

The Day in Shadow: A Voyage of Self Discovery

[1] Bhargavi Jha, [2] Dr. Veerendra Kumar Mishra

Research Scholar, Associate Professor

keshaw.bhargavijha@gmail.com, veerendramishra2008@gmail.com

Article History: Received: 11 January 2021; Revised: 12 February 2021; Accepted: 27 March 2021; Published online: 28 April 2021

Abstract

The theories regarding self, being and identity formation has always been at the locus of all philosophies. Plethora of philosophical dialogues and discourses has been intertwined to understand the rubrics of self and being since time immemorial. Postmodern era encompasses the fractured and hybrid self which is to be understood by understanding the process of formation. In postcolonial era formation of self subsumes class, cast and gender as paramount factors. The paper analyze those factors in detail which provides development of a postcolonial protagonist in Indian context. The postcolonial/Dissensual model of the genre does not surrenders to the traditional conventions of the genre but the failure itself becomes a new perspective of development.

Key Words: Classical *Bildungsroman*, Dissensual *Bildungsroman*, Identity, Self, Subjectivity

1. Introduction

India with its colonial history, diverse culture and dogmas needs a new outlook towards sense of self and the process of formation involved. Cast, class and gender plays a vital role in self formation in Indian context. Pre determines identities and stereotypes becomes the part and parcel of self, subject and identity. Formation of self in female *bildungsheld* in Indian postcolonial narratives subsumes a dissonance with the existing constitutional law of equality and real experience. The Dissensual *Bildungsroman* records this disparity of which is rooted in the self-formation of a female.

Empiricist, cognitivist and pragmatic school of philosophies only negotiates with the male perspective and Female aspect has been always demeaned. The formation of individual takes two approaches as paramount for its development, and that is psychoanalysis which records Freud and Lacan's philosophy and the second approach is of Foucault's philosophy about formation of a subject. Various factors determine the development such as gender identity and family politics, these two aspects become pivotal regarding development. Power as Foucault believes, is the most prominent element in development of an individual. Patriarchy has been the power structure for the female subject, which contrives its pre-determined identity.

Body becomes the medium of subjectification in a female subject. Plethora of philosophies has worked on self and subjectivity but feminist aspect was always ignored. Self of a female was reduced to the trivial body and her aesthetic achievement as an impossible acculturation. Modernism, structuralism, psychoanalysis, humanism etc. only focuses on male formation of self. Female self is surrendered on the ground of marriage as it is considered to be the only end recommended. Question of identity of a female was never the part of philosophic discourse. Pre-given identity, stereotypes and façade of objectification imbricates the terra-firma of female discourse. Development assimilates many interrelated aspects such as class, history and gender. The coherent narrative of this interrelatedness is manifested in the genre of *Bildungsroman*. Classical model of the genre too neglects the female narratives. John Smith in his work *Cultivating Gender* (2016) notes that *bildung*, and its narrativization in the *Bildungsroman*, is not an organic but a social phenomenon that leads to the construction of a male identity in sex-gender system by granting man access to self-representation in the patriarchal symbolic order. As such *bildung* is central form of the institutional cultivation of gender role.

Bildungsroman genre traces the odyssey of formation from a constructed subject to an imagined self of a being. The traditional notion of the genre holds an integrated aesthetic attainment of self, more than two love affairs, rebellious attitude towards the existing norms and attainment of a universal being. Postcolonial narrative represents altogether a very different perspective in consideration to the definition of self and the process involved. Susan Fairman's *Unbecoming Woman: British Woman Writes*

and the *Novel of Development* (1993) also asserts that “the unbecoming of my title is intended to push back against conventional assumption about becoming and stories of becoming, and this pressure is obtained in the large part of focusing a woman” (9). Female writers through the new genre of *Bildungsromane* rejuvenate the female self which have been subjugated.

