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Portrayal of New Woman in Selected Stories from *Dream Vision and Realities*

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By

Maheshwar Bhattarai

Symbol No.: 280361

T.U. Regd. No.:6-2-135-30-2011

Central Department of English

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Central Department of English

Approval Letter

This thesis entitled "Portrayal of New Woman in Selected Stories from *Dream Vision and Realities*" Submitted to the Department of English, Tribhuvan University by Maheshwar Bhattarai has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee.

Members of the Research Committee

Internal Examiner

External Examiner

Head

Central Department of English

Date: _____

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Abstract

*This paper makes an attempt to analyze the issue of representation of New woman in five selected short stories from the anthology *Dream Vision and Realities* edited by Stephanie Forward. The stories are: “The Yellow Wallpaper” by Charlotte Perkins Gilman, “The Yellow Drawing-Room” by Mona Caird, “The Man in the Scented Coat” by Sarah Grand, “The Revolt of ‘Mother” by Mary E. Wilkins and “The Storm” by Kate Chopin. The study is based on the theoretical concept of New Woman by Henry James who used it to describe the evolution of educated, independent and revolutionary woman in western society. As the research finds, the writer portrays the woman as new woman to showcase the rise of changed female personality who no more remain under the domination of patriarchal society. Finally, the research concludes that all stories begin with submissive woman characters and during the progression of plot the characters gradually change to new woman, so in that sense all the stories focus on the process of being new woman.*

Key Words: New woman, Patriarchy, Revolutionary Woman, Victorian Society, Womanhood, Conventional

Portrayal of New Woman in Selected Stories from *Dream Vision and Realities*

This research paper attempts to explore how the portrayal of the new woman has been made in five selected short stories from *Dream Vision and Realities* edited by Stephanie Forward. This researcher develops on claims that the writer has portrayed the female characters in the selected stories as a new woman to showcase the rise of changed female personality who no more remain under the domination of patriarchal society. The presentation of new woman was actually an academic approach to revolt against conventional mindset of the society and its tendency to dominate woman in every sphere of life.

The selected stories are: “The Yellow Wallpaper” by Charlotte Perkins Gilman, “The Yellow Drawing-Room” by Mona Caird, “The Man in the Scented Coat” by Sarah Grand, “The Revolt of ‘Mother’” by Mary E. Wilkins and “The Storm” by Kate Chopin. In 1894AD, Sarah Grand the novelist and also the writer of the selected story “The Man in the Scented Coat” introduced the term ‘New Woman’ in her essay “The New Aspect of the Woman Question” published in the North American Review. However, this research is primarily based on theoretical insights of Henry James’s Concept of New Woman he used it to define the evolution in the number of feminist, educated females, an independent career-oriented woman in Europe and the United States. And it further undertakes the arguments of other new

woman critics like Sarah Grand, Charlotte Perkins Gilman and Mona Caird.

The concept of a new woman was emerging during the period of 1890s and early Twentieth century. The sudden dominance of this new female dimension gradually began to challenge the conventional ideas of femininity with their new demands of voting right, education, sexuality and social expectation, changed social roles and transformation in repressive gender codes. Similarly, the period of the 1890s also witnessed the publication of many short stories written by female writers who reinforced the portrayal of new woman in literature. The new woman writers such as Sarah Grand, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Mona Caird, Mary E. Wilkins and Kate Chopin used the short stories to advocate for female subjectivity and revolt against repressive gender codes created by patriarchal society. The short stories by these writers were the liberating form of uprising feminist writers which gives them a means of self-expression that was denied by traditional patriarchal gender codes.

Similarly, the different concept of theoretical insights on “New Woman” have been used as parameters to the portrayal of New woman in the selected five stories from edited volume *Dream Vision and Realities* by Stephanie Forward. Firstly, “The Man in the Scented Coat” by Sarah Grand highlights the adventurous lady, Josepha from Portland Place. She gets lost in a pea-soup fog in London one evening. As she cannot see anything, she follows a scent of flowers, which turns out to emanate from a distinguished gentleman in disguise who is on a secret mission. Josepha follows the mystery gentleman and his companion to a secret apartment hidden in an upstairs flat behind a revolving bookcase, where she discovers the Prince's shameful secret. Josepha, a thoroughly modern woman, stops to dine, talk and smoke with the Prince, and then, with the threat of imminent discovery, the party must take an unusual escape route. The story shows her place in the cultural and social debate about the position

and role of woman in the 1890s and beyond. Actually, the social and cultural context of the 1890s and the early 1900s and in furthering an understanding of her writing on important questions of the day, such as marriage, education, class and social reform. This story focuses on how the new woman manages to overcome many difficulties during her journey.

Secondly, "The Yellow Wallpaper" (1892) by Charlotte Perkins Gilman features a woman suffering from depression following the birth of her child and her doctor husband, John, who diagnoses her behavior as "hysteria." He prescribes her to rest and leases a house in the country for her recovery. Being inside for walls for many days, she begins to notice a woman figure inside the wallpaper and believes that the woman is trying to break free her limitations. Finally, in an effort to release the woman, the narrator tears down the wallpaper. The wallpaper becomes symbol of patriarchal oppression, and the figure of lady inside paper encourages the narrator to overcome patriarchal domination on her. At the end of the story, she evolves to become new woman from conventional enduring woman who was ready to abide by the decision of her husband.

