

## **Beneficiary Benevolence in the Select Short Stories of Daniyal Mueenuddin**

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### **Abstract**

As the Ocean formed by degassing the Earth's interior, a successful person can be made by degassing the negativity inside him or her. Optimistic thinking acts a magnet in the universe to achieve the desired goal if one is more ardent in getting it. Seeking solutions for problems revolving seems to be the primal point of human kind. Betterment of one's mind help the person to overcome the situation. It is proven that a person's subconscious mind stores everything he or she thinks. It also triggers the person to achieve his goal in his life. Daniyal Mueenuddin's short stories make the common readers of English to taste varied flavours of Pakistani Literature. The protagonists of the selected short stories do not have any belief in themselves. But once subjected to some hard situations, they realise their inner strength. Through their psychic benevolence they achieve their life goals even in their traumatizing situations.

**Key Words:** Optimistic Thinking, Subconscious mind, Traumatizing situations.

Solution is defined as a means of solving problem or dealing with a situation. It is the state of being solved or a method of solving. Seeking for solution is an important aspect for a problematic mind. Some people keep on thinking about the problem until they find a solution for it. It is within the individual to be a solution oriented or else a problem oriented one. Karen Salmansohn states that, “When you have a ‘solution thinking mindset’ – and choose to focus 80% of your thoughts/words on solutions – you will not only be heading more speedily to long-term success, but you will immediately feel better in the moment” (Meah 1). Betterment of one’s mind help the person to overcome the situation.

Literature cannot be described with only a few words but it can be enhanced briefly. Literature is nothing but the proclamation of opinions. As there are variety of literatures worldwide the thesis concentrates on South Asian Literature as the writers of this area became the blending folds of both external and internal conflict. The South Asian Literature geographically includes Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. The genres of South Asian literature include transcultural, immigrant, native, diaspora, exile and so on.

Pakistani English Writing has its strong relationship with its people. The writers come out with ideas which covers the common people as their subject matter. Since 1980 Pakistani English Literature gained International importance and it as well received National and official recognition. The first writer to write in English and receive National Honour is Alamgir Hashmi. The other notable writers include, Bapsi Sidwa and Nadeem Aslam. Pakistani Literature had its rage only in the early 21<sup>st</sup> Century. The writers began to gain more international recognition and they were also shortlisted for International awards. The notable writers of Pakistani Literature is Mohsin Hamid, Asad Shabbir, Nadeem Aslam, Mohammed Hanif, Kamila Shamsie and Daniyal Mueenudin.

Daniyal Mueenuddin is a Pakistani-American writer who writes in English. His story collection *In Other Rooms, Other Wonders* is translated into sixteen languages. He was born in Los Angeles; USA and he grew up in Pakistan. When he was at the age of thirteen, he moved to US and there he received his higher education and worked as a journalist, director, lawyer, businessman and finally devoting his writings to Pakistani Literature. He also won Rosenthal Family Foundation Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

His work *In Other Rooms, Other Wonders* won The Story Prize for 2009 and the Commonwealth Writer's Prize in 2010. The book was selected among the top ten books of the year 2009 by *The Time's Magazine*. His short story *Nawabdin Electrician* was selected by Salman Rushdie for the Best American Short Stories of 2008. His another story *Our Lady of Paris* appeared in *Zoetrope* and was also the finalist of National Magazine Awards in fiction in the year 2007. The collection includes, *Nawabdin Electrician, Saleema, Provide, Provide, About a Burning Girl, In Other Rooms, Other Wonders, Our Lady of Paris, Lily and A Spoiled Man*.

In the short story *In Other Rooms, Other Wonders* the above discussed point is very much evident. The protagonist Husna is a jobless girl who once serves the old first wife of K.K.Harouni, the landlord of the arena. So she seeks job in the house of the landlord. She has been appointed somewhere between maidservant and companion. She is also appointed as office secretary who every afternoon takes down in shorthand a few pages of Mr. Harouni's memoirs. Husna constantly attracts problems towards her. She has been living a dutiful life with Old Begum Harouni and once discovered she is the distant relation of K.K. Harouni which makes her to feel as if she is the owner of the house. Her desires keep on increasing and at one point she asks for a part of the property. She has been sent out of the house by Old Begum's daughter. And now she is seeking shelter under Harouni.

