



Postcolonial Responses to the Western Superhero: A Study though Indian

Nonsense Literature

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Abstract

The idea of a super-being has always existed in mythology/religion and the folklores of most cultures. However, the superhero figure, as we understand it in the modern sense, literally began with the birth of Superman in the American comic book industry around the 1930s during the time of the Great Depression. It has grown up in stages but has always been regarded as having set a standard model for the genre. India, too, was influenced by the immense popularity of the genre in the west and introduced them in the country through the Indian comic book industry. Beginning with translations of the western modes, followed by close imitations, it finally developed its own superheroes known for their marked difference from the central model. There

also exists a third bunch of superheroes under Indian Nonsense Literature, who neither emulate nor resist the western central model. Instead, they use their inherent subversive nature to bring about a rupture in the dominant centre by challenging its sanctity. My paper attempts to read this phenomenon through the nonsense superheroes of Putu and Vivekas the Great, to show how they bring about a collapse of the circle itself and do away with the centre-margin divide.

Keywords: Superhero, Comic Books, Nonsense Literature, Centre, Margin

Introduction

It was with great confusion that I had walked out of *Krrish 3* - the second instalment of Rakesh Roshan's *Krrish* superhero movie series. I was still not sure what exactly his powers were? The superhero fiction along with the archetype of the superhero, as we understand it in the modern sense, was established by American comic books from the 1930s to the 1950s. That does not mean that the comic book publishers invented the superheroes. It was rather imported from similar images of the super-being that has long existed in mythology/religion and folklores and had also seeped into literature. However, it was the change in the economic and the material condition that propelled the introduction of such figures as a definite type within the American culture, which marked the official beginning of this genre. More specifically, it was Superman, who introduced the archetype of a superhero - including the caped costume, a strong moral code, a secret identity to keep and an origin story. On top of that, the presence of enemies was also considered integral to the existence of the superhero, be it in the form of forces of nature, a corrupt system or foreign invaders.

Krrish has successfully internalised all these characteristics. He has a definite origin story which began with *Koi Mil Gaya*, where a boy with brain disabilities - incurred in a car accident - is healed by his friend Jadoo (which means magic) an extraterrestrial being. One does not realise the extent of these transferred powers until he becomes a father himself, where his able-bodied son inherits the powers that give him superhuman capabilities. On his first appearance, he can take giant strides, talk to animals and can lift heavy objects. The second movie, takes it a step further as we see Krrish doing a little of everything. However, he seems to be caught in between two opposite modes - one of emulating its western model and the other of departing and individuating. Caught between these two polarities, Krrish emerges as an exercise in improvisation, with an inconsistent show of invincibility and vulnerability. Why does he fly in some cases but chooses to jump in others, can comfortably lift the weight of an aeroplane in one but struggles to lift a truck in another, is beyond ones understanding. All in all, he emerges as a bad cross between a variety of sources, assimilated together both from the centre as well as the margins.

In closely following the growth of the Indian superheroes in the last few decades, from the likes of Krrish to Shaktiman, Captain Vyom to G-One - they emerge as sites of a marginal cultural production, mimicking and aping modes in the west. There has been a definite attempt at introducing Indian elements, like that of yoga in Shaktiman, the allusion to Vishnu's avatar Krishna in Krrish's name and the anglicisation of Vyom (which means the sky) and Jeevan (which means life) in G-One. However, it could be argued that the margin has never been able to completely escape the pull of the centre in spite of growing sensitivities and interventions aimed at a smoother exchange between the two. The banal lifts from western superhero genres has

mostly gone to reveal the continued lack of confidence of cultural productions, especially in the film or television media, in the margins.

On the other hand, we have also had characters like Batul the Great, Chacha Chaudhuri, Nagraj, Dhruva, Doga, Shakti, Devi, etc. popularized by the Indian comic industry, who fit into the genre with their own individualistic contributions. Although the comic industry in India, too, began as translations of western narratives, they soon evolved to create characters of their own that relied for the origin myth on Indian mythology and folklore. These characters, popularized by the Indian comic book culture and commonly read by children across the country, show a different and perhaps, a liberating vision of superheroes who are comfortably marginal. While on the one hand they do subscribe largely to the modes of the genre, they do so with a definite otherness, a strangeness which prevents their descent into mimicry.

