



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

Stifling Systemization of Subjugation and Humiliating Deprivation Coalesce the Occident and the Orient: A Feministic Interpretation.

Somnath Shankhari

Assistant Teacher

Paritosh Memorial Boys High School

Balagarh, Hooghly, West Bengal.

Abstract: Women has to suffer from hammering subjugation because of the gruelling and incongruous systematization of the fundamental rights and civil liberties under the prejudiced orientation of patriarchy. The Female are maltreated as flawed and inferior counterpart of the male, resulting in the untoward expropriation and exploitation of their privileges and freedom as a human being. It begets a stifling sensations of frustration, depression and humiliation, which generate a vulnerable exasperation of being harnessed. Now, during the colonial and even the subsequent postcolonial period, the colonised are considered to be barbaric, ignorant and rigid brute in comparison with the enlightened, considerate and insightful colonisers, formulating a concocted colossal hiatus between the Orient and the Occident. But in the issue of enslavement, domination, constraint and restrictions enforced upon women, the male members of this two contrasting forces seem to coalesce into a singular oppressing squadron, who implements every possible tyrannical measures to dispossess the female of their veritable rights and privileges. In this paper I will try to accentuate on this topic in respect of Stetson's "The Yellow Wall-paper", Dickinson's "I am Wife; I Have Finished That" as well as Eunice De Souza's "Advice to Women" and "Bequest".

Key Words: Subjugation, oppression, domination, colonisers, concocted, colonised, belligerent, repression.

Introduction: To concoct a fictitious image of the inferiority of women, the male dominated society exerts itself in formulating multifarious intrigues, schemes and policies. But the male apparently enshrouds this hideous motif by a pseudo manifestation of sympathy, care and devotion for the benefit and progress of women. Now this horrendous motif to encumber the female with the inferiority complex for infesting them with the crumbling feelings of ignominy, despondence and submissiveness, ranges from the Occidental to the Oriental, from the so called civilized to the uncivilized, from the enlightened to the ignorant, irrespective of class, creed, colour and country.

In "The Yellow Wall-paper", Charlotte Perkins Stetson delineates with graphic detail how the malignant intentions of patriarchy to humiliate, torment, subjugate and purloin the freedom of women in every sphere of life, lead the male to hatch miscellaneous strategies and schemes but, of course, with a façade of cordial magnanimity. In "The Yellow Wall-paper", the narrator is told to be suffering from nervous breakdown, the only treatment applicable to such crisis being "rest cure", as is diagnosed by her husband and brother, who are both doctors. But in the name of recommending rest, the narrator's simple diurnal activities are restricted with utmost severity, her every preference, entreaty and demand is reprobated with obfuscated premonition that it will be detrimental to her fragile health condition. She is tortured with such inhuman psychic strangulation that she is literally confined in a room, subjected to forced sleeping and feeding, and strict ostracization from penmanship, though she is professionally a writer.

Similarly Emily Dickinson in her distinguished poem, "I'm Wife; I've Finished That", sarcastically highlights marriage as one of these deceptive and shrewd subterfuges to rob women of their independence and individuality. Infact, patriarchy considers the freedom of the female in ventillating their distinctive singularity to be a threat to its dictatorial dominance over society, as the ability to find their indigenous selves through self-expression will enervate their confidence to dissolve their predisposed dependence on the male domination. The culture, ideology and narratives are finagled to such ignoble turpitude that women instinctively considered themselves to be shabbily inferior to men, and marriage is brainwashed to be an august ceremony of the patriarchal society to confer women with an advantageous life of security, affluence and psychological stability.

