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THE GEOGRAPHY OF WOMEN IN AYSE KULIN'S SEVDALINKA

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Abstract

In the Bosnian culture, due to familiar or environmental reasons, the stories of lovers who can not be together are called 'sevdalinka'. 'Sevdalinka' is the name of the novel written by Ayse Kulin as well and it tells the tale of what happened during the Bosnian war that broke out between 1992-1996 where Bosnia constituted the sixth state in the federal formation that was established by Tito.

The novel tells the stories of the beginnings of the war and the events that took place during the war in addition to details of the character 'Nimeta' who is a journalist and her marriage, infidelity and analysis the detailed family relationships. In the novel, Nimete's life and war are intertwined. During the event, leading female characters who possess different worlds, despite living on the same land, their understanding of life and resulting thoughts shows them to be having totally different geography.

Keywords: Sevdalinka, Woman, Conflict, Marriage, War.

Introduction

The word 'Sevdah' (Sevdah, karasevda) in the Turkish language reflects the longing and torment of the lover, its root is based in the Arabic language 'sewda' and is a reference to black bile. Ancient Greek and Arab doctors believed that one of the four elements existing in the human body is black bile and it does in fact effect the emotional aspect of a persons' life, they believed it aroused melancholy and unrestfulness. Hence in greek the word 'melancholy' reflects the basic meaning of the word figuratively: melanhos in greek- black bile. The feeling of love that is referred to by the word 'Sevdah', preserved its basic emotional aspect and transformed to represent over time and place the temporal sad feeling of the Slavic-Bogomil <http://www.bosnakforum.com/index.php?topic=387.0;wap2>.

The piece of work that carries the title of 'Sevdalinka' telling the story of an infidelity in addition to displaying the dimensions of the war in Bosnia. We are faced with different characters of women in this artistic work. No matter how different times or society, women's role, her view point, the expectations of the society of her actually never change and always stays the same. Women constantly, roam and act in what men staged and created as a world, with a secondary status in the society. Women on the other hand had always accepted that dependency role assigned to her. For this very reason, women activity limit was defined, for long years, by the importance her house structure, her kitchen, dress and food she made etc,

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while men were always responsible for every thing else. This type distribution of labor made men Gods in women's eye. Since women were always mesmerised by power and the powerful in this case are men. By the same token women had accepted to be always on the receiving end, the one that is done to and about, men on the other hand were satisfied by this situation. Yet the dilemma between men and women and the problem has not been resolved. The world of men and that of women, as it is today, has always been compared to each other and a war that is between them maybe will never come to an end. 'There will always be a struggle, Chronics and history books written by men and for men will always bring up the unnoticed the war between men and women. It is the kind of war that goes between men and women. Since the beginning of history, and unconsciously, bringing the confrontation to the surface causing conflict, at times handing the dominance to men and other times to women'(Gaber,1998:15).

Infidelity in the Topography of 'Sevdalinka'

The infidelity of women, requires changes according to the rules of society. In feudal societies the infidelity of women, is more of a stain on to her self rather than on to men. While the infidelity of men is often kept a blind eye on, society will not forgive the infidelity of a woman and will eventually force her to end her marriage relationship. Many women on the other hand find men infidelity amusing. One possible reason is that women see men as their masters. In the novel 'Sevdalinka' Nimeta the journalist, cheats on her husband. While Nimeta is married to Burhan and has two children. While she is cheating, Nimeta has accepted her relationship with her husband as mundane. Her Croatian lover Stefan, is a different character than her husband, Nimeta feels liberated and free while with Stefan. Her husband on the other hand was where her duties come to play representing real life and reality. Nimeta, no matter how she appears as a liberated woman, she still bows to the rules of marriage and those of society accepting what those rules bring in to her life. One of those things she has to endure is her husband and her relation with Stefan adds to the excitement, spicing up her life.

'Living is like a still lake for years, as if everyone knew what they and who they are' (Kulin, 2010:5).

Women always live life deeper than men, she likes to go with the flow of excitement. She desires to be attached to those she loves with great passion and emotions. Observing everything around her trying to extract meaningfulness out of them. Tries to understand the changes in the person she is with. She tries to recreate him a new inside of her. She adopts his plans and flows and also worries and tribulations. When Nimeta met Stefan, she dived in to those thoughts, got caught in to her emotions, and let her lose in to loving the men she loved. No matter how much she tried to run away from Stefan, she never broke away from him. While falling in love to with Stefan, she actually loved her husband. But she does not feel the regarding excitement she feels with her lover. Stefan would say "*you are in love with me but you still love your husband*".

