

Psychological Analysis of Female Characters in Shyam Selva Durai's *Cinnamon Gardens*

Dr. V. Vimala., M.A., M.Phil., Ph.D.

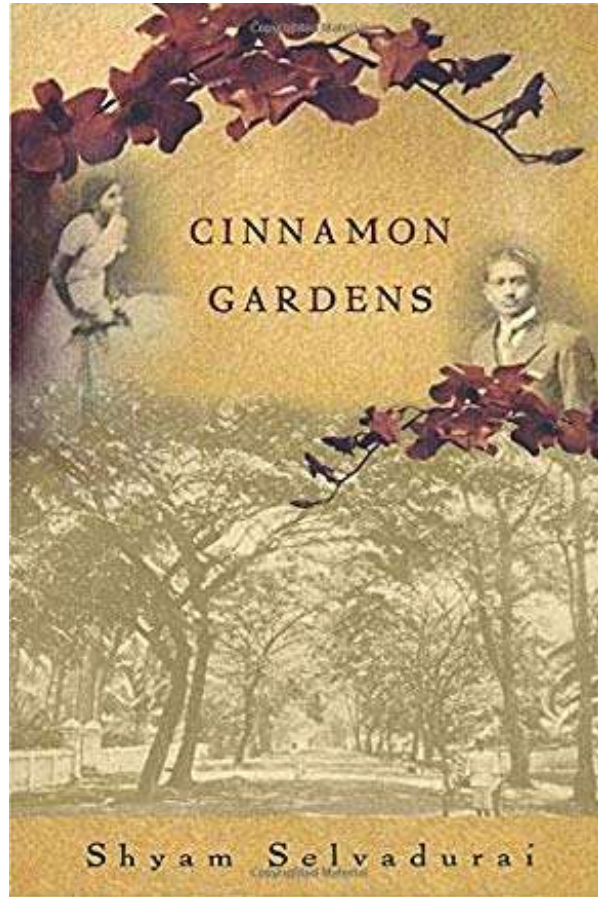
Assistant Professor

CPA College, Bodinayakanur 625513

Theni District, Tamilnadu

Phone: 8940164651

vimalacool04@gmail.com



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Abstract

In Shyam Selvadurai's *Cinnamon Gardens*, the author portrays the historical account of feminism. He portrays the psychological aspects and inner sufferings that happened in Ceylon around 1927. While narrating the story, the novel also describes the roots as well as key issues

including voting rights, the right to education and right to speak. The status of women all over the world is still a cause for grave concern. Women in this society faced many discriminations and difficulties which also affected their inner peace. Public space is still limited to men and a few elite women. The suppression of women is seen everywhere in these nations. Due to this the women are internally affected. Feminism psychologies are traced out in this novel.

Keywords: Shyam Selva Durai, *Cinnamon Gardens*, Women liberation, Women Suppression, Women talents, Emancipation of women, Plight of women.

Sri Lanka is a small country which also faces problems like India. One such problem is need for feminism which we can see in Shyam Selvadurai's *Cinnamon Gardens*. This has viewed all perspective of denial of human rights with regard to women living in a conservative patriarchy. The background of the novel is set in Sri Lanka. The novel portrays the changes happened between 1927-28 where it shows the study based on gender and sexuality. This novel deals with the dream of a girl who wanted to become a teacher. Even the cultured women of that society were not allowed to oppose for selfish purpose. It also focuses on a society ruled by upper class people, rituals and ancient traditions. Selvadurai shows the way of doing things which was made for the women. He says that the women were not allowed to know about the proper way of making teas, dinners, parties, the daily meetings. The male society did not spend some time with their families. Thus, the men are not able to understand the feelings of women. The women in their heart have some fear on their husband's mood which swings often but they try to find their mood to compromise them. The women need to get compromise with the mistake of men even though it is bigger one.

In this novel, the protagonist Annalakshmi Kandaiah's life parallel to the political changes in colonial Ceylon. Annalakshmi is a grandniece of the family patriarch the most powerful Navarantram Mudaliyar, whose job is to help the British Government agent to carry out the colonial policies. Annalakshmi's mother Louisa Barnett a strong-willed woman, is forced to raise her daughters alone while her husband enjoys his life with a mistress abroad. Annalakshmi is in dilemma in the story that shows the similar problem faced by most of the women in the society.

