

THE LEGENDS OF KHASAK: A STRUCTURALIST APPROACH

Aasha N. P

Assistant Professor, Department of English, Chinmaya College of Arts, Tripunithura, Kerala, India

ABSTRACT

An exploration of The Legends of Khasak, (translated by O. V. Vijayan, who also wrote the Malayalam original version Khasakinte Ithihasam) through a structuralist perspective is attempted in this paper. Structuralism is the approach that infers that elements of human culture must be understood by way of their affiliation to a broader, all-encompassing system or structure. The paper works to discover the structures that underlie the narrative of the novel, about sin, penance, salvation and restoration.

Set in Khasak, the narrative progresses through the experiences of Ravi, the protagonist. Building upon the philosopher, Simon Blackburn's, outlook on structuralism that phenomena of human life are not intelligible, except through their interrelations. This study reveals Ravi's relationships with the characters. On the first layer, the inner conflicts of his mind are exposed. On a deeper layer, they reflect how each of these characters are involved in the past, present and in the future of Khasak and how they are all indispensable components of the soul of Khasak. The circle of life and about the infinite clash of myth and reality are the different layers that the structure of the novel reveals and that in turn are things that humans do, think, perceive and feel.

Ferdinand de Saussure's distinction between 'langue' and 'parole' is studied with reference to the alterations made in the language and tone structure throughout the novel. Vijayan has refined the language and penetrated into the essence of words to find the inherent truth in it. Saussure's argument that the "sign" was composed of both a signified, an abstract concept or idea and a "signifier", which is the perceived sound/visual image is explained in association to the myths, dreams and desires, fate, coincidences, ideologies, sex, architecture and struggles of everyday life in Khasak.

The original novel Khasakinte Ithihasam literally revolutionized Malayalam fiction and in the golden jubilee year of its publication, a structuralist reading of the translated version is attempted, so as to bring out the layers of complexity hidden behind the simplest words and events make this book a classic.

KEYWORDS: *Culture, Language, Myth, Reality, Structuralist*

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