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Dream Vs Reality: A Thematic Analysis of Kavery Nambisan's *The Hills of Angheri*

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Abstract

The Hills of Angheri by Kavery Nambisan is a fiction that deals with the dream of Nalli (Nalinakshi), a young village girl, who from her childhood onwards wishes to become a doctor, which is quite unusual in Indian villages, where son is given priority over daughter. The paper brings to the fore the struggle and hardships faced by a rural girl to convert her dream into reality.

Keywords

Dream Vs Reality; Kavery Nambisan; *The Hills of Angheri*.



The Hills of Angheri by Kavery Nambisan is a fiction that deals with the dream of Nalli (Nalinakshi), a young village girl, who from her childhood onwards wishes to become a doctor, which is quite unusual in Indian villages, where son is given priority over daughter. In such places, daughter is always seen as a burden to the parents. The protagonist, Nalli tries to break away from such stronghold and aspires to become a doctor.

Nalli gains inspiration to become a doctor from Jayanath (Jai), her childhood companion, who does medicine in Mysore and who has a dream of building Angheri's own hospital. The very beginning of Nalli's expression to become a doctor receives negative responses from her family members. Her Ajja says, "If God wanted you to be a doctor, you would have been a boy" (7). In spite of all her family members' objection, Nalli receives a favour from her father who is made to think when the vaidyar of Angheri says, "Our village needs doctors" (25) at the time of illness of Budhi, Nalli's cousin.

Being firm in her wish to become a doctor to serve the people of Angheri, she prays to God, "Give me that thing, God. Only that thing and I won't ask for anything else. Please, God give me that thing ..." (35). Knowing the fact that her wish is banned only for the reason that she is a woman, Nalli believes in her strength and fights a hard battle. Carrying her dream of building Angheri's own hospital, Nalli, from her village school sets off to Madras to study medicine where she confronts with the world entirely different and artificial from Angheri hills.

Grown up in village atmosphere with many restrictions, Nalli is taken aback on watching the behaviour of city girls. But in course of time, she changes herself to accustom to the life in hostel and in the city. Nalli struggles not only with the strange atmosphere but also with the heavy and tiresome books which are her constant companions. She keeps her dream in her mind and nourishes it throughout the course amidst lot of miseries. On completion of her exams she returns to her village where Vishnu, her cousin ridicules Nalli often. He is jealous of Nalli and is of the view that spending on girl's education is a futile attempt. Returning to her village with the hope that she will be recongnized as

a doctor she attends some cases in the village like Basawappe's wife with diabetes, Nanja with chest discomfort, Anni with a tender lump in the armpit and Maregowda with a wheezing attack. Nalli even treats Satyavati, vaidyar's wife, who had a fracture on her right femur.

Nalli's wish to serve for the people of Angheri becomes even stronger after the death of the son of Poovi, Nalli's sister's classmate. The boy died of dysentery and it makes Nalli to assure that hereafter no child will die after an ordinary illness like dysentery. She is resolute that she with Jai will take care of everything (135). To become a fully qualified doctor, Nalli takes up internship in the government hospital. At the time of her three months of work in a rural area named Mandya in Mysore as a part of her internship she makes the village people aware of soakage pit septic tanks and infant diarrhea.

She argues with the dai (midwife) who treats a pregnant woman at the time of her delivery in her home itself. Nalli questions the dai who uses unsterilized knife which is used for cutting vegetables, and receives an astonishing reply from dai that it is a vegetable cutting knife and vegetables are not infected. This incident makes Nalli to be more stubborn in constructing the village hospital.

On completion of her internship, Nalli visits her village and receives hurting looks from almost every one of the family. Ignoring those hurting looks, Nalli waits for Jai's consent to build Angheri's own hospital. She believes that Jai will support her in converting her dream into reality. She nurtures her love for Jai not because he is her childhood companion but because of the goal which both of them share.

