



***THE REVENGE OF KAIVALYA: A RETELLING OF A MYTH GIVING  
VOICE TO THE VOICELESS***

- **LAVANYA R.MOHAN**

**ABSTRACT**

India, an erstwhile European colony, is rich with indigenous myths and folk tales. During the colonisation phase, these tales were considered as unauthentic by the Europeans, as they were not supported with reason. But after colonisation, these tales began to get attention, irrespective of state, culture, ethnicity, gender etc., through its representation in literary works, films etc., As a result, they attain a position of authenticity and become credible to people. Apart from these tales and legends, the people who lie in the bottom part of the society, especially the native people, come to the forefront, as they always played a prominent role in propagating Indian culture and belief systems in its entirety. Apart from the males, their female counterparts also contributed to the spreading of indigenous myth and tales.

My paper aims to analyse how the traditional myths or other fantasy tales occupy a central position in the mind-set of Indian consciousness, even with the advancement of technology. It is accompanied by an analysis of how a woman character becomes the source of both peace and destruction accompanied by a myth and at the same time, how she is suppressed by the same. I would like to do this through a reading of the novel "*The Revenge of Kaivalya*" (2013), by 'Sumana Khan'. Kaivalya illumines herself in a patriarchal society, but at the end, her luminosity is destroyed by the same society from time immemorial.

**KEYWORDS**

East-West Encounter, Ambiguity, Indigenous Myth, Gender minority

## **RESEARCH PAPER**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Culture, gender, ethnicity etc. always play pivotal role in the formation of a nation. It is transferred from one generation to other through a cyclic process. India is no exception for this. It is a nation with rich culture and heritage of its own; with various elements embedded in it.

Culture is a word with a broad view, including race, ethnicity, gender etc. which operate in its own unique pattern. India, the erstwhile colony of Britain has its own culture, which was earlier considered as barbaric by the Europeans. The colonizers considered their culture as superior and tried to subvert the culture of their colonized nations. The natives believed in myths and legends, which influenced their everyday life.

### **THE RATIONAL AND IRRATIONAL**

The “White Man’s Burden”, a term introduced by the famous poet ‘Rudyard Kipling’ was specific to the colonizers’ belief in their duty to educate the uncivilized or the barbaric people. The indigenous belief regarding myth and fantasy tales was considered as barbaric by the colonial people. Since these tales were transferred orally from one generation to the next, its credibility was nearly questioned by the Whites, as there were not written records. However the natives, who were labelled as irrational by the Colonizers, retained their belief in those elements of myth and fantasy and at the same time, accepted the dominant culture.

In the modern era, these incredible tales and myths are getting presented in various forms. For instance, in literature, movies, painting etc, one could see a vivid portrayal of these irrational elements. As a result the age old European suspicion regarding authenticity of these fairy tales and myths are erased, as they receive new forms and designs. Since these tales and myths form a part of the everyday life of the natives, its representations attain a voice of its own and thereby gives voice to the voiceless who lie in the bottom strata of society. These representations turn to a narrative technique in the modern period. The elements of magic are used to present a rational world. In other words, the extraordinary or an irrational world is projected in such a way to construct a real world.

### **MAGICAL REALISM AS A NARRATIVE STRATEGY: GIVING VOICE TO THE VOICE LESS**

Magical Realism is associated with Latin American Literature, used by various writers like Garcia Marquez, Jorge Luis Borges, Elena Garro, Isabel Allende etc. It is a Postcolonial

Discourse. 'Stephen Slemon', the postcolonial critic, in his celebrated thesis "Magical Realism as Postcolonial Discourse" writes:

"In the language of narration in a magical realist text, a battle between two oppositional systems takes place, each working toward the creation of a different kind of fictional world from the other". (10-11).

The conflict between the two opposing discursive systems in the language of Magical realism is similar to the opposing systems of the colonial subjects, who are caught between two cultures. They are the practitioners of cultures of their colonial masters and their own indigenous culture. When European reality is presented in a language intended for the colonial masters, the native cultural factors like the folk tales and myth are presented in the language of the colonized. The coexistence of both languages ultimately leads to decolonization by a subversion of the language of the dominant culture and its replacement with the language of the native culture.

Postcolonial representations aim at giving voice to the Third World, whether they are literary works or any other artistic representations. Homi K Bhabha, in his celebrated book *The Location of Culture*, remarks,

"Postcolonial perspective emerges from the colonial testimony of the Third World countries and the discourses of minorities within the geopolitical divisions of East, North and West" (171).

Indian English Literature has its own features just like the European literature. Since India is a land of vast culture, its representations can be seen in the art forms created by the nation. For instance, the ancient Indian texts like Ramayana and Mahabharata etc. project the rich Indian culture in its entirety. These are the testimonies of earlier Indian English writings. From a colonial perspective, these texts, in reality give voice to India's cultural elements which are integrated to the everyday life of people, whether they are the high class or the low class people.

