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**FROM TRIBULATIONS TO TRIUMPH:  
A CRITICAL APPROACH TO SARALA BARNABAS' NOVEL  
"THE WAKE OF KINGFISHER"**



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**Late Dr. Sarala Barnabas  
(1934-2019)**

**ABSTRACT**

*This article examines The Wake of Kingfisher, a novel written by the famous Indian novelist Sarala Barnabas from Ahmednagar, (M.S) is a prolific creative writer and has published several works of distinction. Sarala Barnabas is a novelist of modern society where love, hate, superiority and possessiveness of the past and present give birth to conflict, controlling the present. The past has control over the present and sometimes it comes to haunt it. Her novels are centred on the society where every individual*

*needs his or her space. When this doesn't happen in reality, it results into conflict and conflict results into crisis and crisis tests the inner strength of an individual.*

*Literature reflects the society in which we are dealing with innumerable situations of conflict against a variety of backgrounds; the conflict may take many forms and evolve in a very different ways. Confrontation results into crisis which influences our day today life and it is obligatory to find reconciliation to lead better life.*

**KEYWORDS** : Alienation, Tribulations  
Bridge, the Gulf, Ennui

## RESEARCH PAPER

After the Independence, human relationships, individuality, social issues, power politics, gender equations and discriminations and human psyche and a lot more have become the major concerns of contemporary novelists.

The contribution of the Indian writers is so substantial that the prestigious awards like the Nobel, Man Booker and Pulitzer have been conferred on them time and again. Indian English literature as M.K. Naik points out in his book, A History of Indian English Literature

“It is defined as literature written originally in English by authors Indian by birth, ancestry or nationality.” (The History of Indian English Literature’ p.2)

Sarala Barnabas is an eminent writer in Indian literature in English. She was Vice Principal, Emeritus Professor and former Head of the English Department at Ahmednagar College, Ahmednagar, Maharashtra. She was named ‘**Woman of the Year**’ by **The American Society for Biographical and International Research in 2002** and awarded the **American Medal of Honor in 2003**. She is the product of three universities - Mumbai, Pune and Yale University (USA). She has written novels with different themes which glorify the invulnerable qualities of woman.

Her fictional corpus includes:

1. The Wings of the Morning (1984), (Bombay: Bombay Tract and Book Society, A Translation of Aamche Kritharth Sahjeevan by Ruth Hiwale
2. The Promise of the Spring (1989),
3. Sakshi (1993),
4. Anjolie (1993),
5. Nayantara (1993),
6. Dark Passion (1997),
7. The Rainbow and the Covenant (2001),
8. The Wake of Kingfisher(2005),
9. Dream Sequence (2006),
10. A Memoir- Such Precious Things (Bhaskar Pandurang Hiwale Education Society,2006),
11. Brief Madness (2011),
12. Song of Innocence (2011 ),
13. The Crook and The Sceptre (2011),
14. After Long Years (2015),
15. Incident at Waverley (2013),
16. A Bright Particular Star
17. The Sheltering Tree
18. Saga (2017)

The Wake of Kingfisher centers around a woman character like Sakshi Nayantara, Anjolie, and Incident at Waverley. These novels encompass the stories of various women belonged to different layers of society. The wake of the Kingfisher, The Promise of the Spring and The Rainbow and the Covenant.

The postmodern feminist, Alice Jardine, defined feminism as a movement from the point of view of, by and for woman.in the light of this statement Barnabas may be regarded as a feminist because she creates a canvas which emphasizes the value of woman. She has proven that women are of equal value and have contributed significantly to the development of society in spite the social, legal and economic bondages imposed upon them by the so called patriarchal society. Recent traits in feminism oppose women’s subordination to men in the family and society. Sarala Barnabas is a liberal Christian feminist, and asserts her views for equality and humane approach. She doesn’t discriminate between the biologically determined factors of male and female she subscribes to the theory that men and women are necessarily complementary to each other in the social structure. She strongly believes the primeval biblical concepts of the institutions of marriage and family.

