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Dynamics Of Feminism : A Study Of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *The Mistress Of Spices* And Kamala Markanday's Major Novels

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Abstract :

The paper is an attempt to explore dynamics of feminism in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *The Mistress of Spices* and Kamala Markanday's major novels. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni is an Indian-American author, poet activist and teacher in English. She has described *myriad* voices and the images of women. Her writings account for the women in the new global world. Kamala Markanday is one of the India's best-known novelists in English. Her novels depict about the tendency of doubt and suspicion towards women. As a matter of fact, a woman can't avoid the reality that she offers a weaker section. Society has constructed rigid models for her. In this way, the psychological aspect of the characterisation and the psychological action in the society have recognized the elements of gender-based favouritism. They go through many cataclysms to enter the intellectual world. Thus, feminism challenges the traditional view of woman and it is identified as the liberation from social taboos and male dominance.

Keywords: Re-presentation; Victim; Self-presentation; feminine; masculine; marriage.

It is investigated that women are generally represented as social victims dominated by patriarchal norm of subjugation. In this way, feminism challenges the traditional view of woman as the weaker sex. It is identified as a movement that began in the late nineties. Its history is related to women's equality. In the realm of history, it is seen that feminism in Germany had as its background the liberal ideals of the Freud. Revolution as liberty, equality was fraternity. Owing to various reasons it collapsed and Nazi ordered all feminists organization to disband. In America women tried to evoke immense political excitement that led to feminism. The meaning of feminism deals with belief in and advocacy of the political, economic, and social equality of the sexes.

Feminism manifested worldwide. It is also separated by various institutions committed to activity on behalf of women's rights and interests. It was traced in India in 1914. Krubhai Sallhiunnadhan, the author of *Roshinara* describes the suffering of women and dynamics of feminism in their novels. Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan and Kamala Markanday have presented women in the traditional image of the 'Pativrata' but the conflict of tradition and modern is the theme of Ruth Praver Jhabvala.

The Mistress of Spices is an outstanding work by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni that deals with the lives of the Indian immigrant women living in America. It contains myth, mystery, facts and suffering of the everyday life of the Indian immigrant women. Her works represent the shifting nature of a woman's identity. Tilo is the unwelcomed child of the family as the novelist describes: ".....they named me Nayan Tara, Star of the Eye, but my parents' face were heavy fallen hope at anathas girls child, and this ore coloured lie mud." (*The Mistress of Spices*, 7)

Tilo is a mysterious character who runs a grocery store and uses her knowledge of spices to help her customers. She uses magical spices not only for cooking but for the challenges that Indian immigrants face. When she falls for an American man, Raven. In this way, she is an imagination of diasporic identity because she is from India but resides in Oakland. She also breaks the rules of the spices and is drawn into the lives of the customers. She is forced to choose between the supernatural life and the vicinities of life in this era.

The Mistress of Spices is an outstanding account of feminism choosing between a life of special powers and one of ordinary loves. It is a tale of joy and sorrow. She has to pave her shop for the first time in the novel but later she is drawn even further out by Raven. Here the novelist has tried to use her sharp insight and spilled use of story, plot, and lyrical description to present readers a many-layered look. She was abducted by the pirates who had murdered her entire family. They gave her a new name 'Bhagyawati'. As a mourner, she overcarries forth into her new life. In the end, she overthrows the pirate captain to become the pirate, "Queen leading her pirates to fame and glory so that bards sang their fearless etplots." (20) Unwillingly, she started ruling the pirates but she was saved by the sea-responses. The snakes told her about the dangers and pleaded her to stay as their 'Sarpa-Kanya' but she rejected the snakes. She met the first mother who helped her to formulate her new identity. Thus, Tilo rejected her new name "Tilottamna", and to she was sent to Oakland, California.

Like Buchi Emecheta, Kamala Markandaya has written with a sense of novel binding, an obligation towards her own gender. Her novels reflect her sensitivity towards feminism. She has tried to weave various female characters belonging to different class and status in her writings. Her characters like Roshan, Helen, Mira are the medium through which she gives vent to her pent up anger over the plight of Indian women. They are practical. They maintain good relation with their husbands and are tolerant of the male egos. Gender clash is occurred at a subtle level in her novels. Women raise the issue of over-bearing presence of men in their world.

Nectar in a Sieve depicts an Indian peasant's narrative of her difficult life. Rukmani is the protagonist and narrator of the novel. She is a hard working and supportive wife who has to admit her failures and weaknesses. She provides support to Nathan, her husband and cares for her children. She has to become immune to the realities of poverty. She is like Sita, the wife of Rama in the Ramayan. As we find a good remark:

Nectar in a Sieve is a 1954 novel by Kamala Markandaya. The book is set in India during a period of intense urban development and is the chronicle of the marriage between Rukmani, youngest daughter of a village headman, and Nathan, a tenant farmer. (wikipedia.org)

Here Kamala Markandaya establishes feminism that can lead families to terrible degradation.

Rukmani and Nathan dream of home but they have no means so Nathan takes a decision to go to urban land. Rukmani remarks, "I am sure if I write letters as well as read them, I shall earn even no more" (*Nectar in a Sieve*, 168). In this way, her desperation is to save money. In the end, she receives from the cruel hand of fate is by means of Nathan's death. She faces her tragic life:

Hope and fear. Twin forces that tugged at us first in one direction and then in another... of the latter we never spoke, but it was always with us. Fear, constant companion of the peasant..... (*Nectar in a Sieve*, 83)

Hunger also forces Raja, her son to the compound of the tanner and she dies of starvation.

Women characters of Kamala Markandaya are preoccupied with the problem of adjustment. They have been trying to explore the feelings of girls who face a victim to the conflict between the traditional and the newly acquired values. Women have been living under men's subjugation and their sensibility has changed under the influence of patriarchal standards. Hence, the role of feminism in literature is critical and Miti Pandey remarks:

Feminism in literature describes a method that approaches a text with foremost concern for feminism experience in it. The experience based on fictional characters shows the rational, institutional or imaginative capacity of an author. The experience implied in language of structure that interrogates the cultural prescriptions, that subordinate and trivialise women and treat them as inferiors are the primary concerns of female fiction writers from feminist perspective.

(Feminism in contemporary British and Indian Fiction, 1)

In society, the moral pressure to provide protection to the feminism gender never no end. People stake claims on their share rights and benefits and not claiming anything extra from the masculine gender. Mar-Kanday, novels like 'Two virgins : A novel', etc assure these facts. Her characters revert to their traditional roles after desiring the satisfaction of breaking the norms and challenging the society. This is investigated to present that women have an element of revolte in them, but they prefer to obey the family and society.

Lastly, the study shows that most of protagonists of Chitra Banerjee Diva Kamni and Kamala Markanday go through perpetual struggles to find their real self in this earthly world. They are made inferior by patriarchal culture in this disillusioned era. The fact is that they want to make them feel special and valued. It is sure that they fact complications will crop up within the family and chaos in social lives if women begin to interfere in every aspect of life.

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