

**GLIMPSES OF GENDER STUDIES IN KIRAN NAGARKAR'S
'SEVEN SIXES ARE FORTY THREE'**

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Abstract

Kiran Nagarkar was one of the well-known contemporary writers in the canon of Indian English Literature. His writing approach, theme, employment of references and exploitation of enunciation is indeed noteworthy. His place in the Indian English novel is stalwartly carved by his vigilant investigation of inscription. His English novels have become a lightning pole which is evidently written for a varied Indian and western audience. He has courageously depicted the inconsiderate veracities of oppressed Indian society. The readers visualize his novels as thought provoking, combustible and luminous. Being a genuine experimentalist, his fictional vocation is profusely outshined by his politics of discourse and linguistic preferences.

The central intention of this research paper is to investigate and explore several issues of gender studies such as condition of male and female protagonists, poverty, gender and class discrimination, violence, conflicts, cultural biased gender inequality, identification, quest for identity, victimization, male patriarchy, male hegemony, eroticism, adultery etc. through Kiran Nagarkar's path breaking and experimental novel 'Seven Sixes Are Forty Three'. Through these themes, Kiran Nagarkar delineates the panorama of gender studies in an effectual method.

Keywords: *Gender studies, condition of protagonists, poverty, inequality, gender and class discrimination, violence, conflicts, cultural identification, quest for identity, male hegemony*

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Introduction:

Kiran Nagarkar is the most renowned author of his first debut, path breaking and experimental novel 'Seven Sixes Are Forty Three'. This novel is the significant landmark in post-independence Indian literature. His wisdom and intuition lies in his intermingling of storytelling with an unusual truthfulness of judgments. Kiran Nagarkar's works have been translated into several languages such as Marathi, French, Italian, German, Spanish and Portuguese.

Literature Review:

The present study juxtaposes the in-depth analysis of 'gender studies' in Kiran Nagarkar's 'Seven Sixes Are Forty Three.' In support of this, the researcher has attempted to highlight the opinions of several academicians and research scholars. The literary review is as follows.

- a. Ajay Gamit, 'The Condition of Women as expressed by Kiran Nagarkar in his Novels Seven Sixes Are Forty Three and Ravan and Eddie', Pune Research Scholar, Vol – 5, Issue-5, Oct-Nov 2019, ISSN 2455- 314X, Impact Factor 3.14
- b. Ashish Gupta, 'Masculinity Dissimilarity and Male Supremacy in Kiran Nagarkar's ' Seven Sixes Are Forty Three'', The Creative Launcher, Vol. 5, Issue-6, 2021 Perception Publishing, India
- c. Dr. Girish Kawale, 'Cultural Identification of Women in Kiran Nagarkar's Novel 'Seven Sixes Are Forty Three' Langlit, Special Issue, May 2020 ISSN 2349-5189 I. F. 5.61
- d. Dr. Pravin Waghmare, 'A Critical Appraisal of Kiran Nagarkar's Seven Sixes Are Forty Three', Knowledge Resonance, A Half Yearly National Peer-Reviewed & Indexing with SJIF Impact Factor Research Journal, ISSN 2231-1629, I.F.8.072

- e. Meenu Pandya, 'Mirroring the Dilemma of Modern Youth: Kiran Nagarkar's Seven Sixes Are Forty Three', Vol-8, Issue-2, Journal of Higher Education and Research society: A Refereed International Journal, ISSN 2349-0209
- f. Kamalakar B. Gaikwad, 'Kiran Nagarkar's Protagonists in 'Seven Sixes Are Forty Three': Character Analysis Through Themes', Indian Scholar, Vol. 2, Issue III, March 2016, ISSN 2350-109X,
- g. Kamalakar B. Gaikwad, 'Gender Discrimination in Kiran Nagarkar's 'Seven Sixes Are Forty Three' and Rama Mehta's 'Inside the Haveli' Aayushi International Interdisciplinary Research Journal, Vol – 3, Issue-5, May 2016, ISSN 2349-638X, Impact Factor 2.147

Gender Studies:

The contentious and pioneering sexologist John Money used the term 'gender' in the year 1955. This term is basically taken into account to illustrate a human attributes. Money opened a new trend in a field of 'sexual science' and explained medical ideas about human sexuality. It refers to the social and cultural amalgamation of masculinity and femininity.

