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Bibliometrics of the Publication During the year 2017-2018

Sr. No.	Title of the Paper	Name of the Author	Title of the Journal	Year of the Publication	Citation Index	Institutional Affiliation as mentioned in the Publication	Number of Citations excluding self-citations
1	Deconstruction of Socially Constructed Gender in Gaskell's The Gray Women Through the Lens of Gender Performativity	Dr. Megha Ramteke	Cenacle. A Peer Reviewed Annual Research Journal ISSN : 2231- 0592	Dec- 2018	-	-	-
2	Deconstruction of Socially constructed Gender in Gaskell's The Gray Women through the lens of "Gender Performativity",	Dr. Megha Ramteke	Cenacle, Peer Reviewed annual research Journal UGC Approved ISSN: 2231-0592	Jan-Dec- 2018	-	-	-

Bibliometrics of the Publication During the year 2020-2021

Sr. No.	Title of the Paper	Name of the Author	Title of the Journal	Year of the Publication	Citation Index	Institutional Affiliation as mentioned in the Publication	Number of Citations excluding self-citations
1	Elegant Economy in Elizabeth Gaskell's Cranford: A Feminist Study	Dr. Megha Ramteke	Global Journal of Human Social (GJSS) Vol- 21 Issue- 7 USA. Online ISSN- 2249-460X Print ISSN- 0975-587X	May-2021			
2	Elizabeth Gaskell's 'Angel' Mrs. Gibson in Wives And Daughters, A Threat To Patriarchy And Charles Dickens's 'Angel' Mrs. Copperfield In David Copperfield, A Victim: A Comparative Feminist Study	Dr. Megha Ramteke	IJRAR International Refereed Journal Vo- 7 Issue- 3 www.ijrar.org UGC Approval: Journal No. 43602	Sep- 2020			
3	'Molly Gibson' In Elizabeth Gaskell's Wives And Daughters And Louisa In	Dr. Megha Ramteke	International Journal Of	March- 2020			

	Charles Dickens's Hard Times; A Comparative Feminist Study		English Language, Literature And Translation Studies (IJELR) Vol- 8 Issue- 1				
4	Social Change Thought The Agency of Woman: Sociolistic Feminist Reading Of Elizabeth Gaskell's North And South	Dr. Megha Ramteke	Research Journal Of English Language And Literature (RJELAL) Vol- 9 Issue- 1	Jan- 2021			
5	"Denial of Self-Governance To Women In George Meredith's Lord Ormont And His Aminta And Elizabeth Gaskell's Cranford, A Women's World: A Comparative Feminist Study.	Dr. Megha Ramteke	Research Journal of English Language And Literature (RJELAL)	Aug- 2021			
6	The Jataka Tales In The Pali Canon of Literature And In The Paintings of Ajanta Caves: A Comparative Study.	Dr. Megha Ramteke	Perspectives: Annual Research Journal ISSN- 2249-5134	Dec- 2021			

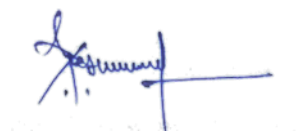
Bibliometrics of the Publication During the year 2021-2022

Sr. No.	Title of the Paper	Name of the Author	Title of the Journal	Year of the Publication	Citation Index	Institutional Affiliation as mentioned in the Publication	Number of Citations excluding self-citations
1	Elegant Economy in Elizabeth Gaskell's Cranford: A Feminist Study,	Dr. Megha Ramteke	Global Journal of Human Social Sciences (GJSS) Vol. 21 Issue 7, USA, May 2021. Online ISSN: 2249-460X	May 2021	-	-	-
2	“Denial of Self-governance to women in George Meredith's <i>Lord Ormont and His Aminta</i> and Elizabeth Gaskell's <i>Cranford</i> , a Women's World: a Comparative Feminist Study. 20-21, August 2021, RJLAL	Dr. Megha Ramteke	Research Journal of English Language and Literature (RJELAL) Vol 9 Issue 1 2021 ISSN 2321-3108(E)	Nov 2021	-	-	-

3	The Jataka Tales in the Pali Canon of Literature and in the Paintings of Ajanta Caves: A Comparative Study	Dr. Megha Ramteke	Perspectives: Annual Research Journal Dec 2021, ISSN: 2249-5134	Dec 2021	-	-	-
4	Effective Visualization to Unfold the Mystery of Detective Story with Special Reference to Ted Riccardi's The Case of Dr. Hodgson's Ghost.	Dr. Megha Ramteke	Lang Lit: An International Peer-Reviewed Open Access Journal, ISSN 2349-5189	Sep 2021	Impact Factor - 5.61	-	-

Bibliometrics of the Publication During the year 2022-2023

Sr. No.	Title of the Paper	Name of the Author	Title of the Journal	Year of the Publication	Citation Index	Institutional Affiliation as mentioned in the Publication	Number of Citations excluding self-citations
1	Elizabeth Gaskell's Mary Barton and Charlotte Bronte's Jane Eyre and Villet: a Comparative Feminist Study of Working Women.	Dr. Megha Ramteke	Sanshodhak UGC Care listed Journal Itihasachya V K Rajwade, Sanshodhan Mandal, ISSN 2394-5990 Porwal College	2023			



Principal

Dr. Yeshwant Patil

Deconstruction of Socially Constructed Gender in Elizabeth Gaskell's *The Grey Woman* through the Lenses of 'Gender Performativity'

ABSTRACT

A Victorian woman novelist, Elizabeth Gaskell's *The Grey woman* has always been critiqued as a Gothic ghost story that belies the feminist element in it. Only a few critics have brought to the fore the feminist aspect of the story. Gaskell's female characters always based on real lived experiences and consciousness; the characters of Anna and Amante also one hand bring forth the reality of the fake identity construed by the male dominated society and culture while on the other hand subverts that very identity by upholding their natural identity carved out by themselves. This 'gender identity', according to Judith Butler is not something that pre-exist but the 'performance' assigned appropriate to male or female by society and culture, the repetition of these stylized acts and their transmission from one generation to another generation constructs 'gender'. This paper is a humble attempt to bring to light the deconstruction of this socially and culturally constructed gender in this short story with the help of Butler's theory of 'Gender Performativity'.

Key Words: Gender, Gender Performativity, Society and Culture, Feminism, Deconstruction

Elizabeth Gaskell's (1810-1865) *The Grey Woman* is considered as a Female Gothic story based on French folktale with a Blue Beard twist. The Gothic nature of the story overlaps its 'feminist palimpsest' and reiterates the old belief of Gaskell's being a docile woman writer and conformist of the domestic Victorian ideology. But beneath the mysterious suspense of this story one finds an ardent feminist stratagem that aims at exposing the falsity of socially constructed gender through the character of *Anna* and bringing forth an identity devoid of socially attributed gender prejudices through the character of *Amante*. This deconstruction of socially constructed gender identity in this story has been brought to the surface with the help of Judith Butler's theory of 'Gender Perfromitivity'.

In the essay "Performativity Acts and Gender Constitution" (1998) Judith Butler brings forth a theory of Gender Performativity. Butler bases her theory on the combination of Phenomenology and Feminism as both the theories study the lived experiences and consciousness. She argues that Gender is not naturally constructed but rather the 'repetitive stylized acts assigned by the society and culture appropriate to male and female constitute the 'gender'. She believes that repetitive 'performance' of these acts by a body attributes it a 'gender identity' which is not natural and this binary frame of gender categories, the subject and the other, is operated by the 'power'. She questions,

"What configuration of power constructs the subject and the other, that binary relation between men and women and internal stability of those terms? What restriction is here at work? Are those term untroubling only to the extent that they conform to a heterosexual matrix for conceptualizing gender and desire?" (Butler viii)

Butler brings into question the very term 'woman' itself which is a social and cultural signifier of a female body and destabilizes this binary frame. She urges that instead of defining 'woman' feminist should "focus on providing an account of how power functions and shapes our understanding of womanhood not only in the society at large but also within the feminist movement". (Butler 31)

In Gaskell's *The Grey Women* through the performative acts of two female characters namely Anna and Amante which are contradictory to each other brought to the fore the binary frame of gender and at the same time destabilizes these gender categories of 'subject and other'. She appears to challenge the possibilities of Sex, Gender and Sexualities which are socially permitted and therefore projected as natural and introduces new possibilities that are more "flexible, free floating, not caused by other stable factors (Butler 3) This is executed through the character of Amante by dispensing her with such performative acts which are not recognizable and permitted by society and culture to a female body. But because of changes in dress and acceptable physical activity and appearance of Amante her sex remains undisclosed, "Life was ebbing away fast, and they had no resource but to carry her to the nearest hospital, where, of course, the fact of her sex was made known." (Gaskell 39) The choice of dress is also essential in a gender construction as Salih brings out a wardrobe analogy in which she argues that "One's gender is performatively constituted in the same way that one's choice of clothes is curtailed, perhaps even predetermined, by the society, context, economy, etc. within which one is situated." (Salih 56) The hollowness of the whole social construction of gender identity is exposed through the character of Amante and it shows that how "the society inscribes on our external physical bodies our internal gender and sexuality". ("Theory of Gender Performativity")

Butler discusses that performativity is not the 'automatic or mechanical' but imposed by the social norms and deviation from these norms and choice of performance that is not permitted by the society or culture to a male or female can threaten the 'social recognition' of a person that is felt as a need to survive or live in the society. This need makes a person to perform his gender without being conscious of it. Anna appears to be conforming to this power play of sexes and this socially constructed gender role as a motherless female in a patriarchal social structure; conforming to the male's control over female's sexuality, identity and gender performance and this gender performativity is realized throughout many aspects of her life.

According to West and Zimmerman, "Gender is an emergent feature of social situations both as an outcome of and a rationale for various social arrangements, and as a means of legitimating one of the most fundamental divisions of society." (West and Zimmerman 126) Marriage is one of such social arrangements through which 'binary asymmetric gender' is maintained. It is a very crucial site of the power play. The set acts of performance which is transmitted from generation to generation appropriate to a 'man' and a 'woman' in a marriage makes 'woman' a personal property of 'man' as Maureen Reddy aptly says that marriage is, "woman's Primary vocation devoid of education for that, go into it blind, without much knowing about the man, into prison." (186) Anna is also submissive and docile to the marriage enforced upon her by the patriarchal family

and after betrothal nobody has any right over her except her future husband. Her choices and decisions are influenced and manipulated by the society. Anna doesn't love Monsieur de la Tourelle but she is forced to marry him because she didn't show any repugnance to him. She is not given a second chance to think as she says, "What could I do but hang my head, and silently consent..." (Gaskell 13) When she expresses her will to go back to her father's place and not to marry Mr. Tourelle, it is considered an act of dereliction. Her father takes her wish as the "The fancy of a silly girl who did not her own mind, but who had now gone too far to recede." (Gaskell 14) Such a marriage is a social and cultural site of producing the binary gender that projects a socially and culturally created meaning, identity or reality that eschews the natural identity or reality that is generated from her mind.

In contradiction to the gender performativity of Anna, Amante's choice of performative acts differs from the 'normality' as being defined by the society. The Norman character Amante's performance of acts makes her egress from the frame of gender binary of 'man' and 'woman'. She creates an identity that breaks the link between gender, sex and sexuality and destabilizes the gender categories. She seems to be undoing "restrictively normative conceptions of sexual and gendered life." (West and Zimmerman 128) Amante's deviation from the stylized repetitive acts or performativity giving birth to a natural gender identity that is threatening or deconstructing the socially and culturally constructed gender and identity bringing the very identity as a 'woman' into question. She becomes 'more human' in terms of nature than 'human' in terms of society's "disciplinary regim". She moves from "viable life" to "livable life". (West and Zimmerman 127) She demystifies the gender role and sexuality.

"The gender 'woman' and gender 'man' remains contingent and open to interpretation and "resignification". In this way Butler provides an opening for subversive action. She calls for people to trouble the categories of gender through performance (Butler 3). Amante seems to be an answer to this call. Although Amante is a 'female' by sex but her disguise as Anna's husband and change in her attire makes society identify her as a 'male' and her bodily performative acts creates her gender identity as 'man'. The selection of dress, behavior, looks and actions all are construed by the society and culture with power in its play but Amante undoes this gender construction and puts up a threat to the hegemony of the gender 'man'. Amante leads to the subversive action in order to resignify and reinterpret gender and she troubles the categories of gender through her performativity.

As opposite to the character of Anna, Amante refuses to act as a timid and weak person. Timidity is a behavioral feature generally attributed to the gender called 'woman' by society. As Anna says,

"I was timid from my childhood, and before long my dread of his displeasure, conquered my humour...I was afraid of everybody (I do not think I was half as much afraid of things as of persons), Amante feared no one. She would quietly beard Lefebvre, and he respected her all the more for it; she had knack of putting questions to Mr. Tourelle, which

respectfully informed him that she had detected a weak point...and with all her shrewdness to others, she had quite tender ways with me.” (Gaskell 16)

The male servant showed disrespect to Anna but Amante was caring towards her. Instead of being envious or disrespectful to another woman who is hierarchically in a better position, a feature that is a part of gender performativity inculcated by cultural and hierarchical structure of society but Amante shows female solidarity. As Anna says that the women servants were “all hard and impudent looking, and treating me with a semblance of respect that had more of mockery than reality in it.” (Gaskell 17)

After discovering the true nature of Mr. Tourelle’s vocation as one of the chiefs of the robber gangs, the Chauffeurs and Anna and Amante overhear the talk between him and other robbers about the murder of Sieur de Poissy and how Mr. Tourelle murdered his previous spouse, Victorine. Amante takes a decisive role of action and makes her mind to be gone away along with Anna.

Amante creates an identity that seems to be a combination of the performative acts assigned to a ‘man’ as husband and at the same time those acts attributed to a ‘woman’ as a mother. She takes care of Anna as a child, “If madame will still be guided by me –and, my child, I beg my child to trust me.” (Gaskell 37) Even when Anna gives birth to her baby girl Amenta’s motherly love for the child surpasses that of Anna’s as she herself says, “the faithful Amenta’s delight and glory in the babe almost exceeded mine”. (Gaskell 37) Amante who is a female by sex but male by appearance and performance dismantles this division of gender.

In the shelter of an old woman, with her presence of mind and shrewdness, Amante makes the old woman keep the secret from her husband of their stay at her place. She very deftly makes ladder of the rope which was lying coiled among other things in the garret to drop them down the ten feet or so. She wore an old suit of a man’s clothes, cut her own hair to the shortness of a man’s, made Anna clip her black eyebrows as close as though they had been shaved, by cutting up old corks, she altered both, the shape of her face and her voice to a degree which was impossible to believe. While Amante is active with all her wisdom, brains, and creativity together at work, Anna remains “like one stunned.” (Gaskell 29) Amante dyes Anna’s hair and complexion with the decaying shells of the stored up walnuts, blackens her teeth, and voluntarily broke a front tooth to suit the disguise. She makes a bundle of old clothes to preserve their character as husband and wife, stuffed a hump on her back and thickened Anna’s figure.

Amante “boldly announced herself as a travelling tailor, ready to do any odd jobs of work that might be required for a night’s lodging and food for herself and wife.” (Gaskell 30) Here again Amante threatens the gender restricted work demarcation; on one hand as a girl she helped her father in the work of tailoring, on the other hand as a husband she is working as a tailor to earn bread and butter for her dependant. Anna admits that she has seen only one thing in Amante in the moment of utter terror that is ‘courage’ while Anna was “on the point of giving way and throwing

herself weakly upon her neck”. (Gaskell 32) ‘Woman’, a gender, that is always ‘the other’, ‘the weaker’, is dictated to remain under the protection of ‘man’ in the male centric gender binary. This unconsciously done performative act of being weak is undone by Amenta as she was “conscious of a power of protection” (Gaskell 37) she possessed and Anna did not.

Butler also believes that heterosexuality is also socially and culturally constructed through performative repeated stylized acts like masculine gender and heterosexual desire in male bodies. "Sex is not an ideal construct which is forcibly materialized through time. It is not a simple fact or static condition of the body, but a process whereby regulatory norms materialize "sex" and achieve this materialization through a forcible reiteration of those norms" (Butler 1-2). Gaskell seems to break this link between gender, sex and sexuality through the relation of Anna and Amenta as husband and wife and hints at possibility of free play and flexibility of these three terms.

Gaskell’s *The Grey Woman* ends on a pessimistic note as the character of Amante with a naturally generated identity dies and Anna with an identity that conforms to the normality of gender signified by ‘woman’ and construed by society and culture remains alive and is put under the protection of Dr. Voss, a ‘man’ as if reiterating the forcible social and cultural norms. The flexibility and free play of sex, gender and sexuality in terms of performance, desire and choices of action and behavior subverts the male centric power structure of society and therefore these possibilities are curbed through the death of Amante.

Gaskell’s woman characters are based on the realistic representation of female experience, and feminine consciousness of female reality. Through realistic delineation of the characters Gaskell creates a close affinity to the functioning of life with their psychological, emotional and intellectual impulses. This focus on real experiences and consciousness of a ‘female’ makes Butler’s theory of ‘Gender Performativity’ an apt tool to analyze this story. In spite of the pessimistic end of the story Gaskell hints at “the elimination of the oppression of women through the elimination of obligatory sexualities and sex roles”. (“Theory of gender performativity”)

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ELIZABETH GASKELL'S HEROINE OF ACTION IN *NORTH AND SOUTH* AND BENJAMIN DISRAELI'S HEROINE OF ROMANCE IN *SYBIL*: A COMPARATIVE FEMINIST READING OF THE VICTORIAN INDUSTRIAL NOVELS

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Abstract: Elizabeth Gaskell (1810-1865) and Benjamin Disraeli (1804-1881) are well known Victorian Novelists. *North and South* (1848) and *Sybil* (1845), written by Gaskell and Disraeli respectively, are Victorian industrial novels. Elizabeth Gaskell had always been criticised as a submissive, conventional and emotional woman writer as compared to her contemporary writers. This paper attempts at bringing forth the nonconformist and feminist approach in her writing through a comparative study of the female character in Gaskell's *North and South* and the female character in Benjamin's *Sybil*. In contrast to Disraeli's views, Gaskell eradicates the demarcation of public and private life through the character of Margaret who comes to see herself as involved in the public sphere and abandons the position of observer for the position of participant.

Key words: Victorian era, Industrial Novels, Feminist approach, Public and Private Sphere, Margaret, Sybil

Elizabeth Gaskell's *North and South* (1848) and Disraeli Benjamin's *Sybil* (1845) are well known Industrial Novels of the Victorian Era. Taking the charge of her own life Margaret Hale in *North and South* discards the role of an idle lady and undergoes the process of defining her proper work demystifying the conventional feminine work of courtship and marriage. As contrast to Margaret, Disraeli's *Sybil* adheres to the Victorian conventional role of an inactive object of beauty. In Disraeli's novels, "When female characters enter the plot in an industrial novel, they play conventional roles, serving mostly as romantic interests for the male protagonists" (Colby 9).

Disraeli's *Sybil* is named after its protagonist female character Sybil but perfunctorily enough, like most of the male writers who worked within the genre, Disraeli puts a male Character at the centre of the plot in this novel in sharp contrast to Gaskell's industrial novels whether *North and South* or *Mary Barton*. The novel focuses on a young aristocrat, Charles Egremont, who, "brought up in the enjoyment of every comfort and every luxury that refinement could devise and wealth furnish" develops a social conscience. "Popular at school, idolized at home, and secured with a family seat in Parliament," Egremont seems destined for a life of ease, until an unhappy love affair sends him abroad and he returns a "much wiser man" prepared "to observe, to inquire, and to reflect" (Disraeli 40). Sybil Gerard, the daughter of a factory worker of noble ancestry, serves as a difficult prize for Egremont to pursue and win in the course of the novel as well as a means of his introduction to the struggles of the working class.

Gaskell's novel *North and South* moves around the life of Margaret Hale who takes the central stage in the plot. A clergyman's daughter, Margaret Hale moves with her father from agricultural South to industrial Lancashire, where her former comfortable life is replaced by the rigors of urban life, "It is in such an atmosphere that Margaret grows in perception and power, willingly accepts the task of meditating between the agricultural South and Industrial North". The Industrial working conditions, labour problem, poverty etc are scrutinized from the perspective of a middle class woman. "Through her negotiations, the warring parties become reconciled and working conditions improve" thus "*North and South* affirms women's right to participate in public life" (Colby 41).

Sybil is portrayed as an idealized woman of the Victorian age and paranormally personified as an 'angel', "You are an angel from heaven," exclaimed the mother, "and you may well stay beautiful" keeping her away from the daily business of the world, industrial strife and class conflict (Disraeli 105). From the very

beginning of the novel *Sybil* is personified as a spiritual creature living in a rarefied atmosphere and thus isolated from the realms of politics and economics. She is refrained from crossing the threshold of public life confirming the Victorian ideology of passive, dependent and idle creature. Egremont's first glimpse of Sybil reveals an otherworldliness that sets her apart from the rest of humanity:

The divine melody ceased; the elder strange rose; the words were on the lips of Egremont, that would have asked some explanation of this sweet and holy mystery, when, in the vacant and star-lit arch on which his glance was fixed, he beheld a female form ... and so strange that Egremont might for a moment have been pardoned for believing her a seraph, who had lighted on this sphere, or the fair phantom of some saint haunting the sacred ruins of her desecrated fame (Disraeli 77).

Contradictory to Disraeli's notion of idealized young woman like Sybil, Gaskell, from the outset, is interested in representing her heroine as contrasting with conventional Victorian young women. The opening chapter, 'Haste to the Wedding', brings forth the contradictory nature of Margaret and her cousin, Edith, establishing Margaret as deviating from Victorian norms of feminine behaviour in several important ways. Lying "curled up" in the drawing-room, "looking very lovely in her white muslin and blue ribbons," Edith is remarkable only for her decorative value (Gaskell, 261). Throughout the novel, Margaret is played off against Edith, who embodies the Victorian norms for femininity. In contrast, Margaret seeks a realm of action that will challenge her and make use of her talents. Describing to her father her experience at Thornton's party, Margaret admits she "felt like a hypocrite tonight, sitting there in my white silk gown, with my idle hands before me, when I remembered all the good, thorough, house-work they had done today" (Gaskell, 221).

Idealized and ethereal, Sybil cannot form her own realistic perception of the current socio-political scene and therefore is unable to define her proper role in the current circumstances. Instead she dwells upon a nostalgic perspective of the past, glorying in "a race of forefathers who belonged to the oppressed and not to oppressors," and retreats to a dream world of her own making, envisioning a glorious future in which, through divine intervention, she and her father will regain their former landed status (Disraeli 291). So preoccupied is Sybil with this topic that, during a conversation with Egremont about the conditions of the working class, she remarks that the degradation of her faith and of her race are the only two topics that occupy her thoughts. Yet she does nothing at all to effect actual social change, believing that "nothing short of the descent of angels can save the people of this kingdom". In contrast to the male view in the novel, expressed by Stephen Morley as "God will help those who help themselves," Sybil holds that "those only can help themselves whom God helps" (Disraeli 201).

Gaskell strongly implies to bring about a change through the agency of women by allowing her female protagonist to 'act'; by doing she defines herself and has an effect on the world around. The novel traces the maturation of Margaret Hale, whose comfortable life of privilege and freedom is replaced by the rigors of urban life in straitened circumstances. Margaret develops her own perception and tries to find solution to labor problems, in Marry Hotz's words,

Through her characterization of Margaret Hale, Gaskell seeks to reconstitute the working-class connection between life and death to produce meaningful social reform. In particular Margaret intervenes in the strike scene to argue for a more comprehensive, public role for middle-class women in Victorian society and to stand in the place of working-class bodies-those bodies, both dead and alive, which have become such problems to Gaskell's middle-class reader. According to Gaskell, this kind of heroine transforms the economy and bridges the gap between England's two nations (166).

Mr. Thornton also accepts Margaret's assessment of the public situation and moves towards a possible solution by offering work to Higgins, thereby initiating a system in which managers and workers will form personal relationships.

Unacquainted with the dynamics of actual political processes, Sybil is shocked to learn that the working class is deeply divided by internal factions, rivalries, intrigues. Although she is the daughter of a chief spokesperson of the people, Sybil is naïve in her political opinions and reveals only a tenuous grasp of what is taking place all around her. Gradually, Sybil's conviction that "to be one of the people was to be miserable and innocent; one of the privileged, a luxurious tyrant" is replaced by the realization that "the world was a more complicated system than she had preconceived" (Disraeli 337).