Now, during the long history of colonial rule 'the colonisers' have always considered themselves as superior, and to approbate this bigoted self-assessment, they fabricated a concept of Orientalism, which represents the colonised as inconsiderate, thick-headed and immoral savages, who are needed to be illumined with the morality and education of the Enlightened civilization of the West. But when the subject of depriving and exploiting the female of their due privileges, advantages and freedom arises quite surprisingly, neither of the belligerent forces seem to bother with any kind of disparity between the Occident and the Orient, who allege to melt and weld into a homogeneous patriarchal entity that exerts its teeth and claws in assaulting the women. While commenting on Edward Said's "Orientalism", John McLeod has observed:

"If the Occident was rational, sensible and familiar, the Orient was irrational, extraordinary, abnormal"

But this seeming distinction between antagonistic groups merges when the issue of social repression and domination comes to the front. Both the Occident and the Orient prove themselves to possess equal irrationality, abnormality and brutality to deprive the female of their rights as human beings and to obligate them in embracing stagnant existence in society.

That the East is equally competent in regressing, oppressing and exacting repugnant deprivation on women is palpable from Eunice De Souza's presentation in "Advice to Women", of the pathetic condition in which the women propel themselves, after the termination of a love relationship, as if to remain attached to a male member is the only panacea to their paralyzed existence. De Souza advises the women to inculcate the indifference of a cat so that they learn to defy the complete reliance on the whims of patriarchy, to realize that self-esteem is a priority to the subjugation to a fickle-minded lover and become competent to retort with utmost severity. Likewise in the poem "Bequest", De Souza ironically criticizes the high expectation of patriarchy for the ready submission of women to its pervasive domination and dictating superiority, and revolts violently by proclaiming the preference for an enemy to the autocratic attitude of the male.

Repression of Women as Presented in “The Yellow Wall-paper”: In her celebrated “The Yellow Wall-paper”, Charlotte Perkins Stetson meticulously delineates how her ‘nervous breakdown’ because of postpartum depression, provides her the opportunity to realize in scintillating detail the various modus operandi of patriarchy to enforce the sense of humiliation, helplessness and inferiority on women by highlighting their prima facie lacunae in performing various fundamental activities in life, and emphasizing the necessity for indispensable assistance from the male members of the society to withstand the turbulence of life. But patriarchy is infested with such fiendish shrewdness that it always promulgates a shield of spurious sympathy and counterfeited concern for the women folk. The very beginning of the short story establishes this ironical overtone:

“T is very seldom that mere ordinary people like John and myself secure ancestral halls for summer”

Thus, the narrator's husband has endeavoured to showcase his love, dedication and commitment for his wife by booking a 'colonial mansion' for her speedy recovery from psychic depression without bothering for any considerations.

But that this seeming devotion to their relationship is nothing but a façade, is evident at his denial to leave the estate, when the narrator pleads him to take her away from the uncanny atmosphere of the mansion, because the lease is not over yet and further he claims that, as a doctor, he can witness her steady progress towards healthy orientation from her deteriorating mental constitution:

“You are gaining flesh and color, your appetite is better, I feel really much easier about you.”

That his attachment with his wife is superficial, is once more substantiated by his utter failure in realizing the steady psychological deterioration that his wife is constantly suffering from, while his concentration is on her external vibrant fleshly colour. Had John's relationship with his wife been hinged on internal emotional togetherness, he should definitely have postulated the unrelenting intrapsychic disorientation of the narrator.

By profession the narrator is a writer, and she feels an internal relief in providing a vent to her troubled feelings and emotions in paper, but because of the decree of John and her brother, who are both physicians and 'of high standing', she is dictated to stifle her creative delectation:

“Personally I disagree with their ideas.

Personally, I believe that congenial work, with excitement and change, would do me good.

But what is one to do?”

Initially, she shows zealous allegiance to the peremptory command of the male, relying on the truthfulness of their devoted commitment to her actual benevolence, but gradually the narrator realizes patriarchy has no real consideration and attachment for the women folk, and it is engrossed only with the adequate implementation of its mandate upon the female, caring a fig whether those directives prove to be restorative or detrimental to their malady. That John has conviction only on his own evaluation and is not at all earnest in paying heed to the verified psychic torment of the narrator, as patriarchy has obdurate certitude in the women's indigenous ineptitude :

“John does not know how much I really suffer. He knows there is no *reason* to suffer, and that satisfies him.”