'Gender Studies' is an interdisciplinary area which delineates the composite interconnection of gender with other recognition signifiers like nation, religion, gender, race, sexuality, ethnicity etc. Gender, whether womanhood or virility, is a basic type of social organization that its functioning often passes unobtrusive. It focuses on the customs of gender uniqueness and sexual point of reference. It also shapes our behaviors and mind-set. It investigates power dynamics that relate to sexual category. Gender Studies deals with study of male, female and queer. A gender study endow with discernment into the philosophy, history and the guideline of humans. Through this, in an inclusive society, a novice can understand the basic concepts about male, female, transgender and intersex and their meaningful engagement in society. Feminism is an interdisciplinary approach which covers the issues such as egalitarianism and evenhandedness based on gender, gender expression, gender individuality, sex, and sexuality as implicated through communal presumptions and opinionated activism.

Tragic Conditions of Protagonists:

In Kiran Nagarkar's novel, the readers witness the tragic conditions of several characters as well as protagonists. They all experience humiliation, poverty, isolation, absurdity, insult, dilemma, confusion, meaningless etc.

Gender Violence:

The novel, *Seven Sixes Are Forty Three*, focuses on several elements like gender inequality, male domination, discrimination, subjugation; oppression and violence against women. These aspects are perceptibly manifested throughout in the lower strata of the society. In a given social set up, patriarchal and masculine human ideologies are crucial markers. In a male dominated society, women have to face multiple cultural, economic and educational disabilities which prevent them to lead a meaningful and dignified life. Cultural identification of women is reflected in Simone de Beauvoir in her book *The Second Sex* (1949). She asserts,

‘Cultural documentation of women is preserved as supplementary and men as a dictating entity. They don't have any significance in their own dynasty. Their actuality is absolutely overlooked.’¹

In ‘*Seven Sixes Are Forty Three*’, vehemence is countersigned through the existence of the characters remains as peripheral, negligible, mediocre, substantially assorted, subjected to emotional brutalities (corporeal torment), demonstrative exploitation, bullying and intimidations (cerebral suffering). Pratibha, Ajit's wife and Ajit's mother, both experiences the physical and mental violence. Kiran Nagarkar focuses on the oppressiveness of patriarchy and precarious existence of women. He reveals the tragic plight of the women characters. Almost all the women are subjected to violence and ill-treatment in the text. In the institutions of family and marriage, men are shown as privileged and women as inferior. They empower men to control their female counterparts and even entitle them to batter their wives, daughters and mothers.

Nagarkar's novel provides a fresh look of structural transformations of gender roles, ideologies, identities and relations, with a view to improve and better women's conditions. Ajit humiliates and beats his homely and submissive wife Pratibha ruthlessly. Both the women in this scenario remain

mute spectators, robbed of their rights and dignity in their own home. Ajit considers that it is his birth right to treat the women abusively and brutally. Ajit do not treat his wife Pratibha as a dignified human being and a citizen with equal human rights. He is intoxicated with the attitude of macho masculinity, regards his wife as a 'subhuman domestic worker with a body to please him' (Barker 2010: 442).

Pratibha is treated no more than as an object or a property by her husband. Finally she raises her voice and opposes him from beating. In a frustrated mood, she poured kerosene over herself and lit the fire. She tried to embrace Ajit. He was unmoved by seeing the pathetic condition of his wife. Later on, her body was very badly burnt. She begged doctor to save her for the sake of her children and of course, for her husband. Police asked the reason of her suicide. She made a statement that she had tried to commit suicide because of an incurable disease.

