

# Archetypes in Ira Trivedi's *The Great Indian Love Story*: A Critical Study

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## Abstract

This paper deals with this primordial pattern of dominance over women and the effects it has on women of different walks of life and how they absorb it. The Postmodern writer Ira Trivedi situates her novels that deal with the present generation love and sex. Her works include *India in Love: Marriage and Sexuality in the 21st century*, *What Would You Do to Save the World?*, *The Great Indian Love Story* and *There's No Love on Wall Street*. She has contributed immensely through fiction and nonfiction. Much of her works revolve around women and gender in India. The chosen novel for this paper *The Great Indian Love Story* is a social satire on Delhi high society. In this novel, Ira Trivedi has portrayed how women suffer from the archetypal system. One of the significant problems that women of marriageable age encounter is failing in their love because elders do not accept love and love marriage subsequently.

## Introduction

Archetypes as universal patterns which come from the collective unconscious, are the basic content of religions, mythologies, legends and fairy tales. To comprehend the term archetypes, I use Joseph K Davis' research paper titled *Image, Symbol and Archetype: Definitions and Uses*. Davis draws upon Carl Gustav Jung's analytical psychology and also his theories of the "collective unconscious". He reiterates that,

The collective unconscious contains memories, imprints, and modes of human development and behaviour conditioned by mankind's entire history. Jung argues that this collective unconscious manifests itself in the affairs individuals by means of primordial images or patterns of psychic activities, which he calls "archetypes". (28)

In a country like India, which is still primitive in its mindset in spite of modernization and technological advancements, certain patterns become evident in terms of behaviour and thought process. For example, caste is an age old superstitious phenomenon which is of no good in today's context continues to enjoy a greater emphasis due to the manifestation it has gone through over centuries. Similarly, women face greater challenges and continue to be held firm by patriarchy in spite of the various fields that they are capable of excelling in. This primordial notion of women as subjugated beings continues to irk women in general and feminists in particular. The resistance and retaliation comes from women writers from various quartets who pinpoint the oppressive and chauvinistic behaviour of men even today in cut throat fashion at times and subtle ways in other representative works.

## Archetypes in Ira Trivedi's *The Great Indian Love Story*

The novel begins by introducing Riya who returns to New Delhi after failing to find a job in the US right after her college education. On arriving Delhi, Riya encounters Delhi's high life and its accompanying dark side when she meets Serena, a troubled young woman whom she befriends. It is through Serena's spectacle that Riya sees through the obstacles that are inherent for any and every individual especially youngsters.

I desperately looked for work to no avail. By August it came to a point where my bank balance was nearing zero, it became blatantly clear to me that it was time to go back to India. After spending eighteen hours on an Air India flight, the cabin of which reeked of

body odour thinly camouflaged with cheap perfume, I found myself in New Delhi, in a lizard-infested guest room with no friends, no boyfriend, my savings exhausted on an unemployed summer. (Trivedi 12)

The archetypal reflection in this novel picture that Riya is not allowed managing her economic conditions. Her mother protests against Riya working and earning money and that she must depend completely on her parents for money. In the patriarchal society women even today are not allowed to work. Even if they work, they cannot use their hard earned money with freedom. Even worse, a widow or an abandoned wife finds it is very difficult to earn money in life because of the social stigma attached to their lives. Even if they earn money the male world it will be enough to lead a life. Riya desires to find a job but in vain. For men it is naturally easy to socialize with each other after work, such as social drinking, playing golf on weekends, or socializing with clients. A lot of information sharing occurs at these events without time pressure of workplace. It is extremely difficult for women to break into these circles. Even when women are invited to these social circles, it is often a space where they feel one of awkwardness. Yet, it is crucial that women socialize with members on their teams to build rapport, commonality, and friendship that will aid them on the business floor.

The archetype codes approached in the life of Riya who archetypally gets exploited not to work in life. *The Great Indian Love Story* also portrays the story of Parmeet, Serena's mother, who looks for passion outside her marriage with disastrous consequences through archetypal codes. This drives S.P. Sharma, Parmeet's husband, to violence due to her infidelity. This is proof enough of how male domination is at its peak even if women are well educated in the society. Trivedi's is dealt with archetypal portrayal of women mostly on issues of gender and culture in India. She regularly appears on news channels in India and internationally speaking on issues of gender, women and youth. Her main motive to write this novel is to understand how far contemporary feminism functions in the betterment of women.

