



**INTERNATIONAL  
JOURNAL OF ENGLISH  
LITERATURE AND  
CULTURE**

**Volume 12 (1)**

**ISSN:2360-7831**

<http://www.academicresearchjournals.org/IJELC/Index.htm>

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**Review**

# **Black Music of the Harlem Renaissance and Sub-Saharan African musical Traits: A study**

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Accepted 12 December 2023

The Harlem Renaissance, a vibrant and transformative cultural movement that emerged in the 1920s in Harlem, New York, holds a significant place in American history. This period, also known as the "New Negro Movement," witnessed the flourishing of African American art, literature, theater, and music. Among the various artistic expressions, black music played a pivotal role in shaping the cultural landscape of the time. From the soulful sounds of jazz and the heartfelt blues to the uplifting melodies of gospel, the roots of black music in the Harlem Renaissance reflect the resilience, creativity, and communal spirit of African Americans. Jazz, blues, and gospel music served as powerful forms of artistic expression, reflecting the experiences, emotions, and aspirations of African Americans. These musical genres not only entertained but also provided a platform for social commentary and cultural exploration, contributing to the overall impact and significance of the Harlem Renaissance. From jazz and blues to spirituals and gospel, the music of the Harlem Renaissance not only entertained but also served as a powerful tool for social commentary and empowerment. This article delves into the influence of black music and its roots in the Harlem Renaissance, exploring its origins, cultural impact, notable musicians, significance, and enduring legacy. The Harlem Renaissance, a cultural and artistic movement in the 1920s and 1930s, was a pivotal moment in African-American history. Central to this cultural renaissance was the profound influence of black music, particularly jazz and the blues. The roots of this influence were embedded in African rhythms and traditions, and it permeated various aspects of American society. Black music, as manifested during the Harlem Renaissance, served as both an artistic expression and a reflection of the African-American experience. The Present article explores the multifaceted influence of black music and its deep-seated roots in the Harlem Renaissance, highlighting its role as a vehicle for cultural expression, social commentary, and cross-cultural exchange. The legacy of this musical heritage endures as a testament to the resilience, creativity, and cultural pride of African Americans and continues to shape contemporary music and the broader cultural landscape.

**Keywords:** African Roots, Black music, Cultural expression, Harlem Renaissance, Musical heritage

**Cite This Article As:** Bah, A. (2024). Black Music of the Harlem Renaissance and Sub-Saharan African musical Traits: A study. *Inter. J. Eng. Lit. Cult.* 12(1): 1-7

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Harlem Renaissance, also known as the "New Negro Movement," was a cultural and intellectual explosion that took place in the 1920s and 1930s in Harlem, New York. It was a pivotal moment in African-American history, marking a period of artistic awakening and empowerment. African American artists, writers, musicians, and intellectuals converged in Harlem, sparking a movement that celebrated black culture and challenged racial stereotypes. The Harlem Renaissance had a profound cultural impact, shaping the course of American art, literature, and music. It was a time of artistic experimentation and cultural exploration, generating a new sense of pride and identity within the African-American community. The movement also brought issues of racial inequality and social injustice to the forefront of national attention, paving the way for the Civil Rights Movement in the decades that followed. The legacy of the Harlem Renaissance lives on, serving as a reminder of the power of artistic expression and the importance of cultural diversity.

### **African Roots: The Foundation of Black Music**

Music was an integral part of African culture, used for communication, storytelling, and spiritual rituals. When enslaved Africans were brought to America, they brought with them their musical traditions, which became the foundation for the development of black music in the United States.

Black music in America has deep roots that can be traced back to the African continent. The rhythmic patterns, call-and-response singing, and the use of various percussion instruments found in African music were brought to the United States through the transatlantic slave trade. These musical traditions laid the foundation for the development of unique African-American music styles.

### **Slave Songs and Spirituals: Music as Resistance**

During the era of slavery, music became a powerful tool for resistance and survival. Enslaved Africans used songs and spirituals to express their struggles, hopes, and dreams. These slave songs were a form of coded communication, allowing them to share messages of resistance and escape while appearing to sing harmless melodies.

### **From Spirituals to Ragtime: Early Forms of Black Music in America**

During slavery, spirituals emerged as a powerful form of expression for enslaved African Americans. These religious songs often served as coded messages of hope, resistance, and liberation. After the Civil War, ragtime gained popularity. It combined syncopated rhythms, driving piano melodies, and elements of African and European music. Ragtime set the stage for the birth of jazz and other black music genres.

### **The Role of Music in the Harlem Renaissance Black Music as a Driving Force in the Harlem Renaissance**

One of the most influential aspects of the Harlem Renaissance was black music. It played a pivotal role in shaping the artistic landscape and giving voice to the African-American experience. From the roots of African melodies to the innovative sounds of jazz, black music became a driving force in the Cultural Revolution that defined the Harlem Renaissance.

### **Music as an Expression of Black Identity and Empowerment**

In the Harlem Renaissance, music became a powerful form of self-expression and a means of asserting black identity and empowerment. Musicians like Louis Armstrong, Bessie Smith, and Duke Ellington used their craft to challenge racial stereotypes, celebrate black culture, and inspire a sense of pride within the African-American community.

### **Harlem's Nightlife: Clubs and Cabarets as Gathering Spaces**

The vibrant nightlife of Harlem during the Renaissance was characterized by the proliferation of jazz clubs and cabarets. These venues became gathering spaces for artists, intellectuals, and the general public, fostering a sense of community and creativity. They served as platforms for musicians to showcase their talents and for audiences to experience the electrifying energy of black music.

## **Music and the Visual Arts: Collaborations and Inspirations**

Music and the visual arts had a symbiotic relationship during the Harlem Renaissance. Musicians and visual artists often collaborated, drawing inspiration from each other's work. Jazz, with its vibrant rhythms and improvisational nature, influenced painters, sculptors, and writers, resulting in a flourishing of artistic expression across different mediums.

## **The Rise of Blues and Jazz: Influences and Innovations**

Out of the hardships and struggles emerged the blues, a genre that embodied the African-American experience. Originating in the Deep South, the blues combined African musical traditions with European influences, giving birth to a unique sound. From there, jazz emerged as a dynamic and improvisational genre that took the world by storm, showcasing the immense talent and creativity of black musicians.

## **The Birth of Jazz and its Influence on Black Music**

Jazz, born in the early 20th century, was a revolutionary music genre that defined the Harlem Renaissance and transformed American music forever. It combined elements of African rhythm, blues, ragtime, and European harmonies to create a vibrant and improvisational art form. Jazz became a symbol of freedom, rebellion, and cultural expression for black musicians, providing a platform for their talents and paving the way for future generations of artists.

## **Jazz: The Soundtrack of the Harlem Renaissance**

Jazz emerged as the quintessential sound of the Harlem Renaissance, captivating audiences with its infectious rhythms and soulful melodies. Legendary musicians like Louis Armstrong, Ella Fitzgerald, and Duke Ellington became synonymous with the jazz movement, pushing boundaries and redefining the possibilities of music.

## **Jazz in Harlem: The Hotbed of Innovation**

Harlem became the epicenter of jazz during the Renaissance, attracting talented musicians from all over the country. The neighborhood's vibrant energy and cultural diversity inspired innovation and experimentation, leading to the development of different jazz styles and techniques. From the classic sounds of the Cotton Club to the intimate jam sessions in local speakeasies, Harlem became a hotbed of musical creativity.

## **Jazz and Social Integration: Breaking Down Barriers**

Jazz played a significant role in fostering social integration and breaking down racial barriers. It brought people from different backgrounds together, transcending divisions and creating shared experiences. Through the universal language of music, jazz challenged societal norms, promoting unity, and laying the foundation for a more inclusive society.

## **The Role of Harlem as the Cultural Hub for Black Musicians The Cultural and Artistic Renaissance in Harlem**

Harlem became a thriving cultural hub during the Harlem Renaissance, attracting an array of talented artists from diverse backgrounds. The neighborhood's vibrant energy, artistic community, and intellectual exchange created an ideal environment for black musicians to flourish. The cultural and artistic renaissance in Harlem provided a platform for artists to showcase their talents, challenge racial biases, and redefine the boundaries of artistic expression.

## **The Magnetism of Harlem for Black Musicians**

Harlem's magnetism for black musicians can be attributed to the sense of community and the opportunities it provided for artistic growth. The neighborhood's jazz clubs, theaters, and speakeasies became gathering places where musicians could collaborate, experiment, and perform. Harlem offered a supportive and nurturing environment that allowed black musicians to hone their skills, gain recognition, and make significant contributions to the music industry.

## **Jazz and the Harlem Renaissance: A Cultural Revolution**

Jazz was the heartbeat of the Harlem Renaissance. It captured the spirit of the era, with its infectious rhythms, vibrant

improvisation, and soulful melodies. Jazz music reflected the social, political, and cultural climate of the time, giving voice to the experiences and aspirations of African Americans. The rise of jazz during the Harlem Renaissance not only revolutionized music but also challenged the racial divisions and stereotypes that plagued society.

### **Jazz Clubs and the Jazz Age in Harlem**

Jazz clubs played a pivotal role in the Harlem Renaissance, providing a platform for musicians to showcase their talent and connect with audiences. Iconic venues such as the Cotton Club and the Apollo Theater became legendary hotspots, attracting both black and white patrons. The Jazz Age in Harlem saw the emergence of legendary jazz musicians, electrifying performances, and an atmosphere of excitement and cultural exchange.

### **Jazz Musicians and Their Contributions to the Harlem Renaissance**

The Harlem Renaissance produced a host of influential jazz musicians who made significant contributions to the genre and the wider cultural landscape. Figures such as Duke Ellington, Louis Armstrong, Ella Fitzgerald, and Billie Holiday not only shaped the sound of jazz but also used their music to challenge racial inequality and inspire social change. Their talent, innovation, and resilience continue to inspire generations of musicians and serve as a testament to the enduring legacy of the Harlem Renaissance.

#### **Louis Armstrong: The Jazz Innovator**

Louis Armstrong, a legendary jazz musician, was one of the most influential figures of the Harlem Renaissance. His innovative trumpet playing and distinctive vocal style revolutionized the genre and made him an icon of American music. Armstrong's immense talent and charisma captivated audiences worldwide, breaking down racial barriers and leaving an enduring legacy.

#### **Bessie Smith: The Empress of the Blues**

Bessie Smith, known as the Empress of the Blues, possessed a voice that could melt hearts and convey the pain and longing of the African-American experience. With her raw and emotional performances, Smith became a trailblazer for female artists in the music industry. Her soul-stirring vocals and command of the stage made her an influential figure in shaping the blues genre.

#### **Duke Ellington: The Musical Pioneer**

Duke Ellington, a visionary composer, bandleader, and pianist, pushed the boundaries of jazz music during the Harlem Renaissance. His compositions were sophisticated, and innovative, and showcased the talents of his band members. Ellington's contributions to jazz remain unparalleled, and his music continues to inspire generations of musicians.

#### **Mahalia Jackson: The Queen of the Gospel**

Mahalia Jackson hailed as the Queen of Gospel, possessed a voice that could move mountains. Her powerful vocals and unwavering faith made her an influential figure in the gospel music scene. Jackson's performances, filled with passion and spirituality, touched the hearts of many and solidified her status as a legendary gospel artist.

Through the contributions of these notable black musicians and many others, the influence of black music during the Harlem Renaissance reached far beyond the boundaries of the era. Their talent, innovation, and determination continue to shape the music industry and inspire generations to come.

### **Blues and Gospel Music: Expressions of African American Experience and Identity The Blues: Origins, Themes, and Influences**

The blues, with its roots in African musical traditions and African-American experiences, emerged as a powerful means for Black individuals to express their identity and struggles. Originating in the Deep South during the late 19th century, the blues captured the essence of hardship, heartache, and resilience. Its distinctive musical style, characterized by melancholic melodies and soulful vocals, became a vital form of artistic expression for Black communities.



The Blues emerged from the Deep South, born out of the hardships and struggles faced by African Americans. With its roots in African musical traditions, work songs, and spirituals, the Blues became a powerful outlet for expressing the experiences of black individuals. Through its soulful melodies and poignant lyrics, the Blues delved into themes of love, loss, oppression, and resilience. Influenced by African rhythms and European musical elements, the Blues developed a distinct sound that captivated audiences and paved the way for future musical genres.

### **Blues Artists and Their Impact on the Harlem Renaissance**

During the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s and 1930s, the blues made its way north, taking center stage in the artistic and cultural movements of the time. Legendary blues artists like Ma Rainey, Bessie Smith, and Langston Hughes played a pivotal role in bringing the blues to the forefront of Black artistic expression. Their performances and compositions not only resonated with Black audiences but also captivated and inspired people of all backgrounds.