However, among all these various types and kinds, there exists a unique margin within the marginal superhero culture of India, whose function has rarely been taken into account. They are the superheroes of the Indian English Nonsense Literature like Samit Basu's Putu or Kaushik Vishwanath's Vivekas. Through an engagement with such varied responses from the margin, where on the one hand we have cultural production aimed at mimicking the west, and on the other hand we have those which seek to insert an otherness, my paper will finally move on to this third category. The paper will aim at reading and decoding the functionality of these nonsense superheroes that have tried to approach the western modes of this genre with a definite individuality of its own. The aim will not be to explore how these superheroes utilise the subversive nature of literary nonsense to undercut the superhero genre. Rather it will attempt to show how in doing so the nonsense superheroes succeed in transcending such dualities and breaking down the centre-margin divide. It is through an exploration of this third response, that I

would like to propose a radically new way of engaging with dominating power structures, neither through concurrence or conflict, but by creating ruptures within this structure to destabilise the circle itself.

The Idea of a Super-being

The sense of a being much more powerful than a normal human has always existed in most cultures. There have been myths and legends along with various other folkloric characters all over the world which have fed into this whole idea of a super-being. Egypt, for one, is known to have chronicled the exploits of such beings, mostly godly in nature. The ram-headed deity Neph, thought to be the creator of man as well as the other gods with his super human powers, is also believed to be the oldest example of such a super-being to have guarded his identity behind the guise of Cnoupis the potter. The Greek culture's contribution to this genre was with their pantheon of the twelve Olympians, who had won their position by fighting off an even older race of super-gods known as the Titans. All such figures, however, were not gods. Some were humans with immense power who could stand up against the gods. There were others born out of the union between gods and humans - a demigod, who possessed some powers of the god. The figures of Perseus and Hercules, the demigods born out of the Greek culture, also strongly fed into the superhero figures. In fact, Hercules was the prime inspiration behind the creation of Superman. Other such examples are myriad across cultures, be it the Sumerian semi-divine but mortal King of Uruk or the Persian leader Husheng, Samson the Hebrew hero, China's Hou Chou, the Polynesian hero Mataora or our very own Rama-s and Krishna-s. Even the archangels from the Hebrew lore are considered to have been inspirations, with their individual powers which were used to salvage humanity.

Apart from this, various other medias also put together the idea of the super-being, building on older archetypes and moving towards newer imaginations. Folklores of various cultures are dense with such figures, prominent among them being the Robin Hood figure from the English tradition, an outlaw, whose prima aim in life was to loot the rich to help the power while protecting his identity behind his costume all the time. There was also a spurt of heroic and villainous characters from what is popularly known as the pulp fiction, cheap editions printed on pulp paper and aimed at the working-class readers. Be it the 'Penny Dreadfuls', the 'Dime Novels', the American short story magazines or the radio serials, there was a gradual build up of the caped crime-fighter in figures of Zorro, the Shadow, Doc Savage, the Spider and other such likes. The success of Zorro made way for the silent movies by Douglas Fairbanks, further cementing the image of the caped crusader. The early twentieth century also saw the introduction of figures like Tarzan by Edgar Rice Burrough, Buck Rogers by Philip Francis Nowlan, Conan the Barbarian by Robert E. Howard and Flash Gordon by Alex Raymond, which contributed in their own way to the genre. In literature, the idea was propagated through figures like the Scarlet Pimpernel, created by Baroness Orczy, initially presented as a play and then a novel. Radio produced the Green Hornet, while the Phantom was created by Lee Falk as a newspaper comic strip. The pulp fiction finally gave way to the comic book culture, which is where the superhero as we know him in the modern sense was finally born and eventually raised. So although the comic book publishers did not invent the superheroes, what they did was to channel the diverse influences of the classic superhero figure from mythology/religion to folklore to literature to radio/television/movies to the pulp magazines. Finally, it was with the rise of Superman in *Action Comics* #1 in the year 1938 that the all-conquering superhero genre was officially born.

