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LESSONS IN FORGETTING: FORGETTING THE SORROWFUL EXPERIENCES UNDERGONE BY MALE DOMINATED SOCIETY

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is to evaluate and analyse the feminist themes that are embedded throughout Anita Nair's novel Lessons in Forgetting. This research paper provides a brief summary of the novel Lessons in Forgetting and focuses on the difficulties that its female protagonists face, including female feticide, gender discrimination, love, and dependence on family. It is implied by this phrase that women should ignore the guidance they have been given and instead concentrate on developing their own concepts of what makes for a happy existence rather than paying attention to the recommendations of other people. Feminism, on the other hand, is an ideology built on optimism and hope rather than pessimism and negative worldviews. The struggle against patriarchal customs is turning out to be an ancient conflict since an increasing number of women are forging their own paths to contribute to the betterment of society. It is something that the main character, Meera, as well as the other women in the novel, make use of in order to get their lives back in order after their husbands committed betrayal.

KEY WORDS: Male Domination, Sorrowful Experience, Feminist Themes, Protagonists, Optimism

INTRODUCTION

American entrepreneur and politician Carly Fiorina claims that, "Feminism doesn't shut down conversations or threaten women...a feminist is woman who lives the life she chooses and uses all her God given gifts." Regardless of the particulars, feminism is problematic when placed within the context of patriarchal civilizations. The only objective of feminism is to strengthen the bonds that already exist between women and the communities in which they live. The concept of feminism may also be seen as a social movement. The "women's movement of the 1960s did not truly signal the beginning of feminism" this statement is attributed to historian Betty Friedan. Instead, it was a return to a tradition that had been around for a very long time and that had wonderful literature that addressed the issue of gender disparity in society as well as providing answers to the issue. This literature had been around for a very long time (Beginning theory by Peter Barry, 166). Women have won the battle against the so-called patriarchal males and can now be found in all walks of life as a direct result of the realisations that they themselves have had. Female authors such as

Kamala Markandaya, Anita Desai, Githa Hariharan, Sashi Deshpande, and Anita Nair have written about gender issues and the ways in which male characters have dominated the narratives of their works as a form of resistance to the patriarchal society. This is done in order to counter the patriarchal society. It is no longer acceptable for males to subjugate women to their will and powerlessness. In addition, women have progressed to the point that they are able to create their own worlds, much like Meera and the other female characters in the show do when their husbands are not there. The town of Shornur, which is located in the state of Kerala in India, is where Nair was born. Nair is the author of many books, one of which, *Lessons in Forgetting*, was adapted into a film, for which she wrote the dialogue and the screenplay, and for which she was awarded the National Film Award. Nair is also the author of a number of short stories. This is a book that tells a narrative within a story.

A PARTICULAR KIND OF MALE DOMINANCE

Nair does an excellent job of describing the female characters, notably the heroine Meera, who serves as a cookbook writer, daughter, mother, and wife. The novel's two distinct chapters flow one after the other and are intertwined till the very end. In addition, Meera's husband threatens her in weird ways, putting her mental health in peril since he wants to sell the Lilac House to fund his new business endeavour. He is threatening her mental health because of this:

“Meera and her husband Giri, son Nikhil, were found in a party there she meets her friends some applauded her for giving such tips to cook in her book and one praises her for Thai prawn recipe. Further she thinks that this is the place she wanted to be and spends her splendid time. Giri doesn't like it when she stays attached to his side ‘We might as well stay at home then,’ he said once.” (*Lessons in Forgetting*, 6)

