

**Women of Strength and Courage in Mohanty's "A Beautiful Woman"****Dr. Navdeep Kaur Gill**

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**Abstract**

The present paper focuses on the strength of women who stand as rock even in odd circumstances to save the honour of their family. Mohanty has depicted the women as an epitome of strength. A healthy society requires such women who fight at all fronts to redeem the family, its dignity, and become pillars for the foundation of stable societies. They play a vital role in maintaining cordial relations showing tolerance, kindness, forgiveness, bravery, strength, and co-operation.

**Keywords:** Women, Strength, Empowerment, Gopinath

**Introduction:** The status of women has undergone a sea change since times immemorial. They have earned respect, playing different roles as mother, sister, and wife, and becoming a source of strength, care, love as well as motivation, thus venerated like a goddess. India is a democratic republic with the second largest population where women have been recognized as key agents of progress and development in all fields. Kinsella, Elaine L. et al. discussing about the bravery of women state that they show "courage by having the moral strength to withstand difficulty, as well as the moral strength to speak out against the injustices that they had perceived throughout their lives" (5). Petra Anic and Rijavec perceive women as having higher "nurturing strengths" as compared to men (7). Their equality and empowerment are seen as central to a more holistic approach towards establishing new patterns and processes of social evolution. Mohanty through

his stories has portrayed such women characters who encourage women to redefine beauty ideals and expose their inner sights as well as true selves.

Gopinath Mohanty, an author of Post-Independent Age, is the most eminent writer in Oriya literature next to Fakir Mohan Senapati (Mohanty, Dynasty iii). He was born on April 20, 1914, in Nagabali (Cuttock), a small village on the banks of the river Mahanadi. Having passed his graduation from Ravenshaw College, he received his master's degree in English from Patna University in 1936. When he joined his Administrative Service in Orissa in 1938, he used to spend most of his time with Kondh and Paraja tribes of the undivided Koraput district; therefore, he was much impressed by their lifestyle and languages. Gopinath Mohanty is known as a great short story writer in Oriya literature, who covers diverse themes. There is a great collection of his stories depicting various aspects of life of Oriya people living in villages, cities, and hills. Manoj Das sharing his views about Gopinath Mohanty as a short story writer, states that "his short stories were remarkable for his typical handling of the Oriya language, his uncanny capacity for casting phrases chaste with those colloquial, thereby achieving a new harmony. Its effect in the native Oriya language is supreme" (Mohanty, Bed ix).

"A Beautiful Woman" narrates the story of a simple-hearted, innocent, sincere, and loving wife residing in a small town, who goes to a big city in search of her husband. She has not received any news from her husband for four months. This worry sets her on the search. In the city, she is extremely happy to see plants and flowers on the road sides, equally satisfied to find that people are very well-behaved there. Very confused to understand the huge buildings with elevators, unable to communicate with people in English confidently, she recalls how her husband has shortened his name from Kangali Charan Sharma to K. C. Sharma just to hide his identity. After a long time with the help of some kind ladies, she finally is able to find him, who has gone estranged, having changed further his name from K. C. Sharma to Kriti Deb to marry another woman. Mohanty has shown another example of wicked modern society in which he exposes how a cunning husband betrays his compassionate wife as well as innocent children.

Mohanty in his story "A Beautiful Woman" has admired the woman power in all aspects that supports the entire family, even in difficult circumstances. In his all works, her patience,

simplicity, devotion, integrity, determination, tolerance, and compassion become a great inspiration as well as motivation for all women suffering due to atrocities of male domineering society. Patauni, the central character of the story, is very proud of her husband when she “stared at the board with pride as she stood outside the huge six-storied building. So many rooms! Such a big name. My husband works here” (Mohanty, *Hidden* 105). She gets embarrassed to enquire about him. In doing so, she feels that his respect is at stake and thinks that “Will have to ask others about something so personal- whatever the other may think” (106). But when she feels her trust betrayed, she exposes her cunning, deceitful, and a knave husband who changes his name to hide his identity just to befool another woman.

