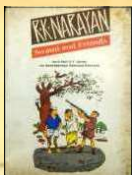
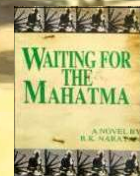
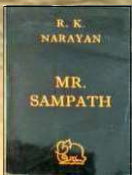
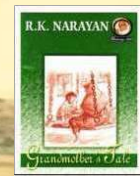
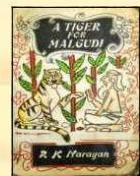
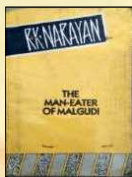
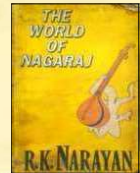
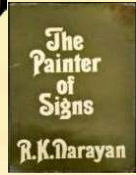
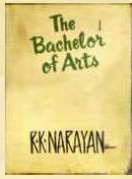


ESPYING GANDHI/SM ON MALGUDI MILIEU



Dr. Neelam Bhardwaj

ESPYING GANDHI/SM ON MALGUDI MILIEU

Author

Dr. Neelam Bhardwaj



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First published: 2022

ISBN: 978-81-957671-0-6

Price: Rs. 400.00

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About the Author



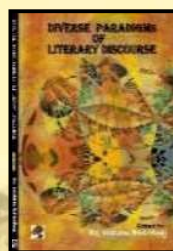
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First published: 2022

ISBN: 978-81-957671-1-3

Price: Rs. 450.00

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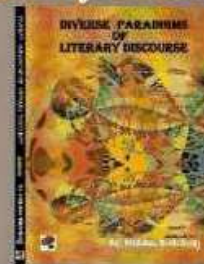
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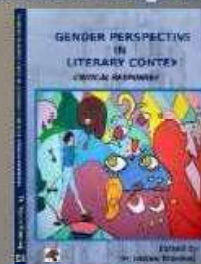
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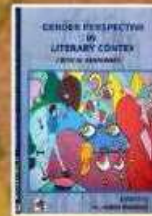


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First published: 2022

ISBN: 978-81-957671-3-7

Price: Rs. 450.00

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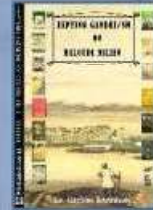
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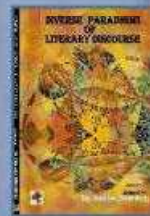


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WORKS CITED

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2

Women as Silent Sufferers in Shashi Deshpande's *The Binding Vine: A Study in Neurosis*

—Dr. Neelam Bhardwaj
Assistant Professor
P.G. Department of English
SCD Govt. College, Ludhiana

Alfred Lord Tennyson, in *The Princess* (1847), depicts a clear-cut line of demarcation between man and woman:

Man for the field and woman for the hearth;
Man for the sword and for the needle she;
Man with the head and woman with the heart;
Man to command and woman to obey;
All else confusion. (Tennyson, 78)

This might have suited the Victorian age of compromise and priggishness - the age which did not provide the equality to woman kind - but the modern times will hardly approve of it. So, it is common knowledge that the women who constitute half of the world's population are paradoxically not treated at par with men in all areas of human activity. They are confined to their homes oppressed, suppressed and marginalized in the matter of sharing the available opportunities for the fulfilment of their lives. Possessing

a rare insight into the entire panorama of woman's plight in the present day custom bound Indian society, some Indian women novelists have done commendable job in highlighting the subtle factors contributing to the none too happy position of women in the emerging society. It won't be an exaggeration to say that the Indian women writers are no longer the weak counterparts of male writers. Their works have occupied an important place in the world literature. Many Indian women novelists who have received international awards, have tried their best to explore the unexplored regions of the mind and psyche of women characters.

This unstated part of a literary character's experience assumed as much significance as the manifest action after Freud had empirically proved the role 'the unconscious' plays in our lives. Sigmund Freud (1962) popularized the term 'The unconscious' so much so that the entire scheme of Psychoanalysis is based on 'the unconscious'. He was persuaded that powerful mental processes remain hidden from the consciousness. He viewed that the mind can be divided into three main parts: The conscious mind, The subconscious mind, The unconscious mind. 'The conscious' mind encompasses everything that we are aware of; this is the facet of mental processing that we can think and talk about rationally. A part of this takes into account memory, which is not always an element of consciousness but can be retrieved effortlessly at any time and fetched to awareness. Freud called this ordinary memory 'The Preconscious'. 'The unconscious' mind is a reservoir of feelings, thoughts, urges and memories that are outside of one's conscious awareness. Most of the matter of 'unconscious' is unacceptable and unpleasant, such as feelings of pain, anxiety and conflict. According to Freud, 'the

unconscious' continues to influence one's behaviour and experience, even though we are innocent to these underlying influences. While talking about the partition of personality i.e., The Id, Ego and Superego, Sigmund Freud evidently mentioned that the Id is the only component of Personality, which is entirely unconscious and includes the instinctive and primitive behaviour; Id is driven by the Pleasure Principle and strives for immediate gratification of all desires, wants and needs. The key concepts in Psychoanalysis are 'The unconscious' and 'The Id' (a store house of repressed desires) and these repressed unconscious urges are linked to Psychopathology or mental illness. Psychoanalysis is a system of therapy that evolved over a period of years during Freud's long career. Many persons do believe that they have been profited from psychoanalytic therapy predominantly in terms of self-understanding, respite from inner conflicts and anxiety. So, Psychotherapy employs free association as the basic tenet of psychoanalysis. In this therapy, the individual being treated must articulate whatever thoughts come into his mind, regardless of how personal, agonizing or seemingly irrelevant they may be. Freud thought that the conscious represents a relatively minuscule part of the mind, while the unconscious, like the submerged part of an iceberg, is much the larger portion.

Society's values imperceptibly enter 'the unconscious' of these characters and from there they regulate their behaviour. Society compels every individual to repress his instinctually and that way forego the chances of deriving pleasure in the act of living. If the individual happens to be too weak and sensitive and intellectually too ill equipped to openly defy such oppression, he finds an alternative in neurosis which is

a form of both suffering and protest, that is, it makes his suffering an 'unconscious' activity and its symptoms only symbolically express his wish to subvert the life-negating values of civilization. These conflicts and traumas become too pronounced at a particular point of time in their life when a part of their psychic apparatus refuses to submit to repression. The characters are, therefore, shown as grappling on the one hand with the psychic conflicts of personal origin. The inner world of the characters becomes very interesting for critical purposes if they happen to be neurotically disposed. Neurosis reminds us of the fact that there is a seamy side to our civilization. In the resultant neurotic struggle against several hostile cathexes, they manifestly display three distinct tendencies: some move from neurosis to psychosis; others arrive at a compromise solution for their problems and yet another group sets out to become compulsive idealists because they find the realities of life too harsh or repulsive to put up with. Some novels, thus, portray sensitive women in their moments of intense struggle and in their efforts to seek neurotic solutions to their problems.

In the course of the ordeal called living, the protagonists of these novels have found themselves at odds with the societal norms and have undergone various degrees of psychological transformation. Those stubbornly persisting to be faithful to themselves had to give up the struggle entrusting themselves to primary process thinking. From neurosis, they have taken a giant leap into psychosis with a final act of violence. Those unwilling to take risks, neurotically worked out a compromise and tried to find modicum of fulfilment in the 'givens' of their existence. They have ultimately accepted their lot in life but not before they have gone

through a sobering experience. And lastly, there are those supposedly in possession of an extraordinary will-power and appear to transcend the limitations of society and advance closer to the goals they have set for themselves. There has been a neurotic solution and a nevertheless. Both as a physical reality outside and a psychic agent within, society which we take to mean the essence of one's relationships with others, has played a crucial role in bringing about this change for the worse forcing these sensitive people to seek neurotic solutions to their problems.

For the purpose of the present paper I have identified Shashi Deshpande's novel *The Binding Vine* featuring neurotic characters in the light of the knowledge of psychoanalysis which has given the modern literary critic remarkable scientific insights into the inner struggles of literary characters and other aspects of the literary product. I have attempted to read three broad patterns into the individual neurotic struggles of these literary personages and those patterns loosely correspond to the ones enumerated by Freud in his book *Civilization and its Discontents*.

Deshpande's predecessors represented Indian woman as merely a puppet but her woman is brave and full of the vigour of life. Kamala Das, an Indian poetess, in one of her poems tries to fly like a free bird:

I shall someday leave, leave the cocoon
You built around me with morning tea,
Love-words flung from doorways and of course
Your tired lust. I shall someday take
Wings, fly around...(Das 52)

A woman in this situation is presented by Deshpande in her most eminent novel *The Binding Vine*. She created

new ripples in the waters of English literature. Her concern with the woman's quest for identity and liberation makes her a missionary writer who has explored the outer as well as the inner world of her female characters. Her own particular way of blending and weaving the moods, desires and emotions of her characters has placed her at the topmost position not only in India but in the whole literary world. Shashi Deshpande strikes a note of realism and optimism in her portrayal of the Indian middle class educated women. Her gift to contemporary women has been to write novels which show women engaged in the complex and difficult social and psychological problem of defining an authentic self. Shashi Deshpande's women characters seek their self-hood within the orbit of family and relationships. Her novels explore important problems of our time without offering a facile recipe for their solution. The women in her novels are neither demi-goddesses nor strong-minded superheroines. They are normal educated middle-class women who are independent to some extent but vulnerable at the same time because of an inalienable bond of tradition.

Deshpande's novel *The Binding Vine* is prefaced by a notable quote from Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights*: "What were the use of my creation if I were entirely contained here?" (Deshpande, 1). It touches a chord in every woman as she responds to it with a recognition of her own doubts, complexes, fears, desires and suffering being mirrored in the narration of Urmila, the protagonist. As Urmila who is best known as Urmiwades through the labyrinth of relationships, she witnesses, experiences and analyzes the confusion and guilt, the pain and anger, the joy and suffering—an entire emotional tornado surfacing in her turbulent journey.

The narrative fabric of the novel is interwoven with the experiences of three mothers: Urmila, Mira and Shakutai.

The narrator protagonist Urmila or Urmila in *The Binding Vine* is clever, educated and sharp tongued. She is a college teacher by profession. The novel begins with Urmila grieving over the death of her one-year old daughter, Anu. She is terribly shaken by this personal loss and her misery is very much evident in her confession: "This emptiness, this blankness frightens me" (Deshpande, 20). She fights with the memories but realizes that forgetting is betrayal. Again, she says in a highly philosophical manner: "There is no vaulting over time. We have to walk every step of the way, however difficult or painful it is; we can avoid nothing" (Deshpande, 9). In the eyes of her friend Vanaa and brother Amrut, she has always been a woman of formidable courage who could manage the old crumbling mansion in which she grew up and her old grandfather (after the death of the old lady) at the age of thirteen. Used to that image, they are shocked and helpless to see her going into pieces over the death of Anu. Reminded by Vanaa of her capacity to bear hurts and urge to continue, Urmila dismisses it as only a facade just as the house at Ranidurg was a facade of splendour as none of the inner rooms matched the outside. Instead of fighting her pain and sorrow, she holds on to it as she believes that to let go of that pain, to let it become a thing of past would be a betrayal and would make her lose Anu completely. Like a masochist, she clings to her pain and allows her memories of Anu, every small incident to flood her with longing and a great sense of loss.

When Urmila, realigns herself in relation to these diverse experiences, a new meaning and a new pattern of reintegration emerges. Urmila is married to Kishore who

is in the Merchant Navy and remains away for long stretches of time. Kishore is reserved and withdrawn by nature but after the death of their baby becomes totally uncommunicative. As Urmi says: "Kishore will never remove his armour, there is something in him I will never reach. I have lived with the hope that someday he will. Each relationship, always imperfect, survives on hope" (Deshpande, 141). Urmi isolates herself mentally from her near and dear ones. But ironically enough, it is this alienation that brings her closer to life. Urmi feels sorrow because she has lost her daughter and the pain of her death is unbearable otherwise, she has not any grievance against anybody. She uses the story of her own life to construct a plot where the different definitions of female life are recreated. She makes a psychoanalytical study of her own self and then accepts life on its own terms.

Turning away from the solicitous care of her mother and Vanaa, preferring to deal with her grief all by herself, Urmila turns to Mira's poems and diaries. Mira was Urmi's dead mother-in-law. She had died while giving birth to Kishore and Kishore's father had married again. It is Urmi's sensitivity that makes her delve into the poems of Mira. Through her poems and diaries, Urmila establishes a communion with her. As she tries to reconstruct the tragic tale of a sprightly girl who suffered and wrote poems in the solitude of an unhappy marriage, Urmila senses a message being deciphered like a message tapped on the wall by the prisoner in the next cell. Through Mira's diaries, which were only her school note books, and the few photographs of her family, Urmila tries to visualize her as a girl, a favourite daughter of her father who was obviously proud of her intelligence and talent evident in his act of presenting her with a book of poetry. Moreover, Mira had a keen desire of being

recognized as a creative writer and a poet but her diffidence, anxiety and nervousness did not let her do so. Mira's desire to be a poet, her fear of being laughed at if she expresses it aloud, her questioning, anxiety and uncertainty are all evident in her poems:

Huddled in my cocoon, a somnolent silkworm

Will I emerge a beautiful being?

Or will I, suffocating, cease to exist? (Deshpande, 65)

Her marriage was only "a dark-clouded, engulfing night" (Deshpande, 66) she awaits with dread. She begins to hate the word 'Love' as it is uttered by her husband all the time. She doesn't allow him to drag her whole self out of her. She keeps her feelings, her rage and despair at being singled out for his physical obsession of her, to herself. Utterly lonely she lives in that alien household, which treats her as mad, with hopelessness hovering about her. "They called me mad, they, who cocooned themselves in briskly blankets and thought themselves warm when I spoke of my soil that boiled and seethed" (Deshpande, 100).

She was married at the age of eighteen and was a victim of marital rape. She shrinks further when a new name, Nirmala, and a new identity as a wife are thrust on her. But, at the same time, she refuses to give up her name and identity and proclaims "I am Mira" (Deshpande, 101). Appalled even as a child at her mother's total indifference to her own life, surrendering her 'self' totally to her husband and children, Mira decides that she would never give away her life dismissing it as nothing. Opposing her mother's advice, "never utter a 'no,' submit and your life will be a paradise," her will rose like "a monster child"

(Deshpande, 83) and she struggled against the man who tried to possess her despite her intense repulsion.

Through the poems, Urmila can see how Mira felt burdened with her femininity. The silver toe-rings and anklets made her stumble and fall. Though she never wanted to make herself an image of her mother, she knew that she too was trapped with no escape:

Whose face is this I see in the mirror

Unsmiling, grave, bedewed with fear?

The daughter? No, Mother, I am now your shadow.
(Deshpande, 126)

Yet, it is through Mira's poetry, Urmila realizes that each relationship, always imperfect, survives on hope:

Tiny fish swimming in the ocean of my womb
my body thrills to you: ...

Bridging the two worlds, you awaken in me
a desire for life.

Desire, says the Buddha, is the cause of grief,
but how escape this cord

this binding vine of love? Fear lies coiled within
this womb-piercing joy. (Deshpande, 136-37)

Pain, joy and fear are inextricably intertwined. The pain of child-birth results in the joy of seeing one's own child and no one, not even Mira with all her intense loathing of the sexual acts with her husband and discord with him and his family could turn away from the anticipatory joy of giving birth to her child, her creation, just like her favourite poem. At the same time, she is aware that this new-found love for her unborn child would make her vulnerable and hence the fear that she would remain trapped forever. Perhaps it is because she is frightened of bearing the constant burden of fear for

her daughter as well if the child turns out to be a girl, she has an unconscious desire that it should be a boy:

I feel the quickening in my womb,
he moves—why do I call the child he? (Deshpande,
149)

To her, sex had become the sting of the scorpion to be borne by women. In one of her poems, Mira had written:

Desire, Says the Buddha, is the cause of grief,
but how escape this cord. ...
this binding vine of love? (136-137)

Mira wrote nothing after this poem. She died in childbirth at twenty-two after four years of loveless marriage without even seeing her new born child. Mira too was a victim of physical abuse years ago but neither then nor now the mothers stood by their unfortunate daughters as they dare not defy the society. Mira's mother kept silent knowing she could do nothing to alleviate her daughter's misery. One wonders like Mira why these mothers are eager to marry off their daughters as if it were the only destiny of girls when they themselves suffered in their marital life.

Here, the question arises as to why Shashi Deshpande has included Mira's personal history in the main narrative structure. The answer is that Mira's life provides meaning to Urmila's experiences. Urmila's life takes new shape when assessed in the context of Mira's life story.

With this understanding of Mira's conflicts, the second female character whose life influences Urmila is Shakutai, who belonged to the lower strata of society. Her teenage daughter Kalpana was brutally raped by her

sister Sulu's husband Prakash. The victim, Kalpana was on her death-bed, lying unconscious and dying inch by inch. Shakutai invited death and disaster while desiring the best for her children. Kalpana was actually sent to Sulu for education. It was in the hospital that Urmi met Shakutai. Kalpana was in a state of coma. Kalpana's mother Shakutai seemed to be more worried about the scandal which would certainly ruin the family's name and impair the marriage prospects of not only Kalpana but also her second daughter, Sandhya. Shakutai has had a hard time with her husband who couldn't either honour her or support her and left her to live with another woman. After the initial shock and grief over her daughter's terrible plight, Shakutai talks about Kalpana in pride as well as in anger. She is proud of Kalpana's beauty and her smartness in learning English, her tenacity to pursue anything she desired till she gets it. At the same time, she is angry with Kalpana's stubbornness and independence which she thinks have landed her into the present trouble. Worn out by conflicting emotions, Shakutai begins to wonder whether she is being punished for not wishing to give birth to Kalpana as she couldn't afford a child then, for being cruel to the girl when she refused to stay with Sulu and Prabhakar who could have helped her dreams come true.

