

Journey of self discovery in the Novel Nampally Road by Meena Alexander**Dr. R.Sudha**

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Abstract

The celebrated author Meena Alexander is a poet, scholar and writer of Indian descent. She was born in Allahabad, India on 17 February, 1951. Her early years of life were spent living between Sudan and India, experiencing a variety of languages and cultures. It has left a significant impact on her writing. Alexander continued her study by obtaining a BA in English and French from Khartoum University in Sudan. Later on, from the University of Nottingham in the United Kingdom she captured her doctoral degree in English.

Investigating issues like self- identity, migration and feminine experiences are the hallmarks of Alexander's writing. She has written multiple books of poems such as "Illiterate Heart," which earned her the PEN Open Book Award, and "Raw Silk." Her poetry frequently explores the intricacies of cultural displacement as well as her experiences of living abroad. She has also published articles, memoirs and fiction in addition to poetry. Her autobiographical work "Fault Lines" stands out in particular for its thoughtful analysis of her life in several countries. She was also an English professor at the City University of New York and Hunter College as well. Meena Alexander recounts her life's events from her early years in India up to her youth in England. She, thus finds it difficult to define her identity on account of a past filled with unstable life and cultural conflicts. This research article attempts to analyze Alexander's novel Nampally Road and depict the anguish of an undefined self. It further delineates the emergence of the protagonist who discovers her own 'self'.

Keywords: Immigration, displacement, cross-culture, abuse, self- discovery

South Asian women writers began to stake claims for their writing abilities and significance since the late 19th century and portrayed the lives of women folks as a prominent subject of their works. Renowned writers such as Arundhati Roy, Shashi Deshpande, Kiran Desai, Anita Desai, Kamala Markandaya, Bharti Mukherjee, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni and Meena Alexander handle the psychological agony of women as the inevitable subject of their works. Addressing the suppressed and downtrodden women of various kinds becomes a common theme in all their works.

Meena Alexander also through her works capture her own experiences growing up in a multicultural environment in four different continents surrounded by a variety of ethnic and religious differences. Precisely, Alexander's research on the functions of location, memory and language in the creation of identity look at the various facets of her background and cultural displacement, focusing especially on her position as a South Asian diaspora, writing and living in the west.

Her desire for psychic wholeness through language, which is a recurring theme in her poetry, also speaks to the issues that many postcolonial writers face and are suppressed by the imperial literary traditions of the past. Alexander is renowned for her lyrical writing on immigration, how it affects the writer's subjectivity and the violent circumstances that force people to cross borders. Her works are sensual, playful and spirited when it tackles such severe and challenging subjects.

The novel *Nampally Road* illustrates a woman's struggle to assimilate together her past and present India with great vividness. The gang rape of Rameeza Be by the police is the central event in this book. Rising up, the town's residents set fire to the police station where the incident takes place. The 2013 reprint of this book by Orient Blackswan has a strong connection to the awful events that have recently occurred in Delhi. The novel is a Voice Literary Supplement Editor's Choice when it was first published in 1991. Alexander's areas of interest are social politics, feminism, psychological complexity and diversity of culture. *Nampally Road* centers on the story of the minority struggle highlighting the contrast between past relationships, cultural and historical inheritance.

The protagonist of the novel *Mira* was born in India a few years after the country gained its freedom and she refused to follow her mother's wishes to be married in an arranged union. She spent several years studying an undergraduate degree in England. *Mira* found living in England unbearable due to her inability to adapt to the fast-paced lifestyle of the European culture. She goes to a few college dance parties but the strong lighting and loud music make her feel repulsed. She even makes an attempt to follow Western tradition and go out every evening with a different guy. Europeans believed that staying with the same lover for an extended length of time signified a permanent commitment or connection.

In an attempt to discover a new identity for herself, Mira sets out to write a few poems. She wishes to define herself. She believes that she might begin to give her life a purpose by penning a few poems or prose pieces. Because, she is an Indian who have had a colonial education the novelist makes it abundantly evident that she has a complicated multi-cultural mentality. Mira feels happy to accept a teaching position in Hyderabad when she returns for she believes that living in India would allow her to develop a more distinct sense of who she is. After arriving in Hyderabad, she gets the impression that she is a strong-willed woman rather than just a confused young woman. Either way, her intellect has become more robust now. The only place she could truly live is her own nation, India. Mira makes the decision to live up to William Wordsworth's reputation. One of the English poets that Mira studied extensively for her M.A. final year was Wordsworth. He had composed multiple poems on the natural world, mostly about aesthetically pleasing locations that he yearned to visit repeatedly. He was a magnificent poet who influenced Mira's memories. She adores Wordsworth because he had a profound understanding of pain and repressed desire. Mira,thus aspires to become a poet by attaining Wordsworth's level of clarity.

