

# K.V.RAGHUPATHI'S THE DEVIANT: A CRITICAL STUDY

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**Abstract:** K.V.Raghupathi aged 68 is a professor of English, retired from the Central University of Tamil Nadu and now, living in Chiguruwada, writing poetry and prose. He has published so far 37 works, which included the collections of poetry, poems, and of essays on Yoga and Philosophy. He has also written three novels of which two -The Invalid and The Disappointed are published. The first one The Deviant remained unpublished for a long time, and now, published- a student of a research scholar who confines himself in his hostel room and finally escapes without meeting his professor, parents and sister. It is an absurd novel, small but well written in BSE..

**Keywords:** Professor, Chiguruwada, prose and poetry, Yoga, novels, research scholar and absurd novel, BSE.

## I. INTRODUCTION

K.V.Raghupathi is one of the prominent poet- writers of the contemporary times. As a writer he is in the tradition of Gokhale, Radhakrishnan, Tagore, Sri Aurobindo Living at present in Chiguruwada, near Tirupati, he has achieved a significant position in the history of modern Indian Writing in English by publishing nearly 37 literary works- collections of poetry, prose, collections of short stories, and novels. His books on Yoga his philosophy are widely read and appreciated. His poetry, being published in India and abroad, in Great Britain and America, is of high religious, cultural and philosophical value. Of his three novels, written long ago but one not published instantly. Out of them *The Invalid* and *The Disappointed* are published. The present novel, *The Deviant* is trilogy's third and final book ....written forty years ago."<sup>1</sup>

*The Deviant* has a meaning that one who is "different from what most people consider to be normal and acceptable"<sup>2</sup>. He does not tread the regular path; he goes on a different road unlike the common lot. In this novel, Pranab, the research scholar in the Department of Psychology, on the campus of Tirupati university, is the central figure. It begins with the autobiographical narration by Pranab himself describing his lonely stay within his locked room. He has made a self-confinement for 22 days, having room locked by a stranger. His absence in the department creates a havoc in the department and everyone, including his professor, is shocked to know his absence. Nobody does not know where he has gone. As a scholar he remained absent to the department; his work remains pending in the department and he is marked as absent. Prof Ravikiran Chakravarti, his guide and supervisor, becomes upset and begins to think seriously of his absence and makes a search for him on the campus, and inquires of his movements. Accompanied by his another student Vikram, the professor finally came to know that he is in his room as told by one of his students who heard the noise in the room. The student reports that he might be in the room. By this time, the professor informed of his absence to the Registrar, Vice-chancellor and the police also. The police begin to search and they go to the room and find it locked from outside.

Immediately the professor goes to his room and finds it locked from outside and approaches the window by which he stands and hears some noise inside. He tells about his presence and requests him to open by shouting his name several times. At last, Pranab opens the window and faces his professor who finds him to be physically weak, his face pale and small beard, etc. He makes a lengthy inquiry of how he is his health and why he is confined himself in the room and how. The only reply he gives is that he is fed with the world outside.

"I sincerely apologize, sir. I am unable to leave. You won't get the key from me. Furthermore I don't want you to open the door and drag me outside. Please pardon me."

"Dr. Pranab what exactly is this? I don't comprehend. I'm confused. Why don't you give the key to me? Why don't you come out then and say whatever you want to say?"

"I'm sorry," Pranab said, "forgive me for not achieving your dream." (*The Deviant*, 28)

The professor tries to convince him and scolds him for his abnormal act and implores him to open and come out but Pranab does not agree. In spite of a long discussion on the psychology and philosophy, he does not heed to his advice. Helplessly he returns to

the department. As the professor guides, Vikram, his close friend, goes and meets him at the window. Intimately he conveys him what his doing is unusual and insane and begs him to open the lock, come out and join them but Pranab is not ready. Moreover, he says that he has got it locked by outside by a stranger. He does not say where the key is. Digging in his mind, Vikram argues with him for a long time, the reason for his self-confinement:

"Life is significant, lively and fantastic to you. An epicurean idea would be that. In every way, it is a hedonistic philosophy. Everything appears green and boiling to you."

"Life is meaningless to you, isn't it? But you are a blatant cynic and pessimist." Vikram boldly and energetically made his statement. (*The Deviant*, 56)

In spite of several requests, he does not agree with his argument. Vikram also returns to the department without much hope of convincing Pranab. The professor finally informs his parents who live in Hyderabad.

After a day or two, Pranab's parents- Chand and Revati and his sister, Surekha come by train, keeping their luggage in the cloak room and visit the department. For some time, they discuss about the self-confinement of their son. The professor replies that he has gone 'mad' and locked himself in his hostel room. At first, he allows his parents to go, see and talk to him. His mother and father go to the locked room, meet him at the window. One by One, his father and next his mother, has persuading talk with him, full of love and affection and asks him to come out:

"Beloved son, why? why are you unwilling to travel with us?" She yelled in anguish.

