

Feminist Consciousness in Jane Eyre and the God of Small Things

Raj Kumar Tharu¹, Shreedhar Adhikari², and Dr. Vinay Tripathi³

^{1,2}Research Scholar, Glocal School of Education, Glocal University, Saharanpur, Uttar Pradesh, India

³Assistant professor, Glocal School of Education, Glocal University, Saharanpur, Uttar Pradesh, India

Correspondence should be addressed to Raj Kumar Tharu; rajtharu62@gmail.com

Copyright © 2022 Made Raj Kumar Tharu et al. This is an open-access article distributed under the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

ABSTRACT- The research was an attempt at exploring feminist consciousness in Jane Eyre and God of Small Things. Since both the writers are divided by the spacio-temporal factors, this study helped to understand the origin, development and growth of feminism from the period of Victorian England to the present century of modern India. This comparison was essential to probe the impact of time, culture, religion, nation, and socio-political set ups on the feminist movements. We also can gather the historical background that shaped the slow and steady progress of feminism which spread awareness of the existing inequality on the basis of gender. This research thus is useful for throwing light on the two novels which are embodiments of the respective centuries in which they were written. Charlotte Bronte and her two sisters started writing at a time when the literary world was a prohibited area for women. The quest for identity in Jane Eyre is piogantly portrayed by a woman author who is ironically compelled to hide her own feminine identity behind the male pseudonym. The pen was the metaphorical symbol of authorial creation and only men were considered the masters of all creation/production including the literary products.

Keywords: Feminism, Male Pseudonym, Spacio-Temporal Factors, Metaphorical

I. INTRODUCTION

Attempting an unlikely comparison of two different authors from varied backgrounds may seem uncalled for. Yet research is that which aims to search in every corner for evidences and establish the findings as proof of the hypothesis. Therefore the present thesis begins this daring proposal to compare Jane Eyre and The God of Small Things as embodiments of feminist consciousness. The vast divergence in time, space, culture, custom, language and social practices do not bring about any impediments to the comparative method, rather it shows the deep rootedness of feminism, its growth and achievements from the Victorian England to modern India [1, 3]. The focus is mainly to observe the consciousness of being women. Since both the authors are women and quite popular for their daring frankness one become quite inquisitive to know how these women dared to break the code of social conventions of their time. Our real research should start then from the definition, history and growth

of feminism as a movement that extended from private lives to public and political affairs [2].

Prior to the advent of feminism, the condition of women was deplorably sad. Women are mostly silenced, displaced, interiorized, marginalized, discriminated and enslaved to become object of male possession. Devalorized as beings incapable of wisdom, they are kept as child bearers with a womb to nurture the seed of man [4].

She is a women- a woe (to) man since it is she who with her lack of wisdom and thoughtful action induced by desire or passion yielded readily to the temptation of the serpent. She is evil by nature who seduced Adam to taste the forbidden fruit and thereby to lose heaven [5]. She is the weak sex because she needs the protection of a male and she herself is full of weakness (the lack of strength). She is unstable, disloyal, and swayed by tempestuous passions. She is unfit for adventurous explorations and so is supposed to be a mute companion without personal opinions, decisions or desires. She is the native savage who should submit to the male colonizer for her own improvement. She has no inherent virtue and so is the heart of darkness which should await the enlightenment rendered through male teaching, conditioning, cultivation, pruning and attempts of civilizations [6].

A women is a second sex because she was a product of an afterthought. Adam the first man was made in the image of God into whom was breathed the breath of the Creator. He was to be the crown and glory of creation, the wonder of the angels and the ruler of all the rest of the creations. Eve on the other hand was created a helpmate for man, made from the mere rib of man (Genesis 2:22). She is thereby subservient to man who is her master [7].

She is the fair sex because she ought to be beautiful in order to please a man. She is also to be fair-i.e. - to be virtuous. While a man has freedom to wander and to indulge in physical gratification of his biological needs, a woman must be virtuous and guard her wandering passions so as to be loyal to her master. She has to be the epitome of virtue and beauty so that her man and master may boast of his wonderful possession. She is given the hearth while man is a master of the fields. The useful education of women included good manners and useful occupations like, sewing, knitting, embroidery, housekeeping talents, singing, painting, and prayers. She is to be ornate and not to be a bread winner. This resulting in her economic dependence on the male supporters like, father, brother, husband, uncle or sons [6].

Though suppressed in this age long tradition, the awakening of women, the spreading of the awareness and finally a sound revolt to fight for equality grew from mild protests to tumultuous revolutions. The birth of feminism, its growth and the formation of feminist theory are the consequences of the demands made to obliterate gender inequality [7].

The aim of this research is to see the growth of feminism through the words of these two writers and assess its impact in making women self reliant and daring equals to the men.

II. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

A comparative study of the authors from different time period and different regions and cultures reveals so many important points. The growth and progress of feminism across culture, time and space can be assessed. The method of comparison gives insight into the plight of women and the efforts taken to uplift their condition. Mere political and social reforms done on paper will never help in the actual changes that ought to take place in women. The novelists show how women themselves have to assert their individuality to bring in the real progress. Thus the selection of novels become significant for others to see how women can shatter the shackles that enslave them [5].

III. OBJECTIVES

- To compare the selected novels.
- Study the historical and national background of the authors.
- To assess the growth of feminism through ages and cultures.
- To study the condition of women and the agents of their oppression.
- To measure the steps taken by the women to liberate themselves.

IV. METHODOLOGY

- History of feminism will be studied.
- Historical, social, religious, cultural background of both the authors will be studied.
- Feminist approach of both the authors will be compared.

V. CONCLUSION

A comparative study of the authors from different time period and different regions and cultures reveals so many important points. The growth and progress of feminism across culture, time and space can be assessed. The method of comparison gives insight into the plight of women and the efforts taken to uplift their condition. Mere political and social reforms done on paper will never help in the actual changes that ought to take place in women. The quest for identity in Jane Eyre is piogantly portrayed by a woman author who is ironically compelled to hide her own feminine identity behind the male pseudonym. The pen was the metaphorical symbol of authorial creation and only men were considered the masters of all creation/production including the literary products.

REFERENCES

- [1] Feminism – Definition and More from the Free Merriam-Webster Dictionary". merriam-webster.com. <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/feminism>. Retrieved 12 June 2011.
- [2] Definition of feminism noun from Cambridge Dictionary Online: Free English Dictionary and Thesaurus". [dictionary.cambridge.org](http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/british/feminism). <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/british/feminism>. Retrieved 12 June 2011.
- [3] Oxford English Dictionary (online ed.). Oxford University Press. June 2012. (Definition is of noun.)
- [4] Butler, Judith (March 1992). "Feminism in Any Other Name". *Differences* 6 (2–3): 30.
- [5] Messer-Davidow, Ellen (2002). *Disciplining Feminism: From Social Activism to Academic Discourse*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press. ISBN 0-8223-2843-7.
- [6] Echols, Alice (1989). *Daring to Be Bad: Radical Feminism in America, 1967–1975*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. p. 416. ISBN 0-8166-1787-2.
- [7] Cornell, Drucilla (1998). *At the Heart of Freedom: Feminism, Sex, and Equality*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press. ISBN 978-0-691-02896-5.