

Kleptomania, the Egosyntonic behaviour of Miss Krishna, a Character in Nergis Dalal's 'The Connoisseur': A Study on Causes.

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Abstract

Miss Krishna a character in Nergis Dalal's 'The Connoisseur' is a victim of OCPD (Obsessive Compulsive Personality Disorder) and the cause being her mother's biased love for Miss Krishna's younger and 'beautiful' sister. This paper deals with the causes of Miss Krishna's egosyntonic behaviour. It also studies the relationship of *deprivation of love* from her family and the serious kleptomania *disorder* that Miss Krishna develops. The small but exquisite things that she steals from people shows how much she longs for little affections. Miss Krishna's life is an empty bag void of love and affection so she fills the 'big bag' she carries with tiny and exotic stolen objects. She, a pathetic victim of rejection takes solace in filling her 'bag' with beautiful things that belong to others. After failing to receive the love she rightfully deserves Miss Krishna pinches away things from others. In this milieu, she becomes a victim of OCPD and satiates her hunger for love and affection.

Keywords: Obsessive Compulsive Personality Disorder, Egosyntonic, Kleptomania Panacea, Rejection

1. INTRODUCTION

The term 'Egosyntonic' in psychoanalysis refers to the behaviours, values and feelings that are in harmony with or acceptable to the needs and goals of the ego. ^[1] In Abnormal Psychology, people who are Egosyntonic may not perceive anything wrong and view their perceptions and behaviour as reasonable and appropriate. ^[2] They believe their behaviour/perceptions are congruent to their beliefs and values, not understanding that such behaviour is a personality disorder. This disorder is categorized as 'Obsessive Compulsive Personality Disorder'. People suffering with this disorder are oblivious of the fact that others around them suffer because of their behaviour. A shade of such behaviour can be seen in Miss Krishna (a character in *Nergis Dalal's 'The Connoisseur'*) who suffers with OCPD: kleptomania. This paper studies the causes of the egosyntonic behaviour of Miss Krishna. It

further establishes relationship between *deprivation of love* suffered by Miss Krishna the serious kleptomania *disorder* that she develops. The Connoisseur is a narrative by Nergis Dalal in which she shares the experiences she has with an unwanted guest Miss Krishna.

A word of appreciation, a loving look, an affectionate kiss and a warm hug are basis for healthy human relationships. Love, the ultimate expression of affection, care and concern has the undeniable power to heal all strained relationships. It knows how to restore, rebuild and revive. It also is the universal need of every human being: a panacea of all hurts. Its varied forms make it the mother of all virtues. The Holy Bible (King James Version) in 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 states that Love is the ultimate of all virtues:

1 Corinthians, Chapter 3 verses 4-8

⁴ *Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; ⁵ does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; ⁶ does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; ⁷ bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.*

⁸ *Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away.* ^[3]

The above verses reiterate that Love is the mother of all virtues. *Living beings, both plants and animals, need love to live.* Robert Browning's quote, "*Without love, our earth is a tomb.*" ^[4] reinstates the irrefutable supreme position of Love in human relationships. Research proved that even plants thrive on Love, whenever the caretakers sang songs to them while tending, they blossomed to the fullest. Amir Khan, the protagonist in the movie 'Tare Zameen Par' clearly demonstrates the power of Love by making the child protagonist Ishaan Avasthi- a victim of dyslexia win and the win is a big one. If this is the power of Love, then what could be power of its absence?

2. ABSENCE OF LOVE THE CAUSE OF MENTAL DISORDERS

2.1 Absence of Love and Disharmony in Families

The villagers in Solomon Islands have a custom of standing around the tree that they wish to destroy and curse it for days. Eventually, the tree withers away and dies. If this can happen to a tree, is a human strong enough to withstand these curses. Bruce. H. Lipton in his groundbreaking work '*The Biology of Belief*' ^[5] shows '*that genes and DNA do not control our biology; that instead the DNA is controlled by signals from outside the cell, including the energetic messages emanating from our positive and negative thoughts. This means that our bodies can be changed as we retrain our thinking.*' This also means that love plays a vital role in an individual's personality development. In the days when love is substituted by gadgets one can find innumerable psychological, psychosomatic and psychomotor disorders.

2.2 Absence of Love and Obsessive Compulsive Personality Disorder (OCPD)

OCPD is a disorder which victimizes the vulnerable into doing things repetitively, be it washing hands, checking the door lock or washing the tumblers. The victims are so obsessed with doing things again and again that any forceful stop to it leads to psychomotor disorders. Lady Macbeth's compulsive 'washing of hands', the dissatisfaction of not being able to wash

off the blood stains and her complaint “Here’s the smell of the blood still. All the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand. Oh, Oh, Oh” is a perfect example of OCPD (though the cause of it is not the absence of love). In abnormal terms, OCPD victims do not accept or realize that their behaviour is detrimental to both self and the others. English Literature is full of stories in which the absence of Love leads to psychosomatic disorders.

3. MISS KRISHNA- A VICTIM

3.1 Miss Krishna’s Characterization by Nergis Dalal

Nergis Dalal, the famous Indian writer in English spins a heartening story ‘The Connoisseur’ around the experiences she has with Miss Krishna a sixty five year old woman she chances to meet at an exhibition. Miss Krishna is an enigmatic women very much suitable to her pseudonym ‘Maya’. Dalal portrays Miss Krishna as a thin, spry, single kleptomaniac who has spent all her life looking after a sick mother- The mother who was biased and showered all her love on Miss Krishna’s younger sister.

