



Disjuncture as a Trope of Conjuncture in Sudeep Pakhrin's Selected Poems

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Abstract

Unremitting global flow of people have become the inherent characteristics of contemporary society. Since the concept of global village invaded each nook and corner of the world, thousands of people have been lining-up to enter into the global village from their local villages. They move leaving their ancestor's places behind in the search of opportunities, better life, and to pursuing dreams. However, each such flow unknowingly creates a disjuncture within them. In this context, the paper argues that the specific disjunctive feeling itself becomes a means to connect them with their places and people. Mainly, they try to revisit their past, place and people through memory, which becomes instrumental for their reconnection. Concentrating on it, the paper critically examines the disjuncture as a trope of conjuncture in Sudeep Pakhrin's selected poems. His poems, "Golden Street" and "Maavala" focus on the childhood memories that become strong thread to tie-up with his place and relatives in the verge of overpowering sense of disconnectedness. To critically analyze the isolated and vulnerable human condition in present society, I have employed Arjun Appadurai's concept of global cultural flow and disjuncture as a theoretical backing.

Keywords: *Global flow, isolation, disconnectedness, disjuncture, memory, conjuncture*

Introduction

Global flow has become an inextricable feature of the present world, since the popular concept, 'global village' has entered into each corner of the globe. Along with the proliferating novel idea, the world has shrunk into a small town. One of the most important characteristics of global flow is the

continuous flow of human. Consequently, people are in persistent move; they leave their birth places and fly away for better life, opportunities, and material prosperity. Nonetheless, such consistent move from one place to another unknowingly implants different psychology into the people: mainly, they develop the sense of de-rootedness and disconnectedness, which Arjun Appadurai counts as “disjuncture” (6). He sheds light on disjuncture in the context of globalization and cultural flow. The most important thing is the mobility of people from their ancestor’s place to the new space where they automatically shed off some of their local cultural colors and adopt new cultures. In a long run, when they remain so far from their roots, the same persons start searching their past, place, and people, which intensifies the sense of isolation and disjuncture. However, the intimidating sense of disconnectedness and search for the root turn to be a strong means to reconnect them with their ancestral places and beloved ones. Mostly, it could be the psychological process that connects them through memory rather than physically. Against this backdrop, the paper critically analyzes the disjuncture as a trope of conjuncture in Sudeep Pakhrin’s poems, “Golden Street” and “Maavala.” I have employed the theoretical concept of Appadurai related to global cultural flow and disjuncture to analyze the poems.

Pakhrin, who has been writing poetry for more than a couple of decades belongs to Dharan, a popular city of eastern Nepal. His poems are enriched with subtlety of human emotions and reminiscences. Primarily, his poems “Golden Street” and “Maavala” center at his childhood memories, when he revisits the street of maavala (maternal uncle’s house) and finds warmth and solace. He outpours his isolated and disjunctive state of mind amid cacophonous modern city crowds through his childhood memory. The paper is based on the selected poems that are compiled in Pakhrin’s anthology of poetry *Dagurihiddne Chaubato* (2015). It critically examines the profoundness of disjuncture portrayed in the poems that becomes the trope of conjuncture as it becomes a means to connect the persons with their space and the people.

Global Flow and Disjuncture

Novel social phenomenon has astounded the world in the recent eras, namely, the persistent movement of people tops the chart. Such unique human flow initially remained within a particular national boundary. Basically, it was from villages to the towns during the process of thriving cities and industrialization. Nevertheless, these days the initial bounded mobility of people has surpassed the borders and turned to be a global flow. Since the concept of global village became quite popular along with the rise of capitalism and globalization, human motion has become an inseparable

features of global phenomenon. Appadurai's opinion aptly matches with ongoing scenario when he claims that globalization is about a world of things in motion (5). No-one can stay static these days as everyone has to muster their mittle for grabbing the opportunities as guided by the capitalistic normativity. Money has become the one and only norm of capitalism where global citizens are in marathon run in the path set by the global capitalist pandits. Subsequently, the global citizens as Appadurai points out are prone to be the part of global flow, internalizing or ignoring its dire consequences.