Margaret, conscientiously aware of current socio-economic and industrial issue, wades through the way of conflict towards the equilibrium of society. She follows her own instincts and establishes her own principles of 'connection' and 'equality of friendship' to find the solutions. In this effort she forms a close bond with an individual working class family. She understands that to be effective in the new environment, she must learn to accommodate herself to the working-class mores. The friendship of Nicholas Higgins and his daughter Bessy Higgins supports her as she gradually moves towards her chosen work. This friendship with a working-class woman teaches Margaret that "God has made us so that we must be mutually dependent" (Gaskell, 169). Margaret has empathic understanding necessary to bridge the gap between the working class and the industrialists:

When Margaret, new to the industrial city of Milton-Northern, voices her intention of visiting Higgins's Home, Higgins is annoyed. To him, the proposal carries shades of authority's patronizing condescension, implicitly denying his rights to independence and equality. For Margaret on the other hand, her interest is the outward expression of sympathy and fellow-feeling. It is paradoxically the attempt to put into practice her own belief in the principle of 'connection', in the 'equality of friendship' that should unite the classes, Margaret's impulses is vindicated when Higgins comes to appreciate all she does for his child, Bessy (Wainwright 150).

Disraeli portrays Sybil as a victim of circumstance. Sybil's greatest test comes when she learns that her father is in danger of being imprisoned and she decides to try to reach him to his rescue; but unlike Margaret, Sybil fails to successfully take charge of the circumstances. Instead in this moment of crisis, Disraeli underlines her feminine ineptitude, describing her as "this child of innocence and divine thoughts, born in cottage and bred in cloister, went forth, on a great enterprise of duty and devotion, into the busiest and a wildest haunts of the greatest of modern cities" (Disraeli 359). Here she is in sharp contrast to Margaret's capable, decisive and self-reliant image who takes matters into her own hands. Throughout the scene Disraeli constantly emphasizes Sybil's weakness, mentioning her "sense of her utter helplessness," her "feminine reserve," her "feeling of being overpowered". How she feels, not what she does, is Disraeli's focus. And when she does act, it is most often to implore for help. In the coffee house, the first words she speaks are "Is there not one among you who will assist me?" (Disraeli 361). When human help is not forthcoming, she seeks divine assistance, praying, "Holy Virgin, aid me!" finally encountering a kindly Irishman, she exclaims, "I beseech you by everything we hold sacred to aid me". Later, she continues, "Guide me, I beseech you, honestly and truly guide me!" (Disraeli 368).

Margaret is endowed with ability and strength to overpower the circumstances. She takes a leading role in planning involved in the move to Milton. Within the patriarchal family, Margaret has been sheltered and protected from difficult decisions; the rearrangement of the family power structure is necessary before Margaret can begin to see her vocation in life. It becomes Margaret's responsibility to arrange the transition to Milton in such a way as to cause the least inconvenience to her mother; her father also agrees to her plans and decisions. When the day of the move arrives, it is Margaret, "calm and collected," with "her large grave eyes observing everything, "who supervises the men who had come to help." She reasons to herself, "If she gave way, who was to act?" (Gaskell, 89). When decisions had to be made concerning lodgings, it is again Margaret who makes them, telling her father, "I have planned it all" and exclaiming, "I am overpowered by the discovery of my own genius for management" (Gaskell, 97). Upon arriving at the hotel where the Hales are staying temporarily, John Thornton, the wealthy manufacturer, is rather taken aback when he meets Margaret for the first time, "Mr. Thornton was in habits of authority himself, but she seemed to assume some kind of rule over him at once" (Gaskell, 99). Here Gaskell presents Margaret as an image of competence, strength, and intellectual authority.

Sybil is again forced to fall back to the role of a victim rather than a savior; despite her good intentions she cannot rescue her father and in the end it is she who needs to be rescued. "Pale, agitated, exhausted," arriving too late to save her father, Sybil only finds herself helpless, "She looked up to her father, a glance as it were of devotion and despair; her lips move, but they refused their office, and expressed no words" (Disraeli 379). Inarticulate and ineffectual Sybil instead turns out to be an additional burden for her father as she faints and has to be carried off. Coming to the senses, Sybil again looks for a rescuer, Egremont, the hero and man of action; she writes a letter to him, begging "Save me!" (Disraeli 384). Shrinking with all the delicacy of a woman, from the impending examination in open court before the magistrate, "Sybil is finally

rescued by the intervention of the man who loves her and is again carried to her destination” (Disraeli 386). Throughout the novel Disraeli repeatedly shows Egremont coming to Sybil’s rescue.

Just opposite to Sybil, Gaskell puts Maragret into the role of a savior and rescuer. This can be witnessed in her attempt to rescue her brother Frederick; who, on board the Russell, had tolerated the tyranny of the commanding officer, Captain Reid, until his “imperiousness in trifles” (Gaskell, 152) led to the senseless death of a sailor. At that point, mutiny broke out, and, as a result, Frederick was branded a traitor. Margaret mentions the possibility of clearing Frederick, asking, “If he came and stood his trial, what would be the punishment?” Surely, he might bring evidence of his great provocation (Gaskell, 154). It is Margaret, who rouses Frederick to action and comes to his rescue. Margaret’s assessment of Frederick’s chances proves to be correct, for Lennox agrees that acquittal is possible with credible witnesses. And when it becomes too dangerous for Frederick to stay any longer in England, Margaret, at considerable risk, accompanies him to the station.

In another incident of labor uproar, when the men are on the brink of violence, Margaret again steps forward to save Mr. Thorton. She steps between him and violence and throws her arms around Thornton to shelter him. When he tells her, “Go away... this is no place for you,” she counters, “It is. You did not see what I saw” (Gaskell, 234). But Gaskell does not present Margaret immune to the complexities and dangers of entering the public sphere. The mob pelt pebble at her knocking her down with an injury on head; she suffers the humiliation of being misunderstood for her effort to defend Thornton, but, in retrospect, she expresses scorn for conventional standards for femininity, “I would do it again, let who will say what they like of me. If I saved one blow, one cruel, angry action that might otherwise have been committed, I did a woman’s work” (Gaskell, 247).

It is noteworthy that Disraeli distinctly segregates public life as Masculine and private life, as feminine. Feminine attributes are given more emphasis that makes Sybil a subordinate to be instructed, assisted, and won. In contrast, Egremont’s work is to discover his place in the political order and to act within that order and his work is defined by his masculinity. As he gets closer to his vocation, Egremont “could not resist the conviction that ... His sympathies had become livelier and more extended; that a masculine impulse had been given to his mind” (Disraeli 154). His masculinity imparts him unconditional privilege to ponder over social conditions and capability to bring about a change in the socio-economic system. Unlike Sybil, ‘a dreamer of dreams’, Egremont is a man of action, taking his place in an important national debate in the House of Commons. This discussion of the National Petition is so weighty that “not a member was absent from his place; men were bought indeed from distant capitals to participate in the struggle and to decide it” (Disraeli 330). While feminine character of Sybil yields her mere dependency, inaction, intellectual confinement and subordination. Disraeli’s language conspicuously implies that “Politics is the work of men; romance, the work of women” (Colby 11).

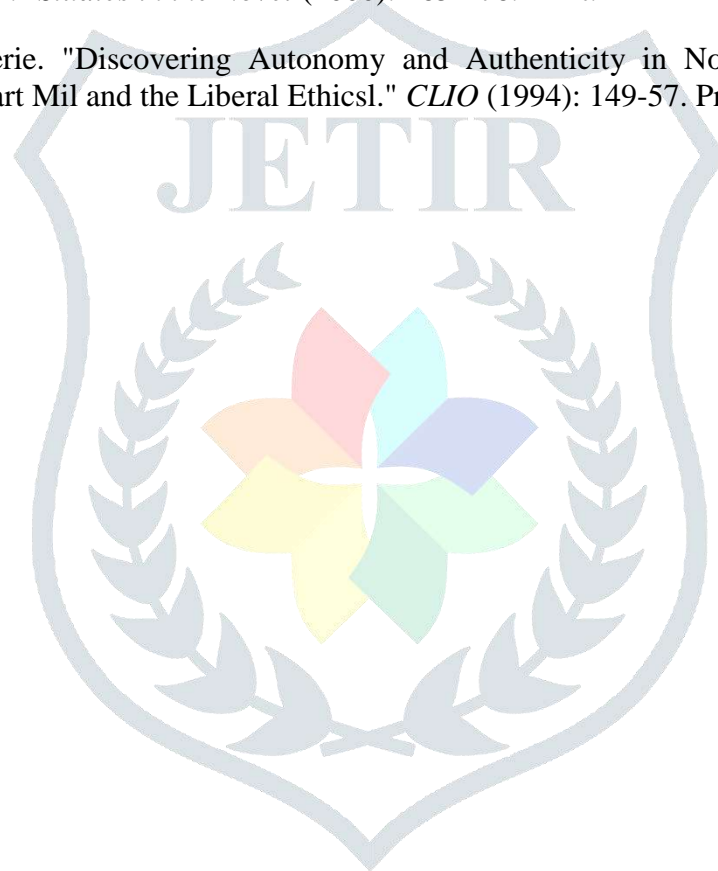
In contrast to Disraeli’s views Gaskell eradicates this demarcation of public and private life through Margaret who comes to see herself as involved in the public sphere abandons the position of observer for the position of participant. For Margaret, this means compromise and even pain, but at the same times an enlargement of identity. It is Margaret who undertakes her roles of public mediator to settle a standoff between the owner of the mill and its hands. She takes up the issue with John Thornton, forcing him to examine and justify his own actions. Margaret strongly advocates her judgment confirming equality of the owners and workers; she establishes her view that the workers should be treated fairly and respectfully. When the strike breaks out she urges Thornton to treat the workers as human beings, “Thornton’s tendency to view the issue from a business point of view, regarding the workforce as a purely economic unit, is corrected by Margaret, who brings the values of private life into the discussion” (Colby 15). As a result of Margaret’s intervention, a personal truce between two former antagonists’ leads to change, after a later visit to Higgins, Thornton is made aware of the lack of food and schooling that is common among his workers and decides to educate some children and to create a system in the factory whereby men are fed adequately and cheaply. Again when caught in a financial crisis, Margaret extends a helping hand to Thornton and persuades him to accept help from her, a woman, by doing so Margaret teaches him new social possibilities; Gaskell here again, hints at inversion of conventional notions of gender by showing a woman instructing a man:

In this novel, Gaskell implies that the marriage between Margaret and John Thornton will be a partnership in which both will work together, in the private and the public sphere, and that this work

will be fraught with difficulties. Nevertheless Gaskell affirms that it is possible to create better social and private arrangements, and that the two spheres are tied together ... indeed married (Colby 22).

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ELIZABETH GASKELL'S *RUTH* AND THOMAS HARDY'S *TESS OF D'URBERVILLES*: A COMPARATIVE STUDY TYPIFYING THE LIFE OF A FALLEN WOMAN

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Abstract: The present paper explores Elizabeth Gaskell's *Ruth* (1853) with new feminist dimensions through its comparison with Thomas Hardy's *Tess of D'Urbervilles* (1891). Both the novels centre on a common theme i.e. the life of fallen women in Victorian England. Elizabeth Gaskell's *Ruth* though written around forty years before Hardy's *Tess of D'Urbervilles* challenges the Victorian domestic ideology and exposes the double standard of the Victorian society. Gaskell proposes an alternative social system paving way for the redemption of a fallen woman. Unlike Gaskell, Hardy bears a pessimistic view towards the life of a fallen woman creating no space for her redemption in the unjust social setup bringing about her inevitable downfall through social exclusion.

Keywords- Fallen Woman, Victorian ideology, Redemption, Chastity, Ruth, Tess

Elizabeth Gaskell's *Ruth* (1853) and Thomas Hardy's *Tess of D'Urbervilles* (1891) both share a common theme, the life of a fallen woman. Although it is written nearly forty years before Hardy's novel, Gaskell's *Ruth* boldly articulates that "fallen woman could be redeemed and returned to normal Victorian society" (Michie 87). Gaskell defies the Victorian concept of femininity as culturally excluded other and redefines feminine position in society. By redeeming and accepting Ruth in the societal domestic sphere Gaskell dilutes the delineation of feminine 'purity' and 'impurity', 'woman' and 'lady', 'whore' and 'Madonna'. Through fictional characterization of Ruth, Gaskell presents solution to the social problem of fallen women by their return to 'home'. But unlike Gaskell, Hardy pessimistically projects his heroine to be doomed to a fatal end away from home.

Gaskell's *Ruth* is a social novel that envisages Victorian views on sin and illegitimacy. It moves around the protagonist, Ruth, who is an unwed mother. Gaskell hits upon the social hypocrisy of the Victorian Age that exempts a man from chastity for being virtuous but when applied to a woman the two terms 'virtue' and 'Physical Chastity' become interchangeable. Unlike femininity in Victorian age, Masculinity is not divided between two halves that is 'purity' and 'impurity'. Gaskell thwarts the idea of 'fallenness' that is based on physical chastity and patent only for women. The novel, through the character of Ruth, redefines the concept of 'virtue' as a quality of soul and not of physical existence.

When a woman falls from her purity there is no return for her [...] as well may one attempt to wash the stain from the sullied snow. Men sin and are forgiven; but the memory of a woman's guilt cannot be removed on earth. Her nature is so exquisitely refined that the slightest flaw becomes a huge defect. Like perfume, it admits of no deterioration, it ceases to exist when it ceases to be sweet. Her soul is an exquisitely precious, a priceless gift, and even more than man's a perilous possession (Sally x).

Hardy's *Tess of D'Urbervilles* questions society's sexual mores by compassionately portraying a heroine who is seduced by the son of her employer and who thus is not considered a pure and chaste woman by the rest of society. Hardy seems to be expressing his dissatisfaction, weariness, and an overwhelming sense of injustice at the cruelty of universal fate of disappointment and disillusionment. He projects pessimistic

views that the hopes and desires of human beings are cruelly thwarted by circumstances and destiny. Tess's baby symbolizes Tess's bad circumstances which were out of Tess's control. It symbolizes innocence in a sense since this baby was innocent having done nothing wrong, but it was punished by society for coming from such an evil act. Having been raped, Tess was also innocent of the crime, but she was still punished and pushed aside by society. The whole novel turns out to be a tragedy with no hope for salvation. It seems that the whole novel, from the very beginning, is propelling Tess towards her tragic execution at the end. It's like an avalanche of tragedy that all lands on Tess, even though she's not the one who started the slide.

Gaskell points out the double standard of a society which condones sexual adventures for men but condemns women for a single lapse. It is notable that Ruth is a victim of circumstances, an orphan, who has no one to turn to for guidance and companionship. Gaskell also sheds light on the lurid conditions of the working women, the apprentices. They had to work for about eighteen hours a day on scanty diet and rest; their life is devoid of any pleasure or amusement:

Two o'clock in the morning chimed forth the old bells of St Saviour's. And yet more than a dozen girls still sat in the room into which Ruth entered, stitching away as if for very life, not daring to gape, or show any outward manifestation of sleepiness [...] for they knew that, stay up as late as they might, the work-hours of the next day must begin at eight, and their young limbs were very weary (Gaskell, *Ruth* 3).

Ruth is one of such apprentices in captivity of unkind Mrs. Mason; when she gets a break of half an hour she tries to seek the freedom of a bird in the open sky, "Ruth Hilton sprang to the large old window, and pressed against it as a bird presses against the bars of its cage. She put back the blind, and gazed into the quiet moonlight night" (Gaskell, *Ruth* 4). Her eyes are full of tears; her heart is flooded with nostalgic feeling for her lost sweet home with loving mother and father. "Oh, Jenny!" said Ruth, sitting up in bed, and pushing back the masses of hair that were heating her forehead, "I thought I saw mamma by the side of the bed, coming, as she used to do, to see if I were asleep and comfortable; and when I tried to take hold of her, she went away and left me alone—I don't know where; so strange!" (Gaskell, *Ruth* 5). All the apprentices have friends whom they can meet on Sundays but poor Ruth has no friend and no home in that desolate town.

Into this emotional vacuum comes Henry Bellingham into her life, who is a licentious heir to a fortune. He is simply bewitched by Ruth's loveliness, and grace, fused with the simplicity and innocence. Circumstances throw Henry and Ruth together and the two become close friends. He enticed her with the happiness to visit her home "her mamma's room, her old acquaintances and native places" (Gaskell, *Ruth* 17). Only sixteen, Ruth is too young and naïve to see the evil in Bellingham's eyes. But old Thomas immediately recognized the selfish love of his and he tries to warn Ruth against him; but alas! She is too innocent to comprehend his words, "My dear, remember the devil goeth about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour; remember that, Ruth" (Gaskell, *Ruth* 20).

Unfortunately Ruth gets late and comes across Mrs. Mason; who finds her "standing with a lover, far away from home, at such a time in the evening, and she boiled over with intemperate displeasure" (Gaskell, *Ruth* 21). She disposes her of her work and slams all doors to get shelter. When Ruth is stupefied, sick, faint near to sank down with the sudden fall and profuse sorrow, Mr. Bellingham expresses his selfish love to her, love only for her outer beauty; "her beauty was all that Mr Bellingham cared for, and it was supreme. It was all he recognised of her, and he was proud of it" and entreats homeless Ruth to go with him to London (Gaskell, *Ruth* 22). But Ruth feels that it was wrong and she expresses her desire to go to old Thomas and Marry, "Oh, sir! I want you to take me to Milham Grange," said she, holding back; "Old Thomas would give me a home" (Gaskell, *Ruth* 23). But after getting into the carriage he moves on to London with faint Ruth. Ignorant of the social meaning of what Ruth does, she is 'a beautiful ignoramus', not responsible for her actions because she is unaware of their meaning. Ruth in her ignorance "exemplifies the conspiracy of silence within which Victorian girls were generally raised; the 'state of repressed consciousness' identified by the critic Martha Vicinus that rendered it effectively impossible for women to act as responsible agents with regard to sexual behaviour" (qtd in Matus 55). Ruth confirms her own ignorance, "I was very young; I did not know how such a life against God's pure and holy will – at least not as I know it now" (Gaskell, *Ruth* 246).

An innocent girl is being punished for unselfishly loving Henry Bellingham who deceives her without any consideration for her and sets off to London with his mother, leaving disgraced Ruth behind and settling the matter handsomely as he says, “Dismiss her, as you wish it; but let it be done handsomely, and let me hear no more about it” (Gaskell, *Ruth* 34). Here, Ruth, bewildered by the situation attempts to end her life; but fortunately she is saved by Thurston Benson. Gaskell does not allow a disgraceful end to her ‘fallen’ heroine but shapes a new destiny full of dignity for her.

Unlike orphan and homeless Ruth, Tess grows under the guardianship of her parents and a large family with younger brothers and sisters. But it is unfortunate that Tess’s own mother impels her to the wrong side of life; it is she who compels her to go to the D’Urbervilles’ house at Trantridge away from home against her wish, “I would rather stay here with father and you” (Hardy 77). She plans to send her daughter to claim kinship with the remaining d’Urbervilles, and thus make her eligible to marry a gentleman. Though she is aware of the danger of Alec D’Urbervilles yet she does not warn Tess against it “I thought if I spoke of his fond feelings and what they might lead to, you would be hontish wi’ him and lose your chance” She murmured (Hardy 76). Furthermore, she chides Tess for not being careful and insists on her marrying Alec; she does not understand her feelings, “who would have expected it to end like this! Why didn’t ye think of doing some good for your family instead o’ thinking only of yourself? [...] Her poor foolish mother little knew her present feeling towards this man” (Hardy 177). Even Tess’s father does not support her in her crisis; he suspects his daughter when Angel departs her back to her parents’ place, “I shall put an end to myself, title and all—I can bear it no longer! [...] D’ye think he really have married her?—or is it like the first” (Hardy 124). The perception that her own parents doubted her makes her go away from home.

Mr. Benson and his sister Faith give Ruth home, love and respect. By depicting an impure woman taken into the home, Gaskell refused conventional Victorian notion of a fallen woman as an outcast. Gaskell did not view emigration as a solution to the problem of prostitution, instead insisting that fallen women could be redeemed by being taken into the domestic sphere. She portrays a fallen woman taken into the sanctity of the domestic sphere, thereby representing in her novel the practical solution that was not available to fallen women of Victorian age. Gaskell asserts her view through Mr. Benson, who considers Ruth as ‘Mary Magdalen’ and stands against the whole world to save her:

I take my stand with Christ against the world [...] I state my firm belief, that it is God's will that we should not dare to trample any of His creatures down to the hopeless dust; that it is God's will that the women who have fallen should be numbered among those who have broken hearts to be bound up, not cast aside as lost beyond recall. If this be God's will, as a thing of God it will stand; and He will open a way (Gaskell, *Ruth* 80).

Ruth’s early work as a needlewoman, her seduction by a ‘gentleman’ and her subsequent ‘fall’ are all details that associate her with stereotypical Victorian accounts of how women became prostitutes. It would have been assumed that a story which had such a beginning could have only one end. As Ruth’s seducer Bellingham says, “There was but one thing that could have happened” (Gaskell, *Ruth* 115). Or a Jemima’s dressmaker remarks, “One knows they can but go from bad to worse, poor creatures!” (Gaskell, *Ruth* 145). But Gaskell refutes unfair assumptions about fallen women and creates a new destiny of such a woman. She applies all devices, the power of education, employment, firmness, self-esteem, independence, humanity, and motherly love to uplift fate of a fallen woman.

Rather than emphasizing the strength of intellect and conscience, Tess's physicality is referred to so frequently in the novel that it's hard not to think of her attractiveness as her defining characteristic. Some characters in the novel aren't able to see past her good looks. The scene in which she first meets Alec D’Urbervilles is the first instance of this:

She had an attribute which amounted to a disadvantage just now; and it was this that caused Alec D’Urberville’s eyes to rivet themselves upon her. It was a luxuriance of aspect, a fullness of growth, which made her appear more of a woman than she really was. She had inherited the feature from her mother without the quality it denoted. It had troubled her mind occasionally, till her companions had said that it was a fault which time would cure (Hardy 23).

When Alec runs into Tess again, he can't stop talking about her mouth, "Surely there never was such a maddening mouth since Eve's!" (Hardy 178). Why does Hardy mention this? Because it's important to point out that Alec's obsession with Tess is purely physical, and his physical attraction to her has to do with her beauty. But Angel is infatuated to Tess too as in the passage in which Angel is staring at Tess (unbeknownst to her) and studying her face:

How very lovable her face was to him. Yet there was nothing ethereal about it; all was real vitality, real warmth, and real incarnation. And it was in her mouth that this culminated. Eyes almost as deep and speaking he had seen before, and cheeks perhaps as fair; brows as arched, a chin and throat almost as shapely; her mouth he had seen nothing to equal on the face of the earth. To a young man with the least fire in him that little upward life in the middle of her red top lip was distracting, infatuating, and maddening (Hardy 83).

It is surprising that so called righteous man Angel Clare can buy into the idea that a wife is her husband's property, "since you will probably have to leave at Christmas, it is in every way desirable and convenient that I should carry you off then as my property" (Hardy 112). Tess herself views her own physical beauty with pride, only to think that Angel is proud to have a pretty wife. At other times, she is self-conscious and embarrassed about her good looks. When she travels alone after Angel has left her, she goes so far as to disguise herself so that she'll be able to avoid the unwanted remarks and leers of men on the road. She snips off her eyebrows and ties a bandage around her chin. She somehow sees her own physical attractiveness as a sin – it's something she cannot help, but her physicality tempts men, and causes them to accuse her of deliberately tempting them, as Alec does: "You temptress, Tess; you dear witch of Babylon!" (Hardy 178).

On the other hand Gaskell emphasizes intellectual power in a woman; Ruth developed her intellectual powers which gave significance to her existence. With the qualities of refined taste, excellent sense and judgement Ruth sets to work and make herself competent and employable to take on the responsibility of her own existence. Her intellectual power, education and knowledge under the directions of Mr. Benson helped find an employment as a governess; she began to earn her living that gives her self-esteem and independence. Even Jemima, Bradshaw's daughter acknowledges, "I meant that you were fitted for something better. Why, Ruth, you are better educated than I am!" (Gaskell, *Ruth* 275). Ruth not only obtains knowledge and wisdom but also teaches all her knowledge to her son as Mr. Benson says, "I doubt if the wisest and most thoughtful schoolmaster could teach half as much directly, as his mother does unconsciously and indirectly every hour that he is with her" (Gaskell, *Ruth* 299).

Tess's intellectual power is neglected throughout the novel and her life is thrown into the clutches of 'fate' which is always dismal. Tess does well in school, passes all her exams, and is on her way to being considered for a career as a school-teacher. Her education enables her to express herself in "her own native phrases-assisted a little by her sixth standard training-feelings which might almost have been called those of the age—the ache of modernism" (Hardy 152). Yet, like all other cottagers in Blackmoor vale, Tess "was steeped in fancies and prefigurative superstitions" (Gaskell, *Ruth* 69). Despite her better education she is still very superstitious, omens worry her; 'the fate' seems to her to decide that she is not to be a teacher; Tess shares Hardy's strong sense of pessimistic fatalism.

