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A Dream that Remains a Dream: The Case of ‘Sultana’s Dream’ by Begum Rokeya

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Abstract. For the proper progression of any nation, it is undeniable that women who occupy more or less half of the total population should be considered effective resources. However, even in this 21st century, the reality goes contradictory to it. That is, the dream of a world, where women can enjoy their basic human rights and can proclaim themselves as the human being rather than being considered as only mere women, is still a dream. This paper deals with the writing of Begum Rokeya Shakhawat Hossain’s ‘Sultana’s Dream’ and aims to analyze this text to make a comparative study between the utopian world portrayed in ‘Sultana’s Dream’ and our real world in order to show the unchanged status of women even today. This research is based on qualitative method. I think this research will add a new dimension to the existing field of feminism and is beneficiary for the people who are conscious of the rights of women and in support of building an egalitarian world.

Keywords. Sultana, dream, Begum Rokeya,

Introduction

In this present world, superficially women are enjoying equal rights but they are actually deprived of getting access in every chance of their outgrowth. The dream of women is enclosed in the shackle of patriarchy. The system engulfs the society by letting women inside and teaches them how to surrender to male power. Begum Rokeya, a pioneer of female education, was concerned about the issue and realized that only female education can alternate their fate. In ‘Sultana’s Dream’, Begum Rokeya creates a totally opposite world which is not averted by the traditional practice and male surveillance. Women have ensured their proper education, especially in the phase of science and technology, their contribution is noteworthy. This land called the “Ladyland”. It is a pure and sacred world based on love and truth. Social crimes are expelled from the country and moral virtues are embedded. In the “Ladyland”, men are staying inside the “Mordana” and women are conducting the social activities. They are able to prove their power through some scientific discoveries. Here, Begum Rokeya sets up the strength of women beyond biological feature. In ‘Sultana’s Dream’, the fondness of education is portrayed in Queen’s nature. The initiatives Begum Rokeya has taken for female education have been viewed as social awakening. However, the reality is, though she has tried to reform the society, the outcome is not gratifying as women are still holding secondary status as if their dream of enjoying equal rights was possible only in a dream. Begum Rokeya consciously or

subconsciously accepts it and that's why Sultana wakes up in the dystopian world. In this paper, I will try to make a comparative study between the context when 'Sultana's Dream' was written and the modern world to understand the stagnant status of women that is always marginalized and secondary.

Background

The traditional identity of a woman is at first as a daughter, then sequentially as a wife and mother and broadly her role as a woman in the society. As a daughter, she has to accept the priority of her father. As a wife, she has to be ruled by her master like husband. As a mother, she has to abandon her happiness for the sake of her child. Overall as a woman, she has to spend her whole life as a burden to others. There was a time when women were considered as a part of hearth because they consumed a certain portion of time in the kitchen. Their position has not changed yet. Still, their position has been inferior to the men. Though a new era has created in the field of science and technology all over the world, the society still treats women as slaves.

The millennium development goal has implemented to create the opportunity for the human being to become a national resource. It has formed into eight categories in targeting to achieve them by 2015. Among them, universal education and gender equality are major aspects. But it is shocking that the goal has not been achieved fully. We have to acknowledge education as the only way for women empowerment. Education equips women socially, economically and even nationally.

Traditional customs suggest women not to be educated rather being expert in doing household activities. But it is also proved that only education let women perform better in their household activities. In 'Sultana's Dream', the ardor of inner self to be free is interpreted by Begum Rokeya through a dream. The goal of educating women has not been achieved yet. It remains a dream as Begum Rokeya's 'Sultana's Dream'.

There are two reasons in writing 'Sultana's Dream'. The surface reason was to surprise her husband by showing her efficiency in English language but a strong voice to women empowerment was the implicit discourse. A feminist utopia is made by Begum Rokeya in 'Sultana's Dream' as she tried her best to establish female equity.

Though Begum Rokeya was born in a highly educated family, she could not get the scope of formal education. At the age of eighteen, when she got married, she found an opportunity to nourish herself through proper education. As her husband was suave and noble-minded, he encouraged Rokeya to learn Bengali and English language. Later, she wrote in a number of genres including novel, poem, short story, essay and even satirical article. Child marriage had created a strong influence on her mind while her sister was forced to marry at the age of fifteen and later, it drove her to stand against women subordination. She takes a glimpse of the story of Rama and Sita from the Sanskrit epic "Ramayan". Though their relationship is considered as ideal to all Indians, she depicts Rama, not an ideal husband. On the other side, Sita is like a puppet who doesn't have any voice of her own. In Rokeya's vision, they are like an average couple where men act as masters and women remain submissive and under the mercy of men.

