

## Traversing The Identity Disorder Of A Woman Through The Characterization Of Chetena In K.R.Meera's Hangwoman

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### Abstract

Culture is the essence that makes worth living of an individual and identity is the most courageous act as it thinks more of oneself. This research is an attempt by traveling through culture and identity of a young girl, who is given a responsibility of taking position traditionally done by her male ancestors. It depicted the story of typical Indian born young girl named Chetena followed familial connectivity as a Public Executioner. This novel sets on Kolkata and it portrays about the young woman's struggles on proving her identity as a hang woman, as her profession differed from the Stereotypic Indian cultural context. Feminism might strikes one who read the content of this novel but it explored more about the cultural impose and identity crises in characterization of this novel. This paper also has its source from the real life characterization of Dhananjoy Chatterjee a movie adaptation by Arindham sil. This film portrays about emotional appeal of a hang man who has done his job without fail though he has all sentimental connections with the person. He was curbed even to shed all his tears and done his duty as a hang man. Culture and customs in the novel is depicted through the outlook of Protagonist Chetena.

**Keywords:** Familial, Executioner, Stereotype, Emotion, Culture, Sentiment.

### Introduction :

Arachar is a famous Malayalam novel by K.R.Meera which is later translated into English by J.Devika entitled "Hangwoman". This novel depicts the story of a young woman named Chetana of Mullick family. She is the protagonist of the novel who is the successor after her father Grudha Mullick. He is an 88 year old man and experienced fully as a hang man who

has sent 450 convicts to death. He demands his lineage job to his daughter by sending Jatindernath Chateerjee to death. Later it is Chetena who takes the job seriously and proves her identity over her job by facing bitter situation. The difficulty in attaining sensation as an executioner leads her into many problematic unusual situation especially Media's concern over her profession. Executioner is the work that not only needs a person to be physically strong but also as mentally. The heroine of the novel changes her character from a disciplined silent girl to a matured thinker as she is flexible with the outside world in accordance with the circumstance .

When Chetena says “Truly, from the uterus of my mother itself I was lying tied up by the veins. Dhakuma, boasted that I made exact knot even in my embryonic state”. It is clear that she has a habit of tying knot from even before her birth and continues in her life but on different occasions, as sometimes a practice sometimes as she has in her blood. Occurrence of caste and culture which is connected to their own profession is also to be noted. Her habit of creating knots in childhood reflects ancestor medium in everyday living. It even creates argument between her father and grandmother as he is the one supports her to do their lineage profession.

### **Cultural fervent:**

It is not only her community decision but as a typical Indian born woman she is forced to stop her education after her higher secondary schooling. Even though she gets high marks she is forced to work in private firm as a proof reader. There she is harassed by the proprietor of press Maruthi Prasad Yadav whom she works with. Under that condition her potentiality over her job and culture reveals affluently when she hanged him by making knot. This incident shocks everyone but she has been taught in such a way by her family and that's where her cultural norms attains its high effectiveness to the readers. But it is also Chetena who wants herself to be slim, calm and traditional as it is the scenario of Indian woman to be.

One can literally see the elements of love between Chetena and Sanjay Kumar Mitra, which starts as an attraction later ends in love and relationship. Dhakuma stands always on the side of male and proclaimed that duty of women is to do sacrifice for the family.

To Dhakuma, Women are the creatures to adjust and suppress whereas it is always the man who dominated. She had the thinking that gestation pain is the only pain for woman and no other pain as mentally distracted. This is where Chetena differs from her family women. When her family males including her father Grudha Mullick, used to visit red streets “Sonagachi” street where women are whoring, but they don’t want their own family woman to call in such a way. Even Grudha Mullick kills his brother’s wife when he sees her in Sonagachi street. The profoundness of culture they follow is seen very clearly when Chetena agrees to do execution without any guidance from her father to hang Jatindranath Banerjee. Her physique becomes so rigid and almost all pains comes before her when she is about to hang him. She wins the moment and creates more revolution among the people about the strength of Woman in this profession. Throughout the novel one could experienced the events only through the characterization of protagonist of Chetena not by anyone else.

