

An Ethnic Study in Priyank's *Am Dead*

But My Heart Beats

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Abstract:

Culture is the social behavior and norms found in human societies, the arts and other manifestations of human intellectual achievements are regarded collectively. Culture is a way of life where different groups of people their behaviors, beliefs, values, and symbols club their hands. Culture is imitated from one generation to the other generation. Culture is a symbolic communication, it passes through people in the society. Ethnicity is the state of belonging to a social group that has a common national or cultural tradition. An ethnic group shares a common and distinctive culture, religion, and language. In the novel, *Am Dead But My Heart Beats*, Zahid and Swati share their religion and decide to move their life in the ethnic construction. Culture plays a vital role in their life, Zahid gives importance to human values than human-made values.

Keywords: Ethnicity, society, multiculturalism, culture, human values, Ethnic Construction

Ethnicity is a multi cultural group of people which includes language, culture, religion, caste and race. The world has thousands of different ethnic groups, the collaboration of culture, language and religion cultivate the human values. It evaluates the humanity and respect. Ethnicity in the society gives different kinds of experience and knowledge. It makes the people to respect other cultures, languages, and religions and it cultivates the humanism within them. Ethnicity is often used as a major source of social cohesion as well as

social conflict. Social cohesion contributes to the wide variety of groups in society. The majority of countries proclaim the negative side of multiculturalism. The fame of our nation lies in unity in diversity. The interethnic group in the region have various religion, community, and race. The culture of various people in society follow different practices, beyond these human values are predominant. The paper deals with the emotions of a young man. He gives importance to the emotions of his lady love Swati.

Priyank is a young writer, who gives importance to social essence, communal ideologies and values of humanism in Indian society. Through his writings, he depicts that human emotion exceeds culture and religion. The irony is found in the words and the actions of people in the concept of ethnicity. The Indian society with unity in diversity shows their religion and communal patriotism in the context of marriage. Here the parents oppose the initiation of ethnicity in their children's marriage. Swati is a Brahmin girl, she loves Zahid, a Muslim boy. Swati's parents impose the orthodox identity of their religion and do not accept to marry Zahid. The same trouble occurs in the family of Zahid. Both families are concerned about their reputation of the culture and religion but they have failed to respect the hearts of their children. The society fails to follow its own word about ethnicity in their life.

Zahid is a studious young man, he lives in Muzaffarnagar. He is an engineering student, he loves Swati a Brahmin girl, who has completed her graduation. Both of them decide to get married but the so-called society does not allow inter-religious marriage. Zahid respects human, he needs her parent's consent. The children respect the emotions of the parents but they decimate the emotions of Zahid and Swati. They remonstrate with their decision to marry each other. Religion stands as a barrier to love. Gita Hariharan portrays the inter-religion issue in her work *Fugitive Histories*

There it finds Asad and Mala testing their ability to bear the terrible burden of living up to...on what happens when a Hindu and Muslim fall in love. 'At least your family is not getting hysterical', says Mala. But Asad grumbles. 'A woman marrying into the community is one more womb colonized. That's how both sides see it. (Gita 70)

A society needs a rebel and here the young lovers become rebel to develop the ethnicity. Swati says “in love, individuals just want love to be the foundation. They are not scared and bothered about the society”(IDHB 82). She tries her level best to get consent from her parents, but she fails to convey it. Her parents are selfish in their belief. ChetanBhagat says about the selfish people who never care about the social development in his work *What Young India Wants*. “Do we believe in power in the hands of a select few to whom the laws don’t apply? Do we value honesty or Do we value getting the job done anyway? Do we believe in frugality or do we want to show off our wealth? (4)”. Both the parents give importance to the society and they stand stubborn in their customs, she describes that “love is not based on permutation and combination. 21st century society proudly says the we are developed in thoughts” (IDHB 84).

