

# Endeavoring woman's awakening: An analysis of Anvita Dutt's *Bulbbul*

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**Abstract:** *The aim of my paper is to explore the lives of the women projected in the web drama "Bulbbul" by Anvita Dutt. I have tried to show how the character of Bulbbul undergoes self awakening and emerge as a quintessential feminist image, by breaking all the conventional ideas of society.*

**Key Words:** *Awakening, New Woman, Hegemony, Oppression, Struggle, Psychoanalysis, Binary difference, Feminism, Existentialism.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION:

Women have always face the hegemonic principles of the society, the patriarchal system have line up the binary difference by socially, culturally, psychologically subjugating her. Her life has always been designed by the conventional ideologies which have made a huge structured life. The paper, through the title suggest portrays how life of the woman character Bulbbul who was oppressed by the society right from her childhood when she victim of the child marriage, physical abuse and rape undergoes physical, psychological change within her. What strike here is Bulbbul raises above all oppression, she awaken herself with radical perspectives of punishing not only her victimizers but for the liberation of all other women in her village. Bulbbul's image as a 'New woman' projects how she liberates herself from all conventional and social institution. Her body acts as her radical tool to fight against the authority. The paper also focuses on the life of Binodini who can be said as the product of the hegemony, accepts the materialistic life provided to her. She is more indulged or rather dependable on her male counterpart; she accepts the superiority of man and the place designed for women by the society.

**2. LITERATURE REVIEW:** The paper is based on Web drama "Bulbbul" which projects how supernatural element is used as symbol to objectify larger social issues. It is based on discussion made through certain literary theories; it depicts the evolutionary journey of a woman from the midst of conventional ideologies towards the world created by her own set of rules and norms. Women were always been psychologically forced to see their body as the patriarchal object which compelled them to analysis their body as the 'other' self. Here, the character of Bulbbul uses her own body to demolish the patriarchal rules and principles. The character symbolically represents how woman must see their body as the whole and not in fragments. This particular paper aims at re-researching the undergoing the underlying meanings of the story. Moreover, it also tent to break down the gendered idea associated with witch practices. As the story takes the help of supernatural arc it symbolically shows that how evil and darkness is always gendered and represented with woman character. Whereas, the irony of the story lies that how darkness is associated with patriarchy and how men of the village becomes the representative of such darkness.

## 3. MATERIALS AND METHOD:

As the paper is based on the web drama, the first hand material was the observation and deep analysis of the drama. The drama acts as the primary source of my research study, along with certain other reference to other works which acts as my secondary data. The whole method is based on qualitative research which objective is to generate social ideas and understandings. It includes history, society and culture, psychoanalytical study is referred along with vivid use of literary theories like, structuralism, deconstructions, feminism etc.

## 4. DISCUSSION:

The paper holds in narrating the significance of individual and human existence. The idea of existentialism that forms the basic grounds for the human liberation from the hegemonic tradition is reflected through the paper. It discover the journey of self awakening by a woman who takes the extra ordinary step to liberate her and acts as the symbolic representation of other women. The paper focuses how the lives and perspectives of two different women are show and how they visualize the world around them from two different approaches. It put forwards the fact of representation and raises certain social issues. It creates the room of scope for further research study and analysis. The popularity of web series have witnessed and welcomed tremendous spectators all over the world. Short, meticulous and minimized time duration of the series tends to welcome movies with fresh new plots contradictory of conventional movies shown in the big screens. In the realm of web series, many Indian filmmakers and writers have come with deeper

insights, meanings and ideologies. Netflix which have been successful in delivering its audience some meaningful contents, have recently allowed the worldwide viewers a new Indian web drama *Bulbbul*. Directed and written by Anvita Dutt, *Bulbbul* enchants its viewer with its so called supernatural elements. Right from its beginning we get the clear picture of male dominancy when a small girl child Bulbbul gets married to an older man Indranil who is the land lord of the then Bengal Presidency in 1881. Unaware of her future and circumstances, Bulbbul never gets any support from any the women around her, rather her aunt make her wear a tight toe ring which says will control her eagerness, demands will help her to stay within the structure.

