

EXPLORING THE ORDINARINESS OF CHARACTERIZATION IN ANEES SALIM'S SELECT NOVELS: A STUDY

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Abstract:

The paper looks into the fascinating world of Anees Salim's select works, concentrating on the peculiar approach to characterization that distinguishes his literary style. Salim, an accomplished Indian novelist, has gained recognition for his ability to weave captivating stories around relatively ordinary persons. This research analyzes Salim's works to see how he depicts the lives of ordinary people, highlighting their ordinariness in a way that resonates emotionally with readers. Salim questions traditional concepts of heroism and grandeur by examining issues like love, grief, identity, and perseverance in the context of everyday life. Instead, he praises his characters' intrinsic dignity and complexity, encouraging readers to find beauty and purpose in everyday experiences. This abstract delves into Anees Salim's novels' complex investigation of characterization, providing insights into the great depth and variety of the human experience as represented in his literary works.

Key words: human experience, everyday life, Ordinariness, identity, characterization, etc.

Anees Salim is a renowned Indian novelist. He is well-known for his distinct narrative style and ability to portray ordinary persons in exceptional situations. His works dig into the lives of ordinary people, examine their challenges, ambitions, and hopes. His characterisation style is unique. He focuses on the normal parts of his characters' life, emphasizing their ordinariness that resonates with readers.

One of Salim's most impressive characterisation skills is his ability to create individuals genuine and approachable. By focusing on the everyday details of their life, he allows readers to see themselves mirrored in his characters, generating empathy and connection.

Salim's works also depict individuals struggling with universal issues such as love, grief, identity, and the search for meaning. Despite the simplicity of their lives, Salim's characters go through deep shifts as they traverse the intricacies of human existence.

Furthermore, the author's portrayal of ordinary people undermines traditional concepts of valour and grandeur. Instead of focusing on the enormous of individuals, he honours the

inherent dignity and resilience of ordinary people, emphasizing the beauty and relevance of their seemingly regular lives.

Anees Salim's first novel *The Vicks Mango Tree* (2012) is about Teacher Bhatt, a retired schoolteacher and aspiring writer who lives in an apartment in Bava House behind the Vicks mango tree, who is one of the main characters. Bhatt has got rejection letters from publishers. Throughout the narrative, he waits for recognition to come and acknowledge the greatness of his *Autobiography of an English Teacher*, a work he has been sending out for years without success and now keeps hidden in a trunk.

Salim's *Tales from a Vending Machine* (2013) is about an ordinary girl who runs a vending machine at the domestic airport. She sees aircraft every day and hopes to board on soon. Hasina Mansoor is a girl with a bright, innovative mind who manages the vending machine for her distant uncle, Haji Osman, whose main motivation is profit. Hasina admires the air hostesses' gorgeous, rich-looking gowns and fake grins.

Hasina's family situation does not appear to be going well. She has a twin for whom she offers money for her education. She has a sibling with a learning disability, as well as a cousin named Eza, whom she admires. However, Eza's mother and her own father are embroiled in a property issue. In such a confusing existence, with the rising emotions of youth and her own goals, Hasina approaches her employment with both resigned defiance and burning ambition.

The narrator, Hasina, is a character who is easily recognizable and unpredictable. She navigates her career and tries to break free from her mundane life, ensuring that her intriguing life is remembered by all, regardless of their love or dislike for her.

Hasina's incorrect pronunciations and the way she talks about 'juice' (Jews) and how Bill Gates discovered the microorganisms make her out to be a beautiful simpleton. However, the conclusion surprises the reader and causes more perplexity.

Vanity Bagh (2013) tells the narrative of the Little Pakistan, a mohalla that may be found anywhere on the Indian map. Mehendi, a Hindu-majority neighborhood, serves as a counterbalance to Vanity Bagh.

Imran Jabbari is the son of the local Imam and, like everyone else in the mohalla, is named after Pakistan's successful, wealthy, and renowned individuals. As a result, Imran Khan the cricketer, not the politician, bears his name. Wasim, Javed, Benazir, Zia, Zulfikar, Navas Sharif, and Yahya are among the colourful cast of characters. We observe the mohalla via Imran's isolated reflections from jail.

People in the Mohallas enjoy a lively life with bomb explosions, dons, and riots interspersed throughout the day. They also go to school, get married, and have children. They may join gangs like the 'five and a half men', as Imran and his friends did, aspire to be Dons, get in significant difficulty performing ostensibly minor gang-related activities, and receive sixteen-year imprisonment, like Imran Jabbari.

Imran's world is a microcosm of small-town India, filled with religious skirmishes, joys, sorrows, politics, and the underworld. Despite these aspects, Imran feels an agreeable life. He misses his mohalla so much when meeting someone from his place, trying to absorb the smell of his mohalla.

