

The Amalgamation of Love and Huzun in The Museum of Innocence

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Abstract:- 'The Museum of Innocence' is one of the best novels by Orhan Pamuk. Pamuk, the Nobel Prize winner in 2006, wrote the novel in 2008, is considered the masterpiece of his writings. His other novels are also well acclaimed in literary world such as, The White Castle, The Black Book, My Name Is Red, Snow, Istanbul: Memories and the City were read and appreciated by readers. (1) The Museum of Innocence is a novel of true love, huzun, and melancholy at the same time. The protagonist delves on both sides where his indecisive state of mind could not lead him to accept or reject the love for his beloved at the outset of the novel. The novel genuinely gives us a robust love affair of Kemal who was madly in love with Fusun, a young girl of distant relation. Pamuk narrates what we can call it as a love affair earlier then it turns out to be a real love for life. But then the love of life, Fusun, is nowhere near to Kemal who was madly in search of her throughout the novel. The struggle to seek the lover and possess her is ardently shown and reflected through the novel.

The research paper will try to analyze the moments where Pamuk juxtaposed the complexities of human nature, love and huzun, feelings of loss, melancholy of the protagonists that lead to express their innermost feelings for his beloved. The paper will also demonstrate contemporary social and cultural aspects of Turkish society and its beliefs. Pamuk tries to justify the feelings of love, huzun and melancholy in the novel. The analysis of the text will lead to the personal and collective emotional experiences; it will aim to demonstrate the intricacies of love and longing while also reflecting a sense of nostalgia and melancholy rooted in Turkish culture and society.

Keywords : Love, Huzun, Melancholy, Loss of love, Narration

INTRODUCTION

Love is the purest form of emotion in the human world. It shows our deep feelings for other human beings. Though, it's a bit complex to understand one's emotions and feelings for others. The feeling of love is unique that the individual feels or relates

to other. The pure form of love is between male and female. The mutual feelings they share bring them close enough to start the courtship and fall in love with each other. According to Merriam-Webster.com dictionary love means strong affection for another person arising out of kinship or personal ties. (2) Here, love may be between opposite sexes or mother's love for her children or her family. Merriam-Webster dictionary also defines Love as an attraction based on sexual desire: affection and tenderness felt by lovers. The emotions and sentiments based on the strings they feel in between themselves. It's a universal theme where writers write about the love between lovers, their courtship, fancy, caress and their predicament.

Huzun is a Turkish word which denotes a medley of melancholy, sadness and tristess. Huzun, in modern Turkey refers to the pain and sorrow over a loss, death of relatives. It has come to denote over a sense of failure in life, lack of initiation and to retreat onto oneself, symptoms quite similar to melancholia. (pp.81) (3) According to Pamuk, it was a defining character of cultural work from Istanbul after the fall of the Ottoman empire. Orhan Pamuk has spoken about huzun in many of his interviews, explaining the meaning expected to him.(4)

"hüzün, which denotes a melancholy that is communal rather than private. Offering no clarity, veiling reality instead, hüzün brings us comfort, softening the view like the condensation on a window when a tea kettle has been spouting steam on a winter's day. Steamed-up windows make me feel hüzün, and I still love getting up and walking over to those windows to trace words on them with my finger. As I shape words and figures on the steamy window, the hüzün inside me dissipates and I can relax; after I have done all my writing and drawing, I can erase it all with the back of my hand and look outside. But the view itself can bring its own hüzün. It is time to come to a better

understanding of this feeling that the city of Istanbul carries as its fate.”

Orhan Pamuk, in his novel, ‘The Museum of Innocence’, blends love, huzun and melancholy where he explores the true human emotions and its complexities minutely with elaborated chapters to explain the human nature in its true colours. The story of novel revolves around protagonist, Kemal who comes from an affluent family, in a wealthy, westernized district of Nisantasi. Orhan Pamuk juxtaposed love, huzun and melancholy in present novel in such a way that readers are carried away with the story of protagonist, Kemal Bey and his beloved Fusun, a distant relative. Kemal, 33 year old, a wealthy family scion whereas Fusun, a distant relative of 18 years old from poor background. Kemal was about to get engaged to Sibel who belonged to bourgeois family, is a highly educated and a sensible girl. Both were in love with each other. Meanwhile, Kemal searching a gift for Sibel in a boutique came across Fusun in a shop. He was immediately got attracted towards her. They started meeting secretly at the Merhamet Apartment where Kemal found true love of his life. Fusun, too, at outset hesitated to be in love with Kemal but later on, she surrendered herself for love. Kemal in the very beginning chapter of the novel talks about the intimacy, love that he felt, made love at Merhamet Apartment, his mother’s home to keep discarded household things. The title of first Chapter of the novel expresses the innermost feelings of Kemal where he says,

It was the happiest moment of my life, though I didn’t know it. Chapter one, (pp- 3) (5)

