

Positive Outlook to Life

- V. Sunitha

The scorching sun has relieved from its hot blaze but the inner fury of Abirami became torrential and uncontrollable. She could not come to terms with what has been determined for her. Her sadist husband is the reason for her emotional havoc. She was once the beautiful and adorable daughter of an affluent merchant Venkatesam, but it is her fate which has trapped her in the pit assigning her a designation called Mrs Ajay Kumar and has splashed mud on her later life. It has been twelve years and she has not tasted the bliss of conjugal bond till now.

Her past was enwrapped with gay and gaiety. She was presumptuous of her beauty and wealthy state. Her friend Priya asked her, "Why do you go around temples? Why do you fast on all the days of the week?"

She hopefully replied, "To get a good husband"

She questioned, "What do you mean by good?"

With a lush on her face Abirami replied, "It means my groom should be a man with no bad habits, not even cigarette, he should be diligent, hard working man with good name and fame, he should love me a lot, give respect to my parents, should be humorous, though he is mediocre in beauty he should be manly and so on and so forth"

What happened to Abirami's hopes and expectations? Did *angapradakshanams*, fasting for continuous three days, all the severe prayers audible to god and was she bestowed a life of bliss and contentment?If the happenings in her later life would have been smooth and congenial she wouldn't have emerged as a successful woman with a doctorate degree in her hand.

As a newly wed bride she stepped into her in-laws house with colourful thoughts and enchanting mind. She was shocked to see her husband who cared a damn and least bothered about her presence. He was engrossed in newspaper, chatted with his sisters and mother, ignoring the new bride throbbing with life and flesh awaiting very much for his care and presence. Here starts the life journey of Abirami on the razors's edge where her twelve years of life can be adumbrated in a single phrase, "craving for husband's love and affection".

It's not only men bully women in the name of dowry and despotism; they also make their life go astray by their cold attitude, this is applicable in Abi's life too.

That was the nuptial night and the very first word she heard from her spouse pierced her ears and struck her like a hurricane.

He said, "You can commit suicide as I don't like to live a life with you"

Those thorns like words are unexpected from a bridegroom in the nuptial bed. They hardly knew each other as it is an arranged marriage and why does he carry so much disgust towards her? The answer to this query is still a mystery to her.

The day passed, the very morning she tried to ignore the bitter experience of the last night and went to him with a cup of coffee on her hand, expecting him to soothe her mind and body with his masculinity.

But alas he reiterated the same question, "When will you leave me? When does our relationship come to an end?"

She responded, "Why do you ask such questions, hardly we started living life together...what makes you to ask such unbearable questions...do I not look beautiful? ..in what way do you expect me to adorn myself, how should I behave?"

...I am really perplexed.... You know, the whole night I was weeping helplessly but you turned aside and dozed off..... Please don't talk so... I like you a lot and I want to live a life with you to the brim".

Ajay barely listened to what she spoke. Everything related to her is loathing and

hesitating to him. Poor bride as she could not explode her inner angst in the house full of people ready to pounce upon her as well as her parents blaming for the construed imperfections of her own marriage rituals.

Days passed on, but his attitude towards her remained the same.

She cried to god, "Is detachment and separation the rule and order of my life? When do I enjoy the experience of conjugal life? Isolation is hellish to me"

There were many weeks and even months that the couple hardly spoke to each other. Every night she lay down on the bed of thorns and not on the marital bed meant for sharing each others love.

Ajay's exorbitant attachment for his mother, his complaints about his wife to his mother made her berserk.

He said, "She doesn't have minimum sense ma, she always falls upon me."

She responded, "How can she disturb my son during night times, let me call her parents arrange for a *panchayat* and speak about this issue."

Abirami cried to her mother-in-law, "I beg you, please tell him some good words, his indifference and lack of concern is unbearable to me."

She rashly said, "With no love and lust how come there grows an offspring in your womb?...the moment you stepped across the threshold of our house, we were deprived of wealth and riches."

She cried, "Why do you impute blame on me for the sins you committed? Your son is a drunkard, has a keep to satiate his carnal pleasure...despite of all these drawbacks on your side it is disloyal on your part to point out me in such a derogatory way."

It was an unforgettable day in Abirami's life. That was the day she was eagerly expecting to convey him the glad news of her pregnancy being confirmed.

She took his hands and said, "Your baby is growing".

He said, "I want to pledge your jewels in order to pay interest for a loan." ...

