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Destabilising Men's Perceptions: Female Voice in Selected Asian Fictions

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Abstract

This paper aims at investigating some selected fictions of South and Southeast Asian writers to note the occasions where their female characters tend to invalidate various forms of male-oriented assumptions embedded in social practices. It also examines the way some Asian women perpetuate the patriarchy and thereby reinforce their subjugation. It is also seen that some of them, on the other hand, do not compromise their dignity in married life even after facing humiliation and uncertainty. Their attempts of discrediting patriarchal ideologies are focused in this paper so as to determine the respective author's attitude and contribution to relocating female voices in Asian patriarchal societies. The women characters selected for this article are found challenging the stereotyped role of women in a culture that is constructed by people in power in these societies. The discussion in this paper is pursued by feminist discourses with a particular focus on cultural issues related to patriarchy in Asian societies. However, it is argued that despite writing from Asian societies, that have a stronghold of patriarchal ideologies, the selected authors attempted to represent their female characters who are found capable of debunking the cultural norms that subjugate them.

Keywords: Patriarchy, Feminism, Asian Societies, Power, Culture, South and Southeast Asian Fictions

Introduction

Asian societies are mostly influenced by patriarchal ideology. Religion, social customs and on top of that colonial subjugation have made these societies comply with gendered ideologies that give ascendancy to the males. However, while living in a society programmed by age-old patriarchal culture, many Asians, no matter whether male or female, do not understand the ways they perpetuate those discriminating ideologies. The people in power, of course, the males, tend to justify their dominance through education system, social, political and religious institutions as well. Societal views in South Asian countries, particularly of Bangla culture is largely fashioned by historically dominant ideologies that relegate women to the periphery of the public or private domain. Southeast Asian societies also share a similar social conviction. Literary works from the authors of both South and Southeast Asian countries document such subjugation and sufferings of women. However, while depicting the miseries of their female characters, these writers focus on their resentment against the patriarchal norms. Through the characterisation of their strong-willed female protagonists, they are found to debunk and challenge the male perceptions of the world. Therefore, the objective of this paper is to offer a critical analysis of female protagonists portrayed by some foremost South and Southeast Asian authors like Rabindranath Tagore,

Begum Rokeya, Shirley Lim, K S Maniam, and Che Hosne Azhari. As religion plays a dominant role in these societies, the gallery of female characters is chosen from the Hindu, Muslim and Christian communities.

It is to be noted that in most societies, especially in Asian countries, social inequality arises out of the patriarchal ideology— a belief system that promotes the assumption that males are superior. This belief justifies male domination on the basis of traditional gender roles which restrict women from getting access to educational and occupational means of acquiring social, political or economic power. In a patriarchal society, women also do not have any scope of constructing their subjectivity by themselves; rather they are programmed to internalize those ideologies which infer that women are inherently inferior and also subject to create their identity in relation to their male counterparts. Men are also defined by the absence of feminine qualities— frailty, cowardice, fragility, compromise, emotion, self-sacrifice, etc. as the male programming promotes. Feminists hold that our gender-based identity is socially constructed and there exist many false assumptions which hinder women emancipation. Moreover, they also criticise male experiences that are considered to be the standard of universality. Liberal feminism argues an equal position for women. The Marxist feminism stresses the economic disparity as the root cause of social injustice. While, on the other hand, the radical feminists point out gender subjectivity. However, all these theories try to dismantle the perceptions that deny the equal and dignified position of woman in the family and social life.

South Asian writers like Tagore and Rokeya gave importance to women education to free them from all kinds of suppression. They have created strong female characters that prove their worth in the struggle of life. Southeast Asian writers also show their concern about women subjugation in the male-dominated world. Writers from both the parts of Asia challenge the general perceptions about gender roles. Nonetheless, they also tend to debunk gender assumptions through the skilful weaving of their plots. Family violence, child marriage, dowry system, female sexuality, conjugal life— all are addressed in the selected works of above-mentioned authors. Most of the Asian societies are Patriarchal in nature. The Asian writers discussed in this paper deal with issues of women power and perception that to some extent challenge the existing ideology. They also criticised the ironical role of women who internalise male perceptions and transmit them from generation to generation. The notion of women inferiority in the fields of intellect and family life is skillfully illustrated in these writings.