Rokeya also mocks the Biblical story of Adam and Eve. In the Bible, Eve is convicted for men's fall down from the garden of Eden. Rokeya portrays Eve as a passionate woman who is eager to know everything and Adam as a womanish husband who wants to lead by his wife. She influenced Adam into eating the fruit, then gained knowledge and fell in the earth. It is certain that human civilization is impossible on earth without the bravery of Eve. Still, men are subjecting Eve or women under their supremacy and surveillance instead admiring them. In this two stories, Rokeya demonstrates the narrow conception of men toward women. In 'Sultana's

Dream', Begum Rokeya alludes her central focus on injustice for women and she protests against it through this text.

To achieve sustainable development of a nation, women empowerment plays a vital role. Sustainable development denotes ensuring a balance of the three columns, which are economic development, social development, and environmental development. Female empowerment has established a far-reaching impression to all these sectors in the utopian world of 'Sultana's Dream'. So it's time to reconsider the barriers of the women in our real world that create Begum Rokeya's dream fulfilled.

Rationale

Though women have rights to enjoy all basic human rights, they are always deprived of their rights. This is a common scenario of the world irrespective of country, race or class. The charter of the United Nations declares one of its major goals: "to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, (and) in the equal rights of men and women" (Achievement 66) which is adopted in 1945. In the declaration, there were some gender-neutral terms, such as: "all human beings", "everyone" to prove that the key intention of the declaration was for everyone, similarly men and women. The UN believes in women's human rights as a part of universal human rights. Some stereotypical views influence women to obey the prescriptive roles which have a detrimental impact on the enjoyment of their human rights. For example, a girl can't get proper access to education and they have been assumed to fit for mothers and wives who will never go into the workplace. That's why they do not have any necessity for quality education. The discrimination and inequality force women to stay behind. It can occur in a number of ways in which "De jure" or direct discriminatory provisions is one of them. For instance, when a law distinguishes between certain groups (ex: inheriting property, forbidding women from driving etc). "De facto" discrimination can also have negative effects on women even though they seem to be gender-neutral (1979). For instance, different aid programs may not benefit women equally as men because they often distribute benefit to the "Head of Household" which position is always occupied by men. It requires to extract all instances of such discrimination in order to assure proper equality.

The equality between men and women in marriage and household life is still unfulfilled.

Women, no doubt lag behind men to utilize their rights related to the private sphere. They are forced to get married, they are deprived of getting guardianship and adoption, they can't shift their identity to their children, and they even can't enjoy equal legal capacity. In order to assure equality, it is dire need to ensure the right to get marry with full consent, to choose a partner freely, and other related matters during and after marriage respectively.

In our society, women are often facing violations. Among them, the gender-based violation is a serious violation which threatens the overall human development and global peace. Some forms of violence against women can be rape, killing, sexual harassment, violence in the workplace, violence against migrant workers, domestic violence etc. Dowry is one of the heinous domestic violence which may affect the lives of girls and women. The United Nations defines dowry-related violence as an act of harassment associated with the offering or receiving dowry at any time of the marriage (before, during, after). Women are usually forced to live in starvation, deprivation of garments or imprisonment if they fail to meet the demand of dowry. Sometimes women are burned or killed by the perpetrators under the disguise of accident or suicide.

To eliminate all these types of violations against women, we need to empower women. Education is considered as the key tool for women empowerment. Because it prepares them to face the challenges, to meet their social and traditional roles as well as to defend regular

impediment and change their lives. Only literacy can help women to understand their equal rights in family, society and country. Education creates women financially sound which paves the way to perform activities socially, politically, psychologically and even technically. It's time to focus on 'Women in Development' rather 'Women for Development'. Jawaharlal Nehru rightly said, "If you educate a man, you educate an individual and if you educate a woman, you educate a whole family" (259). Begum Rokeya also tries to speak about the importance of women's education. The nature of education, its purposes, scopes as well as the emergence of its rapid uses are portrayed in her writing. Education stands as the main driving force of women's freedom in 'Sultana's Dream'.