She comes into contact with an aspiring actor who can't wait to complement her on her appearance, but she chooses to keep her mouth shut about it. When Meera's son Nikhil unexpectedly interrupts her, saying that he has looked for his father everywhere but hasn't been able to find him, she immediately sets out to find him, only to overhear one of her acquaintances say that he was last seen two hours ago. Meera's son Nikhil says that he has looked for his father everywhere but hasn't been able to find him. Now, Meera is aware that she is in a difficult situation. Because of her disposition, Giri brings misery upon herself on purpose. Nikhil, her son, regularly questions her about the frequency with which her husband sends her text messages. She explains to him that he has no choice but to be at work and assures him that he will be back home in the morning. And she is ready to fib to her mother about him at any time if she ever asks about him. When Meera finally gets home at the end of a long day, she finds that her family is fast asleep. Nikhil, however, has a momentary awakening during which he screams out for his father. Meera calms him down by assuring him that he will see his father in the morning and then putting him back to sleep. She can't take the pressure any more, and she has to know why he left; so, she checks his email and discovers that there is nothing there; the inbox as well as the sent things have been purged. Suddenly, she discovered a note in draughts that she had only partially read, and it dawned on her that the Lilac home was the cause for his departure.

It is a type of tyranny for males to place expectations on women that they would do as they are told, and he acts tyrannically against Meera by leaving the party without giving her advance notice. Despite this, she has always shown a certain amount of disgust when listening to his house talk. Despite how hopeless she feels, she continues to cling to the belief that he will turn up even while she worries about everything. In the far future, a very long time after Giri has departed, Meera's husband will send her a text message, which will prompt her to check her email. When her attempt to reach him is unsuccessful, she instantly checks

her email instead of continuing with her call. This causes her to experience awful embarrassment. I am able to comprehend your anxiety, Meera. Irked even, I'm sorry if any of this has caused you to feel worried. I can guarantee you that this was in no way intended to be the outcome. I proposed that we have a brief discussion on the matter. If I were to tell you how I actually felt, I was confident that you'd understand. That was a very heavy load to bear to be aware of how intricately our destiny was intertwined.

I tried, I want you to know that I tried, but I can't go on like this anymore. We have just one life to lead and I can't waste it. I need to be clearer in my head about what I want to do. I will be in touch. Bear with me, Meera. Bear with me until then. (81)

When Meera is questioning him about his reasons for doing what he's doing, he shows her the Lilac mansion that he had intended to sell in order to provide for his family and ultimately settle down. Yet Meera's stance never changes, even when he brings up the Lilac home in conversation. Despite this, it is abundantly evident that he values the riches and goods of his goose girl more than those of Meera, and as a result, he despises Meera. They were over heels in love with one another when they made the decision to get married, but their relationship was destined to end in tragedy. The fact that Giri went missing threw significant doubt on her capacity to carry on life after that point. The publisher that has been printing Giri's books has opted not to print her forthcoming work since she did not purchase one hundred copies of it when it was first made available to the public.

GREEK MYTHOLOGY: GOD & GODDESSES

Throughout the story, Meera is referred to as Hera, the Greek goddess of marriage and family, and Giri, Meera's husband, as Zeus. Zeus is the deity of the sky and thunder. Nair encourages her audience to make comparisons between Meera's life and the traditional history of gods, in which the God is considered to be superior to the Goddess, but the Goddess is never told where the God has gone when she no longer sees him on the horizon. It was a brilliant inference on Nair's part to think that Meera was actually Hera, the goddess of women and marriage who also held the title of Queen of the Goddesses. Hera, the Greek goddess, is able to converse with mankind, provide assistance to them, and develop relationships with them. Meera has distanced herself from Giri as a result of his treachery, and she has built a strong friendship with Jayamkondan Anantharaman Krishnamurthy, who is working as his assistant (JAK). She has elevated herself to the role of a deity in the home, and she demands that she will be carried out in all aspects. Yet, Zeus is also venerated in the form of Giri, the God of Thunder and the Heavens. Even in Greek mythology, the love that Zeus and Hera had did not result in the birth of a child. He stays away from Hera so that he might spend time with the other gods. Suddenly Giri vanishes without a trace, exactly like Zeus did in the stories without alerting Hera, and no one knows what happened to him. Both gods have the characteristic of anger, but Giri and Meera both have the characteristic of chaos in common with each other. The disarray that has taken over the home of the Lilacs is too much for Meera to endure, and she is adamant that Giri not learn the truth. Exactly 54 years ago, her grandpa entered into a lease agreement with the property's original owner for a term of 99 years. Meera came to the realisation that Giri did not love her once she moved into the Lilac home; rather, he loved the way of life that she had choose to live for herself.