Mira also undergoes some small difficulties in assimilating to Indian society after moving to Hyderabad. Several Andhrites are astonished to witness Mira accidentally eating with her left hand. She begins her career as an English literature teacher at Sona Nivas College, Hydrabad. She becomes a favourite among students when the professor gives her Wordsworth to speak on. In her spare time, Mira persists in trying to compose poems. Beneath her bed, she keeps a decent assortment of small notepads. Commenting that nobody has the authority to force ideas on readers, Ramu, her lover ridicules Mira's inventive attempts. Mira clarifies that writing poetry is her life's work. At the age of 25, she lacks adequate writing knowledge. Notwithstanding all of her education in the West, she is deeply confused mentally. To create a new identity for herself, she desires to become a poet or else her mother will deck her out in silks and jewels and sell her to a wealthy estate owner or engineer. There is a strong feeling in Mira that she might not make it through such a marriage. She believes that marrying is a personal decision for Mira, and she will dedicate herself for it if only she is fully prepared for that.

Mira's quest to discover who she is takes a drastic turn when she first encounters Rameeza Be in the Gowliguda police station. Rameeza has blood all over her sari. Right behind the wooden desk in the prison chamber, she is found lying curled up on the dirty floor. The dirt holds her face up. Even though she has mosquitoes swarming overhead, she has both of her eyes open. Her breathing looks labored and erratic. Mira holds onto the bars of the cell and studies her for long . She leans forward and reaches through the bars of the prison to touch Rameeza's wet forehead. Her cheeks are covered in a thin layer of hair from her head, Rameeza is taken away very quickly and sent to Maitreyamma's home, where she receives proper care and relaxation.

After a thorough treatment, Rameeza is able to recover due to Maitreyamma's powerful herbal remedies. When Ramu and Mira visit Rameeza, Mira gets much affected by her pitiful state. "I wish I could give up my own useless life in some way that could benefit her," Mira thinks to herself. Consequently, she at last discovers who she is. She realizes that she is just an average Indian and nothing more. Mira's life is to find a way to alleviate the agony of millions of Rameezas in India, since Rameeza Be's misery resemble the suffering of the whole country. Mira's sense of belonging to her nation becomes evident when she likes to retain in India and she becomes a complete native Indian when she decides to serve her own motherland.

Nampally Road portrays the agonizing voices of women folks; the characters and storyline may vary, but the grip of violence is so great that justice appears to be a distant goal. In addition to concentrating on the rape victim's consciousness, the book attempts to present the concept as it relates to subalterns, as illustrated by Gayatri Spivak. It illustrates how to analyze speech and the subaltern in the context of Rameeza's experience. The novel highlights how difficult it is for rape victims to articulate their traumatic experiences and how challenging it is for writers to do so in any kind of factual or fictional narrative.

In the novel, a Hyderabad police station is set on fire as the result of Rameeza Be's rape and that is documented in the media while she is in police custody. However, the incident itself is elevated to the status of a lyrical symbol. Dreams and omens connect Rameeza Be to Durgabai and the main character Mira, a woman who returns from abroad and is searching for her identity. Ramu, her lover, is the second important character who is an activist in the middle of the civil rights movement but strangely disagrees with Mira's work. He is a Roman Catholic servant who wishes to immigrate to Canada. This is the novel's diverse cast.

Characters are given a voice in the feminist arena that Alexander builds. This book illustrates modern India and a woman's quest for identity in a very realistic way. Women's friendships are nourishing and long-lasting. The tale of Rameeza Be, a short woman, serves as a vehicle for depicting the violence. The physical abuse inflicted upon this defenseless woman causes psychological abuse and terror in the minds of those living there. The protagonist who represents Meena Alexander's own alter ego, struggles mightily to strike a balance between her writing career and the depressing realities of her surroundings. The catastrophic events in Rameeza's life make her reflect on her identity as a writer and the idealized idea of nationality. Mira starts to believe that her drafts are meaningless.

Even so, Mira remains upbeat and works with Durgabai to arrange for Rameeza Be's recovery. Witnessing the metamorphosis of a tranquil, financially stable and loving Mira Kannadical,

joining the demonstrations against injustices, reflects the author's deepest misgivings and conflicted feelings about her identity and purpose, as well as her own struggles to cope with the disruption of time, space, memory, and the actual world.

Alexander has drawn attention to the situation of women in post-colonial thought as a result. Women's lives are still controlled by their patriarchs in the so-called decolonized countries, both at home and in society at large. This is vividly conveyed in her novel.

Work Cited:

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