### **Blues Lyrics: Reflecting the Realities of Black Life**

The lyrics of the blues poignantly reflected the realities of Black life, addressing themes of poverty, discrimination, heartbreak, and social injustice. With raw honesty and unfiltered emotion, blues singers painted vivid pictures of the challenges faced by Black individuals in a racially divided society. Through their words, they shed light on the experiences and struggles that were often overlooked or dismissed by mainstream culture.

### **Spirituals and Gospel Music: The Songs of Faith and Hope From Slavery to Worship: The Evolution of Spirituals**

The history of Black music would be incomplete without acknowledging the spirituals – songs born out of the African diaspora and the brutal reality of slavery. Originating in the fields and slave quarters, spirituals served as a means for enslaved Africans to express their faith, hope, and desire for freedom. These songs, often rooted in biblical stories and African musical traditions, were a source of solace and strength amidst the hardship and oppression of slavery.

### **Gospel Music: Church as a Haven for Black Expression**

As the descendants of enslaved Africans embraced Christianity, spirituals evolved into gospel music. The black church became a sanctuary where African Americans could express their faith and experiences through song. Gospel music, characterized by its lively rhythms, powerful vocals, and uplifting messages, became a cornerstone of Black religious and cultural life.

It provided a platform for individuals to celebrate their heritage, find solace, and uplift their spirits in the face of adversity.

Gospel music, deeply rooted in the African-American religious experience, played a significant role in the Harlem Renaissance. Originating from spirituals and hymns sung in black churches, gospel music uplifted and inspired people through its powerful vocals and messages of faith.

With its fusion of African rhythms, blues influences, and religious fervor, gospel music became a source of solace and hope for many in the African-American community.

Notable figures such as Mahalia Jackson, Thomas A. Dorsey, and Sister Rosetta Tharpe played significant roles in popularizing gospel music and bringing it to a wider audience. Their contributions helped bridge the gap between sacred and secular music, influencing generations of musicians across genres.

### **Impact of Blues and Gospel on the Harlem Renaissance**

The influence of blues and gospel music during the Harlem Renaissance cannot be overstated. These musical forms provided a voice to African Americans, capturing their joys, sorrows, and aspirations. The expressive nature of the Blues and the uplifting spirit of gospel music resonated with both black and white audiences alike, creating a shared understanding of the African-American experience. Through their music, black artists brought attention to the richness and complexity of African-American culture, breaking down barriers and challenging societal norms.

### **Impact of Black Music on Social and Political Movements during the Harlem Renaissance Music as a Catalyst for Change: Inspiring Activism**

Black music, particularly the blues and gospel, played a vital role as a catalyst for social and political change during the Harlem Renaissance. Its raw and heartfelt expression of Black experiences resonated deeply with listeners, sparking

conversations about racial inequality and the need for social justice. Through their music, artists confronted the issues of their time, empowering others to join the fight for equality.

### **Black Music as a Tool for Social Commentary**

Black music, including jazz, the Blues, and gospel, served as a powerful tool for social commentary during the Harlem Renaissance. Artists used their music to shed light on social injustices, racial inequality, and the daily struggles faced by African Americans. Their lyrics and melodies became a means of protest, challenging the status quo and demanding change. Through their music, black musicians sparked conversations, inspired activism, and encouraged unity among diverse communities.

### **Black Music and the Civil Rights Movement**

The influence of Black music continued to grow during the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s. Artists like Nina Simone, Sam Cooke, and Bob Dylan used their music as a powerful tool to advocate for racial equality and challenge the status quo. Their songs, such as "Mississippi Goddam" and "A Change is Gonna Come," became anthems of the movement, inspiring individuals to take a stand and demand justice.

### **The Role of Music in Civil Rights Activism**

During the Harlem Renaissance, black music played a vital role in the larger civil rights movement. Musicians and artists used their platforms to raise awareness about racial discrimination and advocate for equal rights. Through their performances and lyrics, they became voices of resistance, inspiring and mobilizing individuals to fight against oppression. The powerful messages conveyed through black music helped galvanize the civil rights movement, leaving an indelible mark on American history.

### **The Influence of Black Music on Popular Culture**

Black music has also left an indelible mark on popular culture. Its innovative rhythms, soulful melodies, and honest lyrics have influenced countless genres, from rock 'n' roll to hip-hop. Artists like Jimi Hendrix, Aretha Franklin, and Michael Jackson broke barriers and transformed the musical landscape with their undeniable talent and creativity. Today, Black music continues to shape the soundscape of popular music and inspire new generations of musicians and listeners.

### **Legacy and Continuing Influence of Black Music from the Harlem Renaissance Black Music as a Global Phenomenon**

The legacy of Black music from the Harlem Renaissance extends far beyond its original time and place. Its impact can be felt around the world, transcending borders and cultural boundaries. From African rhythms to the blues, gospel, and beyond, Black music has become a global phenomenon, enriching the musical traditions of diverse cultures and inspiring artists of all backgrounds.

With the contributions of Black musicians from the Harlem Renaissance, it is essential to recognize how their artistry continues to shape our understanding of history, identity, and social justice. Through their music, they have given a voice to the voiceless, offered solace to the weary, and sparked movements for change. Their legacy lives on, reminding us of the enduring power of Black music to inspire, unite, and transform.

## **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, the influence of black music during the Harlem Renaissance cannot be overstated. It not only served as a means of artistic expression but also became a vehicle for social and political change. The rich tapestry of jazz, blues, and gospel music that emerged from this era continues to resonate and inspire generations to come. The Harlem Renaissance remains a testament to the power of music in shaping culture, challenging norms, and celebrating the diversity and talent of African-American artists. Through their creative contributions, these musicians left an indelible mark on the world, reminding us of the enduring legacy of black music and its roots in the Harlem Renaissance.

Black music played a pivotal role in the Harlem Renaissance, serving as a powerful means of expression, resistance, and cultural pride. From its African roots to the innovative sounds of jazz, black music shaped the artistic landscape of

the time and left a lasting legacy in American history. The Harlem Renaissance was not only a cultural movement but also a celebration of black excellence and a testament to the transformative power of music.

The influence of black music during the Harlem Renaissance was profound and far-reaching. It not only defined an era but also shaped the course of music and culture for years to come. The innovative sounds of jazz, the raw emotions of the blues, and the spiritual solace of gospel all contributed to the cultural renaissance that unfolded in Harlem during the 1920s. The impact of this music extended beyond entertainment, inspiring social and political movements and leaving a lasting imprint on popular culture. The legacy of black music from the Harlem Renaissance continues to reverberate, reminding us of the power of artistic expression in challenging societal norms and fostering change.

Black music played a pivotal role in shaping the cultural landscape of the Harlem Renaissance. Jazz, blues, and gospel music served as powerful forms of artistic expression, reflecting the experiences, emotions, and aspirations of African Americans. These musical genres not only entertained but also provided a platform for social commentary and cultural exploration, contributing to the overall impact and significance of the Harlem Renaissance.

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**Review**

# Depiction of Social Realism in Indian Writings in English: A Comparative Study of Selected Works of Mulk Raj Anand and Shyamlal Jaidia

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Accepted 12 December 2023

The present paper attempts to give an insight in the approach of depicting social realism in Indian Writings in English, especially in the selected texts *Untouchable* (1935) and *Untold Story of a Bhangi Vice-Chancellor* (2001) written by Mulk Raj Anand and Shyamlal Jaidia, respectively. The motifs of writings of both the writers focus to depict the harsh realities of life in Indian society especially for the poor and the deprived people despite the fact they belonged to different times in India. Still the concerns of these writers primarily touch the intricacies of discrimination against Untouchables in pre-Independence days and in the post Independence times.

**Key Words:** Realism, Motifs, Deprived, intricacies, Discrimination

**Cite This Article As:** Kumar, V. (2024). Depiction of Social Realism in Indian Writings in English: A Comparative Study of Selected Works of Mulk Raj Anand and Shyamlal Jaidia. *Inter. J. Eng. Lit. Cult.* 12(1): 7-13

## INTRODUCTION

The depiction of social realism in Indian Writings in English reflects the diverse and complex nature of Indian society. Indian writers in English not only explore the themes of social issues in the diverse cultural fabric but they also capture the nuances, challenges and social transitions of routine social practices not only between the high and poor but also among the different social stratifications, especially known as the caste system. In essence, Indian writings in English serve as a powerful medium to capture the multifaceted nature of Indian society, offering readers both within and outside the country a deeper understanding of its social realities. These literary works contribute to ongoing conversations about identity, societal norms, and the ever-evolving dynamics of India. These writings often highlight the rich cultural tapestry of the country wherein they depict the diversity of languages, traditions, customs, and religious practices in India. The Hindu social structure primarily rests on the graded inequality that has neither loosened its grip on the untouchables nor has given any respite to the Dalits even in the contemporary times. Rather, caste discrimination against Dalits has evolved in the most subtle ways. In the compilation of castes in the hierarchical order, the upper castes avail more privileges and contrarily the lower castes are imposed with more prohibitions. Furthermore, lower castes comprise a large number of sub-castes which comprise a sizable number of Indian demography who have long been deprived of human rights. Even in the post-independent period in the country (when they have been given equal rights like the

other citizens) either they get deprived of these opportunities or their pursuance get stuck into delaying tactics that has lead to their incessant oppression in the Indian society. Unfortunately, Bhangis suffer the most in the graded inequality within the Dalit communities. Bhangis' long history of repression comprises numerous reasons apart from their long association with cleaning human excreta and filth from the public places in past times and their lack of awareness towards education and other corrective measures (in the post-Independence times). Dalit writers open a new perspective of describing social reality. A few other writers also describe the untold story of this subjugated community. Arundhati Roy quotes Gandhi's definition of an ideal Bhangi (in his essay titled 'The Ideal Bhangi'), wherein he says a person who takes care of "...the body of society ...while deriving his livelihood from his occupation, would approach it only as a sacred duty" (116-117). Dalits socio-cultural subjugation has not been a part of literary exploration in mainstream writings in India except in the writings of Munshi Premchand (in Hindi) and Mulk Raj Anand (in English) even that is a part of 'discourse of pity' (Mukherjee 1). Bhangis' sufferings hardly ever influenced any upper caste mainstream social reformer except Gandhi and he too discussed their problems in a 'holistic' supposition instead of situations in real life. After Ambedkar's Writings and Speeches, there came an upsurge in Dalit writings that put Dalits in the centre of their literary discourse. . In Hinduism, untouchables have a long history of affliction in socio-cultural, politics, and economic domains in the name of religious sanctions. Either in the past (before independence under religious sanction) or in the present (in policy implementation in the post-Independence period), untouchables/Bhangis have suffered due to caste oppression in Indian society. In the post-Independence period, Bhangis are equally eligible to become beneficiaries of the provisions, especially in the Scheduled Castes reservations in getting education and government jobs. But the un-academic background of sub-castes like the Bhangis in the earlier and in the present times (due to their long associated traditional occupation), keeps them away from the benefits of the SC reservation policy.

### **Mulk Raj Anand and Contemporary Issues**

The sensitivity of writers aptly captures the sensibility of the common man despite linguistic barriers to express the natural impression of situations in the foreign language. Still English writings in India not only helped to deconstruct the British colonial rule in India. The writers explore the themes of identity, cultural clash, and the struggle of independence. Out of the three big novelists in Indian Writings in English (that includes Raja Roa, R.K. Narayan), Mulk Raj Anand has primarily focused of the issues of poor and the marginalized people in Indian society who often highlights the rich cultural tapestry of the country and delve into the diversity of languages, traditions, customs, and religious practices helps in breaking stereotypes and providing a nuanced understanding of the complex cultural landscape. Like many Indian writers in English, he not only focused on the themes such as identity, displacement, cultural clash, and the struggle for independence but pointedly describes the pervasive issue of caste-based discrimination and social inequality. He sheds light on the struggles faced by marginalized communities and questions the deeply entrenched caste hierarchy. After independence, certainly, the welfare policies (for the SCs) have become the big safeguard to ensure their upliftment, education and jobs in government sector but the caste biases against them still persist in different aspects. The academic environment for Dalit students shows that "Sweeping were invariably done by girls from the SC or ST communities....water was stored in clay pots, the SC and ST children were not allowed to touch it" (Ramachandran & Naorem 51). The caste discriminatory practices not only deprive these students from the constitutional rights but also demoralise them to get enrolled in first-rate academic institutions. Nevertheless, Jaidia's autobiography portrays that Dalits' higher educational standards motivate their political activism and boost up their confidence to seek the legitimate rights either at individual level or through social organizations. The Bhangis' long association with the traditional occupation constitutes their dual form of marginalization in the Indian society. The dominant castes like zamindars and the other upper castes having control over the resources do not wish to come out of their narrow-mindedness over the caste matters. Bhangi's lack of resources does not let the change occur at the individual level or at the community level which is the real cause of their incessant oppression in Indian society. Their socio-economic backwardness gives rise to different socio-economic problems leading to the Bhangis exploitation. Furthermore, due to no specific provisions for the Bhangis in distribution of the SC reservation policy, they also get deprived of the opportunities to get education and seek jobs in government sectors. Dalit writings divulge Bhangi's backwardness in the literary world and put forth the under- carpeted social realities in the erstwhile feudal society.

