



AboutUs: <http://www.the-criterion.com/about/>

Archive: <http://www.the-criterion.com/archive/>

ContactUs: <http://www.the-criterion.com/contact/>

EditorialBoard: <http://www.the-criterion.com/editorial-board/>

Submission: <http://www.the-criterion.com/submission/>

FAQ: <http://www.the-criterion.com/fa/>



ISSN 2278-9529

Galaxy: International Multidisciplinary Research Journal
www.galaxyimrj.com

Nemesis

Dr. Vandana Singh

Senior Assistant Professor & Head,
P.G Department of English,
Maharaja College, Ara.

Sojourn

Grey clouds were beginning to gather in the sky once more. I pulled my shawl firmly around me like a shroud, shivering in the chilling wind, and accelerated my pace. The rain in Cochin is akin to an unexpected guest that shows up at any time and makes me feel afraid. It could happen that the intense downpour catches me in the middle and prevents me from climbing the steep slope to go to my house. On those days, I was in such bad shape that it was getting harder for me to even walk quickly. The road was empty and freezing, with no one in sight. Lost in her memories Shubhra did not realise when she reached home. The girl, Radha next door neighbour, called out but Shubhra just looked up and smiled.

Is it Radha's disposition, or has her unwelcome virginity—caused by the mother's severe discipline—made her so apathetic? It appeared as though no one could ever discover what was inside the girl's heart, not even if she was ripped to pieces. She didn't enjoy going out or getting dressed up. She had no interest in singing or playing music or in reading. There were times when she would sit down to stitch a cushion using cross-stitch embroidery, moments when she would finish a sweater in two days, times when she would continue to knit plaids before unravelling them, and times when, when she felt like it, she would clean the entire home. Like her mother, she was very passionate about cleanliness. When I saw that lovely girl's habit, I used to get really concerned about her future. I think it's not a very joyful married life for a lady who is constantly cleaning herself. The person who can't stop worrying about things like how many inches or centi-meters the circumference of his bedspread should be bound in, how to match the colour of the book bindings to make the books on the table look nice, or how to arrange the folds of saris in the box inside the pyramid's stupa-shaped pits. At times, she finds herself with less time to reflect on the primary issues facing her family.

Adolescence

Unfortunately, I met a man who, in contrast to my easy-going demeanour, had a phobia of cleanliness. Romantic to the core, Shubha had first fallen in love with a boy who was close

to her family when she was sixteen. He was her eldest brother's brother-in-law. Although, at first, she thought it was love, it turned out to be nothing more than a sixteen-year-old's infatuation. For a few years, her emotions caused her to have emotional turmoil till he married a more attractive girl. Like any adolescent, Shubhra's quixotic mind was seduced by an attractive boy when she was still impressionable, but her ideas about romance came from the romances she read and witnessed in movies. Her favourite things to do were read Mills & Boon and watch romantic comedies.

She remained in her own world, playing around with her feelings and being too nervous to tell someone she loved them. In the early 1980s, blasphemous feelings were not expected by society. Girls needed to uphold social graces and project an idealized persona that would win over the groom's family. Shubhra was the goal of every potential family in the community as soon as she turned eighteen. She had to suppress all of her ardent fantasies and be shy, subservient and obedient. As she grew older, her desire to get married replaced all other goals in life. Extrovert among family women and close friends—all of whom were girls, of course—she had never had the confidence to talk to boys she was interested in. Being brilliant in her studies, father wanted her to become a doctor or an IAS officer and like doted daughter, in spite of belligerence, she prepared and took the exam for civil services. Got through her prelims but refused to go further. I refused to pursue the career of an officer despite my father's anger. I regret every second of my life today for making such hastened decision that could have transformed my life, Shubra postulated.

After completing her education, she entered the workforce. Joining as a faculty in a management Institute was a moment of pride. Eventually, at a conference, she ran into the man who would become her husband. When the man requested for her phone number, she ignored him since she was too preoccupied with her presentation and afraid of her strict conventional father. After returning from the conference, she began to warm up to the stranger on social media, and gradually she developed interest. She didn't ask how this person obtained her contact information. He listened to her talks and spoke in a way that captivated her.