Husna's service to in an ambiguous position with Begum Harouni increases her determination to rise in her life although she has no idea how to go about it. She is also aware that she cannot marry a rich guy from the province and at the same time she is not so sure whether she can do it so. The narrator proclaims that.

At that time, in the 1980s, the old barons still dominated the government, the prime minister a huge feudal landowner. Their sons, at least the quick ones, the adapted ones, became ministers at thirty, immaculate, blowing through dull parties, making an appearance, familiar with their elders,... as she imagined them blowing through foreign airports, at ease in European cities that she read about. She would even have sought a place in the demimonde of singers and film actresses, bright and dangerous creatures from poor backgrounds –no upper-class woman would dream of entering those professions –but she had neither talent nor beauty. (Mueenuddin 115)

In the story she is described not by her beauty or talent but by her determination and cunning nature to become rich.

Husna even before the death of Begum Harouni meets Mr. Harouni and introduces herself as his distant relative. This she does to endure her security after the death of Begum. Begum Harouni and Mr. Harouni are both divorced and Husna uses it and gets the support of both. Husna continues to build a strong relationship with Harouni without the consent of Begum. Harouni teaches her some lessons who then sends her back home in his car. She does not read rather sits at the desk surrounded by books by imagining as such,

... a girl her age stepping from a large new car in Liberty Market, among the expensive shops, or glittering in a pair of diamond drops at a wedding. Husna's mind would hang on these symbols of wealth, not letting go for hours. She sensed that all this might come to her

through Harouni, if she became his mistress.... The young girl's fear of Harouni had dissipated, and she let herself be seen critical, quick-witted, sensual and slightly crude.

(Mueenuddin 116)

Husna's greed keeps on growing without knowing that at one point she will be devastated. After Begum Harouni announces her holy pilgrimage Husna leaves the place to stay permanently with Harouni. She does everything to gain the attention of Harouni. But she cannot get close with him as she expected. Harouni also loves her company but not as a mistress. She starts using the car, brings herself clothes and even small bits of gold jewellery too. She even after having a lot of things from Harouni's money she would go to him with some special request, wanting to buy something, and he would ultimately agree. As days pass her cunningness grows out the limit as, "She wheeled, petted him, became frosty, became nice. Giving in, he would be unable to look her in the eye, himself embarrassed. She said to him, speaking plainly, "Scratch a man and find a boy"" (Mueenuddin 128).

Husna gets what she want in her life, but her cunningness does not allow her to stop. She gets solution for all her problems in the name of Harouni. But it changes as the old near his death. Harouni is seriously infected by a heart disease and there is no chance for him to recover from it. Harouni promises her to give a sum of amount to her to live her life after his death. But she demands half of his property. Harouni does not say a word to her and at one evening he dies. When Husna tries to get along with the car she is stopped at the middle indirectly pointing that she is nothing but the one among the servants.

As Husna prepared to get into the car, the general stopped her. "You need to be here. People will be coming to ask about him. He's probably going to be all right, but you should call Sarwat and others. Kamila should come back from New York. Have them call Rehana also."

Rehana, the middle child, had broken with K.K. when he separated from his wife. Husna

began to cry, shaking, and he stood back and looked at her shrewdly. “Don’t, this isn’t about you. Prepare yourself now. Remember who you are”. (Mueenuddin 132)

Husna tries to prepare herself for the upcoming situation. She has been sent out of her room. She has been made to stay outside the house.

Husna is treated as if she is a stranger. The daughters and son of Harouni does not have any concern about her. For the first two after Harouni’s death they do not give any importance and on the third day she has been called by her daughters. They get straight to the point,

My father allowed you to live in this house. However, he would not have wanted you to stay here. Tomorrow afternoon the car will be available to take you wherever you wish to be taken. I suppose you’ll go to your father’s house. There will be no discussion on the subject.”

She settled back, finished with the problem. (Mueenuddin 136)

Husna asks them whether Harouni told something about her. Kamila, the elder daughter of Harouni, replies with finality, “There was and is nothing for you”.

Husna has been deprived all her rights from Harouni because she demands half of the property of Harouni. But in return she hears only the harsh words of Kamila that, “Look whatever you had with my father is gone now. If you took care of him in these past months, you were rewarded. You’re young, you’ll find other things. You think that you’ll never heal, but you will, sooner than you think. Go on, go back to the annex” (Mueenuddin 136). At last she has been sent to the place from where she came.

