

Consent And Appropriation Of Women

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Abstract

Colette Guillaumin's theory of appropriation tells that men appropriate women which let them define women as objects. She suggests that the fundamental aim of patriarchy is appropriation where men regarded women as resources for their own benefit without the need of their consent. Consent is a significant concept in mainstream feminism. It gives women choices and power. Therefore, consent is powerful and performs in many different ways. There are times when consent is forced and it has been often questioned. Then there are the affirmative results of consent. However, using Guillaumin's concept of appropriation and Gene Sharp's theory of power as theoretical framework, this paper studies how male chauvinism treated women as objects and took their consent away through a Mizo short story *An Account of the Courting That Never Took Place*, written by Zirsangkima and translated in English by Josephine Lalbiakzuali. Therefore, consent has become more and more significant concept in the realm of gender studies and has its effects on individual as well as communities. This study is a representation of women in a patriarchal setting whose consent has been neglected and whose voices have been inaudible.

Keywords: Consent; appropriation; women; patriarchy; literature

1. Introduction

As Irigaray contends that the state of feminine is “nothing other than the complement, the other side, or the negative side of the masculine” (63), every woman in a patriarchal society exists in the shadow of men. The masculinity appropriated women, for the likes and pleasures of themselves. The discourse of society has been male-centered. On Lacan’s account of the significance of language, Grosz highlights him as misogyny, “...as the key signifier of the symbolic, the phallus marks male and female bodies and sexualities in different ways” (78).

Weedon accentuates Irigaray’s views such that “female desire is totally foreign to male desire, and the two can only be brought together through a patriarchal repression of the female” (Weedon 64). In a patriarchal setting, many people believed that the answer to every question is patriarchy which gives hostile energy to women empowerment.

This chapter is a textual analysis of *An Account of the Courting that Never Took Place* written by Zirsangkima, and translated by Josephine Lalbiakzuali which focuses on the female characters, the unnamed character who is the motive for the protagonist, although she is introduced to the readers in the name styled by the protagonist, and her unseen mother. There is a state of estrangement of women characters in this story. Therefore, there is only one feminine characters presented in this story-‘K-Dear-i’, although K-Dear-i acted as a motive for the protagonist, she has been sidelined from the central scene; additionally, her mother seems to present in the presumption of the readers which can be regarded she stands only in the shadow of her husband. So, this chapter studies characters that remain unheard, and unseen to the writer but are significant to the central characters, and themes. It is based on Simone de Beauvoir’s declaration, “He is the Subject, he is the Absolute- she is the Other” (xiv). Literature is a reflection of reality; therefore, this story reflected the society that it is set in. In this way, an in-depth study of women’s consent and appropriation is given which represents the condition of women in a patriarchal setting. Being “the other” is to be insignificant, voiceless and to be a mere thing.

1. The feminist critique of consent:

In critiquing consent from the feminist point of view, Gene Sharp’s theory of power became significant. Sharp’s theory of power is mainly his implementation of non-violent actions. This theory is divided in two parts: the first part is his categorization of his non-violent action plan, and the second part is its elaboration (Martin 213). He has developed 198 types of non-violent action plan. Therefore, he writes,

Social power may be briefly defined as the capacity to control the behavior of others, directly or indirectly, through action by groups of people, which action impinges on other groups of people. Political power is that kind of social power which is wielded for political objectives, especially by governmental institutions or by people in opposition to or in support of such institutions. Political power thus refers to the local authority, influence, pressure and coercion which may be applied to achieve or prevent the implementations of the wishes of the power holder (Sharp 7-8).

Sharp seeks to amend the established views regarding the nature of power as monolithic structure where powers are concentrated in the hands of few individuals. In opposing this method, he brings out an alternative - the pluralist structure. It is interesting to note that the pluralist structure suggests that the control or the power depends on the obedience and cooperation of others. He contends, "The most important single quality of any government, without which it would not exist, must be obedience and submission of its subjects. Obedience is the heart of political power" (16). Despite the fact that Sharp suggests pluralism of power, his pluralist structure seems to be bias in nature. "Obedience" is the key element in Sharp's theory of power. However, it turns out to be the cause of hierarchical structure in Sharp's theory which resulted in inequality. Sharp has been praised tremendously for resisting the inhumanities prevailing in the society. Contrastingly, his theory of power serves as a source of inhumanity, for the subjects i.e who obey for a variety of interrelated reasons (19-23). He further stated that the obedience is voluntary in nature (25) which reflects the idea of consent. According to Sharp, they have consented to be ruled, and controlled by those in power. He contends that even in totalitarian regimes the submission may be the result of terror (1980-98).

Although Sharp's theory of power seems to be strong and persuasive, it has been construed in different ways. Some scholars (Lipsitz and Kritzer, 1975) questions on the empirical base which they found are uncooperative. The "loci of power" which Sharp mentions as the external sources are designed in the likes and favor of those in power. From a feminist analysis, this theory does not account, for women experiencing power at the top hierarchy which further gives the idea of landing women as the subjects expecting to be obedient to those in power. So, there is an element of partiality in this theory. In spite of the fact that Sharp's pluralist view of power which depends on cooperation, the subjects are forced to give their consent if it is from terror; so, it can be assumed to be a forced cooperation. On account of consent, Sharp notes that it is given, and withdrawn as well (1973, 30-31). He explains that withdrawal of consent is beneficial, for the victims to challenge power abuses such as dictatorship, genocide, war, and systems of oppression (Martin 213).

