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CHAPTER IV

A Comparative Perspective

4.1 Introduction

Literature is a mirror of society. It is an expression of thoughts, feelings and various experiences of people. These thoughts, feelings and experiences expressed differently or similarly in different literatures. Comparative study points out these similarities and differences systematically. A comparative study studies literary theories, concepts, terms, trends, genres, movements etc.

Comparative means a compare two things. In the context literary study, R. K. Dhawan says,

Comparative Literature is a literary discipline and ought to be recognized as the most important academic activity of the present era, in which East and the West are meaning and unifying the world into a single whole. Just as a national literature is the reflection of a national history. So in the world literature a by – product of comparative literature, is reflected the course of civilization.¹

The globally natured comparative study is well-known discipline today. It is a link between different literatures and cultures because it is not only study the texts but also the study of different cultures, societies and ideologies.

A comparative literature is a very old method of study. A comparative literature means a comparative study of two or more literatures, literary items and fragments. It received wider attention because it provides more balanced view, truer perspective than is possible from the isolated analysis

of a single national literature, however, rich in itself. In the light of the concept

of comparative literature present chapter is important for the comparative perspective of male identity in both selected novels, which emerge naturally from the analysis of the selected novels.

4.2 Plot and Setting in *Remembering Babylon* and *An Imaginary Life*

The plot of the *Remembering Babylon* and the *An Imaginary Life* is well-organized and well-developed. Both novels are set in tribal part of the country. *Remembering Babylon* is set in the settlement of Queensland, Australia. *An Imaginary Life* is set in the Tomis, an outpost of the Roman Empire, between the Danube and the Black Sea. Instead of this similarity, the problems of aboriginal peoples and characteristic features of male identity are shown in both the novels. Both novels deal with the problems of aboriginality which is the major issue in contemporary Australia. Men in both novels are affected by the aboriginality.

The central characters in both novels are belonging to the civilized community. Their life has drawn them towards the tribal places. Gemmy in *Remembering Babylon* is a civilized man but has been thrown overboard off the coast of Australia which is a tribal place. In this settlement area, most of the people are uncivilized. There everything is new for Gemmy. He does not understand the language and culture of that people. Gemmy has an intellectual power, and with that he learns all the things. In this situation, Gemmy is shown his power, which is an important characteristic feature of the male identity. Ovid in *An Imaginary Life* is a civilized man but banished in a tribal place, Tomis. There also everything is new for Ovid. He does not understand the language, behavior and culture of that people.

Like Gemmy, he is also learned all things with the intellectual power. Through, these central characters, Malouf shows that how male are always ready to face problems in any difficult situation.

The effective language of the narrators of both the novels shows the situation in the contemporary Australian society. In the contemporary Australian society aboriginal people faces many problem. In *An Imaginary Life* Ryzak knows the power of knowledge. He wants to teach his grandson Lullo from the Ovid. He wants to civilize Lullo for the purpose of get good treatment from the white settlers. In *Remembering Babylon* Mr. Frazer also want to develop the community because of treatment from the white settlers. He is a very much aware character of this novel. George also wants to become a noble person for getting a prestige, fame and respect from the contemporary society. Malouf explores the problem of aboriginality through both of the novels.

The setting of both novels is different, but the men, who are living in the Australian contemporary society, face the same problems because of aboriginality. These fictional works are replacing before us the social ethos of the Australian contemporary society. They try to awaken the people to arrive at an understanding the life of an aboriginal man in relation to the Australian society. Both novels succeed in going to the grassroots of the problems of aboriginality.

In both novels, there is a fight of men for survival. These two novels provide a whole spectrum of the images of men in the Australian contemporary society. Malouf in both novels has provided the sufficient space to the facing and fighting with the difficulties in the life of men. The novelist's observation of the issues and matters related to men are so close and realistic that the novels present the picture of exploration

of male identity. These two novels become the record of real male identity, aboriginality and attitude of men in the Australian society. The plots of these novels are woven round the life of the men in Australian contemporary society.

4.3 Male Characters in *Remembering Babylon* and *An Imaginary Life*

In both novels, Malouf's perception of the social forces, problems and his knowledge of men's psychology are depicted through the development of his central characters. Malouf presents the different masculine traits through his male character. In both novels Malouf gives importance to male characters. There is no any important woman character in both novels.