Fragmentation and disjunctive state of mind have become an integral part of the modern global society. Primarily, it is an outcome of the human ambitions that insist them to move from one place to another. They move to pursue the opportunities, sophisticated life, and physical prosperity, which have become an essential human conditions for their normative progressive path. Such moves on the one hand, as Stephan Greenblatt claims, makes much larger "cultural field" due to the cultural mobility (8): and on the other hand as Appadurai posits, is the "...relations of disjuncture" (5). Greenblatt attempts to justify his claim envisaging the mobility in Roman era; the never ending flow of the Roman emperors exhibiting the huge mass of conquered slaves was the part of the expansion of their cultural field. His claim only suffices partly to justify as the countless numbers of invaded slaves while moving from their places develop the never healing sense of cultural crisis, which in my opinion has underestimated by Greenblatt. I am more convinced by the argument of Appadurai as he highlights the fact that the disjunctive self is an outcome of the consistent global flow. At the same time, we could consider the idea of Walter Benjamin, who highlights the loss of "aura" that withers in the age of mechanical reproduction of art (4). Even though Benjamin focuses on the work of art and its withered aura, we could relate that with the human aura in the capitalistic world. In this sense, the people in the modern capitalistic society are obvious to gather the sense of loss, isolation and disjunctive feeling.

Global mobility of people inculcates strength and flaw at the same time. It lands people in the abundance of possibility for progress on the one hand, whereas, on the other hand, it intimidates them with internal crisis that is caused by the disjunctive relation of the vectors. In this regards Appadurai argues, "Indeed, it is the disjuncture between the various vectors characterizing this world-in-motion that produce fundamental problems of livelihood, equity, suffering..." (5). Primarily, motion or movement of the people integrates the shift from one space to another; one culture to another; and from one psychology to another. The innumerable factors combined with the motion never leaves people free of problems and crisis as Appadurai

internalizes. In fact the crisis or disjuncture is an inherent characteristic of globalization, which he takes as “split character” (6). The split or fragmented state of global citizen get intensified by the continuous threat of structural power of the state as well as market and other capitalistic ingredients. Within such gloomy disjunctive global circumstances there arises the silver lining of hope: that is “the role of the imagination in social life” which Appadurai claims as the strength of globalization and disjuncture, from where the sense of collective life emerges (6). Nevertheless, the undeniable fact is that the globalization and the constant flow of people have loaded them with the sheer sense of loss, isolation and disjuncture.

The capitalistic society is entangled in the networks of commodification of humans. Human beings have come under the sharp razor of capitalistic ethics that only enhances the features of objectification. When we look back to the history of the expansion of capitalistic market, we could get the distinct visual of Atlantic slave trade when the slaves were treated merely as objects. Several researchers have provided their opinion on the commoditization of black slaves. Among them Hortense J. Spillers’ idea seems rather touching as she claims, “...the captive body reduces to a thing becoming being for the captor; ...as a category of “otherness,” the captive body translates into a potential for pornotroping...” (67). It highlights the process when the captive slaves gradually translate to flesh from their previous human self. The Atlantic slave trade and capitalistic market expansion dehumanize human and treated them as just a fleshy cargo. In the similar context, Nicholas T. Rinehart gives rather different idea. He argues that the slave trade not only treated slaves simply as things, objects or commodities, but also treated them as persons who could suffer and the owners maximize their suffering that they cease to suffer and died (35). It gives quite horrible picture of slaves’ suffering and the inhuman attitudes of the slave owners who intentionally snatched the lives of the slaves through their torturing measures. In this sense, the capitalistic market and its extending tendrils have left no space to objectify humans for the profits. However, Appadurai points out even more gloomy reality when he claims that in the present world, the time itself is commodified (79). His claim hints towards the crumbling down of human values along with the altering idea of the time. There was the time when ‘time’ was taken as one and the only truth that walks in the liner path and flows uninterrupted. However, the linearity of time itself has been questioned in the postmodern capitalistic world. As a matter of fact, the more rigorous time regime had been required, as Jago Morrison argues, in the nineteenth century industrialized Britain, which resulted into the standardized ‘mean time’ issued by Greenwich that began the rapid colonisation of the globe (28). The ever

running time itself came under the standard structure of industrial world which harshly commodified it. Commodification of time has popped up with several consequences including the modern mechanical holiday package. Appadurai satirizes industrial holidays in such a manner:

...the industrial society knows that the commodity clock of productive time never ceases to operate. ...industrial leisure: the harried vacation, packed with so many activities, scenes, and choices, whose purpose is to create a hyper-time of leisure that the vacation indeed becomes a form of work, of frenetic leisure—leisure ever conscious of its forthcoming rendezvous with work time. (80)

As mentioned before, when the holiday time even turns to be the frenetic schedule, then such environment could arouse nothing except disjuncture and disintegration within people. Today's world is engulfed by the motion and flow, which happens not as per the natural human instinct, but comes as the enormous compulsive global capitalistic force. Among such meagre circumstances human beings feel more isolated and fractured. The isolation gets more terrific with the sense of loss and ever widening distance between the present space and the root they belong.