It is interesting to note that Sharp's view of power stemmed from the social contract theory. The fundamental issues of social contract theory go:

In the natural condition 'all men are born free' are equal to each other; they are 'individuals'. This presupposition of contract doctrine generates a profound problem: how in such a condition can the government of one man by another ever be legitimate; how can political rights exist? Only one answer is possible without denying the initial assumption of freedom and equality. The relationship must arise through agreement... (Pateman 6).

Pateman writes in her book *The Sexual Contract* (1988) that besides political rights, and freedom, sexual contract has also been included in the social contract theory. She writes, "To tell the story of the sexual contract is to show how sexual difference, what it is to be a 'man' or 'woman', and the construction of sexual difference as political difference, is central to civil society" (16). Her discourse includes consent which pertains to the experiences of women. One of the Pateman's argument is that women are not regarded as individuals in the society. Hence, consent is not their liberty.

Pateman's view elucidates that the so-called civil society established, and constructed by the social contractarians is just a normalized form of patriarchy in which women are dominated by men (1). She further explains that political rights with the social contract depend on the sexual contract. However, this sexual contract is submerged in the modern patriarchal society through the marriage contract. Therefore, the social contract theorists perceive marriage, and family to be part of the natural phenomenon because of the male sex right, which Pateman regards as the original dimension of patriarchy (3). Thus, paternal rights involve male sex right which stresses on the power, and domination of men. The marriage contract reflects, and replicates the original patriarchal construction of sexual difference as mastery, and domination, with men as masters and women as dominated (187). In this respect, women are not given the liberation of rights, and status of an individual. So, the consequences resulted in the inaccessible of consent for women. Conforming to Pateman, the theory of power based upon consent would be meaningless, for a person who does not acquire privilege, and entitlement as an individual. Although Sharp and other theorists (e.g. Carroll, 1989) cited instances of women's actions of resisting power, Sharp does not appreciate enough the differences among the individuals to whom he gave the concession of choice. Particularly in the context of gender, it is even more fundamental since it is located within the patriarchal constructions of society. It became quite evident, and noticeable that Sharp's theory of power is biased in nature, on grounds of gender. Although he highlights the rights, and freedom of civil society regarding consent, the degree of freedom is different in that of the subjects and those in power. The context of "obedience", and "consent" are evidently parallel to each other, since inequality exists in the structure itself.

This theory of pluralist view of power seemed to be no different from the monolithic view of power at some point where violence, and force is used by the power holder against people who opposed their authority. Even though the pluralist view does not imposed violence on disobedient subjects, the power vested on the top hierarchy indirectly have that kind of power on the civil society. In this sense, as aforementioned some scholars contend that Sharp draws his theory in such a way that he placed men in the position of power. So, women are evidently the victims, and sufferers of men, those that are in power. Therefore, Sharp's theory of power is clearly bias in nature as it outlined the position of the weak, and the able which made a separation although Sharp tries to attain harmony by proposing "obedience", and "cooperation" among the civil citizens. However, "obedience" itself is a strong word which can be construed in positive, and negative ways. To begin with, the word shed some positive light because it led good results in some situations. However, on the other hand, it denotes oppression, and authority in certain ways.

In the analysis of feminism, gender is recognized, and regarded as social construction. However, MacKinnon, and other liberal feminists who have parted ways believed that this social construction of gender is inseparable with social construction or belief of sexuality which aligned women under the oppression of men as they are regarded to be the subordinate. Radical feminists do not see gender as a mere social identity but that of a social construction which serves as the trailblazer for domination and subordination (Laden 27). Gender, in itself, is unjust, and bias as it established, and paved way for unequal distribution of power between men and women (113).

Therefore, from the above-mentioned discourse it is clear that manipulation, and oppression vitiated consent. There is a saying that a person's consent is unacceptable, and illegitimate if he/she is

manipulated into giving his/her consent. Remarkably, this notion has been related to feminism which, in a patriarchal institution, dissolved consent of women by means of oppression and manipulation.

The notion of consent is that it “changes the moral situation” (Shiffrin 481-524) by shifting the moral responsibilities to the one giving the consent. The person can do harm or assault or the like; however, responsibility is attributed to the person consenting it even though she is the victim. This structure of consent definitely erases the responsibility of other people in an individual. Therefore, in the context of feminism, the silence of women makes the oppression of men permissible and invisible. Additionally, the silences lead to consequence in the engagement of self-harm which outgrows self-respect and even impacting others. The consent can be given through non-verbal acts, and even, in some contexts, by remaining silent (Simmons 75-83). In this story as well, no words of humiliation came from men, neither the consent of K-Dear-i is not taken for consideration. There is no sign of protestation, or the urge to raise her voice, to stand for her opinion. In the later part of the story, her mention of her likes of the protagonist is followed by her father storming, and pushing away. In this moment, she does not react to her father, standing out for herself which, in a way, can be regarded as her consent.