Here it is noteworthy that the problem of prostitution and fallen women is deeply associated with poverty, economic dependency and subordination to men who want to take possession of women as their property, "The masculine position involves being associated with an indiscriminate desire to own property, a desire both Gaskell and Marx characterize as negative by linking it with prostitution" (Michie 118). Therefore, Gaskell emphasized on economic emancipation of women, whereas Hardy effaces the conducive and empowering effect of employment in the development of the self in Tess. After being disposed of her work as a governess at Mr. Bradshaw's home, Ruth seeks every kind of employment, "She was so willing to serve and work, and every one despised her services [...] many and many a time Ruth turned over in her mind every possible chance of obtaining employment for her leisure hours, and nowhere could she find it" (Gaskell, *Ruth* 261). After working as a governess, a needlewoman eventually finds an employment for herself in the form of a sick-nurse as she has "the gift of a very delicate touch, which is such a comfort in many cases" (Gaskell, *Ruth* 272). She performed her task with utmost perfection that gradually earned her recognition and respect. "Such a one as her has never been a great sinner; nor does she do her work as a penance, but for the love of God, and of the blessed Jesus. She will be in the light of God's countenance

when you and I will be standing afar off" (Gaskell, *Ruth* 305). She makes her son proud of her who proudly tells everybody that Ruth is his mother.

Ruth proudly refuses to accept any money from Mr. Bellingham after he deserts her. She requests Miss Benson to return the blank note of fifty pounds which is given by his mother to get rid of Ruth, "If you please, Miss Benson, I should like to return this money [...] I have a strong feeling against taking it [...] this money pains my heart. He has left off loving me, and has gone away" (Gaskell, *Ruth* 96). Ruth firmly guards her self-esteem and feeling of true love that cannot yield to temptation of materialistic gains. Her power to love honestly makes Bellingham undeserved to the power of giving and casts him out of her life.

Ruth shows the strength of character and firmness when she thrashes Bellingham who once more attempts to entrap Ruth. But grown out of her innocence and ignorance, Ruth has unbroken self-determinacy, she can understand her conscience; she can separate truth from false and puts up a strong protest against evil. She refuses to marry her seducer. She does not cow down to his will as she says firmly,

To save Leonard from the shame and agony of knowing my disgrace, I would lie down and die. Oh! Perhaps it would be best for him—for me, if I might; my death would be a stingless grief—but to go back into sin would be the real cruelty to him [...] Whatever may be my doom—God is just—I leave myself in His hands. I will save Leonard from evil. Evil would it be for him if I lived with you. I will let him die first! (Gaskell, *Ruth* 215).

Hardy deprives his heroine from the quality of self-reliance, independence, strength and firmness of character. Tess's fate is decided, for all her efforts, mostly by others. Though she initiates her own behaviour and actions, she is ultimately judged and condemned by external forces. She shares Hardy's sense of morbidity incurred by misfortune. Tess's letter which would explain her situation to Clare and perhaps save her from her marriage and her ultimate fate, goes unnoticed; "Obsessed with bad luck, he insists on its use to explain the loss of the letter" (Jekel 166). Tess suffers from indecision, when Tess gets a chance to reveal her truth she backtracks and loses strength, "At the last moment her courage had failed her; she feared his blame for not telling him sooner; and her instinct of self-preservation was stronger than her candour" (Hardy 104). This again makes her victim to injustice by another man.

Ruth turns down Bellingham's proposal to marry and chooses her own freedom. She proves that woman is not always powerless and does not always need to be dependent in a male-female relationship. Ruth exemplifies Simone de Beauvoir's belief as expressed in *The Second Sex* that "women are as capable of choice as men, and thus can choose to elevate themselves, moving beyond the 'immanence' to which they were previously resigned and reaching 'transcendence', a position in which one takes responsibility for oneself and the world, where one chooses one's freedom" (Social Institutions and Gender Index OECD).

Tess is deprived of the power to follow her conscience and self-esteem; she is instilled with dependency on men and timidly gives way to their instructions. When Alec d'Urbervilles leaves Tess back to her home, he tries to kiss her again at that time Tess meekly says, "If you wish," she answered indifferently, "See how you've mastered me!" (Hardy 46). When converted Alec blames Tess for tempting him with her charms and asked her to swear not to do so again, Tess timidly accepts his accusation by following what he says, "Tess, half frightened, gave way to his importunity; placed her hand upon the stone and swore" (Hardy 170). Even Angel does injustice to Tess; though he himself had a moral slip and asks Tess for forgiveness not revealing it before, he refuses to judge her at parallel for the lesser sin which was not her intentional will, but victimization at the age of sixteen,

I did not mention it because I was afraid of endangering my chance of you, darling, the great prize of my life—my Fellowship I call you. My brother's Fellowship was won at his college, mine at Talbothays Dairy. Well, I would not risk it [...] the sinner that I was! But I must, now I see you sitting there so solemnly. I wonder if you will forgive me (Hardy 124).

Tess forgives Angel but he does not; here we witness a double morality. He says, "I repeat, the woman I have been loving is not you" (Hardy 127). Despite her innocence and injustice at the hands of Angel, Tess pleaded guilty of self-preservation and not revealing the truth of her past life to Angel. She considers herself disrespectful, unworthy and completely devoted herself to him by self-sacrifices. She considers herself

responsible for everything; she even thinks of ending life to help him get rid of her. She entreats him to accept her as a servant all through life.

It's too late when she comes to realize that Angel has actually done injustice to her and she writes, "O why have you treated me so monstrously, Angel! I do not deserve it [...] why have you so wronged me? You are cruel, cruel indeed! I will try to forget you. It is all injustice I have received at your hands!" (Hardy 195). She is again projected as helpless and vulnerable creature as Alec again wins her in the name of her brother and sisters' good future. He persuades her that Angel will never come back and claims himself as her master. Angel returns with changed mind but alas! It's again too late. "She is victimized by Alec, persuaded and then rejected by Angel, claimed again by Alec, and reclaimed by Angel. Her only ally, her temperament, becomes her destruction when compassion and tenderness, warmth and sexuality move her to yield to first one man and then to another" (Jekel 167).

Gaskell presents Ruth's child not as a 'sin' but as a blessing 'a messenger of God' who will help Ruth wade through the struggle of life. Ruth is full of power to proclaim her motherly love against the whole world of false morality, on the news of child she exclaimed, "Oh, my God, I thank Thee! Oh! I will be so good!" (Gaskell, *Ruth* 88). That shows her strength to fight the injustice and Gaskell also allows her son's baptism. Mr. Benson appeals to his sister Faith to consider Ruth's child as God's blessing, "Teach her (and God will teach her, if man does not come between) to reverence her child; and this reverence will shut out sin,—will be purification" (Gaskell, *Ruth* 89).

But Tess's child dies early without baptism because he is illegitimate secondly he was not baptized by a parson. Tess named him Sorrow while unsuccessfully trying to baptize him, "So passed away Sorrow the Undesired—that intrusive creature, that bastard gift of shameless Nature, who respects not the social law" (Hardy 56). Thus her darling baby was buried in "that shabby corner of God's allotment where He lets the nettles grow, and where all unbaptized infants, notorious drunkards, suicides, and others of the conjecturally are laid" in the night (Hardy 57).

Ruth vows to turn her son into a pure and noble being and keep away from the evil like Bellingham; through her dream of her son being grown into "the repetition of his father" Ruth asserts her judgment that it is her seducer, her sinner who deserves God's punishment, "She saw her son dragged down by the clinging girl into some pit of horrors into which she dared not look, but from whence his father's voice was heard, crying aloud, that in his day and generation he had not remembered the words of God, and that now he was tormented in this flame" (Hardy 122).

In Gaskell's descriptions, Ruth is associated with saintliness, purity, suffering, and maternal love; she is thereby characterized as a Madonna. "In Ruth, Gaskell refuses the split between purity and impurity not simply at the level of action, by showing what happens to Ruth, but also at the level of figuration, in the imagery she associates with her. In depicting her heroin, Gaskell refuses the cultural construction of femininity that separates 'whore', from 'madonas'" (Michie 106). Here Ruth is being cast as a sort of Christ figure, sacrificing herself to save all those sick, including Bellingham himself. Rather than dying as fallen woman or even redeeming herself through death, she had already redeemed herself in her innate goodness and self sacrifice. With her words, as "Sally, do you think God has put us into the world just to be selfish, and do nothing but see after our own souls? Or to help one another with heart and hand, as Christ did to all who wanted help?" Ruth attains martyrdom (Gaskell, *Ruth* 29).

Unlike Gaskell, Hardy confirms that "once victim, always victim- that's the law" (Hardy 290). In spite of her hardships Tess weaves continuous threads of optimism and sense of life but Hardy quashes all her attempts. When Tess gives way to Alec and goes to live with him, Angel comes back with love but too late. Tess again cries over her fate; she admits that she hates Alec now, for he lied to her about Angel. After a heated argument Tess stabs Alec in the heart, killing him. This leads to Tess's capture and execution. "Indeed Tess is victimized-sacrificed to Alec's lust and Angel's ideal" (Jekel 66). Tess realizes Angel's objection with living with her, "How can we live together while that man lives?" as he considers Alec as her husband in nature (Hardy 129). She kills Alec for Angel's love and ultimately is put to death with a stigma of sin. Indeed, Tess is the victim of Hardy's strong sense of pessimistic fatalism that does not allow her redemption and return to respectable life despite her innocence and optimism.

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ELIZABETH GASKELL'S 'ANGEL', MRS. GIBSON IN WIVES AND DAUGHTERS, 'A THREAT TO PATRIARCHY' AND CHARLES DICKENS'S 'ANGEL' MRS. COPPERFIELD IN DAVID COPPERFIELD, 'A VICTIM': A COMPARATIVE FEMINIST STUDY

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Abstract: Elizabeth Gaskell (1810-1865) has always been alleged by the contemporary feminist critics as a meek, traditional and conformist to the Victorian domestic ideology. This study is a humble attempt to revisit Gaskells with a feminist vision to elicit the strong feminist and non-conformist dimension in her novel by comparing the female characters with similar social background in one of her novels entitled *Wives and Daughters* and in one of the Victorian male novelist, Charles Dickens' well-received novels, *David Copperfield*. This study reveals relatively non-conformist attitude of Gaskell towards her female characters in her novel.

Keywords: Elizabeth Gaskell, *Wives and Daughters*, Charles Dickens, David Copperfield, Feminism, Victorian Domestic Ideology

The term 'Angel in the house' was first used by Coventry Patmore (1823-1896) in his poem with the same title published in 1854. Often applied to middle class Victorian women, "Patmore's 'angel' is an idealized woman, a domestic saint, a priestess whose moral purity and fine sensibility preserve the sanctity of the middle class domestic space from the corruption of the outside world"(Archibald, 2002, p. 5). It represents conventional Victorian women who submit to the patriarchal structure of family by accepting limits and restraints, and recognizing male superiority. The character of Mrs. Copperfield in Dickens's *David Copperfield* (1849) identifies with this conventional Victorian woman as a victim of male superiority. The lurid conditions of Victorian women as discussed in the first chapter are experienced in case of Mrs. Copperfield. In contrast to Mrs. Copperfield, Gaskell's Mrs. Gibson in *Wives and Daughters* (1865) seems to put a threat to patriarchy in every stage of the story and rejects 'Victorian male assumption of moral authority.'

Mrs Copperfield marries at a very tender age of twenty. Furthermore she marries a man who is twice her age and in poor health. Unfortunately she becomes widow even before her son David is born and she is left alone with her immaturity and inexperience to raise a child. In such a critical situation, her housekeeper, Peggotty comes to her rescue who is very loyal to Mrs. Copperfield. More perceptive than Mrs. Copperfield Peggotty tries to bring the negative aspects of Mr. Murdstone's character to her notice and warns her, but in place of taking it as something that would stand her in good stead for taking an important decision of her life, she throws a huge tantrum: "Was ever any poor girl so ill-used by her servants as I am!" she exclaims (Dickens, 1997, p. 49). Mrs. Copperfield's volatile temper and mood swings soon make her to patch up with Peggotty at one moment and get angry at another. By attributing the qualities of weakness, childishness and indecisiveness to his female character Dickens appears to be conforming to the Victorian ideology of womanhood.

Through the character of Mrs. Gibson, Gaskell draws attention to significance of domestic economy run by women and its role in the world at large, "Her last novel, *Wives and Daughters*, sets forth a brilliant depiction of the domestic economy at work"(Langland, 1995, p. 132). As the title suggests, the novel examines the relation of women to men, as wives or as daughters, but instead of deliberating Victorian woman's conventional role of dependency on men, it indeed focuses on the ways men rely on women. Mr. Gibson is a doctor by profession; he is a somewhat "socially ambiguous" figure, "that is, as a doctor, neither is he bound by society's rules, nor can he use them as others might for social advantage"(Langland, 1995, p. 132). Dr. Gibson's family presents two charming and marriageable girls, one the daughter, Molly, the other the stepdaughter, Cynthia, of the Hollingford. The

Doctor acquires his stepdaughter in the course of the novel by wedding a Mrs. Kirkpatrick, a second marriage for both.

Unlike Mrs. Copperfield, Mrs. Gibson does not passively submit to the patriarchal oppression of women. She takes the charge of the entire family and household. It is she who gives free play to her self-interests, ambitions and wishes and manages the socio-economic status of the family. She is ambitious for her daughters and actually succeeds in furthering their interests. Here Gaskell wants to pinpoint, "how the social importance of the middle-class mother and wife, the semiotician of the middle class, has been consolidated in the fluid and shifting society of Victorian England" (Langland, 1995, p. 133). Her masterful negotiations of signifying practices, etiquette, dining rituals, household décor, and dress etc. make her a key player in the socially prestigious marriages of Molly and Cynthia, marriages that install them permanently within the upper middle class and remove them from the ambiguous status of doctor's daughters and potential governess.

In contrast to Mrs. Gibson, Mrs. Copperfield doesn't have the toughness of spirit to resist a clever, brutal fellow like Mr. Murdstone. Mr. Murdstone flatters Mrs. Copperfield: when David repeats to his mother that Mr. Murdstone called her "bewitching" and a "pretty little widow", Mrs. Copperfield falls prey to these manly tactics of pleasing and entrapping a woman (Dickens, 1997, p. 91). She accepts Mr. Murdstone's proposal of marriage not paying a heed to the most trusted and loyal caretaker Peggotty's warning against this man. Mrs. Copperfield represents the middle class Victorian women for whom Marriage was the ultimate destination like Most English women in the nineteenth century she was prejudiced, inclined and had an instinct to make the best of her marriage; doesn't matter how stultifying were her relations with husband, she followed her duty as an 'angel'.

Mrs. Gibson does not cow down to the values and principles of her husband dismantling the patriarchal structure of the society. It is evident in the matter of Dr. Gibson's patriarchal values and principles towards Molly's upbringing. Dr. Gibson shares common Victorian conception of idealized woman. Fearful of spoiling his daughter, the doctor has set forth an educational plan that is primarily proscriptive and intends to keep Molly intellectually and socially backward; it is clear that although he reads the backwardness of his daughter as a sign of her natural goodness, that sign has only a very limited social currency. Proud of his daughter's social clumsiness, Gibson admits that "she is a little ignoramus, and has had ... no training in etiquette" (Gaskell, 2004, p. 88). Mr. Gibson entrusts Molly's dress to "his old servant Betty", whose taste he esteems "as the more correct, because the more simple" (Gaskell, 2004, p. 43).

He secures a governess for Molly largely as a chaperon to protect her from the attentions of his male apprentices. As a result of instructions from Dr. Gibson, the governess, Miss Eyre, only "taught Molly to read and write but tried honestly to keep her back in every other branch of education" (Gaskell, 2004, p. 65). Later he marries Mrs. Kirkpatrick because he feels a need of wife rather a chaperone to take care of his marriageable daughter, "He seeks a kind of chaperone for his daughter to protect her from the wolves circling the patriarchal stronghold, but in the novel's poetic justice, he gets a woman who is a master of the social discourses he displeases; She challenges his values through the consummate success of her own" (Langland, 1995, p. 135).

Mrs. Copperfield is meekly submissive to the values and principles of Mr. Murdstone accepting herself as naïve and unintelligent. Conforming to the Victorian convention she hands over possession of her life as a property into his hands as she says, "He is better able to judge of it than I am; for I very well know that I am a weak, light, girlish creature, and that he is a firm, grave, serious man and I ought to be very thankful to him, and very submissive to him even in my thoughts" (Dickens, 1997, p. 102). She hardly resists the humiliation and oppression by her husband; she quietly accepts what he says, "It's very hard that Y' Clara ... you surprise me! You astound me! Yes, I had a satisfaction in the thought of marrying an inexperienced and artless person, and forming her character, and infusing into it some amount of that firmness and decision of which it stood in need" (Dickens, 1997, p. 84).

Then onwards Mrs. Copperfield never expresses her opinion whatsoever. Even when it comes to the welfare of her own son who is constantly abused by her husband she remains cold. She is kept aloof from her son. Mrs. Copperfield is completely dispossessed of the rights to express her feelings and show affection to her well-wishers like Peggotty or her own son, David. She is always bullied by her domineering husband and her thoughts and beliefs are also shaped by him who instils in her mind that David is a bad boy and makes her send him to school. She cries over her weakness and says to Peggotty that she is "a weak, light, girlish creature and that Mr. Murdstone is a firm, grave, serious man" (Dickens, 1997, p. 92).

Gaskell exposes the marriage of Mr. Gibson and Mrs. Kirkpatrick as the means of social convenience and demystifies Victorian concept of the rhetoric of love and spiritual uplift. Dr. Gibson's failure in household management, social status and class regulation, to prepare Molly for any fate other than that of a small-town apothecary's wife puts him in want of a home-maker,

Dr. Gibson's need for a household supervisor is interpreted as desire for a wife, a companion for his quiet hours, someone to love. The entanglement of social convenience with personal desire reveals "love" as a construction, especially because the question of a 'suitable' partner is foremost. In emphasizing social

matters in this way, Gaskell is much blunter than Dickens, who swerved away at key points to reinforce a romance of “love” (Langland, 1995, pp. 136-37).

Mrs. Gibson refutes Victorian conception of marriage that locates the possession of a woman as property under the protection of husband always considering the fair sex as weaker both physically and economically. “Mrs. Gibson is not a ministering angel, a spiritual guide, a sympathetic, charming, self-sacrificing goddess.” The Victorian marriage law merged a woman’s existence with that of her husband considering the married couple as single entity and thus eliminating a woman’s individual identity and existence. Thwarting this law Mrs. Gibson not only proves her separate existence but playing a role of an expert socialist economist she wins a social identity for the doctor and his daughter with the help of her management strategies, “Mrs. Gibson is a social mentor who makes the doctor and his daughter figures to be reckoned with socially, and that, as Elizabeth Gaskell forces us to recognize, is the goal occluded by Victorian mystification of middle-class women” (Langland, 1995, p. 137).

As soon as the marriage takes place Mrs. Copperfield’s existence and identity is effaced in her own house. When Pagotty happens to call her by her older name instead of Mrs. Murdstone, Mr. Murdstone batters with the following comment, “But I thought I heard you, as I came upstairs, address her by a name that is not hers. She has taken mine, you know. Will you remember that?” (Dickens, 1997, p. 74). She conforms to the Victorian marriage law that eliminates a woman’s individual identity and existence by merging her existence with that of her husband considering the married couple as single entity.

It is noteworthy that the married woman had very limited rights before the Married Women’s Property Act was passed. According to English Common law a woman had no right to any property. She was not able to make any will after marriage without the consent of their husband. The only way to claim any property for them was to become a widow. Most of the property that the woman had before marriage was obtained from the father, and after the marriage ceremony the husband got this property, which was enforced by the Common Law Doctrine of Co venture. Mrs. Copperfield conspicuously seems to be the victim of this injustice. Soon after her marriage with Mr. Murdstone, she is ripped off the right to make any important decisions regarding anything whether it is property, household matter or even the education of her own child; it resulted in her seclusion from active life.

Mrs. Copperfield remained dependent on her husband and as a sheltered lady she had nothing to do but to realize the type of female perfection which the breadwinner of the family expected to find in his wife and daughters. From that day Mrs. Copperfield passed her authority to Miss. Murdstone without a ‘shadow of protest’. When, one night Miss Murdstone develops certain household plans to her brother, of which he signified his approbation, Mrs. Copperfield starts shedding tears as she thinks, “she might have been consulted ... it’s very hard that in your own house I may not have a word to say about domestic matters. I am sure, I managed very well before we were married” (Dickens, 1997, p. 84). But Mrs. Murdstone is soon thrashed her with an accusation of being “inexperienced and artless person” who needs his assistance to improve her qualities (Dickens, 1997, p. 85). Mrs. Copperfield cowers down to his instructions and filled with intense feeling of guilt and begins to entreat for apology, “‘Pray let us be friends,’ said my mother, ‘I couldn’t live under coldness or unkindness. I am so sorry. I have a great many defects, I know, and it’s very good of you, Edward, with your strength of mind, to endeavour to correct them for me’” (Dickens, 1997, p. 86). Devoid of mental and emotional strength under the influence of domineering Mr. Murdstone’s brutal treatment Mrs. Copperfield and her unnamed baby waste away together and are completely destroyed.

Mrs. Gibson is self-assertive of her power and fully conscious of her position as the mistress of the house rather than being submissive to any kind of oppression.

When the servants grumble about the work their new mistress demands of them, she summarily dismisses them- even Betty, Molly’s nurse and surrogate mother, who has been with the family for sixteen years ... distress over dismissal aggravated by the honeyed expression of Mrs. Gibson’s regret: ‘But, sweet one, you seem to forget that I cannot go against my principle [never to take an apology from a servant who has given notice], however much I may be sorry for Betty. (Langand, 1995, p. 139)

Gaskell’s representation of Mrs. Gibson challenges the Victorian domestic ideology that presents middle class woman as a domestic servant; performing each act keeping in view the comfort, convenience and satisfaction of husband. The social historian Carol Dyhouse argues in support of Victorian mythology when she claims the existence of a “social expectation that a wife should be solicitous for her husband’s needs ... even in the lower-middle-class home meals would tend to be taken at times which fitted around the routine of the man’s work” (qtd in Langland, 1995, p.140). But Gaskell’s depictions of Mrs. Gibson’s strong determination to reform not only the household customs but the life and habits of her resistant husband puts threat to this ideology when she overturns the customs in her husband’s life and his schedule of the household in accord with her strategies for social identity. She entirely reschedules and rearranges her husband’s eating times and habits forcing him to give up a noon dinner for a “six o’clock dinner” to prevent the aromas of “hot, savoury-smelling dishes from the kitchen ... when high born ladies, with noses of aristocratic refinement, might be calling” (Gaskell, 2004, p. 213). Mrs.

Gibson also forbids her husband from his favourite diet of bread and cheese, “In short, her social business ‘rather diminished his domestic comfort’, a truth rarely represented so directly in Victorian fiction, where ostensibly the angel is feathering a nest with only the master’s comfort in mind”(Langland, 1995, p. 140). Unlike Gaskell, Dickens emphasizes femininity in his women characters that becomes their weakness and grounds their ultimate doom.

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'MOLLY GIBSON' IN ELIZABETH GASKELL'S *WIVES AND DAUGHTERS* AND 'LOUISA' IN CHARLES DICKENS'S *HARD TIMES*: A COMPARATIVE FEMINIST STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Elizabeth Gaskell (1810-1865) and Charles Dickens (1812-1870) were the contemporary novelists of the Victorian Era. While Dickens is regarded as a well-canonized author in the Victorian literary canon, Gaskell was slowly trying to make her niche in an all-male Bastian, the world of writing. In fact Gaskell had been severely reproved for being a conventional, submissive, meek and conformist writer. The contemporary feminist critics refuted any political, social and feminist significance in her work. Gaskell has been revisited in this paper through the lenses of feminism by comparing the woman character in one of her novels namely *Wives and Daughters* and the woman character in a novel written by Dickens namely *Hard Times*. This comparative feminist study intends to reinstate Gaskell as a non-conformist and as an ardent champion of woman power by identifying her innate qualities of strength and self-reliance that have always been derecognized by male dominated society.

Keywords: Elizabeth Gaskell, Charles Dickens, Feminism, Victorian Era, Non-conformist, Comparative Feminist Study

Dickens's *Hard Times* (1854) begins with the theme of Utilitarianism a theory according to which an action is right only if it conforms to the principle of utility. This furthers the discussion to Fact versus Fancy. The bastion of 'Fact', being the eminently practical, Mr. Gradgrind, and his model school teaches nothing but only Facts. Any imaginative or aesthetic subjects are eradicated from the curriculum, but analysis, deduction and mathematics are emphasized. Against this backdrop, the novel presents a woman, Louisa, Mr. Gradgrind's daughter, who is caught up in the whirl of imposed teaching of 'Facts' and remains soulless. She can understand neither the facts of life nor the sentiments of her own. In contrast to Louisa, Gaskell's Molly Gibson in *Wives and Daughters* (1866), judges her fancy and facts with her own conscience and decides on her own course of life with aplomb. As Colby rightly says, "I will argue that Molly does indeed develop in the course of the novel –from a naïve girl to an experienced, discerning woman" (3).

