



MULKRAJ ANAND'S 'GAURI' AS A NEW WOMAN: A MARXIST FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

A good society is a classless society, according to Marxist-Feminist. Society plays an important role in the lives of people and people should work for a classless society. This paper explores the views of Mulkraj Anand's service to society through his protagonist 'Gauri'. The docile Gauri was known for her gentle behaviour. She has all the so-called feminine characteristics expected in the male-dominated society. Gauri was considered only as a sexual object by all outsiders and also by her husband. Gauri strived hard and after the world experience spoke much about inequality in society, the need for education and other modern techniques. Gauri also began to give her views about the existing set of rules and class divisions. She boldly says that there must be equality and justice in the society. Anand says a woman can rise against oppression if she gets enlightenment and realizes that truly, she was suffering. This paper explores the situations where Gauri was suppressed and excelled as a new woman from the Marxist Feminist point of view. Some women do not even know that they are being suppressed by the male-dominated society. But once they realise they can rebel to become an independent new woman.

Keywords: Marxist Feminism, Patriarchy, Capitalistic Society, male-dominated and Feminine.

Marxist-Feminists accept Marx's theories as their fundamental theories. They believe in women's liberation along with the proletarians. They give light to the problems of women in the society which are faced by them. Women are viewed only after their gender and not as workers even if they

contribute equally to men. 'Gauri' is one of the most memorable characters of Mulkraj Anand, and her role in the novel is significant. 'Gauri' evolves as a revolutionary woman, who revolts against the patriarchal society. A Marxist-Feminist reading of Gauri will be useful to analyse not only a single

Marxist Feminism, Patriarchy, Capitalistic Society, male-dominated and Feminine

woman character but also a majority of Indian Women in general, who are suppressed by the patriarchal society. This suppression was easily done as Gauri represents the typical Indian woman, bound to her fate by tradition and patriarchal customs.

Marxist-Feminists found women suffer in the patriarchal society like the proletarians in the capitalistic society. In the patriarchal society, women are suppressed by the religious rules. But in Marx's socialistic society, women will not be subjugated religiously, because religion will wither away and it will not affect women in any way. It will abolish the objectification of women, which treats women only as sexual objects and society neglects their feelings. However, Marx did not go deep into the problem of women. According to him, there is no sex division but only class division. Thus Marxist theory did not give much attention to women. So there came the need for Marxist-Feminists. "Marxist-Feminists are the Marxists to the Feminist sisters and feminists to the Marxist brother," says Mary Bailey. Marxist feminists desired to inject a feminist perspective into the classical Marxist ideas. According to Rosalind Delhmer, "Feminism becomes defined by its object of concern much the same way as socialism has

sometimes been defined by an object - the poor or the working class."

Feminist organizations usually work for two different functions. It deconstructs the age-old beliefs and reconstructs a new movement, which is a new outlook on female activities in society. Marxist-Feminists criticised Marxism for not recognising the housewife's domestic chores. They argued that hierarchy existed within the family and that men, like bourgeois ruled over women who suffered like the proletarians.

The main objective of this paper is to highlight the fact of how a submissive woman emerges as a new woman and to analyse the situations and incidents where Gauri is subordinated by the patriarchal society. It shows that the woman, if confident enough to face society, cannot be subjugated to the further ill-treatment of the patriarchal beliefs.

The rationale of this paper stems from the fact that economic independence is a must for the empowerment of women in society. Gauri after all the hardships emerged as a new woman to face the society with the responsibility of raising her son.

The novel begins with the marriage of Panchi and Gauri. Mulkarj Anand introduced Gauri through Panchi, the would-be husband of Gauri in the first chapter.



Panchi hears the constant refrain from his would-be mother-in-law that “Gauri is like a cow, very gentle, very good” and he ‘felt like a holy bull going to marry the little cow Gauri’. Mulraj Anand gives the contrast between Gauri and Panchi very early in the novel.

Panchi is described as a peasant with strong physical power and he is brave. Gauri is known for her innocence and beauty in the village. She is gentle, meek and docile. But Panchi is known for his roughness and brutal behaviour. Panchi considers himself a holy bull in contrast with the gentle cow. The cow is a domestic animal which symbolizes sacrifice, submissiveness and gentleness. Panchi wants his wife to be submissive. So he felt happy that his would-be wife would be ‘obedient’ to him as she is like a gentle cow.