Therefore, after two weeks of her wrenching compliance, she decides to hear the inherent impetus of her feelings and confront the dictates of the male by maintaining a diary. The emotional attachment between the narrator and John has become so meagre that she feels mollified at the absence of her husband, while contrastingly she should crave for the presence of her husband in this 'dreadfully depressing' condition as the soothing cohabitation of the

consorts in an intimate relationship mitigate 'nervous troubles'. Now, during this wrenching hanging around the mansion, she experiences the mysterious complexity of the 'sprawling flamboyant patterns' of the yellow wallpaper, which later becomes her obsession. Initially, she tries hard not to pay any heed to its spookiness, by entreating John to arrange for her accommodation in a room 'downstairs that opened on the piazza', as it imparts a sedative sensations to her agitated mind, but her husband with all his vainglorious preponderance, expresses his verdict for her arrangement upstairs, as it is 'airy and comfortable', and it will be preposterous to extend importance to 'a whim' of the narrator, implying the infeasibility of women's urge and desire.

Ironically this obduracy proves fatal to patriarchy, as by remaining in close contact with the wallpaper, the narrator gets obsessed with it and by turn excogitate it to be a replica of the impenetrable intricacies of patriarchy, which aggravates her psychological disintegration further with its vigilant predominance and presumptuousness: "I get angry with the impertinence of it and the everlastingness. Up and down and sideways they crawl, and those absurd unblinking eyes are everywhere." Gradually, the narrator begins to fathom the wrenchingly obsequious subservience of women under the browbeaten domination of the male, and a type of contrasting subpattern with a distinctive penumbra, seems to lurk beneath the obvious exoteric pattern of the wallpaper. Now this subpattern gradually emerges as a woman while the external pattern takes the form of bars which seems to imprison her potentials and throttle her existence. Interestingly, this subpattern becomes invisible in sunlight, which represents the rigidity and regularity of male oppression, while in dim light, most obviously in moonlight that stands for feminine power and energy and vitality, the female figure becomes palpable:

"At night in any kind of light, in twilight, candlelight, lamplight, and worst of all by moonlight, it becomes bars! The outside pattern I mean, and the woman behind it is as plain as can be."

During her cautious observation, the narrator ascertains that while the yellowish colour of the wallpaper creates a sense of strangulation earlier, a ghastly stifling smell of the wallpaper tentatively seems to cast its repressing impression on her, and to stick around pervasively:

"I find it hovering in the dinning-room, skulking in the parlour, hiding in the hall, lying in wait for me on the stairs."

For an astute reader, the wallpaper with all its repugnant yellowish tincture that by referring to the sun, which is itself an emblem of the scorching rigidity and blistering authority of the male, symbolizes with its nauseating dinginess the crumbling married life of the narrator with John, her psychic sickness as well as the smothering coercion of patriarchy, while the stifling smell with its ubiquitous presence emphasizes the inescapable nature of the strangulating essence of male domination.

Ironical Overtone of Enslavement in "I'm Wife: I've Finished That": Emily Dickinson with sarcastic cynicism has inflicted a slashing attack on the root of the suffocating culture of patriarchy and on its smothering rituals by turn, in her much acclaimed poem "I'm Wife; I've Finished That". Dickinson portrays the repugnant exasperation and throttling humiliation that women have to confront in the male dominated society, which with its fabricated narratives and concocted ideologies has demeaned and degraded the independent mentality and self-sufficient existence of women, as if by refuting the assistance and the consequent domination of patriarchy, the self-focused female has stigmatized itself because such dereliction and indifference to the male have imposed a searing attack on the obdurate postulations about the superiority of patriarchy and the inevitable dependence of women on the male.

The poem presents an ironical contrast between the two modes of living: the life of a self-sufficient spinster without the intermeddling influence as well as suppression by the male and the society approved married life, in which women weigh the importance of their lives by considering the pseudo sense of security that the dependence on the

male confer upon them. Sarcastically, Dickinson exaggerates her sense of shelter that is vouchsafed to her by patriarchy because of her allegiance to its customs and cultures, in contrast to the vulnerable lifestyle of a spinster, but paradoxically in the process of hyperbolizing the feeling of protection, she highlights the colossal gulf between these two modes of living and her indigenous celebration of the emancipation of unencumbered womanhood.

