

Reading Literature: Assignment 1

- 1) Examine the narrative point/s of view through which Shobasakthi's short story "Bombshell Diana" is told. Analyze how this impacts our processes of meaning-making.

The story starts in a court scene where the refugee petitioner T. Pratheeban is being interviewed by the French judge Eve Daniel. The narration of the scene is quite objective, from a third-person's point of view. The conversations between the judge and Pratheeban are described in detail by Shobasakthi to set the right mode for the story of Diana to begin. The emotional lines spoken by Pratheeban are reported by the author in quite a dramatic fashion which made us, the readers pay more attention to the story because we get the impression of hearing the accounts and details of horror from a victim who witnessed it first hand and lost a loved one in the process. The third person style narration adopted by the author also provides a certain degree of authenticity to the story and the events that transpire.

The majority of the short story "Bombshell Diana" is narrated by the author from a limited omniscient point of view. The feelings and emotions of Diana are described by the author in multiple instances and the story mainly revolves around 'Gundu' Diana. But the author also provides detailed accounts of the history and backgrounds of a few other characters in the story. The court scene and the heartbreaking words of Pratheeban set up the readers to listen to the tragic story of his cousin. Shobasakthi starts the narration of Diana's life in a hospital ninety minutes after she was born when the hospital is bombed by two military aircraft. His description of the bombing, an event which happens so fast and unexpected, gives us a taste of the world and setting Diana is born into, one that is dangerous and unforgiving.

The fragile mental state of Diana due to her environment filled with inhuman acts of terror and worsened by her disease of freezing when in shock is captured very vividly by the author when he describes her nightmare of sixty-four Diana corpses laid out, arranged in rows with their stomach torn open and intestines pouring out after a bomb kills her fellow friends in a training camp organized by The Movement (LLTE). When the author talks Diana's wish to freeze herself just to escape the reality of her tragic existence, he brings out the innermost feelings of fear experienced by the SriLankan Tamils and made us shudder just thinking about the living conditions of these refugees which pushed even a young girl to think of self-harm.

The description of Selvam and his family, we see Shobasakthi talking about the domestic violence against women in these refugee villages. The author also provides us with the story of Palani whose son is taken away by the Movement. While he gives a third person account of all these events, the multidimensional storytelling method of his can only be seen as a limited omniscient point of view. This narration method keeps us, the readers, very engaged while simultaneously learning about the horrors in the lives of these poor refugees. Selvam's story with his wife in particular gives us a lot of insight into the family dynamics of the SriLankan Tamils (the refugees).

At the last when it is revealed that petitioner, T. Pratheeban was a fraud who used Diana's story to get refugee status, we as readers are quite taken aback and question whether any part of Diana's story was real at all. I feel it was Shobasakthi's intention to end the story in this fashion as the notion of us analysing and thinking again about these events described in the story of 'Gundu' Diana, we are able to relate more with the tragic realities of the SriLankan Tamil refugees.