Annalakshmi's society is one of those societies where women were given job only if they were either poor or too unattractive to get a husband. This system has been changed later. In the year 1927 the women of the bourgeois elite were involved in public life restricted only to religious activities or meeting on the needs of working girl. Sonia is the aunt of Annalakshmi. She is an active new member which makes the twenty-two-year-old Annalakshmi to have dream of her as new women. This makes her to challenge the gender roles. Her strong loves for education and unconventional behaviour helped her to reach her challenge against the society of those men were a remarkable one. The exploring choice of Annalakshmi is the highlights of the events in Sri Lankan history in 1927. The event shows Annalakshmi's course of life is further augmenting her decision concerning career and marriage much to the embarrassment of the

women in Sri Lankan society including her own mother. Though Annalakshmi's struggle, it explains the state of women's struggle for liberation in Ceylon, Selvadurai highlights the marginal roles of women in Ceylon society of 1920's where Annalakshmi is considered as over educated, even by women of their own class including her relatives who consider her teacher profession (dream) is greatest crime.

The bicycle which she ricked was the gift from her British teacher in school. As a new woman she was not "ashamed or afraid to ask for share of the world" (Cinnamon Gardens 5). Annalakshmi on the same hand finds nothing wrong with the vision of Ceylonese women on a bicycle. The society and Louisa were having a narrow mind that the activities of Annalakshmi is not right as their family belongs to a very high reputed family which thinks that spectacle girls don't ride bicycles. Therefore, Annalakshmi should give up her wish to ride the bicycle.

All the other people considered Annalakshmi's activities as foolish and objectionable but for Annalakshmi, the bicycle stands as freedom that her thought is to enjoy only as the western women. This made clear in her words with her sister Kumudini where she queries about the tradition. "How will the women of this country ever progress? European women can ride bicycle and do all sort of things because a few brave women made a start." (Cinnamon Gardens 8).

By riding the bicycle, she wants to compete with European women. By the way she can full-fill her desire to ride bicycle. When Annalakshmi steps forward to ride a bicycle, her own family members don't mind accepting it. Her sixteen-year-old sister Manohari says "She looks just like monkey on a bicycle and I'm sure people will pay us lot of money to see her do tricks." (Cinnamon Gardens 7). Annalakshmi's world is bloomed when her teacher gifted the bicycle. Her public bicycle ride culminates her happiness from getting marked as a fast woman in the society. Were the society unable to take those things casual. In such tie, Annalakshmi doesn't worried about their dignity in the society and she crosses the womanly barriers which were framed by men in their society.

The powerful rights of men build a nation which plays a major role in the novel. Only few women were able to understand it and they put their development were Annalakshmi is one such lady. Here Annalakshmi's Character is reflective at the time when the women groups' played role during the Donoughmore Commission's hearing. In this novel, the reader can find out that the novel creates a debate about right for vote to women through an issue which is related to women franchise.

When Annalakshmi attends a meeting with her aunt Philomena, her aunty wants Annalakshmi to follow the words of the society where she gives some examples of Tamil nationalist leader Ponnambalam Ramanathan, who has given a speech for the people's power and

for women's vote which are against our great Tamil tradition. She also says that the purity, nobility and the modesty of women would be incapacitated if they would be given voting rights. A woman should engage herself in servicing their husband all the time. The Sri Lankan women also have the mentality that women are made to serve the family members and they are not given rights to live a life of their own.

Annalakshmi is different from others as she has overcome all the difficulties which were given to her by the society. She is cheated under the pretext of love by Seela. She has faced the discrimination and forced to marry a boy who lives in male dominated society. Annalakshmi has faced many physically and mentally torched after entering her adulthood her father doesn't support her. Selvadurai has explained the condition in a better way by saying,

“Annalakshmi's screamed out of pain when Murugasu pulled her hair and slapped her. Apparently, Annalakshmi had not swept the drawing room. Yet Louisa later found out that the real cause of violence was severing of the bond between father and daughter.” (Cinnamon Gardens 43)

Louisa comes to know about his activity. She wants her daughter to be saved from Murugasu. For that reason, she wants Annalakshmi to marry soon. Louisa never feels that why can't this same happen to Annalakshmi in that home. Most of the women in Ceylon were also victims of convent gender-based violence. From this the reader can get to know the mindset of those people and fear of the people which stops them from raising their voice against the men in the society. In which Annalakshmi is different where she struggles for independence and rejects her marriage which was planned by her father. She knows very well that this marriage would create a great disturbance in her achievement and will be forced to live a life that might be filled with violence throughout her life span. Annalakshmi rejects the marriage and finally joins as a teacher in a Hindu school. She then lives a life for her own in the society.

In the world everyone has different thoughts regarding a person, thing or an issue likewise in this novel, the reader can analyse the problems of women in the patriarchal society. Some women use to follow the tradition, but some consider it as a degradation of the society. In the East, women still face many differences in wages as they are paid low wages compared to men. They are also less respected in cases of work. They compress their talents to limited areas. The suppression of women is been seen everywhere in this nation. Due to this the women were internally affected and that changes their mind affects them psychologically. Therefore, the feminism psychologies are traced out in this novel and were the reader gets a clear view of the women in the societies.

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