

Vol. 8, Issue-III (June 2017)

ISSN: 0976-8165

# The Criterion

*An International Journal in English*

Bi-monthly, Refereed & Indexed Open Access eJournal



*The Criterion*

UGC Approved Journal [Arts and Humanities, Jr. No. 768]

*Editor-In-Chief - Dr. Vishwanath Bite*

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ISSN 2278-9529

## Woman in an Immigrant World in Katherine Vaz's *Saudade*

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**Article History:** Submitted-29/04/2017, Revised-31/05/2017, Accepted-04/06/2017, Published-05/07/2017.

### **Abstract:**

This present paper tries to analyze the issues of woman in an alien world. Katherine Vaz's *Saudade* crafted the problems faced by an immigrant woman in the United States. The immigrant woman has to face the cultural, identity, and patriarchal issues in the United States. Clara the protagonist of the *Saudade* is a victim in her homeland and in the alien world. As a woman she has to undergo various issues. Her physical and mental is being affected with the harsh circumstances she faces in the society. She is used as an object by the male members in the society. With the dream of finding new opportunities she migrated to America but her dreams are lost as she faces more issues in her life. She also faces problem with the use of language. Clara from her childhood to her maturity undergoes suppression and oppression. When she attained maturity in her age and the maturity in her mental she believes that she can have a life of her own. Clara becomes a self-confident and self-realized woman.

**Keywords:** Immigration, relation, culture, patriarchal, identity.

### **Introduction**

Clara the voiceless woman without the ability to speak suffers within the community. She is dumb born and lived a solitude life. But few friends and relatives understood her feelings and amicable her to overcome her frustration. Clara is highly affected with the inner tranquility. She has created a world for herself as she struggles. Her father Jose Francisco attempts to bring her into a normal life. He tries to introduce his daughter with the world of speech. He brought natural objects to impress his daughter to get her the ability of speech. Jose always brings objects from the sea whatever getting in his fishing net. Clara also happily received those objects to learn speech.

Clara started to lead her life with the objects brought by her father. She enjoyed with the objects and dedicated her time to hear the voice from the objects. She lays on the floor for many hours and strains to hear the melodious voice of the from the shell. She press tightly to her ears to hear the voice. Her father's voice impressed her, whole heartedly she admires the beauty of the voice. She also hears the voice of her homeland mixed with the voice of her father. On

hearing this she feels the air of freedom. She believes that the islands of Azores is free to live. Jose on returning from his job one day afternoon he shows his daughter “posed in front of the mantel, with her eyes closed and face tilted skyward... silence was no barrier to their daughter” (*Saudade* 18).

Though Clara cannot speak, she has the power of ambition to speak. Her will power shows that she is ready to face this world even though she cannot speak. Clara's parents understood her wish they motivated her in all possible ways. Unspeakable Clara lived her life in a normal way but express her wish in all possible ways.

Maria Josefa Magalhães impressed Clara, Maria's attitude to have relation with this unspeakable girl. She helps Clara mentally and physically moreover she is very trustful and neighbor of Clara. She carries sugar in her hand and tells “I'm glad you're my visitor! Take as much as you want” (*Saudade* 19). Thought the patriarchal society will not allow woman to have their relationship. Clara and Maria breaks all the social roles. Maria's unhappy marriage made her to break the social rules so she speak with Clara.

try to speak with sugar to the little girl. . . .Maybe it was the impulse to be sweet, or simply to use whatever was at hand. So great was her sudden desire to get through to Clara. . .sugar language and added several grains to the mound in Maria Josefa's hand. (*Saudade* 19)

Clara and Maria find joy in communicating with each other. While communicating with Clara, Maria holds the hands of child Clara which shows the physical affection. Both realized the reality of life. “letting cascades run over the rims of their clasping. . . .Life is too brief to marry shadows” (*Saudade* 19). Clara's sugar language made Maria to have attachment. The motivational talk and attachment of both leaves a special space from them within the Azoreans community. They created a special attention to the traditional American Society.

After the Vietnam War the people from Portuguese forced to move to America. People of Portugal are not independent to decide. They lost their identity and relations. Clara also forces to move to America. After coming to America she meets her distant uncle who inherits a vineyard in Southern California. He helped Clara and her family to resettle in America. America is place for new opportunity for foreigners. But after Vietnam war people believed that “no longer a place of absolute peace, it had at least returned to being as they had always dreamed it a shelter of abundance” (*Saudade* 24).

Bur Clara's uncle motivated her as she can have ice cream, washing machine, cloths shoes, new games and endless hopes. Moreover she can have an independent life of her own. She can find a new path in her life. But if she stays in Portugal she could not explore herself. As she moves to America she can have adventures of life in California. As the family is suffering with the fate of culture, tradition and war, the present position of Clara will not allow to get new adventures. Clara also says that “Maybe in California, a change might trigger” (*Saudade* 46).