Seven Vows

For me, every day turns into a torment. The married life has completely collapsed. I quit my job to care for my mother. Rishabh's, my husband, aggressive demeanour was the cause. I've only felt hurt and distant from him because of his pushy and domineering behaviour. I question every day whether my trust in God is mislaid. Why am I experiencing such intense pain at every turn? Have I committed innumerable sins to require restitution in this lifetime? I feel like

positivity has entirely left my side. My in-laws are to blame for my husband's frequent outbursts of rage and irritation when he drinks.

I have indemnified for what I believe to be a bad marriage for the last two years. My marriage has been steadily falling apart, thanks in large part to my in-laws. The mantra is to act like the weakling if I have to avoid confrontation with Rishabh. That's what my mother-in-law does all the time. I am filled with remorse and I abhor my existence. I despise myself for marrying and hurting my parents. How loud someone can yell? What kind of insecurity had his parents ingrained in him for their own gain? I now see why he persisted in claiming that my parents are self-centred and think only about themselves. It actually pertains to his parents. My parents' money is wasted like water to afford my in-laws luxury, and I've turned into a meal ticket. I have come to hate them and my husband for his naive confidence in his parents.

Black Sheep

Eldest Sister Sushma was at home for the summer holidays. 'Oh, why are you depressed? The concerned sister questioned the younger sibling, maybe she is very observant. I thought.

'Talk to me. Tell me what's wrong? Are you not happy? Tell me what you feel? Why do you get so angry all the time? Can I ask a question?

Oh no. What brings about this barrage of questions fired at rapid speed. Bemused Shubhra speculated.

Sure, answered Shubhra after long thought.

Sushma: God bestows everyone with at least one quality. You have such a beautiful complexion. You may not have sharp features but your skin exudes a radiant radiance. Although skin abnormalities are common but God has blessed you with translucent skin. Do you feel low because rest of us are fairer and more beautiful?

Shubhra couldn't understand if this was a confrontation or if Sushma was giving me advice? I was bewildered at the condescending tone. Unsusceptible thoughts entered into my mind. Any how questions had to be answered.

Shubhra: Yes, I feel low because I am not tall like you all nor I am fair. I am fat and parents get angry because I pay no heed to my studies.

'Let me tell you something. 'Sushma said sitting beside Shubhra on the patio steps.

'How come? Why is she so concerned? Maybe Mom must have told her about my erratic moods. I thought

Sushma: You are facing adolescent hormonal change that affects the mind. Suddenly everything was silent. I tried to dissect this new information fast before next question was thrown at me.

I was startled from my stupor by the harsh sound of snoring coming from behind. I jumped out of my senses. I turned around so fast that I fell on my sisters sleeping face. I started laughing softly as I had finally managed to bash her face without her realising. I wonder what the purpose of the entire conversation was when the concerned sister is already sound asleep.

Next early morning Shubhra was confronted by her second sister Supriya. Shubhra had no respite from the four adult members of the family-parents and two elder sisters who were dominating in nature.

Supriya: Why do you argue with our parents all the time? Why do you not eat? This marks the beginning of the second sister's journey to mentor the recalcitrant sister. Why have you declined to eat the food prepared by Dad for you? Dad made the sandwiches especially for you as its your favourite! They adore you incredibly. When will you behave responsibly, Shubhra? You ought to be embarrassed of yourself. When you were small, our mother used to buy dresses every day. Dad has always had you on his mind. What issue do you have? Could you explain why you don't give them any attention? Queries, queries, and still more queries!

