

# Portrayal of Social Realism in Sherman Alexie's Flight

<sup>1</sup>Jahanavi Anand, <sup>2</sup>Harpreet Kaur

<sup>1</sup>Research Scholar, Department of English, Chandigarh University, [jahanavianand18@gmail.com](mailto:jahanavianand18@gmail.com)

<sup>2</sup>Associate Professor, Department of English, Chandigarh University, [Hapreetoor.uila@cumail.in](mailto:Hapreetoor.uila@cumail.in)

## Abstract

Realism is a way of composing that provides the sensation of recording or 'reflecting' genuinely a real lifestyle. The principal source of the subject is crafted by friendly authenticity and is comprised of issues related to human existence, the works, musings and activities of people, who are battling for his or her privileges in capitalist, rather than communist nations. Social Realism includes individual, social and aesthetic changes in all circles of human existence with complexities and subtleties. Realities are identified with family, the class, the wedding, the governmental issues, economy, profound quality, religion, and instructive principles. It relates all the more to friendly corrections and social maladjustments like joblessness, youth distress, lawlessness, war, and their causes and punishment. Sherman Alexie was brought into the world in 1966. He is a Novelist, story author, artist, and movie producer. His works draw on his encounters as an Indigenous American with the family from a couple of clans. The motivation behind this paper is to look at Sherman Alexie tale flight (2007). It is written within the primary individual, from the attitude of a Native American youthful grown-up who calls himself Zits, "a time traveling murderer." Zits is an encouraged kid, having spent most of his life moving from one aggressive or foul family insight to a different, and as a biracial individual with Native American fall.

**Keywords:** Social realism, cultural changes, indigenous American, mass murderer, youth unrest.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Writing has many great strings which can weave an excellent piece of art. Each string has its own importance in the innovative work. Similarly, there are distinctive story methods for the depiction of writing. Among the account procedures, realism, in writing, is a push towards that endeavor to depict existence without glorification or romantic subjectivity. This paper will examine the novel of Sherman Alexie's excursion to underscore a reasonable image of the Native American in the light of ordinary social issues to introduce a social problem with Native Americans within the assembled province of America. Native American literature is the traditional oral and written literature of the native peoples of America. These include ancient hieroglyph and

pictographic writing of Middle America as well as a good set of folks, myths, and oral histories that were transmitted for hundreds of years by storytellers which survive on the language works of many present-day American Indian writers. Native American Literature starts with what is classified as "Oral Literature." Oral Literature can incorporate fantasies, legends, tunes and drones, and even talks. Moreover, the oral literature was formed and expected to be heard as they wanted to celebrate the glory of their rich culture and heritage, but they were deprived of even the basic necessities, which gave rise to many social issues and problems. Thus, felt insecure for their land, tribe, and traditions.

## 2. Meaning of social realism

The term social realism was the mixture of the two different terms one social and the second is realism. The principal source of the region being talked about is crafted by social realism and is comprised of issues related to human existence, the phrase "social realism" refers to work by painters, printmakers, photographers, writers, filmmakers that seeks to bring attention to the genuine social-political situation of the working class to challenge the power structures that sustain these situations. It shows existence with the real world, precluding nothing revolting or harming and admiring nothing. Social realism includes social changes in all circles of human existence with their points of interest and realities identifying with family, the gathering of students, the marriage, the school, the legislative issues, economy, profound quality, religion, and instructive standards. Social Realism is a sharp understanding of the social conditions. Realism isn't a narrow viewpoint that is restricted to any specific century or group of writers. The eighteenth- century works of Daniel Defoe, Henry Fielding, and Tobias Smollett are among the soonest instances of authenticity in English writing. In nineteenth- century this movement was started by French novelists like Flaubert also as well as Balzac. Social realism is coined by Henry James in his literary work during this scholarly methodology of writing; an essayist is recognised of the essential reality while portraying a piece of workmanship. It is an inventive movement which focuses on the social injustice, social discrimination, and economic backwardness, and struggle of working- class protagonist.

