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Perspectives of Feminism in Volga's *Sweecha* Novel

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Abstract

This paper discusses Volga's first novel *sweecha*, which highlights the aspects of feminism, traditions, familial bond, oppression. The protagonist craves for freedom, women rights, equal status along with opposite gender. Cultural change is a part of the society. Society norms impact deeply on women, domination of patriarchal society creates problems to women. Women undergo atrocities, hardships at grass root level of domestic life. She is the centre of all woes.

Key words : Patriarchal society, Domination, oppression.

Introduction

A Utopian socialist and French philosopher Charles coined the word "Feminisme" in 1837. The Oxford English Dictionary lists 1852 as the year of the first appearance of 'feminist', and 1895 for 'feminism'. Feminism is a combination of movements and philosophies established political, economic and social rights for women. A feminist is an advocate or supporter of the rights and equality of women. Feminism is a social movement, provides women with some rights and opportunities as men. Feminists have campaigned and continue to campaign for women's rights, including the right to vote, hold public office, work, earn equal pay, own property, receive education, enter contracts, have equal rights within marriage and leave.

"The concept of feminism has become synonymous with women and it is related to women's struggle for human status against male

domination. (Thomson 1994:177) This movement which aims to change the power relationship between men and women, can be defined as a political project developed to prevent women's inequality, exploitation and oppression. The feminist movement has taken various forms over time. The first wave feminism, which advocates for women's rights during the period of 1920-50 (Gonzalez-Rivera, 2013 :259). The second wave feminism, covering the period 1960-1988, encompasses the struggle for matters such as workplace equality, women's equal education, rights, and freedom to reproduce (Looft, 2017:894). The third wave feminism does not focus on the consequences of the preferences made, but rather on the awareness and accessibility of information for making a free choice (Zimmerman et. Al 2009:78) "1

Professor Deborah Rhode describes feminism thus:

“ At the substantive level, it implies a commitment to equality between the sexes. At the methodological level, it implies a commitment to gender as a focus of concern and to analytic approaches that reflect women’s concrete experience. Under lying these commitments are certain core values of broader scope. Any ethical framework adequate to challenge gender subordination must similarly condemn the other patterns of injustice with which it intersects.”²

This definition comprises two goals upon which feminists agree:

- 1) Eliminating subordination of women and
- 2) Deriving knowledge and power from the experiences of women⁴.

Savitri Bhai Poole started feminism in India. Pundit Rama Bhai criticized patriarchy in the society. In Tamil Nadu Subramania Bharathi as a champion of women rights, prioritized individual rights, freedom and equality.

Volga’s contribution towards Telugu Literature:

Volga’s real name is P. Lalita kumari, famous for feministic writings. Her stories, novels and poetry represent the realistic characters. She is connected with ASMITA, a well known feminist voluntary organization.

Renowned Telugu writer, Volga has been selected for the prestigious Sahitya Academy Award for her short story compilation “Vimukta Kadh Samputi”, for the year 2015. The award winning short stories focus on the freedom of women through female characters. She made three feature films which won critical acclaim and awards. Among her works are the novels *Swecccha* (1994), *Sahaja* (1995), *Manavi* (1998), *Kanniti Keratala Vennela* (1999), *Gulabilu* (2000), *Rajakiya Kathalu* (1993), and *Prayogam* (1995)⁵

In the society women face bias, atrocities, physical torture, mental torture, problems in their own lives, mental pain. Volga as a feminist writer under these one portrayed in her novels. By reading her novels readers are going to be enlightened. Men show respect towards women is the motive in her writings. Her wish is women confront their problems

individually, psychological bravery, lead their life happily.

Literature purpose is meant for society welfare. Why the writers are portraying women as inferior to men? Why patriarchal society crushing women? With these bad deeds how women face problems in the manner of physical, psychologically? How many years women should bear the agony? Indeed, do they aware of oppression, mental pain? If they experience it are they ready to express freely in this male dominated society? She wants to give clarity to these above questions. She used literature as a tool to curb evil ones in the society.

