

The Lure of the Other: Feminine Consciousness in Mulk Raj Anand's *The Old Woman and the Cow*

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Abstract

Social deportment and human society have passed various changes through numerous organizations, especially in relation to women's status in society. Gender is socially created discernment of a particular person, established on hoped demeanour and distinct parts, ascribed to him or her by the society. Ideas of gender parts elaborate the distinction between female and male conduct. Gender parts are learnt within an intricate pattern of affinity in the first degree of society. A male child is taught to play with mechanical implements and other mechanical toys while a female child is given dolls to play. Even the distinction is distinguished in garments, manners and demeanours. A female child is taught to appear beautiful, by smooth, mild, humble, serene, unresisting behavior and to surrender to the male authority of sagacity. For numberless years, women in our country had been placed to a lower rank to men and socially kept under subjection.

Keywords: Lure, Feminine, Awareness, Protest, Suppression, etc

Only some women have gained equal position in comparison to men. Their accomplishments in numerous tracts of land are widely confessed but this small quantity of women is more of exclusion than the pattern and the greater number of women exist illiterate, needy, deficient and vulnerable. Carl O Saver observes:

That we speak of mankind as masculine collectively, but the great innovation and its elaboration was mainly done by women; keeper of the hearth and provider of food.

(Roy 118-19)

Women were presumed to have no distinctive character. Actually, women were perceived as playmates for men. But Ajin Roy in his *Is India Politically Polluted (Geo-Social Protest and Challenges)* depicts the views of Manu about women:

Manu long ago declared that where women were adored, God frequented that place.

(Sharma 120)

One of the impressive accomplishments during the twentieth century has been the approval of the want and spread of women's education. Numerous deserving girls are gaining chances of enrolling at the gateways of higher instruction. There have been more chances for middle-class and upper-class women to go in for remunerative labour. Women are labouring in non-traditional works and are also containing judgment creating ranks. On the other hand, some women are the victims of deprivation, poverty and unemployment of colonial heritage. Anuradha Sharma in *Encyclopedia of Indian Women* describes:

Commercialization, modernization, export-oriented development, growing reliance on private sector and profit motive as the main objectives of economic activities have all affected women adversely.

(Sharma 75)

The actuality of the subjunctive status of women is suggested by means of unfortunate sex proportion of girls, the advancing native vehemence, growing number of dowry annihilations and rape occurrences. One very encouraging advancement which has happened during the final decade is the rise of women's notion wherein women have promoted their voice in opposition to uniformity, patriarchal worth's and inequalitarian social construction. The modern leadership, we except, will not only explain the legend of the high status of Indian women but will grasp more convinced paces to elevate the position of women and this resulted in the form of feminism which is a sort of intimidation to every man-made system and symbol which subdues and squeezes the female sex in previous centuries.

Feminism is an advancement and motion in critical theory and in literature. It is an effort to translate and retranslate women's observations as portrayed in different sorts of literature, particularly the fictitious tale and to a smaller range, poetry and drama.

It interrogates the long-enduring, prevailing, male phallo-centric ideologies (which join up to a sort of male plot), patriarchal postures and male translations in literature and critical evaluation of literature. It assails male conceptions of value in literature by proposing reviews of male writers and depictions of men in literary works and also by privileging female authors. In addition, it claims believed and traditional male opinions about the disposition of women and about how women realize, operate and imagine, or are supposed to realize, operate and imagine, and how in ordinary way they correspond to life and maintenance. It

thus interrogates several biases and suppositions about women created by male authors, not least any inclination to fling women in stock character.

Feminism has its roots in the strife for women's propriety which commenced late in the eighteenth century, more peculiarly with *A Vindication of the Right of Women* (1792) by Mary Woolstoncraft, after it, came John Stuart Mill's *The Subjection of Women* (1869) and *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* (1845) by the American Margaret Fuller, Rebecca West's and Virginia Woolf's articles on women authors who underwent from cultural and economic losses in what Virginia named a Patriarchal society. Her *A Room of One's Own* (1929) was a classical inscription of the feminist critical rotation. She indicated herself to the offspring of why there were very small number of women authors and it is commonly troublesome and impracticable for a woman to compose. Dorothy Richardson's twelve volume, *Pilgrimage* comes in the category of stream of consciousness technique, its first volume presented in 1915 and the rest appeared posthumously, in 1967. This focuses on the ferial awareness of the actress Miriam Henderson, is governed in unpunctuated women's prose and caused Virginia Woolf to perceive that Richardson had searched the psychological proverb of the feminine order.

