NOMADIC SUBJECTIVITY AND THE CONCEPT OF IDENTITY: A POSTSTRUCTURAL READING OF SELECT WORKS OF RAHUL PANDITA

LAL SURYA S

RESEARCH SCHOLAR, MPhil, DEPARTMENT OF STUDIES IN ENGLISH, DR. JANAKI AMMAL CAMPUS, KANNUR UNIVERSITY

ABSTRACT: *Rahul Pandita, a well known Indian author specifically known for his writings about Kashmiri Pandits has contributed to the poststructuralist critique of identity in his work Our Moon has Blood Clots. His critique sticks with the Deleuzian concept of "nomadic subjectivity". The concept of Nomadic subjectivity is an important reference to the critique of poststructuralist identity. It points towards the transition of identity, in contrary to the traditional philosophical concept of fixed identity explicated through Plato's Forms, Descarte's God, Kant's Transcendental I, etc. By referring to the Deleuzian concept of nomadic philosophy, Rahul Pandita sheds light upon the transition of identity. Identity becomes not something per se given or a priori but contingent in nature that opens up a vast array of possibility for the development of subjectivity. The contingency of identity means the notion of 'becoming' in Deleuzian terminology. This is exactly what Rahul Pandita is exploring through his work. This article aims to discuss the poststructuralist notion of identity by focusing on the Deleuzian concept of nomadic subjectivity. The basic assertion of this paper is that the work of Rahul Pandita conceptualises the idea of poststructuralist notion of nomadic subjectivity.*

Keywords: nomadic philosophy; post-structuralism; becoming; identity; a priori; possibility.

INTRODUCTION

It is generally assumed that philosophy took birth out of miracle. It is the vastness of nature that surrounded him which stuffed the notion of miracle inside him. But this universe was adequate enough not only to inject miracle but also to generate fear and terror inside him. When the external world around him got manifested itself in the form of pandemics and disasters, man started to alienate nature. Exploiting his innate potential of reason man started to make meanings out of these phenomena. This activity of controlling the nature ultimately gave rise to science while the responsibility of appeasing with this alien world was taken over by religion. As a primary step towards achieving an appeasement with nature he started to worship the nature. So through the act of conquering and appeasing what he is aimed at ensuring the security of himself and his family or race. But it is from his realisation that he can never completely conquer nature gave rise to the concepts of certain supernatural beings, called Gods. So he always ensured to win the trust of his God while engaging in a conflict with nature. Later on developed ritualistic services and ceremonies around this concept of God in order to ensure their trust which is supposed to be reserved only for the specific sect. Hence the specific sect would declare war against whoever breached smooth functioning of this system, which in a way ensured their sub-contract with God.

Fear acquires its dominancy in almost all fields of human interaction, like social, political and religious domains. It becomes more evident and dangerous when it is implemented within the framework of religion. The very history of religion is marked by the involvement of violence because it is grounded on discrepancies. It is usually a thought that originated in some remote corner of the world with a written script that deals with the eternal fight among good and evil, and that which is supposed to be followed by a large section of mankind belonging to different geographical, cultural and linguistic background and this itself points towards the inconsistency in itself. But it not a question about inconsistency anymore, rather it all about the way how such systems of though persist on consistency of the system by engulfing the singularities[1] and diversities that exist in a society.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The history of mankind is also a history of war. War that he had fought against his own brothers or against nature. Everywhere religion occupies a prominent role. From the clash that started between Moses and Ramses to the unending conflict in the Middle East, ethnic conflict had marked as a smouldering issue that is hard to extinguish. Ethnic cleansing, mass massacres and violent riots in the name of religion have left deep wounds in the consciousness of mankind. In this still ongoing process, millions have lost their life, property and family. Kashmiri Pandits usually designated as Hindu Pandits are one among such victims who became a symbol of refugee in their own motherland. Irrespective from the stories of the other victims that often win media attention and public notice, the case of Pandits are totally strange. They are completely 'unacknowledged' by the general public. Media and politicians never showed their interest towards these men who was wiped out from their homeland in a night and left to be wiped out from the

sphere of history then. Rahul Pandita's *Our Moon has Blood Clots* is a heartbreaking and an adventurous story of his and other Pandit families who survived the unacknowledged ethnic cleansing that happened in Kashmir back 1947.

