

Affirmation of Female Identity In Habba Khatoon and Emily Bronte : Psychoanalytic Approach

Dr. Asma Shaw

Assistant Professor, Department Of English

Islamia College Of Science and Commerce, Srinagar.(J&K),(India)

ABSTRACT

Psychoanalytic approach to the poetry of Habba Khatoon and Emily Bronte , in spite of difference of the times, cultures and languages reveals all the basic constants in the nature of womanhood; the variables are only in the consciously assumed personalities. Most of the permanent features are integral part of their nature because they are destined to be women; but many of the features are a result of the role apportioned to them by society. Their relation to men in various social milieus and cultural conditions has produced in them certain traits that are universal. Verses of Emily Bronte and Habba Khatoon reveal how emotional nature assumes the shape of oedipal drive towards the origin. Return to the 'origin' takes the shape of withdrawal from outside and professed narcissism. Narcissism in its turn assumes the form of loneliness, nostalgia, melancholy, ennui, and mystic ascent of her Self— the basic substance of countless melodious songs obtaining in all languages, particularly in the verses of Habba Khatoon and Emily Bronte.

Keywords: *Psychoanalysis, Female identity, Narcissism*

The poetry of Habba Khatoon and Emily Bronte provide us with an interesting case for psychoanalytic approach to poetry. The two women of the medieval times, although belonging to two different cultures and languages have given vent to their feelings, deprivations, dreams, fantasies, flights of imagination, and aspiration through much similar poetic expressions. The differences, as sharp as similarities, also help us know how female psyche gets influenced by the moment, milieu and the race.

The differences of milieu, moment and race in the poetry of Habba Khatoon and Emily Bronte may yield contrastive results to historical, cultural or moral analysis of their poems, but to a pure literary analysis it helps in understanding that how female psyche, although not divorced from historicity, is reflected through the literary expression that has various universal codes and fundamentals. Taking this basic premise, it would not be without purpose to undertake a study of the available texts of various poems written by the two women of remarkable creative potential. Their poetry is a result of all those psychic processes that are centred in their respective minds, accessible only through the texts that have many other inter-textual connections when seen against the background of the diverse literary traditions.

Psychoanalytic criticism yields useful hints amazing symbols, actions, and settings in a creative work. Rene Wellek and Austin Warren included "psychological" criticism as one of the five "extrinsic" approaches to literature described in their influential book, *Theory of Literature* (1942). Psychological criticism, they suggest, typically attempts to do at least one of the following: provide a psychological study of an individual writer; explore the nature of the creative process; generalize about "types and laws present within works of literature"; or theorize about the psychological "effects of literature upon its readers" (81). However, critics cannot depend on psycho-criticism as a "one size fits all" approach because, like all forms of literary criticism, it has its shortcomings. It is better that this method is adopted side by side with other methods like sociological, Historical, and empirical methods. One should not get theory-ridden. If we see a work of fiction or a poem primarily as a psychological case study, we are led astray and we shall be missing its wider significance and we may not be able to appreciate the essential aesthetic experience.

Existential perspective, with insights of psychoanalysis, demands that an individual woman is treated as an individual human being that is, like a male human individual, product of an historical and cultural context. Although every individual human being is essentially infinite and unpredictable behaviours, he or she is, for the sake of convenience in recognition, a set or bundle of accessible features or traits. This is clearly evidenced when we do not talk of generalizations but restrict our study to particular human beings, especially two creative personalities who are highly particularized through the texts of their writings. Habba Khatoon and Emily Bronte are two such highly individualized individuals.

As two distinct individual human beings, no more reachable as possible targets of any psychoanalytic analysis as living human beings, Habba Khatoon and Emily Bronte, who lived their lives in two time-slots of the past and existed in relation to their respective cultural and social situations, are reachable through their verses handed over to us through written or oral records. Here we have to be consistently cautious of the fact that the two women of the past are two distinct 'textual entities' not two corporeal beings with their psycho-somatic existence; psychoanalytic approach has to delimit its approach in accordance with this limitation. Contemporary literary discourse has finally made it clear that the text of a literary work is never the equivalent of the person who has produced that text; it is rather an autonomous reality that takes its shape through the 'medium' of the artist. In the words of Eliot: .