"Please stop asking me questions. I'm sick of hearing these inquiries. I am not longer able to respond to these queries." Chand remained silent while Pranab pleaded with his mother to stop torturing him. He stepped back. He let his wife talk to her son for the rest of the conversation. He hardly intervened and hardly took part. (*The Deviant*, 108)

Affectionately his father requests him repeatedly to obey his words as they are ready to take him to their house at Hyderabad. Revati, his mother, being quite upset by his self-confinement, promises to give him the house, their money and gold etc., But Pranab is not enticed by all her offerings and remains stubborn.

Hopelessly they return to the department and inform the Professor what happened. Leaving Surekha, their daughter, behind to try to persuade her brother in her own way, they go back to Hyderabad. Subsequently Surekha goes to his locked room and has a long discussion at the window with her soft words first and then, gently scolds him for his self-confinement. Of course, his sister's speech, Pranab's emotions are softened undoubtedly but he does not change his decision of self-confinement. She tells about her marriage. He refuses to speak about his own marriage, though she says that it is possible to marry and be happy outside. He becomes happy to hear about her engagement and the fixing of the date of marriage. At her best, she tries to convince him but fails. She also returns to her home at Hyderabad and reveals to the parents about her failure to convince him. They realize that none of them could end his self-confinement:

"However, I have gained a lot of knowledge from our parents."

"All of that is untrue, sweat heart," Pranab responded to her."

"It is not untrue. But here's the reality." She made a forceful argument.

"Okay, whatever it is, I accept your observation and inference. That's all I can do, my sister, for my helplessness." (*The Deviant*, 174-175)

At the end of the novel, sixty students and their teachers gather near his locked room around 8.40 p.m. Again, the professor gets his parents and sister back to the spot. All of them still think that he is inside his locked room. When the professor gets the *godrej* lock broken, door opened, and he goes into the room, he finds no presence of him. Vikram, being suspicious of his hiding, follows him inside and asks him to search even in the toilet and another room. Only he finds three envelopes kept of the table, consisting of three letters - one to his professor, the second, to his parents and third, to his sister. In each of letter, he apologizes for his behaviour and thanks them for their love and sympathy and makes it clear that he is leaving them. Nobody could guess how he escaped from the room when it was locked from outside? The novel has a 'mysterious' end.

No doubt, *The Deviant* is a novel because it has nearly two lacs of words. There is a story in the novel. The strange story is of a young scholar who has self-confined due to fear of the cruelty and corruption in the external world. Pranab, a well etched out central character, is described by the words- "a foolish", "crazy", "insane", etc. With Pranab, there are three long dialogues-

one with his Professor Ravikiran Chakravarti, the second with his friend Vikram, and third with parents-Chand and Revati, and his sister, Surekha. There are implications of psychology and philosophy in the dialogues.

The implications of absurdist philosophy are in the text: The main character, Pranab, experiences "gloomy and emptiness"(p.78); "Life is dull, dreary and boring."(p.130); "human life is meaningless"(p.130); "The world, the life and everything else in meaningless"(p.131); "Life is meaningless and without purpose" (p.189). By all these internal evidences one may recognize and classify it as an 'absurd' novel like that of Albert Camus's *The Outsider*.

Pranab has not interested in the outside world but he has not lost his hope for living; otherwise, he would have committed by suicide but he succeeds in running away from the Department and his parents. The main character is full of fear, anxiety and frustration. The setting of the room is well described with its atmosphere. The only virtue of the novel is its technical excellent- the whole narrative is of one day in the manner of James Joyce who wrote *Ulysses*.

According to the novelist that it is novel of "stream of consciousness" technique and there are no characters" but he has described them physically. The narrative techniques of first-person and third-person are used alternatively. The emotional content is of the most appealing by which the characters are described more by the inner feelings and emotions than by the description of physical features. The last three letters printed in *italics* are also emotionally written by the missing Pranab.

The time in the novel is compressed to one day from 4.30 a.m. to 8.40 p.m. The plot-structure is chronologically developed. The main theme of isolation and alienation is of the most important theme of the contemporary times. In that sense, it is a modern Indian English novel, written in BSE ( British Standard English) but not in Indian English. For normal readers, it is boring but for an academic reader, it is of much literary value. "The first novel is bound to be a bad novel", said by William Golding in 1984 Karnatak University Special Lecture but Raghupathi's first novel stands as an exception. In one sense, it is 'unrealistic'- how Pranab could escape from the locked room. Did he evaporate himself in the air? May we call it a 'novel of a fantasy'. On the blurb, it is mentioned that there are characters not named ("no named" characters<sup>3</sup>) but it is not true, the characters are named, in fact. No doubt, the average reader must appreciate the "evocative prose style"<sup>4</sup> (blurb). In addition, it is called "a literary gem"<sup>5</sup> (blurb) of its own kind which is rather 'a word of praise' than 'a word of sensitive criticism'.

As the novelist says that "he wrote this novel when he was a young man of twenty-five". (on phone) On the part of the novelist, it is a rare literary feat. It is the most surprising that one can write such an experimental novel at that immature age. No doubt, K.V. Raghupathi's novel is "most compelling and experimental novel"(blurb). The language of the narrative straight-forward, simple, and terse. The descriptions of the place and people are vivid. It is quasi-poetic novel with more of his philosophy of life than the depiction of life.

## REFERENCES

- [1] The Writer's Note
- [2] Google source.
- [3] The blurb on the back page