## 3. Introduction of Sherman Alexie

Sherman Alexie (1966-) is one among the notable Native American authors of the 21st century. Alexie is outstanding for his intense portrayal of the indifferent realistic societal setup. He has become a postmodern voice in the suffering quest for Native American social reality and social character. Alexie's works show miserable humor, the unexpected impact

of liquor addiction, self- destruction, inappropriate medical services, joblessness, racial class that soak human existence on the booking just as the resentment that rises out of the bending and destruction of a genuine character of the Native American. He is a Novelist, short story author, writer, and producer. His compositions draw on his encounters as a native American with a plunge from several tribes, grew up in Spokane Indian reservation.. His first novel, *Reservation Blues*, received a 1996 American Book Award. In 2010 Alexie was granted the PEN/Faulkner grant for his short story assortment "war Dances". In 2005, Alexie turned into an establishing board individual from Longhouse Media, a non-benefit affiliation that is committed to educating filmmaking abilities to Native American youth and utilizing media for social appearance and social change. Alexie's work has been generally obtained as an highly imaginative and sensibly intelligent author. His verse, short story, and fiction have been lauded by pundits, researchers and commentators for the reasonable depictions of the Native-American encounters. Alexie might want to perceive social reality of his age. The heroes, in a large portion of his artistic works, display a constant battle with themselves and their feeling of sadness and despondency in the white American culture. Alexie, through depicting his masculine and feminine characters, desires to show a basic part of social realism with the end goal of making cognizance of his local area and society.

## 4. Social realism in Sherman Alexie's literary works

On the sour possibility that when we study the theoretical works of Sherman Alexie, we can understand that social realism has been affected in a large portion of his compositions, particularly, short stories and books. Alexie wants to depict a sensible picture of the social truth of postmodern age through making characters, plot development, and subjects. Alexie wants to emphasize his unassuming nature towards the social issues of his region. What he wants to impart to individuals of the

postmodern time is, likewise valid for any nation of all ages. As desires, this accommodation is set up to acquire social authenticity of Alexie's age with the goal that we can get an obvious view of mental contentions of aboriginals. Alexie never expounds on anything hallowed, and he wants to introduce how local individuals live in the postmodern world. He has excelled in expounding on terrible things and shows the best and haziest climate. Even though Alexie's works depends on regular's genuine achievements of the Native American culture, he utilizes a creative mind in his works of fiction. For instance, the novel, *Flight* is no time like the present voyaging and its principle character changes into various chronicled characters. Alexie's compositions are to clarify the tendency of Indians in the present American culture and to show his vanity of turning into an Indian. Alexie's works contain his own social practical decisions. In such a manner, we can epitomize *Flights* features a cruel snare of the white society. Most of his compositions focus on issues like despair, destitution, liquor abuse, chronic drug use, racial boisterous and estrangement in the present society and the hunt of one's social character, strains between the white and indigenous group with the components of prejudice and sexual persecutions, particularly between racial among Indian and non-Indian individuals.

### **5. Development of individuality in Sherman Alexie's *Flight***

Zits, the hero of Sherman Alexie's *Flight* (2007), a 15 years old is mutt Native American young person who has significant issues in characterizing his personality and discovering his place in present-day American culture. An absence of parental oversight and the lack of affection of the child care framework transforms him into an irritated and useless young fellow who is carried near savagery. This metaphorical excursion through history permits Alexie — and Zits—to delve profoundly into the thought processes behind clashes that may clarify the predicament of Native Americans today. Time-traveling

demonstrates a productive unreliable gadget that helps the writer — and his pursuers—to investigate these verifiable crossroads from unusual perspectives to perceive what official records have disregarded or neglected.

“Call me zits Every day call me zits. That 'not my real name off course. My real name isn't important”

Initially many lines of the novel investigate promptly zits' battle with personality, a significant topic of the story. The narrator and protagonist of the story, Zits, experience a journey of the mind. Before this journey, Zits is depicted as an angry, unloved youth who runs as soon as he does not feel in control of his environment, especially in his foster homes. In jail, he meets a boy named Justice, a character that initially gives him a respect he does not often get. Justice shows “respect” and “love” that Zits never encounters, he must decide to follow the boy named Justice who meets in prison and told about the ghost dance and pursued him to kill innocent people in a bank .Through this journey zits takes a different experience of Native and some white narratives. At the end of the novel, the storyteller zits renounces his criminal past, he finds ideal foster family proclaims his real name

“Michael, I say “My real name is Michael. Please, call me Michael.”