The bourgeoning mass culture has systematically obliterated the typical communal cultural values. Moreover, the tricky discourse of globalization has torn asunder all the uniqueness and particularity of local culture and covered that with the grand mass culture. Within the scenario, it is contextual to remember Gary Day's interpretation of F. R. Leavis' criticism and culture. As Day postulates, "...mass culture along with industrialization had destroyed an authentic, unified culture, replacing it with synthetic, divided one" (131). Leavis had consistently made the industrial world aware of the loss of traditional and cultural values that are the vital binding factor for organic community. Nevertheless, the capitalistic spirit always ignored and underestimated wisdom of seniors. Consequently, the authentic and organic cultural values have been vanished in the global village, where consumption and mass culture have been the only glorifying matter. While being surrounded by peculiar milieu and sense of loss, every modern human being is prone to disjuncture. In such dire situation, revisiting the roots and bygone days through memory could give solace to the aching soul. Many thinkers have shed light on the power of memory and its politics. Zehra Azizbeyli takes memory as a dynamic concept that public memory helps to preserve identity of the community (195). While concentrating on her idea, we could connect the power of memory with the issue of identity; memory not only connects people with the community but also strengthen the sense of belonging. Here lies the power of memory that could recover the fractured and disconnected self of

today's people, who are more isolated and drawn away from their beloved people. In this context, the disjunctive feelings of modern people itself could become a trope of conjunction and connectedness when they take refuge to the memory.

“Golden Street”: The Disjunctive Site

Pakhrin's poem “Golden Street” unfolds the myriad reminiscences; the childhood memories; the dreamful young days; colorful dragonfly like streets; and the acute sense of loss that has substituted all the pleasurable past and led towards the present disjunctive state of mind. Poet has minutely observed the psychology of the modern society, where each individual has baggage of alienation and disconnectedness. Day reminds Leavis's idea of the ‘organic community’, which is destroyed in the industrial society (131) and resulted into the unharmonious community that instigated alienated feelings of the people. Moreover, the citizens of global village have carried complicated set of mind as an outcome of seclusion even in the crowd. Therefore, so many people revisits the past memories, as it becomes the safest space to take refuge on. Recollection of the bygone days on the one hand exhibits their extensive sense of loss, whereas, on the other hand portrays their desperate attempts to connect with the place and people they have left behind. The following lines have captured the similar sentiments:

From which way we can get to
the golden streets of childhood?

The road to the temple?

Really, don't care about it

Let me rejoice

At the same crossroad as a kite, running after a kite

Poet has used ‘childhood’ as a symbol of reminiscence as well as special phase of human life from where everything begins. Furthermore, it is the only particular part of our life which is carefree, full of happiness, joy and contentment, far away from malice, judgments, and baggage. Similarly, the image of a ‘golden street’ highlights the colorful and shining episode of each childhood. Poet has presented the most common visual image of a child running after a kite: most probably, he intends to universalize the joyous moment of each child, who treasures such common, but the most precious experiences in their life. Nonetheless, the above lines have not only celebrated the joy of childhood, but equally envisaged the loss of those special period of his life. Poet exposes his uncertainty through the questions that whether any specific road can take him to the colorful phase of his childhood days. The question holds connotative meaning rather than literal that points towards the search of the past days, where the speaker seems to be keenly interested to

tread the same path once again. The complex and fragmented set of speaker's mind get solaced by the memory, as it becomes the strong thread to connect with the past. Similar feelings and emotions related to the childhood continues in the second stanza of the poem.

