

NARRATING THE LIFE OF A WRETCHED HUMAN: A CRITICAL STUDY OF K.V. RAGHUPATHI'S NOVEL *THE INVALID*

U.S. Saranya *

Abstract: K.V. Raghupathi's *The Invalid* (2012) is one of the two novels authored by him and the first one to reach the public. In fact it was written when the author was a university student and got published when he was a university teacher almost after a gap of 30 years. *The Invalid* is about a young brown and a fair looking man Praveen but fondly nicknamed as Pravy. He was an orphan and taken care by his sister. When he was pursuing post graduate degree in chemistry, his sister passed away. Due to his poverty and sudden loss of his sister, he started hunting for livelihood. As a result he got a post of chemist in pesticide division in K.N. Pharmaceutical industry situated in Bangalore. He was over loaded with work and exposed to toxic gases and due to that his health got afflicted with a mystifying disease. The preposition of the paper is to deal with the life of the protagonist in the novel.

Keywords: Orphan, poverty, loss, disease.

Dark dark and dark it was a dark black night and no sounds could be heard utter silence filled the room and the only sound which was heard is the hooting of owls, and the invalid lay on the mattress on his back and his head up facing the darkness and nearer to his cot was a window and he got fresh air from it, but his room was a small and compact room in the hotel and the hotel is situated on outskirts of Thirupathi and his room had nothing except a cot, chair, table and his suitcase. He was in half sleep and suddenly he gets up and breathes heavily and sneezes and he moves his finger slowly from head to toe and feels that something has gone wrong "the body was not his own for the first time he realized so. Something had taken possession of his upper part leaving the lower part to himself." "how can I be one in two? I cannot?" (9) he coughs heavily and pushes the mucous through the gullet he feels to spit it on the floor but he swallows it. He was sweating heavily and the warm air which came from the fan made him burn and he placed his benumbed legs on the floor and it pricked him he beat his legs against the floor so as to free himself from the cramp and he stood and he felt that something has gone wrong with him, passing his finger over his body, he wanted to assure himself whether he was himself or not.

Something strange has grown in his upper part of which he could not distinguish. But he could feel it. Of what shape? It was not known to him. Of what form? He was unaware of. He had never been felt it. Never had he experienced. Now he felt he was transformed. What could he be like? Was he a strange animal? (10)

* Assistant professor of English, School of Humanities and Sciences, SASTRA University.
Email: ussaranya90@gmail.com

He moved near the window and gazed intensely at the sky at its blackness later he moved near his mattress and he sat there and he tried to sleep his eyes was burning with lot of effort he laid himself on the bed he breathed heavily his stomach was swollen which hid a part of his lower part he could not see his own thighs he closed his eyes but could not sleep he turned his body hither and thither feeling great discomfort and annoyance. Like a fish on the land, he was struggling. (13)

He was a young brown and a fair looking man his name was Praveen but fondly nicknamed as pravy. He's thirty years old still a bachelor, determined not to marry while he was in the womb of his mother in the seventh month his father died in a road accident and at four in his tender age his mother passed away due to chronic peptic ulcer so orphaned he had been brought up, educated and well groomed by his only lovely sister lalitha. (16) and when he was thirteen his sister got married to a clerk in government office and in her six year of married life she gave birth to two children a boy and a girl and in her seventh year she got pregnant again but her husband has willed against it so complying with her husband's wish she had undergone abortion which resulted in heavy blood loss despite her physical weakness she worked in the kitchen with smoke and she developed frequent fits and it was one day on her acute fit she suddenly collapsed on the floor in the kitchen with no one at her side to attend because her husband has gone to office and her children were playing outside later she was carried to the hospital and she could not with stand the powerful drugs and she passed away her sudden death was a great shock and pain to pravy who was at that time prosecuting his post graduate degree in chemistry at Andra Pradesh university in vizag.

