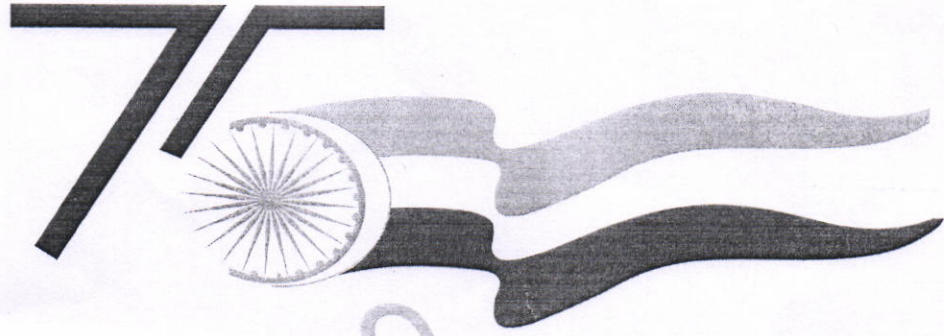


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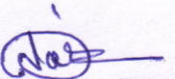


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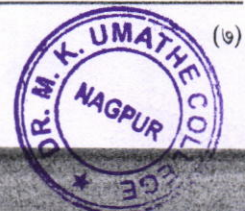
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Maternal Affection and Pursuit for Survival in Margaret Drabble's Novels: A Brief Study

Dr. Vaishali Meshram

Assistant Professor

Dr. M. K. Umathe College, Nagpur

drvaishalimeshram@gmail.com

Mobile No: 8983391596

Abstract:

It has been discovered that till recently women had been the victims of the vicious male experiences that have remained unexpressed. Very few women have a heart to express their feelings and to tell the truth about their body and mind. Mrs. Margaret Drabble, the leading British woman writer of today has handled these themes in her works with great artistic vision and has boldly written about pregnancy, birth, children and motherhood. Having a strong sense of obligation to female tradition, Margaret Drabble has brought the conflict in the mind of educated women to the surface. She could be considered as a feminist because most of her novels are focused on feminist issues and problems pertaining to women. The present article is an honest attempt to undertake a detailed study of women characters portrayed in the novels of Margaret Drabble and tried to reveal their yearning for freedom, equality and motherhood.

Keywords : Pursuit, Survival, Motherhood, Struggle, Feminist, Freedom, Equality.

Introduction :

Margaret Drabble is the most popular writer amongst the women readers as she writes about the specific experiences of women and they feel connected with those experiences in one way or the other. Her literary works include eighteen novels, ten short stories, four plays, six books on criticism, five editions, numerous articles and have been translated into sixteen languages. Margaret Drabble, in her novels, has taken up

the themes that explored the complexities of the lives of modern educated women such as motherhood, loneliness, yearning, pleasure, love, career and the other themes that are still relevant today. She describes the women who escape from the traditional role of women in society by focusing on her protagonist's problems. She also shows how women can adapt in a society that is always changing. Her protagonists are of her age and go through the same stages of life wherein they take some time to overcome all the hurdles that come in their way of advancement. Although she has written these novels forty years ago, the themes and solutions to her problems very much belong to modern society. Women today still face the same questions posed by her protagonists like how to combine motherhood and career and many other questions pertaining to women. The in-depth study of her novels will enable us to see how Drabble identifies the demands of society and different relationships influencing a woman's actions, her search for identity and fulfillment of her life.

Margaret Drabble's earlier novels are about the situation of being a woman while the later ones are about being a woman in a man's world. Sarah, Emma and Rosamund are some of her characters who are confronted with the situation of being a woman whereas her other characters are confronted with the situation of being a woman in a man's world. People usually mock at her only because she is a woman writer who has dealt with the problems related to sexuality, motherhood, quest for equality and assertiveness.





Margaret Drabble's earlier novels, especially *A Summer Bird Cage* (1963), *The Garrick Year* (1964) and *The Millstone* (1965) are written in the first-person narration. In most of her novels, Drabble has created the women protagonists who possess the same traits as that of the novelist. Sarah, Rosamund and Emma resemble their creator in certain ways. Sarah and Rosamund are graduated from Oxford like Drabble and like her they have complex relationship with their siblings. Let us study some of her women protagonists in detail.

