




## RESEARCH ARTICLE

Section: *Language and Linguistics***A comparative analysis of the representation of gender equality Awareness in *Lucy, The Woman Warrior* and *The God of Small Things* novels**Rosa Maria Simamora<sup>1</sup>, Karisma Erikson Tarigan<sup>1</sup>, Bertova Simanihuruk<sup>1</sup>, Bonar Gurning<sup>1</sup>, Pioro Benevolent Lariesto<sup>1</sup>, & Muhammad Yusuf<sup>2</sup><sup>1</sup>Department of English Literature, Universitas Katolik Santo Thomas<sup>2</sup>Department of English, Universitas Sumatera UtaraCorrespondence: [rosasimamora1967@gmail.com](mailto:rosasimamora1967@gmail.com)**ABSTRACT**

Violence against women continues every year as the driven by patriarchy, gender inequality, and the lack of awareness especially among women themselves on the gender equality. This research explores gender equality as represented in three novels namely *Lucy, The Woman Warrior* and *The God of Small Things* Novels. This study employs qualitative and quantitative approach. This study uses feminist literary criticism and pragmatic theories. The analysis focuses on women's actions, such as promotion women's self-worth, the ability to make independent choices, and advocating for social change for themselves and others. These themes are examined through the authors' presentation of characters, settings, points of view, plots, and language. Questionnaires were distributed to 48 female students from the Department of English Literature at Universitas Katolik Santo Thomas, who had read the novels, to assess their sense of empowerment. The study concludes that the three novels empower women to become more aware of gender equality, especially in advocating for rights, freedom, and opportunities. Through their appreciation of the novels, the women/students recognize and assess their potential for personal growth. They gain insights into societal norms and customs, learn how to respond to them, and highlight the importance of education in enhancing self-worth—by studying diligently, completing their education on time, and securing employment. From 48 female students who are addressed the questioners, 47 corresponds give yes answers. It means that the novels empower them to be aware of gender equality.

**KEYWORDS:** ability to choose, awareness, gender equality, self-worth, social change**Research Journal in Advanced Humanities**

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## Introduction

In 2022, cases of abuse against women in our country rose to 25,050 victims, as reported by the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (Bayu, dataindonesia.id). On *International Women's Day 2022*, the National Commission on Violence Against Women released a report titled *CATAHU*, which highlights numbers, types, and forms of gender-based violence (*Kekerasan Berbasis Gender*, KGB). It also examines structural and cultural barriers, as well as legal challenges in addressing these issues. The report expressed concerns about the stagnation of prevention and response efforts in the face of rising cases and increased complexity of gender-based violence against women (komnasperempuan.go.id). Domestic violence is the most common form of violence experienced by women globally such as economic violence, psychological violence, emotional violence, physical violence, and sexual abuse, remains the most common form of violence experienced by women globally (Razaghi and Ramezani, et al. 2022).

Gender equality and gender-based violence are issues that directly and personally affect every individual. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), gender refers to the socially constructed characteristics, norms, behaviors, and roles of women, men, girls, and boys. This includes norms, behaviors and roles associated with being a woman, man, girl or boy, as well as relationships with each other. It is hierarchical and produces inequalities that intersect with other social and economic inequalities. Gender-based discrimination, such as ethnicity, socioeconomic status, disability, age, geographic location, gender identity and sexual orientation, are among others. This concept is referred to as intersectionality (Torgrimson).

Gender equality means when people of all genders have equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities. Achieving it, is a key to ending extreme poverty: when women and girls have a quality education, access to healthcare, sustainable livelihoods, and a seat at the decision-making table, economies shift (Sara De Vido 2018). Gender awareness is the ability to view society from the perspective of gender roles and how this has affected women's needs in comparison to the needs of men (Hubert and Stratigaki 2011). Gender equality awareness aims at increasing general sensitivity, understanding, and knowledge about gender equality. Besides, it aims to promote and encourage a general understanding of gender-related challenges, for instance, violence against women and gender pay gap. It also aims to show how values and norms influence our reality, reinforce stereotypes and support the structures that produce inequalities (Rolintulus).

To empower people/women to be more aware of gender equality is crucial issue to be discussed since it involves and affects diverse people with their responsibilities and opportunities and so it deals with human rights. There are still some cultures and society, particularly those experienced colonization and adhere to patriarchal system that seem to have the same view on un-fully supports women's rights.