Bulbbul: Aunt! Why do we wear toe rings?

Aunt: Because there is a nerve here, if it is not pressed, girls tend to fly away.

Bulbbul: (excited) Just like a bird!

Aunt: No! Toe rings are meant to control you.

All the women hides' multitudes of pain, unfairness, anguish and frustration as they themselves remain the victim of the long conventional social practices. The toe ring symbolically represents the bondage and the social marginality which sets the binary relation of woman and man. Right from the childhood girls are taught and are acquainted with their marginal position in the society, they wear the burden of slavery and patriarchal hegemony in their lives. Bulbbul's childhood passes with that of her male companion Satya who happens to be her brother in law. Her world was designed by a man whom she thought to be her savior. Till her maturity Bulbbul was succumbed to the life that was portrayed by Satya to her. It was until Binodini, Bulbbul's sister-in-law who was married to Indranil's younger brother Mahendra who was mentally retarded, could see the gradual closeness of Satya and Bulbbul whom she informs to Indranil, the man she actually admire. In this whole drama the character of Binodini cannot be overlooked, as she silently absorbs all the injustice, frustration compelled upon her. She was smart who holds lot expectation from her life, but her life takes a devastating turn when she was married off to a man who fails to provide her mental, physical and more important the position of Thakurain (lady lord) which finally make her envy Bulbbul. Binodini fails to awaken herself as she indulged more towards materialistic life and feels incomplete without her male counterpart. Binodini as a character becomes symbolic of all the women in the society who believes in the conventional ideologies and willingly accepts their fate. Binodini symbolizes the typical Indian women who believes man to be more superior and that women have to necessarily to be grounded. Her extra marital relationship with Indranil depicts how she is totally dependable on patriarchy to enjoy certain social status. She fails to see her own inner qualities and nor does she become the voice of the voiceless. Her character can remind one of Jane Austen's novels where the women are treated only as marital object. The women on other hand revolve around the theme of marriage, social status and their husband's material possessions. One can also remember Anita Desai's "Fasting, Feasting" and the character of Aruna who dream to see a comfortable and socially reliable life with the help of her husband.

Binodini invokes Indranil about Bulbbul's character which leads him to physically abuse Bulbbul leaving her legs deformed, where he also mention that a woman must not think about anything beyond her husband. No one speak against him which paves the way for more injustice for Bulbbul. Bulbbul's self awakening and her response towards the barbarity incurred upon women takes a vigorous turn when Mahendra rapes her, resulting in the awakening of Bulbbul's inner self. The director project the scene with the most symbolic and psychological content where Bulbbul screams for the first time suggesting her break through from deep silence and the voice of a change. The image of Goddess Kali is shown indicating the birth of the radical and the revolutionary woman. This scene reminds of Mahasweta Devi's short story "Draupadi" where the character Dopdi Mehjan who awakens herself after facing brutality of the patriarchy upon her body. She no more regards her body to be a subjugated form and how she uses her naked body to break down all the hegemonic principles of patriarchy. The use of the body projects psychological dimension of women, they no more observe their body as a patriarchal object. They stop questioning about their body rather uses it as the radical tool against the oppressors. Unlike Mahasweta Devi's "Draupadi" which tends to recall the mythological character of Draupadi from Mahabharata. Here, Bulbbul's deeper awakening of the inner soul is symbolized with that of the energy of Goddess Kali, another mythological character from Hindu religion. Bulbbul is no longer a meek and fragile character nor does she needs male counterpart in her life. The whole drama is bounded together by the supernatural elements which excite the spectators. The whole village assumed Mahendra's death and several other deaths of the men in the village are due to the presence of witch in the village. People believed and assumed women can be witch where they have placed the position of the women with that of demons again placing them on the other side of the binary. Interestingly this particular fear of the witch engulfed the minds of the villagers after Mahendra's death where the twisted foot prints were found which is basically associated with the idea that witches have such twisted foot. After Mahendra's death there were numerous mysterious deaths that took place having said to be killed by the witch, it actually made Satya who returns from London after twenty years, very curious about finding the truth behind the deaths.

