

COMPARISON BETWEEN THE PORTRAYAL OF TOXIC LOVE IN 'WUTHERING HEIGHTS' AND 'MINNAL MURALI'

Vayshnavi Suresh^{*}

ABSTRACT

The goal of this paper is to make a comparison between the portrayal of love in 'Wuthering Heights' and 'Minnal Murali'. The relationship between Heathcliff and Catherine is described as an all-consuming love. There are several instances in the novel where the concept of love crosses its boundaries and at times it turns toxic in nature. "I won't rest in grave until you are with me". This statement expresses not just love but emotions far beyond the concept of love. Heathcliff takes revenge against Linton's family and Earnshaw's family mainly because of his lost love. The revenge is taken not only against a generation but against two generations, this throws light upon the gravity of love which he had towards Catherine. He wishes to have the presence of Catherine even in the form of ghost. This clearly portrays their toxic relationship. In the movie 'Minnal Murali' the bond shared between Usha and Shibu can also be classified as a toxic one. Shibu kills Usha's brother for the sole purpose of claiming her as his own. Even after this he is ready to destroy the whole society just to satiate his love for her. The statement proposed can be supported with help of Affect Theory. Realisations about the hidden "toxicity" of things can be seen as a natural extension of idea that our fundamental emotionality renders us susceptible to kind of psychological violation that we had never imagined.

Keywords: love, Wuthering Heights, Minnal Murali, toxicity, Affect theory

^{*} Department of English, Vimala College (Autonomous), Thrissur

INTRODUCTION

The word 'toxic' has witnessed a surge in its popularity with the Oxford English Dictionary declaring it as the 'Word of the Year' in 2018. The online searches for the word have risen up to 45 percentage.

Literature is a wide canvas which paints a wide spectacle of emotions which encompasses love, hatred, pity, revenge and even toxicity. When we delve deep into the nuances of human expressions, we explore a wide range of human sagas wherein the words gain life and communicate with the readers in multiple voices. Few works of literature which marked their annals in the epoch of history as romantic fictions might not be the same on a closer analysis. Many relationships that begin with all-consuming love and towering passion at times turns toxic. The idea presented can be given a clearer picture with the mentioning of Romeo and Juliet, Catherine and Heathcliff, Hester and Dimmesdale.

Many romantic relationships portrayed in Malayalam films unravel the concept of toxicity. The movie *Uyare* depicts a relationship where the hero does a whole lot of cruelties towards his lover. He is least concerned about her future and her ambitions. Malayalam movies has a stellar record in producing some of the most nuanced and best acclaimed films. Few such relationships portrayed in movies includes Pallavi and Govind, Shibu and Usha.

Wuthering Heights is one of the greatest love stories in fiction. Emily Bronte presents a vision of life in which finite turns into infinite and physical into spiritual in this 1847 novel. She obliterates the distinction between time and timelessness as one flows into the other. It concerns two families of the landed gentry living on the West Yorkshire moors, the Earnshaws and the Lintons, and their turbulent relationships with Earnshaw's adopted son, Heathcliff. Catherine Earnshaw, a volatile emotional person is far more distinct from Heathcliff, an

unforgiving and immensely revengeful person. Catherine belongs to a settled family whereas Heathcliff is "a dark-skinned gypsy". Heathcliff was adopted by her father, Mr. Earnshaw from the streets of Liverpool. At the very outset, Catherine and her brother, Hindley was not willing to accept the fact that their father has brought someone to their family out of the blue. Later there happens a shift in Catherine's outlook towards Heathcliff. Here begins the story of all-consuming love which ends in a saga of fury.

