



BARBARA KINGSOLVER'S FLIGHT BEHAVIOUR: AN ECO FEMINISTIC APPROACH

K. Dharshini

Ph. D Research Scholar, PG & Research Department of English, Vellalar College for Women, Thindal, Erode.

ABSTRACT

Literary works express the ideas and feelings of human beings towards the society. They act as a foremost tool in building social construction among the people. The literary works also plays a vital role in the lives of women for their upliftment. They make women to realise their self. One such writer who strives hard to elevate women through her works is Barbara Kingsolver. Though she is an ecologist writer, she concentrates on her women characters by associating them with the natural world. Eco-feminists states that without any liberation to nature there will not be no successful in liberating women from hurdles. In the novel Flight Behaviour Kingsolver portrays Dellarobia's behavioural amelioration in relation with nature. Thus, this paper accounts on Dellarobia's fight or flight behaviour in search of her own identity.

KEYWORDS : Behaviour, Eco-feminism, Identity, Nature, Patriarchy

INTRODUCTION

The novel, Flight Behaviour was published in 2012 by Barbara Kingsolver, an American Novelist. In this novel, the author draws ecological scenes and feminism in the backdrop of fictional locale Featherdown, Tennessee. This novel emphasises on the changes in nature's reaction and evokes the concept of women empowerment in the minds of the readers. Kingsolver raises her feministic voice against the male dominated society. She endeavours to bring changes in treating women. In this novel Kingsolver shows how environmental awareness significantly changed protagonist life positively

Feminism

Feminism is a critical term coined to fight for the rights and identity of women. Moeliono says that, feminism is a women movement of demanding full equality between women and men, equality rights that covers all aspects of life, both in the political, economic, social, and cultural aspects. Feminism is an activity to fight for the interests and rights for women. Feminism is not just a movement; but a will power by females to attain self-determination. Feminist theory examines the social roles of men and women, their interests, experiences, etc... The themes often explored in feminist theory are oppression, objectification, patriarchy, discrimination, and stereotypes.

Eco Feminism

Francoise d' Eaubonne coined the term eco-feminism in 1974 and urges women to take necessary actions to the issues related to them. In her book "Feminism or Death" (1974), she talks not only about the struggle of women, but also about the life and death of humans and the planet. She urges not for the overthrow of male power but insisted on change in system of power itself. D' Eaubonne prognosticate, "the planet placed in the feminine will flourish for all." many aspects of eco-feminists emerged in the late 1970's. One among them is "Cultural Ecofeminists", who stretches the importance of women towards nature, as a part of validating the chief status of women. The Cultural eco-feminists relate women with nature as they are playing the role of nurturing and caring.

Dellarobia's Void Life

The protagonist Dellarobia was born and brought up in Tennessee. Though she is married and has children, her marriage life seems to be unsuccessful. She cannot find any love with her husband. She is distressed and decides to have an illicit relationship with a telephone repairman. She thought of satisfying herself through this relationship. While she is heading towards her lover's house, her eyes visualise a vast number of butterflies surrounding her husband's family farm. She has not seen those kinds of butterflies in her whole life. She considers it as a bad omen. Dellarobia is a complete

representation of medieval women. Though she is smarter and intelligent than her husband, she is in an inexpressible place. "A certain feeling comes from throwing your good life away, and it is one part rapture" (Flight Behaviour 1). She is a woman who keeps all her sufferings within herself, but still aims to create her own identity. This novel is a recreation of patriarchal society, where women are being dominated throughout their lifetime.

Dellarobia is a woman of twenty-eight who is waiting to complete her studies. As born in a poor family and as a girl, she is not able to continue her education. Once she gets into marriage life, everything turns upside down. With an unlovable partner and intolerant family members she runs her life without any interest. She is a "piece of work" (Flight Behaviour, 13) or a "lazy daisy" (Flight Behaviour, 46), who is just needed to give birth and take care of everyone without considering herself. She has to either accept the patriarchal hegemony or lead her way towards destruction of her life. In common, women are silent sufferers; though they play many roles such as daughter, sister, wife and mother, but they cannot own an identity in their life.

With the sight of butterflies, she decides to return to her husband's house. The arrival of butterflies brings a chance to Dellarobia to begin her studies. Many scientists come to examine about the butterflies. Their farm reaches much popularity among the tourists and the media. With the help of a scientist named Ovid, Dellarobia starts her life with hope. She begins to live her life and love her life by studying the lifecycle of butterflies. She spends most of her time in analysing the butterflies along with the scientist. She finds that these monarch butterflies usually live in hot regions. But due to climatic change, the butterflies migrate to Dellarobia's family farm.

Dellarobia, on knowing that the butterflies will not survive in harsh winter, feels devastated as Tennessee is a region of cool climate. "Things look impossible when you've not done them" (Flight Behaviour 592). But to Dellarobia's surprise, the butterflies struggle in the cold to save their life and at last they get back their soul. With this Dellarobia too gets a hope in her life. Dellarobia's growth starts elevating only when she understands about nature's lesson. She recognises her ability and dreams to live her life without the vibes of negative persons surrounding her life. This novel attempt to convey awareness both environmentally and globally through the character of Dellarobia. For Dellarobia "being a stay-at-home mom was the loneliest kind of lonely, in which she was always and never by herself." (Flight Behaviour 81) She decides to leave her husband and to continue her college life. She moves off from the farm along with her children and starts her own life. By working in the lab, she starts earning money and

continues her studies. Dellarobia starts her journey from an unhappy farm life and reaches a self-esteem level, portrays her consciousness towards nature. Just like the butterflies, Dellarobia chooses her way of life to make herself independent. "The sky was too bright and the ground so unreliable, she couldn't look up for very long. Instead, her eyes held steady on the fire bursts of wings reflected across the water, a merging of flame and flood. Above the lake of the world, flanked by White Mountains, they flew out to a new earth" (Flight Behaviour 432).

CONCLUSION

Dellarobia in the beginning without much thought and consideration steps to destroy her own life, but at the end she fights and flight to create an own identity in her life through self-preservation. Feminism is not to go against men or society but make women to understand about their own self. Nature and women are related and they resemble in many aspects. Abusing them will lead to destruction and chaos, in society and life. In general, women are the strongest and most brave creatures. But due to the domination in society and in their own house, women become the victim of sufferings. Once when they start realising their strength, they emerge as heroine like Dellarobia. To regain one's place in the world, one must undergo a deep analysis over our ecosystem. That is the best possible solution for one to understand that the real problem is lack of concern towards nature and women. Thus, by observing nature, Dellarobia changes her life in a positive way. Through her determination, she creates her own identity and frees herself from the norms of patriarchal society.

REFERENCES

1. Allison, Julian Emmons. "Ecofeminism and Global Environmental Politics." Oxford Research Encyclopaedia of International Studies. 2010.
2. Ecofeminist Undercurrents in Barbara Kingsolver's Flight Behaviour.
3. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/358089798_Ecofeminist_Undercurrents_in_Barbara_Kingsolver%27s_Flight_Behaviour.
4. Francoise, et al. Feminism or Death. How the Women's Movement Can Save the Planet.
5. Verso Books, 2022.
6. Kingsolver, Barbara. Flight Behaviour. New York: Harper Collins, 2012.