



LISA JANE SMITH'S VAMPIRE DIARIES "THE AWAKENING": AN ARCHETYPE OF LACANIAN DESIRE

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Abstract:

In this research paper, a venture has been made to critically analyse Lisa Jane Smith's Vampire Diaries: "The Awakening" in the light of Lacanian theory of lack and desire. Through the character of Elena Gilbert, the researcher has tried to analyse the working of Lacanian desire in the novel. According to Lacanian theory, our desires are initially not our own; they come from the desires of other people. What they lack becomes their desire; and then this freshly born desire, becomes the desire of other's. In "vampire diaries", Elena Gilbert, the female protagonist, has the things that other girls lack and desire. Elena Gilbert desires every that guy's love, care and attention that other girl desires. She has brought to light, how these women really performed to ascertain their self-identity.

Lisa Jane Smith is one of the renowned American writers. Each of her novel deals with fantasies of young adult's romance, horror and science fiction. Her notable works include: "The Vampire diaries", "The Secret circle", "Night world" and many more. Lisa Jane Smith is best known for her best-selling "vampire diaries". "The vampire diaries" series have been promoted for five awards.

In existing scenario, people are very passionate and pioneering towards their dreams, wants, needs and life. This passion of people, the urge of fulfilment of their dreams and desires sometimes misdirect them. These days women are aware of the worth of their existence. Now, they do not underestimate themselves, but there are also some constraints and sacraments which should always be taken care of. The main theme of the novel is the prize of love, friendship and making sacrifices for them. Elena Gilbert is a lady with plenty of fellows and a strong desire to be loved.

Key Words: Lacan's Theory of Lack and Desire, Desire, Lack, Desire for Love, Friendship, Civilization & Constraints

Introduction:

Vampire diaries: "the awakening" is Lisa Jane Smith's most favored and well received novel and is considered her masterpiece. It is a romantic novel of the 20th century and an American supernatural, horror, romance book series. It is simply assumed that the story holds a deadly love triangle between Elena, Stefan and Damon. Elena, the female protagonist, an adorable and well-liked human girl; Stefan Salvatore, the male protagonist, brooding and mysterious young school guy, a vampire; and Damon Salvatore, dangerous and evil vampire brother of Stefan Salvatore. Elena finds herself drawn to both brothers. She is seen as a romantic, idealistic trapped in a materialistic world as a worldly and fleshly girl. In this research paper an attempt has been made to analyse the life of Elena Gilbert as a paradigm of Lacanian desire.

According to Jacques Lacan, desire arises from insufficiency and one wants what one desires. Thus, it seems to be a paradoxical situation at the beginning. Lacan has explained the concept of desire and lack by taking an infant as his concern. He recounts the transition from infancy to childhood in several stages, i.e. the imaginary, the symbolic and the real. Imaginary stage is the state of infant's wholeness with the mother. Here the other Concept of mirror stage is given by Lacan. The mirror stage is a pathway between imaginary and symbolic order. When the infant looks his image in the mirror, he identifies himself with that ideal image which is unified with the mother. When the Infant next enters into symbolic stage i.e., social structures and laws embodied in language. The concern (infant) gets divided. The infant feels alienated because he is lacking that unity with the mother and this lack gives birth to desire.

According to Lacan "desire is the essence of man; desire is simultaneously heart of human existence" (Evans 37). He says that unconscious desire takes more attention than the conscious one and also unconscious desire forms the central concern of Lacan's theory of "Psychoanalysis". Secondly, unconscious desire is completely sexual in behaviour as he says "the motives of unconscious desire are limited... to sexual desire... the other great generic desire that of hunger, is not represented" (Lacan 156). According to Lacan, desire can never be put into words; it can never be expressed and thus is always left Unexpressed.

Lacan distinguishes desire from need and demand in his essay "The Significance of The Phallus". According to Lacan, need is entirely biological in nature that can be satisfied, like infant depends on another to satisfy his needs. On the other side, demand can never be satisfied. Demand implies a demand for love. The "Craving for love remains unsatisfied and this leftover is desire" (38), thus Lacan points it that "Desire is neither appetite for satisfaction, nor demand for love, but the difference that results from the subtraction of the first from the second "(Lacan 318). Contrary to need, "Desire is Constant in it's pressure, and eternal and the

realisation of desire does not consist in being fulfilled but in the production of desire as such” (Evans 38). According to Lacan, desire of one is the desire of another. One wants to be the subject of another person’s desire that can also be labelled as ‘Desire for Recognition’.

