



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

Unconditional Love: A Study in Lisa See's *The Girl of Hummingbird Lane* and *Dreams of Joy*

Mrs. A. Stella

Assistant Professor & Research Scholar

Bishop Appasamy College of Arts and Science, Coimbatore.

Dr. S. Beryl Darling Violet

Assistant Professor & Research Supervisor

Department of English

Government Arts College, Coimbatore.

During the 20th century, literature had resurgence in the world of fiction in America where many writers from the diversity of ethnic minorities shared their ideas, backgrounds and culture with the public through their novels. Chinese-American writer Lisa See is known for implied details about her culture in her novels. See's novels *The Girl of Hummingbird Lane* and *Dreams of Joy* pay particular attention to the special bond between mothers and daughters. While the mothers have different individual histories, they seem interchangeable as they all have similar personalities that are strong, determined, and have the arcane power to show similar concerns for their daughters' well-being. As a result, the mothers are possessively trying to hold on to their daughters, and the daughters are battling to get away from their mothers.

Lisa See is a confident, smart impeccably researched writer. She is a prolific writer. See spent her childhood hanging out at her great- Grandfather's antique store in Los Angeles China Town. Though she is a person with red hair and eighth generation Chinese, her family embraced her and provided her the stability she expected in growing up. Each of See's books explores something different the readers haven't seen before. She has written with a new aspect, a new time period told from a different point of view. To use a metaphor, her books are as different as salted plums and dried squid. There is no wonder that in some way her novels explore the nature of mothers and daughters. See always has a constant place for her mother in her life. This paper throws light on how See explores the concept of mother daughter relationship through her novels, *The Tea Girl of Hummingbird Lane* and *Dreams of Joy*.

The novels *The Tea Girl of Hummingbird Lane* and *Dreams of Joy* have the intricate carvings of the mother daughter relationship. *The Tea Girl of Hummingbird Lane* describes the love of A-ma towards Li-yan, Li-yan's love for her unseen daughter Yan-yeh or Haley and Constance's love towards Haley (adopted daughter). *Dreams of Joy*, a sequel to *Shanghai Girls* talks about the intense love of Pearl towards her daughter Joy.

The Tea Girl of Hummingbird Lane weaves the customs of the remote Chinese minority. They live in a mountain town in Yunnan where growing tea is the part of their custom. The novel not only throws light on mother daughter relationship but also about the history of growing tea, their economy and romance. The story of the mother daughter bond is bound by an unbroken bond of tea. The story focuses mainly on motherhood. Li-yan, the protagonist has a special relationship with her mother, A-ma. Li-yan is a young girl belonging to Akha tribal community where the villagers rely on rituals, beliefs and taboos detached from rest of the country following the traditions for the past 100 years.

Akha is a tribe which has its origin from Tibet. The people who like to travel from place to place, as they wander used the traditional practice to burn or destroy the forests to create fields. After some time they move to the next place. But in the later years they found difficult to roam from one place to another. So they started to stay in a permanent place. Though they stayed permanently in a place, their houses depend on nature, in the village.

Li-yan and San-pa are childhood friends. They were in love with each other and had a baby out of wedlock. According to Akha law, it is a taboo and the baby should be killed. Li-yan's mother A-ma knows her daughter's secret. Being a mother, she was not ready to kill the baby. Instead carries the burden in her heart and safeguards her from the family members throughout Li-yan's pregnancy. There was belief that a girl should live in her in-law's house during pregnancy. It is again forbidden for a mother to be with the daughter at the time of child birth. If the mother happens to be with the daughter, then the men in the family would die for three generations and rest of the family would suffer for the next nine generations. Despite all the obstacles, A-ma was with Li-yan.

Li-yan with the help of A-ma takes the baby, to an orphanage in Menghai. She names her daughter Yan-yeh and places a tea cake in the wrapping of the baby. After leaving the baby in the orphanage A-ma expresses the pitiable condition of her daughter thus. "Nothing will take away the pain of a lost child".(190). Later after getting married to San-pa, she initiated the search of their daughter but soon after the death of San-pa she was left without anyone to find her daughters' whereabouts. Though she was informed by the authorities in the orphanage about her daughters' adoption by an American couple, Li-yan has had the burden always in her heart.

Li-yan gets married to Jin and has a baby boy. But still her heart aches for her daughter Yan-yeh. Li-yan even uploads the details of her daughter but she neglects mentioning about the tea cake kept in her daughter's wrapping. Yan-yeh named as Haley by her adopted parents always wonders about her Chinese ethnicity. She felt that her skin is darker than any other Chinese in America. Though her adopted parents are so loving and affectionate towards her, she always wanted to find her origin. Finally, Haley along with the teacake travels to China and reaches Spring Well village where Li-yan identifies her daughter by the teacake.