Nimeta, while struggling between her love affair and her family, becomes estranged to her self. This estrangement stems from the departure of the ego from her being, It is like the sculpture maker approaches his piece of art from a distance looking at it from a distance, that was the state of psyche was of Nimeta. Another way of putting it would be the contradiction that erupts between the ego and the values of the same individual. The on going questioning starts in the spiritual world and she starts recalling the previous world she lived in before meeting Stefan, this includes her actions, life style. The principles she knew all along as rights have shaken and now she is looking to account for the difference between the past nNimeta and the new one. Estrangement goes all the way back to Plotinos and Aint Augustine, the expression clarity of conflicting thought concept is found in Hagel. Hagel evaluates self estrangement as Ontological, which means the same person, trying to be creative by actualizing self-and the thing- while being influenced and directed by others, the person turns in to tow entities, this division comes into being when the person starts seeing

them selves and their ego as separate entities. Nimeta dispensing her core values, becomes out of control over her actions and behaviours. She starts living a conflict within her self while aiming to demolish the love she harbored. 'She, gave a place inside her heart to a kind of passion and love that was not suppose to be there, at the same time as that love grew, she made the effort not to nurture and nurish it. But to no avail she could not manage to stop it.'(Kulin,2010:2). 'No matter how hard she tried, even in a cold house, or empty street, would appear before her eyes; there is no escape from Stefan' (Kulin, 2010:228).

While Nimeta would live the struggle with her self, she finally makes the choice, her choice would be her marriage. *'She chose her husband and her kids over her love of Stefan, that choice has to bring its fruits. She chose depression over a new life.'* (Kulin, 20120:41) She did not have the stomach to face a new life. She is still tied to her husband. *'She felt , she had the right to complain about Burhan, her husband, but she would not accept that from others, not her friends not even her mother.'* (Kulin, 2010:76) Over the years, Nimeta despite not being in love with her husband, she had established a strong bond with him. Though she also never said no to Stefan, her lover, demanding her intimacy. *'To not say no to Stefan, you always have a good reason Nimo, cause you are in love with him'* Nimeta, with every bit of hope that is left in her to say no when ever she is with him, suddenly for a reason she could not figure out, losing control of herself would find herself saying yes to Stefan.' (Kulin, 2010:85) 'Stefan is alive in her heart' with all of this happening in her life, Nimeta still held on to her marriage and made the choice, yet she did not know who will her life unfold before her eyes *'A huge wound has opened in her heart, how in the world would she get back to her old days.'* (Kulin, 2012:97).

Stefan appeared to Nimeta in a time where her husband Burhan was assigned to a job out of town, a time she felt only. 'All happened in a time where her relationship with her husband strained and suddenly this man appears, all of a suddeen she finds herself taken by the moment. She was taken but, she did not leave, she stayed.' (Kulin, 2010:139).

Love & Passion in 'Sevdalinka' Topography

What is Passion? A topic that is in question since the existence beginning of human race. It's meaning originates from the Indian word 'lubh' to love passionately. While man kind researching and trying to understand all aspects and states of passion, passion became a topic for novels, stories and films and continues to be. A women who is in love forgets about herself. The minute Passionate love is experienced, it spirals out of control of the person living it. Lover starts wondering why did they fell in love in the first place. There exists different opinions on how Passionate love develops. Some opinions say that the person falling in love finds similar traits in the opposing person as a reasoning for falling in love. In this case an active person would find a similar one, while an emotional person would find a similar emotional person to fall in love with. With all this being said, some times the psychological tendencies and environmental conditions would dictate the behaviours of the person falling in love. An amours person would want to feel secure. To reach the feeling of security, that person by falling in love would want to love someone else to feel secure . Thus needing someone else in love would give the lover the feeling of avoiding insecurity. Nimeta, would feel weak as her husband constantly spends time away from her. *'It was like entering into an dense, grey fog, not being able to see ahead. Right at that point, the point of feeling drawned she met Stefan. Through t hat thick, dense fog a golden, warm and thin light appeared love to her. It was like a roman candle, exploding, lighting Nimeta's surroundings, overwhelming her, then all of a sudden, extinguished... forever, there was fog... again.'* (Kulin,2010:26) Nimeta, found strength in Stefan for herself. It is natural when someone loves a woman, she feels secure of herself, he regards her, spoils her. *'before him coming closer to her, putting his hands around her neck and touching her gently, gazing his eyes on to the beauty and not getting enough of it, before all of that, she would feel abandoned, discoloured and frozen in time and a woman who is ordinary not feeling beautiful. But the minute he kissed her, she felt the immortality, in the light of ivory, given upright.'* (Beauvoir, 1979:84) With the man's love, woman feels she reached luminace. Nimeta also regains lunminace falling in love

with Stefan. Nimeta thus is hooked to Stefan with passionate amorous and connected to her husband with love.

