

“An Interview with Kavery Nambisan”

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Abstract: *Feminism originates in the perception that there is something wrong with society's treatment of women. It attempts to analyze the reasons for and dimensions of women's oppression, and to achieve women's liberation. To some liberation is defined as social equality with men, while others feel that this narrow definition reflects the class bias of what is described variously as bourgeois feminism, career feminism, and mainstream feminism or liberal feminism. Liberal feminism views liberation for women as the freedom to determine their own social role and to compete with men on terms that are as equal as possible. The people of liberal thoughts does not believe that it is necessary to change the whole social structure in order to affect women's liberation. Individual women may liberate themselves long before their status is attained by others; the concept also involves liberation for men, since they are not only removed from a privileged position but are also comparatively free of the responsibility for such things as the support of their families and the defence of their country.*

Keywords: *feminism, liberation, individuality, oppression, identity.*

1. INTRODUCTION

As carefully observed of human psyche and behaviour, with a fine eye for details, Kavery Nambisan brings in her narratives and characters to life, illustrating her themes, without making moral judgements about her women who are neither saints nor villains, just ordinary people leading the best lives they can, using whatever resources are available. Kavery's characters, both the major and the minor ones, are very real and compelling. Her novels are full of wisdom and subtle parallels; they are funny and bitterly sad, but generally optimistic and never preach and predict.

The author displays sympathy towards her characters and does empathize with the living conditions of her female protagonists. As her characters are silent, it signifies that they are in a state of oppression, which in turn is a characteristic of the subaltern condition, while speech signifies self-expression and liberation. The women novelist intends to show the rights of women and which must be preserved. Women novelists assert the rights of women to live their life in their own way. I took an interview with my writer Kavery Nambisan.

In an Interview with Kavery Nambisan:

Q1 – When did you know you were a writer?

Do i know it? I'm a person which is trying to write. When i read what sells, I feel we have so many imposters posing as writers. Only posterity and readers can decide the quality of a writer. I am still dissatisfied with my work.

Q2 – Madam! What is the driving force behind you that made you a great writer?

I am a slogger, and i'm fairly disciplined and stubborn about saying what I want to say.

Q3 – You are a doctor and a social worker. Are you on a mission to cure the social mala dies in the society?

Not really, i feel depressed and somehow responsible for the injustices in society. I'd like to do what I can. But with my writing, I only want to stay honest to my own muse.

Q4 – What's your message to the world, through the character of Shari in 'mango colored fish'?

Shari is an ordinary girl who is sensible enough to follow her heart.

Q5 – Why do your woman protagonist always compromise with then lot?

I'm not sure. Do they compromise? Nanji for instance rises above the personal and is able to do more than more than most of the men in her family not only for them not also for others. It takes a rare type of courage. Shari does not compromise in the end, although she struggles to come to terms with what she actually wants out of life. Harini does not compromise. So there you are!

Q6 – I we can call Evita “a liberated person” for breaking her silence, how to account for her seeking security of the family system only when there is no indication that male in the world would change?

That novel is a sort of comic farce about the gender inequity with serious undertones. Extra buckles under circumstances.

Q7 - The concept of sisterhood is more prudently seen in your novel' on wings of butterflies' can it be interpreted as your solution to end male domination in the society?

Sisterhood in the right sense can do a lot for society. The women in....Wings are not successful because they try imitating the men in many ways.

Q8 – The conflict between ‘Mother and daughter’” is present in your novel ‘On wings of butterflies’ is there any special reason or interest that made you to choose this?

No. I'm just interested in conflicting relationships which are all too common.

Q9 – Does Nalli's character has any close resemblance to u? If so how?

Yes. She is stubborn, dogged and often hare-brained. But she's a genuine article.

Q10 – Tell us a little bit about your growing up years?

Very simple in the first ten years or so, although my father was big in politics. Even then, we moved to Delhi, learnt English and Hindi and when my father was in the Union cabinet, lost out on our personal freedom. But my father never let it come in the way of our lives, he did not let any of his children use his name or 'influence' in any way. So we stayed quite normal.

Q11 – Today's women are independent no more appendage to man. What do you say?

You're talking of people like us. I see women facing gross injustice every day in my medical career. Patriarchy hasn't gone away.