On the other hand is Sulu, Shakutai's sister. She could not come to terms with reality that her own husband Prakash had raped her sister's daughter because he wanted her to be his mistress and could not bear her getting married and getting away from him permanently. After realizing the terrible truth, Sulu killed herself overcome by guilt that her barrenness and fear of her husband have paved the way for the ghastly

crime committed on Kalpana. Sulu's suicide unsettles both Shakutai and Urmila. Shashi Deshpande has justified Sulu's action saying that each person is an individual in a situation.

Shakutai's self-accusation reminds Urmila of her father's confession of his guilt when he was dying of cancer. With a penitent tone, he begged her for forgiveness for leaving her with the old people. Urmila couldn't convince him that she had a very happy childhood in Ranidurg where she was loved, wanted and was very special in the household. Having lost her little daughter, Urmila now realizes that she too is not free from the pangs of guilty conscience and the same morbid self-questioning whether or not she had been a good mother to Anu. She feels that perhaps the answer lies in carrying the burdens of the dying and the dead as life would acquire a meaning of that very act.

Towards the end of the novel, the jig saw of the binding vine becomes clear and complete with all the odd, puzzling pieces being put in place. Urmila's unvoiced accusation against her parents as to why they have left her to live with the grandparents gets an answer from her mother's pathetic confession seeking her understanding after all these years. Inni explains her daughter "I was frightened of you Urmi, I was too young, I was not prepared to have a child and you were not easy, you used to cry all the time. I didn't know how to soothe you... then he (papu) decided he would take you to his mother, He didn't say anything to me, I cried, nothing could make him change his mind" (Deshpande, 200). Inni bursts out in agony that it was Urmi's father who had sent her away to Ranidurg as he did not trust his wife with looking after the child well as once she left the

baby with a man-servant, Diwakar. The sudden revelation of the rift between her parents makes Urmila ponder once again how difficult relationships are, with too many chasms to bridge. The relationship between her papa and Inni, Baijaji and Aju, Vanaa and Prakash, Vanaa and her daughters, Shakutai and Kalpana is loving but it does not abstain them from being cruel to each other, ignited by clashes of egos, desires and interests. The relationships can be wholesome only when the people themselves are whole. But as Urmila feels, the great divide in ourselves is the hardest to bridge and the most difficult to accept and live with.

In *The Binding Vine*, the theme is not the construction of femininity but its de-construction. Urmil undergoes psychological transformation through self-analysis. She feels that a woman has to possess contrary identities and she herself has to bind together her conflicting identities of neglected daughter, abandoned wife and grieving mother that binds together the multiple identities of one's self. It transcends all barriers of caste, colour and creed. It is the spirit of love that makes one strong to get out of the 'Chakravayuha' of human existence. Urmil realizes that the identities she possesses transcend gender divisions. It is as an individual that her search for happiness begins. After all the shocking revelations, traumatic tragedies and hysterical denial of life, one finds Shakutai getting on with her chores calmly and resolutely. However burdensome our ties are, however painful our experiences are, one can never opt out. The main urge is always to survive, to get on with the business of living, even if it comprises a daily routine that takes care of a hundred trifling matters, bringing an order and rhythm to it. Realizing this, Mira says, "Just as the utter futility of living overwhelms me, I am terrified

by the thought of dying, of ceasing to be" (Deshpande, 203). Considering the fates of Mira, Kalpana, Shakutai and Sulu, Urmila regains her courage. Accepting the freedom and advantages of her life as a gift, she decides to be content with her life, hoping that Kishore will remove his armour one day and she would reach him. Anu is gone but she still has Kartik. With a new understanding of life and relationships, Urmila realizes that with all the betrayals and cruelty, life is worth-living as there are flashes of love, concern, understanding and reconciliation that brighten it. The bonds, thus, help us to continue with life, the greatest gift to mankind.

The most creditable aspect about Shashi Deshpande's portrayal of woman characters is that she does not idealize them. She shows how women make use of the mode of concealment and evasion. Mira had evaded any open discussion of her tensions and her diary had been her sole confidence. Kalpana's plight was interpreted as a shameful calamity which will have social repercussions. Instead of lodging an F.I.R. against the accused, her mother Shakutai wanted concealment of the facts and wanted it to be interpreted as an accident.

To conclude, we can say that, in India, the women happen to be the worst sufferers as the social norms and moral codes have been so framed as to be particularly disadvantageous to them. This is perhaps why the Indian English women novelists, encouraged to a certain extent by their historical and cultural context, consistently treated the neurotic phenomenon in their fictional works. Shashi Deshpande feels that it is the 'dependency syndrome' in women which is responsible for their psychic condition culminating in their neurosis. The vast majority of Indian women have been silently

suffering repression for ages at the hands of the establishment. There are all kinds of women: there is Shakutai who is strong and Sulu who is weak and Kalpana who is very bold. Her message for the modern Indian women is contained in her novel *Roots and Shadows*: "Assert yourself. Don't suppress it. Let it grow and flourish, never mind how many things it destroys in the bargain" (Deshpande, 1983:10).

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3

Negotiating the Acculturative Stress: A Study of Before We Visit the Goddess

—Dr. Sumeet Brar

Assistant Professor
P.G. Department of English
SCD Government College, Ludhiana

The exploration of the cultural and cross-cultural psychology of the transnational migrant communities has always been the aspect to explore for the literary critics and psychologists. It aims at exploring the new avenues of cultural, personal or national identity to discuss their native and adopted communities' dialogue. The immigrants face asymmetrical cultural contexts in the radically motivated political rhetoric. The women in diaspora face a particular predicament. They are twice marginalised and twice removed from the privileged centre. The diasporant women are involved in the discordant cultural structures as they have to internalise the dichotomised traditional and modern individuation paradigms while being at the economic, legal and educational disadvantage. They carry many worlds within them that assign form to their migratory reality. Immigration adds the clause of acculturative stress and intergenerational conflicts to one's persona. Born and

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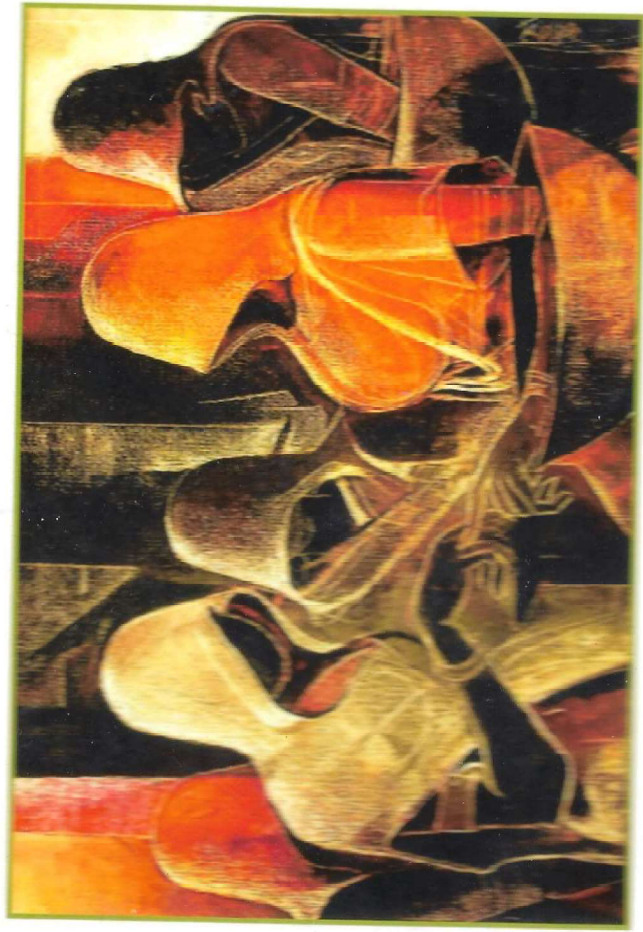
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refers to subordination...in terms of class, caste, gender, and age. (Hoare and Smith 167)

Gramsci used the term "subaltern" for the proletariats meaning a class having no voice in power structure. But today, the word subaltern is used by the feminists in post-colonial terms for a woman who, hardly, seems to fit in with what Gramsci originally had in mind. Gramsci is right when he says that there are two power categories in the social order—the ruler and the ruled. The subjugated people seem to be voiceless in all the important walks of life and their contribution is negligible in all the important issues.

Today the sociologists use the term "subaltern" for women in the sense that they have no choice in a patriarchal regime. What render a woman subaltern are factors that generally remain out of control for a woman in a patriarchal society. In Gramsci, the voice of the proletariats was blotted out of the power structure. From a postcolonial perspective, the subaltern means a person who has no right of power and cultural imperialism. In other words, a subaltern is not the one who does not get anything he wants to get; rather he is a person who dares to speak but his voice remains unheard to the powerful. He lacks in courage and remains meek and feeble.

Spivak's ground-breaking essay *Can the Subaltern Speak?* has popularised the term "subaltern". Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak linked the notion of a subaltern to the eastern women; who remain marginalised, oppressed, silenced, and disenfranchised both socially and economically. Spivak's views are much relevant in the Indian perspective as the position of Indian women remains much thwarted. The identity of an Indian woman is defined by the men who are considered the main part of the society. Sex is the determining factor that makes a woman marginalised. A girl child grows up with the tales of Sita's "agnipariksha" (ordeal by fire), Draupadi's public disrobing and humiliation, Ahilya (cursed by her husband) turning into stone awaiting her deliverance at the touch of Rama's foot and many such tales are found in a plenty in the Indian classical and religious texts. These tales bring a gradual death of the sensibilities of the girl child who learns to accept the "body blows" and the many acts of patriarchal

5

Mulk Raj Anand's *Gauri*: A Subaltern's Voice behind the Veil

Dr Neelam Bhardwaj

A study of the subaltern concern shown by Mulk Raj Anand, in his novels, reveals that despite all the all claims of social reformation and the advancement in the field of science and technology, nothing much has changed for the Dalits, subalterns, and the poor section of our society. Despite the whole progress of the nation, the things remain the same for a subaltern. The exploitation of the lower caste people by the upper caste is not a new phenomenon and it has become as a bitter truth of our rural and, to some extent, of the urban society. The newspapers, magazines, media and television keep on focusing on the atrocities and injustice done to the subalterns.

The woman in India and other patriarchal countries symbolises weakness. She is supposed to live a miserable and dependent life. Our culture has neither given her the right to remain free and independent not to act on her own. She is considered to be a creature to be commanded. She is transfigured into a cultural sign rather than a material being.

The term "subaltern" owes its origin in Antonio Gramsci, an Italian Marxist writer and underlines a subordinate position in *On the Margins of History (History of the Subaltern Social Groups)*:

The term subaltern means the exploitation of the marginalisation of sections of people in societies. Similarly, according to the group of subaltern studies, the term also

giving his novel a reoriented interpretation. Both the titles bear significant ramifications regarding the predicament of women. The title *The Old Woman and the Cow* draws attention to the mother-daughter relationship in an economically backward, tradition-ridden society.

This is the novel with an exception as Anand weaves the plot around woman character in the leading position. Through *Gauri*, Anand has explored deeply the gender-based biases that impose a rigid system of traditions in the name of national heritage and culture. Women are expected to mould their way of life according to the set norms as *Gauri* is the only novel of Mulik Raj Anand which has a woman as its central character and is based on an ancient myth. Anand's *Gauri* is an offspring of feminism in India, which as a movement was just entering our patriarchal society. It is a journey of *Gauri*'s suffering and it starts with her arranged marriage, which is the norm of our Indian society that a girl has to marry a person of her parents' choice and not of hers. *Gauri* is an evolving character in the novel. When the novel begins, we see her as a naive innocent girl determined to enter into the new role of wifehood with all the finest shades of feelings like devotion, forbearance, love, etc. It is only because of this mindset that she could not be compelled out of the basic Indian traditional moves. To quote Margaret Berry:

India is a hapless country where a host of tribulations, as pictured in Anand's novels begins with arranged marriages. Here, the partners are like oxen sold or given in marriages arranged by their parents. (Berry 56)

She is married to a village farmer, Panchi. As it is common in India, *Gauri* has to live in a joint family with Panchi's uncle, Mola Ram and aunt, Kesaro. Panchi is a typical Indian husband of male dominated society who considers *Gauri* as a mere commodity to satisfy his physical needs. Anand supplements this in the following expression, "Gauri is like a cow, very gentle and very good" (Anand 81).

The novel is critical not only of patriarchal system but also brings to light that woman is woman's biggest enemy. It is Kesaro who makes *Gauri*'s life miserable just for the reason that she likes

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violence as a way of life. She is indoctrinated into submission and acceptance of herself as the "Other".

The violence and suppression faced by a woman in a patriarchal society is multifaceted—very subtle and insidious and hard to recognise, presented as it usually is in the guise of respect, idealisation, concern, or protectiveness. A peculiar apartheid is perpetrated on woman and her psyche who leaves a very deep and complex impact—hard to understand and even more difficult to overcome. This injustice is done to her not only by men but also by the women in their different roles as a mother, mother-in-law, or a relative. The social structure of our society makes a man enemy of another woman. The following discussion shows for women's subaltern status in society as has been fictionalised by Mulik Raj Anand in his *Gauri*.

Mulik Raj Anand is one of the writers who concentrates on women's sufferings in traditional Indian society. Anand was always troubled by the sufferings of women. In the light of the above, it is commonplace to call Anand a champion of the downtrodden in one novel after the other. The novels *Untouchable*, *Coolie*, *Two Leaves and a Bud*, *The Sword and the Sickle*, etc. project Anand's deep understanding of the problems of those human beings who are generally considered as non-entities in the eyes of our society. Mulik Raj Anand is well-aware of their enormous competence which often remains unrealised as they are trapped in the complex social construct that oppresses and underestimates their capacity in one way or the other. Anand, the champion of the outcastes, pictures in his novels the predicament of women too, for she is another victim of the rigid social order. In the novels like *The Death of a Hero*, *The Sword and the Sickle*, *The Big Heart* etc., Anand has perceived and delineated woman's place in the fast-changing society.

Through his novel *Gauri*, first published in 1960 under the title *The Old Woman and the Cow*, Anand not only advocates a protest against the sufferings of the women but also presents a forceful argument for the equal rights and empowerment of women. It is equally important to pay attention to the fact that Anand first gave his novel the title *The Old Woman and the Cow* and renamed it *Gauri* after twenty-one years, thus

who is a doctor and in whom she sees a fatherly figure. Colonel Mahindra is the mouthpiece of M.R. Anand as his ideology is similar to Anand who wanted to bring social equality for women. In the same manner, Colonel Mahindra wants to bring this social equality by helping Gauri to make her stand on her own feet and become self-dependent. He offers her a job in his hospital. In the hospital, she also meets Dr Batra, Colonel Mahindra's partner who harasses her sexually but is never successful in his acts. Seth tries to win her but fails as she still loves Panchi. Inder Nath Kher rightly remarks, "Gauri refused to accept the hypothetical values of her society and its double standards of sexual morality" (Kher 43).

In India, woman is still considered as a reservoir of patience and courage and is the one who is supposed to maintain a balance in the family by submitting herself to male dominance whether in nuclear or joint family. D'Souza writes:

One may, therefore, say that unity and integrity of the joint family are maintained through the subordination of woman by man. In fact, according to the traditional Hindu code, woman is always deemed to be subordinate to man, first to her father, then to her husband, and finally to her son. (D'Souza 53)

That is why Gauri decides to go back to her husband, Panchi. She wants to forgive him and starts again but her miseries do not end here. When she comes back to her husband, the people of the village start talking about her life in Hoshiarpur. They start questioning her chastity. Panchi is a weak person and starts believing what everybody is talking about Gauri but here we see transformation in the character of Gauri. She is no more that weak-willed creature as she used to be. She starts raising her voice when Panchi hits her, she says, "If you strike me again, I will hit you back" (Anand 283). It shows that she realises her position as a human being and becomes aware of her individuality and self-respect.

Again, following the overriding traditional values very much endowed in Indian culture, Anand has compared Gauri to the mythological character of Sita from *Ramayana*. *Gauri*, like Sita has to prove her chastity. Like Sita had to stay with Ravana, Gauri

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Panchi and cannot tolerate any other woman in his life. She not only tortures Gauri but also accuses her of being friendly with young men like Subedar's son, Rajguru which is not permissible in Indian society. Kesaro takes it to Panchi and she is beaten mercilessly so that she does not protest. All this not only brings tension between Panchi and Gauri but also conflict with his uncle, Mola Ram. Panchi has to leave the house and also the barn. Rafiq Chacha, a Muslim friend helps them by offering him a part of the barn to live. This brings closeness between Panchi and Gauri but for a short period of time.

Anand has rightly brought a transformation in the character of Gauri as Kesaro tries to spoil their relation by blaming her for the separation of the two families; she pushes her out of the house. One morning, Gauri tells Panchi that "We shall soon have another mouth to feed" (Anand 101). She is kicked out by Panchi. He tries to suppress her, sometimes by beating her and sometimes by kicking her but she has reached a position where in order to save her child she gathers courage and leaves for her parent's home where she can give birth to her baby.

Anand stresses the need for a woman to change in view of what the novelist portrays a marginalised woman i.e., oppressed, ostracised, abandoned, or deprived in the character of Gauri. On reaching her paternal home, the story takes a new shape. She is sold to a banker, Seth Jai Ram by her mother, Laxmi and uncle, Amru, so that they can pay mortgage on their two houses and cow, Chandari, the only source of their livelihood. This brings shock to her. She shouts and yells but in vain and finally accepts her defeat. She is married to a person who is much older to her. Though Laxmi sells her but Anand does not depict her as negative a character as Kesaro who tries to bring in hurdles in Gauri's life to ruin her. Rather Laxmi is presented as a victim of circumstances. For Laxmi, Anand aptly writes in the novel, "The woman had just no thought of morality and felt that one husband or another was all the same, both for her or her daughter" (Anand 226).

