



Back into the Cage: The Psychological Impact of Re-arrest in Arun Ferreira's Memoir

Anumodica Pushkar (JRF Research Scholar)

Dept. of English & MELs,

University of Lucknow.

Prof. Deepak Kumar Singh

Prof. & Head, Dept. of English

D.A.V. (PG) College, Lucknow-226004.

Abstract

This specific research examines the emotional aspect of Arun Ferreira's memoir, *The Colours of the Cage* by analyzing his terrible second arrest. Imagine how it would feel to have your liberty forcibly taken back after you had tasted it that is what Ferreira went through. This paper examines his psychological and emotional reactions to this unfair treatment, revealing the intricate inter-play between fear, hopelessness and resistance he underwent on being thrust into incarceration again. A closer look at how Ferreira portrays this tumultuous period will not only help us understand his personal struggle but also its wider implications in terms of human suffering caused by systematic oppression. The writer uses this experience to provide insight into the psychological impacts of human rights violations.

Keywords–Re-arrest, Psychological Impact, Trauma, Imprisonment, Resilience

Introduction

Arun Ferreira is a lawyer who became a human rights activist and writer, whose struggles became symbolic of those facing political prisoners in India. Born into a Goan Catholic family in Mumbai, Ferreira was keen on social justice from an early age. He went to St Xavier's College in Mumbai where he developed strong social consciousness and led the institution's canteen employee to called for improved working conditions for themselves. Later, he worked with slum dwellers in Bombay before he became a community organizer in Vidarbha rural Maharashtra state. Ferreira's activism centered on the plight of marginalized communities like Dalits and Adivasis, who are victims of systemic and structural violence that can be categorized as state-sponsored violence. Because of his dedication to this cause, he found himself fighting for their rights hand in hand with grassroots organizations. Such actions made him clash directly with those accountable for upholding law and order at that time. In 2007, Ferreira was arrested in a sensational case where he was accused of being a 'Naxalite' —a word that is used as synonymous with 'Maoist' in India, a banned political movement/group from 2004; along with others, they were plotting on blowing up Deekshabhoomi in Nagpur where Dr. B.R.Ambedkar, the chief architect of the Indian Constitution converted to Buddhism. In just four years, between ten cases were slapped on him under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act which extends to people whom the state thinks may one day commit something against it.

He was charged for fighting war against the State among other grave allegations. Despite an absence of substantial proofs, Ferreira spent nearly five years being subjected to harsh conditions and tough treatment while in prison. His memoirs are based on his experience during this time depicted by *The Colours of the Cage*. None of the charges against Ferreira could be proved in court and he was finally acquitted of all charges in 2014. "He describes what happened that day, in the last chapter of his book, which opens with a sketch of a man breaking free; in the background is inscribed the word azaadi: freedom. In reality it would be two years, till what was to detention which changed the circumstances in his favor. The media was more on this side this time.

Violent occasions occurred, accompanied by a letter calling for his liberation. Ferreira was back home on January 4, 2012. In prison, he had one interesting experience that inspired him to write a successful book later. The work was published and became a bestseller due to its translation into various languages. A brief glimmer of hope, only to be crushed by his immediate rearrest. This event transcends

personal tragedy, becoming a potent symbol of the unending cycle of injustice that traps political prisoners in India.