Catherine and Heathcliff shared a bond of friendship where both of them were playful in nature. They cared for each other and one was always willing to stand for the other. With the death of Mr. Earnshaw, they began weaving an intricate relationship which grew from friendship to love and then to revenge:

The little souls were comforting each other with better thoughts than I could have hit on: no parson in the World ever pictured Heaven so beautifully, as they did, in their innocent talk; and, while I sobbed, and listened, I could not help wishing we were all there safe together. (Bronte 57)

Deterioration in the relationship between Catherine and Heathcliff can be traced from the moment they visited Thrushcross Grange. The lifestyle and culture of Lintons made her realise the social circumstances that distinguishes herself from Heathcliff. After the bulldog incident, Linton family took great care of Cathy while they disregarded even the existence of Heathcliff. During her stay, her manners were much improved. She started wearing fine clothes and developed a taste for the finer things of life. She gets refined to the point that she cannot even contemplate Heathcliff's approach towards her. There is an instance in which he says:

'You needn't have touched me!' he answered, following her eye and snatching away his hand. 'I shall be as dirty as I please: and I like to be dirty and I will be dirty.' (Bronte 69) Edgar Linton slowly starts developing feelings towards

Catherine. The situations were also favourable for him as he nestled in the cradle of power and money. When Edgar proposes to her, she decides to acknowledge him as her future husband only because of his wealth and status even though she loves Heathcliff. Catherine confides her plans to Nelly and Heathcliff eavesdrops on their conversation and decides to leave Wuthering heights to make a fortune. Their separation creates a huge vacuum in Catherine's life that she finds her life fragmented and deteriorated. There was a violent wind, as well as thunder. Cathy got thoroughly drenched for all obstinacy in refusing to take shelter. The whole night she sat in the storm over the Heights in full fury.

Catherine could not even think about living a single day without the presence of Heathcliff. She realized the fact that it was he who made her complete. The reality that he was not with her was something intolerable. Edgar Linton was the only ray of hope in midst of all these darkness. He helped her during this stage and finally she decided to spend the rest of her life with him. Edgar Linton, as multitudes have been before and will be after him, was infatuated; and believed himself the happiest man alive on the day he led her to Gimmerton chapel, three years subsequent to his father's death.

Heathcliff returned back to Wuthering Heights after gaining a fortune and now his only aim was to take revenge against all who opposed their relationship. Edgar Linton was a lovable husband and a good companion but on seeing Heathcliff, Catherine was no more the same. She was taken back to the good old days that she forgot her present situation. Heathcliff slowly began executing his ideas, he returned back as a half-civilized person with depressed brows and eyes full of black fire. The word blackfire indicates the intensity of toxic love which he possesses towards her. He drank undisguised delight when they shared looks. Both of them were too much absorbed in the moment and forgot everything around them. She never expected his return and Mr Edgar grew pale with pure annoyance. Even in front of her husband she was ready to shower him with all

her good words 'I shall think it a dream tomorrow! She cried. 'I shall not be able to believe that I have seen, and touched, and spoken to you once more. And yet, cruel Heathcliff! you don't deserve this welcome. To be absent and silent for three years, and never to think of me!'(Bronte 125)'

Heathcliff pretends as if he has got feelings towards Isabella and she starts falling in love for him. Catherine starts developing a sort of jealousy and this is exactly what he wanted. In reality he had no feelings for her, she was a mere instrument to carry out his revenge. This is not a very usual phenomenon the loss of his lover turned his love into a toxic one. He married Isabella and she was illtreated. This makes it clear that both of them were aware of the fact that they really did not have feelings for their partners. All the feelings were cooked up and this heightened the level of toxicity. Edgar Linton took great care of Catherine when she was down with brain fever, the care which he gave her from can be compared to a mother's love.

Heathcliff says to Nelly, every thought she spends on Linton, she spends a thousand on me. He compares his life to a hell once he loses her. Catherine was pregnant with the baby of Edgar when he visited her for the next time. He bestowed kisses and held her tightly to him. Catherine is referred to as his life this cannot be equated to a normal love. She was not ready to leave him even during the last few hours of her life. Heathcliff strongly believes that her soul would not rest until he is in grave with her. He wants the ghost of Catherine to haunt him Be with me always-take any form- drive me mad! only do not leave me in this abyss, where I cannot find you! Oh, God! It is unutterable! I cannot live without my life! I cannot live without my soul! (Bronte 125) The quest for revenge which Heathcliff had towards Earnshaw's and Linton's did not cease. He takes revenge even against the next generation. When Hindley dies and Heathcliff takes charge of Hareton, it is only to torture him and make his life difficult. He also takes charge of Linton but doesn't treat him any better.