Here Prof. Veena Das comments on self-destruction of Indian woman, 'Woman's body is made so that she can hide the faults of her husband deep within her, so she can drink all the pain – take the stance of silence.'² (Das: 1997, p.85)

Protagonist Kushank Purandare informs this tragic news to Pratibha's mother-in-law. Instead of showing sympathy for Pratibha, she reveals strong sense of hostility towards her daughter in law. Being a typical Indian mother she supports to her arrogant and aggressive son Ajit. Thus ironically Nagarkar displays the marginalized status of these two women.

Nagarkar demonstrates the patriarchal ideology of Mr. Kathavate (Bhau) who stays in Mumbai Chawl, Second floor. Every night, he mercilessly beats, slaps and kicks his daughters and wife. His neighbour Anna tries to stop him. Even Kushank also tried to stop him from such violence and cruelty but it proved futile.

In next episode, we witness the violence of Chandani, Kushank's girlfriend. She wishes to marry Kushank and tries to break the hurdles such as caste, class, region, religion, language etc. Nagarkar reflects on unfair social practice of oppressive and unforgiving patriarchy, hostile to young lovers, that eventually succeeds in breaking the affair and giving a full stop to the

prospects of their love marriage. In this episode, when Chandani's father gets to know about his daughter's love affair, he comes from Indore to Pune to see her and brainwashes her and suggests her not to be foolish and impulsive. He tries to convince Chandani that her decision to marry Kushank is an immature.

Chandani's family members kept her telling awful things about Kushank and his family for day and night. They also made Chandani write to Kushank that she would not marry him. Thus, Chandani's family members finally succeeded in breaking her affair with Kushank, although, even Kushank's own economic conditions were completely unfavorable for him to enter into wedlock with Chandani. Thus, it becomes quite clear that till men bring change in their attitude towards women and shed oppressive patriarchal attitude characterized by violence, authority and machismo, women cannot have satisfactory subject positions.

In a true sense, we can assert that Kiran Nagarkar is an artist of the erotica. He focuses on absurd and adulterous nature of his protagonist. Kushank, a jobless fellow, an absurd character, indulges in vague and meaningless activities. His empty mind compels him to commit adulterous activities. Kushank tries to seduce a beautiful woman. (SSAFT: 15-16). Kushank keeps himself busy in sexual enjoyment and works of adultery. He does these activities willingly or unwillingly. Sometimes he becomes the victim of sexual harassment. He tries to escape from this situation. Sometimes he behaves like a bastard hopeless. Once he met a beautiful lady in a restaurant. Regardless of women's age, he flirts her. She gripped his hand firmly. She cooed his name with love, breathed shallow sighs. She took his hand on a conducted tour of her body. He could not resist the temptation and follow the lady, with a lamb ready for slaughter.

'Let's do it.' I would say finally and plunge in.³ (SSAFT: 19).

This erotic experience of Kushank surely reflects his adulterous nature.

Further, Nagarkar boldly asserts about Kushank's erotic experience with a Parsi woman, a well-wisher of Kushank. He reflects his lust and thought about her loneliness and wanted to commit sensuous deeds with the religious lady who always thinks of his best. His mind might be corrupted

with erotic feelings. (SSAFT: 31) Nagarkar narrates the erotic experience of other characters like Rashid and his beautiful girl friend. He depicts their lovemaking in a natural manner. This couple does not feel sex as a sin, but take it granted as an enjoyable activity. Rashid shamelessly approaches the girl and does what he wants. Arvind had evil eye on Kushank's relative Ursula. He deliberately harasses her and asks Kushank,

'Hey, has Ankush sent his wife home from the States? Or is she yours? Belongs to both of us actually, we take turns.'⁴ (SSAFT: 33).

Here Nagarkar projects the sexual and lustful thoughts of Arvind.