"Don't you feel happy that your heir is growing inside my womb?"

Uncared of her words he ferociously said, "If you are not giving your jewels, I will send you along with the banker and thereby clear my loan, I cannot provide you food and shelter until your death."

She handed over the jewels with the only intention that she may be rewarded with love and affection.

She consoled herself, "My Ajay will definitely change as soon as he sees the innocent face of his baby, all his disgust will vanish in the air, the moment his baby laughs at him."

But her expectations remained only as expectations with no hopes for fulfillment. Nine months passed and it was the time for delivery. Ajay did not even bother to see the face of his little daughter. He was dry and passive even to his cute little daughter. His attitude was nothing but silent killing, slow poison, he was not harsh and dominating but never bothered to take care even when his wife suffered from labour pains nor relished at the sight of chubby infant.

She clutched his hands and said, "See our daughter, does she resemble you?", he didn't even bother to say 'yes' or 'no' and simply ignored by turning his head towards the ceiling of the hospital.

The flood of despondency that deluges Abirami makes her to pen to her thick friend Prabha, her collegemate. The letter which she got in response from Prabha, a physically challenged woman but an epitome of hard work and determination unveiled the bright side of life. Being suffocated in the pit of doldrums and wretched life she was able to have a fresh lease of air and was able to breathe new life through her advice. Infact she was the one to retrieve her to normalcy from the abyss that she was dwelling in.

Yet she resolved to step into MSc, applied for the course, with strong

determination and pursuit she managed to get through her master's degree, but with a second class. Unable to cope with stone-hearted and feelingless man she wrestled internally, yearned for him but molded her to fit into the patterns of life that is determined for her.

It is his passive response and null efforts to satiate her cravings for love metamorphosed her as an active woman with a positive outlook towards life. Thereby Abirami managed to complete her M Phil and Doctorate and became a professor in a reputed institution.

She often remembered the quotation by her friend Prabha,

"Unakaga vaalgiren endru pirar solvadhai vida, unnal vaalgiren endru pirarai cholla vai." which means, the phrase 'I live for you' is trivial and not worth mentioning when juxtaposed with the phrase, 'I live because of you' which is consummate and superlative.

She discerns the sagacity in her friend's words, keeps it as a repository and marches ahead to enlighten the lives of the innumerable by her noble teaching profession. Though she had reached her intended pursuit inspite of the bruises of her silent husband her unspoken suffering and agony are unheard to the external world.

- *Angapradakshanam*- It is a popular step of a Puja, which is practiced by the Hindu people of India. Devotees before taking *angapradakshanam*, take a dip into the sacred river, lie prostrate, and then roll around the temple, chanting the Lord's name.
- *Panchayat*- A village council meant for carrying out administration work and solving family problems.



Journals Received

- *D.C. Chambial*, POETCRIT, Vol.XXIII/No.2/July 2010 - Maranda (HP)
- *Jaydeep Sarangi*, SEVA BHARTI JOURNAL OF ENGLISH STUDIES, Vol.VI/Jan.2010 - Medinipur (WB)
- *KV Dominic*, IJPCL - Indian Journal of Postcolonial Literature, Vol.X/No.1/June 2010 - Thodupuzha (Kerala)
- *Laxmi Shankar*, PUNYABHOOMI, Vol.1/No.1/Jan. 2010 - Bhopal (MP)
- *Rajkamal Shiromani*, IJELL - International Journal of English Language & Literature, Vol.1/No.1/Summer 2010 - Patna (Bihar)
- *Sudheer C Hajela*, DIALOGUE, Vol.VI/No.1/June 2010 - Lucknow (UP)

Book Review

Bran Nicol: *The Cambridge Introduction to Postmodern Fiction*, Cambridge University Press, 2009, ISBN 978-0-521-67957-2

Book Review by: Lata Mishra, Govt. KRG PG (Autonomous) College, Gwalior (M.P.)

As does a biologist, systematically and methodically dissect a specimen for his study so does Bran Nicol in his *The Cambridge Introduction to Postmodern Fiction* deal with the concept of Postmodernism. The book is written with great care and concern. The scholarly approach and sustained argument about the postmodernism, postmodernity, theories in postmodern fiction is a major concern in this study. Nicol considers Postmodern fiction more as an aesthetic, it is a sensibility that brings under its umbrella all specific currents in writing of later half of 20th century.