### **Jaidia's Description of Bhangis**

The 'nucleus perspective of Dalit narrative' in autobiography does not recount the 'short-term author-narrative validity' rather it presents a long sharing of community afflictions. Dalits' narratives are unique in portraying their painful experiences to achieve the self-esteem against the set caste hierarchy. Dalit writers divulge how Dalits' human rights have not become a part of the academic-literary discussion even after the Independence of India. Dalit writers go beyond the encircled literary delineation of Bhangis' backwardness in the context of the other scheduled castes so as to

discuss their issues in the context of citizenship in Indian society. Although Dalits' face clash of interest in their claim for Scheduled Castes reservation, yet their opposition of the upper castes' biases give them a common collective identity of Dalits. Dalit writers dissect how in the name of culture, caste practices against Dalits' get religious sanction as well as sub-categorization in the Brahmanical construction. The societal issue involves untouchables' exploitation in financial and political rights that continue even after more than seven decades of independence in India. In the post-Independence period, the constitutional provisions including the SC reservation are provisioned to ensure their human rights and equality in India. However, the contradiction between the social constructions (due to getting immune to religious sanction of caste) against untouchables and their constitutional provisions (due to lack of social support system) succumb to new ideological interpretations. The underlying issues of Bhangis' sufferings are described in the autobiography, especially in the context of the Rajasthan society:

Let me give some idea of the type of house where I was born. The hut had a rectangular ground plan; the four walls were constructed of local stone. The walls were plastered with mud and cow dung. The framework for the roof was made up of bamboos. These were tied by a special type of rope called moonj ...Then straw bundles were placed on the frame all along the slopes for thatching. (6)

Bhangis' backwardness becomes evident through the condition of their bustees which are still devoid of any substantial housing schemes and are just scattered inhabitations without any housing amenities. The emerging Dalit literary activism in socio-cultural and political aspects counteract the mainstream writers' meta-narrative of social neutrality that intends to maintain literary standards of the contents instead of describing the social reality. The social disparity in which Dalits, particularly the Bhangis live in Indian society never gets any literary sensitivity. The writer describes the tricky working style of the University that had seen 19 VCs in total 38 years since its inception in 1962. Moreover, they had tarnished the image of the University by obliging the Rajputs, Jats, Oswals, Brahmins, and others for the political equations. He says:

When I joined the University a feud was going on between dictatorship and democracy. Dictatorship is based on not any moral ground but on arrogance. I took initiative and courage to anchor the transformation of the University. This was the only reason, why I was strongly opposed and even criticised by those valueless and immoral elements in the University...I disapproved of the pro- Congress line. I did not subscribe to the outlook of B.J.P. as well. (173-174)

The writer maintained strict self-discipline in following the balanced approach to take many initiatives and bold decisions to strengthen the administrative system of the University. He managed to improve the law-and-order situation in the campus and modernized it leaving a long-lasting impact on the University system. His managerial skills reflected when "The University won the case and saved the money worth of lacs' being spent on irregular appointments of such teachers who had no sufficient work load...I strictly followed all the rules and regulations" (242). Despite, the instance of an attempt to lock the Vice-Chancellor in his office chamber (by some ad-hoc teachers led by Dr. Dunger Singh Khinchi over the demand) to regularize their services, he never succumbed to such undue pressures in his official capacity.

### **Mulk Raj Anand' Scientific Solution**

Mulk Raj Anand is also a prominent Indian writer in English and his text *Untouchable* (1935) is one of his most well-known works. As a social realist, he describes the harsh but real life suffering of the protagonist Bakha, a young Dalit (formerly referred to as "untouchable") man who works as a sweeper. The novel explores the harsh realities of caste-based discrimination and untouchability in Indian society. The novel vividly portrays the discrimination faced by Bakha due to his low caste that not only pushes him into the degrading treatment and social isolation as experienced by untouchables in the pre-independence era. Anand's work highlights the broader social injustice and inequality prevalent in society. It critiques the oppressive caste system and its impact on the lives of marginalized communities. The protagonist, Bakha, becomes a symbol of the individual struggle against societal norms. The writer uses the narrative that explores his aspirations, frustrations, and efforts to break free from the constraints of his caste. The writer poignantly describes the backdrop of British colonial rule in India. It reflects the socio-political dynamics of the time and how colonialism intersected with existing caste hierarchies. Although the writer advocates for the recognition of the inherent dignity of every individual, regardless of caste and challenges the dehumanizing practices associated with untouchability yet Dalit protagonist lacks the essence of Dalit anguish that can make him to come a decisive approach to get rid of his exploitation not only from the drudgery of routine life but from the oppressive caste system, Undoubtedly, the writer shows some flame of resentment in the Dalit protagonist but intensity of his thoughts never reached at the resilience against the caste system. The realistic portrayal of social issues and its contribution to the discourse on caste

and social justice put the writer in the central space in Indian Writings in English but Dalits' protest has to cross a long journey to put a counter canon of Dalit literary corpus.

### **Dalit Writer on Dalit Issues**

Jaidia's pertinently describes Dalits' real life challenges succinctly due to his experiences as a Dalits. The scarcity of resources, problems of getting education, and starting any entrepreneurship for Dalits becomes the focal point of literary exploration in his autobiography. The mainstream writers' description of Bhangis' backwardness and their exploitation in 'the construction of their social reality' is also a coercive narrative to undermine their human rights. The ignoring of Bhangis issues which have been sweeping the dust of Hindu society in many terms even before the recent Swachhata Abhiyans, they get no sensitive literary description and their miseries continue in the society. He describes:

My publications on Bhangis produced widespread repercussions arousing the social conscience of the higher caste Hindus to the sense of injustice which they had inflicted for centuries upon the Bhangis. It indeed opened a new chapter in the history of down-trodden persons- especially the Bhangis. The impact of my publications was so great that Sociologists and Social Anthropologists ...were also moved. (102)

Jaidia's innovative research on Bhangis' issues and his literary exploration reveal his deep understanding of their socio-cultural oppression and adds a new dimension of social studies in India, particularly in Rajasthan. Professor Shyamlal Jaidia, an educationist as well as a sociologist, reached the top post of Jai Narayan Vyas University Jodhpur despite his birth in one of the most backward castes. Still, many Untouchable castes have not realized the importance of education. But going against the long persisting unawareness towards education among the Untouchables, he achieved educational as well as scholastic heights despite all odds of socio-economic barriers. Moreover, he published many books on the Bhangis issues and organized various deliberations based on his research study in this area. His achievements established him as a man of great understanding of the human relationship that he manifested during his struggle starting from Bhangi busti to the highly sophisticated official residence of a Vice-Chancellor of a University. As a human being, he neither got entangled into any hypocrisy or any snobbery nor became vindictive despite his bitter experience throughout his journey. In his writings and research works, Jaidia neither shows any hostility towards the social organizations nor does he fall in any brawl with any community. Rather he continues focusing his point on Bhangis issues through his research. His soberness (either in the inter-personal relationship or as a committed scholar as well as an earnest teacher) evidently shows his maturity of an individual in different capacities. His judicious administrative decisions elucidate his managing skills despite his un-academic family background. His research work got rejected on the complaint of his supervisor. Furthermore, his colleagues and subordinates (at Government College Karouli) also treated him like a leper. Even on his joining as a Professor he had conflict with the then Vice-Chancellor of the University, which he resolved righteously with immense maturity. He even took the legal course when his genuine right of headship was being tried to be usurped by his upper-caste colleagues, hence, displaying biases towards the community he belongs to. He was always amicable to his juniors as well as the seniors. His appropriateness of behaviour and common courtesy not only impressed his colleagues but also saved his time and energy. He neither tried to give caste colour to the matter nor made a brawl that generally crops up in the caste atrocities against Dalits. Moreover, he interacted with the Maharaja (His Highness) as he was invited to attend the party at his palace. Jaidia's genuine approach to understand Bhangis' social issues and his administrative skills to work judiciously in favour of the University even in the pressing circumstances prove him to be a man who keeps humanity above all than other considerations.

### **Changing Occupation through Getting Education**

For the Dalit parents, managing resources in getting education for their children is a costly affair and a testing time not only for the Dalit parents who have no resource at hand but for their children also due to various reasons. In the recruitment process for different posts in the University, he performed his duty towards society (without taking undue favour of his post) and expedited the recruiting process in the general administration of the University. Because the need for education and job is everyone's priority in any community, the urgency of getting livelihood must be taken with utmost priority. The writer describes that the SCs are the most affected sections in the current situation in case of falling of vacant seats either in the general or for the reserved categories at any level in government sectors. Jaidia states:

Let me be very frank about it... If in my endeavour to secure the constitutional rights for my people who have been trampled down in this country in general and in this University particularly, I think that to uplift my

brethren was not a sin and will also not harm the interest of the University in any way. During my tenure as Vice-Chancellor whatever decisions, University had taken were as per rules and Acts of the University. (240)

The upper castes' criticism of Dalit officers keep them on tenterhook and intend to involve them in any brawl without issues but to prove their point. In the interest of the University, when the writer takes tough decisions (including the cancellation of Syndicate membership of Prof. Kapoor and Prof. Singhvi), he is strongly opposed by the upper caste people in the University. Jaidia also took appropriate steps on the politics involved over the common issues like installation of JNV Vyas Statue, furlough in the name of study leave without any research outcome (that cost a lot to the University). His immediate and adequate response to sort out the situation not only saved his time and energy but also proved his acumen to manage the University affairs efficiently. He says,

The name of 'University of Jodhpur' constituted and incorporated by Jodhpur University Act, 1962 (Rajasthan Act 17 of 1962) was changed to 'Jai Narayan Vyas University, Jodhpur' in March 1992. In view of the sacrifices made by Shri J.N Vyas and the role played by him in transforming the mental attitude of Bhangis, Chamars, Meghwals and other untouchable castes towards the national movement and the way he initiated the socio-religious reform movement... The state government was kind enough to sanction a sum of Rs. 3.35 lacs to install the statue... I took keen interest in the finalization of the statue and its installation... The ceremony to unveil the statue was fixed for August 9, 1997 to coincide with the commemoration of the Quit India Movement. However, a few employees of the University were opposed to its installation. (191-192)

The writer also describes the nexus of the politicians with the so-called educationists who grind their axes on different occasions like getting nominated in the syndicate of the university. Jaidia describes how the posts of SCs and STs even for the lower division clerks do not get filled and many a times they are treated as not found suitable. The huge backlog of vacant posts of the SCs neither gets attention of the authorities nor any representation in mainstream literary discourse. Hence, the writer describes new issues of Bhangis not only in context of Rajasthani culture but also in the larger perspective of Indian society. The coercive narrative of Bhangis' sufferings is also a wilful diversion (being made by the mainstream writers) keeping them in a social flux. Bhangis' literary coercion weakens their analytical endeavour to understand the underlying reasons of socio-cultural exploitation even after more than seven decades of the country's independence. Jaidia describes the harsh realities of Bhangis' socio- economic status that become evident in the pitiable conditions of his family:

I was the true child of an untouchable bustee, where there was no drainage, no light, and no water only marshy land, where I lived among amongst the public latrines and the stinking dung scattered all around where the day was like dark night and the nights pitch-dark. I had wallowed in its mire, bathed in its marshes, played among its rubbish heaps and my listless lazy manner was the result of my surroundings. (Untold Story of a Bhangi Vice-Chancellor 7-8)

Dalits/ Bhangis lateral entry to avail benefits of corrective provisions for the SCs and rigidity of the erstwhile feudal lord families are crucial for multi-layering exploitation. The erstwhile feudal lords' hostile attitudes towards Bhangis become crucial factor of their exploitation in the Rajasthani society. Hence, Bhangis' multifarious sufferings are the outcome of their lack of awareness to seek proportionate accommodation in SC reservation as well as due to the erstwhile feudal families' attitudinal indifference that deprives them of many opportunities.