These women are typically assaulted through tradition, culture in the way of archetypes in their life. Women are controlled by men and they are subtly controlled because of their education. The illiterate women face serious challenges in the predominantly male dominated society. Woman too would want to move around with their male friends. But the society does not perceive it appropriately. Even worse is when women struggle to like or love a male of their choice. The archetypal rule for women is stringent and does not approve of men as at least a friend. If a woman falls in love with a man, parents do not support that in any way. Riya is new to India after her stay in the US. While Serena, her neighbor asks if she has any male or female friend, she replies in the negative. But today's women have come a long way ahead to dare for anything and thereby are willing to break archetypal, traditional and cultural rules.

Basic social etiquette prevented me from doing the same, but I observed her in the mirror out of the corner of my eye. She was dark and her dull grey pallor was in stark contrast to her peroxide blonde hair which hung around her face in perfect, soft golden curls.. 'Hi, I'm Serena, nice to meet you.' I limply shook her hand and smiled at her weakly, 'Hi, I'm Riya' She smiled back, a nice, friendly smile that made her dull face glow. 'So how do you like it here in Delhi? You know I was in the States as well. New York. She had a loud voice and spoke with a strange accent—a mix of a Punjabi and an American accent. She seemed like the kind of person who would say 'anyways'. 'You liked in 'it here? Have you made friends?' she asked, actually pausing for me to answer before continuing to rub the lotion into her arms. 'Kind of, I guess,' I replied tentatively. There was a moment of awkward silence and then I added, 'To be honest, I don't know many people here.' (Trivedi 17)

Radical feminism aims to challenge and overthrow patriarchy by opposing standard gender roles and men oppressing women. Feminism calls for a radical reordering of the society. Early radical feminists, who rose from the second wave feminism, viewed patriarchy as the oldest and the most universal form of domination. Cultural feminists support the theory that patriarchy has made women to be viewed as the "Other". They locate the root cause for women's oppression is a male dominated society. Cultural feminists believe that the cause of women's oppression is biological. Their body is the material base of reproduction of human beings. It is a natural procreative mechanism; its sexuality is controlled by men through the institutions of marriage and family. Androcentric cultures dominate and oppresses women in all walks of life especially the socio-economic field. These feminists are committed to change the patriarchal system which is the root cause for many social problems. "The radicals contend that patriarchal oppression is

gender oppression and they concentrate their attention on male gender oppression or female gender strength.” (P. 7)

Ira feels love makes a great change in life, the women of the present scenario boldly face the love like men do. They prove that they don't want to be meek or submissive in the system of archetypes. When in an interview, the question was asked to Ira Trivedi regarding the novel, she replies that:

*The Great Indian Love Story*, tumultuous—that is how I feel when I think of him. Warm and fuzzy, hot and cold, all at the same time. I think of his fair face, his hard, piercing eyes and dark hair, his gentle hands that could be rough with impatience, and his crooked smile that made me yearn. There were other things about him that also made me yearn, I think with a smile—his strong, magnificent body that made me go weak. The effect he has on me is wonderful, yet at times it is confusing and terrifying. I think of him when I wake up in the afternoon, and when I fall asleep at dawn. I waited for him to call so I could run to him and be cradled his arms again. I ached for him all the time because with him I feel special. (Trivedi 21)

Feminism, Frye observes, has been going at generality in another way from the start. Frye argues that the generalizing movement of feminist was not towards metaphysical, statistical, or universal generalization. She connects feminist generalizing to “hearing each other into speech.” The experiences of each woman and of women collectively generate a new web of meaning. She notes,

Our process has been one of discovering, recognizing, and creating patterns—patterns within which experience made a new kind of sense. Instead of bringing a phase of enquiry to closure by summing up what is known, as other ways of generalizing do, pattern recognition/construction opens fields of meaning and generates new interpretive possibilities. Instead of drawing conclusions from observations, it generates observations.

