

GENDER DISCRIMINATION AND SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT IN KATE GRENVILLE'S *LILIAN'S STORY*

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Abstract

Women, the most indispensable entity of social environment have always been victim of patriarchal society. They are considered inferior due to long established model of hierarchy, constructed by male chauvinism for positing man as center and woman as marginal. This model cunningly justifies women's exploitation as marginalized category. The Australian woman novelist, Kate Grenville's novel *Lilian's Story* depicts the unending journey of a woman into darkness of humiliations. The present research paper explores the sufferings of Lilian Una, who is sexually harassed by her own father. It studies how an ambitious talented and blooming woman due to atrocity of her own father turns mental. *Lilian's Story* is based on real incident which relates with the life of Bea Miles. The paper analyses the position of women in the social environment of androcentric society and exposes the issue of gender discrimination.

Key words: atrocity, androcentric, chauvinism, humiliations, victim

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This paper explores the gender discrimination and social environment in the novel *Lilian Story*. It is a key issue in all over the world and those people understand the value of this word who suffered by the biases. Gender is a complex concept and often confused by the biological sex of a person. It is socially constructed roles, activities, behaviors and attributes societies consider appropriate to men and women. Gender equality is the equal participation of both men and women in all the spheres of private and public life. There are vital interconnections between gender discrimination and social environment, inequality between men and women, rich and poor, specific ethnic and age group, people with disabilities and also about the developed people all these inequality create prohibition in the development of the society. Women are facing violence in the global era, because society divided by categorically men are in higher category women are in lower. "Feminist social theory has been concerned with understanding fundamental inequalities between women and men and with analyses of male power over women. Its basic premise is that male dominance derives from the social, economic, and political arrangements specific to particular societies" (Jackson and Jones 12).

Gender equality is matter of fundamental human rights but still women are not getting any kind of equality in the society. It creates barriers to effective sustainable resources and decision making opportunities. In some cases, violence can be used against

women as a means of control over opportunities and resources. This paper represents the gender equality in Australia, here individuals can be discriminated and marginalized from society and be restricted to participate in society only because of their gender. In 1984 Sex Discrimination Act is applied by the Australian government. It covers the issues of discrimination in partnerships, education, marital status, potential pregnancy and sexual discrimination. Many Australian women have experienced physical violence and sexual harassment in their lifetime. Domestic violence is also a key issue in Australian society, some women are experienced violence by their intimate partner and most of the women abused by their own family members. "One is not born, but rather becomes, woman" (Beauvoir 14). Simon did deep analysis of women's life and share her experiences to the society women are not born but society realized them these are the women and keep them in other category. This inequality affects to everyone, even including men, it affects the whole society.

Kate Grenville is the renowned Australian writer her works on historical fiction examine class, race and gender in colonial and contemporary Australia. She known as short story writer but *Lilian's Story* changes her image and later she became successful Australian novelist. It is first published in 1985 and won the Australian/Vogel Literary Award. This novel became Sydney's best novel and in 1996 it was into a film, Ruth Cracknell and Toni Collette played a role of as characters and Collette won the Australian film Institute award for supporting actress for her performance as the young Lilian. After writing *Lilian's Story* she got huge prominence in the fictional world. *Lilian's Story* is originally called the Bea's Story because it is loosely based on the life of eccentric, well-known Sydney women named Bea Miles. The novel tells the story of Lilian Singer, a grossly fat, engagingly individualistic

woman who choose her own path whatever it takes her and will not be bound by the conventions of society.

Lilian is dogged since the day of her birth. She struggles early to escape the two constrictions that bind her, being ugly and worse still, being a girl. She faces many challenges in life, patriarchal society force her towards the eccentricity. Grenville represents the Lilian as a protagonist who fought against the male domination. She suffered by physical pain as well as physiological disorder. Through the journey of Lilian, Grenville examines the whole Australian society. Women were living like feeble animal they had no liberty to do anything in life always in control of men. "A 'history of women', then, should do more than restore women to the pages of history books. It must analyses why public life has been considered to be the focus of history, and why public life has been so thoroughly occupied by men" (Curthoys 4).

