

## **I. Women in China, *Red Sorghum* and Female Masculinity**

This thesis focuses on *Red Sorghum*, a historical novel by the Nobel Prize winning Chinese writer Mo Yan. The main thrust of the research is the study of female masculinity in the novel. The female protagonist of the novel exhibits masculine qualities in the overtly patriarchal society of China in the 1930s. This methodology studies how the females present themselves with masculine qualities and subvert the traditional gender roles attributed to them. It challenges the stereotypical image of female as submissive, fragile, emotional, passive and receptive being and establishes women as an assertive, bold, sexual and active individual.

The research argues that the female protagonist of the novel, Dai Fenglian demonstrates masculinity by subverting the traditional stereotypical notion of women as a submissive, docile and fragile being. Her courage, intelligence, determination and action, makes her rebellious in the patriarchal society of 1930's China. In *Red Sorghum*, Mo Yan depicts the story of struggle of a female character against the hardcore patriarchy of 1930s China, along with the atrocities of Japanese invaders. The female protagonist Dai Fenglian journeys from a teen age girl with bound feet who falls prey to patriarchal system as married to a leper, to a masculine female who inherits the winery and manages it successfully. She also plays a heroic role in the anti-Japanese resistance movement. She hates her father, she drinks wine, she grudges the Japanese, she leads the women of the village, and she unites two warlords to fight against the Japanese, in a very masculine way. She is the manifestation of rising communist ideology in contemporary China which opposed the domination and exploitation of women and advocated that women's liberation is necessary for the social progress. In this sense Dai Fenglian marks the rise of new women and ushers towards the modernization of Chinese society.

The novel is set in China, which is one of the oldest countries in the world, known as a Confucian society. It was characterized by a blend of highly centralized political system and the Patriarchal hegemony. Jeffrey Hays writes in his article “Chinese Women: Their Status, Confucianism, Communism and Village Life”,

The ‘Three Mountains’ i.e., feudalism, bureaucratic capitalism, and imperialism, the three fold power structure had its dominance both on male and female, yet Chinese women were at the lowest level of the society. The four powers of the society—the authority of the clan, the authority of the divine, the authority of the husband, and the authority of political power—sustained the social structure. (1)

Unarguably, Chinese women suffered the most from the male- dominated culture, biased legal system, inhuman ethical code, and patriarchal social structure, which reinforced men’s political power, physical power, and psychological power over Chinese women. He further writes,

For more than 2,000 years, the double chains—foot binding and inhuman ethical codes—confined Chinese women to the domestic sphere. Women in China lived as the properties of male in the society. Because of Traditional ethical codes, like the Four Virtues i.e. proper speech, modest manner, diligent work, and familial responsibilities; Chinese women were deprived of any kind of right, all rights, such as property rights, divorce rights, work rights, educational rights, and political rights, were only for Chinese men. Chinese women even had no right to marry the person they loved, or to divorce. (1)

Chinese women were deprived of their fundamental rights. They had to submit to the males of their families; to their father before marriage, to their husband after marriage

and to the son after the death of their husband. They lived a life under the total authority of males. Hays writes, “There was a saying in China, if you marry a chicken, you must stay with the chicken; if you marry a dog, you must obey the dog, in this way Chinese women were denied any agency at all and they were eternally oppressed, powerless, passive, and silent” ( 1). In this way woman had no choice in their hands. They had no agency. They were compelled to live a life of an object.

Chinese women were considered to have a negative influence on their own children as they were uneducated and superstitious, towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Chinese intellectuals during the first half of the 20th century institutionalized the belief that a stable home space only can lead to a stable nation, and began to train women for their jobs and responsibilities as household managers, as a movement. The home was started to be seen as a microcosm of the imperial order of society, and its management became crucial to national concern. Jeffrey Hays also writes, “Managing the domestic space was an important responsibility; a wife who managed well and without complications enabled her husband to attend fully to public ‘outside’ affairs” (3).

Protests and women’s rights movement, to change women's place in society began in China's coastal cities in the early years of the twentieth century. By the 1920s female equality was commonly accepted by urban intellectuals. Increasing numbers of girls attended schools, and young girls were approved of marriages based on their own choices. Foot binding, an inhuman way of tying feet of young girls to give them good shape, declined rapidly in the second decade of the century, because of a nationwide campaign led by intellectuals who associated it with national backwardness.

The change came after the communists came in power in China. Women were endowed little respect and rights in the country. Hays further writes,

After the Communists came to power party leaders condemned the oppression and subordination of women as one more aspect of the traditional society they were intent on changing but they did not accord feminist issues very high priority. In the villages, party members were interested in winning the loyalty and cooperation of poor and lower-middle-class male peasants, who could be expected to resist public criticism of their treatment of their wives and daughters.(1)

Since, many party members were poor and lower-middle-class peasants, and their attitudes toward women reflected their background, the party saw the liberation of women as depending, in a standard Marxist way, on their participation in the labor force outside the household. They win the support of many women of this class who were later dedicated to the party.

The position of women in contemporary society has changed from the past. Women attend schools and universities, serve in the People's Liberation Army, and join the party. Almost all urban women and the majority of rural women work outside the home. But women remain disadvantaged in many ways, economic and social, and there seems no prospect for substantive change.

Traditional Chinese society was male-centered. Sons were preferred to daughters, and women were expected to be subordinate to fathers, husbands, and sons. A young woman had little voice in the decision on her marriage partner. When married, it was she who left her natal family and community and went to live in a family and community of strangers where she was subordinate to her mother-in-law. Far fewer women were educated than men, and sketchy but consistent demographic

evidence would seem to show that female infants and children had higher death rates and less chance of surviving to adulthood than males. In extreme cases, female infants were the victims of infanticide, and daughters were sold, as chattels, to brothels or to wealthy families. Bound feet, which were customary even for peasant women, symbolized the painful constraints of the female role.

Women were generally taught to be quiet and submissive. Frank and openly speaking women were often frowned upon. They thought a woman is beautiful when she's 'sweet' and 'silent'. In many parts of China women do not have the legal right to own land and were generally regarded as weaker, dumber and inferior to men.

According to Hays,

Until the end of the 19th century, Chinese women were often called Daughter No. 1 or Daughter No. 2, etc. until they became Wife No. 1 or Wife No. 2. For most of history, women in China viewed themselves in terms of the "three obedience's"—servants to their father's first, then their husband's and finally their sons. (1)

In villages women often did most of the work, and even then were ordered around by men and were only allowed to eat after the men have finished. Many young girls were virtually sold into their marriages, and were treated like servants in their households, pushed around by their husband and in laws, especially their mother in law. Women accused of adultery were sometimes subjected to horrible punishments such as "peeling the skin off the bones" until the victim died. Widows showed their loyalty by not remarrying. Many had no means of taking care of themselves and died from hunger. One Sung dynasty Confucian philosopher wrote, "It is trifling when a widow starved to death. But it is a very serious matter when she loses her chastity."

Here, Hays explains how women were dominated and exploited in the Chinese society during the middle of the twentieth century. They were treated as servants in their houses and were subjected to torture and exploitation.

