OBSTINATION OF GENDER DOG MATISMIN THE SELECTOR OF SOULS BY SHAUNASINGH BALDW IN AND TELL IT TO THE TRESS BY ANITARAUBADAMI

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ABSTRACT

Obstination of gender dogmatism deals with gender discrimination, in which women exist in a world of human-constructed social norms. This paper examines the patriarchal structures present in diverse societies and the oppression of women across the globe. The text illustrates thepredicament faced by women residing in a multicultural Diaspora society, wherein they areconfronted with challenges arising from their gender and cultural identity. This study examines the societal perception of female characters as objects of production. Shauna Singh Baldwin and Anita Rau Badami address the experiences of women living in a diasporiccontext, grappling with issues such as race, culture, and patriarchy. Their works offer apoignantportrayal of the struggles faced by these women. The authors illustrate their characters as originating from diverse backgrounds and situations, yet sharing a common theme of oppression and subjugation withinagender-based society.

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Gender plays a vital role in describing one's self. It refers to the socio-cultural norms, individuality and relations. Humans are social beings who function as per the instructions of society. It is the society that decides how a man and woman must act. The society has expectations of men and women. There are ways in which the society wants men and

women to behave. Most probably, gender refers to the social differences between men and women. This difference has been learned widely among societies and cultures. This culture can also change over time. The gender is often used to satisfy the needs of men in all areas in any social context. It helps to analyze the roles, responsibilities, barriers and opportunities of women and men. Everyone must be aware of how the world looks back at women and men.

Society puts on several conditions on activities that have to be perceived by a male and a female. The rule that is constrained by gender is affected by religion, race, ethnicity, as well as geographical and political environment. The value of gender is never neutral. One is frequently referred to as superior and the other as inferior. At one point, gender attempts to overcome authority. Gender is not something that cannot change, and the concept can often change. Gender is defined based on social, cultural and behavioural factors. Gender is a flexible term and its roles can be changed by time and culture. Social norms create gender discrimination. Gender is a cultural practice learned through socialization.

Gender concerns highlight the dynamic nature of culture. Women often entail multiple expressions and interpretations since they migrate to different cultures. The physiological difference implicates power and dominates the other gender. The social and cultural constructs of society label the role of women as subordinate beings on the basis of gender. The gender differentiation is the root cause of women's hierarchy status being offensive in society. Gender is caught up in the socially constructed world. This kind of thinking often gets into feminist thinking.

The dynamics of unique gendered motility issues pertaining to diasporic women from the Indian subcontinent crept into the discussion of diasporic literary studies. Gender is an essential part of the migration process. The influence of migration for men and women relies upon many factors, all of that has gender implications. Fictional works provide an opportunity for Diaspora writers to collect, consolidate and examine the stories of their past and understand how they deal with issues such as race, culture, and patriarchy, moving beyond their longstanding socially constructed identities. Therefore, diasporic writing of women is an act of liberation for women as it gives them a much-needed voice for their sufferings.

The article centers on the exposition of the literary works authored by Shauna Singh Baldwin and Anita Rau Badami, both of whom hail from the Indian Subcontinent. Hence, it is imperative to investigate the depictions of cultural identities and representations of the homeland. The focus is specifically on female concerns and their strategies for navigating the altered circumstances of life. Unlike concepts like cultural memory and images of homeland, a series of ambivalences and discontinuities can be noted in how women in diaspora handle gender roles and how they participate or resist the process of acculturation, assimilation and hybridization. It is interesting to note that women are presented to be the preservers of culture as well as the first to get assimilated into the host culture. Besides, there are significant differences in the way women are treated and portrayed in the works representing different Diasporas. The responsibility of representing and preserving cultural memories within their communities has likely been bestowed upon women due to their traditional roles in cultural preservation.

