

Sultana's Dream: A Cartesian Nightmare of Her Solipsism

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Abstract:

Feminism is a yet to be movement, its definition is constantly evolving with the advent pluralisms propagated by postmodern thought. This paper is centred on the feminine insecurities and a reckless radicals man hatred fostered by the protagonist Rokaiya is *Sultana's Dream* as the outcome of the perception of female body. She re-imagines an inside out world swapping the usual gender roles endowed on men and women respectively. But is this peremptory domination of one dyad over the other lead to a utopia of equity as she claims it would is my primary analysis of the story.

Keywords: feminism, solipsism, Cartesian dualism, 'misandry'.

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The primal node of my paper is deeply rooted in the solipsistic world view of men and the fictional perspective of Rokaiya's female solipsistic world. The paper also examines the no man's space between the actuality and the "fictionality". In my opinion 'Sultana's Dream' is an anti-phrastic usage of the word 'dream', it is a nightmare than a 'dream'. It is an inveigh against male chauvinism, which I intend to bring by means of two analogous philosophies of 'solipsism' and the "Cartesian dualism", both are a piecemeal of similar ontological arguments, which says nothing in the universe can be experienced out of our 'consciousness': "I think, therefore I am", Descartes' "Cogito Ergo sum". We see an object and the impulses created by the object are sent to our brains via our sense; ergo sense organs, bridge the 'limen' [the sensory threshold]. So, it is impossible for us to know 'the other'; they do not exist as they are nothing but the representation of the 'self'. Based on this underlying principle of solipsism, Rene Descartes formulates the mind and the body dualism. His stance is that our consciousness is imperfect, so we know 'nothing'. All that we know is what we believe in and our beliefs are not concrete truths. For

example the 'brain in a vat' theory sponsors a philosophical scepticism that the brain can be deceived by generating artificial electrical impulses in the vat and can be controlled by mysterious supercomputers simulating their conjured up reality for the brain. Similarly, the brain is also in a vat, namely the skull. what we perceive may not be the reality. Furthermore, desecrates forwards the mendacity of dream, which is a good example to explain the uncertainty of dreams. When we dream we are unaware of the reality and are lost in the lucid world of dream and hence it made the dreams a dubitable reality. The philosophers impugned the existence of 'reality', many philosophers believed that dream could be constant, may be life we live is also a dream that we perceive as reality. This theory sounds ambiguous, but can we affirm unimpeachable the truth of our cognizance and the world we perceive? Like Descartes assumption, what if we are wrong? What if we are in supernaturally or artificially conjured up limbo? So, a lot of theories were attributed to this kind of hypothesis. So, solipsism in short is a theory of self-absorption, deserting the others.

The reason I brought in these philosophies is to aid my claim that sultana's dream is a Cartesian nightmare of her solipsism because we all are solipsistic creatures and I wish to explore through all possible aspects to corroborate my stance.

If the conceptualisation of Cartesian nightmare is true and if I am just the vat for the supernatural impulses created by a diabolic energy and so we perceive a man as a man, then solipsism is victorious, but if the Cartesian nightmare is false and I believe it is true treat a man a cat, then the solipsism fails, but in a way the tyranny solipsism is invincible, why? By virtue of reason, still my grasp of the man in front of me is in accordance with the final output of my

‘brain’ or consciousness. So, solipsism appertains to: nature of the object itself in nature and the second is the attitude of the subjects towards the object in nature.

It is a known fact that “Sultana’s Dream” is an early utopian feminist Sci-Fi. It was published in the year 1905 when the western world was seething with the advent of modernism. It depicts the contingency of an alternate history, then a utopia. It is a culmination radical feminism for it portrays a possibility of the reversal of roles of men in women in a Muslim society.

