

CHAPTER: 4

The Mole: Analysis

“The Mole,” the female protagonist is Rani who is a young woman from the lower class of the society. The male protagonist is Choudhry, an artist, who hires Rani as his model for a painting. There are two other male characters in the story—Chunнан (a man from Rani’s neighbourhood) and Ratna (the male servant in Choudhry’s house)—with whom Rani is shown to have sexual relationships. She is quite overt in her sexuality and often shows off the mole on one of her breasts to the men in her life. The salient feature in her personality is how she teases these men with the mole. Both Chunнан and Ratna instantly respond to the teasing. However, Choudhry never has a sexual relationship with her but he feels strong sexual attraction to her. He neither can stand Rani’s relationships with Chunнан and Ratna nor can himself get involved sexually with Rani. Once Choudhry gets infuriated when he catches Rani with Ratna bathing together in the pond. This event compels him to succumb to his attraction to Rani. He goes to Rani’s hut at night and frantically searches for her in darkness only to discover that she is not there. To Choudhry, this indicates her being with some other man which he cannot take normally. However, the next morning he cannot query Rani about this as it will reveal to her that Choudhry went to her room the previous night. When Rani goes missing the following day, everyone starts asking Choudhry about her. Some even start suspecting him. After months she is discovered by the police when she

is dropping her new born baby in the dustbin. The suspicion among people grows stronger and they take it for sure that Choudhry has sexually exploited her. In the court when she is asked who the father of her baby is, she nonchalantly says that Choudhry is not the father as he is impotent; the father may either be Chunnan or Ratna. With this twist at the end of the story, Choudhry is both freed and punished by Rani. Sexual politics between Rani and Choudhry, Rani is quite vocal about her sexuality and knows how to tease and attract men towards her. Though she is from a class much lower than that of Choudhry, from her interactions with him it can be stated that she has empowered herself with her sexuality. This becomes evident when Rani whines a lot during the painting sessions with Choudhry. The author uses the mole as an apt metaphor for Rani's sexuality in the story. In the session with which the story begins, Rani shows off the mole to tease Choudhry with it while posing for the painting. She says, "Choudhry, have you seen this? ...Look at this—this black mole just below my neck. Over here, a little below, on the left. ...Did you see it?". She speaks not only with her tongue but also with her body. Her body language enhances this empowerment over Choudhry which Chughtai draws with these words: "She held the floral pitcher with one hand as she peered down her cleavage, parting her lips wide. ...She pretended to be coy. ...She grinned shamelessly. ...She continued to snicker immodestly. ...Resting the pitcher, she leaned towards him". It is interesting to note that the author uses contradictory expressions as 'coy' and 'shamelessly' to create an oxymoronic effect in Rani's body language. This only heightens the strength of her sexuality

as it expresses that she has deployed her own tactic in winning over the subject position by both pretending to conceal and revealing herself immediately. This tactic is also symbolized by the trouble Choudhry faces to create the perfect “tint that would replicate the exact shade of her skin” because, according to him, her skin tone and the colour of her eyes keep on changing “constantly”. From the perspective of the sexual politics between them, this observation adds a chameleon feature to her sexuality through which she can camouflage herself from her socially attributed position of the Other, making herself mysterious and “completely unmanageable” to Choudhry. Moreover, the way she adores her mole establishes the fact that she is well-aware of the power that single mole can possess to overpower the men around her. Here, in the sexual politics between Choudhry and herself, Rani takes up the subject position for a while through her seduction of Choudhry which Choudhry finds quite intimidating. While Rani’s body language is bold and seductive, Choudhry’s one is nervous— “Choudhry’s shoulders quivered. The beads of perspiration on his smooth skull grew larger”— which means he is receding from the centre. What follows this situation is a tug of war between the sexes over the position of the subject. Choudhry confronts the seduction and defends himself as he says, “I haven’t seen any mole, nor do I want to”. Rani’s quick reply to this is, “Hunh! Liar! You’re looking at it from the corner of your eye”. Both of them throw bolts and arrows from their own quivers— Choudhry reminds her that she is too young to be talking in this manner; to prove him wrong, she retorts by narrating how she has tricked Ratna into bathing with

her in the pond. When Choudhry is about to hit her in a fit of anger, she throws her final bolt, “If you hit me, I’ll go out on the road. That will embarrass me, and I’ll tell people that Choudhry, Choudhry...I’ll tell them, ‘Choudhry says that my mole...h’m...h’m.’ ...I’ll tell everyone, Choudhry. . . I’m so young. Just a little girl...You’re very naughty”. The very suggestion of what she may tell people threatens Choudhry to the core. He gives up the war right there. Again, the body language of Rani— “She edged towards the door slowly”—and that of him who “sat there dumbfounded” present the reader with the redefined power nexus in which now she is the subject and he is the Other. She justifies the meaning of her name which is queen, and leaves the battle field victorious with her weapon, the mole. This same sort of battle is fought between her and him when he sees her “romping in the water” of the pond with Ratna. This scene of sexual playfulness makes him both jealous and angry to an extent where it seems as if “his height increased by a few inches,” thus denoting him a monstrous energy to hold on to the subject position. However, the author juxtaposes this monstrous Choudhry with a defeated, retreating one in these words: “His hungry eyes landed on the black, protruding mole, which seemed to transform itself into a black stone and strike him on the forehead. He turned and ran like a vanquished dog to his room and lay down on the bed”. The increased height of him in the subject position escapes the battle the moment it faces the mole. Though Rani and Choudhry never involve sexually, she is capable of bringing on “the reciprocal claim” in her sexual politics which Beauvoir regards as an important factor “to deprive the concept

Other of its absolute sense and to make manifest its relativity”. Chughtai, in her pattern of redefining the Other, shows Rani to make that reciprocal claim in all her relationships. With Choudhry, the point of Rani’s reciprocity is seen in the previous paragraph through her self-empowerment in front of him. In her sexual relationships with both Ratna and Chunnan, her reciprocal approaches are made clear. She initiates the relationship with Ratna while bathing in the pond as she says, “Yes, I was bathing in the pond. I was scared to go alone, so I took him along lest someone came there without warning. Yes, I was bathing. I also washed my blouse. ...He was sitting far off. Then I said, ‘Ratna, I have a mole, but in a very bad spot’. The reference to the mole gives enough invitation to Ratna. However, when he does not show much interest, she tricks him into believing that she is drowning. The pond becomes another metaphor for Rani’s sexuality. When the bait of the mole does not work, she uses the bait of her feigned naivety to catch Ratna. She confesses to Choudhry while narrating this incident, “Oho! I wasn’t going to drown really. I ... I was just going to show him the mole”. Chunnan, on the other hand, shows a great deal of interest to Rani by gifting her with her favourite gurdhani (a sweet made of jaggery) and kheer (puffed rice with sugar). She says, “Hunh! I don’t beg him. He brings it to me and asks me to go to his shack. I don’t like him at all—he has such a big moustache; it makes me sneeze. Phun...phun!”. In this scenario, the gurdhani and kheer are like precious goodies offered to a queenly goddess of sexuality in an attempt to please her so that she approves of Chunnan’s request. Like Choudhry, Chunnan, too, is aware

of how empowered Rani sexually is, so the question of forcing her into a coitus does not appear in his mind. Here again, in the sexual politics between Rani and Chunnan, Rani is reciprocal enough to voice her objection to his moustache, and her rejection of Chunnan as a preferred choice.