



FLUCTUATING MOODS OF ABHA, AS REPRESENTED IN THE SHORT STORY “ABHA”: TAKEN FROM ‘GULABI TALKIES AND OTHER STORIES’

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Abstract:

The research paper explores the insecurity of women in the patriarchal society and how they want to come out from the rigid norms and want liberty. The short story Abha, taken from the Gulabi Talkies and Other Stories, written by Vaidehi, a Kannada writer. Here, the author uses a feminist voice strictly through the character of Abha. Abha becomes a mouth of the narrator. Another character Samita reflects the rigidity of this patriarchal society. Abha faces conflicts between her desires and societal expectations and roles and responsibilities have to be done by her/women. Abha wants to live independently as she desires in every situation as men live as they want. Hence, she used to smoke and sleep like a man and at the same time she feels insecure. After sometimes, her mood fluctuates and behaves like a woman: wears saree and uses make up kit and dresses beautifully. So, it shows how her mood and mind fluctuate between her desires and societal expectations.

Introduction:

As the title of the story Abha, suggests the life of Abha and her fluctuating Moods. Abha means fearless, and other meanings are for want of and insecure. Abha also stands for nothingness. The story “Abha” is about a fearless woman named Abha, and she comes to a hotel of Samita as a guest. As the story growths, it reveals the insecure life of Abha and how she is in want of another support to live her life. She also finds nothingness of life.

Literature Review:

The feminist theory embraced the concept of a distinction between biological sex and the social construct of gender. It is widely held that while one's sex is determined by anatomy, the concept of gender of the traits that are conceived to constitute what is masculine and what is feminine in identity and behaviour are cultural constructs that were generated by the patriarchal biases of our civilization. As Simone De Beauvoir, a philosopher and feminist put, “one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman. No biological, psychological or

economic fate determines the figure that the female figure plays in society. It is civilization as a whole that produces this creature, intermediate between male and eunuch, which is described as feminine". By this cultural process, the masculine in our culture has come to be widely identified as active, dominating, adventurous, rational, creative. And the feminine, by systematic opposition to such traits has come to be identified as passive, timid, emotional and conventional.

Fluctuating Moods of Abha:

As the life of Abha opens to us, we can find the feminine conflicts. In the story Abha and Samita are significant characters and Nirguna Rao also becomes a role of importance. The story opens with Abha's entering to the hotel of Samita as a guest at first time, to attend the poet's meet.

Abha is an educated woman and modernistic in nature. She is so talkative and enthusiastic in nature and a poetess also. At her first visit to Samita's hotel, she comforts herself as her own house and gives information about her family, Calcutta life, husband, daughter Ujwala and what they are being in detail. But another character Samita feels strange, yet she respects Abha and her feelings as a guest like Atithi Devobhava.

Samita is also an educated young lady. She is formal and modest in nature. She brought up in the pious family with certain customs and traditions and she is from patriarchal inheritance. Samita represents the gender bias of the patriarchal society. She doesn't like the way of smoking of Abha and her sleeping style. She says, "Thoo! Hadn't anyone taught her even to sleep right?" and says "Hey, sleep properly. You are sleeping like a man." In return Abha exclaims and says, "So where all does manliness manifest itself, if it shows even in the way we sleep?!"... Abha becomes feminist in her voice.

Though, Abha is talkative, she doesn't want to tell everything, every bit of her life. "Ujwala is my daughter. I put her in a hostel because I didn't want her to stay at home. In a hostel, for no particular reason, just like that. Isn't that safer?" She doesn't disclose any problem she is facing. And when Samita rejects to use cosmetic items like lipstick, Abha says, "Anything goes when age is on your side. You need all these only later..." After this Abha mentions another line, it seems to be threaten, which is cause for her restlessness and worry. "There is this researcher girl who comes home..." The line which is spoken by Samita that, "it'll be all right" consoles Abha and Abha asks again to Samita, " Tell me the truth, will it be really al right? This shows the confusion or problematic condition which is going in Abha's mind.