The unscrupulous patriarchy fabricates the prevalent ideologies and dogmas in such a way that the innocence of the women is besmirched with the feeling that only by being a consort or subordinated to the male, can the female achieve the magnanimity of a Czar or their womanhood can procure its true essence:

“I’m a Czar- I’m a “Woman” now-
It’s safer so”

Imitating the prejudiced views of the male, Dickinson deprecates the susceptible existence of a spinster, by invoking the image of an eclipse. The poet compares her life to be as sheltered and unassailable as something situated on the sunny part during an eclipse, while the life of the spinster resembles the darker side, which symbolises the precarious, hazardous and vulnerable mode of living in this dire world. But an insightful reading will enable the reader to realize that only the opposite of what is stated is meant, i.e., it is the life of a married woman which is infested with suffocating anxiety and humiliating subordination that compels the female to crave for the life of an unencumbered spinster.

Subservience of the Female in the Oriental Culture: Conforming to the subjugation of women by the male members, the Orient too ensures the emblematic coercion of the totalitarian dominance of patriarchy. While discussing on the concept of Orientalism, as is analysed by Edward Said, John McLeod in his pivotal book, “Beginning Postcolonialism”, has mentioned how the Occident has fabricated on the basis of their assumptions and imaginations the idea of ‘Orientalism’ to accentuate upon the inferiority and tawdriness of the colonised, highlighting their various lacunae in characteristic constitution:

“Compositely, Oriental stereotypes fixed weaknesses as (amongst others) cowardliness, laziness, untrustworthiness, fickleness laxity, violence and lust.” (page-46)

McLeod unequivocally points out that this concoction of facts is strategically meted out to bolster the West’s ascendancy and excellence over the East so that this manipulated sense of greatness provides them ratification to reign over the Orientals. But quite surprisingly, in the matter of exacting subordination on the women folk, this fictitious gargantuan hiatus between this two pugnacious forces seems to evaporate, and they coalesce into a single despotic entity of patriarchy, who unleashes ruthless and excruciating agony on its female counterpart to ensure male dominance.

That this inhuman repression is permeating in every sphere of the Orient, is palpable from Eunice De Souza’s two celebrated poems, namely “Advice to Women” and “Bequest”. While Dickinson ironically expresses her solidarity for the life of a spinster, De Souza’s “Advice to Women” precisely advocates the female to learn the indifference of a cat so that they can imbibe within themselves the potentiality to negate the whimsical eccentricity and fickle-minded idiosyncrasies of the male members, who are always assiduously eager to maltreat the women according to their caprices, and thereby learn to relish the unfettered emancipation of the life of a spinster. Advising the women to inculcate the apathetic attitude of a cat, which bothers a fig for the other’s approbation and appreciation and remains self-absorbed with its own longings, De Souza admonishes the depression of women who crave for the love and attention of the perfidious lovers, who remains infidel throughout their lives with treacherous relationships with multiple partners simultaneously.

De Souza advocates that the female should focus on their inner potentials and must not be obsessed with the attention and attachment of the capricious lovers, while at the same time they must retain intrinsic nonchalance towards other females, with whom her lover may be unfaithfully engaged, as it is this indifference of a cat, with which a woman gets hold on her own life because to be in relationship is an external factor of life, whereas the female should provide priority to their own yearnings by remaining self-sufficient and self-absorbed, because hankering after the false-hearted lover's warmth and ardency, is not meritorious enough to the women's unwavering dedication and commitment to any romantic involvement:

“That stare of perpetual surprise
in those great green eyes
will teach you
to die alone.”

In “Bequest”, Eunice scathingly condemns the unrelenting subjugation, a woman has to confront in a male dominated society, which always encumbers her with numerous dictatorial conditions and regulations that should determine the courses of her diurnal activities and decisions. Every member of patriarchy always exerts his extreme potential to make the female cognizant of the 'stern standards' that women should conform to in their smothering existence. Referring to the sacrifice of Jesus, at the very outset of the poem, De Souza accentuates the dire mode of suffering, affliction and self-immolation, a woman has to withstand in her throttling lifestyle under patriarchy.