Shauna Singh Baldwin and Anita Rau Badami consolidate the sufferings of women who live in a Diasporic world and also negotiate with the issues of race, culture, patriarchy and so on. The description of the different female concurrences in diaspora possibly facilitates women to transcend their previously established social identities. From this perspective, writing can be seen as a means of emancipation for women, providing them with a much-needed platform to express their thoughts and ideas. The present article attempts to trace the way in which Shauna Singh Baldwin and Anita Rau Badami of the

Indian subcontinent present issues such as notions of womanhood, empowerment of women in the diasporic space, women and education in the diasporic context, changes in gender roles and decision making capacities of women, the impact of cosmopolitanism on women, motherhood, ethnic and cultural orientation and so on. Diasporic women writers are most probably concerned with certain themes like marriage, parenting, alienation, loss of Identity and struggle for their own position. This article focuses on the novels The Selector of Souls by Shauna Singh Baldwin and Tell it to the Trees by Anita Rau Badami. They have created female protagonists who have moved out of their homes. Diaspora phenomenon has traditionally centered on the migratory patterns of individuals and has frequently highlighted the hardships encountered by migrants. However, it has been criticized for its lack of acknowledgement of the distinctive experiences of women who have undergone migration, whether by choice or by force.

Women have been integral members of nearly all cohorts emigrating from India's borders, collectively comprising the Indian Diaspora. As previously discussed, the experiences of this group have predominantly been incorporated into male-centered and generalised perspectives and overarching narratives. Consequently, the contributions of the Indian Diaspora's voices, circumstances, and crucial part in its success narrative have gone unacknowledged and uncharted. The role of women in Indian society is closely linked to the socio-cultural basis and belief systems that are deeply ingrained in past histories and mythological/religious stories. The underlying themes of these narratives are rooted in the patriarchy, power structures, and gendered views. The Indian culture exhibits significant diversity and heterogeneity without a standardized template, yet the system of patriarchy is prone to prevail within the overarching framework.

Feminist investigations propose that the phenomenon of migration and diaspora has an impact on the power dynamics and authority of women inside the family, leading to modifications in gender roles that correspond to the evolving economic and social conditions of both the home and host nations. However, it should be noted that these alterations do not exhibit a consistent progression and are not uniformly manifested. Females in India are also included in the cohort of highly proficient expatriates. The availability of worldwide economic prospects and unrestricted mobility has afforded these women with a sphere of influence and self-determination. Nonetheless, Indian women continue to adhere predominantly to traditional familial norms, assuming the roles of wives and mothers, and occasionally perpetuating power dynamics within the household.

The act of a woman marrying a man who resides outside of India or relocating to an unfamiliar social environment following marriage can result in feelings of alienation and displacement, particularly when she is dependent on her husband. The experience of such exposure and enslavement elicits sensations of distress and isolation, ultimately resulting in the individual's vulnerability to feelings of exclusion, detachment, and hopelessness. The majority of these female authors depict their personal experiences as newlyweds or as wives grappling with their flawless reality. The phenomenon of a woman's displacement within the diaspora can be analysed through the lens of marriage, due to the prevalent discourse surrounding sociocultural change. Both individuals find themselves situated at an uncertain, unfamiliar, and potentially hostile juncture that gives rise to instability and displacement. The phenomenon of socio-cultural displacement in women can be likened to that experienced by individuals who are part of a diaspora. Uma Parameswaran's lines aptly illustrate that when individuals enter an unfamiliar territory, they may encounter a mixture of emotions such as curiosity and excitement, as well as seclusion and apprehension. This phenomenon may prompt individuals to seek comfort in the nostalgic embrace.

It is evident that the arrival of a female offspring is perceived as a disappointment in a certain objective manner. Conversely, the birth of a male child is often regarded as a significant accomplishment for a woman, as it is perceived as a realization of her feminine purpose. The individual is conditioned to perceive a feeling of accomplishment in relation to their own actions. If the other facets of giving birth to a daughter (such as her transitory presence and purported capacity to cause sorrow) are considered, they are typically introduced at a subsequent juncture. Furthermore, these gender roles are intentionally perceived as an unchangeable circumstance, thus perpetuating and justifying the entire phenomenon of gender stereotypes. (45).

