

Outsider, outcast

BY MUNAKHAN | 2023-08-27

MY nephew, now 9, and I have been watching one of the 11 Star Wars films for the last three years whenever we are together. He didn't think anything of the British-Pakistani actor Riz Ahmed playing Bodhi in Rogue One, whereas the rest of us celebrated this first. Bodhi's ethnicity doesn't figure in the film. There are many other firsts for Pakistanis in the creative arts which have paved the way for a new normality. When I was nine, the closest I got to some sense of representation without knowing what it meant was watching Alyque Padamsee play Jinnah in Gandhi in 1982. I watched it as part of my history class and remember feeling upset at Jinnah's portrayal. Pakistan seemed like a last-minute inclusion in the film. Fast forward to my first job as a journalist at Newsline in the mid-'90s; there was so much controversy about Christopher Lee playing Jinnah but the film went ahead. That could not happen now and it is a good thing. Today you see push back against the constant portrayal of regressive storylines in dramas or the casting of a man to play a transgender character. Of course, this pushback will cause conflict among those who have created and enforced a social order, and do not want to give new voices a seat at the table. I believe audiences want to see themselves in stories and visuals, and I'm including the news in this, too. Marginalised communities aren't adequately represented, which widens the gulf in people's understanding of their issues. But sometimes seeing yourself on screen can also go wrong, as happened with Yashica Dutt, author of Coming out Dalit, who saw her story in an episode of the Indian series Made in Heaven, the second season of which was released recently. The episode in question portrays an inter-caste wedding of Pallavi Menke, a scholar at Columbia University who reclaims her Dalit identity after years of hiding behind an upper-caste name. Her marriage into an upper-caste family in India is riddled with power and class dynamics. These are rarely talked about on screen and many people have hailed the episode, which was directed by Neeraj Ghaywan, also Dalit, for the assertion and resistance shown by Pallavi. In a tense exchange of words with her fiancé about the kind of wedding they should have, Pallavi says, 'everything is about politics'. But for Dutt, the opening scene cuts too close to home and, as she wrote on Instagram, was 'taken without permission or credit'. While the director Ghaywan credited Dutt as an inspiration for the episode in a social media post, and Dutt her-self called the episode a 'cinematic triumph when it comes to showcasing what it truly looks like for a Dalit woman to take her power back in the casteist society', she wants to be acknowledged in the end credits. The producers felt otherwise and issued a strong rebuke denying any appropriation of Dutt's life. This controversy has evoked diverse opinions and thoughtful discussion across caste lines. Dalits are sharing stories about the discriminations they've faced, and also asking whether any individual should speak for a community. For readers in Pakistan not familiar with the caste system: Dalits are the lowest in social hierarchy. They have historically performed jobs like manually removing human waste from sewers. Although India outlawed caste discrimination in 1950 and manual scavenging in 2013, both continue. India also created a quota system for lower castes to give them more opportunities. One of America's greatest public intellectuals, Cornel West, was quoted by the Associated Press as saying he felt a kinship with Dalit activists, and called racism and casteism 'institutionalised forms of hatred'. Lest any sense of gloating set in, I'd like to remind you about Pakistan's shameful 'institutional form of hatred' that makes its citizens rob others of their right to self-identification. Further, linking that to citizenship and even marriage certificates, as attempted in Punjab last year legitimises hatred. We are seeing this hatred play out across Pakistan in the form of brutal violence against peaceful communities trying to make ends meet like every other person right now. Yet they are only seen when acts of violence are thrust upon them. Our response to Christian persecution in Pakistan does not elicit the same reaction as does violence against Muslims in India. I do not know how this institutional prejudice can be arrested, given the government's head-in-the-sand approach.

However, I believe filmmakers may have answers if they are allowed to tell stories that unmask stigmas. We have, after all, a rich history of thought-provoking dramas on social ills. I have no doubt of our ability to do it again. There is an audience desperate for these stories.

Social discrimination: Need of awareness through media.