Patauni sets an example of bravery when she faces the difficult situation with confidence. She, in a daring manner discloses his treachery in front of all, “‘Deb! Deb!’ She shouted.’ ‘You call yourself Deb here. You are getting married to this girl, Oh God! How have we wronged you? I, your wife, am alive, your two children are waiting for you to get back. What is this! Kangalicharan Devata Sharma has become Deb!’”(120) Further she warned him, “‘Ok, remain Kirtideb, a disgrace to your ancestors! I have got my answer. I am leaving.’ Through loud sobs she repeated, ‘I am leaving.’” (120). Her cunning husband tries to defend him, telling lies about his wife and denies to identify her, rather calls her insane. Patauni is no more a coward girl now or confined to four walls, but has come forward with guts and dignity, answering back his devilish husband’s blames on her personality.

“Did my eyes deceive me? ... Or has he changed so much? Can a man become so depraved? Whatever it might be, I have to have courage. She says we will look some, we will look at the names and addresses of people. But what is left to look for? The person for whom I took all this effort, he did this! I have to be strong. Ah! The poor children!”(122)

Bennis and Thomas stress that women should be daring enough to defend themselves against abusive and insulting comments as well as the actions that undermine their dignity from the male counterparts in order to maintain their self-respect and position in the society besides maintaining cordial relationships (39- 45).

Patauni is really a very beautiful woman, a strong, firm foundation of a family; she has saved her home and family by her sensible behavior. She is a devoted wife, not tolerant to listen anything against her husband for whom she has so much so much respect in her heart. She does not suspect him even after getting all clues that show him estranged. He got swayed in the city lifestyle to that extent that he not forgot his loving and caring wife, but also his small kids and parents. She gets shocked when he refuses to recognize his wife bluntly who was so worried about his well-being and finds him with a great difficulty with the help of some concerned women. Although Kanganicharan Devtata so called Deb, totally refuses to identify his wife Patauni, she is still hopeful and determined to make him realize as well as bring him on the right track. She does not pay any attention to suggestions or doubts expressed by Mampalli and Lisa but “there were only two thoughts in her mind. Is this the turn my life has taken? No! No! I have to have courage” (Mohanty, *Hidden* 123). Beauty of Patauni is observed in her modest and tolerant behavior when her husband badly bruised by his colleagues for his betrayal of his wife, returns to her and asks her to go with him, she forgives him and follows him without any argument or condition for the sake of her family.

Born and brought up in village, she does not lose hope, instead in a daring manner puts in all her efforts to reveal his real face in front of his colleagues. Treasurer et al. assert that only courage and bravery of women assist them to confront fear, gauge risk, strengthen trust with others, put forth their ideas frankly, to cope with adverse circumstances and try their best to reverse them (52-57). A powerful lesson has been taught through the story that if women are wronged, they themselves should fight till they get justice. Society does punish a man rather he is made to suffer by his own. And a polluted society because of such treacherous people will be purified only where women are strong and determined to protect their children and themselves. Aliah Aljowaie posit that women show strength by finding “meaning in negative circumstances and by conquering difficult challenges to emerge stronger and more committed toward being successful” (115).

Miss Eileen Mampalli, working at Samson Agonistics Co. Ltd., is also very concerned and helpful lady who even being totally stranger to Patauni, understands her problem and tries to

solve that. She very kindly helps her to freshen up and be comfortable at a new place. Ensuring her all help, she tells Patauni to “[r]elax first. Then tell me. I am here. Wherever he is, Mampalli promises you that she will find him” (Mohanty, *Hidden* 109). Patauni gets strength from the polite and compassionate behavior of Mampalli. She listens to Patauni’s problem with patience and gives her word to find her husband. She even takes her to her home for night stay. When Patauni hesitates to go with her, she “hugged her and said, ‘You are my sister. We belong to one caste, one religion, the caste and religion of the human race.’” (114). Not only Mampalli, but her mother also is very supportive. Patauni feels very encouraged from their loving and caring attitude when she observes that “Both mother and daughter are very affectionate. They took her, a total stranger, into their fold, knowing fully well that she will be no use to them” (114). After the whole day’s search when Patauni loses hope of finding her husband, Mampalli assures her that “As soon as the office commences tomorrow, Lisa, Deb and I will devote ourselves to his task. Don’t worry” (116).

Mohanty through his story asserts that a debased society can be improved with the help of strong, determined and daring women who co-operate with each other for the welfare of humanity without any condition or greed. He wants to emphasize the point that women are no longer a weaker section rather more decisive, strong, bold, and responsible who can turn impossible task into possible one, thus creating a zestful society.

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