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Dhiruben Patel's *Aandhali Gali* A Psychoanalytical Insight into the Emotions of a Woman

Rajesh V. Basiya, Ph.D.



Dhiruben Patel

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Dhiruben Patel was born in Baroda on 29th May 1926. Dhiruben has achieved an outstanding position in modern Gujarati literature. She has been given a creditable position in the history of Gujarati novel. She also gave her services as the President of Gujarati Sahitya Parishad. She was conferred the prestigious Sahitya Academy Award for her novel *Aagantuk* in 2002. She was also given the highest meritorious award for Gujarati literature Ranjitram Suwarnachandrak in 1983. She contributed in all genres of literature. She has written short stories, novels, plays and poems. Dhiruben is a prolific writer.

Psychological Insight into the Life of a Woman



Aandhali Gali is a psychological insight into life of a woman who all of a sudden decides to marry at the age of forty five. Kundan, an unmarried woman of about forty five, lives a lonely life in Mumbai. The novel presents a picture of happy married life of Paresh and Shubhangi which brings new changes in Kundan, and her approach towards life. But Kundan is disappointed in the end and she is again thrown away into that dark street of life that is-aandhali gali which has no end. The novel is a description of the sensitivity of a woman. According to Dhiruben sensitivity for a writer is more essential than gender, *‘I firmly believe that sensitivity is the first and last requirement of a writer, it is of no importance whether the writer is man or woman.’*¹

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Human Mind is Unpredictable

Aandhali Gali was published in 1983. Human mind is unpredictable. Sometimes we cannot know a person thoroughly even though we live with him or her for years. Kundan, an unmarried woman of about forty five, who lives a lonely life in Mumbai, is the central figure in this short novel. Her father, Ratilal loved Kundan so much that he does not marry after the death of his wife; he does not marry after the death of his wife because he was mindful of his daughter. Therefore, Kundan also has not married though she is forty five. After the death of her father, Kundan wants to have a tenant in her big house 'Kundan Villa', as she feels lonely. Kundan's father left sufficient wealth for her livelihood. Being moved by the love story of Paresh, a stranger, Kundan allows him and his wife Shubhangi to stay in a part of her house. When she hears the latter part of the love story of Paresh through Shubhangi, not only does she take an interest in their life, but also becomes conscious about her own life.

A Bond of Love

For forty five years, Kundan had been a virgin in the real sense of the term. Now she, all of a sudden, thinks of the marriage influenced by the loving and blissful conjugal life of Paresh–Shubhangi after their prolonged separation. The writer beautifully presents marriage as a bond of love:

Pati patni banne digmudh thaine Kundan same joi rahyan. Teni vat jetli anadhari hati tetlij sachi hati. Bija ek manasno bhar jivanbhar vendharvo, tena sukhe sukhi thavun, tena dukhe dukhi thavun te kai nanisooni vat nathi. Agadh prem vina avo bojo sha mate koie pan uthavvo joie? ²

(Husband and wife were stunned as they stared at Kundan. Her point was as true as abrupt. It is not a less significant matter to work laboriously for a person for one's whole life.... to feel happy on his/her happiness.... to suffer with him/her, for his/her misery.)

Change of Symbols

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For many years Kundan has put on white clothes but now she starts wearing colourful clothes. She buys make-up articles and beautifies herself. She also learns the art of cooking. She becomes active in life. Putting aside her modesty, she tells Shubhangi that she is very keen to get married. She tells Shubhangi, “ *Shun lage chhe, Hun pan parni jau to?...³* (What do you say about it? Should I marry?) It is a new incarnation of Kundan. Shubhangi is surprised to see the change in Kundan:

“Shun?” Shubhangie poochhhyun. Kundane phari pachhun pelu aachhun, lajjashil smit karyun ane kahyu: “Mane thayun ke a lagna to karva jevu chhe! Mane ghana ghana vichar aavva mandya...⁴

(“What?” Shubhangi asked in much surprise. Kundan again smiled bashfully and said, I think this marriage is a venture to be made use of. I am continuously brooding over it...)

In Search of a Partner

Kundan gets her name registered in a pilgrimage – special, so she may have a partner. She thinks of giving an advertisement in matrimonial classified. Looking at the longing for marriage in Kundan’s heart, Paresh introduces her to an elderly colleague in his office Mr. Parekh. As the developments are on full swing to fulfil her aim of marriage, an obstacle occurs. Kundan inherits the property of an unknown lady called Baruadin Joans after the latter’s death. Kundan learns about her father’s love affair with this lady through the lawyer of the family. She is shocked and stops the steps toward her marriage. She tells Paresh-Shubhangi to vacate her house.