Which streets delivers
exactly at the door of the child's heart?
In the fragrant of incense of grandmother's story
In the supernatural world of grandfather's blessings
In the worship-room of mother's kitchen
In the paradise of father's pat
I sang almost every day
Hymn like my complains and grievances
I got a handful of my childhood from everyone

The poetic emotions in this stanza turns more significant, as it not only expresses the quest for bygone days, but equally meditates about closer relatives and his attachment with them. The vitality of the memory is that it keeps persons closely connected with their beloveds despite being physically away from them. Poet claims his closeness with each relative, from grandmother, grandfather to his own parents when he traces out the specific memories attached with them. We could notice rhythmic expression of his connection with his parents and grandparents, which visualizes his joyful past; fragrant of incense and grandmother, blessing of grandfather, worshipping room and kitchen of mother and caressing pat of his father, all seem so natural and smooth. More importantly, these image unleashes his spontaneous, harmonious and soothing childhood days. Robert N. Butler seems quite natural and convincing when he claims: "Memory is an ego function. .. It serves the sense of self and its continuity; it entertains us; it shames us; it pains us. Memory can tell us our origins;..." (75). As Butler postulates, memories are the most powerful means to link with our origin and self. Pakhrin's continuous retrospection of the past activities, relatives, and an attempt of capturing the bits and piece scattered around the golden street could be a graceful claim of his root and self. However the final stanza shudders and beats readers' heart, since the poet has brought the stark grimness of capitalistic society.

Never to walk again
Those leftover path
are coming in front of my eyes
like a scene from a 3D movie
And, grinning- the ugly present.

(51-53; Trans. by Pakhrin)

The final stanza has picturized the contrasting milieu between past

and the present where 'never to walk again'- those days were full of life, beauty, and joy; however, the present full of chaos and ugliness. The image of 'ugly present' indicates the global capitalistic world where each relation stands on the base of give and take; vested interest and profit and loss calculation. Appadurai's visualization of today's world matches with the disjunctive present Pakhrin has internalized. As he speculates, "The world we live in now seems rhizomic (Deleuze and Guattari 1987), even schizophrenic, ... alienation, and psychological distance between individual and groups on the one hand, and fantasies (or nightmares) of electronic propinquity on the other" (29). In fact, distancing ourselves with the people and becoming closer to the virtual and technological reality have become the essential factors of contemporary society. Such artificial life has gifted the human world with unsurmountable predicament, schizophrenic condition, and never bridging gap between the human beings. Poet is more concerned about the proliferating internal crisis, which in the end of the day becomes a potential reason for the collapse of a productive human self. The grinning ugly reality of everyday life has dragged the whole human civilization towards the dark dungeon of self-destruction and chaotic psychological state.

"Golden Street" unveils the plethoras of childhood memories along with the unbeatable bitterness of loss, isolation and de-rooted state of the speaker. He attempts his best to overcome the disjunctive present state through the reminiscences of the joyous past, however his path is obstructed by the ugly reality of capitalistic and machinized world, where human relations, emotions and values are already thrown and swept away by the metropolitan sewages.

"Maavala": The Conjunctive space

Ephemerality and transition have become intrinsic factors of the capitalistic society, where fluidity and flows are counted as the major steps for progressive path. Hauled by the waves of unstoppable global flow, each individual, in a certain point of their lives, moves towards the exhilarating new world. There onwards, gradually the person become an active member of global consumer culture. In the end of the day, as Appadurai claims, "The pleasure that has been inculcated into the subjects who act as modern consumers is to be found in the tension between nostalgia and fantasy..." (83). They start swinging between the past, a secure place surrounded by loving family, and fanciful present, a terrifying consumeristic world captivated by selfish relations. Injured by such contrasting situations each person, who had happily left their places and people to grab the opportunities of the world, once again strolls along the path of childhood memories. Pakhrin's "Maavala" is an endeavor to compensating the loss through creating a conjunctive space, who

is detached from his root.

The speaker has travelled back to the childhood memories, when those reminiscences turn to be a soothing factor for his internal crisis caused by the chaotic and disjunctive present circumstances. Unpretentiously, he recollects past days and counts each trivial like thing as a treasures of his life. He becomes so emotional by the memories of the fairy tales of his uncle; cough of his old grandmother; and flooding fragrance of incense all over the house. The speaker seems to have created a special space for every relative in his new psycho-social surrounding as if everybody is just beside him. His veneration for Maavala (maternal uncle's house) becomes implicit in the following lines:

The only way
used to get to the Temple and Maavala
Where...
Uncle used to tell the fairy tales
like the way Pandit recites the mantras
Grandma's old cough
used to ring like a bell
And, the smokes spread like the fragrance of incense
from her kitchen to the whole house

