
**AN IN-DEPTH STUDY
ON THE LIFE AND
WORKS OF
K.S.NANDITHA**

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Introduction

Understanding people and activities of modern world demand meeting the interdisciplinary needs and challenges of knowledge system. New concepts and theories transform the way by which language and literature is treated in traditional disciplines. The problems of modern mind need to be investigated at a more comprehensive level. When the modern literary text journey the readers into different emotional spheres, a variety of gender and psychoanalytic issues open up areas of discussion. It enables the readers to look at the writers of literature in a multi-dimensional perspective and in turn to understand the quantitative nuances of psychology as involving people and not just numbers. The disciplines overlies one another while the reader is benefitted of a truly comparative experience.

Origin of the Study

The understanding to present research originates from women's voices to their own social conditions: from

stories, autobiographies, movies, blog writings and even some of the 'status updates' by women in social networking sites. Each story is dark and dreary. The writings portray female characters as trapped and unable to escape her destiny. Compromise is what characterises the life of the common run of the middle-class women in India. With the study probed into women's issues, researcher finds similar themes of emptiness and vacuum in the writings of late writer, K.S.Nanditha. The motive was clearly not monetary. On the other hand as a Researcher, it is interesting to ask what was missing in her life that drove her to take these potentially dangerous risks.

Nanditha - The Author

K. S. Nanditha was a native of Kerala hailing from Wayanad, a place well known for its pristine beauty. It is difficult to spot the most beautiful among the three – Nanditha, Wayanad or her poems. Born to the proud parents Shreedharan Menon and Prabhavathy Menon, Nanditha grew up as a girl-next-door kind of girl. To an outside onlooker, she was just an ordinary girl, but in reality, she was a repository of talent – talent that found no parallels; however, very little did she let the outside world know about it. Nanditha was a voracious reader. Her favourite authors were Madhavikkutty and Ayyappan who were well known poets of the same era. Both these authors' works described forsaken love, loneliness, and being lost without love.

Nanditha was born on May 21, 1969 in Wayanad district. She did her schooling in Government Ganpath Model Girls High School, Chalappuram and graduated in English literature. Later, she went on to do her M. Phil in Chennai Mother Theresa Women's

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University. She was employed as a guest lecturer in Muttill Muslim Orphanage Arts Science College. She always wanted to do Ph. D. and in fact, did apply for the same at Chennai Mother Theresa Women's University. Her chosen topic was "Personal Freedom – A Dilemma: An iconoclastic approach to the ideals of womanhood with reference to the novels of Gail Godwin."

Nanditha – The Woman

She was very silent by nature, studious and liked the company of books. She had very few friends and most of the time preferred to remain alone. Nanditha unfortunately had a shaky marital life. She was reportedly in love with someone from a different religion whom she could not make her life partner, as her parents were against an inter-religious marriage. This incident put her into the doldrums from where she could never come out. Later, she fell in love with her neighbour and married him, which was also not approved by her parents.

Nanditha committed suicide on January 17, 1999 by hanging herself at her residence at around midnight. Hours before her suicide, she had informed her parents that she is expecting a long-distance call and that she will attend the call by herself. However, parents report they never heard any such call and did not know from whom she was expecting the call. Her death came as a complete shock to everyone – her parents, friends, relatives, and colleagues – as she was a very bold and strong character with a driving ambition and goal clarity. She never exhibited any signs of emotional turbulence. The world came to know of what she was going through only when her works got published posthumously twenty years after her death.

The striking feature of Nanditha's poems is that they were never written for publication – or maybe never written to be shown to anyone else. She gave vent to her feelings and emotional turmoil in the form of poems. Writing poems was the only way through which she could cast away the demons that wreaked havoc in her mind. The highlight of her poems is the choice of words – words handpicked with utmost precision. One who reads the poems would understand that no other word in the dictionary could better convey the depth of the emotions that she had while writing those poems. Words automatically got filled with grief when they came off of her pen. Even the words that convey negative emotions of isolation, despair, anger, revenge, etc. got a new dimension and acceptance among the masses through her poems. That alone is a telling sign of how gifted a poet she was – a poet who could change the way we understand vocabulary!