The Rise of the Western Superheroes

The era of the birth of Superman is generally known as the Golden Age of comics which stretched on to the mid-fifties. Historically it was the time of America's Great Depression, when Jerry Siegal and Joe Shuster - two teenagers from Cleveland, created the figure of Superman from whom nearly all the other superheroes were born either as imitations or as a direct response. Both Siegal and Shuster were born to Jewish immigrant parents, attended the same school and struck up a close friendship which was primarily centred on their shared interests in science fiction, the pulps, the Fairbanks movies and the daily published newspaper comic strips. They started writing short comic strips and other stories much earlier where the germ of a Superman figure slowly grew up with each passing tale. Finally lying awake one night in 1934, Siegal struck on the inspiration of the first successful version of Superman by assimilating all the characteristics that were slowly growing up in their minds and stories. He remembers the moment as such:

I am lying in bed counting sheep when all of a sudden it hits me. I conceive a character like Samson, Hercules and all the strong men I have ever heard of rolled into one. Only more so. I hop right out of bed and write this down, and then I go back and think some more for about two hours and get up again and write that down. This goes on all night at two hour intervals, until in the morning I have a complete script. (Reynolds 102)

The kind of response that Superman garnered was something that even its creators had not anticipated. The American Depression had its own role to play, with his high rate of unemployment and poverty. There were drastic job cuts, as common man struggled with bankruptcy and homelessness. The other consequences included dearth of food which led to wide

spread malnutrition, increase in alcoholism, increased rate of suicides and a degrading state of education. All this led to mass migration and a rapid rise in the crime rate as the unemployed had no other way to fend for themselves other than stealing. In fact, Siegel's father was found dead after a robbery at his store - which the police reported to be a heart failure while the family suspected to be murder. It was popularly surmised by comic book writer Meltzar that Superman was born out of a little boy's grief over his father's murder causing him to create a bulletproof man. Whatever might have been Siegal's personal motivation behind the creation of Superman; he turned out to be the representative of common man in an era where they were left with no other agency other than these flights of fancy. This idea was further benefitted by the fact that the figure was the imagination of two kids belonging to a family of immigrants rather than any corporate agency. Hence, in his first incarnation, Superman was busy fighting the various social evils that had gripped America around that time, protecting common man from corrupt government, violence in domestic spaces and injustice. Plus, the comic books also provided an escape into an optimistic world where there was still some hope left, especially since it was also available at a cheap and affordable price. The impact of Superman was further used by its creators to make it into a moral centre for its young audience, making it essential for Superman to abstain from any acts of killing even if it be for the sake of justice.

The best part about this genre was that although it began as a response to the troubled economic times in America, its mutable nature made it easy for its creators to easily adapt to changing times and take up new challenges and cater to new audiences. So as the Second World War approached, the superheroes became patriotic centres. By the late forties-early fifties, the cold war had set in and stringent censorship laws were put into place accompanied by a severe decline in readership. When the world had just lived through the most horrible war in the history

of humanity, just survived a nuclear holocaust, it was difficult to bring back the superheroes to fight petty criminals. The impact of comics on young minds with its focus on disruptive elements like that of death, horror and violence, became subject of serious concern and also saw the rise of the Comics Code Authority. This gave rise to a new type of comic book featuring Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck, while the older ones like that of Superman, Flash and Green Lantern were reinvented. Women, teenagers and animals entered the superhero zone more prominently and the idea of a superhero league also developed. Elements of science fiction became more prevalent in the story plotline and the villains became super villainous.

It was only in the sixties that the superhero genre really broke free from the classic models and became more innovative with the imaginings of a more 'realistic' hero. The names of Stan Lee and Jack Kirby stand out as the driving force in this period with their creation of an original group of superheroes in the Fantastic Four rather than recycling older forms. They were not idealistic role models, but normal people with real-world problems who had accidentally acquired some extraordinary power. This was followed up by figures like the Incredible Hulk and the Amazing Spiderman and later the Iron Man, The X-Men and the Avengers. Thor was also an invention of this era, who despite being a Norse god has issues that he has to deal with. Although the seventies are identified as a period of lull with relative stagnation and decline but the genre reinvented itself again in the eighties and nineties with darker superheroes. Finally the twenty-first century saw the genre being adapted into movies that turned out to be really successful. These periodical ebb and flow of the superhero genre was mapped into distinct ages which began in the Golden Age and further stretched into the Silver Age (from the mid-fifties to 1970) to the Bronze Age (from 1970 to the mid-eighties) and finally the Modern Age (from the

mid-eighties to the twenty first century). The original superhero model, however, remained that of Superman and the ones which followed immediately like that of Batman and later Captain America, Wonder Woman and Captain Marvel, while the later superheroes were all born from them - be it as fan-fiction, imitations or challenges.

