

An Analysis of Postcolonial Gender Constructions in Three Selected Texts

T. Amarasooriya^{1*}

The paper focuses on the ways in which gender is constructed in selected postcolonial literary texts: *The Quilt*, *Ten Rupees*, and *Mozelle*. Gender construction is distinctive in some postcolonial texts. Colonial rule caused many social changes. In the postcolonial context, women were exposed to new opportunities mainly due to globalization. This exposure led women to resist and question their subaltern status. The study tries to explain the deviations from stereotypical gender roles in the postcolonial context. *The Quilt* by Ismat Chughtai highlights the oppression and negligence of female sexuality and desire. The narrative depicts how Begum suffers due to her subaltern status in marriage. Her frustration and sense of loneliness ultimately lead to an alternative relationship which gives her sexual pleasure. The narrative shows how a female character is empowered and given agency in a postcolonial literary text. *Ten Rupees* by Manto is the story of a girl called Sarita. In describing Sarita's character, Manto emphasizes her innocence and delicacy. Manto's description of Sarita tends to break away from stereotypical imagery of sex-workers and the reader shares Sarita's joy. Hence, Sarita is portrayed in a positive way. Manto moves away from the traditional descriptions of a prostitute. He creates a new character who is full of dreams, fantasies, and wishes. It shows that gender construction in this text is different and it takes a new direction. *Mozelle* by Manto is woven around the relationship of a Jewish woman and a Sikh man. *Mozelle* is a Jewish woman living in Bombay. Trilochan, who is a Sikh, wants to marry her. *Mozelle* is portrayed as a very forward woman. Towards the end of the story *Mozelle* is portrayed as a "heroine", because she rescues a Sikh woman and dies naked. The narrative is also used as evidence to show the diversity in postcolonial gender constructions. In the above postcolonial texts, gender, racial and caste boundaries, which were prominent in traditional society are discussed in a subtle way through operative characters. Hence, the purpose of the study is to show how the postcolonial gender constructions in some texts move away from traditional and stereotypical gender constructions.

Keywords: *gender, subaltern, female sexuality, oppression, prostitution, agency*

¹ University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka * tharu667@gmail.com