The main distinction between Western and Indian feminist activities remains in the truth that whereas in the west females come to the forefront demanding a better treatment for themselves in India, guides of the India Renaissance and English learned gentry raise the issue of woman's emancipation. As far as the literary acquisition of women in India is affected we find that learned females are interested in winning themselves in constructive literary employments. Nevertheless, the earliest characters of females are male authors. In modern age, there has been a change from romance to realism. Artists like Bankim and Tagore are the first to perceive that Indian females would be an efficient medium for a writer for presenting his skill. Skilled authors like Saratchandra, Khandelkar and Premchand depict many realistic women protagonists. Tagore's *Streepatra* can be considered as the first feminist writing in India. Tagore's *Binodini* is unmarried girl who struggles alone in anticipation of the rigidity of orthodoxy.

After Independence, Mulk Raj Anand resumes the club on behalf of females as a social improver who shows the frightful realities of the scavengers, plantation labourers, coolies and the Indian women whom he addresses 'the poorest of the poor'. In his renowned novel, *The Old Woman and the Cow*, he has depicted Gauri as the modern women.

Anand, the constant well-wisher of the underprivileged, succeeds in portraying the miserable plight of female characters who are victims of the rigid pattern of social community. The birth of a female child is considered as a great curse or calamity. The baby-girl is treated as a guest in her parent's residence. Her life moves like a gyre, a spherical round of cooking,

washing, cleaning and nothing else. She is treated like a slave, though she plays various roles in the family as well as in society as a daughter, sister, wife, mother, grandmother, labourer, comrade, prostitute and maid-servant:

That women had no role to play in the formulation and/or implementation of development policies and programmes has been pointed out by a number of scholars.

(Nongabri 196)

In male-dominated human societies, women are provided second position considered suitable only for childbearing. They are treated as tame employees who do not get wages. Even now females are facing the social superstitions like purdah-pratha, dowry system, enforced widowhood, child-marriages, female infanticide and denial of education, though these problems had been eliminated earlier yet they have resurfaced and women are tortured by ruthless husbands, cruel mothers-in-law and fault-finding sisters-in-law:

They are undernourished, overworked, and still worse are degraded and disrespected in the family.

(Reddy 62)

The woman performs a role in social community but this role is equal to the invisible mass of floating ice below the water. She is the nave of a wheel along which all things revolve in a circle, having to honour traditions. She continues the motionless pivot as the middle point in a potter's circular body, encompassing to beget recent models, revealing the cohesion of a racial manner of living, which successively has encompassed and supported her to obtain a distinguishing attribute of concentration.

When attempting to recognize what protest is, an effort has been created to inform that women's protest captivates into its circuit the fair sex's arousing awareness, their upheavals, encounters and solemn declarations against all things which retard this preparation of self-liberation. This aroused female sex, excitedly wishes to affirm her oneness as mankind. The Indian fair sex rejects to incubate in the band vehicle of western women's emancipation. She arouses with a recent intelligibility and sensitiveness, which is indispensably Indian. In despite of being chained by blind faiths, long practiced breaking household and matrimony regulating principles of dowry, acceptance, divorce, ravishing or violation and sexual harassment, she is violently ardent to affirm a recent morality. This aroused woman is capable of rebelling and questioning, some interrogations to be responded, despite a superabundance of inferior prohibitions, usual practices and regulating principles. She revolts against these socio-political harms. Laxmi, in *The Old Woman and the Cow* (1960) discovers the hypocrisy of the cruel men with her bold speech:

What do you know of the desire that consumes a woman! You only take her when you like. Then you turn away in the dark! And then you go to other women, considering them as

whores.... And you lay off, without asking them what they feel. And then sit in judgements on them if they look on men who are not their husband!...

