

The Women struggle in a patriarchal society in “Amy Tan's” ‘*The Kitchen God's Wife*’

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Abstract

The article analyses Amy Tan's novel *The Kitchen God's wife* (1991). The novel reveals the female struggle in a patriarchal society and the influence of distinctive cultural backgrounds between a mother and daughter which affects their relationship, it also discusses the sufferings of women. The first part of the article is about the novel and how the protagonist has suffered by her husband. It narrates the whole story, and also proclaims the past bitter experiences of the narrator named 'Winnie Louie' a Chinese born American. The novel also deals with a young woman in California who realises a great understanding of her mother's Chinese background. The novel is believed to be an autobiography of the novelist 'Amy Tan'. The second part of the article deals with the female struggle in a patriarchal society, it concludes with the argument on male chauvinism and its consequences.

Amy Tan is a Chinese-American author. She stands prominent among her contemporaries. Amy Tan was born in Oakland, California. Her family migrated to America from China during the Chinese civil war in 1949. Her father Jan Tan is an electrical engineer and a minister in Baptist society. Amy Tan is known for her lyrically written tales of emotional conflicts between the Chinese mothers and daughters. Amy Tan's writings mostly associated with familial conflicts, loss and reconciliation, male chauvinism and so on.

The Kitchen God's wife (1991) is a story of a young woman in California who realized her mother's Chinese background, and tries to know her mother's sufferings, her bitter past with her Chinese husband, and how she was treated as a machine for sex without humanity. *The Kitchen God's wife* (1991) is Amy Tan's second novel, it discusses about a young Chinese American woman's search for her heritage, and to know about her mother's past life with her Chinese husband. The first part of the novel reveals from the daughter Pearl's point of view. It portrays her difficult relationship and conflicts with her mother 'Winnie Louie'. It is interesting to see her mother's reactions, her reappraches and every moments of their relationship. "Winnie" leads a life in China with her cruel husband named "Wen Fu". She had three children all of them were dead in infancy. "Wen Fu" treated Winnie like a machine only for sex, and abused her. One day "Wen Fu" met with an accident and lost one of his eyesights.

After the accident "Wen Fu" insulted "Winnie" by calling her as whore, "I am a sick man, you are a healthy woman! I am a hero, you are a whore! Your two eyes see other men in the street" (P179) Winnie tolerated everything and was simply running her life with so much of mental disturbance, she has faced trouble in every sides, after her father's death, she was tortured doubly by her husband. Winnie struggles a lot and tried all her means to be a good wife to her husband but all in vain. Winnie wants to lead a good and happy life with Wen Fu. In fact, Winnie was brought up by her uncle and aunt, she didn't receive parental love from her parents. Winnie's married life also became unhappy because of the husband, he is a lover of sex who always wanted to have sex and compels her for that.

If she refuses, he abuses her with dirty words like prostitute and whore. One morning, he blamed her that she was not a good wife to satisfy his wishes. It angered Winnie and she shouted at him in frustration, in response to it, he shows his anger towards his own child by hitting verily hard. When Hus second daughter was very ill and affected by diarrhoea he stopped the doctor from giving treatment and insisted him to play card. So, Winnie wanted to get divorce from her husband. In 1941, during the Christmas time Winnie met 'Jimmy Louie' who is an American, born with Chinese background. It's her first meeting of Jimmy Louie who was crazy for Winnie by hearing her tearful past. So, Winnie fell in love with Jimmy Louie. When Wen Fu came to know about the secret love between Winnie and Jimmy Louie he was infuriated and called her a whore, made her to write a divorce note with a gun on her head. He humiliated her by asking to kneel down before him, and said. "You are such a worthless whore"! With a big laugh. " You are divorced, get up from my life bed" (P217) Then Winnie wrote a letter to Jimmy Louie who was in America, with an intention to elope write him to America. With all these problems they reached America. Jimmy Louie loved and cared for her more than Wen Fu, he often sings song for Winnie. But again a huge hurricane came into her life. Winnie was arrested and put in the women's prison, she didn't know the reason, Wen Fu appeared in front of her and smiled wildly. The reason behind her arrest was under the charges of stealing her ex-husband's valuables like gold, and for leaving her Chinese husband alone and illegally eloped with an American, she was shocked and cried. She said to the judge "My husband divorced me a long time ago, during the Civil war he puts a gun to my head and forced me to sign a divorce paper" (P356) Wen Fu defied it and asked for a witness, when she failed to produce eyewitness she was sentenced two years jail, then Wen Fu got back the complaint against her for some reasons. When Winnie was alone, he went and torn off her passport, visa, and divorce paper, her tickets, then raped her very wildly and said, "Beg me, beg me to let you to be my wife" (P391) she was angry and managed to escape from him. She did not even want to kill him because Winnie was a kind hearted woman.

At the end, Wen Fu realized his mistakes, and he begged her to pardon him for his hearing mistakes. He was ashamed of his activities and burnt himself. Winnie was worried hearing that, not because of the love, but because of the loss of a life. Then she leads a good life with Jimmy Louie.

Conclusion

Winnie has a little recognition in the patriarchal society; she could not lead a normal life. This novel is an example of first person narrative, talks about the narrator's past and present. "The Kitchen God" is an interesting character in Chinese mythology, who treats her wife badly, he has been cursed by many women even now. Like the 'Kitchen God' the character 'We Fu' played a demonic and dominant role in Winnie's life, but Winnie becomes a victim of male domination. This indicates that, Winnie as a character of power and authority turned against oppression that leads to recognition. She has become a powerful woman in American society.

Work cited

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