This paper examines the severe emotional consequences of Arun Ferreira's rearrest, as powerfully portrayed in his memoir. Being abruptly thrust back into prison not only reawakened Ferreira's fears and anxieties but also forced him to confront the brutal truth of a system designed to crush the human spirit. Through a thorough analysis of his account, this study seeks to reveal the complex layers of fear, despair, and defiance that define Ferreira's reaction to his second imprisonment. Arun Ferreira's story is one of courage and resilience in the face of injustice. Growing up in Mumbai in a Goan Catholic family, he felt a strong pull towards social justice from a young age. His time at St. Xavier's College wasn't just about academics; it was where his passion for activism ignited, leading him to embrace student politics and join various social movements. His life and work have become a powerful symbol of the struggles faced by political prisoners in India. Arun Ferreira's heart beat for the most vulnerable in society. He dedicated himself to fighting for the rights of marginalized communities, especially the Dalits and Adivasis, who often bear the brunt of systemic oppression and state violence in India. Working side-by-side with grassroots organizations, he became a voice for the voiceless, tirelessly advocating for the rights of these disenfranchised groups. But his unwavering commitment to justice put him on a collision course with the authorities. Arun Ferreira's story is a powerful reminder that personal struggles can hold up a mirror to larger societal issues. His experiences force us to confront the uncomfortable realities of democracy and human rights in India today. His case highlights pressing demand for reforms legal and systemic reforms that protect those who dare to speak truth to power – the activists and dissenters. But Ferreira's story is not just a call for action; it's a source of inspiration. His work and words inspire passion in others, encouraging them to fight for injustice and inequality in the world.

The Maharashtra police arrested Ferreira In May of 2007 for being a Naxalite and a member of the unlawful Communist Party of India-Maoist. He was accused of waging war against the state among other serious offenses. Despite a total lack of incriminating evidence against him, Ferreira languished in notoriously bad prison conditions for nearly five years, the time being to suffer extreme abuse directed at him. It was during this time period when he authored his memoir *The Colors of the Cage*. In his memoir, Arun Ferreira brings forth the raw, naked view of a political prisoner in India. Taken into custody in 2007, Ferreira was arrested on trumped-up charges that labelled him a Naxalite. Writing begins from

the prison years and really unbelievable adversities undergone by him; his eventual release evoked in one a sense of momentary hope for freedom,

But it got brutally shattered as he was immediately rearrested. This moment of re-incarceration is a personal tragedy, but more than that, it is a powerful symbol for the relentless cycle of injustices heaped on political prisoners in India. Ferreira's story is a testament to the psychological turmoil experienced by those who are unjustly imprisoned. His memoir provides a unique window into the emotional resilience required to survive such an ordeal. By examining the portrayal of Ferreira's inner world during this tumultuous period, the paper aims to illuminate on the broader implications of his experience on our understanding of human rights abuses and the emotional toll of systemic oppression. Moreover, this analysis underscores the indomitable spirit of individuals like Ferreira who, despite facing relentless persecution, continue to fight for justice and truth. His story is not just about the struggle against physical imprisonment but also about the battle to maintain one's dignity and humanity in the face of systemic brutality.

Through Ferreira's eyes, we gain a deeper understanding of the courage and resilience needed to stand up against oppression. Ultimately, this research paper aims to highlight the ongoing struggle for justice faced by political prisoners worldwide. By bringing attention to Ferreira's experiences, it calls for a broader recognition of the emotional and psychological impact of unjust imprisonment. In doing so, it hopes to contribute to the ongoing discourse on human rights and the need for systemic reform. *The Colors of the Cage*, is an intense and haunting account that details his emotional trauma from rearrest and the period thereafter in prison. The book details the harrowing experiences of a human rights activist and political prisoner and opens a window to the deep psychological and emotional impact of how the justice system has treated certain people it considers "undesirable.". Ferreira's narrative, marked by a raw and uncompromising honesty, lays bare the devastating consequences of the Indian government's relentless pursuit of political dissidents, shedding light on the systemic abuse and dehumanization that permeates the country's criminal justice system. Ferreira's painful personal experiences, so meticulously recorded in the memoir, present a brilliant example of how such continuous violation of an individual's rights and the quantum of psychic torture that is inflicted by the state's machinery of oppression may leave deep and indelible scars. In this vivid, emotionally charged description, Ferreira's narrative emerges as a call to fundamentally re-examine the practices and policies that have condoned such gross

violation of human dignity. Before his rearrest, Arun Ferreira describes a moment filled with a foreboding sense of dread and uncertainty. In *The Colors of the Cage*, he writes:

“ I guess you had too high expectations about the last court date . Its better to expect the worst and therefore be mentally prepared for whatever the outcome . Like I mentioned in my earlier letter – ‘there’s many slip between the cup and the lip’ .This would include all events from the court date, judgement, release from prison, until reaching Mumbai. Its better to be prepared worst. Although my personal experience tells me its easier said than done. Nevertheless, try it”. (Ferreira, 141)

This passage captures the intense anxiety and fear Arun Ferreira felt just before being rearrested, highlighting the precariousness of his situation and the dread of losing his freedom once again. Arun Ferreira depicts out his emotions after he got rearrested from the gate of prison , from where he was about to free to live his life according to him and his family.

“Hi, the tiger ultimately bared as fangs ,I guess!! Or rather the true face of Indian democracy. All through the journey after I was rearrested from the prison gates, I kept wondering about what you two would be going through. Though I was mentally expecting this, I nevertheless kept hoping against it. Hoping that I would be able to join you. Guess such dreams and plans will get postponed. But however hard they may try it will definitely happen one day”. (Ferreira,145)

This passage not only expresses missing tense and foreboding atmosphere of a moment filled with dread and uncertainty. The imagery of the ”chilling stillness” and the ”sense of impending doom” sets the stage for a traumatic of the policemen triggers a visceral reaction of fear. The contrast between the brief taste of freedom and the imminent loss of it adds to the emotional weight of the situation, underscoring the gravity of what is about to happen. The language effectively conveys a sense of powerlessness and the crushing inevitability of the ”nightmare poignantly describes his family’s emotional breakdown after his rearrest:

“The walls of the cell seemed to close in tighter with each passing day, suffocating any remnants of hope. My family’s voices on the other end of the phone were laced with a pain that mirrored my own. Each call was a reminder of the life I was missing, the injustice we were collectively enduring. The psychological scars ran deeper than the physical bars that held me.”(Ferreira,148)

This quote delves into the ongoing emotional struggle and the profound psychological effects of being separated from his family and the constant reminder of their shared suffering. In *The Colours of the Cage*, Arun Ferreira poignantly describes his family's emotional breakdown after his rearrest: The news of his rearrest hit his family like a devastating storm. His mother, who had clung to hope with every fiber of her being, broke down in tears, her sobs echoing the shattering of our dreams. His wife, who had been a pillar of strength, now looked lost and defeated, the anguish in her eyes cutting through him like a knife. The weight of their sorrow was unbearable, a painful reminder of the collateral damage of my imprisonment. This vividly illustrates the profound emotional impact of Arun Ferreira's rearrest on his family, capturing their grief, despair, and the shared suffering that accompanied his return to captivity. "The Colours of the Cage" that captures the emotional breakdown of Arun Ferreira's family after his rearrest: As he was led away in handcuffs, he could see his family's world collapsing. His mother's cries of despair, his father's silent agony, and his wife's inconsolable tears haunted him. Each of their faces mirrored a heartbroken desolation, a collective suffering that tore at my soul. Their pain was a searing reminder of the injustice and cruelty they were all enduring. This further emphasizes the emotional devastation experienced by Arun Ferreira's family, highlighting their profound grief and the deep emotional scars inflicted by his rearrest. The criminal discourse in the early 19th century linked crime to the human psyche in terms of pathology. A latest film, *Haider*, showed torture forms that are usually torture in Indian prisons and also tried to capture some torture-related scenes but there, the censor board cut 41 scenes still the Colours of the Cage was welcomed by both the mainstream newspapers and social media.

