

INTERTWINED RELATIONSHIP OF SISTERS : A STUDY ON BEATRICE CULLETONS NOVELS, IN THE SHADOW OF EVIL AND IN SEARCH OF APRIL RAIN TREE.



Abstract:-

Beatrice Culleton Mosionier is the main advocate of the psychological novel dealing with the complex nature of woman. Being an artist, she skillfully portrays the mental and emotional feelings of human relationship through her characters Chris and Cheryl in *In the Shadow of Evil*, April and Cheryl in *In Search of April Rain tree*. They are sisters. Chris suspects the relationship between her husband Peter and her sister, Leona. The reason for her suspicion is revealed through the past of Chris. But she is ready to provide money in order to take bail for Leona at one instance. She is also ready to take care of Leona's son Michael in the absence of Leona. But there are more complications between April and Cheryl. They differ in accepting their native heritage. April is ashamed to be called as

B. Kayal Vizhil and K. Girija Rajaram²

1M.A.M.Phil., Ph.D., Research Scholar in English, Karpagam University, Coimbatore.

2Research Guide, Karpagam University.

Metis whereas Cheryl is proud to be Metis. Like Chris, April also takes care of Henry Lee, son to Cheryl. Against the wish of Cheryl, April marries Bob Radcliff. Later she realizes her mistake and rejoins with her sister, Cheryl. In both the novels, they try to drive comfort from one another in facing all the problems in the White society. But they retain their love and care till the end of the novella.

Keywords:

Intertwined relationship, Beatrice Culletons novels, *Shadow of Evil*, mental and emotional feelings.

INTRODUCTION :-

The greatest relationship for humanity will always be relation between man and woman. The relation man and man, woman and woman, parent and child Will always be subsidiary. (D.H. Lawrence 130)

Beatrice Culleton Mosionier is the main advocate of psychological novels dealing with the complex nature of woman. She has also portrayed in detail the inner disturbance of her characters in a fantastic manner. She also describes the mental and emotional feelings of human relationship through her characters Chris and Leona in *In the Shadow of Evil* and April and Cheryl in *In search of April Raintree*. Coleman's words aptly lifts here,

The need to love and be loved is crucial for healthy personality development and functioning. Human beings appear to be so constructed that they need and strive to achieve warm loving relationship with others. The longing for intimacy with other and separation from or loss of loved ones usually present a difficult adjustment problem. (73)

Colemans words come true in the case of sisters like Chris, Leona, April and Cheryl. They are physically separated by the external forces like foster homes, marriage, culture etc. But they have a soft corner for one another in all occasions in both the novels.

Concept

The attachment and suspicion between Chris and Leona

Chris was a writer and had a husband, Peter and a son named Todd. Peter earned money by speaking engagements. Christine began to write with an encouragement given by her husband. She trusted Peter but at the same time she had a suspicion on Leona. Chris returned home after attending a conference and also she found the note of Peter, "Christine, I had to go to Fort St. John be back as soon as I can Peter" (S.O.E. 22). After seeing this note of Peter, she scolded Leona and imagined Peter saying "I am sorry Christine. I fell in love with Leona. It just happened" (S.O.E. 24). She couldn't bear the cheating and loss of Peter to another woman. She uttered..

Right now I was angry – big time angry. A little bit jealous – okay, a whole lot jealous, and I was very hurt. But if I could recognize these feelings, then how could I possibly be crazy? (S.O.E. 24).

At one occasion, sergeant Trolly, a policeman asked her for Leona's address. So she removed to Peter's Rolodex, copied her address for him and put her card in her pocket. She also thought, "Sergeant Trolley must have thought it strange that I didn't know my own sister's address, but I had refused to memorizing it (S.O.E. 29). She didn't even wish to be familiar with Leona's address. That much of suspicion she had for Leona. Armstrong comments.

In this second novel, *In the Shadow of Evil* Culleton Mosionier revisits some familiar territory, although the emphasis on Aboriginal experience is reduced. She tells the story of a conflicted sister relationship, this time from the perspective and narrative voice of the dark skinned younger child; the incompetent, alcoholic mother; the untrustworthy foster care system; and the main character's long struggle to undo the effects of betrayal and loss.

When Leona wished to come to Chris home, Chris hesitated at first. After hearing the words of Peter, she wrote a reply letter to Chris in order to invite her. When she saw her in the doorway of the bus, she thought Leona was even more beautiful than ever. She was relieved when she refused her offer of the front seat beside Peter. But she hated the way Leona so easily joked around with Peter. She was so relieved when she came to know that Colin had become a lover to Leona. She also uttered,

With her, anything was possible. One side of me wanted to trust her and one side Was always on the alert....
So once she was gone, it was my intention not to stay in contact with her.
Fort. St. John, at least she was focused on another man! (S.O.E. 45)

The reason behind her suspicion towards her sister was revealed through the past of Chris. In the past Chris had a lover named Nick. Nick came to Chris home for her birthday party. Chris said, "Still, I was watchful because Leona was the centre of attraction and Nick couldn't help being drawn in by her incredible charisma. (S.O.E. 72).

Leona also used to flirt with many guys and brought them home and Chris also used to hear bed squeak often. Once she heard the voice of Nick, "You got the lighter on your side?" (S.O.E. 73). Out of rage she marched right to her doorway and found them in the bed. This was the reason, why Chris suspected the relationship between Leona and Peter.

Chris received phone call from Leona's friend informing that "She's in the Remand centre (S.O.E.91) and requesting her to take care of Leona's son, Michael. At first she said, "I am sorry but I'll have to get back to you. Bye"(S.O.E. 91). Though she couldn't forget the betrayal of Leona, she accepted to have her child, Michael with her after a long mental struggle. She had lost her son, Todd. But she didn't wish to have another loss, especially another son, Michael. So she took much care to Leona's son, Michael. Here one can find Chris concern for Leona's son. She also reveals her love and care for Leona's Family.