Thirdly, "The Yellow Drawing Room" (1892AD) by Mona Caird strongly voice against Victorian gendered conceptions. The story presents a disobedient woman Vanora Haydon who decides to paint her family's drawing-room yellow after the death of her mother. Vanora is assigned to decorate and furnish a drawing-room, and she chooses yellow. By making it yellow, she creates her own room, reflective of her own personality and individuality - something which the conservative narrator cannot cope with. The death of her mother who also symbolizes the old woman marks the inception of New woman Vanora Haydon who acts accordingly with her wish despite social constraint.

“The Revolt of Mother” is a short story by Mary E. Wilkins Freeman, and was originally published in 1890AD in Harper’s Bazaar. It addresses themes of rebellion, self-assertion, tradition, and the repression of the woman in a male-dominated society. The story revolves around role of making decision in a family. Sarah Penn, the main character, was Adoniram’s wife who dared to go against her husband’s intention in turning the new barn into the family’s new house. Sarah suddenly decides to move into the new barn when Adoniram was away to buy a horse in another town. During the progression of the story, in some instance her stereotypical feminine-self questions over her action of moving to the new barn but she did not care of them and believed in her decision. When her husband Adoniram returned home and sees the drastic change, he could hardly believe it but still finally accepted it. Indirectly, the story supports the social acceptance of new woman at the end of story.

Lastly, written by Kate Chopin's "The Storm" was published in 1969 under *The Complete Works of Kate Chopin*. With an adulterous one-night stand at the centre of the climactic tale, Chopin struggled a lot to publish this story in a male-dominated society. The story presents the adulterous encounter of Calixta and Alcee, her former lover. It is concerned with explicitly female experience and desires which is why it was not published in first attempt. In few pages Chopin manages to present woman’s status in society, especially family, and to challenge that representation by exposing the artificiality of the happy married life that was supposed to be fulfilling and enough for woman. The story moves deep into how woman life is described, their relationships with men, to what extent their choices are limited by their gender and if they accept or reject the traditional female and the constructed femininity in patriarchal ideology.

To analyse similar stories and gender issues, my study has used the conceptual

insight of the new woman. The New Woman was the term popularly used at the end of the nineteenth century to define the woman who was revolting against the limits imposed by traditional society on woman. Today the new woman might be called a liberated woman or feminist. Gail Finney gives a short description of New Woman as:

The 'New woman' was a term that gets maximum space in academics of the nineteenth century. The concept of a new woman was usually used to describe that female who were rising against the limits imposed by traditional patriarchal society to woman. In today's context such woman are popularly known as liberated woman or feminist, despite difference in word, the qualities are same then and now. (23)

As per the description given by Finney, it is clear that the new woman are more inclined to value her being and her choice of life by being the agent of self-fulfilment. While talking about the characteristic of new women they are usually rebellious, independent, self-sustaining, believing in sexual equality and courageous in nature. Rather than fitting herself in the role of the stereotypical female ideal as certified by traditional patriarchal society, the new woman wants to remain independent in life. She often advocates for legal and sexual equality, tries to remain single because of the difficulty of getting equality within marriage, more open about her sexuality than the 'Old Woman'. Furthermore, the new woman or liberated woman are academically vibrant, economically independent, and physically strong and has ability to change her in accordance with context. The issue of independence was not simply a matter of the mind rather it was also reflected in other physical changes and activity activities such as bicycling, workplace performance that expanded woman's capability to involve with a broader world. Apart from female writers, there were some male

scholars who also supported the idea of new woman in literature. Many scholars of that time associated Ibsen with the supporter of New woman and woman right. For his contribution, the Norwegian Woman's Rights League, in 1898, gave a banquet to honour him for his support of woman's rights.

Any kind of scholarly discussion on the emergence of the phrase 'new woman' demands acute insight on the development of feminism and how female managed to ensure their dominant position in a patriarchal society. History is always evident that woman are suppressed since ancient age, and such repression has been the main cause of all psychological disturbances in society. However, the wake of feminism banged with new phenomena and tries to challenge the conventional controls and gender limitations on woman at various levels. It gives new ground for woman in home, society, political space and economic domain. Various writers and scholars have defined the emergence of feminism in their own ways. Janet Richard in his book *Woman writer's Talking* (1981 AD) conceptualizes feminism as "The essence of Feminism has a strong fundamental case intended to mean only that there are excellent reasons for thinking that woman suffer from systematic social injustice because of their sex; the proposition is to be regarded as constituting feminism" (3). In simple term one can frame feminism as a set of ideologies and movements that have common objective of defining, establishing and achieving equal rights for both men and woman in all aspects of life including social, political, cultural, religious, economic and so on.