Do they ever discern the pain or bewilderment that my disobedient mind is experiencing? I don't even know myself well, other from the fact that I can't follow strict rules for very long. My rebellious disposition wants all the comforts of life and to be a free bird. I want to take to the skies. My goal is to be self-independent and earn money so that I can become self-sufficient and stop receiving constant criticism from my father. Do I look like your daughter? My mother noticed the belligerent stance of her youngest and sensed that something was amiss. She looked up and immediately knew that there was a serious problem. "Am I your daughter or did you pick me up from somewhere?" I inquired once again. It was getting to be too much, and I needed to talk to my mother. My second sister was controlling me like a stand-in, but she was never aware of what I was going through or whether it was just her envious mindset or her need for approval from me.

I was already under lots of peer pressure and my Maths teacher was creating havoc with my life at school. Pre-boards were nearby and I was scared of flunking my papers. I found respite in my mother's lap whenever I got highly strung. The following day was my exam, so I requested my mother to go to the stationary store and buy me pens and pencils. Supriya's husband was posted in the same district so she stayed with us. Suddenly she began to yell at me because I had asked Mom to buy me stuff from the market while it was starting to drizzle.

Is my sister being possessive of my mother, or is she really worried about her? Elders in the family had reminded me several times that my second sister had taken care of me while I was a child, but it did not give her the right to yell at me arbitrarily. I took sleeping drugs so I could study and get rid of the tension. One, then two, and still no change.

After taking four, I was clueless. That day, though, I do recall my father standing up for me and roaring back at his second daughter and asked her to stay quiet. What precisely had I done? I required items for the following day's exam. Even though my parents supported me, the damage had already been done. I had lost my precious time of preparation. My mother quietly begged the older one to keep quiet after realizing that the chaos had affected me badly catalysing me to ask her a question out of context I had questioned her about my identity in the family. She understood my state of mind. What makes Supriya envious of me? Though I hardly qualify to compete with her beauty—she is tall and slim—but the fact remained that my parents adored me as I was very intelligent and good at studies.

Silver Lining

I joined Facebook, and all of a sudden, this person sent me a message expressing his desire to become my friend. Whether it was destined or not, I reluctantly added him. He kept asking me odd questions about my life, and I refused to comply. I warmed up to him gradually, and I struck up a conversation. After a full year, he simply vanished from social platform. He wrote lovely poetry every day for me, per se, which is what first drew me to add him. After that, I started to feel alone and kept asking where he had vanished. Surprisingly, on the final day of submission. Suddenly a message of greeting popped up in the chat box. Hi, how are you?' popped on the screen. I was taken by surprise. Rishabh seemed to emerge from the dark depth of computer screen while I was in deep throes of giving final touch to my research paper. I was exhausted after working on the paper for six months. Happiness bubbled to the brim. It felt like sprinkles of rainwater over parched land. Love blossomed without warning and caught me off guard as it grew on me.

Demise of Patriarch

My father is being harassed by my uncle and aunts afresh over the division of the house and sale of the land. They stalk him every day as though they are the proprietors and my father is their servant. My cousin uncle and two aunts resemble Macbeth's three witches. My father's dictum prevents us from interfering. My husband's health problems are causing him to suffer. For me, life appears to have stopped. I have to accompany my father to the clinic or come home

from work every day in order to be by his side when the visitors barged in on him. My father has been compelled to sign a document by them, but he has refused. They are pressuring him to sign a document, so I had to finally tell them to stop stalking and that everything would go in accordance with my father's desires. Uncle yelled that everything would now be taken into account, including the house and the ancestral properties at the same time. I cannot meddle in the problems of ancestral property.

After this setback, my father retreats back into his cocoon. He has stopped eating and is getting weaker until the day I tell him there is nothing anyone can do. He tells Rishabh about the property disputes and asks for help. If only he had given us access when it was appropriate. In any case, things are getting better. Rishabh's health is also getting better.

Then, all of a sudden, in November, I continued having premonition that someone was suffering from cancer. Since childhood I had been intuitive. My proclivity to avoid stress-issues made me pay no attention to my intuitions. Had I only had. I went my father to have an X-ray after he complained of chest trouble. He questioned the physician there about having pleurodesis. My father explained that Pleurodesis is medical term for water retention in the heart when I inquired him what it meant. Things continued to become worse. My father has trouble swallowing food. He is experiencing terrible constipation and gas. This year, January set in with harsher winter, and my father needs to exercise and walk. He refuses to walk and is confined to his bed. He seems restless all the time as if he still won't walk. Winter is harsh this year, as though it wants to steal my father away. By February, my dad had passed away.

