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Urmi, The Protagonist of The Novella, *Pakki Haveli* and the Paranormal Attitude of Society



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Abstract

Children's minds and brains are designed to be especially open to experience. They are unencumbered by the executive planning, focused attention and prefrontal control that fuels the mad endeavour of adult life, the getting and spending that lays waste our powers. Urmi, the protagonist of the novella, *Pakki Haveli*, is a small girl who is struggling with the atmosphere of her family. "Pakki Haveli" is known as haunted house in Punjab. The whole atmosphere of family is woven around supernatural elements: ghost that is only created by some strange situations as unusual weeping and laughing imagery, black shade, cutting of some locks of Urmi's mother in her pregnancy in night and the tall trees of backside of home. It can be depicted that the co-incidental conditions of normal life are defined as ghost in this novella. It may be that Amrita Pritam wants to clear the doubt about "Pakki Haveli" or it can be that she wants to show the truth behind the "*Pakki Haveli*". Both secrets get disclosed in the novella by her when Amrita Pritam defines the mental chaos of Urmi in such terrific atmosphere.

Keywords: Children's Mind, Pakki Haveli, Supernatural Elements, Weeping and Laughing Imagery, Co-Incidental Conditions

Introduction

How the society is involved with the condition of women from centuries? How a woman is always projected on the margins of society as culprit, as witch, as an ill -omen? How a woman is understood as fortune and goddess in our ancient scriptures: "*yatra naryastu pujiyante ramante tatra devata, yatraitaastu na pujiyante sarvaastatra falaah kriyaah*" (where women are honoured, divinity blossoms there, and where ever women are dishonoured, all action no matter how noble it may be, remains unfruitful) and slowly they are deprived and controlled by the cruel hands of society. How a man is acting just like the social hypocrite and follows all the social norms without objecting anything and understanding things on the standards of human beings. All these issues are dealt in this short story, *Pakki Haveli* by Amrita Pritam.

Objective of the Study

Amrita Pritam is not only a writer of gender issues but also of social issues. As gender issues always relate to the society, we cannot perceive them separately. For understanding the depth of any of these two issues, the other one is keenly involved and Amrita Pritam has examined it sharply that is the reason her sharp mind has never skipped those things which a common one's mind cannot catch. She observed that the woman is the centre point of any kind of issues happening in the society. Giving her the label of character, fortune and goddess, actually the patriarchal society is taming her capacity and vision. Sometimes she is scolded and beaten as witch and the belief behind it that all the mishaps are occurring only because of the woman. The present paper is focusing on such issues and attempting to eradicate such kind of belief of egoist patriarchy with a practical and realistic solution.

Review of Literature

1. *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*, Sandra Gilbert and Sandra Gubar has examined that the females are either "angel" or "monster" from the male's point of view while the females must kill both and must evolve their own self. The title of the book is drawn from Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre*, in which the protagonist's wife is kept secretly locked in an

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- attic apartment by her husband and only the loud weeping voices come from attic.
2. *The Prelude*, William Wordsworth acknowledges that the childhood is the only phase in which the senses of a child is incredible. The existence of God can be seen by us in the eyes of children. Their eyes glitter with crystal clear truth and piety. No any scratches of modifications, false, greediness, corruption is there in the heart of children.
 3. *What is Patriarchy?*, Kamla Bhasin points out that a woman also carries the patriarchy in conscious or unconscious way. Living in the realm of patriarchal set up, she forgets her self and adopts the norms those are inflicted upon her by the male mind set. In *Pakki Haveli*, the same thing happens. Nani is carrying the responsibilities of patriarchy. She wants a boy baby to be born by Urmi's mother. Even Urmi's Grandmother, who was aware about all the circumstances, does not love Urmi and understands culprit to Urmi's aunt, the real mother of Urmi.

The children become vividly conscious of "every common sight" that habit has made invisible to adults. Urmi, the little girl is the protagonist of the novella, *Pakki Haveli*. Some statements told by Urmi in the novella seems like told by adults. Sometimes children behave like adults from their open mind and open heart without knowing the so-called etiquette and manner of adults. Children become "small adults". In Chapter 4 of the novella, Urmi says, "There was a friend of Papa, to whom he considered as his own brother. After sometimes, he went to foreign to leave aunt here. Mom said that he got married to some foreign madam to go to foreign. This is the reason, aunt lives alone. He sends money every month but never comes"(Lines 3-6, translated by me from the Hindi text of the novella). Despite being a child, the above statement seems like spoken by an adult. It is the interior monologue of Urmi. The whole condition revolves in her mind when she meets the lonesome woman to whom her mother introduces as aunt to Urmi.

When matter comes about "Child Psychology" in literature, William Wordsworth is the first and foremost poet comes in mind. His great "Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood" is master piece of English Literature which discusses apparently the "Child Psychology". Five lines from "Idiot Boy" composed by William Wordsworth depict the psychology of a child, who enjoys the happiness on the edge of brim.

"His heart it was so full of glee,
That till full fifty yards were gone,
He quite forgot his holly whip,
And all his skill in horsemanship:
Oh! happy, happy, happy John".

