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# भैरवी

(दृश्य एवं प्रदर्शनकारी कला की शोध-पत्रिका)

(वर्ष 2023, अंक-26)

अंतर्राष्ट्रीय सम्मेलन विशेषांक



मिथिलांचल संगीत परिषद्

स्नातकोत्तर संगीत एवं नाट्य विभाग

ललित कला संकाय

ललित नारायण मिथिला विश्वविद्यालय,

कामेश्वरनगर, दरभंगा 846 004

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(जप से करोड़ों गुणा प्रभावी ध्यान है, ध्यान से करोड़ गुणा लयात्मकता प्रभावशाली है। लय प्रधान जप से करोड़ गुणा प्रभाव गान का है और साधना के लिए गान अर्थात् संगीत से उत्तम उपाय अन्य कोई नहीं। )

# Search for Identity Crisis in Abha Dawesar's *Babyji*

<sup>1</sup>Mr. Waghadare D. S. & <sup>2</sup>Dr. Inamdar T. M.

## Abstract

*Abha Dawesar is an emerging novelist in Indian English Literature. Babyji is her debut novel comprises the struggle of young girl in adolescent. Present research paper explores the identity crisis of protagonist in the novel as well as it throws light on the analysis of the novel from the perspectives of lesbian relationship. It is an attempt to highlight the major concern of Abha Dawesar behind writing this novel. It is study about inner suppressed feelings of young girl Anamika Sharma who breaks all the barriers of traditional patriarchal society. This paper also focuses on the traditional assumptions of sexuality in our society.*

**Key words:** Lesbianism, Language, Power and Patriarchal Society

## Introduction

Abha Dawesar is Indian English novelist that writes about the socio-cultural issues particularly in Indian society. *Babyji* is her debut novel published in 2005. It is set against the background of 1980 Delhi. It is the story of adolescent girl Anamika Sharma and her struggle to grow up in typical orthodox *Bramhin* family. This novel has already broken the traditional mentality about Identity Crisis. Abha Dawesar has raised the issue of homosexuality through this novel. In Indian society, rather people

have their misconceptions about lesbian and homosexuals. This paper explores the psychological growth of young from the perspectives of power, gender and language used in the novel. *Babyji* is set against the background of the Mandal commission implementation in the decade of 90's. It portrays the picture of confused youth due to growing with puberty. Abha Dawesar skillfully executes the complexities of protagonist in this novel. As per the information available on Wikipedia: "Gender includes the social,

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psychological, cultural and behavioural aspects of being a man, woman, or other gender identity". (<https://en.wikipedia.org>). Most of the people concur that gender is a key factor in social structure. As gender has social, psychological, biological, cultural, and behavioural components, it can be conceived of as a bio psychosocial construct.

Sexologist John Money is often regarded as the first to introduce a terminological distinction in modern English (sex and gender distinction) between biological *sex* and *gender role* (which, as originally defined, includes the concepts of both gender role and what would later become known as gender identity) in 1955, although Madison Bentley had already in 1945 defined *gender* as the 'socialized obverse of sex'. Further, Simone de Beauvoir's 1949 book *The Second Sex* has been interpreted as the beginning of the distinction between sex and gender in feminist theory, although this interpretation is contested. (Ibid)

The present novel is a perfect example of gender crisis. Thus, the purpose of this research paper is to highlight the gender identity crisis issue in this novel.

#### Episode of Lesbian Relationship:

A well-known book, 'Babyji', which was released in 2005 and won the American Library Association's Stonewall Award, is written by Abha

Dawesar. The protagonist of the novel *Babyji*, who is innocent yet ferociously sensual, is the center of attention. The protagonist Anamika Sharma's character is beautifully summed up by the 'News-week' blurb on the cover page of the novel.