Apocalypse

My in-laws have returned to our house. For a period of four months this time. And then comes the same old routine tantrum. Their last visit, I was unable to pinpoint the fundamental issue that was causing my parents to appear so agitated when I got home from work. However, this time, I identified the core issue while I was at home. Why does my spouse act so violently and shout all the time when his parents come to visit? All thanks to my in-laws, who were masters of subtlety. It was a terrible four months. My mother-in-law would start crying, as if I had hit her, if I spoke to her. Naturally, my father-in-law was also discreetly filling my husband's ear against me. Then all hell broke loose.

When my husband asked his parents if they had any problem at my house, they would remain silent and act naïve. I once observed their strategy one day when they turned on the TV and moved around. Please just let the TV play, I urged my mother. Rishabh yelled, "Why is

electricity being wasted?" upon seeing. I politely informed him that his parents had accidentally left the TV on. He looked at me sheepishly and turned to leave.

Rishabh had a penchant to feel betrayed since he thought his parents were overlooked by my parents. Last visit, when my father was still alive, my in-laws had staged same act of innocence. We were compelled to watch TV with my in-laws since they were required to sit and watch it. My husband called me one day while I was at work, screaming abuse at the top of his lungs about my mother. He yelled, "Come home right now!" My in-laws were calm and collected when I got home, Rishabh was still fuming and screaming at the top of his lungs and mistreating my parents. My in-laws informed me that my husband was upset because my mother had turned off the television while they were viewing the news. Afterwards, I discovered that my mother had turned off the TV after my in-laws had left the room with it on. What a conniving couple they are, I thought

My spouse angrily exclaimed, "Why did your mother turn off the TV while my parents were watching a show?" His parents remained silent spectators, while my husband angrily yelled at my parents. Why? For the sole reason that they were a girl's parents? Rishabh repeatedly told me that his parents had an upper hand as groom's parents. I lost it and gave Rishabh a hard shove when he attempted to attack my father. I decided that day. 'Enough is enough.' Shubhra could still feel the anger inside her. My in-laws used to routinely provoke their son while he was intoxicated, then they would sit there as spectators and watch the whole drama by their obedient son. Unfurl in front of their eyes.

To pacify Rishabh, I had arranged for in-laws to come to my house again this time after my father passed away so that they could offer some solace to us, but the same incidents kept replicating. This time, the entire house appeared to belong to my in-laws because Rishabh was supposedly the man of the house now that my father had deceased. They enjoyed their own lovely moments, and picked flowers aimlessly from the front garden, from dawn to dusk. I was depressed. My father had not been gone for long when these two pampered themselves in my room like newlyweds. I felt like retaliating but Rishabh has been made a robot at their beck and call. They had persuaded him during his bachelor years, telling him that his siblings are smart and he worthless. Hogging from dawn to dusk saw lakhs of dollars invested on their sojourn. My husband bought accessories worth thousands and gave to them in secret. In spite of everything, my mom-in-law wanted my accessories. Shubhra smiled at the memories which still haunted her. I frequently wondered...For what length of time, I am supposed to give my in-laws their dowry? And then there had to be the final pandemonium before they left. How is that not possible?

Ruins of Love

My mother-in-law was crying when I got back, acting like I had done something wrong, after she had caused so much turmoil in the house and to make matters worse, they talked gibberish to their second son, who then called my husband to complain that his parents were staying at my house like vagrants. God, I wanted to beat them all up. What kind of individuals had I chosen? Shubhra pondered. My husband misbehaves every fifteen days. Maybe this was punishment meted out by Divine for my arguments with my father. I have been running to temples to pray and have pooja performed for my husband. His parents would mistreat me psychologically till I'm completely exhausted. I am receiving retribution for my actions. As you sow, so you reap. I am now dealing with the consequences of my stubbornness and harsh behaviour toward my parents. What made me get married? Shubhra kept on questioning herself.

