

C H A P T E R - I I

**THE STRUCTURE AND OUTLINE OF THE
STORY OF THE NOVEL 'ROOTS'**

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The novel 'Roots' is originally written by Alex Haley. It is translated into Marathi as 'The Roots' by Sindhu Abhyankar. In this chapter I propose to study the structure and outline of the story of the novel 'Roots'.

The original novel 'Roots' is written in American English language. In the dissertation the original novel is called as 'Source Text' (ST) and its translated version in Marathi language is called as 'Translated Text' (TT). The language used in the 'Source Text' is 'Source language (SL) and the language used in the 'Translated Text' is 'Target Language' (TL).

1. THE STRUCTURE OF THE 'SOURCE TEXT' AND 'TRANSLATED TEXT' :

Before pointing out directly the linguistic and cultural translation problems between the ST and TT, it is better to know the structure of the 'Source Text' and 'Translated Text'. A glance through the structure of both the ST and TT will help to establish a proper system for presenting problems of translation. The knowledge regarding

the structure of the ST and TT is also necessary for the comparison and analysis of cultural and linguistic aspects given in the ST and TT.

The Source Text 'Roots' consists of one hundred and twenty chapters. There are six hundred and thirty nine pages. In this novel, the novelist, Alex Haley, has given a detailed account of his search for his origins. However, the translator, Sindhu Abhyankar, has not exactly reproduced the story of the original novel in the TT. The translated text consists of one hundred and fifteen chapters - five chapters less than the Source Text. The story of one hundred and eighteen chapters of the ST has been reduced to one hundred and fifteen chapters in the TT. It is the story upto the birth of the novelist. She has not translated the last two chapters of the ST. In fact, those two chapters are very important. In those last two chapters, we learn about the different visits of the novelist to the African Country of Gambia in search of his racial roots. Due to the omission of those two chapters in the TT the reader of the TT loses invaluable information of how the novelist visited to different places in Africa and how he searched for the roots of his race.

The translator has adopted the same title of the Source Text for the Translated Text i.e. the title of the

source text is 'Roots' and the title of the translated text is 'the Roots'. She has not chosen any equivalent to the word 'roots' as 'Origins' or 'मुळे' or 'वंश'. The only difference between those two titles is that of transliteration i.e. the title of the ST - 'Roots' is in Roman script whereas the title of the TT 'द रूट्स' is in Devanagari script.

In the title of the TT, there is an addition of the definite article 'the'. Here, the translator wants to refer to the specific Source Text 'Roots' by Alex Haley. She also wants to refer to those particular roots of Haley's race which are mentioned in the novel 'Roots'.

In the Source text, we come across the names of characters, locations, trees and plants. These names are in existence in African and American cultures. In the TT the translator has picked up the very names of characters, locations, trees and plants as they are given in the ST. She has not used any equivalent word to any of these names from Marathi language. From the point of view of reflecting African and American cultures, she has selected those names in the TT.

In this way, here we notice much difference between the structure of the 'source text' and 'translated text.'

2. THE STORY OF THE NOVEL 'ROOTS' :

'Early in the spring of 1750, in the village of Juffure, four days upriver the coast of the Gambia, West Africa, a manchild was born to Omoro and Binta Kinte. Forcing forth from Binta's strong young body, he was as black as she was, flecked and slippery with Binta's blood. The two wrinkled midwives, old Nyo Boto and the baby's grandmother Yaisa, saw that it was a boy and laughed with joy. According to the fore-fathers, a boy first-born presaged the special blessings of Allah not only upon the parents but also upon the parents' families, and it was a thing of pride that the name of Kinte would thus be both distinguished and perpetuated.'⁽¹⁾

'One day Kunta was far from his village, chopping some wood to make a drum for his brother, when he had been surprised, overwhelmed and stolen into slavery by four men. He was the farthest back person of the African family. Then a ship brought him across the big water to a place called Annapolis, Maryland.'²

'He was brought there by a Massa John Waller who took him to his plantation that was in Spotsylvania Country, Virginia. The African, Kunta, tried to escape and on the fourth effort he has the misfortune to be captured by two

white professional slave catchers, who apparently decided to make an example of him. This African was given the choice either of being castrated or having a foot cut off and the African chose his foot. The life of this African was saved by Massa John's brother, a Dr. William Waller, who was so mad about the entirely unnecessary maiming that he bought the African for his own plantation. Though now the African was crippled, he could do limited work, and the doctor assigned him in the vegetable garden. That was how it happened that this particular African was kept on one plantation for quite a long time - in a time when slaves, especially male slaves, were sold back and forth so much that slave children grew up often without even knowledge of who their parents were.