Female writers like, Elaine Showalter *A literature of their own* (1977) talks about female as a writer in the contemporary world. She emphasizes on a new perspective in which woman can represent herself through her own writings. On the other hand, Virginia Woolf in *A Room of one's own* (1929) talks about two rooms where the first symbolizes the economic self-sufficiency of a woman and the second refers to the psychological space. Thus altogether she tries to establish full domination of a female on herself as a being. They have rejuvenated the reality of the epistemological construction of the women and tried to puncture the patriarchy by subverting the history, language, economy, and public sphere of a male dominating epistemological discourse and the structure maintained in the society.

Classical *Bildungsroman* entails instrumentalisation of women in the journey of male *bildung*. The classical *Bildungsroman* attempt to revive the harmony between aesthetic education and self-sufficiency but a failure in the aspired narrative gave a way to the modernist *Bildungsroman*. The neoclassical *Bildungsroman* initiated innovative narrative. Foreshortened and embedded narrative style for female *bildung*. Foreshortened style ruse the process of formation which avoids chronological growth from childhood to adulthood rather this style depicts *bildung* formation in flashbacks, memories and behaviour. Embedded and intertextuality is a key to the modernist female *Bildungsroman*.

The novel *A day in Shadow* has an autobiographical undertone where author is an observer and omniscient throughout the novel. Postcolonial writings root their experiences to the colonial suppression, Gandhian ideology and free India struggling with its class, cast and religion disparities. Nayantara Sahgal represents her quest of self through the protagonist of the novel. The story begins with a point of conflict and flux with in Simrit, who is dealing with a brutal divorce settlement and an emotional turmoil simultaneously. The novel is a revelation of tumultuous odyssey of a divorced woman, a very much different scenario from the western culture and dogmas. The novel provides the audience with an illuminating inner journey of the protagonist. Conventions of classical *Bildungsroman* incorporates trails or circumstances of life as factors responsible of development of the *bildungsheld*. But Dissensual *Bildungsroman* does not stick to this image of the development, the trails of life are considered to be anti-developing factors. The circumstances circumscribe a female *bildungsheld*. The postcolonial *Bildungsroman* novels could be kept in category of victim-survivor's text. The postcolonial victim-survivor text maps the growth of consciousness, socialization and the construction of subject as Pramod .K. Nayar suggests. Dissensual *Bildungsroman* portrays a self which itself is mired in the social context and has not been allowed to grow. The postcolonial text of the victim-survivor female traces the blockages which hinders the development of a female *bildungsheld*. The hostile social context of the female protagonist manifests a dissonance between the self-determination and integration. In India class, cast, culture and gender and other form of disparities, becomes the space where identities are pre- determined with no outer agency to intervene in between.

Jerome H. Buckley articulates conventions of *Bildungsroman* genre which subsumes a wide range of social potion for male *bildungsheld* particularly. M. A. Ferguson asserts that male *Bildungsroman* encounters development as spiral, where at the end achieves self-realization on his spiritual and psychological journey. On the contrary journey of a female *bildungsheld* is circular and home becomes the axis to this. She lacks those opportunities of exploring the outer world as her male counterpart. The fiction consisting of rebellious female protagonist, who do not surrenders to the traditional norms, end up insane and unhappy. Further, Ferguson argues that most of the present novels portrays female protagonist as incapable of attaining maturity.

The different grounds of development of a female *bildungsheld* triggered after feminist movement. Fairman puts the difference of male and female *Bildungsroman* on the issue of marriage. Male *bildungsheld* marries when already achieved his maturity but female *bildungsheld* gets married young and still needs to find her identity and subjectivity. Fairman asserts for “the male protagonist marriage is not a goal so much as a reward for having reached his goal; it symbolizes his gratification” (129). Thus marriage is not a hindrance in male *bildungsheld*. On the contrary female protagonist find it difficult to have a female role model and finally end up having a male mentor and eventually marries him. Fairman further asserts that “when the mentor is a husband and when apprenticeship reduces to a process of marital binding, it never leads the heroine to mastery but only to a lifetime as perennial novice... (6)

Rita Felski also supports in her study *Beyond Feminist Aesthetics: Feminist Literature and Social Change* (1989), that female protagonist “trajectory remains limited to the journey from parental to the marital home and ...her destiny remains permanently

linked to that for her male companion”(125). Thus nineteenth century female protagonist are left with only two options either lead on unhappy married life, or lead a life in solitude which in most cases leads to self-destruction. Felski highlights the difference that male *bildungsheld* find himself free to embark on his journey of self-discovery on the other hand female *bildungsheld* first have to struggle to get a sense of self by freeing herself from dependence and marital subordination.