Q12 – Madam! Among your seven novels which novel did you like the most and why?

Haven't a clue.....'Bharat, scent of Pepper and The Story' are most often quoted by readers.

Q13 – There is a change in the attitude of Women protagonist end of your novels, but there is no change in the attitude of men. Why?

Wrong again! Bharat will surely be a changed person when he returns from his exploits. Simon learns an awful lot as he stumbles through his efforts to help Sitara. They do change.

Q14 – What is your next project you are working on now?

My next novel is set in a small town in Karnataka, which until recently was a village. The brutalities of transformation are captured through the eyes of one woman and through her, many story unfold. It is called, "a town like ours" and will be published early next year by Aleph. An exert will appear in July edition of IQ magazine. Do read!

Kavery Nambisan is a writer whose heroines succeed in maintaining a complete balance in life by asserting their individualism within the boundaries of social bondages. Her desires, efforts and failures in the traditional Indian society are the main highlights of her novels. Her women are modern, self-sustained, yet they are bound by the traditional norms of the society. Nambisan being in India has witnessed in her writings the typical tradition and the modern feminine sensibility. She makes it clear that hers is not the strident and militant kind of feminism which sees man as the cause of all troubles.

According to her an Indian woman is different from her counterpart in the western countries. Women in India suffer and adjust themselves. 'Woman' is the Centre of her fictional world. Her novels delve

into the expectations of Indian women and relates their search for strength and independence, they detail with complex characters that are caught in a net of relationships partly of their own making and partly made by the precepts of society. Her depiction of women's world is authentic, realistic and credible. Nambisan wants people to relate themselves to her characters so that they can feel their joy and pain, since it will be harder to be prejudiced when they meet them in real life. The pivotal concern of all her writings is women. Each story is a microscopic representation of familial relations, redefining new cultural spaces.

The preceding chapters have been devoted to the study of women protagonists in the novels of Kavery Nambisan. She portrays modern, educated and career-oriented middle class married women who are sensitive to the changing times and situations. Revealing a remarkable insight into the nature of a woman's mind, she depicts woman in myriad roles – wife, mother, daughter and an individual in her own right. She always concerns herself with a woman's search for her identity. She endeavors to establish woman as an individual who breaks loose from the traditional constraints and redefines her identity in tune with the changed social ambience of the modern times.

Women novelists have incorporated the recurring female experiences in their writings and it affected the cultural and language patterns of Indian literature. They have brought a stylized pattern in the whole context of Indian writing. Nowadays, people enjoy reading the anglicized novels presented by the new age women writer. A number of women novelists have made their debut in the 'nineties their first novels are quite effective in revealing the true state of Indian society when it comes to the treatment of women. All these writers were born after India's Independence, and English does not have any colonial associations for them. Their work is marked by an impressive feel for the language, and a completely authentic presentation of contemporary India, with all its regional variations. They generally write about the urban middle class, the stratum of society they know best.

Traditions, patriarchy, culture make them confine totally to the cruel submissions in the hands of their men which in return does not allow them to search for their individuality and identity. They confront the opposite and it compels them to renew themselves in order to evolve to a higher degree of consciousness. The common concern running through these novels is the problem of identity. The inability, sometimes situational and sometimes imposed, to fit oneself in the right slot in the scheme of things; the individual and society, the individual in society; form the persistent concerns in the novels.

The novels of Kavery Nambisan projected the predicament of female, women and their search for the bliss and excitement of life which are always deprived of. Not all her women characters are deprived of life but women like Nalli and Evita are conquerors. In the novels *The Hills of Angheri* and *The Butterfly Wings* the novelists have successfully weaved a pattern – a pattern with a strong message of 'hope through change' and the ending is revealed as another beginning. The novels, have presented carefully the different phases of transition of women from being tied to nativity to being rooted in another country.

Women like Nalli and Evita battled with the ties of the past and acquired a new sensitivity towards life. Life, like cyclone, triggered despair and uncertainty but Nambisan's women characters emerged as survivors. The author looks at the predicament of women and visualizes life for a woman as a series of obligations and commitments. In addition to existentialistic reality of life they evoke the sentiment and sensibility of women for their role and respect in society.