Kemal immersed in love with Fusun, he forgot that he was about to get engaged to Sibel, his perfect match according to everyone. Being a Turkish girl, Sibel loved Kemal, cared for him but didn’t give in for intimacy or lust. She thought it’s improper and bad in the eyes of society whereas, Fusun, being a girl, actually surrender herself to a man whom she was not known earlier. Fusun didn’t mind having a relationship with a man before marriage. She considered herself modern and courageous to have sex before marriage. Here, Kemal Bey and Fusun had intimate love making occasions as Pamuk described each and every details of their love making and surroundings with minute details. Pamuk expressed the insecurities and complexities that Fusun dealt with while continuing the relation with Kemal. Pamuk boldly demonstrated the disloyalty and selfishness of Kemal who would

marry Sibel but still enjoys emotional and sexual bonding with Fusun. The duel, though fought in Fusun’s mind, disappoints and breaks her into pieces at times even though she knew that she could not marry Kemal still continues to meeting him in private and enjoys moments spent with Kemal without complains. Lost in each other, both the lovers enjoyed the secret meetings and intimacy devoid of realizing the end of their relationship.

In present novel, we also witnessed love, huzun and melancholy in relationship between Sibel and Kemal. Sibel’s love for Kemal is real as she thought it would be a good match for lifetime. Both accompanied each other. They were from affluent families, their families too were happy for them. Sibel, being a modern girl, highly educated, took her education in France. She was sincerely and honestly loved Kemal and even started planning for their future plans like where to get married, her wedding dress, list of relatives to invite for the engagement so on and so forth. Like a mature lover, she loved Kemal who, too, reciprocated his love for her. He was more than happy to have a girl like Sibel in his life. Once Sibel come in the office of Kemal and he wanted to get intimate with her but Sibel was of traditional views as she thought, in those days in Turkey, it’s not normal for girls to have sexual relations before marriage. She wanted to preserve and protect her virginity and the societal views intact. She refused to break the Turkish culture norms. Here, Orhan Pamuk showed how emotions can be subdued for the social and cultural morals. As she came to know about the affair between Fusun and Kemal, she without making mess tried to convince Kemal that he should forget what happened in the past. Kemal became indifferent to her. She tried to help Kemal come out of the melancholic state and tried to know his psychology to help him out. They travel and spent time together since she loved him and wanted to get along him but he did not break the inertia of his mind. She asked him, just like a good friend, if anything she could do even though rumours of their broken engagement spread in the society. She did all she could do to save the engagement and was even ready to forgive him for his infidelity to her. When things went out of hands, she went to Europe for her higher studies and married Kemal’s friend and settled in her life happily.

Kemal was possessive about his love. He always thought Fusun should be in his arms till eternity. He

didn't like Fusun to talk or be with others. He was always fascinated and attracted to her beauty and body. He always craved for her. Even in his engagement ceremony with Sibel, he was enjoying with Sibel and other guests. He was happy that finally he was getting engaged still at that time he was expecting Fusun to come to the program along with her parents. Pamuk tried to show the infidelity of Kemal enjoying both lives with his wife, Sibel and Fusun, as if a mistress. The trauma Fusun was going through was unbearable for her. She left the program without telling Kemal anything. Kemal, still, hoping to continue their rendezvous, as earlier, at the time of his engagement to Sibel. Broken as he could not find Fusun in the programme, he thought as if he lost her forever. Sibel tried to know the reasons of Kemal's unhappiness; he simply lied as if nothing happened with him.

He searched Fusun like a lunatic in every side alleys and remote areas of the city of Istanbul. He became frustrated and mad. Kemal thought as if he lost Fusun permanently. He even had hallucinations of Fusun. He was desperate to know even a small clue about her. At times, he could not decide whether to continue living life like a dead man without any purpose left in his life, as he had lost the desire to live his life. The affliction of melancholic state left him worthless. Here, Orhan Pamuk used transcended memories of Kemal cherished in back of his mind a sort of escape from the huzun, melancholic mood and agony that could aggravate his living. The writer oscillates the past, present and future events that reflected in the mind of protagonist to help him alleviate the suffering he was going through in everyday life. Meanwhile Kemal's father died. He was living in a state of melancholy that he alienated himself from family, friends and society. His sole aim in life was to search Fusun, his life and find solace for the rest of his life after the break up of his engagement with Sibel. Sometimes he was living in hotels to scourge her in every corner and side alleys of Istanbul. He was unaware of the death of his father. Somehow, his brother Osman, found that he stayed at Fatih Hotel, informed him about sad demise of his father and took him home. He was more inclined to his father in the family. Only his father could understand his feeling but he, too, gone. This made him more lonely and secluded. Even though he was grieving the death of his father, he was thinking about Fusun. He thought that aunt Nesibe and Fusun may come for funeral which made his heart beat fast. He hoped to

see Fusun at least once and he would never ever let her go afterwards. Fusun didn't come for funeral. He went to Merhamet apartment, soothing himself with Fusun's belonging. (pp- 229). (6)