...the poet has, not a 'personality' to express, but a particular medium, which is only a medium and not a personality, in which impressions and experiences combine in peculiar and unexpected ways. Impressions and experiences which are important for the man may take no place in poetry, and those which become important in the poetry may play quite a negligible part in the man, the personality. (1932: 8)

Julia Kristeva, herself an eminent woman, envisaged texts as functioning along two axes: the horizontal axis determines the relationship between the reader and the text, and vertical axis comprised by complex set of relations of the text to other texts. She gave this intricate relationship the name 'Inter-textuality'. According to

this concept texts of all sorts (oral, visual, literary, virtual contain references to other texts that have contributed to their production and signification. She wrote

...every text takes shape as a mosaic of citations; every text is the absorption and transformation of other texts. The notion of inter-textuality comes to take the place of the notion of inter-subjectivity. (146)

Text, according to Barthes, is a complete departure from the notion of representation. In his opinion the Text is a process not a state or an object. It does not completely fit in any traditional genre; generic hybridism is its essence. There is irreducible multiplicity in it and breaks all the defined boundaries of old genres.

So far as general emotions are concerned women are more emotional sex. A common and universal feature of women's emotion according to feminist psychologists is that women are experiencing passive emotions such as loneliness, nostalgia, sadness, happiness, fear, and surprise more strongly. Masculine emotions are generally anger, resolve, desire, and active participation. Socialization of men and women happens throughout lifetime in the expression of emotions. The elders in a family and social group play the vital role in furthering socialization. The seniors admire girls for being sensitive and emotional, while as they appreciate boys for dominance and lack of most emotional expression.

Alienation, in the songs of Habba Khatoon and Emily Bronte, is essentially caused by the cessation of psychological attachment with the mother. Though separation of the child from the womb of the mother is an inevitable result of birth, and cutting the umbilical cord, the shock of separation is stronger in female children than in the male ones. The Oedipal tendency, or return to 'the origin' is common to both sexes, but in girls' behaviour and approach to life, it is more manifest. This is a typical feminist poem showing obsession about the past. Psychoanalysis has shown that girls remain in their emotional stage for a longer time as compared with boys. The child-bride in the poem of Habba Khatoon, like biblical Ruth, is married in a house that is far away from her parental house and is surrounded by people who have no emotional bond with her, they are strangers to her. Her marriage is nothing but arbitrary severance of her infantile affinities with her mother and father. Until she is herself the dominant member of the new house, she is treated just as addition to the new family. She is forced to give up her childhood fantasies and accept the economic, cultural, and reproductive responsibilities of a married woman. Thus in a patriarchal society, marriage of a girl has nothing to do with her choice. Her marriage is an arrangement made by her parents and her in-law:

I am not happy with my in-laws people,
come to my rescue O my parental kin.

I left my home to fetch water
Alas, the pitcher I dropped and it broke;
send me a pitcher for the pitcher I broke,
or you send me the cost of the pitcher.

The poem of Habba Khatoon quoted above is, like many other poems of her, portrayal of the plight of a newly-wed girl. The cultural setting is that of the highly patriarchal medieval times, not much remote from contemporary rural atmosphere in Kashmir. She is yet to surrender her childhood and acquiesce in the new reality at her new house. She is left all alone in her struggle for finding a space in the new social and cultural network of relations. Whatever she does is critically assessed in terms of her capacity to succeed in her routine domestic chores.

Emily Bronte says :

Sleep brings no joy to me,
Remembrance never dies;
My soul is given to misery,
And lives in sighs. (298)

This small poem, like many other poems of Emily Bronte, is an unrestrained outpouring of her alienation and anguish. The poem is too simple and beautiful to withstand interpretation. In stanza one there is an open lament on the loss of sleep. Instead of bringing relief to her anguished soul, sleep drowns her in sigh and sobs because sleep stirs remembrances of the past. In stanza two, the poet speaks about the agitation in her restive soul as she visualizes the faces of the dead. She feels as if all her nears and dears, no more living in this mortal world, throng in and surround her bed. Eventually, sleep heralds no hope, but makes gloom more horrifying. Normally sound sleep has a rejuvenating effect as it relieves the body and mind of fatigue and replenishes body with fresh energy. On the contrary, the poet says that sleep makes her despondence and despair crushing and finds herself sailing in a dark sea. She does not even dream of any sympathetic friend, she, on the contrary, dreams of her old estranged friends staring at her with sneer and scorn for her deprivation and suffering. The heart of the anguished soul is torn with pain. It was expected that sleep would bring back soothing harmony to her; it deepens her desire for eternal sleep through death so that she is no more tormented by failing bouts of sleep.