Women live in a state of continuous change of Identity, from the moment they are born until their marriage. They are considered rootless; they feel isolated in both their homes. A woman is forced by society to carve a position for herself and she is supposed to adhere to several various role models forced upon her. She faces challenges and finally adapts to the new circumstances. Similarly, a diasporan lives in a difficult atmosphere, facing challenges in establishing their determination in an unknown country, and forging bonds of compassion and well-being with an alien culture.

William Safran aptly defines certain unique experiences of a diasporic which are also comparable to that of a wife, especially a diasporic wife, They experience a feeling of alienation and antagonism from the host society and feel they can never fit in (282).

The displacement of a woman from her natal household and subsequent relocation to her conjugal household can result in a distressing encounter, inducing feelings of unease, vulnerability, and ambiguity. Regarding women, it can be observed that they may experience a state of trauma upon relocating to their husband's residence, as they are situated at the cusp of a novel environment. The subject exhibits a profound sense of attachment, connection, and belongingness to her parental abode, while her conjugal abode fails to provide her with a comparable degree of stability, power, or comfort. The institution of marriage engenders numerous novel social connections for a woman. In addition to her role as a spouse, she is also embedded within a broader social network of interpersonal connections. The process of identity formation that an Indian woman experiences is an inescapable phenomenon, which is further complicated by abrupt alterations in her life circumstances.

Shauna Singh Baldwin and Anita Rau Badami examine the distressing issue of gender selection, which tarnishes the reputation of a diverse society such as India, where male offspring are often favoured. The aforementioned statement aligns with the perspective put forth by VrindaNabar, a distinguished author who addresses women's concerns in her literary works, as expressed in her publication titled "Caste as A Woman." The author has accurately noted that the birth of a female child is often viewed as a source of disappointment, whereas a woman who gives birth to a male child is often elevated to a position of great honour. Humans are socialised to experience a sense of achievement based on their personal behaviours. However, there may be concerns regarding the temporary nature of a daughter's stay and the potential emotional strain that could ensue. The aforementioned circumstances are deliberately construed as immutable, thereby sustaining and rationalising gender-based preconceptions. (56)Nabar believes that traditional thinking is to be questioned because tradition carries power and an individual in society is supposed to follow these traditions. If a woman tries to challenge these traditions, she seems to be a person from another world. The same is the condition of Anu in The Selector of Souls and Anu Krishnan in Tell it to the Trees by Anita Rau Badami. Both writers have created strong female characters in the novel who boldly challenge society's norms, which treat women as inferior to men.

Baldwin, through the novel shows how women are stereotypically counseled into subordination and self-declination with words like, “Your dharma is to be with your husband,”

or “Women from good ‘Hindu’ families don’t divorce” (55). So deep is the expectation of traditional values that Anu’s slight transgression from her subordinate position results in her injured face and engorged eyes, reminding her that “She should have noticed the thunderous anger gathering behind her husband’s eyes” (51). Anu's character depicts the plight of victims of domestic violence and abuse in a condescending manner, as they resort to praying for their abuser's demise through a heart attack. Maim him before I sin” (43). Although subtly, it also challenges the patriarchal order according to which “Raping your wife is not a crime. Killing your husband is a crime” (46). Her physical, sexual, and emotional abuse ends with her patriarchal misgivings when she takes a decisive step by denouncing her marital life and religion. Once again, Baldwin’s representation becomes naïve and problematic as it delineates all the female characters entrapped in one or another exploitative relationship. Here we see Anu faces lots of challenges after her marital life; unable to bear the pain of domestic abuse, she finally lives in a world of seclusion.