For many reasons, women have been engaging in self-blame, for being the subordinate, and the consequences of men that followed. Self-blaming stemmed out from the knowledge of assault, and harm done to them. When violation happened incessantly for a long time, the victim could normalize the situation, and think that it is her share to endure the violation which resulted in silence. Then, there are narratives like victim-blaming, which even some feminists adopted. This narrative strongly condemns the victims, the women who bear the brunt of oppression and manipulation. As such, Jaggar gives a criticism of radical feminism where it “portray[s] women as helpless victims” (115). Cudd exaggerates even more, saying that “what is wrong with seeing oneself as a victim is that one sees oneself as personally inadequate – it is self-degrading” (216). She even contends that women are partially responsible, for the oppression through their choices (146-154). This has been a usual opinion; however, oppression has been going on in and out. In this story as well, although the main purpose, and the success of the protagonist’s plan of courting K-Dear-i is between them, the writer made her voiceless when her opinion is what matters till the end of the storyⁱⁱ. According to Cudd’s view, she could have reacted and voiced her opinion in the midst of her father’s anger. In the last scene of the story, when they made a phone call from a PCOⁱⁱⁱ, K-Dear-i utters two lines where she says, “...and I thought you liked me too...” (Zama 146).

These lines tell that K-Dear-i have sparks of emotions for the protagonist; however, the fact that she let her father drives the protagonist away notifies that she chose her father ruled over her emotions. Therefore, she gives her consent, and choice to be ruled over. As aforementioned, she took the “moral responsibility” of the situation. Even though she might undergo any kind of problems as a consequence of the protagonist walked away, she is responsible, for the actions of her father. So, as Cudd called it, she is partially responsible. However, it does not mean that she is completely reprehensible. In a patriarchal society, structure is in favor of men, so it is uneasy, for women to react against them. As Ernest Jones coined “phallogocentric” as an argument that “men analysts have been led to adopt an unduly phallo-centric view” (Reithven 54), women have little voice in the discourse in a patriarchal setting. How Derrida coined “phallogocentrism” to refer the

privilege of men in the construction of meaning has its relevance in this story. There could not be a dissenting voice in women.

In the preface to the *Wretched of the Earth*, Jean Paul Sartre mentioned about the numbers of men and natives (Fanon 7), and he continued,

Native society is not simply described as a society lacking in values. It is not enough for the colonist to affirm that those values have disappeared from or still never existed in colonial world. The native is declared insensible to ethics; he represents not only the absence of values, but also the negative of values. He is let us admit, the enemy of voters and in this sense he is corrosive element, destroying all that comes near him; he is the deforming element, disfiguring all that has to do with beauty or morality; he is the maleficent power, the unconscious depository of and irretrievable instrument of blind forces (32).

This concept is applicable in a patriarchal setting. The condition of women goes parallel with that of the natives. The character of K-Dear-i very well delineates women in her society where their opinions do not much matter. It is no wonder how the women characters in the story seemed inaudible to the readers. Fanon clarifies that in European colonialism, the natives are not treated, and regarded as men (Hussain 136). He goes on to say that as far as physical appearance in concerned, they are men as other normal human beings; but in matters of behavior, they are near to animals, which gave the reason why the natives are recounted in zoological terms. He tells, "when the settler seeks to describe the native fully in exact terms he constantly refers to bestiality". The settler tries to denigrate their identity, and existence by speaking "of the yellow man's reptilian movements", 'native quarter's stink', of breeding swarms, of foulness, of spawns, of gesticulations" (Fanon 33).

Similarly, the Mizo society where this story is set in has been wretched for women. They are given every responsibility in the house but no authority is given to them. The old adages reflect the situation, as Paul says, "Crab's meat is not counted as meat, as women's word is not counted as word". "Bad wife and bad fence can be changed. But the unthreatened wife and unthreatened grass of the fields are both unbearable" (par. 8).

Therefore, these sayings gave the notion that women are not treated as normal human beings, but rather nearly animals, or as an object. Coming back to the idea of dissenting voice, the concept itself has a descriptive, and normative behavior. The idea of dissent aims at the positive impact of the society. So, in this scenario, by giving a voice of dissent, they are withdrawing their consent to oppression, and the likes. Paradoxically, an absence of dissenting voice can be regarded as consent to oppression. In the scenes of the story, there is not a slight appearance of dissenting voice in K-Dear-i's character who is a victim of patriarchal oppression, and authoritarian treatment.

Egbert states that some feminists faux pas women as "victims" as opposed to "survivors" (Egbert 109). These words intend to give positive meanings, Cudd contends,

...it is victim-blaming to claim the victim either made some contribution to the harm or responded in some untoward way that made the outcome worse than it otherwise would have been. If the claim is false, then these kinds of victim-blaming are mere rationalizations of the victimization. But if the claim is true, then the victim may, depending upon the relative contributions of the actions to

the harm, shoulder some of the blame for the harm came about" (Cudd 200-201). He further states that the survivors of these oppressions are the ones who do not "contribute to the harm" by not having actions of in "untoward way (Egbert 109).

The impact of patriarchy is that it has been deep-rooted in the society where women have a belief the oppression, and coercion they faced is their own share to bear. They even regarded the cessation of violence, and oppression as a kindness of the other (Graham 35). Coming back to the story, the element of fear or resentment is not seen in the character of K-Dear-i towards her father. It is obscure that the reason why she rebuked the protagonist cannot be regarded as consensual. It can be assumed that she normalized the oppression of her father. On a positive note, one can argue that she acted the way she does out of obedience since the father has the principal authority in his child's relationship which is how a Mizo society goes. Paul affirms,

The Mizo society is basically patriarchal in nature where male dominance is prevalent. The husband, being the head of the family, exercises unfettered and autocratic dominance over his wife and other members of the family. The power and authority of the patriarch over his children is almost unlimited (par. 5).