Psychological despair, whether existential or objective, is an integral part of woman's condition. We can have many explanations, historical as well as social, but it has become the destiny of woman. Having consigned all her responsibilities, freedom, and future to the will of her husband, she has no future of her own and she clings desperately to the past. And when she is deserted even by her husband or lover or some force of circumstance deprives her of her protector, she has no option but to remain a wailing woman. The comment on women's acquiescence in surrender and lack of the concept of freedom produces hopelessness, dread, despair in their psyche that characterizes her destiny. Simone de Beauvoir wrote about women's psychological despondence:

Women's fate is bound up with that of perishable things; in losing them they lose all. Only a free subject, asserting himself as above and beyond duration of things, can check all decay; this supreme recourse has been denied to women. The real reason why she does not believe in a liberation is that she has never put the powers of liberty to a test; the world seems to her to be ruled by an obscure destiny against it is presumptuous to rise in protest.(613-14)

Habba Khatoon's passionate song :
Who the rival of mine enticed you away,
why this odium for me?
Renounce your anger, hatred, and chagrin,
is not your heart ready? why this odium for me?

The lover in Habba Khatoon's poem quoted above is already married or is in love with some other woman. She beseeches him to give up his odium for her and possess her. She loves her body and is ready to surrender it passively to her dream-man. Her narcissism reaches the stage of masochism when she invites the lover of her fantasy to come secretly to her room and enjoy himself to his full satisfaction. She craves to discover and assert herself in her surrender to the will of the stone-hearted, apathetic and arrogant 'man'. She feels her bosom burns in her passion, and implores her 'dream lover' to alleviate her pain and suffering. She has pretty 'almond-like' eyes, but flooded by tears.

The narcissistic girl present in the above poem of Habba Khatoon, like Catherine in Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights*, is an ardent lover of nature. She identifies her physical existence as one of the beautiful objects of the unconquered and un-trammelled. Thus she is like fresh white snow at mountain peaks that secretly melts with the advent of spring warmth. She is immaculate like newly burgeoned ivy of the garden. She is at the same time sad that her 'dream-lover' does not appreciate her value and have her as a passive prey before her beauty withers.

In Habba Khatoon's lyrics, the mystic notions are less fervent. In her songs the exulting in the beauties of the worldly life is given spontaneous expression. But true to her feminine nature, she has longings to attain eternity through consummate reunion with the Eternal. She envisions the physical world as a vast playground full of enticements to keep the soul engrossed in it. But ultimately the realization dawns upon the soul, but penitence and guilt overwhelm it for being late in realizing the error. Here is a song that gives vent to woman's psychic dilemma.

For a play I went outdoors, but remained rapt there;
unmindful I was that the day was to set.
Veiled once I was in the house of my own,
I stepped outdoors and I was given a name;
the recluse of backwoods gave up their abstinence.

Woman's narcissism assumes the narrative of mystic concept of permanence and transience. The archetypal permanence is the state of oblivion, or a condition before the appearance of consciousness. Absence of language in this inexplicable mystic truth is generally depicted as the paradise when man enjoyed highest position in the hierarchy of cosmic order. Poetic imagination sometimes portrays it as the eternal abode or, in feminist aesthetic, the parental house when a girl enjoys abundance of love and knows no worries of the world. The poetic conceit may also depict it as 'mother's womb' when in absolute forgetfulness there was no sense of

alienation. The Oedipal drive always makes her nostalgic and keeps her yearning to go back to the abode. But individual's involvement in the mundane strife gradually deprives him/her of the sweet remembrance of the privileged position and his consciousness takes overlaying of the material cares. But ultimately, flashes of the lost position appear in mind, but the poet feels that it is late, metaphorically, the sun has set.

