

CHAPTER – III
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As the theme of alienation in *Kosla* was unparalleled in the history of Marathi fiction, so was its structure. Written by a defiant youth, in a fit of disappointment and anger, as it seems, *Kosla* was to metamorphose the very form of the Marathi novel. Asked about the reasons, which led to the rebellious nature of the 'form' of *Kosla*, Nemade revealed certain personal factors, that were responsible for the making of the novel in one his interviews¹. First, his random reading of different subjects, like Marathi and English literature, linguistics, sociology, etc. in his studentship- though Nemade claims that such an undisciplined way of study saved him from looking at things from a single point of view, it led to unsatisfactory performance in the examinations. When he returned home as an unemployed youth, nobody in his village tried to understand his problem sympathetically; instead, they took him to be a mad person. To top it all, his father angrily dismissed him out of the house. Consequently, the exploding perturbation in his heart found an outlet in a form that had to be defiant in nature. Second, he always prefers to be in the company of intelligent people- who are fond of breaking with the traditional and set patterns of thinking- due to which his thinking capacity gets widened. As he frankly admits such friends of his exercise an enormous influence on his mind. Third, he does not feel rooted anywhere. Fourth, his mother-tongue being the dialect spoken in the Khandesh region, it is inherent in his nature to look at the

'standard' Marathi not in straight-forward way. Besides, the traditional stylistic models were incongruous with the ones that he had in his mind.

Thus, Nemade's breaking with the tradition was the cumulative effect of all these reasons. Naturally, on the publication of *Kosla*, so called learned critics, let alone the common readers, greatly bewildered. This is clear from the mixed reactions expressed by them. For instance, L. G. Jog calls the publication of *Kosla* a 'miracle'² in the world of Marathi fiction and remarks that there is no other novel which is written so unpredictably, loosely and strangely in Marathi. For M.S. Patil, *Kosla* is the first 'anti-novel'³ in Marathi. For yet others it is a fictional 'experiment' like B. S. Mardhekar's novels. Some others go to another extremes calling it 'formless' and not deserving the appellation 'novel' at all! However, Dr. C. J. Jahagirdar- who seems to be weary of using the set phrases- describes *Kosla* as a 'literary sanskar'⁴. By using this expression he intends to underscore the two-fold serviced that *Kosla* has rendered. *Kosla*, he opines, not only rebelled against the prevalent novel but also 'sought to change the direction of both literary taste and fictional tradition. Nevertheless, it must be noted that few critics have attempted an intensive analysis of the unique structure of this novel. Unlike traditional novels, *Kosla* has no eventful story that can be summarized. Nor there is a conscious attempt to create suspense or twist the story in order to hold the readers attention. Nemade has almost completely dispensed with so called sophisticated techniques while writing his *Kosla*. He has loosely divided the first-person narration of his protagonist Pandurang Sangavikar in to six parts.

The first part is about Pandurang's childhood and schooling at his native place, Sangavi. The second, third and the fourth parts deal with his six-year stay at Pune and his college education. In the last two parts he is back to Sangavi as an academic 'failure' somehow killing time and pulling on his miserable existence. From the point of view of a reader of V. S. Khandekar's novels, there is nothing grand in this story nor there is anything romantic which the reader of N. S. Phadake's novels might look for. Looked thus, *Kosla* is a series of nothing but non-events. Nonetheless, a discerning reader is sure to hit upon the new possibilities of meaning encapsulated in such 'non-events' and certain ways of their organization in to a unique structure that *Kosla* has.

In his perceptive article⁵ on the structure of 'Kosla,' Prof. Prakash Deshpande discusses seven important factors that, in his opinion, go in to the making of this novel. They may be translated in to English as notion of place, notion of time, world of dreams, supernatural experience, characterization, prose-style and the notion of literature. His assumption is that the richness of the structure lies not only in the wide range of variety of these factors but also in the subtle dimensions that each of these has. He tries to validate this assumption by way of a detailed enough examination of the structural complex of the novel. Here a brief summary of his analysis will create good background for our discussion.