In this story, the voicelessness of the female characters has been normalized to the point where they easily bear the brunt of oppression because they accepted it as their fate. Concerning consent, Pateman argues that the way one can subordinate oneself is giving consent or argument (150-151). In *The Sexual Contract*, she talks about the "fraternal order" in the social contract theory where she argues that in a binding relationship of women, females should have consent (35). This gives the notion that women should not be regarded as subordinates to men. Therefore, consent represents power and liberation. Pateman significantly states that fraternal order preserved male sex right (77-153).

The fraternal social contract is a contract which men signed to cause cessation to structure of society which excludes women from managing issues. It, therefore, terminated, and overthrew the "rule of the father", so this contract seems to operate in the likes of women. The society had been structured in such a way that women have been pushed aside, and controlled, and given responsibility only which they can attend to. This makes them less of an individual because their rights have been taken away from them.

There are many domains where women have been debarred from their own rights and dignities. In matters of education, the structure felt necessary, for women to receive education which would enhance their skills, for various responsibilities bestowed upon them, especially child rearing. As Rousseau states that even though education is needful for individual, how it is given out in the society is not gender neutral (16-29). Education can be in different forms, however, the education imparted to men, and women are different and unequal. While men received education to develop, and enhance their leadership skills, and other skills that would help to solve various issues and conflicts, women have been educated to feed them with skills relating to child rearing, and domestic responsibilities. The education imparted to men and women are biased in nature which reflected women as inferior beings; this unmask the inequality prevailing in the society.

Coming back to the aforementioned 'gender neutral', gender neutrality in plain English is degendering which aims at the elimination of gender biasness. West and Zimmerman states, "in doing gender, men are also doing dominance and women are doing deference" (146).

Judith Lorber, a feminist sociologist uses the term 'degendering' to recount the procedure that "weaken gender's power over our lives...by not gendering in the first place"- this is the notion that Lorber is propagating because she feels the grouping of "masculine", and "feminine" introduced the grouping hierarchy (xiv). Gender neutrality advocates the idea, so as to eradicate the imbalanced authority, and power between the genders resulting in the consent of all genders.

Therefore, gender neutrality goes parallel with gender inclusivity. It denotes every option to all the genders. In the absence of gender neutrality, gender itself defines, and limits the destiny of the subordinate genders. Likewise, in the patriarchal setting of this story, gender makes the women characters subordinate by debarring their consent. This is the way in which men exercises their control over women. In the last scene of the story, K-Dear-I stated through a telephone call,

"...and I thought you liked me too" (Zama 146) which contradicts with her father's rebuking the protagonist. In this scene, the consent or the voice of K-Dear-i has been taken away by the power, and authority of the father. This reflects the insignificance of K-Dear-i's character as female being subordinating in the structure of patriarchal society.

In matters of political ideology in the social contract theory, citizens of a society surrendered their individual sovereignty, so as to form an organized civil society. Since the authoritative authority, and power normally falls in the hands of men, no actual lose is there on their part. The women, who are devoid of representation, are subjected to subordination. For this very reason, politics was regarded as a men's affair, for they collectively made policies that would govern everyone (Massey 171). Politics has been the platform where rules are made to govern the state. As Sharp reflects the importance of obedience for a political power (16), he is supporting, and accepting the concept of hierarchy. This gives the idea that in order to achieve 'obedience' in society, there has to be a doer and receiver. Everyone cannot be a doer or receiver, so it is easy to say that his theory introduces ladder of inequality, discrimination, and biasness in the functioning of a government. So, basically since women are barred from entering authoritative position since earlier times, their consent has been taken away.

There have been improvements, and advancements in course of time. There has been growing beneficial rights for women in matters of politics, and other domains around the globe, although there are still exceptions where women are still subjected to physical violence, and the likes.

With all these advancements, women are still subjected to subjugation which limits their consent. There is a paradox in the fact that although the social contract theory aimed to remove the dominion rule of the father; however, it preserves male sex right simultaneously (Pateman, *The Sexual Contract* 77-153). This theory eliminates the authority of the fathers over their sons, but women do not attain freedom as an individual because the authority men have over women remained (116-153).

Another obstacle in a patriarchal society is “patriarchal leakage”. Okin addressed that the injustices happening in the private sphere have a tendency to cause the same in public domain. In this regard, even when the oppression is reduced in the private sphere, the sense of patriarchy can get “leak out” in the public domain; and vice versa. Okin further pinpointed that the unjust treatment of women, and girls caused to threaten their self-worth resulting in the absence of self-respect in the public sphere (104-109).

Having had a discourse on the social contract theory, although it tried to convince the society that it is structured in favoring women; however, it has been actually male-oriented. In response to this theory, Pateman created the sexual contract theory to highlight the importance of women’s consent within a marriage domain (*The Disorder of Women: Democracy, Feminism, and Political Theory* 35). This theory of Pateman demolished the barriers such that women will no longer be regarded as subordinates. She states that from the time when William Thompson published his response to the ‘white slave code’ in 1825, feminists have criticized the practice of marriage, stating that it does not follow a proper contract.

James Mill reflects the point of patriarchy by stating that women do not need any voting rights as they are absorbed in the likes, and interests of their fathers and husbands (Pateman, *The Sexual Contract* 157). This opinion hindered women from giving their consent. In this story, the author once mentioned “the rest of the family” in referring to K-Dear-i’s family (Zama 144), which can be presumed to include her mother. In this regard, the absence of K-Dear-l’s mother stated the fact that her consent or her opinion is regarded insignificant; and they are expected to share the decision of her father which is regarded parallel to James Mill’s argument.

