

ANATOMIZING THE EMOTIONAL FLUCTUATIONS OF CLAIRE IN MARIAN KEYES'S WATERMELON

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ABSTRACT

Emotions have different dimensions, it cannot be predicted with a normal conscience. To develop the self, a person goes through lots of development and setbacks. Happiness and sorrows play a major part in the development of self realization. To understand this, one has to encounter life as it comes. Pampered childhood disappears during adulthood. To understand the self one has to live up their miseries and most unwelcoming situations of their life without the help of others. Everyone undergoes these sorrows and fluctuations during their development period. The chick literature which gives liberty to the women characters lacks in self development and psychological setbacks. Through the protagonist the emotional barriers are analyzed.

KEY WORDS: *Fluctuations, Excessive liberty, maturity, moral education and awareness.*

AIM: To educate the students and strengthen them with the moral values to encounter depression and prepare them for the better society.

Chick literature is a new genre, which became popular in the late 1990's. Catherine Alliot's *The Old Girl Network* (1994) kick started this genre. This genre of literature, "consists of heroine-centered narratives that focus on the trials and tribulations of their individual protagonists"(Smith). It is the study about a woman and her private life. This genre often highlights the darker side of woman, which attracts many women readers. The chick characters are open and naïve. The female protagonist takes up jobs that of organizer, public relations, typist, journalist and sometimes run up a business of their own. Consumerism and female identity are the two major issues addressed in chick literature.

Chick literature can be light and fluffy romances, laugh-out loud comedies or gritty tales of heartbreak and loss. The plot deals with the personal growth of a woman or a story of a woman in rehabilitation center coming to terms with her addictions. It takes one on an emotional roller coaster and leaves you feeling warm and fuzzy inside.

The protagonist is torn between convention and the pursuit of her own way of life. Mlynowski and Jacobs define Chick Lit as being about “the main character's road to self-discovery”. Just as they further illustrate that Chick Lit is:

Often upbeat, always funny fiction about contemporary female characters and their everyday struggles with work, home, friendship, family or love. It's about women growing up and figuring out who they are and what they need versus what they think they want. It's about observing life and finding humor in a variety of situations, exchanges and people.(Mlynowski 10)

Their naiveness often ends them in trouble. The archetypal features of the chick protagonists are that they are shopaholics, drug addicts, or believers of supernatural beings. The story sequence presented in chick literature portrays the appearance of the protagonist to be emotionless, extravagant, and lost in trivial issues of all sorts. The reader who reads this genre concludes that the behavioral pattern of the protagonist ends abruptly. When the character gets analyzed psychologically, one can understand the deeper emotions that prompted her to showcase this certain behavior.

A chick is a easy going and emotionally volatile character. Chick literature does not deal with any serious issue but portrays the emotional imbalance of the protagonists. The protagonist is in her free will to do things. According to Gandhi, “Too much of anything is good for nothing (Gandhi).” too much of freedom will confuse and traumatize a person and they will seek others help to make important decisions. In *Watermelon*, Claire who has lots of freedom could not afford to take a proper decision so she seeks time and some advice from the elders to decide.

Marian keys's *Watermelon* is a tale about the protagonist Claire an unruly frivolous girl who has no restrictions in her life. Her parents are lenient and she even had a messy relationship before James. Claire's naïve character, her child like behavior, and the way she easily trust people land her in trouble. Claire's perplexed nature pushes her to dangerous situations. She has the urge to familiarize latest stuff and has the audacity to acknowledge the jealousy criticism from the society. This character of Claire differs from other people and expresses her chick nature within her.

Claire is unstoppable and has all the support from family to do the desired things. She is the eldest daughter of the five girls in the Walsh family. Followed by Maggie, Rachel, Anna and Helen. Each one has a distinct attitude and behavior, and except Anna and Helen everyone lives

abroad. Claire is married to James after a long period of love relationship. Claire gives birth to little Kate and encounters the betrayal of her husband at the very same day. She is bold by nature but the sudden blow from her husband shattered her and she was unable to face him.

Claire understands that the infidelity of her husband is acknowledged by everyone except her. This thought annoyed her and makes her insecure. She feels like she is abandoned by her both family and friends. Her conscience of arbitrary interference prompts her think that she is left alone because she is worthless to be informed about her husband's infidelity. She gains more vigor when she happens to know that everyone knew about his betrayal before she could of it.

How do you know? I asked her, pouncing on her for the information.

Michael told me. Aisling told him. George told her.