## CONCLUSION

Caste discrimination against Dalits has been century's long roots in Indian society, especially in the orthodox people not only in rural area but also in so-called urban societies even in the present times. Therefore, literary depiction of Untouchables sufferings in the meta- literary narrative neither get a considerably space to in depiction of social reality nor a wider perspective of caste discrimination against Dalits even in the present times of Indian society. Despite the fact, Mulk Raj Anand wrote on the issues of Untouchables and their sufferings in the rigidity of Hindu caste system. Although Anand has been very sensitive writer who depicted the major concerns of the poor and the marginal people yet the crux of Untouchables' suffering is not deconstructed in the means and modes of his literary explorations as Dalit writers did thereafter. Dalit writers describe the issues of working class in metro-cities, acquisition of agricultural lands from the farmers (influencing their socio- economic fabrications), shifting gender dynamics, impact of politics and technology yet they never show sensitivity towards the caste discrimination. Due to these factors, the socially deprived sections like Bhangis also get influenced in the



phase of socio- economic transformation but their major issues do not get representation in the mainstream literary endeavour. How can the integral part of a society (in a state like Rajasthan or the other) remain uninfluenced when the big change is taking place not only in India but also in the world due to the policies like Liberalization, Globalization, Privatization, and Urbanisation? Jaidia describes, "Our livelihood came from the work we did in the city, cleaning the market, disposing of dead animals, and above all looking after the rich Hindu and Muslim households. As regards the dead animals, we had to be more vigilant in some way as vultures are, because, there is no difference between vultures and sweepers in this respect" (3). The reality of Bhangi life and their workplaces either in the villages or in the cities get no substantial improvement in the socio-economic circumstances. Moreover, due to hasty initiatives like privatization, Bhangis' are the ones who are suffering the most due to their unskilled standpoints. Bhangis' backwardness, if somewhere gets described, is either discussed in the contexts of the other untouchable castes or within the restricted social domains where their issues get presented in the conventional style by the mainstream writers. Like all Dalit writers, Jaidia decodes the graded inequality of the Hindu caste system that prohibits any possibility of interchangeability within fourfold hierarchical order rather that divides the Untouchables further in sub-castes. Therefore, rigidity of Hindu caste rules with regard to the Untouchables' orthodox occupations still continues to haunt their socio-cultural world and fractures their consolidation even in getting benefits of scheduled castes reservations. Bhangis' demands for exclusive reservation within the SC reservation (like certain untouchable castes) bring forth their internal bickering that has weakened their consolidation against their oppressors. Hence, Jaidia deconstructs the underlying issues of Dalits who generally fall into web of the meta-narrative approach that creates an environment of justifying the caste system and Dalits' social status quo therein that intends to keep continue their subjugation and weakens their tough stand against the oppressive caste system.

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## Review

# Exploring Moral and Ethical principles through Drama: A Study of Ifeyinwa Uzundu's *Which Way is Right?*

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Accepted 12 December 2023

This study delves into the exploration of moral and ethical principles through the dramatic lens, with a specific focus on Ifeyinwa Uzundu's play titled *Which Way is Right?* In contemporary society, the erosion of moral principles has become a pressing concern. The decline in ethical values, societal norms, and the erosion of moral boundaries has led to various social issues, impacting individuals, families, and communities. Literature, particularly drama, has often been a medium through which society reflects on its values and seeks to restore or reshape them. Ifeyinwa Uzundu's play, *Which Way is Right?*, explores themes related to moral dilemmas, societal norms, and the consequences of one's actions. The theoretical framework employed in this research draws from moral philosophy, ethical theories, and dramatic literature analysis. By examining the intricacies of Uzundu's play, the study aims to elucidate how drama serves as a powerful medium to engage with and interrogate moral and ethical dilemmas. The methodology involves a comprehensive textual analysis of *Which Way is Right?* to identify and dissect key moral and ethical themes. The findings illuminate the effectiveness of Uzundu's artistic choices in conveying complex moral dilemmas to the audience. In conclusion, this research makes a noteworthy contribution to knowledge by expanding our understanding of the moral dimensions of dramatic literature and the capacity of theatre to foster ethical awareness. It underscores the importance of engaging with art as a means of grappling with and understanding the intricacies of moral decision-making.

**Keywords:** Ethical Literary Criticism, Moral Values, moral compass, societal norms, Character Development,

**Cite This Article As:** Akaenyi, N.J. (2024). Exploring Moral and Ethical principles through Drama: A Study of Ifeyinwa Uzundu's *Which Way is Right?*. *Inter. J. Eng. Lit. Cult.* 12(1): 14-21

## INTRODUCTION

In an era characterised by complex ethical challenges and shifting societal values, the restoration and preservation of moral principles are pursuits of paramount significance. Within this ever-evolving socio-cultural landscape, literature, particularly drama, has emerged as a potent vehicle for the examination, exploration, and potential restoration of the moral compass guiding human behaviour. According to Justin Awuawuer, "The unfolding issues within Nigeria have remained a careful evaluation and a critical interrogation of Nigerian Drama and theatre for the purpose of heralding the moral virtues and simultaneously attacking the vices prevalent in Nigerian society for general social transformation" (Awuawuer 66-67).

Playwrights have harnessed the influential aspect of drama throughout history to offer insightful observations on societal events, leading to positive transformations in human lives and their surroundings. In Nigeria, the postcolonial

theatres of Hubert Ogunde, Duro Ladipo, Moses Olaiya, Kola Ogunmola revolve around the subject of morality and conscience. According to Tunji Sotimirin:

Folksongs, which are also a medium of communication found in these folkloric plays, are fruits of traditional culture and display certain unmistakable features. These include part chant, part song, part dialogue nature. It is pertinent to recall here their closeness to Renaissance European with its librettos, arias and scores, its spectacle and dramatic and theatrical/improvisational nature. Occasionally, people who have gone against the norms of society are warned through folksongs and these serve as a means of social control. They are very significant in the daily lives of any community and are often used as a medium of communication throughout the world. They are used in every aspect of human activities particularly during important occasions including ritual celebrations, religious festivals, social engagements, wars or coronations" (Sotimirin 71).

These songs celebrate chiefs or obas, while others serve the purpose of conveying broad concepts or expressing personal sentiments. In their examinations of the practical values within these songs and plays, Obafemi (1996) and Jeyifo (1984) highlight the cultural significance deeply ingrained in the realm of these folk songs. Sotimirin observes that:

Songs in Ogunmola's plays deserve careful study and critical analysis in order to be understand the message they are meant to convey to us. Apart from using these songs to communicate his opinions to the audience, he also employed the use of the folksongs to remind the Yoruba people of their cultural heritage and their religious beliefs. For instance, in *Asoremmasika*, Ogunmola reminds the Yoruba of their traditional belief in reincarnation and retributive justice (Sotimirin 72).

Consequently, it is noteworthy that Nigeria's traditions of literary and theatrical endeavors persist and thrive within the country, as the populace comprehends the genuinely beneficial influence of drama in their lives. This is because, according to Emmanuel Ebo, in employing drama as a tool for social commentary, the playwright is making an "objective evaluation, exposition or the critical assessment of the sociopolitical conditions in society" (Ebo 108). Therefore, the playwright serves as both a societal observer and a reviewer, as art undeniably continues to be a powerful tool for depicting the world, enabling us to understand and analyze various facets of society, including its underlying contradictions and truths. This implies that every piece of art, particularly drama, should consistently align with established social norms. Consequently, the socio-moralist perspective emerges as the most reasonable method for assessing Nigerian drama, as it mirrors the authentic societal conditions of Nigeria. This approach will enable readers to unveil several aspects: the fundamental underpinnings of morality, how societal norms endorse moral principles, the potential link between religious beliefs and morality, and the extent to which the younger generation can comprehend and endorse these moral values.

Therefore, the dramatic arts have a unique capacity to capture the intricacies of human ethical dilemmas, challenge conventional norms, and provoke contemplation about the right course of action. Ifeyinwa Uzundu's *Which Way is Right?* stands as a compelling exemplar in this context, weaving a tapestry of moral quandaries, individual choices, and their far-reaching consequences.

This study endeavours to delve into the profound narrative of *Which Way is Right?* and decipher the intricate ways in which drama, as an art form, contributes to the revival and reaffirmation of moral principles. The study examines how Uzundu's play brings forth the dynamics of ethical dilemmas, showcases the complexities of human choices, and ultimately, raises thought-provoking questions about the resilience of moral values in a world that is constantly in flux. In doing so, this study aspires to shed light on the transformative power of literature, particularly drama, in nurturing and restoring the moral principles that anchor us in an ever-shifting ethical terrain.

### **The historical trajectory of moral exploration in plays**

Exploring moral and ethical values in plays takes us on a captivating journey through the annals of dramatic literature. Adebayo Afolabi contends that:

Throughout the history of mankind, playwrights have always written or improvised plays to ensure morality in society. Whether in the pre-literate or the modern society, they have always stood as sentinels, guarding society against immorality and other vices that are detrimental to human existence. The truism of the perpetual inextricability of drama and society has been established over the ages. The reasons for this are not far-fetched: the playwright, as a member of his society, is naturally affected by the things that go on in society. He, therefore, writes based on his experiences, with society serving as the source of the raw materials with which he manufactures his plays. Moreover, when a playwright writes, he has a target audience in

mind. It is this audience that consciously or unconsciously tempers and directs the playwright's dramaturgical and thematic foci. Like the two tongues of a pair of scissors, therefore, art and society are inseparable. Any attempt to separate them engenders dysfunctionality and social lethargy in both. But when complementarily synergized, they operate at optimal best levels (Afolabi 61-62).

Given the significance of morality in every human society, the playwright consistently acts as a vigilant guardian at the societal gate, monitoring and preventing the infiltration of external amoral influences into the community. From ancient Greek tragedies to contemporary works, playwrights use the stage as a dynamic space to dissect, challenge, and reflect upon the moral dilemmas of their respective eras. This exploration evolves, mirroring the shifts in societal norms, cultural values, and philosophical inquiries. Niyi Osundare emphasizes the idea that a writer bears responsibilities in any human society, presenting a moral duty to rectify inconsistencies and demonstrate ways in which society can be improved, "So the writer...has a duty to relate not only how things are, but how they could or should be. He must not only lead the people to the top of the mountain and point out the Promised Land. He must also show them how to get there" (Osundare 3).

In ancient Greece, playwrights like Sophocles, Aeschylus, and Euripides laid the groundwork for moral exploration through tragedies that grappled with the consequences of hubris, fate, and divine intervention. For instance, Sophocles' *Antigone* explores the moral conflict between obeying the laws of the state and adhering to a higher moral duty. These ancient plays are deeply rooted in religious and ethical inquiries, setting a precedent for the moral discourse unfolding on the stage. Even the comic plays of Aristophanes often comment on moral issues with the aim of making society better. Aristophanes' comedies, which date back to the 5th century BCE in classical Athens, primarily sought to entertain and satirize the political and social aspects of his time. Aristophanes frequently targeted prominent political figures and institutions in Athens. By exaggerating and ridiculing the flaws and vices of politicians, he aimed to bring attention to the moral shortcomings of those in power. This indirect critique encouraged the audience to reflect on the state of their society. His comedies, especially *Lysistrata*, often addressed contemporary social issues, such as the role of women, the effects of war, and the consequences of wealth and power. By exaggerating and parodying these issues, he provided a humorous lens through which the audience could view and question their own societal norms and values.

The morality of 15th-century Europe was designed by the theocratic governments to teach moral purity, uprightness, and godliness, with the goal of creating paradise. It was a necessary intervention into the performing arts by the Christian Church, which was in power then, all over Europe, because performances had degenerated into exercises in obscenity and vulgarity, as sex exploitation had become the order of the day at the beginning of the medieval period. Centred in the church, morality plays were employed to teach virtuous living to bring the soul of man to God. *Everyman* is a classic example of morality plays.

The morality play tradition continued through the ages, albeit with slight variations. Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* is a classic example of Elizabethan morality play. In contradistinction to medieval morality play, which was centred in the church and had a religious motivation and inspiration, latter-day morality plays were inspired by the personal convictions of playwrights about the plight of man. While the medieval example concentrated on assisting man to make paradise, subsequent models focus on making the world a better place for man before eventually going to paradise. The medieval model had presented the world as a place of vanity and suffering where man should not expect any reward as his reward is in heavens. Subsequent models try to make the world a better place to live in while keeping paradise in sight. Medieval morality plays use concrete allegorical characters such as vice, virtue, good works, etc. They tend to deal with real human problems and the problems of immorality in human societies.

Shakespearean plays, such as *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, and *Othello*, mark a Renaissance exploration of morality. Shakespeare's characters confront moral complexities, delving into themes of ambition, betrayal, and the consequences of unchecked power. For instance in *Othello*, *Iago* is a character who uses deception and manipulation to achieve his goal. This raises moral questions about the ethics of such actions and explores the consequences of deceit.

The 18th century, often referred to as the Age of Enlightenment, was characterized by intellectual and philosophical movements that emphasized reason, science, and a questioning of traditional authority. The plays of this period reflected these broader cultural shifts and often commented on moral issues with the aim of contributing to the betterment of society. The 18th century saw the rise of sentimental drama, which aimed to evoke and explore the audience's emotions, particularly empathy and sympathy. Playwrights like Richard Steele and Richard Sheridan used sentimentality to address moral issues such as virtue, benevolence, and the importance of compassion. These plays often featured characters facing moral dilemmas and emphasized the emotional and moral dimensions of their decisions.