Emily Bronte, as a conscious poet with her definite philosophical posture, does not yield to the customs of oral poetry as Habba Khatoon does. She avoids the repetitive refrain and the additive elaboration of oral lyric. She concentrates on one particular feeling, focuses an appropriate image and consciously maintains restraint in the use of words. Human love does not appear in physical and worldly form in her poetry, but is totally internalized as a narcissistic tendency. Narcissism, as a fundamental attitude of all women, makes Emily Bronte regard her ego as an absolute end and take refuge in it. She was a young woman and did not have the opportunity of having the experience of conjugal life, and as such, she visualizes and understands herself as an image in the universe reduced to mirror. She imagines the world outside as a meaningless chaos. She adores her image in the imagined mirror and tends to rule over space and time. She is solitary and supreme in all her feminine rituals of self-worship. Her narcissism does not let her become an object of male's hunt, as we see in Habba Khatoon, but a house in which dwells her Lord. In her non-Gondal poem, '*The Philosopher*' Bronte makes Self a "little frame" in which "warring gods" dwell.

Why I have preserved to shun
The common paths that others run
And on a strange road journeyed on;
Heedless alike of Wealth and Power-
Of Glory's wreath and Pleasure's flower.

In Bronte's poetry, the reader has always a feel of the presence of an outside power which has permanence in contrast to the ephemeral things, and the poet. In her famous poem "No Coward Soul is Mine" she evinces her conscious choice to dwell in visions. She feels that "Being and Breath" can never be destroyed even if the whole cosmos is reduced to a cipher.

No Coward soul is mine,
No trembler in the world's storm-troubled spheres!
I see Heaven's glories shine,
And Faith shines equal, arming me from fear

This poem is a typical example of poet's mystic annihilation in the eternal cosmic process of being and nothingness and affirmation of self. Individual existence of a thing or phenomenon is in a flux, it makes no sense whether it is apparent or invisible. The prevailing spirit, called 'Being and Breath' is the existence of indestructibility of nature, at the micro-cosmic level, as well as macrocosmic level. The mystic comprehension of relativity of being and non-being and their inexorable inter-convertibility is the underlying principle of all Bronte's poems that manifest a pantheistic vision.

Mysticism is in a way an essential aspect of womanhood. If human love is denied to a woman or the circumstance do not allow a woman to have her lover always with her, she tries to adore divinity of God in herself. She internalizes the whole cosmic drama of the grand outside in her own finite being. Her soul seems to her God's couch and all her faculties emanate from Him and are directed towards Him. It is the physical or fleshy existence that is the basic veil between the mystic woman's consciousness and the majestic Deity enthroned in her own soul. Many studies in psychopathology reveal that women generally develop 'eroto-mania' when they are confronted with inextricable confusion between human lover and God. A psychoanalytic approach to the songs of woman poets gives much significance to eroto-mysticism abundant in their poetry.

Although we do not find any of such fervid declarations in the songs of Habba Khatoon, but the ecstasy of erotic union with the phantom lover assumes mystic dimension. Here, for instance is her popular song: *chhaav myeeny daanay poosh*:

Pretty posies I make for you,
 come and enjoy my pomegranate bloom.
 I am the earth and you are the sky,
 you are the lid to cover the secret;
 rarest of foods I am, you are the guest,
 come and enjoy my pomegranate bloom.

This song replete with erotic images, expresses woman's psychological tendency for voluntary surrender to a male of her own fantasy. In this respect, it may be mentioned here again that corporal existence of womanhood has been universally projected as immanence that is craving for unity with the transcendence. Zaehnar, the author of a monumental book on universals of mysticism, titled *Mysticism: Sacred and Profane*, wrote:

The sexual image...is particularly apt since man both penetrates the woman, is both within and without her, just as God who dwells at the deepest point of the soul also envelopes it and covers it with his infinite love. (151-52)

Commenting on this universal principle of mysticism A.N.Dhar wrote:

It may be pointed out here that the marriage analogy was actually intended to convey just a hint of the "mystic rapture" that is inexpressible in ordinary language. The intention does not seem to have been to glorify the love between man and woman as such as to suggest the supreme significance of divine love. As a singer of wedding love, Coventry Patmore follows both St Thomas Aquinas and St Bernard in celebrating the love between husband and wife as the precursor of divine love; this is especially true of Patmore's odes included under *The Unknown Eros*.(57)

Habba Khatoon, in order to express the same psychic propensity takes recourse of romantic lyrics because there is no other alternative in language. The ornate imagery used in the poem represents the virgin female lover as the earth clad in fast fading, beautiful nonetheless, verdure and blossoms. All the images are intricately related by the underlying psychic urge for surrender. Habba Khatoon is again eagerly waiting to receive her lover (God) with a garland of artfully made garland of fine filaments of fresh cotton flowers. The last line is a suggestion to read the song as a series of hints to meaning that are inexpressible in ordinary language.