(Michael was Judy's boyfriend. Aisling worked with him. George was Aisling's husband. George worked with James.). So everyone knows, I said quietly. There was a pause. Judy looked as if she would like to die.(Keyes : 19)

And to her very shock, the other lady is none other than her neighbor who is married and had two sons. Firstly Clare started her relationship with her husband five years before their marriage. They understood each other and shared their love and felt comfortable with each other and finally had a happy wedding. Clare always felt that they were the best couple. This sudden betrayal makes her stunned and that she could not accept the truth. This thought consumes her and she strives for a reason. She left London and heads back to Dublin with her little new born baby Kate.

According to Aaron Becks, the depression caused by the betrayal makes her to go vigorous over her surroundings. She sets back to her native town and let her parents take care of her little Kate. She is broken and lost her mind, she gave in to depression. People with depression have the quality of the negative traits. They think negatively and make judgments with imagination. They blame themselves for all the negative happenings around them. They combine both their imagination and reality in a single pathway and take the negative ending and they imagine the happenings to be their own misfortune.

Claire as well in the novel *Watermelon* behaves in the same way as underlined in Beck's cognitive negative traits. The trait mentioned by Beck seems to that of a child's behavior. Claire undergoes depression and behaves like a child. Here the Freudian concept of id, ego and super ego can be taken to analyze the character of Claire. The people with id personality express their urge to attain their desire without considering the environment. Claire's character changes drastically like a stubborn kid. She stays in negligence, and avoids communicating with others.

Claire drenched herself in sorrows under the influence of her deep down emotions, she is carried away with the habit of continuous consumption of liquor. The breakup disturbs her a lot and she succumbs to the situation. She goes to her parent's home and mourns for her disaster, in between she behaves like a neurotic, and she skipped bathing.

Getting dressed was such a huge undertaking that I never managed it. On the rare occasions that I did get out of bed I put one of Dad's golfing jumpers on over Mum's nightdress and wore a pair of hiking socks. I would genuinely intend to get dressed properly. (Keyes 79)

Here one can sense the fluctuation happening in her daily course and process. She lacks the stability of her routine and is dumped down by her sorrow. Her only focus is the miserable betrayal caused by her husband, her mind traps her within the sorrows, and her consciousness about her normal life is deliberately destroyed by this setback. Her trapped mind fails to overlook the positive vibes around her. The instability of her emotional setbacks pushes her back from her common sense of living.

The naïve nature of Claire pushes her to imagine a picture of James and the other woman together. She left helpless at situations like when the movie scenes reciprocated her memories. She breaks the remote and the flower vases whenever she encounters a love scene in the television. Even, she goes crazy and to the extreme of complaining about a video tape and returned it to the shop saying it involves her personal issues.

The great terror started the day I watched that video with Mum.(I won't go into the details of what happened there. I'm too ashamed of myself. And anyway the video shop agreed to drop the charges. It was totally true what the assistant said. They only stock the videos. It was no reflection on their personal opinions or morals. I was just a little bit overwrought at the time.). (Keyes 93)

As a kid who goes furious over the little clashes, Claire remains unstable and she expresses her id personality. According to Sigmund Freud, a person with id personality will express their emotion publicly and they have no regret about their attitude.

“According to Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory of personality, the id is the personality component made up of unconscious psychic energy that works to satisfy basic urges, needs, and desires. The id operates based on the pleasure principle, which demands immediate gratification of needs” (Kendra Cherry). The id personality, urges her to express anger is attained by breaking the things around her. The immature personality exposes the naiveness of a person, because the lack of analyzing capacity will lead the person to express their real nature to the public and provide an image of how they suffer from depression.

Claire expresses her emotions like a kid actually because of her naiveness and deep down emotions from the messy relationship; she is spoiled from her young age to be a carefree and

fluffy girl. This freedom given by her surroundings never allowed her to be a grown up. There is no one to guide her to distinguish the right from the wrong. So she vents her anger in all the possible ways. After a long period, her realization of the self transformed her from a dirty creature to a good human being.

To realize one's own self, one needs a lot of disciplining. Disciplining from others gives a different perspective of a person. Disciplining also moulds a person to be a better human being. Pointing out the mistakes and praising the good deeds can lead a person into a dazzling path. Here, Claire encounters negative criticism about her own personality from her own family members and that enlightens her to get a better understanding about her horrible nature. Her sense of realization awakens and she started to realize her mistakes. Self pitying leads her to even more a miserable life.