Model of female *Bildungsroman* in India does not represent an unhappy and insane life after rebellious step on the contrary the break from the social conventions leads a process of unbecoming. As Simrit choice of divorce from her husband becomes the incessant to her new journey of self-discovery as a poet of nature.

Western model does not have the example of a female *Kunstlerroman* but *The Day in a Shadow* represents a new model of female *Kunstlerroman*. Postcolonial writing represents *bildungsheld* in a form of immanent critique.

The novel explores the space where identity of a female is pre-determined only as ‘wives’ of higher officials in higher class societies. The very beginning lines of the novel reflects this image of female very aptly. Simrit says:

The huge mirror of the Zodiac Room at the intercontinental, festooned in carved gilts, reflected everyone of consequence in the Ministry of Petroleum, and a lot of other officials besides. And their wives.(1)

The episode of divorce in life of Simit could not be concluded as a trial which could invest in her development as an individual rather a tag of divorced woman, arrested her development and made her struck to a point. Traditional philosophies of India does not glorify a woman not having a male dominance in her life. The whole identity is rooted with the identity of the male in her life be it her father, brother, husband or son. The constant struggle of female to ruse an identity and subjectivity without male’s intervene led to the process of formation of a female *bildungsheld*. Simrit also find herself in a constant struggle to carve herself out from the image of Som’s wife.

The episode of divorce, arrested her sense of self and further development as an artist, female *bildungsheld* can’t be devoid of duties attached to her, as a mother, which traditional or male *bildungsheld* does not acquire, the process of formation is self-centered. Odyssey of a female *bildungsheld*, in Indian context, includes duty as a mother and formation of a bildung simultaneously.

Institute of marriage in Indian society is not coming together of two different people rather wives become a helper to the needs and desire of the husband and a thing of vanity in higher class. These constructed lacuna forms the personality of a female and their identity in the society which restricts a free development of a female *Bildungsroman*. The dissatisfaction towards these constructivism stimulates the formation of Dissensual *bildungsheld*. Novel begins with Simrit in a party with Raj and her struggle to keep herself away from the people in the party, who does not take a divorced woman an unacceptable object. Simrit’s encounter with Mr. Joshi illuminates the fact that trails of life in female *bildungsheld* are anti romantic, Mr. Joshi says:

Well, my dear, how very nice to see you. How is – how are the children?

He was studying her solicitously as if divorce were a disease that left pock marks.

One of the women asks “What does your husband do?” [4]

The author purports

Wasn’t it odd, when you were standing there yourself, fully a person, not to be asked what you did? There was such an enormous gulf between herself and these women- most people. May be the questions would be different in the twenty- first century. Simrit herself had never accepted a world where men did things and women waited for him. [6]

The Dissensual *Bildungsroman* is narrative of a victim opening up the gap in common knowledge between what the law and constitution claims about its citizen and what victim narrates as his/her experience. The Dissensual *bildungsheld* is still in the process of becoming, in the process of acquiring consciousness that she/he is thwarted.

The novel consists of twenty two parts which manifest Simrit as well as author’s development as an individual. The parts of the novel invested to Simrit’s relation with Som and her life with him discovers the situations which does not encourage her development. Som has his decisions clear cut and Simrit did accordingly.