Along with other siblings, Louisa is indoctrinated from childhood into her father's rigid system, "a man of fact and calculations," whose credo is "you are to be in all things regulated and governed ... by fact" (Dickens 3). Constantly being lectured at and groomed in father's imposed and dry beliefs, his children are manipulated and controlled until they are almost beyond hope of achieving any personal identity and viewpoint. Once Louisa

reaches adolescence, she tries to seek out alternative realms of experience, going secretly to the circus because she “wanted to see what it was like”; but this attempt of hers is frustrated by her father. Dissatisfied with the narrow boundaries that surround her life, Louisa possesses an “air of jaded sullenness”. Dickens likens her to “a light with nothing to rest upon, a fire with nothing to burn, a starved imagination keeping life in itself somehow.” Deprived of any play for what Dickens calls ‘Fancy’, Louisa is presented as doomed to be a victim of circumstances (Dickens 157).

As against Louisa we have Molly Gibson, restless, obedient, and alive to the possibility of life. It is noticeable that Molly is motherless and her identity is first shaped by her interaction with her father. Mr. Gibson loves his daughter, but does not express his affection overtly; “his most caressing appellation for her was ‘Goosey’, he took a pleasure in bewildering her infant mind with his badinage” (Gaskell 63). Yet early on, Molly grows to understand her father, and although he teases her and quizzes her, she feels free to confide in him. The kind of relationship Molly has with her father challenges her intellectually and supports her emotionally; it is “half banter, half seriousness, but altogether confidential friendship” (Gaskell 64). Although, friendly in nature with Molly, Mr. Gibson is of somewhat conservative temperament believing in common Victorian attitude that too much learning is dangerous for women. He does not always recognize what his daughter needs or what she is capable of rather he underestimates his daughter’s intellectual requirements. To Miss Eyre, Molly’s governess, he gives the following instructions:

Don’t teach Molly too much ... she must sew, and read, and write, and do her sums. Many a good woman get married with only a cross instead of her name; it’s rather a diluting of mother-wit, to my fancy; but, however, we must yield to the prejudices of society, Miss Eyre, and so you may teach the child to read. (Gaskell 65)

Following Mr. Gibson’s instructions, Miss Eyre tries to keep Molly back in every branch of education, with the exception of reading and writing. But unlike Louisa, restless Molly fights and argues for more and desirous education as the narrator says, “it was only by fighting and struggling hard, that bit by bit Molly persuaded her father to let her have French and drawing lessons.” Doctor Gibson’s resistance to his daughter’s education only increases her appetite for mental stimulation, “being daunted by her father in every intellectual attempt, she read every book that came in her way almost with as much delight as if it had been forbidden” (Gaskell 65).

Motherless, Molly Gibson comes across a number of women with different temperament like Miss Eyre, Mrs. Hamley, Lady Harriet, Hyacinth Gibson, Cynthia Kirkpatrick, the Misses Brownings, Mrs. Goodenough, and Aimee Hamley; but she refuses to follow the footsteps of any of them and Molly defines herself with her own conscience. Unlike Louisa, Molly is in accord with her emotions, feelings and intellect and chooses for herself the values that will govern her own life. As she undergoes this process, she must learn to separate truth from falsehood, to recognize her own feelings, and above all, to act as she sees fit, prepared for the consequences in contrast to Louisa.

Dickens portrays Louisa as meek and passive and full of profound sense of futility and purposelessness. Though unlike Molly, Louisa is not motherless but Mrs. Grandrind’s intellectual and emotional existence is effaced by her father’s presence. Befuddled from all of the stern teaching her husband insists on, she dismisses her children with the injection “Go and be something logical directly” (Dickens 61). Abdicating her maternal role, Mrs. Grandrind abandons Louisa making her vulnerable to the matrimonial designs of Mr. Bounderby. Aware that Mr. Bounderby is interested in her, yet ignorant of how to discourage or refuse him, Louisa simply endures his attentions. Dickens here emphasizes Louisa’s sexual defencelessness. Louisa realizes her own deficiency but is unable to correct it, as she tells her brother, “I don’t know what other girls know” (Dickens 91).

Molly is quick to perceive oppression, injustice and unfairness; she is quick to defend Miss Eyre, her governess, against Betty’s constant criticism. When Betty speaks impertinently to Miss Eyre herself, Molly “flew out in such a violent passion of words in defence of her silent trembling governess, that even Betty herself was daunted” (Gaskell 67). Molly respects her governess but she protests submissive acceptance of injustice, “As she matures, Molly continues to stand up for women whom she believes to be wronged. Observing her governess shows Molly one kind of feminine response to oppression, a response that she rejects” (Colby 8).

Louisa seems to be at loss of strength to protest and dumbly accepts everything that comes her way like a robot devoid of feelings, emotions and conscience. When Mr. Gradgrind communicates with her about the marriage proposal, Louisa remains passive and unaffected. She submissively accedes to her father's instructions:

As you have been accustomed to consider every other question, simply as one of tangible Fact ... Now, what are the Facts of this case? You are, we will say in round numbers, twenty years of age; Mr. Bounderby is, we will say in round numbers, fifty. There is some disparity in your respective years, but in your means and positions there is none; on the contrary, there is a great suitability. (Dickens, 64)

The strongest attachment Louisa feels is to her brother and it is her brother's wish that she accepts Mr. Bounderby that decides Louisa's response to his marriage proposal. Alienated from the emotional resonance of such decision, Louisa considers her marriage from a purely practical point of view, reasoning that, since life is short, "while it lasts, I would wish to do the little I can and the little I am fit for. What does it matter" (Dickens, 64).

In his depiction of Louisa, Dickens implies that intellect is a harmful burden for a woman and that her natural realm is the realm of feeling. As Louisa's sorrow of being restrained from the free play of fancy and her inability to estimate the emotional aspect of life is expressed in the following lines:

'What do I know, father,' said Louisa in her quiet manner, 'of tastes and fancies; of aspirations and affections; of all that part of my nature in which such light things might have been nourished? What escape have I had from problems that could be demonstrated, and realities that could be grasped?' As she said it, she unconsciously closed her hand, as if upon a solid object, and slowly opened it as though she were releasing dust or ash. (Dickens, 66)

Louisa's lack of emotional development alienates her from others and from her own self. In a comment to the circus child, Sissy Jupe, Louisa reveals her feeling of perpetual estrangement, "You are more useful to my mother, and more pleasant with her than I can ever be ... You are pleasanter to yourself, than I am to myself" (Dickens, 67).

Molly fantastically copes up with her intellectual side and emotional side; each helps strengthen the other. Curious in all kinds of knowledge when Molly is visiting at Hamley Hall, Roger stimulates Molly's interests in nature by setting out his microscopic and some objects he has collected as well as by offering her scientific books. Later Mr. Gibson comments on the books Molly reads "such deep books—all about facts and figures" (Gaskell, 307). Even scholars are impressed with Molly. When Molly is introduced to the learned Lord Hollingford at all, she makes a favourable impression on the scholarly man, who exclaims, "What a charming little lady! ... Most girls of her age are so difficult to talk to; but she is intelligent and full of interest in all sorts of sensible things; well read, too she was up in *Le Regne Animal*." (Gaskell, 339)

Louisa is able neither to love nor to establish an empathic relation to others; she complains of having 'unmanageable thoughts'. But Molly has the power to love truly and deeply and to sustain her emotions. Cynthia, Molly's stepsister, possesses an "unconscious power of fascination" (Gaskell, 254). Nevertheless she lacks the capacity to love deeply, telling Molly, "I've not the gift of loving; ... I can respect, and I fancy I can admire, and I can like, but I never feel carried off my feet by love for any one" (Gaskell, 422). Despite her emotional disengagement, Cynthia deliberately and knowingly accedes to the marriage game, eliciting three serious proposals from men whom she does not love. In contrast, Molly feels deeply and is loyal to those with whom she forms close bonds. Molly's genuine grief over Mrs. Hamley's death makes Cynthia conscious of her own deficiency and prompts her remark to Molly, "I wish I could love people as you do, Molly" (Gaskell, 257).

Unlike Gaskell Dickens presents the fellow woman characters as hindrance to the advancement of the female protagonist. Louisa's own mother leads her daughter to the vulnerability and victimization to intellectual and physical incarceration of patriarchal system. While Mrs. Sparsit tries to spoil her life by inducing Louisa's fall to adultery, "Hartshouse's pursuit of Louisa is presented through the voyeurism of Mrs. Sparsit who became an avid spectator to the process of seduction. She observes Louisa, in the words of Jacqueline Rose, with a

'relentless and punishing scrutiny,' in the course of which the whole concept of a woman's sexual "fall" becomes reified" (Michie 129).

Inexperienced with romance, Louisa is also ill-equipped to handle the sophisticated James Harthouse. Realizing that the way to get to Louisa is through her brother, Harthouse pretends to be concerned about Tom's gambling debts, as well as his ungracious treatment of his generous sister. Louisa, unaware that she is being manipulated, begins to respond to Harthouse, who finally takes advantage of Bounderby's absence to declare himself her lover. Uncertain about her feelings, Louisa again abnegates her emotions and refuses Harthouse and returns to her father. Here Louisa fails to defend her self-respect and innocence; instead takes submissive stand to plead guilty as a 'fallen', "she is represented as "fallen," both because of her literal position and her description of herself" (Michie 130). After she throws herself into her father's arms; he tightened his hold in time to prevent her sinking on the floor, but she cried out in a terrible voice, "I shall die if you hold me! Let me fall upon the ground!" and he laid her down there and saw "the pride of his heart and the triumph of his system lying in an insensible heap, at his feet" (Dickens 204).

Molly is self-assertive to correct her elders when she sees that the relationship with Roger is being misconstrued, although Molly and Roger do later develop romantic feelings for each other, at this point they only share a deep friendship, based on common interests. This conversation with Miss Browning compels Molly to define for herself and to articulate for others the nature of her relationship with Roger Hamley. In so doing Molly separates herself from the narrow vision of the Brownings, who assume that any interaction between a man and woman implies a romantic involvement. Male-female friendship allows for the possibility of a relationship between men and women that was not based on courtship, courtship being the principal vocation of girls of Molly's age and class. When she finds Mrs. Gibson's attempt at manipulating the marriage of Cynthia and Roger repugnant she criticizes Cynthia's passive cooperation with her mother's plans. Molly says to herself that she, "would have resisted; have gone out, for instance, when she was expected to stay home; or have lingered in the garden when a long country walk was planned" (Gaskell 390). In response to a neighbour's suggestion that Mrs. Gibson should turn her attention to Molly next, Molly responds, "half angry, half laughing; 'when I want to be married, I'll not trouble mamma. I'll look out for myself'" (Gaskell 681).

Gaskell always highlights the role of women in the advancement of women in her novel by stressing female solidarity across and within classes. Molly is also surrounded by women who provide the kind of guidance that she needs to develop into a clear-sighted, strong, capable woman. Mrs. Hamley, Aimee Hamley, and Lady Harriet Cumnor all impart strong support and positive influences on the development of Molly. Nancy Chodorow has argued that "girls who are surrounded by a strong network of female relatives and female friends tend to develop a strong sense of selfhood. With the support of caring women, Molly achieves self-knowledge and self-confidence" (Colby 42).

A comparative feminist study of 'Moli Gibosn' in Gaskell's *Wives and Daughters* and 'Louisa' in Dickens *Hard Times* challenges the views of the critics like W. R. Greg, David Cecil, Raymond Williams and Arnold Kettle about Gaskell as a second rank and a meek writer with a feeble hold on structure and characterization. This study also exposes the relatively more conventional attitude towards woman characters in the novels written by highly recognized Victorian novelist like Charles Dickens. A comparison with her contemporary well canonized authors helped to redefine Gaskell's place in the Victorian literary canon by exploring a strong feminist dimension in her novel.

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SOCIAL CHANGE THROUGH THE AGENCY OF WOMAN: SOCIALIST FEMINIST READING OF ELIZABETH GASKELL'S *NORTH AND SOUTH*

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Abstract

Elizabeth Gaskell (1810-1865) began her literary career in an era when Feminism as a theory was not even in existence. Unfortunately Gaskell was considered as a minor woman writer of Victorian age and had been neglected by the feminist critics, "of all the enormous output of feminist literary criticism during the last fifteen years, none has been concerned to any major extent with Elizabeth Gaskell" (Stoneman, 2006: 5). The present paper is a humble attempt to revisit one of her industrial novels namely, *North and South* through the lenses of Socialist feminism. The works like *Capitalist Patriarchy and the Case for Socialist Feminism* of Zillah Eisenstein (1980), *Capitalism and Women's Liberation* of Michelle Barrett (1997), and *The unhappy marriage of Marxism and feminism: towards a more progressive union* of Heidi Hartmann (1981) bring Marxism and Feminism together and put forth an argument that woman's emancipation and socialist social structure are interrelated. A socialist feminist reading of *North and South* delineates how Gaskell brings about a social change through the agency of the female protagonist, Margaret Hale.

Keywords: Elizabeth Gaskell, North and South, patriarchy, capitalism, socialist feminism

Feminist dimension in Gaskell's novels seems to have stemmed from her belief in Unitarianism. Gaskell was under great influence of Unitarianism that believes in equality of men and women and advocates their equal participation in political, scientific and socio-economic domain. Such a frame of mind incited Gaskell's novels to formulate a social order devoid of the demarcation of public and private sphere. Her writings advocate women's proper sphere and their participation in labour. Gaskell, by introducing her heroine into the public sphere and making her the leader in the class conflict oversteps women's domain which is limited to domesticity and ushers her woman protagonists into

men's domain of political, economic and social significance. Gaskell's writings bring forth the dual theory of Radical feminism and Marxist feminism that on one hand challenges 'sexual politics' of patriarchy by proposing an alternative system of sociological, psychological, ideological, political and physiological upbringing of gender based on equality and on the other hand buttresses women's strong economic independence and an upper hand in the social production advocating socialist social structure.

The power – structured relationships and arrangements whereby one gender is controlled by another i.e. sexual politics of patriarchal system is

overthrown by Gaskell by endowing Margaret Hale with power in a family which consists of a father and an elder brother. The whole family is dependent on Margaret; it is she who goes forth to confront the life's challenges and takes all important decisions. At the moment of crisis of her mother's funeral Margaret sheds off emotional weakness, psychologically attributed to females, and gets armed with mental toughness; "The father and brother depended upon her while they were giving way to grief; she must be working, planning, considering; even the necessary arrangements for the funeral seemed to devolve upon her" (Gaskell, 1994: 255). Margaret overturns the values imbibed by socialization in a patriarchal society that sermonize women to be idle and subordinate tools at the mercy of men. Margaret criticizes the luxurious 'honey-trapped' women of higher middle class. On one side she strives for the working class women's justice while on the other hand, she lashes out at the 'wooden-dummy' of upper class women. Equal significance is imparted to masculine and feminine roles, both are equally important in both public and private life, "Gaskell represents working-class family life as enacting positive values of cooperation and shared work ... Gaskell is recommending as alternative to the gendered organization of labour in the home" (Colby, 1995: 9). Thornton is converted into a domestic provider with feminine qualities while Margaret is imparted with masculine quality to carry out decisions in both the spheres and to resolve class conflict in public life. Gaskell not only imparts social equality but economic independence in order to shift the power to women in this power game of patriarchy; it is evident in Margaret's becoming the landlord of Mr. Thornton and her participation in the public social production. Gender equality is the first step to socialism through elimination of patriarchy and thus capitalism or class conflict; "Through victory in the power politics of gender, Margaret Hale has also made an advance in the power politics of class" (Ingham, 1996: 71). In other words socialist values that all the elements of the society being of equal importance and subject to equal justice by the virtue of universal fraternity are rejuvenated through Gaskell's writings.

Gaskell marks a parallel comparison between the 'patriarchal gender system' to keep women under power and 'patriarchal capitalist system' to overpower workers turning both into mere 'useful tools'. As in patriarchal gender society men consider themselves as the master of women, the mill owners in the patriarchal industrial society consider themselves as the paternal authority of the workers. But Margaret exposes the irony behind this convention "the masters would like their hands to be merely tall, large children- living in the present moment- with a blind unreasoning kind of obedience" (Gaskell, 1994:119). The similar politics is played in the patriarchal society against women in which women's natural growth is deliberately stunted by patriarchy turning them into "monster of depravity and incompetence" (Gaskell, 1994: 167). Both the workers and women are regarded as unfit by nature for independent action by so called paternal systems. Pushing women into marginalization is a hardcore politics/strategy of capitalism so that women can be used as an instrument of reproduction to maintain Capitalist patriarchal system. Depriving Women of economic independence and alienating them from public life help to develop 'hands' with brains sans reasoning power. Therefore capitalism provides ground for a patriarchal society and thus for gender and class oppression equally. The elimination of women oppression may directly hit upon the spinal cord of capitalism as Bebel says, "It is wise tactics and strategy to attack an enemy on his weakest side; The 'Woman Question' is the weakest link in the capitalist armour" (Bebel, 1917: 3). Gaskell's writings approach women's question through socialist feminist ground addressing women's question and class conflict simultaneously through the agency of women; Gaskell proposes a social change through the agency of women.

Gaskell's works favour a thorough political and social change by advocating women's 'participatory democracy' in labour and her proper sphere. Socialist feminists believe that gender and economy jointly structure male dominance that encodes separate roles for men and women. Gaskell's "use of the language of political economy in the discussions of conditions in Milton" interlinks

women's question with class question (Colby, 1995: 160). Gaskell's work supports the thought expressed by August Bebel in *Women under Socialism*, "In this capitalist society Woman and the workingman have, since old, had this in common—*oppression*" (1917: 9). Working women are doubly oppressed in the capitalist society which gets benefitted by imparting 'wage slavery' i.e. economic dependence by lowering their wages and 'sexual slavery' on the other hand by depriving them of power. Emancipation from wage slavery leads to economic independence directly marring the sexual slavery. Thus economically independent women can equally stand by workingmen in their fight for the common cause towards socialism. Gaskell draws a parallel between 'women's oppression' and 'class oppression' and seeks solution through women's emancipation. Through women's emancipation Gaskell hits at the root of capitalism as in *North and South* Margaret Hale "as a result of her social displacement from a middle-class position and setting, she becomes the locus of conflict between workers and capitalists: North and south" (Ingham, 1996: 60).

August Bebel says, "Unquestionably, monogamous marriage, which flows from the bourgeois system of production and property, is one of the most important cornerstones of bourgeois or capitalist society" (1917: 86). Marriage in the capitalist society is a business rather a union by virtue of mutual love and fitting moral and physical values and is based on the measures of materialist profit and loss. Fanny, Mr. Thornton's sister is married off to a well established industrialist irrespective of their wide age difference that is very negligible as far as materialistic profit is concerned. Fanny and Edith give in to the role of private domestic labourers. Same is the case of Edith's with captain Lennox. Through her choice of love and equal mutual spiritual values with dignity in marriage with Mr. Thornton Margaret weakens another pillar of capitalism. Margaret is determined enough "not to let physical attraction give him power over her" (Gaskell, 1994: 320); she does not submit to mental, intellectual and philosophical slavery to Mr. Thornton. She is conscious of the difference of her thought over the justice of working

class people on humanitarian ground with that of Mr. Thornton. Margaret resists a marriage of two mentalities with disparity of principles and a marriage that will relegate her to a position of socially and economically dependent subordinate in a sexual power game: "Margaret only submits to marrying Thornton when she has reduced him to a state in which she can, through her collaborator Higgins, control his actions as an employer. His cast-iron convictions as to the shiftlessness of his employees melt. He not only employs Higgins though he is trade unionist, but after discussion with him takes Carlyle's (and Margaret's) about creating something more than a 'cash nexus' as a link with his workers" (Colby, 1995: 49). This equal claim to the power in gender- class will ultimately lead to social equality of economic –class as private patriarchal property will turn into a social property and the process of production and reproduction or child rearing will become a social responsibility.

Unlike other Victorian writers Gaskell's writings do not focus on only the personal life of courtship and marriage of women and oversteps into the social sphere. There are evidences when we find Margaret overthrowing sham patriarchy. Following socialist feminism Gaskell makes Margaret the leader of movement for classless social equality. She takes up the expedition to bring forth the question of working class by plunging into verbal arguments with Mr. Thornton advocating social and democratic rights of the working class at the stake of her traditionally expected womanly attributes in the male dominated culture. Margaret criticises Thornton's calling the working people as mere 'hands' and embeds her justification of their being individual human beings and subject to equal social justice. Margaret achieves an edge over Thornton in verbal as well as logical understanding of action. Margaret makes Thornton empathise and understand the deathlike dire facts of the life of working class by introducing Mr. Higgins who represents the working class in the novel. The commencement of strike for equal wages, Ms. Bessy's victimization to poverty, Mr. Boucher's suicide due to strike failure, dilapidated condition of Mrs. Boucher and her children and Margaret's striving for their solace finally brings Thornton on

equal grounds with Margaret's arguments. Margaret succeeds in developing humanitarian values in Mr. Thornton through a personal interaction between the master and the working class, "once brought face to face, man to man, with an individual of the masses around him, and (take notice) out of the character of master and workman, in the first instance, they had each begun to recognise that "we have all of us one human heart" (Gaskell, 1994: 500). This new-found socialist value is witnessed in Thornton's rejection of using creditors' money at the stake of workmen's interest and steps down to a position of an employee by abandoning his mill.

Margaret's relation with Thornton brings out the gender conflict while her relation to workers, the class conflict. Personal turns political; Margaret's personal quest for "sexless purity" and purposeful existence of life is sought through a political issue of class conflict (Colby, 1995: 48). Somehow it is worked out that gender politics stems out from class politics that sidelines women power from economic and political substantiality in public life and social substantiality in private life. Margaret's victory in her socialist mission makes Thornton, in Colby's view: Resolve on a more humane conduct of his affairs, based on rejection of his own false class assumptions. To bring this about Margaret has become a 'masculine' agent and Higgins a 'feminine' persuader, thereby subverting the notion that ideally men and women are necessarily complementary to each other in all respects. It is only when that idea is broken down that the corset of class begins to disintegrate. (Colby 1995, p. 75)

Gaskell's novels bring her forth as a non-conformist through her treatment of the female protagonist of her novels. She questions the Victorian domestic ideology and the identity and the quality of femininity attributed to woman by Victorian male dominated society. "The process of shifting the significance of conventionally 'masculine' and 'feminine' qualities also involves, in Gaskell's hands, a re-examination of the concept crucial to the Victorian construction of femininity-motherhood" (Ingham,1996: 76).

Margaret upholds the cause of the working class and identifies her thought of justice with them

through adopting their 'language'. She is chided by her mother using the words like 'sack of work' and 'knobsticks' but she defiantly sets argument for her favour for it being the part of Industrial North and her relation with the working class society through Bessy and Higgins. Margaret compares it to military slang of Edith's military officer husband and Mrs. Hale is, "duly shocked by wilful comparison between 'factory slang' and upper-class affection" (Ingham,1996: 65).

Socialist feminist is an amalgamation of radical feminist view of only the 'men' being the oppressor and socialist view that it's the system that is responsible for the oppression. Gaskell equally takes into consideration both the factors of women's oppression. On one side Gaskell addresses the psychologically conditioned economic and reproductive factors of oppression of the 'other' sex as formulated by Simon De Beauvoir (1949) while on the other hand she addresses capitalist structural factors of women's oppression as explained by Engels (1972) and August Bebel (1917). Gaskell's novels press forward Juliet Mitchell's "argument for the simultaneous necessity of radical feminist consciousness and of the development of a socialist analysis of the oppression of women" (1971: 182). Gaskell through her women characters brings forth feminist consciousness as the radical feminists suggest and economic and political liberation simultaneously. Gaskell presents Margaret as a propagator of Socialist values as Mr. Bell asserts, "she's a democrat, red republican, a member of the Peace Society, a socialist" (Gaskell, 1994: 393).

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‘Elegant Economy’ in Elizabeth Gaskell’s *Cranford*: A Socialist Feminist Study

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Abstract- Elizabeth Gaskell (1810-1865) was a Victorian writer who had to undergo various kinds of condescension for her writings. After bearing the stigma of being conformist, conventional, and meek as ascribed to her by the contemporary feminist critics, Gaskell’s writings are being revisited with a new feminist perspective in recent years. The present paper is also a humble attempt to rediscover the feminist dimension of her writings by exploring one of her novels, *Cranford* (1853), through a socialist feminist lens. *Cranford* presents such a social structure that is devoid of a Class system and constructed by women in a matrilineal society as against the capitalist patriarchal society of *Drumble*. This Matriarchal socialist social structure is based on the values of cooperation, humanity, and motherly care characteristic to the differently developed gendered subjectivity of women. The social change through the agency of woman foreshadows Gaskell’s far-sighted feminist views of the 1970s.

