

## PROJECTION OF WOMEN IN THE SHORT STORIES OF KAMALA DAS AND MULK RAJ ANAND WITH REFERENCE TO PATRIARCHAL SYSTEM

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### ABSTRACT

Patriarchy, as a system, works smoothly through the social institutions such as marriage, motherhood and family. It prevents women from realizing their productive and creative possibilities by keeping women entirely busy in the web of the institutions mentioned above. The basic view is that our society is patriarchal that is, its male-centered and is controlled, organized and conducted in such a way as to subordinate women to men in all cultural domains such as familial, religious, political, economic, social, legal and artistic. My attempt is to view this with reference to the short stories, 1. *Parboti's story*, 2. *The Cattle Market* by Kamala Das, 3 *Lajawanti* by Mulk Raj Anand. This paper focuses on the role played by Patriarchal system. Patriarchy works as a system which pressurizes woman and exerts force on them in order to move her away from her own self. Marriage, motherhood and family campaign for patriarchal system. At certain point of time woman struggles to rediscover her lost self. It also attempts to see how the women characters are projected by the writers in the works selected for the paper and how they are victimized by patriarchal system; how they struggle to overcome the challenges posed by the well organized system in order to create awareness among themselves regarding their state and to rediscover their lost selves. To see that many things are infused with masculine assumptions, interests and ways of reasoning and to vision those as thoroughly gender-biased.

**KEYWORDS:** Patriarchy, Institution, Marriage, Family, Freedom, Power, Feminist & Politics

### INTRODUCTION

The writers chosen for my study are Kamala Das and Mulk Raj Anand. Kamala Das is a renowned Indian poet, novelist, short-story writer, essayist and memoirist. She was born in 1934 into a literary family. She was a prolific writer who wrote several taboo-breaking collections of shorts stories and poems, six novels and three memoirs, in which she explored a woman's quest for freedom from sexual and domestic oppression. *Parboti's story* is a story from one of the collections of stories, *The Kept Woman and other stories*. The stories touch upon a variety of topics revolving around women and the way they think and feel.

Mulk Raj Anand is one of the India's most popular short story writers. He was born in 1905. He is considered as a powerful critic of contemporary society. He is notable for his depiction of the lives of the poorer castes in traditional Indian society. His commitment to humanism and socialism is reflected in his works. *Lajwanti* is a tale of pathos with full of overtones of social criticism. It speaks of the tragic predicament of a traditional woman who struggles for independence. Mulk Raj Anand's understanding of social taboos against women had led him to create awareness among people by using literature as a medium of bringing the taboos to light and subsequently getting them eliminated from the social systems.

The writers chosen have focused on working of patriarchy as a system in various forms of ill-treatment towards women. Women characters of these writers face various challenges such as verbal abuse, marriage giving provision to male domination, dowry, sexual harassment and lastly customs and superstitions that are system-friendly which force women to surrender and undergo anguish. They have reflected the social reality with regard to infliction of inhuman pain upon women. These stories question inhumanity towards ill-treatment of women.

## **METHOD / APPROACH**

### **Application of Feminist Political Theory**

Feminist political theory is a diverse subfield of feminist theory working towards three main goals. They are as follow:

- To understand and critique to the role of gender in how political theory is conventionally construed.
- To re-frame and re-articulate conventional political theory in light of feminist issues, especially gender equality.
- To support political science presuming and pursuing gender equality.

### **Assertion of Individuality and Quest for Identity- a Feministic View**

Institutions are to be blamed than individuals. Marriage and family play a dominant role in instilling the patriarchal values among the members of the society. *Parboti's story* speaks of a young girl, who is married as against her wishes to an old man who is of the same age as her father. It is a critique on the gender role assigned to men and women in the society. The writer sensitively touches upon the issues such as marriage and its responsibilities borne differently by parents and daughters, dowry, ill-luck associated with woman, motherhood- preference given to a boy child, economic security and wifehood. Even today, women are facing all these challenges that are posed by the patriarchal system. A woman in the story is considered to be inauspicious just because she has given birth to seven girls in a row. Men are expected to be harsh towards women, playing one of the gender roles assigned to them. Women are morally prepared by the patriarchal society that they should not digest the implication of the remarks that they are homeless and childless. Wrong impressions are created in the young minds by a few societal norms that force women accept the roles of patriarchal system. Gender roles are fixed for men and women differently with clear demarcation. Character Naushad is expected to assure economic security to Parboti which he fails to assess. Parboti, instead of surrendering to death, surrenders herself to the institution of marriage letting it bind her. It is so ironical that she addresses her husband as chacha as she has always addressed him so even before marriage. It indicates that she is not ready to change after marriage in addressing her husband, but it is also a question posed to men as why they expect women to change a lot after marriage.