Pateman contends,

The marriage ‘contract’ was just like the contract that the slave-owners in the West Indies imposed on their slaves; marriage was nothing more than the law of the strongest, enforced by men in contempt of the interests of weaker women (*The Sexual Contract* 158).

These lines gave the idea of the supremacy of men over which is the underlying theme of this story.

2. Appropriation of women:

Before having a discourse on the appropriation of women, it is significant to have a discussion on patriarchy where women are the victims. Patriarchy is not an alien word; rather it is a word which women lived with every day in a patriarchal community. It simply means “the rule of the father or the ‘patriarch’ in a family where the eldest male is the head of the family and controls his wife, children, other members of the family and slaves” (Kamla 3). Gerda Lerner stated that patriarchy has its roots dated back in ancient times of evolution. He further explained that it is a system of social structures and practices in which men selfishly dominate and exploit women to their own satisfaction. It can also be said to be an ideology in which men are seen as superior to women, that women are and should be controlled by men and that they are part of men’s properties (3-4).

Engels refers as the form of domination. Carole Pateman rightly stated, “The patriarchal construction of the difference between masculinity and femininity is the political difference between freedom and subjection” (*The Sexual Contract* 207). This statement is a reflection of men being liberated, and women being the oppressed. As far as patriarchy is concerned, this story is a place where men’s domination muted the desires and wants of the female character. As aforementioned, although K-

Dear-i slightly mentioned her positive feelings towards the protagonist, she is not bold enough to speak against her father where she is surrounded by the norms of patriarchy. It is clear from the story that her father is the one who makes the final decision, leaving the other members of the family subordinates.

Coming to the appropriation of women, in the apologue to 'The Practice of Power and Belief in Nature', Colette Guillaumin stated how women are public property. She explains that in public people take only what belongs to them. She tells how an incident took place in the middle of a street in Paris where a madman grabbed only women, not men. She gave the notion that women are regarded as a public property. She further stated,

Now people only take publicly what belongs to them. Even the most unrestrained kleptomaniacs are covert when trying to take something that does not belong to them. However, as far as women are concerned, there is no need to be covert. They are common property... (73).

Her statement tells that women are subordinate, and insufficient who do not receive respect in the society. She further states how appropriation of women happened in a patriarchal society. She elucidated that a baby of male gender is born to be the subject who will obtain, and acquire everything around him, including women, for the likes, and desires of themselves.

In the appropriation of women, Guillaumin gives two elements: a material fact, and an ideological fact. The first one is an objectification of women, and the later draws a line telling how ought to be. She, therefore, stated four points of how appropriation of women takes place:

- the appropriation of time;
- the appropriation of products of the body;
- the sexual obligation; and
- the physical charge of disabled members of the group (disabled by age- babies, children, old people- or illness and infirmity), as well as of *healthy members of the male sex group* (76).

To discuss each point more in detail, appropriation of time has its significance in the society, since it affects not only the wife, but also all the female members of the family. Therefore, they are the ones who worked, for the desires of the father who is regarded as the head of the household. Although the female members other than the wife do not sign contract with the husband, they are still victims of the structure. There is the appropriation of the whole class of female gender in a patriarchal society which makes them functioned as a caretaker of the family. This suggests that their time has been taken out of appropriation of feminine gender. Guillaumin states, "It is as if the wife is actually owned by the husband, and each man has use of the class of women, and particularly each man who has acquired the private use of one of them" (77).

Concerning the appropriation of products of the body, there are features of objectification stated by philosophers; therefore, Martha Nussbaum pointed seven features of the objectification of women:

- instrumentality: the treatment of a person as a tool for the objectifier's purposes;
- denial of autonomy: the treatment of a person as lacking in autonomy and self-determination;
- inertness: the treatment of a person as lacking in agency, and perhaps also in activity;

- fungibility: the treatment of a person as interchangeable with other objects;
- violability: the treatment of a person as lacking in boundary-integrity;
- ownership: the treatment of a person as something that is owned by another (can be bought or sold);
- denial of subjectivity: the treatment of a person as something whose experiences and feelings (if any) need not be taken into account (257).

In addition to these points, Rae Langton extended three features:

- reduction to body: the treatment of a person as identified with their body, or body parts;
- reduction to appearance: the treatment of a person primarily in terms of how they look, or how they appear to the senses;
- silencing: the treatment of a person as if they are silent, lacking the capacity to speak (228-229).

Kant's views on objectification have been enormously significant, and influential, for feminist discussions. In his *Lectures on Ethics*, he states, sexual love makes of the loved person as an Object of appetite; as soon as that appetite has been stilled, the person is cast aside as one casts away a lemon which has been sucked dry...as soon as a person becomes an Object of appetite for another, all motives of moral relationship cease to function, because as an Object of appetite for another a person becomes a thing and can be treated and used as such by every one (163).

This statement is an accurate reflection of the condition of women in a patriarchal setting, and the whole system on female class as well. In this story, the fact that the presence of K-Dear-i's mother is excluded tells something concerning her condition in the family. Although it is not included in any scenes of the story, it can be assumed that K-Dear-i, and her mother would take every responsibility in the household, other than decision-making. The fact that the author does not include a scene of the mother reflects the insignificance of her, and disposal by her husband as Kant describes as "an Object of appetite". He stated that both men, and women can be the victim of objectification; however, women are mostly victimized in patriarchal societies. Simultaneously, he explains that a person subject to objectification loses her humanity; he states,

...a man is not at his own disposal. He is not entitled to sell a limb, not even one of his teeth. But to allow one's person for profit to be used for the satisfaction of sexual desire, to make of oneself an Object of demand, is to dispose over oneself as over a thing (165).

