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## YAMINI: THE EXPLORATION OF THE MYSTERY OF THE HUMAN MIND AND ITS ESSENTIAL SOLITARINESS

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**Dr. T. T. PRASAD MOHAN BABU**

Asst. Professor of English

STSN Govt. Degree College

Kadiri-515591

Ananthapuramu Dist. A. P, India

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### Abstract:

Yamini, a novel written in the post independent era spanning a period of around twenty years, was an excellent narrative by Chudamani Raghavan, a woman novelist in Tamil she explored the mystery of the human mind and its essential solitariness through Yamini the main character in the novel. "Born though she was along with the stars, she came clad in the hue of the night which gives birth to them. When the time came to give her a name, it was his mood of announcing that produced one, sweet sounding and melodious though it was Yamini."<sup>23</sup> Yamini's another act of peculiarity was that she did not like close physical contact with anybody even her parents even she disliked to be called by pet names by her parents. When he (Saaranathan) attempted to clasp the little girl to him, she gently wriggled and extricated herself. When her mother called her with a pet name, 'Kannu' (Pupil of the eye'; an endearment like 'dear' or 'precious') fondly while Yamini was standing at the window looking at the sky at midnight, she became furious and asked her not to call her so. It was not that Yamini had some high purpose or ideal in her mind to reject the household life. Mary mention of the word "marriage" provoked her essential being to surge up in revolt. This protest was like hunger, like sleep—a simply,-not-to-be-denied instinct. She had no reason to explain to her mother why disliked marriage. Yamini was forced into marriage a common enough event prevalent even today sections of Indian society. Yamini in her disturbed mental state tried to commit suicide. She would have jumped into the well if Saaranathan and the gardener ran and caught her, in time to prevent the disaster. She was given medical treatment for a number of times, but no use. Many times she struggled and dragged herself to the well to leap into the well. Whenever she was left alone, even for a brief while she would rush to the well. It was because she was disturbed from her dearly wished a life of solitude and thrown into the household life that led her to frustration. If she was left to her wishes she might lead a normal life though that looked odd.

Keywords: post independent, woman novelist, Indian society, marriage,.etc

Yamini, a novel written in the post independent era spanning a period of around twenty years, was an excellent narrative by Chudamani Raghavan, a woman novelist in Tamil she explored the mystery of the human mind and its essential solitariness through Yamini the main character in the novel. The writer seemed to be sensitive to women's moods and feelings and to their predicament in society with no ideological ax to grind. She focused on women's strengths without any prejudice towards the male characters. Any feminist writer would have pounced on Yamini's husband making her pregnant presumably against her will. But, it is mentioned by Vasantha Surya in her introduction to the novel, "Chudamani's novel is romantic, an intense daydream about psychological deviance, not an analysis. Bhavana, the expression of human emotions, is its purpose, and not the achieving of verisimilitude. Here the preeminent emotion is not loved between a man and a woman, but the love of parents for their child. That is the chief motive for action, and the real culprit in this story." No feministic feelings were said to be expressed in the novel except with the soaring romanticism modulated by the novelist.

Yamini, as the name meant 'night', was a dark-skinned girl. She was born to Saaranathan and Perundevi. Saaranathan was a Government servant. With a good salary the advantages of inherited wealth and a house of his own – their life was happy that lacked for nothing. Except that by the time was thirty-two years old two male children were born to him – born dead. It was prior to the birth of Yamini. For saaranathan, the happiness of the child being born alive, for the third time, was considerably reduced by his disappointment and annoyance that it was a girl child and very dark skinned. The night belonged to Yamini. She was born when night blossomed like a hover.

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For Perundevi the baby was her salvation. It was her deliverance that came to rid her of her grief. Though Perundevi did not like the child's name, she yielded to her husband's wish and managed to console herself. As she fed the baby at her breast and fondly tended her, the heart would swell with pride and pleasure. She saw radiance in that dark little face. But it took some time to Saaranathan to relent towards the girl. Later his feeling for her was intense and inseparable from his own life.

From childhood, Yamini loves nothing better than solitude. She seemed to be a peculiar girl who increased her mother's bewilderment. As the baby became a little girl the inclination for close association with others was lost. At an age when most children are fed by their mothers, Yamini fed herself, saying, "I'll eat by myself, Amma", from bathing, combing her hair and everything else, why did she hurry to become independent? At only seven years of age, she shook off the company of the servant and began to sleep alone in a separate room. To wear

trinkets, flowers in the hair, to dress up in different kinds of clothes like other girls—these did not appeal to her.