Keywords: *elizabeth gaskell, cranford, victorian feminism, socialist feminism.*

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Megha Ramteke

Abstract- Elizabeth Gaskell (1810-1865) was a Victorian writer who had to undergo various kinds of condescension for her writings. After bearing the stigma of being conformist, conventional, and meek as ascribed to her by the contemporary feminist critics, Gaskell's writings are being revisited with a new feminist perspective in recent years. The present paper is also a humble attempt to rediscover the feminist dimension of her writings by exploring one of her novels, *Cranford* (1853), through a socialist feminist lens. *Cranford* presents such a social structure that is devoid of a Class system and constructed by women in a matrilineal society as against the capitalist patriarchal society of Drumble. This Matriarchal socialist social structure is based on the values of cooperation, humanity, and motherly care characteristic to the differently developed gendered subjectivity of women. The social change through the agency of woman foreshadows Gaskell's far-sighted feminist views of the 1970s.

Keywords: elizabeth gaskell, cranford, victorian feminism, socialist feminism.

I. INTRODUCTION

Elizabeth Gaskell (1810-1865), a Victorian Woman novelist, began her writing career in an era when 'Feminism' was not even established as a theory. The contemporary Victorian feminists not only ignored her writings but strongly disproved any possibility of feminist dimension in her literary works. The critics like W. R. Greg, David Cecil, Raymond Williams, and Arnold Kettle labeled Gaskell as a second rank writer criticizing her as a meek writer with a feeble hold on structure and characterization. Her name had gone into oblivion for being a conformist, submissive, conventional and emotional woman writer writing with no purpose.

After the 1950s, Gaskell's writings began to be revisited by feminist critics who unveiled the feminist, political and social significance of her writings. With the appearance of Ania Rubenius's *The Woman Question in Elizabeth Gaskell's Life and Works* (1950), Annette Hopkins's *Elizabeth Gaskell: her Life and Works* (1952), Kathleen Tillotson's *Novels of the Eighteen-Forties* (1954), Edgar Wright's *Mrs. Gaskell: The Basis for Reassessment* (1965) etc. Gaskell earned a new recognition. Pasty Stoneman wrote *Elizabeth Gaskell* (1987), the first avowedly feminist study of Gaskell's work. Stoneman refuted all earlier criticism of Gaskell and brought forth the characteristic of 'maternal thinking'

in her novels with new feminist light through her exploration of it as the base of social evolution. Hilary M. Schor, in *Scheherezade in the Marketplace* (1992) draws attention to Gaskell's unconventional stance in centering her plot on female protagonists. With all these critics, Gaskell regained her lost ground.

This research is also an attempt in this drive to re-establish Gaskell as a major writer by exploring new feminist dimensions of her writings. Gaskell lived in an age of the Industrial Revolution, and the socio-economic changes impelled by it divided English Society based on Class and Gender, "The society in which Gaskell lived and wrote was intersected horizontally by class and vertically by gender divisions" (Stoneman, 2006, p. 6). Gaskell's novels address both the divisions, and through this study, I have tried to seek a link between Gaskell's address to 'Woman Question' and her address to the social problem of 'Class Conflict.' In her novels Gaskell proposes an alternative social structure based on equality and compassion, which is accomplished and managed through women's agency by imparting them significant roles in the public sphere and social production refuting the traditional Victorian domestic ideology. The interconnection between 'Woman Question' and 'Class Conflict' or 'Patriarchy' and 'Capitalism' makes 'Socialist Feminism' an apt device to examine her novels, as Gender and Class are the two integral halves of Socialist Feminist Theory. This work commences with a glance at the early Victorian Feminism moving ahead to elaborate upon Socialist Feminist standpoint and finally ends up exploring Gaskell's novel, *Cranford* (1853) in the light of Socialist Feminism.

II. VICTORIAN FEMINISM

The notion of Victorian Feminism is hard to pin down as the term 'Feminism' itself was coined towards the end of the nineteenth century. I have attempted to trace the idea of Victorian Feminism by focusing upon some of the significant features and undercurrents brought to the fore by some of the contemporary feminist writers. After the feminist stir of the 1790s which came up with writers like Mary Wollstonecraft's "A Vindication of the Rights of Women" (1792) and the novels of her contemporary, Mary Hays, the significant feminist move took impetus in the 1840s with the debate on 'Gender.' The feminist study of Gender being socially and culturally constructed exposes the Victorian

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ideology of gender hierarchy with men in the center, "Cultural critic Raymond Williams saw the 1840s as a kind of watershed decades for masculinity and femininity, arguing in particular that these years saw a deepening division between the emotions thought proper for men and women to display" (Glover, 2000, p. 19).

Barbara Caine, in her book *Victorian feminists* (1993), asserts that the historian and the contemporary Feminists of the late 1970s and early 1980s criticize Victorian feminist movements for "its sexual prudery, its refusal to acknowledge the existence of women's sexuality and its absolute failure to address the question of women's sexual pleasure" (Caine, 1993, p. x). Victorian Feminists dealt with the very basic question of the 'equality' and 'difference' between men and women, "indeed, Victorian domestic ideology, centering as it did on the notion of separate spheres for women and men, on the intellectual, moral and emotional differences between men and women, and on the moral superiority of women, was at least as important in the formulation of feminist thought as was liberal political and economic theory" (Caine, 1993, p. 21).

Mary Wollstonecraft, John Stuart Mill, Emily Davies, Frances Cobbe, Josephine Butler, Fawcett are named as prominent Victorian feminists. Paradoxically, although these feminists voiced against the prevalent inequality and unjustifiable conditions of women, they are ultimately found to comply with the patriarchal Victorian domestic ideology. Wollstonecraft's views on women's sexuality endorse the Victorian double standard of sexuality, as she admits the necessity of constraints on women's sexual freedom. Wollstonecraft's antifeminist perspective towards women's sexuality is also criticized,

For Kaplan, it is the emphasis on the sexual that is most problematic and most significant in Wollstonecraft. The analysis of sensibility and pleasure as instruments of patriarchal control, the account of how women's sexuality and dependency are constructed both in the existing state of society and in the writings of Rousseau, are evident in the *Vindication*, but rather than attacking them through a demand for women's control of their own sexuality, Wollstonecraft insists on a puritan sexual ethic for women. (Caine, 1993, p. 25).

Another significant figure in the Women's movement is John Stuart Mill, who added a new edge to it by writing *Subjection of Women*. Mill's arguments were mainly focused on married women and their problems; the problems of single women and prostitution were left out by him. Although he brought forth the unfair laws of the marriage of Victorian women, however, he spoke in favor of women's domestic sphere as natural and morally obligatory. "Zillah Eisenstein commented on the way in which Mill, despite his powerful critique of the subordination of women, none the less perpetuates the patriarchal division of male and female sexual spheres

in his insistence that it is both likely and desirable that most women will continue in their domestic role, leaving income-earning activity and involvement in the public sphere to men or to exceptional single women" (Caine, 1993, p. 37).

Among the prominent socio-economic-political changes in Victorian England were the development of science and liberalism. The feminist movement was greatly influenced by liberalism that believed in family and domestic life being segregated from the outer public and social life. Private domestic sphere being the center of women's life consequently fell apart from political and social public life. "For liberalism, as both Carole Pateman and Zillah Eisenstein have shown, has always accepted the existing European sexual division of labor and the basically patriarchal family structure that this entails" (Caine, 1993. Print., p. 38). It upholds liberal values limited only for men and women were excluded from the realm of liberation from the confinement of Victorian domestic wall. Her domesticity was of no use in the public sphere, and women were believed to lack the required masculine character and manly intelligence for handling public domain.

Ironically the Victorian feminist of 1830s and 1840s all circled back to the original sin of Victorian domestic ideology as it is said,

writers such as Sarah Lewis, Mrs. John Sanford, and best known of all, Sarah Ellis expounded at great length on the need for women simultaneously to accept their legal, social, and intellectual inferiority to men, while at the same time forming the moral characters of their children, making their homes the centre of improving discourse, and guiding husbands in their social, familial, and religious duties. (Caine, 1993, p. 44).

The moral responsibility of society fell spectacularly on women. It was women's duty to be morally pure, and the contact with the outer public world could have harmed their purity and therefore, needed to be secluded from the public world with the help of the bliss of domesticity and self-restraint, self-sacrifice, affection etc.

III. SOCIOLOGICAL BACKGROUND OF SOCIALIST FEMINISM

'Socialist Feminism' was one of the prevailing feminist trends in the 1960s-70s that interlinks Marxist view of ramifications of Capitalist class structure and Radical Feminist view of Patriarchal Social structure being at the root of woman's oppression. De Leon, in his translator's preface to August Bebel's *Woman under Socialism* in 1903, bears out the fact that, "Woman Question is the weakest link" in the capitalist armor, "The shot that rips up the wrongs done to her [woman] touches a nerve that aches from end to end in the capitalist world" (Bebel, 1879/1917, p. iii).

Socialist Feminism appears to have breathed its first in Engel's historical book *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (1972). According to Engel the overthrow of the Matriarchal System by the Patriarchal System and accumulation of surplus production as a patriarchal private property to be inherited by their progeny left women only as an instrument of reproduction confined to the role of housekeeper and keeping her out of the process of public social production and thus out of power. In this way women became the first private servant economically subjugated to their master men. With the inception of the patriarchal system, the communal ownership went into the hands of men, which further divided into various classes like Capitalist and Working class, Bourgeois and proletariat class, Squires and Working farmers, etc.

The inequality of men and women before the law, which is a legacy of previous social conditions, is not the cause but the effect of the economic oppression of women. In the old communistic household, which embraced numerous couples and their children, the administration of the household, entrusted to the women, was just as much a public, a socially necessary industry as the providing of food by the men. This situation changed with the patriarchal family, and even more with the monogamian individual family. The administration of the household lost its public character. It was no longer the concern of society. It became a *private service*. The wife became the first domestic servant, pushed out of participation in social production. (Engels, 1972, p. 152)

According to Engels earlier, the whole society was pervaded by "primitive communism," and communal ownership of the production (Engels, 1972, p. 173). It was the period of matriarchy when all women had the power to the effect of important social, political, and economic decisions. It was a pre-class society. The concept of monogamous family was not prevalent "before class society; the idea of a strictly monogamous pairing of males and females with their offspring—the nuclear family—was unknown to human society. Inequality was also unknown. For more than 2 million years, humans lived in groups made up of people who were mostly related by blood, in conditions of relative equality" (Smith, 1997). Morgan describes three stages of development of the human race namely Savagery, Barbarism, and Civilization. With each move to the next stage, production increased. Thus the surplus production was appropriated by men, and the system of private property came into existence. The purpose of production that was for fulfilling the needs of the community was replaced by the purpose to accumulate wealth or profit. As a result, the class system was introduced with the class of the ruled and the ruler with ever-increasing social inequality and injustice. Gradually the matriarchal system was superseded by the

patriarchal system, and women became the first victim of the class/capitalist system:

The beginning of civilization is based on the supremacy of the man, the expressed purpose being to produce children of undisputed paternity; such paternity is demanded because these children are later to come into their father's property as his natural heirs. It is distinguished from pairing marriage by the much greater strength of the marriage tie, which can no longer be dissolved at either partner's wish. As a rule, it is now only the man who can dissolve it, and put away his wife. (Engels, 1972, p. 165)

Engel's anthropological description of human development clarifies that Capitalism and women's oppression came hand in hand. In the pre-class society or the age of Savagery and Barbarism, there was no demarcation of gender labour. Women, being in the centre of a matriarchal society, used to provide food to the community and used to control both productive and reproductive labour equally. But with the increase in the heavier agricultural fieldwork women were confined back to the four walls of the home. As the productive work increased, the need for more labour was increased too, which restricted women to the only substantial role in reproduction. Men seized the central position in the social production of more importance and women occupied a secondary role as unproductive. In consequence, a rigid sexual division of labour came into existence; women's unproductive labour in the household shifted power to men in sexual politics. Capitalism, Patriarchy, and Women's Oppression are woven together, leading to socialist feminism.

Engel stresses upon women's participation in social production and economic independence for their emancipation, abolishing the demarcation of public and private for gender labor. It is noteworthy that Elizabeth Gaskell strongly advocates participatory democracy of women in the public domain in her industrial novels like *Mary Barton* and *North and South*. Apart from Engels other socialist feminists like Charles Fourier also emphasizes women's public and social participation in production, "Social advances and changes of periods are brought about by virtue of the progress of women towards liberty, and the decadences of the social order are brought about by virtue of the decrease of liberty of women ... The extension of privileges to women is the general principle of all social progress" (Fourier, 1901, p. 77). The unpaid immaterial labor of women in the private sphere, which entails her economic dependence, forms a ground for her repression in terms of culture, ideology, and sexuality. As cultural, ideological and sexual norms are formulated by men and psychologically imbibed into women.

Zillah Eisenstein is also one of the socialist feminists whose "*Capitalist Patriarchy and the case for Socialist Feminism* (1979) is the first comprehensive representation of socialist feminist theory and analysis"

(Kennedy, 1980, p. 575). She has chosen the phrase 'Capitalist Patriarchy', to emphasize the existing mutual dependence, of the capitalist class structure and male supremacy; "understanding this 'interdependence' of patriarchy and capitalism is essential to the political analysis of Socialist Feminist" (Eisenstein, 1979, p. 1). Thus drawing on both capitalism and patriarchy, Eisenstein combines Radical Feminism and Marxist feminism. Michelle Barrett's *Capitalism and Women's Liberation* is another significant work with the thought for socialist feminism. Barrett has also delved into the question of the role of capitalism in women's oppression and denies the idea of women's liberation under capitalism. Barrett seems to be in accord with the slogan, "No women's liberation without socialism; no socialism without women's liberation" (Nicholson, 1997). In *The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism: Towards a more Progressive Union* (1979) and *Capitalism, Patriarchy, and Job Segregation by Sex* (1976), Heidi Hartmann holds a social structure based on capitalism responsible for exacerbating patriarchy. Hartmann also hints at the amalgamation of Radical Feminism and Marxist Feminism and seeks the cause of male power of domination in material basis. Hartmann maintains that, "this material basis should be conceived of as all forms of social structures that enable men to control women's labour- whether that be in the 'public' sphere of workplace or state, or the 'private' sphere of household" (Hartmann, 1979). Like Engels, Hartmann also holds monogamous heterosexual marriage and family responsible for developing patriarchy and capitalist social structure and considers labour demarcation as a strategy for women's oppression through economic dependence.

Apart from the influence of Radical Feminism and Marxist Feminism, another significant aspect of the Socialist Feminism was introduced by Juliet Mitchell by writing "Women: The Longest Revolution" (1966). According to Marysia Zalewski Mitchell's writings "alerted feminists to the need for a capitalist and psychic revolution" (2000, p. 18). This new psychoanalytical insight into women's condition explored new elements responsible for her oppression that how capitalist Victorian domestic ideology psychologically conditions the subjectivity of women. At the same time, with different subjectivity, the difference in thought process and moral bearings were also brought forth by Socialist Feminists.

Zalewski has termed the Feminist currents of the 1970s as Modernist Feminism and those of the 1990s as Postmodern Feminism. She puts Liberal, Radical, and Socialist Feminism under the head of Modernist Feminism. Post-modern Feminism is based on deconstruction and post-structural theories. In Post Modern Feminist era Socialist Feminism is criticized for neglecting the racial and other forms of oppression and instigates it to encompass and consider the other forms

of classifications like the issues of race and homosexuality. But it is noteworthy that despite the focus on the current contemporary issues like race and sexuality it is also the fact that society is still divided into classes, with the constant growth of capitalism somehow contributing to social inequality. "Class stratification is alive and well, as is the racial discrimination with which economic disparities are so regularly entwined" therefore to say that Socialist Feminism is redundant should be taken with a grain of salt (Zalewski, 2000, p. 22).

Victorian Feminism precedes Socialist Feminism; they differ from each other in a very fundamental principle of division of gender labour. Victorian feminists still adhered to the domestic sphere of women as opposed to the socialist feminist view of demolishing the demarcation of public and private labour. Socialist feminism posed a sharp contrast with Victorian Feminism by refuting the Victorian domestic ideology of patriarchal family and women's subordination to men. Like Radical feminism, it also differs from liberalism as it advocates only legal, political, and social rights digressing from the main object of women's sexual oppression. Elizabeth Gaskell, though she belonged to the Victorian Age, was far ahead of her contemporary Victorian feminists and her depiction of self-possessed, dynamic, and unconventional woman character presages a feminist age of self discovery with a new dimension of the socialist feminism of the 1960s and 1980s.

IV. SOCIALIST 'ELEGANT ECONOMY' OF *CRANFORD*

The unusual social setting of *Cranford* designed by the women gives another glimpse of the Socialist Feminist fabric of Gaskell's fiction. *Cranford* appears to be posed against an industrial region Drumble replicating Manchester. This economic, social, and cultural confrontation between *Cranford* and Drumble also draws in the issue of Gender and Class into its sphere. "The Elegant Economy" sans class exploitation invented by women in *Cranford* seems to be in accord with Marysia Zalewski's Socialist Feminist thought of women's different moral bearings (Gaskell, 1998, p. 3). Like in other novels, in *Cranford*, also Gaskell makes women stand out with different thinking, with an edge over that of men leading to bring about a new world with socialist values.

Ideas about 'differently gendered subjectivities' paved the way for some feminists to argue that women reasoned and thought differently to men...In the area of moral reasoning, for example, a particularly influential and contested book suggested that women and girls 'failed' on traditional scales of moral reasoning because such scales were based on boys and men (Gilligan, 1982). It was not Gilligan's intention to try and persuade others that women had the same moral reasoning power as men; rather she wanted to pursue the



idea that women had a different way of reasoning morally. (Caine, 1993)

A parallel confrontation is conspicuously observed in *Cranford* apart from that between socialist Cranford and capitalist Drumble viz a confrontation between patriarchal social structure conducive to capitalism and matriarchal social structure a step to socialism. Cranford's socialist feminist side gets stronger with all the women having economic and political control as against "patriarchal property custom of the day" (Knezevic, 1998, p. 407). Cranfordian women's world is very close to Engel's Primitive Matriarchal Society devolving equal economic, political, and social power on women. And there was no concept of idle women as we find in the contemporary capitalist society, "The lady of civilization, surrounded by false homage and estranged from all real work, has an infinitely lower social position than the hard-working woman of barbarism, who was regarded among her people as a real lady (lady, frowa, Frau – mistress) and who was also a lady in character" (Engels, 1972, p. 142). Though Cranford is not altogether devoid of men but they are systematically driven to the peripheral of the social junction of the place imperative to overturn the gender hierarchy. It is noteworthy that these men find shelter in the neighbouring commercial town of Drumble, again hinting at the demarcation of the female values of socialism and male values of capitalism that is considered vulgar by Cranfordian Amazons.

Miss. Matty plays a crucial role as an agency to bring in a new social meaning in the system. She keeps aside her materialistic appetite for a silk gown to save a farmer from economic crisis when she exchanges five sovereigns for the fake note of Town and County Bank as she values a poor man's sweat and little happiness. When Miss. Matty has to face a sudden bankruptcy; all the apprehensive Cranfordian Amazons come out with resources to pull her out of the financial collapse. Miss. Matty's venture in the tea business brings forth new ethical values of mutual progress instead of individual profit in cutthroat competition of the capitalist world. When she comes to know about Mr. Johnson in the town who is already into this business, she gets concerned about him; "she had trotted down to his shop ... to tell him of the project that was entertained, and to inquire if it was likely to injure his business" (Gaskell, 1998, p. 275). The gentle gestures of Miss Matty in entreating her customers not to buy green tea as it has an effect of slow poison and her anguish on their pertinacity in buying it admonish selfish capitalist values. Through Women's regime of social-system advocating social equality and social justice, reciprocation of mutual help on humanitarian ground, Miss. Matty's concern over her customers' welfare more than her own private profit, the ethical aspect of Business brought in by Ms. Matty dispel the capitalist social system based on class division and private profit

upheld by patriarchal social structures. Here Gaskell again relates the whole social structure with 'Women Question' and makes them inevitably interdependent; "Miss Matty simply supersedes the competitive business ethic with a cooperative social ethic that quite successfully manages social interaction among individuals and classes" (Langland, 1995, p. 124).

Poverty, the ugly picture of industrial capitalist Manchester, is excluded from the threshold of Cranford. Cranfordians even abhor talking about poverty; it is against their social decorum. The poor of Cranford lives with self-dignity and 'aristocracy.' The topics like money, commerce, trade, profit are avoided by them in contrast to money centered Society of Manchester. The concept of accumulating private property is overthrown by communal nature of economic activities.

A few of the gentlefolks of Cranford were poor, and had some difficulty in making both ends meet; but they were like the Spartans, and concealed their smart under a smiling face. We none of us spoke of money, because that subject savoured of commerce and trade, and though some might be poor, we were all aristocratic. The Cranfordians had that kindly *esprit de corps* which made them overlook all deficiencies in success when some of them tried to conceal their poverty. (Gaskell, 1998, p. 24)

The labour division between men and women was based on production and reproduction for to propagate inheritors of patriarchal private property. Only the role reserved for women was mothering children keeping out of the process of social production. In contrast to this, in Cranford, women are the proprietors of all the economic, political and social industry. Every activity of women is given social significance in constituting elegant economy. Ironically the girl child of Martha, the maidservant of Miss. Matty and Jem Hearn, is automatically and naturally amalgamated in Cranfordian women's world. Jem's role is only limited to the birth of the new member of Cranford with no other significance to his presence, "He, like the middle-class gentlemen of Cranford, conventionally disappears; his presence marked only by the daughter Martha bears to fill the arms of mistress" (Langland, 1995, p. 130). At the same time, Gaskell advocates mother-right which prevailed in the pre-class society of "primitive communism." As Engel has described in his *Origin of Private Property, Family and State* (1972) that society's conversion from matrilineal structure to the patrilineal structure was the root cause of class-based society, and the overthrow of mother-right was "the world historic defeat of the female sex" (Engels, 1972, p. 62).

The relation between middle-class women and their maids mocks the working-class slavery to capitalist masters. Gaskell draws a line of equality between Martha, Miss Matty's Maidservant, and her mistress by switching their financial conditions and interdependence. But the mutual bond of love and care

of human relation negates the importance of financial differentiation. Martha rules out the probability of leaving her mistress, she hurries to get into wedlock with Jem Hearn in order to provide lodging to Miss Matty. A servant's daughter does not come with a tag of lower-class stigma and is naturalized into her mistress's 'god-daughter.' There is a mutual cooperation between the mistresses and their maidservants and they 'work side by side' with mutual empathy as we witness between the hostess and the servant both in Mrs. Forrester's party as the narrator says, "She knew, and we knew, and she knew that we knew" (Gaskell, 1998, p. 125). The class distinction is diluted altogether along with even an iota of exploitation as Elizabeth Langland (1995) says, "Class difference has all but disappeared from before our eyes" (p. 67).

The household management, the unproductive womanly works, making the best use of the smallest things like rose leaves to make 'pot-pourri' for a person who does not have a garden, making 'chary of candles,' have got social and public significance in *Cranford*. By shifting her focus to women values Gaskell has actually, as Elizabeth Langland says, corrected the 'fake truth' of the superiority of men's values ideologically and psychologically invigorated by patriarchal society. The values shaped by women bring in simplicity in every sphere of life, either economic or social; keeping early hours, rules of calling and visiting with the elegance of taciturnity, punctuality, expensive lifestyle and 'Money-spending' being considered as 'vulgar and ostentatious', love of peace and kindness, a life with a moderate means preferred and cherished puts *Cranford* in sharp contrast to materialist values of men. "The Conjunction of the ladies' fixed incomes –their lack of economic productivity-with their productivity of social meanings generates a different economy in *Cranford*, one they term 'elegant' in contrast to vulgar money – getting-and spending one" (Gaskell, 1998, p. 32).

As Engels described that with the advancement of agricultural production, the agricultural field grew more important than the household, and as the men became the centre of this new production field, the relation of men and women in the household also changed. The domestic labour and reproduction lost their social significance, and women became the personal service provider to men "A man engages in social production, and thereby serves society; a woman essentially serves her man. Since the majority of women are peripheral to public industry and objectively dependent, all women are stereotyped as secondary. All come to represent an undifferentiated domestic function as a sex" (Fraser, 2000, p. 256). *Cranford* overthrows this traditional ideological structure by restoring the production of social meanings and values inside the household governed by women; making the economy of the individual living household an ideal to be followed by the national economy. Gaskell's *Cranford* confirms the

principles of Engle's primitive society in which old ladies were given prime importance in making important social decisions. *Cranford*, as Langland says, "In its understanding of the ways in which women's discursive practices and their quotidian details constitute society and its meanings, it constructs another reality, another truth that counters that of women's marginality, passivity and dependence" (Langland, 1995, p. 131).

