

The Leaders in the World of literature



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The ambit of ambition decides what kind of hero an individual can create from within. Ambition if given wings in right direction can create a statesman while a wrong turn of flight can end up as an authority of negative sort. The biased nature of history has often ignored or sidelined the common individuals as its sole concentration has been set on the persons wielding power and glory. History irrespective of regional, territorial or continental diversions has remained biased. It has jotted down the turn of events, the changing of scenarios from monarchy to anarchy, from dictatorship to democracies but it has failed to take a pause and reflect on the condition of commoners that has suffered at the hands of these changing scenarios.

It is true that the leaders in a generation not only create history but also has the courage and attitude and also the capacity to the course of events. If western world is influenced by likes of Napoleon, Julius Caser, the east has its share of Mauryas and Guptas. As far as west is concerned especially the British, they have written many fictionalized account of their heroes, while east and in particular India, this account has blurred the boundaries of myth, fiction and reality. There cannot be a generalization of the above statement but there are the instances where west has settled down their heroes in folk and fiction categories. Legends of King Arthur, Robin Hood are few among the examples of folk tales while Caser, King Henry, Antony and Cleopatra have ruled the fictionalized world. The eastern counterpart has also categorized their heroes, for example the legends of Dulla Bhatti, Prahalad, Dhruv etc. Except Dulla Bhatti, the other two have also marked their place in the theological sphere. In Indian context, the theological structure has ruled the roost. From Rama to Krishna, the literature has shown remarkable progress, the narratives and their styles have shown the different classes of innovations. Through the theological underpinnings of literature the much of this type of literature has been able to carve an

emotional zone in the hearts of commoners. From Rama to Krishna, Janaka to Vikramaditya much has changed- the moralistic approach, the political zones and social structures. What has remained same is the approach of layman to these texts.

As said earlier the history has remained biased to the plight of commoners but on the other hand literature has made every possible effort to bring out in the open the heroes among the common tagged individuals. The world of fiction which is sometimes ignored as flight of fancy has created the most balanced space for the rulers and the ruled. The present paper aims at finding out the heroes/heroines out of the imaginative yet real world of literature. The paper aims at exploring the potential of these fictionalized characters in relation to the real world. These ordinary humans in extraordinary situations and their flight as well as fight with the inevitable will form the subject matter for the present paper. The texts taken into account are Graham Greene's *The Power and the Glory*, Fyodor Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*, Franz Kafka's *The Trial*, Albert Camus *Plague*, Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House*, Maxim Gorky's *Mother*, Gustav Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*, Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable* and *Coolie*, Stories from *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. Besides these works of fiction another literary piece analyzed is Viktor Frankl's *Man's Search for Meaning*. Lieutenant in Graham Greene's *The Power and the Glory* is symbol of authority who although honest is epitome of rigidity which on reaching its extremity is a form of cruelty. The child in the beginning of the story is amazed at the outer appearance of the Lieutenant, his outlook immediately infatuated the child but as the story advances the Priest makes his entry into the storyline's complex structure. What is worth noticing is the Priest's stark contrast with Lieutenant. While the latter is zenith of honesty former is the height of degradation, a man of careless attitude full of vulgarity but still there exists a meeting point between them. Their dedication towards their

profession. Priest although a man of coward nature never shirked away from his role even if the circumstances are totally adverse to him. Same is the case with the Lieutenant. As a reader we are already aware about the ending of the story but what kept us hooked is the complexity involved in the arrangement of event. Both of the characters are travelling to a same destination but through different paths. Priest even in the role of victim emerge out as a champion while Lieutenant while possessing the whole authority is defeated. The judge in the whole story is the child who while leaving all his imagination and infatuation out his psychological set up starts waiting for the Priest to turn up. Both these characters in the novel are leaders but what makes the Priest the triumphant is his acceptance of death. Himself a disgraced person he became a saving grace for the whole of his community. From a victim of a murder he obtained the status of a martyr. The opposition of authority makes him a rebel but of a different sort.

Characters of Raskalnikov and Sonya in Fyodor Dostoevsky's Crime and Punishment are also the figures of rebellion who are leaders of protest. Poverty stricken and living in a totalitarian Russian regime both of these characters face their hard life with extraordinary courage. Old lady's murder by Rodya and then his initial escape from the external punishment forms the central point in the novel. But what makes Rodya an ultimate protagonist is his acceptance of his crime and the punishment he undergoes. What he did was out of sheer frustration with the prevailing social and political circumstances. Rodya is not a statesman but his concern for Marmeladova family without any ulterior and selfish motives makes him a genuine sympathizer. Sonya's role in the novel is again worth appreciation. Although critics have pointed out the shortcomings in the epilogue of the novel but still Sonya's courageous attitude towards the hard realities of life make her a character of remarkable strength. If Rodya is a directionless violent rebel, Sonya is symbol of non-violence. They are complimentary as Sonya found her solace in Rodya's changed attitude and he found his direction in her calmness. Both in a way become pillars of strength to each other. They are the figures which have shown the rebellion attitude (although in different manners) of common Russian towards the opaque authority of Russian Government. They are the leaders among the common-folk of Russia. They waged a war the zone

of which may be of very short sphere but the intensity of which contained the higher altitude.