Sarah Bennett (A summer Bird-Cage) :

'*A Summer Bird-Cage*' is the first novel written by Mrs. Margaret Drabble which reflects the intellectual women's predicament in the patriarchal society. The novel was written in 1963 when the novelist was greatly influenced by feminist theories. Mrs. Drabble shows the struggle of a young and talented girl Sarah Bennett who is the protagonist of the novel. Sarah graduates from the Oxford University with a first class honors degree in English. She has a perfect blend of intellect and beauty in her but she is completely unaware of her own dreams and goals as she seems unambitious in the beginning. Being a well-educated woman, Sarah expected to own a dream life with a satisfying job, friendship and love. After her graduation she traps in a conflict—marriage vs. career. So she tries to explore both the possibilities. For her, none of the marriages is encouraging. One is happy yet dull, another thrilling yet self-destructive and a third, her sister Louise's, in which she hoped to find a model of her own but ends in a divorce. The novel begins as Sarah returns from Paris to witness her sister Louise's marriage to Stephen Halifax. Stephan is a dull, fashionable, affluent and a satirical novelist with four novels to his credit whereas Louise is a stunning and exciting woman. Sarah does not understand the reason why her sister is serious about Stephen and is getting married to a man like him. She tries to

ascertain whether a woman should marry a man for love or money. In the end, Sarah gets the answer directly from Louise that she married Stephen only for the sake of his money. Before and after her covetous marriage with Stephen, she continues an affair with an extremely attractive and sexy actor John Connell. Though Louise loves him desperately, she shall never marry him.

Many couples tie a nuptial knot for the sake of love that they have for each other. Though their marriage is based on love; it may not have a happy ending for women. Here Sarah's friend Gill chooses to marry for love but to her dismay their marriage proves to be a complete failure. She gets married as soon as she graduates from university. Gill and her husband are considered as a lovey-dovey couple and Sarah believes that they will never depart from each other. But when Sarah learns about their divorce, she is shocked. Gill tells Sarah that they shared a wonderful bond with each other initially but later they started to quarrel over the petty things like money, food etc. She is forced to stay at home and look after the family. The situation gets worsen day by day and eventually they separate with mutual consent. Sarah feels depressed over the worthlessness of women's lives. She feels her life is meaningless and ruined because she is a woman. After witnessing both the devastated marriages, Sarah realizes the importance of independence and cherishes it. Eventually Sarah finds a decent job at BBC, which enables to support her life and pursue her dream of becoming a writer. Through the protagonist, Drabble tries to imply here that staving off the marriage is not the only option the carrier oriented women are left with. Instead they should learn how to balance their married life, family and career in order to fulfill their multi-roles as daughters, wives, mothers, employees or employers. Sarah represents the 'New Women' who is not only courageous enough to live for





her own interests and benefits but also has the courage to pursue the freedom and independence by all means. For Sarah, a 'New Woman' will never lose herself and get into a marriage. A woman should not give up her own cause and social values to spend all her energy to family.

Rosamund (*The Millstone*) :

'*The Millstone*' is the second novel written by Margaret Drabble wherein she has created an entirely new feminine identity for her protagonist Rosamund. This middle-class, educated, single mother is utterly against the social customs of the mid-1960s. Rosamund's motherhood is absolutely unplanned. At the beginning of the novel she is a virgin, that it is quite unusual in her literary social circle, so she tries to hide the fact of her virginity from everyone. It is humiliating for her to be known as a virgin in an advanced modern society like hers. Later she starts falling for George. It turns out to be tragic because she cannot accept his love and has to shun him out of her life. However, unfortunately she becomes pregnant and is terribly disturbed due to this unwanted pregnancy and an illegitimate baby. When she realizes that she is pregnant, she then tries to abort the baby, but she fails to do so as her attempts do not seem whole-hearted. After one such attempt she says that having a baby would be a punishment for her and she will lose her independence.

Rosamund is greatly influenced by her feminist mother who believes in man-woman equality. Rosamund, at this stage of her life, realizes that there is a limit to equality as there is biological difference that she cannot change. Initially, Rosamund is shocked when she comes to know about her pregnancy. It was a sort of punishment for her. However, later she realizes that Motherhood is not necessarily a social trap or "a millstone" but a milestone. Her pregnancy and motherhood proves beneficial to her on a personal plane. During her pregnancy she

finishes her thesis for which she receives appreciation from academic circles. She publishes a number of articles in scientific magazines. Her reputation grows and she is offered a job at the university where she meets George again, but does not tell him that he is the father of her child. When she takes him home to meet her daughter Octavia, she realizes that her bond with her child is so strong that she will never need any man to support her. Motherhood makes her mature, self-aware and develops a sense of responsibility in her. The novelist here asserts that a mother can never be utterly selfish but must consider the needs of another person completely dependent on her. Rosamund is uninterested in getting married to Roger or George and is unwilling to establish her own family. Here we can see her selfishness as well as her urge for independence. Her views of marriage are based on her sibling's personal disappointing experiences of marriages so she doesn't want to get married.

