

The Soul Charmer: Quest for Love in Richa Saxena's Select Poems

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ABSTRACT

In The Soul Charmer, Richa Saxena addresses feminist issues that reflect the social background of twentieth-century Indian society. This paper analyses her selected poems from a feminist psychoanalytic perspective, revealing the manner in which Indian women are supposed to display themselves in order to please the ones watching them: men – the gender oppressors – who established chauvinistic rules by which they judged women's self presentation. Moreover; the analysis is also based on the reading of her voices in her poems where women are shown how desperately they need love and sympathy from their male counterparts. We shall try to present in the paper the sense of distance and aloofness she witnesses and quest for love in her life which is vividly shown in her poems. She is one of the newest faces in the field of Indian poetry. Her poetry surely seems to make her one of the most distinctive and original of Indian poets writing in English today. Most of her poems deal with the theme of unfulfilled love and yearning for love. Quest for love or rather the failure to find emotional fulfilment through love, is the central theme of her poems.

Keywords: *Feminist Psychoanalytic, Feminine, Indian Woman, Richa Saxena, Quest for Love.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Richa Saxena who did her debut in the field of poetry with her collection titled *The Soul Charmer*. It is the collection of variety of poems and was published in 2016. Much of her biography is unknown as she hasn't made it public yet. The only information that can be found about her is that she is a qualified company secretary, a law graduate, content writer, curator, a baker by passion. She is poised to become a good poet that can be predicted from the qualities of poems she has written. They are lucid, contain mundane themes and are amalgamated combination of romance, motivation and emotions. It is one of the best literary works of the author. The collection showers the droplets of intense love and sentiments that has an immense connection to a human being's life. The book clearly depicts that the author has let her heart out while penning down this book. The poetess is indeed a soul charmer. A dreamer, a tale knitter who plays with words like fire. There is a fire in her heart that keeps her going. A hacker who hacks into people's mind and digs out their real self. She is a rebel, in her poetry a woman of substance. She is a book that one cannot leave unread. That is Richa Saxena.

The Soul Charmer is a pure bliss and worth to read. It's a collection of fine verses by the poetess which portrays the different facets of life indeed a phenomenal journey of love. It indeed casts its spell on its readers and hits

the most sensitive chords of a being. All poems felt like a crescendo of emotions that soothes the tympani of one's hidden conscience. Right from the very commencement of the book, the poetess just nailed it. Each and every poem is based on a different theme which clearly highlights the sublime incidents and the long term realisations that have almost occurred in every grown up individual's life. "Being Relatable" is what makes a creation to get itself imbibed into its readers. This is what makes a creation special, with an identical existence.

It is an exquisite collection that resonates with varied emotions like desires, unfilled dreams, identity, passion, solicitude and hope. The poems dwelled with several emotions of its readers. From the unfulfilled urges in one's life to the adolescent explorations regarding love ; from stepping up and redefining bodily pleasures to the deceit and hopeless assurance of a caged soul ; from getting drenched in the fragrance of love to a sturdy self assurance of being alright ; from a random fondness towards the mortal world to the silent prayers for affection ; from the unhealed scars from the daunting past to the echoing soliloquies ; from the mysterious adieus to the story of a living dead ; from making out in love to feeling it's essence ; from beckoning counterparts to the ravishing firsts - the sights, the touches ; from the awaiting love to the awaiting life ; from getting back down the memory lanes hand in hand with the first hero in a girl's life to getting high on love ; from the unanswered queries to the ripped wounds in a fervent avalanche ; from fearless decision fall in love again to the ineffable aspirations of an eccentric heart and lastly hoping for a better tomorrow to come that indeed is a worthy message of hope for the hopeless, by the poetess.

A magnificent creation with infallible traits that leaves an everlasting scar in the soft convolutions of the untouched minds. The style and language of the poems is above average and commendable. The metaphors used in the poems are the top icing that makes the creation even more catchy and appealing. The originality of the verses along with the synchronization of putting it at the right places, in the contents of the book also adds to the pros of the book. There are no glitches. Some of the prominent poems are as under:

"Unfilled Dreams", "She is the Girl", "The Sinful Bird", "To the Girl in Love", "I am Alright", "A Beautiful Day", "Love Me Like Never Before", "Scars", "Voice the Final", "Goodbye", "The Lifeless Life", "Tonight, I See You", "Seasons of love", "Love Me Tonight", "And We Became Us", "Soulmates", "Please, Betray Me" "Do you love me, still?", "The First Touch", "Love at First Sight", "My Heart Awaits You" etc.

