

## Philosophic and Aesthetic Principles of J.D. Salinger's Poetics and Means of Their Expression in the Book 'Nine Stories'

*Ayziryak Nailevna Tarasova*

Yelabuga Institute of Kazan Federal University, Kazanskaya street, 89, 423605, Yelabuga, Russia

**Abstract:** This article deals with the philosophic and aesthetic principles of J.D. Salinger's poetics and here different means of their expression in the collection 'Nine Stories' are investigated. The author bases on the traditional 'Dhwani-rasa' conception. For creating suggestive moods the author uses a definite set of artistic means.

**Key words:** Poetics • Compositional structure • Linguistic means • Symbol • Colour symbolism • Composition

### INTRODUCTION

The extensionality and multidimensionality of J. D. Salinger's prose gives us a scope for various interpretations of the book 'Nine stories', the book in the whole and each of its parts. The characteristic feature of Salinger's literary work is that he managed to connect the laws of ancient Indian poetics with the requirements of the modern literature and perspectives of a modern person [1]. Almost all critics noted the interest of the writer to religion, philosophy and oriental aesthetics in his works. Search of standards of love, goodness, perfect human contribute to his being called an idealist. And in this search Salinger appeals to the ideals of Indian philosophy.

Many critics have noted that the interest of Salinger to ancient Indian literature was caused by the works of the Sanskrit scholar Susheel Kumar De [2]. In his article 'Some problems of Sanskrit poetics' Dâ considered the Indian poetics from the point of view of modern aesthetics [3]. As the main problem of this article he outlined the issues of conformity of the form and content of a literary work. Old-Indian theorists believed that the content of any work must have two components – expressed by words and unexpressed one (i.e. implicit or suggestive) which were to merge into a unity. Only in this case the reader can understand the meaning of the work.

The aim of our article is to consider the means of expression of philosophical and aesthetic principles of J. D. Salinger's poetics in the book 'Nine stories'.

According to many critics, this series of stories has collected works than can be considered the most interesting and important ones for Salinger. In the very title of the book critics see echoes of religious provisions having a kind of a mystery. There exist different versions about the meaning of the number 'nine', for what reason the number of stories had made the cover of the book and what sense it makes. Our investigation mainly bases on I.L. Galinskaya's analysis of Salinger's poetics. As she noted in her book called 'Çããããëë èçããñòíüð éíëã', the methods of decoding were determined by means of consecutive study of the symbolic meanings of the number 'nine' within the oriental religious and philosophical doctrines [4]. This is due to the fact that during the analysis there were revealed a great number of categories from their arsenal presenting in Salinger's texts. So was discovered the key to a cipher, that is the concept of traditional Indian poetics 'Dhwani-rasa' related on one of the stages of its development with the number 'nine'.

According to one of its principles a literary work should contain one of three types of 'Dhwani' (this term as well may be called 'undermeaning'): either to assume a simple idea or to arouse an image of any semantic figure or to suggest the reader some poetic mood (i.e. 'rasa') [5]. Galinskaya maintains the idea that Sanskrit theorists had identified nine such poetic moods: 1) erotic; 2) humorous; 3) pathetic; 4) mood of horror; 5) heroic; 6) the mood of fear; 7) the mood of disgust; 8) the mood of surprise; 9) the mood of tranquility [6].

Chart 1: The correspondence of the stories, poetic moods and main feelings

Story	Mood	Feeling
'A Perfect Day for Bananafish'	erotic	love
'Uncle Wiggily in Connecticut'	humorous	laughter or irony
'Just Before the War with the Eskimos'	pathetic	compassion
'The Laughing Man'	mood of horror	anger
'Down at the Dinghy'	heroic	courage
'For Esmé – with Love and Squalor'	the mood of fear	fear
'Pretty Mouth and Green My Eyes'	the mood of disgust	disgust
'De Daumier-Smith's Blue Period'	the mood of surprise	revelation
'Teddy'	the mood of tranquility	repudiation

Thus Sanskrit theorists including S. De whom we have mentioned above distinguished nine poetic moods suggested by 'main feeling' [5]. As the traditional Indian poetics in the list of poetic moods has assigned to each of them their permanent position so the stories in the book 'Nine stories' are also arranged in the sequence with what poetic mood they embody (Chart 1).

So if we consider the stories through the 'dhwani-rasa' theory we can make a conclusion that in each of them there are the main mood and feeling which stick to the traditional classification.

The detailed analysis of the book 'Nine stories' made it possible to state that as the method of creating these moods the author uses a specific set of artistic means. They are specially developed story composition, various linguistic means and symbols including color symbolism.