It was not a ordinary loss but it was a great loss to him. (16) he now and then remembered her and he was twenty one after completing his post graduate studies in first division with scoring 70% realizing his economic position he did not pursue his research he started hunting for his livelihood nearly five years he searched for a decent job for his qualification, unsatisfied he went for various jobs worked hard for insufficient wages and it was in his sixth year he has applied for the post of chemist in a private pharmaceutical industry situated in Bangalore which he came across in the news paper and luckily parvy has received the call letter he attended the interview much to his surprise he was offered the post of chemist in pesticide division of the industry with a consolidate pay of ₹9000/- per month at once he moved from vizag to Bangalore.

At first pravy was contented and satisfied but he could not manage the cost of living in Bangalore slowly after months he felt that he was overloaded with work and he was exposed to more and more dangerous hazards and toxic chemical gases like (H₂S) and (Co) in the industry and his health got afflicted with some mystifying disease slowly his health got poisoned he became weak and started losing his stamina.

Still the management did not confirm his post as permanent employee and he was left without unexplained reason it pained parvy and now parvy was in his seventh year it was first week of march and when parvy went to his company to sign in the register to his shock he couldn't find his name then he walked to his place astonishingly he found someone in his place that person directed him to meet that section officer then he went straight to the section officer and the officer handed over him a letter stating that parvy was terminated from the office and the letter carried no regrets on the part of management and the reason for his removal was not specified in his letter. (12)

Parvy left the room with grief in his heart and he did not see the higher official on the management he collected his previous month salary ₹12000/- and walked out of the industry for six year and two moths he has served the company they have squeezed him till the last drop of his blood with over work and mere salary he questioned nothing even he didn't question for his post of permanent employee he sacrificed his health and simply obeyed the rules but he was terminated without any reason and with this past he was laid on his bad and suddenly his lovable sister figured before him and stretched her hands and was calling him again those moments of sisterly affection, touches, caressing, cajoles, gentle scolds and chides flashed his mind for few moments he lived in wild illusion.

Soon his illusion was shattered and vanished but his eyes was filled with tears he wept for her loss twelve years have passed since she left and due to heavy cough he spitted the yellowish phlegm on the floor in his room parvy was in the town for ten days since he left Bangalore and came to Thirupathi though when he was studying he visited Thirupathi but now it has become a fast developing town and for past ten days he has been roaming in search of new job with the amount he had in his hand he paid 3000 for his hotel room as advance and rest of the money he kept for his food and travelling expenses and luckily on his sixth day of his search i.e., on 10th march parvy was able to secure some sort of promising response from a manager in a private chemical industry and he was asked to come and see him exactly after a week that was on Monday 16th march but his salary was less when compared to his previous firm it was 8000 even after that venture he searched for better job but received negative response till the eleventh day of his search.

So he planned to go for the job offered and his eleventh day sunday night passed away and it was mid night and in other words he has just entered into Monday and the odd hours has just began and it was this day in which the meeting was fixed by the manager to meet him for his employment in the firm parvy felt about his wretched condition he felt that he must get up and finish his morning rituals catch the bus and make himself present before the manager at the appointed time but his body did not cooperate for his thoughts he felt that he must go but he coughed and sneezed and he could not get up and he felt thirsty and he drank some water

and moved near the window by crossing the phlegm sticking on the floor only the darkness was with him later he returned to his bed and clouds of thoughts burst out the streaking rain of his past love.

During his six year of work in K.N. Pharmaceutical industry he had fallen in love with young charming women who happened to be his coworker and colleague her name was puspha she was twenty six year old they both got into relationship and it lasted for a year and their love was completely swept off by a sudden unexpected event when puspha was trying to cross a heavy traffic M.G. road to catch a running bus she met with a severe accident by a lorry hitting her and she was spot out (34) the police was informed and they attended the spot and seeing the card of the firm she worked the police called and informed the company about the death of puspha a pall of gloom had fallen on pravy he found her lying on the pool of blood he felt the vacuum created by her death was as much as what he had experienced when he had lost his only lovely sister the two unmatched, intense irreparable loses in his life were his sisters and his passionate love(37) for the first time as he was working in the firm, he felt he had been abandoned, isolated condemned and made worthless human creature they loved each other so deeply, so passionately, so intensely, that they had planned to get married secretly both of them had come from two different social economic backgrounds he is from a low family now a orphan abandoned creature and she from a upper middle class family with a rich culture and tradition she had her mom and dad alive and two brothers got married and one as a doctor and other working in a private firm and her younger sister pursuing her post graduate studies in Bangalore in spite of their two different and unequivocal backgrounds both of them had loved each other so much and understood each other so much her demise made pravy horribly diffident cynic and gloomy and it reflected in his work too. Thus he was removed from his service. (38,39)