This journey helps him to better understand himself and the world around him, specifically how love is more powerful even in a world that is saturated with hatred. Through this subconscious wandering, Zits obtains emotional and social maturity that balances and heals his identity. His healing is indicated throughout the violent and emotional hallucinogenic voyage, and his attitude changed after his journey is complete. Zits allows hope and healing to enter his life for the first time since his mother died, whereas before, he was guarded and angry because of previous childhood abuse. At last nonetheless, Zits' excursion instructs him that each individual goes through uncertainty and disgrace and he concludes that one's character

can be characterized by conduct and by the decisions one makes. The last part shows Zits endeavoring to reclassify him through another demeanor and conduct.

## **6. Central issues discussed in Sherman Alexie's Flight**

One of the central topics of the novel revolves around Zit's evolving personality or identity. Zits is an outcast, with no rigged race and no home. Accordingly, he characterizes individuals by their intelligence and magnificence. His enchanted excursion assists him with the understanding that he is in charge of his personality, by giving him knowledge into a few different viewpoints. Hank is an insider, the Indian boy is a mute kid of a warrior, Jimmy feels crazy, and his dad's attendant compared feelings of hatred to his own. Zits transform in their body and every character talks to some degree to Zits 'dismay, but then he understands that each individual has internal contentions and snapshots of disorder. There is no otherworldly character that tackles all issues. All things being equal, every human should fight himself to be somebody he is glad for. The next issue discussed by Sherman Alexie is relations; the best nonappearance in Zits' life comes from his absence of family. His non-permanent parents, bunch homes, and his companions offer little replacement for a genuine family, and his most limited torture comes from his dad's dismissal. His initial life is a progression of disloyalties by his dad, by his mom's passing, and afterward by his Aunt Zooey. In any case, his changes cause him to understand that no family is awesome. He sees assortments of relations through his various personalities and acknowledges how every human is equipped for disloyalty. Hank Storm's family adores him; however, don't realize that he is an executioner. Jimmy undermines his better half. Be that as it may, even the present circumstance is tempered by the viciousness they submit. Even though the novel closures with the possibility of a delightful family circumstance with Robert and Mary there is no supernatural answer for family inconveniences. All things being equal, the human propensity

for mercilessness and savagery implies that we have a grievous inclination to hurt those whom we should cherish the most. The idea of untrustworthiness is depicted in numerous structures during the novel. Zits deceived cultural standards by starting to shoot in the bank on individuals who confided in him to regard their lives. Jimmy was comparatively sold out by Abbad. Elk and Horse submit an alternate, more political sort of treachery through their traitorousness against their kin. The models are plentiful, and all together recommend that people tend to hurt each other. Subsequently, a pattern of mercilessness is propagated, as occurs with Zits, who reacts to the disloyalties of temporary families who misuse and disregard him by going to vicious disdain. All through the novel, Zits learnt not just that double-crossing is a characteristic human bad habit, yet in addition that one should acknowledge this flimsy spot to excuse and discover serenity. "Humiliation" is described by Sherman Alexie, his hero 'Zits' is overpowered with embarrassment and quite a bit of his excursion lies in conquering that embarrassment. He is most quickly disgraced by his appearance, ruled such a great amount by his skin inflammation that he names himself for it. In any case, he puts forth little attempt to change his appearance since he doesn't feel commendable. He is all the more profoundly disgraced, over the agony of his dad's treachery and of the sexual maltreatment that caused him to feel unlovable. Nonetheless, the disgrace isn't what causes Zits' concern; all things being equal, it is his deliberate protections, which he set up because of that disgrace. Eventually, what Zits realizes is that he should acknowledge his disgrace as a piece of himself understanding that each human fights various levels of disgrace, so he can open himself to the chance of expectation. Then violence has been discussed by author, the epic is imbued with savagery at pretty much every point. In light of the enthusiastic fierceness of his dad's treachery and the actual viciousness of sexual attack, Zits has the private a proclivity for brutality and battling. He has figured out how to shut his feelings off, and to react with bitterness to any difficult circumstance. Sadly, this demeanor empowers a pattern of brutality, which Zits

