

Write-up on the novella “The Beast”

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21st April, 2011

1 Characters

All the characters in the story are portrayed in such a way that we can not characterize any character to be good or bad, or more black than the others. All of them are selfish and only think of their own welfare. In a sense, perhaps that is the reason that all of them have the same fate at the end. Let us start with the main character of novella Thakur Udai Singh. It may seem at first that Thakur is an evil character. But he is not uniformly evil and is just trying to save his reputation, wealth and power. He never tries to harm anybody in the first place. Whenever somebody comes up with a complaint, only then he tries to save himself and his reputation by his clever arguments. However when he sensed of loosing election, he gave Jhaman Chamar a beating. When Thakur loses his son Onkar, he is not upset as a father who just lost his son. But he was more upset as to who will take care of his wealth and power now as he never believed in Pratap as someone who could handle his business and politics. Thakur never had any affection for Neela as a pet but only as a weapon which is shown by the Barki rape incidence when Thakur first thinks that Neela couldn't avoid the incident in his village house. So we can ask whom does the Thakur love and probably the answer would be no one but his wealth and power. Neela is just the projection of Thakur's bad doings. Neela is a combination of a dumb animal and a beast, his beast nature is the result of a unnatural diet. Neela's character is given religious touch by Thakur's manipulations. Headmaster's character is of a truly educated person in the village. He is like a enlightened person, people look upon him to tell the right from wrong. He remains in his comfort zone and doesn't do anything to prevent the incidents. We can ask a very important question that who is the real beast in the story Thakur, Neela, headmaster or the Thakur's son Onkar. Onkar was the reason of many deaths in story and indirectly the Thakur was responsible for all the destruction done by Neela. So I think that Thakur and Onkar are the real beast of story. “The Beast” is neither a full length novel nor a short story which somehow shows in the characters which lacks the required depth. For example, no background is given for its characters, not even of Thakur.

2 Symbolism

Names of certain characters like headmaster, name of village, town or city is not mentioned which symbolizes that its a tale which could have happened anywhere in India. Neela the bull symbolizes the empty loyalty of people towards the wealthy and powerful politicians and businessman. Neela has no reason to be loyal with Thakur and in the end he kills Thakur. Thakur easily portrays Neela as goddly creature which tells us how illiterate people are easily manipulated in Indian villages. Headmaster is the one person whom Thakur is feared but he still doesn't do anything which symbolizes the helplessness and powerlessness of common people. Openness of the area symbolizes that there is no boundary of evilness and anything can happen. Neela got out from the same breached wall from which he entered, this symbolizes that bad doings always come back to you. Thakur was killed by no one else but Neela which symbolizes that every device of terror ultimately recoils back to its perpetrator. Also places mentioned by Thakur like Kaziranga in Assam and Bandipur in Tamil Nadu are associated with militant groups ULFA and veerappan respectively which symbolizes the evil and beast character of Neela.

3 Murder Mystery

It is said that two shadows entered into village house. Stronger one kidnapped Onkar and other overpowered Onkar's wife. It is highly unlikely that one of two was a woman. The one who kidnapped Onkar must be a stronger person and hence can not be a woman. Other one took the Onkar's wife into hut and raped her and hence can not be a woman. The only two persons who can be these shadows seems to be Bheeku's son and Chutki's husband. Bheeku's son must have taken Onkar and drowned him to take his revenge, later he pretended to be a mad man to avoid legal actions. Chutki's husband must have taken Onkar's wife and raped her to take revenge on what Onkar did to his then fiancée Barki. Barki might have taken Bheeku's son into her confidence by giving him a false marriage proposal and Chutki's husband by telling her the truth that Onkar raped her before their marriage could have taken place. About the murder of Chutki's husband, the medical report showed that he was drugged and then killed. Barki is most likely to be the one who could have got the opportunity to drug him. Barki might have murdered him because of two reasons, one that she might have come to know about the rape of Onkar's wife by Chutki's husband and she felt for him the same way as she felt for Onkar and realizing that she just have created another monster. So She drugged him and killed him. Second reason is that she might still be angry with him that he dumped her knowing that it was not her mistake but this reason is rather unlikely. Onkar's wife also could have got an opportunity after the rape somehow

and in fight could have killed him. However, It is unlikely of Onkar's wife to be involved in his murder because traces of thorn-apple were found in his stomach and she could not have got a chance to drug him. Barki's death is probably a suicide. Barki was living a very meagre life and after she identified Onkar as the rapist, her life's only motive was to take her revenge. After completion of her revenge, she might not have find any reason to live and committed suicide. About Pratap's wife involvement, it is given in the introduction that Onkar's elaborate plan gave Barki the accomplice from among the Thakur's family, so it may be that it was Pratap's wife who told her to get acquainted with Neela and feed him balls of curds and pure mustard oil which is exactly what Onkar did in his plan. Pratap's wife did the above may be because she identified herself with Berki i.e., helpless, powerless. Pratap's wife feared Neela because she almost thought of Neela as a human being who knows about her being a part of the whole plan. About Chutki's involvement, it is also unlikely that she was part of the plan as she herself wondered that how she could have killed her husband when she did not even move from her house, why would she lie while talking to herself.

4 Social Issues

The story presents a society full of corruption, illiteracy, crimes and injustice. Law only listens to Thakur who is a symbol of wealth and power and who exploits illiterates by telling a lie which itself is a series of true facts. Class discrimination is very much a part of the story. For example, when pump and water coolers are installed which by law is the property of whole village but the benefit only goes to Thakur and his supporters. Villagers do not have their own opinions, a perfect example of which is when income tax officer summons the farmers and they say exactly as Thakur has asked them to. Although it seems that author has deliberately avoided the Hindu-Muslim agenda but in village there is a strong foothold of religion because of which Thakur manipulates villagers to believe Neela as mother goddess. Villagers are illiterate and only one teacher is doing the job of three teachers and also acting as headmaster. Also, at first it seems that Thakur is able to manipulate villagers because they are superstitious, but is it the main reason for Thakur being able to do so. I think superstition of villagers comes from their feeling of insecurity. Villagers owe Thakur a lot of money and they are afraid of Thakur's power. Neela can be compared to a mob in the city, a mob plant fear in people, it help generating wealth and power and also protect it. Neela is doing exactly the same for Thakur, more is the damage more is the effect. The caste system is not depicted directly but class system is very visible on basis of wealth and power. For a country like India, both caste and class systems are essentially the one and the same. The story portrays a male dominant society in which a series of rapes and molestations happen

and Barki's fiancée dumps her to marry with her younger sister. Although at the end, it is women who survive, they come together in the hour of need and make the ultimate plan to take their revenge.