In this text, Sister Sara is depicted as efficient in all branches of knowledge. A number of educational institutions have been established to equip women in different sectors. They are involved in the creation of a flying balloon, solar heat machine, artificial fountain etc. women are empowering themselves through the adaptation of education as well as science and technology. With the power of education, they are becoming superwomen by showing progress in both household chores and in ruling the country. But the global prosperity is questioned while the world is failed to achieve what Begum Rokeya set for women from more than One hundred year ago.

Objective

The primary objective of this research is to figure out the causes for which the dream of an equal world is still unfulfilled.

Hypothesis

Though the performance of women in the modern world is equal, they are still dominated. They are still victimized by the prevailing social customs.

Research Question

- Why do women still have secondary status?
- What are the barriers of female education?
- What can be the possible solution?

Methodology

This paper is mainly based on the form of a qualitative research approach. Qualitative research is a form of communal exploration heading on the purpose of how people interact regarding their experiences and the surroundings they reside in. I will use both primary and secondary sources in the completion of my research paper. I will use some articles, journals, essays as secondary sources.

Literature Review

Women play the most significant roles in developing the social, political, economic and cultural part of a country. Their performance is evident both in the para-eminent role in society and their contribution in the modern life. As half of the part of the world's population constitutes women, it would affect the national development if they are neglected. The sole purpose of the feminists from the 19th century to this modern era is to train the world about the ability and caliber of women. Through 'Sultana's Dream', Begum Rokeya not only demonstrates what would be if women are regarded as equal to men but also concerns their inanimate life in seclusion. Undoubtedly, women are secluded due to the superiority of patriarchy.

Audity Falguni (2010) is agreed with this thought as she believes that, only stronger physical appearance does not mean the superiority. In her article, Audity completely accedes with Begum Rokeya by saying: “the logic of a stronger physical composition of men to dominate women is overruled in that state on the principle that, ‘a lion is stronger than a man but it does not enable him to dominate the human race’ ” (3). Audity further interrogates as well as mocks men’s nature by saying: “it is in men’s nature to reproach women but again, it is men who cannot live without women” (58).

In another article, Deeksha Sharma (2017) believes that Begum Rokeya attempts to highlight the significance of equality, women’s education, and spiritual freedom. Here, equality refers to gender equality and only due to the different gender, it’s not obvious that one gender is better than other and one gender is worse than other similarly. As gender does not make any diverse sense so education also should be equal to both gender. Likewise, women’s spiritual freedom may come only when they get proper liberty from materialistic restrictions.

Admitting with Begum Rokeya, Deeksha emphasizes on the ongoing patriarchal oppression that has much influence on the lives of women. Women are the victims of patriarchal oppression because they are viewed as a weak being and traditional norms let men having in control of every aspect of women’s. She (Deeksha) mentions: “ ‘Sultana’s Dream’ is a feminist utopia as it attempts to challenge patriarchal oppression by providing women with a lesson on self-determination and worth” (41).

Juhaib Malik discusses the altered state of consciousness which is closely related to the text ‘Sultana’s Dream.’ The term “altered state of reality” refers to an alternative state which offers to occupy a diverse thought. This state emphasized mostly on reforming the society in a brand new way that is totally far from the real world. Where the normal state of consciousness refers to be aware of our daily thought, realization, intuition, conscience and emotion, precisely a strong awareness of what is happening with us including our surroundings. Here, the alterations that have happened is not merely an alterations of consciousness but an alteration between imagination and reality. This state cannot last in a longer period of time rather within a very short period of time it could effect on our brain and helps us to travel beyond reality. In his (Malik) paper, he tries to conjoin Donna Fancourt’s concept for a clear understanding of utopia.

According to Fancourt, there is four altered state through which the concept of utopia is closely related with. Those are madness, dreaming, spirituality, and telepathy. Among all of them, Begum Rokeya is able to establish an imaginary world by taking a harbor of dreaming (Daydream). Malik considers ‘Sultana’s Dream’ not as a mere text of assimilating some words rather he regards it as an act of utopian transformation that happens within the dream. He says, “...dreaming becomes a state that could be utilized more effectively in the struggle for

Utopian transformation, linking ideas to action” (4). He mentions the scientific achievement of the female in ‘Sultana’s Dream’ and observes that women’s use of ingenious science fiction would bring a good way of life for a better nation.