Imran Jabbari's soliloquies in *Vanity Bagh* captivate readers with their resignation and optimism, even about life in jail. The author uses innovative craft, with other characters interspersed within the text, to create a captivating and engaging reading.

Salim's fourth novel *The Blind Lady's Descendants* (2014) is about the ordinary character Amar's autobiography. When Amar had reached the age of 26, his uncle committed suicide. Amar remained a half-Muslim since he escaped when only half of his foreskin was severed. As he grows older, he completely loses religious faith and considers himself an atheist.

When Amar Hamsa recounts his twenty-six years at the Bungalow, we see the constant deterioration of his physical and mental state, as well as the breakdown of relationships within and outside the house. He shares the stories of his dysfunctional parents, including a grieving mother, a blind grandmother, and an uncle who inscribed his name on a book. His siblings include a loving younger sister who drowns, a greedy elder sister whose marriage is sold off, and a pious elder brother who prays daily. Hamsa's atheist self appears to be living the life of his deceased uncle, contrasting with the family's struggles.

The family has already witnessed numerous horrible events. After all, bad luck is a hidden offspring of the Hamsa-Asma couple. One of the numerous tragedies is the suicide of the narrator's uncle, Javi, on the day of his birth. Amar, the narrator, turns out to be Javi's natural descendent, sharing many features with him, including a hint of madness.

The novel addresses common human difficulties such as identity crisis, meaninglessness, damaged relationships, religious extremism, and so on. The blind lady in the title is Asma's mother, who is physically blind. However, the majority of the novel's characters are figuratively blind, incapable of seeing behind the surface of life. The author is successful in describing the story with simplicity and elegance. The black humour serves as a great barrier for all the foolishness that surrounds the characters' lives.

While recounting his characters' lives, Anees Salim also weaves the thread of the real world: the demolition of the Babri Masjid, Rajiv Gandhi's death, and the varying reactions of the Muslims of the Bungalow.

Anees Salim has an effortless way of hooking the reader with his narrative. The author's storytelling and reader-friendly style, along with humour, sorrow, and current events, make *The Blind Lady's Descendants* a fascinating, unforgettable book.

Anees Salim's fifth novel *The Small Town Sea* (2017), is reminiscent of E.M. Forster's *A Passage to India*, in which the ordinary becomes remarkable through the writer's creativity.

To emphasize the ordinariness, we have an unnamed 13-year-old protagonist from a nameless little town (probably Varkala, a seaside town in south Kerala) and a nameless father (known as Vappa). The teenager is forced to leave from a large metropolis, where the excitement of a metro line is just starting, to his father's hometown. As a terminal cancer patient, his father wishes to die at home by the sea.

The story follows a terminally ill Vappa, a street-smart Bilal, and the narrator. The vivid imagery prepares the reader for the series of horrors that unfold. The sea, for example, is a character itself, it is described as a "blast of white, a streak of cobalt" and a "liquid desert". (Dubey)

The Bell Boy (2022) is Salim's sixth novel. In it, People come to Paradise Lodge to terminate their lives, just as they would travel to a sacred city. Death hovers over Paradise Lodge, including its newest and youngest employee, Latif. After his father drowns in a river, Latif is almost immediately assigned the job of man of the house. Latif, a thin 17-year-old who darkens his whiskers with a brow pencil, is still a child and is incapable of shouldering the obligations of his mother and two younger sisters. When Latif finds work as a bellboy at Paradise Lodge, a building described as "that had not seen a lick of paint in years and wore a sombre brown, akin to the sepia of holy cities," (*BB* 1) he has no idea that death will haunt him in ways that life has yet to.

Latif is naturally surprised to discover a lodger hanging in one of the rooms on his first day. He rapidly discovers that this is the way of life at the lodge, with the management pocketing any valuables on the body, the authorities silently transporting the deceased, and the staff preparing the room for incoming visitors.

Latif, a young Muslim, encounters suspicion from his manager due to his Muslim identity. Despite this, he finds solace in Stella, a confidante, and a shelter under the Gulmohar tree. Life at Paradise Lodge is filled with life and death, as he navigates the challenges of identity and self

In every aspect, Salim's characters are ordinary. Latif, his widowed mother and sisters, Stella, the nameless manager, and even the forgettable actor may all be from any of India's ordinary towns. They do not have much of a narrative to tell - set down in their own suffering and eager to light a faint fire of revolt, life does not provide many opportunities.

By writing in graphic detail about his teenage protagonist's sexual flaws, Salim emphasizes that, despite Latif's undoubtedly bleak existence, his needs and crucial worries are no different from those of any other 17-year-old who is fortunate enough to attend school and be cared for by his parents.

The ordinariness of characterisation in Anees Salim's works serves as a striking reminder of the incredible stories that occur inside the lives of everyday people. Salim's detailed portrayal of characters allows readers to reflect on the great depth and variety of the human experience, discovering beauty and purpose in seemingly normal moments of life.

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