



Short Review Paper

Manifestation of the silent agony of neglected childhood and Girl child, presented in Prasoon Joshi's lyrics and poems

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Abstract

The paper throws light on an unusual yet dramatic description of the lost, confused and mangled childhood of a child in its home and in the world manifested by Prasoon Joshi in his lyrics and poems. Prasoon Joshi is one of the most prominent poet lyricists of modern times. His imagery, symbols and choice of language is incomparable and come close only to that of Gulzar; another top poet lyricist. Though he writes in Hindi, but his expressions of emotions cross the barriers of language and touch the hearts of the audience. Prasoon Joshi is among those rare poet lyricists, who understands and expresses the emotions in his writings in the most poignant manner. His choices of words are rare in this genre and it is this subtlety that separates him from the others. The paper brings forth the analysis of his select songs and poems recounting the agony, unreciprocated questions of a child, the kind of world the elders have conjured up for their children, their apathy, and almost a nonchalant attitude towards child-psychology. This paper is going to be based on translation work. The lyrics that appear in the paper are originally written in Hindi and have been translated into English by Prasoon Joshi himself and the Hindi poems have been translated by the author.

Keywords: Manifestation, childhood, subtlety, child-psychology, nonchalant, apathy, translation.

Introduction

The 2016-17 Nobel Prize for literature winner was not a poet, a novelist, dramatist or a short story writer, but the winner; was a lyricist and legendary singer: Bob Dylan. "Some people feel the rain. Others just get wet." - Bob Dylan¹.

What is that one thing that every single person has in their mobile phones, or for that matter in their pen drives while they are driving or taking a road trip? Songs. And some of them feature in every playlist, in every medium. The reason is more than our favourite singer or the soothing music, it is the lyrics. The words, the real soul of a song. Although most of the film songs are written after the composer has given the tune, there are few lyricists who do not believe this bondage. For them, expression and content is more important than merely rhyming words. They are thinkers. They have their heart in the right place. The premier list of poet-lyricist is Sahir Ludhianvi, Shailendra, Kaifi Azmi, Javed Akhtar Gulzar and Prasoon Joshi. Prasoon Joshi, is a modern poet lyricist, screen writer, currently is the chairman of the censor board, CEO of McCan world group. The man who gave us the famous tag lines like 'Thanda matalb Coca-cola' and 'Dobara mat poochna'².

Discussion

Prasoon Joshi is one such poet lyricist who has shown deep concern on the social issues and hence, the expression in his poems and lyrics are not only unusual, but very palpable. They

wake you up from your antipathy, your nonchalance and make you think and act. He always believed that an artist is no good if they are turning a blind eye towards the turmoil of the society and not contribute in improvement of the society.

The lost innocence of childhood

"You told us once not to be in such a hurry to grow up, but I don't see any way we could have avoided it. There was always someone out there ready to carve away another chunk of our innocence. May be because theirs was already gone and they couldn't stand the sight of our ignorant happiness. Because that's what innocence is, you know. A blissful oblivion of what's coming, of what you'll lose and what you'll gain, and what kind of person you'll grow up to be."— Laura Wiess, Leftovers³.

Prasoon Joshi is the firm believer that if a nation needs to progress and has to maintain its moral standards, it has to take care of the children. They have to protect them from all the dangers that elders pose. They are now scared and threatened. Threatened by the terrorism, social taboo, elders failing to listen to the pain and understand the child psychology, not forgetting the filth of the modern internet, the kind of language one uses in front of children". Sociology, even with regard to vulnerability, has been remarkably silent in describing the inner experience of the individual, or the ways in which social location shapes the self and self-experience.

It has not offered much by way of understanding what traumatic disruption might mean experientially for those individuals who suffer it. Humanly created trauma describes not only those individuals who, because of disruption, lose the capacity for joy and spontaneity and their ability to interact with others, constricted and inhibited” said Jeffery Prager⁴

Prasoon Joshi in his poems and lyrics has brought out the pain of a sensitive and concerned citizen. He took the platform of film song lyrics to pen down some very atypical songs. His songs bring out of the agony of how the children are forgotten in their own house. They are abused; physically and mentally. After a child of 7 years was brutally murdered in a school in Delhi⁵, and the mass killing of school children in a school in Pakistan, left the humanity in shame. If as a society we fail to protect our children then, we should not ourselves a civilized society. If a child is raped and murdered then what is the use of calling ourselves human beings at all. It is here, Prasoon Joshi comes up with a gut wrenching poem that leaves the readers with lot to think about. His lines hit hard like a whip. They awake humanity from its slumber. He writes:

Jub bachpan tumhari goud mein aaney se katrane lage
Jub maa ki kokh se jhankti zindagi bahar aaney se ghabrane lage
Samjho kuch ghalat hai
“When childhood refuses to come close to you
When the fetus is too scared to be born
It’s time to ponder, because surely, something is not right.
Khuch nahin bahut kuch ghalat hai
Kyonki zor se barish honi chahiye thi
Poori duniya mein
Har jagah tapakne chahiye the aansoo
Rona chahiye tha upar wale ko
Aasman se
Phoot phoot kar
Sharm se jhukni chahiye thein insaani sabhyata ki gardanein
Shok nahin soch ka waqt hai
Matam nahin sawalon ka waqt hai
Agar iske baad bhi sar utha kar khada ho sakta hai insaan
Toh samjho kuch ghalat hai⁶.

When the swords display their valour against flowers
When the innocent eyes reflect fear,
Its time to ponder, because surely something is not right.
When the dew drops choose perching on the barrels of the gun
rather than small palms,
When the small innocent feet have to walk over fire,
It’s time to ponder, because surely something is not right.
When the giggle of a happy child turns silent, when the tottering
words turn mum
It’s time to ponder, because surely something is not right.
It is not something; rather, most of the things are not right
Or else, it should have made thousand faces wailing and tears
would have drowned people,
God itself should have let a loud wailing,
Civilization should have hanged its head in shame

Now it is the time to act and not just to ponder
It is not time to mourn but to question
If even after all this, mankind can hold the head high
Its time to ponder, Yes, surely something is not right”.

A traumatized child is like a big question mark and a burning problem in a society. It is also a dent in the social strata. Like an expert child psychologist, Prasoon Joshi brings out the anguish of a child who wants to come out of the stereotype, live free and screaming freedom from the burdens of expectations of the parents. He compares the child with a bud, a small marble, the sunshine of a morning sun. When he talks of the hurt that a child feels, he uses the imagery of the things that amuse a child. He uses “kites”, “swing” (jhoola), “coins”, “marbles” etc. In a song from the movie ‘Sikander’ he talks of “Dhoop kay sikke’uthaakar gunguna do usey”⁷ (Let him pick the marbles of sunlight and mover around playfully). He understands the importance of preserving the childhood and its innocence.

His song from ‘Taare Zameen Per’-“Tujhe sab hi pata hai na Maa”⁸ has been a hallmark in the Hindi cinema and surely, no sensitive heart is left without a moist eye after listening to the song; but the child has some problem beyond the obvious. The child has the fear of a bullying father, a hesitation borne out of unfair comparisons to siblings, the disappointment of not living up to the expectations of parents.

Prasoon Joshi understands this so well that for a child it is not only the mother, but a father also plays a vital role. But often it happens that in the home, the child is lost. He doesn’t know how things change when it comes to behavior in front of father and mother. He has come up with a beautiful poem showing this agony and confusion. Here is a translated version of the poem that Prasoon Joshi has written on Father.Pita⁹

“I wonder how did it happen!!,
While praising my mother for everything she always did,
I didn’t know when I turned against the father
Although I never spoke a word of rebel, yet, I realized that,
In the praise of mother, resentment towards father comes automatically
What is his fault? Does being a father or being a male or just being powerful and capable?
I have always tried to be taller than my father,
but never tried to measure myself in front of mother
Have I been rebelling against my father’s autonomy or his authority?
Does my mother being a subject of this authority is the only reason
that I find myself closer to her?
or would I have behaved in the same way, had my mother called the shots,
Would I have been the same, if she was in authority, or
While she stood in front of me in all her might,
And I would have been picking up or
arranging those un-kept papers in my father’s files.”

How beautifully Prasoon Joshi has brought out the difference in expression of love of a child towards the parents. It is a natural instinct, perhaps a little oedipal in nature that the child is much frank, expressive and verbal with the mother is very calculated and balanced in front of their father. Prasoon Joshi beautifully brings out the blatant and placid behavior of a child in front of the father and the free and candid behavior in front of the mother. His poetic genius come into force, when he expresses the line-“I have always tried to be taller than father, but never tried to measure myself in front of mother”. It is not the height that he is mentioning; it is the stature that he talks of. A silent competition runs within a child.