Not even her parents or best friends/colleagues were aware that she wrote poems. The only thing some of her friends have noticed is that she used to sit in the verandah and scribble something in her book. Her works were found from her personal diary twenty years after her death

Nanditha's Poems – A Literary Overview

Kerala has witnessed the surge of a handful of splendid women poets over these years. Among them, Nanditha could literally shake the readers' mind in its true sense. Almost two decades after her death, people still talk about her amazing talent, her poems, and her bad luck, pondering over her mysterious death.

The paper attempts to analyse the type and depth of influence that Nanditha's poems have created on readers' minds. People have been attracted to Nanditha's poetry for numerous

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reasons. They range from the powerful words that she has used in her works to the pain that she has undergone in her life to her mysterious demise. The way in which people relate to the poet and her poems largely determines the type and depth of influence that they create in their lives. She achieves this by writing directly from her heart about ever-relevant emotions of love & loss and life & death. Her words came right from the goblet of fire and she wrote only about what she was going through. This made it all the more natural and ultimately influential. Today it's all the more relevant as genuine love and affection seems to be vanishing quickly from all walks of life, so people relate their own lives better.

Nanditha's thought had a trajectory similar to Raja Lakshmi or Sylvia Plath. Her words came directly from the fiery mind; hence, those words had power in them. Each word holds so much pain in them. She wrote only about her own life experiences and not imagination. Each line speaks about her own mind/mental agony and not abstract concepts. It seems as if she wrote those poems only when she was in extreme mental agony or extremely delighted. Maybe that is why she is able to convey those emotions to her readers. An unmatched rarely seen boldness was evident in her words. Her work produces not just joy and sorrow but moves us, shakes us, makes us sit and think. She inspires us to love with all our heart, to love as if there is no tomorrow.

Poetry is a unique way of expressing complex feelings. Every poem speaks a lot about the poet who authored it. Every poem will have multiple meanings to it and hence a lot many can be derived from each poem. However, to arrive at right conclusions, one must use proven or time-tested tools or methods of analysis. Here presents a comprehensive analysis of Nanditha's work from various angles. Great poems has great meanings beyond what just meets the eye. The obvious meaning of any line is called the literal meaning. Every poem has this. For instance, the following lines of Nanditha speak about how much she yearned for love.

*"I want everybody to love me
Love me more than
They love anyone else."*

There is no implied meaning here. There is clarity. However, poets also write lines that contain implied meanings. A little reflection is enough to understand this. In addition to this, the meaning also depends largely on the context. Anything taken out of context and interpreted will not lead to accurate conclusions. We can find such lines in Nanditha's poems too. One such example is;

*"Anemone flowers
Dripping blood
.....
.....
I planted them myself
Thinking they were chrysanthemums"*

Here obviously the poet is not talking just about anemone flowers and chrysanthemums. There undoubtedly is an implied meaning too. She is referring to those same thoughts that she planted in her mind thinking they were pleasant which later on backfired and became a source of worry for her. Such an interpretation is possible only by understanding the whole context in

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which Nanditha has penned down these poems. But it does not end there. Great poets hide intricate meanings behind the words they choose to write the poem with. This can be inferred only by a trained eye – only if someone develops the ability to read between the lines and analyse it vis-à-vis the life situations, the demographic location, and the period of life of the poet. To cite an example,

“I’ll make a man out of your skeleton-
A man with fine bones-
Try and flee, if you can
Bastard!
I’ll have you still.”

Reading between the lines keeping the untoward events that had happened in her life, one can arrive at the conclusion that here, she is referring to her first lover whom she could not make her life partner. She expresses her anguish at his inability to act aggressively when the tough got going. She adamantly says she will not let it go just like that, but will have him still by trying hard. This can be correlated with what happened during the last days of her life. There is enough evidence to believe that she had gone to meet her first love the day before her sad demise. Furthermore, in another poem, she also talks about reconciliation, which obviously is reconciliation with her ex-boyfriend. In this way, all these three meanings wherever applicable are explored to analyse the works of Kerala’s mysterious poets, K.S. Nanditha.