The media audience likes to connect with the story being presented, be it in the news or the dramatic film industry. For this reason, the media focuses on majority and highlights their lives and issues. This underlies the issues faced by minorities in society. For instance, some of the current issues being faced by minorities include the social discrimination of Dalits in India and Christians in Pakistan. In India, Dalits usually face discrimination in society being lowest in the caste hierarchy. Although the caste system has been formally ended and quota system has been introduced to ensure equity, discrimination can still be found in the society, which represents an institutionalized form of hatred. Similarly in Pakistan, hatred against particular communities is in practice, which can be seen in citizenship and marriage certificates. The way Christians are being treated in Pakistan is similar to the way Muslims were treated in India before partition, and the government of Pakistan is still silent. Society needs to accept the fact that just like every other member, minorities are also trying to

make it through this life peacefully, still, they face violence. So to create awareness, it is the time to raise awareness through media in Pakistan.

Since Pakistanis have a great history of making meaningful dramas on social issues, this will create awareness among society to unmask the social stigmas and enrich the cultural diversity in Pakistan.

Words in the Passage : 794

Words in the Precise : 233

Original passage for precis

It was not from want of perceiving the beauty of external nature but from the different way of perceiving it, that the early Greeks did not turn their genius to portray, either in color or in poetry, the outlines, the hues, and contrasts of all fair valley, and hold cliffs, and golden moons, and rosy lawns which their beautiful country affords in lavish abundance.

Primitive people never so far as I know, enjoy when is called the picturesque in nature, wild forests, beetling cliffs, reaches of Alpine snow are with them great hindrances to human intercourse, and difficulties in the way of agriculture. They are furthermore the homes of the enemies of mankind, of the eagle, the wolf, or the tiger, and are most dangerous in times of earthquake or tempest. Hence the grand and striking features of nature are at first looked upon with fear and dislike.

I do not suppose that Greeks different in the respect from other people, except that the frequent occurrence of mountains and forests made agriculture peculiarly difficult and intercourse scanty, thus increasing their dislike for the apparently reckless waste in nature. We have even in Homer a similar feeling as regards the sea, — the sea that proved the source of all their wealth and the condition of most of their greatness. Before they had learned all this, they called it “the unvintagable sea” and looked upon its shore as merely so much waste land. We can, therefore, easily understand, how in the first beginning of Greek art, the representation of wild landscape would find no place, whereas, fruitful fields did not suggest themselves as more than the ordinary background. Art in those days was struggling with material nature to which it felt a certain antagonism.

There was nothing in the social circumstances of the Greeks to produce any revolution in this attitude during their greatest days. The Greek republics were small towns where the pressure of the city life was not felt. But as soon as the days of the Greeks republics were over, the men began to congregate for imperial purposes into Antioch, or Alexandria, or lastly into Rome, than we seek the effect of noise and dust and smoke and turmoil breaking out into the natural longing for rural rest and retirement so that from Alexander’s day We find all kinds of authors — epic poets, lyricist, novelists and preachers — agreeing in the precise of nature, its rich colours, and its varied sounds.

Mohaffy: Rambles in Greece

Precis

CSS-2001

Date: _____

The early Greeks, despite recognizing beauty of nature, did not portray it in their art or poetry. Their perception was influenced by their view of nature's impressiveness as a hindrance to agriculture and a threat ^{due} to its association with dangerous wildlife and natural calamities. Mountains, forests, and even the sea were seen with a sense of disdain or fear, which influenced their early art, which initially did not focus on wild landscapes, prioritizing instead depictions of fruitful fields. However, as Greek republics transitioned to larger imperial cities like Antioch, Alexandria, Rome, the stresses of urban life gave rise to an appreciation for the beauty of nature, as reflected in the works of various authors post-Alexander's era.

“Greek's way to Perceive Nature”

Q. 2. Write a précis of the following passage in about 120 words and suggest a suitable title: (20)

During my vacation last May, I had a hard time choosing a tour. Flights to Japan, Hong Kong and Australia are just too common. What I wanted was somewhere exciting and exotic, a place where I could be spared from the holiday tour crowds. I was so happy when John called up, suggesting a trip to Cherokee, a county in the state of Oklahoma. I agreed and went off with the preparation immediately.

We took a flight to Cherokee and visited a town called Qualla Boundary surrounded by magnificent mountain scenery, the town painted a paradise before us. With its Oconaluftee Indian Village reproducing tribal crafts and lifestyles of the 18th century and the outdoor historical pageant *Unto These Hills* playing six times weekly in the summer nights, Qualla Boundary tries to present a brief image of the Cherokee past to the tourists.