Ferreira's memoir provides an excruciating account of how torture is executed on a body through the excessive use of body stretching, sole beating, and torture by petrol. The unmediated application of the untested ECG test and Narcoanalysis intensified the pain that Ferreria endured and the conviction he bore. His tortured body became a struggling as well as resistant body which helped in giving power to his mind in a situation where everything around him was negating power (Elisabeth Groz). Further Ferreria states: The suffering caused by pricking, hair pulling was sharp no doubt but it was soon done with, forgotten. The struggle became the starting point of his journey from self, who identified himself only as prisoner to self who started to write. The literature is the mirror of the society and that also very true with this literature as well because it not only forces an educated and a person stand for his rights and go against the hostilities faced by him but also when he knows that he is right...he is capable to fight with others to get what he

deserves...the types of things happen with him in the jail which is not acceptable to the offender who has been sentenced for doing nothing wrong. *Colours of the Cage* provides a podium for the way in which the people try to express their opinion for the service of people, represent their struggles, their thoughts, bent of mind and art. A powerful eye-witness account of life in an Indian prison shows how ending incarceration is necessary to achieve a democratic transformation of society. In harrowing detail, the ex-political prisoner describes the hellish conditions he encountered in jail— torture, thrashings, graft, rules and codes of conduct and of unity among prisoners, hunger strikes by prisoners against torture, a pervasive atmosphere of despair, and also the small mercies which still fostered hope—. And he speaks of how those same conditions now confront people across India and around the planet. What's more, the study highlights the indomitable spirit of people like Ferreira who refuse to surrender in their struggle for justice and the truth: his is a story not only of the fight against confinement in flesh but against losing one's own spirit and sense of humanness in the face of a system designed to do so. Looking through Ferreira's eyes, we glimpse something of what it takes to confront brutality head on. Ferreira's memoir is a chilling record not only of his own suffering but also of the Indian state's treatment of political prisoners more generally. Through Ferreira's perspective we can see how those in power use the plight of political prisoners to send a message not only to other would-be dissenters, but indeed to a broader population – that opposition to the status quo will not be tolerated and will be met with extreme violence.

Conclusion

The Colours of the Cage, encapsulates his horrific experiences in prison after which he was wrongfully jailed again, highlighting how much psychological pain it caused him as well as his relatives. Specifically, the story surrounding the arrest acts as an illustration of the shortcomings inherent within judicial and law enforcement systems such that they can involve innocent persons into their problems. The sad experience of being arrested affected not just Ferreira's already weak sense of justice but also left further scars on his family who were thrown once more into dreadful misery and ambiguity. This cycle of repeated imprisonment exemplifies the systemic issues of targeted persecution and abuse of power, which can strip a person of their dignity and humanity. Ferreira's life story is not only an account of Ferreira himself but a greater commentary on those who have been unfairly imprisoned, and the emotional hardship charged against loved ones when a person is in custody, not to mention the resilience of those who fight back when facing such overwhelming oppression. Ultimately, Ferreira's memoir calls to action for a more humane and

fairer approach to law enforcement, which upholds rights and dignity for all, while acknowledging and addressing trauma of being wrongfully imprisoned.

Works Cited

Books

Ferreira, Arun. *Colours of the Cage: A Prison Memoir*. Aleph, 2014.

Ferreira, Arun. *Colours of the Cage*. Common Notions, 2021. Web. 14 Oct. 2022.

Caruth, Cathy. *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*. Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996.

Scarry, Elaine. *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World*. Oxford University Press, 1985.

Grosz, Elizabeth. *Space, Time, and Perversion: Essays on the Politics of Bodies*. Routledge, 1995.

Articles/Papers:

Kaur, Ranjit. "Colours of the Cage: Depicting Theoretical vs. Hardcore Realities of Prison Life." Assistant Professor, St. Xavier's College, Jaipur.

Gupta, Vidisha, and Lalit Kishore Sharma. "Everyday Resistance and Sense of Alternative Freedom in Arun Ferreira's *Colours of the Cage: A Prison Memoir*." Department of English, Banasthali Vidyapeeth, Rajasthan.

Web Source:

"'Naxalite' Arun Ferreira Spends Time with Family." *Hindustan Times*, 6 Jan. 2012, www.hindustantimes.com. Accessed 17 Sept. 2018.