The Rise of the Indian Superheroes

Although, India has also had a strong history of super-beings as part of their rich folklore and epics, here too the superhero figure of the modern day made its debut through the Indian comic book industry. Comic strip in India made its appearance in the middle to late 1950s, mostly inspired by the western mode. At first, the newspapers borrowed the idea from the American and other Western newspapers, and reproduced it as translations of popular comic heroes like that of Tarzan, Phantom and Mandrake. First in line was Indrajal Comics, launched by the Times of India group from 1964, which majorly relied on translations of Western comic strips in its initial days. Around the same time in Bengal, Narayan Debnath created the character of Batul the Great for a children's magazine called *Shuktara*. Although he acquired superhuman powers only in the seventies, Batul, in some sense can be dubbed as one of the earliest superheroes of India. The late sixties also saw the birth of Amar Chitra Katha under Anant Pai, through which he applied the comic format to Indian mythology. Although, both these mediums popularized the superhero figure - be it through translations of the western modes or through reinvention of Indian mythic figures, the Indian superhero was still not born. It was not before the seventies that the Indian comic book industry caught up with the popularity of the genre in the west and sought to emulate it with indigenous intervention of its own. Indrajal came up with the character of Bahadur as created by Aabid Surti, while Diamond Comics (which began 1978 onwards and essentially with translations of the western superhero comics) introduced Pran's

Chacha Chaudhuri. However, it was Raj Comics who were the first to take advantage of the superhero genre in the modern sense of the term and recreate it in an Indian structure, from the mid eighties onwards. With an array of characters like that of Nagraj, Doga, Super Commando Dhruva, Parmanu, Bheriya, Tiranga, Shakti and others, it set the brought revolution in the Indian superhero domain.

Although trying to fit within the genre by following the western format in general, these characters also tried to make their mark by consciously moving away from this central model of reference with their marginal otherness. So, while majority of the classic western superheroes (leaving aside Batman) are shown to derive most of their powers from bodily strengths, the Indian superheroes emerge as others in their power source being situated in their brains. That does not mean to imply that the western superheroes are foolish but rather to stress on the fact that their physical strength far surpasses their mental abilities. Alternatively, for the Indian superheroes the key to their physical strength is by applying the power of meditation or that of their will and determination - all derived from exercising of the mental faculties. For example, Superman's power lies in his super human strength and endurance which is due to his alien origin, while Dhruva's power lies in his intellect, willpower and determination, which he exercises to build up his scientific knowledge and develop his skills in martial art and acrobats. Similarly, Doga's clever mind becomes his major asset, while his physical prowess is shown to be a result of extremely rigorous workouts in the gym. By combining the two he manages to harness his physical strength and endurance and develops quick reflexes like that of dodging bullets. The only superhuman strength that both Dhruva and Doga truly possess might be said to be in their ability to communicate with animals.

Secondly, while the physical power of the western superheroes might be naturally acquired through heredity (like Superman or Wonder Woman), or accidentally acquired through scientific experiments gone wrong (like Spiderman, Hulk or Flash) or due to a brush with gene altering cosmic rays experienced during interstellar journeys (like the Fantastic Four), the Indian hero has to labour over his body through the powers of will and determination and train himself in the arts of yoga or martial arts (like Doga or later Shaktiman), thus, harnessing their reflexes further. Otherwise, their physical powers are mostly from external sources in the form of costumes (like in the case of Parmanu) or mechanical bodies (like Inspector Steel whose only organ that is retained from his human body is that of the brain which operates his steel body) that make them achieve feats of super power. The idea is furthered stretched in Indian superheroes like that of Anthony or Super India. In Anthony, the body has to die for the soul to realise and exercise its invincible powers on the condition that it is kept outside the body - initially the original body and later when it is reborn in a different body it has to leave its new body at night to enter its old body to fight crime. On the other hand, Super Indian is not the original body at all but the clone of the original, implying that power can never be naturally present in the original body.