Lilian's Story open with the disappointing father because Lilian's journey start with her birth, "it was a wild night in the year of federation that the birth took place" (Grenville 3). Lilian's father (Albion) was expecting a son and he got a girl, her bed luck start from that day. She did not get any affection and care from her parents especially her father. He always scolds her even many times bitten by belt, "He brought the belt down on my pinafore with a muffled sound. No bloody good, he said crossly, and pushed the pinafore up, pulled my bloomers down" (20). She faces worst days of her life and realized everything at the age of five when her brother Joan born. Lilian's father spent a week in study to find his name and finally he got the name Joan, everyone was so excited in the family when he spoke his first word from that time she asked to her mother what my first word was then she said, "...she

thought it was Mama or perhaps Daddy. When she saw how this disappointed me she said, it is not important, Lilian, it does not mean anything" (17). Then she realized boy is precious for everyone. Grenville represents the whole Australian gentry's girls had living with many boundaries and boys had living with all the fun, girls were born for house work, Grenville shows the difference between Joan and Lilian. "It was easy to see that boys had all the fun, even though timorous Joan behind glass had fun. I was the biggest girl, as well as the roughest" (29). Grenville shows the patriarchal power throughout the novel, Lilian was sexually abused many times by her father this rape was just like murder for her she lost herself, one confident girl became eccentric beg lady. Albion crosses all the level of cruelty many times she tried to raise her voice but she could not say anything only because of society women cannot raise their voice.

Lilian was an extraordinary goal oriented women but her father became an obstacle in her life. She wanted to become a singer even good in studies but father said, "Women do not need education, father pronounced regularly over the leg of lamb...you will need something behind you" (95). She was alone in the house no one care of her in the bad circumstances that house was just like cage for her no liberty, no respect treated like wild animal. Albion always demotivated her, "father mentioned her sometimes, when warning me about things. A wasted life, he said. Not a bad-looking girl, but a wasted life" (103). It is not stopped here she was like other normal girl, love and marry with F. J. Stroud but her cruel father did not happened. One day F. J. Stroud came to her house and talked to Albion to marry with Lilian, "Father laughed at F. J. Stroud when he came to ask for my hand. She is unbalanced...No one can marry a mad girl, father said. And she is unruly, she is running wild"

(176). According to Albion Lilian had psychological problem Lilian's dream turned into nightmare.

Grenville shows the male superiority, daughters body became a battleground father has all the possession after marriage husband would be the boss of their life. Lilian was an innocent girl but her father declared she is suffering with psychological disorder. Grenville stick with the life of Bea Miles, her father is responsible for her madness, sent her for ten years in the loony bin. Albion did not play any role in her life he was just biologically her father did not obey duty towards his daughter. Lilian is self-made woman break all the colonial rule and made her new postcolonial world. Grenville represents the women as margin of the nation, "... differences as a social category came to explain, and conceal, real social relations of race and gender" (Dean 1). Through the journey of women she shows the life of many Australian children, "Yes, we say, Australia is like this and Australian childhood is like this. Who would have dreamt it?" (Craven).

Lilian was just like colonial women for Albion she was a sex object for him Grenville shows the most embarrassing thing of the novel. Albion refused to accept her as daughter and said, "You are no daughter of mine, Father shouted when I came back, thinner and browner from so much bush tucker and tramping over stones...Then you are a cuckold, I told father, and laughed. And mother is a whore" (Grenville 164). Albion and Lilian's relationship was not like normal father daughter relationship both hates each other. Gradually Lilian rejected her middle class life stop thinking about colonial rules and take step for her independent life. "I am Lilian Una singer, student of life and this is an experience...as the day passed, and by bedtime I was fearful, exhausted, fighting the panic of being no one at all"

(242). She is withdrawal herself after all the rape and harassment and started living life according to herself. This paper examined the awful relationship between father and daughter and also shows the gender inequality which affects the social environment.

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