Once Colin, husband of Leona visited Chris and informed her about Leona. Leona was arrested for assault and also she was in the remand centre in Winnipeg. He also didn't have money for bail. Without any hesitation Chris was ready to offer money for bail. She said to Colin.

She doesn't have money for bail, can't afford that, so I'm going to offer to cover that for her. Then she could come here until her trial, or whatever is next." I said.

Here one can find Chris' love for her sister, Leona. She is ready to offer help when Leona is in trouble. She cannot give up her own sister before Colin. Though she had a suspicion on Leona, her sisterly love bound them together.

Chris also remembered that her mother gave her to children's aid. She kept Leona with her. Chris imagined, "I must have behaved badly because I went into series of foster homes and had a series of social workers" (S.O.E. 92). Dr. Coran was her new foster father. He sexually abused her too. She entered into the room of the doctor and found his own daughter's finger, dirty pictures and also replaced the key too. It was noticed by Dr. Coran. He also slapped her face and was punching her in the stomach. He also grabbed her and tried to rape her and also yelled at others to help her. At that time police entered and saved her from Dr. Coran. At this juncture Chris pleaded. "I want to see Leona" (S.O.E. 108). Here she expected the presence of Leona with her. Her love for Leona induces her to meet her during her time of suffering.

April and Cheryl, complicated sisters:

April and Cheryl stand together in facing all the problem in the White society. They are separated by the social workers from their home. Though they are separated from their parents, they try to derive comfort from one another. Both shares their love and care. Renate Eigenbrod writes.

The novel *In search of April Raintree* by the metis author Beatrice Culleton, first published in 1983, is a story about two sisters who symbolically represent two ways of existing as native persons in today's Canadian society. "Making use" of her White look's, one sister tries to forget her Native heritage, the sister with the Native appearance on the Other hand, identities strongly with Native people and the many injustices Done to them. (97).

Once Cheryl brings April a gift of a book on Riel revolutionary hero, during one of their family visits. Cheryl also shares her essays and community ideals with her. Though they are in foster homes, they send letters to one another. Thereby they retain their love and care. But they defer in accepting the native heritage. April is ashamed to be a metis. To April,

M e t i s m e a n t b e i n g p o o r a n d d i r t y .

It meant being weak and having to drink. It meant being ugly and Stupid.... (AR47).

She also decides to detach herself from her own culture and wished to live like a White person

N.Kalaamani aptly comments,

April and Cheryl Raintree are two young children who grow up into girlhood bearing the stigma of ethnicity... One sister believes that she can gain social identity by racial denial. The other believes that she has to bear the burden of her ethnicity. (103).

When she attains economic freedom, she is bold enough to move from metis to White with the help of her White skin. That is why she decides to marry Bob Radcliff against Cheryl's wish. But Cheryl cannot bear the separation of her sister. She feels longer and abandoned. So she scolds her sister's decision.

Don't lay that crap on me, big sister you turned your back on me a long time ago. You think I don't know why you married Bob? It was to get away from Me, that's why I'll bet you wished you were an only child. I bet you wished I was dead. (AR 192–93).

She expresses her anger towards her sister who has behaved like White. Through Cheryl's words one can understand that she is not ready to lose her sister as well as her heritage. Bob Radcliff also cheats April by having affair with Heather Langton, an actress. She also overhears the conversation of her mother-in-law.

They have the same father and the same mother, that's the trouble with mixed races, you never know how they're going to turn out and I would simply dread being grandmother to a bunch of snivelling little half breads! (AR 126).

Now she understands the mistake she has done and also remembers the words of her sister. April also leaves Bob and gets divorce and forces to return to Winnipeg to start a new life with her sister. When she returns, she finds that Cheryl is hospitalized after being beaten by some gangsters. So April goes to Cheryl's apartment to collect some clothes for Cheryl. But she is taken by the same gangsters and raped by them. Cheryl also dies after this incident. After the death of her sister Cheryl, April begins to embrace her true identity, i.e Metis and Cheryl also writes a letter to her sister at the end of the novel.

Dreams my dream for me. Make them come true for me. Be proud of what You are, of what you and Henry Lee are, I belong with our mother.(AR 201).

This letter of Cheryl boosts strength to April who has been a mother to Cheryl. She also now takes the son of Cheryl and looks at Cheryl's smiling son "On his mother's face when she was that age, the age of innocence" (AR 207). She sees her future in Henry Lee. In *In the Shadow of Evil* also Leona's son Michael proves to be a good companion to Chris. Both Chris and April forget their wounds whenever they look at the sons of their sisters. They also decide to live for the sake of them. April also realizes herself and her heritage. The novel also ends with a hope for tomorrow.

As I stared at Henry Lee, I remembered that during the night I had used the words "MY PEOPLE, OUR PEOPLE". And meant them. The denial had been lifted from my spirit. It was tragic that it had taken Cheryl's death to bring me to accept my identity.... (AR 207).

Both the sisters share some similarities. April didn't want to talk about the rape to anyone and Cheryl also keeps secrets within herself. April says, "I lie to protect her and she lies to protect me and we both lose out" (AR 205). Cheryl's secret is that she has become a prostitute and she is also accused April of having similarly "Prostituted" herself for Bob's money, "a high-class call girl" (AR 197).

April is ashamed of Cheryl for her attachment to nativeness. Likewise Cheryl is ashamed of April's reaction against native heritage and her interest to become a White.

Summation:

In both the novels, they (sisters) refused to speak honestly of one's commitment to the other. But their love for each other connects them at the end of the novella. Cheryl and Leona can be considered as phoenix. Through their death, a new life is started.

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