Satya: Master Dinkar was killed. And it wasn't an animal. It's the work of a man.

Bulbbul: A man! Could have been a woman.

Satya: What woman is capable of such a brutal murder!

Through the following conversation, Bulbbul debunks the myth associated with the nature of woman which the patriarchy have design for the women. She no longer consider in the conventional ideologies formulated by the society. Breaking down the pervasiveness of male violence, Bulbbul undergo fierce transformation to a woman who hunts those men who victimizes and objectifies the women. She sets an example of the revolution by a woman against the society, by deconstructing the master-slave, victimizer-victimised notion of perception. Reconstructing the social ideas associated with the woman, she fearlessly kills the evils of the society by caring, protecting and providing justice to the women of her village. Like Master Dinkar and the chariot driver Ramakant who use to beat their wife and supported Polygamy. The following conversation between Bulbbul, Satya and Dr.Sudip clears it:

Bulbbul: Will that master ever change?

Satya: Which master?

Dr.Sudip: Master Dinkar!

Satya: What a fine man he is!

Bulbbul: (Chuckles) His wife's broken bones tell us exactly what a fine man he is.

Dr.Sudip: What's the point; she always says the same thing that she fell down the stairs!

Satya: Must be the truth!

Bulbbul: There is only one house in this village that has stairs!

The only man in the village who praised, respected and supported Bulbbul was Dr.Sudip, he chose not to be the part of the conventional society. After knowing the truth about Bulbbul, he considers her to be a goddess rather than claiming her to be a witch. He celebrates and respects the essence of womanhood and tried to help Bulbbul when no one stood for her. He never tries to thrust his opinions or dominance over any idea or situation, rather allows Bulbbul to think over any situation with her own conscience. He neither underestimated the strength that Bulbbul holds within her and that's why he let her chose her own way. The supernatural element in the whole drama is the trick that the director plays with the minds of its viewers. The villagers assumed the presence of witch which was generally transmitted through oral narratives. The supernatural element just takes place in one's mind which neither has reality and it becomes clear that there was no witch, rather it was Bulbbul who can effortlessly climb and jump on the trees and her deformed ankles added more dimensions to the thoughts of the villagers. Awakening and the birth of the new woman in Bulbbul reflects the emergence of new ideologies. She refuse to oblige by any of her male counterpart, setting newer dimensions of self exploration Bulbbul's radical feminist ideologies was beyond the control of the 'toe-ring'. She rejects every form of social institution which objectifies and considers them to be the 'others'. Bulbbul's exploitation indicates the fate of every girl and how their life is controlled by the authority of the patriarchy. Breaking the structure, raising questions, Bulbbul rejects to be considered as the 'other', rather she stands with her quintessential feminist qualities. Satya who remains a typical portrayal of patriarchy his mind was embedded with the idea of gender; he forwarded his own judgment regarding Bulbbul and Sudip's relationship. He condemns her for having set relation with Dr.Sudip and tell her how she broke the limitation of the society. He urges her to move back to her mother's home as she will no longer be accepted by her husband again. After knowing how Bulbbul was oppressed by the men of the manor, Satya blames himself to be the part of the family, he leaves the manor letting Indranil condemns for his deeds and how destiny have saved him for not becoming one of the conventional members of the society. Bulbbul brings about the revolutionary change in the attitude of Satya which symbolically indicates the change in the social structure. Towards the end when Bulbbul immerse herself in the waves of fire, the whole scene celebrates the valor, ambition and the quest for self. When Indranil visits the manor after a year Satya left, he saw the image of Bulbbul arising from the fire which shakes him down. This scene holds the imagist perspective which symbolically present that the fire of revolution set by Bulbbul remains to hunts and wipe the man centric culture. The sacrifice for the upliftment of the women and rising from the darkness of the social practices, *Bulbbul* sets a foreseeable endeavor of woman's struggle to break the status quo and the celebration of womanhood. Bulbbul as a character struggle against the bare and blatant exploitation set against her and for the women of her village who undergo sexual control and social engraving.

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