

VARIED SUPER-POWER CHARACTERS IN SAMIT BASU'S TURBULENCE: A CONTEMPORARY SOCIAL REALISTIC TALE

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ABSTRACT

The genre of Science Fiction in Indian writing in English is establishing its momentum and gaining its importance among the readers. SamitBasu has set his super hero novel, *Turbulence*, in India trying to interpret it in a modern way embedded in urban fantasy but dealing with social realistic framework. The four hundred and three passengers who board the flight from London to Delhi, discover the gifted super power within them and realises that it has direct relations to their innermost desires and aspirations. SamitBasu has carefully crafted the super powers and executed them in a much better manner in the novel. He has combined unusual ideas within a gripping plot. There are some intriguing characters while a few are two dimensional; others are quite archetypal as they lack originality. The novel has post-modernistic views on the genre itself. Through his super power characters, Basu tries to bring out the answers for two questions - How would you feel if you actually got what you wanted? What would you do if you were given the power to change the world? The varied characters uncover their super power towards the various problems in the present Indian society and thus brings out SamitBasu's intentions towards social realism.

Keywords: Science fiction, super power, urban fantasy, unusual ideas, intriguing, archetypal

The genre of Sci-fi novels in Indian English Literature is gaining its momentum and gaining its importance among the readers. This interesting genre has gained most of its numbers from American or British Science fiction. The trend has started recently in India with a few writers roping in tropes and ideas of Sci-fi fiction with a background of Indian socio-political impact as well as using the modern technology. Indians tend to think of any technology as a consequence of the colonial rule which would repress them. SamitBasu's *Turbulence* in many

ways focus on this distress where suddenly the idea of superheroes who are essentially western in concept and suddenly is introduced to the Indian psyche gets cold shouldered by one because no one can trust these super-powered humans.

The Sci-fi novels are exhilarating but fun filled genre which opts for common man's moral commitments comprising icons known worldwide. The question related to the title of this paper is whether SamitBasu has added anything special to the superhero novels. The answer tends to be affirmative as the novel is packed with fresh ideas and mostly, post-modernistic in thoughts. SamitBasu has really treated the challenge of writing a superhero novel in a successful manner. *Turbulence* is a novel filled with dialogues that adds reckless action sequences rendering a different style for an interesting superhero movie. The readers enjoy a thorough entertainment as the novel has three major fight scenes and plenty of smaller pursuits and struggles. The author writes action extremely well, describing the various superheroes, their powers and their combat in a way that instantly conjures vivid images. He exhibits a unique style which makes the readers feel they have read a completely natural superhero story.

SamitBasu successfully brings in the elements of fantasy in science fiction which is evident in his first series *Gameworld*. This work has also been well received by international and Indian readers. The series is a captivating story involving myths from different parts of the world with references to pop culture. SamitBasu has used many ideas from this series but merged it with the superhero themes.

The superheroes in this thrilling science fiction are, Aman Sen, an ambitious and smart chap, Vir, an Indian Air Force Pilot, Uzma, aspiring Bollywood Actress, Tia, a north east Indian house wife, Jai, an Ex-army personnel and so on. Aman can get himself connected with anyone in the world through network connectivity whereas Vir possesses the ability to fly on his own, despite being a pilot. Uzma is aspiring to become a Bollywood heroine has been possessing boundless attractiveness because of the super power. Tia possesses the power of transforming into multiple bodies and aspires to live out all the lives she has dreamt off. There are many other forces that takes shapes because of the sudden super power being imposed on them. The perfect example of the opposite forces is Jai, having the same old goal of possessing the whole world under military regime.

The Science fiction, *Turbulence*, has characters from India as well as a British-Pakistani girl named Uzma. The flight from London to Delhi has four hundred and three passengers in

which Aman, an important character finds out that each one of them has acquired a special power to accomplish their desires. He himself finds out that he can instantly get connected to any network through which he can hack any security system and check out anyone's call from any part of the world. Here, SamitBasu makes the character of Aman as a social realistic personality. In the beginning, the readers can find Aman as a person lost in the modern world but now he can connect himself to anyone from any part of the world. SamitBasu has developed such a character into helping and saving others. Aman desires to be an old-fashioned superhero because of such acts of nobility. He tries communicating others in order to save the world but later finds out there is a bad guy formed out of the superhero abilities who is making others disappear.