Here we suggest a more detailed consideration of each of them. One of the most effective artistic means of creating a poetic mood is specially developed compositional structure of the story. Each story in 'Nine stories' has a special composite construction: parallelism, a story within another story, a frame composition. It is notable that the plot, the composition and the poetic mood that is created in a certain story are interrelated and interdependent. For example, Salinger successfully uses parallelism in his work 'Just before the war with the Eskimos'. For the analysis of this phenomenon we should appeal to the storyline. Ginnie comes to her friend Selena's place, where she meets with her brother Franklin, with a feeling of resentment. The rich Selena turned out to be petty and mean, as she grudged the money she owed to Ginnie. But after the acquaintance with Selena's brother Franklin she got overwhelmed with a sense of pity for that lonesome and depressed man. We see further that the feeling of resentment is replaced by the sense of pity. Then Franklin tells Ginnie a story that once pity forced him to take care of a poor poet, who afterwards robbed him and fled. Here comes the converse change of feelings, that is to say the sense of pity is replaced by offense. The

use of such a parallel image emphasizes the accent and contributes to revealing of the 'main feeling' - a feeling of compassion.

The following method is a story within a story, i.e. one storyline is attached into another one. In the story called 'The Laughing Man' the events from the life of the main hero John Gedsudski, his girlfriend Mary Hudson and the children are intertwined with episodes from the history of the Laughing man. According to the plot of the story the Laughing Man was very ugly that is why he always wore a mask made of poppy petals.

John's wards - including the narrator - loved, respected and took their teacher for a model, whereas the Laughing man was friends with the forest animals who did not consider him to be ugly. Here is an example:

'Every one of us, from the smallest hoodlum to the biggest, loved and respected him' [7, pp.67];

'There he befriended any number and species of animals; dogs, white mice, eagles, lions, boa constrictors, wolves. Moreover, he removed his mask and spoke to them, softly, melodiously, in their own tongues. They did not think him ugly'.

Also we can see the effective use of this method when the author narrates about the following situation. After John had a quarrel with his girlfriend, his feeling of tension grew and eventually resulted in aggression and harsh treatment of children. The reader can trace the same tendency in the Laughing man's behavior. In the beginning he was happy as well. But later his best friend - the wolf was killed and his anger turns into revenge.

The next no less important means of creating a suggestive poetic mood according to Dhwani-rasa theory is the use of various linguistic means. Throughout the series of stories the author uses the linguistic means conveying both the literal and suggestive meanings. Such verbs as 'to laugh', 'to shake', 'to smoke'; the derived forms of such nouns as 'blood', 'death'; the naval terminology may be referred to the linguistic means

conveying the literal meaning. While such means like alliteration, the images of the rain, the ocean and winter convey the suggestive meaning.

Thus, for instance, in the story 'Uncle Wiggily in Connecticut' the author renders a 'humorous mood'. At first the main characters laugh quite naturally, but then their fun turns into drunk hysterical sobbing and at first humorous mood of the story becomes ironic. The mood of irony and laughter is suggested by the repeated use of the verb 'laugh', with which we met in the course of analysis of the linguistic means. For example in the following sentences:

- 'Mary Jane laughed and put away her mirror' [7, pp.41];
- 'Mary Jane giggled' [7, pp.46];
- 'He was the only boy I ever knew that could make me laugh. I mean really laugh' [7, pp.46];
- 'Eloise laughed suddenly, from her diaphragm' [7, pp.47].

The whole story of the Laughing Man is written in a terrifying style. As the examples here we can mention the repeated use of the words 'blood', 'death': 'taste for the Laughing Man's blood' [7, pp.69]; 'his chin resting on his bloody chest' [7, pp.79]; 'eagle's blood' [7, pp.79]; 'what little blood he had left...' [7, pp.79], 'bloodstained ground' [7, pp. 80].

The abovementioned means that contribute to realizing the philosophic ideas of the author are closely connected with colour symbolism. The colour symbolism is introduced in two ways. The first method is successfully implemented by the inclusion of a certain colour into the text and its constant repetition. This or that colour was to arouse a certain mood according to the ancient Indian poetics. For example, blue in 'A Perfect day for bananafish', red in 'The laughing Man', grey in 'Pretty Mouth and Green My Eyes'. The second method of introducing colour symbolism is creating poetic images or pictures associated with a particular colour. Thus, the frost on the windowpane is associated with the white colour, for example, in 'Uncle Wiggily in Connecticut', the tobacco smoke reminds of the grey colour in 'Just before the war with the Eskimos'. The red colour is associated with constantly flowing blood throughout the story 'The laughing Man' and so on.

In the course of analysis of the first story, 'A Perfect Day for Bananafish' Salinger uses the epithet 'blue' several times in it.

The introduction of this colour, according to the ancient Indian symbolism, is an indication of an erotic mood. Blue color causes in the reader familiar with the ancient Indian poetry an association with a blue Lotus flower, which in mythology is one of the attributes of the God of love Kama [8]. We meet it in following episodes of the story:

- 'Well. How's your blue coat?' [7, pp.31];
- 'If there's one thing I like, it's a blue bathing suit' [7, pp.34];

Also it was revealed that Salinger succeeds in introducing blue colour by creating a poetic image of the ocean. The action of the story as well takes place on the oceanside. For example:

*'In the ocean room, playing the piano'* [7, pp.30]; *'Sybil was sitting insecurely on a huge, inflated beach ball, facing the ocean'* [7, pp.33]; *'The two started to walk down the ocean'* [6, p.35]; *'He looked at the ocean'* [7, pp.35]; *'Here comes a wave!'* [7, pp.37].