Theoretical Framework

In the text ‘Sultana’s Dream’, Begum Rokeya mainly focuses on the emancipation of women from traditional, social, cultural and religious malpractice. The hidden desire for upholding an individual identity is portrayed in this novel in an unconscious state. As the main concern of this research is to establish a social status of women through proper authorization, I will apply the feminism and the psychoanalysis theory in my research paper.

Feminism is a collection of movements and ideologies which focuses on gender as a key point to analyze as well as a platform to look for equality, equity, and proper rights. The central

idea of feminism is to form equality in society between men and women. It does not support just of being a mere woman. It's about a political movement, ideologies, and beliefs which are concerned with the idea of gender difference and its effects. It looks after the opportunities of being equal with proper dignity. Feminism is the acknowledgment to regard women as complete human being as they deserve the equal dignity and opportunity in all aspects of society.

According to the Oxford Dictionary (9th edition), "the belief and aim that women should be the same rights and opportunities as men; the struggle to achieve this aim" (570).

Broadly, feminism is a theory, or a belief, or an advocacy that fights for equal rights and opportunities for women. The history of the feminist movement is divided into three waves in which each of them deals with different aspect. The first wave was started in the 19th through the early 20th century that focuses on suffragette movement and civil rights movement. The second wave (the 1960s – 1980s) dealt with the actions connected to "women's liberation movement".

The third wave of feminism started in the late 1980s to early 20th century, dealt with both an extension of the second wave and a response to the previous failures.

Though the feminist movement can be traced back to 1848, when the first women conference occurred in Seneca Falls in the United States of America, the idea was initiated around 24 centuries ago. The Greek philosopher Plato supported childcare so that women could be soldiers and according to Elaine Hoffman Baruch, Plato "(argued) for the total political and sexual equality of women advocating that they be members of his highest class...those who rule and fight" (Utopia 209).

In the 17th century, the proto-feminist Bathsua Makin wrote "The Present Duchess of New Castle" which is considered a prime example of what women could have come through proper education. Since the ancient period, women have always been considered inferior to men because of their biological difference. Mary Wollstonecraft is one of the most influential women and has been called "the mother of feminism". She has fought for women's right and intellectual betterment which is coined in her masterpiece *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*.

Wollstonecraft has questioned the patriarchal society by showing their psychological superiority. She says, "She was created to be the toy of man, his rattle, and it must jingle in his ears whenever dismissing reason, he chooses to be amused" (118).

She has been exhibited a society as a competitive platform where there is an urge to raise voice for women for every woman as well as men. Wollstonecraft claims women's psychological freedom in individualism. Through this, women are able to think critically as such it will facilitate their self-observation. It will also pave the way to think for themselves who they actually want to be. She asserts,

"Strengthen the female mind by enlarging it, and there will be an end to blind obedience; but as blind obedience is ever sought for by power, tyrants and sensualists are in the right when they endeavor to keep women in the dark, because the former only want slaves, and the latter a plaything" (107).

Here, she is arguing for women to be intellectual and worthy. In order to achieve this goal, women have to gain the equivalent facilities as men. Traditional gender role cast women as irrational, weak, nurturing and submissive. It excludes women from equal access to leadership and decision making position both in the family and the outside world. Patriarchy also promotes the belief that women are innately inferior to men. This inborn inferiority is called biological essentialism which is based on the biological differences between the sexes. Patriarchal ideology acknowledges that a woman possesses only two identities. She is a "good girl" if she accepts her traditional gender roles and abides by patriarchal rules. She is referred to as "bad girl" if she doesn't. The key stance of feminism is to split the idea in this way: the

gender inequalities are not natural but social, not pre-appointed but produced by men in order to keep the power. It is a socio-political movement that revolts against such discrimination, domestic violence, stereotypical gender role, and oppression. It works for demolishing superstitions and unethical biasness about society and human psychology.

The term psychoanalysis was first used by Sigmund Freud in 1896 through his notable creation *An Interpretation of Dream*. Psychoanalysis is a psychological method meant for understanding and curing mental illnesses. It had a very specific idea about how the human mind works, assuming that every human is to a certain degree controlled by unconscious mental processes. Freud's theory became more mature but more complex in the course of time, and since he developed it continuously, its different concepts were strongly interwoven.

