

## **The Concept Of Double Marginalisation Found In The Play Chandalika Written By Tagore**

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**ABSTRACT-**Nobel prize award winner Rabindranath Tagore is also known as “the bard of Bengal” The mystic elements in his works give them a special space in the literary world. His works also helps people who belong to the lowest place in the society to connect themselves to it. Chandalika is one such play of Tagore which portrays the basic problems that the women of 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> century went through, intertwined with the emotions of a young girl who falls in love with a Buddhist disciple.

Chandalika is a short dance drama in two parts with just three characters, Prakriti, the heroine, her mother and Ananda the Buddhist monk with whom she falls in love. The story is based on a Buddhist legend and it deals with the troubles that women belonging to the lower caste had to face. The theme of double marginalization can be identified when the protagonist Prakriti and her mother had to live their lives standing at the marginalized space in which they are placed by both the patriarchal society and the upper caste people. Marginalization is also seen when the human world of Prakriti comes in conflict with the spiritual world of Ananda. The play concentrates on how Ananda helps Prakriti to get herself out from her marginalized space by making her realize her value. The concept of divinity residing in oneself is seen in the play when the protagonist realizes that she is as good and important as any other creation of god.

**Key words:** Double Marginalization, Chandali, Lower Caste, Upliftment, Patriarchy

**INTRODUCTION-***Chandalika* is a two act play written and published in the year 1938 by Rabindranath Tagore who is a Nobel prize award winner. He is well known for his mystical way of writing. His works were of great inspiration to people all over India during the time of Independence. They were one among the many reasons that created a feeling of ‘Nation’ to

the people in India and gave them a push to fight against the odds and get their freedom back. Tagore who started writing dramas at the age of twenty with his first play *Valmiki Pratibha* used philosophical and allegorical themes in most of his plays. Works written by Tagore gives a particular message to the society that would help the readers uplift themselves along with their society. *Chandalikatoo* is one such play that portrays how a lower caste woman is pushed to the periphery and how the Buddhist ideologies help her come out of the dark space in which she lived for the whole of her life until she meets a Buddhist monk. The story is taken from an old Buddhist legend.

The plot of the play revolves around the life of Prakriti and her mother who are tagged as the Chandalis as they were born in Chandal caste. The Chandalis were not supposed to touch or even have eye contact with the people of the upper caste as it was considered to be an unwashed sin. The story takes shape when this young Chandali girl meets a Buddhist monk named Ananda along the bank of a well and he asks her to give him some water. The very incident of a man belonging to the upper caste asking for water to her without any reluctance changes the entire notion of Prakriti about herself and her life, in the process of which she falls in love with Ananda but he who only had the intention of spreading his master's principles and uplifting a soul never turns back to look at Prakriti again. This hurts the womanly ego in her and the readers see her stooping down to prove that the place she was given by the society was right. She uses her mother's ability to cast a spell on Ananda and tries to drag him into her abode to offer herself to him. Ananda's divinity helps him resist the spell to a great extent but then he falls for it. He goes through a great amount of pain but once he reaches Prakriti's hut, the state in which she finds him melts her heart and makes her realize how cruel her intentions were. The power of Ananda that tried resisting the spell eventually kills Prakriti's mother who surrenders herself at the bhikshu's feet at the end. Prakriti too gives up her womanly ego and surrenders to Ananda and accepts him as her spiritual master. Tagore has told that it was once in his life time that he wanted to prostrate in front of something and that was to the Buddha of Gaya that might be because of the stand that the followers of Buddha took in order to raise their voice against the existence of the caste system but took a very silent strategy to execute them just like Tagore himself had done through his works.

**Concept of Double Marginalization-**The theme of Double Marginalization can be drawn out of the play when we take a look at the sufferings that Prakriti goes through as a person belonging to the lower caste and as a woman who has been brought up in the patriarchal society. Prakriti as a lower caste has always been looked down upon by the rest of the society. She has never been taught to question the existence of this discrimination. She, her mother and probably the ones among their earlier generation have kept quiet for so long and that would have continued if not for the interference of Ananda.

When the plot develops the readers gets to know from the conversation of Prakriti and her mother that Ananda had enlightened her and had made her believe that she is no less than any other creation of God. Prakriti tells her mom about the incident where she met Ananda and how he asked her for some water. When refused he asks her the reason and she reveals her caste expecting the monk to move away from her but Ananda stays and advises her to give some water to quench his thirst. She says,

“For the first time in my life I heard such words,  
for the first time I poured water into his cupped  
hands—the hands of a man the very dust of whose  
feet I would never have dared to touch”

This is the scene that portrays the upliftment of Prakriti, the Chandalika to Prakriti, a human being. Ananda teaches her how all of the creatures of God are the same irrespective of the caste in which they are born. The monk who belongs to the high caste looking straight into her eyes and talking to her with utmost compassion is that which brings a wave of change in Prakriti. This instance changes her whole outlook on herself. She realizes that “self-humiliation is a sin, worse than self-murder”. Ananda through Prakriti has also enlightened her mother to understand the real value of the soul that they possess.

Even after her upliftment from being a lower caste, the remnants of what has been taught by the society to her to be a mere woman to satisfy a man still remained in Prakriti. Her ego gets hurt when Ananda does not look at her for the second time he passes near the well. This leads to Prakriti pursuing her mother to cast a spell on Ananda and bring him to her so that she can

let him know her love and give herself to him. She never thinks about the damage that it could bring to Ananda, her love for Ananda and everything that the society has taught her till then blinds her to a great extent that she doesn't back off even after seeing her mother nearing to death or Ananda getting badly hurt. It is at the end of the play, when she looks at the magic mirror and sees him reach her door steps having lost all the spark in him and standing there enduring all the pain just to seek a sinner like her, does she realize the depth of her actions. Suddenly she throws away the mirror and destroys the spell and hails victory to Ananda, the pure soul. With that she also throws away her needs as a woman and understands that it is not just physical pleasure that a woman is expected to give. This is the instance when she realizes that she could be a woman and surrender herself to the divinity and Ananda even without offering her body. Towards the end of the play, Prakriti says

“Let your feet spurn afar the endless  
reproach of my birth. I have dragged you down to  
earth, how else could you raise me to your heaven?  
O pure one, the dust has soiled your feet, but they  
have not been soiled in vain. The veil of my illusion  
shall fall upon them, and wipe away the dust.  
Victory, victory to thee, O Lord!”

These lines portray her transition from being a woman that a patriarchal society has brought up claiming that she is just an instrument to satisfy man's physical pleasure to a woman who understands spirituality in a deeper level. She realizes her sin and repents for her unthoughtful deeds.

**Conclusion-**Tagore, in this play has portrayed how a lower caste woman is pushed into the periphery by the upper caste and also the men of her own community. But a divine interference, a helping hand from Ananda brings her back to her real self and gives her a hope to believe in herself and have a self-esteem. Tagore showcases the double marginalization that Prakriti goes through and finally finds a solution to set her free from them. Caste

distinction and discrimination based on gender were the two dominating evils that has been existing in India for a very long time, in spite of the trouble that people had to go through by following these practices, they were still considered normal and everyone accepted it without questioning. This might be the reason for Tagore to choose this story from the legends of Buddha whom he greatly admired. The play like most of the other plays that Tagore wrote had a great cause and has definitely created a spark of awareness on its readers.

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