EXISTENCE INSIDE EXISTENCE

After ending her marriage to Meera, Giri's life has been turned upside down, and she has no idea what the future has in store for her. She takes on the role of sole breadwinner for her family almost quickly. In addition to this, it is expected of women to provide financially for their families; as a result, women frequently find themselves doing numerous jobs in

order to make ends meet. As soon as she realises that she needs to find employment to support her family, she makes a number of adjustments at home, such as switching to a post-paid telephone plan for certain free calls and having Meera's mother, Saro, start sharing marmalade with everybody she meets. These changes are made as soon as she realises that she needs to find employment to support her family. She has brought about significant shifts in the manner in which things have traditionally been carried out at home, yet her family continues to stand behind and support her in every way. All of these things have taken place as a direct result of Giri not being here. Meera is one of the many people who, in the wake of Giri's departure, is left wondering why the two of them are no longer together. Sister Kala Chiti of Sarada is questioned about her confidence in her returning husband. In addition to it, she argues:

“You see, Meera, we are brought up to believe that our husband is our god. His wishes are ours, and without him we are nothing. There is a saying, KalAnalumKanavan, pull analumpurushan. Whether he is hard as a rock or as worthless as weed, a husband is a husband. Can you make a life without your husband?” (200)

In order for Meera to be able to support her family, she has abandoned her former identity as Hera and taken a job as an assistant to Professor J. A. Krishnamurthy. She is now completely self-supporting financially. In point of fact, men do not view women only as objects at their disposal to do with as they want. Despite the fact that many women lack the ability to fight back against injustice and adversity, they are obligated to do so for the benefit of society and their children because they are expected to fulfil their roles as spouses, mothers, and employees. As Giri leaves, Meera never resorts to physical violence in this work; nonetheless, after Giri leaves, she asks, "what next?" over and over again, almost like a mantra, since life must move on regardless of what happened. In addition to that, she would have married someone following her ex-divorce, husband's but she chooses to live alone in order to be able to care for her family in the manner of a predatory bird. A second female protagonist, Meera's aunt Kala Chiti, also finds herself in a difficult situation, but one that is distinct from Meera's. Even though Kala Chiti's husband, Ambi, continues to be obsessed with her hair but not her, and even though he finally leaves her for another woman since she does not have any children, Kala Chiti continues to go on with her life and begins a new one with Sarada:

I finally had a reason to leave him. Not even my father could fault me for this. I was the wronged wife. So I left him. Before I went, I cut my hair at the nape of my neck. I gave it to Ambi. A long braid woven with jasmine and kanakambaram. This is all you ever wanted of me. Keep it. And let me go, I said, walking out. (232)

The way in which women are portrayed in the book is reflective of a life inside a life. Even if their spouses leave them, they are able to select a better life for themselves and never give up hope of achieving it, even if it means starting over. While men have excuses, women have alternatives. Women can choose. While life is filled with indescribable delights, patriarchal society eagerly anticipates the joy it believes it is entitled to. Nair has done a stunning job of illustrating the ways in which female characters are able to discover fresh life despite having a terrible beginning to their stories.

ROLE OF SANYAS IN PATRIARCHAL SOCIETY

The fear that the protagonist ladies feel about the power that men have is what ultimately puts those guys in danger. In the subject of cyclone study, J.A. Krishnamurthy is recognised by his moniker "Kitcha," and he is considered an authority. When he sees Nikhil, a young boy of thirteen, with his mother, it brings back traumatic memories from when he

was growing up. While at school on a particularly lovely morning, Kitcha overhears his father speaking with other family members about his intention to one day become a sannyasin. The fact that his wife would be reminded of her deceased son Kitcha prevents her from going on the trip, despite the fact that it is religiously significant. Following Kitcha's brahmoupadesh, he tells his parents that he does not want to get married or have children, and he gives them a date by which he must leave the house. Kitcha then sets a date for when he must depart the country. Kitcha believes that he should be provided for in terms of brahmoupadesh if he wants his grandfather to live with me on a permanent basis. The results of this are extremely disruptive to his goals. Kitcha's mother, SaradaAmmal, finds herself in a difficult situation as a result of her son's impending departure with his father.

