

A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF GURU DUTT'S PYAASA AND MOHAN RAKESH'S ASHADH KA EK DIN

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Abstract:

There is an uncanny similarity between the 1957 dystopian classic, *Pyasa* and Mohan Rakesh's acclaimed play, *Ashadh ka Ek Din* (henceforth to be referred by its Sarah K. Ensley's translated version, *One Day in Ashadha*) published in the very next year. The present research paper tries to analyse the parallels between these two classics and thus establish, from a purely formalist perspective, how the latter may have been inspired by the former. However, the similarities do not make Rakesh's play, a copy of Guru Dutt's film. Though both are a scathing attack on what the nation had become in its very first decade after independence, *Pyasa* is directly critical of the social ills whereas *One Day in Ashadha* does so indirectly. This research paper looks at these and other deviations also in *One Day in Ashadha* with respect to *Pyasa*. The methodology followed in this research paper is based on the Russian formalist approach. Scenes from the movie and instances from the text are taken up for scrutiny and an analysis is carried out purely based on these references. The inferences drawn from the analysis point out the validity of T.S. Eliot's belief about literature as expressed in his, 'Tradition and the Individual Talent'. Literature is not a static block; it is a dynamic flow that brings the past literary work to bear an influence on the present and in turn the present bears an influence on future literary work. The scope of the research paper remains a Formalist analysis and does not take a New Historicist approach. It does not look at the history/ life incidents of the author. However researchers in the future may carry out the scrutiny required from a New Historicist approach.

Keywords: Guru Dutt, *Pyasa*, Mohan Rakesh, *Ashadh ka Ek Din*, Sarah K. Ensley, Russian Formalism.

Introduction:

The Indian freedom struggle was the movement based on the principle of "Nation first and foremost" be it the Moderates or the Extremist. It bore fruit and the nation gained independence in 1947. The popular belief at the time was that the idealism of the freedom struggle would act as the shining beacon for the nation that was barely managing to lift itself from the misery of the most violent partition. Contrary to this belief, by the end of the very first decade of the Nehruvian era, idealism gave way to materialism and the spirit of sacrifice was replaced by a self-centred approach. Though the Government, espoused socialism, its "licence permit Raj" created a nexus between the politicians, the bureaucracy and the rich, formalising corruption and creating a society obsessed with money, status and power. This deeply disappointed those who had high hopes from the newly formed democracy. This disillusionment is at the very core of Guru Dutt's "*Pyasa*" in which he asks, "Jinhe naaz hai Hind par who kahan hai" or "where are those who claim to be proud of India". (Dutt, 01:29:38)

The same sense of disillusionment is represented by Mohan Rakesh's "*Ashadh ka Ek Din*". In fact there are many similarities between *Pyasa* (1957) and *Ashadh ka Ek Din* (1958). The present research paper takes a Formalist approach to prove that Guru Dutt's *Pyasa* has deeply influenced Mohan Rakesh "*Ashadh ka Ek Din*". The paper uses an English subtitled version of *Pyasa* and the Sarah K. Ensley translation of Rakesh's play written for the National School of Drama and called "*One Day in Ashadha*" as the primary texts. The paper

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