

## HUSBANDS AND LOVERS: KATE CHOPKIN'S AWAKENING AND

### SYAMA PRASAD'S ORE KADAL

SHREEJA NARAYANAN

Guest Faculty Department of English Ambedkar Arts and Science College Malappuram Wandoor Kerala, India

#### ABSTRACT

There exist healthy debates of what success love marriages have over the arranged marriages. What happens when the male and the female decide to live a life of their own and what happens when the family makes a man and a woman "commit" marriage. This is a subject of so called significance ever since the origin of such a social set up. There had been many studies in the psychological and the social realm, of what happens to the duo later on in their lives. Can a person really fall in love with another one (be it male or female) about whom he/she has just a blurry idea? Society in its long run has already proved that love and sex are different. Being indulged in sex after all doesn't mean to be in love. After marriage what happens if that person finds a better half that the person was in search of? As all social rules are being made as a trap, the rattraps have higher tendencies to fall upon "women". And so, my paper analyses what happens to two women of different geographical area and economic conditions, when they fortunately or unfortunately fell in love with men of their interests. The study takes Edna Pontellier of the novel *awakening* by Kate Chopin and Deepthi of a Malayalam movie *Ore Kadal* by Shyama Prasad, as its source.

**KEYWORDS:** Rattrap

#### YOKED WITH LOVE: AN INTRODUCTION

According to Anand Prakash, A significant crew of suppressed identities in the contemporary novel relates to women in all societies, irrespective of race or class. Most of the novels in the twentieth century present women with a bias. Scarcely any light is shed on the question of women's exploitation under the pressure of home, marriage and the overarching patriarchy.

The women's movement of 1960s was not the start of feminism. Rather it was renewal of an old tradition in some classic book which had diagnosed the problems of women's inequality in the society. In *the Awakening* some such serious issues like the notion of women being viewed as personal property by the men are depicted openhandedly. For instance, if we look at the time, period and the culture in which the novel has been set, there are innumerable instances that indicate the fact that men simply thought of their wives as personal property. It almost appears as if they did not know any better or could not even conceive of the fact that their wives were independent people with a mind of their own as is the case with Edna Pontellier. This may also be discerned when we look critically at what Leone Pontellier has to say about his wife Edna Pontellier as well in the narrator's voice.

In the '*Ore Kadal* the feminist issues are focused through two major characters Deepti and Bella. Deepti is the protagonist of the movie. She is a house wife with unemployed husband and a young son. There is a kind of ordinariness

and dullness about her marriage which is there in every middle class marriage. It is this dullness which makes her crave for something else. But nothing is explicitly told. At no point do we see any of the hardships in her marital life though the discontent is there.

The novel *The Awakening* tells about how she is awakened, and feels a sense of hopelessness and entrapment in her marriage as well as within the walls of domesticity. The awakening is illustrative of how society too enforces the norms of conventionality by isolating anybody who dares or defies its norms and particularly so a women daring to do so. For Edna Pontellier, the protagonist of *The Awakening*, independence and solitude are almost inseparable. The expectations, tradition coupled with the limitations of law, gave women of the late 1800s very few opportunities for individual expression for independence. Expected to perform their domestic duties and care for the health and happiness of their families, Victorian women were prevented from seeking the satisfaction of their own wants and needs. During her gradual awakening Edna discovers her own identity and acknowledges her emotional and sexual desires.

While Edna belongs to a financially sound family, Deepthi in the movie clearly depicts the plight of middle class women in the society. It is a story about relationships and certain crisis that develops out of those relationships. We can see another character Bella in the movie. Bella is the friend and soul mate of Dr. Nathan. She is a socialite modeled after many socialites we see in urban India. She was raped when she was fifteen and has had a very tough life. She also had a series of lovers. She has travelled through difficult paths and became wiser and cynical because of that. Yet she is also sensitive to human sufferings, love and pain. She becomes a kind of sounding board to Dr. Nathan. So the two women he is involved with - Deepthi and Bella - are contrasting characters. Bella is a character where fate has shown its dark side, yet someone who holds on to life and who gives a moral support to Nathan. In fact society punishes these so called rebels through isolation fearing that such flawed character might challenge society's very existence. Pontellier thinks his wife's aspiration is merely trivial and frivolous and that he can actually make her conform to his way of life, which is in a sense a very difficult thing for Edna Pontellier to accept and she finds the whole exercise painful and frustrating.

The awakened [sexually awakened, at this stage] Edna also emerges as a character who, is seeking to take control of her own life and her own feelings as someone who wishes to escape from the confines of marriage, domesticity and even motherhood more than clinging on to the satiety of a husband, home and birth. Moreover Edna finds herself struggling with her feeling of motherhood or lack of it, as she also realizes what society dictates as motherhood and being a mother. Deepthi on the other hand is not sexually awakened by the arrival of Nathan, who is to her – a next word for Guru. Actually Deepthi, who was a dropout from her school, adored Nathan for what she aimed and didn't ever succeed in. She fell into his life so smoothly because of her economic instability. Nathan was exploiting her respect to him and her personal need.

Edna Pontellier is a respectable woman of the late 1800s who not only acknowledges her sexual desires, but also has the strength and courage to act on them. Breaking through the role appointed to her by society she discovers her own identity independent of her husband and children.

The details and specifics of Edna's character is a key to understand the novel and its impact on generation of readers. At the beginning of the novel, Edna exists in a sort of semi-conscious state. She is comfortable in her marriage to Leonce and unaware of her own feeling and ambition. Edna has always been a romantic enamored with a man visiting neighboring plantation in her teens, and infatuated with a tragedian as a young woman. But she saw her marriage to Leonce

as the end of her life of passion and the beginning of a life of responsibility. Although she expected her dreams of romance to disappear along with her youth, her fantasies and yearning only remain latent, re-emerging on Grand Isle in the form of her passion of Robert Lebrun.

