

THE SELF -IDENTIFICATION IN MEENA ALEXANDER'S 'RAW SILK'**G. P. Khandare**Dept. of English, Yashwantrao Chavan Arts & Science Mahavidyalaya, Mangrulpir, Dist. Washim, MS
gpkenglish@gmail.com**ABSTRACT**

Raw Silk (2004) is regarded as distinct literary output by Meena Alexander. She deals primarily with exemplification of the tragedy of September 11th and physical violence as a whole. It is not possible to be silenced for general assertion in her poetry. The purpose of this is not to cut the predominance of war and universal violence in Raw Silk. It also exemplifies the profound level that this poetry has close connection to Alexander's memoir. Her writing primarily is focused under the tenet of truth of her life and its experiences. She effectively instigates the concept of door, silk and stone in her memoirs that inculcates the process of appreciation in the reader. It may be also pointed out that her revival of past remembrances stands significant, abiding in her all-literary work.

Introduction

From her diverse point of view, Alexander composes with moving power of post-September 11 occasions. She brings out savagery and common strife, love, sadness, and a hard-won trust. This self-portraying cycle of sonnets mirrors the surrealism of such an existence, and is shot through with the frissons of joy and torment, of excellence and pressure, that stamp a genuinely worldwide character.

Raw Silk has bi-dimensional meaning for silk. The first aim is to manifest the ultimate outcome of all of the past remembrances and things that an artist absorbs. This literary work indulges the features of silk i.e., vivid and resilient, and pointed with extending and twisting; similar of the physical violence that is portion of the texture of our cruel and anxious age. The affirmative dimensions and its instances of the life journey of the silk have the close recognitions with the journey of Meena Alexander's life that it is represented in her poetry.

Meena Alexander also explains New York by the different angle. She creates a series of poems named "Listening to Lorca" in which she correlates herself to Lorca's poetry on New York, a city he had witnessed 50 years before Alexander displaced there. Alexander exclaims that Lorca's Poet in New York permitted her to relocate herself to posit through some of his words.

She laments for the loss of her New York. So, she questions,

*Why stay on this island?
See how it's ringed by water and flame?
You who have never seen Granada --
tell me what is the color of home?
(Raw Silk: Poems, 19)*

Raw Silk is contemplation on violence on a global measure. She is more and particularly concerned with the violence supported by religious narrow mindedness on the global canvass. The violence of Partition is clearly seen, and she is simultaneously very keen to write about Godhra and Naroda Patiya. The incidence like 9/11 is not merely about New York and the United States but the intense questionings into violence and nationalism on global calibration. The references of Tagore, Kabir and Forugh Farrokhzad are used in her poetry. These references point out the urgent need for the non-violence. It is her astonishing query of ahimsa of Gandhi. She addresses this into her poem. The chaos of civil life, struggles and strife, personal despairs, love and gone hope of the events of post September 11 are highly induced. The personal elements of her experiences in the light of surrealism have been vividly reflected by her work. The amalgamation of two contradictory things like melancholy and happiness, burden and beauty help to establish one's global location.

The prime ordeal of employing the process of producing silk is to define the physical attractiveness that can come out of incorporating procedure. The process of creating silk commences with silkworms. They nurture on mulberry leaves and discharge silk wisps. These filaments are woven into clothes. The permutation that the mulberry leaves

endure is excessive and the domino effect are limitless. This justifies how art can be produced from very tiny, but transform into a number of varied matters.

The Silk also has a sarcastic purpose. It is possible to hide or cover something by silk but it does not perform fully. It means that silk is not fully able to cover a thing, showing the half portion of thing. The poem treats two varied subjects that are dealt with reciprocally. Alexander moves into her past and present, between her personal life and the tragedy of war. She is in the position of dilemma of handling her own problems, her internal strife of life and the consequences, problems of war that she wishes to balance with.