The idea of the gender equality awareness is well described in The Victorian Government's vision as to live in a safe and equal society, have equal access to power, resources and opportunities, be treated in dignity, respect and fairness (Billings 2019). In his profile page as *HeForShe Champion*, President Joko Widodo states that women represent half of driving forces of the country's development. In this regard, the issue of gender has become the main focus in government and shows Indonesia's commitment to fight for positive change for women especially relating to access, participation, control and benefits from development. To encourage the implementation of the responsive development, gender is not only through policies, programs, and activities, but requires concrete steps through a massive change movement, and changes in mindset and paradigm from all segments of society. *HeForShe* is a solidarity campaign for gender equality which aims at involving men and boys as agents of change to achieve gender equality and women's rights and encourage them to be involved in efforts to end the issues of inequality experienced by women and girls. As the ambassador of *HeForShe*, the president's mission is to increase women's participation and representative in politics and development, and protect women, children, and marginalized groups through three focused areas, namely (1) Increasing women's participation in politics and decision-making; (2) Reduction of maternal mortality; (3) Elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls (Ramadhani et al. 2019).

Many women writers, have always strongly voiced that idea and feminist values through their works for one of the ways to enlarge self-knowledge and give evaluative response to life is through intensive reading of

literary works. Roberts (1977) agrees that the work should intrigue, captivate, stimulate, or elevate. When they finish reading it, their awareness life should be heightened. They may never discern that the work has changed them in any way, but in fact these changes do occur as a result of experiences in reading. Passages in the work should come back to their mind for they will see in an expression of human conduct. Howsoever, literature, like any all arts, is one of the essential things to make human beings more human.

The author is the most important element as Gill (1985) states that the events of the novel and the reactions of the reader depend upon what he or she chooses to do. Women writers' texts deal with, and often challenge, their dual oppression-patriarchy that preceded and continues after colonialism and that inscribes the concepts of womanhood, motherhood, traditions such as dowry, bride-price, polygamy. They deal with the burdens of female roles in urban environments, the rise of prostitution in cities, women's marginalization in actual political participation (Katrak in Ashcroft 1995).

Three influential women writers with their most inspiring novels are chosen to prove that they can empower women to be more aware of gender equality i.e., Jamaica Kincaid with *Lucy*, Maxine Hong Kingston with *The Woman Warrior*, and Arundhati Roy with *The God of Small Things*. Jamaica Kincaid, Caribbean American writer who was born in St. John's, Antigua on 25 May 1949 has cultivated a voice distinct from male Caribbean writers. She often explores the complexity of mother-daughter relationships, the effects and after effects of colonialism, and alienation. Her work also transcends Afro-centric and feminist perspective (Vorda 1996). Maxine Hong Kingston who was born on October 27, 1940 in Stockton, California never felt that her parents encouraged her to do well in her academic studies, in part because in their conservative Chinese culture, women often are not expected to have carried outside of the home. She concerns about education for women and *The Woman Warrior* has been reported as the most commonly taught text in modern university education. She illustrates this condition through her use of Chinese talk-story, her mother's traditional perspective, and her own first-person view as a Chinese American (Wang 2001). A controversial writer, Arundhati Roy bravely voices the Indian conditions through controversial and feministic views in her novel *The God of Small Things* (Paul 1999). The novel is proper to be studied that depicts the life of Kerala society and its rites, customs, traditions and patriarchal domination, caste apartheid, caste hegemony and caste discrimination (Khobragade 2018).

### **Feminist Literary Criticism**

Criticism is the study concerns with defining, classifying, analyzing, and evaluating works of literature (Abrams 1981). The literary genre to be criticized in this research is novel dealing with feminism. Feminism is the ideology that believes in the equal rights and opportunities for women in education, employment, and in the cultural and social lives. In most societies, women were traditionally confined to the home as daughters, wives and mothers. Undeniable that many women throughout history did, in fact, play important role in cultural and political lives, but they tend to be invisible (coe.int/web Feminism and Women's Rights Movements). It is about respecting diverse women's experiences, identities, knowledge and strengths, and striving to empower all women to realize their full right (iwda.org.au).

Feminist literary criticism is a product of the feminist movement of the 1950 which concerned itself with the representation of women in literature as an expression of the social norms about women and their social roles as a means of socialization. It focused on the images of the women in books by male writers to expose patriarchal ideology and how women characters are portrayed. This approach analyzes a literary work from a feminist perspective and can be applied to any gender of literary work: poetry, drama, and novel (Djayanegara 1995). The working system of this criticism is to analyze literary works by tracing the ideologies that shape them and showing the differences between what the work says and what appears from a careful reading. This approach aims to end male's domination and tries to take roles as a form of negotiation rather than a form of confrontation. It is carried out with the aim of subverting the dominant discourses, and not to compromise with them (Djadjanegara 2000).

