

Gender Aspects Found in some Selected Sinhala Novels:

A Feminist Approach

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Introduction

Literary criticism is a study evaluation and interpretation of literature. However little research has been undertaken in the field of literary criticism in contemporary Sri Lankan literature. This has created a vacuum in the understanding of certain aspects of the literature.

Feminist theory is the extension of feminism of theoretical or philosophical discourse. It aims to understand the nature of gender equality. It examines women's social roles experiences, interests and feminist politics in a variety of fields such as Anthropology and Sociology, Communication Psychoanalysis, Economics, Literature, Education and Philosophy.

Much of feminist theory also focuses on analyzing gender inequality. Themes explored in feminism include discrimination, objectification, oppression and patriarchy.

Gender is relatively a new concept. It is the socio-cultural definition given to girls and boys, men and women while nature makes us biologically male or female. Society makes us socially feminine or masculine and it is gender and society which determines the appearance, attitudes, behavior roles, responsibilities, rights access and control over resources etc. of girls/women and boys/men expressed in another way. Gender is a phenomenon and refers to norms, values, customs and practices by which biological differences are transformed and exaggerated into a much wider social system because of patriarchy. There is gender inequality in the present world.

Research Problem

- What is Gender and what is feminism?
- Why is the gender question created?
- What do we mean by empowerment of women?
- Why is it necessary?
- How does it represent gender in the Sinhala Novel?

Objectives of the Study

- Understand feminism in gender studies as an academic field of study and research
- Understand and use of intersectional feminist analysis to explore the basics of social inequalities.
- To examine critically about Sinhala novels and writers and about the relationship of literature to gender issues.
- The goal of feminist and gender studies is to broaden our perspectives and consider the conditions for the creation of a more equitable society.

Theoretical Considerations and Empirical Evidence

Feminism has become one of the most prominent concepts/ideologies in contemporary sociological theories. This can be referred to as a theoretical thinking which fights against the forces that devalue women. This theory emerged in the 18th century in Europe as a response to the subordination of women which promoted gender equality and empowered women.

Feminist theory and its attention to diversity offer a sound basic for organization working to change women's inferior social position and the social, political and economic discrimination that perpetuate it. Many of these organizations come together in networks under the umbrella of feminism, and include a worldwide movement to end Gender discrimination/Gender sexism and sexist oppression, by empowering women.

All branches of feminism deal with the linkages of gender with other relevant social categories. Members of each branch and the groups they work with negotiate how gender is constructed according to their own needs and priorities. Different feminisms result from these constructions.

Methodology

Sex is biological component of male and female and Gender is the social and psychological component. Feminism is a worldwide movement to end sexism by empowering women. Branches of feminism include liberal feminism, its main stream and inclusive branch focusing on working within the system to end sexism; cultural feminism and focusing on positive qualities of women's roles; socialist feminism focusing on ending sexism by eliminating capitalism and adopting socialist principles and radical feminism. Calling for women to create separate women centered social institutions; multicultural or global feminism, working for change

across national boundaries; and eco-feminism, focusing on environmental action are important.

Taking these factors into account, observations were made to study the impact of feminist literary criticism in the field of Sinhalese novels. Relationship between the literature and gender studies was studied and analyzed on the basis of a feminist prospective. Accordingly special attention was paid on radical feminist theory.

The research was conducted on the writings of four novelists who contributed to Sinhalese novels. Two female writers and two male writers who have joined this field are selected in this research.

- i. Sumithra Rahubadda
- ii. Sunethra Rajakarunanayake
- iii. K. Jayathilaka
- iv. Gunadasa Amarasekara

I have selected four books written by these above mentioned authors for my research.

Key Findings and Conclusion

- The women have been characterized as a second class being in all writings.
- The women have been defected as a weak character, mentally and physically.
- The women do not receive the rightful place as she has been wrongly interpreted due to her responsibilities in society.
- Patriarchy has eclipsed all aspects of the women's life in all spheres.

Keywords: Discrimination; Empowerment; Feminism; Gender; Novel; Subordination;