During the beginning of the Twentieth century, the wave of feminism became popular as a female revolution against traditional barriers set by a male-dominated society. The rise of feminism dismantles conservative Christian limitations on female of American society and the contemporary female of that time began to find different

ground to flourish as per their desire and same phenomena of change give birth to the new woman. As Charlotte Perkins Gilman described her: “Here she comes, running, out of prison and off the pedestal; chains off, crown off, halo off, just a live woman” (Allen 32).

As mentioned earlier, while tracing the inception of a new woman in academic discourse, the credit goes to feminist author Sarah Grand, as she used the term in her article "The New Aspect of the Woman Question" published in the *North American Review* in March 1894 AD. And Henry James further followed up to develop the concept of new woman when he used it to describe the group of American emigrants living in Europe. The wealthy European woman who were rich in material possession abandoned their traditional idealism and adopted a new lifestyle by showing up their free spirit and attitude towards society. When woman began to take such new position in society, the traditional womanhood slowly gets faded, and the phenomena of new woman took place in society. The new woman were not an individual or a group of woman's representation particular region; rather, it was a phenomenon or an attitude and that woman who adopted that attitude became the new woman.

Thus, we can assume that the root of new woman can be traced back in the collective movement of feminist from the different epoch of time and the birth of new woman was the outcome of that organized movement. The movement raised woman's issue in social space including media, political space and policy debates. As a result, the law was passed in 1882 which allowed the married woman of United Kingdom to manage their earnings under “Married woman's property act”. Moreover, the woman got right to possess and control their property. In 1878, the University of London pushes up new woman movement when it became “the first university in the UK to admit woman to degrees, via the grant of a supplemental charter. Four female students

obtained Bachelor of Arts degrees in 1880 and two obtained Bachelor of Science degrees in 1881, again the first in the country” (Ledger 8).

After the evolution of the suffrage movement, the concept of new woman too began to circulate in the literary domain. In an effort to maintain their new gained position some feminist turned to magazine, books and other writing platforms to express their inner revolutions. In same regard, “The Yellow Wallpaper” by Charlotte Perkins Gilman was written during the period of social transformation. Till the early to mid-nineteenth century the patriarchal ideology confined the middle-class woman within domestic space as moral and spiritual figure of their home. They were compelled to remain within the four walls of house as a part of their social role, and same phenomena is projected in “The Yellow Wallpaper”. The woman’s attachment with house is shown in following words:

The most beautiful place! It is quite alone, standing well back from the road, quite three miles from the village. It makes me think of English places that you read about, for there are hedges and walls and gates that lock, and lots of separate little houses for the gardeners and people. There is a delicious garden! I never saw such a garden - large and shady, full of box-bordered paths, and lined with long grape-covered arbors with seats under them. (91)

So, the limitation of woman in the domestic sphere suggests the patriarchal mechanism to force her to be ideal wife or mother. In the given extract the unnamed female narrator gives much detailed explanation of inner house which shows her engagement inside four walls and when it comes to the description of outer environment like garden, she mentioned that she has never seen such garden, means she was habituated to enjoy the interior environment of house.

When the story was first published in the Forerunner, in 1913AD, it triggers a

lot of controversy among the readers as they were not able to understand the author's intention behind writing such story. In her essay "Why I Wrote The Yellow Wallpaper" she has mentioned that:

When the story first came out, in the New England Magazine about 1891, a Boston physician made protest in The Transcript. Such a story ought not to be written, he said; it was enough to drive anyone mad to read it. Another physician, in Kansas I think, wrote to say that it was the best description of incipient insanity he had ever seen, and--begging my pardon--had I been there? (Gilman 2)

In the essay, she made it clear that instead of driving people crazy, the story shown something wrong going in traditional medical practice. As a new woman, she was able to raise the voice against such social tendency to lock woman inside the house in the name of treatment. As the story was written at the time woman's roles were defined by the traditional notion of patriarchal thinking. As the unnamed narrator in the story revolt against the confinement of female by tearing "The Yellow Wallpaper" of the room, the woman that time too attempted to reject the conventional pattern of behaviour ascribed by their male counterparts. Julie Bates Dock makes the following remarks with the whole thematic content of the story "The Yellow Wallpaper":

The story appears not just in those weighty, two-volume collections of American literature but also in textbooks for courses in woman's studies and genre studies and in dozens of introductory literature texts for undergraduates.' It has been analyzed by literary historians of every stripe, although feminist critics still lead the way in championing Gilman's achievement. (Dock 52)

The above lines present about the literary studies of contemporary society of America. The textual history of "The Yellow Wallpaper" illustrates changing critical

priorities in the academy. *The Feminist Press* edition of that year gave the story wider currency than ever before. The issue that is presented in the story is a common issue in our society. After the publication of this story, it has achieved various remarks on the work of the authors. Sarah Grand takes us as close to the heart and mind of the character, Josepha is within the power and range of language. The author shows a new woman venturing out in the story to prior the Twentieth century.

It mentions that it is known as the victory as Gilman's protagonist. While resting in a room that resembles a nursery, Gilman's narrator becomes quite obsessed with the yellow wallpaper, seeing and coming to believe that there is a woman behind and within the paper. It might remember that genre may be less an artistic choice than a financial one and perhaps Gilman, along with her narrator, had to succumb to "The Yellow Wall-Paper" before she could align her aesthetics with her politics. In its form as well as in its central narrative.