Yamini continued to behave in such an odd way in spite of her mother's longing for making her normal. Although she did help her mother with household chores in a refractory fashion, she preferred to sit by herself rather than get caught up in such matters. Yamini's behavior with her friends also looked odd. She played with them but though she did not stand apart conspicuously often in the middle of the game when the other little girls huddled together and giggled, she would find herself a separate corner and go off as though she were bored. In relating to others it was not that she was reticent exactly. But her own fulfillment did not seem to lie in the pursuit of such external relationships.

Yamini was fascinated by the night sky. She spent hours looking up at the night sky, drinking in its ineffable beauty. She liked night more than any other thing. She preferred to live a solitary life looking up at the sky. When her father asked her not to do so for she would feel scared, she simply flashed a quick, pearly smile and said to her father that looking at the darkness did not scare her and that she liked darkness. She looked up at the night as though she were lifting her face like a bowl to catch and hold the liquid beauty of the night. The night had found a natural echo in her.

Yamini's another act of peculiarity was that she did not like close physical contact with anybody even her parents even she disliked to be called by pet names by her parents. When he (Saaranathan) attempted to clasp the little girl to him, she gently wriggled and extricated herself. When her mother called her with a pet name, 'Kannu' (Pupil of the eye'; an endearment like 'dear' or 'precious') fondly while Yamini was standing at the window looking at the sky at midnight, she became furious and asked her not to call her so.

The behavior of their daughter, stunned, hurt and confused Saaranathan and Perundevi. They didn't know how she would change. They were shaken by her odd behavior. They thought that she would change with the growing years and become like everybody else. But there was no change in her. She did not become like everybody else.

There was no doubt- she was like all other girls in the matter of physical changes. But she screamed with the hurt of her own body. That was the time when her feminine nature was beginning to blossom. Her parents felt a new excitement combined with anxiety and a feeling of responsibility. She burst into endless tears. She drove her off with her wild shrieks when her mother tried to console her.

“She had now come into her inheritance of womanhood. Yet the sheer marvel of having become a real woman did not thrill her in the least. Instead indistinct waves of emotion surged up and buffeted her. She quivered with outrage as the world had invaded and planted its flag upon her unsullied, solitary inner domain. And she struggled to free herself.”<sup>2</sup>

Conservative families of those days used to marry off their pre-pubescent and teenage girls. The prevailing belief was that every girl was born to get married and bring forth children and that it was her father's duty to find a husband for her from within the strictly codified circle of caste, sub-caste, and reason. As it was a relatively easy way, often marriages were arranged between the children of a brother and a sister. The groom had the privilege of rejecting the bride whereas the bride was not expected to express an opinion on the matter. No girl should resist the marriage since people believed fundamentally, that human beings, especially women, found happiness and fulfillment only through marriage. But Yamini refused to get married. The parents thought that it was a commonplace rebellion by any girl. Perundevi tried to convince her in vain.

It was not that Yamini had some high purpose or ideal in her mind to reject the household life. Mere mention of the word "marriage" provoked her essential being to surge up in revolt. This protest was like hunger, like sleep—a simply, not-to-be-denied instinct. She had no reason to explain to her mother why she disliked marriage. Yamini was forced into marriage a common enough event prevalent even today in sections of Indian society.

"The hearts cries were drowned in the notes of the wedding pipe. Her eyes were stricken, her face bowed and miserable as the marriage thread was tied around her neck."<sup>3</sup>

As it was inescapable for her, she had to walk behind her husband to his house in another part of the city. But could she be there with no interest in household life? One evening she went to her parents without telling her husband. Feeling bitter Perundevi scolded her and tried to make her daughter see reason. She told her son-in-law that it would turn out all right and pleaded him not to misunderstand. In no time she understood that it was not just fear but rebellion. It was the clamor of wings beating against the door of a cage. Such incidents, her running home repeated many times and each time they took her back. Sometimes she would disappear. Each time she was brought back.

As days passed Saaranathan grew more and more anxious. Doubt reared within him about whether he had done the right thing in getting his daughter married. He felt a lot. One day Yamini came and knelt weeping before him. He wondered at her being without fury. She was completely defeated by now. His heart seemed to be desolate and empty as though left high and dry after a flood. Now there was no sign of anger in her. Yes, she was pregnant then.