In this background, the representation of female of the early twentieth century China with manlike qualities in itself marks the subversion of traditional gender roles and presents the breakthrough in the novel. Mo Yan who was in the art department of the communist party of China presents his protagonist as a robust, assertive, bold, enterprising woman which shows renewed consciousness in modern Chinese women. This tones his character as a masculine female.

The Nobel laureate of 2012, Mo Yan (Real Name Guan Moye) is a fifty-eight-year-old Chinese writer. He has worked as a member of the cultural affairs department of Peoples Liberation Army. Mo Yan is famous for his panoramic novels on the history of twentieth century China. He tries to rewrite history. But unlike other state sponsored writers Mo Yan depicts the real picture of the life during the turbulent times in Chinese history. He has authored many novels, novellas and short stories and has won almost all the literary prizes in China. *Republic of Wine*, *Big Breast and Wide Hips* are some of his most successful novels.

*Republic of Wine* (2000) is evocative in imagery, viciously funny in descriptions and depictions and has symbolic social implications. This book too is focused on gender representation. Mo Yan also mocks the farcical attempt of Chinese men to prove their dubious machismo by hoisting toast after toast: the last one standing is the "real man".

In *Big Breast and Wide Hips* (2011), Mo Yan creates a historical epic of early 20th century women in China. In a country where patriarchal favoritism and the birth of sons is placed above all else-this book is first and foremost about women, with the

female body serving as the book's central metaphor. This novel's characterization is remarkably done - each protagonist throbs with humanity and life. Each female character is a real inspiration.

In *Red Sorghum*, Mo Yan presents the story of struggle of a female character against the hardcore patriarchy of 1930s China, along with the atrocities of Japanese invaders. The female protagonist; grandmother of the narrator, Dai Fenglian journeys from a teen age girl with bound feet who falls prey to patriarchal system as married to a leper, inherits the winery and manages it successfully. She also plays a heroic role in the anti-Japanese resistance movement. She hates her father, drinks wine and gets drunk, she grudges the Japanese, leads the women of the village, and unites two warlords to fight against the Japanese, in a very masculine way. The novel covers the time between 1920s and 1970s. . Narrator's Grandma, Dai Fenglian was enraged by the Japanese atrocities; that she was became the trailblazer of the anti-Japanese resistance movement. Dai Fenglian known as little Nine in her childhood, was a daughter of a poor peasant. Her feet were tied and she was known as the girl with smallest and most beautiful feet in the area. Her father set her marries with Shan Bianlang, the son of Shan Tingxiu a local distillery owner, when she was 16. She is attracted to one of her bridal sedan bearer, Yu Zhan'ao. Their relationship develops further and produces chains of events. Yu Zhan'ao saves her from a bandit while taking her to her groom's house, rapes her three days later in the sorghum fields, kills Shan father and the leprous son and the new widow Dai Fenglian becomes the master of the Shan estate and distillery. Together these people fight against the Japanese forces meanwhile the different warring groups attack each other for arms and dominance. Mo Yan presents the scenes of extreme violence without any censorship.

A first person narrator 'I' recollects a family saga during the Sino-Japanese war in 1937-1945. Mo Yan presents the story of three generations of a family and their roles in the making of the glorious history of Gowmi County in particular representing the whole china in general. The narrator presents the story of his people, the life of the people, their struggles, and their fights keeping his female protagonist, Dai Fenglian at the centre. The novel opens in the 1939, where the army of the Commander Yu is heading towards the Bridge over Black Water River in Jiao-Ping Highway to attack over the Japanese convoy. Narrator's father Douguan, then a teen aged boy follows his foster father Commander Yu in the crusade with the recommendation and motivation from his mother. Dai Fenglian seems to be the mastermind of the attack here. She is the inspiration to the army of Commander Yu that consisted of some forty people like Wang Wenyi, as well as some of his friends of the days of his banditry; Mute, Fang six and Fang seven, 'Buglar' Liu, etc. It tells the story of common village people who fight against the Japanese to ensure their survival. These people do not fight the grand war for communists neither are they organized army. These are the local ruffians like Commander Yu, Detachment Leader Leng etc. who become the heroes in the local history.

The narrator goes to the past and narrates how the Japanese army attacked Gowmi Township. They came to the village and took the cattle as well as the men to work in the Jiao-Ping highway. Uncle Arhat then the foreman of the distillery owned by narrator's grandmother was skinned alive and killed by the Japanese. They tortured the people, raped the women, confiscated their properties and gutted their houses. China was a republic and different warlords dominated different counties in those days. Narrator depicts his grandmother as a national hero. She was a brave, intelligent, robust, young woman who managed the distillery very well as the most



successful distillery owner in the area. *Red Sorghum* has been analyzed, interpreted and criticized from different perspectives by many critics. The novel dramatizes Dai Fenglian's individual journey from an innocent, smart, beautiful girl to the mentally robust, psychologically revengeful and physically appealing lady. She cuts all sides of the net made by her family members. Her father arranges her marriage with a leper son of a landlord in return for a mule. This marriage incites masculine power in her action and thought.

Kingkley, Jeffrey C. of St. John's University New York, claims in his review of the book that,

Mo Yan is a young, defiantly experimental writer, and his story takes a modernist track, interweaving past and present fragments of main plot and several subplots into a slightly mystifying yet cinematic and classically suspenseful grand narrative-cinematic because of his mesmerizing red symbolism: red sorghum (the red original color of the crop, modern hybrids are colorless), red blood, red sunsets, red bridal veils, red wine. (428)

He illustrates how Mo Yan becomes a modernist writer with so vivid use of manifold imageries. His subject matter is interwoven beautifully with the dominant red colour symbolism.

Shelly W. Chan writes in "From Fatherland to Motherland"

The gender hierarchy is obvious. The father figure is dominant throughout the book, and even Douguan, the narrator's father, then a teenager, is a little man of iron. Furthermore the female protagonist, Grandma, is in fact masculinized. Her grandson the narrator employs the phrase "a hero among women", to endorse her, carrying the

implication that she is a man like woman whose pursuit of freedom is rare among her sisters. (69)

Such representation of grandmother illustrates the heroization of the grandmother.

According to Kirkus Review “Mo Yan’s is a powerful new voice on brutal unrest of rural china in the late 1920’s and ‘30’s.” Grandma struggles against the brutality of patriarchy standing among men like a “man”.

The Boston Globe writes “*Red Sorghum* creates the backdrop for the mythic heroism and primitivist vitality through the exotically portrayed setting of Shandong’s lush sorghum fields.” The sorghum fields provide background to the heroic pursuits of the people of rural china.

Chuanbo Huang of Chinese Department in Dezhou University justifies the portrayal of the bandits as the national heroes in the book as in his article “On Mo Yan’s War Ideas --- Based on Red Sorghum, Big Breasts and Wide Hips”,

But because of bandit's special identity in history for a long time, can regard them as the hero. Mo Yan expresses his own understanding of a hero of anti-Japanese war through his Red Sorghum. It is a war of the whole nation to resist against Japan, nearly of different levels and every group makes a contribution to it. Since it is the standard to confirm patriotism, then among the writing of literature, we should not have man-made restriction, and should restore historical truth. That is to say bandits such as Yu Zhana’o should belong to the hero of resisting against Japan too. (154)

Here, Huang explains that any force that was fighting against the Japanese invaders was highly esteemed. The bandits had become the heroes for the people, Yu Zhan’ao too being a bandit, fighting the Japanese was actually in great height.

