

THEISTIC APPROACH IN ARUN KOLATKAR'S JEJURI

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-Abstract-

Arun Kolatkar's *Jejuri* has attracted attention of critics as well as readers and scholars. The poem is famous as Kolatkar has accepted the non involvement strategy and he exposes the so called fake religious world by adopting English language. Kolatkar seems to be appear atheistic but the present paper attempts to study Kolatkar's theistic approach in *Jejuri*

Arun Kolatkar, born in Kolhapur in 1932 contributed as a graphic artist in an advertising agency. His main creative output includes *Jejuri* (1976) and *Arun Kolatkarchya Kavita* (1977). Kolatkar is a bilingual poet. *Jejuri* was awarded the *Commonwealth Literary prize* in 1977. It is also considered as a long poem divided in many sections. Although Kolatkar has accepted the strategy of non- involvement to expose the hypocrisy of the religious world, represented by Lord Khandoba and his myths then it appears to be an example of impersonal poetry and the sense of atheisms may be found developing in the poem. Kolatkar's *Jejuri* may be studied from atheistic point of view but a deep study of the poem highlights a hidden theistic approach of the poet. The poem begins with a 'day-break' and ends with 'sun-set'. In the bus, that is taking the poet to *Jejuri*, he finds himself sitting in opposite to the old man with the cast mark on his forehead. The narrator is not interesting in old man's head. It is the cold wind that whips the protagonist Manohar on his way to *Jejuri*. And surprisingly enough, the -

alter, from where the priest is waiting is also cold. The world 'cold' suggests here the atmosphere on the hills of Jejuri. The ruined temple of Lord Maruthi and its dilapidated condition resemble 'the broken tile' that clicks. Jejuri is the place of mongrel bitches, puppies, butterflies, cocks and hens. The mongrel bitch and her puppies that have taken shelter, do not mind the condition of the temple. Similarly the priest who argues that the goddess has eighteen arms in reality she has eight arms, does not mind the condition of the temple. He is just waiting for the puran poli in his plate. The world of Jejuri is full of hypocrisy and fake religious world. The small section *The Reservoir* shows the existing world of Jejuri.

There isn't a drop of water
in the great reservoir the Peshwas built.
There is nothing in it.
Except a hundred years of silt. (1978:36).

The dry reservoir contains no water but silt. The true history is hidden and whatever exists covered with silt that is why the poet says:

What is god
And what is stone
The dividing line
If it exists
Is very thin
At jejuri
And every other stone
Is god or his cousin (1978: 28).

The poet rejects the so-called false, superfluous claims of religion and science but at the same time upholds the real and genuine world of humanity and nature. In the section *Makarand* we have a chance to prove that Makarand instead of doing pooja prefers to smoke a cigarette although we are left with doubt what is actually performed by the alter-ego of the

protagonist. Protagonist wanders with the “divided face” on the hills of Jejuri suggesting the dilemma of his mind. That is why he does not want to respond either to the feelings of *An Old Woman* who begs money in the name of god or to the priest. In the section *The Blue Horse* his strategy of non- involvement tempts to ask the question to the priest’s son to test whether he believes like others in the legend of five hills that are five Demons, killed by Lord Khandoba. The priest’s son is clever enough to divert the poet’s attention to the butterfly. In many sections the poet’s authentic voice is heard.

No more a place of worship this place
Is nothing less than the house of god (1978:12)

The three *Chitanaya sections* scattered though in different parts of the Poems show the poet’s authentic voice. Chitanaya Mahprabhu, the 16th century Vaishanava saint, who visited jejuri. Both the poet and the saint represent the true consciousness despite the centuries of difference between their respective periods and life styles. He visits the place while on pilgrimage and finds the stone besmeared too much with red paint and will like to see it rid of excess of it. The poet’s atheistic approach gets an identity when Vaghya declares,

Khondab’s temple rises with the day
But it must not fall with the night (1978:33)

It is through the vaghya’s persons that the poet’s authentic voice, that of faith, is once again heard. **Yashwant Rao**, whose place is just ‘outside the main temple’, is humorously described as ‘only a second class god’. The poet does not like the other gods who are ‘either too symmetrical or too

theatrical'. The poet also calls them false gods who expect something or force to do something. *Yashwant Rao*, in poet's view far superior. He is a 'mass of basalt' with no arm, leg or head. The poet calls him 'a bone-setter' that is why he is a god of understanding. He sets your body 'whole' in the hope that your 'spirit' will look after itself. The protagonist leaves Jejuri behind and is on his way to railway station with few questions knocking about in his head. But the coconut in the hands of the protagonist reminds us of Makarand's dilemma and, it is answer to it that protagonist has made a pooja of the god. This is the example of the poet's atheistic approach.

The poet presents three worlds existing at Jejuri: the religious world, the scientific world and the world of nature. For the poet the world of nature is more sacred. The street ends, the protagonist leaves the town behind and is on his way to the railway station. He stops 'dead' half way between the temple at jejuri and the railway station like 'needle in the trance'. The dance of cocks and hens makes him to forget everything. The same trance he expected from the religious world which is full of silt. But there is *Yashwant Rao*, *Vaghya* and other sections that represent the poet's authentic voice and there lies Kolatkar's theistic approach. What Mr. M.K.Naik calls Kolatkar, a rare phenomenon among modern Indian English Poets.(1982:207) is true.

Works Cited:

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