## Pragmatic Criticism

Pragmatic criticism views the work as something which is constructed in order to achieve certain effects on the audience and tends to judge the value of the work according to its success in achieving the aim. It emphasizes on the artistic strategies by which an author engages and influences the response of his or her readers to the matters represented in a literary work (Abrams 1981). It is a 'pragmatic theory' since it looks at the work of art chiefly as a means to an end, an instrument for getting something done, and tends to judge its value according to its success in achieving that aim. To the overwhelming majority of Renaissance critics, Samuel Johnson says "It is always a writer's duty to make the world better, justice in a virtue independent on time and place" (Abrams 1971).

## Methodology

This study employs a mixed research method, as described by Leavy (2017), which is particularly appropriate for research objectives that aim to describe, explain, or evaluate phenomena. It is often used by applied social research, behavioral science, including those which try to encourage community change and social action. This type of research provides a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation by integrating qualitative and quantitative data. Data collection is through studying and comprehending information from textbooks, journals, articles, virtual resources, and documents. The primary sources for this study are the novels *Lucy*, *The Woman Warrior*, and *The God of Small Things*. The study focuses on two main subjects: the novels as primary objects and a sample of 48 female students from the 2017–2020 cohorts of the Department of English Literature, Faculty of Cultural Sciences, Universitas Katolik Santo Thomas, Medan. In this phenomenological study, data were gathered directly from participants by distributing questionnaires to students who had read the three novels. The research was conducted at the Department of English Literature, Universitas Katolik Santo Thomas. This research involved two main steps. First, secondary sources were collected and analyzed by selecting key episodes from the novels that relate to gender equality awareness. All data are taken together, then interpreted to provide comprehensive and meaningful understanding of how the novels portray the empowerment of women and their awareness of gender equality. Second, the questionnaires were manually analyzed to determine whether the novels influenced the participating female students.

## Result

### The Analyses of Novel *Lucy* Promoting Women's Self-Worth

Kincaid illustrates this theme through her portrayal of characters, settings, and point of view. Lucy, who grows up in a patriarchal family and society where male elders hold absolute authority, faces such conditions both in her family in the Caribbean and later in Mariah's household in the United States. The Caribbean and the United States serve as critical settings, shaping Lucy's emotional experiences like, the traditional social values of the Caribbean leave her feeling oppressed and disheartened. Her father does not consider her existence as a girl, conversely, her brothers are sent abroad for college, while she never hopes to be except just being a nurse that she hates because nurse is a person who obeys doctor's orders. Ironically, her mother, whom Lucy absolutely needs supports from, is submissive.

What empowers Lucy to start being aware of gender equality is through realizing her self-worth. Considering patriarchal values that girls have no economic values, un-competent at public role, except doing domestic role, she cannot do anything except leaving her family. What makes her disappointed more is her mother whom Lucy really hopes to get support from seems to betray her. Undergoing such misery, Lucy does not let her life down but moves to a country where women's emancipation officially spurt its history. Lucy begin to realize her self-worth by setting goals for herself, starting with finding a job as a maid in a white, affluent household. We are impressed that Lucy knows who she is: a girl with strong will, self-worth, dignity, and struggles to drive her own life independently. Besides, the author creates Lucy as a resilient maid who loves her routine until afternoon, and she studies her books and goes to school at night.

The author suggests that empowering women to recognize gender equality largely depends on their own efforts and attitudes. They can get it by developing a positive attitude. Character Dinah (a wife) is contrasted to Lucy who lowers her self-worth by coveting Mariah's husband and destroys heartlessly the marriage, conversely, Lucy understands her self-worth through finding her identity. She frankly confesses that: "I was not a man; I was a young woman from the fringes of the world, and when I left my home, I had wrapped around my shoulders the mantle of a servant" (95). Undoubtedly, Lucy asserts herself as a woman who has to struggle to change for better life by refusing that women in society, in history, in culture, women everywhere are similar.

### **The Ability to Determine Choice**

Act of ability to determine choice is vividly shown through character Lucy and settings. Facing the constraints of her patriarchal family, Lucy makes the bold decision to leave her home and family behind. Caribbean as a setting creates certain situations of disappointment, failure, and anger because of patriarchy. Meanwhile, the author points USA as a crucial setting to show Lucy who has been empowered her to be aware of her position as a woman to get self-freedom to access any opportunities: education and occupation she likes to get: "I understood that I was inventing myself, and that I was doing this more in the way of a painter than in the way of a scientist" (134). *The use of a first-person narrator* underscores Lucy's journey of self-determination and autonomy. Lucy asserts herself as a girl who has right to determine what the best for her without depending on anybody. It is her own choice to decide to leave for her hometown, decide to find job and friends, go to college, find an apartment and new job.