Before going into the analysis of their works, a discussion based on sociological, anthropological and feminist theories related to culture, power, gender, and sexuality is attempted to deploy a framework for focusing the argument of this paper. Some notable and bold female characters are presented then, who dismantle gender-biased patriarchal perceptions. However, in this paper, it is argued that if women are not given equal and dignified position, equilibrium of family, as well as society, is broken.

Power and Cultural Construction

In the modern capitalist society, a person's value is measured by his or her productivity. Frederic Engels (1948) stated that with the emergence of private property, women's household work became insignificant in comparison to men's productive power. Therefore, women's economic dependence, hormonal cycles, emotional orientations as well as lack of articulate and formal or illusive style of language derived from socio-political activity make them 'cultural idiots' while the males occupy the position of 'culture ideal.' Culturally set gender role attaches women to household activities including childbearing, caregiving, or cooking. Conversely, males go out to do social and economic activities that enable them to hold and display control over constructing power relations. Together with economic sovereignty, the male power is capable of producing discourses that espouse gender discrimination affirming that "men are the locus of cultural value" (Rosaldo; 1974).

American cultural anthropologist Sherry Beth Ortner (1974) views that distinction between 'nature' and 'culture' determines the distribution of power among the gender relationships. She notes "[t]hus culture (i.e., Every culture) at some level of awareness asserts itself to be not only distinct from but superior to nature, and that sense of distinctiveness and superiority rests precisely on the ability to transform- to 'socialize' and 'culturalize'

nature" (p.73). She holds that women's second class status is postulated because of their symbolic association with nature while males are identified as a culture. Women's creative power- the procreation activity is considered as natural and therefore they remain outside the social mechanisms that value creative but not natural power. On the other hand, prestige, values, creativity, valour, rationality is always attached to male sex. They enjoy power as "cultural systems give authority and roles to the activities of male" (Rosaldo, p.19).

In this regard, we note that the biology of women body is not solely responsible for their subjugation. Rather it is the "politics of body" that determines their fate. Resting on the theory of evolution, Sociobiologists explore the ways our biological traits affect the creation of culture. They argue that we are born in a society which has already set some standard models; we are to follow and comply with the dichotomy of 'good' and 'bad.' Moreover, they also observe that we tend to accommodate in our environment and compromise with the dominant traits we encounter in our familial and social life. Moreover, we tend to accept the existing conceptions as true and try to fit in a dominant standard with regard to our relationship with others.

Unlike the genetic heritage that is transmitted to children by their parents, culture is learned by participating in the programs that pre-exist before birth and is assumed as natural. Ferrante (2007) asserts, "Thus people think and behave as they do simply because they know no other way. And, because these behaviours and thoughts seem natural, we lose sight of the fact that culture is learned"(68). Interestingly, such programming or laws are created by the authority or the people in power. Therefore it is obvious that these dominant traits, norms or values that largely control our behaviour and social position are in the hands of those who have power and can thereby mould culture according to their will and benefit.

Thereby in a patriarchal society, that maintains male superiority, women power is undermined, and in fact, they are subjugated in every sphere of life. This subjugation is confirmed through systematic social activities like religion, production of gender-biased literature, constructing taboos, norms, and customs. However, women subjugation is deeply rooted in patriarchy. It is a system of social structure that posit male in a privileged position empowering them with authority to control women. Tyson (2006) holds that patriarchy promotes the belief that women are innately inferior to men (85). She concludes that this inferior position long occupied by women in patriarchal society has been culturally, not biologically, produced (p.86). Womanhood is an ascribed status.

Referring to McDowel and Pringle's study (1992), Kamabarami (2006) mentions that women are not only constantly defined in relation to men, but are defined as dependent and subordinate to them as well. As a result, women are socialised to acquire those qualities which fit them into a relationship of dependence on men. She also holds that family is that social institution which initiates patriarchy by socialising the young to accept sexually differentiated roles. It is from the mother that the child experiences its social relationship and tends to internalize the ideology which later shapes its personality.

As a matter of fact, the mother, in a family, is the agent of transmitting gender roles to young children. As mentioned earlier, her confinement to 'private life' for childbirth and nurturing deprives her of socio-political or economic activities that may have empowered her to gain authority over culture. Consequently, she cannot come out of the cycle and hence becomes the trainer of existing norms while at the same time she maintains an emotional relationship with her children. On the other hand, the father, being the breadwinner holds economic and political power over his children. Determining a woman's role, the age-old culture moulds her to accept the dependent position. For, decision making and sharing of family property she depends on the husband and being programmed in this patriarchal system she transmits this culture through generation to generation.

