

# **Shakespeare's Egalitarianism In The Tempest**

**Dr. Amrita Roy**

*Deptt. of English*

*Navarashtra Higher Secondary School*

*Patahi, Muzaffarpur*

*Bihar*

## ***Abstract***

It is impossible to imagine the world without women. Both male and female are the two wheel of our life they equally contribute our society. God has also created both to be equal human beings. But in our patriarchal society women are only subordinate to men, they do not play the main role, their voice has been suppressed and opinions are ignored. This happens not only in India but almost all over the world. The condition of women and their role in society have been expressed in our literature. Shakespeare, leading dramatist of 16<sup>th</sup> century has beautifully expressed in his dramas, women's interest, their ideas and their conditions in our society.

**Keywords:** *patriarchal society, two wheel of life*

## **1. Introduction**

Gender role within the tempest portray the conditions of women during Elizabethan era. Even though England has been ruled by a female monarch for over four decades, women still has limited right. As demonstrated with Miranda and her father, Prospero family life centered on the traditional patriarchal paradigm where women belonged to their father or husbands and were thought of as property. During this time, women had only two pathways-marriage or joining a convent. Other limitations women had during this era included being unable to receive a proper education, be heirs to their father's titles. Upper class Elizabethan women. However, did have certain privileges such as an education even though it was very restricted. These patriarchal ideals are applied in The Tempest especially with the appearance of the single female character, Miranda.



**Fig.1:- Miranda – The Female character from The Tempest**

Throughout the play *The Tempest*, Miranda is subordinate to Prospero and is expected to be attentive to his every speech and command. Prospero controls every aspect of her life, including education to whom she marries and when she sleeps. Miranda serves as the example of how women were treated during this period. She presents real picture of women in our society - how she is innocent, feels safe under the guidance of father, relinquishes all her wishes, and does work according to her father's will. All these pictures show the though she has separate existence from her father but her mind is guided by him. Except Miranda the other significant mention of women is of Caliber's mother, Sycorax who is physically absent. Yet holds a strong presence. In the play she is referred to as a witch who was banished from Argier and then died on island. Like Prospero she has magical powers and can, therefore, hold power over people which can be viewed as a threat to male masculinity. In a feminist point of view, Sycorax can be seen as a character that challenged the patriarchy and as a result was exiled.

## 2. Shakespeare's challenge to the patriarchal ideals

While Shakespeare does include a subordinate women in *The Tempest* to demonstrate the kind of limitations women has during his challenges the patriarchal ideals that weighed during this era. This character is Ariel, the shape shifting creature, who act as a servant Prospero. Ariel takes on the shape of a water nymph, which is mythology, is portrayed as a female deity. Prospero's enslavement of Ariel serves as a way to stop this stray from the norm. Female characters in *The Tempest* lack a tangible presence in the stray. Prospero's wife is rarely mentioned. Prospero discusses her briefly as a piece of virtue. Sycorax, the mother of caliban , ruled the island before Prospero arrived. Yet like Miranda's mother, seems to have been long dead before the play takes place. Despite Sycorax's importance to the background and plot of the play, she, thus does not assert any sort of first hand power in the play.

## 3. Miranda with the active role

The only female character with an active role in the play is Miranda. The lack of female characters in *The Tempest* say a lot about how the men in the play imagine the role of women in society. Even Miranda remains somewhat passive as she acts according to her father's command. Prospero manipulates Miranda like a pawn in his political game indicates how men in *The Tempest* subordinate women from their desires. Miranda is far from the stereotypical 'courtly lady'. She recalls that she does " not known \ one of my sere; no women's face remember\ save from my glass my own' and the lack of womanly influence upon Miranda shows as she instinctively shies away from archness of timidity as a form of dissembling when she approaches. Ferdinand on the subject of marriage states "Hence bashful cunning and prompt me plain and holy innocence! I am your wife if you will marry me; if not I'll die your maid; to be your fellow\ you may deny one; but I will be your servant". By asking Ferdinand to marry her in this way, she is thus how she has adopted to live in a patriarchal society because rather than accept a rejection from, she is prepared to dedicate her life to him as his servant as she does not know a life without some form of male dominance.