3.2 Miss Krishna’s Plight

Always in love with her sister, always taking care of her mother, always waiting to receive their love but never receiving it- this is the summary of Miss Krishna’s life. On one hand she has a younger sister who is ‘more beautiful’ and ‘eligible’ than her and on the other a mother who showers all her love and affection on the younger sister. On not finding companionship in any of her family members, she tries to find it in something else and somewhere else. This is why she develops a penchant for beautiful things and in this milieu, she resorts to pilfering things. She fills the void created by her mother and sister by filling her bag with little things she steals from her friends and acquaintances.

3.3 Miss Krishna- The Kleptomaniac

The oxford dictionary defines **kleptomania** as **a recurrent urge to steal, typically without regard for need or profit** and Miss Krishna fits into the definition very well. Typically, she steals things which are small and exquisite: those that fit into her huge bag. Pilfering becomes so easy to her that she knocks away things without inviting the slightest doubt from the owner. A neighbour’s cup, an acquaintance’s spoon or a relative’s vase, the narrator’s cordless transistorized nine-inch clock all go into her big bag. She does that as she loves ‘beautiful things’ and not because she wants to use them regularly. The story says that she stores all these never used things in her trunk boxes.

3.4 Miss Krishna- The Connoisseur

She loves everything exquisite and her collection, though pilfered says that she has a taste for the rare. The qualities of a connoisseur are so well traced in Miss Krishna that the sympathetic readers pardon her modus operandi of collecting things. We sympathize as in one paragraph while appreciating the author’s beautiful tea set, she says, “All my life I have been starved of beautiful things.”^[6]

3.5 Miss Krishna and egosyntonic disorder

As mentioned earlier, people who are egosyntonic may not perceive anything wrong and view their perceptions and behaviour as reasonable and appropriate. Miss Krishna is never guilty of stealing others' things, on the contrary, she behaves normally even after pilfering Nergis' favorite possession 'the cordless transistorized nine-inch clock'. She shows many stolen things to the author claiming that she 'bought' them at a store which sells exquisite things for a cheap price. True to her name pseudonym Maya, Miss Krishna casts a spell on the author and takes advantage of her courteousness. She does all this without an iota of remorse.

4 CAUSES FOR MISS KRISHNA'S EGOSYNTONIC DISORDER

4.1 Miss Krishna's Mother- The Culprit

Miss Krishna's mother deprives her of the love she deserves and this creates a void in her. She tells the author, "*No matter what I did, or how I looked after her, she always preferred my sister.*" ^[7] This biased treatment makes her sad. She seems to echo a feeling 'I am deprived of the beautiful expression 'love' so I am going to find solace in accumulating beautiful things'.

Every child thrives on parents' display of love and affection, love in this case becomes the binding force and the sustaining force. The small '**it's ok**' when the child fails, a '**warm hug**' when it falls and a '**pat**' when it wins are **the little beautiful treasures** that a child cherishes and these shape its life. Miss Krishna, deprived of all these things from her mother, finds them in **the little beautiful things** she steals. Her trunks and bag are full of such things. She does not feel even a bit of remorse while doing so

4.2 The Insatiable Thirst for Love and Affection

Towards the end of the story, we find Miss Krishna write her will on the Author's name and bequeaths 'property' to her. The author to her astonishment finds numerous tiny things in the collection the glass, silver statues, carved figurine, watches, jewellery, monogrammed ice-tongs, silver trivets, egg cups made from polished wood, cigarette lighters and fountain pens and is amazed at the thirst Miss Krishna had for beautiful things. This shows that there was not an **enough moment** in her life. She declares that all those beautiful things are a panacea for all her illnesses. Ironically, all things go into the bag but the bag is never full. This symbolically means her life has become a big bottomless pit and no amount of love and affection would fill it. The damage done by her mother becomes irreparable. A loner she is, looks all around her for love but receives not. Just as person deprived of justice in society turns into a criminal spewing bitterness, Miss Krishna turns into a kleptomaniac stealing just to indulge herself. Her indulgence knows no bounds and this leads to OCPD of kleptomania. This disorder may be attributed to the mild eccentricity of an aging spinster but it qualifies more to be the thirst of a love-deprived daughter. Talking of indulgence, we can easily trace people who find pleasure in excessive shopping or excessive partying because of rejection from loved ones.

4.3 The Secretiveness

Miss Krishna happens to stay with the author as her house was under renovation; it is during this period that Nergis develops curiosity about the bags and trunks. Many a times, but to no

avail, the author tries to find out the contents of the trunks. Miss Krishna manages to keep the contents of her trunks a secret from even her host. In one of the paragraphs Nergis writes, *'Behind her locked door I would hear her shifting the trunks around, opening them and presumably unpacking their mysterious contents. However, whatever she took out went right back again because when the door was opened eventually, everything would be inside once again and the locks firmly fastened.'* ^[8] The phrase *whatever she took out went right back again* signifies Miss Krishna's possessiveness towards the things she has managed to accumulate and *the locks firmly fastened* signifies her fear of losing what she amassed. She is a game neither to reveal nor share her possessions. Her obsessive behaviour reaches its peak when steals one of the author's prized possession.

CONCLUSION

Relationships need a sensible handling Love needs to be spread, it needs to be displayed, it needs to be told and talked about. In the times when there is discord between family member, love is the instrument of peace. It should be shared with all and should become the chant on which our world runs. Complaints that the world has become a bitter place and people have become inhuman will continue until love is given its supreme position. It should be the guiding principle on which the world runs and should be treated as important as the 'axis of the earth.' Once this is done, it becomes the panacea for all egosyntonic disorders.

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