Analysis:

In the present novel *The Vampire Diaries: “the Awakening”*, the female protagonist Elena Gilbert is experiencing the trauma of unattainable desire. She represented a character in which we observed a parallel shift from one object of desire to another in order to reach a state of pure profusion and fullness. For the most part every object of desire disappoints her. She usually replaces one object of desire with another for the attainment of that lost happiness and fulfilment.

“Elena Gilbert, cool and blonde and slender, the fashion trendsetter, the high school senior, the girl every guy wanted and every girl wanted to be” (Smith 3). From her childhood onwards, Elena lives in Fell’s Church. In the book, she is a popular, selfish and a ‘mean girl.’ Much of Elena’s story revolves around her desire for a relationship with the male protagonist, Stefan. Stefan Salvatore, a vampire, but looks exactly like a normal high school student, tall, dark and handsome, empathetic, compassionate and lastly a mysterious stranger in the town of Fell’s Church.

Initially, Elena shares a relationship with his childhood friend Matt Honeycutt, a guy with kind and helping heart. He was the most humane man she ever met. Elena dumped Matt, claiming that she doesn’t deserve him. This is also somewhat related to the new mysterious guy, Stefan. In Elena’s view, he is the one she was looking for and will feel the pride in showing her new acquisition off to the other girls of high school. According to Elena in book, “Most boys were like puppies. Adorable in their place, but expendable” (Smith 6).

In relation with the Lacan’s theory, Elena is done with Matt as he is not up to her expectations and doesn’t match with what she desired earlier. The new guy Stefan in no time becomes the crush of every girl, and every girl desires him, Elena as well. Caroline, her other childhood companion, looks more like a vogue model than ever, competes with her in acquiring Stefan. But the original splitting of her from her imaginary world happens when she gets snubbed by Stefan. He deliberately turned away from her and snubbed her on purpose in front of Caroline. Elena becomes very disappointed: “She’d have him, even if it killed her” (Smith 25).

This scenario conveys her strong and indestructible desire for Stefan. According to Lacan, desires are initially not one’s own, but they come from another’s desires. Here, Elena’s imperishable desire comes from Caroline’s desire and by getting ignored by Stefan. She started feeling empty and directionless, but never gave up. Consequently, she acquires a new identity is that of a ghoul and a purposeful woman as the townspeople call her. She becomes split personality living with a lack and false identity. She feels a vacuum within herself, a sense of lost originality and begins inwardly to detach herself from her family and friends. But she is unable to express this intangible unease to her Friends and family who she thinks does not have the sensibility to understand her. Her conversations these days with her friends Bonnie and Meredith becomes as flat as a street pavement. Once she falls short of her expectations, she turns herself into a person who can carry out everything to achieve her desire. This wasn’t enough for Elena; she gathered as much information as she could on the subject of Stefan Salvatore.

Thus Elena gets frustrated and in order to get rid of her frustration, she tries to release some of it. In the School Homecoming Dance, she throws herself into the whirl of colour and music. She is brighter than she had ever been at any dance before. She dances with everyone, laughing too loudly, flirting with every boy in her path.

One should always act with keeping the dignity, Constraints and sacraments in mind. The desire for Stefan is Elena’s unconscious desire that possess huge power. Her failure forces her to opt for the wrong way. She chooses a bunch of new friends she had never been with: Tyler Smallwood, Dick Carter and Vickie Bennett. They moved towards the old and fearful cemetery. Tyler’s arm circles her waist, he nuzzles moistly at her neck, hugging Elena more tightly. Elena becomes what she wasn’t and enjoying everything. A persona of her is guffawing and shouting with Dick and Vickie and Tyler over the whizz of the wind, but another bit of her was watching from far away.

