
UNLEASHING THE POWER WITHIN THE WOMAN

Ayuta Mohanty

Scholar, KIIT University, Bhubneswar, Odisha, India

Received: Oct. 2018 Accepted: Nov. 2018 Published: Dec. 2018

Abstract: The position of women in India has been of secondary importance to this patriarchal society. The women are considered to be a financial burden to their family before their marriage. After marriage their in-laws and husbands treat them as mere property and torture them time and again. And these women silently suffer all these humiliations, torture, pain and hardships without any retaliation. May be that is why the patriarchal setup always considers women as meek, docile, inferior and powerless beings. They are always treated as someone who has no voice and no strength to make choices. But what will be the result if women start retaliating and revolting. The paper focuses on such retaliation that a woman makes against the person who murdered her soul and destroyed her happiness. This paper analyses Paromita Goswami's *The Wedding Gift* that revolves around the life of a widow Nirmala. A woman and moreover a widow in a patriarchal setup is no sort of a cakewalk. Nirmala, after her husband died, was forsaken by her own family and her in-laws considered her a bad luck. She had to endure a terrible life. But still she was happy and heart was content. Why? May be due to the choices she made to take her revenge in her own sweet way gave her a sense of peace and achievement. This paper looks at the power that is hidden inside every woman and how Nirmala unleashes that power and decides to search for her happiness in own way.

Keywords: Power, Woman, Choice, Revenge, Happiness.

Introduction: Being a woman, in a patriarchal society like India, is a daunting task. Women in India are considered inferior to men and have been assigned a secondary status. They are always considered meek, weak and powerless being that has no voices and no strength to make choices. From the moment a girl is born, she is considered a financial burden for her family. After getting married, they are expected to adjust and fit-in in a new family and mould themselves according to that family. But most of the times, their husbands consider them as their property and abuse them physically, sexually and mentally. Their in-laws torture them in various ways and being taught to be patient, the women endure all these hardships, pain and agony and live their life silently. In a way, they accept whatever destiny gives them without questioning. According to Simone de Beauvoir, "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman." In this quote she tries to put in the essence that the women are not born weak, meek or docile, rather they become such in the course of their lives. They are strong and they have a lot of latent power in them and all they need to do is to unleash the power that's within them. So the question that might waver in our mind is what will happen once the women start realizing the power that remained hidden in them since long? The power within the women, once unleashed will stir a storm in the patriarchal setup.

Discussion: This paper looks at one such retaliation of a woman against the patriarchy, against the person who shattered her happiness, ruined her life- her husband. The paper focuses on the Paromita Goswami's book *The Wedding Gift* based on the theme 'in pursuit of happiness'. Everyone searches for happiness in the journey of their life. So does Nirmala, a young girl. The book throws light on Nirmala's search for happiness and how she achieves that in her own way. The book opens on a Durga Puja day and Nirmala's house was full of hustle-bustle as her in-laws were preparing to welcome Ma Durga's idol in their home. But Nirmala wasn't allowed to celebrate with them or rather be with them as she was a widow- a sign of inauspiciousness. So she was sitting at the table in her room on the terrace on the second floor. A diary was before her opened but she was distracted by a moth that was trying to get near the flame of a kerosene lamp. But each time it tried, it crashed with the glass of the lamp and fell down but it didn't lose hope and kept trying. Nirmala had lost her mother at a very tender age of ten and soon

her father remarried and her step-mother abused her. She was always taught to be obedient and follow the instruction that were given to her. One such instruction was to marry Sameer and she just obeyed it. Her decision, her choice and her feelings never mattered to anyone. Even no one bothered to ask Sameer of his decision. The marriage was finalised by Sameer's mother and Nirmala's father. But she hoped that this new beginning of her life would provide her all the happiness that she had been searching all her life. She had a lot of expectations from Sameer and this marriage. She was happy but on their very first night, all her dreams, hopes and happiness got shattered when Sameer made a revelation before her. He informed her that he loved another woman and this marriage was of no importance to him. He also said her that when he would return back to his medical college in the city, he would marry that girl. Next morning, he left for the city without even looking at Nirmala. Nirmala never told the truth to anyone as Sameer had forbidden her to do so. "She knew he had abandoned her to a difficult life. She was ready to face it" (Goswami 61) . They got the news of his death in an accident after six months. "She was a widow now. Someone inauspicious for all the threshold in life. ... Time and again she was held responsible for all the misfortunes in the family" (Goswami 72).

