



ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

English Literature

A LITERATURE REVIEW ON PORTRAYAL OF FEMINISTIC PERSPECTIVE IN ALCOTT'S "LITTLE WOMEN"

KEY WORDS: Little women, feminism, review analysis

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ABSTRACT

Femininity is a concept that existed over the years and underwent vivid assumptions and interpretations. But a revolutionary change of the same ceased to exist. The claim that gender is socially constructed and the roles each gender has to perform has paved ways for societal constraints, inequalities and rigorous beliefs. Although being a part of modern era, we still bear confusions and misinterpretations regarding gender equality as the entire conceptualization seems demeaned. This paper would focus upon Alcott's Feministic views in the novel *Little Women*, which is an extraordinary literary text that highlights feministic traits and gender disparities through the character portrayal of four young girls and particularly Josephine March. Furthermore, this paper would examine the reviews of the above mentioned literary text to analyse the addressal of femininity in the previous works of the researchers and discover the gap analysis and the scope for further research.

INTRODUCTION

Gender is socially constructed and also the disparities within it follow such constructions. Every individual either male or female are confined to adapt a set of repeated actions as claimed by Butler in her work *Gender Trouble*. When both the genders (male and female) are united in an institution, they may knowingly or unknowingly perform their gendered acts and still there prevails to be certain imbalances and differentiations among them. Societal conditioning and expectations have led to the formation of gender. While analysing *Little Women*, we get a clearer picture of the unconventional writer Louisa May Alcott who's alike Jo. The novel revolves around the four young girls and the protagonist Josephine March, who's ahead of her times. Although a children's text, this novel has been rooted with vivid branches of feminism throughout.

Margaret March is a feminist, being the eldest, she portrays a motherly figure and is a governess by profession which makes her perspective different from the rest whereas, Josephine is the contrast of Meg and can cross any conventional boundaries for making life better. As we compare these two sisters, we understand that although their attributes are different, they are emerging out to be knowledgeable individuals. Thus we can claim that each girl in the novel portrays a different type of feministic approach in their attributes and beliefs which makes it a feministic novel on the whole.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Feminism is identified as an imbalance of potentiality in a society wherein both the genders exist. (Hannam, 2007). It emerged as a hostility towards patriarchal society, Mary Wollstonecraft's essay *A Vindication of the rights of Woman*, highlights the importance of being educated equally and criticises the patriarchal society for refraining women from the same. Wollstonecraft portrays liberty and equality of rights and freedom through her revolutionary works. Emily Toth in her book *Unveiling Chopin* highlights that Chopin had to disguise her true self to publish her works. (Tolentino, 2008).

Chopin was a woman ahead of her times who tried to draw parallels especially through her works which represented the themes of women's liberation from the constraints of society and marriage, and simultaneously correlating her personal experiences of the same. Chopin was a free spirited woman, whose perspectives were unique and sensational. Emily Toth states that Chopin dolled herself to look presentable and intentionally seductive. But the society criticised her for not attending the household chores and instead taking leisure walks by flaunting herself. (Tolentino, 2008).

While we observe the ancient traditions of India, it glorified some headstrong women through Vedas and other holy books and also liberalised them. However the latter periodic history witnessed suppression and subjugation of the feminine society. Subjugation and Victimisation existed over the years across the globe, such contemporary issues are difficult to resolve. (Saha 2013). Women are subjected to marginalisation and the domestication of them led to suppression and inequality among both genders. George Burnap, a clergyman from New Hampshire states that God's intention of creating man and women separately was to mould them to behave differently (Rennemo, 2015). In the *Journal of a Novel*, Steinbeck portrayed women as vicious and crafty and breaks off the stereotype of women being sidelined and submerged. He although brings out the negative aspect of a feminine character, it is understood that being a social animal, human beings are more wicked and cunning. It is the societal control that enforces us to behave in a standard manner otherwise our inner self is the wickedest of all.

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SCOPE OF RESEARCH

The further scope of the research would pave ways for the analysis of marxist feminism, existentialist feminism and also character analysis apart from the protagonist which would bring in novelty and deeper knowledge of the concept feminism in the researcher and also the readers.

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