

A Study of Interpersonal Relationships in Bijender Singh's *Confusing Poetry*

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Abstract

Dr Bijender Singh is a teacher, poet, short-story writer, critic and an editor. He has written two poetry books in English *Late Night Poetry* and *Confusing Poetry*. He has written and edited more than fifteen books till date. Poetry gives him pleasure and that's why he keeps writing lyrical poetry. Language is not a constraint for him as he writes his poems in English, Hindi and his dialect, Haryanavi also. One among his notable books is *Confusing Poetry*. It is a collection of forty-five short poems with diverse themes. The researcher in this study has chosen only one theme of relationship from his poetry and explored the importance and intensity of family relationships. Present paper sheds light on the relationships of siblings, husband-wife relationships and the most notable parents-children relationships. The researcher came to the conclusion that the only selfless relationship among are these relationships is parents side in parent-child relationship.

Keywords: Relationship, Family, Parents, Children, Siblings, Husband, Wife

A poet is a different person from the other folks of the society and that's why he puts down even the small things happening around him/her. Such a noted poet is Dr. Bijender Singh from Haryana who has earned his doctorate in English literature from USA. He has been conferred honorary 'Doctor of Humanity' from USA. He has been awarded 'Dr. Ambedkar Sahitya Ratna Award', 'I2OR- Editorial Excellence Award 2017' and 'Dr. B.R. Ambedkar National Award'. He presently lives in Rohtak and is working as English Lecturer. He is the editor-in-chief of a UGC approved *The Expression: An International Multidisciplinary e-Journal* (www.expressionjournal.com). He has written few essays, some short-stories and many Hindi poems. He writes in English, Hindi and Haryanavi. Apart from more than fifteen books to his credit, he has published various research papers in peer-reviewed national and international research journals, conference/ seminar proceedings and edited anthologies.

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This paper explores different shades of relationships. India is a country of diverse cultures, classes, ethnicities, religions and races. Thus, Indians are likely to have diverse mentality also. Indians are bound by interpersonal relationships in a wider network of role and social relations. According to Sriram “The family is the basic and important unit of society because of the role it plays in generation of human capital resources and the power that is vested in it to influence individual, household, and community behavior” (122).

Two types of families are generally seen in India, one is nuclear family and another is joint family. But in general, joint families are in large concentration as compared to nuclear families. Joint family consists of children, their parents, grandparents and cousins. All the people of a family are closely linked with each other. They have close relationships with each other. This is the central concern of this paper as Desai also writes:

The family is the first line of defense especially for children and a major factor in their survival, health, education, development, and protection. It is also a major source of nurturance, emotional bonding and socialization, and a link between continuity and change. It has the major potential to provide stability and support when there are problems. Human development can, thus, be enhanced by enriching family life (Desai, 225).

Methodology:

The study is based on case study of the collection of poems, *Confusing Poetry* by Bijender Singh. The stories of the poems display the real Indian life portrayed by the Poet. The study is qualitative in nature. Qualitative approach was carried out through the study of poems as primary sources and other reference books, research papers, thesis etc. as secondary sources. The methodology also includes:

- I. Collection and thorough reading of primary sources.
- II. Thorough study of critical or secondary works.
- III. Study of reference material available on the topic.
- IV. Interaction with eminent teachers and scholars on the topic.
- V. Documentation, citations and references according to MLA style sheet 7th edition, will be strictly adhered.

Discussion:

Families are changing in many ways across the world. Most countries have seen a decline in the fertility rate over the past three decades. Today almost no country has a total fertility rate above the population replacement rate of two children per women. As a result the average household size has also declined over this period. At the same time, there has been a sharp increase in the proportion of women entering the labour force. The evidence on trends in child well-being is mixed, and important challenges remain. There are still large gender gaps in employment and earnings and one in eight children on average across the world still lives in relative poverty.

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Family formation patterns are also changing. Increasingly both men and women want to first establish themselves in the labour market before founding a family. Hence, the age of mothers at first childbirth has risen and with it the probability of having fewer children than previous generations. Many women remain childless. Birth rates have fallen and life expectancy has increased, so there are fewer children and more grandparents than before.