The hotel started its daily work and the morning noise in the hotel was audible for pravy everyone in the hotel who passed by his room mistook him for his snores and deep moaning and grunts the sun was getting hotter pravy room door was shut and it was not open till noon he hadn't come out the hotel worker got a suspicious because of all these days of stay in the hotel pravy was the early raiser and he tapped the room door there was no response all he could hear was only the moaning sound then he peeped into the keyhole to see what was happening he rotated his eyes from left to right and searched the whole room he spotted the floor with blood he got shocked and later he found pravy on the mattress groaning in pain soon the hotel boy shivered and he ran to inform the hotel proprietor and the proprietor ordered the workers to bring a wooden stool so that they can climb on it and can views pravy state from his room window which was kept wide open soon they got the stool and placed in front of pravy window and saw the disgusting sight of pravy and the pungent smell which came from the room created a nauseating feel soon they came to know the seriousness of it and the proprietor informed the police. (79)

Within few minutes police came there and started investigating about pravy and the proprietor told about the information which he knew about pravy he told that he came to hotel on march 4th and took a single bedroom room number seven and he has been there for 11 days and daily morning he used to go in search of job and return in late night and he has paid a ₹3000 as advance to the room and then the police calls for the ambulance soon the ambulance reaches the hotel and the sight of police and ambulance creates awareness in the nearby places (82) the door could not be opened so the police ordered to break the door and the workers took a wooden piece and they started hitting the door hard and later on the door was opened and the sight of blood sputum and urine on the floor created nausea in all of them and they found pravy laid on the mattress in pain and pravy appeared as a bizarre creature like half burnt and half roasted (90).

While Mohan a writer writes to sudhakar, that he has received all his letters and has to forgive him for not responding for his letters, and he states the reason for not replying to the letters because he was deeply immersed in his writing. And he doesn't want to let him of what he was writing in advance and he feared that he would suggest him to do some alterations in the narration and he never has the habit of discussing anything before he starts to write and while hi writing and even after ending it. He tells him that he must have been irritated for not replying for his letters and now I am sending you the type script of "the invalid" and by seeing that he will be relieved of your tension, anxiety, disappointment and irritation.

During our last meeting in Chennai you asked me to write a short story and I promised to write it to you and without any conceived plot theme and structure I just wrote what came to my mind it took around three months to finish my novel and he states that he just wrote what came to his mind. And he badly remembers of what he has wrote and I hope you would call it a novel because it has lots of pages so you won't call it a short story and I don't name it and I haven't used any themes in the novel and to tell you the truth I never put a question before me or for myself why am I writing? Or why should I write? And he tells that he hasn't got any reason for writing a highly deplorable human pathetic experience some people would drag me to explain about the text for writing such experience but silence is my only answer.

Thus there is nothing disgusting in this piece of writing one need not get disgusted with Parvi. Parvi is not an invent of imagination his condition is original and not imagination he is not fictitious and superficial but real and original because Mohan has faced innumerable Parvi's in his daily life with variation in the degree of wretched condition and suffering but Parvi's condition and what he has written in his dairy is usual and common we are not aware of its not because of our ignorance or innocence but of brutal negligence and carelessness.

To this human world. I offer Parvi in all humility, humbleness and love. And he states to Sudhakar that he can publish in literary magazine though he is not a

trained writer he is devoid of all these things he is bare and nothing and he claims to disclaim being a writer, first and last forever and by the end Mohan states that he has spoken too much and I sincerely regret not at the end not forever and ends the letter and the novel comes to an end.

Reference

Culler Jonathan, *Literary Theory; A Very Short Introduction*. New York: Oxford University press. 1997. Print.

Raghupathi K.V. *The Invalid*. Allahabad: Cyberwit.net. 2012. Print. Raghupathi K.V, *The Disappointed*. Allahabad: Cyberwit.net. 2014. Print.