Simone de Beauvoir in *The Second Sex* says that men possess the original aspiration to dominate over others. Men have little care for the feelings of women. Anand has very clearly given Panchi’s notions of the bride. He thinks of Gauri as “a girl whom he could fold in his arms at night and kick during the day...” The patriarchal society has the law that a man has all the power and right to do anything to a woman. A woman does not react against this system

because her rebelliousness would term her as unfeminine and unnatural. According to Marxist-Feminist Zillah Eisenstein, a woman is not viewed as an autonomous being. Panchi considers Gauri not as a life partner but as a female body which will give him pleasure.

Gauri is not viewed as an autonomous being. Gauri is not only denied autonomy but is also viewed as a property of Panchi. Panchi does not have any love or affection towards his wife. He thinks Gauri is one on whom he can show his superiority. Panchi who was brought up in a male-dominated society, sees women only as dolls and puppets. The act of suppressing will automatically come in a male as it is supposed to be their right to rule the woman. Alison M. Jaggar says,

‘Marriage is a relation that is remarkably similar to the feudal relation of vassalage. It provides a means for exchanging support and protection from the husband in return for services and devotion from the wife’

Panchi thinks his wife as the one,

“Who would adorn his house and help him with the land....”

Panchi felt like a capitalist, who had a chance to look after a woman who was given

to him in marriage like a proletarian and felt himself superior to Gauri.

Gauri is doubly cursed because of her gender and economic status. Even if Pachi does not belong to the capitalistic society, he acts like a member of the owning class. He tries to be superior to his fellowmen. If he cannot, he takes out his frustration on his wife. He struggled continuously with the bullocks in the field and he either brutalized or coaxed them to plough. When he fought with his uncle because of the bullocks, he immediately cursed Gauri. Gauri did not have any connection with this. But the religious minder Panchi, thought that the inauspicious nature of Gauri made him suffer like this. Panchi seemed to have lost his humanity. His character is presented as a socially isolated person. He did not bother about anyone but himself.

K.K. Sharma says, "Panchi does not belong to the owning class really but has internalized the values and norms of the ruling classes to such an extent that he rather identifies himself them than of his class. Thus his alienation from man takes the specific form of his class" Panchi, though belonging to the proletarian class, wanted to prove himself as a Bourgeois class member. But he could not show his valour to anybody else but Gauri. He fought with Molaram and then his

incapability to become a ruling class member made him batter her.

No one in Gauri's mother's place was ready to accept Gauri with a warm heart. Even her mother did not welcome her. She was considered a burden. They considered her child as 'one more mouth' which would bring trouble to them. Love is based on economics only, for them. Even in her mother's place, she could not find any solace.

Laxmi and Amru forced Gauri to go with the Rich old Seth as his second wife. Gauri came to know that her crying and sulking would not change the mind of her mother, she shouted at them as though she was possessed by Goddess Kali. Mulraj Anand says,

"Gauri's stubborn will was the equal of Amru's pride"

Amru was furious and he lifted Gauri by her plait of hair and dragged her to the horse waiting outside their house. The innocent Gauri gradually understood her position in the male-dominated society and her self-realization slowly sprouted. Like a feminist, she tried to analyse the situation and did not accept anything blindly. Even though she was sold to the Seth, she did not like to live like her mother who was living a louse life with her cousin Amru. Gauri did not go to the extent of doing anything for money.



She had her principles and she tried to keep up those principles even if she underwent any further suffering.

The rich old Seth took Gauri to his house. Gauri's ability to get liberation from the old man failed and it made her suffer from fever. The rich man pretended to be very kind to her. But Gauri could easily understand that he was pretending to woo her.

The patriarchal men will frequently threaten and try to sexually exploit women. Gauri became a victim of such a situation when she worked as a nurse in Dr. Mahindra's hospital. Dr. Mahindra had a partnership with a young doctor Batra who owned the land of the hospital. Dr. Batra was a handsome young man of about thirty-five. Gauri had found a certain similarity in his gait and manner with that of her husband and accepted his ribald humour and indecent looks. But she was aware that it would lead to serious consequences. She was also conscious of her position. But her fundamental innocence made her move with Dr. Batra who also called her 'the cow'. According to, Gauri, Dr. Batra was in an exalted position and she just smiled at his jokes. Even though he resembled Panchi, Gauri as a nurse, behaved very carefully. She did not like to give room for any criticism. Dr. Batra, some days later winked

humorously at Gauri. Gauri was very much frightened and she averted the eyes of Dr. Batra. But Dr. Batra who was a small volatile personality, ached to establish some intimacy with her so that he could reach up to her heart. But the Indianness in Gauri made her avoid Dr. Batra. Dr. Batra found, that telling jokes and persuading Gauri could not help him anyone in winning Gauri for him and he started threatening her.