Although Gaskell does not intend to abolish "monogamous family" which, according to Engel, plays as the economic unit of society and the abolition of this is indispensable for the emancipation of women. But she presents a society devoid of families centered on private property, propagating a patriarchal social system of women's exploitation. "In *Cranford*, Gaskell offers a social model which operates under values which run counter to those of the capitalist patriarchy" (Colby, 1995, p. 56). Indeed *Cranford* entertains the values of socialist matriarchy where there is no biased distinction of economic class and gender class. 'Political economy of women's subordination' is replaced by the 'elegant economy' of liberation of humanity. This world brings out women with different subjectivity of their own reflected through their management of the social system of *Cranford*. This subjectivity is born out of their experiences of psychological and physical pangs of subordination to patriarchal domination, and so better understands the pertinent magnitude of socialist values.

The classless elegant social system of *Cranford* is a revolutionary socialist change. It presses upon the necessity of a socialist social structure, which according to Morgan, preceded class society; it will also consequently eradicate gender exploitation along with class exploitation. It is worth noting that more recent research has provided a plethora of examples that show that women enjoyed relative equality with men in pre-class societies. In these pre-class societies where the concept of private property was yet to be introduced, production was aimed for the social use in the required amount without the surplus to be distributed among classes. The necessities and needs were fulfilled with the exchange of goods as money was not in existence at that time. Childbearing and household work also acquired the significance of social and public industries. This kind of barter system in the interest of social good is nostalgically hinted at by Gaskell when people of *Cranford* exchange various things with Miss Matty to extend their appreciation and love for her humility, "A new economy of exchange emerges with Matty giving her patrons "good weight," while "they, in their turn brought many a little country present to the 'old rector's daughter-a cream cheese, a few new-laid eggs, a little fresh ripe fruit, a bunch of flowers; based less on money than on barter this new system pays tribute to the old" (Knezevic, 1998, p. 415). With the invention of money, as Engel says, a new social power came into existence; this power became a strong source of class

exploitation. The very things like money, creditors, debtors, usury, and forcible collection of debts are things of contempt for the Cranfordians.

V. CONCLUSION

The Socialist feminist approach in Gaskell's writings differs from contemporary radical and liberal feminist theories in its comprehensive study of women's oppression bringing in the other factors like class structure, psychology, subjectivity, and difference apart from biological and rational equality. Cranford advocates a social state of society with social equality and justice through the agency of women. This novel emphasizes "the fact of the excellence of women's values and abilities, the biological and evolutionary origin of women's superior attributes and socialist vision of political and social equality between the sexes" (Adams, 2002). All the questions and relations, whether social, economic, and political, are resolved keeping in view the social interest. According to Adams, it is not "capitalist competition and selfishness" but "cooperation is the means for the survival of the higher species" (2002). The narrator Miss Mary asserts at the end of the novel that, "ever since that day there has been the old friendly sociability in Cranford society; which I am thankful for, because of my dear Miss Matty's love of peace and kindness"(Gaskell, 1998, p. 270).

The whole story of women's oppression circles around Capitalism, Patriarchy, and Socialism and ultimately leads to Socialist Feminism. Women's oppression is somewhere linked to material gain. Gaskell's novels seek women's emancipation through socialism that rips –off the capitalist or class structure and thus the patriarchal system as the three are interlinked. Capitalism can be done away with only through bringing women-power to the fore which will upturn the relation of the ruler and the ruled. Gaskell makes it happen in her novel by advocating woman's 'participatory democracy,' eliminating gender-based demarcation of labour and imparting important roles to women in social production. *Cranford* is the best example showcasing the socialist social structure based on women's maternal, human and socialist values.

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‘Elegant Economy’ in Elizabeth Gaskell’s *Cranford*: A Socialist Feminist Study

By Megha Ramteke

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Abstract- Elizabeth Gaskell (1810-1865) was a Victorian writer who had to undergo various kinds of condescension for her writings. After bearing the stigma of being conformist, conventional, and meek as ascribed to her by the contemporary feminist critics, Gaskell’s writings are being revisited with a new feminist perspective in recent years. The present paper is also a humble attempt to rediscover the feminist dimension of her writings by exploring one of her novels, *Cranford* (1853), through a socialist feminist lens. *Cranford* presents such a social structure that is devoid of a Class system and constructed by women in a matrilineal society as against the capitalist patriarchal society of *Drumby*. This Matriarchal socialist social structure is based on the values of cooperation, humanity, and motherly care characteristic to the differently developed gendered subjectivity of women. The social change through the agency of woman foreshadows Gaskell’s far-sighted feminist views of the 1970s.

Keywords: *elizabeth gaskell, cranford, victorian feminism, socialist feminism.*

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I. INTRODUCTION

Elizabeth Gaskell (1810-1865), a Victorian Woman novelist, began her writing career in an era when 'Feminism' was not even established as a theory. The contemporary Victorian feminists not only ignored her writings but strongly disproved any possibility of feminist dimension in her literary works. The critics like W. R. Greg, David Cecil, Raymond Williams, and Arnold Kettle labeled Gaskell as a second rank writer criticizing her as a meek writer with a feeble hold on structure and characterization. Her name had gone into oblivion for being a conformist, submissive, conventional and emotional woman writer writing with no purpose.

After the 1950s, Gaskell's writings began to be revisited by feminist critics who unveiled the feminist, political and social significance of her writings. With the appearance of Ania Rubenius's *The Woman Question in Elizabeth Gaskell's Life and Works* (1950), Annette Hopkins's *Elizabeth Gaskell: her Life and Works* (1952), Kathleen Tillotson's *Novels of the Eighteen-Forties* (1954), Edgar Wright's *Mrs. Gaskell: The Basis for Reassessment* (1965) etc. Gaskell earned a new recognition. Pasty Stoneman wrote *Elizabeth Gaskell* (1987), the first avowedly feminist study of Gaskell's work. Stoneman refuted all earlier criticism of Gaskell and brought forth the characteristic of 'maternal thinking'

in her novels with new feminist light through her exploration of it as the base of social evolution. Hilary M. Schor, in *Scheherezade in the Marketplace* (1992) draws attention to Gaskell's unconventional stance in centering her plot on female protagonists. With all these critics, Gaskell regained her lost ground.

This research is also an attempt in this drive to re-establish Gaskell as a major writer by exploring new feminist dimensions of her writings. Gaskell lived in an age of the Industrial Revolution, and the socio-economic changes impelled by it divided English Society based on Class and Gender, "The society in which Gaskell lived and wrote was intersected horizontally by class and vertically by gender divisions" (Stoneman, 2006, p. 6). Gaskell's novels address both the divisions, and through this study, I have tried to seek a link between Gaskell's address to 'Woman Question' and her address to the social problem of 'Class Conflict.' In her novels Gaskell proposes an alternative social structure based on equality and compassion, which is accomplished and managed through women's agency by imparting them significant roles in the public sphere and social production refuting the traditional Victorian domestic ideology. The interconnection between 'Woman Question' and 'Class Conflict' or 'Patriarchy' and 'Capitalism' makes 'Socialist Feminism' an apt device to examine her novels, as Gender and Class are the two integral halves of Socialist Feminist Theory. This work commences with a glance at the early Victorian Feminism moving ahead to elaborate upon Socialist Feminist standpoint and finally ends up exploring Gaskell's novel, *Cranford* (1853) in the light of Socialist Feminism.

II. VICTORIAN FEMINISM

The notion of Victorian Feminism is hard to pin down as the term 'Feminism' itself was coined towards the end of the nineteenth century. I have attempted to trace the idea of Victorian Feminism by focusing upon some of the significant features and undercurrents brought to the fore by some of the contemporary feminist writers. After the feminist stir of the 1790s which came up with writers like Mary Wollstonecraft's "A Vindication of the Rights of Women" (1792) and the novels of her contemporary, Mary Hays, the significant feminist move took impetus in the 1840s with the debate on 'Gender.' The feminist study of Gender being socially and culturally constructed exposes the Victorian

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ideology of gender hierarchy with men in the center, "Cultural critic Raymond Williams saw the 1840s as a kind of watershed decades for masculinity and femininity, arguing in particular that these years saw a deepening division between the emotions thought proper for men and women to display" (Glover, 2000, p. 19).

Barbara Caine, in her book *Victorian feminists* (1993), asserts that the historian and the contemporary Feminists of the late 1970s and early 1980s criticize Victorian feminist movements for "its sexual prudery, its refusal to acknowledge the existence of women's sexuality and its absolute failure to address the question of women's sexual pleasure" (Caine, 1993, p. x). Victorian Feminists dealt with the very basic question of the 'equality' and 'difference' between men and women, "indeed, Victorian domestic ideology, centering as it did on the notion of separate spheres for women and men, on the intellectual, moral and emotional differences between men and women, and on the moral superiority of women, was at least as important in the formulation of feminist thought as was liberal political and economic theory" (Caine, 1993, p. 21).

Mary Wollstonecraft, John Stuart Mill, Emily Davies, Frances Cobbe, Josephine Butler, Fawcett are named as prominent Victorian feminists. Paradoxically, although these feminists voiced against the prevalent inequality and unjustifiable conditions of women, they are ultimately found to comply with the patriarchal Victorian domestic ideology. Wollstonecraft's views on women's sexuality endorse the Victorian double standard of sexuality, as she admits the necessity of constraints on women's sexual freedom. Wollstonecraft's antifeminist perspective towards women's sexuality is also criticized,

For Kaplan, it is the emphasis on the sexual that is most problematic and most significant in Wollstonecraft. The analysis of sensibility and pleasure as instruments of patriarchal control, the account of how women's sexuality and dependency are constructed both in the existing state of society and in the writings of Rousseau, are evident in the *Vindication*, but rather than attacking them through a demand for women's control of their own sexuality, Wollstonecraft insists on a puritan sexual ethic for women. (Caine, 1993, p. 25).

Another significant figure in the Women's movement is John Stuart Mill, who added a new edge to it by writing *Subjection of Women*. Mill's arguments were mainly focused on married women and their problems; the problems of single women and prostitution were left out by him. Although he brought forth the unfair laws of the marriage of Victorian women, however, he spoke in favor of women's domestic sphere as natural and morally obligatory. "Zillah Eisenstein commented on the way in which Mill, despite his powerful critique of the subordination of women, none the less perpetuates the patriarchal division of male and female sexual spheres

in his insistence that it is both likely and desirable that most women will continue in their domestic role, leaving income-earning activity and involvement in the public sphere to men or to exceptional single women" (Caine, 1993, p. 37).

Among the prominent socio-economic-political changes in Victorian England were the development of science and liberalism. The feminist movement was greatly influenced by liberalism that believed in family and domestic life being segregated from the outer public and social life. Private domestic sphere being the center of women's life consequently fell apart from political and social public life. "For liberalism, as both Carole Pateman and Zillah Eisenstein have shown, has always accepted the existing European sexual division of labor and the basically patriarchal family structure that this entails" (Caine, 1993. Print., p. 38). It upholds liberal values limited only for men and women were excluded from the realm of liberation from the confinement of Victorian domestic wall. Her domesticity was of no use in the public sphere, and women were believed to lack the required masculine character and manly intelligence for handling public domain.

Ironically the Victorian feminist of 1830s and 1840s all circled back to the original sin of Victorian domestic ideology as it is said,

writers such as Sarah Lewis, Mrs. John Sanford, and best known of all, Sarah Ellis expounded at great length on the need for women simultaneously to accept their legal, social, and intellectual inferiority to men, while at the same time forming the moral characters of their children, making their homes the centre of improving discourse, and guiding husbands in their social, familial, and religious duties. (Caine, 1993, p. 44).

The moral responsibility of society fell spectacularly on women. It was women's duty to be morally pure, and the contact with the outer public world could have harmed their purity and therefore, needed to be secluded from the public world with the help of the bliss of domesticity and self-restraint, self-sacrifice, affection etc.

III. SOCIOLOGICAL BACKGROUND OF SOCIALIST FEMINISM

'Socialist Feminism' was one of the prevailing feminist trends in the 1960s-70s that interlinks Marxist view of ramifications of Capitalist class structure and Radical Feminist view of Patriarchal Social structure being at the root of woman's oppression. De Leon, in his translator's preface to August Bebel's *Woman under Socialism* in 1903, bears out the fact that, "Woman Question is the weakest link" in the capitalist armor, "The shot that rips up the wrongs done to her [woman] touches a nerve that aches from end to end in the capitalist world" (Bebel, 1879/1917, p. iii).

Socialist Feminism appears to have breathed its first in Engel's historical book *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (1972). According to Engel the overthrow of the Matriarchal System by the Patriarchal System and accumulation of surplus production as a patriarchal private property to be inherited by their progeny left women only as an instrument of reproduction confined to the role of housekeeper and keeping her out of the process of public social production and thus out of power. In this way women became the first private servant economically subjugated to their master men. With the inception of the patriarchal system, the communal ownership went into the hands of men, which further divided into various classes like Capitalist and Working class, Bourgeois and proletariat class, Squires and Working farmers, etc.

The inequality of men and women before the law, which is a legacy of previous social conditions, is not the cause but the effect of the economic oppression of women. In the old communistic household, which embraced numerous couples and their children, the administration of the household, entrusted to the women, was just as much a public, a socially necessary industry as the providing of food by the men. This situation changed with the patriarchal family, and even more with the monogamian individual family. The administration of the household lost its public character. It was no longer the concern of society. It became a *private service*. The wife became the first domestic servant, pushed out of participation in social production. (Engels, 1972, p. 152)

According to Engels earlier, the whole society was pervaded by "primitive communism," and communal ownership of the production (Engels, 1972, p. 173). It was the period of matriarchy when all women had the power to the effect of important social, political, and economic decisions. It was a pre-class society. The concept of monogamous family was not prevalent "before class society; the idea of a strictly monogamous pairing of males and females with their offspring—the nuclear family—was unknown to human society. Inequality was also unknown. For more than 2 million years, humans lived in groups made up of people who were mostly related by blood, in conditions of relative equality" (Smith, 1997). Morgan describes three stages of development of the human race namely Savagery, Barbarism, and Civilization. With each move to the next stage, production increased. Thus the surplus production was appropriated by men, and the system of private property came into existence. The purpose of production that was for fulfilling the needs of the community was replaced by the purpose to accumulate wealth or profit. As a result, the class system was introduced with the class of the ruled and the ruler with ever-increasing social inequality and injustice. Gradually the matriarchal system was superseded by the

patriarchal system, and women became the first victim of the class/capitalist system:

The beginning of civilization is based on the supremacy of the man, the expressed purpose being to produce children of undisputed paternity; such paternity is demanded because these children are later to come into their father's property as his natural heirs. It is distinguished from pairing marriage by the much greater strength of the marriage tie, which can no longer be dissolved at either partner's wish. As a rule, it is now only the man who can dissolve it, and put away his wife. (Engels, 1972, p. 165)

Engel's anthropological description of human development clarifies that Capitalism and women's oppression came hand in hand. In the pre-class society or the age of Savagery and Barbarism, there was no demarcation of gender labour. Women, being in the centre of a matriarchal society, used to provide food to the community and used to control both productive and reproductive labour equally. But with the increase in the heavier agricultural fieldwork women were confined back to the four walls of the home. As the productive work increased, the need for more labour was increased too, which restricted women to the only substantial role in reproduction. Men seized the central position in the social production of more importance and women occupied a secondary role as unproductive. In consequence, a rigid sexual division of labour came into existence; women's unproductive labour in the household shifted power to men in sexual politics. Capitalism, Patriarchy, and Women's Oppression are woven together, leading to socialist feminism.

Engel stresses upon women's participation in social production and economic independence for their emancipation, abolishing the demarcation of public and private for gender labor. It is noteworthy that Elizabeth Gaskell strongly advocates participatory democracy of women in the public domain in her industrial novels like *Mary Barton* and *North and South*. Apart from Engels other socialist feminists like Charles Fourier also emphasizes women's public and social participation in production, "Social advances and changes of periods are brought about by virtue of the progress of women towards liberty, and the decadences of the social order are brought about by virtue of the decrease of liberty of women ... The extension of privileges to women is the general principle of all social progress" (Fourier, 1901, p. 77). The unpaid immaterial labor of women in the private sphere, which entails her economic dependence, forms a ground for her repression in terms of culture, ideology, and sexuality. As cultural, ideological and sexual norms are formulated by men and psychologically imbibed into women.

Zillah Eisenstein is also one of the socialist feminists whose "*Capitalist Patriarchy and the case for Socialist Feminism* (1979) is the first comprehensive representation of socialist feminist theory and analysis"

(Kennedy, 1980, p. 575). She has chosen the phrase 'Capitalist Patriarchy', to emphasize the existing mutual dependence, of the capitalist class structure and male supremacy; "understanding this 'interdependence' of patriarchy and capitalism is essential to the political analysis of Socialist Feminist" (Eisenstein, 1979, p. 1). Thus drawing on both capitalism and patriarchy, Eisenstein combines Radical Feminism and Marxist feminism. Michelle Barrett's *Capitalism and Women's Liberation* is another significant work with the thought for socialist feminism. Barrett has also delved into the question of the role of capitalism in women's oppression and denies the idea of women's liberation under capitalism. Barrett seems to be in accord with the slogan, "No women's liberation without socialism; no socialism without women's liberation" (Nicholson, 1997). In *The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism: Towards a more Progressive Union* (1979) and *Capitalism, Patriarchy, and Job Segregation by Sex* (1976), Heidi Hartmann holds a social structure based on capitalism responsible for exacerbating patriarchy. Hartmann also hints at the amalgamation of Radical Feminism and Marxist Feminism and seeks the cause of male power of domination in material basis. Hartmann maintains that, "this material basis should be conceived of as all forms of social structures that enable men to control women's labour- whether that be in the 'public' sphere of workplace or state, or the 'private' sphere of household" (Hartmann, 1979). Like Engels, Hartmann also holds monogamous heterosexual marriage and family responsible for developing patriarchy and capitalist social structure and considers labour demarcation as a strategy for women's oppression through economic dependence.

Apart from the influence of Radical Feminism and Marxist Feminism, another significant aspect of the Socialist Feminism was introduced by Juliet Mitchell by writing "Women: The Longest Revolution" (1966). According to Marysia Zalewski Mitchell's writings "alerted feminists to the need for a capitalist and psychic revolution" (2000, p. 18). This new psychoanalytical insight into women's condition explored new elements responsible for her oppression that how capitalist Victorian domestic ideology psychologically conditions the subjectivity of women. At the same time, with different subjectivity, the difference in thought process and moral bearings were also brought forth by Socialist Feminists.

Zalewski has termed the Feminist currents of the 1970s as Modernist Feminism and those of the 1990s as Postmodern Feminism. She puts Liberal, Radical, and Socialist Feminism under the head of Modernist Feminism. Post-modern Feminism is based on deconstruction and post-structural theories. In Post Modern Feminist era Socialist Feminism is criticized for neglecting the racial and other forms of oppression and instigates it to encompass and consider the other forms

of classifications like the issues of race and homosexuality. But it is noteworthy that despite the focus on the current contemporary issues like race and sexuality it is also the fact that society is still divided into classes, with the constant growth of capitalism somehow contributing to social inequality. "Class stratification is alive and well, as is the racial discrimination with which economic disparities are so regularly entwined" therefore to say that Socialist Feminism is redundant should be taken with a grain of salt (Zalewski, 2000, p. 22).

Victorian Feminism precedes Socialist Feminism; they differ from each other in a very fundamental principle of division of gender labour. Victorian feminists still adhered to the domestic sphere of women as opposed to the socialist feminist view of demolishing the demarcation of public and private labour. Socialist feminism posed a sharp contrast with Victorian Feminism by refuting the Victorian domestic ideology of patriarchal family and women's subordination to men. Like Radical feminism, it also differs from liberalism as it advocates only legal, political, and social rights digressing from the main object of women's sexual oppression. Elizabeth Gaskell, though she belonged to the Victorian Age, was far ahead of her contemporary Victorian feminists and her depiction of self-possessed, dynamic, and unconventional woman character presages a feminist age of self discovery with a new dimension of the socialist feminism of the 1960s and 1980s.

IV. SOCIALIST 'ELEGANT ECONOMY' OF CRANFORD

The unusual social setting of *Cranford* designed by the women gives another glimpse of the Socialist Feminist fabric of Gaskell's fiction. Cranford appears to be posed against an industrial region Drumble replicating Manchester. This economic, social, and cultural confrontation between Cranford and Drumble also draws in the issue of Gender and Class into its sphere. "The Elegant Economy" sans class exploitation invented by women in Cranford seems to be in accord with Marysia Zalewski's Socialist Feminist thought of women's different moral bearings (Gaskell, 1998, p. 3). Like in other novels, in *Cranford*, also Gaskell makes women stand out with different thinking, with an edge over that of men leading to bring about a new world with socialist values.

Ideas about 'differently gendered subjectivities' paved the way for some feminists to argue that women reasoned and thought differently to men...In the area of moral reasoning, for example, a particularly influential and contested book suggested that women and girls 'failed' on traditional scales of moral reasoning because such scales were based on boys and men (Gilligan, 1982). It was not Gilligan's intention to try and persuade others that women had the same moral reasoning power as men; rather she wanted to pursue the



idea that women had a different way of reasoning morally. (Caine, 1993)

A parallel confrontation is conspicuously observed in *Cranford* apart from that between socialist Cranford and capitalist Drumble viz a confrontation between patriarchal social structure conducive to capitalism and matriarchal social structure a step to socialism. Cranford's socialist feminist side gets stronger with all the women having economic and political control as against "patriarchal property custom of the day" (Knezevic, 1998, p. 407). Cranfordian women's world is very close to Engel's Primitive Matriarchal Society devolving equal economic, political, and social power on women. And there was no concept of idle women as we find in the contemporary capitalist society, "The lady of civilization, surrounded by false homage and estranged from all real work, has an infinitely lower social position than the hard-working woman of barbarism, who was regarded among her people as a real lady (lady, frowa, Frau – mistress) and who was also a lady in character" (Engels, 1972, p. 142). Though Cranford is not altogether devoid of men but they are systematically driven to the peripheral of the social junction of the place imperative to overturn the gender hierarchy. It is noteworthy that these men find shelter in the neighbouring commercial town of Drumble, again hinting at the demarcation of the female values of socialism and male values of capitalism that is considered vulgar by Cranfordian Amazons.

Miss. Matty plays a crucial role as an agency to bring in a new social meaning in the system. She keeps aside her materialistic appetite for a silk gown to save a farmer from economic crisis when she exchanges five sovereigns for the fake note of Town and County Bank as she values a poor man's sweat and little happiness. When Miss. Matty has to face a sudden bankruptcy; all the apprehensive Cranfordian Amazons come out with resources to pull her out of the financial collapse. Miss. Matty's venture in the tea business brings forth new ethical values of mutual progress instead of individual profit in cutthroat competition of the capitalist world. When she comes to know about Mr. Johnson in the town who is already into this business, she gets concerned about him; "she had trotted down to his shop ... to tell him of the project that was entertained, and to inquire if it was likely to injure his business" (Gaskell, 1998, p. 275). The gentle gestures of Miss Matty in entreating her customers not to buy green tea as it has an effect of slow poison and her anguish on their pertinacity in buying it admonish selfish capitalist values. Through Women's regime of social-system advocating social equality and social justice, reciprocation of mutual help on humanitarian ground, Miss. Matty's concern over her customers' welfare more than her own private profit, the ethical aspect of Business brought in by Ms. Matty dispel the capitalist social system based on class division and private profit

upheld by patriarchal social structures. Here Gaskell again relates the whole social structure with 'Women Question' and makes them inevitably interdependent; "Miss Matty simply supersedes the competitive business ethic with a cooperative social ethic that quite successfully manages social interaction among individuals and classes" (Langland, 1995, p. 124).

Poverty, the ugly picture of industrial capitalist Manchester, is excluded from the threshold of Cranford. Cranfordians even abhor talking about poverty; it is against their social decorum. The poor of Cranford lives with self-dignity and 'aristocracy.' The topics like money, commerce, trade, profit are avoided by them in contrast to money centered Society of Manchester. The concept of accumulating private property is overthrown by communal nature of economic activities.

A few of the gentlefolks of Cranford were poor, and had some difficulty in making both ends meet; but they were like the Spartans, and concealed their smart under a smiling face. We none of us spoke of money, because that subject savoured of commerce and trade, and though some might be poor, we were all aristocratic. The Cranfordians had that kindly *esprit de corps* which made them overlook all deficiencies in success when some of them tried to conceal their poverty. (Gaskell, 1998, p. 24)

The labour division between men and women was based on production and reproduction for to propagate inheritors of patriarchal private property. Only the role reserved for women was mothering children keeping out of the process of social production. In contrast to this, in Cranford, women are the proprietors of all the economic, political and social industry. Every activity of women is given social significance in constituting elegant economy. Ironically the girl child of Martha, the maidservant of Miss. Matty and Jem Hearn, is automatically and naturally amalgamated in Cranfordian women's world. Jem's role is only limited to the birth of the new member of Cranford with no other significance to his presence, "He, like the middle-class gentlemen of Cranford, conventionally disappears; his presence marked only by the daughter Martha bears to fill the arms of mistress" (Langland, 1995, p. 130). At the same time, Gaskell advocates mother-right which prevailed in the pre-class society of "primitive communism." As Engel has described in his *Origin of Private Property, Family and State* (1972) that society's conversion from matrilineal structure to the patrilineal structure was the root cause of class-based society, and the overthrow of mother-right was "the world historic defeat of the female sex" (Engels, 1972, p. 62).