Family in 'Sevdalinka' Topography

Even if the place of woman in society changes, inside the family house, the thought of the traditional woman still maintains its position. Nimeta, like her husband worked and earned money, yet what was expected of her is her basic role in the house, her responsibilities towards her kids and husband. Her husband, Burhan, while he is an understanding spouse, respecting Nimeta's work, he still harboured the classical image of a woman in his head. He always wanted to be first on Nimeta's priorities. *'Men are about coming home at the end of the day, to the warmth of a home, a hot meal, with their cameras on tranquil and peaceful. Woman who run every where with cameras on their shoulders can only get along with men who shared same job.'* (Kulin, 2010:35) Women, are attributed things like, dealing over the years with unimportant things, running after less valuable aims, possess slave souls. Meanwhile when women take care of small house chores, it resulted in her being a judged for a long time as a slave and prisoner to that house. For hundreds of years, a woman who lives at home, would get herself busy by ornaments, doing embroidery, which pushed them to get lazy to the comfort of their homes. *'For house wives, higher status is more about being stright and beneficial rather than beauty and freedom.'* (Beauvoir,1979:18) While Raziyanim, still thinks that the best place for a woman should be her home. Raziyanim has only one world and that is her home. She ties all the problems that Nimeta's family goes through to the reason that Nimeta is not at home. *'Kids of mothers who work outside the house, for sure lack in decency.'* (Kulin,2010:65).

Womanhood is completed by being a mother. While giving birth is part of her creation. To be amother is her natural duty. Since she is a little child, she explained to her the glory of the motherly feeling. Nimeta was raised with these teachings and thoughts of her mother. But Nimeta was a different mother than her own. She never gave in to the feeling of a mother. She loves her children, but she never was a clasical mother or a wife. She put her work at the forefront. She does not have her kids alone in the center of her life. While she protests to her newspaper send her out of town duties, she actually wants it. *'I would pray that he would want me to even go along with Ivan who refuses to confess to you.'* (Kulin, 2010:50) Beauvoir, states that momentus instinct non existing, it is a feeling that is related to society rather. *'Motherhood, generally is strange self admiration, alturism, imagination, sincerity, bad faith, coveting and a mix of dog like actions.'* (Benauvoir, 1981:174) Nimeta, in order to rescue her son, we would do any thing. *'Ready to do any thing, like a wounded, hopeless animal was te woman.'* (Kulin,2010:245).

Marriage in 'Sevdalinka' Topography

Marriage is a social institution. It is the most important expectation of a woman. It happenes to be that the soul of a woman is different than that of a man. As much as they seem simialr prior to birth, the difference starts to appear by the day after birth. Woman and man surely become strangers to each other as time passes by. This process reflects on the marriage that would take place in thier lives. *'Women's soul is like 'an even surfaced lake'. The flow of waters to the lake and from the lake, evaporation and rain would happen on the surface but surely it works through all depths of that lake, while Men's soul, is like flowing waters, always in turbulence, and works to the out most depths, always looking to reach the open seas.'* (Graber,1998:113) Nimeta's marriage to Burhan was after both agreed to be married to each other, and continued for long years to be married. Yet with time their relationship started to wane, distincing them apart. Their relationship was not built on discussions. This started to annoy Nimeta over time, she lost interest in marriage. *'Maybe she fell in love with another man for the lack of fighting with her husband, the accumulating desires inside them, the disappointments, the anger all of which they got to release. Burhan was like a still water, never bloated, never angry, and never questioning at all.'* (Kulin, 2010:144) In Nimeta and Burhan's marriage, woman is river, man turned into a lake, and man could not respond to the expectations of woman. Nimeta, always displayed a strong personality within the marriage structure, while Burhan always supported her. *'You were never*

a person to feel pity for. I always knew the strength inside you. For the reason you were subject to pressure growing up raised by your mom, I have always given you the room to breath and the freedom to be, I left you alone to do what you please.' (Kulin, 2010:164) in Burhan's eyes, Nimeta was always this strong person with strong personality, for this reason he never saw Nimeta the weak. Nimeta will only display her weak side while with Stefan, crying on his shoulders. Craying is the last weapon a woman could have once she is out of other weapon resource, she would use. Tears would act as a complaint and a distraction at the same time. Man while judging this situation, a woman would accept this out of the ordinary rule form the get go. Beauvoir, describes tears as 'magical prayer'. Woman would display inconsistent behaviour in these situations. Some times becoming childish, doing crazy things. Woman would most of the time display such a behaviour when faced with someone who is stronger than her. That is not the case while being around kids who are naturally weaker than her, thus woman would hessitate to display her weakness near children. That's why when Nimeta's husband left to war, and she met with Stefan, she opened up to him and streamed her suffering to him. The main reason is that Stefan is a stronger personality in her eyes.

Conclusion

Ayse Kulin titled 'Sevdalinka' 1992-1996, novel tells the story of the war in Bosnia and Herzgovina, during this war, Nimeta a journalist's struggle of survival is told. In Nimeta's eyes, survival, family, marriage, infidelity, loneliness, fight, motherhood, such feelings and thoughts are examind. In the novel, woman with different upbringing styles and times, and thier stance towards life is told while in the societ's eyes woman's basic roles and aspects remain unchanged despite the changes in the society itself. No matter what geography, woman some times struggles with a feeling of fragmantation, some times with the role display of a strong character or for the sake of her passions, and social concerns and the go between these extremes continues to struggle.

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