The wake of the Kingfisher is the first novel by Sarala Barnabas which focusses the tribulations of Ayesha when she faces the identity crisis and her victory over the crisis.. The writer creates the impression that all is well in the life of Ayesha. Her upbringing in the family has given her sense of confidence which forced to believe that she can manage herself. The novel raises two important issues- the depth of woman's attachment for her kith and kin and second how cultural differences affect upon the individuality of an individual. Ayesha, the second daughter of Akbar Khan enjoys greater freedom than her sister. Her life starts changing when her brother David gets married to Valerie Braganza who is a roman Catholic from Goa. Barnabas doesn't discriminate between races either and Akbar Khan and Rahel are shocked when Ayesha falls in love with and wants to marry American Anthropologist, Christopher Morgan, who has come to Ananapur to study Hambari tribe, they consent to their marriage. The gulf between the American and tradition bound girl is bridged because there is love and understanding between the two but more importantly between the older and younger generation.

Barnabas being a skillful writer has pointed out the cultural differences between the East and the West, especially matters related to man woman relationships. When Christopher Morgan proposes her, she will not take any decision without the consent of her family. He has to take the consent of her father. Ayesha has her fears, she doubts if Kit's mother and sister would accept her. She had always gone to her father with her problems but now she is afraid. Her father reacted violently when David expressed his wish to get married to Valerie. Barnabas is a typical Indian writer who has depicted Indian social atmosphere in her novels. Whenever Akbar Khan wanted to take decision, he did not take alone but he believed in a collective decision. Rahel Khan is agitated, "His background, his culture, was so alien." (The Wake of Kingfisher, P.91) and Ayesha was only twenty two, "Too young to decide on her own," (The Wake of Kingfisher, P. 92) Ayesha seems has grown up overnight and knows what she wants. Her worry is whether she wil be accepted by his people and whether she will be fit into a society and family. Her trouble starts when she goes to America to live with Kit, she becomes homesick immediately on arrival. She decides not to give into the homesickness that threatens to engulf her. Although Ayesha tries to cope up with the situation, faces a dual struggle; one being a good housewife and the other living in a different country and culture. Her husband treats her as an equal; he is supportive and does everything to make her comfortable. Barnabas is more interested in the cultural differences between Ayesha and Kit. When kit was in India, we see India through his eyes, when Ayesha goes to America, we see America from her eyes. As days passed, it appeared that Ayesha is comfortable in America but after the realization of her pregnancy, she craved for her home. Seven months later her grandmother's illness and friend's marriage made her blind and came back to India without giving any intimation to her husband. She is happy to be back home in her family,

"This was where her roots were, this was the world she knew – her parent, siblings friends the Klan clan, church, the school and college and this was where she would be." (The Wake of Kingfisher, P, 112)

Akbar Khan and David feel responsible for Ayesha's misbehavior. They decide to settle their matter on their own way, Akbar khan is more restrained but David is very much annoyed, the tension between the two patriarchal controls is balanced and the two prevent each other to take extreme decision. It is almost three months before Ayesha comes out of her ennui, memories of kit come flooding and she blames herself for her cruel reckless behavior. Haunted by nameless fears, she only wants to go back to her husband. She was torn between two identities. She is

"Ayesha Khan, born and reared in the land of her birth, where her roots lie deep in the soil of India". (The Wake of Kingfisher, P. 233)

and on the other hand she is Ayesha Morgan,

"Whose life had changed so suddenly and drastically when she met and fell in love with American whose country she had adopted, and where her child was born." (The Wake of Kingfisher, P. 233)

Kit, all alone in America, is bewildered, helpless and frustrate. He couldn't understand what went wrong. He couldn't trace any signs of homesickness and it seemed that Ayesha had adjusted well. His friend Rick

who has better experience of the world tells him the universal truth that “Women are unpredictable” (The Wake of Kingfisher, P. 217) and he assures Kit that Ayesha will surely return. A traditional bound Ayesha, in spite of her education in America, still looks for her identity in the conventional roles of a daughter and wife. The crisis identity is finally resolved as she realizes that after her marriage she is Kit’s wife. She had taken a long time to realize this truth. She becomes successful in resolving the crisis, it because of three men in her life- her father, her brother and her husband.

## REFERENCES

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