



Identity Crisis: a Search of Self

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ABSTRACT - Modern Indian Fiction has seen tremendous growth in women centered approach and feministic views. Women writers have put forth their solidity towards the growth of Indian fiction. They have adduced female subjectivity by portraying different characters in their novels. Their characters speak about their approach, sacrifice, survival, conflict, suffering, revival, victory and what not. Women writers brought out the women's issue in limelight. They created instance and people from real life existence to depict their feelings, situations, expressions, mood swings, identity crisis, tortures, psychological, physical and emotional disturbances, problems faced and tackled by the women folk. It also says even in these difficult situations how women are exposed in the fast growing economic and societal changes. This paper puts forth Sudha Murty's voice which clearly states the dilemma faced by women in the Indian urban set up. It deals with a multi-layered topic of complicated family matters of a very typical Indian Society almost thirty years ago, but which can be found even now. This paper focuses mainly on the human relationship, impact of sudden changes in India's emergence as a developing nation and conflict between traditions and modernity.

Key Words: Bakula, Dilemma, Feminism, Identity Crisis, Western Ideologies.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Indian women novelists have established a strong tradition in Indian writing in English. They have established a distinctive style in exploring the problem faced by women. The emergence of women writing in English during this period made the novel as an instrument for self-realization, social reform and regeneration. In the novels of women writers, we come to know about women who are traditional in their way of living but modern in their outlook and have the capacity to retain their individuality. Many Indian women novelists have explored female subjectivity in order to establish an identity that is not imposed by the patriarchal society. Their work is marked by an impressive feel for the language, and an authentic presentation of contemporary India, with all its regional variation. They generally write about the urban middle class often the central figures in the novels in order to seek their own identities consciously, try to break away from the kind of life they are nostalgic for.

A modern development in modern Indian fiction is the growth of a feminist or women centered approach, many Indian women novelist have explored female subjectivity in order to establish identity. Women writers have moved away from traditional portrayals of enduring sacrificing women, towards conflicts, female characters searching for identity, no longer characterized and defined simply in terms of their victim status.

There are many Indian women writers who bring out the women's issues. They create many characters from real life existence and bring their feelings, mood swings, identity crisis, tortures and many psychological and emotional imbalances. Arundati Roy, Gita Hriharan, NamitaGokhale, Anita Nair, ManjuKapur have created attention through their works. Their concentration was mostly on feminism: The way the womenfolk have been treated by the male dominating society. The problems faced and tackled by the women, with the growth of economic and societal changes and how women are exposed.

Indian writing in English dates back to 1930's, KashiprasadGhosh, is considered to be the first Indian poet writer in English. Sohee Chandra Dutt was the first fiction writer of Indian English novels. Indian writers took English and adopted Indian style in writing. They have acculturated English in terms of the 'Indianised context'. Many Indian noteworthy literary personalities like Rabindranath Tagore, R.K.Narayan, KamlaMarkandaya, ManoharMalganokar, Anita Desai, MulkRajAnand, Raja Rao, NayanataraSehgal have wrote the spirit of Indianness. During 1980, many writers took the world with a storm by their magnificent writings like Salman Rushdie, V.S.Naipaul, Shoba De, Kushwant Sing, SashiTharoor, Amitav Gosh, Arundati Roy, Sudha Murty, ManjuKapur, SashiDeshpande. These authors used Indian phrases alongside English words

and had tried to reproduce a blend of the Indian and the western culture. Indian author, poets, novelists, essayists, dramatists- have been making momentous and considerable contribution to world literature since the preindependence era, the past few years have witnessed a gigantic prospering and thriving of Indian English writing in the global market.

Sudha Murty a prolific writer in English and Kannada, has written nine novels. Her books are translated into all the major languages. Her novels spell our view on charity, hospitality and self realization through fictional narratives. Sudha Murty was born in 1950, in Karnataka. She is a social worker and an accomplished author. She is famous for her philanthropic services. She has initiated to provide all government schools in Karnataka with computer and library facilities. She has written many stories, which deals with common lives, hospitality and realization. In 2006, she was awarded the Padma Shri, a civilian award from the government of India and also received an honorary doctorate from Satyabhama University. The very first novel remains startlingly relevant in its scrutiny of modern values and ethics.

Our greatest fear is not obscurity, but winning acclaim. Every individual craves for recognition. To get recognized, one should find a sense of 'self'. Finding a sense of self is nothing but identity foreclosure. The purpose of this study is to bring forth the heroine's quest for identity in the novel 'Gently Falls The Bakula' by Sudha Murty. The concept, identity crisis was developed by Erik Erikson who believed that the formation of identity was one of the most important parts in one's life.

