

**THE STUDY OF THE WOMEN IN THE NOVEL 'THE
FOURTEEN ROUNDS' (CHAUDAH PHERE) BY SHIVANI: A
FEMINISTIC APPROACH**

VANDANA S.P. MISHRA

V.J.T.I. MATUNGA

HUMANITIES DEPARTMENT

MUMBAI, INDIA.

Abstract

Shivani's stories touch the hearts directly. She depicts the plight of women in Indian nativity. In this novel, how Ahalya, the daughter of a business person in kumaon fights for her own life and self-decision making out of the social prestige of her father who is a double faced man. It's the voice of Ahilya who continues the battle of her mother who was a socially excluded. Ahilya has a sense of isolation, and feeling of being helpless to gain social respect for her own illiterate mother who lives in Ashram, dejected by her own husband and family.

I am going to study the women characters and Ahilya, Being a teacher how she could bring the changes in her life and the family and society and the tradition of India (kumaon)...more or less every region of Indian cultures are same.

Keywords- *Struggle for self-identity, women, isolation, culture, feminism, nature and solitude*

**THE STUDY OF THE WOMEN IN THE NOVEL 'THE FOURTEEN ROUNDS'
(CHAUDAH PHERE) BY SHIVANI: A FEMINISTIC APPROACH**

-VANDANA S.P. MISHRA

Shivani is the pseudonym of Gaura Pant, the popular Hindi magazine story writers of the 20th century and a pioneer in writing Indian women based fiction, was born in 17 october 1924 by the Vijayadashmi Day in Rajkot, where her father Ashwini Kumar Pandey was a teacher who was a kumaoni Brahmin and mother a Sanskrit scholar and first student of Lucknowmahilavidyalaya. Shivani was awarded padmashri for her contribution to Hindi literature in 1982. Almost all of her works are in print today and widely available across India.

She garners a massive following in the pre-television 60s and 70s, as her literary works (like her most famous novel, 'Krishnakali'), were serialised in Hindi magazines like Dharmayug and Saptahik Hindustan, leading to her cult status as a Hindi magazine novelist. Through her writings, she also made the culture of Kumaon, somewhat known to Hindi-speaking Indians across the country. Her novel 'KariyeChima' was made into a film, while her other novels including 'Surangma', 'Rativilaap', 'Mera Beta', and 'Teesra Beta' have been turned into Television serials.

Upon her death in 2003, Government of India described her contributions to Hindi literature as, "...in the death of Shivani the Hindi literature world has lost a popular and eminent novelist and the void is difficult to fill". (The Hindu)

As she grew older, she along with her brother and a sister went to live with her grandfather, a Sanskrit scholar and a founding member of Banaras Hindu University. In 1935, Shivani's first story was published in the Hindi Children's magazine 'Natkhata', at age twelve. That was also when, the three siblings were sent to the study at Rabindranath Tagore's Visva-Bharati University at Shantiniketan. Rabindranath Tagore even visited their ancestral home in Almora several times.

Shivani remained at Shantiniketan for another 9 years, left as a graduate in 1943. It was this period that she took to writing wholeheartedly and had the most profound influence in her writing sensibilities, a period she recounts vividly in her book, 'AmaderShantiniketan.' In 1951, her short story, 'Main Murga Hun' (I am a Chicken) was published in Dharmayug, and she became Shivani, from Gaura Pant.

Her first novel, Lal Haveli, established her reputation in the early sixties, and in the next ten years she produced several major works which were serialised in the Hindi magazine, Dharmayug. Proficient in many other languages including Sanskrit, Gujarati, Bengali, Urdu, and English, she was a prolific writer, her work consists of over 40 novels, many short stories and

**THE STUDY OF THE WOMEN IN THE NOVEL 'THE FOURTEEN ROUNDS' (CHAUDAH PHERE)
BY SHIVANI: A FEMINISTIC APPROACH-VANDANA S.P. MISHRA**

hundreds of articles and essays. Her most famous works include ChaudahPhere, Krishnakali, Lal Haveli, SmashanChampa, Bharavi, RatiVilap, Vishkanya, Apradhini (a collection of interviews with women lifers); travelogues: 'Yatriki', based on her London travels and 'Chareivati', based on her travels to Russia. In most of her work, her main protagonist was a beautiful and strong Kumaoni Brahmin woman who was also proficient in speaking the Bangla language, perhaps Shivani's own imaginary alter ego.

Towards the end of her life, Shivani took to autobiographical writings, first sighted in her book, 'ShivanikiSresthKahaniyan', followed by her two-part memoir, 'SmritiKalash' and 'Sone De', whose title she borrowed from the epitaph of a 15th Century Urdu Poet:

**Thak Gaya HoonNeendAaRahiHaiSone DeBahut Hein
ZindagiMeneDiyaHaiSaathTere**

(I am tired, sleep overtakes me, let me rest I have been long enough with you in the journey of life)

Shivani continued to write till her last days, and died on 21 March 2003 in New Delhi.