The struggle stands more severe and bitter when Gauri's life brings her to Hoshiarpur where Seth lives. When she reaches, she is running down with high fever. She meets Colonel Mahindra

stays for some time in the household of the banker, Seth. Sita was reunited with Rama as Gauri is reunited with her husband, Panchi and as Rama rejected Sita so does Panchi due to social pressures. Anand highlights the boldness shown by Gauri unlike the old myth where Sita accepts the sufferings; Gauri rejects the old taboos and heads for a new life like Sita. She does not want to accept the defeat, she strongly wants to project her identity and decides to go to Dr Mahendra's hospital to give birth to her baby and thereafter lead a life with dignity. Emerging out of her sufferings and struggle, while talking to her friend Gauri says:

He (Panchi) pretended to be a lion among the men of the village. But really, he is a coward. They are telling him that Ram turned out Sita because everyone doubted her chastity during her stay with Ravana. I am not Sita that the earth will open up and swallow me. I shall just go out and be forgotten of him. (Anand 237)

Here, we see development in the character of Gauri. In the first chapter, we saw Gauri as suppressed and fearful but now she appears a strong-willed person. C.J. George states:

Cow like gentle Gauri presented in the first chapter, undergoes epic transformation mainly through suffering and at the end of the novel, she succeeds in vindicating her right to an independent life, free from the violations and abrasions of male supremacy. (George 174)

Anand knew that the novel writing is a strong medium to sensitise the people about ill-treatment of women. He also believed that a change can be brought in through literature and there are many philosophers who believed in his philosophy like Jean Paul Sartre who believes:

If I am given this world, its injustices it is not so that I may contemplate them coldly, but that I may animate them with my indignation, that I may disclose them and create them with their nature as injustices that is, an abuse to be suppressed. (Sartre 45)

Commenting on Gauri's development, D. Riemenschneider writes: With Gauri, Anand clearly propagates an image of a woman totally different from that of traditional Hindu society by

emphasising her right to personal freedom and individual choice against the structures imposed on woman by religion in a patriarchal society. (Riemenschneider 184)

However, the novel is a reflection of Anand's concern for woman. He was a feminist and believed that the freedom of Indian woman lies in her right to education and thereby gaining financial independence. Through the portrayal of Gauri's character, Anand has conveyed a new dimension to women empowerment within the Indian ethos. Gauri ultimately succeeds in bringing out her true identity by rebelling against the wrongs done to women especially in rural India. She challenges the evil practices of the society and succeeds in her flight against the patriarchal setup which appears to be inspiring flagship in the old rotten hackneyed and conventional tradition of Indian womanhood.

Anand feels that woman, whether rich or poor, is a marginalised being. Bapsi Sidhwa makes an interesting observation in this context:

Colonialism humiliated the men and they, in turn, humiliated the women. Hence, whenever the condition of society is weak or humbled, women suffer the most. It has given men the only vent for their frustrations and that pattern continues with expectations of subservience from the women. (Chelva 45-46)

Anand's women characters have been depicted as a victim of male ire and dominion. They remain the passive sufferers and their destiny depends on men however effeminate the men may be. In Anand's novels, women have been depicted as subalterns who have not learnt to speak against their husbands. In his novels, Anand has given them a voice, an identity, a name, and a reason of their existence. Anand is aware of the fact that social taboos against women cannot be removed only by adding new rules in our legislation. In his novel, subalternity has been depicted through the character of Gauri who is the epitome of life-long suffering. She is the real example of gendered subaltern.

John Stuart Mill also holds the view that the life of the contemporary women is merely a bit better than the slaves and they have enough potential for change but they have fear from

the patriarchal pressures. But now the present scenario has changed them from a "Tradition Housewife" to a "Modern Career Woman of Today." It can be easily perceived that a woman's emancipation can be possible only through her education and economic independence. But, to some extent, the idea of a woman's emancipation has become merely an illusion or a mirage.

Thus, the above study of the subaltern concern as Mulk Raj Anand has depicted in his novel *Gauri* reveals that no woman is born as a subaltern but she is made a subaltern by our societal or patriarchal pressures. In this way, it is not justified to use the term subaltern arbitrarily and blindly to any specific category without giving it due consideration. Let us take the word in the right spirit—what it originally implied. Women must have liberty to voice their concern against all kind of injustice done to them. It is in this sense that the term "subaltern" can be applicable to women also. And I come to the conclusion not abruptly but with conviction that this evil will continue to exist unless there is a change in the system. Right now, the whole thing seems to be a mirage to me.

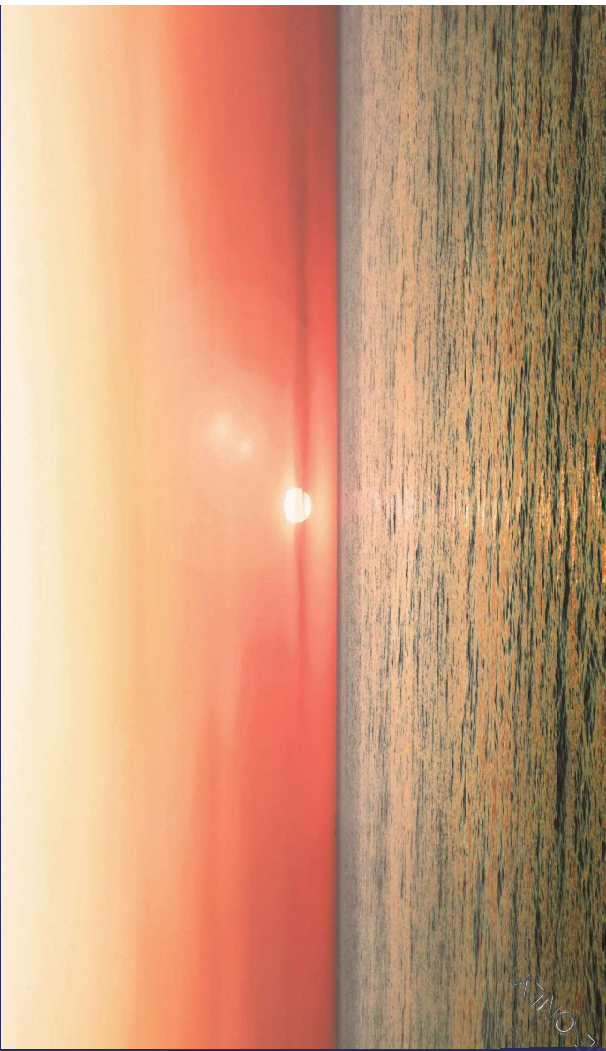
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This book entitled "The Reflections of Pandemics on Literature, Culture and Society" endeavors to put forward the genuine reflections of human minds during the times of COVID-19 and form a valid document of reference for future generations. It has presented the sensible responses of creative brains during the time of CORONA Pandemic appeared in the year 2020. Various articles from the writers across many countries in the world and several states in India have reflected the inner thought processes related to the milieu of Pandemic.

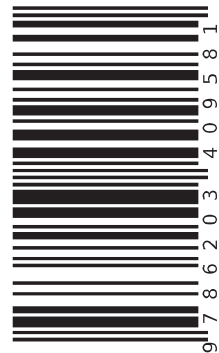
Rajwade, Nerkar, Kosambi, Waghmare



Dr. M. R. Rajwade, Dr. D. M. Nerkar
Dr. S. R. Kosambi, Dr. S. S. Waghmare

The Reflections of Pandemics on Literature, Culture and Society

1. Prin. Dr. M. R. Rajwade, Principal, PTVA's Sathaye College, Mumbai (India).
2. Dr. D. M. Nerkar, Coordinator, IQAC, PTVA's Sathaye College, Mumbai (India).
3. Dr. S. R. Kosambi, Dept. of English, PTVA's Sathaye College, Mumbai (India).
4. Dr. S. S. Waghmare, Dept. of English, PTVA's Sathaye College, Mumbai (India).



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THE JAGGED PATH OF DIASPORAIN IQBAL RAMOOWALIA'S
THE DEATH OF A PASSPORT

Dr. Neelam Bhardwaj
Assistant Professor, P.G. Dept.of English,
S.C.D. Govt. College, Ludhiana, Punjab, India

Abstract:

What could a woman do when she's faced with a situation in which she has no power, no choice but to surrender ... (Ramoowalia).

The above lines are drawn to explain representation of women. These, and similar lines question the place of women in the society – where women lack voice, agency, and subjectivity. They are from literary narratives and contextualize women's surrender in the ways of our society. The narration from a woman's perspective and bringing in the 'self' is rare from a male writer.

In this paper, an attempt would be made to study the identity problems in Iqbal Ramoowalia's *The Death of a Passport* to find out how the Indian diasporic experiences try to overcome the identity problems in their diasporic journey. It brings forth the conditions and tribulations of an illegal Indian woman immigrant through Seema who leaves her husband, Anmol, and six months old child, Amroz, in Canada and moves along. The first half of the story narrates her pain ridden journey with numerous transformations. She adapts to all of these. In the later half she meets Sodhi who appears as a hope to get a passport. A woman, separated from her husband, without a passport and marriage documents is a vulnerable being. Finally, after trying desperately to acquire a legitimate status in Canada, and Sodhi's death, she destroys the unstamped passport and moves to start a new journey in quest of another passport, which is "a blind flight without any wings". The manner in which the Indian women like Seema manage to develop their agencies and struggle against odds tries to locate a new dimension for Indian diasporic women.

Hence, the structural, conscious and nonconscious factors affecting a diasporic woman's existence as a diaspora need to be analysed, especially when they have no choice for survival but to surrender to the given circumstances. There might be an assumption that women in the diaspora may be less oppressed. By the virtue of being a woman, an individual become vulnerable for various oppressions at home or abroad. Every moment of her existence provides an opportunity for a new lesson.

Key Words: Transnational Identity, Assimilated Immigrant, Security Problems, Self-Conceptions, Cultural identity.

It is psychological fact that one doesn't think about himself fast long as one lives within his own group, but the moment he is separated from his group, he becomes aware of himself and his identity. It is this sense of separation and aloofness which creates the problem of identity in diasporas.

The grave issue of Indian women trapped in wedlock with NRIs, particularly within the northern states like Punjab, has assumed abysmally appalling proportions. A peep into annals of literary archives of Indian diasporic nuptial discourse lays bare factual avalanche of ghastly incidents starting from blatant violence to lying, cheating, false promises, dowry demands, quick

divorces, desertion, rape and what not. Much to the distress of these female victims, they live countless miles away from their family. The yawning spatial distance shuts out chance of immediate relief or rescue. Biological, linguistic, social and political constraints increase their woe. To cap it all, there's a vacuum of an omnibus jurisprudence and one judicature to control such aspects which exacerbates the scenario. The whole scenario could also be termed as a diasporic nuptial conundrum during which NRI wives languish incessantly.

What could a woman do when she's faced
with a situation in which she has no power,
no choice but to surrender... (Ramoowalia 92).

The above lines are drawn to elucidate representation of girls. These, and similar, lines question the place of women in the society- where women lack voice, agency, and subjectivity. They are from literary narratives and contextualize women's surrender in the ways of our society. The selected narratives are within the sort of fiction. Imagination forms the basis of fiction. Authors, while imagining, to delineate the fiction may draw from reality- directly, indirectly as well as with varying degree of actual reality. This means that fiction is predicated on lived experiences - although by proxy. Fictional narratives are representation of social realities. They can be significant resource to comprehend the way people live in society as well as how they are represented.

Iqbal Singh Ramoowalia was an Indian born Canadian writer. He was involved in teaching and writing. Iqbal Ramoowalia was basically a poet. He has written several poems and has given his composition to his readers first time in prose accredited with the novel *The Death of a Passport* published in 2003. *The Death of a Passport* is a classic example because of its woman centered narration. He has presented a serious problem of emigration that it is a pathetic description of those problems which are faced by those Punjabi girls who go to Canada after their marriage. The narration from a woman's perspective and bringing in the 'self' is rare from a male writer.

The story brings forth the conditions and pain of an illegal Indian woman immigrant through Seema who leaves her husband, Anmol, and six months old child, Amroz, in Canada and moves along. The first half of the story narrates her pain ridden journey with numerous transformations. She adapts to all of these. In the later half she meets Sodhi who appears as a hope to get a passport. She, being helpless, submits herself to him. She had no one back home to whom she can return and hence suffers all the pain to avoid her deportation. A woman, separated from her husband, without a passport, and marriage documents is a vulnerable being. Seema's experiences aim to reflect this. Seema is left to defend herself and to deal with the burden of illegal immigration. There is no shortage of work opportunities for Seema, but she has no valid authorization to avail them. Her journey makes her come across such men, mostly Punjabis, who help her get a livelihood. Rajan and Sodhi are few to name. But they demand favours from her. While Rajan monitors the cash she earns, Sodhi monitors her body and mind. Finally, after trying desperately to acquire a legitimate status in Canada, and Sodhi's death, she destroys the unstamped passport and moves to start a new journey in quest of another passport, which is "a blind

flight without any wings” (Ramoowalia238).

Passport is an important manifestation of one’s identity, especially if residing as a diaspora. The protagonist migrates thanks to circumstances and her movement abroad doesn’t have legal sanctity. Passport is another major cause for her identity negotiation. Seema agrees to marry Sodhi in spite of not loving him just to avoid her deportation. The overtime of Sodhi makes her question who was she married to, the person or his passport? Her identity swings back and forth and she or he finds passport as adequate to an individual who owns it. The death of Sodhi was the loss of her getting a legal sanctity to stay in Canada. The open-ended novel makes us question the state Seema was left after Sodhi left her. She asks herself:

Who had I married? Him or this passport? Who was he?
Was he a human being or just a thin bunch of papers bound
together with a landed stamp in it?” “What will you do
now? (Ramoowalia237- 238)

So, Women’s wounded existence within the Death of Passport is represented by Seema’s woe – symbolic of the woe of the many women wedded abroad – is well-epitomized within the novel. The defenseless Seema suffers a series of agonies including physical abuse, financial exploitation, and mental torture in the hands of her dearest friend’s husband, a priest in a temple, a female owner of a restaurant, or an unclean defrauder woman.

The manner in which the Indian women like Seema manages to develop her agencies and struggle against odds tries to locate a new dimension for Indian diasporan women. Seema of the novel migrates under forced circumstances but somehow affected by her marriages. The strong roots in her native culture and the movement beyond the borders bring in a new social relation in picture and hence a transition is felt. Seema misses her home but not much detail has been provided by Ramoowalia.

Seema with her status of an illegal immigrant has no choice but agrees to Rajan’s ‘prescription’ of his handling her earned income. It does not merely impose the choices but transforms the consciousness of the oppressed thereby affecting the thoughts and behaviour and making them appear inanimate. Seema looks like an inanimate object kept in the house. The readers find her sighing, sobbing and as non-living as any other item of the house she belonged to. She is not just ‘other’ to the patriarchal force but also remains ‘other’ to her own self. Seema lives a secluded life and wishes for her voice:

‘Seema, you’re like an ant in this elephantine house,’ ...
realizing that she was only another item, an unwanted
presence, in that lavishly furnished, two-storey detached ...
(Ramoowalia,. 1).

Ramoowalia uses the imagery to describe two contradictory ideas. On the one hand, she hints at the insignificance of her ‘ant’ like structure in an ‘elephantine’ house where hardly anyone cares of her presence, on the other hand she indicates at the destructive power of an ant which can be fatal to an elephant. Her whispers are the indications of her realization of her being oppressed. Her longing for an existence of her own is whispered mostly low in tone and signifies her low resistance. Her

state makes her think of the general situation of wives in India where she feels that “the husbands are maharajas” and every wife “has to be an obedient attendant, tongue less, and blind” (Ramoowalia 3). Her pondering brings a parallel to the similar situation of wives in India or as diasporas.

The new immigrant had a place to go back and an identity to protect. But woman as migrant ‘move beyond’ in most of the cases after her marriage, which is more of their husband’s choice or affected by circumstances rather than their own. Seema stands parallel to this. She accompanies Anmol, her husband after marriage. Hence her migration is affected by marriage and dependent on circumstances.

After migration and standing all alone for oneself, Seema is left with no choice but to adapt to whatever the host society offers her. The common shared experience with some Indian families and illegal immigrants reflects at the vulnerable conditions. Undergoing harsh realities, as migrant women, she realizes, struggles, undergoes pain, but to emerge strong. Apart from this, she prototypes numerous such diasporic women who remain silent about the humiliation they undergo. This silent suffering is in order to save relationships, marriages, and families from breaking down.

Seema, through “Concealing is feeling and, in many cases, being secure” (Ramoowalia 51), tries to justify silence. Rather she opts this to avoid insecurity. Silence for women, like Seema, is not just a garb to hide their internal turmoil but also keep other relations unaffected. To illustrate, Seema’s silence of Veena’s (her friend) husband molesting her saved the relationship between them. She could have complained the police about the priest attempted rape but lacking a legal document would have caused problems for her. She has the fire overpowered by fear. It is the fear which she is unable to quit:

Women are unfortunately more vulnerable... Targets of
gruesome gazes, ready to swallow them alive... My mother
used to say that women are like lamps made of flour:
outside, crows prey on them, and inside, mice devour them
... (Ramoowalia, 57).

Vulnerability adds to this fear. Moreover, experiences as a diaspora far away from one’s homeland and all alone creates a sense of alienation and pain. The victim accepts the subjugation to the oppressors which is considered the reason of her silence and the oppression she undergoes. In order to surmount this oppression, one needs to recognize the causes and discover the yearning to be free. Seema raised her voice for the first time when she talks to Rajan, the person who employed the illegal immigrants in his warehouse in Canada and helped Seema to get a shelter. She says:

... How long will I live in this miserable condition, hiding
and running away from my own shadow! ... What’s my
reality? Who am I? (Ramoowalia. 97)

Her voice is the indication of her conscience which demanded her to be herself and independent. “You don’t have a choice when you have no roots and no status,” she told herself (Ramoowalia 50).