Moreover, while the superheroes in the western source find their origin myths in outer space or on alternate universes (like Superman), their Indian counterparts would rather find resources in earthly spaces and energies (heightened human faculties, animalistic powers or the power of the forces of nature). Either their additional powers come from animal gods like worshipped as part of the pagan culture like that of snakes (in the figure of Nagraj) or wolves (in the figure of Bheriya), or by channelling the force of one particular human emotion like that of the anger of a woman, which is worshipped in the form of Goddess Kali (in the figure of Shakti).

In some cases, even if they come from outside the earth, like that of Bhokal, his power lies externally in the power of 'Bhokal-Shakti' - the power of his teacher Mahaguru Bhokal. The power is not internal but has to be summoned by shouting 'Jai Mahaguru Bhokal' which gives Bhokal his physical strength and the weapons of a mystical sword and shield that belonged to his Mahaguru. He, too, possesses psychic powers which had come to him on wielding the weapon Prahara on his forehead in memory of its deceased owner who was also Bhokal's wife. The character of Gojo is also shown to be a mystical character born of a Yagya started by a highly respected priest - Hrishi Taptamukhi, who has to take within himself Gojo's spirit to fight the evil demons. If at all the superhero is shown to have inherent physical power, like that of Yoddha, it is also necessary to have him come from the heroic age of the ancient past to fight present evils making it impossible to imagine that such power can exist in any man in the present.

By creating such alternate discourses of superheroes who are comfortably situated in their marginal otherness, the Indian superheroes created a definite identity of its own. Their individualistic contribution to the genre lay in their respective origin myths which delved deep into the religious and tribal mythology of the country and gave an Indian touch to the figure. However, given that the classic point of reference remained the western model, the Indian model always tried to establish its individuality in alterity to the centre. In doing so, the Indian essence could only thrive by stressing on its existence as the other, failing to make a dent to the centre-periphery divide. In being built up as a response to the western mode, its creation remained centred around a western archetype, albeit in its alterity, and remained as marginal figures at the periphery. Even the later interventions in this genre, be it in the characters of Shaktiman, Captain Vyom, Krrish or G-One, little was done to alleviate this divide. Rather, all that it did was to

import few more elements from the western mode including the superhero's costume, along with other key elements from the western superhero narratives like that of his secret identity, love interest, journalistic links, scientific exploits and other such likes. In alterity or in imitation - the prime centre for the Indian model remains centred on the classic western model.

Nonsense Superheroes

However, there exists in India a third kind of superhero figure who tries to transcend the dual pull of the centre and the margin, thus providing an escape route from this vicious cycle. Born within a different genre altogether, these superheroes borrow from the central genre only to debunk it with the use of subversive mechanisms. These are the superheroes born within the tradition of Indian English Literary Nonsense, who have neither tried to ape the centre nor appropriate the margin but have rather toiled to do away with such simple dualistic models altogether. Nonsense has always avoided any clear cut definitions owing to its extremely overlapping nature. Its formal emergence is accorded to Victorian England, where it is surmised to have grown up mainly as a response to the overt didacticism in children's literature. However, owing to its subversive nature, it has been appropriated time and again by authors to suit their purposes, especially in modernist writing where it has been used in questioning reality, existence and the efficacy of language. Many critics have also seen it as close to parody, although it can be argued that nonsense does not exactly function like a parody. Rather, its motive is to transcend beyond a simple level of ridicule/criticism of the centre to debunking the centre altogether. That being the potential of Nonsense, what exactly happens when the superhero genre is appropriated within its mould? I will take up the definite cases of Samit Basu's Putu and Kaushik Vishwanath's Vivekas the Great, to study the functionality of these Nonsense superheroes vis-a-vis the centre-margin model.