The character of Memsaab also focuses on the theme of alienation and displacement. She was Roop, the second wife of Sardarsaab, who appears in the novel What the body Remembers? by Shauna Singh Baldwin. Roop now Memsaab, became old and her children grew up. Memsaab is the victim of Diaspora; during her childhood, she lived in a Village named PariDarvaza in Punjab, now a part of Pakistan. After marriage, she moved to Rawalpindi, a place later abandoned to the Muslims of Pakistan. After that, they moved to Delhi. They lost their home because of the India-Pakistan partition. In the novel The Selector of Souls, Memsaab often faces the wrath of her son. Her son wanted to inherit the whole property and wanted to sell the house, but Memsaab is never ready to move out because she does not want to dislocate and she had a close bonding with the place where she lived with her husband after escaping from the partition.

Badami’s Tell it to the Trees is a multi-narrated novel and the story runs into four parts restraining the narration of Varsha, Suman, Anu’s Notebook and Hem. The story takes place in an isolated town in Canada, called Merrit’s Point. Vikram J. K. Dharma is a male chauvinistic character who, although born in Canada, leads a life like a traditional Indian orthodoxy family. He lives with his bedridden mother, Akka, his children, Varsha and Hemant and his wife, Suman. Vikram succeeds in regulating his household, isolating his family and concealing his abuse. The novel examines the attitude of leading female characters considering their home as a prison where they are forced to live and often become victims of domestic abuse at the hands of Vikram. Here we find a close resemblance with the experience of Anu in The Selector of Souls where she also becomes a victim of domestic violence at the hands of her husband, Vikas.

Vikram Dharma is accustomed to beating Suman and the children regularly. He is too atrocious that he shuts them up and beats them brutally. The members of the family kept it secret by making excuses. Suman is a victim of Domestic violence after marriage. She often wanted to escape from the house, but she did not have money. Her mother-in-law was very much supportive that she offered her golden necklace to Suman and asked her to move away. But still, she could not go to India because someone has hidden her Passport. Badami, like Baldwin, represents the same issue of documents and identity in a foreign country. She is physically present, but her identity is only based on the documents on the basis of which she has migrated. Without a passport, she is nothing. This shows the helplessness of Suman and all immigrants who have flown to a foreign country. Once they are there and their passport is in someone else’s custody, they are in a trap like Suman. Identity in our own culture is not required as it is made up of the culture we take over. In a foreign cultural context, an immigrant's identity is often defined not by their personal characteristics, but rather by the official documentation that outlines their caste,

community, and nationality. Suman's stay with Lalli, her friend, and celebrating KarvaChauth again represents the Indian ritual. Marriage again is a ritual in India and Badami satirizes the Indian marriage system in the following narration by Suman.

I was eighteen—a ripe old age for a woman, practically a toothless crone if the talk around me was to be believed. Until Lalli's death, I had convinced myself that marriage was the best thing to happen to me. Not surprising, really, given that marriage, marriage, marriage was all those wretched gully people thought about when they saw a girl. Not just in my gully, it seemed to me, but in every road, alley, and home throughout the country. The economy of India runs on marriages. Weddings are big business. All you hear right through the year—except for a few months when Saturn presides over the planets and nothing auspicious is launched—is talk of marriages. Every activity has to do with that walk around the sacred fire. Saris are purchased, jewels ordered, and money flows around like so many intersecting rivers. Fortunes are built (by shopkeepers, marriage halls, priests and cooks) and lost (mostly by the girl's parents) during the wedding season. Gold prices all over the world are affected by this season—going up when we are getting married and our poor parents are spending their life savings on gold ornaments and collapsing in the bad-luck months of July, September and December. (33,34)

