Enroute of a Village's First Graduate to an Ideal Symbolic Interactionist

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Abstract

Education is the gaining of knowledge, which makes a person self- equipped without any direct dependence. A village which has faced an utter devastation due to over flooding stumbles to regain its routine after its shelter and occupation have been flooded. Nothing is left behind to lead a normal life. With the arrival of Atluri Pitcheshwar Rao who is affectionately addressed as Pitchayya, the first graduate of Pulapparu village, the villagers find hope in his words and an awakening prospect of future. Pitchayya has a wide knowledge as he has travelled far and wide. The actions of Pitchayya are perceived under symbolic interactionism. Villagers who have divided themselves based on occupation already face a border which further challenges their unity to bring forth togetherness to work on rebuilding. The character Pitchayya in the novel *Softly dies a Lake* by Akkineni Kutumbarao symbolizes education that is respectable in society, and which also serves and rescues a village community. With the presence of Pitchayya, symbolic interactionism theory is applied so as to explore the crisis of Pulapparu village. The paper traces the journey of Pitchayya who became an ideal symbolic interactionist in his native place.

Keywords: Educated graduate, Symbolic interactionist, Village community, Social interaction

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"*Symbolic interactionism* is a term coined by Herbert Blumer (1900- 1987) for his theory of self, interaction, meaning and joint social acts" (Fink, 2015). Owing to this, he is considered the founder of symbolic interaction. Blumer based his theory on the work of George Herbert Mead, and he gave significant credit to Mead. Blumer was a student of Mead. Mead became involved in a number of social inquiries outside the university. "Pragmatism as a philosophy is captured in its view that meaning should be understood in terms of its usefulness to the individual or to society. This view of the relation of conduct to meaning permeated Mead's thoughts and subsequently, became fundamental principle for Blumer's symbolic interactionism" (Fink, 2015).

Symbols are open ended, with a reasonable cause to subjectivity. Social interaction enriches the integrity of a symbolic interactionist as it leads to act in a sensible manner. Sensibility is needed for leading a sensory appeal to external circumstances, leading to attainment in maturity of feelings. Sensory form includes ethos, which is intellectually reasonable and emotionally convinces the people to accommodate new ways. Mostly, human feelings fall under social interactions which bring out the sensory form. Such feelings are mostly out of compassion or suffering. Symbolic interactionism brings plurality through singularity. It creates differentiation among the actions enacted with a power to have stern reasonable ability. Plurality leads to multiple actions with variety of processes. With social interaction, an individual overcomes personal boundaries. "In Bakhtin's words, person as 'organic unity' is capable of 'transcending itself that is, exceeding its own boundaries" (Dvoretchkaia and Melekhina, 2014).

Symbolic interactionism is being developed when the villagers face helplessness during the floods followed by their extraordinary solidarity to build a bund and to practice wet farming in Kolleru lake. "What about us? The flood came and swept everything that was there. Since there is nothing we can do we just eat and sit still. You don't stay in one place and keep roaming about" (Kutumbarao 161). Symbolic interactionism comprises society with symbols that establish meanings by developing ideas through communicating with each other. It is accomplished in a circular pattern. "Symbols invite us to think, call for an interpretation, precisely because it says more than it says and because it never ceases to speak

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to us" (Dvoretchkaia and Melekhina, 2014). With the presence of Pitchayya a whole new frame of symbolic interactionism is attained. "Pitchayya was the pet name for Atluri Pitcheshwar rao, the very first one to get a degree in Pulaparru" (Kutumbarao 160).

Symbolic interactionism has higher potentiality leading to certain activity. Human activities become null and void without sensory appeal. Symbolic interactionist possesses and expresses strong emotions. Pulapparu village is a community, and Pitchayya is an educated person who becomes a symbol. "Pitchayya's consciousness was not limited to the school, but he organized the youth in the village and boys into sanghams" (Kutumbarao 160). "Pitchayya entrusted the sanghas in the village to Madhu and he became part of all these struggles even as he was studying in college" (Kutumbarao 160). Eventually, the hopeless villagers who are dejected to proceed, try to establish meanings through the utterance of Pitchayya. The idea to join hands together to work on the bunds and deepening Kolleru lake fall under the ideas of sensory development. The execution of working on the assigned plan is the way of communicating with each other.