Seema questions the patriarchal control. Seema does not get overruled by the masculine forces around rather possess their voice, agencies and subjectivities. In

Seema, this transformation is seen at a very late stage. She gets to find job for herself but the income was very low compared to the hard work she puts in.

Ramoowalia describes the character of Seema in close association with Punjabis, except Patricia. Seema starts to work in Rajan's warehouse and finds herself among many such workers like her. Seema runs away fearing to be caught by Police and starts working at Patricia's restaurant. At all the places she lacks control over her earnings. The awareness of the conditions one is trapped in and the desire to locate one's subjectivity and agency is a step towards conscientization. The change and realization of self can be achieved only when one resists against the oppression to acknowledge one's essence. The resistance from Seema increases in intensity as the novel progresses. The oppression, be it any form, alienation due to gender or race or migration makes one devoid of the respect and is commonly observed in case of diasporic literature. The resistance made by Seema is a step ahead to break the 'culture of silence', whereby this marginalized and exploited woman realizes her oppression and act to gain freedom from it. It is, at this point Seema challenges the dominant roles prescribed upon her and undo her gender.

Breaking marriage, leaving a family and a small child behind, and encountering two molestations shatters her down:

Crying at home for hours, before gliding into sleep, at the loss of something inseparable from her being, receded gradually... It was not easy to absolutely overcome the feeling that something integral has been plucked out of her (Ramoowalia 85).

But slowly, she regains her composure. In the Gurudwara when she resisted to the molestation done by the priest, her strength is reflected. Left without a passport, she finds a temporary solace at Rajan's warehouse, Patricia's restaurant, or with Sodhi. But none of the places she is more than a mechanized being. Seema occupies the position of a slave earning for Rajan, helping Patricia, and giving sexual satisfaction to Sodhi. Her voice is seldom for herself and similarly showcases her subjectivity. Seema as an individual is heard only when we approach the end of the novel. Her 'illegal' residency is the fear she broods over every time:

But I don't think any strength is left in me... to endure being trampled along any longer ... and rolled around like an un-claimed ball of rags (Ramoowalia 181).

She questions her being and the futility of her life. It was Sodhi who initiates in her the strength to accumulate the lost selfhood and face the new world. The act of packing her belongings and moving ahead for a new life in the quest of a passport, her new identity is her challenge to the deportation that awaits her. She does not go back to any of the people she has left behind and this is a gesture to her growing sense of independence which she inculcated after several experiences in Canada. She turns confident at the end when there is no other way left for her, no new fear. "... I can't let myself die a perennial death" (Ramoowalia 181).

The desire of living life to the fullest, having one's own identity and getting their lost voice marks her emergence. She challenges the society; the fear of surrender and oppression is discarded and they appear as 'new woman'. Her

existence in the diaspora reflects at the fluidity in the identities and the way it gets negotiated. This idea helps to get a picture of the way the identities of Seema suffer, adapt, change and get negotiated throughout her life. Be it Rajan's workshop or Patricia's restaurant these transformations are seen represented explicitly and begins with her changing names.

Her identity changes with each changing name. Although her names change and she adapts to the host milieu but her subjectivity, choices and desires remain the same. Seema to Reeta to Susan are the examples which show the way in which the change of the names denotes the change of the person and the whole mentality and emotional attachments. Change of names instills series of transformations in her persona and character. The change in her attire and attitudes marks the birth of new woman, woman self-dependent and strong to the host milieu. She appears a strong woman, although broken, and isolated but the names make her feel one with the host society and her people. But in the struggle, a woman loses the part of her existence and is never compensated for the loss. They were "featherless butterfly" (Ramoowalia. 3), "a featherless goose" (Ramoowalia202). But the inner strength enabled her to soar high in adversities. She never submitted herself to anyone to gain privileges. A broken marriage, abandoned child, and illegal identity shattered Seema but her strength is quite explicit in her monologues:

Look at me: I'm flying without wings and feathers with a
grinning beak. Look at my bleeding heart and mangled soul,
but I'm still flying (Ramoowalia 202).

The society around is symbolized by the voice which demands the woman to please the devil and survive when the situation demands her to surrender. The state is symbolic of a woman who is helpless and without any support to perform; she is expected to surrender yet dwells a will to live. The narratives focus on the stronger sides of women and their existence through the representation of characters like Seema who creates her life in the new hostile environment, independent, strong and determined.

This narrative of Seema epitomizes the tale of thousands of such women who have no choice left in the journey of their lives but to succumb to the circumstances, and the way they gain their existence and subjectivities marks their triumph. Behind the making of a woman are present some complex interactions some like social status, class, culture, and gender and such have been continuously affecting her. Her alienated life in the host land undergoes gradual transformation where she gains self-apprehension as a tool to break the silence and gain agency. Although the novel ends on Seema's move on for a new journey for a passport to sustain her stay in Canada. Seema's escape from the previous situation marks the continuation of the turmoil. Although she is turned a stronger persona than what she was at the beginning but ends with the same agony of the protagonist it began with. She is the epitome of strong women, not to be corpse in gender dichotomies, but appear as individuals to bring in change and awareness.

Thus, having deserted by diasporic families, the woman being isolated far away from home in an alien land. They have to face constraints of language, communication, lack of knowledge of local rules and laws, lack of support from

friends and family, lack of funds support and proper shelter are the issues that no one likes to raise at the time of marriage. Their alienated lives in the host land undergo gradual transformation where they gain self- apprehension as a tool to break the silence and gain agency.

From the analysis of diasporic character of Seema, it has been found that she tries to maintain her illegal status as legal by way of hiding her identity. The writer perceives to narrate the problems of illegal immigrants through the diasporic identity of the character, that we try to see an Indian diasporic world we believe to know. The identity of Seema depicts the formations of the author's complex process that is dependent not solely upon the agency of the individual, but also upon the surrounding environment. The protagonist Seema is caught up in the conflict between two countries and its codes. This living between two different cultures creates a need and desire to fashion new diasporic identities. The Identity issues forms the major crux of Indian diasporic experiences which perceive to be worth applauded in Iqbal Ramoowalia's novel. Beginning with the more general discussion of diasporic identity, however, it may be argued that diasporic identity is but among several possible outcomes like development of a universal spirit that transcends any particularities and simply stresses the quality of being human. Further, it also seeks to define or redefine their self- conceptions, cultural identities or political trajectories which challenge the globalized world and international migration.

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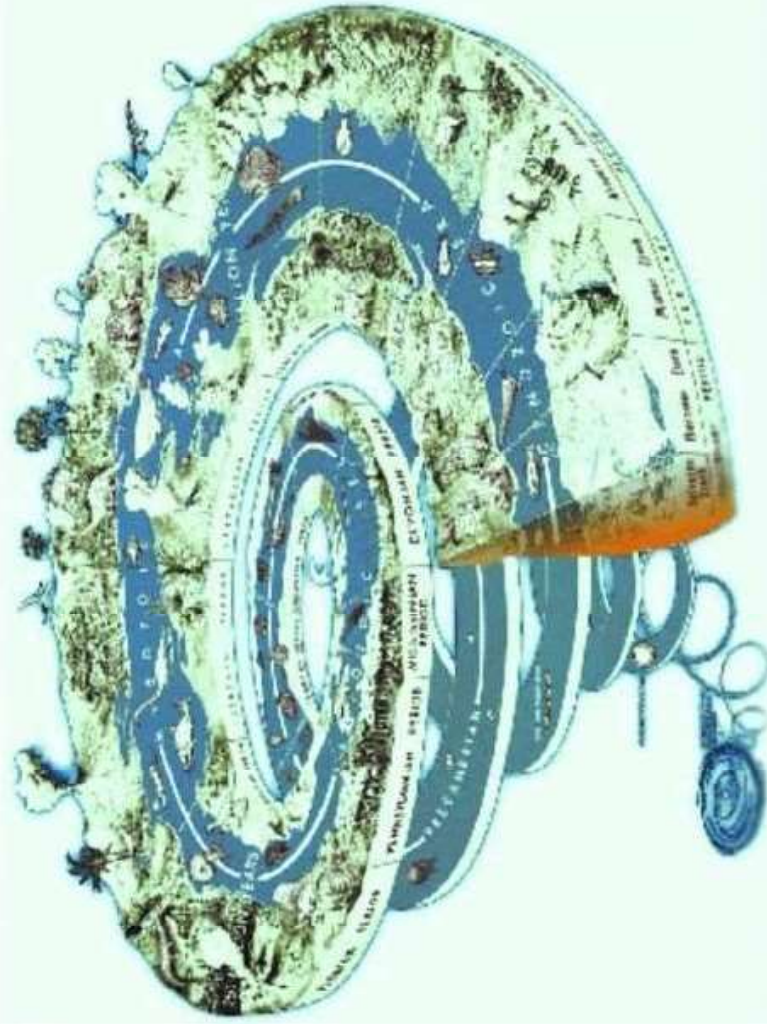


Dr. M. Subha holds Ph.D in Indian Writing in English from the University of Madras. She is an Assistant Professor in the Department of English, Academy of Maritime Education and Training, AMET Deemed to be University, Chennai – 603112, Tamil Nadu, India, since October 2018. She has published a number of research articles in both online, indexed, refereed journals and books. She is an active, lifetime member in Athens Institute for Education and Research (Atiner), Athens, Greece. www.atiner.gr. Her area of research interest includes Contemporary Indian Writing in English and Global Anglophone Literature and English Language Teaching. She has edited the books, "Indian Writing and Translation in English: Literature, Culture and Media" and "English as a Second Language: Teaching and Employability Skills". She is also the coordinator of the MOOC course "Grammar and Usage for Undergraduates" in Vidyamitra.



Dr. V. Meenakshi is an academician with 14 years of teaching experience in Government Arts and Science College, Orathanadu affiliated to Bharathidasan University, Trichirapalli, Tamilnadu, India. She has qualified UGC NET in English in December, 2001. She holds Ph.D in English from Bharathidasan University. She has published more than 14 research articles in Peer reviewed journals and books internationally renowned. She has also presented more than 26 research papers at national/ international conferences/ seminars. She has organized Literary Quiz programmes and delivered academic lectures in national conferences and Faculty development Programmes. Her area of specialization includes Indian Writing in English and Literary criticism.

A CRITICAL INQUIRY INTO THE ANTHROPOCENE FICTION AND REALITY



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EDITORS
M. SUBHA
V. MEENAKSHI



ANU BOOKS

Published By :



ANU BOOKS

New Delhi • Meerut • Glasgow (UK)
E-mail : anubooks123@gmail.com
Website : www.anubooks.com
Phone : 0121-2657362, Mob. : 99978 47837 (India)
+44 758 651 3591 (UK)

ISBN : 978-93-90879-40-3



9 789390 879403

2021

₹ 500/-

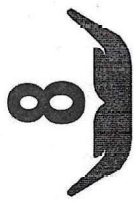
with the ritual hunting during the performance. It includes a ritual procession into the woods with arsenal. After the ritual hunting, the bounty animals are brought to the shrine meanwhile the Theyyam will peel the skin of the bounty animals with a ritualistic knife. The hunting is under the dark scanner for a long time since it includes hunting down of so many endangered animals. The wild species that are facing severe endangerment are also hunted down. This had broken out into a serious ecological breakage. The Environmentalists Activists had called for the ban of the tradition. The contrasting argument was based on the preservation of culture and custom. Cultural icons and writers called out for the reformation of customs and traditions according to the time. The writers such as Ambigasudhan Managad had published works in awareness of this infamous ritual.

Conclusion

However, The Wayanttu Kulavan Theyyam serves as an antique demonstration of the confluence of agrarian and hunting societies. The environmental aspects related to the Theyyam are sometimes found to be controversial in the modern standards, but it is an exemplification of a hunting past where everything was available within the nature. The nature had served as the supermarket and grocery store for the earlier populations. The beliefs and culture also reflect these aspects. Wayanattu Kulavan is a deity because he as a hunter has learned the consequence of being the hunter in the agrarian Kerala society. His punishment and death shows the transition from hunters' concept of death to agrarian concept of death when he is resurrected by the god, who himself was formerly a hunter god, who was changed into present after the marriage with the local agrarian culture. It also shows that, in this land there is no space for hunter way of life.

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THE 'INVISIBLE ENVIRONMENTALIST': RUKMANI'S ECOFEMINIST STANCE IN KAMALA MARKANDAYA'S NECTAR IN A SIEVE

Neelam Bhardwaj
Associate Professor

P.G. Dept. of English, S.C.D. Govt. College,
Ludhiana, Punjab, India

Abstract

Since time immemorial, women are traditionally involved in protecting and conserving their natural resources. The interrelationship of land, water, forest, animals with each other in the novels of Kamala Markandaya can be understood only by women in a broader and more holistic way than anyone else. What is true of women writers like Kamala Markandaya is equally true of all women in general. A small noise gone unheard by man may be a big bang for woman. All these thoughts and emotions are genuinely handled by Kamala Markandaya in her novels.

Markandaya's debut novel *Nectar in a Sieve* focuses on the inborn characteristics features of an Indian wife who tries to keep the family ties intact. The novel also depicts the rural life of the South India and the condition of peasant woman and farmers in contemporary India. In Rukmani, the protagonist of *Nectar in a Sieve*, Markandaya gives a richly delineated character whose three-dimensional quality heightens the significance of the ideological concerns that she embodies

in her. Her protagonist Rukmani, like the author, can be acknowledged as an 'invisible environmentalist' since both are sceptical to obdurate industrialization or urbanization and raise voice to preserve nature even in their acute crisis.

Keywords: Ecofeminism, environment, human, nature, oppression, patriarchy, women.

Introduction

The world of nature, plants and animals existed billions of years before we came on this earth. Nature does not need us to rule over it, but runs itself very well and better without humans. We need to recognize our dependence on the great life-producing matrix of the planet in order to learn to reintegrate our human systems of production, consumption and waste into the ecological patterns by which nature sustains life. This might begin by re-visualizing the relation of mind or human intelligence of nature.

Women and Nature Relationship

Women have long been allied with nature; Earth is surmised to be feminine in nature. It has often been metaphorically termed as 'Mother Earth'. Historically, women have had a negligible access to the outside world. They have been for long excluded from the major concerns of life: often their roles were seen as secondary to the human development. Rather it can be said, women have been generally submissive, as has been nature. Anthropological studies have suggested that the identification of women with nature and males with culture is both ancient and pervasive. This very basic thought gave birth to the Ecofeminist philosophy – the idea of a connection between feminism and ecology.

The word 'ecology' emerges from the biological science of natural environmental systems. It examines how the natural phenomena function to sustain a healthy web of life and how they become disrupted, causing death to the plant and animal life. The intervention of human is obviously one of the main causes of such disruption. Thus, ecology emerged as a combined socio-economic and biological study to examine how human's use and misuse of nature is causing pollution of soil, air and water, and destruction of the natural systems of the growth of plants

and animals, threatening the base of life on which the human community itself depends.

A Brief Discussion on Ecofeminism

Ecofeminism is a relatively new concept which is still at a nascent stage. An ecofeminist perspective would involve the coming together of Ecocriticism and Ecofeminism into one analytical focus, where it would be necessary to recognize that the exploitation of nature and the oppression of women are intimately bound up with notions of patriarchy, oppression on gender class, caste and race. The increasing objection for the massive environmental destruction and the fight for existence in the third world countries affix the fact that gender, class and caste are inwardly interconnected. In this context, this study focuses primarily on women merging with the association between degradation of nature by humans and exploitation of woman by male dominance.

Ecofeminism has the female perspective and orientation. Ecofeminism emphasizes gender differences, and pays more attention to gender discrimination and unequal treatment suffered by women in social life. Specifically, women's values are ignored, housework devalued, and women are excluded from public domains. From the perspective of female, Ecofeminism reveals the root behind gender domination, which is the power structure of hierarchy of human society, and the operation mechanism of power inequality.

Ecofeminism, in broad terms, has been conceived as both a theory and a movement that associates women and the environment. It describes the connections, which has been established between women and nature from cultural, historical, psychological, spiritual, or political perspectives; that denounces the comparable degradation, subjugation, and exploitation of women, nature, non-humans, and other marginalized social groups. It further proposes diverse alternative solutions, addressing both gender and ecological vindications and hence trying to put an end to the violence exerted on women and the underprivileged, as well as to the destruction of natural resources and the extinction of non-human animals and species.

This attitude seems innate in the Hindu psyche and finds its manifestation in respect for all life. Kamala Markandaya employs herself with the basic concern of an environmentalist or ecologist by lamenting

over the destruction of landscape within her literary milieu. Eco criticism or eco critics endeavour to speak for nature and thereby try to understand and address the problems of human cohabitation with nature. It investigates how the artist utilizes nature literally and metaphorically.

Ecofeminism and Kamala Markandaya

Indian writers like Kamala Markandaya, Ruth Praver Jhabwala, Nayantara Sehgal, Anita Desai and Santha Rama Rau display a rare insight into Indian character. Kamala Markandaya's novels cover a wide range of themes. Her women characters strongly uphold the tradition of universal love in their concern for animals, in providing shelter to the destitute and deformed relatives. Belief in universal individualism enjoins active charity, meekness and humaneness. In the conflict with evil, the method to be used is love not force, for in using evil methods to defeat evil, it is evil that wins.

Kamala Markandaya has been progressive enough to depict social philanthropy through her effective crafting in the form of novels. Her debut novel, *Nectar in a Sieve* (1954) opened a new age revealing truth and reality of Indian life, which was not caught by earlier writers. The title of Kamala Markandaya's novel *Nectar in a Sieve* comes from a poem by Samuel Taylor Coleridge entitled *Work Without Hope* and appears in the epigraph, "Work without hope draws *Nectar in a Sieve*, and hope without an object cannot live" (qtd. in Iyengar: 438). Rukmani, the narrator and the heroine has to face so many ups and downs, fret and fever of life like her husband's infidelity, her daughter's sacrificial going to the streets to save the family from hunger and starvation; the premature death of the child Kuti.