Peter Li in the *World Literature Today* identifies Grandmother Dai as the true heroine of *Red Sorghum*, he writes, “She is a casualty of war, she emerges as the most interesting and colorful character in the novel and the protagonist who links the entire story together. Her heroism stems from strength of character and integrity that defies the usual heroic physical characteristics such as exploits of strength and courage” (77). In this light grandmother Dai has been portrayed as the true heroine by Mo Yan. She is the most powerful and influential character in the novel who binds the story together. According to Li, Grandma is a hero who is out of the convention. She is not physically powerful, but her inner strength and courage make her a most celebrated hero of the novel.

All of above are different analysis and study from various critics and reviewers. Their perspectives are guided from different issues and perspectives. As this researcher observes, some of these critics study modernist features of the novel, some make new historical reading, some study the representation of anarchy, some study the structures of myth. But none of the researchers have focused on the gender issue and particularly the study of female masculinity exhibited by the female protagonist in the novel. So this researcher attempts to analyze the novel using the framework of female masculinity.

As the pretext of the study demands, female masculinity is the theoretical tool to analyze the text. But while doing so, it will not cross the frontier of the textual research. It is proved with the support of different writers and critics from the relevant domain. Mainly, the research will base on Judith Halberstam's *Female Masculinity*. She doesn't agree on the prevalent issue of gender and sexuality. For her, issue of gender is fluid. Our action, determination and behavior are key factors to present our

identity as masculine or feminine. The research also takes idea from Kamala Bhasin, Todd W. Reeser, Janet T. Spence and others for its theoretical support.

Female masculinity is a new concept in the field of gender study.

Traditionally, masculinity and femininity were used to reflect the sexual relation. They were close to biological structure of the human beings. Masculinity connotes the man or male whereas femininity refers to woman or female. So, in a simple sense, masculinity refers to the qualities of men. But with the passage of time, the term analyses only the qualities of gender not the sex. Everyone, having qualities of male; bold, vigorous, determinant, ambitious, strong, breadwinners etc. can be taken as masculine. Masculinity means having the qualities or appearance considered to be typical of men; connected with or like men according to *Oxford Dictionary*.

While dealing with the issue of masculinity, we need to find differences between sex and gender. Sex is close to nature since it is biological. Nature determines our sex; either male or female. But gender is cultural. Culture creates the gender. Gender is the qualities of human beings. Qualities traditionally associated to male are masculine whereas qualities close to female are feminine. Masculinity and femininity are two opposite terms to indicate two different genders. Cultural practices, norms and values can lead us to develop our gender quality. Society teaches the boy to be bold, powerful, muscular, macho, and stout-hearted. On the contrary, girls are taught to be passionate, shy, quiet, submissive, obedient etc. As per that, two opposite qualities can develop. But if such qualities appear in the opposite sex, the issue of gender can be altered. Gender is therefore constructed and alterable not static.

In the simplest context, female masculinity is masculinity outside the male body. The study of female masculinity has been integral to the dissolution of the idea of binary gender system and more presently, it is popular in gender study. Judith

Halberstam, Kamala Bhasin, Todd W. Reeser, Janet T. Spence, and many more are the gender critics, have put forward their theory on gender study.

For Judith Halberstam, female masculinity is “about women who feel themselves to be more masculine than feminine” (Judith Halberstam xi). In other words, female masculinity can be described as female born persons feeling more comfortable behaving or looking masculine. In this sense, female masculinity is a specific gender with its own cultural history rather than a derivative of male masculinity in which women embody qualities that are usually associated with maleness such as strength, authority and independence. In this regard, Dai Fenglian is a masculine female, who embodies the qualities like strength, determination and independence that are associated with man. Her challenges to her family, straight forwarding the condemnation of sick cultural practices of the then Chinese society, are also the attributes of masculinity.

Female masculinity is an important part of the masculinity. The concept of masculine can't be understood without knowing the various forms of masculinity. To understand the female masculinity, we need to cross the boundary of culture and its limitation which are in practice from thousands of year.

Halberstam argues that the notion of gender is always indeterminate. Gender identity is fluid. It changes in parallel to the change in the social determination of gender category. Even the formation of male masculinity is not free from the formation of the female gender category. According to Halberstam, the understanding of male's masculinity is incomplete if the concept of alternative masculinity is not brought into application.

Female masculinity has often been reduced to the lesbian identity. Even within queer masculinity, there is further reduction splitting between female to male,

transgender and lesbian representations. There is the possibility of the birth of rebellious in the subjugated self of women. She sets a new trend the course of understanding masculine behaviors and identities. In dwelling upon the contribution of female masculinity, Halberstam makes the following argument:

Female masculinity signals a new understanding of masculine behaviors and identities, and a new direction in interdisciplinary queer scholarship. Illustrated with nearly forty photographs, including portraits, film stills, and drag king performance shots, this book provides an extensive record of the wide range of female masculinity is not some bad imitation of virility, but a lively and dramatic staging of hybrid and minority genders. (77)

Whenever a female being asserts masculine characteristics, she will have to encounter several disdainful attitudes. Most of the females with the masculine traits have been facing the risk of social condemnation and ridicule. Hence, it becomes dangerous to assert masculine side of female self in the society governed by the patriarchal norms and values. To subvert the static notion of gender identity, the alternative notion of gender category is brought. Hence, the idea of exploration of alternative masculinity is decisive to the understanding male masculinity completely.

Indian gender critic, Kamala Bhasin, in *exploring masculinity*, contents that female masculinity and male masculinity are similar. For her, masculinity can be located neither in male body nor in female body. For her female can be masculine if one inherits such traits. Affirming this fact, Kamala Bhasin claims:

Masculinity does not exist in isolation of femininity. In most societies, masculinity and femininity are mirror images of each other, if men are supposed to order, women have to take orders; if men are allowed to

hot tempered; women have to be patient, and so on. Even though there are masculinities, masculinities normally means having qualities like strength, assertiveness, fearlessness, independence, authoritarianism, ambition. (33)

Bhasin clarifies that masculinity is an integral part of femininity. It means masculinity and femininity are not polar or opposite phenomena. They do not exist in isolation to each other. The effect of upbringing implants such nature. Body is a biological site but masculinity or femininity nothing to do with the biological structure and its physical performance. Right from the childhood period, children are trained to develop certain values and outlook. They are schooled to develop different kinds of virtues. As a consequence, their bodies develop certain characters, and their minds generate certain responses. Underlying factors like power and potency are analyzed immensely in the discourse of masculinity.