Rahul Pandita is a journalist and a well acclaimed and a celebrated figure among young Indian authors. He is a 2015 Yale World Fellow. He has authored *Hello, Bastar: The Untold Story of India's Maoist Movement*. But it is his work on Kashmiri Pandits that had won wide appreciation from the public and became national best seller, simply because the literary scenario of Indian English Literature really lacked authentic works that background the miserable story of Kashmiri Pandits. The work is divided into five parts, each focusing at the different stages of his miserable life in Kashmir. Each part is connected with each other in a rigid manner through the skilful narrative potential of Pandita. It can be categorized among the genre of historical autobiography as it delineates his life along with the history of Kashmiri Pandits. Through this work Pandita outlines the history of the out-casted Pandits by narrating the story of his family. His family was an extended family with his and uncles and grandparents residing in a huge mansion. Both his parents were government employees and his grandfather was a connoisseur in Hindu religious rites. Their life was a peaceful one until everything became topsy-turvy in one night. The events that unleashed on that terrorizing night was a culmination of a long history of religious hatred that was smouldering inside Kashmir.

DISCUSSION

The ancestors of Pandit family settled at the valley of Kashmir from the regions of Punjab years back. They settled and nourished a new civilization out there. In the course of history the administration of the region fell into the hands of many rulers and things became very hostile for the Pandits. The Muslim administrators who handled a majority of term ruling Kashmir turned the land as a parallel Auschwitz for the Kashmiri Pandits. Martha C. Nussbaum in her work *The Monarchy of Fear* explicates that politics is emotional and the stakeholders who are interested in promoting the crisis often employ the strategy of injecting emotions into the mind of the majority through fake propaganda which makes them fail to rise into the level of expressing empathy towards their fellow mates. This is exactly what happened in Germany during the Third Reich. A similar kind of situation unfolds in Kashmir. This paper mainly intends to take a look at the philosophical side of 'transcendental-codes'[2] of meaning making process of whose misunderstanding constitutes majority of issues around us. My perception towards this issue will be channelized through the poststructuralist perspective because dismantling or exposing the transcendental-codes that constitute a system is what Poststructralism is mainly focusing at. For the purpose I am intending to employ a concept that was advocated by Rosi Braidotti, by drawing inspiration from Deleuze, in her work under the same name, *Nomadic Subjects*. Nomadic Subjects is a different kind of 'becoming'[3] which asserts that it is still possible to think and live politically without relying upon any sort of transcendental codes which are suppose to define the being. Through this she is not only proposing the new possibilities of escaping but "rather she also seeks to imagine the transitions among identities, sexualities, generally everything about structural-universal codes which are thought of as unique and isolated in themselves." (NM 8)

After witnessing a series of very terrorizing events, the little Pandita, asks himself, "I can't fathom why all this is happening. If the Kashmiris are demanding Azadi, why do the Pandits have to be killed? Why do we have to leave our house, where I play freely, and ride my cycle, and exchange comics with my friends? How is the burning of a temple or molesting a Pandit lady on the road going to help in the cause of Azadi? (MB 95) This is where the philosophy of Braidotti points at. She says that all structure is grounded upon the concept of excluding its 'otherness', but at the same time this exclusion is always interiorized or represented inside the structure. So the excluded part is both inside and outside and hence she proposes that the structure will not have a consistency because its establishment depends on the radical exteriority which cannot be totally interiorized. Thus it can be stated that what the majority of the Kashmir is really meaning through ethnic cleansing is that they are trying to negate the exterior part, that is, 'the other', which is none other than the Pandits, under a universal identity negating the singular representations like bodily establishments and performatives. Through the negation of the other and bringing them under a single identity they believe they can bring stability to the system.