The Yellow Wall-Paper foregrounds competition among professional, political, and popular discourses, and, as I have argued the rise of yellow journalism exacerbated this discursive struggle through its influence on the literary marketplace. By catering to the burgeoning consumer culture's demand for fast-paced, scandal-driven stories, sensational journalism regulated literary production as well as gender. Gilman was only one of many writers whose artistic and political ambitions did not always correspond to these public demands.

Gilman, as a feminist, considers her as a professional writer whose works can be read as an extended meditation on female authority and the fate of socially-conscious writing in the turn-of-the-century print marketplace. Many critics debate regarding the different perspective on their own issues. According to George Egerton's "The Mandrake Venus", deals with prostitution. It is shown one of the new

woman who is beyond the traditional society in which such activities are rejected.

This provocative story highlights the transparent variety of discourses about sexuality in Victorian times.

Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar have also argued that “In fact, it is not really until the moment in the mid-nineteenth century when female resistance becomes feminist rebellion that the battle of the sexes emerges as a trope for struggle over political as well as personal power” This statement makes very clear that woman of that time was trying hard to outgrow their conventional gender roles ascribed by patriarchy and get transformed into new version of themselves. In the revolutionary short story "The Yellow Wallpaper", a woman loses her mind from being locked up in a room to recover from her "illness"—a thinly veiled metaphor for being fed up with domestic oppression. These works made clear that ladies were fed up with being just wives and mothers. They did not want to live in a world that rejected the possibility of their actually being thinking, creative equals to men.

The story of Gilman represents the birth of an entirely new woman who manages to free herself from the boundaries created by her husband and patriarchal society. It gives the glimpse of unnamed woman who grows out of male enslavement that indicates the collective rise of woman as a whole. It is very clear that Charlotte Perkins Gilman did not give any name to the heroin because of her intention to make readers aware of the fact that all female are repressed in the patriarchal society and everyone should act like the new woman projected in the story. Furthermore, the writer has frequently used “I” pronoun throughout the story to symbolize the different personality of protagonist or to separate the new woman from old woman. According to the historian Ruth Bordin, the term “New Woman” was:

intended by [James] to characterize American expatriates living in Europe:

woman of affluence and sensitivity, who despite or perhaps because of their wealth exhibited an independent spirit and were accustomed to acting on their own. The term New Woman always referred to woman who exercised control over their own lives be it personal, social, or economic. (25)

The frequent use of 'I' in the story can also be understood as the narrator's self-consciousness that concentrates more on her needs and desire than what the society wants her to be. It also demonstrates the egoistic side of new woman in very positive sense. As the time, when the story gets published such qualities of female were not celebrated as like today. Such privileges were only given to male member of society, and that was accepted only in case of men. It is because of this patriarchal fact, her story was considered revolutionary at that time, as it portrays completely new figure of woman at the end of story.

Moreover, the writer showed contrast between two worlds of perception in the story. On the one hand, there was presence of motherhood, submissiveness, typical womanhood and other character traits of old woman. However, on other hand the writer also portrays the character of new woman who is ready to revolt the culture and go against the decision of her male counterpart. In one instance the female character criticises her husband's choice "I don't like our room a bit. I wanted one downstairs that opened on the piazza and had roses all over the window and such pretty old fashioned chintz hangings! but John would not hear of it" (91). The contrast between old conventional woman and new woman is made via the characterization of same female character that later succeeds to grow out of patriarchal limitation and become a new woman. In this sense we can argue that the story is not about the representation of new woman rather it is about the becoming of new woman. It is because the story present scene and incident that gradually encourage conventional woman to become

new woman. Regarding the becoming of new woman, Dockrell Morgan in her essay “Is new woman a myth?” argues that:

In the Victorian society of England, the popular opinion was against woman, and she was ordered to take up the conservative middle class woman’s career of marriage and motherhood. In fact, her role was fixed by the Victorians as she was not allowed to transgress against sex, gender and class distinctions.

“Woman can rarely have been held in lower esteem than they were at the end of the 18th century. So, the emergence of new woman was inevitable. (339)

The new woman character presented in the story attempt to go against the Victorian woman ideal as she represents reasoning, revolution and knowledge to defend the viewpoint of her husband who tries to oppress her in the name of treatment. The story presents many noticeable circumstances which indicate the lack of understanding between unnamed narrator and her doctor husband, John. As shown in the plot, the protagonist suffers from nervous illness, but instead of curing her the husband is more interested in caging her inside house in the name of treatment. The story reads:

John is practical in the extreme. He has no patience with faith, an intense horror of superstition, and he scoffs openly at any talk of things not to be felt and seen and put down in figures. John is a physician, and perhaps - (I would not say it to a living soul, of course, but this is dead paper and a great relief to my mind) - perhaps that is one reason I do not get well faster. You see, he does not believe I am sick! And what can one do? (90)

The husband is shown as careless and rigid doctor who never bother to listen to other’s view and keep on moving accordingly with his own thought. When his wife suggests him another approach of treatment, he directly rejects her recommendation and forces his own method of treatment on her. In the story the female character

narrates that “Personally, I disagree with their ideas. Personally, I believe that congenial work, with excitement and change, would do me good” (90). The unnamed wife had a hobby of writing a diary to express her thoughts, but her husband recommends not to get involved in writing as it will swell the illness. So she was forced to keep the diary secret, and this incident symbolically represents her husband’s intention to stop her from expressing. Speaking more broadly, the incident implicitly reveals the patriarchal tendency to deprive woman’s writing freedom and their right to expression. However, the wife’s act of secretly writing the diary indicates that she has already learned to outgrow social limitation and she is on the process of being new woman.