***Nectar in a Sieve*: An Exploration of Rukmani – the 'Invisible Environmentalist'**

Nectar in a Sieve begins with Rukmani, the youngest of the four daughters of a once prosperous village headman is married to a tenant farmer, Nathan, who is poor in all respects. The villagers gossip that the match is beneath her family, who had managed to marry their three older daughters to wealthier husbands. This unenviable coupling was indeed a direct result of her father's diminished role in the community. He was the village leader, a position that had once conferred authority,

respect, and relative wealth; however, the centralization of government powers meant that his position had become little more than a figure-head, "the headman is no longer of consequence" (Markandaya 3).

Rukmani gets married to a landless and poor farmer because four dowries are too much for a man to bear. Rukmani's father is no longer of consequence as a headman of the village, an indication that Rukmani and her village are caught between the residual power of the ancient world and newly acquired world order which has yet to achieve full shape. Markandaya's covert social critique of child marriage and the dowry system can be viewed through a critical lens intending to show how traditions combined with poverty oppress women more than men.

The promise of a bright future is represented in the able body of her husband, as well as the paddy that runs through his hands. Nathan holds up a handful of grain and promises that with, "Such harvests as this, you shall not want for anything" (Markandaya 6). A symbiotic relationship is thus established, between the farmers and nature. The farm soon becomes the centre of their lives, and Rukmani finds her passion in tending the land. If one looks in particular at the depictions of Rukmani's work in the garden, one can see that this practice links her with the land through her body and her labour. The garden has a special place in her life and is closely associated with her coming-of-age. She is married at twelve, in the years of her young bloom. Rukmani experiences her own physical, emotional, sexual and psychological development through her work in the garden and the growth of her vegetables:

I was young and fanciful then, she recounts, and it seemed to me not that they grew as I did, unconsciously, but that each of the dry, hard pellets I held in my palm had within it the very secret of life itself, curled tightly within, under leaf after protective leaf. (Markandaya 13)

The fourteen-year-old Rukmani comes to her new home, the sight of which sends a chill down her spine, "this mud hut, nothing but mud and that was my home" (Markandaya 4). She cannot adjust herself to such a poor insecure abode. However, when she comes to know that the hut has been built by her husband with his own hands, her fear and humiliation turns into pride. The Indian dowry system throws her

in poverty and Indian value system makes her to accept it as her fate. The combined effect of these hierarchies was a denial of women's direct experiences in, through and as nature. This emphasis on life and in particular the female body as the giver or sustainers of life was a common theme in early ecofeminist writings and is echoed in the way Rukmani's experiences a sort of embodied spirituality through her connection with the growing pumpkins.

Rukmani is considered as an active agent of nature. At the beginning of the novel, the development of a sheer bonding between Rukmani and the nature is shown. Most of her daily activities are environmentally driven, which arise an ecological consciousness in this novel. This bond starts to strengthen further after her marriage with Nathan. The importance of nature is portrayed in Rukmani's extravagant narration during the journey to her husband's house. The gentle breeze feels to her as the sound of different birds. Despite making journey by cart and arriving at a mud house, she embraces all the things in a blessed way due to the natural entities. Rukmani feels:

when the sun shines on you and the fields are green and beautiful to the eye, and your husband sees beauty in you which no one has seen before, and you have a good store of grain laid away for hard times, a roof over you and a sweet stirring in your body, what more can a woman ask for? (Markandaya 55)

This oft-quoted passage from the novel is seen to romanticize the relationship that Rukmani has with her land and to nature. The quote highlights that for a peasant woman, happiness consists of bare necessities at the elemental level made up largely of food, clothes, shelter and the idyllic beauty of the countryside. Nature, the sun and the beauty of the green fields appear as Rukmani's source of well-being. Two other themes emerge from the quote above: the symbolism of grains and women's sexuality. Grains and seeds represent the overriding symbol for life itself in *Nectar in a Sieve*.

Procreation is seen to be an essential role for a woman in Rukmani's society. A woman who fails to conceive early in her marriage may be renounced by her husband and family. A similar situation arise later in the novel as Ira is barren. Here, the claim that women are closer to

nature rests on the premise of women bringing forth life from their bodies, undergoing the pleasures and pains of pregnancy, childbirth and nursing. In a social sense, child rearing and domestic caretaking have kept women close to the earth and thus closer to nature. Later on in the novel, after celebrating the Diwali festival, Rukmani recalls her senses opening like a flower to Nathan's urgency, a description of Rukmani's sexual desire which echoes her earlier description of the "seedling that unfurled its small green leaf to her eager gaze, and her excitement would rise and mount: winged, wondrous" (Markandaya 19)

The text here uses nature as a metaphor to describe Rukmani's sexual maturation as well as sexual desire. By overtly linking Rukmani's body to the land, the text here harkens back to ecofeminism's naturalization of woman's pleasure and connectedness to the earth. At this point, however, it becomes important to move away from the images of a romanticized and naturalized image of the third-world peasant woman reflected in the character of Rukmani. Markandaya also raises the issue of literacy for girls in India in the uncertain political climate after independence through Rukmani, whose father taught her to read and write, a practice that her mother strictly opposed as, "what use", my mother said, "that a girl should be learned!" (Markandaya 34)

She teaches her children in future to read and write as well, and says of Nathan that it could not have been easy for him to see his wife more learned than he himself was, for Nathan could not even write his name, "yet not once did he assert his rights and forbid me my pleasure, as lesser men might have done", indicating that an educated wife was generally frowned upon in a society that values women for giving birth to lusty sons and having a husband to look after. However, despite Rukmani being a learned woman, she is not free from the prejudice against her girl-child. Her first reaction at the sight of her daughter is, "I turned away and, despite myself, the tears came, tears of weakness and disappointment: for what woman wants a girl for her first-born?" (Markandaya 68). This attitude arises partly out of the rigours of the dowry system as Rukmani herself had suffered from it, and partly due to the traditional view that a son is his father's property. It shows, a

woman is an inborn burden, an unwelcomed being in the Indian society. She craves for sons and finally succeeds by giving birth to six sons.

However, with the birth of every child their poverty starts aggravating. Rukmani says, "we no longer had milk in the house except for the youngest child; curds and butter were beyond our means except on rare occasions" (Markandaya 24). When Irawaddy, her only daughter turns fourteen she marries her to a landless labourer by spending all her savings on her marriage. Unfortunately, the flood destroys their crops in the same year and they have no other way but to survive on roots, leaves and plantain till the next harvest. Rukmani's daughter, and later on Rukmani's sons, are intrinsically linked to the land.

Markandaya carefully merges the land and sons together to show that both Rukmani and Nathan had hoped too much from them – too much from the land and too much from their sons. In each case, they get nothing but disappointment and frustration. Nathan and Rukmani are still unable to lead a happy life even after they have begotten sons. Ironically, it is Ira, the daughter who brings disappointment at her birth, who comes to her parents and family's aid. 'Irawaddy', the significance of her name is even more pronounced here as she is named after the river Irawaddy, which becomes Rukmani's sustenance once when the family is starving, and again at the end of the novel when Rukmani is left husbandless and landless.

The arrival of the tannery in Rukmani's village marks a period of transition for her as well as for the lives of many of the other villagers. It is a nod towards industrialization and urbanization. As the effects of development are introduced into the village by disturbing its agrarian culture, the villagers are forced to work on the project of the construction of the tannery. The first immediate effect of the tannery is felt on the natural environment of the village. Here, it becomes easy to read Rukmani's sentimentalized laments against the destructor of nature in the light of Environmentalist Vandana Shiva's pronouncements of mal-development. Shiva expresses a particularly negative and anti-developmental view of the application of scientific technology from the West (in the context of building tannery in the rural villages in India) and the resultant exploitation of nature and its processes.

Kunthi declares to Rukmani that she is not a senseless peasant woman and there is no earth in her breeding. Kunthi is excited about the change in the form of shops and tea stalls, and even a bioscope that will come in the village with the tannery. Janaki welcomes the tannery as a source of employment for her sons. For the land could not take them all. Such a response despite the fact that her husband's shop has been forced to close down due to the high shop rent that they cannot afford to pay. Kali had always been fond of an audience for her stories, and these three women, representative of rural women in general who are eager to benefit from the changes that progress and modernization bring with them. The responses of these women highlight the potential of development and capitalist tendency to have a productive transformation, which can lift the mass of labourers and peasants out of the morass of economic deprivation and social degradation of hunger and poverty.

The setting up of the tannery brings with it officials from different races and classes, such as the Muslims. The class privilege of the Muslim women is seen in the jewelled rings they wear, any of which could have fed the peasants for a year. Kali says of the Muslim women that it is an easy life, with no worry of the next meal and plenty always at hand, "I would gladly wear a bourka and walk veiled for the rest of my life if I, too, could be sure of such things, indicating her yearning for security of food and to be free from the degradation of hunger" (Markandaya 87). Rukmani and Kali's exchange here about the Muslim women illuminates that no one should have to endure the brutalizing effects of extreme poverty such that people are constantly worrying about not having enough to eat.

The second important feature of patriarchy is the feudal exploitation. Nathan miserably succumbs to the exploitation. He has his own fatalist philosophy that is representative of all Indian farmers. This shows that patriarchal culture marks agrarian culture, which is represented by third world peasants like Rukmani. Additionally, villagers are exploited during their hard times by moneylenders, such as Hanumanta and Biswas. These money lenders are indifferent to villagers, as the shopkeeper Hanumanta shows very harsh attitude towards Rukmani, when he tells her, "You have come for rice. They all come for rice. I have none

to sell, only enough for my wife and children. Are you not of it? Why then do you come to me?" (Markandaya 45). He fleeces the villagers and says, "take it or leave it. I can get double that sum from the tanners, but because I know you". (Markandaya 45)

Secondly, the small-scale businessmen are wiped out because of the bigger shops. The agrarian culture and the small-scale shopkeepers' condition steadily and gradually deteriorate by the slow sprawl and spread of the flourishing tentacles of the tannery, which in the end swallows the serene pastoral land of the village. The tannery goes on working day and night. Markandaya states, "A never-ending line of carts brought the raw material in thousands of skins, goat, calf, lizard, and snake skins and took them away again tanned, dyed and finished". (Markandaya 49)

On the one hand, the introduction of the concrete buildings in a serene landscape and, on the other hand, constructions meant for peasants, typical huts with thatched roofs and mud walls. Rukmani and Nathan are ultimately shown to be victims of two major forces, the landowners or the zamindari system, and the vagaries of nature. Rukmani and Nathan are landless peasants, and with the establishment of the tannery, the landowner Sivaji sells the land that Rukmani and Nathan till to the tannery owners. Pravati Misra remarks that the landlord in the erstwhile zamindari system was a rich person who was wealthy at the cost of the poor farmers and workers who were deprived of the basic needs of living. The archetype of the landlord suggests exploitation of the poor by a wealthy villager who enjoys social power. With economic development, most of the economic benefits went mostly to the large landowners and the elite upper class, as seen in the figures of the landowner Sivaji and the money lender Biswas in the novel.

Thirdly, the tannery changes the attitude of the young generation, as they no longer want to continue their ancestral profession of tilling the land; rather, they wish to earn easy money by working in the tannery. In response to Arjun's decision to join the tannery, Rukmani expresses her contention and remorse, "You are young, besides, you are not of the caste of tanners. What will our relations say?" (Markandaya 53). One can observe the recklessness and indifferent attitude of Arjun, as

he replies, "I do not know, I do not care. The important thing is to eat" (Markandaya 58).

Fourth, due to hunger and loss of traditional modes of work, many of the peasant women are compelled to take up prostitution, Ira's movements as a child have to be restricted, depriving her of the free space of the playground where the bazaar has been raised, and ultimately, she resorts to prostitution to feed her family and to save her brother Kuti from dying of starvation. Ira's decision to take up prostitution stems from the changes happening under the impact of modernity and industrialism where she thinks the preservation of life more pious than the observations of so-called moral values which fail to feed her family. The throng of men has spoiled women's chastity. The tannery has not only marred the village pastoral land and agrarian culture but also ruptured moral values.

According to M.K. Bhatnagar in *Feminist English Literature*, Ira's decision to take up prostitution is, in a way, "a bold rejection of the innate institution of marriage" (Bhatnagar 39). Ira's motivation to do so is contrasted against Kunthi's, whose motivation to take up prostitution is based on selfish interests, thus highlighting "the inculcation of individualism that comes along with the erosion of the time honoured peasant-code ... with no substitute" (Bhatnagar 39). The industrialization progresses not without its evils, it still presents some form of upliftment of the rural poor. Rukmani, tries to make sense of the loss of her land:

Tannery or not, the land might have been taken from us. It had never belonged to us, we had never prospered to the extent where we could buy, and Nathan, himself the son of a landless man, had inherited nothing. The hut with all its memories was to be taken from us, for it stood on land that belonged to another. And the land itself by which we lived. It is a cruel thing, I thought. (Markandaya 54)

It is here that Rukmani's crisis of identity fully takes place when her land is taken away from her and she is forced to leave her home with Nathan. Nitya Rao, Professor of Development at School of International Development claims that, land is a key element in the identities of indigenous people. Many of their struggles for recognition

begin with land, which takes multiple meanings. The act of rejection that the land brings for Rukmani results in what Stephen Chan calls the condition of abjection. Often this idea of home bears a direct relation to the land. For Rukmani, there is some chance of her retaining her identity while she had her land, conceptualizes by the quote, "while there was land there was hope" (Markandaya 53).

As Bina Agarwal elucidates, for many, land provides a sense of identity and rootedness. What they needed were fields of their own. This point by Agarwal retains its poignancy most when Rukmani becomes husbandless (Nathan dies in the city) and she has no form of food or economic security. The implication of this is that if women are in-charge of the means of production through owning the land, it represents the opportunity for self-determination which is intrinsically tied to one's notion of identity. Rukmani now, in the condition of abjection through the displacement from her land and hope versus no such hope. Such a situation finds its culmination in the figure of Old Granny, dies penniless and a destitute on the streets in the village. It is here then that the text is shown to strongly "resist the pastoral" (Mount 11).

All these effects of tyranny move around the central themes of poverty, hunger and exploitation. Being a daughter of this soil, she knows what it means to be poor. She considers it as the 'sixth great sin'. Poverty breeds hunger. Rukmani says:

... for hunger is a curious thing: at first it is with you all the time, walking and sleeping and in your dreams and your belly cries out insistently and there is a gnawing and a pain as of your very vitals were being devoured, and you must stop it at any cost, and you buy a moment's respite even while you know and fear the sequel. (Markandaya 86)

No wonder, hunger turns them into beasts. She says, "there flesh melted away and their skin sag and sink between their jutting bones, saw their eyes retreat into their skulls, saw their ribs curve out from under the skin" (Markandaya 88). Being a weak child, he suffers. All of them become so weak that on the death of Raja, her son, Rukmani does not cry and does not allow her daughter to cry. She says, "what

are you crying for? ... you have little enough strength, without dissolving it in tears" (Markandaya 89). Kuti turns so weak that he stops wailing.

Ira cannot see her brother dying of hunger and she takes to prostitution. Nathan outbursts his anger, "I will not have you parading at night" (Markandaya 89). Ira's reply "Tonight and tomorrow and every night, so long as there is need, I will not hunger anymore" (Markandaya 99) makes him speechless. Ira's prostitution increases the life of Kuti by a few more days but alas Kuti is destined to die of hunger soon. Rukmani, the mother feels relieved as she says, "I grieved, it was for my son: for in my heart and could not have wished it otherwise. The strife had lasted too long and had been too painful for me to call him back to continue it" (Markandaya 102). Rukmani feels that her son has escaped from the cruel trap of hunger. She feels that her son should not continue his battle against hunger. Thus, Markandaya shows her characters willingly accepting the death of their near and dear ones as a permanent escape from the eternal feeling of hunger.

Rukmani is eternally trapped in the endless cycle of poverty, hunger and exploitation. Her exploitation starts on her wedding day. She feels humiliated when she gets married with a poor, illiterate peasant like Nathan. A girl from a well to do family is compelled to marry such a man who has neither land nor money. She continues her married life as any other Indian superstitious, conventional rustic woman. Unfortunately, the history is seen repeated in the marriage of her daughter, when Rukmani has to marry her beautiful daughter Ira to a poor person due to her inability to pay the dowry.

Rukmani blames the tannery for their exploitation. Shiv K. Kumar in his essay *Tradition and Change in novels of Kamala Markandaya* compares it with the serpent in the Garden of Eden. He says:

Rukmani, the devoted wife of a tenant farmer, living in the soulful quietude of her little village, suddenly finds within this garden of Eden a serpent in the form of a tannery that begins to rear its ugly head, devouring green open spaces, pollution the clean, wholesome atmosphere and tempting simple gullible peasants into greed, ambitions and immorality. (Kumar 205)

The very existence of the rural life is endangered by the advent of tannery as the industry brings prosperity as well as its ill effects. Through Nathan and Rukmani, Markandaya shows the picture of Indian peasant at the advent of Industrialization. In the temple where Rukmani and Nathan seek shelter and food, we see the atmosphere there similar to the one characterized in the village: that of hunger and fear has to ferociously compete with other homeless people for her share of food. Rukmani's belongings are stolen in the temple and she feels herself to be a victim of theft and deceit in God's house. On the whole it is misery all the way for the poor, whether they go to the city or remain in villages. Almost every young woman is left with no other option but to sell her body. Industrialization makes peasants landless. But due to their illiteracy and lack of any other skill they either turn beggars or die. When Nathan becomes landless he goes to the town. He loves his land more than anything else. He has to become a beggar in order to survive in the town. His hard work on the quarry aggravates his illness and brings him closer to death. He dies on the very day they plan to return. His fight against poverty and hunger comes to an end only with his unfortunate death.