Abha is critical of her body and competition from other women. According to her, personality, the way a woman dresses and her feminine attitude are all factors of attractiveness. At her age of 40, Abha becomes so beauty conscious and gets jealous for other women. "Otherwise even your husband will grow distant. Not just that. There will be no curiosity in the eyes of people who look at you. You will not stand out in parties. It's easy to make monkeys if the tribe of men who begin to talk and caress when they spot fair skin. Just watch how everyone looks at me when I walk in." These speaking of Abha also express how a woman becomes a glamour doll or objective in the eyes of patriarchal system.

After getting ready, Abha feels upset and starts to think about that researcher girl and cancels herself to attend poet's meet. It seems that Abha doesn't reconcile herself from her family problem that the illicit relationship between her husband and research girl. Abha asks about the poet's meet when Samita came back. Samita mentions few names such are Vasudev, Ramesh, Ramakant, Kshama, Krishna, Muttappa. And here enters another important role named Nirguna Rao, who is well-known by Abha.

Abha is completely distracted by her family problem that her husband is not with her. But she no longer remains as a biased woman, she comes over that and she is un search of liberation. Nirguna Rao becomes a source of support to Abha and she feels comfort after the meeting of Rao at night. Samita doesn't like the attitude of Abha and even she doesn't ask anything about the meeting of Abha and Nirguna Rao. Samita questions herself the changing mood of Abha, "How did that strange fear disappear in day? Is it growing or changing?

Abha is bold by nature and she expressed her childhood memory that she would marry a woman. She talks of friendship and 'together' relationship. But Samita doesn't speak anything about living together and she blames Nirguna Rao for his attitude. "Thoo. He is just like a girl.. Even walks and talks like one." Here, Samita is representing the biased society. Abha speaks in high regard in feminist way. "That's where you slip. Why 'thoo'? What if he is like a girl? Doesn't it amount to saying girls are lesser beings?

On the second day of poet's meet, Abha reads the poem. In her poem, she seems to suggest the freedom of man, who is free to have extra marital relationships. "Life is a search... Searching again and again... Searching for colours..." and "You know what this thing called marriage is... I think all relationship stood stand cancelled and get reshuffled after forty." It shows the failed marital status of Abha with her husband. Her husband is

interested in another girl and she is in search of companion now. She left her husband and finds companionship of Nirguna Rao. Abha's experience of pains of life are expressing through her poems. "I might get burnt myself in the process, isn't it?"

After the completion of poet's meet, Abha goes away with Nirguna Rao from Samita's hotel. Abha becomes a subject of mysterious and she is so light hearted when she went with Nirguna Rao. Here, the suspicious questions about Abha and Nirguna Rao relationship asks through the voice of Samita. That question might be asked by the society also. They seems beyond Samita's or society's understand. Abha goes, "like a gopi follows the strains of Krishna's flute leaving all else behind..." Abha left her make-up kit and lighter and Samita tries to send them to Abha, but she receives negative answer that "She is dead, don't you know?" That may be her husband's voice or Nirguna Rao's voice. We don't know. The reader gets in confusion that whether really Abha is dead or she has changed herself with a new name. Samita is also caught in this thinking in her utter solitude.

Methodology:

The research study has a qualitative content analysis approach and its analyzing the fluctuating moods of Abha and problems of women in the patriarchal society through the character of Abha and she ends her life in nothingness as represented in the short story named 'Abha'.

Results:

- **Patriarchal Society:** A patriarchal society dominates women in all perspectives. In this story also, we can see the reflection of male dominance, as Abha cheated by her husband.
- **Nothingness:** Abha feels herself incomplete. She is not living with her husband and daughter.
- **Dependent Nature:** Abha feels alone and needs a supportive hand to live peacefully and happily. So that, she chooses Nirguna Rao.
- **Disturbing Mind of Abha:** Throughout the story, we can see the disturbing state of Abha and the confusion is going on in Abha's mind.
- **Gender Bias:** We can see the concept of gender bias through the voice of Samita. She says, 'Hey, sleep properly. You are sleeping like a man'. These words of Samita shows how people look at women in the eyes of masculine in every aspect.

Conclusion:

The story reflects the helpless plight of women through Abha. It seems that Abha becomes a victim to the patriarchal society. She will be cheated by her new companion Nirguna Rao. She ends her life in nothingness. Narrator wants to say the dominant nature of men over women.

References:

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