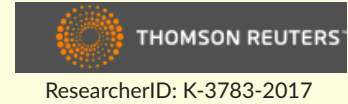




# THE CONTEXT

International, Peer Reviewed & Indexed Journal of Arts & Humanities

UGC Approved Journal: S. No. 42344 | Volume 4 Issue 1, July 2017



Guest Editor: Dr. Vinita Basantani

Chief Editor: Mr. Kumar Wani

ISSN 2349-4948



9 772349 494000



**MAGNUS**  
Publishing & Distributors  
Parbhani 431 401. MS India.



## THE CONTEXT

Quarterly journal of Arts & Humanities

UGC Approved Journal: S. No. 42344

Publication details and instructions for authors:

<http://www.magnuspublishing.com>

This is an Open Access Journal distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License:

[CC BY-NC-ND 4.0](http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/)

### Three Widows in Indira Goswami's Novel *The Moth-Eaten Howdah of the Tusker*

Prin. Dr. Chandrakant R. Mandlik

Head, Department of English  
Shri Shiv Chhatrapati College, Junnar (Pune)

Published online: 01 July 2017

Article Number: TCissn.2349-4948/4.1a111

© 2017 Author(s); licensee Magnus Publishing.

The Archived Version and permanent URL of this article is:

<http://www.magnuspublishing.com/thecontext/2349-4948-111.pdf>

#### Abstract

Widows in male dominated society have been denied life sources. They are neglected by the family members, relatives and the society. Therefore they have to suffer from mental, physical and social exploitations. The widows are not allowed to enjoy freedom, dreams and desires. They deal life without any pleasure in the corners of the house. Indira Goswami projects miserable condition of three widows Durga, Saru and Giribala in the novel 'The Moth-Eaten Howdah of the Tusker'.

**Keywords:** *widows, miserable life, no dreams, no desires*

---

## Three Widows in Indira Goswami's Novel *The Moth-Eaten Howdah of the Tusker*

Prin. Dr. Chandrakant R. Mandlik

### Introduction

Indira Goswami, a prominent figure in English literature presents sensitive and appealing picture of the society. Her novel named '*Dantel Hatir Une Khowa Howdah*' received Jananpith Award in 2000. She tries to show that role of culture is prominent in making the women very submissive. We find that women are truthful to their culture and traditional happenings. They are under the impression that their prime aim is to look after family and the members in the family. Therefore, they keep themselves busy in various types of domestic work. It portrays women's culture. Indira Goswami's work is the greatest contribution to the Indian literature which includes autobiography, novels, and short stories. Indian woman does not allow her mind to think except the family. She even does not think of herself as an individual. She knows the fact that her recognition is due to her family. Indian woman respects all the rituals which are created by men. All the decisions are taken by men. The share of women in the process of decision is negligible. The women right from the childhood are brought up and nurtured in a way that they cannot oppose the rituals.

Indira Goswami reflects women's desire and their efforts to fulfill them. One may underline novelist's projection for women's liberty. The main focus is on the sufferings of widows in the Hindu community. They have to face financial problems, old traditions and sexual exploitation. The woman protagonist is unable to make herself free and breathe fresh air in the world of men power. The life of widows is neglected and it is prison life like parrot. Some of the widows are young and have a thought of love. The other are middle aged and suffer from unhappiness because they are not allowed to enjoy pleasure of ordinary life. Some widows are old who are out of the house and dealing life on the premises of holy places like Puri and Vrindavan. Dr. Rajul Sogani Says: "Perhaps writing about the pain of these women helped Indira Goswami come to terms with her own grief and frustration and keep a hold on her sanity". (Sogani, 2002: 55)

Women are from marginalized sections of the society. Indira Goswami has experienced exploitation of widows and their pathetic condition in their family and the society. The life of young Brahmin widows is also destroyed by the old harmful rituals and traditions. These women have been denied pleasures of life. By struggling with social codes the widows are dealing with the life like animals. There are two worlds for these widows. The outside world which is dominated by male supremacy and the inside world where women have to suffer in life. In this world women learn

---

to live only with their shadows and rejection. It is called distorted life. By illustrating cruel life of widows, the novelist Goswami has established her social agony. With this regard Sisir Kumar Das says:

The bold articulation of the sexuality of the young widow and her fiery protest are not only powerful expressions of the writer's social attitude but they are aesthetically so refined and ingenuous. (Das, 2002:10)

The novelists evaporates critical life conditions of widows, Durga, Saru Gosainee and Giribala who are the members of the Gosain family of the 'Sattra'. Durga is badly treated by the father-in-laws family thinking that she is unholy woman. The reason for it is that she is widow. She always lives in frustration. Her brother's house is the only shelter for her who is 'useless and unfortunate person'. (540) Durga's life is meaningless. Being helpless she has no other option left except obeying the codes of widows. Instead of moving around the thought of widow ship she has owned fame in law and land selling. These two things are responsible for strengthening her demand to the father in law's house. She says "They will come one day and take me back to Chikarhathi with honour and respect". (Goswami) 2002:470-71) Holly places like Puri, Prayag, Kashi, are the sources to give peace to the mind. Therefore Durga decides to go to Prayag and Puri. She wants to be free from the restriction and tension of widow ship and to dispose the ashes of her dead husband in the rivers. It is considered as the holy rite in India after the death of a person. She is of strong mind to join the pilgrimage to Janannath temple.