### **The Right to Influence Social Change for Themselves and Others**

The author empowers women to be aware of gender equality through their right to influence social change. Lucy becomes an agent of social change when she shows us her rejection of the patriarchy by pursuing education and job. In contrast, characters like her mother, Mariah, Dinah, and Sylvie represent submissive women who remain stagnant—not due to lack of opportunity, but because of their unwillingness to step outside their comfort zones.

### **The analyses of Novel *The Woman Warrior***

#### **Promoting Women's Self- Worth**

Kingston highlights women's awareness of gender equality by portraying contrasting characters. The character of the aunt exemplifies this awareness, believing in her right to fall in love again after she was left by her husband. Interestingly, the man she loves and who impregnated her leads the raid against her. She chooses to protect the man's identity and refrains from seeking legal action, believing that her self-worth lies in taking responsibility for her own actions rather than blaming others. Her self-responsibility is her self-worth which is shown by going alone to the pigsty to give birth to her illegal child.

I narrator is fully aware of her equal right as a girl and capable of promoting her self –worth by countering her mother's threat that "girls to be wives or slaves" (9).The author's uses metaphor to directly compare girls and wives or slaves means that women are harmful. However, her mother's talk story about Famulan, a woman warrior, has obsessed her, identifies herself with to show her strong inner need to have self –worth. Metaphors such as 'Girls are maggots in the rice', 'Feeding girls are feeding cowbirds, and 'Better to raise geese than girls' become a trigger for her to struggle and fight against the traditions that view women as harmful parasites, traditions that devalue women. She promotes that only through education women can get freedom, better future, and self-worth. She views herself as a smart, valuable personality and shows her self-worth by refusing matchmaking arranged by her parents and by going to college at Berkeley to change her fate. Brave Orchid is another character who promotes her self-worth by pursuing education--to be a doctor although she is married woman and a mother, and has to live in the dormitory. Her view that men and women have the same right to get education is vividly conveyed as a way to get self-worth through having courage, intellectuality, strength, and self-independence by fighting 'A Sitting Ghost' in the haunted room the students are the most afraid of. The room is a setting to create certain mood of fear, which symbolizes any obstacles and hard times that the woman students have to cope with in getting educational success.

## **The Ability to Determine Choice**

The ability to determine choice is obviously one way to show women's awareness of equality. Aunt represents this ability because at a critical moment, she chooses to take responsibility and determines her fate by going to pigsty to deliver the baby herself: 'she would protect this child as she protected its father' (15). She chooses to accept the real punishment that her name will never be mentioned as if she had never been born.

The author empowers women to be able to determine choice through I narrator. The crucial thing she must counter is her determination not to be a wife or slave as her parents expect her to be by choosing a Chinese legendary warrior, Famulan as her role model and manifests it through decision to get scholarship. She chooses to be a self-confident woman by pouring out all the inside barriers: her quietness, insecurity, and alienation although it is hard. The most decisive step she made is when she refused the tradition of matchmaking and decided to leave her parents' house.

Brave Orchid is created to represent women who have ability to determine choices by deciding to be a doctor although she is a wife and a mother. She is represented in such a way to trig I narrator's awareness of her own ability too. The mother tells her of the aunt, Famulan, and Tsai Yen in order to teach cultural ambivalence of her Chinese and American values to combine and to decide for her best.

## **The Right to Influence Social Change**

Characters I Narrator and Brave Orchid are agents to influence change in social life. I narrator, in the beginning is fully aware of all her mother's stories but the end is hers. For her, the aunt is her forerunner contrasts to her family/the men's views on women: to be blamed and punished. The aunt promotes social change that women must have self-determination and braveness, even in a risky situation. I Narrator vividly represents woman who is capable of influence social change through her refusal against patriarchy and the traditional values, i.e., Girls are maggots in the rice, It is more profitable to raise geese than daughters, Feeding girls is feeding cowbirds, There's no profit in raising girls, Better to raise geese than girls, When you raise girls, you're raising children for strangers. What is actually the point is the women themselves have to counter those traditional values by self-development to enhance their economic values.

## **The Analyses of Novel *The God of Small Things***

### **Promoting Women's Self Worth**

As a controversial Indian writer, Arundhati Roy advocates for women's empowerment and gender equality through contrasting characters. Ammu asserts her self-worth by breaking free from societal expectations. Aware that her future seemed confined to waiting for a marriage proposal, she escaped the control of her ill-tempered father and her embittered, long-suffering mother. Desperately, she ran away from home and worked, and met Baba, her future husband. After marrying Baba, who descended into alcoholism and cruelty, even attempting to sell her to Mr. Hollick, Ammu asserts her self-worth by seeking a divorce.