Her feminist method is recognizing and naming patterns, identifying schemas. She mentions, for instance, the pattern of male dominance in conversations. Naming patterns is not reductive or totalitarian. What we do is sketch a schema within which certain meanings are sustained. Serena in the novel never understands the struggles of another woman. Riya gets a firsthand experience of this attitude of Serena in the airport. But she acts well for the persona that she is in the novel. It shows the feministic disadvantages of a woman and how far a woman can support another woman in this patriarchal society.

From the margin to the center, Feminism is a struggle to end sexist oppression. Therefore, it is necessarily a struggle to eradicate the ideology of domination that permeates Western culture on various levels as well as a commitment to reorganizing society so that the self-development of people can take precedence over imperialism, economic expansion, and material desires. A commitment to feminism so defined would demand that each individual participant acquires a critical political consciousness based on ideas and beliefs. Feminism is the struggle to end sexist oppression. Its aim is not to benefit solely any specific group of women, any particular race or class of women. It does not privilege women over men. It has the power to transform in a meaningful way all through life.

There is no time for love in a world that revolves around the latest Ferraris, the hottest nightclubs, diamonds, single malts, cocaine and ecstasy. In this whirl of wild parties, sex and drugs one can meet Serena Sharma who lives her life one debauched night at a time, always falling for the wrong men. Her life is a rollercoaster ride, her father's death followed by her mother's remarriage, a broken heart and a lost love. Hence the author's point of view that,

I met Serena at a point when I was desperately lonely and bored with my life. I'm not going to lie—there were times when I had wished I didn't know her. Serena was trouble, and I knew it the minute I laid eyes on her. But I realize now that I needed her in my life. Serena's story helped me discover my own. Her experience jolted me out of my stupor and pushed me to take control of the languorous, hollow life that I had lived until then. For that I will always remain in her debt. (23)

Adding to this woe, the novel presents her horrific affair with Amar Khanna a trophy husband, coke addict and serial adulterer. Riya jaded by her unsuccessful attempt to find a job in America, returns to Delhi to find the city of her childhood changed beyond recognition. Striking an unlikely friendship with Serena, Riya finds her complacent torpor shattered. *The Great Indian Love Story* is also the story of Parmeet, Serena's mother, who looks for passion outside her marriage with disastrous consequences, and S.P.

Sharma, Parmeet's husband, who is driven to violence by her infidelity. Trivedi weaves together sex, revenge, glitz, friendship and a chilling murder to create a potent cocktail in this gripping novel on the perfidious nature of love and power.

Ira Trivedi's *The Great Indian Love Story* tries to explore the darker side of Delhi and its socialite class. Though her intention is to tell a bold and provocative tale on the lives of rich and the mighty is noteworthy, its treatment is so bland that the story loses its track right after the first few chapters. The characters appear as if they are sleep walking through a Madhur Bhandarkar movie with almost everyone sleeping around with everyone else and there is too much talk about drugs, sex and lacy underwear.

Though the archetypal code is portrayed on the protagonist Riya, a U.S. educated twenty something girl who befriends Serena Sharma at a high end Delhi gym, the novel highlights Serena and her sexual escapades. Serena has a troubled life, her father has died recently and her mother happily married a guy who is half her age. There is also a sub plot involving Parmeet (Serena's mother) and her extramarital affairs. The story goes on with nothing really happening in the narrative except Serena (who also gets pregnant in between) and her mother having sex with multiple partners. The author further says that,

They asked me to very seriously consider my options back home in India. In my darkest dreams I had not imagined moving back to India, the country that I had left as a child, and where my parents still lived. I spent hours on end at Career Services, browsing through thick binders and books, attending one counseling session after another and scouring the internet for jobs. As time went by, and Career Services stopped answering my phone calls, it began to sink in that moving back to India was the only viable option I had. I was an Indian citizen, with a below average GPA in an inconsequential major, with a sub-standard resume and to top it all I lacked the necessary social skills to impress interviewers. I was below-average on every score. (Trivedi 25)

### Conclusion

Ira Trivedi's *The Great Indian Love Story* explicates the archetypes that women adhere to. The novel is a portrayal of how women are merely puppets at the hands of men and the patriarchal world at large. Be it desires or happiness or fancy or wish, it all depends on what men offer and how far they are allowed the freedom that women expect. Through these literary works the scope of academic and social discussion is necessary which authoritatively calls for women too to enjoy the privileges that are solely entitled to men thus far.

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