The relation between middle-class women and their maids mocks the working-class slavery to capitalist masters. Gaskell draws a line of equality between Martha, Miss Matty's Maidservant, and her mistress by switching their financial conditions and interdependence. But the mutual bond of love and care

of human relation negates the importance of financial differentiation. Martha rules out the probability of leaving her mistress, she hurries to get into wedlock with Jem Hearn in order to provide lodging to Miss Matty. A servant's daughter does not come with a tag of lower-class stigma and is naturalized into her mistress's 'god-daughter.' There is a mutual cooperation between the mistresses and their maidservants and they 'work side by side' with mutual empathy as we witness between the hostess and the servant both in Mrs. Forrester's party as the narrator says, "She knew, and we knew, and she knew that we knew" (Gaskell, 1998, p. 125). The class distinction is diluted altogether along with even an iota of exploitation as Elizabeth Langland (1995) says, "Class difference has all but disappeared from before our eyes" (p. 67).

The household management, the unproductive womanly works, making the best use of the smallest things like rose leaves to make 'pot-pourri' for a person who does not have a garden, making 'chary of candles,' have got social and public significance in *Cranford*. By shifting her focus to women values Gaskell has actually, as Elizabeth Langland says, corrected the 'fake truth' of the superiority of men's values ideologically and psychologically invigorated by patriarchal society. The values shaped by women bring in simplicity in every sphere of life, either economic or social; keeping early hours, rules of calling and visiting with the elegance of taciturnity, punctuality, expensive lifestyle and 'Money-spending' being considered as 'vulgar and ostentatious', love of peace and kindness, a life with a moderate means preferred and cherished puts *Cranford* in sharp contrast to materialist values of men. "The Conjunction of the ladies' fixed incomes –their lack of economic productivity-with their productivity of social meanings generates a different economy in *Cranford*, one they term 'elegant' in contrast to vulgar money – getting-and spending one" (Gaskell, 1998, p. 32).

As Engels described that with the advancement of agricultural production, the agricultural field grew more important than the household, and as the men became the centre of this new production field, the relation of men and women in the household also changed. The domestic labour and reproduction lost their social significance, and women became the personal service provider to men "A man engages in social production, and thereby serves society; a woman essentially serves her man. Since the majority of women are peripheral to public industry and objectively dependent, all women are stereotyped as secondary. All come to represent an undifferentiated domestic function as a sex" (Fraser, 2000, p. 256). *Cranford* overthrows this traditional ideological structure by restoring the production of social meanings and values inside the household governed by women; making the economy of the individual living household an ideal to be followed by the national economy. Gaskell's *Cranford* confirms the

principles of Engle's primitive society in which old ladies were given prime importance in making important social decisions. *Cranford*, as Langland says, "In its understanding of the ways in which women's discursive practices and their quotidian details constitute society and its meanings, it constructs another reality, another truth that counters that of women's marginality, passivity and dependence" (Langland, 1995, p. 131).

Although Gaskell does not intend to abolish "monogamous family" which, according to Engel, plays as the economic unit of society and the abolition of this is indispensable for the emancipation of women. But she presents a society devoid of families centered on private property, propagating a patriarchal social system of women's exploitation. "In *Cranford*, Gaskell offers a social model which operates under values which run counter to those of the capitalist patriarchy" (Colby, 1995, p. 56). Indeed *Cranford* entertains the values of socialist matriarchy where there is no biased distinction of economic class and gender class. 'Political economy of women's subordination' is replaced by the 'elegant economy' of liberation of humanity. This world brings out women with different subjectivity of their own reflected through their management of the social system of *Cranford*. This subjectivity is born out of their experiences of psychological and physical pangs of subordination to patriarchal domination, and so better understands the pertinent magnitude of socialist values.

The classless elegant social system of *Cranford* is a revolutionary socialist change. It presses upon the necessity of a socialist social structure, which according to Morgan, preceded class society; it will also consequently eradicate gender exploitation along with class exploitation. It is worth noting that more recent research has provided a plethora of examples that show that women enjoyed relative equality with men in pre-class societies. In these pre-class societies where the concept of private property was yet to be introduced, production was aimed for the social use in the required amount without the surplus to be distributed among classes. The necessities and needs were fulfilled with the exchange of goods as money was not in existence at that time. Childbearing and household work also acquired the significance of social and public industries. This kind of barter system in the interest of social good is nostalgically hinted at by Gaskell when people of *Cranford* exchange various things with Miss Matty to extend their appreciation and love for her humility, "A new economy of exchange emerges with Matty giving her patrons "good weight," while "they, in their turn brought many a little country present to the 'old rector's daughter-a cream cheese, a few new-laid eggs, a little fresh ripe fruit, a bunch of flowers; based less on money than on barter this new system pays tribute to the old" (Knezevic, 1998, p. 415). With the invention of money, as Engel says, a new social power came into existence; this power became a strong source of class

exploitation. The very things like money, creditors, debtors, usury, and forcible collection of debts are things of contempt for the Cranfordians.

V. CONCLUSION

The Socialist feminist approach in Gaskell's writings differs from contemporary radical and liberal feminist theories in its comprehensive study of women's oppression bringing in the other factors like class structure, psychology, subjectivity, and difference apart from biological and rational equality. Cranford advocates a social state of society with social equality and justice through the agency of women. This novel emphasizes "the fact of the excellence of women's values and abilities, the biological and evolutionary origin of women's superior attributes and socialist vision of political and social equality between the sexes" (Adams, 2002). All the questions and relations, whether social, economic, and political, are resolved keeping in view the social interest. According to Adams, it is not "capitalist competition and selfishness" but "cooperation is the means for the survival of the higher species" (2002). The narrator Miss Mary asserts at the end of the novel that, "ever since that day there has been the old friendly sociability in Cranford society; which I am thankful for, because of my dear Miss Matty's love of peace and kindliness" (Gaskell, 1998, p. 270).

The whole story of women's oppression circles around Capitalism, Patriarchy, and Socialism and ultimately leads to Socialist Feminism. Women's oppression is somewhere linked to material gain. Gaskell's novels seek women's emancipation through socialism that rips –off the capitalist or class structure and thus the patriarchal system as the three are interlinked. Capitalism can be done away with only through bringing women-power to the fore which will upturn the relation of the ruler and the ruled. Gaskell makes it happen in her novel by advocating woman's 'participatory democracy,' eliminating gender-based demarcation of labour and imparting important roles to women in social production. *Cranford* is the best example showcasing the socialist social structure based on women's maternal, human and socialist values.

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THE JATAKA TALES IN THE PALI CANON OF LITERATURE AND IN THE PAINTINGS OF AJANTA CAVES: A COMPARATIVE STUDY

Megha Ramteke

Abstract:

The Jataka Tales in Pali-Canonical Literature in Theravada and their pictorial narrative through the various paintings, murals and rock-sculptures in the Ajanta Caves are very important part of Theravada Buddhism. These moral fables give the glimpses of Buddha's previous life in the forms various animals, kings and gods when he was still on his path to become the Enlightened Buddha. Through a number of incidents in his former life the Bodhisattva preached and gave message of various virtues and values to the mankind. This work is a humble attempt at a thematic analysis of these Jataka Tales written in the Pali language and the pictures or painting depicting the Jataka Tales found in the rock-cut caves of the Ajanta. My personal visit to these caves and observation of the murals especially in the cave Seventeen inspired this study. Most of these Jataka paintings seem to corroborate the details given in the Pali Canon of Literature with little thematic differences.

Key Words: Jataka-Katha, Pali-Canonical Literature, Theravada, Rock-cut Caves of Ajanta, The paintings in Cave 17

Jataka Tales form a voluminous part of the Pali-Canonical Literature in Theravada Buddhism and are included in Khuddaka Nikaya of the Sutta Pitaka. These moral fables are dated between 300 BC and 400 AD. 'Jataka' meaning 'birth-story' in Pali and Sanskrit is any of the legends about the former life of Gautam Buddha in which he was born in various forms like a king, an animal, a god etc.. Through different roles and characters Buddha teaches virtues to be inculcated among the people through these fables. There are more than 500 Jatakas in Theravada written in the form of verse which were said to be in existence in the form of oral commentary of prose stories before being preserved in the written form.

"The canonical book of the Jatakas (so far unpublished) contains only the verses, but it is almost certain that from the first there must have been handed down an oral commentary giving the stories in prose. This commentary later developed into the Jatakathakatha."¹ (Jataka, Jataka:24 definitions)

But there is still an uncertainty about the numbers and origin of these Jatakas, "It is not possible to say when the Jatakas in their present form came into existence nor how many of these were among the original number." (Global Buddhistdoor)

According to the book entitled *India through the ages* written and compiled by Madan Gopal in 1990 there are approximately 30 rock-cut Buddhist cave monuments in the Ajanta dating from 2nd century BCE to about 480 CE in the Aurangabad district of Maharashtra State in

India. According to Richard Cohen, “The Ajanta Caves constitute ancient monasteries and worship-halls of different Buddhist traditions carved into a 75-metre (246 ft) wall of rock” (Cohen) Through my personal visit to these historical and magnificent Buddhist caves I explored the ancient Indian historical art in the form of a number of religious murals, paintings, and rock sculptures with vivid colors, shapes, dimensions and techniques. Especially the cave 16 and cave 17 have a large number of paintings and murals depicting the previous life of Gautam Buddha in various forms through a number of stories known as “Jatak-kathas”, “Caves 16, 17, 1 and 2 of Ajanta form the largest corpus of surviving ancient Indian wall-painting” (Cohen) It is a well known fact instilling a feeling of pride that the site is a protected monument in the care of the Archaeological Survey of India, and since 1983, the Ajanta Caves have been a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

As mentioned above the Buddhist Cave 17 in Ajanta is more fascinating for its voluminous wall paintings and murals about Buddha’s rebirth and life.

The cave houses some of the notable paintings of the Vakataka age that includes Vessantara Jataka, a huge and gigantic wheel representing the 'Wheel of Life'; flying apsara, subjugation of Nalagiri (a wild elephant) by Buddha at Rajagriha, Buddha preaching to a congregation. The Jatakas depicted here are Chhaddanta, Mahakapi (in two versions), Hasti, Hamsa, Vessantara, Maha-Sutasoma, Sarabha-miga, Machchha, Mati-posaka, Sama, Mahisa, Valahass, Sibi, Ruru and Nigrodhamiga. (trawell)

The present paper is a humble attempt at a comparative study of the Jataka- Tales written in the Pali-Canon of Literature and the pictorial narratives of some of the Jataka Tales in the Ajanta Cave 17. This work is based on the thematic analysis.

Chhaddanta:

Chaddanta, shaddanta in Sanskrit literally means having six tusks but according to the narrative given in the Tripitika, Chaddanta is the name of a river near Himalayas where eight thousand royal elephants lived together. This is a Jataka no 514 in pali that is about the birth of Bodhisattva as a giant white elephant with red face and feet.

At this time the Bodhisattva came to life as the son of the chief elephant. He was a pure white, with red feet and face. In due course of time, when grown up, he was eighty-eight arm lengths high, one hundred and twenty arm lengths long. He had a trunk like to a silver rope, fifty-eight arm lengths long, and tusks fifteen arm lengths in circumference, thirty arm lengths long, and emitting six-coloured rays. (Wikipataka The Completing Tipitaka)

The Master in the form of Chaddanta, king of eight thousand elephants lived in a golden cave. He had two wives, Cullasubbhadda and Mahasubbhadda. One day he, along with his herd, went to Sal Grove which was in full bloom at that time. He happens to strike the Sal tree with his frontal globe that makes the green leaves, flowers and pollen fall on Mahasubbhadda as she was standing towards the wind. While the dead leaves and red ants fall

on Cullasubbadda. This incident fill her with anger and grudge against her lord as she thinks that he deliberately humiliated her to please his dearer wife. In another subsequent incident the king elephant went to a lake with all his companions and wives. While frolicking in the water one of the elephants swam to a far end and gathered a large lotus with seven shoots and offered it the Master. He offers this lotus to Mahasubbadda that makes Chulasubbadda even more enraged. In the following incident when the king was entertaining and offering fruits to five hundred Pecceka Buddha, Chulasubbadda offered the wild fruits to them and sought the following wish through her prayers, "Hereafter, when I pass hence, may I be reborn as the royal girl Subhadda in the Madda king's family, and on coming of age may I attain to the dignity of queen wife to the king of Benares. Then I shall be dear and charming in his eyes, and in a position to do what I please. So I will speak to the king and send a hunter with a poisoned arrow to wound and kill this elephant. And thus may I be able to have brought to me a pair of his tusks that emit six-coloured rays." (Wikipataka The Completing Tipitaka)

Then on she started starving herself and embraced death. As she desired, in the next birth she becomes the queen of Benares. Recollecting her previous life she longs for her wish to be fulfilled. She pretends to be sick and ensnares the King of Benares to grant her wish by obtaining the Master elephant's tusks. The hunter named Sonuttara was selected for the heinous work to be performed. But when he heard the story of the invincible character of Chaddantta and his strong and powerful herd of eight thousand elephants, Sonuttara was horrified to death. Chulasubbadda recounts the story of her prayer to Pecceka Buddhas and how she was in power to kill the king elephant and obtain the pair of his tusks. After listening to her story Sonuttara agreed to fulfill her wish. Seven days later, well equipped with all the appliances and food, the hunter sets off for his mission. It took him more than seven years to reach the dwelling place of the king elephant and designs his strategy to kill the master.

He digs a pit and covers it with planks. Then he creates secret entrance into the pit. When the Master elephant was about to pass by he gets into the pit wearing yellow clothes, with a bow and a poisoned shaft and releases the poisoned arrow aiming at his bosom. Roaring with pain the master elephant tread heavily crushing branches and grass. He nearly kills his enemy but when he sees the yellow robe of the hunter "an emblem of sainthood" he stops and starts conversing with the hunter. Thereby he understands the whole matter and realizes that Chullasubba did not want to obtain his tusks but wanted to kill him. He asks the hunter to cut his tusks before he dies and please the queen. The hunter gets up to cut the tusk but the elephant is like a mountain for him; Chhadantta himself helps him by lowering his head. Still the hunter being unable to cut the tusks the Master himself cuts his tusks with the help of his trunk and hands them over to the hunter. In doing so the Bodhisatva, Master Elephant utters the following words, "I don't give you these, friend hunter, because I do not value them, nor as one desiring the position of Sakka(Indra), Mara or Brahma, but the tusks of infinite knowledge are a hundred thousand times dearer to me than these are, and may this meritorious act be to me the cause of attaining infinite knowledge." The king elephant helps the hunter reach Benares in seven days with his magical power. Sonuttara immediately goes to the queen and informs her about the demise of her lord in previous life and hands the tusks over to the queen. Chulasubbadda breaks down at the news and gazing over the tusks she

recollects the days when her lord was so dear to her. Grief-stricken Chulasubbadda dies the very day.

A Comparative study of the pictorial depiction of the story entitled 'Chhadantta' with the written narrative in the Pali Canon of Literature brings forth the semblance with each other. The underlying structure of the painting sticks out in the form the white elephant, the Bodhisattva or the Master elephant that makes the subject matter of the composition. Bearing out the details given in the picture the elephant king is not painted as having six tusks and Sonuttara, the hunter is draped in yellow. The mood of the given mural appears to be gloomy, dark and disturbing that hints at the heinous deed of killing the master and cutting his tusk just to pacify a little grudge. The colours used in the painting depict the tone of the painting that creates depressing emotions. The brightness of the white color of the elephants clashes with the dark background disturbing the harmony of the situation. The written narrative and the pictorial narrative deal with many similar themes like bodily sacrifice as the Bodhisattva Elephant sacrifices his tusks and ultimately his life. His sacrifices show his humbleness, compassion, love, and truthfulness through which he gives a message that how a little grudge, ego, revenge or hatred brings about one's own emotional, mental and physical doom. The dismal faces of the people and the queen in the king's court in the painting bring home this message. The Bodhisattva lays down his life for this understanding of this universal truth of life. This universal theme or meaning of the painting reiterates the theme of the story.

Another theme that is found in both the narratives is 'religiosity'. This theme comes out through the Bodhisattva elephant king's reverence for the yellow robe the attire of 'sainthood' or 'priestly guise'. Although Sonuttara didn't deserve to wear the saintly robe as he was full of violence and enmity, the master is ready to sacrifice his life in respect of the emblem of religion. This is one of the traits Bodhisattva shows on his path to become Buddha.

One theme that occurs in the written narrative is 'the infinite knowledge' as he tells the hunter, Sonuttara that he is not aspiring for the position of 'Indra' or 'Brahma' but he hopes that this meritorious act will cause his attaining the 'ultimate knowledge'. On his path to become the Enlightened Buddha he teaches various virtues through these meritorious acts.

Hamsa:

The Jataka Katha 502 entitled 'Hamsa' is a moral story of the bird Hamsa which in Sanskrit means *hansa* that interpreted by different scholars in various ways. Some interpret it as a swan, some as goose, and even some have interpreted it as flamingo. As it is seen in the painting in Ajanta Cave the picture of the birds therein appears to be a mixer of a goose and swan. The head profile of these paintings of the bird including the beak in terms of its shape, size and colour give the impression of a swan while the neck and the plump body give an impression of an indigenous goose. It might be inferred that these are the members of the family of Anatidae.

According to the narration given in the Pali Canon in Theravada Buddhism 'Hamsa' is a story of the Bodhisattva in the form of the golden goose named as Dhatarattha and Ananda in the form of another goose named Sumukha. The wife of Bahuputtaka of Benares saw a

golden goose and gets so much fascinated by the beauty of the goose that she entreats the king to find and fetch the golden goose. In order to entice the goose king sets up a trap by offering a variety of foods. When the golden goose or Bodhisattva realizes the subterfuge he alarms other geese and they all fly away to their safety except for his captain Sumukha even after Dhatarattha's efforts to persuade him to fly away to safety. The King and the queen were overjoyed to see the golden goose but when the king heard about Dhatarattha's and Sumukha's loyalty to each other he sets both the gees free. "The story was related in reference to Anandas readiness to give his life for the Buddha. Channa is identified with the huntsman, Sariputta with the king, Khema Theri with the queen, and Ananda with Sumukha" (jataka, jataka: 24 definition-Wisdom Library)

In the painting based on the story of Hamsa in Cave 17 in the Ajanta the Composition centers on the Golden Goose sitting on the throne preaching the king and other courtiers. The Courtiers are seen joining their hands and listening with rapt attention to the moral discourse of the Golden Goose representing Bodhisattva. The other goose appears to be silver sitting beside the Bodhisattva representing Ananda. The Mood of the painting creates a feeling of tranquility and harmony where everyone is in peace with wisdom learned from the Bodhisattva. The vibrant colours, golden, red, white, green harmonize and create a pleasing sensation and bring all elements together. The tone of the painting through these colors creates a sense of depth in the art. This pictorial narrative depicts the theme of loyalty of a king and his knight or two friends towards each other and the nation on one hand while necessity of a conducive atmosphere, openness and readiness to receive sermon on dharma or right thoughts even from a bird.

Mahākapi-jātaka

Mahakapi-jataka 516 in pali is amoral fable about Bodhisattva born as a Monkey. The story is set in a forest near Benares when Brahmadatta was the king. In a village of Kasi, a Brahmin farmer once after ploughing his fields sets free his oxen for some time. But the oxen while grazing around lost into forest. When the farmer realized that it was too late and his oxen didn't return, he himself started looking for them. But he could not find them. He was overcome with grief and kept looking for them into the deep forest, till he had entered the Himalaya region. The tired and hungry farmer kept wandering for seven days. One day he finds a tinduka tree with fruits. He climbs up the tree to eat the fruit. But he slips off the tree and fell "sixty cubits into a hell-like abyss" where he passed ten days. Bodhisattva living in the form of a monkey in the forest helps the man out of the trench by hauling him on his back after practicing with a stone. While the Master monkey was asleep, this ungrateful man attacks the Monkey by throwing a stone on his head. But instead of getting enraged by the appalling action of the man, "The Great Being, becoming aware of his action, sprang up and perched on a branch of the tree and cried, "Ho! Sirrah, you walk on the ground; I will just point out to you the way from the top of the tree and then will be off." So he rescued the fellow from the forest, set him on the right road and then himself disappeared in the mountainous region" (jataka, jataka: 24 definition-Wisdom Library)

The farmer was punished by the nature for his evil deeds as he was suffering from leper and kept wandering like 'preta' a hungry ghost or shade as described in Buddhism. Maddened by his suffering once he found his way to Migacira park, A park in Benares. The king of Benares finds the man lying on a plantain leaf enquires about his suffering and the man tells him the whole story at length.

The Fresco mural in the cave 17 in the Ajanta depicting the story of Mahakapi-jataka bears out the details of the story given in the Pali Canon of Literature in Theravada in a sequential manner. It portrays the man fallen into the pit, the Bodhisatva Monkey hauling him out of the pit on his back, the Bodhisatva sleeping and the man throwing a stone on his head and finally the Bodhisatva giving him the right direction safely rescuing him out of the forest. The composition of the painting centers on the Monkey and the Man as the subjects of the tale. The mood or the atmosphere in the painting is dark as it is set in the middle of the forest at night. The surrounding darkness gives a feeling and impression of something ominous to take place. Although the bright color of the Monkey sticks out against the dark and unpleasant impression of the atmosphere giving the message of kindness, forgiveness and compassion.

The thematic analysis of both the narratives brings forth the themes of kindness, forgiveness, love for mankind and compassion as these are the traits of Bodhisatva on his path to enlightenment. The written narrative deals with one more theme i.e punishment. If a one does evil deeds one has to face the music. Evil actions will only fetch ill-fate as the man recounts his story to the king of Benares.

Ruru-Migaraja-Jataka

In the Pali Jataka 482 entitled Ruru-Migaraja-Jataka, the Bodhisatva was born as an eponymous character, a deer named Ruru. He lived in a very thickly dense forest. Ruru was very beautiful, golden in colour his body used to glitter with various colours like that of rubies, sapphires and emeralds mesmerizing everyone. Apart from being beautiful he was full of wisdom, compassion, love, and care. He was also having the ability to speak in human language. But he was aware of man's cruelty and devilish mentality very well therefore he would keep away from humans.

One day while wandering through the jungle he happens to hear an agonizing cry of a man who was in trouble and crying. The man was caught in the torrent of water and was being carried away by gushing water. When Ruru saw this man he immediately jumped into the water and asked the man to cling him but the man instead climbed on him putting his entire burden on his back. The deer somehow brought him out of the water and took his good care till he comes back to his senses. After that Ruru asked the man to leave. But the man entreated Bodhisattva to allow him to do something good in return for him. The deer asked him to never share this story and his whereabouts with anyone when he goes back to his world. The man agrees to keep the promise and leaves.

In another incident the queen dreams of a marvelous deer preaching in human tongue. She implores the king to catch that stunning deer for her. The king agrees and announces a prize for the one who finds this deer. At that time the man saved by the deer, out of sheer

greediness, spills the beans and takes the king, his men to the dwelling place of the deer. When the King was pointing the arrow towards the deer, he was enthralled by the charm of the deer. Ruru, being assured about losing life, requests the king to tell him, how he reached him. When the king tells him about the man who betrayed him the deer utters these words,

“Better is to lift a log of wood out of water,

Than to save an ungrateful one !” (jataka, jataka: 24 definition-Wisdom Library)

The king gets curious and requests Ruru to share his story. After listening to his story the king is filled with reverence, admiration and compassion for the deer and turns his arrow towards the ungrateful man. But the Bodhisattva again show his true virtues and pleads the king to forgive that man and shows compassion. “So, the king forgave the man but invited the deer to visit his kingdom as a royal guest. Ruru accepted the invitation; and on the king’s request mounted the royal carriage to proceed to the kingdom in a pompous procession. Reaching the king’s court, he perched the throne and delivered several discourses to the king, queen, princes and the courtiers for some days. He then returned to his abode for good.”¹⁰

A Comparative study of the narrative of *Ruru* in Pali with the pictorial narrative in the cave 17 in Ajanta shows the similarity in plot, character, setting and the details of the deer, Ruru. The deer, Ruru is escorted by the royal procession to the palace in a chariot. His body is golden with the spots of various hues. The composition of the picture centers on the deer Ruru, the Bodhisattva that makes the underlying structure of the painting. The mood or the feeling expressed in the painting is jovial, cheery and buoyant. The atmosphere is pleasant and optimistic. The bright vibrant golden color of the painting matches with the jaunty nature of atmosphere. The colors of the picture harmonize and bring all the elements of pleasing sensation together. Finally the thematic analysis brings forth the themes like compassion, helping nature, betrayal, selfishness, forgiveness, deteriorating values in mankind. The Bodhisattva through this moral fable preaches the virtue of Compassion and forgiveness as these two virtues are rewarded at the end of the story and the evil deeds of betrayal and selfishness are admonished.