However, we should remember that a woman exercises the culture and mother role that she has acquired from her own mother. She also identifies herself with her child in terms of her relationship with her own mother. In this regard, Deutsch's (1944) assertion is worth mentioning. She says, "in relation to her own child, woman repeats her own mother-child history." A child's early attachment to the mother helps it shape personality.

However, unlike the boy, the girl child spends more time at home with the mother. Thereby she is the one to whom the gender-based traditional culture is transmitted easily. Analysing Chodorow's theory, Anthropologist Mitchell Rosaldo (1974) concludes, "as a young girl has a mother to love and to follow, she also has the option of becoming a 'little mother,' and consequently of being absorbed into womanhood without effort" (p.25). Growing up within the surrounding of other senior female members she identifies herself as one of them and thereby is destined to fit in the dominant patriarchal culture. Conversely, the boy learns to be a male going out of the home through his ties with 'male peers,' only to find that it is the world where women are to be dominated.

The women enter into their husbands' house as a stranger. Because of arranged marriage culture, she has no scope of knowing the man before she gets him as a life partner. It is only through her children that she roots in the new environment. However the mother in law, in most cases appears to be antagonistic. The sister-in-law, if there is any, adds more suffering to the newcomer woman who happens to be their kin through marriage. The in-laws, in this case, despite being women of the same fate, try to victimise her only to feel them less victimised.

Social culture is constructed via a set of discourses operating from dominating sources. Patriarchy in Asian countries is deeply rooted. However, the situation gets worsened in postcolonial patriarchal societies as in those societies women are double colonised. Other than being treated as weaker sex in social relations they are also found to be the victims of family violence. Loomba (2007) comments, "Colonialism intensified patriarchal oppression, often because native man, increasingly disenfranchised and excluded from the public sphere, became more tyrannical at home" (142). However, this pattern of behaviour or views is also liable to be changed, adjusted or readjusted. As such patriarchal tenets that influence the lives of millions of Asian women can also be deconstructed.

Debunking Men's Perception of World

The winner of esteemed "Commonwealth Poetry Prize" (1980) Shirley Geok-Lin Lim's short story 'Mr. Tang's Girls' documents the male world represented by a Chinese patriarch Mr. Tang. It is a "story of four girls in the second family of Ah Kong, an affluent but insensitive and traditional father, who fails to cope with the growing sexuality of the eldest girl" (Quayum, 2007). Every Friday, he drives to his second family and exercises his patriarchal authority over his wife and four girls whose "suppressed giggles, lazy talk, muted movements and uncertain sighs constituted his sense of home"(158). Their voices are like the background music-a chorus element but not to be heard louder than that of their male counterpart, at least when he is 'in'; only to create a perfect male world where women are to play their docile role to reinforce the male power. The 'He' enjoys a sense of elation satisfying his "masculine vitality"(163) as his daughters' "silent form would fill him with pleasure that they should belong to him, depend on his homecoming, and fall asleep in his presence, innocent and pure" (91). Ah, Kong's wife is considered as an unproductive being in terms of material exchange value. His wife is a sex doll for him. He finds "his round soft wife in her faded nightgown was exactly what he wanted then; he was firm next to her slack hips, lean against her plump rolling breasts;" (163) . The wife's subordinate position is evident in the statement- "Ah Kong approved of her [the maid servant] as much as, perhaps even more than, he approved of his wife." She assures him of transmitting the patriarchal message to their elder daughter Li: "I told her a married woman has all kinds of responsibilities. She's lucky she'll have a husband who'll take care of her, but she has to learn to get along with him" (167).

But the Malaysian-turned-American author Shirley Lim destabilises Ah Kong's male world through the representation of his rebellious daughter Kim Li. She attacks Ah Kong's patriarchy by defying to marry a man chosen by her father. Unlike her sisters, she is not interested in taking make-up or feminine attires. She smokes, decorates her room with the posters of the Beatles singers and does not like 'pink satin pillows or red paper flowers.' She demands that she should meet the man, her father's chosen man for her, before her marriage. As the parents do not accept her idea, she makes fun of her woman being. Her rejection of the traditional culture of arranged marriage finds an alternative expression. She satirises Ah Kong's world by making a farce of it. She

starts applying make-up and consequently Ah Kong gets nervous before entering her room as the 'painted woman' is 'smiling provocatively from her room.' Through the stabbing of Ah Kong, Kim Li hurls her anger against the patriarch's heterosexual hostility.

