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29. Sunjeev Sahota's the Year of the Runaways: An Evaluation

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Abstract

The present paper focuses on the overall evaluation of Sunjeev Sahota's novel *The Year of the Runaways* (2016). This novel represents a painful experience of the immigrants in Britain. As far as the themes are concerned, the writer focuses on displacement, identity crises, disillusionment and alienation in the novel. The immigrants named Tochi, Randeep, Narindar and Avtar arrive in Britain in search of better and satisfactory life. But being illegal migrants, they are mentally exploited and are forced to live under fear and mental stress of having been raided and expelled by the British police.

Keywords: Displacement, identity crisis, disillusionment, alienation and immigration.

As we progress, the taste of readers has been changed in the course of time. Most of the readers want to read something different and recent to satisfy their intellectual thirst. They want new themes, ideas, style and to be mirrored themselves in different forms of literature. If they are excited to get these things, they will come across above things in Sunjeev Sahota's novel titled *The Year of the Runaways* (2016). As far as his maiden novel *Ours are the Streets* (2011) is concerned, it doesn't attract too much attention of the readers across the world. With the publication of his second novel *The Year of the Runaways*, the writer came into light. Picador India has published the novel in 2016.

The novel circles around four Indian characters named Tochi, Randeep, Narindar and Avtar who aren't born with a silver spoon in their mouth. Belonging to middle and lower classes and being financially weak, they can't manage bread and butter for their family. In search of bright future, they are forced to migrate from India to England; even there they can't get solace and relief. Problems and difficulties run after them in Sheffield. Being unlawful dwellers in England, they have to shift their places under the tension of arrest and imprisonment by police. They try to tolerate the pressure of rules and regulation of visa in England. Ghost of past events

hovers around them. Each has their own dark past which they don't want to recall. All these characters are trapped between past and present. Tochi, being chamar by caste, was forced to face exploitation and was a victim of Indian social system. Narinder marries Randeep whom she doesn't know and love. Selfishness is a central point of their union. Randeep also wants to forget his past but his shadowy past follows him. Avtar has also an unpleasant past, struggling to get bread and butter for his family.

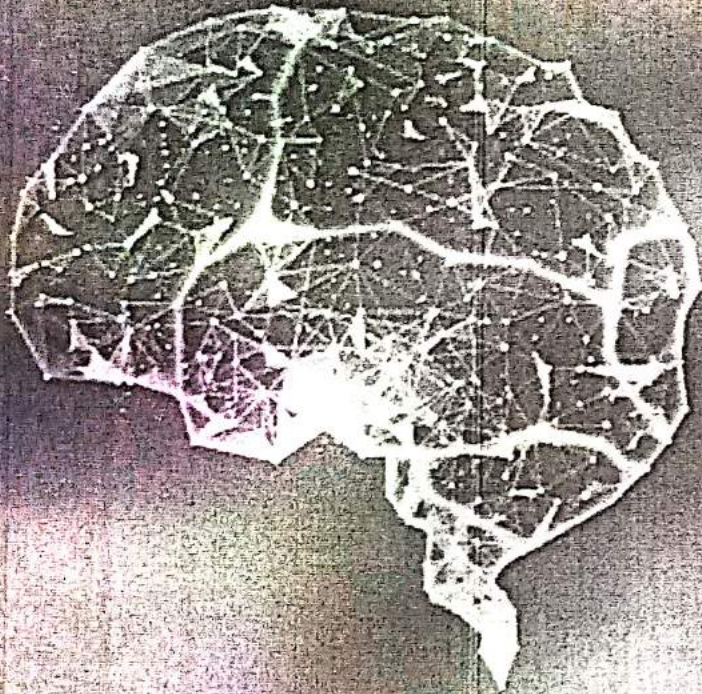
As far as structure is concerned, the novel is divided into four major parts which are named after seasons like winter, spring, summer and autumn, and concludes with an epilogue. Having used the flashback technique, the writer allows us to peep into the characters' past and mind so as to get familiar with their unpleasant and shocking experience. Sunjeev Sahota is a skillful painter of the canvas of literature. By unmasking many issues, he makes us aware of typical caste mentality of Indian people, unlawful dwelling in abroad, selfishness in marriage and immigration. He not only throws light on the above issues but also focuses on unemployment, deterioration of Indian economy which is directly or indirectly responsible for their dilapidated financial condition; and issues concerning with visa in England.

What I like is the accomplished structure and plot of the novel. Characters are depicted elegantly. Typical Indian expressions like oy, arre, yaar, saala, bhanchod etc. show that Sunjeev Sahota is heartily connected with Indian soil, especially rural area. The narrative style is very lucid and straight forward apart from flashbacks. If some readers read Rohinton Mistry's *Fine Balance* (1995), they won't find different and new in Sahota's *The Years of Runaways* because both novels are similar to each other in terms of structure, plot, characters except the issue of immigration.

Sunjeev Sahota's novel *The Year of the Runaways* (2016) is a voice of those migrant people who live in European countries and United States. Most of the people are influenced by western culture and life but finally get disillusioned. Raising some burning issues concerning with immigration, the writer makes us aware of the attitude of the natives towards the migrants.

Reference

- Sahota, Sunjeev. *The Year of the Runaways*. Picador Publication, London. 2016.



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