Days passed by. Yamini had no change in her. Moreover, she was keeping well. She always kept screaming and shouting it was something like hysteria. Rameshan was not at all happy with her. What he had expected was a loving wife. Fine children. The joy and contentment of normal household life. But he could not get all those. He was such an unfortunate one that he received no love or joy from her she carried his child in her body as though it were a growing disease of some sort. He told Perundevi about Yamini's hysterical behavior. Perundevi asked him to leave her for some time. After she came home Yamini appeared a little more peaceful. But this calm was not something positive. It turned out to be nothing very

substantial, but only the emptiness of desolation. She looked like a corpse now. She showed sudden anger and sorrow all of a sudden – the writer wrote, about her condition, like this—

"Rocking quietly and peacefully back and forth on the swing for hours on end, she would suddenly see the and fume. Rage and terror would cover her face like storm clouds suddenly massing in a clear sky. With twitching eyes she would stare at the ceiling, biting her underlip, and press her belly with both hands. Despair would come bursting out of her in a torrent of tears."<sup>32</sup>

Saaranathan was very much depressed to see her condition. He always felt that he had committed an error that could never be set right. Seeing her in tears, he suffered scalding grief, deep inside. There was a tiny hope in his mind that she would become normal like anyone else if he was born. He tried to comfort her in vain.

The night was the only time when a little peace descended on her. She liked night and solitude. Whenever an attempt was made to take her back to her husband's house she screamed frantically. She would throw that and this in her rage at Rameshan. She had no peace and tormented others too. Sometimes she behaved foolishly in fury. She attempted to abort the child by her own efforts a number of times. It was very difficult for Perundevi to watch her vigilantly until the time of her delivery. She gave birth to a female child. The child was very pretty – fair and bright like the full moon. Yes, the moon is born of night. There was no feeling in Yamini's face. She looked at the child motionlessly with no response to her mother's talk. She stared at it for a long time. Suddenly she started screaming. When the nurse went to her she tore herself away frantically. Her actions revealed her insanity. She laughed as though she could never stop. Saaranathan's heart heaved with sobs. He felt like this:

“My child, my Yamini, is this your fate after all? We've all done this to you together destroyed you”<sup>33</sup>

Yamini laughed and laughed. Her mother tried to stop her from laughing by saying that Rameshan was her husband at the mention of the word 'Husband' she suddenly stopped laughing and thundered by saying that she was a virgin. And burst into sobs. She behaved madly. Her condition worsened day by day. Finally, she had to be admitted to a hospital for proper treatment. Saaranathan was found brooding in solitude and spending sleepless nights. Very often he burst into sobs. When her condition was normal, she was taken home. For some days she was sitting on the swing, being by herself, engrossed watching the face of night, still as a statue and stifling, under an oppressive inner burden. One day when Rameshan wanted to speak to her affectionately she made a lunatic cry and shouted, “I am a virgin! A Virgin!” Again she was taken to hospital for treatment. She did not have any feeling towards her child—Geetha was its name. Perundevi loved the child. Apart from the natural affection of a grandparent, knowing that the child was deprived of its mother's care

made her compensate for it with her own abundant attention. And the child naturally grew attached to her.

Whenever Perundevi tried to take the child Yamini, there was a sudden swirl of emotion in her black face and her whole body began to shake violently. She panted, gashed her teeth and put a demonic expression.

Yamini in her disturbed mental state tried to commit suicide. She would have jumped into the well if Saaranathan and the gardener ran and caught her, in time to prevent the disaster. She was given medical treatment for a number of times, but no use. Many times she struggled and dragged herself to the well to leap into the well. Whenever she was left alone, even for a brief while she would rush to the well. It was because she was disturbed from her dearly wished a life of solitude and thrown into the household life that led her to frustration. If she was left to her wishes she might lead a normal life though that looked odd.

Knowing not what to do, they kept her in a room and locked the door. Because it was not possible for them to cover the well and it was clear that she was determined to kill herself. It was only when she needed food, the doors were opened and locked immediately. She became less lucid. The sound of the swing's chains and of her singing were heard. Occasionally there were sounds of sobbing and cries also. Most of the time she spent her time sitting still as a stone, in the locked room, with vacant eyes. Poor Yamini! She lived a wretched woeful life and left the parents in grief beyond any solace on the other side of the door. She could live that life and put an end to it at an early age.

That night, Saaranathan took Yamini with him to the terrace, recognizing her need to nourish her inner self with the cool, refreshing vista of the nocturnal sky above the horizon. He tried to satisfy her inner self whenever he could by taking her up there. At midnight he was walking down with Yamini behind him. He thought that she was climbing down yet. But by then the expected tragedy happened. They searched for her in the dark in vain. Finally, they pulled the corpse out of the well. Yes, Yamini killed herself by leaping into the well. The poor soul ended her frustrated painful dark life. Now her body lay there like a miniature image of the boundless night fallen to earth. Perundevi fell into a faint. There was no end to Saaranathan's grief. The sound heard from inside the well was unendurable to him. Her memories haunted him. Saaranathan still felt that it was their foolishness that led her to cruel fate. If she had been left alone, who knew, she might have developed any emotional relationships later on.

Thus the novel explores the mystery of the human mind and its essential solitariness through the main character in the novel, Yamini.

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