

A Comparative Study of Select Novels of Ruth Praver Jhabvala and Margaret Atwood: A Feminist Reading

Dr. A. PAVANI,
Assoc. Professor of English
SVIT, Hampapuram
ANANTAPUR

Dr. V. B. CHITHRA
Professor of English
JNTUA CEA, JNT University,
ANANTAPUR

Abstract:- This article deals with the comparison between study of selective novels of Ruth Praver Jhabvala and Margaret Atwood about the problems of the female gender and their fight against the male gender. It depicts the courageous and strong footprints of the women who have fought against the injustice of male domination. The existence of women's rights reveals the folly of gender politics, gender discrimination, injustice, and exploitation.

Thus both the authors have especially related with the problems of women and their scuffle to conquer them. Even though their domains are not same, there are many resemblances in their novels.

I. INTRODUCTION

The present feminine novelists have advanced their style which expresses women's awareness. Each novelist is different from the other. Every novelist has her own expectations of experiences, her perspective of analysing the things, and her narration of the persona is different. But there is one point similar in them. They focus on a deep sense of enlightening social change. The works of the Indian women novelist like Kamala Das, Shobhaa De, Anita Nair, Toru Dutt, Sarojini Sahoo, Nabaneeta Dev Sen, etc. can be compared with the present Canadian novelists, like Marie-Claire Blais, Bonnie Burnard, Heather O'Neill and Lisa Moore. All these authors write of women's life and life of affecting women.

II. LITERATURE SURVEY

The inception of women authors in Indian English literature took place in the nineteenth century. After the Indian freedom movement that they could make a firm resolution to Indian English fiction. The post-revolution period has highlighted to the frontline of many famous women writers who have refined Indian English fiction by a narrative style of women's problems. Women have been the spotlight of many literary works in this era. Women writers like Jhumpa Lahiri, Mahasweta Devi, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Rama Mehta, Bharathi Mukherjee, etc. have achieved recognition in recent times. Women's issues, which were there previously, are now transferred to the center. From the above point of these women writers, one gets a glance of a different world that is not mentioned in literature. Women, who were earlier treated as second-class citizens, are replaced in their position in these novels. These

novels show the impact of education on women, their new position in society, and their submission of individuality.

According to Shanta Krishna Swamy, a woman as "the passive female is philosophically prepared for defeat and withdrawal rather than independence and action...she is expected to be a political non-threatening, neutral being devoted, exclusively, to maintenance." [1]

III. AIM

The research work deals with a comparison of selected novels of Ruth Praver Jhabvala and Margaret Atwood from various angles. The research focuses on Jhabvala's & Margaret Atwood's views on and interpretation of women's life.

IV. OBJECTIVES OF PRESENT INVESTIGATIONS

- To be familiar with the major themes of both Indian and Canadian women's life.
- To be well-versed in the various aspects of the individual self and the social world as presented in the novels of Ruth Praver Jhabvala and Margaret Atwood.

V. SUMMARY

Ruth Praver Jhabvala, a citizen of Germany who married an Indian architect, occupies a special position in an Indian English novel. Basically, her novels reveal with the backdrop of Indians who have benefited from India's globalization and corporatism, and especially the non-natives who have married Indians. In the novel: *Esmond in India* (1957), the title of the person is a foreign civil servant with an Indian housewife and a non-native paramour. He is a resident of India, makes friends with some of the social mobility, Indian women, those who are pre-occupied with his ill-mannered nature. As the main role is involved in social and political connections, Esmond's wife who is suffering from illness leaves him. Another novel: *A Backward Place* (1965), tells itself with the predicament of many non-native foreign women who are staying in India differ. Etta, who belongs to Hungary marries to an Indian fall apart years earlier, lives as the lover of a mogul whose dalliance with his "niece" and their impending immigration to Europe results in committing suicide. In distinction, Judy, a foreign woman, admires her intimacy in Hindi family whose happiness and concern are a clear reflection to her strict English brought up. Jhabvala's novel: *Heat and Dust* (1975), for which she won the Booker Prize, narrates

two works: that of Olivia, a young newly married British bride who is supposed to stay in India in the 1920s, whose ruined by an South Indian prince ends in scandal; and that of her granddaughter, who, managed by the elder woman's diary, finds Olivia's route through India and finally meets the same worse luck. In Jhabvala's novel, *In Search of Love and Beauty* (1983), she leaves India and shifts to New York, this is her beginning novel to take place initially in the United States, though the leading role, a sadhu, attracts a woman to ruin her life just as in her earlier works. The novel, *Shards of Memory* (1995) is again to spoil womanhood in the cross-cultural saga of human relationships. The novelist weaves an important in picturizing the disguise of four generations, all suffering from the animosity of ethical waste and emotional feelings and all searching for spiritual guidance.