The new place and new situation can made Clara to have more positive attitude within her. American can provide her new opportunity to speak. Because, in new world she is going to become an orphan. As, Vaz states “it would be a different type of change that prompts the girl to speak the transition from beloved daughter to orphan” (*Saudade* 47).

Clara’s mother was in death bed. She was very fearful on seeing the condition of her mother. Later she was in sleep, but she was not wake up in time. Clara produces her voice in a strange manner. This wakes the neighbours of Clara. The people around Clara’s home rushes to care the girl. She behaves in an abnormal way “of sound but had simply refused, until now, to speak the language of the known and brutal world” (*Saudade* 48). Without the help of the male members in the society a woman cannot live. This situation made the people of Clara’s society to suffer. To have a prosperous life in a new world across the ocean. She is being assured by Florida and her beloved.

### **Issues of immigration**

Gloria Santos is a Portuguese immigrant in America teaches Clara the language of English. She forces Clara to learn English because she knows the importance of English in America. Gloria takes Clara to her home to better understand among themselves moreover to comfort her. Every day they both work together till Clara have a perfect language skill in English. Gloria enjoys the relationship with Clara so she take much advance in teaching English to her. Clara remarks that “I flew on the backs of sugar doves into a land of new words. . .never forgetting until what I carry within me can be put beyond words and into action” (*Saudade* 54). While she is with Gloria, Clara equipped with the skill of language. While Clara is in California, Father Eiras takes much interest with her to equip her. She tried her level best to improve herself as other shows comfort on her.

Even though Clara is innocent she took advantages to seduce Father Eiras. In the beginning Eiras rejects her temptation. On this seduction rather than a holy priest he acts as man of lust. His eyes are being blinded by the lust within him. On this uncontrollable situation of Father Eiras, Clara successfully seduces Eiras. Clara’s relation with Eiras results with Pregnancy. The guilty consciousness with in him made him to leave her in a solitude. Clara bores a baby with incomplete. The appearance of the baby is horrifying. The baby born to Clara is being wounded in the chest. The hole in the chest is visible the heartbeat. She never blames the god for this cause. “she had stretched her arms too wide to claim her land, snapping herself open” (*Saudade* 89). She believes that she left the family because of that god has given this punishment in the form of child’s chest hole. So she feels to going home. She worries for the physical damage of the boy child. With the knowledge of the soon death of her son she leads her life. “her sorrow peaks when she realizes the ultimate fate of the boy that she will be robbed of his voice!” (*Saudade* 91).

The conflict within Clara made her to suffer again. She thinks of her childhood, unable to move with the normal world. As she cannot speak she lost the touch with world. She realizes her loses as a child and throughout her life. Her only success in her life is the success of seducing Eiras. She realizes her mistake only after the birth of her physically damaged son. This situation creates an inner conflicts within her. We can consider the birth of the child in an unnatural way is to awake Clara's mistake. Thought she is innocent and not able to communicate properly she is sinned with a crime of seduction. "herself, the act of speaking under the muffling silencer of oppression is a daunting task. . . How do we command silence to speak?" (*Saudade* 223). Clara in America she wants to speak in English. The only way to communicate with others is in the language of English. But Clara not only learns English but also learns the culture of American in short time.

Clara's new born son's death affects her attitude. On this incident she has created a mental intuition of her own. She struggles within herself and feels to commit suicide. Clara lost her stability, she lead her life in an imaginary world. She was raving something within herself. Her inner feelings are not clear but outwardly she is behaving like a mad person. She imagines so many unidentified voices and she had communication with those voices. Katherine Vaz clearly portrays "full of all kinds of memories,. . . said the voices patiently. . . can it stay the same old egg? How does it create different sweets?. . . released from its shell!" (*Saudade* 111). Though she possess happiness out to the society she feels discomfort in the world and world of her own. Because her mental is fully warped with the dark memories of her past life.

Clara once again lost her identity in the alien world. As she has lost her mental stamina she forgets her relation. People around her like and loved her but Clara is not ready to accept those relations in her imaginary life. People around her tried their level best to bring Clara back to her normal life. Thought she is an immigrant, other immigrant took special attention on her. Gloria Santons cared her more than seven years. Clara's behavior and attitude towards Gloria made her to frustrate herself on caring Clara. Other Portuguese women take care of Clara they provided her with their cultural foods "almond-and-cinnamon cakes with sugar lilacs to cheer her up. . . shaped stems and petals that would become tenfold worms" (*Saudade* 157). As Clara is fond of sugar from her childhood. Gloria and Caliopia provides Clara with sugar, as they believes that it will bring again happiness in the life of Clara. This shows that people around her tried to cure both physical and mental. But they fails in their attempt to cure Clara.

Gloria and Caliopia planned to call Dr. Helio Soares. They believes that Helio can cure Clara from her present condition. As they well know the nature and character of Helio their mind suggested to invite him. He is a person who dreams always in sorrow but he finds happiness in his life. They informed the black past of Clara to the doctor. On seeing Clara he was shocked. He tells to Caliopia that Clara is very critical as her psyche is affected. Helio knows how to handle this kind of patient, he touched Clara with his hands then he "touched her chest, where bones floated like those bendable needles that poke unmoored in fish's meat. There was a small bald spot near her hairline, and some whitish streaks on her neck" (*Saudade* 161).

