

WILSON'S VIEW FROM THE MOUNTAIN: *WE ARE NOT IN PAKISTAN* BY SHAUNA SINGH BALDWIN

D. SaiLakshmi, Research Scholar, Department of English, JNTUA Ananthapuramu

Dr. S. Shanmuga Priya, Asst Professor, Dept. of English & Foreign Languages, MITS, Angallu

Dr. V. B. Chitra, Professor, Dept. Science & Humanities, JNTUA Ananthapuramu

Abstract: *'A view from the Mountain'* is a story from the collection *'We are Not in Pakistan'* depicts the relationship between an American who builds a hospital in Costa Rica and an employee in the hospital native of Costa Rica. The story is narrated from the perspective of Wilson Gonzales. The relationship is impacted with the attack of the twin towers in New York. Ted introduced advanced technology in Costa Rica, a calm and peaceful town to change it into a business place for his benefit. Ted always welcomes change, innovation, growth and something new, particularly materialistic, but not in human relationships. Ted ignores sympathy, bond, concern and affection but he develops a professional rapport with people. He worries more about the loss in America because of 9/11 attacks and concentrates more on news channels than on his Buena Vista.

Key Words: *Ted Grand, American, self-centered, Wilson Gonzales, business.*

Shauna Singh Baldwin a unique and prolific writer of Diaspora is well known for her short story collections and novels. Her novels are *What the Body Remembers* (2000), *The Tiger's Claw* (2004), *We Are So Different Now* (2009), *The Selector of Souls* (2012) and the two short story collections are *English Lessons and Other Stories* (1996) and *We Are Not in Pakistan* (2007). This paper analyses the story 'A View from the Mountain' from the collection 'We Are Not in Pakistan'. We are not in Pakistan is a collection of 10 different stories which differ from expatriate identity crisis to magic realism to contemporary issues in the literary diaspora. "The View from the Mountain" tracks the story of Wilson Gonzales who is predominantly friendly with his American Boss Ted Grand. The story takes great twist when after the 9/11 attack the perception of the boss changes towards Wilson.

Ted Grand, is one of those Americans, scattered over several places. He has been in touch with the means of the developments, political and cultural, and responds with the prejudiced psyche. He moves to Costa Rica and Buena Vista on blood-soaked land where a man has been beaten to death by the local bosses. His commercial and matter of fact approach towards life is without sentiments, affection or feelings. 'Buena Vista' is a grand 'bow teak' hotel with 20 rooms and a balcony with a view of Valley. Buena Vista is furnished with Internet Services. It has a bar, restaurant, and an organization. He builds himself a white Stucco villa beside the hotel a modern Villa with a few Spanish arches and flourishes" (WANIP120). Though Wilson fails to create again as he remains without a life partner Ted and Wilson with their combined efforts tried to create a bar a restaurant and an organization. Wilson gives credit to Ted who makes his believe it is possible to create.

A large satellite dish has been set up for his T.V. Ted Grand, is a representative of the American culture, self-centered, businessman, an introvert without any concern for the feelings and suffering of the people around him. Amritha Saheb Wakle rightly points out that the story starts with a wide description of an individual and ends with an important concept of being sensitive towards society at large, coming out of a self-centered shell, an extravert. When Both Wilson and Ted take a drive through the mountains, they

happened to gaze at the crocodiles. The scene of crocodiles in the water evokes a different feeling in them, when Ted says that he dislikes looking at crocodiles which kill other animals as he had enough of killing in the war, Wilson recollects the incident of his dear Carmen dying in a fire.

It is tragic that Wilson meets Ted Grand to enter an agreement, on the annual Day of sadness the day when Madlina the only woman he loved and Carmen his six-year-old daughter died, to run the "Grand Bow Teak Hotel with 200 rooms with a balcony with a view of the valley, at Costa Rica with large middle class, democracy without military or oligarchy. It is ironical that Ted quotes from a poet, "this is the start of a beautiful friendship". Wilson doesn't displease Ted, when he remarks only interests, no friends- "out of friendship" Wilson says 'it is all about interests; there is no friendship, only interests - don't count on that Wilson'. (WANIP120) Ted replies, Wilson is kept in charge of the ground stalls; attractive sensible Consuela is kept in charge of the inside stalls. The 'coffee business, named "Arian" after the Nobel Peace Prize winner "Oscar Arian Sanchez", flourished. Ted refers to Hurricane Mitch; it caused a little damage in the year 1998, and he renovates his hotel. He humorously says, "destruction is an opportunity for change.....we are growing not to stand still. Change is like music, felt but not seen" (WANIP123).

Both Wilson and Ted Grand take a drive through the mountains. They try to gaze at the crocodiles, which Ted doesn't admire. Ted says that he has had enough killing in the army. It is nothing but hypocrisy. He comes to know about the attack on the world trade center, he gets worried about the 9/11 WTC attack by terrorists. He is in tears and tries to cheer the president and starts suspecting everyone around him. 'New York under attack' news disturbs him so much that he sits before the T.V. abandoning all his duties. Ted changes Costa Rica into a mourning place with his sorrow. This continues even after the bombardment of Afghanistan by American fighter planes, people from various countries lost their lives in the attacks, "He was still cheering Bush dropped bombs on people in Afghanistan.... Enough killing after all" (WANIP123). When Both Wilson and Ted take a drive through the mountains, they happened to gaze at the crocodiles. The scene of crocodiles in the water evokes a different feeling in them, when Ted says that he dislikes looking at crocodiles which kill other animals as he had enough of killing in the war, Wilson recollects the incident of his dear Carmen dying in a fire.

