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Negotiating the Subjugation of Femininity in *Memories of Rain* by Sunetra Gupta

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Abstract

This paper attempts to understand how the main character takes her ultimate decision and emancipates herself in the patriarchal driven area in the novel *Memories of Rain*, and also illustrates the struggles faced by the character and her internal emotions. The tale that takes place in a single weekend is portrayed by Sunetra Gupta's *Memories of Rain* (1992), which comparatively narrates the throwback of a marriage between an Indian girl and an English fjord. The novel is greatly congratulated by its lengthy style of prose.

Keywords: Feminism, Marginalisation, Betrayal, Memory, Rebirth.

Introduction

Sunetra Gupta is among the most versatile diasporic female writers of the 20th century. Gupta belongs to the generation of Indian English writers called Rushdie and post-Rushdie. In Calcutta, she was born and spent her childhood in Ethiopia and Zambia. Sunetra is a renowned novelist, essayist, translator and writer of short stories. The author of the five novels is Sunetra Gupta. She has received a number of awards, including the Sahitya Academy Award, the Southern Arts Literature Prize and the DSC South Asian Literature Prize. She was declared the winner of the Rosalind Franklin Royal Society award in 2009 for her experiments and scientific achievements. She's an adept translator of Rabindranath Tagore's poems. Sunetra Gupta was named "Prodigious Talent" in the UK magazine *Independent on Sunday*. Critics in the west compare Gupta to the renowned author Virginia Woolf because the female protagonist, limited textual language and experiments are the concern of Woolf Gupta. The Sahitya Academy award was given to her first novel, *Memories of Rain* (1992).

About feminism

One of the most interesting areas in the field of literature is feminism. With the theory of feminism, many academic writers have intentionally discussed their perspectives. A *Feminist Dictionary* (1985) defines feminism as a recognition of the world by movement in all human relations on the basis of sex-equality. As a social movement, feminism may be examined. Women are always marginalized, so feminism views women as the most oppressed group and, by portraying them as individuals and human beings, defends the rights of women.

During the latter part of the 18th century, feminism began, while during the 19th century, modern feminism was sown into the soil of literature. Feminist writers, namely Mary Wollstonecraft, Lady Mary Wortley



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Montagu, Marquis de Condorcet, sowed the seed for feminism by criticizing a few practices followed in society in their views and goals for feminism. Feminist writers divide feminism's goals into three main categories:

1. To show the relevance of women,
2. To show that women have been subordinated to men historically,
3. To bring about equality between genders.

The works of feminist works like *The Moving Woman* of Judith Wrights (1946), *The Second Sex* of Simon de Beauvoir (1949), *The Subjection of Women* of John Stuart Mill (1869) concentrate on the struggles women face in their daily lives. Barry, states that, for instance, the feminist pointed out that very few women work for a living in nineteenth-century fiction, unless they are driven to it by dire necessity. Instead, the focus of interest is on the choice of the marriage partner of the heroine, which will decide her ultimate social position and determine her happiness and fulfillment in life exclusively, or her lack of them.

The Novel's backdrop

The first novel by Sunetra Gupta, *Memories of Rain*, deals with the lives of a young couple, Moni, a Calcutta Bengali woman, and Anthony, an Oxford-Englishman who came from the Western world and met during the 1978 Calcutta rainstorm. Anthony is coming to Bengal to do his Bengali theatre research. Moni's brother is Anthony's close friend, so Anthony often comes to Moni's house and gets to know her. He shows an interest in Moni, taking this as an advantage. Her brother instructs her to give coffee to Anthony whenever Anthony comes to his house. Anthony is a smart artist, but an immoral person. Moni is an English language undergraduate student at Oxford University. Moni is a very sensitive woman born into a traditional middle-class family and brought up. She's very interested in Jane Austen and in Tagore's songs. Moni finds herself repelled and attracted by a friend of her brother's. They're both falling in love. Moni struggles a lot to marry Antony, an English Moor, after completing her studies at Oxford. Her parents are not interested in sending their daughter to a foreign country. Finally, her parents accepted her marriage, but they provided for the marriage to take place according to Indian culture. A fairy-tale comes true, only to reach a sordid end. Her marriage is full of pain, frustration, unfaithfulness and non-communication. She spent her life happily after marriage for only a few years until Anthony's mistress became part of the family. Practically, she becomes a family member. Moni experiences prejudice and betrayal after her arrival. As a third person, her



VIDHYAYANA

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An International Multidisciplinary Research e-Journal

unfaithful husband treats Moni. Anthony tells Moni that her beauty and virginal purity have captivated him. Moni's emotions are futile. In the end, she makes a confidential plan for her daughter's sixth birthday, facing all these miseries and melancholy. She picks up her baby and returns to Calcutta. Within a single week, this novel's major action takes place.