However, Mammachi and Baby Kochamma are ironic characters who are unable to promote her self-worth. We don't sympathize with Mammachi for she has capabilities but unwilling to defend or appreciate them. The worst is she lowers women's self-worth and dignity by making girls to be objects/whores for Chacko's sexual needs when he is divorced by Margareth. She also treats Margareth as a whore because of senseless hatred: hates Margareth for divorcing Chacko. She becomes blind, but we are not invited to sympathize with for she is the portrait of submissive woman who will never be aware of gender equality, instead of empowering women to understand their competencies, rights, and positions, she lowers them. Baby Kochamma is not aware of herself-worth as a woman, but a villain, selfish, materialistic, an anglophile character who is in love with a young Irish monk, Father Mulligan by doing wicked things to get Father's love and attention. As a woman, she has to think of her self-worth and open her eyes widely not to catch the father but she does anything and ends in futile and frustrated.

## **The Ability to Determine Choice**

The author creates three main characters to represent women who are capable of determining choices. Ammu decided to run away from home to free from Pappacy's cruelty and humiliation, chose her own husband but decided to divorce him, chose to come home and loved Velutha. Her choice is worth to be appreciated considering she had nobody to be counted on. Margareth Kochamma is an Englishwoman whose self-reliance and independence seem to be as the result of her feministic view--woman has right to determine choice. She decided to marry Chacko, moved out of her parents' home, worked as a waitress, divorced her lazy husband, and becomes independent girl to pursue happiness. What interesting value of her is moving on from her problems, not bothering of people's business and staying focus and calm on Mamachi's revenge. The most controversial woman character is Rahel whose awareness of her existence as a woman is shown through her braveness in breaking the rules because of the grief and suffer of all the family's doom and becomes the victim of institution. However, she chose to drive life in a series of wandering and drifting, chose to end her drifting life by getting married with an American, they loved each other, but the marriage was so lifeless that she decided to divorce.

## **The Right to Influence Social Change**

Roy empowers women to be more aware of gender equality: have the same opportunities, rights to get education and jobs, and determine future. This demands are shown through Ammu who realizes her numbness and fatality if she keeps staying and living in bitter, cruel patriarchal family because she will not given chance to access higher education. She influences people to change their point of view on equal rights and to rebel against patriarchy, traditional marriage, gender discrimination and caste. Margareth Kochamma influences people's view on man and women's equal rights, to be independent women without leaning on others' life by working hard and self-confidence. Rahel influences women for self-independence although she bears grief as the impacts of tradition, institution, patriarchy, and caste system. Roy shows a subtle change in women's right as a social change by settling Rahel to be the female heir of the Ayemen house and not Chacko, or Estha.

## **Teaching and Delightedness**

Humanistic critics share Horace's belief that literature both teaches and delights meaning that the authors through the novels convey moral lessons and delightedness to the readers, and their impact has been deep, their influence lasting, even in the whole life. There are 48 female students of fifth, sixth, and seventh semesters of 2017, 2018, 2019, and 2020 who have read the novels addressed questioners that consist of 10 questions that need answer *yes* and *no*. After collecting and analyzing the 48 questionnaires, 47 students gave positive response to questions number 1 to 10 with the answers are *yes* (*ya*), only one student's answer is *no* (*tidak*) for question number 1 to 10. These responses indicate that the novels effectively empower readers to become more aware of gender equality.

## **Conclusion**

The three novels inspire and empower women to be more aware of issues in gender especially in fighting for gender equality and justice. The authors convey it through characters, settings, point of view, plot, and language to show women's ability to promote self worth, to determine choice, and to influence social change. Male characters symbolize patriarchal system, but some female characters refused to be submissive and are aware of themselves as human beings who have rights to own their bodies, to be decision makers, to determine lives with self-confidence, and to be independent. Settings are created to contrast with patriarchal and feministic values. Point of view 'I' is employed to emphasize women's assertiveness and self-determination. Authors' style and language, i.e., twisted plot, paradox, metaphor, and overt are intended to protest and ridicule established traditions of patriarchy, caste systems and institutions as the sources of gender inequality. By reading the novels, the students fully understand and measure their self-potential to develop, understand the norms and customs and how to respond. They fully understand now that education is one of the most crucial things to enhance their self-value, self-worth, self-choice through studying hard, finishing study on time, and finding jobs. They realize that they are smart, valuable and developing to gain success in the future. In conclusion, the authors vividly portray the novels are tools to empower people/women to be more aware of gender equality.

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