Anamika Sharma is a kind of girl whom everyone always hated. She gets perfect grades, and as head perfect of her school in Delhi, has vast authority over her classmates. But Anamika's extra-curricular activities are far from exemplary. (Dawesar, Cover Page-Back)

Thus, she is the subject of a love triangle involving an educated older divorcee and a lower-caste servant. Sheela Anamika started flirting with the popular girl in school and went on to flirt with two other men: the best friend's father, whom she called 'Adit', and other is Chakra Dev, a hoodlum who was a classmate. The protagonist Anamika sharma who is studying in tenth standard where she has attracted with her maid an illiterate woman and with a divorcee woman named Tripta Adhikari whom she regarded as *India* and on the other hand she also has the lesbian relationship with her classmate. Actually she belongs to the middle class orthodox Bramhin family. But she has her own conceptions of sexuality. Her sexual relationship with her maid and Tripta Adhikari is very rigorous. This relationship gives jerk to the so called ethics of our society.



In regarding to this Simone de Beauvoir in the chapter titled "The Lesbian" of *The Second Sex* (1949), brings challenges to many prejudices against lesbianism. She dismantles the notion by claiming that anatomy can never be "destiny". She presents a critique of social "system" that disallows women to exercise their independence and shows that female homosexuality acts as an instrument to escape this system (Beauvoir, 1997. P.23). As a result, the novelist wants to highlight the issue of identity of adolescent girl through the narrative of this novel.

#### **Episode of Language:**

*Babyji* is experimental novel about the sexual experience of the girl. The novelist presents the inner feelings of the girl struggling with the rigidity of sexuality in Indian society. To heighten the effect of narrative style she uses the taboo language to indicate the delicate passions of the girl in the full bloom of puberty. Abha Dawesar has deliberately used the innovative language to convey their message through the novel. In this context we must quote regarding with language, 'Everything had suddenly collapsed like a black hole into itself, and the only word that described it all was Life.' (Ibid, p. 90) In the above given lines novelist intentionally used language of physics which seems to be very enthusiastic from the perspective of young girl. Image of

black hole symbolically stands for meaninglessness in the life. We can also highlight another example for the language used to give the stress on the identity crisis from the novel, 'Freelance, I repeated to myself. It sounded so exotic. A free spirit, Freedom... I wanted to freelance. I decided I would freelance when I grew up' (Ibid, p. 115). In this way, the special use of language indicates the inner feelings of the protagonist in the novel.

#### **Episode of Power:**

According to Macmillan dictionary power is the ability to influence or control what people do or think. In this novel, the novelist exhibits the power through dialogues, characterization and narrative techniques. In this context power means the patriarchal dominance and exploitation of women as the inferior entity. Regarding the power we have to quote a conversation between Anamika and Tripti Adhikari, 'Maam, what happens if a man and woman have sex before marriage? Why is it wrong? It is not medically wrong. Our society does not accept it, that's all,' the doctor said most matter-of-factly.' (Ibid, p. 96) When Anamika Sharma as a head prefect ask to the doctor who came for sexual counseling about pre-marital sex? Doctor replies that it is not accepted by society. Code of conduct of society is itself hypocritical. It reveals

masculine power of men in the society. Society has not objection for sexual relation of men before marriage. But when girl has such relationship before marriage it brings disgrace to her family. These are the double standards of society about sexuality. In this way there is reflection of sexual identity crisis in the novel. In this context to highlight the impact of lesbian relationship between Rani and Anamika, 'Does he do that sort of thing to you? I asked slightly harshly. "Sometimes" "How often? Every night?" "No, some nights," she said vaguely. "Do you like it?" "No". (Dawesar, p. 47) Though the above conversation we noticed that traditional assumption of sexuality is bounded with marriage institute. But one may not feel happy with monogamy. In fact it also reveals

that women are not sexually satisfied in the imposed relationship.

### Summing Up:

However, Abha Dawesar skillfully had interwoven the sexual perspectives of young girl. In fact this novel is kind of rebel against the conventional norms of gender, identity and misconceptions of society about sexuality. Being a novel on the taboo subject sex, it has already achieved fame as the real commentary on rotten values in our society

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