Rukmani's final act of adopting Puli acquires a large significance because Rukmani adopts Puli with a promise of curing his leprosy in the village hospital run by Kenny and her son Selvam. The very act of promising distils in itself the actions of planning. Thus, when the novel starts with Rukmani reminiscing her life, the image is one which encapsulates both tradition and modernity, "In the distance on the land ... a large building, spruce and white; not only has money built it but men's hopes and pity, as I know who have seen it grow brick by brick and year by year" (Markandaya 20).

The hospital, a symbol of modernity, is built on the village land, a symbol of tradition. Rukmani's affection for the adopted son Puli resembles her fondness of nonhuman beings which is clarified by her words when she parallels them by mentioning that the street children act beastly around food due to extreme poverty. This parallelism between children and animal is the evidence of Rukmani's ecological prospect.

The speciesism (discrimination based on species) that the tannery possesses by getting profits from the non-human animals is one of the main reasons for social disaster in Rukmani's community which she strongly condemns. The outcome of this disaster generates an unknown fear in Rukmani's mind for her daughter's safety. Although Markandaya emphasizes more on the suffering of women and nature, but the killing of Rukmani's son by the watchmen at the tannery generalizes this suffering that this is not only about gender discrimination but also for class and caste vulnerabilities in the society.

Rukmani's resolution of her identity crisis comes in the wake of accepting the ambivalence towards nature and spaces – the rural village and the urban city, human nature and social customs. Her final act of returning to the land is testimony to the distillation and acceptance of this ambivalence in negotiating tradition and modernity: despite the fact that she has negotiated both the land and the city, but both reject her, she still chooses to come back to the land which is starting to embody both the aspects. Her return is then an active choice born of a complex process of reconciling her gust in the land, spirituality and the Gods and man's ability to plan and assert control over her life. At this point, Rukmani refuses to be passively and fatalistically associated with the land, thereby refining the claim that as a third-world peasant woman she is best suited for the care of the land. Thus, it resists a simplistic reading of a celebratory and romanticized return of the native who is one with the land.

Conclusion

To sum up, although Rukmani alters the landscape through her gardening in beneficial ways and is positively linked to the land and her immediate environment, this romanticized view is given another angle and shade of ambivalence. Hence, through Rukmani, a critique of the social and cultural landscape of the day is also offered to the readers. The novelist through her personae, reveals the growth of fanatic industrialization boosting the marginalization of the subalterns by further ruining their landscape and livelihoods. So, the perfect ecosystem can be maintained only when women will be recognized as the best manager of eco-system. Without the uplifting of society, and especially of women in relation to the environment and the rural

economy, the objectives of economic policies and planning can never be achieved. Women are likely to be hit harder by climate change than men due to their social roles and the simple fact that a majority of the world's poor (sufferers) are women. Real growth and emancipation can only be achieved if there is a proactive uplift of the masses from acute poverty, unemployment, and socio-economic backwardness. The rural economy of women can only thrive if there is a potent environmental education policy and empowerment of women who are the major force behind most countries' economies.

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A STUDY OF POSTCOLONIAL ENVIRONMENTAL AND GENDER ISSUES FROM AN ECOFEMINIST VIEW IN ARUNDHATI ROY'S *THE GOD OF SMALL THINGS*

Manas Barik

State Aided College Teacher (SACT-I)

Narajole Raj College,

under government of West Bengal, India.

Abstract

The term 'Ecofeminism' has evolved from various fields of feminist inquiry and activism: peace movements, labor movements, women's health care, and the anti-nuclear, environmental, and animal liberation movements. Drawing on the insights of ecology, feminism, and socialism, ecofeminism's basic premise is that the ideology which authorizes oppressions such as those based on race, class, gender, sexuality, physical abilities, and species is the same ideology which sanctions the oppression of nature. In the context of Third World developing or under developed countries, ecofeminism is a vital issue to unveil the exploitations and invasions over our ecology and its sources, by the developed countries in the names of globalization, urbanization and development. From 20th century onwards myriads of women writers and social workers over the globe shot to seek female subjectivity in order to substantiate an identity and raise voice

Emigrant literature has become a global issue in the modern trends of literary writing. The Punjabi emigrant literature, which had been in hibernation for long, has started raising its head in the contemporary literature where the various distinctive thematic areas of globalisation like quest for identity crisis, aesthetics, uprooting and re-rooting, nostalgic echoes, and a sense of guilt of abandoning their origins are discussed. This literature not only presents the psychological crisis of the immigrants but has also become a tool to create a dialogue with the other languages of the universe.

The present volume discusses the new trends of immigrant literature by the writers of Punjabi Origin where an effort is made to comprehend various challenges and possibilities faced by the diaspora. The research articles in the book are a mirror for the understanding and recognition of the different expansions and evolution of immigrant literature.

Dr. S.P. Singh

Former Vice Chancellor,
Guru Nanak Dev University,
Amritsar



Gujranwala Guru Nanak Khalsa College
Civil Lines, Ludhiana (PB), INDIA.

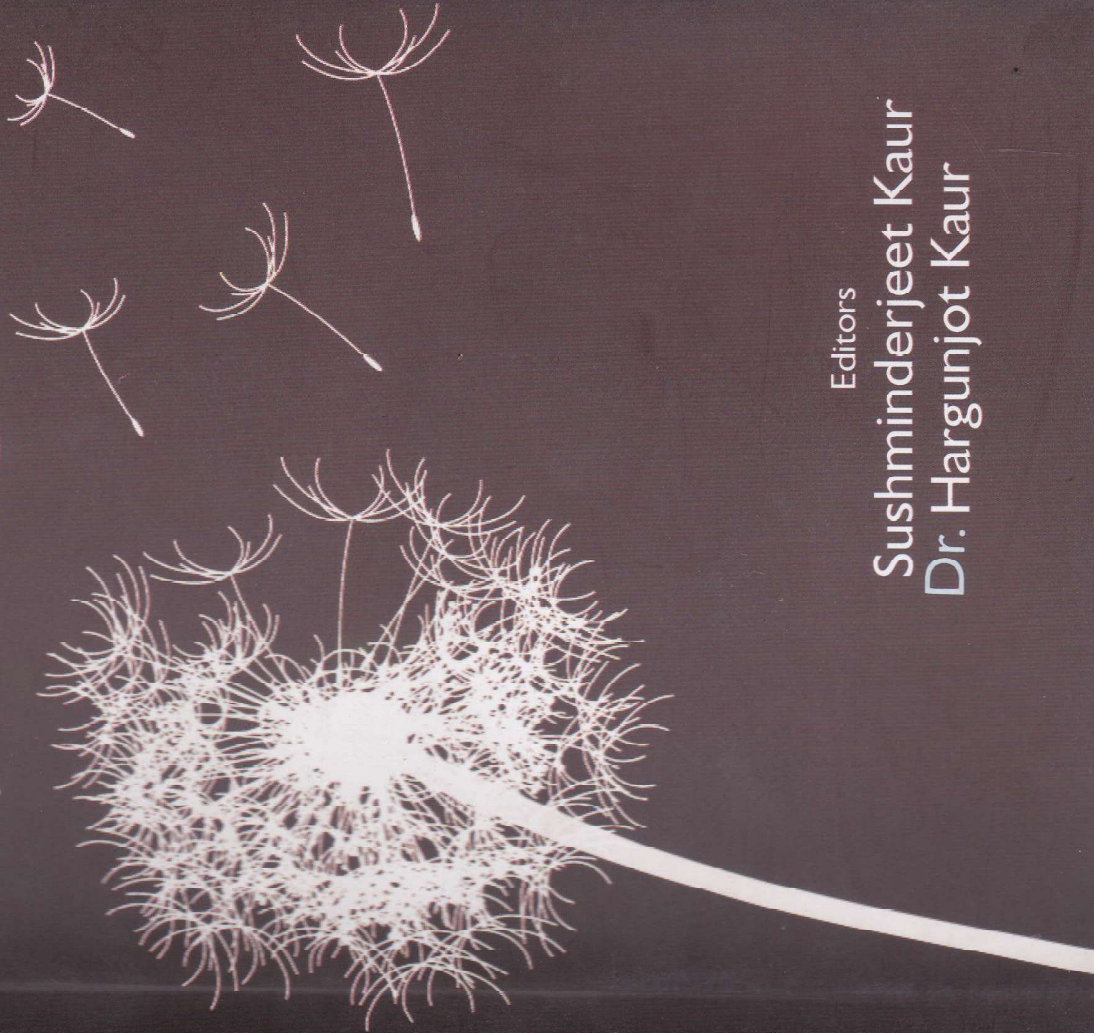


Price : Rs. 500/-

Immigrant Literature By The Writers of Punjabi Origin

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Oscillation between Two Cultures: The Clash of Hybrid Identity in Meera Syal's "Life Isn't All Ha Ha Hee Hee"

Neelam Bhurdwaj

Due to globalization, human beings are familiar with every culture. Different writers from various countries are putting forward the problems related to culture. The problems like familial struggle, gender wise discrimination, teenage problems, problems of particular community etc. are studied with different perspectives. Many writers have written on various issues related to woman and highlighted the woman's problems like identity, social awareness and their cultural status in society, mental disturbance, ill-treatment by people and family to her etc. In Indian culture, In general, *Life Isn't All Ha Ha Hee Hee* by Meera Syal unfolds the personal stories of three young female friends living in the Western metropolis. Since the three women live various lifestyles, the discussion on the following pages must pay attention to how the individual characters differ from each other. However, it is also necessary to explore how the young females contrast themselves against their parents' generation and the roles of their partners in the novel must be also included in the analysis.

Meera Syal was born in the city of Wolverhampton in England in 1961. Her parents both immigrated to England from New Delhi and raised their daughter in Essington. Syal studied English and drama at Manchester University, which prepared her for her career as a writer as well as for her first job as an actress at the Royal Court Theatre. Syal's career is very diverse because she has worked on many different projects-she is an actress, writer, comedian and producer too. Syal usually works with the themes of multiculturalism, race and problems of identity, all of which reoccur in her writing. Due to her cultural origin, Syal has gathered observations as well as personal experiences on what it means to live in London as a first or second generation immigrant and the realities that she has faced in the metropolis are reflected in her writing.

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As everyone knows the culture of East and West is varied. West is considered as modern, materialistic, and with boundless family culture whereas East is considered as full of emotions, feelings and family bindings. The novel *Life Isn't All Ha Ha Hee Hee* revolves round three women of near about thirties named Chila, Tania and Sunita. All three are from Indian origin but staying in London. These three ladies are married and having different issues of their married life sharing to each other. They belong to Indian Punjabi background. These three women united with each other as they belong to same Asian culture and they know the importance of married life, family relations and its bonding. They know the value of motherhood. While staying in London, they face many crisis in their lives due to their Asian culture. Many times they are rejected due to their brown complexion and materialistic view of British people. They stood jointly and helped each other in the new surroundings of British culture. The three girls are childhood friends and they stood middle between Asian and British culture.

The most important character in *Life Isn't All Ha Ha Hee Hee* seems to be that of Tania Tendon. Tania was born in London but her parents had come to settle in the Western metropolis from India, she must be defined as second generation immigrant of the South Asian diaspora in Britain. Like most young immigrants in the West, Tania becomes caught between the culture of the East that is passed onto her by her family that she grew up with and the values and lifestyle of the hegemonic culture in the British metropolis. When we first encounter the young woman, she is attending the traditional Eastern wedding of her friend Chila and she does not feel comfortable there as the wedding reminds her of this:

She (Tania) suddenly remembered why she had stopped attending community events, cultural evenings, bring-a-Tupperware parties, all the engagements, weddings and funerals that marked out their borrowed time here. She could not take the proximity of everything any more ... why her life wasn't following the ordained patterns

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for a woman of her age, religion, height and income bracket. The sheer physical effrontery of her people, wanting to be inside her head, to own her, claim her, preserve her (Syal 15).

Tania is aware that the immigrants she meets at the wedding are still 'her people', i. e. she is of the same race, speaks the same language, she is historically connected to them and this connection can never disappear and must pervade her entire life in the West. She also accepts that her Punjabi roots are an inherent part of her identity that she cannot get rid of:

Sunita and Chila feared they might lose her, when Tania broke loose from her traditional moorings and drifted into an uncharted ocean with her English man and snappy Soho job. ... when she did breeze in ... she seemed to drag the world in with her, full of possibilities, on spiky heels. ... although, Sunita noticed, Tania still sat like one with them, crossed legs, shoes off, unknotting herself in a way that suggested, despite her protestations (my emphasis), that part of her still responded to them like Home (Syal 18).

Indeed, several aspects of the East and the West mix in Tania's life: for example, we learn that she can speak Punjabi in addition to English and that she can hold a conversation in it. She is also described as somebody who likes Hindi films and songs as well as many Western ones and she remains interested in exploring the lives and problems of immigrants from South Asia while she works for British television despite her attempts to distance herself from the majority of such people on a personal level. In this sense, the character of Tania is reminiscent of the common inability of the young second generation immigrant to feel firmly rooted and safe in just one culture. In the first half of the novel, Tania deals with her alienation by focusing on her white English boyfriend, Martin.

Nevertheless, she feels misunderstood by him because Martin adheres to many stereotypical images of South Asians. Consequently, the hybrid Tania is lonely and out of place with him and, in the second half of the novel, she starts to turn towards her roots a bit more. Eventually, she entertains 'a yearning for a South Asian soul mate who approximates a form of South Asianness that she can define for herself'; the young woman who spent years being interested only in white English men suddenly becomes jealous of her friend Chila married to a second generation immigrant and she longs 'to be called 'jaan' - a Punjabi term of endearment-in her desire to feel that she belongs somewhere' (Vogt-William 177). Consequently, Tania starts an affair with Chila's husband, Deepak. Deepak thinks that women should perform the roles of dutiful wives and that they are to be owned and controlled. She would be forced to become a lot like the women of her mother's generation whom she compares to prisoners without bars because they lived for their husbands, they were women with 'plans, boundaries, a place' and she does not want such lifestyle (Syal 111). As a result, Tania's whole urban existence is defined by rootlessness and an endless oscillation between two different cultures as she desperately wants to belong somewhere fully but cannot. When she drives through the area where she used to live with her parents, she does not see office workers, tourists, tramps and drag queens but notices 'Indian women in white widow's weeds', 'early twenties Punjabi lad with goatee beard' and, as she continues along 'the Broadway of Little India', she passes places run by immigrants-'Lotus Café', 'Pradeep's Sweet Mart', 'Lahori's Kebab Hut'(Syal41).

The next character that we have to pay attention to is Chila. Chila is a young-second generation immigrant woman of the South Asian diaspora in Britain because her parents originally come from India. Her family also resided in Africa before moving to London. Chila finds herself in the metropolis from a very early age, which means that she gets accustomed to some aspects of British lifestyle but her roots and the culture of her parents' generation remain a large part of her identity due to her traditional Eastern upbringing in the West. As a result, Chila fulfils the definition of hybridity because she grows up in-between cultures. There are several instances where it becomes clear that Chila's character combines

elements of the West and the East. For example, we learn that as a little girl, she gets called 'Dark Dumbo' by her classmates in London because of her race and the people in her school assume that being a 'recent refugee from East Africa' she 'could not speak a word of English' (Syal 20). Nevertheless, being a hybrid, Chila speaks Punjabi as well as great English. Her oscillation between two cultures then continues during her teenage years when Chila wears blusher, skips lessons to go to 'midday raves in town with Tans and Sunny' and sometimes 'sits in a dark corner with some strange bloke's tongue in (her) ear' while, at the same time, she is 'worried' that she throws away 'all the rules (her) parents had given (her)' (Syal 33). Finally, even the very opening of the novel shows Chila to be caught between two cultures as she prepares for her wedding as an adult. On one hand, Chila freely and consensually participates in the Eastern ceremony that was planned and prepared for her by her family because she feels that keeping tradition and marrying Deepak is the right thing to do. On the other hand, she would prefer to 'celebrate' and wear 'a floaty thing, all gossamer and light' like many brides in the West instead of being 'mummified in red and gold silk, swaddled in half the contents of Grupta's Gold Emporium, pierced, powdered and plumped up' so that her body would only 'walk the walk of everyone's mothers on all their weddings, meekly, shyly, reluctantly towards matrimony' (Syal 14). Everything changes after Chila's engagement to Deepak. When Chila and Deepak start living together, she starts to spend a lot of her time in the house:

I was up for promotion just before I got engaged to Deepak but he said no wife of his was going to work if she didn't want to. (I did want to as it happens but he forgot to ask me that bit) (Syal 35).

The London born Deepak is a hybrid character as he lives according to British lifestyle in some respects but still chooses to adhere to many of the behaviours and traditions he learnt from his parents. Deepak's treatment of his wife, including discouraging her from work, is one of the traditions of first generation immigrants that he adopts because he automatically expects Chila to give up her job and become dependent on him. Interestingly, during the early stages of their marriage, Chila embraces the role she was given.

Chila initially does not mind that she suddenly becomes a submissive wife tied to the domestic sphere in London. Deepak proves to be controlling whenever Chila enters the public sphere, whether it is with him or Tania and Sunita. When she wants to go out to spend time with her friends, he spies on her 'parked with his lights off outside a neighbour's drive, pretending to read an old copy of the *Financial Times*' (Syal 72). Chila is allowed to join Tania's project and is interviewed for one of her films but 'only when her hubby is working late' and then 'she always hurries back before he gets home' (Syal 92). Deepak expects Chila to perform one type of identity in London—he wants her to be a housewife. While Deepak has a job and can go anywhere he wants in the city without ever being questioned because he is a man in a marriage with a patriarchal set up, his wife does not have the same amount of freedom—she does now work, she is often followed, controlled and, as she herself says, her 'world is small' (Syal 34). Indeed, after giving birth to her son, being cheated on by her husband and betrayed by Tania, Chila suddenly develops a lot more personal agency and it is also during this time that she begins to mentally distance herself from London and starts to seriously think of visiting India.