(Anand 226-27)

In a similar manner, Gauri, the main female protagonist of *The Old Woman and the Cow*, refuses to behave like a cow. She originates like a modern emancipated woman, with the assistance of Dr. Mahindra. She is akin to Sita in her distresses, she sustains extravagant incessant suffering and affronts afflicted on her by her husband and his mother, flung out of her in-laws' dwelling place. Her association with the modern world along with the support of Dr. Mahindra, unlocks new vistas and limits of expectations. The periodical accent of affection for the non-existent infant provokes her on. Gauri is equidistant to Gulab, the heroine of Jhabhwala's *Esmond in India* who readily awakens to realize her single individuality. Gauri too, endures the reproaches and physical rush against her husband, Panchi who abhors and scorns his wife. The metamorphosis comes abruptly at the denunciation, while her devoted follower attempts to annoy her.

The gender discrimination and the evils of class system is easily perceptible in the novel, *The Old Woman and the Cow* (1960) which is the single novel of Anand which has been dealt with the modern woman as its central character. Anand's female characters are profoundly concerned with the emergency for emancipation to become conscious as individuals. The outgrowth in the direction of the consciousness which commences unconsciously by Gauri in *The Old Woman and the Cow*. The emergency for single emancipation lasts to be the motivating deputy of her conscious existence and the social community must receive this necessity for liberation as a perpendicular protracted, unpaid aggrandizement. The necessity for single advancement and emancipation prolongs to be her principle monomania.

Panchi, the husband of Gauri, is a male individual of purdah intellectuality with an Eastern superficial luster, who permanently harasses his wife. In spite of her unadulterated companionship, her drinking vessel occupied with solitariness. Her observation that she is single even when Panchi lives with her. She is yearning for serviceable correspondence from her husband. Paradoxically, she is harassed and chastised not for her faults but for the moral obligations so precious to her. Why does the occupation of moral obligations like honoring one's self and not stooping down amount of punishable act? Why does it forever consequence in conveying one's own affection or absorbing the vessel of venom oneself? Gauri abhors this false pretension of social community. The female characters of Anand are generally not liberated except Gauri whose principal concern is an examination for individual emancipation and an earnest necessity for bearing companionship. Anand was greatly influenced by the great dramatist, Bernard Shaw; and the concept of new woman has been represented by him in Gauri's personality:

The 'new woman' of Shavian drama herself derives from Ibsen Nora whose symbolic slamming of the door at the end of '*ADoll'sHouse*' directly antecedes Gauri's conscious if reluctant decision to abandon Panchi.

(Niven 110)

Gauri represents few elements of Indian womanhood. She has strong faith in God as well as her position as a Hindu wife in society. She is convinced that Goddess Gauri will provide courage to her. Motivated by this thought, she gets inspired to seek her identity. *The Old Woman and the Cow* throws light on gender inequality and helplessness of women. Under the economic problems, she is sold away by her own mother to a rich merchant:

When the story ends we find Gauri, bullied, mistrusted and forsaken by her husband, leaving home to as a nurse in Colonel Mahindra's hospital in Hoshiarpur.... It signifies for her a change from bondage to freedom, from meekness to self-assertion, from weakness to strength; in sum, it is the transformation of a cow into a tigress.

(Naik 86)

With internal intuition, she settles to leave her husband who fails in his duties as a husband and as a human being to patronize her. Her judgement is resolute and conclusive coming at last. She does not look back. She starts operating in the hospital of Colonel Mahindra in spite of Panchi's disapprobation and indignation. The actual cause of their discord and bickering is not convivial but constitutional. The sagacious and meddling woman, and the obedient wife in her affirms herself for the survival and good fortune for her race. She is a modern woman who has freed herself from the dying condition of conservative society. There is something excavated and phony about her protest. She moves away from her husband. She rebels against her tradition-bound family; the ostentatiousness and false assertion of conservative Indian society and refuses to act her role as a submissive bride. Gauri avers in opposition to wickedness and ethical hardness of her husband. She retires from home in order to reanimate her particular emancipated self. She affirms with firm belief starting a healthy and strong search:

Against this backdrop Gauri emerges as a person who learns to choose between a life of shame and neglect to one which is not an appendage to her husband but to a brave life. This decision would help her to bring up a child who would not be a coward like Panchi. Motherhood is to be treated as an aspect of creativity which enables creating and transforming life.