The Novel's Analysis

Sunetra Gupta, an acclaimed writer, portrayed the lives of Moni and Anthony, a young couple. In Calcutta, Moni comes from a conventional family and Anthony is from London. This occident and orient is drawn to each other and marries so many struggles in the face. They are settling down in London. Their marriage will only last for a few years. Moni, with her six-year-old daughter, secretly plans to return home and decides to leave her unfaithful husband. Writing in the Washington Post magazine in the title "Out of India: A Thirst for Past" Tharoor (1992) a famous Indian English novelist comments on Memories of Rain.

The triumphant debut of a gifted and convincing voice is marked by Memories of Rain. Sunetra Gupta weaves a tale as intricate and rich, yet as light and warm, like a jamewar shawl, in long rolling sentences that pile clause upon clause, emotion upon emotion, keenly observed detail upon poignantly imagined whimsy.

Moni can be compared to Shashi Deshpande's protagonists, Saru and Jaya. Saru loves Mano and marries him in *The Dark Holds no Terror*, and her parents are not happy with her marriage. She faces lots of physical and psychological turmoil and returns to her parents after giving birth to two children. Her marriage is not a happy marriage. Whereas Jaya, after a few years of marriage, marries Mohan and gets separated from him. Moni observes silence all through her life, similar to Jaya. The same is done by Moni. She does not speak a word against her or Anthony, even when Anna becomes part of the family. Similar to the silence of Jaya in 'That Long Silence', her silence breaks Moni and Anthony's husband-wife relationship. "Jaya asserts a character in the novel with Kamat and says that a woman can never be furious. She can only be hysterical, frustrated, neurotic. In nature, both of their sufferings are socio-physical. In Maheswata Devi's play 'Draupadi', Moni is also juxtaposed with the character Dopdi. As a woman with strong willpower, she stands brave in front of all. Moni was standing against Anthony, who was betraying her. Without anyone's support, she adopted an independent resolution. She was mastering male power. Hoque states Dopdi subverts the physicality of her body from powerless to powerful resistance" in the article 'Mahasweta Devi's Draupadi as A Symbol of Subaltern Defiance. Dopdi allows her identity to be seen by the reader. The decision of Moni makes everyone realize her audacious and courageous attitude. Like these great personas,



VIDHYAYANA

ISSN 2454-8596

www.vidhyayanaejournal.org

An International Multidisciplinary Research e-Journal

women ought to be heroic and fearless.

Marginalizing

Men treat women both at home and in society as marginalized and underprivileged. A woman should be next to men at all times. In *Memories of Rain*, Moni's protagonist must obey whatever her brother commands her to do. "Make some tea for us, Moni, there's a good girl there," he demands. She says, "Make it yourself," suppressing the wild excitement. Anthony visits Moni's house habitually. One day when he comes to their house with her brother because of heavy rain, Moni's brother gives him an umbrella to take this as an advantage, Anthony comes to see Moni the next day in order to return the umbrella. Moni's brother orders her to make tea in a wild and suppressed way whenever Anthony comes. Even at home, men consider women to be inferior to men. Moni is facing lots of suffering. Moni goes out and studies in Oxford to get rid of her suppressed life. Moni sees Anthony in the early days of her stay abroad, and she is attracted to him and falls in love with him. They refuse to get their daughter married to an English man when Moni asks her parents' permission to marry him. Eventually, with many conditions, her father agrees to their marriage, demanding that her marriage take place in a perfect Bengali style. And now, she'll go back to them, bring them a new grief, that of a daughter returned, a daughter rejected, a daughter spurned, says her father in grief. Moni's father tells her all this and makes her understand the conditions. Moni rejects everything, overcomes all subjection, goes to London and begins Anthony's new life. Moni overcomes all of her parents' subjugation and comes out of her cage. S. P. Swain comments on her fight for salvation the feminist struggle for liberation is seen in the context of the crisis of liberty.

Betrayal and betrayal

In her life with Anthony, Moni only feels happy for a few years until Anna arrives and becomes part of the family. Anthony has an affair with an English woman named Anna. Moni faced a lot of humiliation when she came and stayed at their house. The affection and kindness of Anthony towards Moni completely disappears and is converted into disloyalty and hatred. Before she permanently becomes a member of the family, Anna often visits Moni's home. Moni says, she remembers Anna coming to see the child for the first time, laying helplessly numb against the pillows, holding the baby up to her.

