BHARATHI KIRCHNER'S FICTION: FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE THE WRITING STYLE AND THE CHOICE OF SUBJECTS

Prasad.N

Assistant Professor of English, Government First Grade College, K R Sagara,
Srirangapatna taluk, Mandya dist. 571607.

Bharti Kirchner reflects in her novels both Indian Culture and also a great deal of multiculturalism which is experienced by the Indian immigrants not only in foreign countries but also in India as well.

Kirchner has published four critically acclaimed novels; Shiva dancing, Darjeeling, Sharmila's book and her latest pastries;A Novel of desserts and discoveries. The title of the novel, 'Shiva dancing ' symbolises the great celestial dance of creation that will go on forever .It also means that the voyage of life does not stop and is uncontrollable.Kirchner use of myth Shiva is quite subtle. It is not just inferred by the title or alluded by oblique reference; it is interpretative that the novelist manipulates her characters to make speeches about Shiva.
In the novel 'Shiva dancing 'the sevenyear old Meena Kumari was about to marry her best friend Vishnu Ratan according to the ancient custom of Child marriage,Number Seven her people always believed as an auspicious number. Meena Kumari was to marry on her Seventh birthday and the groom also was named after friend god Vishnu whose number is Seven (7)

"Fresh literary terrain......Shiva dancing is a past travel guide, a past socio political study of contemporary India and even past cook book".

Kidnapped from her homeland,young Meena is unable to find her way home and is soon adopted by an American couple, Meena as time feels a desire to return to her village and find the man chosen for her by her Father to be her husband. Meena compares herself with Sita but she promptly realises that," This is modernday America unlike Sita." Further reference to the mythical Sita is the incident of Meena's condemnation for abandoning her Child-husband, Vishnu when she was in fact kidnapped by bandits.Therefore,Kirchner's use of an ancient bat popular myth has a clear feminist indication underlining the injustice meted out to Indian Women, Bharthi Kirchner is very much aware of the position of Women in India. Shealso delineates the difference between modern American girl and traditional Indian mentality.

Shiva dancing can also be implied and intereprerted that the Shiva is the God the destroyer,the one who creates a cycle of birth and death which symbolizes construction and destroction eventually the constructor, the destroyer and the re-constructor of Meena's life by dancing,Meena's life is destroyed when she is kidnapped recreated when she is adopted ,destroyed when her adoptive mother dies, and again recreated when she returns to India and concludes her predicament.

The story unveils numerous parallel lines as it traces the separate lives of Meena Kumari in America and Vishnu Chauhan in India. It places before us two separate cultures the western and eastern and it also employs the overriding motifs of the dance of 'Shiva' which is performed in gaiety and triumph. Social consciousness comprise of customs, traditions, rituals etc. Meena who always been longing for her root to find her husband Vishnu, her culture, tradition gets excited to know that Vishnu is a journalist and well know reporter in Calcutta.
After an email reunion with Vishnu her Childhood husband Meena-family decides to make a trip to India to rekindle her Indianness and find her old Village .She faces intense humiliation from Vishnu's family in particular and the entire Village ingénues she compares her situation with that of goddess 'Sita',she says, I feel humiliates like her [Sita] I just want to disappear.

Kirchner's another novel, 'Goddess of Fire set up in the seventeenth century India. One of the most reprehensible customs of old India is the practice of Sati. The novel speaks about Moorti a widow who silently opposed the practice of Sati but was forced by her relatives.The novel also speaks about the rescue of Moorti by a Britisher.Moorti turned out as Maria and worked for the benefit of her Home town. She gets a job through job charnock and within a very short period of time she proved and saved her

job. Further the relationship between Maria and job turned out to be one of the intimate ones. Job her rescuer renames her Maria, the author brings to the notice of the reader that Moorti as Maria has some misgivings of losing her identity,especially Anglicizing her name. The story takes a turn when Maria goes back to her Village and becomes a witness to see the horrific situations of her family members. The resultant of her rejection towards the natural order of Sati made her parents to lose their lives and her brothers to be virtual slaves.

The novel makes a strong statement about the prejudices and turmoil between English and Indians. While giving readers a detailed glimpse into the more exotic India the author says as a nation and the people of the nation must come to terms with tumultuous changes set a flame by English traders.

The works of South Asian Women writers follow this pattern and the novels are increasingly introspective, open ended and questioning. Issues are no longer black and white answers are neither stereotypical nor easy to find. Menare no longer seen as enemies to women kind . Female protagonists are seen to be in search of self fulfilment, order, meaning and security amidst the confusions and uncertainties of their new conditions.

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