

Contents

SL.No	Articles	Page. No
16.	Women: A Desireless for a Desired in Gitanjali Kolanad's <i>Girl Made of Gold</i>	85
17.	ERUDITION OF WOMEN IN ANITA DESAI'S <i>VOICES IN THE CITY</i>	90
18.	CLASH OF CULTURES IN WOLE SOYINKA'S <i>THE LION AND THE JEWEL</i>	96
19.	EMERGENCE AND EVOLUTION OF GENDER STUDIES: A DISQUISITION ON VARIOUS PERSPECTIVES AND METHODOLOGIES	105
20.	Language and Narrative Techniques in the Novels of Saul Bellow	112
21.	Contextualizing Zoomorphism and Women's Identity in D.H. Lawrence's <i>The Rainbow</i>	119
22.	Towards Ecological Consciousness: An Ecocritical Study of Anita Nair's <i>The Better Man</i>	128
23.	ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEXTBOOKS IN INDIAN CLASSROOMS: AN ANALYSIS	140
24.	Values of Women Empowerment in Girish karnad's <i>NAGA _MANDALA</i>	155
25.	Challenges and Remedies of Teaching, Learning English in India	159
26.	PERSONALITY, SLY, RECONNAISSANCE AND PSYCHOLOGY OF THE CHARACTER NANDHINI IN PONNIYIN SELVAN	165
27.	Postcolonial Perspectives in <i>A New World</i> by Amit Chaudhuri	169
28.	REPRESENTATION OF CLASS AND CULTURAL CHANGE IN THE NOVEL <i>THE REMAINS OF THE DAY</i> BY KAZUO ISHIGURO	176
29.	A Study of Trauma and Violence against Children in Hwang Dong-hyuk's <i>Silenced</i>.	183
30.	Re-vision : Quest for Identity in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's <i>Oleander Girl</i>	191

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EMERGENCE AND EVOLUTION OF GENDER STUDIES: A DISQUISITION ON VARIOUS PERSPECTIVES AND METHODOLOGIES

Abstract:

The origin of gender studies can be traced to late 20th century concerning much about women and their support system. It focused on the representation of gender as a whole in various contexts. However, as the field got evolved, it opened up space to various associated disciplines which includes masculinity studies, queer studies etc. The paper focuses on numerous perspectives and methodologies of such new areas with specific focus on the origin and evolution of masculinity studies. The possibilities of applying few such methodologies which includes surveys, experimental analysis in the evolved form of gender studies as a whole and its effects shall also be discussed in this research article. The social construction of men and the expectations from the society upon them are key areas in this field of masculinity studies. The portrayal of men, impact of societal pressure and the conflicts inflicted upon them are gaining research attention. The concept of masculinity studies found its place in contemporary literary novels. The paper also analyzes how patriarchy has its impact not just on women but also upon men. This perspective shift is obvious and can be observed in numerous works. It can be observed that the basis of this masculinity studies field is deep-rooted in the gender studies. Thus, it is obvious that newly emerged research areas

would have its own challenges. Along with such challenging elements, varied perspectives relevant to the masculinity studies and how does the society respond to it are also discussed in this paper in-depth.

Keywords: Evolution, Gender, Masculinity studies, Methodologies, Societal pressure

INTRODUCTION:

Gender studies favored feminism to a larger extent when it was originated in the last century. However, the evolutionary process shall be considered as beneficial not just to feminism but also to other major areas which is gaining prominence gradually. Among such newly developing research areas, masculinity studies offer a new perspective which deals exclusively with the plight of men as a result of patriarchy and the social construct of men as a whole. The novel *The Last Samurai* by Helen DeWitt is considered for the analysis based on masculinity studies. It can be also compared with similar works which are dealt in detail in this paper. As masculinity studies seeks more attention at present, there are other relevant areas of research as well which is gradually becoming inevitable. Thus, Gender studies encompasses and offers new dimensions to contemporary literature with which each specific field like masculinity studies can be thoroughly examined.

THE EVOLUTIONARY PROCESS AND ITS OUTCOME:

Though introduced many decades back, Gender studies still provide fresh perspectives and it is developing on a consistent basis. This Gender studies field is first of its kind to discuss both about men and women along with their roles in society and what it anticipates from them in return. Therefore, Gender studies provide space to approach masculinity studies exclusively to get acquainted with the behavioral attitude of men and also to promote understanding from their perspective. This initiation of masculinity studies as a separate and exclusive field to study about men would definitely ensure that equality among

genders is obtained. This understanding amidst genders in general, would also be beneficial for peaceful co-existence in the society. When such exclusive research is done, more insights would develop which paves way to further enhance the growth of this field. The study of genders varies sharply in various cultural backgrounds where proper ethnography-based study would be productive. Initially, there were ideas which suggested men rank higher than women in all aspects which is not true. Gradually, it is observed that there are also ideologies which state that among men, few are considered to be more powerful and worthier than few other men, who also share the society with them. Though, the society plays a vital role in developing such circumstances, an individual's behavior helps to enhance it, and as a result, makes them face its own adverse effects (Masculinity Studies).