Dissensual *Bildungsroman* subsumes embodied subjectivity. The ontological realities imbricates Dissensual *Bildungsroman*. The body has been always been the locus of discrimination against a woman. The politics of body does not let the formation of a female *bildungsheld* develop easily. The author projects Simrit as merely a body for Som. During Simrit’s pregnancy Som was indifferent towards the health issues she was through. Even Simrit never told him she felt reckless and fragile. Som use to be busy with his friend Lalli and his own stuffs. The omniscient other in the journey draws the attention toward the embodied

subjectivity of women since very long. When Raj at any cost want Simrit to come out of her insecurities but all in vain, narrator finds the problem of Silence rooted to the eras of suppression. Narrator says:

He had thought the divorce settlement dictated by her husband was the ultimate in outrage, inflicted on an unresisting, unsuspecting victim. But every layer of her past uncovered something equally shocking. The Hindu race! - Mute, acquiescent, letting things happen to it. From a country to the mind and the body of a woman. [37]

Classical *Bildungsroman* records a negotiation between the society and the authority whereas Dissensual *bildungsheld* rejects any authority and father figure. Nayantara Sehgal portrays male character such as Som, Summer Sigh, and N. Shah very astutely, their thoughts regarding women, as inferior, represents the prominent mentality about women and writer through Simrit breaks these shackles and got free. Simrit getting divorce represents the rejection of the authority.

Classical *Bildungsroman* also termed as ‘novel of education’, education is considered to be the most vital factor in development of a *bildungsheld*. But education does not have a role in female *Bildungsroman*. In postcolonial India female’s education is not much celebrated. Marriage becomes an episode in female’s life in India when education does not make any difference. Formal education does not contribute in self-development in female *bildungsheld*. The development is supported on the knowing subalternity through the lives of other victims. Lalli, a friend of Som, killed his wife out of rage as he found her indulge in an adultery. Som justified the murder and considered Lalli a man of courage. Simrit cannot bear the fact of man around her calling her Bhabi, and being a murderer of his wife.

Knowing subalternity termed by Pramod .K Nayar, governs the Dissensual *bildungsheld*, ‘it emphasizes on historical consciousness, political awareness, advocacy, self-reflexivity and self-critique among the victim and the disfranchised’. ‘Knowing subalternity is the making of the ‘citizen-subject’’. The citizen-subject is one who is aware of the subjugation and even escapes it but not fully sovereign. The life plot of a citizen –subject is not freely chosen but not even reduced to a slave. Simrit’s life as a wife and settlement miseries after divorce was not what she choose freely because becoming a wife to a man and fulfilling his desire becomes the only goal and achievement of a woman. But she is not even a slave, she is aware of her subjugation as wife. Relation of Som and Simrit was always at the surface level. Audience can easily trace the formation of author simultaneously, as the writer through out the novel gives a details description of differences a man and a woman have in spite of there their being a couple. Knowing subalternity includes Simrit’s understanding of the fact that she has different notions regarding life which she ignored earlier as a wife and a mother. Traditionally, female roles were instrumental in the process of self-attainment of a male *bildungsheld*. In Twentieth century western view of female *Bildungsroman* gained some attention but never conceived the idea of a successful female *bildung*. As some of the western believes were that female lacks that aesthetic astuteness and hence cannot attain the *bildung*. In most of the works the female either surrenders as a married women or commits suicide, which is considered as a successful female *bildung* by some feminists.

But I propose that female *Bildungsroman* in India, a postcolonial country, with its modernist view provides new models of *Bildungsroman*, which does not fulfil the criteria of traditional *bildung* formation. The failed *bildung* formation as Gregory Castle puts it, is a foundation to a neo and modernist *bildung* with its experiments and inventions.

Postcolonial female works in Indian context provides a new climax to the female *bildung* formation. The female works attracted to the quest of identity and deconstructing the old pre-determined identities. The female protagonist becomes aware of her desires and concepts regarding life and it can be different from a male in her life, ideal life which does not involve her children and husband. Simrit too has a very different concept of life as the writer.