Additionally, along with the revolting new woman, the story also presents different version of female who tries to suppress other counterparts. Not only her husband John but the sister of her husband also shares same idea that woman is not free to live their wished life. John’s sister Jenin is portrayed as typical housewife who has no chance of being new woman. She shows the characters as opposed to the unnamed narrator “There comes John’s sister. Such a dear girl as she is, and so careful of me! I must not let her find me writing. She is a perfect and enthusiastic housekeeper, and hopes for no better profession. I verily believe she thinks it is the writing which made me sick!”(94). Here, Janine stands for traditional womanhood as desired by conventional patriarchal society. And the narrator is not only hard-pressed by male figure but also the female counterpart. In this sense we can claim that she is struggling between two conventional though represented by both men (husband) and woman (Jennie). The many scholars have considered “The Yellow Wallpaper “as ideal depiction of changing woman which is portrayed through the characterization of unnamed female narrator.

Similarly, the Victorian fin de siècle was an age of transformation in many aspects of society including; literature, politics, science and the changing society witnessed revolution after the emergence of new perspectives that challenged conventional grand narratives, especially about woman. While discussing about the evolution of new woman in literature, Gerz Buzwell views that:

Arguably the most radical and far-reaching change of all concerned the role of woman, and the increasing number of opportunities becoming available to them in a male-dominated world. With educational and employment prospects for woman improving, marriage followed by motherhood was no longer seen as the inevitable route towards securing a level of financial security in the society. (3)

However, the trend of writing about New Woman in fiction took place during the period of -1890s when Sarah Grand, following on from her article 'The New Aspect of the Woman Question' highlighted the double-standards inherent in Victorian Society in her book *The Heavenly Twins*. The major part of new woman projection can also be found in Sarah Grand's story, "The Man in the Scented Coat". The story highlights the adventurous lady, Josepha from Portland Place. She gets lost in a pea-soup fog in London one evening. As she cannot see anything, she follows a scent of flowers, which turns out to come from a famous gentleman in cover who is on a secret mission. First, they are caught up with a gang of ruffians, one of whom recognizes the gentleman as being a member of the royal family.

Josepha follows the mystery gentleman and his companion to a secret apartment hidden in an upstairs flat behind a revolving bookcase, where she discovers the Prince's shameful secret. Josepha, a thoroughly modern woman, stops to dine, talk and smoke with the Prince, and then, with the threat of imminent discovery, the party

must take an unusual escape route. The story shows her place in the cultural and social debate about the position and role of woman in the 1890s and beyond. Literary, the social and cultural context of the 1890s and the early 1900s and in furthering an understanding of her writing on important questions of the day, such as marriage, education, class and social reform. This story focuses on many difficulties on the way she wished to go, and in the place she met with three gentlemen.

This section of research deals with Sarah Grand story where the character Josepha finds herself caught up in a conflict between two gentlemen and a gang of ruffians. Josepha follows the gentlemen. She is clearly an advanced young lady, as she accepts cigarette and converses with ease. Josepha plays cards with the man in scented coat, but cannot help thinking of the part such a man might play in life if only devoted himself with the same conscientious intelligence to nobler pursuits. The man becomes confirmed that she is much expanded lady before they parted. And after some months she rejects the gift she gets. It seems that Josepha as being superior to him, because of her greater integrity. The author makes an attempt to reflect all the forces: external and internal, that reflects the psychology of a character at a single moment. Most of the sections Josepha and three Gentlemen presented through an apparently unorganized succession of images. Thus, Josepha's role is complicated and the most difficult to penetrate because Josepha is the most complex character. Whereas by showing three Gentlemen, the author wants to show us the confused mind that jumps from one thought to another. She tries to show her work revolved around the New Woman Ideal. Indeed Sarah Grand's story presents the physical complexities of almost all characters.

By breaking the traditional moral values of society such as socializing beyond the confines of their own home, spending time doing other activities, characters resist

patriarchal notion and try to win masculine domination and challenge gender boundaries. Such acts give the hint that new woman is born for the progress, expansion and mobility of the Victorian era. The major character Josepha is shown venturing out as a new woman, where her character tries to win masculine domination. In the story, everything is presented as fighting against the patriarchal society. The main characters of these stories subvert patriarchy by doing various activities which patriarchy restricts to do by woman. The story portrays moral code society which highly exploits woman and confines them in limited social space by using moral code.