Maxine Hong Kingston (2013) eulogizes Meena for Raw Silk as “Meena Alexander sings of countries, foreign and familiar, places where the heart and spirit live, and places for which one needs a passport and visas. Her voice guides us far away and back home. The reader sees her visions and remembers, and is uplifted.” (*Interview, ‘Travelling Helps in Self-Discovery’*) Raw Silk gains the reader’s beliefs, when the ways it gets in it’s uncovering of the writer’s divergent worlds and of the form’s poetry. The poem commences with Alexander’s remembrance of the past. This part links to the memoir because Alexander makes clear that when she was getting ready her wedding, her mother narrated her stories of her own.

Meena Alexander’s mother explains her feeling of seeing her dressed in wedding sari. She also becomes more intense by looking the glowing reflection in mirror that is encircled by the monsoon clouds outside of her window. Alexander has the feeling of astonishing about her maternal grandmother’s wedding sari. She remembers that her mother had maintained it conventionally covered in muslin and kept in the rosewood chest that was portion of her grandmother’s wedding dowry. She searches at this level that her mother had closed the wedding sari, which makes her melancholic. She comes back to her past life by having recollected the evidences of her grandmother. This compels us to go back to silk, and the procedure of making silk,

*grandmother coaxed mulberries
from monsoon soil, clouds ran riot,
silkworms coiled under the skin of leaves,
berries dripped free,
the courtyard was a sea of blood.
(Raw Silk: Poems, 65)*

The linkage between silk and her grandmother can be easily observed through these lines where Alexander is highly concerned with her past life. Her grandmother always aids the plant and seed for blooming just like mulberries stand the source of mulberry leaves. Thus, the memories and the ideas of blooming by the cause of life are joined together by her. Meena Alexander also recollects the memories that are of pain, strife and struggle of life. Silkworms are wanted for producing silk, in this regard, she writes,

*“Silkworms coiled under the skin of leaves”
(Raw Silk: Poems, 35)*

She is signifying to the issue that she faces problems in producing anything from her past remembrances. The substance that is represented by leaves is also wanted for silk but the berries on the tree are not essential in this procedure of producing silk. They symbolize her past life that Alexander had intended reveal the more melancholic memories. As she is attempting to recollect the abuse, the false memories collapse to the ground and assist to clean her vision from the truth.

Alexander ponders on that the covered past is sure to disclose itself to her. She names these memories and past life of her as “the mother of worms” which ascertains the issue that she has an idea that she has the capacity of taking control. This can be observed several times in Meena Alexander’s poetry that she realized that she covered her eyes not to recollect the truth. This is the first time she indicates that she is uncovering this disguise. When she is in a position to go far from this disguise, the memory vanishes. The poem close with this vanishing,

*“When I open the drawer
to search for silk
I touch smoke
raw silk turned to smoke in the night’s throat.
(Raw Silk: Poems, 36)*

The treatment for immigrants in multiculturalism creates the restlessness for searching the identification into the society. Her intention to find her identity is not about merely on gender but mostly on a human being in relation with the other one, specially the superior one as they are to be called. Init, Alexander suggests a path of recovery and healing through female solidarity and friendship. Each time, she crosses a new border; she is invariably hit by a sense of alienation, but exhilarating in the sense that each gives her a heightened sense of the differences among people in various parts of the world in terms of race, ethnicity, and nationality.

Conclusion

She expects the general acceptability of transnational people without any differentiations in cultural perspectives. Her

awareness transcends to claim for its usefulness, confronting with divergence between universal and national perspective. She asks the questions of self-identification that confronts her as an Indian woman, living and working in New York City where immigrants from all over the world have poured in. she is inseparable from an intimate violence that has entered her probing into the bonds that link inner and outer realms, self and world. Meena Alexander's dislocation along with the strict adherence to her gender, nationality and ethnicity has explored her strife for self. Throughout her literature, the gender and immigration has been prime resultant of herself. She suggests that the crossing of borders through migrations may provide women the space to cross other boundaries in every sphere.

References

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