This male supremacy and debunking of it are also reflected in another Southeast Asian story "Mala." When Mala, in Malaysia born Indian author K S Maniam's story, leaves school at her marriageable age, her parents' main concern is to find a suitable groom for her. The mother is careful about her daughter's manners and gestures lest they should mar the prospect of her good marriage. Mala is criticised if she reads magazines at the doorway or hum a tune in the bathroom. The neighbouring woman also keeps eyes on her and brands her as Mala- a *Malay* word for *lazy*. Despite being a woman, she spreads rumours about Mala's errant behaviour. Mala is in fact, under the surveillance and always being reminded of what to do and what not to do only to prepare her as the best commodity in the marriage market. Mala's failure in the exam adds more anxiety to the family. The mother has to do all the rituals to get rid of her. The mother's concern is obvious, and she goes to pre-curtain, redecorate or refurnish the house to attract a suitable match for the daughter.

Through the portrayal of Mala's character, the writer shows the carefree girl who does not abide by the rules and laws imposed on women. Mala marries on her own choice defying the age-old family tradition. Ironically her educated husband Sanker also takes it granted that wives are defined in relation to husbands. He changes his wife's dress up and looks, so as to make her fit in the business world. Sanker allows her to work for him as a secretary in his office and wants that she should serve a drink to the special customers. Here the husband is seen controlling her sexuality only to make more profit. He also takes her to a doctor who "put[s] some metal inside her" (78) to control childbearing lest it should spoil her beauty. Nonetheless, Mala overtly tells Sanker that she is not going to wait on any man who comes to office. Feeling humiliated, she challenges his authority by denying to go down to his office the next morning. Her self-motivated decision to become a mother and overt defiance to her husband is a gesture of debunking the stereotyped image of Asian women.

Interestingly, the Chinese woman, Lucy, with whom they are sharing the tiny apartment, insists on her avoiding unhappiness and advises her to do whatever the husband wants. Therefore we see that her mother and the Chinese woman reinforce the gender roles approved by Asian patriarchy. They are the stereotyped women who perpetuate women subjugation unknowingly. They comply with the existing social norms accepting them as natural and predispose to accommodate with dominant discourses.

The stereotyped compromising attitude of women is also reflected in Southeast Asian Muslim community presented by another Malaysian female author Che Husne Azhari. Unlike Mala, the Muslim leader's wife Cik Yam, of Che Husne Azhari's story "Mariah," is a very obedient and loving wife. Her conjugal life with Imam is a role model for all the married couples in the village of Molo. Along with her culinary skills and hospitable nature, she is very modest. But, unfortunately, all her good qualities that fit her in the male-dominated world do not ensure her a position of being a single wife in a heterosexual polygamous society. The Imam inclines to a widow Mariah, the *nasi* (rice) seller, for whom the whole village males await at the market entrance every morning. The narrator records the ongoing rumour: "her nasi wasn't much to crow about, but it was a combination of Mariah's swaying as well as her easy smile that made all the men flock to the village square. Many a nasi belauk breakfast remained cold and uneaten in the houses as men ignored their wives' cooking and paid tribute to Mariah's instead" (19). He wants to take Mariah as his second wife. He admits that he crushes on Mariah because of his unrequited love for Sheikh's daughter in Thailand. The Imam validates his argument by pointing out that Cik Yam cannot give birth to a child for him. Cik Yam is actually a victim of the patriarchal notion: "Fertility had nothing to do with men" (23).

When the village women led by Cik Gu Nab, report Cik Yam about Imam's inclination to Mariah, she does not show her anger or anxiety. She does not want to tarnish the name of her husband publicly; but complies with the traditional culture of family reputation. Cik Yam consents the marriage only when the Imam reverses his male role by shedding tears- a presumed stereotyped gesture of weaker sex. Cik Yam consoles the husband: "Tell me

what grieves you my husband, and I will make it better for you" (23). To get consent for a second marriage, the Imam looks for an occasion, and it is of course after prayers. "He begged Cik Yam's forgiveness, kissed the hem of Cik Yam's sarong and asked for her permission to take Mariah as his second wife." He sheds his tears displaying "feminine fragility" and persuades her kissing on her "forehead, hands and finally, in the act of submission, on Cik Yam's feet" (29). The story debunks the idea of woman's frailties. On the contrary, it is the male who develops frailty in his character even though he is happily married to a docile wife.