Freud believed that the human psyche operates on three levels of awareness which are: preconscious, conscious and unconscious. Conscious mind includes some action or feeling of which we are currently aware of. The act which cannot be allowed in the conscious mind directly goes to the unconscious mind. Dream originates from the repressed wishes which are active in the unconscious part of the mind. It is actually the medium to express the unconscious mind.

According to Freud, "It is in the nature of all censorship that in speaking of forbidden things one is permitted to say things that are not true sooner than the truth" (279).

Dream work is the mechanism of a dream which has two central dimensions: latent dream content and manifest dream content. The manifest content is what the dream seems to be saying and the latent content is what the dream is really trying to say. Freud also believed that all dreams consist of unrealized desires, often formed from "latent content" of the unconscious and concealed in the "manifest content" that we perceive in the dream. He says, "Applying our method of dream interpretation has enabled us to uncover the existence of a latent dream-content which is far more significant than the manifest dream-content" (126). The dream represents the unconscious wishes or anticipation which is disguised symbolization and other distorting mechanisms. In 'Sultana's Dream', the visit in ladyland is the fulfillment of Sultana's unfulfilled desire.

Description

Chapter one

Begum Rokeya's 'Sultana's Dream' is a feminist attempt to make women independent in the field of science, technology, ethics, honesty, and humanism. Here, there is no sign of patriarchal domination. This text tries to establish a Utopian Ladyland where women have access to public spaces without being subjected to male surveillance. The Utopian concept was first coined by Sir Thomas More as a socio-political satire. According to More, the island of Utopia is,

"...two hundred miles across in the middle part, where it is widest, and nowhere much narrower than this except towards the two ends, where it gradually tapers. These ends, curved round as if completing a circle five hundred miles in circumference, make the island crescent-shaped, like a new moon" (7).

The term, "Feminist Utopia" points to a world without gender illegitimacy, imagining an alternate reality where men and women are not stuck in traditional customs of inequality. The main concern of feminist utopia is to establish a world where women can enjoy all access to the private and public sphere in order to become self-reliant.

In this text, Begum Rokeya sets up a world through a dream where the position of women are supreme and the men are restrained. Women have improved their efficiency as the queen ensured proper education for them. They show their contribution to the sector of science

and technology. They have studied science and invented lots of things. By using “brain power”, they prove them smarter than men. There are two universities for women in the lady land. One of them invented a wonderful balloon which is linked by a number of pipes. Through this balloon, they can drive above the cloud land and draw as much water as they want from the atmosphere.

Another university discovered an instrument to gather sun heat as much as they required. By passing sunlight and heat, they create solar heat for cooking. They plow their land through electricity to supply the required power for their work. The “Ladyland” is free from flood, thunderstorm, mud or even a single mosquito bite. The artificial fountain is another invention to keep the environment cool in hot weather.

When the women in “Ladyland” are busy in different scientific researches, the men are laughed at their invention by calling the whole thing as “a sentimental nightmare”. The term “sentimental nightmare” is used here to mock on their work as they (men) can’t imagine women outside the household and not even their scientific discoveries. In this text, Begum Rokeya tries to demonstrate their narrow conception towards women from the prior period of human evolution to the present. Though the men laugh at their achievements, they finally acknowledge their deeds as the country is saved from the enemy only through the scientific invention of women. That’s why, they have been kept into “Mardana” (an opposite word to “Zenana”) termed by Begum Rokeya. These scientific discoveries have been drawn a new horizon for women in ‘Sultana’s Dream’.

In the Lady land, women are much concerned with environmental thinking alongside education. Environmental consciousness is a key part of the utopian society. There is no smoke, chimney or trash to contaminate the environment rather the whole land is surrounded by green grass and flower garlands. There is no sign of fire. Solar heat is used in cooking with the connection between sunlight and heat. The house is neat and clean and the whole domestic picture is well decorated and greatly furnished. The street is covered with green grass of moss and flowers and it is too soft to seem a velvet cushion.

Begum Rokeya also explores a new religious aspect which is based on the concept of love, generosity, kindness, and mercifulness. It seems to be the purity is spreading its supremacy everywhere in the “Ladyland”. A strong sense of religious belief is recognized in Sultana’s character. She feels shy while she is walking outside with Sister Sara as she is used to putting on veil when she steps outside her domestic world. The reason behind this shyness is that the outside world is conducted by the male-dominated society where females are not allowed to interfere with their action.