> "'I will tell you. Listen carefully. In our Kolleru we should build a bund around four or five hundred acres, remove the water inside the bund and then do wet farming inside it. This is possible only if the whole village joins hands. This fields belong to everyone. The work is everyone's. The harvest is everyone's. In hardly three months your troubles will cease. Just work for three months. And get rid of all your troubles. Get over your troubles with your harvests.' Pitchayya spoke clearly and confidently." (Kutumbarao 164)

The crisis of the village acts to be the interactive space which forms the base for symbolic interactionism. "According to Gadamer, the understanding is not possible without the activity of questioning" (Dvoretchkaia and Melekhina, 2014). The openness of social interaction is possible through an expression of an individual thinking. It propels on evocative actions that focus on human behavior, intentions and experiences in relevance with society. "Thinking according to Mead is a process where

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individuals interact with themselves by using meaningful symbols" (Rohmawati and Trihastuti, 2021).

Pitchayya has brought the thinking of villagers towards a positive aspect. "At this critical time Pitchayya's

arrival brought happiness to all of them. It lightened their hearts" (Kutumbarao 161). A valuable meaning

is added to Pitchayya because of his education. "Blumer believes that meaning is a condition that

emerges as a result of the interaction of group members and not an intrinsic feature of the object" (Aksan

and Kisac, 2009). An educated individual is considered a self- identified individual. Generally, objects do

not possess an innate meaning while the meanings are given by the people surrounding them. Similarly,

Pitchayya is a very normal person, but the education based on literacy leads him to a position of a

symbolic interactionist.

Socialization is a predominant aspect of communication in social interaction. Perspectives of

individuals are considered the sole prospect of social interaction. The concept of socialization is inevitable

for sustenance of a village community. "Schenk and Holman state that symbolic interaction is a dynamic

theory because according to this theory objects feature meanings within themselves and individuals

formulate their activities in the direction of their evaluation of themselves and also people and objects

around them" (Aksan and Kisac, 2009). To prove this aspect, "Mead assumes that symbols develop mind,

and they are used as means for thinking and communication" (Aksan and Kisac, 2009). Symbolic

interactionism is attained through symbols in the mind of people which add meanings and values to it.

Meanings attribute to reciprocal interaction between individuals. "Moreover, there is a general agreement

among the symbolic interactionists that perspectives and empathy developing abilities of participant are

the key subjects of symbolic interaction" (Aksan and Kisac, 2009). In social environment, reciprocal

interaction leads to emergence of meanings. The village community is the social environment in the

context. The symbolic interactionists have the notion to demonstrate the differences with respect to

various points of view. The source of data is always understood as interactions of humans by symbolic

interactionist.

"According to Mead, humans have a number of possible actions in their mind before taking the actual action, and a person tries these various alternative actions mentally by considering his thoughts" (Rohmawati and Trihastuti, 2021). In social interaction, socialization is a dynamic dimension where the information is not only received but also adjusted and interpreted according to their needs. Social actions are carried out based on the accommodating nature of individuals. Through a symbolic interactionist, humans develop the response to differ from the responses of the other people and have a unique way of approach. The notion of self- concept delves in this area. The prospect of self-development relies on the way of reflexivity where a person unconsciously stands in another person's place and examines themselves. So, when people align their respective notions towards cultural aspects, it develops a form of social interaction that leads to co-operation.

