

ANALYSIS OF FEMALE PROTAGONIST OF 'ANTARIP' AN ASSAMESE NOVEL BY BHABENDRA NATH SAIKIA FROM THE NEUROTIC NEEDS PERSPECTIVE GIVEN BY KAREN HORNEY

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Abstract

Antarip is an Assamese novel written by Dr. Bhabendra Nath Saikia. The story in this novel is based on an affluent family of Assam in post-World War era. Women's Struggle for her position in her family and the conflict that arises from it is beautifully depicted in this novel. The present paper is an extensive analysis of the female protagonist of this novel. The analysis is based on the neurotic need given by Karen Honey and how the female protagonists in this novel resolve their inner conflicts. The analysis shows how Menka's silent struggle in the patriarchal society lead her to change her personality unconsciously from moving towards people to moving against people. The inconsistency in Menka's behaviour and thought process could be clearly seen in the self-talk and the resulting conflicts that she faced is analysed in view of neurotic need theory that is given by Karen Honey. To make conflict more bearable, Menka had to make changes in her attitude from moving towards people to moving away from people.

Index term Neurotic needs, Karen Horney, Antarip, post war society, Menka
Introduction

Antarip is an Assamese noble written by renowned Assamese noblest Bhabendra Nath Saikia. This book was published on 1986. Dr. Bhabendra Nath Saikia was one of the prominent Assamese writers of 20th century. Although, he started his career as an author in 1941 with an article named 'Udai' in 'Path Nirupon' magazine; he was identified as a celebrated noblest only in 1990s. Between 16 April, 1982 to 1st January, 1984 his noble 'Antarip' was published in famous Assamese magazine in the form of episodes, which lead him to identify as an esteemed noblest. 'Antarip' is a Post-World War II story centred on a wealthy family living in a small town. The story was built on the women's conceal struggle with the patriarchal society and her pitiful condition as its result. This article aims on the analysis of female protagonist of the said tale from the perspective of neurotic needs given by Karen Horney. Karen Horney is one of the most influential among neo Freudian perspective. Her theory focused on the culture and environment as opposed to only instinctual factors as in original psychoanalysis. Dr. Horney was born in 1885, in Hamburg, Germany and received her medical degree in 1913 from University of Berlin. In 1932, she moved to United

States and worked in many institutes related to psychoanalysis. She is credited with many books like *The Neurotic Personality of our times*, *New Way in Psychoanalysis*, *Our inner Conflicts* and many more.

Dr. Horney believed that conflicts are inevitable yet solvable part of life. Conflicts are experience by everyone but remain unconscious as they are not acknowledge. She viewed neurosis as an attempt to make life bearable, as a way of "interpersonal control and coping." (Dr. C. George Boeree, *Personality theories*; n.d.). She listed out ten different types of neurotic needs as follows:

1. The neurotic need for affection and approval, people with this need have the desire to be liked by others and get approval by others. They are sensitive to the criticism.
2. The neurotic need for a partner, people with this need are fearful of being abandoned by ones partner. They believe that having a partner will solve all problems.
3. The neurotic need to restrict one's life to narrow borders, people with this need are often undemanding and are satisfied with little.
4. The neurotic need for power, people with this need have the desire to have control over others. They are desperate for power and show dominance for its own sake.
5. The neurotic need to exploit others and get the better of them. People with this need always view others from the perspective of what they will gain from others.
6. The neurotic need for social recognition or prestige. People with this need have admiration for public recognition. They have a desire for public appearance and popularity.
7. The neurotic need for personal admiration. People with this need have the desire to be viewed what they think they are and not what they really are.
8. The neurotic need for personal achievement. People with this need keep on achieving. They have to be number one at everything they do.
9. The neurotic need for self-sufficiency and independence. People with this need feel that they don't want anybody. They tend to refuse help and are often reluctant to commit to a relationship.
10. The neurotic need for perfection and unassailability. People with this need have to get better and better at life. They seek to be perfect and they cannot effort to make mistakes.

In her book *Our Inner Conflicts* Dr. Horney (1945) has quoted, "It is not neurotic to have conflicts. At one or the other time, our wishes, our interaction, our convictions are bound to collide with those of others around us." When an individual experience neurotic needs, basic anxiety is the result. This basic anxiety leads the individual to experience one of the elements: helplessness, hostility and isolation (Karen Honey, *Our Inner Conflicts*, 1945). Dr. Horney developed a dynamic theory on neurosis that centred on the basic conflict among attitudes of "moving towards", "moving away" and "moving against" people. The conflict one experience compels them to take one of the routes to solve it. The element of helplessness heads one to take the route of moving towards people. This ways the individual tries to win the affection of others and they feel safe around people. When the element experience is hostility, the individual takes the route of moving against people. The individual distrust others around them and wants to be stronger, to either protect herself or to take revenge from others. When the element experience is isolation, the individual takes the route of moving away from people. In such case the individual neither wants to fight nor wants to belong to others, rather would like to build a world of her own. The present research is to analyse the characters of female protagonist of the noble "Antarip". The characters will analyse from the perspective of neurotic needs given by Karen Honey and the ways protagonist resolves her conflicts through one of the three attitudes.

Method

It's an analytical research. Analysis the female protagonist was done from the perspective of neurotic needs for Karen Honey. How with the requirement of situation this female protagonist shifted her neurotic need was analysed in this paper.