According to the ancient Indian poetics in the work of a satirical effect it was supposed to write about white colour. In the story 'Uncle Wiggily in Connecticut' this condition is met. The action takes place in the cold season when the street is covered with ice and snow.

*'Eloise, dropping her cigarette on the soiled snow underfoot, said she didn't actually know but that Mary Jane didn't have to worry much about getting one'* [7, pp.39];

*'Outside, the filthy slush was visibly turning to ice'* [7, pp.41];

- *'It's getting so icy out'* [7, pp.41];
- *'I mean it's getting so terribly icy'* [7, pp.45].

In the story 'Just before the war with the Eskimos', the colour symbolism is entered through the creation of a poetic image of tobacco smoke, causing associations with grey. According to the Sanskrit theory, this colour is dominant for 'rasa-3', the feeling of compassion. In two episodes of the story he author mentions the grey colour.

- *'Ginnie handed him a box of matches from the table beside her. He lit his cigarette without straightening out its curvature, then replaced the used match in the box. Tilting his head back, he slowly released an enormous quantity of smoke from his mouth and drew it up through his nostrils. He continued to smoke in this 'French-inhale' style'* [7, p.60].

- *'He paused to drag on his cigarette and exhaled the smoke in a thin, sibilant stream from his mouth'* [7, pp.64].

For realization of the effect of wrath in a literary work the domineering colour should be red. The dominance of red in the fourth novel of the collection of stories is present. One of the most striking examples of this can be a red gossamer mask of the Laughing Man, under which he is hiding his face: *'...as long as he kept his face covered with a pale-red gossamer mask made out of poppy petals'* [7, pp.69]; *'...the first thing I chanced to see was a piece of red tissue paper flapping facilities in the wind against the base of a lamppost. It looked like someone's poppy-petal mask'* [7, pp. 80]. In addition, for the introduction of color symbolism, the author uses the lexeme 'heart' in the text, which can serve as a means of creating associations with red color: *'mother's heart'* [7, pp.71]; *'mediocre heart'* [6, pp.71]; *'heart beating loudly'* [7, pp.78]; *'heart-rending'* [7, pp.79]. The dominant color in the tenth story 'For Esmé – with Love and Squalor' must be the tenth color - black. Gloomy weather and the darkness in the room of Sergeant X create a poetic picture having an association with black color: *'It was about ten thirty at night...'* [7, pp. 102];

- *'It's spooky in here, for Chrissake'* [7, pp.104].

The analysis of J. D. Salinger's collection 'Nine stories' suggests that in the outlook of the writer his artistic and philosophical vision of the world in the spirit of the ancient Indian teachings is closely connected with the highest achievements of world culture [9]. The philosophical and aesthetic principles of his works are based on the Oriental poetic canons. Each story of the book contains some kind of aesthetic mood. In the analysis of the book it was found out that as the means of their expression Salinger uses a certain set of artistic methods. For example, the linguistic means conveying both literal (verbs like 'laugh', 'shake', 'smoke'; the derivational forms of the nouns 'blood', 'death'; naval

terminology) and suggestive meaning (alliteration, the image of the rain, the image of the ocean, banana). These means are closely intertwined with the compositional construction of the stories and colour symbolism. Thus, we can conclude that the use of all these means contribute to realization of J.D.Salinger's philosophical and aesthetic ideas expressed in the book 'Nine stories'. With the help of them the author shows the opposition between contradictory characters and phenomena. He appeals to the Indian philosophy in search of some ideal on which people can rely on in the world of moral values that are, as the author thinks, falling into pieces [10].

## REFERENCES

1. Zverev, A., 2004. Salinger: the longing for sincerity. The official site of J.D. Salinger's creativity. Date Views 30.01.12 salinger.Narod.ru/Texts/\_Zverev-Salinger.htm.
2. French W. and D.J. Salinger, 1988. N.Y. Date Views 12.04.2013 www.enotes.com/topics/salinger/critical-essays.
3. De S.K., 1959. Some Problems of Sanskrit Poetics. History of Sanskrit Poetics. Calcutta. pp: 273-274.
4. Galinskaya, I.L., 1986. The mystery of well-known books. Nauka, pp: 128.
5. Keith A.B., 1928. The History of Sanskrit Literature. Oxford. pp: 575.
6. Galinskaya, I.L., 2007. Salinger's cryptogram. Date Views 25.09.13 vm.msun.ru/Litsalon/Galinska.htm.
7. Salinger J.D. 1982. Nine Stories. Moscow Publishers. pp: 438.
8. The secrets and the colour of 'Nine Stories'. Mir culture, 2010. Date Views 4.02.2013 www.m-kultura.ru/selindjer-devyat-rasskazov.
9. Hassan, I., 1963. Almost the Voice of Silence: The Later Novelettes of J. D Salinger. Wisconsin Studies in Contemporary Literature. pp: 5-20.
10. Gwynn, F. and J. Blotner, 1958. The Fiction of J. D. Salinger. Pittsburgh University Press. pp: 59-63.