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A STUDY OF BREAKING THE STEREOTYPE OF *FIRE ON THE MOUNTAIN*

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ABSTRACT

The metaphor of "Fire on the Mountain" has long been associated with destruction, chaos, and danger. Rooted in cultural narratives across various societies, fire has symbolized an uncontrollable force that devastates everything in its path. However, such representations often overlook the multifaceted role fire plays in ecological, psychological, and societal contexts. Literature depicts reality through the prism of human imagination and perception, using language as its medium. While learning a language, children are exposed to the culture's preconceptions and ideals, which they naturally embrace as adults. According to Kenyan author Ngugi wa Thiong'O, 'Language conveys culture and culture carries especially via orature and literature the full set of values by which we learn to view us and others.'

This paper aims to challenge and deconstruct the stereotype of fire as merely a destructive element by exploring its dual nature both as a force of renewal and transformation. Drawing on historical, ecological, and psychological perspectives, the research highlights how fire is essential for environmental regeneration, cultural resilience, and personal growth. By critically examining the portrayal of fire in literature, media, and cultural narratives, this paper proposes a more nuanced and holistic understanding of fire's role in nature and human life.

Keywords: Stereotype, Fire, Mountain, human imagination, culture

INTRODUCTION

Societal expectations for a woman's life begin even before she is born, as society creates set identities for her. Using binary boundaries between the common conceptions of men and women, it restricts her existence by designating her as Feminine as opposed to masculine, qualities that are characterized in the establishment of gender in society. It also harms a woman's sense of self-worth and advancement when negative characteristics associated with women are associated with features associated with males like courage, determination, and reason rather than with feminine traits like passivity and emotionalism. Aside from these limitations, the private realm that women are allotted in patriarchal society aids the control of their bodies by the opposing sex. To comprehend oneself and others in a patriarchal culture, men and women use stereotypes or fixed perspectives, which lead to hierarchies and division. Due to the male gender's dominance and position at the core of social structures, women are relegated to the margins. We humans have a propensity to see women on the margins as less fortunate because of our predisposition to think in terms of binary categories such as 'superior/inferior,' 'culture/nature,' and 'normal/abnormal.'

Foucault describes stereotypes as knowledge since they are 'primarily the reflection of society' rather than 'empirical by nature.' Those who advocate an unfavorable view of the other sex are likely to exhibit these behaviors. The oppression technique is perpetuated in society via institutions such as the family, school, and the media, resulting in women being both the victims and the perpetrators of their own subjection. By creating white and black images in the categories of perfect woman or sorcerer and ideal mother or temptress, polarization is produced as a 'natural' order among Women themselves. A woman must fit into the ideal category of a wife or ideal woman in order to get respect in society, and she must be obedient, dedicated, and self-sacrificing like the mythological characters of Sita, Savitri, and Draupadi in order to do so. Because of the radical thinkers who have liberated us from our stereotypes and guided us to a free and unbiased assessment of the social reality around us, we can now see the powerful sides of these personalities in terms of the opposition they offer to their dominance.

In the conventional social framework, women have long been seen as subordinate to males. Societal and economic oppression of the matriarchal community under patriarchal Bourgeois society has been described as 'humiliating, afflicted, hushed, and tormented' for the group. Women in the post-modern era started to experience the world for themselves, rather than through the lens of the male gaze. As the matriarchal movement against patriarchy gained momentum in India, so did a new internal revolution in literature, particularly among women writers. The voices of women started to compete with the voices of males in the political arena. Anita Desai's well-known books- *Cry, the Peacock* and *Where shall we go this summer?* are the emphasis of our paper's feminist message. Our goal is to analyze critically how Indian women authors in English have addressed women's issues in the postmodern age. They've sounded the alarm or started a revolution inside themselves in opposition to outdated social mores and gender-based oppression. Considering the femme fatale characters of Anita Desai, one of the most renowned Indian writers writing in English, especially the powerful and domineering female protagonists, Sita and Maya of *Cry, the Peacock* and *Where shall we go this summer?*

In her writings, Anita Desai has paid close attention to the psychology of her characters. Her writing is a way for her to uncover who she is and express that reality in a beautiful way. She has delved into the psychology of a woman and shown how it relates to society in her work. And the representation of the neurotic like Maya and Sita might evoke this attention. Their great struggle and attempts to find neurotic answers reveal both of these ladies as sensitive beings. It is commonly accepted that Anita Desai is a pioneer in the field of psychological fiction in contemporary Indian English. Her ability to represent characters is the most conspicuous element of her work. She focuses on the psychology of women and their responses to her findings. In both of her works- *Cry, the Peacock* and *Where shall we go this summer*, Maya and Sita face painful events and mental strains. Devastated by the premonition of her husband's death, Maya is troubled by her trust in astrological prediction; in Sita the issue of childhood neurosis is emphasized. A full-blown neurotic image appears during Sita's fifth pregnancy as a result of the suppressed need and memories she has hidden deep inside her subconscious. Both books have a common topic of familial turmoil and the ill-adjusted or mal-adjusted individual. While Sita has an 'Oedipus complex' Maya is driven to the edge of murder and violence by her loneliness and unrequited love. In terms of Postmodern Indian Feminism, Maya and Sita are both examples. They both exemplify the very nuanced and multifaceted nature of the Indian psyche.

