

Onakkoor's Parvathangalile Kaatu- A Feministic Study

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Abstract

The given below article aims to throw light on the personality of George Onakkoor. The further novel selected also attempts to define the author. The article also helps identify Onakkoor's views regarding his life, career and the society. "One of the goals of the writer is to strike a chord. Usually you guess, you have no idea if the topic is ripe, if the audience is ready" (Godin). These words by Seth Godin define George Onakkoor who successfully effectuated his goal as a writer. A self-made writer who is not bound by any literary conventions, Onakkoor adapts himself to the changing literary trends. "A writer", he says "is not one who confines himself to a room and works in solitude to create characters out of his imagination, but one who sketches the lives of the ordinary people around him; not the figments of his imagination." (Onakkoor). Accredited with having written the first novel on Smt. Indira Gandhi titled Parvathangalile Kaatu, Onakkoor explores the deep rooted realms of reality in the female psyche right from childhood to old age. In the novel one gets to see the rise of the teenage girl who strive hard to tackle the ace of annihilation to the most powerful woman in the country. His novels speak for him; they single him out as the man capable of understanding the female mind, breaking away the gender stereotypes.

KEYWORDS: Feminism, personality, life, society, goals

INTRODUCTION

George Onakkoor, the Malayalam novelist was born on November 16, 1941 at Onakkoor, a village near Moovatupuzha to Naduviledathu Kuriakose and Mariamma. As a child, he used to read out from books for his paternal grandmother who could not read and write. She would ask him for the story summary if the book was in English and this eventually developed his story telling skills.

Onakkoor stayed at his village till his twenties and later moved to Thiruvananthapuram at the age of 21, when he was appointed as a lecturer at Mar Ivanios College. Being the youngest teacher at the college, his colleagues and students pampered him a lot and he also engaged in many cultural activities along with them.

George Onakkoor published his first novel Akale Akasham in 1972, while staying at a rented house near the college. Then came the hugely successful Ulkkadal which was later made into a film. The novel turned out to be a defining moment not only in Malayalam Literature but also in Onakkoor's personal life and literary career. The novel rendered him financial assistance and earned him name and fame. Onakkoor has also published several other novels which include Akasha Onjaal, Illam, Kamana, Hrudayathil Oru Vaal, Parvathangalile Kaatu, Kalthamara, Uzhavuchalukal, Ezhuthapurangal, and Samathalangalkkapuram etc.

In addition to expanding his literary career, Onakkoor has also made his mark in the film industry as well. He has contributed story, screenplay and dialogue for nine feature films in Malayalam which include Aradhana, EnteNeelakasham, Leyam etc. He has also penned down the scripts for twelve documentary films.

Onakkoor is a champion of social cause who voices out his opinion with least timorousness and perturbation. On a range of topics varying from advising children not to get addicted to internet, to express his concern over Aranmula heritage, he stands an exemplary. A write with a social concern, Onakkoor through his novels throws light upon the untold truths of the society and brings into limelight the downtrodden.

George Onakkoor inspires us to rise high above all the obstacles; to reach out to the world and to be the change that we want to see in the world. He expresses his perception of his life through his novels and what he advocates could be translated through the words of Indira Gandhi:

I do not care whether I live or die. I have lived a long life and i am proud that I spent the whole of my life in the service of my people. I am only proud of this and of nothing else. I shall continue to serve until my last breath and when I die, I can say that every drop of my blood will invigorate India and strengthen it. (Gandhi 328)

The personality of an individual is revealed in every word he speaks and every deed he does. For a writer, his works serve as a platform to express his individuality, personality and social commitments. Hence, an attempt has been made to understand Onakkoor, the man, through the themes and characters in his novels.

Story telling is an art. A writer with a knack for story telling creates characters who retain a definite place in the mind of the readers. George Onakkoor is one such story teller who paints pictures out of his characters, casting an everlasting impression on his readers. The unique narrator in Onakkoor comes into light through his novel Parvathangalile Kaatu.

ANALYSIS AND NARRATION IN PARVATHANGALILE KAATU

In the novel Parvathangalile Kaatu, Onakkoor very efficiently makes use of flashbacks to narrate the story of Smt. Indira Gandhi. The novel is narrated by an IAS officer Manoranjan who worked with Mrs. Gandhi. The novel unveils before the readers, the all-consuming mother and affectionate grandmother in her. Many incidents from the past including the controversial emergency period is discussed in the novel. The technique of 'story within a story' is employed in the novel in order to portray woman in Smt. Indira Gandhi. Her life is narrated in the light of Manoranjan's story. His affection towards Manoranjan's family – his wife, mother and daughter talks in volumes about the unseen and unheard face of Mrs. Gandhi. The novel begins when he informs Indira Gandhi about the birth of his baby girl and it continues to narrate the life of Indira Gandhi and ends when he names his daughter Kamalendu. The novel ends in these words:

I am Kamalendu. I do not want to be anyone else. Allow me to live the way i am. It is the right of a woman, the historical right of every Indian woman. I submit myself for the country and while treading through the

future of my country, I realize that my name is meaningful. I am Kamala. I am Indu. I am Kamalendu. (Onakkoor 142)

George Onakkoor is accredited with having written the first ever novel on Smt. Indira Gandhi titled *Parvathangalile Kaatu*. The inspiration behind writing down such a novel dates back to the time when Onakkoor was the director of Saksharatha Mission. The most important activities of the organization were related to women empowerment. Having decided to write a novel on this, Onakkoor started searching for a suitable theme and character. This search culminated in Smt. Indira Gandhi, the most empowered woman in the country. On seeing Mrs. Gandhi entering the parliament after taking charge as the Prime Minister of India, Morarji Desai thus remarked: "this woman will ruin the country" (Onakkoor). Indira Gandhi's reply to this is true to the age of democracy: "We the women of India are made of flowers, we are not a bunch of flowers but we are fire" (Onakkoor 64). All these incidents had created a tremendous impact on Onakkoor and the urge to give vent to these feelings gave birth to the novel *Parvathangalile Kaatu*. The novel which is based on the experiences garnered and not on the information gathered by Onakkoor provides a vivid picture of the life of the most powerful woman in the country.

Through the novel, Onakkoor endorses his concept of new woman. A feminist ideal having its roots in the nineteenth century, the term was coined by Sarah Grand in her article, "The New Aspect of the Woman Question". The movement focuses on the growth of woman in educational, political, social and economic spheres and it pushed away the limits set by the patriarchal society.

Onakkoor's admiration of a strong woman dominates his political views in the novel *Parvathangalile Kaatu*. It supplements Smt. Indira Gandhi's personal life where she had taken up different roles as a daughter, wife, mother and grandmother. This indeed was a herculean task. While in Delhi, Onakkoor happened to see a flex board in which an elderly woman asks a little girl, "What do you want to become in life" (Onakkoor 113) and she replies "Allow me to live" (113). This reminded Onakkoor of Indu and her childhood days in Ananda Bhavan, her years of concealment and contemplation. Though this childhood is known to all, her later years of life is lesser known. The novel focuses on the life of Mrs. Gandhi who as a daughter assisted her father, as a wife limited her social activities according to her husband's likes and dislikes, as a mother dedicated her life for her children and as a grandmother provided warmth and solace to her grandchildren. "It was a really difficult task to fictionalize a real living character. Nevertheless, I found it my obligation to re-establish the life of a scandalized, humiliated and dehumanized woman who scaled greater heights and thereby set an example for the world" (Onakkoor).

CONCLUSION

Onakkoor feels that empowerment of women can be achieved only if they realize their own potentials. They should realize the fact that they are not secondary citizens. They have equal rights as that of men. And for this, all must work together. "Once while attending a meeting, I noticed that all men were given seats in the front row and the only woman who was on the dais was given a seat at the back row. Outraged at this sight, I offered the girl a seat next to me" (George Onakkoor). Onakkoor remembers the incident and considers it a minute effort from his part to give women recognition she deserves. Similarly, we all must come forward to bring in

such small changes because sooner or later, it can lead to tremendous transformation in society's outlook towards women.

A great lover of nature, Onakkoor believes that man has no existence without it. Though the beauty of nature is indescribable, he used his novels as a medium through which he could pass on the succeeding generation the long lost bounty of nature. The characters in his novels stand in close association with nature, as most of them are farmers. Moreover, the imageries drawn from nature enhance the narration and sometimes become an inevitable aspect in taking forward the plot. In his novel *Parvathangalile Kaatu*, the recurrent image of the wind and the mountain indicates the inner turmoil and the ups and downs in the life of Indira Gandhi. The imagery could even be indicative of her firmness to not succumb to the challenges just as a mountain does not sway in the wind. The literary brilliance in George Onakkoor is exemplified through his novels so much so that even while he narrates his story well-known to his readers, the unique narrative style he adopts makes the reader sit glued to their seats and enjoy it.

He not only puts forth his political views, but also his admiration for a strong woman in *Parvathangalile Kaatu*. The novel also reveals the unbiased personality of Onakkoor, who at once weighs the pros and cons of the political stands adopted by Mrs. Indira Gandhi.

Onakkoor, through his novels, aims at empowering women. He speaks their mind to the world. He speaks for the countless number of women who live a life of servitude. Having strong feminist ideals, Onakkoor speaks for the equality of men and women, for he believes that only such a society will make headway to amelioration. This aspect of his personality authenticates the adage that you don't need to be a woman to be a feminist.

In an era where Malayalam language is losing its rich heritage, Onakkoor through his novels makes a sincere call for the restoration of the beauty of the language. Moreover, the English translations of several of his novels have also helped Malayalam literature to set its foot on world literature and also to make the west familiar with the cultural and literary legacy of Malayalam literature.

Works Cited:

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