The novel is all about the unending journey undertaken by the Kashmiri Pandits from one place to another in search of less hostile environment. They soon turn out to be a refugee in their own homeland and wiped out from the history without being acknowledged by anyone. "We were becoming nobody's people" laments the young Pandita. Packing their bags and shifting to new houses were an everyday practice in the life of a Kashmiri Pandit. Pandita remembers that his father once cracked a joke at their nomadic life as, "I could have opened up a packer and mover company." (MB 139) This unending exodus is a metaphorical imprint of their survival and the birth of a new 'becoming',

nomadic subjectivity. The whole event of his life as a Pandit in Kashmir can be summed up as a fruitless act executed by a system for identifying 'the being' of the other under a specific identity as demanded by the majority. Hence their survival as a Pandit can be seen as a 'becoming' since it destroy the structural forms identifying the being. Pandita evokes, "...it was as if the minority Pandits were to be blamed for everything that went wrong...whatever the reasons, the Pandits became the target. Houses were looted and burnt down, men beaten up, woman raped and dozens of temples destroyed. A massive statue of goddess Durga was brought down in the ancient Lok Bhawan Temple." (MB 35) So it was the simple technique implemented by the majority for negating the existence of the other. Pandita details in his work that "throughout 1990, Pandits are picked up selectively and put to death. They are killed because Kashmir needs to be cleansed of them. And if the one chosen is not to be found, a proxy suffices. It is all about numbers. It is all about how many are killed. It is known that if one among them is killed, a thousand will flee." (MB 73) Here arise the question of 'they'. Who are 'they' and why are 'they' needs to be executed? According to Deleuze identity identifies according to the transcendental categories and there the question of 'they' or the other never arises. The Pandits were categorised as 'they' because they, through their survival opened existence to new . To situate in a pre-defined existence. path by which no transcendental signifier could capture their being. So they transcend from the pre-determined identity towards a subjectivity which functions as a preventer of transcendental signifier. Pandits, in Deleuzian terminology can be called as a 'body' which embraces the possibility of rejecting the transcendental power. Body according to Brian Massumi signifies a new politics of criticising the notion of identity which situates the being in a pre-determined existence. So identity tried to suppress the unpredictable becoming of existence. It means, according to Efe Basturk, that the body and its contingent potentiality signify the lack of completeness in identity, because the notion of identity can perceive itself as "complete" only by making the body foreseeable. So making the body foreseeable is what the majority is meaning through the vociferation "no eastern, no western, only Islamic, only Islamic" (MB 66) And this can be made more comprehensible from the "...series of bomb blasts outside other symbols of 'Indianness' –India Coffee House, Punjab National Bank, the Press Trust of India." (MB 67).

Rahul Pandita begins the 'part two' of his work by emphasising on the notion of freedom as it is perceived from two opposing viewpoints. "In the veins of Kashmiri's flows the blood of the Mujahideen and the destructors of the infidels...from every village will rise a cry: Azadi! From every Mosque will rise a cry: Azadi! From every school, every child will let out the cry: Azadi, Azadi, Azadi!" (MB 71) Who conquers freedom? What constitutes freedom? These are the most significant question that is dealt in this work. Through the work of Pandita what can be deduced is that it is widely propagated that the freedom of majority is curbed by the infidels. The identity of the 'infidel' bestowed upon the Pandits makes them scapegoats of all crimes. The survival of Pandits is therefore a deconstruction of the identity. Identity can be taken as a structure in itself. According to the Poststructuralist theorists, deconstruction does also have an ethical task besides its epistemological function. The ethical task is to expose that the identity does not have a meaning (meaning of the identity as an infidel) in itself. Establishment of meaning, according to Efe Basturk, is a political act. Efe Basturk further explains that, the meaning of being political means that the hierarchy which the meaning carries is not a philosophical matter. In other words, the hierarchy concealed within the meaning forms the identity of the structure and identity is the social counterpart of hierarchy.

So identity emerges by normalization of the exclusion and moreover identity is the identification of the structure within the exclusion. Now comes the second part, what constitutes the freedom? This question can be better analysed from the viewpoint of Kashmiri Pandits. It is their acceptance of their new becoming as nomadic subjects which constitute their freedom. The reign of terror that was unleashed upon them helped them to develop immunity against the external forces by acquiring the status of nomadic subjects.