Satirical plays were a popular form of entertainment in the 18th century. Playwrights like Oliver Goldsmith and Richard Brinsley Sheridan used satire to critique and ridicule societal vices, hypocrisy, and corruption. Through humor and wit, these plays sought to expose moral shortcomings and encourage societal self-reflection.

Some playwrights embraced a more didactic approach, explicitly seeking to instruct the audience on moral principles.

Ben Johnson, for example, wrote plays with a moralistic tone, intending to convey moral lessons and virtues. The emphasis was on using drama as a tool for moral education.

The Comedy of Manners, a genre popular in the 18th century, satirized the manners and behaviors of the upper class. Playwrights like William Congreve and Richard Brinsley Sheridan used wit and clever dialogue to expose the moral shortcomings of the aristocracy. By portraying characters engaging in morally questionable behavior, these plays invited audiences to reflect on societal values and norms.

The 19th century brings about the emergence of realism in drama, with playwrights like Henrik Ibsen and Anton Chekhov challenging societal norms and moral conventions. Ibsen's *A Doll's House* famously questions the traditional roles of men and women within marriage, sparking debates on individual agency and societal expectations. Chekhov's works, such as *The Cherry Orchard*, depict the moral decay of the Russian aristocracy, reflecting the broader socio-political landscape.

The 20th century witnesses a radical shift in theatrical approaches and the exploration of morality. The works of Bertolt Brecht, known for his epic theatre, seek to engage audiences intellectually and morally, fostering critical reflection on social and political issues. Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* uses the backdrop of the Salem witch trials to explore the dangers of moral hysteria and the abuse of power.

In the latter half of the 20th century and beyond, playwrights globally engage with postmodernism, deconstruction, and the questioning of absolute moral truths. Contemporary plays, such as Tony Kushner's *Angels in America* and Caryl Churchill's *Top Girls*, confront issues of identity, morality, and societal structures in the face of changing cultural landscapes.

In the vibrant tapestry of Nigerian plays, the exploration of morality unfolds as a complex and multifaceted narrative. Playwrights delve into the intricacies of societal values, cultural traditions, and individual choices, weaving together stories that challenge, provoke thought, and reflect the dynamic nature of morality in a rapidly evolving nation.

In Ola Rotimi's *The Gods Are Not To Blame*, the ancient Greek tale of *Oedipus Rex* is transposed into a Yoruba context. The play interrogates the intersection of fate and morality, as the protagonist, Odewale, grapples with the consequences of his actions in the context of divine will and familial duty. Rotimi's work serves as a poignant exploration of how personal choices intertwine with the moral fabric of a culture.

Zulu Sofola's *Wedlock of the Gods* confronts the moral implications of forced marriages in Nigerian society. Through the character of Ogwoma, the play challenges traditional norms, questioning the morality of sacrificing personal happiness for the sake of cultural expectations. Sofola's narrative becomes a platform for examining the moral dimensions of cultural practices and the evolving rights of individuals within a communal setting. The playwright reveals African norms and belief systems that sustain the waiting or mourning period. Sotimirin says that:

Uloko, the impatient lover, could not wait for Ogwoma to complete the mandatory mourning period after the latter lost her husband. He decides to have sexual intercourse with Ogwoma. Such an action is taboo, outrightly immoral. This is why at the end of the play, tragedy befalls the people involved, particularly Uloko and Ogwoma. To the African, the woman is not free yet until certain rules are done before she could re-marry or be re-married to another man in the family (Sotimirin 73).

Wole Soyinka commenting on the moral responsibility of writers avers that "writers should have the courage to determine what can be salvaged from the recurrent cycle of human stupidity" (Soyinka 75). Wole Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman* transports audiences to the intersection of Yoruba tradition and British colonial morality. The play intricately weaves a narrative around Elesin, the King's Horseman, and his moral duty to fulfill a ritual suicide. Soyinka provocatively explores the clash between indigenous beliefs and colonial imposition, prompting a reflection on cultural relativism and the consequences of imposing foreign moral values.

The theme of morality is intricately explored in the complex situation of Zifa in J.P. Clark's *Song of a Goat*. Zifa, who is unable to father children with his wife Ebiere, receives counsel from the Masseur to offer his wife to his younger brother due to his condition. Naturally, such a disagreeable suggestion is met with strong resistance. Zifa unequivocally rejects the advice, refusing to entertain the idea. Ebiere is advised to openly communicate Zifa's condition to her parents, emphasizing that such disclosure is not morally wrong. Additionally, there is a moral obligation for a man to fulfill his marital duties to his wife. Despite these considerations, Ebiere eventually succumbs to her desires and seductively engages in sexual relations with Tonye, her husband's younger brother. Regardless of Zifa's condition, this act is deemed taboo, as it is entirely immoral for a brother to be involved intimately with his brother's wife. As a consequence, Tonye pays for his transgression with his life, and the entire household suffers severe repercussions for this immoral act.

The East African literary Colossus, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, a socialist realist who believes in the social function of arts, sees an artist as a moral upholder of truth, a prophet of justice, one who reveals all that is concealed by darkness. Emblemized in the person of the Gicaandi player in *Devil on the Cross*, the writer is figuratively taken to the rooftop, where he can see all the hidden things and so pronounce on them. This figurative height refers to a writer's privileged

position, which is a result of his higher sensibilities, sensitivities, and education as a writer. To Ngugi “writers are surgeons of the heart and souls of a community”(Ngugi 22). According to L.O Bamidele “Literature is instructive and closely related to the moral life of a man. He sees it as an art that is devoted to the task of inspiring virtue or purifying manner—the interplay of aesthetics and moral factors” (Bamidele 12). According to Ian Gregor and Brian Nicholas, plays and novels are basically concerned with two things—the moral and the story. The moral and the story. The moral aspect is indicative of a writer’s relationship with the society while the story has to do with his relationship with his arts” (Gregor and Nicholas 26). Chinua Achebe, talking on the pedagogical responsibilities of artists, avers that they are naturally saddled with “the task of re-education and moral regeneration of society- a task in which they should be pioneers” (Achebe, 24) This is in line with the views of Friedrich Schiller, who regards the stage as a moral force that normalizes all anomalies when society tends to haywire. A look at playwriting and production over the ages will reveal the fact that playwrights have always been interested in the moral life of society and have been making efforts to uphold same.

Collectively, both classical and modern plays serve as a testament to the rich and diverse exploration of morality within the nation's dramatic landscape. They engage with traditional values, confront the impact of colonialism, and interrogate contemporary societal issues. Through the medium of drama, playwrights contribute to a dynamic and ongoing conversation about the moral compass that guides individuals and communities in their quest for identity and progress.

The historical trajectory of moral exploration in plays illustrates a dynamic interplay between dramatic art and the ethical inquiries of the times. Playwrights, through their works, have contributed to moral discourse, challenged societal norms, and provided audiences with a reflective space to ponder the complexities of right and wrong. As the theatrical landscape continues to evolve, so too will the exploration of morality on the stage, shaping and reflecting the moral consciousness of each era.

## Theoretical Framework

Ethical criticism involves analyzing literary or artistic works through the lens of ethical principles and values. When applied to drama, this perspective delves into how a play explores, challenges, or reinforces moral and ethical ideas. This approach contends that literature serves as a distinctive manifestation of ethics and morality within a specific historical context, asserting that literature is not merely a form of linguistic art but rather an art of textual expression. Within the framework of ethical literary criticism, the primary function of literature is viewed as the promotion of moral enlightenment and education, with aesthetic appreciation considered as a secondary aspect. According to Nie Zhenzhao

Ethical literary criticism is defined as a critical theory for reading, analyzing and interpreting the ethical nature and function of literary works from the perspective of ethics. Seeing literature as a product of morality, it argues that literature is a form of ethical expression in a specific historical situation. The theory examines literature as a unique expression of ethics and morality within a certain historical period and that literature is not only an art of language but also an art of text. Literature is, in essence, an art of ethics. Out of the demand for ethical expressions, human beings invented written symbols to record their lives and their understanding of ethics as texts (Zhenzhao, 189-190)

More specifically, ethical literary criticism aims to unravel the ethical dimensions embedded in literary compositions, offering insights into characters and their lives from an ethical standpoint and providing ethical evaluations of their actions.

Throughout the course of human civilization, two significant processes have shaped mankind: natural selection and ethical selection. Natural selection facilitated the physical evolution of humans from apes, while ethical selection serves as a spiritual distinction, setting humans apart from animals. From an ethical perspective, the culmination of these processes is represented by the Sphinx factor, which can be understood as the amalgamation of human and animal elements. The Sphinx factor stands as a central theme expressed in literary works, reflecting the complex interplay of human and animal characteristics in the ethical development of humanity.

In the context of Ifeyinwa Uzonde's play *Which Way is Right?*, ethical criticism can be a valuable approach to understand the work's engagement with moral dilemmas and ethical considerations.

Ethical criticism often thrives on the exploration of moral ambiguity and complexity within a narrative. In Uzonde's play, ethical criticism would highlight situations where characters face difficult choices, challenging the audience to consider the complexities of right and wrong.

Characters in a drama are key elements for ethical analysis. Ethical criticism will focus on the moral development of characters in *Which Way is Right?*. Ethical criticism involves in examining how these principles are represented and whether they align with societal norms or challenge them.

Uzonde's play addresses issues specific to a cultural context, providing an opportunity for ethical analysis within that framework. Therefore, ethical criticism will explore how the play reflects or challenges cultural and social ethical norms.

In summary, ethical criticism of *Which Way is Right?* involves a deep examination of the play's characters, themes,

and narrative structure to uncover its engagement with moral and ethical principles. It allows for a nuanced understanding of the ethical dimensions embedded in the drama, offering insights into the playwright's perspective on morality and challenging the audience's own ethical perspectives.

### ***Which Way is Right: An Analysis of Ethical and Moral principles.***

The play dramatises one of Nigeria's perennial post-colonial crisis which is manifested in ethical challenges. It vividly reveals the difficulties experienced by Nigerian youths who have been uprooted and devastated by the combined effects of joblessness and societal neglect. Set against a typical African society, the play opens along the roadside and two very important female characters are introduced to us. Chioma and Ogechi, are NYSC corps members, who have just concluded their national youth service. Unlike Ogechi, Chioma's experience throughout her service years had been a pleasant one. During the conversation between the two, the playwright reveals that Chioma is a character, who can go to any length so as to actualize her ambitions.

To emphasize the need for the restoration of moral principles in society, Ifeyinwa Uzundu introduces the character of Ogechi, a teenage girl known for her qualities of integrity, compassion, pastience, courage, and a sincere dedication to societal progress. Despite the tough financial difficulties and dissapointments she keeeps facing in her bid to secure a job, Ogechi displays remarkable resilience, unwavering truthfulness, unflinching bravery, and a steadfast commitment to her ethical values. Ogechi refuses to be sexually molested by men, who are in a position to employ her. The frustration that has been building up within Ogechi becomes readily apparent during one of her conversations with her mother:

Mama Ogechi: My daughter, you are welcome, how did it go?

Ogechi: Mama, the same old story. After the interview, the general manager gave me this complimentary card to meet him in all Bright Hotels this evening for furhter interview. Mama I'm tired (29)

Worried as a result of the constant sexual advances towards her daughter, Ogechi's mother believes that the only solution lies in the hands of Pastor Jacob, a fake pastor whom she believes possesses the power to pray and deliver her daughter from the evil spirits hindering her from getting a job. Things start getting worse for Ogechi, when Pastor Jacob makes sexual advances to her, like other men. When being confronted by Ogechi's mother, Pastor Jacob levelled false accusations against the young girl.

Pastor Jacob lied that Ogechi tries to seduce him, but he resists the temptation. Ogechi's mother eventually throws her daughter out of the house, believing every single word of this self-acclaimed 'man of God'. Here, the play also spotlights the pervasive sexual exploitation within the religious circle, where charlatans and hypocrites dressed in religious garbs like Pastor Jacob crave for canal pleasure and satisfaction under the guise of religion. This has led to family disputes and other social maladies. The fact that the so-called or self-acclaimed 'man of God' is among the men wanting to sexually exploit the young girl underscores the nature of the decay in the religious system. The playwright calls for a comprehensive reform of the religious body and the eradication of corruption within Nigerian society. Pastor Jacob is eventually punished as he is caught raping one of his church members.