Simrit simultaneously rejects all that idea that other believes should be the content of a writer’s work, this introduces a new outlook to the traditional model of *Bildungsroman* as, where authoritative figure acts as bridge to the cultures and norms of the society which help the *bildungsheld* to attain a universal self. Divorce was an act of believing to the concept of life one believes to be true as an artist, Simrit divorced Som, who believes material satisfaction as only reality attached to female. Simrit also reject Raj’s idea of a writer and celebrated her own concepts.

Formation of self subsumes many factors which not only affects rather determines it. The postmodern, postcolonial, feminist approach to the genre provides a kaleidoscopic image of a *bildungsheld*. Goethe’s *Bildungsroman* was introduction to the flux and conflict the youth was facing. Later the genre was adopted by English, Ireland but with some new terms and according to the need of the era. Socio-pragmatic and Aesthetico-spiritual aspects were illuminates, I propose here, that *Bildungsroman* genre has been accepted as an approach to understand the process of self-formation but with some blend of newness of the

changing priorities of the generation. Postcolonial writers narrators the journey of self-formation with the baggage of colonial past, the sufferings and pain of the childhood or sorrows of the fellow country people affects and determines the *bildung* formation.

The Day in Shadow does not fulfil all the traits of Dissensual *Bildungsroman*. Simrit becomes artist of her imagined self which incurs concept of life of life in the untouched Mother Nature's beauty. In this chapter we can have a deep understanding of other aspects of female's *bildung* formation, the *bildungsheld* has decided to end the marriage which was clogging her identity as a free individual. Simrit does not surrender to the social norms and rise as a free and autonomous self.

Self is at the locus of the formation of *Bildungsroman*. Dissensual *Bildungsroman* negates all constructions and structures which define her/his arrested sense of self and subjectivity. Simrit realizes all those things which she does not suits her concept of living but never poured her out as Som only conceives what he believes to be true and real. Som has been very much clear about his likes and dislikes and Simrit always accepts his desire. Som nominated Brij (Som and Simrit's Son) as his only nominee to his wealth and his daughters would get nothing out of it, this discrimination made Simrit more focused to the fact that she does not want him in her life and always by killing her sense of self.

Women was always only a body for Som and his friend Lalli. Simrit long for Som and his time as a couple but Som never feel the need. He considered his life complete by acquiring materials which can make him feel rich and his son after him. Simrit unworldly conception of life seemed farfetched to her.

Settlement after divorces brought huge taxation on Simrit, a property to which Som's son was the nominee but at the age of twenty five till then the heavy tax would be payed by Simrit which would leave nothing for her and her kid's sustenance. Simrit signs the consent agreement with going through it and afterwards doesn't find way out. The realization of her immaturity towards her life as an individual different from Som paves her way to the aesthetic attainment.

The divorce episode has been a chaotic journey towards the sense of maturity. After divorce and settlement issues also Simrit immature self still believed Som did not made her pay the heavy tax out of revenge. Raj made her realize about the revengeful motive of Som on the name of settlement.

Odyssey of a Dissensual *bildungsheld* incorporates a sense of protest which further contributes in making of an artistic self. Her self-realization made her call Mr. Moolchand, Som's lawyer, to negotiate the burden she has bear on the name of tax. The awakening that she was only a body to Som made her fight back the stones thrown on her in the shadow of the divorce settlement. She collected herself and made Moolchand understand her crippling situation after this settlement. This was her first protest to what she believe was right.

The chaos was always there between her artistic self and a self-connected to Som and always feel the pain of separation. The flux between her supposed self as a women of a rich man and her imagined self as an artist was growing deep. Within the company of Som she longed for solitary, away from Som's busy life as a businessman and she as his wife. The role was killing something in her. She was not able to hold the relation with Som any longer which only brought dissatisfaction. She than meets Raj who understands her and sense of self as a writer. The choice of characters Nayantara had made represents her growth as a woman with her sense of self, the character Som, N.K Shah, Moolchand who only portrays women under male dominance and then Raj and Ram Krishna who helped Simrit to get maturity. The suggestion by Ram Krishna that: "Until it is settled live as if you did not have this horror hanging over your head." to Simrit made her though momentarily away from the anxiety. Simrit found her artistic self-intact in Raj's company and at the end of the novel she finds herself happy and satisfied as now she attains herself as a writer of nature and philosophy of humanism related to it.