Her family forsook her and her in-laws, though allowed her to stay with them, blamed her for everything that happened in their life. "Nirmala lived in her husband's house but her status was not that of a family member. She was more of a maid than a daughter-in-law. However, she was happy. Happy because she had made a choice. A choice to punish her offender" (Goswami 82). That day when she went to sleep, she took out a small envelope under her pillow. She opened the handwritten letter that was sent by Sangita, Sameer's second wife. She had read that letter numerous times. Sangita had written to her that she was unaware about Sameer's wedding with Nirmala till his death and after his death, she found Sameer's diary and came to know about her from the diary as Sameer had written about his guilt of abandoning Nirmala and ruining her life in that. She requested Nirmala to forgive Sameer as he died of his guilt. She had also sent the diary to Nirmala. Nirmala kept the letter at its place. "She felt happy and satisfied. Happy to know that people were desperately seeking for her forgiveness" (Goswami 106). She was happy for what she had done that night. She remembered her first night after marriage when Sameer had made the thunderous revelation. "his words stabbed her heart like a knife killing her every second. Her soul had slowly bled to death and the irony was that not a person in the world knew about it. She stood in front of her murderer" (Goswami 117). She saw him going towards the door. She thought that she cannot let him go like that and it was her turn now. She felt something choking her throat when she tried to tell him to stop. So she banged her fist on the dressing table beside her and the gold bangles in her hands made a tinkle sound together. The sound made Sameer to stop and he turned to look at Nirmala. "She was no more the woman with a distressed look. She stood elegantly with her head held high and her chin up. A if totally in command of the situation" (Goswami 128). She gestured him to stop and started searching for something in her belongings. She went to Sameer and gave him a small gift box that her maternal grandfather had given her as a wedding gift. She offered it as a gift from her for his fresh start. "Sameer was stunned to hear it. He never expected such generosity from the woman whose dreams he had just shattered. Somewhere at the bottom of his heart he felt ashamed of himself for doing this to her. Nevertheless, he knew he couldn't change his decision" (Goswami 139). He took it, kept it in his pocket and left the room saying a thank you.

On his first night after his marriage with Sangita, he remembered about the gift and opened it. There was a key and a note with the address of a house written on it. The house was in the same city. It was Nirmala's ancestral house and Nirmala's grandfather had given it to her so that Sameer and Nirmala would start a new life in that house. Sameer and Sangita shifted to that house and instead of leading a happy life, Sameer started facing a lot of problems. His guilt held him in such a tight grip that he had lost interest in living and finally committed suicide. Her attention again shifted towards the moth. She felt that earlier she was like that moth who was confused what to do in her life and now she had become like the flame and people are like the moth desperately trying for her forgiveness. She went to the lamp and opened the glass covering and the moth went near the fire and died in the flames. She gave a cunning smile and placed the glass back on the lamp. She thought to herself that her murderer couldn't escape and got his punishment. "She burst into tears but tears of joy. She had avenged her insult in her own way. It was not just a small gift box that she had given to Sameer for his new beginning that day.

She had laced it with all her hatred for him, her ill wishes and the seed of his self destruction. She laughed out loud ...The wind had flipped a few pages of Sameer's personal diary. One of the pages read, 'Those tinkling sound of the bangles is now becoming unbearable for me. As if someone is cursing me day and night. I don't want to live like this anymore' " (Goswami 162).

Conclusion: The writer has tried to focus on the importance of unleashing the hidden power in a woman's life to find her happiness. The story shows the devastating changes that retaliation of women can bring in this patriarchal society to lead it to a better tomorrow. Though it showed the pursuit of happiness in a dark side of life, but it certainly shows how a woman can fight to achieve whatever she wants and how her choices has the power the change the courses of life of not just her but also all the people around her.

References:

1. Goswami, Paromita. *The Wedding Gift*. Ficus India, 15 October 2018. ebook.
2. Beauvoir, Simone de. *The Second Sex*. New York: Vintage Books, 1989. Print.