Chioma decides to welcome Ogechi into her house, but the young girl's continued stay in Chioma's house is shortlived as a result of Tony's infidelity. Believing that Ogechi will ruin her marriage, she orders Ogechi to pack out of her matrimonial home. Frustrated, Ogechi moves in with one of her friends, Agnes, who promises to help her to secure a job. As usual, Andy, the general manager of the company wouldn't take his eyes off the young girl. He tries to woo Ogechi to no avail. At a point, Andy gets angry and orders her out of his office. Without compromising her womanhood, Ogechi later on, secures the job in the company and even Andy proposes marriage to her. Unlike her friend, Agnes, who resorts to offering Andy sexual pleasure in exchange for employment, Ogechi, through sheer hard work attain a greater height. Things turn out fine for Ogechi as she is honored with a very big position in the company, along with a tastefully furnished apartment and a car to her credit. Uzundu in *Which Way is right* advocates for a good moral orientation which is the basis of societal peace and harmony. Neither the rejection from her mother nor friends deter Ogechi from excelling in her chosen career. She is seen in the play doing so well in her recent position in the company even to the extent that Andy, her employer proposes marriage to her. It should be noted that the playwright does not only make Ogechi to excel in her career, but she places her in a position of authority that is enviable in the company. Ogechi is able to change her undesirable conditions through her salient virtues.

Through Ogechi's character, the playwright underscores the significance of strict adherence to societal values. The society depicted in the play is portrayed as deeply concerned about the anomalies in the society and demanding a change in the social fabric of the nation, where moral principle have been jettisoned. *Which Way is Right?* is a play that delves deep into the moral tapestry of human lives, presenting a canvas upon which a spectrum of moral dilemmas, ethical quandaries, and the often unforeseen consequences of human actions are vividly painted. Through its characters

and their intricate dilemmas, this play holds a mirror to society, urging its audience to question, reflect, and engage in a profound dialogue about the fundamental tenets of morality.

Additionally, the playwright points out that impatience, lack of contentment, and greed of the youth have driven some to engage in criminal activities such as drug trafficking, armed robbery, cybercrime, kidnapping, and ritual money. The character of Okechukwu and Ikenna, young men who end up arrested for the offence of kidnapping and attempted murder, serve as an example of the consequences of such behavior. The young men find it difficult to secure a job or any means of livelihood immediately after their NYSC programme and they resolve to reach out to Honourable Nkemka, a politician who, in quest for political power, promises to help them but ends up dumping them. When Okechukwu and Ikenna could not bear it any longer. Ikenna says

Ikenna: That's the spirit bro! Now, listen I told Skido and his group what Honourable Nkemka did to us and they promised to help us get back at him, by kidnapping either his wife or one of his children for ransom. As I speak with you now, his house is under surveillance. Very soon, we will cut our own pound of flesh. That is what our society demands from us (43)

These young men joined bad gangs that planned the kidnapping of Honourable Nkemka's wife. Unfortunately, they were caught in the process and sentenced to twenty-seven years imprisonment. The playwright uses these young men to reinforce the theme of nemesis in the play. The sudden and unexpected apprehension and confinement of Ikenna and Okechukwu reflect the principles of retributive justice, commonly associated with the concept of nemesis. These young individuals, who were previously used as thugs by Honourable Nkemka during his political campaign believe themselves to be untouchable until the repercussions finally catches up with them.

The play also adumbrates gender concerns, especially as it concerns sexual exploitation of women by men. Andy is emblematic of the moral bankruptcy of many employers in Nigeria. He sleeps with young girls before employing them in his company. He becomes disappointed when Ogechi vehemently refuses to give up on her virtues and resist his lewd proposal. Ogechi refuses to be swayed neither by Agnes, her friend nor pressures from her society. Ogechi does not want any stain of adultery to destroy her reputation as she turns down Andy's lewd proposal when he continues with further attempts to lure her. This social construction of a woman as a sex object to a man, reinforces the gender oppression that overwhelms the lives of the female protagonists in *Which Way is Right?* and some other African plays. Ogechi is a typical example of a womanist. Oluwatoyin (2015) says that "the strength of the womanist rests solely in her ability to remain strong and undefeated in the face of oppression.

In contrast to Agnes, the playwright positions Ogechi as an exemplar for young women and womanhood in general. Ogechi is portrayed as morally upright, conscientious, hardworking, possessing fortitude, stoicism, and brimming with ideas—an embodiment of the playwright's concept of an ideal woman. Through this character, the playwright illustrates the potential of young women to achieve great heights, akin to eagles, while maintaining their virtues. Just as Andy symbolizes moral decay in *Which Way is Right?*, Agnes serves as the female equivalent. She sleeps with various men and eventually learns a lesson in a hard way.

Set against the backdrop of a world where moral ambiguities are not merely confined to the pages of literature but resonate through the complexities of daily existence, *Which Way is Right?* engages its audience in an intricate web of ethical choices. Through the vivid portrayal of characters entangled in moral dilemmas, Uzundu's drama not only serves as a mirror to society but also offers a lens through which one can scrutinize, question, and potentially rejuvenate moral principles. It beckons the audience to navigate the labyrinth of human morality and encourages contemplation on the path one chooses in the face of ethical crossroads.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the exploration of moral principles through the medium of drama, as exemplified in Ifeyinwa Uzundu's *Which Way is Right?*, offers a profound opportunity to engage with and reflect upon the complex ethical dilemmas that shape our lives. This captivating work serves as a powerful reminder of the enduring relevance of moral values in our ever-evolving world. Through the art of storytelling and the portrayal of multifaceted characters facing moral quandaries, Uzundu's play invites us to contemplate the consequences of our actions, the nature of our decisions, and the paths we choose in our journey through life. By delving into the intricate web of human emotions, relationships, and choices, *Which Way is Right?* not only provides a mirror to our own moral compass but also impels us to assess, reconsider, and potentially reshape our understanding of what it means to live by one's principles.

This study underscores the profound impact of drama as a means to provoke discussion, stimulate critical thinking, and foster empathy towards diverse perspectives on morality. It reinforces the notion that the arts, including theatre and literature, remain a vital platform for ethical exploration, prompting us to navigate the intricate labyrinth of right and wrong. In a world confronted with constant change and ethical challenges, Uzundu's work stands as a testament to the



enduring power of storytelling and drama as vehicles for moral reflection and rejuvenation.

Ultimately, *Which Way is Right?* highlights the enduring importance of grappling with moral principles, as it is through this continual engagement that we can hope to restore and uphold the ethical values that underpin our societies. By engaging with such thought-provoking works, we are reminded of the timeless need for empathy, introspection, and dialogue in our collective pursuit of a more just and compassionate world. Ifeyinwa Uzongdu's play, like drama as a whole, reaffirms the enduring belief that the quest for moral clarity is a journey worth undertaking, and that the arts offer an invaluable compass in navigating the complex, ever-changing terrain of human morality.

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## Review

# Satire on Female Intellectual Capabilities in George Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss* (1860)

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Accepted 6 January 2024

The oppression of women by men in patriarchal societies is based on the belief that women do not have the same physical and intellectual capacity as men. Because of this belief, women do not enjoy the same opportunities as men when it comes to education in life. This study analyses the various literary devices used by George Eliot to denounce the denial of women's rights to education. It documents the violation of female character's rights to education in George Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss*. The liberal feminist theory developed by Mary Wollstonecraft who advocates mixed education for gender equality is used in this study. How the novelist develops a literary irony on female intellectual capabilities to study the same subjects as men is highlighted in this study. The literary irony is used to denounce the violation of women's rights to education. It has revealed how the novelist promotes a genderless education for the benefit of both women and men in order to reach a social progress in the world.

**Key words:** Oppression-Education-Rights-Women-Intellectual-Capability-Satire

**Cite This Article As:**BAFANA, K. (2024). Satire on Female Intellectual Capabilities in George Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss* (1860). *Inter. J. Eng. Lit. Cult.* 12(1): 22-30

## INTRODUCTION

The oppression of women in patriarchal societies is experienced from the cradle to the grave across the world. The issue about the inequality between men and women in terms of gender is rooted in the form of education that is given to girls and boys at their tender age up to the time they grow up to become adult citizens in society. Patriarchy understood "as the economic, political, sexual and ideological domination of women by men" (Murray, 1995/2005:26) does not favour women's emancipation in any form whatsoever. This social injustice provoked movements demanding reforms. Many movements and agitations in the Victorian society arose as a result of this aristocratic and patriarchal oppressive rule which was not in favour of women's emancipation. Women were not entitled to enjoy the same rights as men. The fact of denying women the right to have the same privileges as men constitutes oppression against them and a violation of their rights to emancipation.

Ellen Rooney explains this issue by saying that "Any agitation on behalf of women's rights involves some sort of critique of the dominant order, some kind of "theory" of women's oppression in a patriarchal society" (Rooney, 2006: 73). For example, Anne Brontë in *Agnes Grey* (1847) and George Eliot in her second novel *The Mill on the Floss* (1860) to name only these, are illustrations of this preoccupation of writers in favour of gender equality.

Jill I Matus remarks this peculiarity about George Eliot by saying that “Her stature in the field of English novelists rests on in no small measure on the way her novels show the scope and complexity of her views about society, religion, gender, history, ethics and morality” (Matus, 2009: 227). George Eliot in *The Mill on the Floss* has developed a critique of the patriarchal oppressive order which is not in favour of women’s emancipation.

The aim of this study is to analyse the various literary devices used by George Eliot to denounce the denial of the rights of women to education in order to secure the same educational opportunity for both men and women beyond gender barriers. It shows that there is a violation of women’s rights to education. This violation constitutes a disempowerment of women. The process of disempowerment is conducted through an imbalanced attitude of men towards gender equality in relationship with the education of girls and indirectly the education of women in general. The study examines how George Eliot delineates this thorny issue of discrimination against women in terms of their rights to education through the use of satire. Further, the study looks at how George Eliot uses irony in the construction of the plot in the story in order to express in an artistic way the patriarchal disbeliefs in the female’s intellectual capabilities to study the same the subjects as men. It looks at how George Eliot denounces the patriarchal disempowerment of women from their tender age through an imbalanced system of education put in place in the novel.

This study is conducted under the lenses of the liberal feminist theory developed by Mary Wollstonecraft who advocates mixed education for gender equality in education to take place. This mixed education is the corner stone for women’s emancipation because they will benefit from the same education as men. With the mixed education, there is no discrimination against women in terms of their rights to have the same privileges as men in terms of educational opportunities and later in terms of employment opportunities. This liberal feminist theory promotes women’s rights to enjoy the same privileges as men right from their tender age. This can be done only through education of boys and girls under the same system of values that are beneficial to both of them.

A focus on the patriarchal world view on female education will be followed by the study of how the writer develops a literary irony on female intellectual capabilities to read the same subjects as men. The last aspect will be based on the perspective developed by the writer to promote a genderless education in the novel under study.

### **Patriarchal World View on Female Education in *The Mill on the Floss***

Literature is “an artful arrangement of language.” (Cavanagh, *et al*: 2010; 4) This artful use of language serves as a mirror of society. As such, it is used to reveal to the readers what goes on in society with a creative perspective. The mirror, through what the readers make of the texts they read, focuses most of the time on what goes on wrong in society for them to develop a consciousness and a desire for a better society. This can be justified by the fact that writers use their geniuses to create new societies that are different from the ones in which they live or the ones they observe in their daily lives. In the context of the Victorian society as it is the case in many other societies across the world today, patriarchy was identified as being what provoked things to go wrong in that society in terms of gender equality.

George Eliot in *The Mill on the Floss* provides a realistic description of the social behaviour of characters under a patriarchal system with the use of satire in the novel in terms of their attitude in front of gender inequality and the future of the youth. In the novel, female characters who represent women of the Victorian society are portrayed as being oppressed by male characters who stand for men within the family unit of the said society. This oppression of women serves the purpose of men’s patriarchal interests and their desire to wield power over women with the ultimate aim of subjugating them. The patriarchal world view of Mr Tulliver does not open ways for him to have discussions with the female members of the family. The fact is that, Bessy his wife has no power to object to his decisions. She simply wanted her husband to invite her aunts like Sister Glegg and Sister Pullet for them to have their say about the education of their children. To prove that the Victorian society was dominated by the patriarchal world view, it is easy to notice that Mrs Tulliver herself had no idea about the education of her children. She did not have idea about any good school where to send her children, especially her daughter Maggie.

The patriarchal interests are featured in the behaviour of Mr Tulliver in the novel. The world view of Mr Tulliver on education is motivated by the preservation and the perpetuation of privileges to benefit men only. His system of beliefs and values are guided by patriarchal motives. For instance, Mr Tulliver decided alone to give a sound education to his son Tom. The narrator lets the reader know that Mr Tulliver made his resolution public when he was speaking to his wife Bessy. Being a male character in a patriarchal setting, he took singlehandedly this decision without consulting his wife. The latter was later merely informed about the decision he made about his son’s education. He did not consul this wife simply because she is a woman. From the liberal feminist perspective, women’s opinion does not matter in men’s world view and in their decision making process.