In 2005, Her daughter, Hindi writer, Ira Pande, published a memoir based on Shivani's life, titled 'Diddi' My Mother's Voice. 'Diddi' in Kumaoni means elder sister, and that's what her children used to address her, as she really was a friend to them. Shivani's fiction proclaims a quiet, warm humanism. Characters who might seem pale and uninteresting in real life— an undistinguished, very orthodox Brahmin priest in a village up in the foothills of the Himalayas, his traditional wife, the village idiot, the widowed mother— take on a human glow and their lives an unexpected resonance. It is the small events, little gestures, nondescript people, that suffuse the world of Shivani's fiction with hope, and the future is something one enters with courage. Shivani's feminism is like a gentle humanism that does not stop short when it meets the female. Within the world-view of her fiction, there are few contradictions or problems that cannot be transcended with a little sympathy and a belief in the goodness of humankind." – 'Women Writing in India', Vol II, by Susie Tharu & K. Lalitha.

The title 'The Fourteen Rounds' is perhaps a satire on hindu sacred marriage, from vedic method and the 'seven rounds' that's the oath to keep the marriage under certain rules and obligations, which have fallen short to enrich the happy married life for the couple, the title may be suggestive of that, that a woman has to break all the prevailing rules of the religion and society in order to breath as an independent human being through her protagonist Ahalya.

Ahalya in the novel is a daughter of a kumaoni businessman settled in Calcutta who never respects his illiterate wife (Ahalya's mother), suffering a lot with such rude behavior of her husband and ill treatment in the family she leaves the home and moves to some Ashram in Kumaon (hilly region in U.P.). Ahalya is sent to the boarding school and forgets her mother gradually. After many years Ahalya comes to her home, in her cousine Basanti's marriage where she met Raju and fell in love with him, to which her bother-in-law (Basanti's husband) witnessed. The fire was on both sides; even Raju had that madness of love for Ahalya.

THE STUDY OF THE WOMEN IN THE NOVEL 'THE FOURTEEN ROUNDS' (CHAUDAH PHERE)
BY SHIVANI: A FEMINISTIC APPROACH-VANDANA S.P. MISHRA

The story of the novel touches the heart directly. Shivani depicts the plight of women in the Indian nativity. Like most of her novels this too has a sad ending. 'ChaudahPher', the novel is the voice of Indian women through her protagonist Ahilya, whose feelings are crushed under the name of her father's false social prestige, her pains for her mother and her isolation and feeling to be helpless to seek social respect for her own illiterate mother who lives in the 'Ashram', deprived of her rights in her family and society and of the love of her husband and socially excluded in her own family and community. How Ahalya continues the fight of a woman for her own life and emancipation, which is the point for my study here, the novel from the feministic perspective. The protagonist of the novel Ahalya is born in Almora district, kumaon educated in a convent school in ooty and lives with Mallika, Ahalya absconds in the woods of the kumaon just after her marriage to keep his father's good social image and prestige, she surrenders herself at once but after the insisting and teaching of her Taai ma (Basanti's mother) she vanished to seek her life to live the way she wanted and not to be imposed and ruled by others.

Shivani has not identified herself with the characters in the novel as she herself says, 'I was born away from my native kumaon, in Saurashtra-Rajkot city where the spoken common language was Gujarati and I learned to speak 'ba' to 'ma' as I spoke out for the first time. 'Sar-bhat' was replaced by 'sweet sour dal' and even servants were forgetting their kumaoni language gradually. I remember very well, even today, the big houses of nagar Brahmins and their attached windows to ours. Through which there prevailed give and take (barter system) of kumaon'sAkhrot and Rajkot's sweet pickles (Godkeri nu athanu). I can remember slightly the faces of Rasikbhai, Kokilbhai, Urmila ben and Harichha ben'.

Shivani's women characters represent voice of Indian women and she keeps the real without hypothecating or idealizing them, only sometimes she is inclined to depict the extraordinary beauty of her heroines that makes her even in the category of the romantic novelist. 'The Fourteen Rounds' is about Indian nativity, a free, simple and creative life of hill life. The same depiction of nature she has maintained in her novel 'Bhairavi', she has been able to carry her plot with nature as a living entity and women as prime authority of their own circle.

Thakurparasad Singh puts forth his opinion about her as, 'Shivani is not in the category of those novelists who can be easily criticized. Here it's not required to mention those novelists. She is a modern writer depicting a plot full of diversity and knowledge. She cannot be separated from this even if she wishes, so when critics represent her from these virtues as vices then it makes feel as if they are committing some mistake. Hindi is the language of expanded states in India so every writer cannot write in a single style of language and parameter and if it becomes so then it will be a misfortune to Hindi language. The language that expresses the agony of the western cities cannot be easily the language of the Indian whole country, I rely on some of the writers and Shivani is one among them. The discrimination between one literature to another literature will remain no more later or sooner. Shivani is the famous writer and if she is not considered in the group of the great writers, still she will not be at loss. I believe that she will be aware and keep her inner creativity alive and she will not be sad for few people who did not recognize her, those few only'.