According to Prof. Deshpande, though Sangavi and Pune are the two main centers of human habitation in *Kosla*, the sub-centers- like Pandurang's house (both old and new), his friends' houses, math, etc. in Sangavi and

college, hostel, mess, the residence of Prof. Gune, in Pune-with self-contradictory implications provide a subtle dimension to the notion of place. Wandering of the protagonist from place to place, from human habitation to non-human territory and placelessness are the other aspects of the notion of place in the novel. The notion of time too is multi-faceted. The very division of the plot in to six parts is based on this notion. Within the broader temporal circle, there are repeating circles of annual routine: beginning of the academic year, and its end in vacation after final examination. This reveals the boring and repetitious nature of life itself. Pandurang tries to get out of it by reversing his daily schedule: by staying awake at night and sleeping during the day. He also tries to capture the fleeting moments of life by maintaining account of his expenditure and a diary. The notion of time reaches timelessness when he describes the posthumous journey of his sister Mani. The dream world, the third factor, is not projected as an alternative to the real but rather to provide a supernatural dimension to it. Dreams pervade throughout the novel. Superhuman experience, the fourth element, relates to the world of ghosts. In addition to both the quotations at the beginning of *Kosla*, there are many references to the ghosts. Moreover, there is admittedly a ghostly dimension to Pandurang's character. As for the prose-style, *Kosla* is a unique example for it presents a wide range of variety of prose. Finally, the notion of literature is so important that it becomes instrumental in approaching the reality in a different way.

Against this backdrop, we shall discuss the structure of *Kosla* and try to bare similar strands, if any, in the texture of *The Catcher in the Rye*. The locale of *Kosla* encompasses a vast enough geographical region of Maharashtra from Sangavi, Ajanta, Pune, Singhgarh to Mumbai. Among these Sangavi, Pandurang's native place and Pune, where he spends six years of his life, obviously cover the major part of the setting. The novel opens and ends in Sangavi. At the beginning, Pandurang finds nothing desirable-except the sky above- in this village but when he returns to it towards the end of the novel, Sangavi exposes him to unbearable plight of people like Tapiram, a man ruined by leprosy and a moribund cow by means of which he realizes the 'close kinship' between pain and death. Mahanubhava math of this village gives him some scope for metaphysical discussion with Bambas Buwa. Pune provides him with like-minded people and better amenities. But he gets fed up with the city-life too as finds that people are selfish and phony both in the village and the city. That is why, perhaps he, along with Suresh, goes to Vetel hills to find some relief. He searches for a better place of living there. Ajanta, with its inimitable carvings on Buddha's life, provides a grand surrounding for Pandurang's poetical-philosophical leap in to primarily sorrowful nature of life. Thus, Nemade's effective choice of setting gives him adequate scope for making a profound and comprehensive statement on life.

The locale of *The Catcher in the Rye*, however, is 'shadowy' as Frank Kermode rightly sees. "The locale of New York sections is obviously that of a comfortable middle-class urban Jewish society where, however, all the leading

figures have become beautifully Anglicized. Holden and Phoebe Caulfield: what perfect American social register names which are presented to us in both a social and psychological void! Just as the hero's interest in the ancient Egyptians extends only to the fact that they created mummies, so Salinger's own view of his hero's environment omits any to its real nature and dynamics.⁶ Thus, Holden's outer world is limited to certain places like schools, hostels, hotels, pubs, garden, museum and Holden's home in New York. Holden is dismissed from three different schools. But it must be noted that for him any school is full of phonies. In fact, schools are the major centers that supposedly mould the minds of amateur individuals and initiate them in to society as its responsible members. Contrary to this mission, Holden finds that schools condition the minds of children in a way, which leads to loss of inherent innocence. That is precisely the reason why he wishes that he would teach his children, if at all he had any, himself instead of sending them to any school. Pandurang also shares this view, which is clear from his soliloquy-like comment that he makes as he watches his younger sister entering her school. In his case the college also does nothing different. Hostel, though filled with peers, is not a happy place either as both the heroes cannot but remain aloof. Holden comes across all varieties of perverts, phonies and cross in the streets of New York and pubs. However, the two places that Holden likes are a museum and a garden. The museum he likes because it exposes him to 'nice' and 'peaceful' atmosphere. Interestingly, both Pandurang and Holden hate to live in their home. Nonetheless, they have to return to it as there is no other place they