Maavala, where his grandmother's blessing floats; temple, where his belief and values reside: he recalls both as valuable parts of in his life. Bantered by the harshness of capitalistic world, he seeks solace in the memories of those people and places that are unknowingly left far behind. Sometime the disjunctive feelings become a means to reconnected with and revitalize our relations and beliefs. As Josiah Heyman argues, "Disjuncture and breakdown of bounded social and cultural units are contingent outcome of processes that may also reinforce social and spatial entities, boundaries and so forth" (144). As a matter of fact, as Heyman points out, the strong sense of alienation becomes a reinforcing point for people to envisage on the reality, when they start connecting procedure again. 'Pandit's mantra' and 'fragrance of incense' are the part of our culture, from which the speaker seems being far away. His recollection of those things conspicuously exhibit his careful consideration of the beauty of past and his strong desire of accumulating those moments through the memories in his life. His reminiscences not only expose his past, but also visualizes the peaceful picture of our society. In the speakers' childhood abode, converse to today's world, where every belief used to stay harmoniously beside each other.

Church and Maavala

both looked exactly the same before
Gurudwaras and monasteries also came
and used to sit quietly in Maawala

.....

Even the enemies there
seemed more friendlier than the friends
Staying close, who used to sing some melodious melodies of a sweet
relationship

Present world, where religious beliefs have been used as violence provoking factors and separating tools rather than the means of connecting communities. However, the different time has been portrayed in the poem, where each belief used to walk hand to hand shedding their egos. The retrospection of orderly past indirectly unveils his interest to get back to such time, where peace and harmony were the only condition of the society. Poet has used the image of ‘enemy’ and ‘friend’ quite uniquely. Normally, friends and foes are the contrasting areas, in terms of ideas, belief or behavior. Nonetheless, he has erased the demarcation between the opposite selves and brought them together. Sometime, reminiscences become self-correcting medium that could help us to reinterpret our present condition and heal the smeared relationships, so that we realize the values of our beloved relatives and places. It could be an outcome of reanalysis of the past and present, poet unhesitatingly declares:

Really,
Maavala and every beautiful things in the world were the same before
The same are the Maavala and every sacred things in the world now
The same way can reach
To the temple and the Maavala now too.

(69-70; Trans. by Pakhrin)

Finally, poet internalizes his Maaval’s reminiscences so powerfully that he finds no differences between the past and the present. It is an outcome of wholeheartedly reconnecting and regathering the beautiful memories of the past. Moreover, it also postulates the vigor of memory that not only leaves people with disjunctive feelings, but also render them strength to patch up with the past. It aptly matches with Butler’s claims: “Revelations of the past may forge a new intimacy, render a deceit honesty; they may serve peculiar bonds and free tongue; or they may sculpture terrifying hatred out of fluid, fitful and antagonism” (75). Pakhrin’s recollection of the past has no sign of hatred and antagonism, rather, it declares the gracious and honest bonding of the past days. While retrospecting the mellow memory-laden time, he once again

walks down the same path that takes him to his maavala and the temple. It picturizes the conglomeration of the past and the present, where previous alienated feelings and de-rootedness have already been dissolved.

Pakhrin's "Maavala" has treated each childhood memory so sensitively that the speaker's disjunctive and isolated present self have been naturally connected to the past auras, which has revitalized his relations and healed the fragmented state of mind.

Conclusion

Bourgeoning global flow of human has become the latest trend of contemporary capitalistic world. The capitalistic market economy and globalization have attracted lots of people to leave their small town and enter into the cosmopolitan cities. People move around to grab the opportunities and also to register themselves as members of the global village. Nevertheless, such mobility brings some explicit consequences: firstly, such movement creates unbeatable sense of disjuncture and isolation to the people; and secondly, it instigates people to search their root and get back to their places and people. In such situation, memory becomes instrumental to reconnect them with past and revitalize their relationship with the places and beloved ones. Against this backdrop, the paper has critically examined Sudeep Pakhrin's poems "Golden Street" and "Maavala", which have powerfully portrayed the loss, disjunction and alienated emotions of a person. Nonetheless, the poet consistently reminiscences and revisits the past to overcome the sense of disconnectedness, isolation and disjuncture. Moreover, the paper has argued that each disjunctive feeling, in the end turns to be a means to reconnect with the places and people. Even without our notice, memory acts as a conjunctive factors to bring solace and sense of connectedness to the persons.

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