

The Concept of Sakhi in Indian Literature: A Study of Ismat Chughtais Short Story The Quilt



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Abstract

Contemporary Indian short stories subtly portray the feelings of loneliness and angst faced by women in society. Regardless of the status of such women, the overpowering feeling of loneliness is a source of emotional discomfort. The need to love and be loved, and the desire for emotional warmth is a genuine human need, which craves satisfaction. When women are deprived of attention, warmth and intimacy, they often seek satisfaction through other sources, both male and female.

Keywords: Loneliness, Frustration, Dissociation, Lesbian Love.

Introduction

The short story *The Quilt* by Ismat Chughtai is a representation of female sexuality and is a frank portrayal of the need of the protagonist to overcome the traumatic memories of a holiday in childhood. The memories pertain to her aunt, who involved the young girl in lesbian activities.

Aim of the Study

The aim of the study is to show how the frustration of an individual often leads to the sexual abuse and exploitation of another individual.

Hypothesis

The false trappings of glamour and riches, no doubt offer material comfort, yet it cannot be denied that when marriages are contracted, only with a view to gaining wealth, the partners resort to other forms of gaining sexual satisfaction.

One hears of the Biology of Sexuality, the Psychology of Sexuality, the Anthropology of Sexuality and even the Politics of Sexuality. What is missing in all this is the *Poetry* of Sexuality. No single aspect of sexuality can lead to a composite picture of what sexuality is all about. Just as there is a poetry in life in relationships, there is also a poetry in sexuality. The poetry of sexuality however defies definition because it is in a sense the passion, the energy behind all creation. Sexuality is one of the profoundest aspects of being human. Since there cannot be a prescriptive morality for all people and all for time it would do well to remember that the definition of an individual's being is not exhausted in any one sentence or idea. The great difference between Western and Indian Thought is that in the west everything is in terms of either and or. In India, it is not so and therefore one part of the Indian method is *Neti-Neti*, meaning it is not this alone, it is not this alone. No statement about anything is complete. It involves something else as well. When we apply it to human relationships and sexuality, it becomes even more meaningful. The definition of an individual's being is not exhausted in any one sentence or idea. Western Thought does not recognize anything between either and or. This perhaps comes from the Greek logic of Excluded Middle. Jaina Thought on the other hand upholds the theory of Anekantavada meaning a thing has several aspects to it and so no absolute statements can be made about it.

Ismat Chughtai's short story *The Quilt* is a first person account of a woman, who as a young girl went to live with her married aunt for a few days. The aunt who belonged to a poor family was a beautiful young girl who was married off to a rich Nawab. The Nawab was an old man who had little or no sexual interest in his young wife, as a result of which, she is lonely and unloved. A long, colorless life with the Nawab frustrates her completely. She has a rich array of costly clothes and expensive jewels,

but she feels tethered and fettered. Ultimately, she found comfort in the hands of Rabbu, a woman who massaged her body daily and brought her back to life. There is an undoubtable hint of a lesbian relationship between the women.

Muslim women have rebelled and redefined meaning of self, community and nationality from within and outside the boundaries of their religion. While some of these rebellions (Women groups, right to education etc). have found legitimacy in atleast some circles (Feminist women groups), resistance centered round sexuality has been silenced and invisibilised . We hope to appreciate the ways in which Muslim women have exercised their gender and sexuality to challenge and transform heteronormative and patriarchal structures.

(Menon 323)

However, the narrator of the story, who is recounting the experience of a stay with his aunt is also embroiled by the aunt in a sexual attempt. The young girl feels repelled beyond words, although she is too young to understand what it all means. Yet this scars remain etched in her memory:

Dusk had fallen and the room was in total darkness. An unknown dread took hold of me. I felt bewildered. Begum Jaan's eyes had deepened. I began to weep inwardly. She hugged and squeezed me like a plaything. The warmth of her body drove me to distraction. But she paid no attention. She was like one possessed, and I could neither scream nor cry.

(Ramakrishnan 204)

There is an urgent need to educate young girls about the kinds of behaviours, which they should learn to recognize as overtly or covertly sexual, and also to fearlessly report such behaviours to their primary or secondary caregivers.

We need to work towards building an environment in which the child has the availability to distinguish right from wrong behavior by adults, the security to say when a wrong is committed and a system which creates a safer environment with effective redress when abuse is perpetrated.

(Menon314)

Conclusion

To conclude, it can be said that lack of love between the spouses can lead one of them to indulge in same sex relationships, and so married relatives are not always safe for young boys and girls. The relationship between Begum Jaan and Rabbu is similar to the relationships which existed among women in the days of the harem. Once an individual indulges in sexual intimacy of this sort, he/she craves for it , and often loses track of his/her behavior. In such cases, one unconsciously uses children to satisfy sexual needs which are deep seated. The dangers to innocent children are thus endless.

References

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