Religion is considered as a part of the culture and it also has a great impact on society.

Though religion emphasizes the equal treatment between male and female, the dominating society is still oppressing women. The American feminist writer Sarah Grimke stands against this societal misguidance. In her second letter, “Women Subject Only to God” she provides some Biblical references where she tries to prove men and women are created equally. She also believes slavery is beyond God’s will where the society considers the born of women is only to become a slave of men. In her letter, she urges the patriarchal society for the psychological emancipation of womanhood. She says, “All I ask of our brethren is that they will take their feet from off our necks and permit us to stand upright on that ground which God designed us to occupy” (11).

Begum Rokeya believes that, though Allah has created men and women biologically different, they both are equal in all other senses. She also questions the patriarchal society for the subjugation of women as the society believes that religion itself retrained women from the privilege that a man can enjoy. In her English article ‘God Gives, Man Robs’ she shows that,

“Allah has made no distinction in the general life of male and female-both are equally bound to seek food, drink, sleep etc. necessary for animal life. Islam also teaches that male and female are equally bound to say their daily prayers five times and so on” (414).

The most important thing is that Begum Rokeya considers every kinship as sacred even though it is beyond blood relation. If the human civilization is wrapped by the glory of sanctity, there will be no offense, not even the intention of domination or suppression. In ‘Sultana’s Dream’, she alludes all these things in such line, “...a distant cousin is as sacred as a brother” (412).

A conventional stereotype of men is focused on this daydream. For example: “men have bigger brains” and women are “naturally weak”. Rokeya coins the word “Manoshik Dashotto” or “Mental Slavery” to split these type of prescriptive ideology. According to her, due to this slavery, women have lost their identity and they even don’t know the power of own ness. They are unfit to the outside world since they have to think them weaker than men. In this case, Rokeya dismisses this absurd idea by presenting proper logic, “An elephant also has got a bigger and heavier brain than a man has” (408). She provokes the womanhood to cast away all these conventional frivolities through the following words, “Jago, jago go bhagini (wake up, wake up sisters)” (Abanati 22).

In the “Ladyland”, women are educated and are aware of environment as well as of moral issues. Environmental consciousness is a key part of the utopian society. There is no smoke, chimney or trash to contaminate the environment rather the whole land is surrounded by green grass and flower garlands. There is no sign of fire. Solar heat is used in cooking with the connection between sunlight and heat. Women also have a high stance of personality with moral virtue in ‘Sultana’s Dream’.

Love and truth is the primary law in this lady land. The moral duty is to be loved and truthful to each other. The type of punishment is also strange as it is not much brutal as that of the real world. The sinner is asked to leave the land and not to enter again. Sister Sara assures Sultana not to be afraid to face any man and remarks, “This is Ladyland, free from sin and harm. Virtue itself reigns here” (404).

Another prominent feature of this “Ladyland” is that they do not permit any girl to have an early marriage. The women are proving themselves as worth as men by forming education compulsory for all. By empowering them through proper education, they go out of the enclosure and prepare to fit for trade and business. The queen in the “Ladyland” ejaculated, “no trade was possible with countries where the women were kept in the zenanas...” (413).

Like ‘Sultana’s Dream’, *Herland* is also a fictional feminist utopian novel where Gilman attempts to set up her philosophy of regression from masculinity. In the novel, the Herlandian society is out of any traditional ideas or norms and they reject these completely. The main concern of both of this novel is about the “Status quo” of the 20th century which remain unchanged in this modern time rather a fictitious one. In *Herland*, Gilman creates a utopian society which is made by women without any aid of men. The island is conducted by a women community based on the regime of motherhood. The intruders who enter into the island are amazed at the power of motherhood which is not biological rather social. It is usually believed that without the supremacy of men no nation can be civilized. However, Gilman tries to portray an opposite picture in her novel. She also interrogates the male-dominated society where patriarchy places women in the subordinate position constructing some notions as universal. For instance: patriarchy constructs feminine sexuality only to please men. In the novel *Herland*, the inhabitants are recognized as much calm and rational like the women in ‘Sultana’s Dream’ whom Sultana encounters in her daydream. Throughout the novel, Gilman compares the men’s society with the women where men’s society is based on thousands of years’ traditional norms,

and women have no laws or policies elsewhere. The socio-political scenario in the island is stable and beneficial. The laws and policies are impartial as everyone is considered equal. There is no biological differences in the island as we can see the women in short hair and athletic body. Their garments are also not seducing and most importantly they are not as coy as the traditional women.