Gemmy, the central character of *Remembering Babylon* is a civilized boy. He lives for sixteen years with the aboriginal tribe. He has an intellectual power. Though he first seems as a deem boy, he is a smart and cool man. With the intellectual power, he wins the hearts of all people and tries to unite white and black people. Similarly, Ovid, the central character of *An Imaginary Life* is a civilized man who lives with aboriginal people. He is banished and exiled in the village, Tomis. Ovid is an also intellectual power. With this power, he wins the Ryzak's believe. These two central characters have many similarities in their life. Both are central characters in the novel. Though civilized both are living with uncivilized people for many years. Both are hasan intellectual power.

The character Lachlan from *Remembering Babylon* and the character the child from *An Imaginary Life* also share some

common characteristics though they belong to different classes of the society. Lachlan is a native boy. He lives with human beings. The child is a wild boy. He lives with the animals. Both are uneducated. Both have had been real men characteristic features in their behavior. Both have physical power. Both are also central characters in novels. Gemmy's masculine characteristic features glow in his relationship with Lachlan like this, Ovid's masculine characteristic features glow in his relationship with the child. Through their relationship Malouf illustrates the exploration of male identity in both novels.

The character Mr. Frazer from *Remembering Babylon* and the character Ryzak from *An Imaginary Life* are also having some similarities. Both are very much aware characters in their life. Both believe in the new discoveries and the power of knowledge. Mr. Frazer is a minister of the settlement area. He wants to develop the land with the help of Gemmy. Gemmy has a good knowledge about the plants. Ryzak is also a headman of the village. He also wants to develop the community with the help of Ovid. He wants to educate Lullo from the Ovid because he realizes the power of knowledge. In both, the novels, with the help of central characters Mr. Frazer and Ryzak develop their community and achieve new success in their life.

In the both novels, the male characters are dominated over the others especially over the females. In the novel, *Remembering Babylon* Janet and Meg is ignored by the Lachlan. Jock, as a headman, does not give importance to women. In *An Imaginary Life*, Ryzak also does not consider the women. Every decision is taken by only men. Through these male characters Malouf explores the male dominance in Australian society.

The characters in both novels reflect the social ethos of the Australian society. They try to demonstrate the status of men in the patriarchal society. The men that belongs urban or tribal society, middle class or lower class as well as a boy or a man they identify with their masculine traits. In both novels, through the male characters Malouf presents the exploration of male identity as well as the problem of aboriginality in contemporary Australian society.

4.4 Male Identity in *Remembering Babylon* and *An Imaginary Life*

David Malouf's use of male identity can be seen in a variety of characters and their relationships with other characters. In both novels, relationships between characters explore their male identity. In both novels, Malouf explores the male identity but *An Imaginary Life* is differs from *Remembering Babylon*. *An Imaginary Life* is explores the hegemonic male identity which is related to the hegemonic masculinity. Hegemonic male identity is a standard form of masculinity.

In *Remembering Babylon*, male identity presents through the in-between relationships like; Lachlan and Gemmy, Lachlan and Janet, Jock and Gemmy, Mr. Frazer and Gemmy. Lachlan and the relationship he has with Gemmy serve to show the power each holds over the other. Lachlan uses Gemmy to show his physical power, whereas Gemmy show his intellectual power. The relationship of Lachlan and Janet shows male dominance, which is a characteristic feature of patriarchic society. Each relationship presents a different characteristic feature of male identity. In *An Imaginary Life*, also male identity presents through the in-between relationships like; Ovid and the child, Ryzak and Ovid, Lullo and the child. The relationship of Ovid and the child reveals intellectual power

and physical power. Ryzak is brave, strong and kind man who always helps Ovid.

Both novels are explores male identity through the different relationships between characters. Though the male identity is different in both novels, it reveals the same characteristic features of the men.

4.5 Characteristic Features of Male Identity in *Remembering Babylon* and *An Imaginary Life*

4.5.1 Power and Control

Both novels are explores the characteristic feature of power and control through the main male characters. In *Remembering Babylon*, Lachlan, Jock and George shows this characteristic feature through their behavior. Similarly, in *An Imaginary Life*, Ovid, the child and Ryzak are shows power and control through their behavior. In both novels, Malouf describes the physical power as well as the power of intellectual and knowledge. All male characters are in both novels tries pretend their power and control over others which is shown in the contemporary Australian society.

4.5.2 Mankind's Fear of the Unknown

Though the both novels, Malouf describes the another important characteristic feature of male identity, which is mankind's fear of the unknown. Both novels include the aboriginal characters. They are barbarous. They are physically and mentally strong. They are not frightened to any animal or live alone in a forest. They are not frightened to fight with anyone in anytime. But they frightened to the unknown person in the novel. In *Remembering Babylon*, when Gemmy first entered

in the village that time whole village gathers for seeing him as an unknown creature like.