can take recourse to. Pandurang tries to find a better alternative in the mysterious house in the woods whereas Holden wishes to find it somewhere in the west or non-existent rye-field. Thus, Nemade and Salinger both choose some common sub-centres of human habitation to project the all-pervasive hypocrisy and phoniness, which have alienating effect on uncommon individuals like their protagonists. However, Nemade chooses a wider space to incorporate the corresponding wider projection of theme of *Kosla*.

As for the notion of time, *Kosla* deals with some twenty-five years of Pandurang's life. Though Pandurang says 'in this world twenty-years isn't a great space' he finds it extremely unbearable to pull on his life. *Kosla* is a chronological recollection of Pandurang Sangavikar. However, in the first part, he enumerates some incidents accompanied by a few horrifying dreams from his life up to matriculation. Relatively, the following chapters give a more detailed account of his six-year stay at Pune. The concluding chapter is more about others life than his own. On the other hand, 'The Catcher' focuses on only three days in Holden's life. The background of the dead night and ensuing Christmas has a symbolic significance. It is noteworthy that within an extremely limited life-span of his hero, Salinger has succeeded in projecting his alienated existence for sixteen years. Though 'The Catcher' lacks the wider context that *Kosla* has, it has provided greater intensity to Holden's sense of alienation. If dream world is an important aspect of the structure of *Kosla*, the world of fancy is that of 'The Catcher'. This can be easily illustrated by Holden's changing fanciful aspirations. However, for Nemade dream is a

mode of viewing reality from a different approach whereas Salinger uses fancy as an alternative to undesirable reality, as a mode of escape. As for superhuman experience, there is hardly any room for it in a largely automated metropolitan city like New York. There is some notion of literature in 'The Catcher', which is similar to that of *Kosla* but it is not important enough to be a dimension of its structure. Holden does not like his brother's gesture of becoming literary prostitute in Hollywood. We shall think of prose-style in the next chapter.

The two important techniques used in the structure of *Kosla* are the imaginary historical account and Pandurang's diary. The first of these has no parallel in the entire Marathi fiction, though Prof. Gangadhar Patil⁶ points out one in a French play by Sartre. This technique has proved to be useful in two ways. First, by using this technique, Nemade has succeeded in projecting the immediate reality from a temporal distance. As his vision is not blinkered by the present, he can achieve a far more impartial evaluation of 'great' achievements of so called modern civilization. The imaginary and sarcastic account of the two self-styled historians of the nine-thousandth century of the Christian era provides a ruthlessly critical analysis of the contemporary life from 'others look'. Second, it has proved instrumental in encompassing almost every domain of human action from education to marriage and man-made conceptual world including the concept of history and time. Thus, it provides a panoramic context to its theme- the painful feeling of alienation experienced by an individual-which would not have been possible only by means of a first-person narrative technique.

Use of diary form is another technique employed in *Kosla*. A critic like L. G. Jog expresses his displeasure regarding Pandurang's diary saying that it is highly artificial in that maintaining a diary as such is not probable in a restless life of the hero.⁷ On the other hand, Prof. Prakash Deshpande opines that Pandurang's diary is in keeping with the autobiographical and commemorative nature of the novel. The diary projects the repetitious nature of life⁸

One more often-neglected aspect of the structure of *Kosla* is the story-within-story, as it were. In the opening chapter, Pandurang shares with us a tale that 'pleased' him. This story is about a rich man who –after he is bereaved of all his family members due to cholera – flings himself in to a well by way of surrender, shouts for help as he feels like living the moment he thinks of his land and property. Ironically, he died of fever in a couple of days! Pandurang narrates us another story in the fifth chapter, which he learned from Dhulakya. This endless story is about a childless couple, which desperately seeks the help of a shrewd Brahmin. Apparently, such tales seem to be irrelevant in the novel. But, apart from serving as a pastime for Pandurang they, in a way, reinforce its thematic thrust.