In the *Holy Bible*, Jesus said to one of his official, the following words, which are taken from the Gospel of St. John, chapter 4 and verse 48; "Unless you people see signs and wonders, you will not believe". (96). This quote implies the extent to which the miracles and fantasy exert its influence on people. It shows the culture of a folk who still believe in an extraordinary power to make the impossible while living in a rational world. This belief in signs and myths in the Indian context can be traced from time immemorial. Salman Rushdie is the widely acclaimed Indian English writer, who formed and presented his contents in a magical realist text, along with Arundhati Roy, R.K.Narayan etc.

Even though the current scenario in Indian writing witnesses a deviation from the employment of magical realism, there are still exceptions. The popularity of such magical realistic works is never deteriorated. This can be analysed through the wide popularity attained by Sumana Khan with her debutant work *The Revenge of Kaivalya* published in the year 2013.

### **PEACE AND DESTRUCTION ON THE SAME COIN**

On the surface level, *The Revenge of Kaivalya* is a text, which presents the wrath and the revenge of a girl named Kaivalya. But on a deeper level, the novel explores the inner reality persistent in every woman, and how the patriarchal society tries to subvert that reality. In this novel, Kaivalya represents the inner strength possessed by every woman in a society, which is above the masculine power. That feminine strength is sometimes unreachable to its counterparts. This novel projects such a feminine power which cannot be easily suppressed by the male dominated society. Kaivalya possess the power of destruction and at the same time provide the eternal bliss or Kaivalya, as her name indicates. She becomes an ultimate source of energy for those who seek it and she destroys that which hinders her path. But at the end, she is succumbed by the ultimate patriarchal power, who suppresses her wrath and the revenge resulted out of it.

In this novel, the unravelling of the two sides of a woman is presented through the use of an age old tale in Hindu mythology. In Hindu mythology, there is the concept of Trimurti, which is the supreme divinity in Hinduism. It alludes to three main concept of Creation, maintenance and destruction personified as Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva respectively. Lord Shiva is the destroyer of evil and transformer. He is the supreme source who has various forms which are both benevolent and fierce. On one side, he is in his Yogic posture and on the other side, he slay demons.

The novel explores the Yogic yet destructive form of Lord Shiva. Here, this traditionally transferred belief system regarding Lord Shiva is used to make a woman to surrender her power to give bliss to others and destroy those who destroyed her own life. In this way, both Lord Shiva and Kaivalya are equal in their exhibition of the multiple faces. Thus they can be considered as two equal powers. However the conventional patriarchal society establishes rigid rules and norms and designs a particular code of conduct for women. Once that code of conduct is broken, the feminine power will be thwarted away from the world. The same thing happens in the novel also. One power becomes highly superior to another and it is subdued or succumbed. Lord Shiva attains highhandedness at the end.

In this novel, Kaivalya is seen as a negative energy which destroys the balance of nature. “But now, a negative force threatens to create an imbalance in pre-destined events. It is a force filled with anger and hatred; a force which has refused to surrender to his Divine Love” (P-14). As a result, it is the duty of the masculine power to destroy that negative power and maintain the balance of nature. Here, since Kaivalya is a form without any body, which comes from an immortal world, the same immortal power is used to send her back to the world she came from. The undefeated power of Kaivalya is finally succumbed to the power of Lord Shiva. “There is no deity powerful than time (2-88-11). This is a quote from *Valmiki Ramayana*. In the case of Kaivalya, even time also waits for her burial as Lord Shiva waits for the right time to make her surrender to his divine power. Even Kaivalya also waits for the right time for the rebirth of her enemy Neelkanth Raya which makes her to come back and avenge the death of Poovamma and herself.

Kaivalya exists as a mythical character in the novel, unfolded by Tara even before she knew anything about the real Kaivalya. It was like a folk song about a curse, which is sung by a family for ages. It was written in palm leaves and the family tried to destroy it. Tara received it from her colleague. But at the end it is revealed that these palm leaves were sent by an unknown force to help the group who is determined to destroy the negative form of Kaivalya. This unknown form can be realised as Lord Shiva himself, who unfolds himself at the end. Here the mythical character of Kaivalya, who exists in both the rational and the irrational world, is being watched by the Divine force. It points out an important aspect that even in a natural and unnatural world a feminine power is always controlled and determined by the masculine power.

## CONCLUSION

*The Revenge of Kaivalya* catches the attention of the readers by dealing a powerful contemporary theme of female subjugation. Its popularity owes much to the use of its fairy tale characteristic accompanied by the usage of myths existing in Hindu mythology. The credibility regarding the oldest existing tales in the postcolonial nations attain authenticity even in this technological era.

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