The autobiographical elements of the novel provides audience an authentic aspect of the novel to fall in the genre of *Bildungsroman*. Nayantara Sehgal herself being a writer proposes that the novel has some autobiographical touch, moreover she also gets divorce and settles with the man she believes understand her and her original self. Nayantara Sehgal's illuminates quest of self as an Anglo-Indian writer. The quest very much illuminates throughout the novel itself.

References

1. Anderson, Linda. *Autobiography*. Canada: Routledge, 2001.
2. Atkins, Kim. *Self and Subjectivity*. Malden, USA: Blackwell Publishing LTD, 2005.
3. Bhabha, Homi .K. *Location Of culture*. New York: Routledge, 2004.
4. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffith, Helen Tiffin. *The Empire Writes Back*. New York: Routledge, 1989.
5. Boes, Tobias. "Apprentiship of the Novel: The Bildungsroman and the Invention of History." *Comparatiive Literature Studies* (2008): 269-288.
6. —. "Modernist studies and the Bildungsroman: A Historical Survey of Critical Trends." *Literature Campus* (2006): 230-243.
7. Brueck, Laura R. *Writing Resistance: The Rhetorical Imagination of Hindi Dalit Literature*. New York: Columbia Up, 2004.
8. Buckley, Jerome Hamilton. *Season of Youth: The Bildungsroman from Dickens to Golding*. Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1974.
9. Castle, Gregory. *Reading Modernist Bildungsroman*. Florida: University Press of Florida, 2006.
10. Esty, Jed. *Unseasonable Youth: Modernism, Colonialism and Fiction of Development*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2013.
11. Foucault, Michel. *Power/Knowledge*. Toronto: The Harvester press, 1980.
12. Giffin, Michael. *Female Maturity from Jane Austen to Margret Atwood: When Bildungsroman Meets Zeitgeist*. USA: Createspace Independent Pub, 2013.
13. Golban, Petru. "An Attempt To Establish A Bildungsroman Development History: Nurturing The Rise Of A Subgenre From Ancient Beginnings To Romanticism." *Humanitas* (2017): 111-141.
14. Gordon, Victoria. "Identity-Construction and Development in the Modernist Bildungsroman." *Senior Thesis in Literary Criticism* (2016).
15. Hardin, James N. *Reflection and Action: Essays on Bildungsroman*. South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1991.
16. Jeffers, Thomas L. *Apprenticeships: Bildungsroman from Goethe to Santayana*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.
17. Kontje, Todd. *Private Lives in Public Sphere: The German Bildungsroman as Metafiction*. Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1954.
18. Mansfield, Nick. *Subjectivity*. MALaysia: SRM Production Service, 2000.
19. Marcus, Laura. *Auto/Biographical discourses*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994.
20. Minden, Michael. *The German Bildungsroman: Incest and Inheritance*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997.
21. Mishra, Veerendra Kumar. *Modern novels and poetics of self:Reading Modernist Bildungsroman*. New Delhi: Authorspress, 2014.
22. Morreti. *The Way of the World: The Bildungsroman in European Culture*. London: Routledge, 1987.
23. Mukharji, Meenakshi. *The Twice Born Fiction*. New Delhi: Pencraft International, New Delhi, 2010.
24. Nayar, Pramod K. *Writing Wrongs: The Cultural Construction of Human Rights in India* (. New Delhi: Routledge, 2012.
25. Pascal, Roy. *Design and Truth in Autobiography*. New York: Routledge, 1960.
26. Redfield, Marc. *Phantom Formations: Aesthetic Ideology and the Bildungsroman*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996.
27. Sahgal, Nayantara. *The Day in Shadow*. New Delhi: Penguin Books, 1991.
28. Smith, John H. "Cultivating Gender: Sexual Difference, Bildung, And THE Bildungsroman." *Michigan Germanic Studies* (1987): 206-225.