Sunita, the last character to be discussed, is a second generation immigrant of the South Asian diaspora in Britain because she was born in England and her mother and father originally come from India. As a result of growing up in her parents' household where she learns about Indian traditions while also being exposed to white British culture outside of it, Sunita is bound to live a 'double life':

Always the same stuff about family and duty and the double lives we were leading. Always proud to be who they were, but not scared to push back the boundaries, to redefine what being Asian meant. We were making history. We knew it as we were living it (Syal 86).

What Sunita describes here is essentially the hybrid condition that she perceives in herself as well as many other young people

born in London to first generation immigrants from the East. She recognises that a young woman like her cannot live absolutely the same lifestyle like her parents and share all of their values because she is too influenced by her Western surroundings and she has never been to India. Sunita is a hybrid in terms of language because she can speak Hindi as well as English and her hybridity is often visual. For example, when the book talks about her youth and university days, we learn that Sunita smokes and walks around in her Dr. Martens boots produced by the classic British footwear brand, but at the same time wears her bindi, the forehead decoration, typical of South Asia. Finally, Sunita is also a hybrid when it comes to her opinions and general outlook on her cultural belonging. She perceives South Asians as her 'brethren' that she should 'seek out' and have solidarity with because of their shared roots and skin colour but, at the same time, she knows that she does not necessarily have to 'like them', their opinions and lifestyle (Syal 85). As a result of her hybrid condition, Sunita always feels 'special and lonely' (Syal 86). Interestingly, it is Sunita's hybridity that eventually leads her in choosing a second generation immigrant as her partner rather than a white British man. As a result, she decides to marry Akash, whom she describes as 'the best of East and West in one perfectly formed package' (Syal 89). Sunita's relationship with Akash dramatically transforms her identity from its early stages. She leaves the feminist group, fails her exams, marries and turns into the stereotypical Indian wife that she never wished to become. Exactly like Deepak in his relationship with Chila, Akash eventually proves to be rather controlling of Sunita and expects the role of a good wife and a mother to be her priority in London while he, as a man, can do anything he wants. Indeed, Akash expects Sunita to be 'a good Hindu girl' with traditional interests and even clothes (Syal 77). Sunita does adopt this identity and performs it for a long time in their marriage: when Sunita goes to Soho with Tania and Chila, she is 'always' at home apart from her work shifts and hardly goes out and makes time for herself (Syal, 69). In other words, Sunita is driven to the private sphere after stepping into a marriage with a man of South Asian descent in the Western metropolis and she sacrifices a lot of her potential for her husband

and children. As a result, she undergoes a very positive transformation. One day she comes home to her husband as a completely different woman:

Sunita stroked her boyish hair which barely skimmed the fur-trim collar of her very expensive velvet box jacket, Lycra trousers and her soft leather cowboy boots. She smiled slightly, the tilt of her head revealing red and copper highlights shimmering in her crown ... 'They told me that the Gwyneth Paltrow was out, so they did me the Natalie Imbruglia instead. Everything else I bought was on sale' (Syal 204).

Sunita reclaims the 'self' that she lost in the relationship with Akash and she becomes empowered. This reflects in her interaction with the Western metropolis. Sunita leaves her house more: she regularly goes to the hospital with the pregnant Chila where she befriends a young doctor, she takes the tube to go shopping for clothes, looks for a new career and even goes to a party on her own where she dances and rediscovers 'her passions, her backbone, her legs' (Syal 227). Her husband, who would prefer having a traditional submissive partner, criticises her new looks and approach to life and he is visibly unhappy about having to stay at home to look after the children when his wife goes out to enjoy an evening in the area of Soho with Tania and Chila.

To summarise, many women living in society are facing the same problems like the trio of this novel. They struggle, they compromise, and they tolerate everything. The characters of Sunita, Chila and Tania depict the same features of suffering women. The novel endowed with modern family life with dual culture in London. It focuses on identity formations of immigrants in London and provide images of how they re-imagine, view and navigate their urban surroundings. This essay points out London's status of a global city where people from all over the world come to live and turn it into a stage on which they perform their identities. It becomes clear that the presence of immigrants in the streets of

London as well as their cultural roots influence them and the constructions of their identities because all humans are 'a complex collision of inheritance and environment' (Syal 99).

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Exploring the Punjabi-Sikh Ethos: Shauna Singh Baldwin's *hat the Body Remembers*

Pragti Sobti

Dinesh Kumar

Set in undivided Punjab, chiefly between the momentous years of 1928 and 1947, Shauna Singh Baldwin's bestselling debut novel, *What the Body Remembers* (1999), contests both the relative global silencing of sub-continental Partition history and the patriarchalism of colonial and Indian nationalist ideology. At the same time, it challenges the tri-umphalism of post-independence secular rhetoric, and the dominant Hindu, male perspective in post-independence Indian fiction. By drawing on the Punjabi literary genres of medieval Gurmat, Bhakti, and Sufi poetry in the Guru Granth Sahib and on the kissa (romance narrative) and daastan (popular folktale), the novel tells an epic story of Sikh dislocation. And by narrating Sikh religious and political history as it impacts the private lives of the characters, it conveys the cultural memory of Singh Baldwin's quom ("people", "community", or "nation"). Narrated primarily by Satya and Roop, the warring co-wives of Sardarji, an Angli-cized Sikh landowner whose family is violently displaced by Partition, the story also serves as an allegory of the communal rifts and bloody coming-of-age of postcolonial India and Pakistan. Finally, the novel denounces the oppressions of colonial English as well as Hindi linguicism and culturalism in various ways, as it forges a Punjabi-Sikh idiom in English by incorporating Punjabi words, syntax, rhythm, and referentiality. This article is an effort to examine these many ways in which Singh Baldwin-marked by her particular history as a female, minority, Sikh, diasporic writer "re-members the (Sikh) body", thereby representing and memorializing pre-partition Punjabi culture and sensibility to write the first Sikh feminist novel in English.

Beginning as the short story "Satya", collected in Singh Baldwin's *English Lessons* and *Other Stories* (1996), *What the Body*

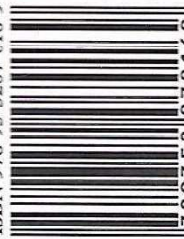
Indian Dalit Autobiographies

Marginalized Voices



AUTHORS PRESS

ISBN 978-93-5207-016-9



9 789352 107016 9

₹ 900 | \$ 45

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Edited by
Bijender Singh



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The present book is a modest attempt to critically evaluate the various aspects of Indian dalit autobiographies and memoirs. I am indebted to all the contributors who left no stone unturned to offer us a critical exploration of many dalit autobiographies in this book. This book, it is hoped, will definitely get a warm reception by the students, research-scholars and teachers equally who want to get acquainted with the dalit literature and dream to be conversant with new vista of Indian dalit autobiographies.

This book would have never seen the light of the day without the support and cooperation of many people whom I want to extend my obligations. First of all, I owe to my learned contributors who tried their extra bit for writing their scholarly papers and sending them on time. I place on record my sincere and heartfelt thanks to Mr. Sudarshan Kcherry, Managing Director, Authorspress, New Delhi for his faith in my editorship and bringing out this book so meticulously and promptly. I am thankful to all of the technical hands that rendered their services tirelessly and constantly to bring out this book.

Last but not the least; I extend my heart-felt gratitude to eminent dalit writer, poet and literary critic Prof. Sharankumar Limbale; Regional Director and Professor, Yashwantrao Chavan Maharashtra Open University, Pune who spared his valuable time to write the foreword for this book.

Bijender Singh

Mob: 91-9992873801

Email: drbijendersingh@india.com

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Notes on the Contributors		

noticeable name is Urmila Pawar, a great activist and one of the award winning writers. She is famous as a feminist writer and leader of Women's lib movement. In the streamline of Indian women dalit writers, she has established herself after Daya Pawar, Baby Kamble and Shantabai Gokhle as the prominent voice of dalit literature.

Born in the Konkan region of Maharashtra in a Hindu Mahar family, Urmila is a well known literary personality who is famous for her short story writing in Marathi literature. She has a Master of Arts in Marathi literature and now a retiree from Public Works Department of Maharashtra. She was awarded Laxmibai Tilak Award for the best published autobiography i.e. Aaydan by Maharashtra Sahitya Parishad.

'Aaydan' her autobiography written in Marathi has been translated into English and titled as *The Weave of My Life: A Dalit Woman's Memoirs* by Maya Pandit which portrays the condition of dalit community exploited by the upper caste and being extremely marginalized. In her autobiography, she has described the struggle of three generations for the survival to overcome the pain and burden of their caste. She details the village life at the time of her grandmother, mother and her own childhood. In her foreword to the English translation, Wandana Sonalkar writes that the title of the book is a metaphor of writing technique employed by Pawar:

The lives of different members of her family, her husband's family her neighbors and classmates, are woven together in a narrative that gradually reveals different aspects of everyday life of dalits, the manifold ways in which caste asserts itself and grinds them down. (Pawar xv)

There are two ways to see an autobiography – one can be with sympathy and another with empathy. But at the end Pawar quotes in *The Weave of My Life: A Dalit Woman's Memoirs*:

Urmila Pawar's *The Weave of My Life*: Notes from the Margins

DR. NEELAM BHARDWAJ

After the Independence, the major concern while making Indian constitution was to pay special attention to uplift the status and standard of those people who have suffered from indescribable ills and evils like untouchability, cruelty and exploitation to that of equality with other citizens of India. In this concern, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar helped a lot by framing such a constitution in which injustice done to these people for centuries was tried to be undone. In fact, under the influence of Dr. Ambedkar, a wave of change was visible among these classes who raised their voice of revolt against their exploitation and inhumane existence.

In 1958, the term 'Dalit Literature' was used for the first time in Maratha region and it gave birth to many writers whose pen stood in this concern and raised their voice for this cause. Indian dalit women writers have, nowadays, placed their feet in the arena of literature. They are shining because they have written from the point of view of a woman. Most of the autobiographies by women writers have no concern with the riches but the social practices committed on them and thereby expressing genuine female experiences. Among them, the most

Life has taught me many things; showed me much; it has also lashed out at me till I bled. I do not know how much longer I am going to live; nor do I know in what form life is going to confront me. Let it come in any form, I am ready to face it stoically. That is what my life has taught me. That is my life, and that is me. (Pawar 320)

It clears our confusion of categorizing this autobiography. It focuses on the major issues of class, caste and gender in the context of Indian society. It is not only a discovery of selfhood and assertion of identity but presents a realistic picture of Indian culture, communal relations, clashes and tolerances. This piece of writing is a pure work of strength, courage packed in one. Pawar has very beautifully talked about the reality of growing as a dalit when leaders like Dr. Ambedkar were working for a new society free from caste system.

Her memoir is a combination of many memories which helps the readers in understanding the autobiography as well as the injustice done to dalits especially dalit women:

The labour of generations of dalit women inside and outside the household and the critical work of 'remembering'. It is through this labour of weaving that the testimonio builds an archive of memories of encounter of three generations of dalits of the Konkan region with modernity: with colonial education, changing processes and meanings of community and productive and reproductive labour; the city, the postcolonial bureaucracy, household and popular cultural practices, violence and humiliation inside and outside the home, illness and death, new meanings of romance, conjugality and motherhood, processes of agitating in the public world of social movements and the slow but golden transition to a new life after *Dharmantar* or conversion. (Pawar 332)

Basically, Urmila belongs to Mahar dalits and she has spent her childhood in rugged Konkan coast near Mumbai. Dalits were mainly settled in the centre of this village and were the main attraction for the upper class's exploitation. Life for dalits was

such that belonging to a lower caste meant fixed destiny where there is no hope of any change and rise from the circumstances. Pawar describes in this following quotation:

The community was haunted by a sense of perpetual insecurity, fearing that it could be attacked from all four sides in times of conflict. That is why amongst our people there was always a tendency to shrink within ourselves like a tortoise and to proceed very slowly. (Pawar xi)

A very small incident from her childhood depicts the cruel behavior of the upper class. Pawar's school teacher was from upper society. Apart from teaching them, he made it sure they do every piece of work around like sweeping the school campus and collecting the cow dung. She was even made to sit in the last row.

Dalits had been tortured from everywhere. Pawar has not only exposed the condition of dalits at a small level but has also unfolded the reality of Guruji from the upper caste along with the so called priest.

Once when Pawar and her mates were waiting at the stairs of the 'Mandir' for 'Prasad', she noticed suddenly the door of the 'Mandir' opened. She saw Ulgava, daughter of Kombati coming out of it and 'pujarji' following her. He hurriedly came down even without giving them 'prasad'. At that small age, Pawar wondered why Ulgava was crying.

One of the most important weapons discovered in the autobiography to eradicate caste system is education. Her father was a school master, though he had studied till seventh standard. His only mantra was to get education. He even scolded kids for not studying. While dying, he passed on this same mantra to his wife and this right step taken at that time is a fruit of where Pawar stands today.

After her husband's death, she was told to break her 'mangalsutra' and her bangles and also she was instructed to remove her wifehood i.e. kumkum with the left toe of her husband. Describing about this incident from her life somewhere she has tried to portray the condition of dalit women which is even worse than the dalits.

According to Pawar, dalit members who worked on the footsteps of Ambedkar managed to succeed to a great extent but they failed to change much for dalit women. She says, 'in fact, it's worsened', as she also writes about the treatment to daughter-in-laws in the dalits. They were used to live on soup of salted water with rice. Food cooked was different for males and females.

Pawar witnessed overpowering of males in dalits starting from her father to the number of males she came across in her life. When her father used to come home and made Pawar and her siblings sit with books until their neck get twisted, Pawar could not speak anything. When they failed to sit and study, he would thrash them. Pawar says that her foolish mother would merely watch her father and could not try to stop him.

Second male who got stuck in Pawar's throat is her brother who was only four years older than her: "this brother, though, had taken a bow, almost, to bear me, like Afzal Khan's decision to kill Shivaji." (Pawar 136) Next male member is her husband. Although it was very clear from her decision to marry that the marriage will have a lot of tension but as Pawar writes:

I shared a bittersweet relationship with my husband who supported me but also expected me to fulfil the typical role of a wife, catering to kitchen duty and household chores. (Pawar 317)

From the above lines, we get to know her husband's dominance over her. She has explained about the treatment given to her by

males outside her family. A minute description of oppression and exploitation towards females is described in the autobiography. She was insulted when she went to attend some wedding at her sister-in-law's place. When she, along with two of her nieces, began to ask for rice repeatedly, the cook got angry and bursted out: "Whose daughters are these anyway? They are eating like monsters." (Pawar 117) Pawar also writes about her own experience of sexual exploitation at her early adulthood by her uncle: "My maternal uncle plays dolls with me and pretends to be my husband, drags me into an alcove and presses me hard." (Pawar 125)

Once, Pawar and her husband went to attend a function. It was very difficult to make her husband attend any function as he was very reluctant. When it was his time of drinking, he stood up to leave. On being questioned by an artist, he replied: "This is the time we get water in the house. So I have to go fill it up." (Pawar 307) and surprisingly after sometime that artist narrated the incident like: "The poor husband was going to store water at home and this shameless woman was laughing. How easily men appeared poor and women shameless" (Pawar 307) Pawar has expressed that how her life always revolved around a few things. She could never break the trend, only people got changed in her life nothing else:

When I got my salary, I could not believe that all that money was mine; that I could spend it the way I liked. Before my marriage, I used to handover my salary to my mother. Now I started handing it over to my husband. (Pawar 208)

Pawar is of the view that the self respect of a man is natural in this society but for a woman it takes a strong effort. She transformed herself by the participation in drama at the school and college days with the strong faith in reading books about Babu Saheb Ambedkar and other dalit writers. In the course of

time, she joined a job in Mumbai and got an opportunity for developing her writing skills over there. As a result, she started using her leisure time in writing short stories, drafting articles, developing intimacy with female friends and awareness about women's problems. Pawar has highlighted the issue of distinction of male/female positions and titles awarded to them. She asserts that on being promoted a man becomes Bhaushahab or Raosaheb but a woman officer will remain only a Bai without the title of Sahib.