The whole idea is solipsism of the author. Dreams are expressions of ‘repression’ or an ‘ambition’. Sultana’s dream is also such an expression wherein she accomplishes her ambition of oppressing the male. Despotism in any manner is injustice. She believes in an eye for an eye. She advocates male subjugation because of urge to be a man. This desire to be a man is what is technically termed as ‘penis envy’ in Freudian theory. It states that women crave for a penis, not physically rather in a psychological way. Both men and women display a proclivity towards having a penis, a man has ‘castration complex’. ‘Penis envy’ is not about the change of sex, but about the urge of a woman to be as powerful as a man, she craves for power she is not entitled to have. But a man has got nothing to do with acquiring a woman’s identity, except transgenders because they are naturally made that way. A man also is anxious to stagnate the flow of his anarchic power from him to a woman and thus, he has a ‘castration complex’. Let us consider Sultana as the alter ego of the author, then Sultana has repressed ‘penis envy’ in her mind so she creates an ideal state for herself and all the women in her society and cages all men in what is she calls ‘mardhana’. By changing the of gender roles, the protagonist establishes her fictional land of female domination, her dream to gain power over men comes true and thus, she quenches her

thirst of 'power'. But the concept of utopia is bogus. In so far as my speculation is concerned the world created by Sultana is not a 'utopia', she creates a dystopia, where she incarcerates men. Because a utopia, an ideal egalitarian world of perfection. But, the novella procreates a world of 'misandry': 'men do not exist'. Misandry is a run of the mill topic for most of us. We never think of the problems that men face. Getting into 'misandry' would be a digression and redundant to the topic of discussion. So, how does Sultana's dream concocts 'misandry' and why? Solipsism can answer the question relatively. The idea of misandry is a reaction to the idea of misogyny. Misogyny is genetically mutated into the mind of man and women. Women hate women and men also hate women; at the ground level solipsism plays a significant role in embedding these ideas in our minds. Solipsism tends to objectify things. There are two kinds of objectification, One, impersonation of things into a human being. By nature, we have a penchant for dolls, we impersonate them, and we give them names, vent our anger on them and so on. A photograph is yet another way of reducing a person into a paper, we mistake the paper for a person, and we impart human qualities into inanimate things. The second is the reduction of human to things; we look at them as things. The best example is 'woman' who is forever in the eyes of man. Not just women, slavery is also objectification of a person. Epistemologically it pertains just to a way of experiencing in consciousness, but at a higher level it is a violation of humanity. "Though it is not wrong on a moral ground yet, it is not obvious to many that this local solipsism is to be condemned in the way that its global counterpart deserves, It is moral and epistemologically injustice committed on the other person", says Langton.

The second type of objectification had caused a race to fall behind; they are women. When a man objectifies a woman, he recognizes her as the 'other'. To him "she does not exist".

She is pushed to being 'the second sex' says Simone De Bevouire. I don't say seeing the world in the eyes of consciousness is 'wrong'. But objectifying women based on gender is fatal error. A woman's character becomes "situational" says Simone De Bevouire in her book "Second Sex".

"When wealth is lost, nothing is lost; when health is lost, something is lost; when character is lost, all is lost", says Billy Graham, by make a woman's character situational men deny her an identity in the society; she is dependent, coward, weak, submissive, vulnerable object of sex for a man. For a man, she nothing more than an inanimate object in the house. The brains of the entire human race are molded with these misconceptions and this is not neoteric, but 'atavistic' evolutionary throwback to the pre-historic era.

'Sultana's Dream', is fiction that pushes man for rung one to rung two, i.e. in Ladyland Yet, the author make no attempt to affirm women's identity, all she does is to take the anarchy of men's absolutism. No uniqueness for a woman's identity is established. In her world 'man' is objectified his existence as a supreme creature is shelved. Women in Ladyland acquire the traits of men. 'The women say that you look very mannish.' 'Mannish?' said I, 'What do they mean by that?' 'They mean that you are shy and timid like men.' 'Shy and timid like men?' (25). In some respect, it can make a man realize the ramifications of the reversal. But the reader will not comprehend the real problem of women. The passersby say Sultana looks 'mannish'. But is reversal of role being the only solution to the gender issues. Can't equilibrium be brought between men and women?

