



Women Versus Patriarchal Society in Laksmi Kannan's 'She'

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Abstract: In this paper we have attempted to reflect the contradiction basically between the inner- self of a women of conventional society and the outer seemingly glamour of her life style. The rigid society shatters her dreams, killing her vision gradually. The surliness of society destroys her capacity to think, her power of estimation and the ability to fulfill unuttered distress and she begins to think alone with the rhythm of the conventional society.

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Introduction:

In the poem 'She' the poet sketches the pains wretchedness of a unnamed women who is breathing in a patriarchal society but is not given the opportunity to experience the liveliness. In Indian upper middle class society a women is supposed to maintain a certain standard of life and appearance of her own.

Since birth, a female is counted as none in Indian families and her identity is ignored. In this male oriented society, male is supreme. Although the female seems to be joyful, peaceful and her life looks meaningful but she conceals a great hustle- bustle deep within. Male imposes his interests and customs as well as he also bounds her with the chains of his rules and regulations. Now she has to dress herself according to him and feel and think accordingly. She adorns herself for him and not for her own happiness and follows a dictated routine. All this grieves the poet and so in the present poem she has raised a voice against this tendency of patriarchal society.

In the first stanza, the poem portrays the picture of a well dressed human who is seemingly conscious of her outer appearance as the poem begins with the lines

"She wears well tailored clothes"

But just after two lines, the lady seems to be bounded by the showy outfits. She is not comfortable and one cannot be happy without being comfortable and so she is not happy instead she is "spring- tensed". The glamorous attires actually symbolizes the social status which needs to be maintained and has to do nothing with the comfort of the women while the "form" of the woman symbolizes her inner soul who is anguished and distressed putting on such tight clothes and desires freedom. The lady undergoes deep mental agony but she does not dare to go forth with her own

wishes. It is so because these status symbolized clothes have been prescribed by the patriarchal society. Each and every moment of her routine has been fashioned by the society and her mind and heart are mere organs for survival and not to think or feel. Her personality has been bisected into inner and outer and both do not sympathize with one another.

Now we move into her luxurious house which contains everything of which she can be proud of but at the same time the readers feel that in lack of any special achievement of making her own identity, she needs to be so. Psychologists say that one becomes proud and one wants to hide one's weaknesses. The same theory is applicable here. The lady is suffering from the weakness of not satisfying her instinct but she is not willing to expose the weakness and so she has covered her mind with the sheet of pride. The room is attractive "with clean health" and it has been decorated properly but she, in her own self, is struggling with her loneliness and voidness. The room is adorned but her inner self is unadorned. The outer surroundings of the lady are orderly and she is fighting with her internal chaos the beauty of the table is delightfully charming, "bursting with colors" and has been contrasted with her white lace. The bursting colours symbolize the radiance and perfect management of the house while the white lace of the lady symbolizes disappointment and desolation of her heart. A woman in a patriarchal society generally experiences emotive barrenness at the core of her being. The outer world is healthy but her inner core seems to be corroded. The room is "breathing an air of uncluttered ease" but in her mind there is a desperate silence. The poet has made a unique comparison between the "swept clean" floor and the "empty heart" of the woman. Paradoxically, the management of the

house has been appreciated which is actually the management of the of the lady while the lady is psychologically and emotionally sick due to her role as a home maker that does not let her feel a meaningful realization of the self.

In the concluding lines of the poem, a vision of bounded woman is seen who is highly willing to be free from the conventional and complex patriarchal life style. "The open doors" symbolize a gateway to attain freedom through which the woman admires nature which is mesmerizing. The patriarchal society has confined her within the four walls of the house. The "mango tree" symbolizes richness and happiness that she lacks. The poet is trying to signify that a woman has to survive under the given circumstances (i.e. within the drawn lines apart from the inevitable fact that she wants to be free) by the society. The woman finds herself dumb as she is silent though she is continuously struggling with the thunder running within herself. It is a satire on the marital life of the typical Indian woman. To consider:

"sweet throated birds evoked
the pain of memories"

She reminds her unmarried life, her unobstructed and playful childhood when she enjoyed her life to the extreme. There was no wall and she was liberal to express and explore. Her memories were so melodious that now when she recalls her past, the present seems to her as melancholic and distressful.

The woman is looking at "the eagle" which is gliding at full ease in the vast and cool blue sky with high "shrill notes". The eagle is indicated as a living creature who has been blessed with all sorts of liberty; its shout echoes in the ears of the woman which messages to breathe and to rush out of the sophisticated image and lifestyle designed by the patriarchal society. The vast sky is the God made freedom where everyone has been balanced equally and no snobby rules are inflicted upon living being. At points it seems a cry of the poet demanding equality and existence for women. In the last three lines, a kite has been shown which is a bird of prey. It symbolizes dishonest man who does not let any opportunity miss to laden his own dominance over wretched woman. The kite is angry and it may a symbol of the conventional society who will not let her break the fences made by it.

To sum up, Lakshmi Kannan depicts the emptiness of a woman's heart who is seemingly the leader of an orderly and contended management of a house. The unnamed woman is ruining her inner- self but maintaining the physical health of the house. She is feeling jealous of the nature where she finds everything lively.

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