## 4. Conclusion

In a nutshell, Shakespeare was much more influenced by the queen Elizabeth only due to her ability to take strong decision, her skills, her protection of art, literature and science, her work for the welfare of her subjects, religious reformations and so on and so forth. Despite the condition of women in society was miserable. Shakespeare in all his romances wanted to present women as an embodiment of firmness but in *The Tempest* Miranda's womanhood represented common women of the society. Though she belonged to upper class but had no separate existence. Shakespeare wanted to bring a change in women's condition and to provide a proper place through his plays.

## 4. References

- [1]. Nostbakken, Faith. *Understanding The Tempest*. 1st. Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2004. Print.
- [2]. *The Tempest*. Act I, Scene II. 10–13.
- [3]. *The Tempest*. Act I, Scene II. 354–365. In later editions, Miranda's lines here are often reassigned to Prospero. Please see section 4.1 for more information.
- [4]. "The Tempest". Act V, Scene I. 203–206
- [5]. *The Tempest*. Act III, Scene I. 47–48.
- [6]. Slights, Jessica. "Rape and Romanticization of Shakespeare's Miranda." *SEL: Studies in English Literature 1500–1900*. 42.2 (2001): 357–379.
- [7]. *The Tempest*. Act III, Scene I. 83–84.
- [8]. Neill, Michael. "'Noises,/Sounds and sweet airs': The Burden of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*." *Shakespeare Quarterly*. 59.1 (2008): 36–59. Print.
- [9]. Sanchez, Melissa E. "Seduction and Service in *The Tempest*." *Studies in Philology*. 105.1 (2008): 50–82. Print.
- [10]. Leninger, Lorrie Jerrell. "The Miranda Trap: Sexism and Racism in Shakespeare's *Tempest*." *Trans. Array The Women's Part: Feminist Criticism of Shakespeare*. Carolyn Ruth Swift Lenz, Gayle Greene and Carol Thomas Neely. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1980. Print.
- [11]. Leninger, Lorrie Jerrell. "The Miranda Trap: Sexism and Racism in Shakespeare's *Tempest*." *Trans. Array The Women's Part: Feminist Criticism of Shakespeare*. Carolyn Ruth Swift Lenz, Gayle Greene and Carol Thomas Neely. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1980. Print.
- [12]. Theobald. *A New Variorum Edition of Shakespeare: The tempest*. IX. Ed. Furness, Horace Howard. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1892. 73–74. Print.
- [13]. Rev. Dr. Krauth. *A New Variorum Edition of Shakespeare: The tempest*. IX. Ed. Furness, Horace Howard. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1892. 73–74. Print.
- [14]. "The Tempest", Act II, Scene II. 149."

[15]. Dickson. A New Variorum Edition of Shakespeare: The tempest. IX. Ed. Furness, Horace Howard. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1892. 73–74. Print.

[16]. Staunton. A New Variorum Edition of Shakespeare: The tempest. IX. Ed. Furness, Horace Howard. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1892. 73–74. Print.

[17]. Cartelli, Thomas. "After "The Tempest:" Shakespeare, Postcoloniality, and Michelle Cliff's New, New World Miranda." Contemporary Literature. 36.1 (1995): 82–102. Print.



**Dr. Amrita Roy** is an eminent 10+2 English teacher from a leading Higher Secondary School of Patahi, Muzaffarpur, Bihar. She pursued her Ph.D. on Shakespeare's Romance from V.K.S.U. Ara, Bihar. She published several research articles and participated in many seminars of Magadh University & Bihar University. She is an eminent author well versed scholar from the department of English. Her Area of Interest is Yoga and Fine Arts.