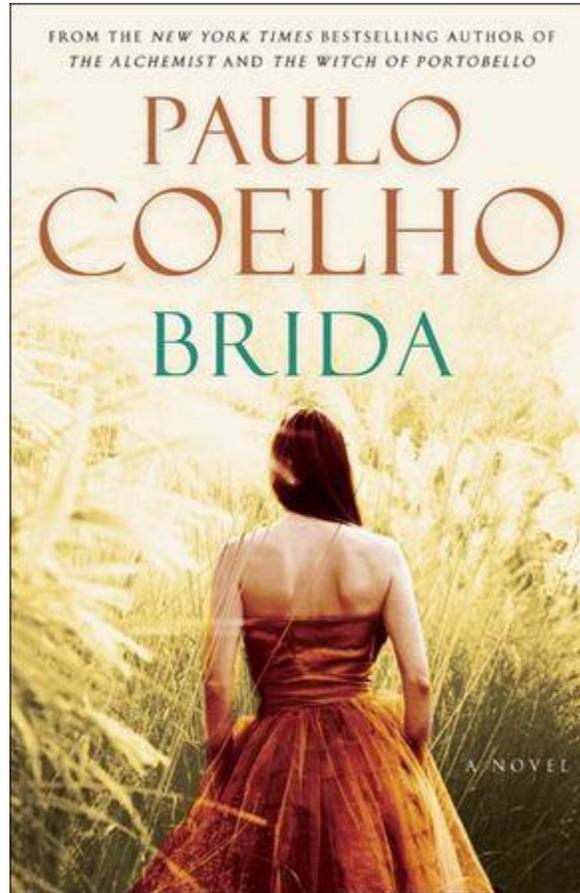


Socio Gynic Catalogue in Paulo Coelho's *Brida*

S. Deepa, M.A., M.Phil. and P. Vengatesh



The society has seen gradual evolution of feminism, feministic perspectives, spirit of womanhood etc. Though the voices are heard, woman is still posed innumerable questions and hurdles to let her out of the larvae. Beyond all these, very few come out of their position; while the wings of others are cut even at the initial stages.

Profession to excuse and exclude woman from their patriarchal boundary does not mean to be the reality while domestic violence exists to be suppression, denial of identity and rights within the house, the professional world too imposes several other tortures by which woman failing to maintain work-life balance gets weaker both physically and psychologically. The paper depicts one such reality; the woman is subjected to on trying to come out of her conventional

zone. Woman of modern era moves out of visible frontiers, but, she is being laid several invisible traps, could not be a mere exaggeration.

Coelho's portrayal of Brida depicts clearly that she is the representation of modern age. She bears the identity of education, job, independency, inquisitiveness, etc. With all these traits she begins her march towards learning magic. The changes been undergone by her, marks what is the real freedom of woman. Keen insight into this issue surges up several questions such as whether the real freedom is achieved. Do the woman and society really stay prepared to adopt the changes? Is she stable and determined? Does the world actually wish for liberty of woman?

Brida, actually the witch in her previous births; has happened to develop a deep passion for magic and she is at the stage to do anything in order to learn it. As her first step, she meets Magus, who admits to teach her 'The Tradition of Sun' having realized her to be his soulmate. Under the pretext of self-learning, Magus exposed Brida to "Dark Night" all alone in the forest. The conflict among fear, danger and determination could be seen here. Having felt slightly dissatisfied, Brida gets in touch with wicca, who was actually a witch and ex-lover of Magus, through a bookseller. Wicca is so curious upon Magus' consent to teach Brida and she tries herself to find the special gift within Brida. Brida does all practices and rituals said by Wicca. During this course of study, Brida undergoes several conflicts within her, either to follow the Tradition of Moon or to give up. Finally, she attains her goal. Brida has realized the special gift within her and also the fact of her being a witch. Though the search for mystical wisdom constitutes this plot of self-realizations, the thirst for soulmate draws a beautiful lining to it.

With Coelho's confession that "Witches were, above all else, women" (Coelho 218), the embodiment of love and possession, the paper is an attempt to list out the perspectives of feminism.

After the ages, the liberty of woman could be found curtailed still. Woman is ever portrayed the object of sacrifice. Coelho speaks of four rings of revelation with woman such as virgin, martyr, saint and witch. With all these, sacrifice remains the purpose of survival. While education remains the common right of both men and women; at certain extent of educational progress and application, woman alone is expected to sacrifice on familial cause. Consequently, the society bears not only the average criteria but also the toppers within kitchen and home bound circumstance. The real worth of education received is subjected to question. "Would you give up everything you had learned until then... In order to stay with the love of your life?" (Coelho 14)

The question asked by Magus to Brida, puts the entire woman community into fix. There begins a dilemma between individual or family. The girl's life where there had been a time when nothing in the world was as important as herself (Coelho 14) gets transformed to womanhood identity of sacrifice and is found to confess "I'd give it all up", she said at last" (Coelho 15) resulting in loss of their uniqueness and identity itself. Though the family commitments are framed social responsibility of both men and women, they are to restrain betterment of woman is a pitiable fact.

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In most of the circumstances, even the bold, independent, intellectual woman fails to realize her strength and give up easily. She finds self-satisfaction at the arms of man, who nurtures her. She tends to forget her uniqueness. While at earlier days, extreme love and affection for the man binds the woman with him, at later ages, the forgotten uniqueness demands for absolute dependency upon him. Man, who exists to be the companion of life tends to be the life itself within a very few years of marriage. Brida's feeling during her course

she didn't need to understand the meaning of life; it was enough to find someone who did, and then fall asleep in his arms and sleep as a child sleeps, knowing that someone stronger than you is protecting you from all evil and all danger (Coelho 115)

clears the attitude. The feminine determination to fade gradually could be felt in these lines.

