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Research Articles

"THEME OF LONGING FOR LOVE IN CHARLOTTE BRONTE'S NOVEL JANE EYRE: A CRITICAL EXAMINATION"

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ABSTRACT:-

Charlotte Bronte was one of the prominent novelists of the 18th century. She is highly esteemed for her literary works which she has written in her life. Jane Eyre is her magnum opus novel that depicts the different facets of male dominance. Jane Eyre is the mouthpiece of Charlotte Bronte through whom she explores her life experience which she had faced during the Victorian era. The emotional agony that the main character experiences throughout the novel stems from the treatment received as a child, loss of loved ones, and economic hardships. To fill these voids, Jane longs for love, ironically she rejects affection at some point throughout the novel though it is that which she seeks. Her painful childhood experiences create an emotional center derived from this pain. From the onset of the novel we view the world through the eyes of Jane, a young penniless orphan. In her view, love must be based on mutual understanding and equality. In addition to love, Jane Eyre pursues the equality on economic, personality and social status.

To examine closely the novel is brimming with feminist ingredients. The author yearns and craves for equal rights on the basis of sexual discrimination, domestic violence. The paper will try to show female image that is against social pressure. Jane Eyre is a fiery spirit and a longing to love and be loved.

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INTRODUCTION:-

Jane Eyre is the typical works of Charlotte Bronte. It has a high appraisal in literary history. The novel narrates Jane Eyre's life experiences from an orphan to an independent woman. She was unfortunate when she was born, because she lost her parents and was sent to her aunt's family, where she was heartlessly treated. Jane Eyre is little, ugly, timid, and is a "little thing" having no clear identity. All the power presses her, strangles her personality. But Jane Eyre is not destroyed by the ugly fact, and she is not over-whelmed by difficulties. On the contrary, she learns how to live and how to be strong. And she has the courage to struggle with the pressure. Jane Eyre cuts a completely new woman image. She represents those middleclass working women who are struggling for recognition of their basic rights and equality as a human being. In her view, love must be based on mutual understanding and equality. Love is not only acquaintance, but also it needs equality.

Through the feminist perspective the author typically explores subjugation of women when Jane Eyre is cruelly treated in childhood by her aunt, Mrs. Reed, a harsh and stone-hearted woman on whom she is dependent. Bronte makes a female image that is against social pressure. Jane is a helpless child with a fiery spirit and a longing to love and to be loved. In order to make herself happy she faces many hurdles, hardships and frustrations. She is brave, enthusiastic who changes her tragic fate through her own strong efforts. She is a glaring example of victimized women. All appraise her fiery spirit, her hatred for self-righteousness, her love for truth, and her yearning independence and equality. In her opinion, everyone is the same at God's feet. She is small in body but huge in soul. As per her, everybody should respect each other.

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According to R.B Martin, Jane Eyre was the first major feminist novel, “although there is not a hint in the book of any desire for political, legal, educational, or even intellectual equality between the sexes.” Jane was not a modern feminist in the sense of claiming her feminist ideals in the streets, but she expressed these ideals through speech and action. She lived in a "world that measured the likelihood of her success by the degree of her marriageability," Her major aim is not to get married, but to preserve her identity and her freedom in a male governed society. That is why Jane has the courage to stand up, to defy the rules of her society and to speak out each time when she feels that she is treated unfairly— it does not matter if it is her aunt, her bulling cousin, the cruel headmaster of the school, or even the man she is in love with. From the very beginning of the novel Jane has the courage to defy her aunt when she is unfairly punished in the red room. She says, “I am no bird; and no net ensures me; I am a free human being with an independent will.” Another proof of her free spirit and feminist ideals is her relation with Rochester. Even if she is a governess (less than a member of the family, but more than a servant given her education), she does not consider herself inferior to Rochester in terms of spiritual qualities. She insists she is much more than her social status, saying "Do you think, because I am poor, obscure, plain, and little, I am soulless and heartless? You think wrong! I have as much soul as you-and full as much heart! And if God had gifted me with some beauty and much wealth, I should have made it as hard for you to leave me, as it is now for me to leave you." Do you think I am an automaton? a machine without feelings?...Do you think, because I am poor, obscure, plain, and little, I am soulless and heartless? You think wrong — I have as much soul as you, — and full as much heart...I am not talking to you now through the medium of custom, conventionalities, nor even of mortal flesh; — it is my spirit that addresses your spirit; just as if both had passed through the grave, and we stood at God's feet, equal, — as we are.

She wants recognition that both sexes are equal in terms of “heart and spirit”. She defines herself as a spiritual human being, refusing to be defined in terms of so-called “marriageability”. She merely rejects the idea of being objectified, even if Rochester tries

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to objectify her, when he buys her all kinds of expensive jewels and garments. ("The more he bought me, the more my cheek burned with a sense of annoyance and degradation"). Marriage is a sort of entrapment that will make her lose both her independence and her true self. That is the reason why she cannot accept a marriage as a mere convention and why she refuses his cousin's proposal. His attitude towards her refusal is relevant for women's condition in the Victorian Age. St John is angry with her because he rejects the idea that a woman might not want to get married: "and do not forget that if you reject it, it is not me you deny, but God."

From the short passage, it can be seen Jane Eyre finds she is deceived; her self-respect is made fun of, because she loves Mr. Rochester sincerely. No one can bear this by his closest lover. But Jane Eyre can. What's more, she makes a very rational decision. Under so beautiful love, the temptation with rich life, she persists in her self-respect. At the end of this novel, though Thornfield is destroyed and Rochester himself is disabled, in this circumstance, Jane Eyre is in a dilemma no longer between love and self-respect. At the same time, she feels satisfied: she gets love and respect when they get marry. She is really a brave lady who won the heart of her life partner who says, "Every atom of your flesh is as dear to me as my own: In pain and sickness it would still be dear. Your mind is my treasure, and if it were broken, it would be my treasure still."

The independent spirit is another most important aspect attracting readers. Jane Eyre is exposed to a hostile environment but continuously and fearlessly struggling for her ideal life. To some degree, the novel can be interpreted as a symbol of the independent spirit. In Jane Eyre, mistreatment and unfairness force Jane to struggle for self-respect, while knowledge and worthwhile work provide her with enough economic supply to gain independence. Jane, casting alone on the world and fighting a solitary battle, shows her determination in pursuing her self-esteem and independence at every stage of her life, both in struggling with social pressure and resisting the temptation of passion and love. In every relationship, Jane rises from inferiority to superior and finally gains full independence through continuous rebellion.

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CONCLUSION:-

Of course Jane Eyre finds ardent and chummy love with Rochester, now reduced to her level through his injuries, blindness and loss of property. One message here seems to be that life and love are basically cruel and that happiness can only truly be achieved at a price. However, Charlotte Bronte also seems to attack the Victorian convention of brotherly and sisterly love as the basis of marriage in favour of the new ideal companionship based on equality.

From the paper it is seen that Jane is typically a brave lady who worthily loves and wants to be loved. Her love is based on equality and independence having nothing to do with status, power or property. Through this novel, the novelist dives into the vast ocean of love and brings out a novelistic pearl. Throughout the novel, various hues of love are reflected.

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