To conclude, psychoanalytic approach to poetry of Habba Khatoon and Emily Bronte, in spite of difference of the times, cultures and languages reveals all the basic constants in the nature of womanhood; the variables are only in the consciously assumed personalities. Most of these permanent features are integral part of her nature because she is destined to be woman; but many of the features are a result of the role apportioned to her by society. Her relation to man in various social milieus and cultural conditions has produced in her certain traits that are universal. Such traits are persistently being strengthened by man's attitude to her since the very beginning of life; girls and boys are treated differently, whatever be the social, economic and cultural context. The most obvious of all these psychological realities is her being emotional in defiance to reason. Her emotional nature manifests itself in all her roles in society. In poetry, which is essentially based on emotions, woman's poetry is an unhampered outpouring of emotions. Verses of Habba Khatoon and Emily Bronte reveal how emotional nature assumes the shape of oedipal drive towards the origin. Return to the 'origin' takes the shape of withdrawal from outside and professed narcissism. Narcissism in its turn assumes the form of loneliness, nostalgia, melancholy, ennui, and mystic ascent of her Self—the basic substance of countless melodious songs obtaining in all languages, particularly in the verses of Habba Khatoon and Emily Bronte.

REFERENCES

- [1.] Barthes, Roland, 'From Work to Text' (Fr. 19710, in *Image Music Text*, trans. a. Basler, Roy P. *Sex, Symbolism, and Psychology in Literature*. New York: Octagon, 1975.
- [2.] Bronte, Emily. *Wuthering Heights and Poems*. London: Everyman. 1983 Print.
- [3.] Dannie Abse and Ernesto Cardenal. Ed. *Critical Survey of Poetry*. Vol.1. California: Salem Press. Inc. 1976.
- [4.] De Beauvoir Simone. 1949. *The Second Sex*. Tr. H. M. Parshley. Penguin Books: 1986. Print.
- [5.] Dhar. A.N. *Mysticism Across Cultures*. New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers and a. Distributors. 2002.
- [6.] Eliot. T.S. *Selected Essays*. New York: 1932. Print
- [7.] Freud, Sigmund. *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis*. Trans. Joan Riviere. London: Allen, 1922.
- [8.] Gilber, Sandra and Susan Gubar. *Mad Woman in the Attic*. 1980. Rpt. Rivkin, Julie and Michael Ryan. *Literary Theory: An Anthology*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd. 1998.
- [9.] Grierson, G. and Barnett. Ed. *Lalavvakyani*. JK Books, Srinagar, 2011. Print.
- [10.] Kamil, Amin. Ed. *Kulyati Habba Khatoon*. Srinagar: The Jammu and Kashmir Academy of Arts, Culture, and Languages. 1995.
- [11.] Kristeva, Julia. *Semiotikè*,
- [12.] Lacan, Jacques. 1956. "The Function and Field of Speech and Language in
- [13.] Lacan, Jacques. *Ecrits: A Selection*. Trans. Alan Sheridan. New York: Norton, 1977.
- [14.] [Linda Marilyn Austin](#). "Emily Bronte's Home sickness" in [Victorian Studies Volume 44, Number 4, Summer 2002](#).
- [15.] *Psychoanalysis*", in *Literary Theory: an Anthology*. Ed. Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan. London: Blackwell Publishers Ltd. 1998. Print.

[16.] Shauq, Shafi. *The best of Kashmiri Literature: Mystic Poetry*. (Forthcoming)

[17.] Stephen Heath (London : Fontana, 1977). Rept. Nial Lucy, *Postmodern Literary Theory*. London: Blackwell, 2000.

[18.] Wellek, Rene, and Austin Warren. *Theory of Literature*. New York: Harcourt, 1942.

[19.] Zaehnar, R.C. *Mysticism: Sacred and Profane*. London: O.U.P. 1973