I wonder if it's a Universal fact that in-laws get insecure as soon as the son marries, even if the daughter in law loves and respects. My conniving in-laws created a chasm between me and Rishabh with such finesse that even I could not understand till it was too late to retrieve the broken ends. I still recall our first year of marriage, when my spouse would go out drinking, come home, and start a scene. It had been made binding for me to talk to my in-laws every day after marriage. Their unhappiness stems from their unwavering chase of money rather than the money itself. Every morning, I heard the titbits of my conversation with my in-laws through Rishabh. Harassed to the core, I told my in-laws that I was filing a divorce suit. According to my father-in-law, Rishabh was unimportant. He has not worked his whole life and spent all of his earnings as a freelance contractor on himself, leaving them with nothing. 'Yell back at him when he yells because he is a weak guy and would try to dominate otherwise'. His mother's response was 'Put him behind jail. He will learn then'. But do not divorce. It is not acceptable in society.

Frosted Shards

These days, I wonder a lot about why we married despite the fact that we are mismatched. Rishabh is not interested in our marriage. He is curious about the family's financial situation. Even before my marriage, I had been providing for him for two years. His job doesn't pay well. He has no interest in me. His father convinced him, he should practice celibacy in order to avoid high blood pressure. Did I appear to be his meal ticket? An easy target for him to marry a girl who is spinster till the age of 35 and also one year older? It appears that the marriage is just a convenience for Rishabh. My health has declined over the last two

years as a result of mental agony. I declined to comply with my spouse's requests for more financial help. Earlier, I refused to comply to my in-law's demand to quit job and shift to their place. My father would never want me to quit my work. My husband causes too many issues yet he also supported and asked me not to quit.

I could no longer bear anyone dominating, and I hate and scorn Rishabh's attempts to do so. The continuous badgering had started to take its toll. I conceived but due to stress and workload I miscarried. To what exact destination is my life heading? I had quit my job after the demise of my father as I didn't perceive any progress in my career. The next job appears to be distant. Depression intermittently appears. My mother cannot be left at the mercy of Rishabh while I work. Lost in thoughts, Shubhra persisted in going through her previous actions that might have caused this destruction in her life. I've fought my entire life for a quiet existence, yet it appears that tragedy and turbulence are essential components of my life. It makes sense that the Karma concept has dealt her a bad hand. Perhaps I might live in peace at some point. I've never been really assertive. Throughout my career and personal life, I have always believed in fate. My life is never satisfying to me. Why?

Dejected Soul

I quit my job because I felt like it was robbing parts of my soul, my valuable time and energy. Now that I'm "Home, I am still not at peace. I understand that actions have an impact on the real world. I'm getting anxious because my interview letter hasn't arrived yet. Interviews have started for additional subjects. My father wanted me to apply for a position at Central University. He had a dream that I hold a very important position in my profession. I'm not sure what will happen to me now. I have always believed in the Divine. But I feel like I'm lacking in some way. Every time, I fail. I have no idea what's going to happen. I must work at the institution for a few years before leaving. I need the job and I need to be in a cosmopolitan. I am nervous, though. The call letter is not here yet. What should I do now? Why does it always happen to me? What specifically did I do to merit this? The problems don't seem to be going away. Life appears twisted as it continues to come.

Every day that goes by seems to be becoming harder in life. Things are becoming complicated. Life is teaching me how to deal with problems, find answers, and adjust to living without my father. Dad has always protected me from hardships in life. It felt as though I were living in a happy and safe cocoon filled with love and laughter. He was my mother's and my safe haven, taking the full weight of life's hardships. Life appears to be slowly getting back on

track. I can now easily perceive the subtleties impeding our current economic situation. I used to wonder why he was so reluctant to cash in on his farm.