(William Wordsworth)

The novella *Pakki Haveli* resembles the story of *Aapka Bunty*, the novel written by Mannu Bhandari, the novelist who got the universal popularity from this novel. The protagonist of *Aapka Bunty* is Bunty, who is a little boy lives with his mother not with his father. His mother and father have divorced to one another. The

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complete novel is the psychological interpretation and reflection of the mind of Bunty. He lives alone with his mother so, in his surrounding, his mother is the only member of his family. He keenly observes his mother, Shakun, a woman, who is trying to make her own identity as woman not as the wife of her husband after divorce. Shakun represents "New Woman" of this era. She is a mother as well as teacher. She is confronting with difficulties being both as mother and teacher still she is trying her best to prove that a woman alone is sufficient to live her life at her own conditions even with the responsibilities of mother. This is the concept of "Indian Feminism". Here, a woman is feminist to be enlightened and to have the realization of her duties towards family, society and country. Indian Feminism is universal and full of positivity and not confined to some streams and goals. One thing is necessary to understand here that having realization of one's duties is one thing and raising voice against suppression is another. And "Indian Feminism" understands it very apparently. In Indian Feminism, being a woman, a mother is the first feminist. Mother, who is the creator of whole humanity.

The novel also reveals a serious issue relating about those children whose parents get separated or divorced from each other. Being in such condition, the children become less loved not in the sense of materialistic ways. The children are entitled to get equal love and affection of both mother and father. Only one's love does not fulfil the lack of other's love. In *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693), Locke writes that parents have considerable responsibility to ensure their children are reared correctly through the formation of healthy habits. Mannu Bhandari says that the Indian parents do not know to nourish their children. Most of times, father becomes unknown about his duties but as a ring master. She says that parents obtrude themselves and their wishes over their children on the name of love, affection, care and protection. They never let them flourish and bloom. A long time ago, Rousseau idealised the notion of the feral child unchained from the shackles of society and believed the child should develop free from burdensome adult intervention.

Urmi and Bunty are similar in the theme of "Child Psychology". Bunty and Urmi both observe their surroundings very closely. In "An Essay Concerning Human Understanding", Locke proposed the new born mind to be like "white paper, void of all characters, without ideas". They observe the things and people of their surroundings and understand them with open heart. The logics and interpretations of children are the "Real Logics". Their logics become unfurnished, not refined, not perfect, not affected by social and moral conditions but their logics become straight and comes from open heart and first mind experience. Most of times, their logics become relevant. From the perspective of adults, the logics of children can be childlike but going through deep reality, these logics are "Real Logics". In Chapter 2, there is conversation between Urmi and her Nani in following way showing the relevancy of children's logic,

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Nani says to Urmi, "Don't tell to your father, I will take to you at temple of Kali Mother tomorrow."

Urmi, "Who is Kali Mother, Nani!"
Nani, "Durga, the queen of ghosts."

Urmi, "What will she do?"

Nani, "She will help us. You chant the name of Kali Mother at sleeping time."

Urmi, "How?"

Nani, "O Kali Mother!"

Urmi, "But she is not my mother."

Nani, "She is also your mother."

Urmi, "But there becomes only one mother. How will be two?" (Lines 58-68, translated by me from the Hindi text of the novella)

In Chapter 5, Urmi solves world's most critical problem in her age with her mind. Again, there is very logical conversation take place between Urmi and her Nani,

Urmi asks to Nani, "As father lives with mother, why not uncle with aunt?"

Nani lifts her hand towards sky and told, "Woman's fate is written by wrong hand of God. Which line got rightly drew is satisfying."

Urmi kept on sitting a long time in night to take slate. She kept on writing with wrong hand to take chalk, but she was unable to write any single alphabet even the line was not being drawn correctly by her. Her hand started to pain. She was grappling with the question of her mind through a keen curiosity. It is unknown to Urmi why the God writes with wrong hand but still she understands that wrong hand cannot draw a right line of fate. It is the thing to be understood by us all that wrongly adapted conditions, ways, medium never take us to right conclusion or result at last. (Lines 32-36, translated by me from the Hindi text of the novella)

Children are the "Small Adults". They have worries, logics and understanding those are better to adults. They do not know differences between genders, religions, colours and economic. These are the adults who obtrude these differences upon them throughout life. The rationality of adults is nothing but foolishness in the understanding of children. When Urmi, the protagonist of the novella, speaks and tries to understand the matter of her family then it seems that she is adult in some statements. Even, reader gets shock to read the statement of Urmi:

"Grandmother is angry, why I am a girl. Why I am not a boy but when Grandmother was little, she was also a girl." Here, Urmi's grandmother is in the role of patriarchy. She never loses a chance to hate to Urmi because she is a girl. Patriarchy is not limited only to men sometimes a woman of the family takes the role of patriarchy but it happens only in patriarchal society. Most of the societies of India developed in the hand of men leaving South Indian societies this is the reason the men paved the way of patriarchy. In such

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atmosphere, being head of family, even a woman also carries the role of patriarchy sometimes consciously and sometimes unconsciously. In this novella, Amrita Pritam has discussed again the gender issue and patriarchy. The whole family is doing efforts for a boy to be born. It seems if again a girl will be born then whole family will fall in the grief of cremation. How much ridiculous to think that a baby boy takes birth from a woman's uterus, who is a girl still people do not want to give regard to a girl's existence. If this is the rationality of adults then those unlearned and unrefined children are better than such adults. Even today, when we are on the acme of development still it is the mentality of our people who are learned and high profiled elite class.

Conclusion

Amrita Pritam has raised the issue of woman exploitation. In the last phase of novella, a secret discloses that the aunt of Urmi is her own mother not her aunt who is victimized by her own father. His father condemns her as ghost that all the ill omens of the family is done by her. She denies all the charges but her love for Urmi. She commits suicide at last. Amrita Pritam has woven the supernatural phenomena in the plot of novella and she has also tried to convey her thought that in such condition, most of times, a woman is targeted even being innocent. Amrita Pritam has also clarified that the supernatural incidents are either coincidences or reaction of our unconscious mind nothing else.

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