Nalli acquires her 'double self' from her Indian life and western life. Nalli experiences transformation of her personality during her stay in England to study FRCS. She acquires wisdom and individuality. The double self of Nalli and her journey in the West presents the theme as continental. She acquires a balanced and matured perception of life. Though she procures individuality, she does not fall into the trap of feminist identity. Uma Mahadevan Dasgupta examines the novel as a bildungsroman. In an article "Angheri Dreams" she opines that: "The novel can be read as a Moving bildungsroman about Nalli, a young girl growing up in a joint family in the village, and her determination to become a doctor. (The Hindu, Oct 09, 2005). This can be read as a bildungsroman as it clearly shows the life of Nalli right from a 12 year old girl until she becomes a grown up young surgeon. The novel presents autobiographical elements.

Nambisan and Nallireverberate the personal and geographical similarities. As they both went to England to study FRCS and eventually settled as doctors in India. The novel is closely based on the

experiences of the novelist. While, her novel *On Wings of Butterflies* is characterized by Evita, who resists all the problems she faces in her home, plans to establish an organization for women to fight for the rights of women and to unite women. Women in this novel use different methods to fight for the injustice. Evita stayed there for three days and she by herself was delighted butterflies. Unwilling to confine themselves within the strong folds of patriarchy they always attempt to seek an option to move on in life. These women are intelligent, have a questioning attitude and are not contented with the justice they were asked to be complied with. They do not hesitate to rebel against the patriarchy as they see it not just as a site of their oppression at home and in society but also make it a field of battle to vanquish their oppressors.

An analysis of the women characters of Kavery Nambisan reveals the presence of a definite quest for a true self identity. Kavery Nambisan's woman-centred novels and short stories give us a psychological insight into the working of a woman's mind; especially one belonging to a typically Indian background. The years of societal and cultural conditioning teaches the Indian woman to be self-effacing, submissive and subordinate to man, suffering of a patriarchal society in silence. Kavery Nambisan, by making her heroines undergo stages of self-introspection and self-reflection, makes them evolve themselves into more liberated individuals than what their biological nature or culture have sanctioned.

Nambisan closely examines the emotional world of womankind. They set themselves to voice the voiceless miseries and helplessness of millions of married women, tormented by existentialist problems and predicaments. Nambisan's focus is on how her heroines are bravely struggling against or helplessly submitting to the relentless forces of absurd life in their relationships. As D. H. Lawrence opines in his book *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1929) opines that: "The great relationship for humanity will always be the relationship between man and woman. The relation between man and woman, woman and woman, parent and child will always be subsidiary." (LCL 130)

The strength of these women lies not in accepting the devastation of life but in renewing themselves from the shackles of burden and bars. The novelists try to show that life is not an encumbrance of affliction and anxiety but it prepares us to face the twists and turns of life with courage and strength.

Many contemporary Indian novelists concentrated on depicting the external aspects of life basically in rural India. Nambisan tries to examine the dialectical relationship between the internal and external aspects of life. The novels of Nambisan subtly capture the spirit of rural India, also struggling to break away from traditional Indian cultures and establish a distinct identity. Through her writings, the doctor novelist Nambisan forever had planned out to alter the map of post-colonial Indian English Literature. The writings of Nambisan successfully meet the challenges of other thematic depictions by creating a new idiom for creative expression and portraying reality in terms of contemporary society.

The fiction of Kavery Nambisan is relevant to all times because she writes about the predicament of modern man. She swims in to woman's inner psych and beautifully projects her emotions. Literature for her is not a means of escaping reality but an exploration and an inquiry. She prefers the private to the public world and avoid from the traditional grooves of external reality and physical world. In fact, her real concern is the exploration of human psyche, inner climate, and she unravels the mystery of the inner life of her characters.

2. CONCLUSION

Woman is born free and her rights are the same as those of a man ... The law must be an expression of the general will; all citizens, men and women alike, must participate in making it ... it must be the same for all ... All citizens ... must be equally eligible for all public offices, positions and jobs, according to their capacity and without any other criteria than those of their virtues and talents...

Hence, quest for identity and the quest for self is a phenomenon which is important in the contemporary India. Quest for identity is the crisis which focusses basically on the self-realization which is the emphasis which is the basis for the realization of the self and the self-conscious. Finally, the realization of the self is the basic aspect which plays a vital role in the development of the nation in general and the development of the self of women in particular.

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