**THE STUDY OF THE WOMEN IN THE NOVEL 'THE FOURTEEN ROUNDS' (CHAUDAH PHERE)
BY SHIVANI: A FEMINISTIC APPROACH-VANDANA S.P. MISHRA**

1st Dec. 1970- Lucknow.

The novel ChaudahPher explores the feminist zeal in the times when women were unheard or not allowed to speak. There are two categories of women in her novels, like one is Ahalya's mother, submissive and docile and the other like her Taai ma and cousin Basanti, who are retaliating figures against injustice.

'Some critics regarded Gaura Pant as first modern writer for various reasons. First because she wrote in the age which is regarded as the modern period in Hindi literature and second is the density with which she revolted against the society of her times, last but not the least because she could depict her women characters the very unconventional and critical of the society they live in'. (IJELLH-p286)

Shivani can be compared to the novelists like MannuBhandari, Krishna Sobti and UshaPriyavada, all these Hindi novelists focused on the urban society and changing the relationship between men and women and changing the stereotype of women in the society. In this novel, mostly women are from upper caste belonging from traditional Kumaon families, who are fighting for oppression in the gentle way (even among the lower caste women are fighting for the same issue), the title 'ChaudahPher' may also suggests Ahalya's two marriages which was not allowed to upper caste women in Hindus or the ironical question over the vedic system of marriage. (the oaths, the seven rounds around the sacred fire and vedichyms those are enchanted in the sacred rituals of hindu marriage which falls insufficient to enrich the life of couples' with love and faith and the marriage obligations)

'With modern women I do not just mean the twentieth century Indian women, but women who are educated and are aware of all their rights, who hold the courage to fight back for the rights and dare to do that has not been done by women since the ages'. (Chaudah Pher-p34)

Thus, Shivani's fiction is rich with powerful women characters. (The above content from the novel is Translated by Mrs. Anuradha Sharma, in 'The depiction of conflicting self identities in Hindi feminist writings from 1965-95,' published in International Journal of English Language Literature and Humanities)

This novel also depicts the life of women in the brothel where they are forcibly pushed in to the hellistic life for their survival having no road to a good and respected life.

Maithili SharanGupt, a Hindi poet has lamented over the tragic plight of women in Indian society in these words-

'Ablanaarihayetumhariyahikahani,

Aanchal me haidudhauraankho me paani'.

In the post-modern world the concept of women is changing from 'abla' to 'sabla', (from weak to the strong). Women in 21st century are celebrating their strength instead of lamenting over their weakness.

THE STUDY OF THE WOMEN IN THE NOVEL 'THE FOURTEEN ROUNDS' (CHAUDAH PHERE)
BY SHIVANI: A FEMINISTIC APPROACH-VANDANA S.P. MISHRA

'when women started writing in the west, their writings were categorized as feminist and when women in the east started expressing their heart and mind, they were called as unconventional and even prostitutes because they were advocating freedom in all spheres of life.' ("including sexuality")- (IJELLH-p277)

The writers like MannuBhandari, UshaPriyavada, Krishna Sobti, Gaura Pant and MrinalPandey represent the concept of new-women against the passive depiction of women in the family and society by the male writers in post-colonial India.

We see the sentiment of Ahalya, her inability to do something for her mother at first and then for her own self in respect to the family and the society. The Patriarchal society where Ahalya's father is imposing a marriage on her just for his social status, she fights back by absconding to the woods and then even deserted by her lover Raju. (A victim of patriarchy)

Here, is the point, that a feminist can raise a question, 'Can a woman trust or rely on any man may he be a father or brother, a friend, a lover and even a husband?' The feminist angle answers to this question simply as 'no'. 'The feminist critics condemned the literature written on women by men on the basis of what they saw from the above ("superficial knowledge about women"), They popularized this slogan "bhogahuvayatharth", means one can write about his or her experience, and not about others. Male writers could never do justice to women representation in their writings'. (p279-80)

The concept of new women in Hindi literature is very close to that of English, when women started speaking out against the injustice done to them. They pour their hearts out by writing their experiences of life, and participating in the economical and political activities of the nation and started making their presence felt as important citizen of a democratic nation. They got educated and started earning which increased their importance in the family and society. The novel is about a glimpse of women in Indian society in the modern age and their condition in the patriarchal society.

Works Cited

Shivani, Gaura Pant. ChaudahPere, RadhakrishnaPrakashan 2007, Paperback

Tharu, Susie &Lalitha,K. Women Writing In India, Vol.II-1993, Paperback

Sharma, Anuradha. Depiction of conflicting Self identities in Hindi Feminist writings from 1965-95, IJELLH, Vol.II, Issue II, JUNE2014, IPSN 2321-7065

Websites- en. Wikipedia.org/Wiki/shivani