Even though when a boy is a perfect match for a girl, he is renounced by her parents just because he belongs to other religion. “this is not acceptable. Zahid belongs to a different religion, different culture” (IDHM 87). This statement is given by Swati's father. It is difficult to enclose love within concepts like religion, culture, and tradition. The mixed culture does not destroy the individuality of the people. Zahid attempts to get consent from Swati's family, he tries to prove the synergy of love. He says about ethnicity to them,

Aunty, there will be no her-festival, her-religion, her language, his-culture, her-custom, and other differences. It will be our customs, our festivals, our religions, our language, our culture, our India, our love. Intercommunity marriagesbring so many cultures traditions together...none of us will lose our identity. (91)

The pulse of the younger generation is explained by Zahid to his parents but they fail to understand it. The idea of Zahid does not work instead it exacerbates the issue. Swati’s father hits him and pulls Zahid out of his house. The same emotional drama is performed in the Zahid’s family, “How could a Muslim Pathan marry a Hindu girl? We can’t have a daughter-in-law whose blood has Hinduism in it. We cant have our next generation to draw its blood from a Hindu girl. What would people in Muzaffarnagar say? “ (96). The above statement is given by Zahid’s father. Zahid and Swati decide to get married with the help of Aarti, her friend in

the temple. Being a Muslim man, he respects Swati's ritual and plans to marry her in the temple. They rent a house in Lucknow with the help of his friend, they decide to lead a happy and ethnic life. Their happiness does not stay for a day, the life of a lovely couple shatters and diverts in an unimaginable situation. Swati is forced to become a prostitute, she is abducted by the prostitute agent and she is in the Delhi Red light area of GB Road for two months. On the other hand, Zahid is in the Mental Asylum, he is assaulted by Swati's relative and certifies him as mentally sick. The violent behavior of the people ruin the life of a lovely couple.

In Delhi, Swati is sexually harassed, she is tormented by cruel people. Fortunately, she gets help from the other prostitute girls who belong of other region help her to escape from the place. With the help of Aarti, she finds her husband Zahid in the mental asylum. She confesses her impurity, but he believes in human values than culture, in the context of culture Swati is impure but as a husband he understands the emotions of Swati and he breaks the culture, respecting the value of pure soul.

The barbarous Muzaffarnagar Riot happened on 21 August 2013. An eve-teasing incident turned in to a bloodshed. The actual reason behind this communal violence is an eve-teasing of a girl from the Hindu Jat Community. She is allegedly harassed by a Muslim youth Irfan Qureshi in Kawal village. The Hindu brothers of the girl, Sumit Singh and Gautam Singh stabbed knives to murder Irfan. This issue tempts their community to slaughter her Hindu brothers and in rage of revenge, they started merciless killing every Hindu coming before them. Ethnicity breaks and religion comes into segregation, the cause of conflict arise among the people. The actual reason for the riot changes and it becomes a communal riot. Violence is not a weapon to solve problems, unity is the best to face it. Zahid's family stuck in the riot and he goes to save his family. On the other account, Swati's family also stuck in the riot. A villain of Swati's family becomes a hero in a moment. And a Hindu blood of Swati becomes daughter in law of Zahid's family. Time teaches everything to the parents, they realize the charm of ethnicity. A family with inter-religion love exists, both the Hindu and Muslim parents are dying to save each other. Love exceeds everything, if love is present everywhere, there will be no violence. "Beta, for god sake we will be grateful to you all forever, Swati's mom and dad said with folded hands"(IDHB

174). Swati's parents insulted him once but they regret themselves and thanked him for saving all of their lives. Humanity cannot die because of hatred, both the family accepted each other. But the self-respect of Zahid does not allow their sudden love for them. They decide to spit their old communal thoughts, love is actually the solution to communal problems in India. Love has the power to conquer all odds.

The inter-community relationship gives deep friendships, it brings different communities together. Mixing of cultures, religion, traditions, and thoughts, that makes everyone feel that every community belongs to them. If people give importance to empathy than sympathy, no one targets the turban of Sikh and mock of it, no one questions the customs of other community people. No one gets indulged in showing the dominance of ones caste, religion or colour. All humanity gets dumped in a riot. A love weapon makes two enemies into families. The ego of two families have ruined the life of lovely souls. Men make all customs, religions, traditions, and community but as time passes it overrules man. According to this society, love is not pride but counting dowry is a big occasion, a proud one. Many people support and oppose dowry, the supporters of dowry give the logic that a parent's property has the share of a girl too, that's why it is given in the form of dowry. Swati questions the concept of arranged marriage, a girl doesn't choose her father, mother, brother, and sister, she accepts them. It is the right of the girl to choose her partner in life. Her parents dominate on her rights, so she interrogates the society for it. Ethnic culture proves its power through the love of Zahid and Swati.

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