Kamala Bhasin has also forwarded her theoretical concept on the issue of gender and sex. She is very clear on the differences between gender and sex. She views that our culture and social pattern is responsible to determine the gender. In support, she argues that if the case of gender is natural and constant as sex, all male nature should be similar and vice versa. But in reality, many male are similar to female and many female are similar to male in their behaviors. Her arguments further clears from the following citation from *Exploring Masculinity*:

We believe attitudes, behaviors; traits are socially prescribed, taught and learned. We imbibe them through socialization and gendering which take place within the family, in schools, religious institutions etc. because, socialization and gendering begins as soon as we are born (sometime even earlier). It seems as though feminine and masculine

qualities are inborn and natural. If that was so, as men would be gentle and caring and so women aggressive and domineering. Yet such men and women exist. (35)

Kamala Bhasin, here argues that what is important is that these differences among men and women exist in spite of all the gendering that is done round the clock. Just imagine how much more diversity there would be if ideological and material pressures were not passing girls and boys, men and women into prefabricated behavior and roles. Attacking over the social institution, she raises question in the practice of teaching gender role. We need not to spend more time to teach natural role but we are still teaching child to perform their gender role properly. In conclusion, she is also straightforward as the dynamic role and position of gender.

It is very necessary to know the difference between gender and sex to grasp the concept of female masculinity. Gender denotes the degree of masculinity and femininity in a human being whereas sex connotes the male- female identity. Though both terms are inter denoted traditionally, they have different meaning on gender study in modern age. Now, person having all assumed characters of traditional male are recognized as masculine, crossing the sexual identity. In this point, gender can be taken as social or cultural. It can be created and restructured too. Different social agents can guide the male and female to play alternative role. But the role can be altered and create new identity in any sex. On the other hand, sex is biological and it is constant. There are many theorists who try to draw the line between gender and sex for the clear description of female masculinity.

Janet T. Spence and Robert L Helmreich provide constructive view on the shifting notion of masculinity. Masculinity is no longer the privileged domain of the men. Nor is it exclusively concerned with the male body. Janet's view is somewhat



influenced by the thoughts of the constructivist theorists of the postmodern period. Her statement that both femininity and masculinity are rooted not in the biological process but in the sociological process of learning, adaptation, evolution, assimilation and upbringing is essential in the study of female masculinity. The following lines throw light on the shifting ground of old masculinity:

Femininity and masculinity or one's gender identity refers to the degree to which persons see themselves as masculine or feminine given what it means to be a man or women in society. Femininity and masculinity are rooted in the social rather than the biological. Societal members decide what being male or female means, and male will generally respond by defining themselves as masculine while female will generally define themselves as feminine. It is important to distinguish gender identity, as presented above, from other gender-related concepts such as gender roles which are shared expectations of behavior given one's gender. (87)

Spence and Helmreich are very clear regarding the issue of masculinity and femininity. The term masculinity is provided to male whereas femininity is provided to female. But, she is not agreeing on issue of gender provided by society. She suggests distinguishing the gender identity. One's gender can be determined by their action or behavior not by physical appearances. So, in her views too, the concept of gender is not constant. Female can be masculine by their actions and vice versa.

Todd W. Reeser introduces the idea of multiple masculinities rather than a single category that every man fits into. Masculinities can be demonstrated by women also. Reeser warns his readers not to be confined happily in the singular masculinities. He approves the notion of multiple masculinities by forwarding the concept of female

masculinities. In his view masculinity is not private property of male. It is not singular and remains with certain group rather can be applied for multi- purposes as an alternative use. Reeser's idea becomes clear in the following lines:

Masculinity is not a conscious process. It is perpetuated through social institutions and is enforced and policed through individual interactions. There are intersections and variations of masculinity based on race, location, culture, time period, age, ability, etc. and developed four classifications: hegemony, subordination, complicity, and marginalization. Masculinity is the norm, something that men are expected to exercise and that women are discouraged from associating with. Masculinity can be defined as the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees the dominant position of men and the subordination of women. (121)

In this light, Reeser criticizes the existing form of masculinity that presupposes the legitimacy of patriarchy and its hegemony. He opines that, gender is a social construct and it may vary in different cultures. Women also can possess the manlike qualities at some encounters.

Female Masculinity is a major component of feminism. Pro feminist and feminist group raises the voices on the favor of woman and their rights. The situation and different scholars establish the new concept on the issue of gender. Traditional gender issues are criticized and justified as cultural construction. Role related identity begins in the field of gender study. Following views of Halberstam from *Female Masculinity* supports the changing concept of masculinity.

Not all models of masculinity are equal, and as butches and transsexual being to lay claims to the kinds of masculinities they have produced in the past and are generating in the present, it is crucial that we also pay careful attention to the function of homophobia and sexism in the new masculinities. Gender variance, like sexual variance, can not be relied on the produce a radical and oppositional politics simply by virtue of representing difference. (179)

So, the shifting notion of gender identity is wider than the past. Outer appearance and biological relation also be difference in daily life. Masculine and feminine category based on physical structure also challenged by biological performance. In this regard, the area of gender study becomes wider and multiple. Female masculinity also becomes an important issue in the course of gender study.

Since femininity and masculinity are two major issues under the gender study, female masculinity is sub-topic of feminism. Woman study is the outcome of feminism where as female masculinity is an issue of gender study. Female masculinity can represent the new concept of gender identity and gender role. In order to gain the complete idea in any study of gender, knowledge of female masculinity is compulsory.

Masculinity can be cultivated. In whichever process it is cultivated, it comes through the interaction between an individual and the socio-cultural background in which that individual is brought up. The upbringing, tradition and the dominant nature of man-woman relation are the determinate and constitutive elements of masculinity. The shifting family structure, changing gender relation, the increasing role of female gender in the society, emerging value system are largely accountable for the inception of female masculinity. When alternative concept of masculinity arises as a counter to

the hegemonic masculinity, a higher level of analysis becomes necessary. Otherwise, no remarkable break-through will be seen in the patriarchal status quo.

In this way, the notion of masculinity is fluid. It is no longer stable and static nor is rooted in the biological inheritance. This sort of view on the question of masculinity paved the way for the emergence of female masculinity. Though it is new term in the field of gender study, it has great role for the theoretical analysis of literary genres. The novel *Red Sorghum* can be gazed from the same theoretical perspective.

Female Masculinity is understood as the study of females who feel to be more masculine than feminine. In other words, female masculinity can be described as female born person who feel comfortable behaving or looking masculine. Judith Helberstam is the pioneer theorist who introduced this mode of thinking as a critical theory. In *Female Masculinity*, she argues that “given my premise in this book, namely, that female masculinity is a specific gender with its own cultural history rather than a derivative of male masculinity” (77). In this sense, female masculinity is a specific gender with its own cultural background and is not just a derivative of dominant masculinity. Masculine women embody the qualities that are normally associated with maleness, such as strength, authority, assertiveness and independence. In this regard *Red Sorghum* is an exemplary novel related to the female masculinity.