Africans fresh off slave ships were given some name by their massas. In this particular African's case the name was 'Toby'. But whenever any of other slaves called him that, he would strenuously rebuff them, declaring that his name was 'Kin-tay'.

Hobbing about, doing his garden work, then later becoming his massa's buggy driver, 'Toby' or 'Kin-tay' - met and eventually mated with a woman slave there whose name was 'Bell-the big-house cook'. They had a little girl who

was given the name 'Kizzy'. When she was around four to five years old, her African father began to take her by the hand and lead her around, whenever he got the chance, pointing out different things to her and repeating to her their names, in his own native tongue. He would point at a guitar, for example and say something that sounded like 'Ko'. Or he would point at the river that ran near the plantation - actually the mattaponi River - and say what sounded like 'Kamby Bolongo' alongwith many more things and sounds. As kizzy grew older, and her African father learned English better, he began telling her stories about himself, and his homeland, and how he was taken away from it. He said that he had been out in the forest not far from his village, chopping wood to make a drum, when we had been surprised by four men, overwhelmed, and kidnapped into slavery.

When kizzy was sixteen years old, she was sold away to a new master named Tom Lea, who owned a smaller plantation in North Carolina. And it was on this plantation that kizzy gave birth to a boy, whose father was Tom Lea, who gave the boy the name of George.

When George got around four or five years old, his mother began to tell him African father's sounds and stories, until he came to know them well. Then when George got to be

the age of twelve, he was apprenticed to an old 'Uncle Mingo' who trained the master's fighting gamecocks, and by the mid-teens, the youth had earned such a reputation as a game cock trainer that he had been given by others the nickname he would take to his grave 'Chicken George'.

Chicken George when around eighteen met and mated with a slave girl named Matilda, who in time bore him eight children, with each new child's birth, Chicken George would gather his family within their slave cabin, telling them afresh about their African great-grandfather named 'Kin-tay' who called a guitar 'Ko' a river in Virginia 'Kamby' 'Bolongo', and other sound for other things and he was chopping wood to make a drum when he was captured into slavery.

The eight children grew up, took mates, and had their own children. The fourth son Tom, was a blacksmith, when he was sold alongwith the rest of his family to a 'Massa Murray' who owned a tobacco plantation in Alamance Country, North Carolina. There Tom met and mated with a half-Indian slave girl named Irene who came from the plantation of a 'Massa Holt', who owned a cotton mill. Irene eventually also bore eight children, and with each new birth, Tom

continued the tradition of his father, gathering his family around the hearth and telling them about their African great-great grand-father and all those descending from him.

Of that second set of eight children, the youngest was a little girl named Cynthia, who was two years old when her father, Tom, and grand-father, Chicken George, led a wagon-train of recently freed slaves westward to Henning, Tennessee, where Cynthia met and at the age of twenty two married Will Palmer.³ Cynthia's and Will's prayers were answered in 1895 with the birth of the sound, healthy girl whom they named Bertha George - the 'George' after Will's father. When Bertha finished the local eighth grade in June of 1909, there was no question that she would be leaving Henning to attend the CMC Church supported Lane Institute thirty miles to the east in Jackson, Tennessee, which went from ninth grade through two years of college. Bertha achieved consistently high grades - studying pedagogy, to become a teacher-and she both played the piano and sang in the school choir. Bertha met a young man in the college choir whose name was, Simon Alexander Haley. He was from a town named Savannah; Tennessee. Bertha got married to Simon Alexander Haley in the summer of 1920. It was the first social event attended by both the black and the white. Bertha gave birth to a son in 1921 whose name was Alex Haley - the novelist himself'.⁴

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Haley, Alex : 'Roots' (Picador Edition)
1978, Published by Pan Books,
P. 1.
2. Ibid., : P. 576.
3. Ibid., : PP 617 to 619.
4. Ibid., : PP 612 to 614.

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