Clara (*Jerusalem the Golden*) :

Drabble, in her fourth novel '*Jerusalem the Golden*,' created a character who has escaped from the clutches of stubborn orthodox mindsets and orthodox social structures for good prospects. Clara Maugham, her protagonist is a small-town young woman from Northam which is located in the North of England. Her capabilities for development are greater than the opportunities available in her narrow circumstances. For her, there are not enough opportunities to thrive in her home town; hence she leaves Northam. Clara believes that her fate is destined to be like her mother who is a woman without hope and thinks that when she is dead, the garbage collector will cart her body off as she will be all alone. Her mother, Mrs. Maugham is a jealous, unpredictable woman who always criticizes her neighbours. Clara does not like her mother's ways of leading life, so she abandons her family and hometown. One day she receives





a telegram about her mother's illness. Her mother is suffering from cancer but she doesn't feel much about her. Still she goes to see her in person. She understands that her mother's illness is a crucial sign of retaliation for her neglect but she selfishly pursues her quest for escape and wishes to get over everything. Clara has failed to triumph over anything. She is a victim of her own fear of life even if she tries to thrive in an unfavorable situation; the aftermath is not a joyous one. She attains a persistent isolation in a spurious and sterile Jerusalem.

Jane (*The Waterfall*) :

In the novel '*The Waterfall*,' the novelist has depicted her protagonist's struggle in finding a new morality. The novel was published in 1969. Jane Gray is the protagonist in this novel. The central theme of the novel is the love affairs between Jane Gray and her Cousin Lucy's husband whose name is James. Jane struggles to escape her fate but it catches her up everywhere: she can neither escape the tragic romance nor live with it in peace. She is a writer who writes and publishes poems. There is constant conflict between herself as a woman and an artist. As a woman she experiences sex, fulfillment, and femininity while as an artist she tries to give form and shape to those experiences. Jane Gray resembles Rosamund Stacey in many ways. They both are educated young women and mothers who share the perplexity of their lives after graduation and struggle to maintain balance between family and career. Rosamund finds joy and love solely in motherhood whereas Jane finds love and independence through sexual and romantic intimacy with a man who is actually not her husband. She is married but her husband Malcolm has left her to live with another woman even when she is seven months pregnant. He beats her up brutally and leaves her. The novel starts with Jane alone in her bedroom about to give birth to their second child.

Frances (*The Realms of Gold*):

The novel '*The Realms of Gold*' was published in 1975. The novel explores the experiences of the protagonist Frances Wingate, an anthropologist and her affair with Karel Schmidt, a lecturer in history. She has both, simplicity and sophistication in her. Everything comes to her easily. She frees herself from the family mesh and conflict and turns back to nature. She is lucky as she marries her lover in the end and has a happy family. The novel begins in a hotel room. Frances is on tour and delivers lectures about her discovery of an ancient city, Tizouk. One evening she becomes emotional due to loneliness and sends a postcard to her lover Karel. She becomes restless when she receives no response to her card. She is ignorant of the fact that her card has not been delivered but misplaced by the European mail system. Frances is distressed due to this, but carries on as mother to her four children, as a professional, and as a member of her family. Karel too thinks hopelessly about Frances, his lost love, puzzled by her rejection of him. His wife and students incessantly take advantage of his patience and good nature. Karel and Frances reunite in the end after several dramatic incidents.

Conclusion :

To sum up Margaret Drabble's literary works are moral and humanistic in nature. She takes delight in describing woman's passionate yearning for man and the way a baby comes in this world out of its mother's womb. She has enough boldness and courage to reveal the feminine experiences, discloses young women's struggle and predicament in reality and provides a comparatively mild way to ease the conflicts faced by women. Her early novels deal with the lives of ordinary middle-class girls while the later novels are more complex and explore the delicate webs of social interconnections. She shows special concern for intellectual women's fate and living circumstances in the patriarchal society





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