## II. Dai Fenglian as a Masculine Female: Rise of New Woman

*Red Sorghum* presents Dai Fenglian, the narrator's grandmother as a masculine female. She subverts the traditional gender roles in the patriarchal normative society of early twentieth century China. She challenges and ruptures the traditional patriarchal norms and values in the novel and stands out as a masculine figure in the overtly patriarchal Chinese society winning respect and love from society. But, her rebellious spirit is undermined when she dies in the beginning of the war of resistance in North Gowmi Township, for which she was the first motivation. Dai Fenglian stands out in contrast with the prevailing notion of women in the first half of twentieth century in China. As a masculine female she exhibits characteristics such as strength, courage, determination, possession, rationality, assertion, boldness and sexuality, etc. The writer presents her in heroic terms it can be clear from the following remarks;

In some significant aspects heroes are born, not made. Heroic qualities flow through a person's veins like an undercurrent, ready to be translated into action. During her first sixteen years, Grandma's days had been devoted to embroidery, needlework, paper cutouts, foot binding, the endless glossing of her hair, and all other manner of domestic things in the company of neighbor girls.(89)

According to the narrator, grandma was a typical woman; she was devoted to existing code of conduct. Like other girls of the village she was interested in the household chores. But she inherently had the potential to rise to become a hero. The latter circumstances instigated heroism in her and fueled masculinity in her.

Dai Fenglian grew up in a traditionally Confucian society in the early decades of twentieth century. The society of the time was highly patriarchal and the feudal

system was very exploitative towards women. She grew up in an impoverished family where she was taught all the homemaking activities. The qualities of masculinity were started to appear in the social life of Dai Fenglian when she was forced to marry to a wealthy leper. She was made scapegoat by her father to fulfil his desire and keep his prestige in the society. The smooth path of Dai Fenglian was disturbed when she was married. Her parents were poor peasants, for them marrying her daughter to a wealthy family was all that mattered. She had to bear all the excesses of patriarchy, which in turn helped her to grow masculine qualities in her action and determination. Her courage and boldness is flourished from time she leaves her parental house to go to her husband's house. The excesses of patriarchal domination as she encounters, make her femininity weak and masculinity dominant. This change is revolutionary in the women of the early decades of twentieth century, in China.

Dai Fenglian encounters the excesses of patriarchy in different occasions and intensities that make her a masculine female. First of all, her father sets her marries to a leper, in the lure of a mule. She hears all the rumors about the leper and becomes very oblivious about it. The moral and social decorum her parents had taught her throughout her life appears to be dwindling. The disillusionment starts and she becomes more and more rebellious as she commences farther from her home, the ties with the family appears to be fading. She is carried by some young villagers in a torn sedan, as a bride. She forgets the decorum, her parents have taught her. She no longer appears coy and docile. Instead she openly expresses her passion and sexual desire. She removes the vile; she has covered herself with, to look at the muscular bodies of the sedan bearers. She peeps at the half naked bodies of the sedan bearers and gets filled with sexual passion as mentioned by the narrator himself. The narrator says “the

men's bodies emitted the sour smell of sweat. Infatuated by the masculine odor, grandma breathed in deeply, this ancestor of mine must have been nearly bursting with passion" (Mo Yan 42). Like a landlord craving for the body of a passing village girl, she craves for the physical contact to the bodies of the bearers.

As the party moves forward they are confronted by a bandit. The man takes the belongings of the bearers and attempts to rape Dai Fenglian. Here she encounters another exploitation but is rescued by one of the bearer Yu Zhan'ao. By this time, Dai Fenglian has received disillusionment and awakening of the excesses of patriarchy this becomes more confirmed when she finds her husband a real leper. She fights the man and keeps him away with a pair of scissors in her hand. This marks the first vent out of her resentment that gets intense further on. She is abducted and raped by Yu Zhan'ao on the third day after her marriage. While going back to her parental house after staying for three days in her husband's house, Yu Zhan'ao secretly abducts her and takes her into the thick sorghum field, where he rapes her. Dai Fenglian who was confused what to do now, surrenders herself to her savior. This incident brings courage, hope, assertiveness and rebellion in Dai Fenglian. The rape itself was the severe exploitation upon Dai Fenglian carried out by a strong patriarch. This had a very resonating effect on her; this actually foreshadowed her future life. She quarrels with her parents, throws the things away and cries out her grief. Her father scolds her, reminding her of the Confucian ethics of marriage. Hays writes, "There was a saying in China, if you marry a chicken, you must stay with the chicken; if you marry a dog, you must obey the dog, in this way Chinese women were denied any agency at all and they were eternally oppressed, powerless, passive, and silent" ( 1). Her father scolds her reminding her that matches are made in heaven and one has to comply with it no matter how the husband was. He declares "People destined to marry are connected by

a thread, no matter how apart. Man and wife, for better or for worst. Marry a chicken and share a cop, marry a dog and share a kennel” (Yan87). He discloses here that he was lured for the mule and agreed for the marriage.

This was the commodification of women; she was exchanged for a mule. She then collects herself and warns her father that he wouldn't see a single hair of the mule, for which he get her married to a leper. This was her revolt against patriarchal domination. She was assured by Yu Zhan'ao, her lover and she had the premonition that somehow her life was going to change. So she challenges her father violating the ethics of the time.

She is repeatedly exposed to danger and hardships that shapes her masculine characteristics. On returning back from her parental house she confronts the interrogation of magistrate Cao. She is startled by the turn of the events. One patriarch, her father binds her knot with a leper and another Yu Zhan'ao cuts it off. He kills her husband and father-in-law that leaves her as a sole heir of the all property and most important of all a life with freedom. Her destiny is set by the two patriarchs but she makes best out her life with her courage and intelligence. She makes plan immediately and develops a survival strategy. She pretends to be very shocked and grieved at the murder of her husband and father in law. She calls the inquiring magistrate Cao her father as if she has lost her mind and succeeds to win his sympathy. She knew that Yu Zhan'ao had killed both men but she pretends to be innocent and traps the magistrate in her net. She acts as insane and makes the magistrate her foster father to secure her safety from any attack. She develops the ability to design schemes and avenge her assaulters. Dai Fenglian becomes the mistress of the huge estate of the Shan family and takes everything in her control. Yu Zhana'o joins her later as a hired hand and takes the place of the master of the estate.



Here too Dai Fenglian acts very cunningly. She maintains a distance with Yu Zhana'o who had actually expected a warm embrace. Yu Zhan'ao betrays her and starts living with Passion, the servant girl, she reacts in a bold way. She counteracts by going to live with Pocky Leng, Yu's contender. Hearing the news Yu Zhan'ao comes running to Pocky Leng like an injured tigress struggling to save her cud.

Dai Fenglian was not only quick and strong on her thought and expression, she was also equally per formative. She subverts all the social conditions which were becoming her enemies for her free life. Before her disillusionment, she was fully free and a matter of beauty, similar to bird, she could fly anywhere. Who ever saw her could be pleased to see and hold her. Her nature was not to be like a caged bird so each and every time, she planned to break the rod of cage and be free. She had full courage and strong will in her life. She was not such lady who could easily bow down her head in front of patriarchy when they are going against her feeling and sentiment. So, according to her nature, she appeared very dangerously in all situations. She did not consider any social, cultural and religious norms and values to save her dignity and personal freedom.