Despite the language barrier, we managed to find our way to the souvenir shops with the help of the natives. The shops were filled with rubber tomahawks and colorful traditional war bonnets, made of dyed turkey feathers. Tepees, cone-shaped tents made from animal skin, were also pitched near the shops. "Welcome! Want to get anything?" We looked up and saw a middle-aged man smiling at us. We were very surprised by his fluent English. He introduced himself as George and we ended up chatting till lunch time when he invited us for lunch at a nearby coffee shop.

"Sometimes, I've to work from morning to sunset during the tour season. Anyway, this is still better off than being a woodcutter ..." Remembrance weighed heavy on George's mind and he went on to tell us that he used to cut firewood for a living but could hardly make ends meet. We learnt from him that the Cherokees do not depend solely on trade for survival. During the tour off-peak period, the tribe would have to try out other means for income. One of the successful ways is the "Bingo Weekend". On the Friday afternoons of the Bingo weekends, a large bingo hall was opened, attracting huge crowds of people to the various kinds of games like the Super Jackpot and the Warrior Game Special. According to George, these forms of entertainment fetch them great returns.

Our final stop in Qualla Boundary was at the museum where arts, ranging from the simple hand-woven oak baskets to wood and stone carvings of wolves, ravens and other symbols of Cherokee cosmology are displayed.

Back at home, I really missed the place and I would of course look forward to the next trip to another exotic place.

Class Assignment Sabahat Gul (OS3)

Words in Passage: 436

Precis: (145-150 words)

I had a trip to Cherokee with John, last May. We visited Qualla boundary, which had a beautiful view due to blanketing mountains, ~~the~~ its Oconaluftee village replicated ancient crafts. Then the natives helped us reach to shops, where special axes, head-dresses used in wars, and different tents were available. After that we met George, who told us that he used to be a wood cutter which was a difficult profession for life survival, he also offered us a lunch at a place nearby. On having a chat with George we found out that people of Cherokee held activities like bingo weekends, along with trade. Finally we saw various features of Cherokee culture at the ~~the~~ museum. Then we came back home and still miss the place. For next trip I am looking forward to another great place.

Title: A Trip to Cherokee, last May.
Words in Precise: 135

PART-II

Q. 2. Write a précis of the following and suggest a suitable title:

(20)

The fear of human beings when faced with the mysteries of life and their weakness by comparison with the vastness of nature created in them a need to communicate with the divine, with the superior powers which they believed regulated the universe and determined their own fates. Knowledge of wishes of the gods was always a sure guide for human behavior. In ancient Greece, the precise nature of these wishes was 'decoded' by the art of giving oracles, practiced by soothsayers who had the gift of understanding the signs or signals sent by the gods.

The soothsayers uttered their oracles by interpreting flashes of lightning, rolls of thunder or the flights of certain birds of prey (omens); alternatively, they might observe the direction in which the fire burned when a sacrifice was made, examine the entrails of animals which had just been sacrificed, or base judgments on the sacrificial beast's willingness to approach the altar. The interpretation of dreams was popular too, and so was palmistry. The most notable soothsayers of ancient Greece were Tiresias, Calchas, Helenus, Amphiaraus and Cassandra.

However, there were abundant instances in which the gods did not manifest themselves to the faithful in the forms of signs but spoke directly to an intermediate who for a short time was overcome by a 'divine mania' and transcended his own human essence. Here the prophet- or more usually the prophetess- entered a state of ecstasy in which he or she delivered the message from the gods to the suppliants.

These practices for foreseeing the future were the basis on which the ancient Greek oracles operated. Each oracle was located within a properly-organized sanctuary and was directly associated with one or other of the gods. Apollo was the archetypal soothsayer for the Greeks, the god who was responsible for conveying to mortals the decisions pronounced by Zeus. The most important of all the oracles, that at the Delphi, delivered the messages with the intervention of Apollo, while the oldest that of Dodona, functioned with the assistance of Zeus.

Assignment # 02

Sabahat Gul (053)

Precis:

Humans used to fear life's secrets and their weakness in this enormous universe, this made them feel the need to connect with the power that controlled the universe and their futures, so to guide the humans there was a need to know God's wishes. For this, the art of giving oracles via soothsayers was developed in the ancient Greek. This art was used to translate the signals of the universe in usual activities, such as lightning, thunder, bird flights, dreams, palmistry, and future predictions. Other than this, God used to communicate ~~with~~ with his prophets for a short span instead of giving signs only, whereas the prophets used to deliver God's message to that generation themselves &

Words in the Passage : 339

Words in the Precise 115

Title: Human Life & Ways to know God's wishes.