An hour later news of the affair had spread all through the settlement. A crowd had gathered to see this specimen of—of what? What was he? They stood in the heat, which was overpowering at this time of the day, and stared.(P4)²

These lines show that how much they curious to see an unknown person. In *An Imaginary Life*, also in the forest when the natives saw the child all are frozen. When the Ovid and natives bring the child in the village all people gather like;

Children left off splashing about in the pools and ran shouting behind us, wide-eyed, staring. Women gathering their arms full of washing to watch us, only their eyes visible under the black shawls. Rumor of the boy's capture had preceded us. (P64)³

It shows curiosity and fear of the unknown person is instilled into their mind. Whether it is a boy or the man they fear to unknown.

4.5.3 Aggression

Both novels set in the tribal area. The natives or the aboriginals are uneducated and uncivilized. They do not have intellectual power, but they have physical power. As they are living with nature and animals, they are aggressive in nature. Men show their power through the aggressive nature. Though the aggression is different in both novels, but it is the similar characteristic feature of the male identity. In *Remembering Babylon*, Lachlan and George shows aggression like barbarous people. But in *An Imaginary Life*, the child shows his animal like aggression because he lives with the animals. Through the aggressive nature men are

dominated and rule over others. Malouf presents the male dominance of contemporary Australian society through this characteristic feature in both novels.

4.5.4 Protectiveness

Through the both novels, Malouf wants to explore that protectiveness is a prime important characteristic feature of the male identity. In the patriarchic society, every man protects his family in any situation. Male characters in both novels are protective. In *Remembering Babylon*, Jock McIvor is a headman. He always protectshis family. He saved Gemmy and gave shelter to him. In *An Imaginary Life*, Ovid, Ryzak and the child are protective. Beginning of the novel, Ryzak is a protective of an Ovid. Then Ovid becomes a protector of the child and finally the child becomes the protector of the Ovid. The child takes care of the Ovid like;

He brings me birds eggs, holding them gently cupped in his hand, pointing out the speckles and making little cries to tell me which bird it is. And occasionally, out of a clutch of six or seven, he will give me one to suck, pushing a grass stalk through each end and showing me how to draw the goodness out. He gives me seeds to eat, and straws to munch on. He finds roots that are sweet, and tubers, digging them up with his nails and cleaning them off with a thumb to make them ready for me to chew and swallow when I can, demonstrating, with his strong teeth, how they can be stripped and pounded to a pulp and the stringy fibers rejected. He finds a kind of mallow with a drop of honey in the horn, and holds his dead back, pointing his tongue to take the single stick dollop of it, and laughs when I try to do the same. His eyes are everywhere, as we walk, for whatever is edible and will sustain us (P143-144)⁴.

In this novel, role of protector has been changed as per the situation. Here, Malouf illustrates that through this characteristic feature of protectiveness males are preserving their humanity.

4.5.5 Adventure

Real men are identified with their adventurous and the aggressive nature. It is a part of their life. Adventurous nature of a man means who always ready to taking initial, taking physical risk, with sufficient confidence and self control. Malouf in both novels explores this characteristic feature through his male characters like; Lachlan, Ovid and the child. These characters are adventurous and aggressive because this is society excepted from them. Though the novel, *An Imaginary Life* sets in the first century and the novel *Remembering Babylon* set in the nineteenth century the men are similarly adventurous and aggressive.

4.5.6 Obsession with Success

In the world, each and every man wants to succeed in his life. Success provided them a name, fame, power and prestige in society. Each and every man is always obsessed with success. Both novels show this characteristic feature through the male characters. Malouf presents that the characters, Mr. Frazer, George, Ovid and the child are highly obsessed with success. George wants to become a noble person and get a higher class. It gives him prestige in society. Mr. Frazer wants to succeed in discover new thing for developing the land. Ovid and the child want to achieve their world where they both are happy.

4.5.7 Status and achievement

Both novels reveal this characteristic feature of male identity. Men are successful when they use their physical power, intellectual power and ambition in work. This success leads them towards the status and achievement. The male characters of both novels achieve their status through the using physical and intellectual power. In *Remembering Babylon*, George wants to get a higher status for the purpose of status. In *An Imaginary Life*, Ryzak is always tried to preserve his headman status in the village.

4.5.8 Familial patriarchy

In *An Imaginary Life* Malouf discuss the familial patriarchy. The village, Tomis is patriarchic society. In patriarchic society, men are important in all manners. There is no importance to women. This follows generation by generation in the society. Through the familial patriarchy, Malouf presents the male dominance in the contemporary Australian society.

Thus, these are the similar characteristic features of the Malouf's both novels. Though the male identity is different in both novels, it reveals the same characteristic features of the male identity.

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