The patriarchal excess is doubled upon the women with the Japanese invasion. The women had to suffer with a twofold assault; domination of their men and the attack and prosecution of the Japanese army men. She becomes very grudging and revengeful. She becomes the trailblazer of the anti Japanese resistance movement. When the Japanese come to capture the village, she shows her intelligence and cunning. The Japanese invaders attack the village and capture all the animals and men to force them work in the Jiao-Gao Highway. Uncle Arhat, the foreman of Dai's estate is also captured and assaulted. Dai tackles the scene very intelligently by controlling Uncle Arhat and stopping the Jap soldiers from brutalizing him. She

swears by his blood to take revenge against Japanese invaders. She shows her cunning in many instances. She also does same with the Jap force when they attack the village and assault Uncle Arhat, she acts like a mad women, smearing the bloody mud on her face and shout. The narrator himself comments that his grandmother looked three parts human and seven parts demon. This terrifies the Jap army and they become quite pacified.

Dai Fenglian develops some qualities that subvert the existing social and ethical norms. In this regard Lu Tonglin writes in “Red Sorghum: Limits of Transgression.” *Politics, Ideology, and Literary Discourse in Modern China Politics:*

In Mo Yan’s Red Sorghum, Grandma’s independence also subverts Confucian ethics. As a daughter, she disregards her father’s plans for an arranged marriage. As a wife, she uses a pair of scissors to defend herself from her husband. Moreover, she commits adultery with the murderer of her legal husband. In other words, Grandma literally transgresses the rules of the “three submissions” imposed on Chinese women by Confucian ethics, which require a woman to obey her father before marriage, her husband after marriage, and her son after the death of her husband. (174)

Grandma rejects the social custom of marriage and enjoys the intercourse whole heartedly. Unlike the female of the era Dai Fenglian rejects the social decorum. She transgresses from the moral code of conduct. She is involved in adultery and yet lived a very comfortable and dignified life. She exercises her independence and power of authority in the society despite of being a woman. If she were an ordinary woman, she would have been punished for her activities. But she receives the respect of the people of her community and hence becomes a masculine female. That was the real courage

of Dai Fenglian. With such actions, she was taken more than a simple lady who is shy, fragile and governed by other. She boldly appeared for her personal life challenging the unjust social practice. As the reaction of her deceptive marriage, she had done all. She was with the view of personal freedom and equality. She has the right to choose her husband by her own mind and not with any force, as other women were doing. Without caring any norms and values, she stood as the revolutionary lady; she lives with Yu Zhan'ao as her wife. So, this performance of Dai Fenglian adds a brick to justify herself not a simple female rather female with extra qualities. Dai Fenglian inherits the property of Shan family. The writer here presents her as a sole heir of the estate in order to make her a masculine female. Because inheritance was denied to the women back then in China, Mo Yan gives this woman, a privilege. The power of inheritance and the promise of social privilege is another trait of masculinity, according to Halberstam. She puts it as, "Masculinity in this society inevitably conjures up the notion of power of legitimacy and privilege; it often symbolically refers to the power of the state of uneven distribution of wealth; masculinity represents the power of inheritance and promise of social privilege" (2). In this sense Dai Fenglian is a masculine character. She is the sole heir of the Shan estate after the death of both Shan father and son. The ownership falls in her hand and she becomes the legitimate heir of the property. She also enjoys social privilege. From an ordinary poor girl, she changes into a privileged mistress of a huge estate and leads in the business of the family, winning respect and favor of the people in the community.

She rises up to such a height that even in her profanity the society keeps silence. In the later days she becomes popular as a revolutionary figure and is almost worshipped like god by the people of Northeast Gowmi Township. Dai Fenglian takes

over the business right from the time she becomes the mistress. She takes the leadership. She exercises her authority and orders workers to get the estate free of anything belonging to old masters. She summons all the workers and orders them to clean the compound. She says, “Men, you have worked hard! I’m young, and have no experience in managing affairs, so I’ll need to rely on everyone’s help to get by. Uncle Arhat, you have served the family loyally for over a decade, and from now on you’ll be in charge of all distillery affairs” (129). Here Dai Fenglian takes control of the estate and binds all the workers in her favor by her good conduct, respect and trust. She becomes a very worthy and venerable mistress. Here, she is entitled with the power of inheritance and social privilege and becomes a true leader of the Gowmi rebellion later, which epitomize her as a masculine female.

Dai Fenglian is very assertive and subordinating to her family. Dai Fenglian breaks all the relationship with her family after she becomes the mistress of the Shan estate. She rejects her father and lives independently giving a good leadership to the distillery. All these attributes are very unique for a woman in the early twentieth century China. Generally women are considered to be subservient to their families but Dai Fenglian subordinates her family. As her father pushed her into that marriage and forced to go through all the trouble, she breaks all the kinship to her family. She rejects her parents and berates her own father to chase him away from her property. She puts some buns in front of her father and sends him away like a beggar. The following conversation presents how she dismisses her relationship to her father. The nature and thought of Dai Fenglian was not common which could be with normal lady grown up in Chinese patriarchal society. The desire and dream of her father was scattered along with the scattered buns that she threw on his face. In that condition it was obvious that patriarchy would try to overrule. But, Dai Fenglian was not such

woman who could easily bow down her head and give the chance to other against her desire:

Dai: You can eat these on the road.

Father: little Nine, you are my daughter!

Dai: Go on, I've heard enough.

Father: But I'm your dad.

Dai: You're no father of mine and I forbid you ever to enter my door  
again!

Father: I am your father.

Dai: Magistrate Cao is my father, weren't you listening?

Father: Not so fast, you can't throw one father away because you  
found yourself a new one. Don't think having you was easy on  
your mother and me.

(Mo Yan 129)

Dai Fenglian, rejects the filial duty and kinship. She gets very angry with her own father and rejects him; she denies him as her father and flings the buns in his face. She is very protective to her property. Here, she rejects her father and breaks all the ties with her family to live her life independently. She keeps her greedy and all authoritative father away from it at the cost of end of familial kinship. This action of her is the action of social rebellion. In this context, Judith Halberstam argues that female masculinity sometimes appears as social rebellion as the result of excesses of male supremacy. She claims that, "Sometimes female masculinity coincides with the excesses of male supremacy, and sometimes it codifies a unique form of social rebellion" (9). Here Dai Fenglian rebels with her father and ruptures the social norms, as a masculine female.

Dai Fenglian faces all the trouble and injustices of patriarchy and becomes a fearless, cunning and scheming woman. She is not afraid of anything; she shows her courage, intelligence and boldness in her action. When the bandit attacks the party heading to Gowmi Township, taking Dai, as the bride in the sedan, she keeps all the worries away and maintains her composure. She looked at the highwayman fearlessly. She realizes the danger only when she is taken into the sorghum by the bandit. This shows her confidence and fearlessness. Dai Fenglian becomes very cunning woman. She is very quick and scheming. On returning from her parents' house, she finds that her leper husband and his father have been killed. The magistrate Nine Dream Cao interrogates her. Here, she maintains her composure very wisely. She pretends to be out of mind. She is forsaken by the magistrate because of her innocence and heartbroken state. She acts mad in front of the magistrate to convince him that she has been broken down by the murder of her husband and father-in-law. Not only that, she then suddenly call the magistrate as her father. She even makes up the story how she was separated from the family in the time of hardships. The magistrate declares her as his foster daughter. She crawled forward and wrapped her arms around magistrate Cao's legs and wailed:

Dai: Father, my true father, now that you're the county magistrate, don't you know your own daughter? Ten years ago you fled the famine with your little girl and sold her. You may not know me, but I know you.

