

RATIONALISM IN ARUN KOLATKAR'S JEJURI

Dr. Rakesh Vishwanath Talmale

Associate Professor in English,
Yashwantrao Chawhan Arts, Commerce &
Science College, Lakhandur, Dist. Bhandara.

Mob. No. 9420868415

E-mail – rakeshtalmale6@gmail.com

Abstract :

Poetry in India is qualitative in content and concept of the multiple ethos of its society. It executes numerous tendencies of Indian society in innermost ways. Arun Kolatkar's collection of Marathi poems 'Jejuri' is remarkable to convey different aspects of regional and national tendencies of modern era India. He explores rational aspects in penetrating ways. He staunchly makes satire on unfathomable Hindu beliefs and traditions seen in contemporary society of India. In the poem, Kolatkar excavates rational aspect by observing the temple of God Khandoba one of the form of God Shiva. His rational aspect is not only questioned Hindu beliefs but he exposes beliefs in the various religions of the world.

Keywords: Rationalism, Jejuri, Temple, Indian, Religion

Introduction :

Arun Kolatkar (1932-2004) was significant poet of Marathi Literature. His numerous works were translated in English language. 'Jejuri' the bunch of poems was published in 1976. 'Jejuri' won the precious commonwealth poetry award in 1977. His poetry is milestone in both Marathi and English languages. Jejuri was filled with experiments which manifested some of the trends of modern literature. These poems are radically dark, thoughtful and humorous overwhelming with plentiful messages to its readers.

'Jejuri' is a pilgrim place near Pune in Maharashtra. The place Jejuri is famous for the temple of Lord Khandoba who is incarnation of lord Shiva. Lord Khandoba is highly worshiped by the Maharashtrian people, second after lord Vitthal & Rukmini of the place Pandharpur. Lord Khandoba is a warrior, horse rider and sword expert God. He belongs to Dhargar i.e. Shepherd farming community of Maharashtra.

The collection of poem 'Jejuri' has number of poems carrying rational and escapist ideas of poet Arun Kolatkar. Arun Kolatkar boldly conveys these ideas in extravagant and penetrating ways. He makes subtle satire on religion, culture and tradition. People blindly

follows religious thoughts on the name of God and Goddess of Hindu religion. Nowadays religion is a kind of business. Particularly Hindu religion is a handy tool of major political parties of India. These parties molded it according to their political, social and economical benefits. The collection of poem 'Jejuri' is a fine example of showing people places and things for the sake of false belief. These issues are to be discussed under the light of few poems of the collection 'Jejuri'.

The collection of poems is started with the poem 'The Bus' In this poem, the bus represents the modernity and process through which the travel become easy. The bus depicts the people of different society. The people with scientific tools visit pilgrim place seems odd to poet. Poet exemplifies the road as a machine roaring marching towards the temple.

*You look down to the roaring road. You search for the signs of
daily break in what little light Spills out of bus.*

In the poem 'Manohar' Kolatkar's protagonist Manohar gets confused about the temple. He visits the place looks like temple but Manohar feels it is not.

*The door was open.
Manohar thought.
It was one more temple.
It isn't another temple,
he said,
it's just a cowshed.*

Kolatkar seems emptiness in every part of the place 'Jejuri'. In this pilgrim place it is believed that God resides in every inch of it. All the holly places nourishes holly appearance of God. He mentions the ancient Maharashtra ruler Peshwas. They build the area and were the staunch followers of Hindu and Bramhin ideology. Now the place has left nothing after their predecessors. Rather he conveys pessimistic expression in the poem 'The Reservoir.'

*There isn't a drop of water
in the great reservoir the Peshwas built
There is nothing in it.
Except the hundred years of silt.*

In the poem 'Yeshwant Rao' Arun Kolatkar explores his rational aspect in illustrious ways. In the belief of God there also hierarchies like social classes of four Varnas. Kolatkar mentions god Yeshwant Rao as second class god.