As mentioned earlier, *Kosla* has no parallel in the history of Marathi fiction from the point of view of both the theme and structure. *The Catcher in the Rye*, however, has one. Mark Twain's 'Huckleberry Fin'. Many critics have repeatedly compared these two novels in terms of their narrative pattern, style and characterization. Nevertheless, we shall concern ourselves with what critics have to say about the structure of 'The Catcher' alone.

In their seminal essay, Arthur Heiserman and James Miller Jr. place 'The Catcher' in an ancient and honourable tradition, the tradition of the Quest, which is the most profound in the western fiction. In their view, Holden is a typical American hero with a significant difference. "He is engaged in two sorts of quests at once. He needs to go home and he needs to leave it. The phoniness of society forces him to leave it but he is seeking nothing less than stability and love."⁹

On the other hand, Carl Strauch argues that psychological and philosophical insight can be gained only through recognition of the interlocking metaphorical structure of 'The Catcher'. He further maintains: "Salinger has employed neurotic deterioration, symbolic death, spiritual awakening and psychological self-cure as the inspiration and burden of an elaborate pattern-verbal, thematic and episodic"¹⁰.

Brian Way discerns a tight three-movement structure beneath the episodic brilliance of the novel. He says that, "the first movement shows Holden Caulfield at school; the second, his escape to New York and search there for sexual adventure; the third, his collapse, at the conscious level, backward in to childhood, at the unconscious, forward in to madness."¹¹ Brian Way considers the second phase –which describes Holden's four successive attempts at sexual satisfaction – as the best part of the book. Further, he remarks that 'The Catcher' is not only the classic novel of adolescence but also the only great novel, which handles this phase successfully. However, he seems to be dissatisfied with the third phase, which deals with Holden's collapse.

According to Brian Way, this collapse takes place on two levels: a conscious groping back towards childhood represented by his clandestine visit to Phoebe and at unconscious level he is drifting toward mental breakdown. Mr. Way considers this third phase less successful compared to the earlier two because instead of continuing the portrayal challenging contradictions of adolescence he presents the moral analysis of the significance of Holden's neurosis and thus 'slips in to the current American habit of equating mental disorder with innocence'. This interpretation of Mr. Way leads him to the conclusion that 'his (Salinger's) understanding of adolescence sex is the strength of the earlier passages; his ignorance of the child's relation to sex ruins the close'¹².

Though there can be little disagreement as far as Mr. Way's analysis of the first two phases is concerned, his conclusion about the third phase cannot be accepted. Carl Strauch treats the end in a more sensible manner. He defends Salinger for closing the novel with ethical questions rather than psychological ones. He maintains that the short concluding chapter is not 'a lame and defective appendage to a charming book but a triumph of technical virtuosity'¹³. In his opinion, Holden poses a koan or riddle at the end when he admits: "Don't ever tell anybody anything. If you do you start missing everybody."¹⁴ So he misses all, even Stradlater, Ackley and that goddam Maurice. This riddle, Strauch thinks, "is a shock to the conceptualising, precept-laden intelligence, a puzzle or paradox that will not yield to logical analysis but that, on the contrary, sends the mind back over the experience

recorded, even in to the depths of the unconscious where both the malady and the cure lay”¹⁵.

Thus, we come across many different- and confusing- interpretations of the structure of the novel. Prof. Amur makes an attempt at steering clear through this confusion by stating that the movement of ‘The Catcher’ is a ‘simple’¹⁶ one. For him, it is a movement from Holden’s psychological crisis to his final recovery via a series of frustrations that Holden suffers in his attempts to recover the crisis. Also, the nature of the movement is highly organic and it gives unity to the structure of the novel.

