



SURVIVAL IN THE FACE OF PATRIARCHY: FAILURE AND MOXIE OF NIVARA - A FEMINISTIC APPRAISAL OF SAMRUDHI DASH'S NOVEL *BEYOND THE HORIZON*

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ABSTRACT

*The present paper will attempt to analyse the novel *Beyond the Horizon* by Samrudhi Dash from a feministic perspective which talks about many ills and vices that a women faces in the strict patriarchal society of India and highlights their plight after being victimized by the antiquated codifications of Indian society. Particularly, this paper attempts to talks about the protagonist ,young Indian girl, Navira, who finds herself caught in a whirlpool of trials and tribulations when she rebels against the social and patriarchal standards and customs to make a bid at carving and shaping out her individuality.*

Keywords *Feminism, Gender, Saleable commodity, Patriarchy, , Individuality, Women, Society,*

INTRODUCTION

Feminism had always been mistaken for a stance that provides extra privilege to the women of the society. This notion drove the people to believe that feminism is a hindrance to equality. Thus, miserable constraints had been imposed upon women. Feminism is both a political stance and a theory that concentrates its focus on gender as a subject of analysis. The representation of women as weak, seductive, sentimental, and powerless, a sex object or a procreating machine, a saleable commodity is considered absurd by feminism. The grim reality reflects that women are not given any extra privileges; rather they don't even get the basic rights. Feminism can rather be termed as a revolution whose agenda had been to restore the rights of the women.



Samrudhi Dash, originally hailing from Bhubaneswar, the capital of Orissa, did Masters in English literature from JNU, New Delhi in 2014 is well known poet. She made her entry in the novel writing with her debut *Beyond the Horizon* (2017) which has been written from a feminist point of view. The story revolves around Nivara Desai, a simple, innocent girl, hailing from Delhi, the city of sin (as described by the author), ensnared by the complexities of life as well as the society around. 'It tells about the pain, agony, turmoil in the life of an innocent girl who, in a male perveted society is desperately rejected without any fault of her own which leads to her suffocation. This story is perhaps the story of every girl who has kept their pains and emotion locked up in the darkest corner of their heart, but still managed to keep a forced smile over their lips.' (B, Butterfly web).

It narrates her struggle to free herself from the shackles of society and create an identity for herself. It depicts Nivara's journey of life, from an innocent girl to how she survived the suicidal attempt. And how she shaped her own life. The girl fed up with the patriarchal society and love failure thinks of living no more and went on to kill herself, but destiny wanted something else, it wanted her to come back and set an example. Since it shows how Nivara thought to go away from the male dominated society at the time of being successful without telling anyone, the novel beautifully deals with most complex and philosophical topics of feminism.

DISCUSSION

The novel describes a fretful journey from a meek heart and gullible girl to a mature and experienced young lady that earns a worldwide fame, that's what can be considered her flight beyond the horizon. It takes the readers through the ups and down of this girl during her stay in Delhi, with respect to her academic and personal dimensions in her life.

The novel, written from a feminist perspective, goes on to elaborate Nivara's struggles in a society which fails to understand her sensitivity, growing up in a typical Indian family and how, as she leaves the cocooned environment of home and ventures to the world outside, she is at every step shocked by the revelations of inherent human falsities that strike her.

In the first part, the protagonist as a born fighter, who against all odds fights her way to the prestigious campus of JNU – her dream university, where she enjoys her life to the fullest but her valour gets thwarted by a chronic disease and is unable to deliver up to her expectations. But she manages to defeat the disease and finishes her course at JNU with flying colours.

Part II, of the novel, constituting of six chapters, belongs to the crucial and harrowing stage of her life, and describes the most crucial and pathetic stage of her life. Nivara seeks her career in

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the civil services and wants to join IFS and she works tooth and nail to get her dream accomplished but her life is hit by an unspeakable tragedy – she falls in love with a boy named Aryan, who despite being decent and very caring breaks her heart on the pretext that he finds her over ambitious in love. She had been rejected by Aryan, the love of her life, whom she thought to be her lifelong companion, without any sound reason. The breakup shatters her life completely and she fights her seclusion by taking overdoses of sleeping pills as she had no one to share her agony with. Nivara even makes an unsuccessful attempt to take her own life when the burden of unrequited love seems un-affordable to her. The incident exposed the shallowness of human relations. The falsities and flaws of the society lay naked before her. She felt like being drawn into an unending vortex of grief from where no one can come back. It surfaces to her that her innocence, trust and gullibility have ushered in such a devastating doom in her life. In the words of the author:

“she knew her innocence had been her biggest failing, that one virtue that had ripped her apart in a world where women were considered as just number.”

The incident left a deep impact on her and she attempted suicide. But destiny had something else in treasure.