Through the example of her own brother Sahu, Pawar has highlighted the other important issue of male child. The attraction for the male child is described when her brother had a son and the *namkaran sanskar* was performed. On this occasion, the sisters have raised the issue of property rights of girls after marriage: "Don't you know that Babasaheb had asked in the Hindu code Bill to give the daughters their share of property? So come on, get up now!" (Pawar 289)

Pawar has also described the story of Jyoti who has attempted to steal the child of other woman for this male child craze of her husband. Apart from people, Pawar has exposed certain harmful beliefs which have no logic at all but are practiced since ages – beating a pregnant woman is one among them which is a complete blind faith. When once Pawar got a bit late to come home, the whole family thought that some kind of ghost spirit has entered in her and created this confusion in the family. Pawar's mother came out with: "Thank God! The ghost did not crumble you up. The God of this place has saved you! It's the spirit of the ancestors that's protected you." (Pawar 136)

At the end of the story, Pawar lost her husband and her son. In spite of her unbearable pain and struggle at this juncture of life, she was blamed by her own community people that she

failed as a mother and a traditional wife. Once, on being asked by her to the mother about 'motherhood', her mother replied in one word 'sacrifice' in a low tone of pain:

I just wanted to know how she would express the feelings behind the word 'Mother'. My question made her wince with pain. She said, to be a mother is to commit sati; to immolate oneself: nothing less! (Pawar 298)

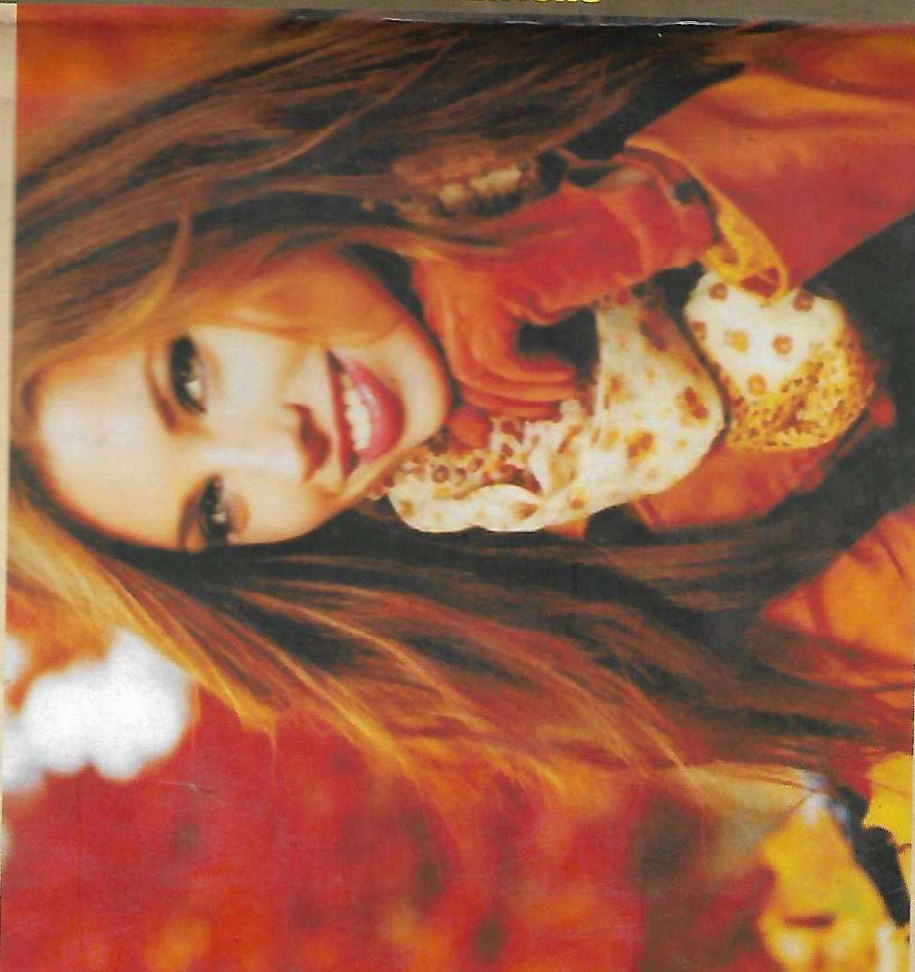
Throughout of her life she has faced only challenges. She had been weaving her life as her mother weaved bamboo. The very quote stated at the beginning justifies the whole autobiography:

My mother used to weave aydams. I find that her act of weaving and my act of writing are organically linked. The weave is similar. It is the weave of pain, suffering and agony that links us. (Pawar x)

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INDIAN WOMEN NOVELISTS
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PUBLICATIONS PVT LTD
www.vishwabharati.in

ISBN 978-93-83192-94-6
9 789383 192946
₹ 800 | \$ 40



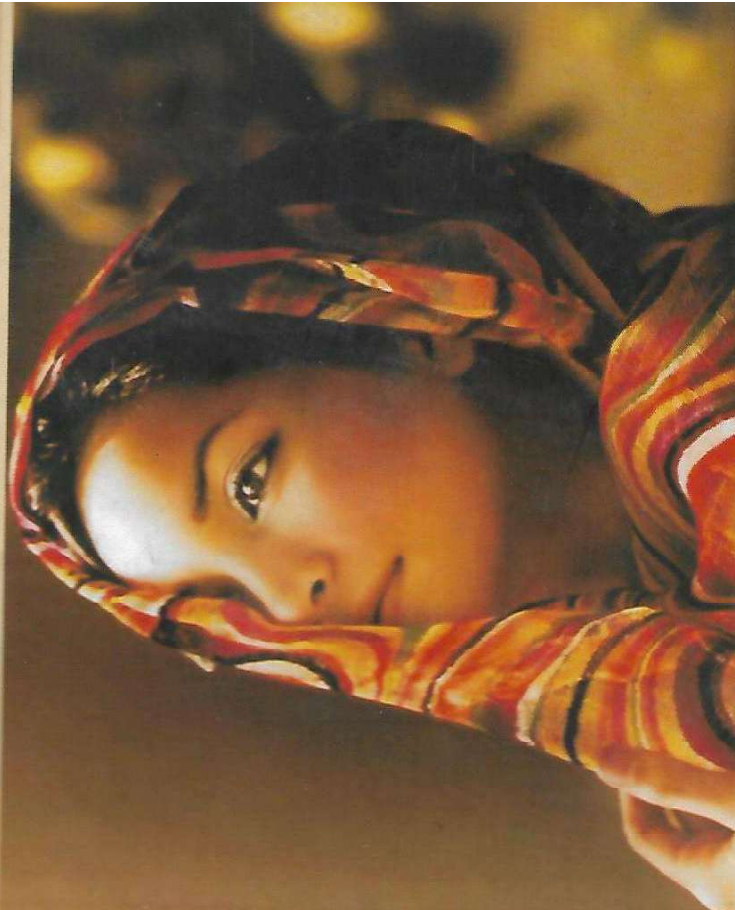
INDIAN WOMEN NOVELISTS
FEMINIST REVERBERATIONS

Bijender Singh



INDIAN WOMEN NOVELISTS

FEMINIST REVERBERATIONS



Edited by
Bijender Singh

will enhance the scope and tradition of healthy criticism on different women novelists whose works have been extensively examined and explored in this anthology. This book, it is hoped, will prove of paramount importance for all scholars and teachers who want to go for the deep study of Indian women novelists.

I would like to acknowledge many persons without whose cooperation this book would not have seen the light of the day. First of I am grateful to all of the incredibly gifted and skilled contributors who left no stone unturned to give a detailed critical analysis of the feminist novels from Indian Writing in English. I will always remain indebted to my mother, wife, brothers and sisters who always boost me up for taking new ventures in the literary arena. I express my gratitude to all those who directly or indirectly extended their sincere cooperation to complete this anthology. I find no words to express my gratitude to Dr. S.S. Kanade and the Managing Director, Mrs. Mahananda Shivputra Kanade, Thematics Publications, Latur (MS) India who published this book promptly and diligently.

Last but not the least, I record my immense debt of gratefulness to the great scholar, researcher and critic Prof. (Dr.) Ami Upadhyay, Director & Professor, School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Open University, Ahmedabad, Gujarat, India who spent her valuable time from her busy schedule to write a scholarly 'foreword' for this book.

Bijender Singh
 Mob: 91-9992873801
 Email: drbijendersingh@india.com

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issues. She has authored more than two dozen collection of poems, 26 novels and 23 collections of short-stories. Originally written in Punjabi and Hindi, her essays, short stories and novels have been translated into more 30 regional and foreign languages. Still today, she holds an unsurpassed position on account of her portrayal of imaginative world based on patriarchal social constraints.

Amrita Pritam's partition classic *Pinjar* was translated into English by Khushwant Singh. It is renamed as 'The Skeleton' in English language. This title is given on the basis of repetition and significance of the word "skeleton" which assumes multifarious denotations and connotations in the text.

This novel is an attempt to narrate the story of partition from a woman's perspective. It highlights sufferings, exploitation and sacrifices of women due to their dislocation and abduction during partition days. Here, Amrita Pritam brought out women's experience under patriarchy. She put the marginalized at the center stage of the novel. The way she has captured the pains and traumas of partition displays that she is a highly sensitive poetess.

Pinjar is mainly set in a small village Chatto and its neighbouring villages like Rattawal and Sakkar which are all now in the Pakistani Punjab. The storyline describes a period of 1935-1948 during which these villages were stuck in an environment of riots and massacres. The protagonist is Pooro, who is a young girl of Hindu money-lender's family of Chatto village.

The soul of Pritam's narrative lies in the evolution of Pooro and her mind. It captures her memories from innocent adolescent in the late 1930s or early 40s to a young mother in 1948. In other words, the story describes the period of Pooro's life since she was abducted by Rashida at the age of 15 and subsequently had to live in his home as his wife for the next six or seven years.

Pinjar opens with Pooro, now with a child, reflecting back to her childhood days at his parents' home. She was hardly fifteen years old and was just beginning to show signs of puberty.

Pooro was now fifteen. She felt a strange upsurge of blood in

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Women and Family in Amrita Pritam's *Pinjar*: A Feminist Approach

Dr. Neelam Bhardwaj

This boy...this boy's father...all men...men who gnaw a woman's body like a dog gnawing a bone and like a dog consuming it. (Singh 34)

The above thought is of the central female character of Amrita Pritam's magnum opus *Pinjar*. The obvious reason for quoting it is that this is the voice of the main female personality caught in the web of patriarchy and seeks her freedom from its fetters.

The word 'feminism' seems to refer to an intense interest in feminine problems. It is a theoretical project, which aims at understanding the power structures in the society, male domination, social practices and social institutions, which are instrumental in assigning a marginalized position to women in all parts of the country. The study shows that feminism is a struggle for equality of women, an effort to make women become an individual. This paper is an analytical study of Amrita Pritam's *Pinjar* to analyze her feminist perspective.

Amrita Pritam (1919-2005) is considered as the first renowned poet, essayist and novelist of Punjabi literature. She was the first prominent poet of Punjabi literature, migrated to India from Lahore after the India-Pakistan partition in the year 1947. She is the first woman recipient of the Sahitya Academy Award. She also received the Jnanpith award, the Padma Vibhushan Award and five D.Lit. degrees from various universities in India for her lifetime devotion to Indian literature. She is famous for her heart moving stories on the partition tragedy and hair raising feminist

Pooro got up and went out of the door. Neither her mother nor her father tried to stop her. When she had come this way earlier, she had believed that she was returning to life; she had wanted to live again, to be with her mother and father. She had come full of hope. Now she had no hope, nor any fear. What more could anyone take from her than her life? The thought dried up all her tears." (Singh 23)

Pooro had no other alternative but to go back to Rashida and reconcile to be his wife after tying the nuptial knot. She is given a new Muslim name "Hamida" for the rest of her life:

"Till then, Rashida had called her by her proper Hindu name. One day he brought a stranger with him and asked his wife to stretch out her arm. The man tattooed on it the new name she had been given when she was married to Rashida. From that day "Hamida" was not only inscribed on her skin in dark green letters but everyone began to call her by that name. (Singh 24)

After the marriage, Hamida became as cold as a corpse and was forced to conceive and deliver a son against her wish. She expressed no happiness on the birth of the son but instead her eyes seemed to say, "What more do you want of me? I have given you my person and I have given you a son. I have nothing more to give." (Singh 33)

Such bitterness was also incurred on the child. We can easily guess from her gestures that she is cursing the child in her heart of hearts:

A cold, clammy feeling ran through her body-as if a slimy slug was clambering over her. She clenched her teeth; she wanted to shake the slug off her arm, flick it away from her side, draw it out as one draws out a thorn by taking its head between one's nails, pluck it out of her flesh like a tick or a leech and cast it away.... (Singh 33)

Rashida tried his level best to calm her down by advising her to mix up with the neighbours but she would always reply, with a hint of sarcasm: "Where can I go to? Whom am I related to except you?" (Singh 26)

her limbs. Her breasts burgeoned; her kameez became too tight for her. She bought calico prints from a neighbouring market and had new ones made. She also got a new set of dupattas to match. She had them thickly sprinkled with silvery mica. (Singh 5)

Although an innocent girl, Pooro is described to understand the complex structure of society which is based on cultural leanings and preconceptions. For instance, she could well gauge the horror of losing her world after the abduction by Rashida. She did realize that her future life and identity has permanently been modified by her Muslim abductor and she has lost her previous life and people she loved forever. However, there were still a lot of things that she could not wrap her head around at her tender age:

Hate welled up in Pooro's heart as she heard Rashida's words. He had robbed her of her birthright; he had robbed her of her future. Her parents had probably given her up for lost and left the village. (Singh 20)

Her fervent pleas to Rashida to let her go back home were turned down rudely by him. On the other hand, he told her that they would soon initiate the process of marriage in a Muslim way. Pooro gave a deaf ear to Rashida's words and planned her escape in the middle of night by unlocking the door. She ran so fast that she could heave a sigh of relief only at the doorstep of her house. Although her mother hugged her warmly, but at the same time uttered, "Daughter, it would have been better if you had died at birth. If the Shaikhs find you here, they will kill your father and your brothers. They will kill all of us." (Singh 22) Fearing the same, her father said, "Daughter, this fate was ordained for you; we are helpless." (Singh 22)

When Pooro knelt before him and requested him to take her along with them to Thailand, her father again asserted:

Who will marry you now? You have lost your religion and your birthright. If we dare to help you, we will be wiped out without a trace of blood left behind to tell of our fate." (Singh 22)

On hearing these words, Pooro thought that she had nothing more to lose now. It is described in the novel as:

that try to suppress her dignity.

After marriage, Taro met with bad luck when she came to know that her husband was having affair with a girl of lower caste. The couple wanted to marry but the parents of her husband forced him to marry Taro, a girl of their own caste. They had the hope that husband's past from Taro's parents. They had the hope that everything would become fine as the boy would forget his beloved and would continue to live in the same house with the bride of his parents' choice. But, as was written in her fate, no change occurred in Taro's life and she was forced to suffer in silence. This lead Taro to outpour her anger on the patriarchal system, "What can I tell you? When a girl is given away in marriage, God derives her of her tongue, so that she may not complain." (Singh 44)

She found herself in a fix about her marriage; whether she should accept it or not. It is to be noted here that even Taro could not overpower the patriarchal system and her attempts to raise her voice against the system were met with futility, "For two years I have had to sell my body for a mess of pottage and a few rags. I am like a whore... like a common prostitute..." (Singh 45)

Later in the novel, we come to know that Taro got such revolutionary ideas from her brother who studied in the city. It was from him that she learnt to voice against the injustice meted out to her.

After the partition, Hamida saw a mad young girl who was forced to parade naked in the streets by a gang of boys. She scolded them in great anger resulting from the suppression and suffering that she underwent, "It was a sin to be alive in a world so full of evil, thought Hamida. It was a crime to be born a girl." (Singh 86)

The women of the neighbourhood reacted on the condition of the mad woman. They collectively tried to cover her up. When these women discovered that this mad woman was pregnant, they expressed their hate towards the men folk of Sakkar. Hamida kept her observation:

She is neither young nor attractive; she is just a lump of flesh

She remained confined to herself and had no clue how and when to express the anger and suppression inherent in her heart. Throughout the novel, she found no outlet of the deep pain inside her heart. Though her appearance and actions might suggest that she was an ordinary married woman, her internal life was far tougher as she had to face the scar of abduction and her husband's guilt of doing the same.

At no point do we see Pooro fighting against patriarchal norms. Instead, eventually Pooro found her small little space and happiness in the dominant structures of power. Pooro learnt to accept her new fate without losing her spirit. Rashida continued to be a provider for the family but he could never get rid of his dominant quirks. The maternal instincts of Pooro kept increasing to the point that she started loving both the child and his father, Rashida. She eventually accepted her new reality. We never get to see her as a rebellious woman.

The next woman mentioned in the novel is Kammo who used to live with her aunt in the neighborhood of Hamida. Hamida has often heard Kammo's aunt grumble: "They had the wretch to torture us." (Singh 38) because, according to the Aunt, Kammo's father had taken another woman after the death of Kammo's mother. The duo had now moved to the city. The other woman refused to have any relation with Kammo. So, Kammo was abandoned by her father too. Hamida thinks:

People often say that when a person's mother dies, even a real father becomes a step-father. It was Hamida's misfortune that her real father had become a step-father before becoming a widower and her real mother had, without being a widow, become like a step-mother." (Singh 38)

The next girl who is a victim of patriarchy is Taro, a simple village girl. Taro's husband had a love affair with another woman. So, he had deserted her. On hearing the story of Taro, Hamida thinks that her own house is just like a "haven or refuge" (Singh 48). Taro charmed Pooro by her courageous and magical words which she spoke expressing her deep hatred against the institutions

without a mind to go with it... a living skeleton... a lunatic skeleton... a skeleton picked to its bones by kites and vultures. (Singh 52)

The mad woman delivered a child and a fresh controversy arose in Hindu and Muslim communities regarding the religion of the child:

The mad woman was a Hindu. The Muslims have grabbed a Hindu child. Under the very noses of the Hindus, they have converted a Hindu child into a Muslim...” (Singh 56-57)

But, at last, it is stated in the novel that the child was dropped at Rashida’s doorstep by these Hindu forerunners. At this crucial juncture, Amrita Pritam narrates:

Hamida’s ears burned with rage when she heard of the abduction of Hindu girls by Muslims and of Muslim girls by Hindus. Some had been forced into marriage, some murdered, some stripped and paraded naked in the streets. (Singh 83)

After partition, there could be seen convoys of Muslims going to Pakistan and convoys of Hindus coming to India. In one such incident, Lajo, the sister-in-law of Pooro, was kidnapped by Muslims and was kept in Ramchand’s house which was then occupied by a Muslim.

Pooro tried to send Lajo back to her parents. With the help of Rashida, she hatched a plan to rescue Lajo from the custody of her abductors. She engineered the plan and eventually Lajo was rescued. In spite of her not being accepted by her parents, Pooro helped Lajo to join her family. She clarified Lajo’s rescue with the words:

The abductions have taken place on such a large scale that the parents have started accepting their daughters abducted by the opposite community. Rashida says that Muslim girls are also recovered from India. Such of the recovered girls are with offspring. (Singh 85)

Towards the end of the novel, Pooro’s brother asked her to accompany them to India but she preferred to stay in Pakistan

with Rashida and her children.

It is quite remarkable that Pritam was able to bring out the harsh realities of those times in their full colour. In fact, this is a feature of a majority of Pritam’s work that she is able to express the oppression of women in the society. She gave a platform to the desires, dreams, fears and miseries of women. She was disturbed by the plight of women and she doesn’t shy away from bringing it all out for the rest of the world to see. In fact, she panned this concern prominently through all her writings.

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