I now know the little-known details that prevented him from selling his land and building a solid financial foundation. As he took care of all the formalities, life was wonderful. I have to manage now. Yes, the husband is around, but after a few glasses he becomes agitated and twitchy.

Somewhere in the darkness of culture
Society stuck some labels on my forehead
Loving, Caring, Selfless and Servile.

Shattered Dreams

My father was never satisfied with the unexpected marriage I had. Perhaps he experienced a shock. He insisted on a traditional, ceremonial marriage and refused to accept my choice. He never spoke to Rishabh the first year of our marriage, which upset me. In my own world, I was unaware of his pain. Dad had never anticipated that I would take this step, though, as the youngest and most adored of my three siblings, I had been pampered. Eventually, after much searching for a suitable partner, Dad had announced that I might select my own groom. I had promised to take care of my parents and not get married. However, things were becoming unmanageable. The fact that her daughter was not getting married devastated my mother's heart. Her one and only wish in life was to get me married.

I consented to marry a man I had never seen before after a protracted courting. He was merely someone I met on social media as a buddy. Everyone was unaware of it but my mother. My mother was ecstatic when I finally consented to marry him after two years of protracted negotiations. I requested this individual to meet me at the conference I went to. Had no notion that I'd unexpectedly tie the knot at a temple without any traditional ceremony. I told my mom about it. It was complete mayhem when I brought him back to see my parents because my father, who always discussed things with me, could not have imagined that this would happen with his own daughter. For me, it was a romance picked out of a movie.

Was it the aggressive part of my inner self that led me to make the choice on which I ponder so much these days? For a few three months, everything was perfect. My family as a whole was shocked to learn that I was getting married. They appeared happy, but it was only a surface bliss. There was a question going through everyone's mind who would take care of the parents. Who will take care of the parents now? blurted out the second brother-in-law. And naturally, I responded, "I will take care of them." How self-centred can someone be?

Some had grudgingly wished to know every aspect of the marriage proposal, and nieces were curious. Astute counsel was given by some, asking "Have you thought about how you would balance between two cultures? How could a small-town spinster land up with a jackpot? She is not smart enough but still the imagined old groom turned out to be a handsome hunk? I sneered. The human mind is strange and it takes everything for granted and rejects things that turn out to be different. After my father left for his heavenly abode, things and perspectives got clearer. His comments, "You will realise my words when I am not there," rang true with clarity. His practicality and vast understanding of human conduct are evident in every statement made by stalwarts.

A True visionary to the core he believed and taught me....

Never live a flower's life, as the day you bloom will bring you to pieces. You will be called God the day you are chiselled and carved by life, therefore if you wish to survive, live like a stone.

I was going through the same stage of life as my father, who had prioritized everyone's wishes above his own. Till his final breath, my father cared for everyone but himself. Will my husband, an alcoholic, ever get better? Will he be able to provide his kids with a life that will enable them to do great things in the future, or will they have to endure a life of misery similar to that of their mother? Shubhra fell asleep on the armchair and didn't even realize it. When she woke up the following morning, she took a resolution to file for divorce. Perhaps going against her morals, she made a fresh decision for her children's future—something she had not been able to accomplish up to this point. Although society might not embrace it, but what about that society which tends to keep watching like a hawk and interfere in everyone's life as if it is a spectacle to relish on for the rest of its life? The children had grown up and were ready to fly, even though she could never have imagined living alone like this ever.

Frozen in time

Shubhra and Rishabh have not exchanged words since years now. All they know is that they live close to one another and are neighbours. Their spirits never stop circling one another. Rishabh believes he is still alive. Not only are the other passengers on the bus alive, but so are they. The structures lining either side of the street are more than just walls. Their hearts are pounding within them. Maybe for a little while, Shubhra's smile gives her life some purpose. In large cities, bus rides are frequently lengthy. This trip appears unfinished at times, yet every bus comes to a stop eventually. Every passenger descends to that level. The bus turns into a

deserted cottage. Divorce never got initiated as the kids wanted to be with both parents. Shubhra finally gave in to a life that was not meant for her but it mattered to her kids.