Likewise, Grand's story presents the New Woman concept as Josepha smokes and plays cards with scented coat man. Similarly, Wharton's fiction in Katherine Joslin's study of the writer and her work, she observes that Wharton's fictive world "is peopled with both men and woman, who must struggle for selfhood within the social context; she insistently and, many critics have claimed, even perversely avoids the easy, happy ending" (Joslin 35). Likewise the character Josepha also illustrates the selfness while she starts to go in the fog and she does not take any help of candle and so on. Instead, she shows her strongest all over the story.

In the story, Sarah Grand writes "With the words on her lips, she ran down the steps, and it was as if she had plunged into space, she was so instantly engulfed. In reality she was only a few yards from the door, clinging to an area railing, gasping and giddy, trying to collect herself...was to stumble off the curb into the roadways" (76). It may be interpreted as woman in the period were so much in trouble to raise the voices although some philosophers did by having troubles in them. They did not stop their movement for progress. Here, Grand analyzes the characters desire to engage with others to fulfil their own desire and to get pleasure. In the story, female

are engaging with their own desire, and they seek for freedom. Through the fiction, she demands parallel role of male and female in society and indirectly rejects the conventional notion of womanhood. She attends to frame same idea in her essay “The New Aspect of the Woman Question” where she views that:

It is for us to set the human household in order, to see to it that all is clean and sweet and comfortable for the men who are fit to help us to make a home in it.

We are bound to raise the dust while we are at work, but only those who are in it will suffer any inconvenience from it, and the self-sufficing and self-

supporting are not afraid. For the rest it will be all benefits. The Woman

Question is the Marriage Question, as shall be shown hereafter (Grand 8)

While linking the theme of the story with ideological insight of the writer, as in the story the writer give portrayal of female character who imitates the habits of man like having cigarette, interacting with new people and getting engaged in risky situations. Through the characterization of such lady in her fiction, Grand was actually trying to advocate the traditional society that such there is space in our society for such females too.

The last two decades of Victorian-era became subjected to the beginning of social transformation related to gender issues. The change in social attitude slowly marked new beginning in society as the people of that time slowly began to accept the presence of new woman. The move away from the traditional patriarchal model of lifestyle automatically challenged the male supremacy in society and contributed to establishing gender equality.

Responding to the same changing trend, in 1990s, many literary works on new woman get mainstream space in academia and Mona Caird works counts significant in this context. Mona Caird and Charlotte Perkins Gilman wrote stories about the

woman who feels "buried" and constrained by men. Gilman's famous short story *The Yellow Wall-paper* is popularly known as the feminist classic. However even before the publication of Gilman, the British writer Mona Caird independently wrote her own study in yellow called *The Yellow Drawing-Room*. Gilman's story was written in 1890 but was not published until 1892. In 1891 Caird published a volume called "*A Romance of the Moors*" which contained this story. The stories of Caird and Gilman shared same spirit of feminism because both voice against the confinement of female in patriarchal space and even deals with the same theme of female hysteria and psychological tension. In the *Yellow Drawing Room*, the author has tried to present characterization of a female who wants to paint her room yellow as per her own inner desire despite different instruction from her husband. Broadly, this story also gives the glimpse of woman who rejected her traditionally ascribed roles and tried to establish new order in her life. As mentioned in the story:

We want my brother-in-law to have the room done over again, Mr. St.

Vincent, but he won't hear of it. We did all we could with Vanora — we told her that nobody used such a brilliant colour, but she only said that she found Nobody, when you came to talk to him seriously, was a person quite open to reason. Dear Vanora is so quaint." Her taste seems to be rather quaint. (104)

When the new woman character Verona painted the room yellow colour, the other relatives make negative comment on her choice of colour and suggest her to change paint. But Verona was trying her best to convince others regarding the beauty of yellow colour. We can also find the new woman feature in the way Caird's story presents the conversation made by Vanora so much expressive than her male counterpart St. Vincent. If one goes through the conversation very carefully it is clear that the new woman character speak with directedness and self-assurance but on the

contrary the male character St Vincent is not able to control his words as his narration reveals: 'I replied crazily', 'I plunged headlong', 'I pleaded like a lunatic, argued, urged' (108,109). The male character's intention to dominate the female with verbal utterance goes in vein as Vincent fails to articulate his words and just mumble it inaudibly.

In addition, Caird's "Yellow Drawing Room" is a classic example of new woman writing as the author's awareness of transactional period is clearly visible in the story. The male narrator is distressed because the female character Vanora Haydon tries to exercise her feminine power over him. As a portrayal of new woman she seems capable enough to manipulate the personality of St Vincent and influence him to be on her side. When Vanora get permission to decorate the room, she chooses to paint yellow as a symbol to make that too like her. Such act was not allowed for woman at that time, yet she dared to paint the room as per her wish. But Vincent finds it very hard to cope with the colour in the room as the act of painting was manifestation of Vanora's refusal and revolution against the establishing notions and limitations to females.