"The social interactions that occur between the villagers also take into account the culture of other villagers when they interact" (Rohmawati and Trihastuti, 2021). The ideas are further developed with positive social changes where the information is imparted with social and economic benefits. Intersubjectivity is developed in social interactions as the individuals interact and enact the actions. "… lack of knowledge about the culture being faced, so that there can be misunderstandings between villagers" (Rohmawati and Trihastuti, 2021). The symbolic interaction revolves around the notion that the principle of meaning is the central part of human behaviour. With the absence of inter-relation, objects, humans, conditions and events do not feature an intrinsic meaning towards symbolic interactionists. When village community is seen as a society, freedom of an individual has a limited role in the welfare of community. Human behaviour results in the acceptance of a symbolic interactionist, therefore it is necessary to understand the definitions, meanings and processes formed by the humans in a society. In this cultural context, symbolic interaction focusses on social interaction and having an emphatic role among individuals.

A symbolic interactionist has personal educational choices and concerns over decision making. The characteristics of an educated person are unique to fit into a state as a symbolic interactionist. Broad

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concerns have directly been approached in symbolic interactionism. It leads to self- fulfillment with cultural determinants. A symbolic interactionist develops self- identity. Self- identity is recognizable among a community. Pitchayya's arrival is the attribute of externalizing with an expression of awareness to his native place. Pitchayya has attained integrity and proved his self- identity through cultural existence being intact with education. This forms a social integrity in bringing up sensory responses from the village community. A symbolic interactionist possesses a strong -willed concentration with an utmost appeal to rationality and logicality based on knowledge. This knowledge-based paradigm of symbolic interactionists revolves around social interaction.

The meanings raised out of the interaction lead to the sensory situation based on facts. Pulapparu village is inhabited by Kammadoras, who are farmers, and the Vaddirajas, who are fishermen. The two communities depend on Kolleru lake. While the Vaddis depend upon the fish that is found in the lake, the farmers feed their cattle and buffaloes on the plants and weeds that grow in its waters. The lives of the people completely revolve around it. Kolleru lake has over-flowed its banks, and now people must stand in solidarity to rebuild their lives. The sensory aspects bring the villagers together to work on a single cause. "Thomas says 'it is not important whether interpretation is accurate or not'. He believes that fact is based on personal perceptions and changes in time" (Aksan and Kisac, 2009).

Symbolic interactionism provides social interaction as an opportunity for self- determination and self- orientation, with a precise inter- subjective meaning. Symbolic interactionism is identified as a pragmatic philosophy by John Dewey and George Mead, the foremost figures of movements of post-evolutionary thoughts. "According to Collins, 'the most important contribution of pragmatism was to stimulate empirical sociologists to set forth an action oriented and completely social theory of the nature of mind and self" (Fink, 2015). "In the worlds of the uneducated, in the cultures of dwelling, elders, parents, and neighbor teach and learn traditions which emphasize staying well rooted; strengthening the knowledge and skills needed to nourish and be nourished by their own places" (Prakash and Esteva). Mead's influence appears on sociologists. Symbolic interactionism favours individual freedom, individual

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autonomy with self- reflexiveness and the doctrine of natural rights with societal organisations. Mead focused on the relationship between physical as well as the social world. "Mead and we find him noting with approval Comte's conviction that 'we must advance from the study of society to the individual rather than from the individual to society'" (Mead, 1956).

"The definition of education was bound up with that of the 'educated persons,' their economic and political place in the local community, and their actions in relation to that community" (Ramp and Smith, 2004). In social interaction the individual responses varied with perception and experienced difficulties. The community is praised when young people get motivated with the symbolic interactionists who have transformed their holders, namely degrees and diplomas, into role models. This aspect leads to self- sufficiency, self- respect, self- development and self- motivation which are the familiar terms associated with educated individuals.

"Educated persons' were seen as those who had positive self- esteem and a respect for elders and for traditional ways" (Ramp and Smith, 2004). To be a symbolic interactionist, individuals must have individualized approach to exercise and develop identity. On pragmatic grounds education is utilized as a 'tool' for survival of culture and to develop connection in the village community. To cope with crisis, people relied on the availability of manual work. The traditional culture imbibes native thinking.