Another occasion to be noted is when Sultana expresses her discomfort walking unveiled, sister Sara says: 'You need not be afraid of coming across a man here. This is Ladyland, free from sin and harm. Virtue herself reigns here.' (Hussain, 34-35)

Why will a woman's virtue be harmed if she walks out without purdah in front of men? Is it mandatory for the women to hide themselves from men? What good has been bestowed on the 'Ladyland' by the change, when the despondency of women is not transformed?

More than being sensitized this story is an animus against men; it is an imaginary retribution of women over men. Men are portrayed as creatures with insatiable carnal appetite.

'Yes, it is not safe so long as there are men about the streets, nor is it so when a wild animal enters a marketplace.' 'Of course, not.' 'Suppose, some lunatics escape from the asylum and begin to do all sorts of mischief to men, horses and other creatures; in that case what will your countrymen do?' 'They will try to capture them and put them back into their asylum.' (Hussain,50-51)

Likewise, there are numerous portrayals of recalcitrant nature of men. This novella is a first ever science fiction by women in India, the fact that this is an impeccable Sci-fi, albeit, it is short novella, it doesn't make it novice abominable composition. A veritable potency of good craftsmanship and ample creativity is evident in her work. Techno advances are the central sci-fi theme around which the story pivots. The excogitation of the plotline is also coherent, the author feels that science is only medium that can elevate the status women in the 'man-made' society.

She also expostulates the lethargy of most men who dally with time, smoking ‘cheroots’ and procrastinating their work,

“They dawdle away their time in smoking. Some smoke two or three cheroots during the office time. They talk much about their work, but do little. Suppose one cheroot takes half an hour to burn off, and a man smokes twelve cheroots daily; then you see, he wastes six hours every day in sheer smoking. . .” (Hussain72-74).

The artificially built ecosystem, high techno advancements, like solar cookery methods, machine to extract water directly from the sky, instruments to collect heat from the sun and store it were invented. The author trusts in the power of science to fend off the male oppression, she believes in acumen of ‘brain’ of women to emancipate themselves and it win over the strength of men only with the aid of science. Moreover, her stance is true; men overpower us as we are dependent on them for our security. But in the story when men fail to protect the women of the country, the authority slips from men to the hands of women. But, the conundrum is the possible fallout of such a power allegation. What women of Ladyland do is not what is expected of them. They surmount men’s superiority, but do not share the power rather they set forward in unison for further aggrandizement. This is the ramification of the power acquisition.

I started the paper by introducing solipsism (experiencing the world via ‘consciousness’) as the bedrock of dualism of subject and the object. Now, I would like conclude my essay by proving how according to me is “Sultana’s Dream” a Cartesian nightmare, solipsism is often mistaken as self-absorption, even the introduction of my essay has the word “self –absorption”.

The truth is different; solipsism is a hypothesis of how ‘we’ perceive nature and not about how ‘I’ perceive nature. Superficially, it may show singularity, but, it is singularity experienced a plural common belief. A concurrence in the popular belief in reality together as human being and not as ‘male ‘and ‘female’ . But, people’s misconception and objectification of the ‘other’, distorted the equilibrium of the ‘human condition’. The rehabilitation of human condition is a sign of ‘utopia’ and not the reiteration of the precedent atrocity in a different way. Sultana does this mistake of alienating men, she does not find an alternative to heal the damage caused by segregation, besides she adds an impetus to already ravaged ‘human condition’. Instead of segregation she a could have deciphered the enigma of amalgamating genders into human and should have re-established ‘humanity’, but she watches the merry go round of power cycle. She doesn’t create a utopia rather she creates an ideal world for herself, imprisoning and leaving stranded the men. It is a replication of the same old outmoded prejudice. Humanity can never be overrun by solipsistic individuality, because humanity is part of us, our’ consciousness’. Humanity lies far beyond the rigmaroles of segregation, which is the only narrowly possible way in establishing ‘utopia’. But the world formed in the subconscious of Sultana’s doesn’t see beyond segregation. Therefore, I call, “Sultana’s dream: A Cartesian nightmare of her [misconstrued] solipsism.

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