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Research Articles

“A STUDY OF TABISH KHAIR’S NOVEL *THE BUS STOPPED* AS A LYRICAL JOURNEY”

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ABSTRACT:-

Tabish Khair is one of the emerging and enthusiastic Diaspora writer of Indian origin, presently residing in Denmark. He has given his brilliant contribution in the travel literature. In his novel *The Bus Stopped*, he expresses several characteristic features of a journey which highly raises the regional spirit of his native region Bihar and the memories of migrant writer. The writings pertaining to journey are always known for the experiences of pleasure, fun and memories of a writer touring on a particular region or route. There are number of migrations from third world countries to the west which are witnessed by the twenty first century. Their frequent travelling to their native regions or the other places of the world produces a great volume of literature in the travel writing. The novel is based upon a bus journey on a particular route from Gaya to Phansa of his native land Bihar. The novel highly raises the notion of home and the bus becomes a symbol of metaphor for the self which expresses the feeling of need of travel along with a desire of coming back to their homes. *The Bus Stopped* is a lyrical journey through small town. It allows the stories to emerge with immediacy and leisure, with abrupt shafts of humor.

Keywords: Lyrical Journey, Notion of Home, Diasporic Sensibility, Travelogue, Denouement

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INTRODUCTION:-

Tabish Khair is an Indian English writer who feels deeply associated with his land of birth, India. He is presently working as Associate Professor in the Department of English in the University of Aarhus (Denmark). His writings involve not only the academic but also the socio-political issues of current relevance. Even residing in Denmark from a quite long time, he refuses to leave his concrete links with India. This paper reveals a study of Tabish Khair's novel *The Bus Stopped* as a lyrical journey. The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries show the revolutions brought by travel writing in the literature. The contemporary travel writing shows one of the most prominent changes that have been taken place in the social scene. The present writings related to journeys reflect the social consciousness. It makes the society aware from the traditional consciousness. In the twentieth century journey related writings became of the most promising and innovative technique of writing. *The Bus Stopped* is a well balanced travelogue where a number of stories are woven to create a masterpiece. The stories are essentially the portrayal of memories of a migrant writer. The writer has essentially used two strong metaphors in the novel, The Home and The Journeys. Here he has used the home as a signifier of identity of memories of diasporic writer. And the Journeys re described in the diasporic dynamism. The novel is a journey of emotions and experiences along with fun. There is no any central character in the novel. The writer has picked various characters from different racial groups. It is a semi-autobiographical novel. The stories are essentially the narration of memories. There is much to enjoy here.

The structure of the novel is most complicated to characterize because it reveals more than one narrator. The story is divided into two main parts. The first part is a frame story and the central part consists of multiple journeys which are told from inside a bus. The home becomes the symbol of identity where as journey reflects the diasporic dynamism. The story is a montage of memories of the author travelling on route from Gaya to Phansa. The journey of the bus is divided into a number of interesting pictures which

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comes one by one in front of the reader. The structure of the story has a single narrator, who largely describes the memories of his homes and houses of the past. These stories deal with the alternate between the point of view of the driver of the bus Mangal Singh, and the interesting and heart touching passengers of the bus.

As indicated in the title the narrative deals with the writer's journey from Gaya to Phansa. On the way the bus stopped many times at different places which provide a platform to show writer's experiences during the journey. The title has been selected quite appropriately. As in the initial pages of the narrative the bus was stopped. The writer has also given a subtle description of the bus such as colour, tyres, a rusted mudguard and a cracked windscreen etc. Mangal Singh driver of the bus came and stated it; "Just before he turns the ignition key, again and again coaxing the old engine to start, he puts the whistle to his mouth and gives a short sharp blow on it. A sound that cuts across the dawn, the field and the houses like a bird in flight" (Khair. 2004, 14).

The bus reached at its destination and stopped at the end of novel. The bus stopped many times during the journey from Gaya to Phansa. There was something new in terms of story, situations, events and characters on every stoppage. The most rememberable event of the bus was quite dramatic denouement for all the passengers as well as readers, that there was a woman travelling in the bus carrying a dead child. When this event came into the notice of other passengers the bus stopped. The child was buried and bus moved on its way. At the end of novel we saw the whole story woven in relation to the bus and its journey on a particular route. The bus became a metaphoric symbol in terms of need of journey.

On arrival of bus at the final destination all the characters reached their own stations. The eunuch gets married as a woman, the servant boy ran away from his village but ultimately caught and the Danish character goes back to Denmark. Apart from these characters the novel is final shaped with several questions yet to be answered depends upon the choice of readers such as; the tribal women get home? What about Chottu? What about the child who was buried by the roadside? Can a bus be at home? Khair

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becomes able to deconstruct the cultural boundaries of his adopted nation through the narration of this journey of his native land. His heart has been filled up with the flavors of memories and experiences over the journey of his native land. While portraying his memories of journey of his land of origin the author finds relief.

In the contemporary time Diaspora has contributed a lot in writings regarding journeys. Their continuous migrations and visits to their native regions bring a great volume of literature in travel writing. Home becomes a symbol of identity for Diaspora because they are living apart from their native land. They are eager to come back to their native land and with the help of narration of their memories they return back to their home. In this particular novel Tabish Khair returned to his native land with the help of the narration of their memories over a journey of his native region. The novel strongly raises the notion of home, as the novel starts with the 'home' and after completing the journey 'homes again'. On the basis of structure the entire story has been divided into three parts; the main part titled as 'journeys' and the later two sections opens with the title 'homes' and ends with the title of 'homes again' like a complete lyrical journey.

CONCLUSION:-

The novel highlights the regional spirits of Bihar in an interesting way. To highlight such regional spirit of any place is a very unique quality of writing about lyrical journeys. Moreover, the boundary does not only bind to the geographical limits but also divides the cultures, race, ethnicity, languages and religions etc. A person residing outside his native country writing about the local life, customs, rituals, traditions, languages, race, ethnicity, it reflects how the person is deeply rooted in the affection of his native country. The travel writings deconstruct the man made boundaries. The not only explain the regional scenery of Bihar but along this it also expresses the smartness of regional language as he has used the typical *desi* words of Hindi and Urdu languages. He has applied the long sentences filled with the essence of his native land such as, "yahan sudh desi gee ki mithaiyan milti hain." This is an enjoyable book. Khair is a talented writer and a master painter of words. The story is full of twists and turns and the ending of the novel is

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hilarious. The selection of characters is very appropriate. Every stoppage brings something new for the reader. It is a musical journey which moves through small town of India and which represents the memories of a migrant writer. Hence it is formally mentioned that the novel is a lyrical journey which raises the regional spirit of Bihar the native land of Tabish khair and importance of need of journey.

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