Discussion

Conflicts are inevitable part of life. The way these conflicts would be viewed and solved would also be influenced by the civilization of that period. 'Antarip' is a story based on a wealthy family of a small town of Assam, India in the post-World War II era. Women's repressed role in patriarchal society and her silent yet rebellious struggle against it is beautifully described in this novel. The story of Antarip revolves around the life of Menka, Mahikanto, Kiran, Madan, Indra and Chitra. Menka, a beautiful, chaste and traditional woman of her time, and would always follow all the rituals of patriarchy society as taught by her parents before she got married to Mahikanto. Menka and Mahikanto had spent a successful married life for many years with four children. In spite of this superficially viewed happy and successful marriage, Mahikanto decided to have a second marriage with Kiran. Kiran belongs to an economically poor family and this was the only reason that her father arranged her marriage with a much older man Mahikanto in exchange of lump sum of money.

Menka's struggle and her rebellious nature started with the knowledge that her husband Mahikanto is soon to bring a Mistress for himself. This news created a bunch of conflict within her. She was confused whether to welcome the mistress who would take her all rights from her husband or should rebel against it. This avoidance-avoidance conflicts situation leads to change her personality from move towards people to move against people. It was a tough decision on her part as welcoming a mistress meaning sharing the most integral part of her life with someone else. The inconsistency in her thought processes leads her to behave in a way not approved by her, lead her to experience basic anxiety. This resulted in the experience of helplessness. Her present personality that is shaped by her culture to follow her husband demands and be a good wife, she starts to prepare for the function to be followed as Mahikanta arrive with Kiran (mistress). This adherence to her husband demand shows her *neurotic need for affection and approval*. The conflict leads her to approve her husband's decision instead of opposing it as she thought this could be the only way to get love and affection from him. Although the conflict that she have experienced could have leads her to show unwelcoming behaviour towards Kiran. But doing that would mean disregard her husband decision and that is something not permitted by the civilization of that time. Kiran (mistress) on the other hand a beautiful young woman got married with Mahikanto just to agree with her father's wish. She like Menka, was a woman who would take care of her husband and agree to whatever her husband would ask her to do. This common character of both Kiran and Menka shows the common practice of patriarchal society, which manifest into *neurotic need for partner*. Kiran told Menka once that it is against her will that Mahikanto got her from her father's house. Yet Menka's found it difficult to believe her. This also shows commonality between both the characters shows their *neurotic need to restrict one's life to narrow borders*. In the patriarchal society that they live in restrict them to the narrow boundary of their husband and their family. But as the story unveils, it could be seen that she began her rebellious journey with that. She soon realizes that as the mistress sets her in the house, Menka's importance in Mahikanta's life decreases. At this moment, Menka again crosses with the same conflict of being a good wife who approves all decisions made by her husband or should she fight for her own right. The inconsistency again can be seen at this point. She could sense the lurking hypocrisy in her environment. The society that taught her to be a good wife and adhere to her husband's need, does not teach the same to male counterparts. This lurking

hypocrisy in her environment makes her decides to move against people from move towards people. Madan, a close kin of Mahekanto was an occasional visitor to his family. Menka and Madan had a good cordial relationship, where Menka, as a good sister daughter in law (moving towards people as demanded by society), takes care of his needs. When Kiran becomes pregnant with Mahekanto's child, the change in Menka's attitude could be visible to her husband. As the time passes, Menka's reveals to her family that she is too pregnant. This muddles the entire situation for Mahekanto as he never slept any time with Menka after he got his mistress Kiran to his bedroom. When Mahekanto went to question Menka about her pregnancy how about, Menka's changing attitude could be recognizable. She illuminate the entire situation with her clarification that 'if she cannot question him about Kiran's place in her house then how could he ask about with whose child she is pregnant with?' This is the point in this novel that inspires Menka's attitude to change to be a more aggressive one. Her *neurotic need for power* and *neurotic need to exploit others* was the result of this change in her personality. The loss of power after Kiran's entrance into her house and her speculation of loss of prestige that to be followed after Kiran give birth to her child lead Menka to explore her other side that was repress by societal teaching till this time to being a good wife. She realises that she was to lose her remaining power once Kiran becomes mother of Mahekanto's child. She can compensate with only if she too have a child to produce in front of her family, though she had four other children with Mahekanto. She also exploits Madan's relationship with her, by taking him into her company to continue her power in her family. The child that she bears is of Madan, nobody knew about it, except both of them. Mahekanto, who had to give the child his name according to society, as Menka was his wife. Indra, son of Menka and Mahekanto, who studies in Calcutta, was aware of his mother's drastic change in behaviour and her relationship with Madan. In spite of being aware of his father's deed, he never questions his father. But he did question his mother as this was allowed in the civilization of that time. Chira, Indra's close friend and a well-educated Bengali lady of Calcutta, too could not speak against the injustice that was done to Menka. Patriarchal society of post-world war era obliged Menka to resolve her conflict in this way rather than to confront her husband directly and compile him not to bring a mistress in to the family. Though the teaching of society have not changed much from that time, Menka a brave women of post-war era, portrait in this novel had to change her personality from time to time to resolve the neurotic need that raised due to her conflicts produced by her situations.

Conclusion

It can be seen from the above discussion that, the civilisation of the post war period and the patriarchal society leads Menka to repress all her desire and rights. Yet to make her life more bearable she had to change her attitude from moving towards people to move against people.

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