PATRIARCHAL VICTIMIZATION UNBIASED OF GENDER:

One of the major areas of focus as far as masculinity studies is concerned is to trace and express that men are also victims of patriarchy that exists for a very long period of time. This victimization was believed to affect only women but it is understood recently that even men undergo certain issues due to patriarchal structure and they also suffer a lot with other conditions in the society. One such element is the job roles. There are so many stereotypes around job roles which affect both men and women on an equal basis. There are few jobs which are portrayed as jobs done by men and few other as jobs done by women. However, at present, situations are changing that any skillful person irrespective of the job nature, who is best suited for the role, can excel in the field. Thus, masculinity studies and Gender studies as a whole discuss such elements as well which supports both men and women and defend them from gender-oriented stereotypes that exist.

There are literary works by various authors which portray the victimization of men in the patriarchal system. Such authors have also elaborated on the adverse conditions of

women, as the victimization on women is comparatively more than men. However, the sufferings of male characters that were picturized by authors also receive more attention in recent times. It is not just the patriarchy that affects men but there are certain other factors which has an impact upon their behavior. One such element which has a huge concern in literary works is the plight of men due to the absenteeism of the father. A protagonist or any particular character whose father is not present from early days of his life, struggles a lot and searches for an identity. This can be observed in female characters as well. There are literary works like *The Last Samurai* by Helen DeWitt in which the protagonist undergoes many tough situations and adventures as he is deprived of his father's presence.

THE LAST SAMURAI – A MASCULINITY STUDIES VIEWPOINT:

The Last Samurai by Helen DeWitt is about a young boy named Ludovic and his mother. The author has made the character sketch of Ludovic in an interesting manner by depicting him as an intellectual right from his birth. Ludovic was portrayed as a boy who is capable of reading more than three languages when he was not even four years old. His mother also plays a vital role in his intellectual development. Once, his mother introduced him to Akira Kurosawa's work and he was sure that it was a masterpiece. As the novel progresses, Ludovic's character depth becomes obvious. He is not just an intellectual child but also has developed strong determination, which urges him to find his father. This adds benefits to his personality traits. He comes across many different scenarios and struggles in the process. However, eventually he found his father which makes the quest successful. It could be later understood that he was not happy with this identification. The author Helen DeWitt, through Ludovic conveys that he worries, as he had wasted so many years on tracing his father. Ludovic, as he found out later that his real father, whom he was searching for, did not satisfy him in a father's position. He expresses that he should have sought some other

person who would suit the best in being his father. Therefore, he moves on to trace a person who would qualify to fill his father's role.

Such quest for father at a very young age, shall be observed in the masculinity studies perspective. The quest for a person who can potentially fill the role of his father clearly reveals the impact of absenteeism of father upon Ludovic. This also has an impact in shaping his identity. Through such literary works, the effects of absenteeism of father upon male children can be observed. These elements are focused exclusively in masculinity studies. Similarly, such a kind of absence impacts female children as well. Thus, both can be specifically concentrated in the perspective of gender studies. There are so many other novels in various genres which deal with the impact of father absenteeism and its effects upon male and female children.

PERSPECTIVE SHIFT IN CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE:

Therefore, novels like *The Last Samurai* makes it evident that the perspective shift is taking place in a larger extent on the basis of masculinity studies. From such novels, it is obvious that even in domestic fiction or fiction which deals with father-son relationships, interpretation through the lens of masculinity studies or gender studies as a whole is possible. As far as methodologies are concerned, individual surveys or experimental studies can be carried out but to remain more authentic, the patriarchal effects upon male characters and their share in domestic circumstances proves to be a novel method in analysing masculinity studies. This kind of methodology gives a broader perspective to analyse in-depth. In contemporary literature, masculinity studies focus on not just the physical health but also mental and emotional health. In addition to it, it also deals with plethora of sufferings men undergo due to the gender factor. This leads to the emergence of varied perspectives and dimensions with which this new area can be approached. Gender equality is the prominent

focus of gender studies. Therefore, masculinity studies, proves to be a beneficial one in achieving this goal. Thus, the perspective shift towards male characters in the contemporary fiction where men also undergo trauma would be useful in obtaining the equality between genders.

CONCLUSION:

118 / 385

Therefore, the field of masculinity studies gradually raises to prominence as a result of which holistic approach is possible that would benefit genders in common. This would also pave way to eradicate all sort of conflicts revolving around this gender studies. This is mainly because, it provides space to express the mindset of men and difficulties they undergo as a result of which a wider perspective and interpretation of gender can be made and analysed. As the field slowly progresses, the works that are pertained to women in domestic space traditionally and works that are pertained to men in the society are getting interchanged. This particular change shows the way in which men and women support each other thereby promoting equality which is the primary objective of gender studies as well. It is obvious that, if gender studies continue to evolve, there would be more positive changes in the society.

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