Azhari's story focuses on Mariah's longing for freedom. After her husband's death, she chose her business for living independently. Despite having a long list of prospective suitors, Mariah decides to marry the religious leader of the village discarding false assumption about women that they are greedy and wish to marry rich persons only. Faridah (2000) notes, "Mariah has refused all other proposals, but the Imam's because she has hopes that the religious leader will provide and guide her in spiritual matters. In short, she thinks of her own salvation for the hereafter" (234).

On the other hand, Indian feminist writer Begum Rokeya creates a land of ladies and shows women's potency in their public life. Through a dream sequence, the author projects a land of empowered women. In her *Sultana's Dream*, women are educated, self-reliant, meticulous and adept in handling administrative and state issues. Reversing the patriarchal assumptions, men are presented as timid and shy. They are kept in *Mardana*, a secluded place "that stands as the representation of the embodied male seclusion from power—from the center" (Rahman and Sarker 2018:38) and are solely responsible to look after household work and domestic chores while women go out for outdoor activities. Therefore, in the lady land males are "cultural idiots" while the women are the "cultural ideals" going out for economic and social activities Rejecting the assumed inferiority of women, Sister Sara excels in a number of branches of knowledge ranging from history, politics, military affairs, education to science. Unlike the males who are busy with masculine vanity, greed, and war-monging, the women in this Utopia are harmless. Entrusted with authority, they do not fight for one another's land nor do they run after hoarding jewellery. Women protect their land through knowledge and creative politics. Thus Rokeya has successfully pictured the role reversal to establish women's claim in politics and public affairs. If given equal opportunity, they could also prove their worth. Hossain (1992) notes, "[i]n *Sultana's Dream*, a farcical fantasy of role reversal, Rokeya exposed the depressed condition of women and pictured an ideal world where they were able, after suitable education to take responsibility of their own world."

The narrative sheds light on the false assumptions that a patriarchal culture constructs. It is highlighted here that if given proper space and encouragement, women folk is capable of accomplishing all those things that they are thought of incapable. Begum Rokeya promotes women abilities in the arena of science, education or politics. The scientific education and success of women's endeavour, shown in a dream though, makes the assumption about women's disqualification in scientific education invalid. In her *Sultana's Dream*, she shows two women universities where the female scientists invent the machine to control weather while another to store solar energy. Rokeya actually urges recognition of women abilities as equitable as males. In this dream sequence, the South Asian author attempts to debunk patriarchal culture in an ironic and humorous way.

Rokeya's contemporary and the first Bengali Nobel laureate Tagore's writings also plead for women liberty and restoration of a respectable position for them in the family as well as in social life. He contended that male and female together could create a happy world. Commenting on Tagore's position in this regard, Prof. Quayum (2014) concludes, "therefore, giving equal status to women, instead of forcing them to submission, was the only way to create a balanced and meaningful civilisation in which man and woman could complement each other's attributes and 'talents' and create a paradise on earth"(144). With this view, Tagore created some female characters who challenge the sufferings done to them.

Patriarchy promulgates the idea that males are inherently dominating and superior to their opposite sex—the females. This perception takes various forms of psychological and physical violence in many families of South Asian countries. Dowry system, for instance, is a curse for women in Indian society. There are many instances

that women, especially mothers-in-law, are the agents of family violence. The mother-in-law, who was once a new bride to the family, has now gained some power at her old age in the domestic world. Anthropologist Louise Lamphere (1974) holds that women gain some power through family politics and strategies namely by persuading the husband and the son. In Indian societies, some mothers-in-law establish their position in the family by taking up the role of a patronizing patriarch. Assuming a key role for enhancing family property she, ironically, reinforces the oppression to her daughter-in-law, the new bride.

Tagore's Nirupama in the story "Assets and Debts" is the victim of such a tormenting mother-in-law. The mother-in-law takes charge of ensuring the growth of family property by inflicting humiliation on Nirupama for extracting dowry money. Notwithstanding, the fact that she herself a woman, the mother assumes the patriarchal role. She values her daughter-in-law Nirupama in terms of exchange value. To the mother-in-law, Nirupama is eligible to get nutritious food only if her father pays the dowry. Tagore states that her "malice crossed all limits" when she comes to know that Nirupama is not submissive and has persuaded her father not to pay the 'debts.' Ironically, her educated husband does not have any strong voice against such domination.