The Cattle Market, title of a story, is a metaphor for the dealings of marriage. It is a critique of the marriage system in India. It reflects the burden of the parents and the responsibilities of the daughters in the society. It also speaks of dowry system which is closely associated with the institution of marriage. It gives a provision to decide a woman's price to be fixed without her knowledge or consent regarding the ownership as if she is for sale in marriage as the cattle are sold in the market. Kamala Das, through the story, questions the right to imprison girls in the house. She emphasizes that girls deserve the knowledge of the world outside and that they can excel in various fields if they enhance the knowledge deserved by them. She empowers women through her writing. She brings in the concept of women's education and further suggesting women's participation in the public activities. Thus, she upholds women's intellectual power as against the

images built by men based on assumptions that woman is weak, ignorant and incapable. To sum up, she disproves the masculine assumptions, interests and ways of reasoning and proves that these are gender-biased.

Maina, a bird, which symbolizes freedom, is caged in the story *Lajwanti* that reflects the state of the female character, Lajwanti. Lajwanti, (the name which means a sensitive plant, touch-me-not) who moves close to death later picks up the courage lost and clings on to life to face the odds of life posed by the patriarchal system. Maina in the cage represents the state of Lajwanti who loses her freedom and is completely bound by the marriage and family, institutions of patriarchy. Maina, fluttering in the cage, envisions the sufferings of Lajwanti as well as indicates one's individuality. She tries her best to free herself from the clutches of the patriarchal system, but fails in her attempt and instead gets blamed and verbally abused by her brother-in-law Jaswant, in an attempt of breaking the societal image of a woman designed by patriarchal system and hence that is associated to familial disgrace.

Lajwanti wanted to know what her father thought of her and if he had understood her mysterious will and the instincts which had inspired her always to do the odd things. It hurts her a lot when she learns that her father wants her to leave to her in-laws' place. She is frightened of her own self and tries to hold her breath. Then she realizes and expresses fear regarding her loss of identity. Realization of one's state is very much essential before one takes an initiative to gain the lost identity. The only companion to Lajwanti throughout the story is maina, to whom she expresses her pain. She addresses maina, "My Maina, tell me what will happen now? My heart flutters, as you often do when you are frightened of the cat coming to eat you.... But perhaps now that my father has brought me back, I will allow myself to be eaten. Only the humiliation will be complete now". She knew that Balwant, her husband was a coward, who dares not even raise his head to look at his elder brother. She rejects to yield to Jaswant, her action angered him and his ego was hurt as he couldn't gain control over her. Further, to satisfy his ego, he started physically harassing her. Jaswant expected women to be very calm, patient and mute sufferers. Whereas, Lajwanti's father clarifies her that she should at any cost live or die in her in-laws' place by overcoming all atrocities that are posed by the patriarchal system.

Shrimati Dayal serves as an example, of an educated and knowledgeable woman, to Lajwanti. She rescues Lajwanti and stops her from being harassed. She objects to the practice of polygamy. Education and knowledge about the world is very essential and such concepts broaden one's mind and ensure women with better status and better life that is free of system-bound in the society based on equality. In the beginning, Lajwanti decides to end her life with a few attempts to death, but later, she is forced by her heart to the taste of life's breath and thence learns that she has to survive the odds of life.

## CONCLUSIONS

Kamala Das and Mulk Raj Anand have projected the characters which unravel the significant roles played by dominant values that are instilled without their knowledge in their lives as well as the power associated with their understanding and they question the norms which are part of such power play. Kate Millet's 'Sexual Politics' speaks of the mechanisms that express and enforce the relation of power in society. She analyzes the western social arrangements and institutions as covert ways of manipulating power, so that to establish and perpetuate the dominance of men and the subordination of women. I would like to conclude that East or West, the societal arrangements and Institutions – marriage and family play surreptitious ways of manipulating power to gain control of the so-called stronger section of the society over the so-called weaker section of the society according to the values assigned to the different sections of the respective

societies either based on class, race, caste, religion or gender. Power plays a dominant role and it is all part of power politics.

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