Dreams of Joy is a sequel to *Shanghai Girls*, which takes place in China during Mao Zedong's Great Leap forward. It is a period when wealth was distributed evenly, and collectivist farming was introduced. It is a programme to modernize China according to communist ideals. In *Dreams of Joy* See explores the love of Pearl towards her daughter Joy. In the beginning of the novel, it is known that Joy started her journey to People's Republic China in search of her biological father Z.G.

Joy was brought up with the belief that Sam and Pearl are her parents. When she came to know that May was her mother, and Pearl was her aunt she was dejected about the deceit. She steals the money from her mother Pearl's savings and runs away to China to find her father and to build the new communist nation. Pearl follows Joy to China, despite her bitter experience. When she travels back to China, she reminisces the past memories, when she and her sister May both spent time in posing for artists in Shanghai.

According to the Chinese custom, the widow should "pray, fast and recite sutras"(42). Only thirteen days passed after Sam's death she was least bothered about others' comments and started her journey to China to find her daughter Joy. She was really worried about her daughter because the lifestyle of Joy in Los Angeles is entirely different from Republic China. When she reached China, she was pestered with lots of questions knowing that she is a bourgeois and an overseas Chinese. Though she was tricked with lots of questions, her motherly love was reflected in her answers. She never spoke a word about her daughter Joy.

Pearl, the sacrificial mother reached Shanghai but when she enquired in the Artist's association where Z.G. worked she was informed that he was sent to Green Dragon village as a part of rehabilitation programme. She was worried about Joy who accompanied him to the village and her survival in the remote area of China. Pearl stayed in Shanghai for her daughter's arrival from Green Dragon village. In the meantime, she was forced to accept the rehabilitation programme which is government sponsored torture. Though she was not surrounded by comforting atmosphere she tolerated everything for the sake of her daughter. Pearl was with the hope that she can convince her daughter and take her back to America.

Pearl was assigned with the jobs like street sweeping, collecting posters, scraps etc. She even stayed in her own house in Shanghai as a tenant. Joy was still angry with Pearl and leaves again to the village to marry a man named Tao with whom she had an affair. Joy left Shanghai against the advice of both Pearl and Z.G. Though Pearl was not happy with Tao, she doesn't want to go against her daughter's happiness. She has lot of dreams about her daughter's wedding. But there in Republic China the things are entirely different. It is said, "We're in the New China. You fill out some forms and you're married. That's all (180)".

Joy does not get consent from her mother, Pearl to get married to Tao. When Pearl awaits her arrival in Shanghai from Green Dragon village. Joy is not bothered to talk to her mother instead without informing Pearl and Z.G. she runs away to Green Dragon again. But after her marriage with Tao she feels a kind of loneliness. So, Joy goes in order to find her mother. When she finds her mother standing in the moonlight, she hugs her. When she holds her mother she feels a kind of a warmth, affection and strength. After knowing the secret about her birth secrets, she leaves her for China without the knowledge of anyone in the family. She is angry with both Pearl and May thinking that they deceived her. Even after knowing that May is her real mother, she always addresses Pearl as her mother. In spite of her anger, she knows that her mother Pearl has an unconditional love towards her. Whenever Z.G behaves very strange towards her and insists that he will treat her like a stranger she is reminded of the love Sam had for her. That is the reason why she names her child after her father as, Samantha. Pearl was not able to leave her daughter alone in her in-law's place. So, she stays back in the village for some time and later moves to Shanghai. When she happened to hear that Tao and his family tortures her just because she gave birth to a baby girl, Samantha, she immediately takes initiative to rescue her to bring back to Shanghai. She not only saves her daughter from the clutches of Republic of China and Tao, even takes Joy and Samantha back to their real home, America with all the necessary documents.

It is evident from both the novels taken for study the mother- daughter relationship is instinctive. The mothers' selfless love towards the daughters is seen throughout the novels. The unconditional love of the mother for the daughter and the strong bond is a universal factor which no one can deny. It is so common that it cannot be severed or limited by any boundary.

References

See, Lisa. *The Tea Girl of Hummingbird Lane*. New York: Scibner, 2017.

See, Lisa. *Dreams of Joy*. Great Britain. Bloomsbury, 2011.

<https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/this-is-mother-love-in-lisa-sees-the-tea-girl-of-hummingbird-lane/>

<https://redthreadbroken.wordpress.com/2020/06/23/the-tea-girl-of-hummingbird-lane-review/>