On the other hand, the dignity and courageous nature of Nirupama debunks the image of submissive women. However, the boldness in her character gives her power of endurance. She establishes her self-identity by refusing the commodification of women in the dowry system. She considers it her dishonour to give dowry. She asks her father, "Does your daughter have no dignity? Am I only a bag of money; so long as there is money I have value?"(63). Tagore points at the darker side of women subjugation in the male world through the death and ironically spectacular cremation of Nirupama.

Like Nirupama, Chandara in the story "Punishment," proves her value through her self-sacrifice by accepting the false allegation of murdering her sister-in-law. Nevertheless, she seems to be bold and conscious about her dignity in terms of her relationship with her husband, Chhidam. As with the case of other Indian women, she is also married at her early age. She is always engaged in a quarrel with her sister-in-law. Hurling of abuses, hue, and cry stemmed from jealousy or desire of grasping authority over one another is a common experience in that family. The elder sister-in-law, since she came first to that family, is more active in everyday uproar and assumes the role of stereotyped mother-in-law. The males, their husbands, are accustomed to their quarrel. They do not interfere as long as their authority is challenged. Chandara likes her husband and is, in fact, happy with him until the occurrence of a tragic incident in their house. Her brother-in-law Dukhiram kills her sister-in-law in anger. Chandara's complete disillusionment of married life occurs when Chhidam proposes her to take charge of murder on her shoulder to save his brother as he holds that "if I lose my wife I'll get another but, if my brother is hanged I'll never get another" (116). This very confession of Chhidam illustrates her subordinate position in the house.

The beauty of Chandara's character lies in her silent protest against Chhidam's world. She gets a stunned hearing to Chhidam's proposal regarding shouldering the guilt on herself. She does not utter any word; rather "her two dark eyes continued to bore into him in silence lie black fire" (119). Having dismayed completely, Chandara takes on the crime herself that ultimately leads her to gallows. But she does not compromise to her feminine gestures against the dignity and inner strength. On another occasion before this, she had left the house, and the husband had to accept his defeat. Chandara, though an uneducated poor village girl at her teens, dares to challenge the male world that does not allow her a respectable life.

Nevertheless, in the courtroom, she does not look at her husband; nor does she allow Chhidam to visit her on the day of her execution. The weaker sex Chandara does not want to see the face of her husband even before going to gallows. While being asked by the civil Surgeon, she expresses her desire to see her mother—another woman; and not the man whom she trusted. She embodies the primordial cosmic power "Shakti," mentioned in Hindu mythology, which has the ability to destroy as well as creating. Chandara's utterance of "Hell!"(122) is a voice against women subjugation is an attempt of deconstructing men's perception of the world where women

are being underestimated on both biological and cultural basis. However, she represents the Asian women who are capable of altering men's perceptions that hold women to be weak and voiceless.

However, South Asian writers like Tagore and Rokeya were writing in a time when Indian Independence movement was at its peak. Both of them recognised the vitality of Asian women despite the predicaments they face in social relations. The Malaysian stories also demonstrate the importance of giving respect to women's values. The writers believe that women's respectful position and individuality should be ensured with a view to building a prospective society shared by both men and women. In their writings, they emphasise restructuring the culture and social practices that degrade and ignore women's vitality.

Conclusion

The women characters discussed in the texts are drawn from the poor, middle and lower middle-class families, who are mainly the victims of gender discrimination in Asian societies. Though the South and Southeast Asian fictions chosen here can never be a true representation of all Asian societies, they have their relevance to Asian culture in terms of their patriarchal and cultural representation. The authors focused on the double colonized status of the "third world women" and created the image of 'new women' who would establish a society free from misogynistic injustice. However, from the above discussion, we can contend that men and aged women with certain level of veneration should come forward together to establish gender harmony in a society that would be devoid of any false assumptions leading to the oppressions only to limit the basic capabilities of mankind. From the analysis of the chosen texts, in this paper, we note that most of the female protagonists have the potentiality to express and establish their own individual identity. In some cases, the authors have intentionally reversed the gender role so as to invalidate the dominant discourses of patriarchy. Moreover, by giving voice to their female protagonists, the Asian writers, addressed here, destabilise the perception of existing gendered norms.

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