In her novel *To the Lighthouse*, Virginia Woolf correctly comments on marriage and states marriage is not considered a happy thing many times today. Men always consider women to be playful. Apt for the Declaration. Moni is treated as a plaything by Anthony and he stays with her only to fulfill his wish. She



VIDHYAYANA

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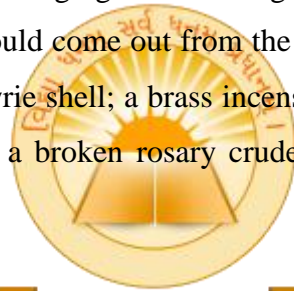
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was betrayed and left alone; her only salvation was her child.

About memory

Moni recaptures with Anthony her bitter memories and her hardest day. The relationship between past and present memories causes her to experience depression. She's got tears in her eyes, she's always wanted to be able to address someone with her song, she's always been thinking that it might be a young artist. Moni relates her suffering through the song during her stay in London, when Anthony abandons her and stays with Anna. But in a productive way, Moni takes all of this distress and motivates herself to move forward in her life. In the article, Memory and Identity Evaluation in M. G Vassanji's *The Sophia Livingston Gunny Sack*. Ji-Bai would say, is this old sack here, this poor darling for whom no one has any more use. She would drag it closer, stroking the sagging brown shape with affection, to sit on her like a favorite child. She would plunge her hand through the mouth's gaping hole, and she'd rummage inside. Now here, you're feeling this thing, you're fondling that one, and you're bringing out this naughty little nut, and all else in it is rearranging itself. Some knick-knack of yesteryear would come out from the dusty depths: a bead necklace shorn off its polish; a rolled-up torn photograph; a cowrie shell; a brass incense holder; a Swahili cap so softened by age that it folded neatly into a small square; a broken rosary crudely tied up to save the remaining beads; a bloodstained muslin shirt; a small book.



VIDHYAYANA

Rebirth Over

The powerful will-power of Moni allows her to overcome all her hardships and she moves to Calcutta. Moni remembers that she's never made a decision, and this is her first big decision. Moni is returning to Calcutta on her sixth birthday with her daughter. Moni remembers how foolishly she imagined that Anthony had crossed seven seas to save her. But now, after ten years, she realizes that he has come to colonize her like a colonizer. He got her married, brought her to London, and treated her like a slave. In her article, Revision, Rerouting and Return: Reversing the Technology of Diaspora in Sunetra Gupta's *Memories of Rain*, Banerjee (2009) comments that Moni's reminiscences appear mostly negative at the early stage, but as the novel progresses, we see a steady shift in Moni's memory. Moni recaptures everything, including the crooked nature of Anthony. Moni does not communicate and shares with Anthony neither her suffering nor her decision. She remains aloof and, on her sixth birthday, returns to Calcutta with her daughter. By arising from her sufferings, Moni regenerates herself like a phoenix and gains new life.



VIDHYAYANA

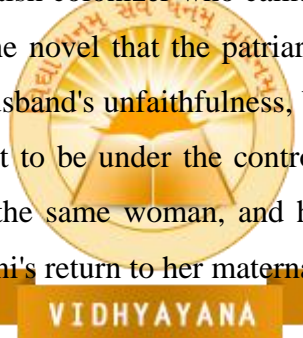
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Conclusion

In the end, it was the secrets that held hostage and fuelled my depression, but, once released, emancipation from fear, shame, guilt and judgment-was finally possible." are fit for the protagonist Moni. B. G. Bowers' statement about emancipation in *Death and Life* "In the end, it was the secrets that held hostage and fuelled my depression. She marries Anthony and settles down in London with him. She trusts him a great deal, but there is a sordid end to their marriage. She suffers from a lot of internal conflicts. Moni teaches that women should emancipate, empower, and teach men that women are not slaves, and that they have the supreme power to overcome battles. In the patriarchal dominated society, she sets the way for all women and shows that women's destiny is not in suffering in men's hands, but in empowering themselves. She emancipates herself and overcomes all her struggles by going back to her home. Anthony portrayed himself as a loyal husband at the beginning of the novel, and Moni regarded him as a prince who traveled many seas to rescue her, but as the novel continues, it is clear that he wore a mask and disguised himself as a devoted husband. It is possible to compare Anthony to the British colonizer who came to colonize an Indian woman and treated her as a slave. It is evident throughout the novel that the patriarchal dogma is entirely deep-rooted in his mind. Moni suffers a lot because of her husband's unfaithfulness, but she is emancipated by her independent choice to return home. Moni doesn't want to be under the control of Anthony, and it's clear that the new Moni was born. She doesn't want to be the same woman, and her secret choice makes her live a life of liberation. On her daughter's birthday, Moni's return to her maternal home symbolizes her rebirth.



VIDHYAYANA



VIDHYAYANA

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An International Multidisciplinary Research e-Journal

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VIDHYAYANA