Kundan lived with her father for years and still she could not know him fully. How can she then know Mr. Parekh, a total stranger? This thought makes her cancel the arrangements for the marriage. She is disappointed very much. She feels that she could not even recognize her father with whom she spent her whole life. She says, “*Juone, ratibhainiye mane khabar na padi...Aakhi jindagi sathe rahi toyee! Hun koine nahi olakhi shaku, koini sahthe nahi rahi shakun.... bas, Jivya karish aamne aam – kok divas to aa aandhali gali no ant avshene!* ⁵ (Look, though I lived my whole life

with Ratibhai, I could not know him. I shall not be able know anyone. I can't live with anybody...Just be living and someday there will be an end to this blind alley!)

The Dark Street of Life

In this way, she decides to live in 'Aandhali Gali', the dark street of life that is - andhali gali which is called blind alley - a street from where we cannot come out. Now she does not want to trust anyone in life. She is again thrown back into the 'Aandhali Gali'. The self-awareness of a lady caused by the sudden change of circumstances is revealed very realistically in this short novel.

Deep Reflection on Married Life

Dhiruben focuses on the conjugal life of a person keeping at the centre the two points: the married life of Paresh-Shubhangi, and the unfulfilled desires of Kundan to get married. Following the footsteps of her father who refuses to remarry for her happiness, Kundan also does not marry though she is forty five. But the love story of Paresh arouses the feeling of love and marriage in Kundan, and she becomes conscious about life. She takes interest in cooking, cosmetics and costumes. She does feel that it is not too late for her to get married. She plans to marry and settle in life. Mr. Parekh, a widower serving with Paresh, shows interest in Kundan. She also meets him. But, Baruadin Joans becomes the obstacle, and she decides not to marry, and all on a sudden her behaviour is changed. She goes back to the same status of spinster as she was before, a single, lonely bird. She rejects the proposal of Mr. Parekh for marriage. Paresh and Shubhangi cannot understand what has happened.

Shocking Secrets

In the end, she explains everything about the unknown Christian woman, who had left some property and a flat for Kundan in her will. Kundan comes to know that she had relations with her father. Kundan is extremely shocked to know all these things. Now she cannot bear to see the happy conjugal life of Paresh and Shubhangi and makes them vacate her house. After years, a happy meeting takes place in the life of Paresh-Shubhangi. Their parents have not given consent to their marriage. They had only gotten a registered marriage done at a court. Ultimately Paresh gets both a

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job and a house. Though both of them are above 32-34, they have no issue. Still they are happy. Kundan, the heroine has no job. She takes an interest in the life of Paresh and Shubhangi.

Relevance of the Title of the Novel

Dhiruben has given a quite appropriate and symbolic title to this psychological novel. Usually a street has two ends and both are open to enter or exit. But there are some streets or roads which have no open end. We can enter the street but can't exit on the other end. Such a street is called blind alley in English. It is called *aandhali gali* (street) in Gujarati. Here in this novel the central figure is the character of Kundan. She decided to live a maiden life at an early age, in her youth. She was not interested in love or marriage in her youth. Once the season has passed, or the age to fall in love or marry is gone, as far as Gujarati culture is concerned, it may not be possible to reverse the situation. But at the age of forty-five suddenly, the company of the happy couple arouses the feeling of love and marriage in Kundan's heart. But, sadly, it may be too late. All her efforts for love and marriage seem to be futile; when she hears of her father having had a mistress, she cancels all arrangements for her marriage. And she is again thrown back into the same life of loneliness-'aandhali gali'. She has to live the same dull and lonely life. She says, "... *bas, Jivya karish aamne aam -kok divas to aa aandhali gali no ant avshene!*"⁶ (... Just be living and someday there will be the end of this blind alley!) Thus it is a very suitable and effective title to the novel.

Thus, the novelist insightfully describes an unmarried woman's longing for marriage at the age of forty five. But it may be too late now. She presents a psychological insight into life of an unmarried (Gujarati) woman. *Aandhali Gali* deserves a praiseworthy place in the history of Gujarati novel.

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Notes and References

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3. Ibid. p.66.
4. Ibid. p.68.
5. Ibid. p.104.
6. Ibid. p.10.

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