Vikram is the most dominant man who makes Suman do all the household chores by assigning her different tasks to be completed before he reaches home like the whole house must be dusted properly, Trousers should be ironed, Shirt button to be replaced, laundry, windows to be cleaned and so on. She doubts that Vikram hid her passport to prevent her from escaping the home like Harini. The dream of running away from this house cannot be accomplished because she lost her identity with the document to be stamped on her photograph to get back her identity or else she is nothing more than possessed by Vikram. As far as Indian society is concerned, a woman has to accept domesticity as a part of her duty and they are raised accordingly. Suman in Tell it to the Trees is brought up in such a culture and she often does household chores to please her husband Vikram and avoid his abuse. Suman works hard, but her husband Vikram is never pleased. Suman is raised to be a woman with the ideology of a society that she must learn to do all domestic chores and satisfy the family members. Varsha, the stepdaughter of Suman comments that she continues to engage in culinary activities throughout the morning and dedicates the remainder of her time to domestic maintenance. The individual engages in daily cleaning activities, including dusting, wiping, and mopping, occasionally performing these tasks twice within a 24-hour period. It is a rare occurrence to observe her without the accompaniment of cleaning tools such as dusters, rags, brooms, and buckets. The level of cleanliness in our household is such that one could safely consume food directly from the floor or even conduct a surgical procedure on it. The sound emitted by the hoover cleaner serves as our customary auditory stimulus. (33)

The mother-in-law of Suman similarly encountered instances of abuse from her deceased spouse. She was brought to Canada with the purpose of leading a secluded lifestyle, wherein she was responsible for performing all domestic duties while under the supervision of her spouse. Upon Akka's arrival at Merrit's Point, it was evident that she possessed a high level of intelligence and education, as well as proficiency in six Indian languages in addition to English. During a discussion with Anu Krishnan, Akka expresses her sentiment that her life has been squandered"What is amazing is that I used none of my talents. My knowledge has rotted from misuse. What use all that knowledge, tell me? I ended up in this Jehannum where nobody cares about my past or my abilities."

Akka goes on to tell Anu that she wishes to be like her. She describes Anu as a free bird who comes and goes as she pleases." (8) In spite of her Indian roots, Anu represents a very different way of life. She is a free woman who chooses to leave her husband, move from her

city house and leave her job to pursue a career as a writer. Anu is not afraid of the society she lives in and so breaks the rules of a married woman. She breaks off her marital relationship and moves away from the stereotypical patriarchal world.

Akka is aware of the abusive behaviour exhibited by both her spouse and offspring, and she refers to her husband as a "demon." The protagonist's lack of remorse regarding her spouse's passing raises the possibility that she may have deliberately abandoned him in the snow, leading to his eventual demise due to hypothermia. Nevertheless, Akka persists in staying, even subsequent to the passing of her spouse. This shows that although Akka is an educated woman, she is never ready to come out of the stereotypical world that society had created.

Suman also accepted all her husband's cruelty and brutal violence because she was stereotyped with the notion that she should adjust to the new marriage life as a woman. She says, “This is my weakness, I know that now, I am a follower of rules, I don’t have the courage to break them. I cannot bring myself to fight back against the things I know are wrong or to stand up for things that are right.” (46)When Vikram went to India after his wife died, he desired to find a new wife, “somebody like Akka, who will never leave him.” (10) This shows Akka’s inability to break free from her prison. As a traditional Indian housewife, she is raised to stay at home even if she hates it. She fails to answer when Varsha asks her why she has stayed in this house if she hates it that much. She encourages Suman to leave because she loves her and she does not wish her to end up suffering from abuse and confinement for the rest of her life. She wants her to do what she has failed to do all her life, leave. (12)

The selected works of Baldwin and Badami depict female characters who are constrained by societal norms to assume the role of housewives and fulfill various domestic responsibilities, regardless of their location in either India or Canada. Baldwin and Badamicentre their attention on the authentic experiences of women, including their aspirations, suffering, adversity, and fortitude, while affording each female protagonist a distinct perspective. The characters in the narrative are differentiated according to factors such as religion, geographic location, social class, language, and familial ties. This article reflects the efforts of women who are protesting against patriarchal norms in society. These norms relegate women to a secondary status and undermine the power structure by treating them as inferior solely based on their gender. Gender discrimination is attributed to the cultural norms that an individual upholds within society. It is imperative for society to instill in every individual the value of respecting all genders.

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