Helio understood the physical need of a man to Clara. Clara is always depend on man. She has the thirst for sex within her. On touching the male she again started to be active. As seven years Gloria cared her to bring her to the normal life. But when a man touches her she feels and acts as active. Helio carried Clara in his hands and take her outside to show and get the heat of sun light. “It seems as if he is driven by an intuitive force, one that tells him that the .cure for their condition was that someone must come along and hold the other” (*Saudade* 161). As Clara has created a new institution within herself, her inner consciousness of sex is being awakened by the touch of the doctor Helio. “Snuggling up to him, just as she did her father as a child, she murmurs. . . . I’m very hungry” (*Saudade* 161). She finds a pleasure in a man. She consider man as a savior of herself.

Clara falls in love with Helio. He is a dentist, moreover he is a beekeeper. Without thinking anything the negative result started to love him. But soon finds danger “in letting herself fall in love. . . . My beekeeper brought buckets of honey to court me. I think he hoped the sugar would rot my teeth so I would also go to his dentist’s chair” (*Saudade* 224). At this situation she realized her mother, as mother how she was in love with her husband. Clara knows her mother’s mental institution she loved her husband till the death. But Clara even though she has created a mental institution for herself but when love blossoms within her. She lost her mental stamina and even lost her physical. She lost herself with men. She believes that herself is being affected by male dominated society. When she lived in her own native she was in the domination of her people. But when she arrives in California she lost herself with priest and now with doctor. She was brought to California in a forceful manner. Now she is love with Helio, the doctor she fears of this love. Clara endeavors to perform and she has buried all her wishes in the new land. Clara opines that “Leaving Helio this way was horrible. . .her life with him was already dead” (*Saudade* 244).

In the new law she lost her identity, culture and home. Even she learned English language to communicate with others. She is longing for cultural homelessness and for Helio. She searches for new identity in the new land. Throughout her life men plays a vital role even her son plays a vital role. Now she realized that she can have a secure life without a man’s help. So she thought to leave Helio alone. Helio feels for Clara, because he really loves her. She is mentally and physically part from his life, which leads an emotional approach in Helio’s life. She thought to lead a new liberal life in the new world for women. Somehow she has prepared to live a new life with struggle. Even she cannot lead her life in homeland. Clara says that:

Portuguese words inside herself, she had never spoken the language. She was a stranger coming home after twenty years. . . . Maria Josefa’s door and it gaped. . . . Clara hugged her. Maria Josefa could not speak English and Clara could not speak much Portuguese, but they could communicate with sugar (*Saudade* 281)

Twenty years back she left her homeland, so now she could not find relations there. Even if she goes to her own home town she will not find identity. She learned new language and adopted

new culture. Find new relationship with other immigrants both men and women. Culturally and mentally Clara is attached with Maria Josefa for long time. She finds pleasure in new land and people. But her attitude and her behaviours made the things worse. As she was a child she could not speak properly. She forgets all her past and when she comes to new land she adopts the new place and people.

Clara realized her past only when she was in struggle. She thinks of her ancestors and her birth place. How her parents take care of her, other people behaved with her. Messages from her father and mother, caring of her parents. Her memory covers the beautiful nature of her hometown. She focuses all her issues with her own will and wish. The mental stamina of Clara is high as comparing to other woman in the society. Clara suggest that "Do not worry about the blank pages of your future. Sweet mountains are hiding inside them. . .will find you the whole world" (*Saudade* 287).

Saudade Vaz clearly states that Clara finds happiness and sweetness in all occasions. Even though she finds happiness and the same time she finds sorrow. She enjoys her life with sorrow and happy. She has created an amazing world around her to lead a life of her own. Even after the loss of her child she lead a sorrowful life for few time and later come back and renewed her life with Helio. She left Helio and lead a life of her own. Maria house brings back the life of Clara back. She came back again and had affair with Helio. He inspired her in all ways. She finds her own way of culture. "I do not write to say what I think, I write to find out what I cannot perceive on my own" (227).

## **Conclusion**

Vaz portrays that Clara attempts to discover herself in a new way. Childhood to her maturity she faces various issues in her life. In all situation she finds a new identity and her selfhood. The psychological of Clara is rediscovered in all sorrowful situations. Clara finds happiness in learning new languages and having relations. Her immature affair with the priest and mature affair with the doctor allows her to find herself more. As a woman she needs freedom in the male dominated society. She believes that a woman can live in this society only with the help of a male partner. Later she realized that a woman can lead her life with the help of a man. Vaz advises the woman society to should have to create a world for themselves. If they create a world of their own they can achieve new things in this world. Clara has created a world of her own and she has achieved her ambitions.

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