"That is not it, Mamayya. This is the very reason that I came here today. I read that your harvests were washed out and that whole villages were under water. I came to see how you all were. In fact I was to come ten days ago but couldn't. There is a solution. Go to the place from where your troubles arise and you will get a solution. In other words we can get our harvest from where we lost it." (Kutumbarao 163)

Pitchayya, although educated, never advocates usage of modern- day equipment. In village community, people sort out in a way to whom or what they can relate to. Villagers carry out obligations in the form of integration for village community. The symbolic interactionist possesses an ability to promote

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identification, commitment, involvement and motivation. "'If everyone works together it will be good. Pitchayya always thinks well before he speaks. Should we all get together and do this work? I think if we all join in it won't be so difficult,' said Rangayya (Kutumbarao 165). The cultural aspects exist as memory in the minds of the older peasants that the village leaders are still their 'leaders' and that they serve the interests of the village community. Symbolic interactionism leads to community renewal and economic improvement that benefit the members of village community.

The community has cultural differences based on the occupation which is directly related to the characteristics of people. The process of co-operation and accommodation is necessary for social interaction. In a symbolic interaction, the symbolic interactionist takes the role to interpret, judge, define and act. Initiatives of communities have origin rights that are recognized and respected. Symbolic interactionism resolves community helplessness with its limited facilities and infrastructure. Village community must be developed under various conditions, be protected and empowered, so that it becomes active, advanced, independent and democratic. As a result, village community thrives with fall potential. "People who have received the attention of the village government in fulfilling their needs in a participatory manner are expected to show concern and responsibility for the existence of the village through the obligations of the community" (Maolani, 2019).

"The process of self- discovery must start from understanding, proving, serving to becoming true while self-improvement and self-development is a training that aims to get students to know themselves better and be able to develop their potential" (Rizqina and Nafsika, 2021). Social integration is not a result of negative assimilation process but a positive social integration process. The crisis is dealt with a possible and practical solution which will be self-sufficient and self-managed. "Symbolic interactionism develops interaction perspectives on mind, society and environment based on the ideas. The foundation of this theory is 'meanings' by the social actors in the phenomenon they live in" (Husin and Rahman, 2021).

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Collective actions are highly necessary as individuals' actions in the present world are directed towards future events and activities. "Youth are more seen in the souls owned by someone. If the person has a rebellious soul, full of initiatives, creative, and there is a goal to build a personality, then that person can be said to be a youth" (Rivai and Alam, 2019). "In this perspective, knowledge production is understood as a theory, a strategy and a tool to shift from context to concrete state and to benefit from that" (Alver and Caglar, 2015). Community participation has a long-term validity, an effective use and hence it is executed to solve crisis in that community.

Educated individuals must be ready for future. The development of a village community relies on comprehensive regions and independent sustainability. An educated person is expected to be embodied with charitable conduction and social contribution. "As Pitchayya spoke each of their faces filled with hope" (Kutumbarao 166). Pitchayya as a savior brings life to the devastated village with hopeless people. "Every issue has a solution. We need to search for it. That's all" (Kutumbarao 163). This shows an educated individual transformed as a symbolic interactive ideal in a community that thrives to establish its survival notion along with other individuals. Under cultural context, which is region specific, education is highly valued. Symbolic Interactionism acts on a longer way than communication as a language. The notion of conscious self is the base for cultural integration. Symbolic interactionism unified the village community. Pitchayya is considered a symbol of an educated individual.

Social interaction leads to have a symbolic interactionist beyond formal communication through language. Pitchayya's inevitable mindful presence in his native place leads to valuing education. The cultivation of ordered feeling leads to the sensitive appreciation of circumstances with social interaction. With this prospect, the idea for development continuingly seems to appear with meaningfulness and visibility. Therefore, the symbolic interactionist is acknowledged, and with a heightened representation. Social interaction teaches people to avoid partiality and aspires to have a fullness and completeness. An extended understanding of an individual's point of view leads to an interpretation of main idea beyond

one's own sphere of ideas. Education when approached with symbolic interactionism promotes development of sensibility and self-identification with an integrity.

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