

FEMINIST CRITICISM ON RAJINDER SINGH BEDI'S LAJWANTI

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Abstract

This research tries to criticise the portrayal of stereotypical notions which reflects strong patriarchal notions in the partition writing "LAJWANTI". As cultural materialism and new historicism considers fictions as a source of history and writings are read by different people from various nations, lajwanti's character gives a negative impact about Indian girls and their expectations from their husbands. During the time of partition, the abduction and its trauma is not reflected much rather lajo is expecting her husband to quarrel and beat her as he use to beat her before and she identifies her womanhood and as a wife to compulsorily get physically violated otherwise she is not ready to accept her husband . Thus it gives a negative impact on readers mind under the genre of partition writing. This criticism questions the portrayal of feminine psyche and pleads to rethink the depiction of woman characters.

FEMINIST CRITICISM ON LAJWANTI

The Genre of Indian literature represents Indian writings translated from many languages to give worldwide recognition to Indian writings. According to Raymond Williams "All subjects live and work within the culture constructed by ideology, through discourses. The ideological constructions in which the authors live and have internalized inevitably become a part of their work .Then according to Cultural materialism by Graham Holderness it is "A politicized form of Historiography." That means "what was happening at the time when the text was written" as said by Allen Sinfield. It is no longer a matter of literature maintaining the foreground and history the background, instead it is a matter of literature and history occupying the same area and given the same weightage. Reading all of the textual traces of the past, fiction or non-fiction, it Places the literary text within the frame of a non-literary text. Context is replaced by "co-text", that is an interrelated non-literary text from the same time period. (Greenbelt around 1980).

The genre of partition literature depicts the trauma left by *Partition* as major concern of Indian *literature* after independence. India Pakistan partition in 1947 into two nation-states, was a horrible gendered experience. Women irrespective of their ages became specific targets of communal violence. As Urvashi Butalia writes, “About 750,000 women are thought to have been abducted and raped by men of religion different from their own (and indeed sometimes by men of their own religion).”

Partition played upon gendered relationships that constitute women’s relationships to their families and to their communities. Conversely, partition also allows a critical insight into the nature and structures of gender relationships that brings everyday life together. It is, then, a historical juncture for feminist analysis. This paper focuses on LAJWANTI penned by RAJINDER SINGH BEDI which was first published in urdu in 1951 and translated to English by BEDI in 1967. It was made into a telefilm by Neena Gupta in 2006. The referred is a translation of urdu original by Alok Bhalla .

According to Perter Barry’s “An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory”, feminist criticism focuses on examining power relations which obtain in texts and in life. It examines representations of women in literature by men and women then re-read psychoanalysis to further explore the issue of female and male identity with a view to break them down and show the extent of patriarchy. Literature plays an active role in the creation and consolidation of the culture in which it is produced but also actively contributes to the constitution of that culture. The writer in “Lajwanti” which is a partition novel explores the plight of abducted women during the violence and upheaval of the partition of the subcontinent in 1947. Sunderlal, an abusive husband whose wife went missing during the conflict, actively campaigns for the repatriation of abducted women but is taken aback by the unsettling emotional transformations that attend the return of his own life. Bedi raises the problem of silence and the story rises disturbing questions about deeply-embedded patriarchal biases.

Feminist Criticism rethinks the canon aiming at the rediscovery of texts. So as a partition writing, lajwanti doesnot focus on the trauma which women face after abduction rather the whole writing reflects the stereotypical notions which women’s have regarding men. The question is why is the central theme relying on lajwanti been treated as a slender, naïve village girl who feels happy with the beatings of husband. Where for instance the writer discusses that “Even after severest beatings, she would begin to laugh happily if she saw a faint smile on Sunderlal’s face.” It is depicted that girls knew that all husbands beat their wives. Indeed, if some men let their wives show independence the other women would turn up their noses in contempt and say “what kind of man is he! He can’t even control a women !” and the writer expresses that the folk songs also depicted the fact that husbands were expected to beat their wives. Lajo herself use to sing “I shall never marry a city boy, he wears boots and my back is slender.”

After sunderlal meets lajwanti in a marriage and she accepts to marry him, the writer depicts that “she did not notice that his boots were large and ugly and she forgot that her back was slender.” Protagonist sunderlal swears on himself when he gets tormented by the memories of lajo that if he ever finds her again he will never beat her . He waits for her arrival and when he gets the boon of her presence he happily accepts her and treats her like goddess. to an extent it can be agreed that no women wants her husband to look her like devi. Thus she had remorse regarding the change which she encountered after she got rehabilitated . This juncture which the

writer expresses is not the point of concern but the highlight given to the notion of Lajo only missing beatings is questionable. While Sunderlal and Lajo once discuss about the time which she spent during the time of partition when she was abducted. Lajo's character is not shown in such a way that she was traumatized because of abduction, but emphasize is given on the feeling that she never felt anything as that strange person never beats her.

Day by day she feels sad as she never encounters her husband doing physical violence like before which she thought is the only form of love. Lajo expresses that she never got her husband back after abduction.

As a partition novel it is not emphasizing on trauma of abduction rather it is focused on stereotypical notions which gives a different impact about Indian women's psyche to the readers outside. Thus this paper criticizes the portrayal of LAJWANTI as a women character which upholds all the patriarchal stereotypical notions and gender bias.

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