Despite the fact that Kant talks about prostitution, and sexual desire in these lines, it has its relevance in the general objectification of women. When a man sees a female as an object; or when a female functions as an object for man, their humanity has been subjugated on many levels paving way for the appropriation of females. K-Dear-i has been the sole female character present in the whole story. As Kant states "a thing on which another satisfies his appetite", her desires for the protagonist has been conquered by her father's desires of contentment from coercing her to let go of the protagonist.

Mackinnon contends the relationship between objectivity and objectification, stating:

The stance of the 'knower'...is...the neutral posture, which I will be calling objectivity- that is the non- situated distanced standpoint...[This] is the male standpoint socially...[The] relationship between objectivity as the stance from which the world is known and the world that is apprehended

in this way is the relationship of objectification. Objectivity is the epistemological stance of which objectification is the social process, of which male dominance is the politics, the acted out social practice. That is, to look at the world objectively is to objectify it (50).

In a patriarchal setting of a society, discourse revolves around the male class which makes it easier, for appropriation of women to exist in the society.

To discuss some of Haslanger's points related to this story concerning objectivity, he talks about the significance of the object's nature. He explains that their nature could not be changed. Therefore, in the concern of women, their nature is responsible, for the consequences of patriarchy. MacKinnon, however, believes that women are weak, and submissive by nature which makes them object-like. This belief gave the idea that women are naturally submissive to men, and are subordinates to men. However, this idea seemed to be not credible as gender is socially constructed. It is to be noted that the submissive characteristics of women are social construct simultaneously. They are let to believe that they are weaker, and subordinate to men, and they are meant to be submissive. In observing the character of K-Dear-i, she did not show any kind of hesitation to go against her desires, nor did she give significance to her will. Having analyzed her character, she seems to normalize the coil that strapped her. Thus, objectification does not stem out from the object's nature; rather it is the outcome of gender inequality. Therefore, Haslanger has rightly said,

Once we have cast women as submissive and deferential 'by nature', then efforts to change this role appear unmotivated, even pointless...These reflections suggest that what appeared to be a 'neutral' or 'objective' ideal, namely, the procedure of drawing on observed regularities to set constraints on practical decision making- is one which will, under conditions of gender hierarchy reinforce the social arrangements on which such hierarchy depends (231).

Coming back to the appropriation of the products of body, Guillaumin mentions that earlier in France, when a mother tries to take her child outside the country, she needs to have the father's approval and consent (77). It gave the notion that although the mother bears the burden of carrying, and caretaking the child, she does not have any real responsibility on matters of decision-making, for the child. In this story, the absence of K-Dear-i's mother reflects the fact that her consent is regarded insignificant for making decisions, for her daughter.

Regarding the appropriation of women, it is immensely deep rooted in the society that it reached a point where it does not look abnormal, and a large population of women does not victimize themselves, and normalized being dominated by men. In careful examining this condition, it can be assumed that women believed the dependence on men as it ought to have been. This belief can be presumed to have stemmed out from masculinist discourses. As Weedon analyses the difference of Derrida and Lacan's notion of gendered subjectivity, she mentions "phallus" which Lacan describes as the signifier which assures patriarchal structure of the symbolic order (53). She explains that phallus denotes power, and domination in the patriarchal structure. She contends, "men by virtue of their penis can aspire to a position of power and control within the symbolic order" (54).

She further adds that women have no place or status other than their connection to men, “as mothers, and even the process of mothering is given patriarchal meaning, reduced in Freud, to an effect of penis envy” (54)

Guillaumin has given five means on how appropriation of women has taken place:

- the labour market;
- spatial confinement;
- show of force;
- sexual constraint;
- the arsenal of the law and customary rights (84).

Among these five points, two have been likely to be discussed, for this story. Concerning spatial confinement, Guillaumin declares how the patriarchal society have expected women to confine under the four walls of their home, or wherever the husband requires her to stay, which is regarded as the place where she ought to be. She affirms that this expectation has positive, and negative aspects. The notion it gave is:

Your place is here, you are the queen of the house, the magician of the bed, the irreplaceable mother. Your children will become autistic, psychotic, idiots, homosexual, failures, if you don't stay at home, if you are not there when they come home, if you don't breast-feed them until they are three months, six months, three years old, etc., etc (85).

However, there is a negative outlook which gave the notion like,

If you go out, other guys like me will pursue you until you give in, will threaten you, will make your life impossible and exhausting in a thousand ways. You have permission (it is an order) to go to the grocery, the school, the market, the city hall, and down the main street where the shops are. And you may go there between seven o'clock in the morning and seven o'clock in the evening. That's all. If you do anything else, you'll be punished in one way or another, and in any case I forbid it for *your* safety and *my* peace of mind (85).