Kushank shamelessly stays in the house of his girlfriend Aaroti. As a member of the house, he witnesses each and everything of her family. He observes the conflict between Aaroti and her husband. Nagarkar boldly mentions that his female character Aaroti fearlessly convey her opinion frankly on sex to Kushank. Once Kushank was going to see a movie, Aaroti asks him,

'I want to see that film too'.⁵ (66)

This incidence reveals Aaroti's modern approach towards life. Nagarkar depicts the love making between Raghu and Bhishander Singh's daughter in a well. He describes them as inanimate objects locked in lovemaking. (SSAFT: 100) In next episode, Sita Ranade's brother Satish abuses and threatens to Kushank for chasing his sister.

'You bastard, chasing my sister. If I see you near Sita again, I will break your bloody leg, you hear.'⁶(SSAFT: 131).

All these incidences suggest Nagarkar's superb style of presenting eroticism in flawless manner.

The world created in Seven Sixes are Forty-three is multicultural and cosmopolitan in a true sense of the word. Except one or two instances, there is complete absence of conflicts in the name of caste, creed, colour, gender etc. Written in the stream of consciousness style, the novel presents the little tragedies of life in the big metropolis. It is the story of Kushank Purandare, his friends, his relatives, his fiancés who live a drifting life in the faceless

megacities without any mooring of life. The narration moves through various metropolitan cities like Mumbai, Delhi, Banaras, Indore and Cochin.

The various characters that belong to these various cities are presented without any religious, racial, provincial and linguistic identity. Kushank has four close friends Raghu, Sadhan, Jitendra and Rakesh. It is very difficult to guess about their state, community or race as it is not emphasized.

Kushank is in love with several girls. They are introduced with bare first names like Aaroti, Prachinti, and Chandani. Most of the narration is addressed to his some mysterious lady-love 'You'. Nagarkar deliberately keeps these characters without any provincial or racial identity. Even in his relations with these ladies, no gender related complexes are depicted.

We can find the religious and cultural conflict only in two episodes of the novel. The narrator Kushank Purandare spends his childhood with his Kaku. She is Hindu at the time of her marriage. Later she converts to Christianity. She has four daughters. All are Christians. But she insists to call them by their Hindu names. At the time of death she wants to revert to Hinduism and to be cremated according to Hindu ritual. But the padre refuses saying that there is no tradition. It may appear as an episode of religious and cultural conflict. On the other hand it is presented as an inevitable disillusion and frustration that man is subject to. It highlights the fact that whatever you may do in your life, the ultimate end is meaningless. Life is meant for failures. The novel brings out the very existential tragedy of human life. Cutting across the clothes of nationality, caste and religion the novel reveals the bare bones of humanity.

Other episode is about caste discrimination. The untouchables in draught-prone Nandadhela are not allowed to draw water from the well. Saved these two instances of social conflict, the novel presents the world, which is completely cosmopolitan and the deliberate presentation of the characters with their cultural, communal, religious, racial and ethnic under erase denotes that Nagarkar's *Seven Sixes are Forty-three* is the expression of the Indian multiculturalism in its entirety. This novel is unique in every sense. It has unique language, writing style and the interplay of the psychology of characters.

Kiran Nagarkar's use of language is very harsh and the characters are very sensitive. The author describes the funny side of everything i.e. poverty, suffering, illness, death and of course sexual intercourse.

Conclusion:

Thus from the present research, the researcher has come to a certain conclusion that gender and gender equality are the significant part and parcel of Gender Studies. 'Gender' is a significant contemplation in present globalized enlargement. It is a technique of looking at how societal customs and power formations impact on the lives and chances obtainable to diverse assemblages of men and women. 'Gender equality' as a human right, thwarts hostility against women and girls. It is indispensable for monetary affluence. Societies that worth women and men as equal is safer and better. Gender studies is a field that upholds gender impartiality and fights intolerance against women and other marginalized groups. By investigating the narration of gender standards over time, it's feasible to comprehend how they contribute to the continual domination of women in contemporary society. These gender related concepts are explained through various situations depicted in the novel 'Seven Sixes Are Forty Three'.

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