We may discover that Maya and Sita symbolize a repressed female group via psychoanalytical investigation. Maya resorts to violence because she doesn't expect to deal with her neurosis, but Sita compromises and learns to cope and returns home quietly.

In her work *Fire on the Mountain*, she explores the issue of marital misunderstanding and inability to communicate. The book tells the narrative of Vice-Chancellor's wife Nanda Kaul, who has taken refuge in a mountain top mansion in Carignano in the hamlet of Kasauli to avoid the pressures of her family and society at large. Having to deal with the Vice-Chancellor was a lengthy and arduous process in which all she had to look forward to were the obligations that came with her job. As a result, she has become disillusioned with her selfish, infidel spouse. Every day she played the gracious hostess for her husband, who 'wanted her constantly in silk, at the head of the large rosewood table in the dining-room, entertaining his visitors.' She performed this role for her husband. A quote from Gopal N.R. sums it up perfectly: 'She is so busy raising the family and performing the responsibilities of mother, housewife, and hostess that she is content in her solitude even if it is partly chosen and partly incidental.' Nanda Kaul, wife of a Vice-Chancellor and living a lavish lifestyle, is satiated by the intrusion of Mrs. Desai into her difficult life. They seemed to be a perfect marriage to the college community on the surface but 'from inside, everything was a fake,' says Kaul. 'Composition and harmony' were absent in her marriage to her spouse.

Loneliness and solitude, as well as the ensuing misery and suffering they cause, are the primary themes of

this story about the abandoned existence of an elderly widow. Kausali is the setting for Nanda Kaul's story, which begins with her almost abandoning the outside world in order to live a peaceful existence surrounded by pinecones and hills. Nanda Kaul seems to have decided to live a solitary retirement after the death of her spouse. Carignano is a solitary and spooky Kasauli mansion where Nanda Kaul, an elusive young man, makes his home. An annoying letter from Asha, Nanda Kaul's daughter, informing her of the impending birth of her great-granddaughter Raka threatens to break her peaceful seclusion. Raka, who she'd been hoping to avoid, shows up in her life just as she'd hoped. She does not want any extra duties and prefers spending her time alone in Carignano. However, Asha's message has left her feeling uneasy, and she ruminates on it in agony.

As her hands filled with bags and letters, messages and requests, she longed to be left alone with the pines and cicadas.' If anything, else occurred, it would be an unwanted intrusion and distraction.

Women in Indian English Literature

Indian English literature has been begun with poetry in 1930s and fictions of Mulk Raj Anand (1905-2004), R. K. Narayan (1906-2001) and Raja Rao (1908-2006) (Paranjape, 1998). They have highlighted the social, nationalistic and philosophical concerns. Whereas, Bhabani, Abbas and others have concentrated on secular India free from archaic superstitions, exploitations and Western control. Rabindra Nath Tagore has shattered orthodox conceptions about female gender, sexuality and social status with Bengali dance-drama in 1930s (Chaudhuri, 2010). The women authors i.e. Kamala Markandaya, Nayantara Sehgal deal with humanism and social justice in 1950s. Some of the authors explored the subjects like political concerns, philosophical inquiries as well as funny, energetic and stylistic excitement. In this context, Anita Desai and Shashi Deshpande have represented the Indian middle-class ladies in their works. R. K. Narayan has shown busy but untrustworthy, hard-hearted and greedy women in his Malgudi with contrast ineffectual, stupid, inept but successful males. The overseas fiction market steered to Indian elite authors for narrative compositions and critique. The attention was focused on desire for an identity via autobiography, challenges of division, minorities, etc. in 1980s and 1990s. Khushwant Singh depicted the love and sacrifice at the period of partition in his 'Train to Pakistan' (Sehrawat, 2013).

