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Structuring Society In Lois Lowry's *The Giver* Quartet.

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Abstract

In The Giver Quartet series by Lois Lowry, Society and structuring plays an important stream in all the four books. Structuring is mainly about how to plan, organize (or) arrange the parts of something. In the Society, social structure is the aggregate of patterned social arrangements in society that are both emergent from and determinant of the actions of individuals. Likewise, society is believed to be grouped into structurally related groups (or) sets of roles, with different functions, meanings (or) purpose. Social Structure gives us the ability to interpret the social situations we encounter. This Paper deals with Structuring and the functions of the society as portrayed in Lois Lowry's *The Giver Quartet*.

Keywords: Society, Structure, Totalitarianism.

Introduction:

The word 'structuring' may sound ambiguous, but there is difference between totalitarian structuring and structuring on the ashes of chaos. As God created this world out of chaos, a kind of structuring, is relevant for the good of humanity. It doesn't refer to external structuring, but the internal transformative structuring to light the thought-process which was dormant for a long time. Education comes to the forefront as the empowering foot to provide directions to construct the society of caring and sharing. The language has to be understood and used in its originality and this requires the creation of perspective and freedom to accept or deny.

Lois Lowry, an American writer, born on March 20, 1937. She is the author of several books for children and young adults, including *The Giver Quartet*, *Number the Stars*, and so on.

The *Giver Quartet* is basically about structuring society and constitutes its central concern. To make it more just and habitable, the author has depicted four societies which are completely different from each other. Each one of them requires some kind of structuring which is carried out by the protagonist. The protagonist, Jonas of the first novel, *The Giver*, embarks on the mission to structure the society which seems to be an utopia, but has all the features of a dystopia. In this society, freedom is given to the individuals in minimum, and the children are terminated in the infancy, if they do not fit into the parameters of healthy children set by the authorities. They are selected for specific jobs in the childhood and adults are controlled with the help of certain pills.

In the second novel of the series, *Gathering Blue* (2000), the mission of restructuring society is taken up by Kira, who is an adolescent girl. This society is completely different from the society of Jonas, because in contrast to Jonas's society, Kira's society is technologically backward and the people are not controlled with the help of technology, rather they are controlled with the help of discourses and absence of technology. In a way, it is a dark and intimidating place where women are denied even the basic rights like education, and it represents the third world societies. When the story opens, we see Kira sitting beside the dead body of her mother. The society is very harsh, unsympathetic, and cruel to her. They burn her house, they steal vegetables from her garden, and they did not allow her to build her house. All these things happen to her because she is physically challenged, and this society like Jonas's society has set certain parameters and anyone who does not fit into those parameters is terminated, and Kira is a physically challenged child. She would have been terminated in her infancy, if her mother had not saved her and now when her mother is dead, the society has turned hostile to her. Due to these similarities, both societies are similar and require restructuring.

Both protagonists are special and are chosen for specific roles in the society. Jonas is chosen as the Giver; on the other hand after a lot of struggle, and fighting a case in the court Kira also gets recognition. She is assigned the task of repairing the Singer's robe which tells the story of the past of their world. In a way, both are associated with the task of revisiting the past, and has the power to understand the present society with reference to past. They can see how the society has changed and what kind of changes are required to transform it into a just society. Once Kira is chosen for this specific role, she is provided accommodation in a very reputed building, the Council Edifice.

There she remains in touch with the common people, and along with repairing the Singer's robe, which is her official task, she takes up the mission to transform the society on her personal level. She remains in touch with her friend Matt, who is a protagonist in the next novel in the series, *Messenger*. In this novel, his situation is very bad, as he lives in the poorest and dirtiest part of their community, and has an abusive mother.