The article entitled "People Talk a Lot of Nonsense about Heredity": Mona Caird and Anti-Eugenic Feminism" not only foregrounds Caird, inspecting her fiction and non-fiction within historical and eugenic contexts but also acknowledges the ways in which 'Caird's late-twentieth-century writings have been recognized as the response to new woman phenomena. Richardson argues that the modern critics have frequently linked Caird with Sarah Grand, "even though Caird herself distanced her ideas about motherhood and race from those of Grand. Richardson also explores the ways in which Caird has accused of sharing racist beliefs, dismissing this as another example of the lack of attention paid to Caird's ideas".

The abstract nature of womanhood and how it is constructed by society has been recognized by many feminist critics, and they have also tried to consciously interpret literary texts in the light of same idea. As Judith Butler in her book *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* have argued that:

If there is something right in Beauvoir's claim that one is born, but rather becomes a woman, it follows that woman itself is a term in process, a becoming, a constructing that cannot rightfully be said to originate or to end. As an ongoing discursive practice, it is open to intervention and resignification. (43)

The construction of identity is based on social phenomena as the people learn to adapt certain behaviour according to their gender and if the female imitates male personality then her identity gets fluid. That's why, unlike sexual orientation, the identity and genders are constructed like represented in "If I Were a Man" where a female personality enters male body and experience men's life. In this sense, the identity is intervened by the transformation of body and in same way transformation of cultural behaviour can also problematize the body.

While talking about the conventional notion, for any Victorian woman sexuality was only a natural part of life after marriage, and pre-marital sex was considered as sin. Traditionally, it was also believed that the woman's sexuality was not her own rather her husband has control over it and she should remain virgin till marriage. With such grand narratives of morality, the Victorian woman's sexuality and their desire were suppressed by patriarchal society.

After the new woman movement, the females understood that taking possession of their own body is the first step to free their sexuality from patriarchal domination. They soon began to look at their body as the sexual subject rather than

the object for male sexual pleasure. The new woman figures were courageous enough to make sexual relationship with any male she desires and she could choose whether to be sexually involved with particular male or not. Amid such transformation in female perception of body, the manhood or male counterparts view this change as challenge to morality and their unilateral dominance over female sexuality. Under same contextual frame we can analyse how Kate Chopin's short story "The Storm" "depict characteristic of new woman.

While looking at the life of Chopin its assumed that after the death of her husband Oscar, while Kate was struggling along to manage the business of her husband "she engaged in a romance with a local planter named Albert Sampite, though not much is known about the discreet affair, it is obvious that Chopin practiced many of the same sexual freedoms as some of her characters (Holden 3).

While analyzing "The Storm" one must consider the time when Chopin wrote this story. Despite being written in 1898, it was not published until 1969 because the writer herself refuses to publish this story because the then American society was not liberal in accepting the woman character presented in the story. The led female character Calixta in the story embodies a sexual desire which was shameful for Victorian woman. Although Calixta is married and has a child, she still builds up a strong impulse to be with a married man Alice, during the storm. The sexual tendency of Calixta can be termed as the desire of new woman. The detailing in the story also evidently proves Kate Chopin as the new woman writer because, instead of criticizing the act of Calixta, the writer narrate such situation as "The generous abundance of her passion, without guile or trickery, was like a white flame which penetrated and found response in depths of his own sensuous nature that had never yet been reached" (126). The use of such positive words like as "generous, passion, sensuous nature, and

delight” to describe the extramarital sexual involvement between Calixta and Alcée normalize female desire in the patriarchal world. Despite being advocate of new woman, it was already made clear in the stories of Henry James that, even after being free to exercise their intellectual and sexual autonomy, his heroines ultimately paid the price for their choices. However, unlike Henry James heroines, till the end of the story Calixta neither regret for her deed nor any kind of harm comes to her, which indirectly reinforce the birth of new woman in male-dominated society.

After the rise of the new woman concept, it was uncovered that woman, who had been traditionally restricted from finding out about sex, became free to discuss venereal infections, contraception, separation, and infidelity. Marriage, customarily viewed as woman’s definitive objective and most noteworthy reward, turned into a kind of confinement which suppressed and overlooked female interests. The issue revealed through the characterization of new woman, the previously sinful sexual assets turned into dominant methods by which Victorian idealism could be challenged. Through her recently uplifted sexual consciousness the new woman like Calixta in Chopin’s story moved towards becoming the example for social transformation in the way patriarchal society views female body.

It would not be wrong to say that Kate Chopin's “The Storm “is ahead of its time. Written before the feminist movement, this story practically challenged the socio-cultural norms imposed on woman. The story gives one example of new woman with the message that not all the woman are born to fulfil the duty of ideal wife and mother. Calixta is surely the character who exemplifies Chopin's attempt to challenge conventional thoughts regarding woman and the undermining of male-centric philosophy. The story does not offer the situation of as an approach for opposing male-controlled society since the illegal relation makes them opponents. The story

addresses female sexuality since it depicts the endeavors of a marital lady to accomplish some sexual self-sufficiency (and delight) through illegal relationship.

The New Woman set different significance on her sexual self-sufficiency, yet that was hard to incorporate as a society because still there were voices of dissatisfaction to criticize female vulgarity in almost any form. For ladies in the Victorian time, any sexual movement outside of marriage was considered a deadly sin. But “Divorce law changes during the late 19th century gave rise to a New Woman who could survive a divorce with her economic independence intact, and an increasing number of divorced woman remarried” (Holden 3).