Margaret Atwood, who resides in Canada. She is a poet, novelist, literary critic, essayist, and environmental activist. Her works express a clear thought about the feminist message. They come under the division of fiction of protest, though this one rarely diminishes their artistic value. When we compare with the other women writers, Atwood is very much keen in demonstrating that women are oppressed in Western society and their choices are severely restricted. The Four novels deal with this theme exactly: *The Edible Woman* (1969), *Surfacing* (1972), *Lady Oracle* (1976), *Bodily Harm* (1981), and *The Handmaid's Tale* (1983). Besides counteracting male domination, and modern capitalist society, these novels also explain a quest on the part of the heroines which are similar in all cases. It implies the progress from the old sex roles towards a new one, and the key role is to achieve self-definition as a woman. In *The Edible Woman* (1969), Atwood pin points the rejection of male character, and losing identity in the society. Marian Mac Alpin, the key role, struggles with introspection of the face of the insubstantial options available to her as a teenaged woman in the 1960s. Her initial expectation is to satisfy her father and mother and her financial matters. Marian doubts about the marriage by assuming that she will notice herself completely formidable about her husbands' eminent personality, successively suppressing her imagination on her own. She prepares a woman-shaped cake (an "edible woman") and dedicates it to her fiancé, Peter. Natalie Palumbo trusts Marian "hopes to fend off her metaphorical consumption by Peter, and resolve her ambivalence to marriage" [2]. This survey of the nearly marriage as traditionally envisioned revolves as a central idea in *The Handmaid's Tale*. In *Surfacing* (1972), Atwood highlights the motif of individuality, this era studying national as well as gender inequality. This description is examined through the unknown female heroine collapsed consciousness, in which reality, memory, fairy tales, and mythology are mixed. The protagonist introspects herself as completely restricted and unwanted from the people around her. At the personal stage, she feels avoided by those with whom she is intimately involved, especially her boyfriend and her best female friend. According to society, she feels dejected and politically relieved. The view of her separation and detachment stems from a lack of individuality, which Atwood describes by leaving her anonymous. In *The Handmaid's Tale*, the author again implies the importance of

names, significantly the names of women roles. As Natalie Cooke examines, when related to Marian MacAlpin, the unspecified protagonist of *Surfacing* may "find herself in a much stronger position as a woman of the 1970s" [3](68). Moreover, the revolution for women's freedom has not freed her from male imbibed pressure to marry, nor has it absolved her of the fault she feels as a result of her abortion. In *Lady Oracle* (1976), Atwood discusses the duality and multiplicity as functions of the name. The protagonist Joan Foster builds a series of identities. By this systemshe wants to secure love and acceptance while avoiding the consequences of her actions. Foster acts up to integrate these identities and spends her life on the run, hiding her real activities from the men she is involved with. Foster is willing to target about her death to maintain this fragmentation, thereby not willing to take responsibility for her actions and failed relationships. In *The Handmaid's Tale*, the author highlights the female protagonist's struggle to reconcile conflicting identities: her socially proscribed identity and her authentic identity. In her fifth novel, *Bodily Harm* (1981), Atwood "scrutinizes social myths of femininity" from the point of view of a woman whose body has been "damaged by cancer and a mastectomy"[4]. Rennie, the protagonist, struggles to accept her body's betrayal, "the scar on her breast splits open like a diseased fruit and something [...] crawls out" [5]. As Carol Ann Howells explains, "Rennie's disgust at her own damaged body inevitably affects her account of her relationships with men" [Atwood 85]. The filthy details of these relationships pinpoint the narrative on sexual power politics. Hence, "Rennie is forced to see how the personal and political cannot be separated" [Howells 80]. *The Handmaid's Tale*, Atwood's sixth novel, continues her explorations of gender and identity as well as domestic politics. Since its publication in 1986, the novel has been the subject of intense critical dialog. A dystopian survival text forms at the edge of the twentieth century on the cusp of accomplishing equality between both the sexes, *The Handmaid's Tale* elucidate the dissolution of the United States, resulting in what Christopher Jones rightly quotes as a "reinvigorated hatred of women and the explosive growth of religious (patriarchal) fundamentalism" [6]. This hatred is identified in the imperial force of the Republic of Gilead, a puritanical, reactionary, militaristic regime. Jones marks this cultural shift succinctly; "in this future, men have had it with uppity women and 'put them back in their place'. A civil war is fought toA make women "malleable to men's desires [...]. They must admit to their socially determined roles or be seen as 'demons'" [7]. These type of social characters are focused by a caste system defining standards for human behavior, dressing sense, and social duties, thereby discarding unacceptable cultural trends and beliefs, while controlling a doubtful and potentially rebellious community.

VI. CONCLUSION

These novels depict the brave and bold steps of the women who have fought their way to freedom as artists. The emergence of women's rights exposes the folly of gender politics, gender discrimination, injustice, and exploitation.

Thus both Ruth Praver Jhabvala and Margaret Atwood are essentially concerned with the problems of women and their struggle to overcome them. Though their domains are different, there are many similarities between the novels of both writers.

REFERENCES

- [1.] Krishnaswamy, Shanta.; Glimpses of Women in India, Ashish Publishing House, 1983, 116-117.
- [2.] Natalie Palumbo, 75
- [3.] Cooke, Nathalie. Margaret Atwood: A Critical Companion. Westport: Greenwood Press 2004, 68.
- [4.] Howells, Carol Ann. Margaret Atwood. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005, 80
- [5.] Atwood, Margaret. Bodily Harm. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1981, 60.
- [6.] Choudhary, Hira Lal.; Upkar's UGC NET/JRF/SET English Literature (paper-II&II), Upkar's Prakashan, 2012,435, 436 & 437
- [7.] Goldblatt, Patricia. "Reconstructing Margaret Atwood's Protagonists." *World Literature Today* 73.2 (1999), 275-82.