In this comprehensive study of the term, Nicol emphasizes that Literature is no more about being delighted, but now it is a labyrinth and meanings have to be deciphered from the text. Postmodern readers cannot afford to sit with their backs resting and hearts delighting in the fancy created in the novel. One needs to work out meanings in the text. Reality is a manufactured product. The novel no more informs us about reality but it constitutes reality. The book is intended both for the scholars and students of postmodernism. In a very deft and precise manner, the writer divides the book into chapters dealing with the term Postmodern Fiction and its various kinds, citing key novels of its twenty-four representative novelists to enable the readers 'digest' each concept with full clarity.

Any attempt to define postmodernism, becomes difficult due to postmodernists' central claim that express, defiance and rejection of truths. The meaning of the term's prefix is also disputable as it signifies the end of an old and beginning of new era. However, critics regard the relationship between modernism and postmodernism as a complex one. Nicol argues that though postmodernism has been defined keeping in view modernist values and aesthetic techniques but postmodern fiction ought to be compared to realism for better understanding. He explains the reason for preferring so, through Patricia Waugh's argument that modernism is preoccupied by consciousness whereas postmodernism is interested in fictionality. Realism ignores fictionality.

Apart from Introduction, the book comprises eight chapters. Chapter One entitled *Postmodern fiction: Theory and Practice* assesses how social and cultural changes affect fiction and positions its readers to respond to it. After a brief discussion on realism and modernism the writer analyses the features of modernist fiction as pointed out by Nathalie Sarraute and Robbi-Grillet. Grillet talks of fiction as 'constructing' rather than 'transcribing' reality. This chapter also gives perspective of postmodern theorist Brian McHale and compares it with Hutcheon's poetics of postmodernism. McHale's theory states that 'dominant' component of modernism is 'epistemological' whereas that of postmodernism is 'ontological'. Two kinds of reading practices 'paranoid

reading' and 'conjecture' are critically examined.

Chapter Two, *Early postmodern fiction: Beckett, Borges and Burroughs* discusses the mentioned novelists. They are anti-realists and may be considered key-transitional figures between modern and postmodern fiction.

Chapter Three, *US metafiction: Coover, Barth, Nabokov, Vonnegut, Pynchon*, explores the terms such as metafiction, metanarrative, paratext, intertextuality and so on. It then takes into account the representative novels of these writers and discusses myth, fairytale and fantasy in their works. The writer explains how the reader also plays the role of co-creator of a text. He conjectures rather than interprets the rhizomatic narrative structure of postmodern fiction.

Chapter Four, *The postmodern historical novel: Fowles, Barnes, Swift* differentiates radical metafiction from historiographic metafiction.

Chapter Five *Postmodern-postcolonial fiction* explores postmodern strategies employed by postcolonial writers. The conventions of the Indian narrative traditions are often blended with western genre of the Bildungsroman in postcolonialist texts. The notion of single authoritative viewpoint is challenged in both postmodern and postcolonial writings. In this chapter Bran Nicol discusses Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's children*, Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, Ishmael Reed's *Mumbo Jumbo*.

Chapter Six, *Postmodern fiction by women: Carter, Atwood, Acker* begins with discussion on several prominent feminist and cultural theorists like Sandra Harding, Sabina Loviband, Meagham Morris, Spivak, Irigaray and so on. The three fictionists clubbed in this chapter draw matter from literary and cultural myths that shape their contemporary culture and use postmodern aesthetic strategies in their writings.

Chapter Seven, *Two postmodern genres: Cyberpunk and 'metaphysical' detective fiction* assesses how postmodern fiction encompasses science fiction and detective fiction within itself. Science Fiction offers an alternative to realism. Writers like, Burroughs, Vonnegut, Atwood and Acker explore what is directly unrepresentable in fiction through creation of virtual space like, space colonies, space-stations, subterranean cities. The term cyber-punk and its origins along with example of novel, *Neuromancer* by William Gibson is also assessed. In detective genre, Nicol discusses Borge's *Death and the Compass* and Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose*, Paul Austen's *City of Glass*.

Chapter Eight, *Fiction of the postmodern condition: Ballard, De lillo, Ellis* is the final chapter of the book. In this chapter the works of three post-war writers are investigated. The chapter deals with the way the ever advancing and expanding technology has intruded our culture and changed the world from real. Bran concludes, 'postmodern fiction reminds readers of the nature of fictionality and causes them to reflect upon the process of deriving the meaning from narrative.'(185)