Edna is very different. The people Edna meets and experiences she has on Grand Isle awaken desires and urges for music, sexual satisfaction, art, and freedom. That she can no longer bear to keep hidden. Like a child Edna begins to see the world around her with a fresh perspective, forgetting the behavior expected of her and ignoring the effects of her unconventional actions. Yet Edna is often childish as well as childlike: she barbers unrealistic dreams about the possibilities of a wild adulterous romance without consequences, and she fails to consider the needs and desires of anyone but herself. Her flagrant disregard of reality is revealed when she mocks Robert's apprehensions about adultery, and when she leaves her children in the care of their grandmother without a second thought. Edna's independence frequently amounts to selfishness.

Where as in the movie, Deepti and Jayakumar love each other intimately. It is a very power full relationship. But for Nathan, the relationship with Deepthi is carnal. For him, every woman is mere body in which he likes to float enjoying all its curves. He gives her a bit of his take on sex. More than romance, what happens to Deepthi is that she idolizes Nathan. The moment she realizes his fake love, she goes completely out of her wits. She bites Nathan on his left breast and screams to laugh. Symbolically she was causing pain in him. A pain that no medicine can ever cure.

He fell in love, as men are in a habit of doing ...he pleased her, his absolute devotion flattered her...she fancied there was sympathy of thought and taste between them, in which fancy she was mistaken. Add to this the violent opposition of her father and her sister Margaret to her marriage with a Catholic, and need seek no further for the motifs which led her to accept Monsieur Pontellier for a husband.

All these shows that Edna is a romantic at heart, a part of her wanting to live in a world of beauty, romance and dream. Also, she has a rebellious spirit and the objection of her family to the marriage convinces her that it is exactly what she herself wants to do. She decided to become the devoted wife of a man who worships her, and thereby 'take her place with a certain dignity in the world of reality, closing the portals forever behind her upon the realm of romance and dreams'. Yet the text never presents Edna escape from tradition as heroic, it also never declares her actions shameful. The narrative may sometime portray Edna as selfish in the ways she acts out her defiance of convention, but it never portrays Edna's defiance itself as intrinsically wrong. Perhaps, even, the novel portrays Edna's rebellion as intrinsically right.

## CONCLUSIONS

The difference between Edna and Deepti is that Edna and Deepti are younger women. Edna is always independent of her husband and children but Deepti loves her family which is inversely proportional to her love for Nathan. When Deepthi informs Nathan about her pregnancy, Nathan says about the statistical ratio of children born each hour a day. In a moment of insanity Deepthi tries to throw her baby in the dustbin which was prevented by Jayakumar. She sways between her love towards Nathan and duty towards her loving husband. In order to get rid of her passion, she relies herself on spirituality and tries to concentrate on her family, but quiet often she fails in doing it. To the second part of the novel, we witness a changed Nathan. We see him always smothering his wound caused by deepthi's bite. He loses control of his emotions and tries to meet her.. Just like Nathan of the first phase, Robert Leberum is cheating Edna. He had many

incestuous relationships with many other women.

It is also clearly stated that Edna believes herself to becoming more a spiritual being as she continues on her journey of awakening, descending alongside in the social scale. Both roles models of womanhood, Adele Ratignolle and Madame Moiselereisz are presented as alternative way of being, rejected by Edna Pontellier as they are inappropriate for her. Adele is mother- woman, her identity subsumed within that for her children; with her husband to the sense of identification is so complete as to affect a strange kind of merging of the selves. Mille Reisz is the solitary artist, detached so completely from the real world that she appears to others as arrogant, or insane.

Edna is a solitary soul too, those moment when she is enjoying her solitude, she takes pleasure in feeling her round arms, eating a hearty meal, seeing the material objects in her house as though for the first time when she is of herself and she is not complete without her fantasies and delusions. When she swims out into the sea alone for the first time, feeling a sense of her new passion and when she is truly solitary without even the burden of a piece of clothing only the hum of the bees and the fragrance of pinks to keep her company, she is also the hopeless romantic for whom the vision of the ideal world cannot be substituted by dreary reality. She is an existentialist too, her vision of life is dark and somber, presented as follows: ‘there were days when life appeared to her like a grotesque pandemonium and humanity like worms struggling blindly towards inevitable annihilations’.

The ending of the novel and movie is different. In the movie Deepti is beginning a new life with Nathan. In the novel Edna Pontellier is walking into the sea completely nude. While Edna escapes into a world of eternity Deepthi makes her earthly love eternally. Edna understands that no man of this world could ever satiate the internal thirst of her heart and no gleam of earthly radiance can kinder her inner eyes of desires. As unearthly as she could really be, she even abandons the burden of her clothing and walks quietly in to the deep sea.

While *Ore Kadal* ends with a happy ending, Deepthi is just entering into a world which exorcized Edna. Her conditions later in the society are never going to be different. The world has not yet grown from its pupa stage to accept the sensibilities of women. Thus marriage is a commitment filled with duties and responsibilities providing a little space for love and dreams. Purity is decided physically – there is no purity for one’s love. A successful woman is one who agrees to the norms of the families and ruins her passions in the abyss of her conscience. Living and loving becomes an autocratic way were one always sacrifice all joys and pleasures and the other makes advantage out of it. My research tries to make a literary plea to be just without fear. Why to yield your love for a society that gluttonously waits for your decay? Let us wait for that day when sense and sensibilities yolk together, when the echoes voice.

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