Magistrate: The woman is mad; she has mistaken me for someone else!

Dai: I' m not mistaken! I'm not! Father! My true father!

Magistrate: I can be your foster father! (124)

She makes up the whole story that he sold her for two pecks and promised her to come back after sorting out things. She even asks about her mother and little brother. She does all this to mask her knowledge of the murder. Doing all this stupidity, she is able to veil the truth that she knew. They have been killed by no other than Yu Zhan'ao, her new lover, as he had assured her and told her to come back in seven days. He had done his job and freed her from her leper husband and his father. This whole episode is the show of her cunning and intelligence that would herald her as a hero in the coming days. This was very unconventional for the woman of the time. Dai Fenglian in this sense stands tall as a masculine female in the pretext of the novel. Her scheming becomes stronger in the progress of the story.

Dai Fenglian's masculinity becomes more vivid and assertive on her encounter with the most brutal patriarchy of the Japanese invaders. The environment and treatments made more revengeful. She was governed by poisoned mental condition. The brutalities of the Japanese invaders make her very agitated. She acts almost like a mad woman screaming and panicking on the assault of Uncle Arhat, her foreman. Grandmother acts like a mad woman scaring the Japanese troops, "Grandma laid her hands on Uncle Arhat's scalp, and then rubbed her hands on her face. Pulling her hair, she leaped to her feet like a madwoman, her mouth agape. She looked three parts human and seven parts demon. The startled Japanese soldiers froze" (16). Here, grandmother loses her temper on seeing the most severe kind of brutality of patriarchy that made her masculinity more assertive. In this scene grandmother loses her temper and smears the blood in her face to scare the party of the Japanese soldiers with her demonic face. They stopped thrashing Uncle Arhat on seeing her in such demonic look. The madness she shows is the act of rebellion that was to save Uncle Arhat. She could not stand the brutalities of these patriarchs and rebels against it.

The narrator further comments, “Grandma wasn’t crazy. The minute the Japanese and the puppet soldiers left, she removed the wooden lid from one of the wine vats and looked at her frightful, bloody reflection in the mirror like surface. Father watched the tears on her cheeks turn red. She watched her face in the wine, turning it red” (16). Grandmother, here takes an oath to herself. She washed her bloody face in wine which now contained the tickles of blood from Uncle Arhat’s body. She saves Uncle Arhat from the fury of the Japanese invaders with her strategy and contemplates on the scene after the troop leave. Grandmother makes a commitment to herself to drive these Jap soldiers out of her village at any cost. This she does before any of her male counterpart had imagined. The Japanese soldiers were terrified on looking at the demonic face of grandmother. Seeing her awful face the Japanese troops stop their assault and go away. This is her courage and determination that enables her to face the most dangerous situations with ease. Her determination is further strengthened by the other brutalities of men. She faces the danger confidently and leads a very adventurous life. She lives; among men like a man, breaking all the social norms and values of patriarchy, which is mostly masculine. She develops these qualities after she encounters the exploitations of patriarchy.

Later in the story, she makes the two warring commanders take a promise to fight united with the Japanese invaders, making them drink the same wine. She comes between Detachment leader Leng and Yu Zhan’ao to make peace between them and direct their fury to the Japanese invaders. She says to the men, “even if don’t agree, you mustn’t abandon justice and honor. This isn’t the time of place to fight. Take your fury on the Japanese” (27). She manipulates these leaders to cooperate each other to fight against the Japanese. She further says, “Uncle Arhat’s blood is in this wine; if you are honorable men you’ll drink it, then go out and destroy the Jap convoy. After



that, chickens can go their way, dogs can go theirs. Well water and river water don't mix" (28). In this way, grandmother work as a mediator between the two commanders who are in loggerheads in order to take revenge with the Japanese invaders for the assault and killing of Uncle Arhat. In this manner grandmother shows unconventional ability as a woman which marks her as a masculine female.

The masculinity of Dai Fenglian can be further illustrated from the comments of Shelly W. Chan, she writes in "From Fatherland to Motherland":

The gender hierarchy is obvious. The father figure is dominant throughout the book, and even Douguan, the narrator's father, then a teenage boy, is a little man of iron. Furthermore the female protagonist, Grandma, is in fact masculinized. Her grandson the narrator employs the phrase "a hero among women", to endorse her, carrying the implication that she is a man like woman whose pursuit of freedom is rare among her sisters. (68)

According to Chan, grandmother has lived in the age of patriarchal domination yet she has lived a very dignified woman. She has worked as a commander among the women to support the warriors in the battlefield. She has been taken as the hero in the history of Northeast Gowmi Township; for her courage, valor and sacrifice for the people. She has exhibited masculinity as she lived an independent life unlike the women of the era, most like a man.

Dai Fenglian is a very powerful and influential woman in the novel. She has her influence in the decisions of Commander Yu. When the novel opens we find her handover Douguan, her son to Commander Yu in order to take him as a soldier. Her influences are evident in other cases as well. It was Dai Fenglian who devised the plan to stop the Japanese convoy at the bridge over Black Water River by using rakes.

Narrator mentions the account of the incident, from an old woman of the village, she says “Northeast Gowmi Township, so many men, at Black Water River the battle began; Commander Yu raised his hand, cannon fire to heaven, Jap souls scattered across the plain, ne’er to rise again, the beautiful champion of women, Dai Fenglian, ordered rakes for a barrier, the Jap attack broken” (13). Her representation of Dai Fenglian is very grand. She mentions Dai Fenglian, present at the time of the attack over the passing Japanese convoy, shoulder to shoulder with men like Yu Zhan’ao. She also had a very significant role in bringing the Japanese convoy down. In this regard we can see Dai Fenglian’s qualities such as; strength, authority and independence. Judith Halberstam in this context argues that, female masculinity is “about women who feel themselves to be more masculine than feminine” (xi). In other words, female masculinity can be described as the traits of female born persons who feel more comfortable behaving or looking masculine. In this sense, female masculinity is a specific gender with its own cultural history rather than a derivative of male masculinity in which women have the qualities that are usually associated with maleness such as strength, authority and independence. In this light, Dai Fenglian is a masculine female.

Dai Fenglian had always stayed with the army and had helped them indeed. She advised the army to lay rakes on the road to stop the moving vehicles of the Japanese force. The narrator comments on this as, “the tale proved that the strategy of stopping the Jap convoy with rakes had sprung from the mind of my own kin, a member of the weaker sex. No wonder my grandma is feted as a trailblazer of the anti- Japanese resistance and a national hero” (13). Here narrator’s grandmother has acted as a true hero in the resistance movement, she is very quick in formulating plans to strike which heralds her as a masculine female.

Grandma had influenced the tough commander Yu so many times. For instance, she manipulated him to stop the general in Yu's army, adjutant Ren from leaving the camp because of his difference with Yu. Yu rejected adjutant Ren's plea to shoot Yu's uncle for the rape of a local girl and let him go away. But grandma requested Yu to stop him. She said to him, "you can't let Adjutant Ren go. Soldiers are easy to recruit, but generals are worth their weight in gold" (55). It was because of her, Yu decided to shoot his uncle to keep Adjutant Ren in the camp. Later grandma also influenced Yu to recruit Wang Wenyi as a guerilla soldier, in his wife's request. This all was the power of a woman in the exclusively patriarchal Chinese society where woman were taken as the submissive, passive and agency less entities, grandmother had proved her authority, assertiveness and agency. In this context she stands as a masculine female in the history of Northeast Gowmi Township.