The words used in a poem speaks volumes about the poet; however, going a little further along the same route, one can confidently say that the frequency with which certain words appear in a poet’s work speaks even more about the poet. Hence, a comprehensive analysis of the type of words used, the pet words and the frequency with which they appear in the poem are also subject to in-depth analysis to arrive at right conclusions about Nanditha. For examples, in several instances, she has used words/phrases like “yearn,” “aching need of what I sought,” “to pine away,” “I want everybody to love me,” etc. These all show how much emotionally deprived she was and how much she longed for true love in its purest form. Besides these, miscellaneous factors like the tone of the poem, the general mood of the poem, the attitude that is reflected in the poems, the title if any, and the opening and closing lines are also analysed so as not to miss any details about this author who left us 17 years ago but who continue to live in our hearts – or in the other words, the immortal poet in every sense of the word.

Handwriting Analysis in Brief

The Graphology, or handwriting analysis, has now grown into a well-developed and widely accepted assessment technique. It helps us to infer a person’s character, personality, psychological state, etc. We have been fortunate enough to get a copy of a page of Nanditha’s diary which shows the poem in her own handwriting. An analysis therefore of her handwriting is done to get valuable insights into her character. These findings are correlated with the findings arrived at by other methods of analysis to reconfirm its correctness. To cite an example, Nanditha’s ‘g’ loops had the shape of a triangle. This usually indicates an emotionally

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damaged character. It also indicates perseverance and aggressiveness. In Nanditha's case, we have enough and more evidences to correlate this finding.

The other logical tools for arriving at conclusions that are used here is direct statements from the poet herself, the inference that one could logically draw by analysing the meaning keeping the context and life in mind, the similarities that we can observe in the life and work of poets like Raja Lakshmi and Sylvia Plath, and the first-hand information collected from the parents, colleagues, and friends of Nanditha.

For instance, Nanditha has stated fair and square that she is a "prisoner of her own thoughts." From this, it is clear that her coping mechanisms were not very beneficial and that she continued to suffer from emotional trauma. She was never able to free herself from her self-destructive thoughts. The most common logical tool used is inference. There are many lines in her poems that help us to make inferences about her emotional battle that was going on in her mind. From the lines "I've to call back my soul lingering around golden thoughts" we can confidently infer that her thoughts always wandered to the reminiscences of her relationship with her boyfriend and that she was trying hard to accept the reality – while intellectually she could understand that she has lost her boyfriend for ever, her mind was not ready to accept that; it kept on going back to the memories of her yester years. Mystery lurks around every corner of her life. We still have no answers to lingering questions, most important being why did she commit suicide. The others include, who was her lover before she got married to her husband? Where did she go on the day previous to her committing the suicide? What was the phone call she expected all about? Did she really receive that call, as nobody else has heard the phone ringing at night. If she has not received the call, what made her hang herself? Whose phone call was she expecting and what would have been the matter?

Conclusion

A whole new world will be opened in front of us when these analytical tools are used to study the poems of Nanditha .we will get a firm grasp of who she was, what made her poems so influential, the gravity of the emotional trauma that she went through in her life, and the real meaning of many sentences that she used in her poems. This will help us understand that her works are at par with those of international reputation and why she was a true jewel of the poetic world and why we should take pride in her being an Indian. The words that she has written and her sad story are bound to stay in our mind for years to come. Was it her life, works, or demise that influenced the people more? It's difficult to say. But one thing is for sure all these will continue to intrigue us; they are not going to decay in the gravwork of The words that she has written and her sad story are bound to stay in our mind for years to come. Was it her life, works, or demise that influenced the people more? It's difficult to say. But one thing is for sure – all these will continue to intrigue us; they are not going to decay in the grave