Woman remains ready to accept and adopt changes. This exists to be the basic framework of tradition especially Indian tradition. The bride is always sent to groom's house, since the tradition firmly believes that woman is flexible, adoptable and loveable. The changes are welcomed to certain extent unless the individuality gets disturbed. The inner voice heard by Brida "what is outside is more difficult to change than what is inside" (Coelho 136) is a timely warning. Wicca's comment that each dress bears within it the good and bad memories, Brida could not decide which dress to be thrown and to be kept with her. While the dress matters the most to Brida, she has let Wicca to influence her inner self. The importance given by Brida to dress, which in turn is neglected to one's personality and character, is pitiable. Most of the women are in such a state that they could be influenced easily in one way or other. Woman subjects themselves blindly and voluntarily to domination. She lives a lifeless life. "... many people chose to spend their whole life destroying paths they didn't ever want to follow, instead of following the one path that would lead them somewhere" (Coelho 55). The day woman realizes her need and designs her life the way she likes and deserves, trumpets women liberty.

Woman stays quite unstable. She does not really know what she wants. While she let others to influence her, she also travels in the way shown by others. She could not stay focused. She remains uncertain. Her desire and aim shift randomly from one thing to another. Jack of all trades is master of none. Brida claims at this switch over to the bookseller,

what are you good at? asked the owner.

Going after what I believe in. That was the only possible reply; she spent her life in pursuit of what she believed in. The only problem was that she believed in something different everyday (Coelho 30).

Success is always the focused attitude and regularity towards it. Constant switchover and consistent dilemma keep success at a distance.

The world always poses innumerable challenges that threatens mankind especially woman. Coelho commands upon wonderful support 'Faith' at times of fear. When Magus exposed Brida to Dark Night all alone in the forest, the emotion of fear threatened her for snakes, scorpions, etc., even though they were not present actually. But, once she convinced herself through her childhood memories of her father describing the scenery of milkman and other workers of night, she remembered the forgotten truth that night is part of day. She regained her determination against fear at this thought. "...Life is an act of faith. That you could choose to fill it with snakes and scorpions or with a strong protecting force" (Coelho 26). Though fear is an alert signal against wrong, most of the time it hinders the effort to be taken and makes people desperate. It is such fear for failure often troubles Brida to give up her effort. Once she felt she could not read the stories described by the tarot cards, as said by Wicca, she felt disappointed.

Fear exists to be the main obstacle in all walks of woman's life. This turns her weaker which in turn strengthens the opposite. Once woman stand herself with all her bravery, crimes against her like sexual harassment, murders upon dowry, domestic torture etc would kneel down before her.

The other major mistake woman commits is 'preconception'. They predict the happenings and do not let the reality to be viewed. Once they find the assumptions getting altered, they start to worry. Either to think of past and future and expect the happenings as they wish makes them anxious. Thus, both fear and preconception blur the vision of woman from reality.

Woman always tend to be strong, but she fails to realize that is state of sorrow. "Only warriors choose how they will die, but that woman had given her life for love, and perhaps, for her, love was a strange form of war" (Coelho 80) portrays woman to be the warriors of life. They often struggle, however succeed at the end. But, the majority of women quit their struggle and surrender.

Coelho's claim that man is to nurture and maintain knowledge, whereas, without transformation, knowledge will not be shaped as wisdom and woman is the soul of transformation highlight the significance of woman. It is only because of woman; man attains his meaning for life is absolute truth.

He even points out the days of antiquity, where women were strong enough to discuss things equally with men. This recollects Bharathi's words in Pudhumai Pen "Aanum pennum nigarena kolvadhil arivilongi, ivvaiyam thazaikumam" (Bharathiar- Kavithaigal) on feminism resulting in welfare of the nation.

In addition, with all these, the utmost trait is that woman longs for appreciation, attention and admiration. She wishes to be felt essential and special. Loren's gift of dagger to Brida, which she searches for, clears that Loren's respect Brida's desire, ambition and intuition. "Brida felt very special. She needed to feel this, for the woman inspired a respect she had felt for very few other people" (Coelho40). The confession by Brida's mother "I felt necessary, and that's the best feeling a human being can have (Coelho 206), - I was his companion; his wife, his audience, his

lover. In a matter of only a few hours, I experienced the love of, a life time” (Coelho 208) claims at woman’s longing for emotional companion. Woman always expects someone to share her views, someone who makes her feel vital. Thus, the thirst for emotional, intellectual companion remains unquenched within woman forever. Woman is neglected of such opportunity because of patriarchal ego. Most of the men do not support the ideas of wives. They fail to share things with her for they assume themselves, that women know only of house. Though woman moves on bearing all this, it often stains in her heart as a painful memory. Feeling neglected, unimportant, unworthy exist to be the identity of woman in many aspects of life.

Wicca’s prayer to Virgin Mary depicts the real situation of woman at all times.

May the Virgin Mary free us from those marks and put an end for ever to our sense of guilt. We feel guilty when we go out to work because we’re leaving our children in order to earn money to feed them... we feel guilty about everything, because we have always been kept far from decision-making and from power (Coelho 129).

Woman exists as the caretaker, teacher of love, bravery, etc. Despite these, she is often crucified.

“Finding one important thing in your life doesn’t mean you have to give up all the important things” (Coelho 209). For woman familial upliftment remains the major responsibility but to pay her identity loss as its wage should be changed. “She didn’t need to neglect her beauty in order to prove that she was also intelligent and capable” (Coelho 230) Coelho speaks that that the real liberty of woman could be achieved only when the society admits and creates space for proper balance between individual development and familial contribution in woman’s life.

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