Samit Basu's Putu, the superhero, made his appearance in print with "Putu is a Hero Now" in *This Book Makes No Sense: Nonsense Poems and Worse* published by Scholastic India. The poem situates Putu within the superhero genre, listing his qualities that qualify one as a superhero. However, in doing so he also ends up parodying every aspect of what the defined is defined by including the superhero's costume, his noble character, his dual identity or his superhuman powers. With the subversive nature of laughter, he pokes fun at the seriousness that is inspired by the superhero figure, thus trivialising the entire genre. In doing so, it becomes an attack on the dominant centre, thus, destabilising it. Paralleling Putu's seriousness to deal with trivial crises with that of the classic superhero's ventures, Basu creates an alternative way of engaging with the centre which shards it off piece by piece. He introduces Putu's debut as a superhero as: "Putu is a Hero now/Stop him if you can but how?" The heroic Putu has the gift of speed and strength that makes it difficult for others to stop him. However, in blatantly stating the basic premise which characterises this invincible figure, Basu also seem to expose the flipside of such a simplistic imaginative assumption. The genre is reduced into simplistic binaries, with good characters or bad. Within this scheme of things, the superhero is always the good guy. If at all there is a super-villain, the superhero will always act as an opponent and always win. However, what happens if suddenly the superhero wants to be the bad guy himself? When the all-conquering centre itself allows no force to be able to counter its superhero, how much space does it give to the marginal to emerge as countering forces?

Basu also brings the superheroic honour code to the forefront as his Putu, only bruises but never kills and always pays what is owed. Being a super-being functioning within man-made orders, makes the superhero an outsider. Given his basic disparity with mankind, he should have

his own set of rules and regulations. It is therefore quite scary in realising how the superhero has always been imagined to have subscribed to the western system of law and regulation, despite being outside the system. Despite being an outsider, why has no superhero ever come from a culture with alternate ethics where evil is good and good is evil? Does that not seem to expose the arrogance of a centre that leaves no scope for any other alternate system of life to thrive and believes that theirs is the only correct way to go about humanity? This further extends into the arena of the other marginal heroes, making their existences as a carnivalesque space that has no real power of resistance.

Basu further plays with the idea of how the genre has moved from having the superhero as a crime-fighter to him becoming the fashion centre. The costume of the superhero, with his underwear on top, has been the subject for much parody. Keeping with the tradition, Putu too wears 'underwear' and wiggles "like he just don't care".

Never worry Putu here

Striking pose and heart with fear.

For the superhero it is as important to 'strike a pose' and look heroic, as it is to swell hearts with fear. Through these images, Basu paints his Putu with the colours of vain glory that has increasingly come to define the superhero culture of modern times.

Moving further, Basu states how none of the villains stand any chance against Putu, be it Sinner Son or Demon Daughter or Super Squid from Underwater. he seems to also point out how the genre, which had started off as a response to the deteriorating material conditions of the Great Depression, has now gradually moved towards the meaningless fantastical. The superhero now goes about intervening in everything and anything, which are nothing more than a joke in

comparison to the real life corruption and social evils that he had been born to fight against. Today's superheroes are like medicines that can be easily purchased by anyone 'facing trouble' - be it something as random as having someone turning one's house to rubble, or someone stealing one's ancient treasure, or someone causing mere displeasure, or someone making life less simple, or someone playing with other's pimple or pinching one in the thighs, so on and so forth. The random order of things that the superhero is expected to accomplish - along with clubbing together the trivial with other serious crimes like that of 'robbing a local bank' or 'doing vulgar gesture' or 'setting off nuclear device' or indulging in terrorism' or 'delaying your application', further helps break down the seriousness of the central model. Through the use of the hilarious, Basu thus tears down the larger-than-life superhero icon that has stood in guard of the centre for so long.

Similar is the fate of Vivekas the Great, the superhero who is known to have "single-handedly conquered seven nations". Published in the same anthology, Vivekas makes his appearance in Vishwanath's story "Chandrabumps". In this fantastical story, Chandrabumps, the protagonist cannot retain his pants for long, for he claims that his "pants have run away" (Chandrabumps 31). His name, true to his plight, has the suffix of "bumps" hinting on the plight of others seeing him pant-less. The narrator, Vivekas the Great, the conqueror of seven nations, has now been entrusted with the job of making Chandrabumps wear pants. The putting together of a great deed (conquering seven nations) with a meaningless one (of making a man wear pants) totally undercut the 'Great-ness' of Vivekas. The story also touches upon the common man (the villagers) and the boundaries of decency as upheld by a society. The villagers are shown angst-

ridden over maintaining the society's "collective decency" in the presence of the indecent pant-less Chandrabumps.