“They tell me I ought to feel blessed to have been married to man who has taken up sanyas. I am cursed, Kitcha, that’s what I am. Neither a wife nor a window. Who am I, Kitcha? You tell me. He says it’s not you. That’s what I can’t bear. If he left me for another woman, I would woo him back; I would bring him back to us. But this! How do I fight this, Kitcha?” (18)

In spite of the fact that her spouse has vanished, she has not given up hope that she would see him again someday. But everything shifts when she gets a message from him declaring that he will never come home again. From that point on, nothing is the same. The significance of this letter in her life can hardly be overstated. An excellent illustration of this is Meera, who begins a new phase in her life by going to school to become an educator, falling in love with a physics professor, and establishing a family. An enlightening experience is provided by Nair's description of "a life beyond the living" for each and every one of the female characters in the book. All of the male characters, including Kitcha's father and Nikhil's father Giri, are sexist swine who look down on their wives and their children. While Kitcha is aware that his father would never return, he can empathise with Nikhil and SaradaAmmal since they both mourn their dads despite the fact that they know they will never see them again. In spite of the fact that the men's betrayals had a significant impact on their descendants, the women in this tale are wonderful because they accepted their new lives with responsibility and expectations despite the fact that the men had abandoned them. The guys in the story do not just ignore the presence of the ladies. Every single one of the main characters is a woman, and they are all searching for happiness.

COMBATING SOCIAL MALAISE

Women are pushing back in order to make our society a better place. It is not permitted for women who seek to alter bad practises in society to grow in status as JAK's daughters. Smriti meets Shivu during the Stree Shakti festival during her last year of college in India, where she also attended the festival. Also, the community has requested that Shivu lead a workshop. In spite of the fact that the forum's organiser, Rupa, is interested in debating themes such as dowry and the ritualistic burning of women, the majority of participants appear to be more curious on the topic of female feticide. Smriti is a very active member of the forum, and she first became involved with it while she was a college volunteer. She eventually becomes friends with Matthew and Rishi as a result of the bravery she demonstrates. Smriti goes to Minjikapuram since the workshop organiser has settled on having the event take place in the state of Tamil Nadu. As she goes for a walk down the beach, she invariably cuts herself on a piece of glass, which causes her to lose a significant amount of blood. As she gets to the hospital, she notices that a lot of other pregnant ladies have also been brought there to find out the gender of their unborn child; if it's a girl, they won't think twice about having an abortion, regardless of whether or not they wanted one. As a result of this knowledge, she has come to the conclusion that she will work on the problem by staging demonstrations, educating the general public about the illegal conduct of those

involved, and gathering further proof of the issue. Smriti comes into contact with Chinnathayi, whose daughter is eager to share all the information she has learned about abortion with her, but fate decides to play a trick on Smriti. This is due to the fact that those who support abortion work together to demolish Smriti. JAK discovers the truth about what took place to his daughter Smriti after conducting in-depth investigation on the subject. The courage of his daughter has provided him with a momentary high, but he rapidly begins to regret what has transpired in regard to her. Women are not helped by men in their struggle against the problems of society; rather, males dominate them by making their lives unpleasant in a variety of ways.

CONCLUSION

The storyline of "Lessons in Forgetting" centres on the female protagonist's decision to forget the lessons that she was given by the male protagonist of the novel in order to make it through life in a kingdom where there is no monarch. The characters in this work travel through several stages of life including marriage, motherhood, daughterhood, and friendship; but, despite these changes, they continue to be powerful examples of femininity. These stages include: marriage; motherhood; daughterhood; and friendship. Possession, spirituality, or the inability to have a kid in the womb are not acceptable justifications for male control over their wives, especially when this control leaves the women to fend for themselves in the shadows. Despite this, after they have retreated into the shadows, they could bring them back out. To summarise, Nair paints a clear picture of the torment endured by her female heroines and reveals to them the path that leads to a happier existence. From this point on, all that is required is some more movement forward. They must, in spite of everything that takes place, have a chance to continue living in the life beyond this one.

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