doesn't have the foggiest idea how to break. His numerous changes unveils how natural savagery is in all mankind's set of experiences. Each change is loaded with murder, mercilessness and torment. By seeing these abominations from a disengaged viewpoint (inside other people), Zits defies the reality of brutality, its grotesqueness. This new knowledge drives him to shun such a reaction to his life's difficulties. Gaining from his encounters on schedule, Zits fortunately starts to get some distance from brutality toward the finish of the novel. Then in the novel Sherman Alexie drive one of the issues of hate or revenge made by Zits and different characters in the novel. Disdain goes about as an antecedent to vindicate - one doesn't exist without the other. Zits detest the first class of his country. He loathes cultivating the framework. He abhors the ones who have manhandled him, and he despises his dad who deserted him. Equity's exercise to Zits is to enact that disregard into retaliation. In view of what Justice instructs, Zits feels supported in carrying out such a barbarity. In any case, his transformation uncovers to him how any human can defend a fury by concentrating exclusively on his disdain. Gus feels defended in slaughtering Indians similarly that the Indians felt legitimized in spoiling the groups of Custer and his men. By seeing that alternate point of view and explanation do not moderate the offensiveness of brutality, Zits understands the simplest deformity is that the human capacity is to detest without feeling regretful. At the end, Alexie's characters realize through his changes that he should first genuinely acknowledge himself as defective on the off chance that he is to excuse others. Having developed a particularly enthusiastic safeguard, Zits barely feels constrained to consider the wellsprings of his disrespect of the various bodies he occupies. Contemplating on one's own disgrace and disdain, he discovers that each human is equipped for betrayal, he starts to understand individuals like his dad, and afterward he is ready to excuse them. When he starts to absolute others to look for a superior life, he has discovered that he can pardon himself that he doesn't want to characterize himself by his vices.

## 7. Social realism in Sherman Alexei's Flight

In-Flight Sherman focuses on injustice, hate, revenge, betrayal, racial conflicts, and most important identity crisis. This novel also highlights familial conflicts psychological traumas, poverty among not only the Native Americans, but also the people of 21st-century globe. Zits always learn a little bit more about the way the world is unfair to everyone, zits initially sees justice as retribution, he believes that by creating violence he can be successful in his search for justice. Zits come to view Justice as a best friend, the "only real friend" of his life. After speaking with Justice regularly about the Ghost Dance as a justification of American Indian violence against whites, Zits loses his inhibitions about harming others. Justice has helped Zits understand that the Ghost Dance is real and that he has the needed knowledge, as well as power, to appropriate justice when zits want revenge from others he finds himself in a bank shooting plentiful people, so that his "mother and father can return." Zits finds himself transported into the body of others to see the hatred and racism of history play out around him. Zits falsely replicate the behavior of a long line of heroes in American literature who use aggression as part of their transformations refinement or restoration. In such instances, violence chiefly serves as a means for self-assertion, self-declaration, or self-protection in the struggle for moral reliability and identity.

## 8. Conclusion

The examination depends on the ideal picture of the social truth of Native Americans through addressing Sherman Alexie's works, Flight. Alexie wants to show social issues of his age by revealing another insight into outrageous destitution, liquor abuse, prejudice, sensations of loss of culture and personality. Flight is the self-story about a common, imperfect character - not someone whose life should be emulated. The fiction focuses on the cultural contexts in which the people whose bodies Zits occupy. Through the storytelling process, Zits makes sense of these experiences as well as his

relationship to the identities and actions of these Natives and non-Native people whom he encounters during his time travels. Instead of sharing a complete life story, the memoirist is selective and transforms significant life episodes into a uni-fied, cohesive whole. Most importantly, *Flight* as a fiction meditates on relational identity construction as a difficult continuous process, requiring much effort. Zits is a humorous teen and an outsider, who creates a place in society for himself. In *Flight*, Zits has the chance to cure and determine his own future. Alexie deals with Native themes in *Flight*, but the book is much more. Just as Zits speaks through a mirror to his father, Alexie holds a mirror up to American society so that through the eyes of an anxious adolescent our understanding might be activated and we might learn about the modern-day effects of the frontier. In a novel so deeply engrained with American values, it is appropriate to end with “optimism” for Alexie it is a “way of hoping” that something positive will happen.