(Bamezai 99-100)

To attempt and influence a discernment of moral obligation to one's husband does not create consciousness of understanding. Gauri apprehends it. Should her position alter? How should the alteration seize the part of space? Should it be the portion of a remoter convivial rotation?

Gaiuri's insurrection in the novel is excessively undivided. Gauri elucidates the serious accident of the Indian female sex who is married to a self-assertive man while she settles to abandon, she is perfectly confident to assemble with the fellow feeling of the Western reader, but not with the religious minister who explains her abandonment in very preservative mode. Gauri quickly discovers that female sex on her own cannot outlive. Outside an arranged scheme in which a grade has been ascribed to her, a female sex cannot contrive. Indian social community does not endure oneness, not including in the suit of Sanyasihood. Womanly oneness is not gratifying. Gauri disappoints because she changes position inside many globes. The novel is pessimistic. A female sex can solely flutter the support in the company of the regulations. It would be a misconception to explain Gauri's non-performance as demonstration of truth that she is simply irresolute female of man. The solution, at that time, did not abide in particular command or in systematic instruction.

During the thirties Anand has created an intelligible examination of what would be the issue of women's education in a social community Where individual civil liberty is literally restricted:

After Independence Mulk Raj Anand takes up the cudgel on behalf of women as a social reformer who reveals the hideous actualities of the lives of sweepers, coolies and plantation workers and the Indian women whom he calls 'the poorest of the poor'. In his famous novel, *Old Woman and the Cow*, he has portrayed Gauri as the modern mother India.

(Pandey 17-18)

Systematic instruction accumulates to the social elevation of a female child exclusively in an equal quantity, it approves her members of her household to obtain her a more desirable husband, education is not an extremity in itself but a kind of lengthy limit investment, conducting singly, Gauri is absorbed to the mythological goddess:

I am guarded by the Goddess! So do not come near me. Or you will burn! She warned him.

(Anand 152)

Panchi harasses Gauri sexually, there is no emotional balance between them. She compromises with her tormented life and feels pleasure in his brutal arms. Panchi is the prey of ego, the ego of being man, the supreme power in society that is why he wants to apply his power only on his wife. Respect, honor and close contact are absolutely absent from their married life:

A Hindu wife is another victim of exploitation. She is quite helpless against the ill-treatment meted out to her by her husband and the in-laws. By virtue of his position as a husband, the man enjoys every kind of power over the wife. The wife has to submit to every whim of her husband. Economic dependence of the wife on her husband is perhaps one of the reasons for

her victimization. Economic independence is perhaps the only remedy of this evil, if at all there is any.

(Agnihotri 36)

Gauri cannot bear her sense of oneness and solitude being intruded or crumpled by her husband. She stumbles along her disposition of moods of anticipation and sorrow.

Encountered with adverse social circumstances she examines that singly she could labour better and she should perceive more coherently. The novelist appears to be covering in anticipation of the outdated significations and mores that manage a fair sex as occupations without bestowing her any solitude or individuality of her own. Gauri attempts to obtain 'first principle of affection' to re-sculpture and revitalize her separated and companionless self. The composition of violent effort, incommunicability and estrangement is moreover impelled in a more governed and less hallucinated and extraneous method.

Gauri has fostered the robustness within herself. She no longer wants any person to fulfill her position and individuality, nor does she want to be patronized. The modern woman who is awakening to a recent, healthy and strong awareness will no more adopt the deadwood of antique thoughts and indistinct notions still vindicated and recommended by bourgeoisie community. Women's liberation is now, not settled upon by male-sex. Women have to deliver themselves and male sex will have no choice but to consent this recent demeanor.

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