Volga’s “Swecccha” novel discusses the Indian traditions influence of invisible violence in domestic life. She wrote this novel in 1967. At first it was published in Chatura magazine, in those days, critics treated it as a controversial novel in Andhra Pradesh. Some critics claimed it as valueless one, but its sensitive theme is valuable one up to the present age, forever.

Theme of Sweecha Novel:

Aruna is a modern middle class woman. She has no freedom in her house from childhood onwards. Her father Janaki Ramaiah, Mother Sithama, brother Gopal Rao, Sister in law Susila, paternal aunt Kanakama torment by the usage of direct competition words. Aruna faces restrictions, no movie, no outing in her childhood. Her elders never gave a chance to her wishes. She wishes to come out from her domestic cage as early as possible. During her MA. Study time, Aruna falls in love with Prakasam, wanted to marry prakasam but her friend’s influence showed impact on her that marriage will wipe away the freedom. Aruna gets a lecturer job in a Junior college, united with prakasam in a registered marriage office. After the marriage within two months she becomes pregnant.

She does not want to become mother, but prakasam’s influence paved her to motherhood. She gives birth to a girl child. She leads family life happily with prakasam but in some situations she feels loss of freedom in her life. During the period of time Aruna comes to know about Uma, Sudheer love

story, continual of their dating without marital life. Aruna understands the uma's nature.

Aruna joins as a member in the lecturer union, fights for full salary. She participates in hunger strike also. Her photo appears in the newspaper, Prakasam warns her to stop the activities. In the Junior college Lecturers start a magazine named "Velugu" to highlight problems in the society. She gives 100 Rupees as contribution, that ired prakasam. Aruna attend union meetings regularly, it evoked anger in prakasam.

At one juncture, as a representative of union she visits an Electronic factory to study about the women employ problems and makes an interview. By knowing this prakasam vents anger towards her. Prakasam protested against her deed. Aruna continues her attempts to know about injustice meted out to Sangamma, a rape victim in the hands of Dora. Aruna plans to know about the woes of Mehindhi women, in the form of Interview. By knowing it Prakasam warns her not to visit Mehindhi women place. Aruna as an individualistic natured woman, decided to be away from prakasam.

Aruna decides to carry her baby along with her to Uma's house to lead a new life, but prakasam does not allow her to take the baby. Prakasam says that he loved baby very much and denies to carry the baby. With out baby she goes to uma's place for the sake of new life. This is the short theme of the novel.

Sweecha title is an opt one for this novel. Aruna is a common middle class woman. has no freedom at all. She craves for freedom in her life. It is a rebellion against traditions, wishes to come out of ancient traditions. Aruna comes across conflicts in her life. Kanakamma illtreats Aruna by using satiric words : Cheema Nadakalu (Ant Walks), Aruna goes to the upstairs and watches the passers by.

Kanakamma shouts "Eemita Daba Meedha Nunchuni Chudatam Paneayepogane kindaku Digavemi Digu Kindanke (Why are you staying, watching on the up stairs, comedown after the completion of the work as early as possible?) Family traditions do not allow her to move out for outing, films. At one moment she wants to fulfil her wish to watch a movie. Uma is a soul mate of her, she shares

everything with her. In the end of the novel, Aruna aspires to be a free bird and fulfils her wish.

"The writer has not shown any solutions to the problems that were discussed in the novel. Though many of the issues are not relevant to the present day's society, the novel remained a mile stone in feministic literature in Telugu."6

When Sweecha novel name comes to mind indeed what is sweecha? In which circumstances human beings live freely? What are the circumstances give scope to men? Whether those are applicable to women? If men freedom differs from women freedom, how freedom expression, freedom life would be ? etc questions arise in the mind. A scholar named Angels stated " Freedom is the recognition of necessity."

Conclusion

Volga's Sweecha blew Oxygen to Telugu literature. Change should come from the hearts of the people and mind set towards women. Understanding, maintaining good relationships, having challenging life, creates good environment for women. Women should cherish their own privileges whatever the government is providing. It is a good opportunity to enrich their empowerment.

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