On the Girl child

Prasoon Joshi believes that no society can survive without taking care of the girl child. It is nature's best give to mankind. It is like a blessing in motion. But does the Indian society really value this gift? The Indian patriarchal society is so much obsessed with the male child that many parts of the country still have a very pathetic male- female child ration. The society in such part does not celebrate the birth of a girl child. Female feticide is rampant. Hardly have they completed teenage and they are married, the school, the office, the in laws and more over her own parents are after her all the time. She is hurried upon to grow up. The mother itself strangulates the innocence of the girl child, when she tries to put a “duppatta” round her- Prasoon Joshi writes:

“Bahut Jaldi –Jaldi hum usey duppatta odhna sikha dete hi”¹⁰ (we make her wear the duppatta so early in her age). Duppatta for Prasoon Joshi is not only a piece of cloth. He uses it as a symbol of imprisonment. Duppatta is shackle. It is used to strangulate the innocence and burden her with responsibility at a tender age. Prasoon Joshi has wrote a beautiful poem which is like a tight slap on the society that has treated the girl child badly. That has always looked down upon her. This poem came at the time, when P.V.Sindhu and Sakshi Malik became the only medalist in the Rio Olympics 2016. He begins the poems on a very satirical yet an angry note. Like a whiplash he questions the society that has always looked the girl child as a burden: Here is the translated version of the poem ‘Sharm aa Rahi hi Na’?¹¹ (Aren't you ashamed?):

Aren't you ashamed?
Shame is on the society
that did not celebrate her birth,
shame on that father who lit a lamp less just because she was born,
Shame on those rituals, customs, those fetters,
on those doors that did not open for her,
Don't the elder feel ashamed who associated her existence only with the darkness?
Those veils, those dresses that were used to tie her down and broke her from within,
aren't you ashamed?

Ashamed are those office and schools, those streets that have teased her.

Ashamed are those lyrics and songs,
that have not seen her anything more than merely a body.

Ashamed are those religions, those politics
that have that have shattered and insulted her dreams.

The examples, the news, the protruded questions
that were thrown at her, all of them are ashamed.

In fact, every single thought that tried to clip her wings and stopped from soaring high, should hang its head in shame.

We all should feel ashamed, as, while she stood before us;
holding the shining sun in her palms, we could not see the rays of happiness, and

were busy sulking over her being a girl.

While everyone saw her murky present, She held the bright tomorrow in her palms

But, Can anyone stop the sun from spreading sunlight?

A daughter had to bring the dawn

And yes! There it is! Here is the dawn before us”

The poems is a hard hitting narrative of the kind of hypocrite society that we live in, the kind of double standards that we maintain in our society, despite being in the 21st century. “Not much really needs to be said about the sharp difference in how we treat men and women in society. The double standards lay bare in the open for all to see. For most of women's lives, a tiny voice inside their heads follows them around, nagging them into the realisation that their gender constitutes their whole identity in a way that it does not for men.

Why this distinction? The answer, as it does for all things gender inequality, lies self-sufficiently in patriarchy” says Dipanwita¹².

He has not spared anyone. He has tried to show a mirror to parents, entertainment industry, to offices, to schools and to every person who has tried to bring down the spirit of a girl. Who have tried to objectify her and have tried to smother her progress and tried to pin her down.

Shouldn't poetry; whether it is written or performed, be judged by how one manages to remember the words crashing against the mind and casting indelible expressions?. Prasoon Joshi writes another heart touching poem on how a girl is pleading her father that if he thinks of getting her married, what the husband should be like. It has a paradoxical tone and has been written in a narrative style. Unlike those want to be brides who dream and desire that her would be husband should be rich and prosperous. Some desire to be a queen; ruling in a palatial house, others desire to be decked up with precious gold jewelries from head to toe, some like a business house, Prasoon Joshi's aspiring bride makes a very uncommon request to her father. It is probably very girl wants to plead to her parents while they are looking for a match for her. She tells that she is quite scared and skeptical, yet she can't remain quiet.

Hence, she says that she doesn't want to be married to a rich businessman, nor to a king, nor to a goldsmith, as she doesn't like to rule, nor does she like to do business nor she has any liking for jewelries, what she is requesting is that she should be married to a blacksmith. A blacksmith! However strange it may sound, but why does Prasoon Joshi makes her choose a blacksmith over all the affluent and prosperous bridegrooms? It is here the brilliance of Prasoon Joshi as a sensitive poet comes in light. Prasoon Joshi makes her to prefer a blacksmith because, it is only a blacksmith who would melt and break open her shackles and chains. What are these chains? What are those shackles that Prasoon Joshi wants her to get rid off?. It is here that Prasoon Joshi's prowess is visible.