Multiple attempts on Vivekas' part of buying new pants for Chandrabumps fails miserable as each time he is discovered naked from the waist down with the pants having 'run away'. Unlike real superheroes who take up each task without questions, Vivekas expresses his displeasure at having been entrusted with this minor task making the villagers scold him rather than Chandrabumps. This is rare in the history of superheroes that the common man has the power to scold him. The insecurity that Vivekas suffer from is also one of its kind as he is the only one who does not want to keep his heroism a secret but nobody seems to believe in him due to lack of proof. The only time when somebody does recognise him, Vivekas feels excited in his happiness. It is even more embarrassing for Vivekas when the villagers check his pockets to look for the conquered nations and find none, because going by the honour code of the superheroes, Vivekas has returned back the conquered nations. Vivekas tries to accomplish his task by taking Chandrabumps to a trouser-tamer who drowns herself when she fails at her task. Finally when Vivekas does catch someone who turns out to be a common trouser-thief:

"Why do you steal Chandrabumps's pants?" I roared.

"I come from a poor village where we have no pants," he blathered.

"Nonsense! An entire village without pants?"

"Surely, in your travels far and wide as a single-handed nation conqueror you must have come across some such village. Indeed, there is nothing a man as well-travelled as you could not have come across."

The boy had a point. I had seen all kinds of things in my travels, like three-humped camels, cheese-human hybrids, a village inside a fullstop at the end of a

book, a piece of music that could be seen but never heard, and a girl who could sneeze. However, as much as I racked my memory, I could not remember having come across a pantsless village. But to admit that to this young man would be to admit my ignorance.

“Hmm, yes, I have, in fact, come across a pantsless village,” I lied. I then decided to let him off with a stern warning. “If Chandrabumps’s pants ever go missing again,” I said, “I will hunt you down and make a banana out of your split and a split out of your banana.”

Vivekas, the nonsense superhero, seems to have inherited common human foibles like that of lying, making his status unique as a superhero. Further, unlike other superheroes with their larger-than-life actions, Vivekas' scolding seems to evoke laughter rather than fear. Despite all this, Vivekas is still unable to get back the trousers to Chandrabumps as they decide to run away on their own, refusing to go back.

But as I stooped down to pick up Chandrabumps’s trousers, they stood up on their own. “We will never go back to Chandrabumps!” the trousers said, speaking through the zipper.

Then they started to run from me. I grabbed at them, but they easily slipped out of the grip of my one hand. I gave chase again, but the trousers were too fast for me. “Why?!” I shouted after them, “Why won’t you go back to Chandrabumps?”, but my questions were answered only by the sound of trouser legs swishing in the silent night air.

The story ends with Chandrabumps ending his life out of frustration. Through the use of the subversive nature of laughter, Vishwanath's nonsense superhero thus, seems to completely reverse the purpose of the genre by being a complete failure. From being entrusted with an insignificant assignment to failing miserably at each little task, Vivekas seems to successfully undercut the notion of an invincible hero of an all-conquering genre.

Conclusion

Through the above examples, I would like to argue that the nonsense superheroes give us a radically new way of engaging with dominating power structures, which is neither through concurrence nor conflict. Rather, in rejecting the only two possible ways that the centre-margin model can provide - that of imitation or resistance, concurrence or conflict, it opens a third possible way of reading these structures. This third way uses the central model but only to do away with its sanctity and open up ruptures within the dominant core. In doing so, it not only does away with the centre but also its margin, thus, dissolving the entire circle itself. This is achieved by utilising the subversive spaces within literary nonsense that dares to dress itself in the dominant mode and also make fun of it. This is the only way that a marginal text can enter into a direct dialogue with its western model, engaging with it by making fun of them rather than emulating or resisting them. Through such techniques, the nonsense superheroes not only undercut the dominant superhero discourse but also manage to transcend beyond it, breaking down the centre-margin divide and providing the margin a scope to begin on an equal footing.

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