Grandma lived in comfort and facilities like men in her life. She used to smoke opium as well as drink the sorghum wine, which was unprecedented in her days. The narrator writes, "Apparently grandma was an opium smoker, but wasn't addicted, which was why she had the complexion of a peach, a sunny disposition, and a clear mind" (9). She lived at the time when women were preferred to be dumb and passive let alone smoking and drinking but she did all that she was pleased with. In another instance, grandmother fully drunk at the time, wailed in front of Uncle Arhat. She said to him, "Uncle, don't leave, if not for the sake of the monk, stay for the Buddha. If not for sake of the fish, stay for the water. If not for my sake, stay for little Douguan. You can have me if you want; you are like my own father" (9). In this pretext, grandma appears more masculine than feminine. The narrator also mentions that his grandmother used to go hunting with her rifle in the hand, riding the strongest of her mule. He writes,

In spring, throngs of rabbits run wild in the fields. Grandma rides her mule, rifle in hand, as she hunts rabbits, with father sitting behind her, his arms wrapped around her waist. Frightened by the mule, the rabbits fall easy prey to Grandma's shots. She invariably returns home with a string of rabbits around the mule's neck. (61)

In this way, Grandma lived a life of men challenging the patriarchal norms and authorities and scaling to the apex of reverence. She lived her short span of life, as a masculine female. She was revered by the people of Northeast Gowmi Township as a national hero.

Even at death, she is fearless, bold and assertive. She contemplates at her death bed, "My heaven, you gave me a lover, you gave me a son, you gave riches, and you gave me thirty years of life as robust as red sorghum. Heaven, since you gave me all that, don't take it back now. Forgive me let me go" (69). She expresses her strong desire to live more. She, then questions the providence, assuming this death caused by her sin. She questions, "Have I sinned? Would it have been right to share my pillow with a leper and produce a misshapen, putrid monster to contaminate this beautiful world? What is chastity then? What is the correct path? What is goodness? What is evil" (71).

Here she seems to be confident and satisfied with what she had done. She, worked against the divine law of marriage, she committed adultery and now when she dies she tries to vindicate herself from any accusation of immorality or sin. She further justifies her action as:

You never told me, so I had to decide on my own. I loved happiness, I loved strength, I loved beauty, it was my body, and I used it as I thought fitting. Sin doesn't frighten me, nor does punishment. I'm not

afraid of your eighteen levels of hell. I did what I had to do; I managed as I thought proper. I fear nothing. But I don't want to die, I want to live. I want to see more of this world. (72)

By her expression, all of us should understand that Dai Fenglian is not a coward, opportunist, and weak woman. In any condition, she kept up her determination. Whatever she had done, all were from her own effort and mind. All the time, she stood more than a female and challenges the patriarchal thinking of the society. She reversed the general concept of people about female and stood as new woman that is similar to accepted nature of male. She makes her new identity that is revolutionary masculine woman. She boldly asserts she is satisfied with the way of life she has led. She takes the responsibility of all her actions and claims that she is not repentant for anything. She was the master of her body, so she used it as she pleased. She moved as the need. There was no one show her the way. So she had to come up with her own choice all the time. Now, at the deathbed, she expresses her confidence on herself. She is not afraid of damnation; she is not willing to submit to the established social norms. She is even at death an independent, bold and assertive woman, which makes her a masculine female.

### III. Dai Fenglian as a New Woman and Subservience of Patriarchy

This research explores how Dai Fenglian, the female protagonist of *Red Sorghum*, exhibits the masculine traits, how she questions and subverts the traditional gender roles in the patriarchal normative social background. She subverts the traditional stereotypical notion of women as a submissive, docile and fragile being. She encompasses the qualities like; courage, intelligence, determination and action, that makes her rebellious in the society. With her independent lifestyle, she heralds herself as a masculine female, challenging and rupturing the established Confucian ethics. She lives among the toughest men, in the hardest times in history of China, struggling both with the social dogmas of patriarchy and the inhuman assaults of Japanese invasion, to become a national hero in the history of Northeast Gowmi Township, which makes her masculine in all aspects.

Dai Fenglian is a masculine female, a new woman who rises up as a harbinger of female liberation in the reawakening period of Communist China in the backdrop of feudal system. According to general perception, in female sex, there should be the quality of femininity; i.e. weak, submissive, obedient, docile, passive and subservient to male. But, this kind of general perception is altered by Dai Fenglian and she stands as the masculine female. She embodies the qualities like, strength, power, authority, privilege, independence, combativeness, and assertiveness. Indeed, it is very difficult to stand in opposition to the existing social rules, if anybody tries to cross the social limit that shall be criticized. But Dai Fenglian ruptures the traditional patriarchal normative culture of marriage and the Confucian ethics of China. She lives as a masculine female, who establishes her dignified and independent existence. She denies the bond of marriage; she performs adultery and lives with a bandit begetting

an illegitimate son to him. She inherits the property of the Shan family, being the sole heir which was unprecedented in contemporary China. She rejects her own father and denies all familial ties. And yet she is sung by the local people as a national hero. She is the trailblazer of the anti Japanese resistance movement in Northeast Gowmi Township. She works as the commander among the women and motivation for the men. She is portrayed as a national hero in the history of the Northeast Gowmi Township. She represents the renewed consciousness that dawned in Chinese people especially women which led towards the liberation of women from the patriarchal domination.

The representation of Dai Fenglian as a masculine female ushers towards the new era in Chinese history. She stands for the liberation of women from the male hegemony and the feudal exploitation of women. She is a new woman, an exploration of Communist ideology that actually brought a new consciousness in Chinese society and liberated woman from all the feudal domination and injustices. But, the untimely and quite ordinary death of Dai Fenglian is the result of the still existing male supremacy. She is killed in the crossfire between the Japanese convoy and the troops of Yu Zhan'ao, in their first encounter. Dai Fenglian; according to the narrator, was a commander of the weaker sex that is among women. She has been denied a place in the liberation army whilst she had all the potentials for one. In this sense the author is predominated by the notion of patriarchal supremacy and the inferiority of female. So the premature death of Dai Fenglian is the action of subservience to patriarchy. In a nutshell, the research proves that the female protagonist Dai Fenglian is a masculine female who has been attributed with the masculine qualities and she subverts the traditional gender roles as well as the Confucian ethics dominant in Chinese society in the late twentieth century. Though she was brought up in the

patriarchal China internalizing its decorum and the Confucian ethics, she ruptures all these social norms. She lives as a liberated women, a new women and is worshipped as a national hero even after her death. Hence, she is a proven masculine female. But, her premature and untimely death is the result of subservience of patriarchy. She is the invention of rising communist ideology in contemporary China which opposed the domination and exploitation of women and advocated that women's liberation is necessary for the social progress. In this sense, Dai Fenglian marks the rise of new women and ushers towards the modernization of Chinese society.



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