Describing personal freedom as a prime metaphor he candidly writes about the feelings that a no matter how advanced the times have become; nothing seems to have changed for a girl in India. She is ensnared in societal barbed wires hiding from the world outside; rising out of the quagmire to step into life outside is indeed a big step for these girls. How does one open the portholes of life, and what of the dreams of making a life for oneself escaping from these imprisoning rings? Prasoon Joshi himself expresses the reasons behind penning such heart wrenching poems. He adds: "It is about liberation from deep-rooted slumber of the men folk, that they are unable to wake up from. For instance, we take an extreme view when it comes to women — either rape or absolute freedom. Our men are stuck between the two extremes. For instance, a man ask a woman for a towel when he goes for a bath or a cup of tea, that he demands or expects only from her. It is this dependence of the man on her that he is not able to free himself from or liberate her from. It is this deep-rooted conditioning that he is stuck in. And it will take him very long to be free from 'towels' and 'tea' that he always associates women with". As told to Rana Siddiqui Zaman in an interview¹³.

(Babul jiya mora ghabraye
Bin bole raha na jaye
Babul mori itni araj sun li jo
Mohe lohar ke ghar de deejaye
Jo mori janjeerey pighlaye
Jo mori janjeerey pighlaye)

"O Father!, I am so scared from within to speak in front of you but now I have open up to you
O Father! Listen to my request, Please do not get me married to a goldsmith's house, for, I do not have any liking for jewelries, Neither to or to a king or a prince for, I do not like to rule.
Nor to a businessman, for I do not like business of greed for money,
O Father! Listen to my request, please get me married in a blacksmith's house, where they would melt and break my shackles.

The very choice of a house of a blacksmith or a blacksmith as a husband would ensure that the girl would be free from the

bondage. The shackles that the society has put her in, the handcuffs of orthodoxy, all shall be removed. How beautifully he has used the symbolism to describe the condition of the girl in the Indian society!

Conclusion

Prasoon Joshi's poems and lyrics on the lost childhood and the pain of the girl child are the testimony of the unwelcomed and unfavorable times that they have in the country. If a country ignores its child, then it is destined to be doomed. He holds highest regards for women and hence, his poems on girl child are all about how to take care of her fragile innocence, how to change the orthodox perspective of the society towards the girl child. In one of the interviews he words out his concern- "When you go through the ups and downs of life you need someone who says that no matter what happens to you, whether you are successful or not, I am there with you. "In the absence of that person and that love, you have a society which is depressed"¹⁴.

Prasoon Joshi's poems and lyrics on children and the girl child can be summed by these lines by Anthony Neilson- "I can only hope that (God) will judge us not as the monsters we have become but as the children we once were"¹⁵. Prasoos Joshi is very sensitive towards the issue of what society gives to its future generations. It is because of this reason that he takes utter care in his lyrics that he should not let the innocent mind get polluted. He also calls the society to take a note of the current situation and the impact of it on the child. He says- "All children are naturally blessed to deal with life challenges with unique inherent strengths. Still, our modern world's expectations rob them of their natural instinct, and often rather than instilling belief, we let them get bogged down under the pressure of examinations. As parents, many of us struggle with balancing our expectations with our child's potential. Year on year, our conscience is rattled by children crumbling under exam stress and driven to self-harm"¹⁶.

Prasoon Joshi holds the media responsible to destroy the innocence and exploit the childhood in various forms. The children they show in advertisements are all well-off and are often seen competing with parents, mouthing dialogues that would be considered unruly in traditional Indian homes. It is a great observation, because the kind of dance moves and the choice of the songs the children are being asked to perform by their parents is the reflection of the society. It is during one such event of a scene in a web series 'Rasbari' (Juicy), that Prasoos Joshi has taken strict objection and has written a strong tweet- "Saddened by web series #Rasbhari's irresponsible content portraying a little girl child dancing provocatively in front of men drinking. Creators and audience need to seriously rethink Freedom of expression or freedom of exploitation? Let's spare children in the desperate need for entertainment"¹⁷. Prasoos Joshi is a responsible artist and is living example of how a sensitive artist should be. He does not turn a blind eye towards the responsibility of an artist towards society. His poems also tell that if a country has to progress it has to nurture the children

because they are the future. To sum up, how Prasoon Joshi holds up the society for being nonchalant and apathetic towards the problems of the children, these are the best lines from his poem titled- "Itna Kyu Sotey hi Hum" (Why do we are in such deep slumber?)- "itna lamba, itna gehra, itna besudh kyu sotey hi hum"¹⁸.

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