The event of ornament stealing in her house by Mahidar Bapu breaks her dream of joining the pilgrimage. She wills to go to her husband's place to die in order to find relief from all worries in the life. One may underline Durga's traditional attitude towards the life. Saru Gosainee, the young widow is independent and beautiful. She is bold enough to shoulder the masculine responsibility. She does not bother the comment expressed by the neighbors. Her happy life has come to end because of the untimely death of her husband. Now she has to suffer from financial condition. She maintains her life on the income coming from the land. The work of cultivation is done by her regularly with the co-operation of a Brahmin. Being a trustful and polite person he helps in collecting rent. She desires to fulfill sexual emotions from Mahidar. But Saru is not successful even though he has responded her because of the patriarchal society. It shows that in the patriarchal society individual's desires and emotions are not taken into consideration. She has to suppress her sexual desires. If a woman commits a mistake she is compelled to undergo an act of purification.

Mihidhar deceives Saru by making illegal deeds like selling her land and stealing Durga's ornaments in the house. This act of Mahidhar reflects her love and trust to him is in vain. Saru is unaware of Mahidar's ill deeds. The novelist, Goswami tries to present silence of Saru's inner life. Her dreams symbolize woman's desire to be free from the chains of the society which is dominated by the male beings.

---

Giribala, a beautiful widow fights against the social traditions and culture. In Indian society it is seen that women are not given liberty of making choice of their life partner. Their dreams and desires are not taken into account by the people in the family. Giribala is married by her parents against her wish. She has no voice in the home and cannot speak against the decisions which are taken by the elders. Consequently, she had to wedlock a man who did not have feelings of love and affinity to her. Giribala is a ceaseless sufferer who cannot receive words of happiness through the lips of her husband. Consequently, she finds death better than life. Raju Sogani's views on the novel are remarkable

As an artist, she (Indira Goswami) brings into sharp focus the pity and horror of their (widow's) situation and above all, the intense desire in each one of these caged birds to come out of its prison if not to fly, at least to breathe the fresh air of life and sing its own song. How long will society force them to languish in isolation or perhaps court violent and pre-mature death? The question is still to be answered (Sogani: 2002. 65)

Eleman is the fourth woman character in the novel, '*The Moth-Eaten Howdah of the Tusker*' who keeps her working on without saying anything. She is a wonderful example of woman character which is presented by the novelist in the orthodox Hindu society. According to the rules of the Brahmin community a girl must be married before she gets puberty. The family of a girl is given punishment of outcaste if a girl gets puberty before marriage. The novelist says: 'That girl's father will soon be made an outcaste if he doesn't get her married fast---- (Gosswami, 2002:404) The priest and the village elders look after all the happenings in the village. Elman's father fears that his whole family will be made outcaste if his daughter gets puberty before marriage. Therefore the family members and other people worry the growth of the girls 'A third opium eater would add with a shy wink and boorish laughter, "Have you noticed her breasts? They have become like those female doves swollen with eggs!"-----And they would all glance at the girl's body with gleeful vile looks. (Goswami, 2002:404:405) Without thinking of his daughter's dream and wishes Eleman's father decides to sell her to the person an opium smuggler who is older than her. Eleman and her grandmother take help of Indranath. The police arrest Eleman's father and the opium smuggler on getting information from Eleman and her grandmother. Here it is important to note that when women realize that the situation is beyond their toleration they begin to breathe freedom. They show boldness to come out of prison life.

### Conclusion

Due to male dominance experience of women in India is the same with slight differences. Dominant culture, moral laws, and social conduct do not allow women to cross the threshold of the house. The changes in the women's body enforce them to lock up themselves in the houses. In the present novel the novelist tries to represent oppressed emotions of women community and their strong desires for liberty. The

---

women characters like Giribala and Elman show that women must try to understand her pathetic condition. They must also realize their significant life time and attempt to establish their own identity on the basis of abilities. It is fact that nobody except themselves will come to help them. They have to become courageous enough to let the thoughts come out on the lips. It is also their own responsibility to find out right path in order to make their life bright and meaningful.

#### Works cited

- Das, Prof. Sisir Kumar. (2002), *A Great Narrative, Mamoni Raisom Goswami and Her Fictional World-The search for the sea*. Comp. Kaikous Burjar Satarawala, New Delhi: BRPC Ltd.
- Goswami, Indira. ( 2002), *A Complete Novel: The Moth-eaten Howdah of the Tusker, Mamoni Paisom Goswami and Her Fictional World- The Search for the Sea*, Comp. Kaikous Burjar Satarawala, New Delhi: BRPC Ltd.
- Sogani, Dr. Rajul. (2002), *Caged Birds: Widows in the Novels of Indira Goswami, Mamoni Raisom Goswami and Her Fictional World- The Search for the Sea*, Comp. Kaikous Burjar Satarawala, New Delhi: BRPC Ltd.