The positive aspect gave the message to women that they are needed, for the well-functioning of the family. It points out the efficiency, and the need, for the upbringing of children. On the contrary, the negative aspect gave the notion of obsession, rather than love, and a penalty follows which seems to have become a threat for the women. In the context of Mizo society, tracing patriarchy from earlier times, it considers household chores, and activities to be women's duties, and did not regard them as “jobs”. Considering all times, Mizo women are strong in, and out to bear the contempt of being a homemaker, the mental, and psychological oppression. They are powerful to live under duress, and yet persistent to shine. Besides the physical violence, they underwent mental depreciation through the ages. They very well performed their responsibilities perfectly. Though they never had time for leisure, they were expected to be cheerful at all times which they never failed to do so. In this sense, Mizo women have been the epitome of power and struggle. Even the supernatural beings in the folk stories are of feminine gender. There are mentions of men having an affair, and relationship with supernatural beings such as an ogress, a guardian spirit, and a half man half tiger, etc. in Mizo fables. In the tale 'Chawngtinleri'^{iv}, the beautiful damsel Chawngtinleri who is the protagonist is given to a guardian spirit as a wife by her brother. As a token of gratitude, he is given lots of wild animals to hunt, by which he fed the whole village by organizing a feast. In this tale, the spirits are the provider of food to the villagers. Likewise in the story 'Thasiamá', the

bachelor protagonist Thasiama has affairs with the spirit and is blessed to be a great hunter, with abundant crops and livestock. This is contradicting to male's version of handling power. Women bear the brunt of patriarchy in which they hold a lower position in the society. The worst fear of men in the Mizo society is being a henpecked husband. Women have been belittled regardless of their massive contributions in daily life. In the story of 'Nuchhimi'^{vi}, there is a character of a kind of bogey named Hmuichukchuriduninu which is a feminine gender. The human feared them, and as a result, they killed them in the end. It reflected the connection of supernatural world with that of the human folk. In it, the supernatural beings dominated the human beings; and the fact that feminine gender represents the supernatural beings gave the notion of the superiority of women. Though she is killed in the end, it is out of fear which reflected the power, and domination within the feminine gender.

All these tales reflected the dominance of women although they had been ill-treated in the society. They have been regarded as a subordinate to men till date which is one of the feminist themes of this story. The author put the female characters in a position of 'the other', away from the limelight. Regardless of the fact that K-Dear-i has been the main motive, she hardly arrives on the scene; moreover, it is predictable that she has not opposed to the protagonist. There is hardly any presence of K-Dear-i although she is the main motive, so her thoughts, and actions are vague and unclear.

In this story, the writer has put K-Dear-i's scene only within their home. In the last scene of the story, although the protagonist, and his friend make a phone call from public place, K-Dear-i receives the call from her home. Additionally, when the writer recounted the scene when the protagonist accidentally stroked K-Dear-i's father, there is the mention of 'family' twice- "...It so happened that K-Dear-i's family were in the middle of their prayer session", "Fortunately the rest of the family had not opened their eyes yet..." (Zama 143-144).

From the mention of "family", the readers can presume K-Dear-i's mother to include, and exist in the family, which gave the notion that the females in the family has been confined within the four walls of their home. It is obvious that K-Dear-i went to school, but there are no scenes where she socialized other than that, which makes the spatial confinement relevant in this story. Both she, and her mother have been appropriated by her father. Despite the fact that the spatial confinement can be construed differently as aforementioned it has its positive, and negative aspects, the negative aspect is more exposable in a society of patriarchal structure.

Concerning show of force, although Guillaumin specifically refers to physical violence, it can be comprehended as a general way of showing force. Although K-Dear-i, and her mother are not victims of physical torture; however, they suffered violence, and force that affected their mental and free will. The fact that K-Dear-i's mother is not included in the image of how her voice has been inaudible which denotes the domination of her husband. As the writer tells in an interview, a woman does not have a say in making decisions. It can be assumed that she is pushed behind by the power, and authority of her husband. Similarly, it is the same with K-Dear-i who stays under the authority, and domination of her father. It is K-Dear-i who the main motive of the protagonist is, and who is the one to make decision; however, her feelings, and her desires have been put aside by the power, and control of her father. Therefore, her father pushed the protagonist away where she makes no denial.

The fact that K-Dear-i's statement, "I thought you liked me too" has been followed by her father's words, "Mami, bring the telephone here, let me *sa/a^{vii}* him..." (146)

These two statements state the authority, and dominance of men in family. Despite the fact that K-Dear-i's decision is central to the story, patriarchy makes her father, and even herself negligent towards it. She is appropriated by her father to the likes of exercising his power and domination.

As aforementioned, the women characters in this story have been put forward in such a subordinate manner. K-Dear-i appeared in only two scenes, however, one is through a telephone call, and what is significant here is that only Lalmala, and the protagonist's words have been available to the readers, so the communication has become one-sided for the audience. It is simply hard, and impossible, for the readers to imagine, and visualize their appearances and features. Moreover, how the writer put her and her mother in the scenes can be regarded as void of action. The only time that they actually appeared in the scene is when they are in the middle of a family devotion. The writer narrated to the readers that the other family members other than the father have closed their eyes when the incident happened, so they have no expressions. Only the father expressed his anger in the post situation, and this can be regarded as the writer's voice to portray the hegemonic masculinity while making the women voiceless. The author explains through the protagonist that "...her father did not happen to see me so he proceeded with his prayer...so said the spy Lalmala" (144). However, it so happened that when they are making telephone calls, he interrupted, and got angry with the protagonist which tells that he knew it is the protagonist who tripped over him prior, although Lalmala said he closed his eyes, and knew nothing. Lalmala might meant himself when he said "did not happen to see me" because the readers are given the idea that Lalmala rushed, and ran off when the protagonist declared, "I intended to scold Lalmala thoroughly but he ran off swiftly while I gave chase!". In these incidents and scenes, the female characters are put in the shadow of men. Particularly, K-Dear-i's mother has no important role in the whole plot of this story. There could be a question from the readers on the presence of her. She doesn't talk, nor has she a move. Her character can be interpreted in such a way that she has been a mirror, and reflection that portrays women as quiet, and submissive who stayed in the shadow of men.