This society has become monochromatic under the totalitarian regime, and people have become intolerant to different colours and other differences as well. Kira decides that if people are to be realized the importance of difference, they should start loving different colours. She learns the art of creating colours from natural ingredients. An old woman named, Annabella, who lives in the forest and whose existence is shrouded in mystery helps her in learning this art. This mysterious woman also teaches Kira, the art of creating blue colour, which has completely disappeared from the life in this society. As women are not allowed the right to education, so Kira does not know how to read and write. She finds help from Thomas, who notes down things told by the old woman, and slowly with a lot of hard work and concentration, Kira also becomes capable of reading and understanding with the help of the notes taken by Thomas. Kira's act of educating herself is an act of transforming and restructuring society. Jonas is chosen as Giver in the first novel, and in this novel, a little girl, Jo, is chosen to be the next Singer who narrates the memories. Neither in Jonas's society nor in Kira's society, have people had freedom. The chosen ones have less freedom because the burden to maintain the totalitarian status of the society lies with them. In both societies, parents disappear or die. Jonas does not know who his parents are, and Kira has never seen her father. On the day of the Gathering, many hidden realities of this society are revealed to Kira. For instance, she discovers that the Singer who occupies a very important position in the society, and only for repairing his robes, she gets an important position and a comfortable life is not a free man at all. She finds a heavy chain around his leg and realizes that all of them, including the Singer are prisoners of the Council. On this day, another major revelation happens to her that, she is not an orphan because her father is alive. Her father is brought to her. Her father is brought to her by Matt. Her father is blind now, and he tells her that he has found a new place where there is no discrimination, no injustice, no termination of infants, and no hatred for the physically challenged people. He wants to take her to this place, along with him, but she declines this offer because she has taken up the project of restructuring the society. The elders of the village require her to weave future on the Singer's robe, in order to control the future and the thinking power of the people. In this project, Kira visualises an opportunity to restructure

the future, by weaving the visions of a just community in place of Council's propaganda. Kira's father takes Matt along with him to the village of Healing, and in this way story moves from Gathering Blue to Messenger. Initially, this community is just an holistic place but slowly many problems erupt, and it is on the verge of becoming unjust society. Matty sacrifices his life for restructuring this society and finally gains the title of Messenger. On the one hand Kira's father, Christopher, who is also known as seer and Matty comes to the village of Healing; on the other hand Jonas along with Claire's son, Gabriel or Gabe, comes to this village. Jonas has saved the life of Gabe who is to be terminated because of health issues. In this place, Jonas has earned the title of Leader, and shows the right path to the people and help in restoring social justice in this society. The first striking feature of this society is that it is constituted of people like Kira's father Christopher who has earned the title of seer, Matty, Gabriel and Jonas, who are either exiled from their societies or have to escape the torture and injustice. The second striking feature is that everyone is welcomed here, and thirdly, there is no discrimination and the people with physical weaknesses are taken care and given full protection. The only fearful thing is that it is not possible to leave the village because the forest surrounding the village attacks everyone who tries to leave this village.

The major preoccupation of the author, throughout the series, is to structure society in a better manner and create improved circumstances, and sensitize the adolescent towards the requirement of the future. In the first novel of the series, this preoccupation is visible in Jonas' pursuit of "Elsewhere," which is nothing less than a revolt in a society, and is completely hegemonic and homogeneous. In the second novel, this revolt is manifested in a search for the source of blue dye, which is non-existent in this society. In the third novel, where the society is large benign in the beginning, and which is turning selfish. Slowly, the major project is to restore it to its original benign nature.

It is evident, the author advocates individualism but not the abstract individualism which is divorced from the real society. For the author, individualism stands for accepting accountability, acknowledging that even cooperative action requires individuals to step in, to motivate, and to consolidate. In other words, the author sees individual consciousness is the seat of social change which is required for structuring just society. This conception is clear from all the protagonists' evolution from naive state to the state of awareness. This transformation in the individual consciousness results in the transformation of society. First, it is the individuals who can see beyond

and analyse the power structures in their respective societies. Later on embark, the mission to bring out significant changes in the society. *The Giver Quartet* is a significant text in this manner, because it sensitizes the adolescent readers towards the demands of future society.

The concept of equality is to subsume respecting the dignity of each individual across gender, caste, class and creeds. This becomes an imperative to structure a society where give and take policy rules the roost. When 'thinking for I' is replaced by 'thinking for us', the world gets widened to accommodate everybody's dream. This strengthens the body and the soul, and the spirit of the society to 'self-determination' and 'collective determination'.

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