'Gently Falls The Bakula' is a story of a marriage that loses its ways as ambition and self-interest take their toll. This novel has been dedicated to all the women in India who allowed family commitments and responsibilities to overpower their own aspirations. When their aspirations are suppressed identity foreclosure arises. This psychological development leads to identity crisis. Shrimati and Shrikant are neighbours in the small town of Hubli in Karnataka. They both fell in love. Shrikant joins IT company and rapidly climbs the ladder and reaches the pinnacle in his industry. While Shrimati intelligent, abandons her academic aspirations and becomes his uncomplaining shadow, silently fulfilling her duties as a corporate leader's wife. But later she realizes her life is dismally empty.

The book deals with a heavy, multilayered topic of complicated family matters very typical of the Indian society almost thirty years ago. Her novels present a sample of whole Indian society. She depicts a sample of whole Indian society. She depicts the change in the rural areas. Sudha Murty is one of the many voices of the modern Indian English fiction, who clearly states the dilemma faced by a woman in the Indian urban set up. Her novel focuses mainly on the human relationship, impact of sudden changes in India's emergence as a developing nation, conflict between tradition and modernity.

Growth of technology, industrialization, scientific advancement is necessary for the overall growth of the country. On the other hand, it has its own negativity. They create a set of problems, psychologically and sociologically especially on the womanhood. Be it in a small town or a metro city, craving for identity continuous. Like the heroine of the novel the writer herself made many personal sacrifices while her husband setup Infosys along with five others.

Sudha Murty is one of the many voices of the modern Indian English fiction who clearly states the dilemma faced by a woman in the Indian urban set up. She is known for her sensitive portrayal of the inner feelings of her female characters. Her women characters possess an admirable strength to face calamities of life and are adept to the wisdom of compromise and adjustment. The story is such that it can happen in any part of the country even today. There must be innumerable couples who have been through and are still going through the dilemmas, be it in a small town or a mega city. The writer has chosen Hubli and Bombay as the setting for the novel. These two places are very known places for her personally, as she grew up in one and enjoyed the work in other.

She portrays her heroine; Shrimati Deshpande has a slim, tall girl, with a wheatish complexion and clear features. She had unusually long hair which touches her knees. She is fond of the flower 'Bakula' which she always wore in her hair. She is not a usual girl who is fond of jasmine, rose or some other flowers which usually attract the girls of her age. Like Shrimati Bakula flower is a very unusual. It is a tiny, pale greenish brown and is shaped like a crown. As flower grows, it is unattractive but carries a divine fragrance even after it dries up. This flower plays a key role in the life of Shrimati and Shri. In the space between the houses of Shrimati and Shri grows the tree Bakula about the size of a Neem tree. From the beginning of the novel, the writer makes the character of the heroine as resistant and resourceful as the earth.

"Shrimati was the only one who was not at all perturbed. She was neither bent upon doing better than Shrikant nor did she look upon her success as a matter of family honour and pride." (18)

Even at the very early age Shrimati Deshpande developed the equanimity of an ascetic. She strongly believed that studies will help one to acquire knowledge and examination is not the ultimate measure of one's intelligence. By the words of Professor Collins to Prof. Rao it is clear that

“Her ideas are very clear and logical.”(44)

During her study in university Shrimati developed a fine critical sensibility and trained herself to think logically and reduce emotional idealism. She became passionate over history and started detaching it from the emotional point of view and became more aware of the facts and she always remembered the saying of prof. Collins who said

“Where the heart rules, there the mind grows dull.”(68)

Even though the relation between Shri and Shrimati was not healthy in early years, later Shri could clearly understand whatever she said was simple straight, clear and directly from the heart. There was no artifice, no attempt to show off and nothing added. When they both had a flourishing relationship during their graduation, Shrikant started associating the Bakula flower with Shrimati.

“The Bakula was now, for him a symbol of Shrimati, a personification of her.” (34)

Despite the advice given by her mother Kamala that she will not get love and affection from inlaws if she marries Shree as there is a cold war prevails between their family and Shrikant’s family. Shrimati expected, she could change them by her kind, polite attitude and moreover she will continue her life with Shrikant in Bombay, a secular life. Through her mom the writer clearly portrays typical Indianess by the following words.

“In our society, you marry not only an individual, but also his family,” (82)

The institution of marriage is considered as the be all and end all of a girl’s life especially in Indian society. As Bombay life started accustoming, Shrimati felt very lonely and bored. Shreekanth’s concentration was madly on his job and promotions. He used to work late. He was proving himself in the new atmosphere to gain his name. The sense of boredom and dissatisfaction grips the young married women when they find husband is busy always with his work schedule. She decided to continue her doctorate in history. Typical Indian women’s fate is decided either by the society or by the in-laws and nowhere by her own choice. Her dreams shattered when they received a letter from her mother in law about the repayment of Shreekanth’s loan which she took it from her cousin and brother. In order to pay the debt, she decides to do job earn and return the debt without knowing the cruelty and reality of mother in-law and her cheap intentions. She chooses a job in which she is neither interested nor which is her profession.