Education is given the most priority. Friendship is sacred and punishment for crime is not mandatory. Love, purity, and respect are the primary ingredients of the island. Men are distinguished as ego-centric, narrow-minded and full of traditional bias. Here, racism is inconsequential while the whole world is parted in the idea of superiority and inferiority. In the literal world, women are regarded as “the others” and the term “others” is prescribed by the patriarchy. Here, the novel *Herland* questions to the patriarchy what would be the situation of three intruders if they were considered as “others” in this utopia. If it would happen, perhaps the intruders couldn’t enter into the island or might be punished by the utopian community. By producing the concept of utopia, Gilman urges to the contemporary women not to be oppressed by the authority or by the influence of patriarchy.

Both in ‘Sultana’s Dream’ and *Herland* we see that physical strength is the main weapon for men whereas psychological wisdom is for the women. As women are considered traditionally inferior to the men then why the superior nation keeps women inside the four walls is a big question. Begum Rokeya uses the ironical term “Zenana” to depict such position of women.

Patriarchy itself is a social norm and this norm would never let another power to rise since it is circulated as supreme. These two books voice for the social awakening so that no women would be differentiated as the subordinate being.

Chapter two

In the early 20th century, when Begum Rokeya stood against the patriarchal social system, on the purpose of liberating women through a utopian vision another feminist Charlotte Perkins Gilman also wrote on the same philosophy which was based on the emergence of a different world far from the reality. Both of the authors were compelled to move on to the imaginary world, full of happiness and tranquility due to the extreme misery and melancholy in their everyday life- in the real world.

Rokeya establishes a utopian world via dream in ‘Sultana’s Dream’ and Gilman portrays a complete women dominated fictional world in her novel *Herland*. Both texts signify a journey heading to a land which is ruled by the females. However, the predicament is that they have to leave the utopian world after being delighted by the corruption free land. These two texts

motivate the reader to have a new outlook about women’s capability that is, women possess the same quality as that of men and they really can challenge the patriarchal dominance. The title of the novel *Herland* implies a land controlled by the women. The novel especially depicts a utopian land where three friends travel to explore the issue which is unknown to the outside world. Through this novel, Gilman tries to differentiate the world where the inhabitants of *Herland* live and the society where we reside. We can find similar things in both ‘Sultana’s Dream’ and *Herland* like, gender roles, influence of education, patriarchal power, and religion on the lives of women.

In *Herland*, Gilman encourages women to embrace their own identity. We live in a society full of imperfection. In contrast this novel is an attempt to establish a safe gender binary. In the novel, the intruders to the *Herland* hold a traditional idea of gender performance. They are different in their individual approaches to treat women. Jeff thinks women as things to be entertained and worshiped where Terry has a notion to own them. Terry faces some difficulties

in *Herland* to comply with the rules organized by the women and he has to leave the land at the end of the novel. The women are much peaceful in nature as they behave politely when the three men are arrested. Surprisingly they notice the inhabitants of *Herland* is united and devoted to their own work which is completely inverse to their own world.

Like Begum Rokeya, Gilman also dreams of a technologically advanced society in *Herland* where women rely on science and technology in lieu of religious ideology. That's why she follows an experiential learning style to educate the Herlander's which refers to a learning process where knowledge is being produced through experience. Gilman is aware of the importance of education. She envisions an educational system where everybody is open to pursue as he/ she wants. She thinks education as natural as breathing and the other things that happen spontaneously in the environment. The method and subject matter of the education perpetuate their value on the basis of motherhood in Herland. Here, the inhabitants are agile for the overall development of their child and thus education becomes a part of their everyday life.