Heathcliff forces his ill son to marry Catherine's daughter so that he can inherit Thrushcross Grange. Nelly remarks "I could not picture a father treating a dying child as tyrannically and wickedly as I afterwards learned Heathcliff had treated him."

Minnal Murali deals with the plot in which the hero gains special powers after being struck by lightning. The movie is set in the village of Kurukkanmoola. A bolt of lightning forks in sky and hits both Jaison and Shibu and they discover hidden powers. The movie is a collaboration to show the viewers that good and evil are two faces of the same coin. Shibu the superhero drives the story on his shoulder and becomes the bonafide personification of deep moral values. Shibu can be viewed as an opposing force an entity that radiates varied levels of resistance towards the lead character. The film introduces Shibu for the first time when he loses his wallet, he is searching for it in such a way which captures all our attention. Later we realize that it was not the money in the purse which was important but the photograph of Usha which was way too important for him.

The movie presents a scene in which Usha's daughter is in need of a medical emergency and the family finds it difficult to gather the amount required. Shibu wanted to help her in this situation and the solution that he finds to help her out is to rob a bank and then to procure the required amount. This throws light on the intensity of his feelings towards her. He is least bothered about the consequences of his action. He is ready to do anything and everything for the sake of his love. Here by helping a single person he creates a whole lot of difficulties to many around him.

Shibu is a Tamil migrant and belongs to the lower caste, hence he is at the bottom of the social hierarchy. He lives in the society as an outcast and he is devoid of love. Shibu is ostracised as he is the son of a mad woman. Usha can also be considered as a social outcast as she is an abandoned woman, and the

scandal of her elopement and pregnancy. These might be few reasons that intensified their feelings. His actions are not upright in nature. Shibu started expressing his feelings for Usha once she was abandoned by her husband. Usha was least bothered about this as this is a situation where many would try to take advantage of her.

Shibu wanted to claim her as his own and he meets her brother Dasan to inform him his feelings. Dasan does not approve this relationship as he is bothered about the future of his sister. Shibu finds his decision intolerable and he is not ready to accept the reality. He decides to kill Dasan despite the fact that it was he who took care of her when she was all alone. He gave no importance to the life of people around him, all that he wanted was her. This love cannot be considered as a usual one. The way in which he kills him is so brutal in nature and he pretends as if he has known nothing about it. At the end of the movie, he is ready to destruct the whole society for his love.

Freud explained this urge as an inherent part of love: "At the height of being in love the boundary between ego and object threatens to melt away. Against all the evidence of his senses, a man who is in love declares, 'I' and 'You' are one, and is prepared to behave as if it were an act.

CONCLUSION

In the novel *Wuthering Heights*, the relationship between Heathcliff and Catherine destroys the life of many. The revenge of Heathcliff remains even after the death of Catherine, Edgar and Hindley. He takes revenge even against the next generation. In *Minnal Murali* he is ready to destruct the whole society for his love. He kills her brother who was the only solace for her. Love is often explained and expressed as a pure feeling where destruction and cruelty does not exist. Thus, both the relationships can be considered to be toxic in nature.

REFERENCES

1. Bronte, Emily. *Wuthering Heights*. HarperCollins Children's books 2009.
2. Bronte, Emily. *Wuthering Heights: the 1847 text, background and criticism*. Edited by Richard J. Dunn, 4th edition. New York and London 2003.
3. Hawthorne, Nathaniel. *The Scarlet Letter*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1947.
4. Shakespeare, William. *Romeo and Juliet*. The Riverside Shakespeare, edited by G. Blakemore Evans et al, vol.2 Houghton Mifflin, 1947.