The plot of *Turbulence* revolves around a few of the Indian passengers, and Uzma, a British-Pakistani, on a flight from London to Delhi. Everyone on this flight has developed extraordinary new powers, some more impressive than others. Aman, the main character of the novel, theorises that each person has acquired a power that somehow corresponds with their desire, which in some cases turns out to be far from what the person would consciously wish for. For example, Aman, a man who felt isolated and lost in a city where one's contacts and connections are everything, can now connect with any communication network instantly, using only his mind. He is constantly online, can hack any secure system, listen to any phone conversation, and is connected to the entire world.

Jai, in *Turbulence* is portrayed as a person who wants to design the world according to his whim and fancies with his super abilities. He wants other to bend according to his will so that his job becomes easy. His character becomes villainous once he starts ignoring the fact that others are getting hurt in the process. SamitBasu depicts a character which represents a lot whole of people who will behave the same as Jai if they are rendered the super power. This has also paved way for the interesting sequences in the science fiction. Aman is able to get the support of other super heroes to end the villainous moves which makes the sci-fi exhilarating.

There are few other super heroes who supports Aman for doing good things for the needy. Aman thinks of bringing a change by fighting against corruption, vague government corporations and spiritual extremists. To pursue and perceive his objective, he wants to unite the super powers so that they can help crores of people who are without food, education, proper houses and voiceless before power of politics. He wants to ensure that the super

powers are not exploited on crime-fighting with superhero costumes, superstar authorizations, or reality television shows. Aman's intentions are to do justice to earth and save the suffering human beings in the world. But in the process, he finds that if he wants to do good to someone, some others are getting hurt and harmed, playing with lives as well as making enormous, possibly devastating results. SamitBasu presents clearly a real world situation by making Aman realise the above mentioned idea as well as keeps the readers thrilled by raising a question – will they be able to do justice to the world hereafter or would it end meaningless? SamitBasu tries to present a real India, the subcontinent with all its senseless grandeur - F-16s, Bollywood, radical religious parties, nuclear plants, cricket, terrorists, luxury resorts, and crazy TV shows. This makes the novel super real but the real questions being imposed by the author are - How would you feel if you actually got what you wanted? What would you do if you were given the power to change the world?

SamitBasu has written a Sci-fi which appears more realistic than most of the X-men type of superhero novels. He has drawn each superhero character aspiring to be portrayed as real characters living in the subcontinent. This makes the fiction much interesting as the whole scenes become more colourful than before as we have superpowers to fight the real enemies in such a corrupt world rather than fighting some aliens from the external world. The readers gets thrilled with the superheroes and their powers as they have to fight against the real causes to save the people rather than saving them from the aliens and protecting the world. Some of the characters have powers that make them appear subordinates to the main characters but at the crucial moments of the fiction, it's them who do the needful and shows them as really powerful. SamitBasu presents a villain who is actually a villain but his intentions are moralistic in nature compared to the so-called good superheroes in the fiction. Here, SamitBasu explores the reality behind superhero models in Sci-fi fictions as the following questions are raised in the minds of the readers – who gives the authority to superheroes to interfere in others' lives? What are the qualities that differentiates a superhero from a hero? If the superhero really attempts to change the world a much better place to live, what are the consequences? SamitBasu's Turbulence depicts that super heroism is subjective and finally, it's all about power.

The main protagonist, Aman, is depicted as a character who doesn't even thinks changing his own life a better one before acquiring the super power. He has not involved himself in helping others or participated in relief works caused due to natural calamity nor served any helping hand for the needy people at any point of time. After gaining the super power, the

subcontinent's problems become his own problems and he tries providing his own solutions for them. SamitBasu makes it interesting at this point by making the villain also trying to provide such solutions but in his own ways.

This makes the readers raise questions against the super powers of Aman, Uzma and Vir who wants to change the world. Jai, the villain, has the power to change the world according to his ideologies but the above mentioned characters are bothering him. Vir's only duty is to stop Jai from carrying out his plans. Here, an important question is raised – Does it needs to be villainous even to change things better? Does Aman, Uzma and Vir become Villains in the process to do good? These questions adds much more in-depth meaning to the science fiction though it is not the main focus. There are situations in the fiction that offer a picture that good and evil are not the same as presented in the past.

SamitBasu has carefully crafted the super powers and executed them in a much better manner in the novel. He has combined unusual ideas within a gripping plot. There are some intriguing characters while a few are two dimensional; others are quite archetypal as they lack originality. The novel has post-modernistic views on the genre itself. The varied characters uncover their super power towards the various problems in the present Indian society and thus brings out SamitBasu's intentions towards social realism.

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