Truly in her heart, she was waiting and waiting for something to come about. She gazed out wistfully over the wide solitude of her life, every morning she awoke; she hoped it would come that day. Elena’s frustrations and longings cause her to give up her own personality and good values and her pure inner conscience. She feels totally secluded and longs for a heart to heart chit-chat and attention. Her friends Bonnie and Meredith, she thinks, is not suited to the task. Elena in order to achieve her desires, forgets everything and accepts everything.

Results:

Tyler parked halfway up the hill to the ruined church i.e. the cemetery. He offers Elena some beer, who tries to ignore the sick feelings of Tyler Smallwood. She tries to get gel well with this new squad. In no time, Tyler tries to sexually assault Elena. His shoulders around her had merely been infuriating, constraining, but now with a sense of shock she felt his hands on her body, scrabble for bare skin. Never ever in her living, had Elena has been in a circumstance like this, far-flung from any aid and assistance. She helplessly: “Tyler, take

your hands off me”, “Let go”, “Get me off” (Smith 94). All the harshness and acidity of the world seemed to be served to her on her salver. Her good faith, Stefan had raised coming into the cemetery and ultimately protects Elena plus punishes Tyler for his deed.

In the mean time she wins Stefan Salvatore, but another character of Damon comes in between. In further volumes of the series, again the love triangle forms among the three where Elena finds Stefan incapable of heroism, effeminate, she gets bored of him and his caring and calm nature and falls in love with Stefan’s older Vampire brother Damon Salvatore.

This cycle of lack and desire continues throughout the series. As Lacan says, the more frequently the subject pursues his desire, the more quickly he will be brought to the disappointment. He further says, “... If the object of desire, is reached, but then it no longer remains the object of desire; another object will become substituted in its place” (Hill 67). The Same thing happens with Elena; she gets bored with Stefan and she judges him as brooding and inconclusive.

Her desire for another man who will fulfil her desires, though she herself cannot convey her desire, as the Lacanian notion of ‘the subject’ who cannot express the real, thus the desires always remain unexpressed. When she reaches the stage of total disappointment followed by the total termination of her relationship with Stefan, she ultimately goes for her relationship with another brother, Damon Salvatore, in further volumes of the book.

Conclusion:

Thus the life of Elena Gilbert is an archetype of Lacan’s theory of lack or unattainable desire. The Lacanian concept of metonymy can be clearly seen when Elena constantly substitutes one object of her desire for another until she is driven to distress and despair. Finally, she decides to take her own path self-servingly, after never being able to attain the profusion she persistently seeks.

Lacan argues:

“In speaking being unconscious desire emerges in place of its loss. We long to fill the gap made by the lack of access to the real with something that would reunite us directly with the world, seeking a succession of objects of desire... None of our conscious objects of desire, including sexual objects, will fully deliver the complete satisfaction they promise, since they cannot by definition replace what has been lost” (Belsey 51).

Similarly, Elena indulges in wrong and masochist activities, hang out with some flirty companion, in a fruitless hope of getting back that lost unity but always receives disappointment in return. Neither of the guy is able to fulfil her desires and make her ‘whole’ because the ‘subject’ is all about something lacking. The desire is made up of retired objects, of things missing and misplaced, and usually imagine by the subject reside in others. Desires achieve a proper resting place only in death. Elena’s action is the bridge and the gap between desire and its fulfilment.

A woman is a part of one society; her actions describe her character and her willingness to accept the Constraints of that society. She should never be denied by others to be a part of it. The actions of Elena Gilbert were something unacceptable within the society. Any woman should not do such acts that can exclude her from the society. A woman should be able to hold, stand and speak. Their actions should always earn some respect, dignity and love. If she wants to fulfil her desire than she should begin with the most acceptable path for her as well as the society of which she is a part. This doesn’t mean that society is the most significant institution but it is also not the least one. It is appreciable to achieve desire, to get what one wants but with the maintenance of good values and moral within the actions.

Elena always felt depressed when she is unable to achieve her desire and also more of the times a feeling of insufficiency within her. She opts for various ways, rights and lefts, but never dropped what she desired until and unless she is up to it. In further volumes of “Vampire Diaries”, her object of desire shifts from one object to another, thus always remain unattainable. Laterally, at the end of the dusk, we are a part of this civilization; we live here with our own course of actions, so it’s healthier to live with the acceptance by our civilization, not with hatred and humiliation.

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