Therefore, post-independence Indian English fictions have concentrated on women life but difficulties were connected to middle- and upper-class women. However, Arundhati Roy has explored the breached connections between the upper and lower castes. Here, she attempts to project the crises of the society when lady is from higher caste and untouchable men. Manju Kapur depicts three generations via Kasturi, Virmati and Ida to illustrate three periods of the Indian freedom movement i.e. pre-independence, battle for freedom, post-independence period in her 'Difficult Daughters' (1998). Kasturi embraces forces of patriarchy, Virmati rebels and battle against unconventionality and Ida creates her autonomous position as a divorced woman (Nandal, 2014). Therefore, Indian English literature was confined to urban, middle-class and largely Westernized issues and society (Singh and Singh, 2012). Whereas, rural experience was absent and Dalit literature was at very meager side (Datar, 1999). The similar approach was remarked by Saulnier (2000) that white feminists are not working for black and woman at the same time. However, Rani (2010) describes the identity crises of lower caste village woman i.e. Rukmani in Kamala Markandaya's 'Nectar in a Sieve'. Rukmani is the universal mother figure beyond the love and domestic harmony (Patel, 2011). Thus, Indian novels (Bedjaoui, 2009) have intentioned to deliberate: (1) rethinking and reconstructing women identity, (2) quest for the establishment of woman cultural authority, (3) revalorizing marginalized cultural women identities, (4) construction of fixed identities by socio-cultural norms and (5) mental displacement of woman. Women exploitation in religious caste based hierarchical Indian society is horizontal (man-woman in family or caste) as well as vertical (inter-caste most probably from upper side).

Women Literature Before and After Independence

Indo-Anglian has been a most loved classification with women literature when independence. One of the quick creating genres of Indian literature was poetry. With evolving situation, women were coming into the field of Indian English literature. Their worry was for identity and identity was simply the procedure acknowledgment and self-definition. An exceptionally fascinating phenomenon of modern indo-Anglian poetry is a substantial number of women poets' inexhaustible writing refrain too. It has constrained consideration from basic circles moreover. P. Lal brings up the phenomenon of high level of women writers in English delivering in fact capable and delicate work. Their poetry has not greater amount but rather quality moreover. Indian women literature has been blessed to get an environment which isn't an agonistic to women-writing. Indo-Anglican has been a most loved classification with women literature when independence. One of the quick creating genres of Indian literature was poetry. Indian women literature has been blessed to get an air which isn't threatening to women writing. Without precedent for Indian English poetry, the women poets of Post-Independence and Post-Modern period depicted in a rebellious saying their wants, desire, sexuality and gestational encounters. They advanced Indian English poetry with an abundance of new subjects and experience. They built up another creative nonconformist talk to depict their repressed wants. Therefore, another type of feminist poetry developed and developed to give the Indian English poetry new quality, new decent variety and new strong another indication of maturity.

Indian poetry started to set up its reality. In pre-independence period just two women poets demonstrated their presence through their poems. Feminist movement in the writing of Toru Dutta one can without much of a stretch found and took a shot at it. And after her commitment there is a presence of Sarojini Naidu who gave especially significance to the writing of woman and solidarity to them. These poets and writer had built up a decent compatibility about feminism and its movement. Along these lines, they composed to a great extent of Indian myth; legend and landscape, their personal self and enduring were consigned to the foundation. So, after these commitments amidst the twentieth century it was noteworthy and great development to feminist and on account of their commitment and with the progression of time number of writers appeared in this field. Lakshmi Kannan, Meena Alexander, Vimla Rao and Eunice de Souza. This new type of women poets is posts apart from lilting romanticism of Toru Dutt and Sarojini Naidu the poetic universe of the new generation is all the more genuine and dynamic, regardless of whether it is appalling on its substance. There is a surprising movement in the poems of contemporary Indian women poets from praising and spiritualizing love to an increasingly commonplace acknowledgment of sexuality and the physical needs of women. These poets have found their own voices and built up their sensibilities. Their poetry expresses the longing of woman to make tracks in an opposite direction from the ties that have confined her since times prehistoric. A few women poets, in particular, have made advantageous endeavors at mapping out new landscapes as human beings and likewise as innovative writers. The women poets of the present century have definitely and unhesitatingly left the romantic entanglements, of the empty talk of the past custom and prevailing with regards to figuring another convention and 'another method of articulation' that is without a moment's delay unique characteristic and unconstrained. The poetry of Kamla Das, Gauri Deshpande, Mamta Kalia, Monika Varma of the more established generation and Sumita Jain, Lakshmi Kannan, Meena Alexander, Vimla Rao and Eunice de Souza of the present represents the validity and geometricity of the fundamental feminine sensibility.

Conclusion

In a way, the position of women in contemporary India is paradoxical. While she is at the top of the ladder of achievement, she is also silently suffering from the abuse perpetrated on her by members of her own family. A lot of progress has been made by today's women, but they've still got a long way to go. There are several obstacles in their way. The ladies have emerged from the safety of their homes and are ready to face the challenges of the real world, armed to the teeth with their skills and abilities. They had shown their worth. The problem is that in India, they haven't been paid yet.

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