Husna is the person who makes her solutions itself to be a complicated one. After reaching annex she is totally staggered. She is unable to think about her life. She understands the point that she has served Harouni with love and she now she decides to leave the place without any expectations. She

says that, “I came with nothing, I leave with nothing” (Mueenuddin 136). Now she feels that her total problems have been disappeared as she finds that the solution is within herself and not in the properties or the jewelleryes.

As Pat Riley says, “If you have a positive attitude and constantly strive to give your best effort, eventually you will overcome your immediate problems and find you are ready for greater challenges” (Riley 1), the protagonist Sohail, in the short story *Our Lady of Paris* with his positive attitude overcomes all his problems. Helen, Sohail’s girlfriend goes to Yale, Pakistan from New York. Sohail’s father is a farmer in Yale. He is hardly committed to his father’s work and he leaves him and moves to New York. The main reason for leaving the place is terrorism that is prevailing in the area. Even now he is not ready to come back to the place but because Helen insisted, he brings her to the place. He enters the place hoping that the place might have changed.

Helen, Sohail’s girlfriend wishes to marry him and for that reason only she wants to meet his parents. And on the other Sohail also have such an idea but he is too afraid that whether his childhood will have any influence over his life. In his previous visit to his motherland he is very much excited to tell about Helen to his parents. But as soon as they hear about her they are not in the mindset to accept her, “When he announced to his mother that he would be going to Paris for Christmas, to meet Helen, she pursed her lips but said nothing” (Mueenuddin 139).

At one-point Sonail’s mother accepts her as he keeps on insisting her to do so. But at the same time his decisions always surround his mother. Once his mother asks him to take her and his father to Paris to see the beauty of the place. She says brightly, “Only for a week, I know you’ll want to be alone. Do you remember when we were in Rome, how nice it was? Your father mentioned it just the other day, how much he’d liked that” (Mueenuddin 140). He is very careful and says that he does not even meet her for months together. He passes this comment as he thinks that his mother is making to

let out his relationship with Helen. He acquiesces but soon he realizes that soon he has to introduce Helen to his mother, in order to move the relationship forward.

Sohail's feelings for Helen is so intense which he cannot articulate to his mother. He grapples the situation somehow but at the same time he is so sure that it is not going to work out with his parents. For this reason, he cannot even unlock his feelings to Helen. The reason for his silent aberration is he himself. He is not in the position to say a word against his father or mother. His father Mr. Harouni heeds to the words of his mother even he is very much concerned about his life. After Sohail and Helen goes back to Paris, Sohail's parents also goes to Paris. They all meet in Sohail's apartment.

In Sohail's apartment, they started enquiring about Helen. First Helen has an interview by Mr. Harouni. His questions are concerning about Sohail's life. He starts hurting her by saying so,

Still looking into the fire, Mr. Harouni observed speculatively, "Sohail was very happy at Yale". He really was, Mr. Harouni. He's been happy as long as I've known him". She wanted to be straight with his parents as possible. She decided to press on, to maintain even this slight momentum of conversation. "His life in Pakistan is so different, at least from what I know. But he has an American side, what I think of as American. He's very gentle –I don't mean Americans are gentle, they're not. But it's easier to be gentle in a place where there's order. (Mueenuddin 144)

Helen does not try to disrespect Sohail's parents but at the same time she is not ready to lose her self-respect for Sohail. Whenever his parents console Helen to take him back to Pakistan she manipulates them that he has a better life in the place where he is staying.

Helen indirectly tells Sohail's parents that to leave him to take his decision which his parents are not ready to do so. Even Sohail wants that from his parents. On the other hand, Sohail's mother Rafik changes herself to the culture of Paris. Rafik is a famous beauty from a prominent, cultured



family. But she is interested more in attending dinners, polo and fashionable weddings. Most probably she prefers polos to others.

Shandur Polo Festival is an amazing festival celebrated by the tribes of Gilgit and Chitral in the northern areas of Pakistan. The tribes from the regions of Gilgit-Baltistan and Chitral meet at the Shandur pass every summer. The pass has a beautiful polo ground where a unique wild free-style polo is played between different teams of the region. The polo ground is adjacent to Shandur lake. The festival provides an amazing cultural experience in the Hindukush mountain ranges. (Shandur 1)

Even in choosing a game she prefers traditional one. She is from an orthodox family but now she is changing herself to the customs of other countries. But she is not ready to accept Helen as she wants her to change according to Rafik's customs. This makes the situation even worse.