"The Caged Bird" is an apt example of a patriarchal domination. This ballad is a sheer reflection of the limitation one goes through in the pressure and judged eyes of the society often in despair and working in order. It beautifully captures the feeling of depression and angst with the world. Sometimes we feel all dejected, tired and depressed and we all want to end it and walk into oblivion. The author speaks about the journey of little girl who is glad as her wishes are getting fulfilled at the onset but meets a stiff resistance as she grows up:

I was once a little girl:
With wishes umpteen,
And you fulfilled them all;
Making me feel on cloud nine
I was the star that dazzled in your
Galaxy;

Shiny and bright,
And you like the expansive sky;
Protected me with all your might (1-9).

But this happy journey doesn't last long because her ambitions and aspiration of freedom are stifled and she feels suffocated by the atmosphere. The speaker tries to convey that when a girl in India becomes adult variety of custom and traditions are slapped on her life. She can't come out of her home alone and enjoy her life as she used to enjoy in childhood. The courtyard and room becomes her world where she has to remain throughout her life. She feels tamed and caged by the social dogmas:

Then one day rules changed;
The game got messy,
Social taboos came upfront;
Dominating and fussy (10-13).

Her inner voice urges her to break the shackles of patriarchy and free herself from all domination which limits her flight. She musters the courage and aspires to fly like Icarus but to her dismay she can't and she complains:

You taught me to fly;
But with wings of others
Clasped by chains of patriarchy;
The little birdie got shivers (14-17).

At last she complains to the unidentified listener whom he expects to help her but the only solution she gets from him is that she should learn to adjust, behave like a woman and limit her dreams and be content what she has. The lines beautifully depicts how in Indian societies girls are often lectured to learn the art of being a house wife whose only job is to cook food and clean the kitchen. She implores the listener:

You taught me to be happy on my
Terms;
To revel in contentment,
Yet the first time I complained,
You smilingly pushed me to a little
More adjustment (18-23).

Similar echoes are found in the Kamala Das' poem "An Introduction". It too speaks about the little girl's shattered dreams who longs to be loved when she becomes adult but she becomes a persona non grata in her own home and is married as soon as possible. The poetess speaks it like this:

I was child, and later they
Told me I grew, for I became tall, my limbs
Swelled and one or two places sprouted hair, when
I asked for love, not knowing what else to ask
For, he drew a youth of sixteen into the
Bedroom and closed the door. He did not beat me

But my sad woman-body felt so beaten.

The weight of my breasts and womb crushed me.

I shrank / Pitifully. (23-31)

In her another poem like "She is the Girl" the poetess speaks about a girl who has enough fire in her and wants to vent her pent up emotions, wishes and desires without looking at the societal pressure. This story is the story of every girl living in nook and corner of India. The poem reflects the individuality she longs for. She in a sense tries to give a message to male folk that she is not inferior compared to them. She forcefully rejects the male notion that women are inferior and weak. The poetess says about the iconoclast girl who wishes to defies the norms and wipe out all the bumps she faces:

Spark in her eyes, spunk in her voice:

She is he girl-

Who defies the norms;

Dreams she carves, stories she weaves,

Know her once and take along-

An impression,

That never leaves (1-7)

The poetess envisages that the girl who is set to do something independently and like a typical feminist wants as Aapola et al. says "individualistic, complex . . . especially about personal choices" (qtd in Zheng, J 23) and wants to establish a self identity though she has to go through tough odyssey:

She has roles to play, verses to say

And, a journey she set on (8-9)

Although she will meets a lot of challenges in her war of liberation. She may get a lot of disrespect, epithets such an immoral, anti-traditionalist and opposition from the orthodox section of society but she need not to worry because the sweetest of the victorious are achieved after the hardest hard work instead she should move on and continue her journey:

Smiling through the bumps

Coming her way (10-11)

The author continues her description of the girl and negates that it is not a fairy tale girl rather a real one. Such girls are found among us who eat, drink and dream in the world where we live in:

A no fairy-tale girl, lass who is for real,

A tea sipper, a coffee kisser

High on her dreams,

Flying with her aim clear (12-15)

The poem speaks about the qualities of girl who has set off herself to fulfil the unfulfilled dreams. According to the poetess such are none other than she herself, and other common girls whom she sees daily. Because all of them are in one or other way victims of patriarchy, obsolete customs; truth is whoever is victim of this injustice tries to set herself free:

A heart on fire, a smile on her face
A soul ablaze,
Unshackling the chains, breaking free
She is the girl
A little in you
A little in me (16-21).

"The Silent Tormentor" is a complaint to the beloved for being harsh for a small mistake which hurts her dearly. It beseeches her lover to end the separation and talk to her again. The poem hints at a woman who is in quest of love. She feels neglected and wants to be loved by her beloved:

Hey, Love!
Why aren't you talking to me?
Why aren't you holding me?
The unsaid words,
The fiery stare"
Why are you not yelling at me? (1-6)

She accepts the mistake that she is inefficient and difficult to handle and stubborn but this is what she is. She coaxes him to accept her as she feels desolate without him:

Yes, I was a little clumsy
A little stubborn;
But, that is how I am,
Your honeypunch,
Whom, today, you scorn! (7-11)

The last stanza talks of utopian love, longing, silences, loneliness, pain, tribulations of an unquiet lover who constantly tries to persuade his dejected lover to love her. So that she could feel solace and her aching heart feels joy:

Nudge me little,
Pull me close,
The pleading words,
Wish I could voice,
But,
Why aren't you listening to me?
Why aren't you talking to me? (12-18)

The instances of quest for the love can be found in the poem "In Hope of a Better Tomorrow" the poem speaks about the speaker who feels lonely among the people who are crazy. Although she is among the people yet she feels no solace among them, she is constantly in search of his true love who could make her joyous. She in desperation wishes:

Standing alone in this crazy crowd,

Desperately,
Wanting to cry aloud;
Wish you were here,
To pamper and care
To show me the light ahead,
To smile with me;
Through the path we tread (1-8).

"Love Me Never Before" is a passionate appeal by the author to her beloved to fill the void which has been created due to his absence. The poem speaks about the aloofness of the poet. She is facing the lack of love from her partner who does not seem responding. She beeches:

Look deep into my blank eyes,
And reach out to the corner,
Where pain resides;
Love me like never before..... (4-7).

She further implores him to balm her wounds of solicitude which can only be cured when he meets her. Moving further, the forlorn lover imagines a situation where there is tranquillity nothing disturbs and distracts the expression of lover. She believes:

Let there be silence around,

That speaks of my love abound;
Let my heart find solace in your stare
Warm enough to set my soul on fire,
And let me melt, like the wax;
Love me like never before...(8-13).

At last she has a wish and she wants it to be fulfilled by her lover:

Let me be free and fly so far-

Give me the wings,

That were once torn apart,
I shall fly high and soar up there
Just to be back in your arms bare...
Because that's where I belong;
Love me like never before.... (14-20)

II. CONCLUSION

Thus, the collection is a long dreamt attempt to portray love in its entirety. Love, as simple, or as profound as it can be, embraces every human relationship. Through this book, the poetess dives into the vast ocean of love and brings out the poetic pearls. Throughout the book, various hues of love are reflected. Love, in its most innocent form, when it is between a daughter and a father, sensuous form or when it is between a man and a woman. Perhaps, in it's, most gruesome form, when it is clasped by the chains of patriarchy .And, the most powerful of

all, and the kind of love where one discovers their true self-the love for one's own being. The book explains that love does not always happen between lovers. Love also serves to inspire someone. To fill the void with hopes, to cry for someone and when the purpose is accomplished, to move on to a new journey. To create more memories. To always remember, that someone somewhere always keeps you in his prayers.

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