### **Struggling over identity :**

From the very beginning of the novel she is not given enough space to include her voice in public. Though media had better influence in her days compared with early days, the liberty given to women remains same. When media takes her execution as a hot talk she becomes an idol for entertainment where she is constantly subjugated by others. But her constant and stubborn attitude makes her to deal with all obstacles and to get ready for the identity battle against various suppressions. Unlike any women Chetena is not the one in a crowd to tolerate male domination instead she walked boldly in the crowd of male chauvinism. When she uttered, “Men are like tortoise with hard shells and soft body inside. When the shell breaks the helpless creatures inside trembles in fear” her transformation from tolerance changes into a powerful executioner. Her strong command over male has stunned even her father. Her identity as a womanhood was presented in the end of the novel as she likes to call her as Hangwoman not by representing her father with her as Hangman’s daughter. She has even done her best by executing culprit without any support from her father. Chetena becomes an unremarkable identity to all those who stand against male force.

There were various stories that made Chetena to carry out her act in liberalization. She used to hear from her grandmother Dhakuma saying “The outrage of some women will never end by killing only one woman”. She hears various stories from her as Pingala Kesini who kills the King of Bengal as she is taken away from her husband forcefully and about Premalatha who kills her husband to marry her past lover. That is where she realized the position of Women in the society. She says that when she was born, the only person who rejoiced was her sister Neeharika while others disappointed because of their future as a girl she will lead. She even compares life and love of woman to Ilish fish which comes to shore to lay eggs and returns to sea after its job is done. When her mother tells her the story of Elokeshi, who killed her husband since he had illicit relationship with another woman. She argues that society considered her act is a sin and people don't bother about betrayal of man whereas if it is done by woman they don't accept the woman relationship she holds. Though her mother is illiterate, Chetena taught by her to do what she wants to do. She used to say not to obey her father when it comes with life of woman though she was a person who followed her husband's command. Marriage is considered as the means of escaping from poverty. But she refused those approaches by rejecting her when she is not satisfied with her relationship with Sanjay Kumar Mitra. She even asks her father to return ring and bangle which is given by him as a symbol of engagement. She raise her voice to her father as silence always haunts her from doing good things. She decides not to participate in TV shows because she gets insult by him. She wants him to apologize and beg her. During the process of killing her old Chetena she faces numerous troubles even from her family members but she explores her identity successfully in the end of novel.

**Pursuit of self :**

Chetena wants Sanjay to love her but to the outside world she pretends as she anymore loves him. At a point of time when she and her father are to execute without informing it to him, he reacts her by harassing her physically. Many incidents in this novel like when her father attacks her wife, Chetena's mother at street shows about women's inability to liberalize in their thoughts. One could see the independent spirit in Chetena as even though she faces assaults in her life she raises her emotions. As Ganges lost its purity because of people's dirt, she is to

Sanjay as he always throws his rubbish emotions to her. Knowing the intention of Sanjay she begins to behave in a rude way. When he comes to know about the reason behind his rejection he begins to command her. But she never wants herself to tolerate as her ancestor women. She is against the domination of men vehemently. This is the place where she breaks the chain of a typical Indian woman. Her attitude even stunned Sanjay at a point of time. From the childhood she used to hear stories from Dhakuma that mostly attributed her to think more about the male domination. But she maintains silence whenever she happens to hear later it made her to provoke against society.

When Chetena sheds tears in front of media, they commercialized her emotions. But her protest not ended with the tears, she resisted and was bold enough to succeed it. She took inspiration from the women around her as a woman named Ratnamalika, who stands against sati after her husband's death and another woman Protima who marries an Islamic man in spite of all the opposition she had. She believes that keeping silence over an issue alone kills those person who are opposing so she decides to raise voice against it.

### **Conclusion:**

Therefore as the term "modern" begins to emerge, issues over identity and tradition of woman also begins to change. Characters like Chetena increased not only in literature but also in real life. Death is the main issue mentioned in every chapters and it gives more authenticity to the novel. This paper portrays life of Chetena who undergoes various humiliations which makes her to struggle more to reveal her identity in the society. Sanjay Kumar Mitra pretends as if he is in love with her only to use her and get familiarity in media. When she came to know about it she rejects him, it leads him to behave rude to the core. In the beginning it is her weakness that made her to fell in love with Mitra but later it turned as her strength to work hard for her goal. Throughout the novel she is represented as a woman who lived indifferent in usual patriarchal world and her vision of changing the concept better. "Everything old only, I alone new" quoted by her when Sanjay reflects the changes she possessed. Throughout the analysis this paper tries to give Chetena as a character that meant to create revolution in future generation.

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