"Of course he's only a second class god

*and his place is just outside the main temple,
Outside even of the outer wall.”
As if he belonged
among the tradesman and the lepers”*

Kolatkhar further shows variety of god and their activities for their believers,

*I've known gods
prettier faced
or straighter laced.
Gods who soak you for your gold.
Gods who soak you for your Soul.
Gods who make you walk,
on a bed of burning coal.
Gods who put a child inside your wife.
or a knife inside your enemy.
Gods who tell you
how to live your life,
double your money or triple your land holdings.*

Nextly, he criticizes the believers for their blind faith on God.

*God who can barely suppress a smile
as you crawl a mile for them.
Gods who will see you drown.
If you won't buy them a new crown.*

The poem 'The Priest' is a direct attack on the priest community of Hindu religion. It is a strong satire on the ugly face of religion. Nowadays religion becomes a big commercial business. Kolatkhar exemplifies the selfish practices of the priest which render on the name of God and faith. The priest waiting for the offerings of the devotee. He rather work for the offerings rather money. He is waiting for the bus. He is eagerly standing outside the temple under the hot sun for the bus. He is thinking about the earning of the day and the sweet dish Puranpoli. The sweet dish Puranpoli is cooked in Maharashtrian family at the festival and auspicious occasions. It is expressed in this way,

*An offering of heel and haunch,
on the cold attar of the culvert wall
The priest waits.
Is the bus a little late?
The priest wonders,*

Will there be a Puranpoli

With a quick in his plate?

The priest has number of bad habits. He regularly chewing betel nut in his mouth. He is turning it over and over as though he is chanting mantra. The priest should be holy and pious person but he is not. He perhaps praying for the bus to arrive soon.

The bit of betel nut

turning over and over on his tongue

Is mantra

It works.

*The bus is no more just a thought in his
head.*

It's now a dot in the distance

The priest uses religion to get profit from it as commercial commodity. His materialistic attitude is lurked in the poem. His greed for wealth appears in various ways. The base of the greed is dishonesty. Doing this he doesn't feel guilty anymore. By collecting offerings he indulges in counting the offering. At this moment his face looks shameless, merciless and cunning. Arun Kolatkar raises the question of the use of religion, god and temple for the people. The Brahmin community take full advantage on the name of religious aspect of Hindu religion.

A cat grin on its face

and a live, ready to eat pilgrim

held between its teeth.

Priest misleads people mercilessly for selfish purpose. Arun Kolatkar describes the priest as he is ready to eat pilgrim with his teeth. In a way, he is symbol of a wild animal ready to kill other animals for its hunger.

The poem 'Heart of Ruin' is direct attack on religious forms and formats. It presents Maruti temple's wretched plight which loses its glory. It is sad to see the temple community is not looking after the holy structure. The original temple structure is destroyed and the roof has fallen down. The roof is laying on the ground launching the idols head. Unfortunately no one cares about repairing it. The animals have taken shelter in the temple ruins. The young puppies are playing over damaged ceiling and the flooring. There is nothing left in the temple. Ironically he conveys the appearance of dog.

A mongrel bitch has found a place

for herself and her puppies

In the heart of the ruin.

May be she likes a temple better this way.

In later part of the poem poet extravagantly marked about the wretched condition of the temple by pointing the presence of the dung beetle towards broken collection box. Everyone terrified with the presence of dung beetle near the collection box. The collection box did not get out from the falling roof beam. The dung beetle might enter into the broken collection box.

*It's enough to strike terror in the heart
of a dung beetle
And send him running for cover
to the safety of the broken collection box.*

In these ways, Arun Kolatkar presents his rational views in the bunch of poems 'Jejuri'. His postmodernity fanatically appears in syntactic and semantic manner. These poems are thought provoking. In a way, the subtle rationalism is observed in sharp ways throughout the collection of poems 'Jejuri.'

Conclusion :

In this way Arun Kolatkar presents his rational ideas in the poems in 'Jejuri'. He makes subtle attacks on religious aspect that followed in blind ways. There is no logic appeared in religious customs while it appears as the tool of commodity in the hands of upper class people. While conveying his ideas, the obvious presentation of irony observes in the poem. Kolatkar clarifies his ideas through numbers of literary forms and formats. In a way, the poem is unique in its way of presentation of thoughts of the poet.

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