Though, as we have seen, *Kosla* and ‘The Catcher’ differ in most of the aspects of their structure, they are akin in respect of one: characterization. To begin with the character of the heroes, they resemble each other in many aspects such as their common difficult-to-manage state of life: adolescence. (True, Pandurang is elder than Holden by nine years the former being twenty-five and the latter just sixteen), their hatred for sex emanating from inherent love for innocence, which they fear may be spoiled by the hypocritical, phoney society, their innate sense of morality, their dislike for money and material success, their academic ‘failure’ etc. Both of them have been painted as non-conformists. However, they lack enough strength and courage to emerge as successful rebels. They leave no manifestation phoniness uncriticized. But that cannot change the state of affairs much. So, Holden psychologically escapes in to the utopian world of children playing in the rye-field though physically tied to the couch of a ‘psychoanalyst guy’ while Pandurang succumbs to the ‘set

code'. Holden, who constantly protests against all kinds of phoniness, is admittedly a terrific liar himself. But he does not deserve his own most distasteful label 'phoney' as some apply it to him. Edward P. J. Corbett rightly defends him thus: "These readers have accurately described what Holden *does*, but they miss the point about what he *is*. Holden is the classic portrait of 'the crazy, mixed-up kid' but with this significant difference, there is about him a solid substratum of goodness, genuineness and sensitivity."¹⁷ So, Holden's harmless lies are a means of self-protection. Pandurang, though not in the habit of telling lies, takes recourse to them at least a couple of times. In an attempt to overcome the sense of his inferiority complex about his family background, he declares that Balshastri Jambhekar, the 19th century pioneer of journalism, belongs to his family. On another occasion he tells that he, being the only son his 'old' parents, cannot participate in NCC. Obviously, one cannot summarily dub such harmless liars as phonies. Pandurang's father, with his sturdy physique, typifies the dominant patriarchal structure of society and his mother represents an over-burdened daughter-in-law whose life is circumscribed by household duties. Holden's parents, who hardly appear throughout the novel, are not ideal ones. His father is a lawyer who cares only for money and not for justice. His mother, not tied to daily chores like that of Pandurang, finds no time for her children. Disaffiliated to their parents, both the heroes are however inseparably attached to their younger sisters. Pandurang's attachment to his sister Mani is strengthened further after her untimely death. He is not so closely related to his other sisters. Holden is related to Phoebe in a different way. On

one hand, he seeks motherly affection in her and tries to be a guard of her inherent innocence on the other. He is also related to his departed brother Allie. Besides, he is concerned about the virginity of Jane Gallagher, which is likely to be spoiled by Stradlater. Jane is presented as more a symbol of innocence rather than a real girl that can be dated. Among his peers, Stradlater is a 'sexy bastard' and Old Luce is a sex expert. Eknath and Pai can be called their counterparts in *Kosla*. Madhumilind Inchalkaranjekar also is also a bird of same feather. Suresh, however, is akin to Pandurang in some ways. He, too, avoids contact with girls and rather prefers directionless wanderings on Vetal hills along with Pandurang. One difference to be noted, however, is that Suresh, though equally poignant in his critique society, is not alienated as Pandurang is. There are many minor characters in both the novels, which, though shadowy, provide necessary contexts for the character of the protagonists.

In the end, let us address in passing a dubious aspect of both the novels: the picaresque element. Robert G Jacobs argues that 'The Catcher' presents "the formless succession of events more typical of the picaresque novel in which the picaro or rogue comments in his travels upon the voices of all levels of society."¹⁸ Well, 'The Catcher' may have the formlessness of the picaresque novel but Holden is not a 'picaro' in the strict sense of the term. For that matter Pandurang is not one either. The point is that only on the basis of their formlessness of structure, travels and social criticism in which the heroes engage themselves, it would not be justifiable to conclude that *Kosla* and 'The Catcher' are the picaresque novels.

From the foregoing discussion about the structure of both the novels, it should be clear that, barring characterization, they have few aspects that can be easily paralleled. *Kosla*, loosely divided in to six episodic parts, uses historical pattern, diary, story-within-story and many others techniques to project its theme on a wider canvas. *The Catcher in the Rye*, divided in to twenty-six chapters, uses a different scheme altogether. As Prof. Amur says, the structure may be 'simple' but it is so only on its surface. It may also fit in the 'tradition of the quest' as Mr. Arthur Heiserman and James Miller Jr. argue. But we can neither ignore the metaphorical aspect of its structure pointed out by Carl Strauch nor the 'tight three-movement' pattern discerned by Brian Way.

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