“As I lay in the Merhamet apartment, soothing myself with Fusun things (the loss of my father having now merged with the loss of my love in an amalgam of being alone and unloved), I began to understand why Fusun and her family had not come to the funeral”

The sufferings of Kemal narrated so intense in the novel that the readers feel sympathy for him. The readers expect Kemal should get some sort of immunity to bear and sustain the pain as he lonely suffers without any outlet to his emotions. He had hallucinations at times and used to talk to Fusun about his feelings at Merhamet Apartment. Orhan Pamuk mirrors the subconscious mind where much of the thoughts and fights happen. He was suffering from the loss of his father, now, he enjoins it with the loss of his beloved, he afflicted himself with the trauma to bear the sense of loss in his life.

Kemal, having lost his beloved, sustained the alienation from the society. He also tried to escape from his family and society to Merhamet apartment which is in a way Museum of old objects of his mother. This place comforts him with the memories he made with Fusun. Every object in that apartment has the sense and presence of his beloved. Here only that he felt/ cherished the happy moments he enjoyed with Fusun.

“I would usually spend my two hours in the apartment daydreaming in bed, having selected some object charmed with the illusion of radiating the memories of our happiness—for example, this nutcracker, or this watch with the ballerina, with Füsün's scent on its strap, with which I would stroke my face, my forehead, my neck, to try to transfer the charm and soothe the ache—until two hours had passed, and the time had come when we would have been awakening from the velvet sleep our lovemaking induced, and, depleted, I would try to return to my everyday life.” (pp- 157) (7)

A ray of hope came in the life of Kemal when somehow he got Fusun's address. A bewildering thought came in his mind that now he would never let her go from his life at any cost. Finally destiny brought them together. Even though she was married now and happily living in her parent's

house, Kemal used to go and meet her at her parent's house for the next eight years. He, at last, found some consolation in her presence though he could not possess her now. Even just a glance of Fusun made him happy for the rest of his life. Now his approach toward Fusun and life has changed. He just wants to be with her if not possessing her. Meanwhile, Kemal found a queer solace collecting each object that Fusun has touched or used once. He started collecting all the objects that reminded him of her. The objects that Fusun touched or possessed are now more value and worthy than her presence as Kemal shifted his passion to the emblem of the objects.

Kemal, finally, became happy than ever in his life when Fusun divorced her husband and accepted his marriage proposal. Once again, the lovers submerge into the love and intimacy they used to enjoy. Kemal's mother also agreed to their marriage this time. Kemal felt overjoyed to get engaged to Fusun en route to Europe. All the love and happiness that was lost in his life he is now enjoying it. He was planning to spend entire life with his beloved and enjoy their trip to Europe. While their stay at a hotel, Fusun wanted to go for a ride. While driving a car Fusun lost control on car and it collided on the divider with great impact. Kemal's beloved Fusun died in a car accident right in front of his eyes. It left Kemal frustrated and melancholic. He lost himself in the memory of Fusun. After the death of Fusun, Kemal completely broke in his life. The illusions of Fusun haunted him, left him in pain.

Pamuk apparently shown some uncanny nature of Kemal who used to take pleasure from the objects he was more attached to. It made objects precious for him than his beloved sometimes. To give meaning to his life and sustain the torture and agony of Fusun's death, he started collecting every object that reminded him of Fusun. Be it her hair pin, lipstick, hair clip, earrings. He was so mad at collecting things that he collected 4,213 cigarette butts that Fusun had smoked. He was completely lost in life after the shattering incident in his life. He thought to enliven the memories of his beloved though she may not be around but her presence actually felt by the objects she used or touched. He bought the house where Fusun used to live with her parents. He shifted her mother to another house. He made the Museum of Individuality where small things related to their love story exhibit and showcase the love of eternity. Even after the death of his beloved, Kemal

loved the objects his beloved used or touched. The emblem of true love of Kemal and Fusun is even seen today in the museum at Istanbul, Turkey.

CONCLUSION

The Museum of Innocence by Orhan Pamuk is a story of love, huzun and melancholy dexterously interwoven with universal characteristics. Orhan Pamuk tried his best to demonstrate and express the true nature of humans through the narratives. The association of longing and obsession makes the protagonist fall prey to what leads to devastating state. The beginning of the novel is enriched with the sensible, caress and romantic emotions whereas the end of the novel is pervasive melancholy in the life of protagonist and the readers altogether. The writer shrewdly used his narrative technique to put forth his own thoughts and opinions with the thoughts of characters. The loneliness and dejection in the form of solitude is highlighted poignantly. The indecisive and melancholic nature of the protagonist devastated his life. The success of the writer lies in reaching at the heart of the content and reveal subconscious and unconscious mind of the protagonist.

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