Whenever Helen tries to speak, she is not allowed. Helen tries to speak out all she wants to. But as a mother-in-law Rafik wants to heed only fantastic words about her. Without any way Helen also do the same. Helen says,

Thank You. Rafia, then. I guess I just wanted to thank you for making Sohail what he is. He's been everything to me, he's been good to me. I think a lot of the things that he showed me, you showed him first. Just his way of looking at things, I mean, the good part of it. And books and pictures". She stopped. She could go further in being gracious. It was dawning on her that Rafia had driven her to say more than she wanted, and perhaps more than she meant. (Mueenuddin 158)

Rafia wants Helen to be a daughter-in-law as she wishes. Helen is stripped from her right to speech.

Helen even after all this happening accepted Sohail's parents as they are for him. Even Sohail does not like the behaviour of his mother. He asks sorry for the behaviour of his parents. But Helen leaves the place as she is hurt. Sohail consoles her and at last they both are united. Sohail understands her feelings and for the first time he gains the courage to talk to his parents. He is very much stubborn to marry her.

Helen and Sohail plans to visit the nearby place to celebrate Christmas. Helen too is very much excited to visit that place. But now as Sohail is not in the position to visit the place she understands him and decides to celebrate in Paris itself. Helen and Sohail comes to the conclusion that they cannot change their parent's mindset and so Helen accepted them as they are. She is also very much sure that her problems with Sohail's parents will be solved soon.

While they are returning to their place Sohail insisted to stop as he wants to see the beauty of the maze accompanied with rain. Sohail gets a relief and he come out of all his problems. At last, he finds the solution within himself.

"Look, I made it," he whispered, just audible. Almost with horror she watched him approach her, then stand in front of her, looking into her face, and she hardened herself to meet him, eyes dimming, seeing through him, willing herself to remember the centuries, the kings and their queens who had walked here, seen this river, this wet forest –and now their loves blown away, their pain. (Mueenuddin 165)

To make the point more ardent the short story *A Spoiled Man* is also included. This short story discusses about how the characters fight with their mentality to change the mentality of others. The characters prove that by changing an individual one can change the mindset of the whole clan. It also proves that change is the contagious thing. The change that happens in one character affects the other and the chain continues. The protagonist Razek is a sort of man who wants to live his life on his own.

He is very much particular about his possessions, he did not let others to take his own. He had a habit of living in his own movable house, he used to take it wherever he goes. The author did not portray him as a miser but a sort of.

Rezak's character quiet resembles Icarus, the Greek character. Greek myth comprises of more moral stories one among is the story of Icarus sparkling the famous idiom "don't fly too close to the sun". Icarus was the son of the master craftsman Daedalus, who were imprisoned by King Minos in an island. In order to escape Daedalus made a pair of wings made up of wax warning him not to fly close to the sun as the wax would melt and too close to the sea as it could wet. But Icarus did not heed to his father's word as he had been intoxicated by his first experience of flight, as in order to explore he flies too close to the sun and the result he drowned in the sea and died.

In the same way as Icarus, Rezak was given a little luxurious life by the land owners and also a wife of his own, but because of his foolishness he loses everything and at last he dies. This is because he was intoxicated by the words of others. The other servants of the house were jealous because of the importance given to Rezak by the land owners. This provokes others to plot against Rezak which shook his whole life. Because of their influence his attitude changes and he lose everything in his life.

Rezak is quite busy with his simple life. His only possession is his movable house. This house had become his home and consolation. Wherever he works he sets it up and then, he quarrels with the other workers or the boss and moves it back to whatever place his heart had set on next. In his view he lives an independent life. But he was actually not. He was not treated well by some of his land owners because they consider him as the lowest of all other men in the province. Rezak sometimes fought back but at last he accepts everything and moves out of the place. The bitter fact was that he was sent out from his native place but others were not. This made him a gypsy.

The protagonist of the short story lives a disastrous life. But even then, he enjoys each and every moment of his life and lives his life in a positive way. Finding solutions for a problem makes the person an optimist. In the above discussed short stories the protagonists turn themselves to be a sponge absorbing all negativity around them and spread only positivity to make an optimistic atmosphere. As the tree absorbs carbon dioxide and releases oxygen the protagonists also absorbed all negativity around and spread happiness.

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