As long as feminine identity in this story is concerned, loss of identity can nearly be labeled on them. K-Dear-i's mother can be used as a face that represents women's loss of identity. Contrary to the fact that women have been the motive for men's actions, and they are powerful, and they have power in their hands in certain ways, they had been in the shadow of men in the course of history. It is significant to note that it is not a matter of devaluing men; rather it is about making known the significance, and contributions of women. In retracing the insurgency period of Mizoram, it is a known fact that the underground soldiers had played a vital role, for the peace, and harmony of the state. Equally important were the services by women. Without their presence, the underground movement could not function properly. The soldiers could not stray away from basic necessities such as food, water and clothing. As women were the providers of these necessities, it is wrong to lessen their values, and steal their spotlight. Much surprisingly, when peace, and harmony is maintained, only the underground soldiers are applauded; and the women who provided their needs have been forgotten and neglected. So, they stayed in the shadow of the admired men where their identities faded slowly. In this story as well, K-Dear-i's father has identities as the sole authority, and administrator of the family while his wife resembles an object who does not contribute in decision

making, and who is controlled by the owner. As a reader, we see no incident where K-Dear-i's mother voiced her opinion as a mother or as a parent. She just stayed silent in one corner. Her silence can be construed as a telltale sign of her being submissive towards her husband which is indicative of the fact that she is a 'yes' woman to everything her husband did and said. There has been no sign of disagreement which is reflective of her voicelessness.

K-Dear-i has also been voiceless in her own matters. She could be quite tolerable in the scene of family devotion. In this scene, as the protagonist entered in the middle of a prayer, she closed her eyes. Although she might hear some unfamiliar sounds, she is comprehensible that she does not react to it. As the story unfolds, she does have chances to voice her opinion, and make her decision.

3. Conclusion:

Appropriation of women, and their absence of consent have been central to patriarchy. Concerning Lacanian concept of phallogocentric patriarchal order, Irigaray agrees saying that "the otherness of female sexuality has been repressed by patriarchy which seeks to theorize it within masculine parameters" (Weedon 63). Therefore, it is interesting to note that Lacan calls the aforementioned patriarchal order "the phallogocentric universe (phallus+logos) in which men are in control of the word" (Guerin et al 228). This states the domination of men, treating women their subordinates; and it also points out the power of men in the discourse of society. In this symbolic order, Lacan contends that the signifier is the father in the family, who ruled with power and authority; and the agency of control of the Other.

However, Helene Cixous has opposed, and argued against the phallogocentric discourse. She developed the "practices what they call *l'écriture féminine* as a psychically freeing form of feminine discourse". Rather she wants to break out from the discourse, and have feminine discourse so that women can have their own voice. She suggests the discourse to move from "phallogocentric to the feminine" (Rivkin & Ryan 61). She contends, It is by writing, from and toward women, and by taking up the challenge of speech which has been governed by the phallus, that women will confirm women in a place other than that which is reserved in and by the symbolic, that is, in a place other than silence. Women should break out of the snare of silence. They shouldn't be conned into accepting a domain which is the margin or the harem (Cixous 881).

Both Lacan, and Cixous' concepts have their relevance in this story. Lacan regards that phallus is placed at the heart of the Symbolic which denotes the power, and authority of men. As aforementioned, it characterizes in the male oriented discourse of society. In this story, the authority of K-Dear-i's father leads to the domination of her which takes away her consent leading to the appropriation of her by her father. On the contrary, she suggests "phallogocentric" where there is an existence of binary oppositions, in which the first term is more valued than the second term, for instance, male/female. Additionally, she provides a concept that the first, and valued terms makes the structures of Western system. So, in this context, she urges women to narrate their story, to have their own voice. In this story as well, this concept has well connected with the absence of consent. If K-Dear-i has her own voice, she would have decided in the other way, and her father would not interfere.

K-Dear-i's words of "...I thought you liked me too" (Zama 146) contradicted her father's phrase to the protagonist, "You idiot! Go home, and sleep on your mother's lap at once", resulting in the moment when the protagonist "went and hugged her father under his arms and tickled him in the middle of his prayer was to be the first and the last time I ever stepped into her house" (147).

ENDNOTES

ⁱ It is a term of endearment where 'k' denotes possessiveness; and there is the Mizo tradition of putting a suffix 'a' at the end of a male name and a suffix 'i' at the end of a female name to differentiate between men and women. However, such suffixes are not used all the time, such as in the case of direct speech.

ⁱⁱ In an interview with the author, when asked about the voicelessness of female characters in the story, he asserts, "Why would an opinion of female matter?"

ⁱⁱⁱ A PCO (Public Call Office) is a telephone booth commonly accessible in public places in India.

^{iv} A Mizo folk story.

^v A Mizo folk story, transported through the ages through oral narration.

^{vi} A Mizo folk tale.

^{vii} It is a slang word borrowed from the Hindi language, which is a declaration of anger.

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