Not aware of Nalli's love for Jai, he decides to marry Bela, a girl from Bombay. But Nalli does not feel disappointed at the marriage of Jai with Bela. The unexpressed love towards Jai fetches another step in her career. She expresses her family members her wish to become a surgeon. Nalli's father, astonishingly, says, "I've never heard of a woman surgeon" (179). Trying to convince her father, Nalli writes letters to Jai and Dr. Bansali, Nalli's Professor.

Receiving a positive reply from both of them, Nalli's father is convinced and he allows Nalli to pursue her higher studies in England.

Before leaving for England Nalli meets Jai who has settled in Bombay and discusses her plan to build the village hospital. Nourishing her dream, she flies to England, and on stepping out of the plane she affirms, "I will not let anything stop me from what I have come here to do" (191).

Nalli is caught between Indian style of life and British way of life. She experiences alienation and nostalgia. She utilizes the opportunities to enhance her knowledge. Moving with the senior surgeons and colleagues friendly, she does many surgeries with the help of her boss and some interns. She proves herself as a good academician by presenting papers among popular surgeons. A positive transformation of Nalli from innocence to experience is shown in the following lines, "I diagnosed with my eyes and my hands and my mind..." (244).

On completion of her FRCS, Nalli returns to her village after three-and-a-half years to the funeral of her father. Constructing a hospital for the people of Angheri is not only the dream of Nalli but also the same of her father. So, she reveals her plan to start a hospital at Angheri. At once Vishnu, her cousin interferes and says, "There's been a lot of talk going on here. I might as well tell you. Most people in the village feel that you've not competent enough to handle a hospital" (293).

In spite of the opposition that she encounters from her family members and the villagers, Nalli visits Bombay to meet Jai to discuss the village hospital. Listening to Nalli, Jai tries to persuade her to drop her dream to build a hospital at Angheri saying that village will be a misplace for surgeons like them. He proudly says he wants someone to compete with. He answers Nalli,

Let the village improve, let the villagers show that they can keep a surgeon busy. If you go now and work with the quacks, they'll say it's because you've not good enough for a city (282).

Finding a vast change in Jai's behaviour and in his thought, Nalli feels astonished and contemplates how can the village improve unless there is a

hospital to keep the people healthy? As Jai shows no interest towards their childhood dream, Nalli is left to fight a lone battle in converting her dream into reality. Keeping aside her dream temporarily, Nalli moves from her home and joins as a surgeon in a sevashram (charity hospital) in Keshavganj, four hours South-East of Delhi. She tries to prove her ability in treating various patients with different types of diseases. Inspired by Sudha, a middle school teacher who has been ill-treated by her husband but is firm to tolerate any amount of pain to achieve her identity in the society, Nalli strengthens her mind. Nalli admires Philomena who has the same goal as Nalli has. Philomena adopts a village ten kilometers away from Sevashram and starts a school for adult literacy. Inspired by Sudha and Philomena, Nalli remembers her responsibility. After three years of her peaceful experience in Keshavganj she decides to work in Madras.

Not being satisfied with city life and atmosphere Nalli tries to persuade Jai to understand the responsibility. Astonishingly, she realizes that Jai is accustomed with the busy life of Bombay. He does not want to listen to anybody. He is stubborn in his attitude. He respects money rather than rendering service to the poor. The commercialism behind the profession can be understood by the attitude of Jai.

She believes that one's identity lies in achieving what they want. She wants to utilize her knowledge and profession to serve for her village people. She makes up her mind to serve the people of Angheri though they do not have faith in her and are not ready to provide her a place to construct a hospital and recognize her as a surgeon. She decides to work for them and is ready to face humiliations and adverse comments.

Ultimately, Nalli emerges as a surgeon, who is conscious, introspective. She carves out a life for herself in her own village. Consequently, she decides to return to her village and starts the hospital there by which Nalli's dream becomes real. Ultimately, she emerges as a rural India's female surgeon.

Indeed, Nalli is a mouth piece of Kavery Nambisan who believes that the external forces like family, custom and discouragement of male relatives cannot alter a woman's thoughts, feelings, goals and achievements.

Work Cited

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