Claire happens to eavesdrop her sisters complaining to her Mother about her short temper and abnormal attitude. Usually Claire's mother Walsh always supports her but in contrast she too blamed her for being childish which made her realize her fault and she made up her mind to give up her present state. She convinced herself that she needs to live up for the sake of her little baby girl.

It was only when I accidentally overheard a conversation between Mum, Helen and Anna that I realised how awful I was being. I was just about to go into the kitchen when I caught the sleeve of my jumper (well, Dad's jumper) on the knob on the cabinet in the hall. While I extricated myself I heard Helen talking in the kitchen. 'She's such a bitch,' Helen was complaining. 'And we're afraid to watch anything on telly that has people kissing in it or anything, in case she goes ballistic.' (Keyes 106)

When her own sisters complained about the horrific behavior of Claire to mother, she encounters a kind of shock and realized her misconduct. She slowly understands her mistakes and her unreasonable attitude towards the family. She recalls her past and finds that she failed to be a good mother to her child. She also neglects her responsibility as a daughter, mother, and sister. Here realization is the first step to attain maturity. The id personality which takes the lead in her life during the period of depression was slowly giving way for maturity.

Even though Claire makes a move from her dismay she still lacks the ability to understand the truth when James realised his mistake and turns back to Claire, he is too guilty to accept the fact that he cheated on her. Instead of apologizing he puts all the blame on her. This chauvinistic attitude of James and the naïveness of Claire blind her to accept it without any second thought. "I wondered if that would be *mature* enough for James. I must stop! He was right, I was wrong (Keyes 393)." She totally buys his explanation and thinks that she is the only reason for her break up. "Oh James, I don't know. I'll need a couple of days to get everything sorted out,' I said (Keyes 408)."

She happens to call James after she totally accepts the blame but finally finds out that he was the one to be blamed. She calls James at his work, but instead his friend George picked up the phone and he exposed the reality to her:

He was tortured by the thought of being without you. Tortured! He kept saying to me, “George, I love her so much. How can I get her back?” and I just said to him, “James, tell her the truth. Tell her you’re sorry.” He had me driven round the bend!’ ‘Is that right?’ I stammered. (Keyes 427-428)

Claire gets to know a totally different story from George, all the while she was blaming herself for the misfortunes of her life, and even James had convinced her of it.

Claire is disgusted and worries a lot about her ignorance. She was so naïve to be convinced and took all the blame and obediently accepted the false accusation from James. Deliberately the truth from George stirs up her emotion and she encounters the reality with a heart ache and she understands her true position. In order to stabilize her position and self respect she demanded a proper apology from her husband, but she was blamed again and again to accept the faulty accusations. This difficult situation enlightened her mind and she thoroughly analyzed her own self and wanted to ascertain self-identity. By the end of the novel, she builds her emotion and understands the reality. Claire left James without any regrets, because she understood that she should not give away her self-respect at any cost. All her anger and love for James were meaningless but her gain was her self-respect.

It is very common to encounter a lot of fluctuation during the recovering period. Blows and setbacks happen in every relationship. To understand and recover, one has to listen to their surroundings; one has to clean out their mind. The depression has the ability to consume a person’s sense and stir up lots of commotion. A stable and sound mind has the capacity to understand and analyze the right from the wrong.

Claire suffers a lot because she lacks awareness about her own self. An individual can attain knowledge only by education. Everyone needs some advice and a proper guide during their break downs. In this emerging world, every one depends on technologies and lack moral values and moral support. To encounter and solve the emotional imbalance one should have the knowledge to distinguish the right from the wrong. It is the government and the educational sector’s responsibility to educate the students about the knowledge of life. Other than some religious institutions there is no college that imparts moral and value education to their students. Students will attain maturity once they are taught to face the difficulties in life. Woman like Claire who enjoy a lot of freedom fail to attain maturity. Once the tuning is made by teaching these moral values, one can attain their individual transformation.

Understanding and acceptance are the only way to treat these people. The people around them should have more tolerance to accept their weird behavior. They should be sending to good counseling centers and with good counseling they may be able to overcome or handle their lives

and better optimistic approach to life may lift them from such situation. Enlightening them about self love and self belief would enrich them with good hope towards their life. It is advisable to start a course regarding emotional balance for the college students to teach the importance of an individual's emotional sufferings.

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We wish to submit an original research article entitled “[Anatomizing the Emotional Fluctuations of Claire in Marian Keyes’s *Watermelon*.]” for consideration by the Rupkatha Journal for the upcoming issue. Here we confirm that this work is original and has not published elsewhere, nor is it currently under consideration for publication elsewhere.

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