It is often said that the leaders emerge out of rebels. The women characters in the world of fiction are no less than their male counterparts. There are many female characters that have shown remarkable strength in the hour of crisis. The first if not foremost among them is the Mother from Maxim Gorky's novel by the same name. she is an illiterate woman and a loving mother but what make her stand in the line of warriors is her acceptance of hard role of a comrade to rebels. She becomes mother for one and all and acts as an agent against the oppressive authority. The another character which marks the tendency towards the rebellion attitude for batter future perspectives is Nora from Henrik Ibsen's play A Doll's House. Her decision to leave her home in the ending of the play became slogan for many feminists. She is heroine having traits of leading a movement. Simone De Beauvoir in her work The Second Sex has highlighted the need for protest and Nora is an apt figure to settle down into this role. Flaubert's Madame Bovary although on very few moments has also shown this tendency. Her refusal to be a mistress marks her protest and straight away takes her character to a position of a martial who is ready to die but not to kneel.

Existentialists have always stressed upon the absurdity of life. What they have pointed out is struggle against this absurdity. Sartre, Kafka, Camus and many others in their works have put forth this struggle. Their heroes are rebels who may not be victorious in their struggle but what differentiates them from the ordinary is their struggle. It is the importance of struggle rather than the outcome which matters in circumstances hogged by absurdity. Joseph K. in Franz Kafka's The Trial is the victim of opaque, irrational and all powerful system. He is a pawn but at the same time in Foucault's words a vehicle to drive against the irrational authority. The last words of K. highlight the protest of a rebel. He refuses to die like coward like a criminal and lodges his protest even in his last moments of life. The other character which ponders upon the struggle against the basic absurdity is Dr. Rieux in Albert Camus novel. The Plague. Dr. Rieux even in the crisis refuses to budge from his responsibility. Even the death of his wife and uncontrollable havoc created by plague fails to drown down his decision. Both K. and Dr. Rieux has the unimaginable strength to take the

responsibility of their actions and decisions and both came out as true heroes that can lead even in the climate of absurdity.

Throughout the centuries India has remained in the clutches of divisive barriers. Mulk Raj Anand in his works like *Untouchable* and *Coolie* has explored these very barriers. Characters of Bakha and Munoo are the example of victims of caste politics and oppression. But their unbreakable spirit and their decisions to fight on make them unimagined heroes. Their ends may have been tragic but their fight is heroic. They fought adversity through adversity that is by accepting whatever comes their way and then turning up that hardship into the acceptance of reality. Both these characters highlight not only the plight of the deprived but also the courage to fight this very deprivation.

Stories from Ramayana and Mahabharata are filled up with the extraordinary feats of heroes. If Rama is the figure of an ideal king, Ravana is symbolic of practical wisdom. Due to theological interpretations Ravana is often ignored as proud and haughty King but what has remained out of loop is his intellect and wisdom. As different versions of Ramayana are available throughout the world all these have agreed on the fact that Ravana was an intellectual wise King who through his practical wisdom has established the kingdom of Asuras.

Surrender is meek informs Krishna to Arjuna in Bhagwad Gita section of Mahabharata. Dialogue of Krishna and Arjuna in the middle of the great war of Kurukshetra takes plunge into the ideas of political ideological structure. It is here Krishna while shaking away the theological aura dons up the role of political advisor who is ready to take every possible psychological road to conform the mindset of his protégé. Krishna emerges out as a leader whose discourse on righteousness of battle draws the parallels between the right and the wrong and also tries to validate what seems unpardonable as a necessity. Krishna is the pinnacle of wisdom who knows how to counsel, how to take and divert a challenge, how to advance and retreat. Besides Krishna Bhishma, Karna and Abhimanyu are also the characters who have shown steadfastness while dealing the adversities of battlefield. All these act as heroes who not only lead but also marked out the path for the future generations.

Nietzsche's deliberations of Superman as a complete and vital individual aroused among humans the need

for perfection, perfection which is a characteristic of a hero, of a leader. In his masterpiece *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* he has placed out the possibilities of achieving the perfect scenario of a rationalist who has the capacity to take risk, who has the courage to decide when the fear of impossibility lurks over the very existence of human being and most importantly who has the competency to accept the outcome and responsibility of his decisions even after everything has gone topsy-turvy. Nietzsche is often accused of providing theoretical framework to Hitler's ideas of pure Aryan race but what is worth noticing is Nietzsche's efforts of analyzing the basic powers of human thinking.

Viktor Frankl's work *Man's Search for Meaning* is a kind of epilogue to Hitler's war against Jews. Hitler's forcible delivery of Nazi ideas has been challenged by Frankl who was one of the prisoners in concentration camps. Frankl was also one of the silent victims but his clinging to life is the real challenge to Nazi ideas. He has defeated the very ideas of Hitler with the ideas of Nietzsche where he emerges out as a superman who while passing through the basic absurdity of life in concentration camps placed himself above the other individuals. He has not led any revolts neither he has created any atmosphere of mutiny but he has rebelled against very totalitarian authority of existence thus striking out the absurdity not with logic or rationality of mind but with courage and belief of living out through the absurdity of existence. He acted as a leader when the life has demanded from him the share of his courage. History for a layman has remained an out of box idea or something alienable so is the case with literature, but what differentiates the two are their efforts in approaching the common individuals. Literature may have remained out of reach of layman but it has made genuine efforts to place this very layman at the center stage. This may seem ironical but it is also true where history has failed in its attempt (if it has ever done so) literature has tried to gather the material for writing down the stories of the common, for the common and sometimes also by the common. It has tried to locate the heroes and the leaders among the "common".

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