Husband-Wife Relationship:

Husband-wife relationships are very vital in anybody's life and Dr. Singh writes about the image of a traditional Indian wife who sacrifices her whole life for a stranger who somehow becomes her husband. He writes in his first poem "Glory to Indian Wife":

Glory to Indian wife
Who sacrifices her whole life
For the one she may not know
In life's heat or the snow.
Whose voice is sweet as flute
Never knows how to refute.
No other man in dream keeps
If, is rebuked, only weeps. ("Glory to Indian Wife", 09)

Marriage is not just a mutual contract between two individuals but a social contract and a moral expediency in which husband and wife agree to live together and share their lives, doing their respective duties and keep the social and religious order intact. D. H. Lawrence believes: "The great relationship for humanity will always be the relationship between man and woman" (130). In a family structure, marriage binds man and woman and the relationship acquires great complexity. Husband-wife relationship is a universal issue and it has attracted the attention of writers and readers world-wide. The roles of husband and wife in a marriage are complementary, because it is only with the support and help from each other that they can fulfil the duties and obligations of married life. David Knox says, "Marriage is a social relationship in which two adults of the opposite sex make an emotional and legal commitment to live together" (05).

In Vedic period, same rights and privileges were provided to man and woman. Neither was man supposed to be superior to woman, nor was woman considered superior to man. If a wife puts some restrictions on her husband, these are for the sake of welfare of her husband:

Wife has great love for you, man!
Though in many things she puts ban.
Ask from the lady if you don't believe
If one is flour, another sieve.

In odd situations have you tried
A loss whose husband recently died.
For the husband, if wife is gone
Imagine his living with kids alone.

Out of house or on the bed
Nothing except tears to shed.
One knows better after the loss
Forget the anger and don't be boss.

Life is to live, live in piece
Rugged relations need greece.
Forget the bad, remember the sweet
Success in life, enjoy the treat. ("Husband-wife Love", 20)

In ancient times, by doing their duties, the couple shared a sense of basic security and partnership. While in Vedic period, women were by and large treated as equal to men, the restrictions on woman regulating her personality and sexuality got strengthened in the Post-Vedic period. Laws of Manu insisted that "Women should never be made independent, as a daughter she should be under the surveillance of her father, as a wife of her husband and as a widow of her son (Uma, 75).

Due to the increasing focus on social and religious roles of these marriages, they often tended to fail in fulfilling deeper emotional and sexual needs of the individuals involved and were thus mainly reduced to the marriages of duty and obligation. It turned women subordinate to their spouses and most of the marriages continued to be rather inequitable in the sharing of power. It even sanctioned to the man the right to use physical punishment on woman:

The north court held that the wife must be subject to husband. Everyman must govern his household, and if by reason of an unruly temper ...the wife persistently treats her husband with disrespect, and he submits to it, he not only loses all sense of self-respect, but loses the respect of the other members of his family, without which he cannot expect to govern them... it follows that law gives the husband power to use such a degree of force as is necessary to make the wife behave herself and know her place. (Lora, 787)

Thus, while dealing with husband-wife relationship, one can trace the socio-cultural causes responsible for marital conflicts hinted at by the playwright. The male and female dichotomy of being polar opposites with the former oppressing the later leads to strife, because the woman now rebels against the traditional roles and tries to move out of the claustrophobic existence of male-ordained families. Dattani's plays underline that marriages fail if they lack

mutual trust, love and understanding. Both husband and wife suffer if the mutual relations are strained.

Love is always not expressed
Under social boundaries
May be withered, faded or get dry.
In the heat it may fry.
Not only love suffocates
But also the lover.
If spirit is redeemed from body
Pervaded in vacuum.
Found it when
She lost the world
And he too was almost
Under the death cover.
Love not convertible by loss
Not jubilation seen anywhere
What is seen here
Another loss, a bigger one
The loss of another life.
But what fault of parents
And family who only weep
Repent without fault.
("Love is Always not Expressed", 22)

It is an anachronistic idea to think that only wives suffer in an unhappy marriage. The couple has to work in unison towards marital growth and happiness. In the contemporary context, there is a need to change the institutionalized form of marriage into "pure relationship" which is based on happiness of each partner and where "...marriage is seen as a choice, not an obligation, and only reason to marry would be to make partners happy" (Tasha, 206).

Dattani seems to underline the importance of equal rights for man and woman and asks for a social change where individuals can flourish without being exploited. In marriage as an institution and intimate relationship, the positive goal of making love and intimacy permanent must be involved. In the words of Knox: "The benefits of love, sex, companionship, emotional security can be enjoyed without marriage. But marriage provides the social approval and structure for experiencing these phenomena with the same person over time" (David, 143).