The main motivation of Mr Tulliver to send Tom to a good school is based on the fact that he himself had not had the chance to benefit from any good education when he was a young man. So he sees himself in Tom and wants him to have the best in terms of education that can be found on earth. He wants to perpetuate men’s patriarchal power over women through the education he wants for his son Tom to the detriment of his daughter Maggie who was also at the

schooling age. Mr Tulliver's preference for his son Tom to become highly educated betrays his gender bias. This is what he tells his wife:

I want Tom to be such a sort of man like Mr Riley, you know – as can talk pretty nigh as well as if it was all wrote out for him, and knows a good lot o' words as don't mean much, so as you can't lay hold of 'them in law; and a good solid knowledge o' business too (Eliot, 1860/1995:5).

Meanwhile Mr Tulliver himself knows very well that his son is not as smart as such. He casts doubt on his intellectual capability. The belief of Mr Tulliver is that Tom being a boy, he must be sent to a good school despite the fact that he is little a bit slow in life. He rightly told this to his wife Bessy about his son. "Tom hasn't got the right sort o' brain for a smart fellow. I doubt he's a bit slowish. He takes after your family, Bessy." (Eliot, 1860/1995:5)

In addition, Mrs Tulliver is also under the influence of patriarchal ideology in the sense that she believes her daughter Maggie is not intelligent. Mrs Tulliver has a negative world view about her daughter Maggie. This is what she tells her husband:

but I'm sure the child's half an idiot i' somethings; for if I send her up-stairs to fetch anything, she forgets what she's gone for; an' perhaps ' sit down on the floor i' the sunshine an' 'plait her hair an' sing to herself like a Beddlamcreatur', all the while I'm waiting for her down-stair (Eliot, 1860/1995:6).

The world view of Mrs Tulliver is dominated by patriarchy which is based on "the system of relations that presumes the superiority of men." (Harris, 2010: 108) This presumed superiority of men over women has a great impact on the mind set of women like Mrs Tulliver. This ideology is illustrated in the behaviour of Mrs Tulliver. She has the same negative perception about women as the one of her husband whose patriarchal world view is basically negative about women.

In terms of education, Mrs Tulliver does not want her daughter Maggie to go to school. She wants her to remain at home to become a house wife later in life in the same way as her husband also wants Maggie to stay at home preferring to send Tom only to school. This patriarchal world view of Mrs Tulliver is shown in what she wants her daughter to do as work at home. This work is the patchwork. But her mother thinks this is the best work she can do in life. Maggie finds that it is a foolish work to do the patchwork at home. She tells her mother that "It's foolish work"... "tearing things to pieces to sew 'em together again. And I don't want to do anything for my aunt Glegg- I don't like her" (Eliot, 1860/1995:7). At the same time, Mrs. Tulliver accuses her husband of encouraging Maggie in naughtiness. This is an evidence that both parents want their daughter to become a house wife to remain in the private and in the domestic spheres all her life.

The main preoccupation of Mr Tulliver is to give a good education to his son Tom. At the same time, he says nothing about the education of his daughter Maggie. He wants his son Tom to become a great scholar. He opines that:

You see, I want to put him to a new school at Midsummer ...he's comin' away from the academy at lady day, an' I shall let him loose for a quarter, but after that I want to send him to a downright good school, where they'll make a scholar of him (Eliot, 1860/1995:9).

To further highlight his ambition for the education of Tom, Mr Tulliver explains that he does not want his son Tom to become a miller and a farmer like him. He does not wish to find himself in a situation in which he will be challenged by his own son for the questions of inheriting his land or his mill. But he wants his daughter Maggie to become a house wife like her mother. This is what Mr Tulliver tells Mr Riley who also believes that the greater advantage Mr Tulliver can give to his son Tom is a good education.

I don't mean Tom to be a miller and farmer. I see no fun i' that: why if I made him a miller an' farmer, he'd be expecting to take the mill an' the land, an' a hinting at me as it was time for me to lay by an' think o' my latter end. Nay, nay, I've seen enough o' that wi' sons. I'll never pull my coat off before I go to bed. I shall give tom an eddication an' put him to a business, as he may make a nest for himself, an' not want to push me out o' mine. Pretty well if he gets it when I'm dead and gone. I shan't be put off wi' spoon-meat afore I've lost my teeth (Eliot, 1860/1995:9).

The analysis of the behaviour and the view of both Mrs Tulliver and Mr Tulliver reveals that they did not plan anything for Maggie to get a sound education like the one they have planned for Tom. For Mr Tulliver "a woman's no business wi' being so clever. It will turn to trouble, I doubt." (Eliot, 1860/1995:10). To his surprise Maggie was overhearing the conversation between her parents and Mr Riley. This brought her to react vigorously to the information that her father had been looking for a good school for her brother Tom whereas nothing was being planned for her except her mother's

project meant for her to learn the trade of patchwork which she did not like in her life because, according to her, it was below her intellectual capacity. Clearly, the reaction of Maggie in relationship with her parents 'decision to give preference to the education of Tom, the boy, proves that they did not want her to go to any school at all. Mr Tulliver's attitude is gender biased. He has no educational project for his daughter. All his attention is focused on Tom. He wants him to get good education and become a lawyer later in his life. His declaration about Tom is very clear to the point:

You see, I've made up my mind not to bring Tom up to my own business. I've had my thoughts about it all day long, and made up my mind by what I saw with Garnett and his son. I mean to put him to some business, as he can go into without capital, and I want to give him an education as he'll be even with lawyers and folks and put me up to a notion now and then. (Eliot, 1860/1995:58).

Every idea that Mr Tulliver develops about education is for Tom, the boy and nothing for the girl, Maggie. Because of the patriarchal power, Mrs Tulliver cannot object to the decision made by husband. Both parents have no project for Maggie. Their attitude towards her shows that they denied her the right to go to a good school. They made this decision without having a clear knowledge of the intellectual capacities of Maggie. They have developed a prejudice about Maggie simply because she is girl. For them, girls or women have no intellectual capacity to reckon with. This prejudice is in fact misleading when one considers the real intellectual capabilities of Maggie in the novel under study. The novelist shows how intelligent Maggie is through the use of irony.

### **Literary Irony on Female Intellectual Capabilities in *The Mill on the Floss***

In literature, irony, whether it is verbal, dramatic or situational, is used to express the contrary of what is meant, intended or expected in order to add a taste to the use of the language or to create a suspense or a humour in the development of the plot in a story for the reader to have an aesthetic appreciation of the text he reads in terms of the message put across by the writer. (Arp & Johnson, 1970/2003: 760). In the context of this study, it is relevant to recall that "In dramatic irony the contrast is between what a character says or thinks and what the reader knows to be true. The value of this kind of irony lies in the truth it conveys about the character or the character's expectations." (Arp & Johnson, 1970/2003: 335). In *The Mill on the Floss* the delineation of the behaviour of Maggie in her interaction with Tom reveals an illustration of a dramatic irony.

In fact, all the characters around Maggie, whether it is Tom her brother, Bessy her mother, Mr Tulliver her father, or her aunts, believe that she has no intellectual capability to go to school or to even read the same subjects as Tom who is a boy and is at school. The reader knows the truth about all the characters around Maggie and the truth about Maggie herself in terms of her intellectual capability. The fact is that Tom himself told her on many occasions and in a severe tone. This is what he told her: "you are a naughty girl" (Eliot, 1860/1995:27). In another discussion between Tom and Maggie who proposed to help him in case he forgets some aspects of his lesson, Tom once again told her "you are a silly girl- but I never do forget things, I don't (idem). Tom was of the opinion that Maggie is a silly little thing and all girls are silly.

The contrast is that, the patriarchal prejudices cast a veil of doubt on the reality about Maggie's intellectual capabilities simply because she is a girl. These patriarchal prejudices make the characters in the novel believe that women have no intellectual capacity to develop their intellectual potentiality to become through education competent citizens outside the domestic sphere. The truth the reader knows is that the intellectual capability of Maggie is established through the way she reacted to questions related to education. Her father had refused to send her to school to become a prominent person when she grows up simply because she is a girl. Mr Tulliver believes that girls are not made for education of a higher level. For her parents, what women need is the bare minimum in education. By refusing to send Maggie to school despite her brilliant intellectual capabilities, her right to education is denied to her by her parents. This is where the disempowerment of women begins, that is at their tender age. Patriarchy through the process of education favours the disempowerment of women. This disempowerment creates an incapacity in women and people tend to believe that all these incapacities are innate. On the contrary this incapacity is acquired. The disempowerment of women follows a constructivist process. It is rather a social construct. It must not be misunderstood as being essentialist in origin. Mary Astell (1694/2002) explains that women's incapacity is acquired in the process of education. The case of Maggie Tulliver constitutes a clear example how women can be rendered incapable right from their tender age if they denied their right to education.

The incapacity, if there be any, is acquired not natural; and none of their Follies are so necessary, but that they might avoid them if they pleas'd themselves. Some disadvantages indeed they labour under, and what these are we shall see by and by and endeavour to surmount; but Women need not take up with mean things, since (if they are not wanting to themselves) they are capable of the best. (Astell, 1694/2002: 59)

The attitude of Mr Tulliver is illustrative of the attitude of men under the influence of patriarchy. Men believe women do not need a sound education in same way as men. Mary Wollstonecraft (1792), one century before the publication of *The Mill on the Floss* (1860) denounced this misconception of education by men in the following terms:

Into this error men have, probably, been led by viewing education in a false light; not considering it as the first step to form a being advancing gradually towards perfection; but only as a preparation for life. On this sensual error, for I must call it so, has the false system of female manners been reared, which robs the whole sex of its dignity, and classes the brown and fair with the smiling flowers that only adorn the land. (Wollstonecraft, 1792/1992: 59)

Meanwhile, education is a process of economic and social empowerment of human beings. Education helps learners, especially women to build on their dignity and capability. The empowerment of females and males follows the guidelines laid down by the patriarchal prejudices in many societies which aims at the perpetuation of patriarchal interests. Patriarchy is at the source of many social and economic inequalities in many societies across the world. Terrell Carver (1991) records that under patriarchy these imbalances are recorded in the form of the oppression of women within the family unit. The case in point is the oppression of women through an imbalanced education system as well as the organisation of labour. He states that:

The family is, in particular, the major unit for the organization of consumption in the private domain. In all these ways, women are oppressed within the family, both directly by the men present there and less directly through the structural lack of power of the family in relation to capital (Carver, 1991: 232)

The Victorian society depicted in the Nineteenth century realist novels like *The Mill on the Floss* by George Eliot, reflects this gender imbalance in terms of educational opportunities offered to girls and boys at their early age. The novel exhibits the preference of parents to boys to the detriment of girls when it comes to their education.

The paradox that the writer used to create the irony in the story is that when Mr Tulliver was trying to find a good school to his son Tom in order to give him a good education, Maggie who was left out, was far ahead of Tom in terms of her capability to read and write. Even her father had to ultimately testify that:

She understands what on's talking about so as never was. And you should hear her read – straight off, as if she knowed it all before hand. And alleys at her book! But it' bad – it's bad' Mr Tulliver added, sadly, by checking this blameable exultation (Eliot, 1860/1995:10).

Instead of being happy that his daughter is clever at reading, Mr Tulliver rather regrets that she has developed a precocious ability at reading and writing as if it were a sin for a girl of her age to know how to read and write. Mr Tulliver went further to add that “she'll read the books and understand 'em better non half the folks as are growed up (Eliot, 1860/1995:10). To check the fact that Maggie has a great intellectual capability to read and write, Mr Riley asked her to interpret the pictures in her book, and she did it perfectly. It petrified Mr Tulliver who had listened to this exposition of Maggie's with marvellous wonders. Mr Tulliver was amazed to discover that Maggie was able to interpret Daniel Defoe's *The History of the Devil*. On his part, Mr Riley the teacher, comments that this book of Defoe is “not quite the right book for a little girl” before asking Mr Tulliver “how come it's among your books” (Eliot, 1860/1995:11). It is clear that Maggie's intellectual capabilities are far beyond her age and beyond that of Tom, her brother.

As it can be expected from a clever girl like Maggie, she looked hurt and was discouraged about the remark made by Mr Riley about the books of her father. Instead of acknowledging the intellectual capability of Maggie to read and write, Mr Tulliver, together with Mr Riley rather developed a false judgement about the ability of Tom to be good at school, but whom the readers know he is stupid indeed. George Eliot develops this situational irony in her novel as a satire on the biased gender education that produces a satirical effect on readers. Patrick Parrindar (2006) rightly explains that:

The novel is famously the product of middle classes, describing the pomp and privilege of office for satirical effect but glorifying its protagonists' ability to stand on their own feet and rise on their merit.(Parrindar, 2006:12)

The satire on Tom's real capability is further exhibited in the novel when Mr Tulliver decided to go and visit Tom at the school to which he finally sent him. Tom to whom all is given in terms of opportunities to have a good education, rather told his father that he is sick. Tom cannot stand on his feet and rise to his merit at school. He pretended to be sick because he is very weak at mathematics. He told his father that he does not like mathematics arguing that it gives the toothache. This is how the narrator reveals the weaknesses of Tom at school in mathematics and in Latin. 'I don't think I am well, father, said Tom. 'I wish you'd ask Mr Stelling not to let me do Euclid –it brings on the toothache, I think.' (Eliot,

1860/1995:120) To this request, his father told him that he should learn what his master tells him to learn.