It is ironical Ted who dislikes watching crocodiles as they kill other animals for their food, and has had enough of killing in the war. He appreciates the bloodthirsty savage deeds of Americans in several parts of the world in general, Afghanistan in particular. The title itself is an irony that 'The view from the Mountain' is narrow not broad to overview the world at large from the mountain, since Americans are introverts and not ready to understand the problems outside their country like Ted Grand who doesn't heed the problems of his employees and evades his social responsibility or commitments at the same time blames them for lack of progress in his business and progress. He supports Bush's revengeful attitude towards innocent migrants who are imprisoned, though they haven't committed any crime. Ted always thinks about his countrymen but not about other fellow beings of the globe.

Wilson watches a special report on bioterrorism. Ted Grand's biased judgment that Retired Generals, contemplating strikes should be killed with nuclear bombs makes him recall and remember Ted's remarks on crocodiles. Suddenly Wilson's attention is diverted by the furious act of Ted which seems to rip apart Consuela the efficient housekeeping supervisor and accuse Wilson of protecting Consuela. He calls her bitch and accuses her of trying to break the globe. No shards are seen on the floor; Consuela starts weeping, Wilson tries to console Consuela and wipes her tears. "And I admitted I had wanted yes, I wanted very much to kiss Consuela and make sure no one made her cry ever again" (WANIP127). Ted extends the blame on to Wilson and reports that all of them have tried to cheat him. He has almost gone mad and has suffered from a psychic disorder. Wilson is shocked when he is blamed for supplying milk, with a passing reference to 'Anthrax', 'Milk-venenoso', 'He has Anthrax on his mind' Wilson said. Ted is so much shocked that he feels as if his shares fell in companies. Wilson shouts at Ted, "Ted, we are your

friends, not your enemies” (WANIP126). The trade agreements between America and other countries have been cancelled. The removal of laborers and Wilson losing his job are the consequences. It is suspected that Ted suffers from brain cancer. But if the cancer is in the brain, it explains one's behavior, if it is in spleen it excuses anger and pain but not injustice. But injustice is done to the Employees and Wilson. Ted's shares have fallen in some big American companies like Enron or WorldCom, president of these companies is not bound by his previous agreements, Wilson recollects Ted's words about friendship, 'no friends, only interests'.

The readers tend to appreciate the story writing skills of Baldwin, who weaves private life experiences into the theme of political practices of a large nation, with Ted as its representative character. Wilson, a mellowed character takes to heart the suffering and problems of his fellow beings and try to help them out of the dare situation, as against Ted who never thinks about the people of any other country except the Americans.

Ted's illness and Wilson's loss of a job are two different things. Ted is very much concerned about Los Estados and New York. The rest of the world and the suffering of the people don't move him much. He reads about the North American tragedy only, reading “USA Today” influences his thinking. As Chaturvedi Divi rightly says Baldwin throws light on the attitude of Americans who feels as if their lives are more important than anyone's life on the globe. If he is in America, his illness intensifies, he has everything he needs. But his anger and fear have driven him to the worst stage of illness. Wilson, at last, decides not to shirk the responsibility of providing work and living to his relatives and discharging the duties of a brother. Ted is angry, alone, fighting cancer, doesn't take Wilson's support. Ted requires a caretaker to run his hospital. Wilson drives Ted to 'Senjore Airport', he goes to the national park and sits alone, he hears a guide telling the tourists that some species have adapted to a certain environment so well that they can't survive in any place, etc.. In the same way, Ted thinks that he can't be blown away too far.

The Bush government detains people and keeps them in camps: that's why Wilson who expresses his willingness to go to Loss Estados, for Ted changes his mind. Ted takes treatment for cancer but does not completely recover; Ted dies of cancer in a hospice in Estados. Wilson mourns on the death of a friend. (WANIP132) Wilson, who is not self-centered and always thinks of others well-being, runs 'Bueno Vista' with the help of Consuela, with whom he enters into a wedding knot and other employees. Bike travelers remember Ted for the fine view provided by him. Unlike some species which adapt themselves to a certain environment, Americans fail to assimilate any culture outside their own. Priyanka Singh in her review writes “*The View from the Mountain* brings out the pain and guilt of a man.... all his days of sadness”, believing he may have been able to save his wife and daughter reduced his house to rubble”. Ted feared that he would lose his America if he would cross into the next circle of the world. Travelers always remember Ted for the fine view provided by him, from the Mountain.

Conclusion

Shauna Singh Baldwin acclaimed as the most compelling literary voices on the century, handles with ease the expatriate identity crisis with wry humour and varies narrative techniques. The vigour of the narration lies in her writing of the tales with poignancy, realism and dexterity. If we look at any of her stories they look pretty simple and ordinary incidents are woven into interesting stories. All of Shauna's Short stories showcase her multi-faceted talent of taking on various and varied perspectives skilfully. Her story telling is beautifully crafted impresses the readers with depth of understanding of human nature. The short stories of Shauna Singh Baldwin reflect an array of views through mosaic of characters drawn from various generations and social spheres. The short story telling by Shauna becomes significant both as fictional documents projecting the inside stories of Diaspora as well as creates awareness about the contemporary world. The effectiveness of Baldwin's art is in not sentimentalizing the situation and keeping the overplaying if emotion in control.

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