## Reference

- [1] Alexie, S. (2007). *Flight: A Novel* (1st ed.). New York: Grove Press, Black Cat.
- [2] Benson, T. (1991). The Consequences of Reservation Life: Native Californians on the Round Valley Reservation, 1871–1884. *Pacific Historical Review*, 60(2), 221–244. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3640492>
- [3] Coltelli, L. (1990). *Winged Words: American Indian Writers Speak* (American Indian Lives) (First Thus ed.). Bison books.
- [4] Donohue, C. S. (2008). Travels in Salinas and Spokane: John Steinbeck and Sherman Alexie as Cultural Explorers. *Steinbeck Review*, 5(1), 27–34. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1754-6087.2008.00002.x>
- [5] Fraser, J., & Alexie, S. (2000). An Interview with Sherman Alexie. *The Iowa Review*, 30(3), 59–70. <https://doi.org/10.17077/0021-065x.5328>
- [6] Hossain, M. A., & Sarker, S. A. N. (2016). Sherman Alexie’s Literary Works as Native American Social Realistic Projections. *European Scientific Journal, ESJ*, 12(11), 381. <https://doi.org/10.19044/esj.2016.v12n11p381>
- [7] Ibarrola-Armendariz, A. (2019). Urban Indians in the short fiction of Sherman Alexie. *Revista de Estudios Norteamericanos*, 23, 209–230. <https://doi.org/10.12795/ren.2019.i23.10>
- [8] Labrie, R. (1968). Henry James’s Idea of Consciousness. *American Literature*, 39(4), 517. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2923839>
- [9] Murray, L., & Walker, C. (1998). Indian Nation: Native American Literature and Nineteenth-Century Nationalisms. *American Literature*, 70(1), 179. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2902462>
- [10] Powers, M. N. (1988). *Oglala Women: Myth, Ritual, and Reality* (Women in Culture and Society) (First PB Edition, Second Printing ed.). University of Chicago Press.
- [11] Rainwater, C. (2012). Sherman Alexie: A Collection of Critical Essays. *English*, 61(234), 314–316. <https://doi.org/10.1093/english/efs017>
- [12] Reckson, L. (2020). *Realist Ecstasy: Religion, Race, and Performance in American Literature* (Performance and American Cultures, 2). NYU Press.
- [13] Schlegel, J. H. (2009). *American Legal Realism and Empirical Social Science* (Studies in Legal History) (New edition). University of North Carolina Press.
- [14] Sherman Alexie: Poet of the Reservations. (2021). *Journal of Arts, Literature, Humanities and Social Sciences*, 64. <https://doi.org/10.33193/jalhss.64.2021.420>
- [15] Social Realism, Knowledge and the Sociology of Education: Coalitions of the Mind. (2010). Bloomsbury Academic.
- [16] Thampi, M., Caudwell, C., & Hynes, S. (1972). *Romance and Realism: A Study in English Bourgeois Literature*. *Social Scientist*, 1(4), 82. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3516460>
- [17] Understanding Sherman Alexie. (2005). *Choice Reviews Online*, 43(02), 43–0789. <https://doi.org/10.5860/choice.43-0789>

- [18] Westron, L. (2014). Blasphemy by Sherman Alexie. *Western American Literature*, 48(4), 491–493. <https://doi.org/10.1353/wal.2014.0021>
- [19] Williams, M. (2020). *Realism and Complexity in Social Science* (1st ed.). Routledge.
- [20] Zafar, A., Qasmi, N. U. Q., & Ahmad, M. (2020). Media, Language and Cultural Transformation in Alexies Flight: A Study of Globalization. *Global Language Review*, V(III), 89–96. [https://doi.org/10.31703/glr.2020\(v-iii\).10](https://doi.org/10.31703/glr.2020(v-iii).10)