Dr. Batra directed himself towards Gauri with an unabashed open, crazy, headless passion, says Mulkraj Anand, Dr. Batra came drunk and caught Gauri by her arm and said, "Come to me, hill woman!.... Come! oh my dear!....my life!

Dr. Batra's whole weight fell on her Gauri managed to escape from him. Mulkraj Anand says. "From some unplumbed depth, those rose in her..... kali, the energy of sheer negation, the hardness of whom she had brought against Seth Jai Ram Das ..."

Dr Batra could not bear the thought of her having thrown him out, which demolished his pride. He found that her will was stronger than his. Gauri, after all the hardship in Seth's house, developed her potential against the atrocities done to her. She had developed herself not to yield to the persuasion and threats of the patriarchal men into any kind of exploitation. She did not like

to live the life of a loose woman like her mother, Laxmi. Dr Mahindra, the widower, Who had never deviated from celibacy and liberal to other people's desires and was earthy in his outlook impressed Gauri very much. His reading in different fields gave him a broader perspective. Marxist-Feminists work for the removal of the sexual division of labour. Gauri after meeting Dr.Mahindra spoke such Marxist-Feminist views also. Once when Rafique chacha said,

“To Adam was given a hoe”... and to Eve a spinning wheel-and from them all true nobility is descended” Guari immediately interpreted and said, “Old sayings and grey beards are all that we have left... old sayings only invoke God and grey beards recite prayers and the death-in-life prey upon each other”

Guari became very modern in her outlook. Here Gauri proved herself as a feminist who wanted to emerge with the proletarians to have a classless society because she could understand the inequality of society that put her in the lowest status. But Panchi could not drag himself with the steadfastness of Guari. He considered it a crime to speak against elders. He shouted, “ Hain, mad woman! what will the village say if they hear you talk like this to the elders and God is listening.....”

The patriarchal people have associated all the rules which suppress women and proletarians along with religion and without knowing this they still suffer as lower classes in the society. Also, they cannot justify women or proletarians who rebel against the rules made by elders. But Gauri did not bother about that. According to Samaras C. Sanyal,

Through the transformation of Gauri a patient cow-like Hindu wife to a conscious and self-confident lady, Anand shows the gradual changes taking place in the internal social structure of Indian village life.

Gauri, the daughter of traditional India is reminded of Sita's myth when she is about to leave the house. When she came as a bride, her mother asked her ‘to be like Sita’. But only Gauri knew how much suffering, she had undergone because of the passive acceptance. Also, she was aware that Gods will not interfere in her life like Sita who was helped by the divine force. The patriarchal men, even though they are not like Rama expect their brides to be like Sita. Overwhelmed with grief, Gauri simply said to Hoor Banu and Rafique Chacha, who were sad about her departure, that, “He is not foolish, He is a weak, spoiled creature! Spoilt by Kesaro. He pretends to be a lion among



the men of the village. But he is a coward! They are telling him that Ram turned Sita out because everyone doubted her chastity during her stay with Ravana....! I am not Sita that the earth will open up and swallow me... I shall just go out and be forgotten of him....” She knows that Panchi is spoilt by society. M.K. Naik says, “Unlike the ancient counterpart, the modern Sita does not need the earth to open up and swallow her, the anonymous crowd of a big city can do the job equally well. The modern Sita need not vanish from the world but can rediscover the world”

While going away from Panchi, Gauri decided to bring up her child not as a coward like Panchi or not as weak as she was earlier. She went away to make herself economically and socially independent. Her mature mind did not allow her to be a burden for others and she did not even think of taking refuge in her mother’s place. She is not a refugee now. She is an independent woman Gauri shows many characteristics of the ideal woman that the Marxist-Feminists expect from every woman in the patriarchal society. Gauri is not sentimental but she waves her head to forget the Sita image which makes every woman a subordinate in the male-dominated society. Now Gauri is relieved so much that she

may go and work without any further humiliations. She just left the house and she was not sure where she was going. But Gauri had a clear idea about her future and she is even prepared to take charge of her child. She is firm in her decision to bring up the child as a good citizen. Surely this transformation of the cow like Gauri, into a mature New independent woman is a welcome sign for the upliftment of society.

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Marxist Feminism, Patriarchy, Capitalistic Society, male-dominated and Feminine

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