The third part with having eleven chapters describes her miraculous comeback and the zeal to never look back. Having been face to face with death, she realized that killing herself would only mean the end, an end that would not usher any new beginning. She wished to put an end, not to her life, but to the unnecessary trials and tribulations she had been forced to go through, to the pains and sorrows of her life. Her pains were transformed into poetry and found the expression through the many bestselling book *Beyond The Horizon*. The crestfallen girl reached the acme of her career by her own effort, churning the social stereotypes under her heels. She stood to speak for herself, to fight for herself, her pains found a voice for themselves, a voice strong enough to echo though the world. She's a survivor, who has broken free from the shackles, society. Nivara is the representative of all those women who have been put down by the society, yet they turned around to fight back. The novel shows the rise of a brave young lady who decides to keep the pace of life at par with the ticking of clock and accept the fate in good spirit. “She turns her tears into pearls of poetry. When Nivara drenches her pillow her depressed head rests on in tenebrous nights, with droplets of nude, barren pain and translates all the pain into poetry, the reader is reminded of Kamala Das’s “*My Story*” in which she agonisingly writes: “My grief fell like drops of honey in the white sheets on my desk. My sorrows floated over the pages of the magazines darkly as heavy as monsoon clouds do in sky....” (W.Nazir). Nivara turns to poetry for her expression :



“The lessons taught by life had made Nivara much more mature than any other lady of her age and she had already learnt to tame the pain and convert it into her strength. But still she reminisces of the days past excruciated her in the lonely nights and that’s what caused her to versify her pain on the paper to which she calls her 3 AM thoughts.”

It is this struggle of women, which brought into action some revolutionary moments of global orientation in order to fight the menace of chauvinism and enter the magical sphere of equality, liberty and fraternity. But doing this, women have faced a stiff resistance from the society which has been patriarchal in its texture and every possible effort was invested to nip such processes of female empowerment in the early hours. *“Beyond the Horizon* is a philosophical novel with feminist undertones. The plot, divided into three parts, deals with the trials and turmoil of a twenty-one year old young girl Nivara Desai who with incomparable grace and undaunted courage walks the tightrope between illusion and reality. The book deals with the actualities of modern society, exposing the hollowness of human relationships, the complexities of life and the trials and turmoil a young Indian girl undergoes while making a bid at crafting her individuality and taking her own stance contrary to the existing customs society blindly adheres to. Nivara’s innocence and gullibility have made her a punching bag of a society so ruthless in its judgements that, failed by even her best friend and her parents, she decides to commit suicide. But after a miraculous comeback, there’s no looking back. Having glimpsed death from such a close perspective, she finally decides to speak up for herself and make her voice heard above the crowd. Now she is no longer that weak, innocent, gullible girl who could be weighed down by the baseless acquisitions of society. This novel, peppered with insights into modern man’s psychology is in essence a microcosm of what an Indian girl with socially conflicting views undergoes and her final release from the manacles that had bound a soul as loving and sensitive as hers.” (S. Dash. web).

Nivara is a girl shaped by circumstances. The different incidents of life turned her to a mature, strong girl from the innocent one. In today's world, where patriarchy challenges feminism at every moment, she has set an example by carving out her own space. The way of her life was beset with thorns, which pricked her and created almost unmendable wounds. The wounds had once made her wish to die. But those scars have given her courage to clench her fists and fight back. Nivara is the representative of all those women who have been put down by the society, yet they turned around to fight back. Nivara’s attempt of suicide, then a miraculous comeback “like a phoenix” arising “from the very ashes that had sought to destroy her” metamorphosed her into a strong, self-esteemed asset recognised by all and sundry. She is no longer a nincompoop, weak or gullible. She is “a dreamer, a winner, a survivor” who

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“with undaunted courage and incomparable grace crossed the tightrope from belief, trust, innocence and gullibility to reality, maturity, understanding and final renunciation that’s rare at such an age.”

Her journey from a meek heart and gullible girl to a mature and experienced young lady that earns for her a worldwide fame and this journey is about creating her own identity, not losing the it.

The abrupt ending of the story with sudden disappearance of Nivara is indeed shocking to the readers. However it leaves the reader contemplating the deeper reason behind it. The author has purposely left loose ends in her story. Nivara disappeared when she was at the height of fame. The title *Beyond The Horizon* is very symbolic. It indicates as if Nivara has conquered this territory and has set out to conquer what lay beyond the horizon, the unknown. The novelist has made a marvel out of such a seemingly tragic ending to the story and has succeeding in justifying it because in the words of the author

“the end (of Nivara) was something that brought with it the promise of eternity.”

The novelist succeeding in making these words of Nivara true

“I want to die at the height of my success.”

The protagonist Nivara gives a solid and cogent reason to leave this world for good, in her own words:

“The main reason behind my final choice is, I am not meant to survive in a world so parochial, subversive and stereotypical in its approach.”

This novel would be more helpful for the girl readers to get encouraged to overcome all sort of difficulties in life and without seeing back how to move forward in life and grab the success. Apart from the tragic death of the protagonist in the end, *Beyond The Horizon* is an inspirational story of a young girl - her dreams, her fall and re-emergence as a victor.

CONCLUSION

Since feminist consciousness constitutes women’s awareness of patriarchal norms practiced in every field of society. It is an attempt to make the society aware of the injustice and oppression women have to undergo in their secondary status due to gender construction and



women's subordination in the family and the society. *Beyond the Horizon* evolves as a feministic novel giving expression to the idea that how patriarchal and other chauvinistic factors have a tremendous effect on the life of a girl. However, at the same time it is a saga of the struggle by a women caught between strong forces.

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