Although the Pictorial narrative of Ruru-Migaraja-Jataka does not depict the whole story but the last scene in which the deer, the Bodhisattva is escorted on a Chariot to the royal kingdom, bringing out the theme of Compassion and forgiveness being rewarded. The rest of the story is depicted in a sequential manner through rock-cut architectural craftsmanship that reveals the themes of betrayal, selfishness and ugly mentality of the human-beings. Love, Compassion, Sympathy, forgiveness are the virtues preached by the Bodhisattva to the mankind in the world where values and virtues are failing.

In conclusion the thematic analysis of all the Jataka Tales with minute details in both the written narrative in pali and the pictorial narrative in the Ajanta Cave give the impression of semblance. All the virtues taught by the Bodhisattva through his journey in the course of various births in the form of animals are universal and even more relevant for the human beings with continuous moral deterioration which is hinted at by these fables. Love, Compassion, Sympathy, friendship, loyalty, sacrifice, kindness, truthfulness, etc. are the constituent elements of the Buddhism that were inculcated and practiced by Buddha through the ages.

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George Meredith's *Lord Ormont and His Aminta* and Elizabeth Gaskell's *Cranford*: A Comparative Feminist Study

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ABSTRACT

The present paper is also a humble attempt at reintroducing Gaskell as a nonconformist by comparing delineation of the female protagonists in Meredith's *Lord Ormont and His Aminta* (1894) and Gaskell's *Cranford* (1851). In his broad outline Meredith's novel seems to be endorsing 'emancipation of women' within an oppressive patriarchal culture but ironically denies self-governing sovereignty to woman. Gaskell's woman characters in *Cranford* showcase self-governance in every facet of life either economic or social.

Key words: Gaskell, Meredith, Aminta, Cranford, Self-Governance, Emancipation

Elizabeth Gaskell's *Cranford* (1851) depicts a female community in a village constructing their own world without men with self-government in each facet of life either economic or social. *Cranford* overturns the Victorian ideology of male-dominated culture within which female plays out her conventional role as both economically and socially subservient to men. It proposes a replacement of a societal structure of male dominance and masculine rules to a structure dominated by women and feminine sensibility. In sharp contrast to *Cranford*, George Meredith depicts a men's world in *Lord Ormont and His Aminta* (1894) in which a woman is treated as an inferior subaltern who needs to be controlled by "male colonial authority" (Carens 805). Aminta, the female protagonist, rebels against her overbearing husband, Lord Ormont, eventually abandoning him to live with her lover, Matthew Weyburn. In his broad outline the novel seems to be endorsing 'emancipation of women' within an oppressive patriarchal culture but ironically denies self-

governing sovereignty to woman. Timothy L. Carens has rightly said, "The novel works to replace the destructive dynamic of oppression and rebellion with a colonial relationship characterized by the concern of the government and consent of the governed" (Carens 807).

The opening lines establish *Cranford* as a female domain, "In the first place, *Cranford* is in possession of Amazons"; Men are conspicuously absent, "whatever does become of the gentlemen, they are not at Cranford. What should they do if they were there?" for everything from keeping the gardens to settling questions about literature or politics, the ladies of Cranford are, Gaskell says, "quite sufficient" (Gaskell, *Cranford* 1-2). Cranfordian ladies secure unity between separate individuality and independent womanhood that shows their managerial skills. Through this literary effort, Gaskell subverts the centrality of 'centre' (men) by putting the 'other' (women) in the centre in the Victorian binary model, "In *Cranford* Gaskell offers a social model which operates under values

which run counter to those of the capitalist patriarchy" (Colby 33).

Meredith presents a world where man is the 'centre' confirming Victorian ideology of male-dominant culture. From the very onset of the novel, he presents woman as a thing of contempt in the eyes of men. As Matey, Aminta's lover, says to his classmates, "You're going to be men," meaning something better than women. There was a notion that Matey despised girls" (Meredith 5). Here a woman is a marginalized and inferior other who needs to be tamed by the authority of men. In contrast to Gaskell's Cranford, Meredith seems to be approving the capitalist patriarchy by making a man as woman's God,

Women, to whom the solitary thought has come as a blown candle, illumining the fringes of their storm, ask themselves whether they are God's creatures or man's ... They are of the tribe too long hereditarily enslaved to conceive an abstract. So it is with them, that their God is the God of the slave, as it is with all but the bravest of boys (Meredith 111).

Gaskell draws attention to female sensibility that works behind evolution of this self-made community. Cranford is inhabited by a number of single and elderly ladies who have made their own self-rules and regulations to follow, "so be at liberty after twelve—from twelve to three are our calling hours ... and also, that you are never to stay longer than a quarter of an hour" (Gaskell, Cranford 4). They set the way of life simple as in accordance with nature and humanity, "the inhabitants of Cranford kept early hours, and clattered home in their patterns, under the guidance of a lantern-bearer, about nine o'clock at night; and the whole town was abed and asleep by half past ten" (Gaskell, Cranford 5). It is a mutually acknowledged gentility to conceal 'unacknowledged poverty'. Displaying a "kindly esprit de corps," the Cranfordians "overlook all deficiencies in success when some among them tries to conceal their poverty" (Gaskell, Cranford 4). These ladies always follow an 'elegant economy' adopting own set of values in material life, keeping early hours, serving simple refreshments at

entertainment, and dressing simply. It involves careful regulation of means and ends ignoring arrangements for social amenities,

If he walked to or from a party, it was because the night was so fine, or the air so refreshing, not because sedan-chairs were expensive. If we wore prints, instead of summer silks, it was because we preferred a washing material; and so on, till we blinded ourselves to the vulgar fact that we were, all of us, people of very moderate means (Gaskell, Cranford 7).

Further, the hostess works side by side with her servant, tending to the cakes, while, all along, the narrator says, "she knew, and we knew, and she knew that we knew" (Gaskell, Cranford 5). The ladies constituted their own social practices and rituals that allow women to support each other and resolve all economic and social problems together with mutual feminine cooperation. All the lives of Cranfordians are managed efficiently by these elderly ladies with mutual concern despite the crisis, disappointments. Collectively they constitute the functional entity that Cranford and so in this respect are all equally important, "To make a community is a political act, it is a way of consolidating power for the uses of its members. By organizing and defining themselves within a community, the Cranford ladies create an environment which serves their needs and interests" (Colby 25).

In Meredith's world Men rule the roost, "I say, a nation, to be a nation, must have men" (Meredith 55) and women are slaves to them as Lord Ormont arrogantly asserts that "women are happier enslaved and they are inanimate automatic machines, who lay them down at last, inquiring wherefore they were caused to move" (Meredith 336). It is men who make the laws for the fair sex and women are considered as devoid of mind as Aminta also confesses that she does not know what to think on some subject; she is advised by Lord Ormont that "if a man states the matter he thinks, and a woman does but listen, whether inclining to agree or not, a perceptible stamp is left on soft wax" (Meredith 155). Women have to look upto their male superiors for moral and intellectual

guidance; women's virtue lies in her fidelity but "the infidelity of men doesn't count. They are affected by the changing moons" (Meredith 160).

Masculine sensibility is based on capitalist economy as against women's 'elegant economy' of 'esprit de corps', that desires to acquire the possession of all; the women are treated as 'man's creation' who aspires to possess her as a property as Lord Ormont asserts possession of his wife "I have a jewel" (Meredith 123). According to Carens the novel treats Women as an uncivilized colony who is cultivated by 'colonial male authority', "It is Lord Ormont, however, that Meredith most fully develops a model of colonial male authority that acquires legitimacy by effecting the moral and intellectual progress of its subjects through sympathetic understanding and "persuasive" direction (Carens 810).

Although Gaskell's ladies believe that "to be a man was to be "vulgar", they extended their courtesy to gentlemen who interrupted their peaceful domain (Gaskell, Cranford 12). As in the case of Mr. Signor Brunoni, when he falls ill and is in financial need, all the ladies begin to provide assistance to the Brunoni family. Miss Matty takes the lead by sending the sedan-chair for him, Lady Glenmire provides the medicine, Mrs. Forrester makes some bread-jelly, and Miss Pole keeps visiting them at all hour. Here Gaskell emphasizes the humanity and moral values against materialism as the base of female community.

In the further course of the novel after Miss Jenkyns death the community functions under the leadership of Miss Matty who leads a liberating change in her community with freer attitude towards men and class distinctions. As she depicts these changes, Gaskell is suggesting that the leadership of women will lead to more flexible and humane social arrangements. Miss Matty serves as a social mediator, when Mrs. Jamieson's behaviour strains social relations in Cranford and she persuades her neighbours to accept the socially unequal marriage of Mr. Hoggins and Lady Glenmire. Miss Matty thus functions as a progressive leader of her community, calling for changes which will enhance the lives of the

inhabitants of Cranford. At each stage Gaskell's female community challenges masculine ruled culture with its own set-up of values.

Miss Matty's character challenges the Victorian ideology of separate spheres for men and women in which women ruled the domestic realm and men the world outside. Miss Matty is the leader, a household manager, a shareholder, and also a female enterpriser. Shopping for a new silk, Miss Matty overhears the shopman rejects a neighbour's five-pound note; with the "soft dignified manner peculiar to her ... which become her so well" Miss Matty takes action in this situation, offering the man five sovereign for his note because, as a shareholder, she sees herself as responsible for the protection of her community (Gaskell, Cranford 187). Miss Matty exhibits remarkable courage and strength when faced with the possibility of financial ruin as the town and country Bank fails, causing Miss Matty to lose a large portion of her income. When a look at the account book reveals that she will be left with only thirteen pound a year, Miss Matty becomes despondent, "but after tea", the narrator say, "we took to our work," (Gaskell, Cranford 193) indicating that in this case as in others, the Cranford ladies work together to handle difficulties. The young narrator, Marry Smith says, "It was an example to me ... to see how immediately Miss Matty set about the retrenchment which she knew to be right under her altered circumstances" (Gaskell, Cranford 195).

In contrast to the character of Matty, Aminta the female protagonist of the novel has been enslaved by Lord Ormont by accepting her as a mistress but denying her the title of Countess of Ormont. She is deprived of love and respect by a husband of her father's age, she is harshly denied admittance to his home in Steignton without his permission and she has no claim to independence and individual thinking and helplessly follows the laws of her depraved husband.

Eventually Aminta overcomes her cowardice "I have no husband to defend me—I must do it for myself" (Meredith 219). She leaves her husband and considers herself responsible for

inducing him into an "alliance with an inexperienced girl of inferior birth" (Meredith 397). Free from the bonds of 'injustice' as personified by Lord Ormont, Aminta is now claimed by 'justice', personified by Matthew Wayborn as he says, "'Aminta, my beloved, if you are free, I claim you'" (Meredith 390). Divesting his heroine a self-governing independence and responsibility for own development, Meredith arranges for a reformed male authority as he doubts Aminta's ability to self-rule. In Lord Ormont, Matthew, "the civilizing authority, gradually reforms Aminta into a likeness of himself. Despite her remarkable advances, however, the narrative continues to disclose traces marks of essential difference and inferiority" (Carens, 2001).

Aminta's mind is gradually conditioned by Matthew's thought loosing hold of her own cognitive thought process; she admits that she is morally and intellectually inferior to him. Matthew is her master, full of "spiritual valiancy", "cheerful courage, skill, the ready mind, easy adroitness, and self-command ... to imitate was a woman's utmost duty" (Meredith 333). Aminta credits Matthew with ability to discern character and thoughts of his subordinate, "How did he learn to read at any moment right to the soul of a woman?" (Meredith 335). She admits that she is not worthy of her male superior, "oh! I am not the girl you loved. I would go through death to feel I was, and give you one worthy of you" (Meredith 390).

In contrast to Aminta, Gaskell has conferred upon her woman character social as well as economic empowerment. They sustain themselves with self-support and allowing their domestic skills to transcend the border of public work setting. Gaskell's women are not dependent on men for their survival. Miss Matty's experience with household management prepares her to run a successful business. Though little doubtful in the beginning Miss Matty overcomes her fear and is armed to challenge the social ideology that officially segregates women out of the public, productive sector of the economy with new business venture of selling tea.

Gaskell's empowered woman merchant also challenges the masculine commercial ethos in the workplace as Colby says, "Gaskell implies that the strictly competitive structure of business will be infused with the womanly values of cooperation and mutual support" (Colby 32). This is experienced in an episode when Miss Matty is reluctant to sell tea while Mrs. Johnsons, a neighbour, includes the item in his shop; consequently, she confides to him her plans and inquires whether they are likely to injure his business. Although Mary Smith's father calls this idea of hers "great nonsense," questioning how tradespeople "were to get on if there was to be a continual consulting of each other's interests" her action ultimately serves her own interests, for Mr. Johnson subsequently sends customers to her, claiming that Miss Jenkyns had the really good choice teas (Gaskell, Cranford 220). As Elizabeth Langland has noted, Miss Matty actually "establishes an edge over her competitor by telling him that she will not compete" (Colby 40).

Aminta is overpowered by masculine values; she admits supremacy of Matthew's values and principles. She develops interest in his thoughts on girl's education and co-education with gender equality and starts fantasizing about taking an active role in his academy as teacher of the female students. But astonishingly Matthew's school described at the end of the novel has no female students but only boys and Aminta's dream to be a professional teacher is reduced to a mere school housekeeper, "It will be heavy, if the school ... and I love our boys. I am fit to be the school-housekeeper; for nothing else" (Meredith, 415). Matthews commitment to coeducation evaporates without explanation and again Aminta is denied a self-hood and equality,

Her dream of professional agency holds out the hope that the civilizing missions will indeed fulfill its promise to lead the oppressed woman forth into the enlightened world of sexual equality. Matthew, however, firmly restricts the agency to which the woman ... has access. Her vision of professional fulfillment remains a dream (Carens 41).

Meredith's concept of women's emancipation only based on the model that "emancipates them from oppressive authority, but also subordinates them to beneficent rule" of male authority (Carens 814). While Gaskell's *Cranford* vouchsafes the true emancipation, whether social, economic and political, to women that imparts self-governing sovereignty in each aspect of life. It does not put women under surveillance of male reformer, indeed empowering women to bring about reformation.

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EFFECTIVE VISUALIZATION TO UNFOLD THE MYSTERY OF DETECTIVE STORIES WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO TED RICCARDI'S *THE CASE OF HODGSON'S GHOST*

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ABSTRACT:

The Case of Hodgson's Ghost is one of the detective stories in the book entitled The Lost Years of Sherlock Holmes, written by Ted Riccardi. Arthur Conan Doyle was Ted Riccardi's favourite mystery writer and he wanted to give him tribute through his writings. Effective visualization is an apt tool for the comprehensive and critical comprehension of a written text. It is even more essential in a mystery tale to connect the dots to see a whole picture. The present paper is a humble attempt at bringing forth the effective visual imagery used in the aforementioned detective story for its better understanding.

Key words: Visualization, Detective story, Mystery, Critical Comprehension

The Lost years of Sherlock Homes by Ted Riccardi is a detective and mystery Book which fills the mysterious gap of three years between his sudden disappearance, being considered as dead, and his miraculous and thrilling at the same time delightful comeback. All time favorite and world-famous Sherlock Homes wanders through Asia alone from 1891 to 1894 and he recounts his adventurous stories to Dr. Watson, his best friend and assistant detective. Dr. Watson is also the first person narrator of these stories, enigmatically set in the parts of Asia that range from Lhasa to Katmandu, from the East Indies to the deserts of Rajasthan.

A surprisingly detailed, subtle and minute description of Nepal, Katmandu, or Rajasthan brings forth Riccardi's "special interest in the history and cultures of India and Nepal, where he has lived and traveled widely and about which he has written extensively" (Penguin Random House). He also appears to have drawn upon his experiences and studies working as counselor for cultural affairs at the United States embassy in New Delhi and as a researcher on Middle East and Asian Languages and Cultures. "The Oriental Casebook of Sherlock Homes is Ted Riccardi's First work of fiction, a tribute to his favorite mystery writer Arthur Conan Doyle." (Penguin Random House)

Effective Visualization plays a very essential role in the suspense or mystery writings. During visualization the reader gets involved into the interaction with the text and starts creating the mental images of the number of clues or signs in terms of the character's outer and inner description, facial expression, the setting, the atmosphere, the place or various things set in various situations etc. The reader attempts to piece together and connects the dots to see the whole picture. In order to create the layer of suspense and the mysterious effect the writer is

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required to be adept at creating visual imagery. Creating and experiencing the written stuff in one's mind makes reading a live process and the reader becomes a part of it.

Authors provide linguistic information through their writing. They create texts. Readers, to comprehend those texts, must translate this information into what the researchers refer to as a “situation model.” This situation model is just a mental representation of the text, and it includes both linguistic info from the text and the reader's own prior knowledge...situation models include all modalities (visualization includes mental pictures and sounds and smells and tactile information). (Shanahan)

This paper is riveted to one of the detective stories in *The Lost years of Sherlock Homes* entitled *The Case of Hodgson's Ghost*. It is a story of Brian Hodgson, a British Resident, and Representative of the East India Company to the Court of Nepal in 1823. Mr. Hodgson was also known for his extensive research work on the history, languages, customs, laws and every aspect of the life of the Himalayas and Buddhism.

Sherlock Homes recounts his adventurous story in Nepal to his best friend Watson a short time after Hodgson's death in June 1894. While recalling his exploratory journeys to various parts of the Asia, Holmes talks about his disguise as a Scandinavian Naturalist, Tibetan Lama and finally the aging Kashmiri Pandit. Visualizing the mental images of all these several 'avatars' of Sherlock Holmes with the help of the power of imagination makes this mystery tale exhilarating and alive. Likewise the vivid description of a number of places, scenes, and settings ranging from Tibet, Lhasa, Kathmandu, Dolakha, Banepa, the ancient city of Bhaktapur, town of thimi etc. take us on a beautiful imaginary trip. As Holmes describes passing from Tibet into Nepal as a “Dramatic Change” with “the sight of the snowny heights of the Himalayas, the clear mountain streams that pass through them, or the lush vegetation that begins to appear as soon as on begins the descent” (Riccardi 50). While doing his detective probes Holmes, in the disguise of Kashmiri pandit, takes us through the bazaars of Nepal. With the help of his sharp, observant and vigilant eyes we can also see through and create the situation model with our imaginary eyes of the covert scene behind the surface scene. We can imagine and see through the disguises of many secret agents and several criminals of international repute; “Three Tsarist agents, among them the notorious anarchist and bomber thrower Kakovetsky...Rizzetti, the poisoner of entire families, living as a shopkeeper; Thallamann, the inventor of the deadly Salzburg rifle, earning a meager existence as an old map seller; Caspariste, a groom in the stables of the German Kaiser etc” (Riccardi 56). All these characters might take different shapes in the minds of different readers but come together to connect the dots of this detective story at the end.

The Effective visualization and imagination can transport us onto the entirely new world as while reading we walk along with the detective Holmes during his nocturnal prowling in the pitch-darkness of midnight into the Bazaar, “The night was moonless, the sky cloudy and the black enveloped one immediately... He walked slowly down a lane opposite the temple, and holding on to the buildings with his left hand as he tried not to stumble on the rough stones of the gully. The ancient bricks sometimes crumbled to dust at his touch and invisible rodents scurried over his feet”. Holmes peeps through a window and through Holmes eyes we see the

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whole incident of murder come alive in a room with only the flickering of a candle. Among the various accomplice of murders the eyes of the tall man, “far too tall for a Nepalese” (Riccardi 59) seen in the candlelight in the otherwise darkroom gives a shiver to the reader. The mental images of this tall man and the corpse of Rizzetti lying in the pool of blood help us understand and unfold the layer of mystery further in the story.

At the Residence the recognition of the tall English man as an accomplice in Rizzetti’s murder creates a flash back in our mind of the murder scene in the candlelight. Similarly the fights between Mrs. Richardson and Mr. Morrison behind the closed door of the library and what transpires on opening the door creates a picture of Mr. Morrison’s devilish character as Ms. Lucy says, “Mr. Morrison opened the door. Her mother was crying softly, her face bruised in several places. Morrison stood opposite me, his face calm, his cold grey eyes filled with an unholy satisfaction. She felt as though she was in the presence of evil incarnate.” This brutal nature of Mr. Morrison is also linked with Rizzetti’s murder that shows his “sudden and uncontrolled anger”(Riccardi 96). All these mental images finally help us through Holmes to identify Mr. Morrison as Mr. Moriarty.

Without Visualizing the scene of the Ghost of Mr. Hodgson at the residence one cannot create the whole picture by connecting the dots and understand the mystery of the scene.

There, moving in the yard was an immense human figure, well over seven feet tall, dressed in black, walking slowly toward the Residence. He carried a lantern in his left hand and appeared to be searching the ground as he walked. His clothes were reminiscent of those of almost a century ago, and he had a long white beard. The figure interrupted its walk, stooped over, and began to moan. (Riccardi 79)

The mental picture of the apparition described above calls for a minute observation of the each and every detail to decide whether it was truly a ghost as the Nepalis believed the place of residence was a haunted place or there was a major crime conspiracy taking shape in the form of the ghost. The questions like how can a human be seven feet tall, why was this seemingly apparition searching the ground, how can it remain unaffected by the bullets of the pistols, pop up in reader’s mind. Creating and re-creating of these mental images can bring us closer to the truth.

In his investigation Holmes along with Ms. Lucy takes us to the site where the apparition appears. There he finds a tank which is very old and is remained unused for years. Some deductive observational details revealed that two large stones below a water spout which was decorated with ancient gargoyles were moved recently. The wary eyes of Holmes catch the glimpses of the fresh scrapes around them, the fragments of bamboo just thrown there. These vivid descriptions help the reader clearly visualize and decode the implications of the clues and predict what might happen next in the story. As we can infer from the earlier reference to ‘the ‘old dhara’ as an entrance to the old underground network of water supply that ‘the ghost’ might have entered the residence by this means. Holmes has quoted a passage from Essay on *The Languages, History, and Geography* of Nepal authored by Hodgson himself,

“There is no doubt that a complex system of water supply linked the large public fountains both in ancient and medieval times...these underground waterways and tunnels, still sturdy passageways, could be used for political intrigue and military surprise, techniques so successfully employed in the past by the Gurkhas.” (Riccardi 90)

This intriguing descriptions call for a rigorous mental exercise to create a situation model in mind with imagination.

Another essential clue that can help Holmes reach the mastermind of the episode was the odd and mysterious passage written on a piece of paper on Dr. Wright alias Saunder's desk which must have activated Holmes imagination too. This written passage was based on a passage in chronicle that the pundits were trying to translate; it predicts of great burst of thunder and light, explosions, killing of an untouchable by a Brahman and a new God revealing himself as the new Vishnu riding a white horse and welcomed by the people with joy.

By scrutinizing all the details Holmes had and putting together all the mental pictures, the curved piece made of bamboo fragments, the seven feet tall ghost of Hodgson, the details in the passage found on Saunder's desk and the religious procession in Hodgson's essays etc. connect all the dots and the whole conspiracy gets exposed.

“I remembered the processions I had seen, and a note in passing in Hodgson's essays concerning religious processions among the Newars of Kathmandu: the men dress as their gods by wearing bamboo cages on their upper bodies. These then bear the large head of the deity and the divine drapery. The effect is quite dramatic: large, tall divine appear to walk down the paths of the old cities to the temples themselves.” (Riccardi 107)

This religious procession imagined with the power of imagination actually takes place in the narrative in which Mr. Morrison alias James Moriarty the main culprit comes in the avatar of 'a new Vishnu' in the center of the city, Tundikhel, the meeting ground. The entire population assembles for the 'Maha Puja' carrying a flaming torch of straw. Among the heat, smoke, explosions Holmes reaches the top of a high-rise building and takes a direct aim at the head and chest and his, “Shots had blown away the top part of the rider's costume, revealing a common bamboo cage, resting on the shoulders of a tall Englishman, who now stood exposed to the enormous hostile crowd assembled in front of him.” (Riccardi 104)

Visualizing is an apt tool for the critical comprehension of mysterious detective writings. All the scenes, characters, incidents or settings discussed above come to life in our mind's eye through effective visualization; it creates a representation of what the reader is reading. Envisaging each and every situation model gives out a clue or further understanding of the happenings. Similarly the visualization technique in reading comprehension is very useful for the students as it creates a complete mental not only image but movie that retains its memory for good.

Visualizations are most effective if their organization reflects the mental organization that the student is creating. For example, if students create a

series of still images in their mind to represent a geologic process, a series of still images will be most effective in conveying information. Similarly, if students create a mental movie, an animation may be more effective. (Tversky)

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