Gilman's approach to education occupies the center of her 1915 utopian novel *Herland*. It abdicates the traditional method of learning and pays more attention to children's inclination and their needs. She thinks education as the key to democracy. The educational theory that is applied in the novel *Herland* ensures the quality of education which is not about to be bounded to the individual but to the whole society. Gilman's notion of education is also similar to Rousseau's notion. In *Herland*, the inhabitants motivate their children to self-directed actions, to the mandatory institution based tasks. Through this natural learning style, the inhabitants are made an example of being educated as the three intruders surprise on the tenderness of the child. Van narrates that, the Herlander's kids live with the belief of "Peace, Beauty, Order, Safety, love, Wisdom, Justice, Patience and plenty" (93).

Gilman also rejects the traditional norms while shaping the figures of Herlandian women.

They have short hair and muscular bodies which suggest that they are powerful. As each and every aspect in society is made by the women in 'Sultana's Dream', the Herlandian women are also able to make things happen- a wonderful ground, undamaged road, and all the aspects that need to make a perfect world. A glimpse of their technological advancement, as well as overall development, is explored through the following lines: "the road was some sort of hard manufactured stuff, slopped slightly to shed rain, with every curve and grade and gutter as perfect as if it were Europe's best" (15).

Gilman regards women rationally equal and corporeally as worthy as that of men. Herlander's concept of motherhood is the best weapon to disintegrate the gender norms. Women in Herland are diverse from others as they don't have any male counterpart. On the appearance of the three visitors, they remark on the unfeminine outlook of the women as they (women) feel beyond women, attire beyond women and treat beyond women. After living three months they come to the point that their behavior, outlook, dress up and everything is according to their comfort while the traditional women do everything to please men. Here, Lane rightly said, "How proud we are when a girl plays like a little mother: yet maternity and paternity are inappropriate in a child... when they are encouraged to early, the boy is not a damaged as the girl because he is permitted as a whole range of human activities. When a healthy girl shares on those activities, we call her "tom-boy". As a result, we now believed that most human qualities are masculine, simply because we permit men to develop them but prohibit women from doing so" (Beyond 239).

These two utopian texts suggest that women are able to do anything by themselves if only they want. 'Sultana's Dream' and *Herland* both represent a female society that criticizes the existing male society where women are supposed to be below of men. The major common

element of these two texts is that it talks about an imaginary world which is based on female supremacy and seems to be more human without their male counterpart.

Like ‘Sultana’s Dream’, *Herland* is a symbol of a peaceful society where women are the superior. The inhabitants of both writings are so friendly and work together to do everything. No conflict and oppositional clash are recognized, not even any competition among them.

Chapter three

From the time immemorial, women are generally forced to accept the superiority of men. Still today their position remains marginalized, though a number of feminist movement occurs to give them proper right over the period of time. Women have lots of contribution to the development of a nation which is concealed every day by the patriarchal power. They are not recognized properly except thinking them only good at playing roles in home and hearth. We need to empower the women not only to face the challenges of a competitive future but also making them able to take a perfect decision even in their family matters.

Education is the most important tool in empowering women. Education can help women to solve every kind of problems and challenges in their private and social life. It can make them capable of ensuring socio-economic challenges. Child marriage is the most significant obstacle to girls’ education. Children are forced to get married which ends their dream of being educated. Once a child gets married, she has to take care of her family which creates a negative mindset.

Moreover, if married girls would prefer to continue their schooling, they are excluded from doing it for their family pressure. As child marriage is a big threat to girls’ education, a joint effort and policies should formulate to reduce it. Parents also retain some negative belief of girls’ education as they are not supposed to be the bread earner for their families. That’s why parents do not think any necessity of girls’ education. In this case, some steps should be taken to encourage parents in educating their girl. It is necessary to ensure women’s safety both in the household and the street. Because on the way to school, they are often being assaulted, afflicted and teased. Truly, there is no safe place for women. The government should generate strict laws for the security of women. An effective school committee should be formed to ensure a violence free and safe learning environment for girls.

Conclusion

In this project I have tried to read the ideas presented in the text ‘Sultana’s Dream’ by Begum Rokeya in the light of empowering women in every sectors. Through the text ‘Sultana’s Dream’, Begum Rokeya glorifies women’s emancipation from traditional roles. She strongly believes that, in order to be self-reliant, women should be educated as it is the key way to alternate their subordinate position. Empowerment refers to move from powerlessness to powerful and so in order to ensure women’s empowerment, women’s active engagement in social, political and economic sectors should be ensured and at the same time if we cannot bring them out of the shackle of patriarchy, their position will not be changed.

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