According to the poststructuralists the whole issue of identity sprout from a simple misunderstanding of a paradox. The paradox is that the missing part of the identity must be outside the identity (NS 9). According to the poststructuralists any structural form can perceive itself as a whole by externalizing a component that completes it. It is an indication that externalization process is completely arbitrary and political because, according to Basturk, the externalization needs to be formed under an appearance. And this appearance is of the Pandits as infidel is what gave meaning to the whole series of atrocities. This is a political act in the sense that the function of the externalization is to emphasize the completeness of identity by presupposing the lack of completeness in the externalised component. This presupposing is what made Pandits appear as infidels in the eyes of the majority.

Pandits devised new strategies to exist in the society. They removed all their religious signs out from their body, "...ma had removed the golden atth from her ears and her bindi that identified her as a Pandit. Father removed the red sacred thread from his wrist...mother and sister, both of tehm have covered their heads with dupatta." (MB 94) and they even sacrificed their Kashmiri tongue in the presence of Urudu. It's a counter cultural perspective developed by

Pandits to criticise the normalization process or in other words it suggests a rejection of being named by identity. Pandita states that the crowd wanted to turn Kashmir into Pakisthan without the Pandit men, but with their woman. He remembers, "...ma rushed to the kitchen and returned with a long knife. It was her father's. 'If they come I will kill her' she looked at my sister.' And then I will kill myself." (MB 77) Sexual molesting is a kind of imprinting identity, to bring the other under a transcendental code by negating subjectivity. Hence their choice of exodus can be taken as their acceptance of their nomadic subjectivity in order to become-impercetible from the manipulation of institutions.

Nomadic subject is a new epistemological and political entity, to be defined and affirmed in the confrontation of multiple differences in class, race and sexual preference. (NS 30) Nomadic subjectivity is not only aimed at criticizing the notion of identity but also imagine the possibility of a new becoming. Their appraisal of nomadic subjectivity in a way contributed towards becoming-imperceptible[4] to the system of encoding[5]. Pandita recollects an incident that, "...walking had been a habit. We had walked another mile or so when we were again confronted by a few Pathans. We raised our hands, while father started chanting Allah ho Akbar." Here the chanting of Allah ho Akbar reflects their *becoming* by embracing a subjectivity which is marked by its fluid nature[6].

Becoming is always a matter of creating 'lines of flight'[7] to escape out the bodies that are named by transcendental structures. Escaping from identity is not something that can be possible only by abstraction, that is thinking about how to escape, but rather it starts with querying the conditions that made us. This ability of analysing the condition offers an alternative path to live, to think and to act. So it can be said that the criticism of identity should focus on creating new nomadic subjectivity in which the structural forms of identity no longer encode and predefine the subjectivity of the other. Pandita ends up his work by expressing his deep grief that, "...it has become unfashionable to speak about us, or rise the issue of our exodus. But I have made it my mission to talk about the 'other story' of Kashmir. Like the tramp in Naipaul's *In a Free State*, I have reduced my life to names and numbers. I have memorized the name of every Pandit killed during those dark days, and the circumstances in which he or she was killed. I have memorized the number of people killed in each district. I have memorized how many of us were registered as refugees in Jammu and elsewhere." (MB 220).

CONCLUSION

Reading Rahul Pandita's work in the context of nomadic subjectivity provides this work a survivalist style.
If a specific sect or a class device a particular system that functions on the ground of certain transcendental codes and whose objective is to negate the irreducible gap that exists in the identity because of its externalised component can create social inequality and catastrophe. This unending urge to perceive itself as a structural form of totality in itself by refuting it's externalised component have given rise to various totalitarian regimes throughout history.

Such systems always emphasize on the importance of being collectively addressed under a particular identity thereby spreading fake conceptions about 'singular beings' that it has got no meaning of its own unless and until they are referred to a transcendental code which acknowledges their completeness and sovereignty. So nomadic subjectivity proposes a new kind of becoming which negate this concept of completeness in itself, both in terms of ego and system. Hence it provide new possibilities for 'the being' to extend from its predefined identity. This is what he meant by "return permanently" at the end of his work, a new mode of survival.

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