The literary irony in the novel is further revealed to the reader. The worries and the despair are shown by Tom to prove his difficulties in mathematics. The narrator uses a metonymy related to Euclid, the ancient Greek mathematician who is considered as the father of geometry in mathematics to show the difficulties of Tom in mathematics. Despite the fact that, earlier in the story, Tom treated his sister Maggie as a silly girl, she nonetheless proposed to help him in his lessons in mathematics and in Latin. To do this, the narrator explains that she volunteered by speaking with a little air of patronizing consolation to help him. She told him she would stay with him so long as Mrs Stelling allows her to stay at school. The reaction of Tom came out in a very negative tone and in a high spirit at the proposal made by his sister to help him in his lessons with the intention to confound her by showing her a page of Euclid. "You help me, you little thing!...I should like to see you doing one of my lessons! Why I learn Latin too! Girls never learn such things. They are too silly". (Eliot, 1860/1995:125). The irony is that Maggie knew much more Latin than Tom. This is what she reveals to Tom in a confident manner: 'I know what Latin is very well!' ....'Latin's a language. There are Latin words in the dictionary. There's bonus, a gift'(Eliot, 1860/1995:125). Following this, the two children discussed the meaning of the word bonus. During this discussion about the word bonus Tom tried to correct Maggie and it is rather Maggie who ended up correcting Tom on the different meanings of the word bonus. This scene is an illustration of the confusion that is in the head of Tom about the lessons he is learning. The paradox is that Tom believes he knows it all, but in reality it is rather Maggie who knows it better than him. This is a mockery on the intellectual capacity of Tom in order to create a satire on the capacity of women like Maggie. In a further comment, Tom told Maggie that she will grow up and become a woman one day, and on this ground she need not talk. But Maggie in a confident manner, told him that she shall be a clever woman when she grows up. In the mind of Tom, his sister Maggie will remain a nasty disagreeable thing even when she grows up, and for this reason he will hate her because she is a woman. His mind set is controlled by patriarchy that makes him believe that women are silly, nasty and disagreeable things even if they grow up.

Furthermore, when Tom was trying to learn his lessons on Euclid and on Latin Grammar, Maggie joined him in order to help him, but Tom did everything possible to show her that she is not clever to help him in his lessons. He did this by drawing the book he was reading away and wagging his head at her before telling her: 'You see, you're not so cleverer as you thought you were. (Eliot, 1860/1995:127). For Tom, his sister is simply a donkey because she is a girl, and girls or women can never be clever enough to read Latin Grammar. He said this to his sister: 'Oh you know what you've been doing' said Tom 'you've been reading the English at the end. Any donkey can do that.'(Eliot, 1860/1995:128) The intellectual battle line is now drawn between Maggie and Tom to reveal to the public knowledge who is clever and who is stupid. In this battle, Mr Stelling has a great role to play. In the process, Maggie asked Mr Stelling a nagging question: 'Could I do Euclid, and all Tom's lessons, if you were to teach me instead of Tom? (Eliot, 1860/1995:130). Instead of letting Mr Stelling answer the question of Maggie, Tom, the representative of patriarchy in this battle, rather said this to Mr Stelling 'Girls can't do Euclid. Can they Sir?' (Eliot, 1860/1995:130) The answer of Mr Stelling is clear enough about the female intellectual capability: 'They can pick up a little of everything, I daresay' said Mr Stelling.

'They've a great deal of superficial cleverness; they couldn't go far into anything. They're quick and shallow' (Eliot, 1860/1995:130). Even Mr Stelling did not give much of the capabilities of Maggie until she proved him the contrary. All of them were overwhelmed by gender stereotypes about women's capabilities. During the Victorian period, women were considered as being inferior to men. This inferiority of women is still in force in various forms because the British society is still a patriarchal dominated society.

This consideration can be traced back to the Middle-Ages. But with the rise of enlightenment and the transformation of British society, women and some men began to publicly fight these stereotypes. Even after the passage of the Great Reform Bill of 1832, the status of women was that of being inferior to men to the point whereby they were denied any form of political right after the passage of such an important bill. By allowing Maggie to play a prominent role on the question of education, George Eliot is suggesting an end of gender biased education system.

### **The Promotion of a Genderless Education in *The Mill on the Floss***

A genderless education is a kind of education that is blind to the sex of the learner. It does not give any privilege or any favour to a girl to the detriment of a boy and vice versa. It is an educational policy based on the principle of equality between men and women in terms of their rights to education and in terms of their capability to learn. Mary Wollstonecraft as a liberal feminist of the eighteenth century was an advocate of mixed education in her time. She is one of the pioneers who published an essay in order to denounce the violation of women's rights to education in the eighteenth century in her book *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792). In this essay, she proposed a mixed education. From this type of education she promoted, there is what can be understood today as a genderless education. She clearly stated this idea about genderless education. Wollstonecraft clarified what kind of education girls and boys should receive in order to become enlightened, autonomous and powerful citizens. She declared that boys and girls should be

educated together by stating that:

that to improve both sexes they ought, not only in private families, but in public schools, to be educated together. If marriage be the cement of society, mankind should all be educated after the same model, or the intercourse of the sexes will never deserve the name of fellowship, nor will women ever fulfil the peculiar duties of their sex, till they become enlightened citizens, till they become free by being enabled to earn their own subsistence, independent of men; in the same manner, I mean to prevent misconstruction, as one man is independent of another. (Wollstonecraft, 1792/1992: 283)

Wollstonecraft remarkably underlines the necessity to give a genderless education to both boys and girls with the aim of preparing them for a future life in marriage which is understood as being the cement of society in which both men and women live a life of autonomy and. Independence from each other. According to her, independence and autonomy should be construed as being genderless to create a fellowship between men and women. In other words, she argued that independence and autonomy should not be based on the exclusive rights of men. This life of autonomy and independence is against the enslavement of women. It does not allow women when they gain power to enslave any man whatsoever.

It is relevant to notice that these ideas were not easily accepted in the Victorian society. In front of this resistance to the social and political change, George Eliot took her pen to raise clearly the problem in her novel published one century after Wollstonecraft's book through the use of satire on the supposed intellectual incapacity of women. Eliot expressed her ideas by developing a delineation of a character like Maggie to criticise the supposed intellectual incapacity of women. In fact, the problems of Maggie originate from the fact that her right to receive the same education as men is denied to her and at the same time it is recognised and granted to Tom, her brother. This situation constitutes a case of discrimination against women in terms of their rights to education.

The fact of denying women their rights to have the same opportunities as men in life had generated a lot of agitations and movements in the Victorian society. The struggle for women's liberation from the shackles of men across history in various parts of the world is being lead to achieve equality in terms of gender praxis. This is what has brought writers from the Victorian period to take seriously the defence of the necessity for women to have the same rights as men by voicing ideas in favour of women's emancipation. Since then, many efforts are being made to reach a stage where there will be gender equality between men and women in various sectors of life. These efforts to reach gender equality are still relevant today because patriarchy is still in force in many sectors of society. Andrew Heywood (1994) in this sense declares that "although women have gone a long way to achieving 'formal' equality with men in many modern societies, significant cultural, social and political inequalities nevertheless persist." (Heywood, 1994/2004:288) George Eliot, through the delineation of the character of Maggie portrays a vision for gender equality between men and women which should start right from their early age. That is to say through a system of education that is genderless. This study on genderless education is still relevant because patriarchy permeates every aspect modern societies.

In many societies, the education in place does not give the same opportunities to boys and girls even if they are in mixed educational system. In many instances, there are discriminations against women in terms of opportunities they should have in life. This constitutes a violation of women's rights to have the same opportunities as men in life. The violation of women's rights takes many forms under different circumstances. Women's rights to education, to employment, to inherit from their parents, to have access to land, to have equal pay as men or to have the right to develop some economic activities, etc, were tempered with in the Victorian society and the situation has not changed as such because of patriarchy that continues to prevail today. The situation has not changed as such in the world at large today. Many conscious efforts to eradicate these forms of discrimination against women in societies that are still dominated by patriarchal rule are made at different levels.

In the Victorian period there were separate schools for boys and girls. In view of this discriminatory system, John Stuart Mill was one of the scholars who suggested the mixed education which is based on the principle of gender blindness or gender equality. George Eliot preceded him by expressing in her novel *The Mill on the Floss* these ideas of gender equality through a satire on the supposed intellectual incapacity of a girl like Maggie Tulliver to receive the same education as Tom her brother. But the reality is different. The reader rather discovers that Maggie's intellectual capability is far higher than that of Tom who is entitled to receive the best education that can exist on earth from his father. In the end both George Eliot and John Stuart Mill are of the same opinion concerning gender equality.

By highlighting the intellectual capability of Maggie Tulliver to develop her potentiality through education, George Eliot in *The Mill on the Floss* promotes the idea of genderless education as a pathway to reach gender equality between men and women. To reach this gender equality, they suggested that the oppressive system of patriarchy must be dismantled in modern societies. In the same sense, Andrew Heywood remarks that "patriarchy is the most pervasive and fundamental form of political oppression, gender inequality running deeper than class exploitation, racial discrimination and so forth. To call for 'women's liberation' is therefore to demand not just political reform but a social, cultural and personal



revolution: the overthrow of patriarchy". (Heywood, 1994/2004:276) The principle of gender equality promoted by George Eliot must be based on the fight against all forms of cultural, social and political systems that perpetuate inequalities between men and women. In other words, there must be a Marxist revolution to overthrow patriarchy.

George Eliot in *The Mill on the Floss* has given the role of fighting all the institutions like the family unit and the school system that perpetuate gender inequalities to a little girl like Maggie Tulliver in the context of education. George Eliot insinuates that this fight for gender equality must be led through the various systems of education across the world. To do this, Eliot created Maggie and gave her the important role of challenging the patriarchal institutions and practices that subjugate women and prevent them from being emancipated. Andrew Heywood (1994) further explains that the "Feminist political thought has primarily been concerned with two issues. First, it analyses the institutions, processes and practices through which women have been subordinated to men; and second, it explores the most appropriate and effective ways in which this subordination can be challenged." (Heywood, 1994/2004:62) Through her writing, George Eliot is exploring the effective ways through which the subjugation of women can be challenged. Her description of Maggie Tulliver shows with ample evidence that the little girl is challenging all the institutions like the family unit and the educational system that are biased against women's emancipation. George Eliot was a contemporary of John Stuart Mill. He developed ideas in favour of women's emancipation. George Eliot may have agreed with him when he declared in his book *The Subjection of Women* published in 1869 that:

All women are brought up from the very earliest years in the belief that their ideal of character is the very opposite to that of men; not self-will, and government by self-control, but submission, and yielding to the control of other. All the moralities tell them that it is the duty of women, and all the current sentimentalities that it is their nature, to live for others; to make complete abnegation of themselves, and to have no life but in their affections. (Mill, 1869/2006:17-18)

George Eliot in *The Mill on the Floss* is of the opinion that the subjugation of women is not by nature. She knew clearly that the subjugation of women emanates from culture. Culture is transmitted through education. From a constructivist perspective in relationship with feminist struggle for women's liberation, she decided to attack the roots that perpetuate the subjugation of women by putting the characters in the educational setting. The educational system in this setting is challenged by Maggie Tulliver at her tender age. She did this by claiming women's rights to equal treatment in terms of education.

## CONCLUSION

The study has explored the issue of discrimination against women in their educational process. The study of George Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss* has revealed that the majority of the characters are under patriarchal prejudices and do not believe that women should have the same education as men. The Victorian period that the study has substantiated is an illustration of the fact that all of them are under the patriarchal prejudice reaching out to the belief that women should not have the social life dominated by patriarchy. This study has pointed out that the parents of the two children Maggie and Tom have no project for the education of women. Mrs Tulliver and Mr Tulliver are of the same opinion that is dominated by patriarchal considerations. Both parents believe that their daughter Maggie is not intelligent enough to get the same education as their son Tom, which has appeared in the novel context as sheer irony.

The study has thus come to the conclusion that George Eliot has used irony in order to create a satire on the supposed incapacity of women. This satire through the use of irony reveals that it is rather Maggie who is indeed intelligent to read Latin and Mathematics. But initially every character in the novel including the teachers believed that it is Tom who is intelligent and on this basis he is the one to be sent to a good school. The study has shown how George Eliot promotes equal opportunities for both boys and girls during their educational phase. She did this by using satire on female capabilities to advocate women's rights to education. For her this will ultimately lead to the creation of society in which there is a gender equality. Basing on female capabilities and rights to education, the study has documented satire to mock patriarchal despise of women regarding education. It has shown that through *The Mill on the Floss* George Eliot advocates the dismantling of patriarchy.

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