After the repayment of the debt, Shrimati gets an opportunity to enroll her into doctorate. But that too gets shattered when Shreekanth shifts from Bombay to Delhi. The writer very carefully analysis the preference of her woman where she is neither ambitious nor very courageous, that her priorities were always pushed to the lowest rung. Because of Shreekanth’s hard work and stern effect he was promoted as project manager to U.S. His dreams and ambitions were reaching its heights, wherein the lady’s love for history, her aim for doctorate was a quashed silently. Her heroine proves herself to be as resistant and resourceful as the earth. The positive attitude of women is an outcome of their inner strength which can withstand social oppression. Indian woman can be compared to phoenix bird. Whenever a critical situation arises in the family, she suppresses her feelings, emotions and buries it. Immediately she takes rebirth after it is resolved. She dreams and expects that one day her thoughts and expressions will take shape. In the same way, when Shrikant shifted to U.S., she was thrilled as she could do her doctorate. Encouragingly she met Dorothy, Prof. Collins daughter, who completed her doctorate and working in the same university as professor after spending three years in U.S., she planned to register for PhD. But sudden demise of Shrikant’s senior, made him shift to Bombay with promotion as General Manager. The women character is always demonstrated as the importance of faith in life as a great sustaining power. A personal story slowly develops into a wider conflict in which are involved the individuals identity for supremacy and the social demands.

Shrimati undergoes many crucial problems. She could neither fulfill her inner desire to do her research nor could she convince herself the children she had dreamt to name as Ashok, Vikramaditya, and Siddhartha Gautama would remain only as dream. In typical Indianness, wifehood is to be followed by motherhood in most of the society. Both family and the society expect the motherhood as soon as she gets married. The writer explains how a typical Indian married woman reacts to real life situations and changes their lifestyle according to the wishes of men. Shrimati soon became the extremely efficient personal assistance as well as a good hostess to his personal and official guests. Her temperamental incompatibility with her corporate thinking husband compels her to think of self-identity. Self-introspection on her self-esteem make her realize to be herself and thinks twice to cross the threshold of family life and move out into the outer world of freedom struggle and social reform, where the women is presented with many social opportunities. The heroine is caught in an ambiguous situation between two cultures and one preoccupied with existential concerns. The writer brings the conflict between two set of values one standing for the supremacy of social hierarchy and the other for that of the individual. The character is an educated aspiring individual caged within the confines of a conservative society. Their education leads them to independent thinking for which their family and society become intolerant of them. It is their individual struggle with family and society through which they plunged into a dedicated effort to carve an identity for themselves as qualified women with faultless backgrounds. The pain unrequited love is felt clearly through the lens of Shri’s character.

The character has a clear conscience of the problems. She faces various slices of life in terms of cultural, economic, social aspect and how human identity is destroyed by the oppressive forces of society. The deep insight that is her energy is totally drained, she has exhausted mentally and physically. She had totally sacrificed but her sincerity went unnoticed by him. He never valued her sacrifices. The following lines of the writer clearly expose the reality of most of women who serve the family without expectations.

“She had to live like his shadow all the time. She would not have any identity of her own. Her life would be that of a planet which shines with reflected life, rather than that of a star which radiates its own light”. (150)

They face the problems boldly and depict a positive attitude with good ray of hope yet to come in future. The impact of the IT boom is a conventional gild. Education has brought a tremendous change in the outlook of women. When Shrimati left Shrikant and chose her direction, no one in this male dominated society would appreciate her step but she acted on what she felt was right without even bothering about what people would think. Women have proved themselves by gaining access into the patriarchal world. Shrimati, feels the pinch of sacrifices she blindly made for the man she loved,

“Shrimati had served her husband with single minded devotion knowing her capability and being aware of the outsid world.”(165)

The novel deals with despair and agony of human life search for identity, intervention of western ideologies. The writer provides a solution or a methodology, if a women is not given space in modern society, identity quest will lead to more problems in social transformation. The writer’s literary excellence surpasses other writers in depiction of typical Indian woman who explore the anguish of women in modern society

“She made up her mind. She could not stay here. She had to go someplace where she could get the same joy that Shrikanth got from his work. That pleasure was more valuable than money. She was going away not to earn money, but to find her individuality”. (156)

The main understanding behind the novel is to make the men, the society, and the male dominated society to realize the psychological, emotional, social problems faced by women. Thus, through this novel one can realize that the writer has repudiated the stereo typed image of women and she could bring a shift in the mindset of the people.

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