Similarly talking about the work of Mary Eleanor Wilkins Freeman “The Revolt of ‘Mother’” which was first published in 1890 during a controversial time for woman freedom and beginning of female revolution. Many scholars have claimed that the journey from conventional woman to new woman was not easy as it. As said by Donovan “For the first time woman were allowed into universities; for the first time, into professions such as medicine. For the first time woman had a genuine opportunity to leave the world of traditional woman – the home – and the traditional roles of wife and mother” (43). In this regard “The Revolt of ‘Mother’” can be seen as new woman story which addresses the themes of rebellion, self-assertion, tradition, and the repression of woman in a male-controlled society.

In her depiction of Sarah, Freeman makes it unmistakable from the earliest point that she is portraying a proficient and dedicated housewife whose submissiveness was the result of her own will, not somebody else's. But gradually, when the story gets progressed, the readers are made aware that Sarah is actually forced to remain contingent because of established patriarchal norms and values that she was obliged to follow. Before the marriage her husband had promised to give one

house to Sarah, but now neither she talkback with him about that promise nor he is doing any initiative to fulfil the promise of the house. As implied in the story, Sarah's husband is not able to understand or not trying to understand her desire for the house. In regard to the same issue of gender equality and identifying woman's need Gay argues:

When I say equality, I mean that woman should be able to move through the world with the same ease as men. Woman should be able to live in a society where their bodies are not legislated. They should be able to live their lives free from the threat of sexual violence. And when we consider the needs of woman, it is imperative to also consider the other identities a woman inhabits.

(45)

The story begins with Sarah Penn asking her husband, Adoniram, why men are digging in a field nearby. At first, Adoniram hesitates to answer and tries hard to avoid the question. But finally he reveals that people are digging a basement for a new barn. Sarah notices that the workers were preparing the building barn on the same spot where Adoniram had previously promised her to build the house. The story addresses the issue of same dissatisfied mother who begins to speak up against her husband's decision of making barn in the place promised to build new house. Her act of speaking up can be considered as the quality of new woman in Victorian age. Before the digging for barn she was an ideal housewife who used to abide by the decision of her husband, but when she witnesses her husband destroying their collective dream of house, she slowly changed to new woman personality. Donovan explains this trend changing from silent to revolutionary personality as: woman can "find 'their' place within the linear, grammatical, linguistic system that orders the symbolic, the superego, the law ... a system based entirely upon one

fundamental signifier: the phallus.” Or, they can refuse to engage in patriarchal systems. This means, however, they remain silent. But, “as long as woman remains silent, they will be outside the historical process” (44).

When she remained silent for many years, her husband was continuously exercising his dominance and imposing decisions on her. As soon as she adopted the characteristic of new woman and spoke out for her desire of home, her husband was shocked to see that part of her. It can also be argued that the process of being a new woman was encouraged by her motherhood instinct and her desire for the house was more directed towards the future of her two children, a girl, Nanny Penn, and a boy, Sammy.

Freeman’s story also gives another layer of new woman besides Sarah. While the mother represents an old woman who is struggling to become new woman by breaking patriarchal chains, the story gives the hint that Sarah’s daughter is already a new woman. In one of the paragraph from the story we can read that the mother is overly conscious regarding her daughter’s future and the duties she is expected to fulfil. The story narrates:

Nanny, she can't live with us after she's married. She'll have to go somewheres else to live away from us, an' it don't seem as if I could have it so, nowadays, father. She wa'n't ever strong. She's got considerable color, but there wa'n't never any backbone to her. I've always took the heft of everything off her, an' she ain't fit to keep house an' do everything herself. She'll be all worn out inside of a year. (116)

The daily chores listed in the above paragraph are the duties of conventional Victorian woman, and when the mother claims that her daughter cannot fulfil all these social duties, she indirectly implies that Nanny no longer belongs to the group of traditional

woman. Owing to the dialogue of mother we can assume that the upcoming generation like of Nanny's had already become new woman and they are not expected to live traditional lifestyle like conventional woman.

In a nutshell, this paper proves the claim that the writers has portrayed the woman as new woman because to showcase the rise of changed female personality who no more remain under the domination of patriarchal society. The presentation of the new woman was actually an academic approach to revolt against conventional mindset of society and its tendency to dominate woman in every sphere of life. During the textual analysis of selected stories, the researcher finds that almost all the stories have presented the submissive woman character that later gets transformed to new woman in the course of events unfolding in the stories. Some stories like "The Yellow Wallpaper" focuses more on the process of conventional female character being transformed into new woman and others like "The Storm" give more emphasis on the events unfolding on the story and deeds of new woman character.

After working on this research paper and getting insights from various reviewed literature, it concludes that the presentation of new woman in stories was actually the desire of those female writers to advocate for woman which they did through writing. As the research in selected stories was limited to analysis of new woman but the future researcher can also study on the aspects like female subjectivity, female trauma and identity in the stories.

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