With embittered cynicism, the poet highlights how even the least important male of a woman's life does not miss the opportunity to counsel her in conforming to the stifling subjugation and despotic dictation of patriarchy, as if it is customary for a woman to sacrifice her everything for the benefit and convenience of the male. De Souza sarcastically yearns for her emergence as a 'Wise Woman', who with sagacious prudence will wear the mask of a vacuous smile on her face, and will endlessly exhibit her obtrusive happiness conferred upon her by patriarchy for her dedicated allegiance to its repression and domination. Comparing her obligatory condition to a 'plastic flower', the poet highlights her compulsion to maintain an outward appearance of ostentatiously protruding vitality and freshness under the prejudiced annihilation of individual rights and privileges of women, who are expected to vouchsafe this susceptible amenability on her children, in spite of being harrowingly humiliated:

“I wish I could be a
Wise Woman
smiling endlessly, vacuously
like a plastic flower,
saying Child, learn from me.”

Optimistic Retaliation of Women through Feminist Movement: Hopefully, the women develop the resolution to retaliate against this inexorable oppression of patriarchy by protesting with utmost competence. In “The Yellow Wallpaper”, the narrator decides to unsettle the complacency of patriarchy by symbolically plucking out the rancid wallpaper which symbolises the totalitarian nature of patriarchal dictatorship, and the emancipation of manacled womanhood from its precariously strangulating suffocation. That the women will liberate themselves from their claustrophobic repression by the male, becomes once more palpable when the narrator 'creep over' her husband,

whose unanticipated swooning emblemizes the precipitous disorientation of patriarchal ascendancy under the forceful mutiny of the female. Concomitantly, the Oriental woman too will not allow latency in its vigorous rebellion against the stifling, pugnacious and despotic domination of the male members, is evident from Eunice De Souza's proclamation in "Bequest" that she will sacrifice her heart like a 'spare kidney-/preferably to an enemy' rather than embracing the bridling domination of patriarchy.

By citing Aristotle's declaration that 'female is female by virtue of a certain lack of qualities' and St. Thomas Aquinas's belief that 'woman is an imperfect man' or referring to Aeschylus's trilogy, '*The Oresteia*', in which 'victory is granted by Athena to the male argument put by Apollo, that the mother is no parent to her child', Raman Seldon in his "A Reader's Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory" has substantiated the obdurate postulations about the superior position of masculinity in comparison to the fragile potentials of women. But the women through their persistent endeavour in ventilating their innermost feelings, emotions and thoughts by promulgating such key slogans as 'personal is political' have been able in establishing their essential significance in society, securing their privileges and liberties to some extent and somewhat refuting the unjust enslavement of the female to patriarchy.

Conclusion: Thus, from the above discussion it has become quite obvious that the male members of the society has exerted their vigorous campaign and atrocious brutality from the ancient times, to legitimize their supremacy over the naïve and meek female. While the Occident during the colonial period has fabricated a narrative of Orientalism to falsely stigmatize the members of the Orient with inferior and mean characteristics, these belligerent forces of the 'colonised' and 'colonisers' weld themselves into a single despotic system to subjugate the women through excruciating repression, and thereby deprive them of their essential acclamations and commendations. But hopefully, the women have learnt to organize themselves for registering and broadcasting their vehement rebellion as well as protest against this ill-intent of patriarchy and obtain their prerequisite rights, respect and regards from the male.

References:

- 1) "The Yellow Wall-paper" by Charlotte Perkins Stetson.
- 2) "I'm Wife; I've Finished That" by Emily Dickinson.
- 3) "Advice to Women" by Eunice De Souza.
- 4) "Bequest" by Eunice De Souza.
- 5) "Beginning Postcolonialism" by John McLeod.
- 6) "A Reader's Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory" by Raman Seldon.