Sibling Relationship:

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Sibling relationship is one of the longest lasting relationships in most people's lives, and one of the most important ones: "Relationships between brother and sister have often been called life's most influential and longest lasting relationships – lasting longer than ties to parents, spouses or children" (Stephen, 17). It plays a significant role in one's development as an individual and brings joy, rage, pain, pleasure and frustration in life. Mary Piper writes, "Siblings are for better or for worse, each other ultimate fellow travellers. Whether their bonds are comfortable or uncomfortable, or a little both, they are co-voyagers in a world without many enduring reference points" (18). A child learns many lessons about sharing and competition from siblings. Through interaction with brothers and sisters, children learn about intimacy, empathy and love: "...sibling relationships serve an important function in the emotional and social development of children. Siblings actively shape one another's lives and prepare each other for later experiences both within and beyond the family. (Pure)

Religious views establish the impression that to be a sibling is an ascribed rather than an earned role. An individual remains a brother or sister with natural love and affection for each other regardless of circumstances. Religion also reinforces the impression that brotherly or sisterly love is a phenomenon that comes forth naturally by itself. In India, one of the sibling relationships is celebrated twice every year as Raksha Bandhan and Bhaiya Dooj. Bijender Singh's poem "Modern Families" tells how joint families disintegrate when a salaried brother stops giving his salary to his home. He does it very silently without creating and dispute:

Now the families don't create disputes
When these disintegrate.
Just stop giving salaries at home
Live in glasses, call their fate.
Why these forget the old parents
Brothers and sisters in cold days.
Time is running for them
To bring their old days.
The drift and flux of money
Leads them to alienation.
Their loss of prestige
Mingling with low members
In family or society.
They have big talks, walks
And palaces in glasses
Only shining of the home
Minds blunt to be social.
Only allurements and no satisfaction

Having all to live a happy and contented life.
("Modern Families", 23)

The modernization and materialism have eradicated the affection, love, care, respect and importance of relationship. People are very much materialistic. They don't even realize the value of relationships. They consider money and property as the precious gift of nature, which actually is a gift of nature only for those who prevent their relationships by it. Dr. Singh's poem "Parental Love" is about how a girl even after her marriage remains attached with her parents. This poem beautifully praises some good characteristics of girls which makes them better than boys:

I don't believe much
In idol worshipping or fetishism.
Inertia or liveliness two poles apart.
But I believe in human worshipping
To serve and regard them.
Though my wife
Loves me more than her parents I know.
But sometimes I feel jealous
To see her love to her parents.
I appreciate her and I burn.
But I know she is right
And I taking wrong turn.
A boy changes after marriage
But a girl?
Cessation on life but happy
Lap of parents her paradise.
Glory to girl, so love for them.
Outrageous by temperament your ornament.
Boys may relinquish but not girls.
Though exception never counted.
("Parental Love", 16)

Parent-child relationships provide the foundation for children's learning. With parents' sensitive, responsive, and predictable care, young children develop the skills they need to succeed in life. Early parent-child relationships have powerful effects on children's emotional well-being, their basic coping and problem-solving abilities, and their future capacity for relationships. Through these interactions, children learn skills they need to engage with others and to succeed in different environments. They learn how to manage their

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emotions and behaviours and establish healthy relationships with adults and peers. They also learn how to adjust to new situations and to resolve conflicts. When parents have warm, trusting, and reliable relationships with peers, family, community members, and service providers, they are more likely to have positive relationships with their children. Bijender Singh's poem "Sorrow of Separation" narrates the concerns of a father for his children. A person learns only by his own experiences. The poet tells that he could better understand the affection of her mother when he himself became a father:

I was one who was called stone
By my mother
At a time, I remember.
Because I did not
Miss my family so much.
I used to tatter emotions
When I was child.
But today when I am
Away from my wife.
I am a father now
And understand how much
I love my blood.
And now got to know
My mother's love for me.
It seems I am estranged.
Away from my life,
Don't know why?
Love and separation is better known
When have personal experiences
I relegate now all emotion
As now time made me sensitive
From a stone.
("Sorrow of Separation", 17)

In the world everybody is selfish. Here people give love and affection to others for personal benefits but the only selfless love is parents love for their child. In the childhood, children can't stay away from their parents particularly from mother for a single day and in adolescence they still realize and feel the importance of their parents. After marriage people almost forget their parents, they gave love and respect to their wives, which is good but one should keep balance in his love, respect, affection and care for both his wife and parents.

When the same people become parents, they repeat the same thing of their parents and this unending cycle rotates continuously.

Conclusion

India is a diverse country of different religions, castes, creed, color and sex. Families of both types Nuclear and Joint are found in abundant. There is a deep root of attachment among the family members. Brother-brother relationship, brother-sister relationship, sister-sister relationship, father-son relationship, mother-daughter relationship etc. have an emotional bond with each other. All the members of the family have care, respect and honor for each other but everybody is much concerned for himself or herself. The only one side of one relationship is selfless that is parents affection for their children and in return children have love and respect for their parents but they too are selfish at times.

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