

Chapter - II

ARABY : A JOURNEY INTO DARKNESS

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I

'Araby' is one of the stories in Dubliners. It deals with a boy. He is in love with a girl. She is Mangan's sister. He does not express his love in words or in action. His love is mute. He is attracted towards her. He observes her passively and feel happy inwardly. He notices :

"... Her dress swung as she moved her body, and the soft rope of her hair tossed from side to side".¹

He is eager to speak to her. But he is very shy. Except a few casual words, he has not spoken to her. But he remembers her all the time. And her :

"... name sprang to my lips at moments in strange prayers and praises which I myself did not understand".²

One day she asks him about bazar. She wants certain things from the bazar. This makes him quite happy. Though he has very limited money with him he wants to squeeze this opportunity. This may give him a chance to speak to her.

He is :

"... like a knight on a romantic quest sets out for the bazaar to bring her some love-token".³

It seems that the image of a girl disturbs him often. He can not concentrate his mind on studies. He becomes restless. Once again her physical appearance attracts his mind :

"The light from the lamp caught the white curve of her neck, lit up her hair that rested there, falling, lit up the hand upon the railing. It fell over one side of her dress and caught the white border of a petticoat, just visible as she stood at ease."⁴

He goes to the bazar and finds that the whole bazar is over. All shops are closed. It makes him sad. Darkness surrounds him. His desire remains unfulfilled. He murmurs in dejected mood. He saw himself as a creature driven and derided by vanity. And the story ends here.

II

Joyce is the master of symbolism. His symbols are both varied and abundant in his stories. The boy's desire to make his beloved happy, is nothing but a search for an ideal. It seems that he is escaping from the unsatiated condition of mind to the land of happiness and fulfilment. But the boy fails in this attempt. He is frustrated and he gazed up :

"into the darkness I saw myself as a creature driven and derided by vanity; and my eyes burned with anguish and anger".⁵

Joyce has used the first person narrative technique. To some extent 'Araby' is a story of adventures. The word Araby, suggests the East, romantic adventure, and escape from routine.

Joyce has used Epiphany as a technique in his stories. The Epiphany means :

"... a sudden spiritual manifestation, whether from some object, scene, event or memorable phase of the mind -- the manifestation being

out of proportion to the significance or strictly logical relevance of whatever produces it".⁶

Joyce gives a new dimension to his symbols. The story begins with the reference to the 'blind street' and ends with "creature driven and derided by vanity".⁷

Also death lingers there at the backside of the house. In the near past a priest died there. The apple tree in the garden, probably signifies the Fall of Man. The story takes place in the winter season. The chilled atmosphere signifies death. The trees are full with yellow leaves. All such images, convey the meaning of decay, destruction, death and darkness. In order to give another dimension to his narrative, Joyce uses colours and especially brown and yellow colours to signify the decay, destruction, paralysis. For example the house where the boy lives has a brown colour. The girl he meets has a brown but exciting figure.

There are two important characters in the story : the nameless boy and Mangan's sister. The story proceeds further only with the boy. His silent love becomes more articulate when the girl requests him to bring something from the bazar.

Paradoxically enough the utterances of the girl anticipate the end of the story. The silent, darkened bazaar brings the boy to the senses. The story begins in a childhood and ends in adolescence. Joyce has not used any description to suggest the end but the symbolic use of darkness that pervades the bazaar, the closed shops and emptiness reveal the meaning of it all. It shows how the boy failed in achieving the freedom, the escape at the end. The darkness symbolizes how the boy's quest for freedom, for escape is not fulfilled.

The boy's desire to escape into the new world is the theme of the story. In order to satisfy the quest he goes to the bazaar, but he finds the place complete vacant, empty. His soul is progressively corrupted in this condition. The darkness in the bazaar reveals to him his corrupted state of mind.

Joyce projected here the paralysis of morality. The boy becomes the object of morality and at the end he is revealed fully corrupted and paralysed.

Through the simple story Joyce projects his deep concern with the Dublin life. His use of the plot is very simple but the symbols he uses help the story to proceed

further. So Ezra Pound writes :

"Mr. Joyce's 'Araby', for instance, is much better than a 'story', it is a vivid writing."⁸

The boy's attraction for the girl is very common. His mute love for her sometimes makes him restless. He becomes helpless when he finds the closed shops in the bazaar.

"Once again the structure is basically tripartite : an evocation of the childish experience of a dingy environment, the romantic attachment to the girl, and finally the visit to the Araby bazaar..."⁹

Araby becomes the story of illusion, disillusionment, and it ultimately comes to reality. Another dimension may be given to the story. The nameless boy is not happy in the present situation. He tries to escape from this to the land of promises and happiness. Araby suggests this journey of the boy. It naturally, then, becomes a spiritual journey.

Though the story belongs to his earlier period and especially the childhood phase of his career, it signifies

more. The arrangement of events in the story produces a
far short story. It becomes the story of man in general.
Joyce's technique makes the story proper and mere illustra-
tive than any other devices used by him.

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