



SEGREGATION AND LONELINESS OF FEMALE CHARACTERS OF MIRIAM TOEWS

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Cite This Article: S. Rajkumar, "Segregation and Loneliness of Female Characters of Miriam Toews", International Journal of Interdisciplinary Research in Arts and Humanities, Volume 2, Issue 1, Page Number 19-20, 2017

Introduction:

Miriam Toews is a prominent and profound writer in Canada. She has received a number of literary awards for her works. Gervais Award, Writer Trust Findley Award and Roger Writer's Trust Fiction Prize are her major and notable awards. As a degree holder of BA in Film study, she worked in CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation) yet she wrote number of stories, scripts and hilarious works for CBC. As she was born to Mennonite parents, she is well known about the values of the community. From her childhood, she has been isolating herself. In her personal life, she faced lot of unwanted and unexpected happens like the suicide of her father and later the similar happen of her sister. Nevertheless she does not worry about her past days instead she is moving towards the future with hopefulness.

In this research article explains how Miriam Toews survives this society through her own life. She has penned many novels like, *A Complicated Kindness*, *All My Puny Sorrows*, *Irma Voth* and *The Flying Troutmans*. As she was born in Mennonite community metaphorically she used the place in many novels. In the mean time, she very much dislikes the community more or less and she likes the values of it. This research proposal also explains how Miriam Toews affected and how she expressed her own feelings and emotions through her writings. Besides, the researcher wants to explore the segregation and loneliness of female characters in the novels of Miriam Toews. The novels are *A Complicated Kindness*, *Irma Voth*, *All My Puny Sorrows* and *Swing Low: A Life*. The purpose of the novels which the researcher has chosen is to explore the migration life the female protagonist of the above novels. In all the novels, the female protagonists move to various countries like, the US, the UK and Canada. When they move to other countries they cannot survive the life as their own. Instead they face many problems like, solitariness, identity crisis, racism, etc.. Besides they are all encountered by isolation or loneliness. Similarly, Miriam uses the name of her community name that is Mennonite in all her major works.

A Complicated Kindness:

Generally in a family, a girl will be most affectionate with her sister. In the other hand that sister may not understand the affection and love of her sibling. Similarly in this novel *A Complicated Kindness* explains the depression and isolation life of the Female Protagonist. This novel begins in Mennonite community. The protagonist of this novel is Nomi Nickel. From the beginning to end she faces a misery life. She believes in God mean time she has lot of assured on her own community. Regrettably, she could not find any happy moment in her life. On the other hand, her father is so pious on God. As the result he uses to return to home very late. Because of this Nomi begins to use drugs and etc... After some time she got a boyfriend and married him. After one month he also departed from her and again she came to isolation life. At once she came to know that her mother had affair with her English Teacher, besides she very much depressed. After a year passed there were a conflict between Nomi and her boyfriend the result he left her and her father also left her because of pious on God. Eventually she was isolated by her own family members like Sister, Mother, boyfriend and Father. The theme of the novel elucidates the isolation of a teenage girl. Though she is more affectionate with her family members they cannot understand her affections and love. This is not only in Nomi's life also there are people like Nomi all around the world who faces the similar problem.

Irma Voth:

In the second novel *Irma Voth* explains the loneliness and misunderstanding among the family members. This novel is based on the movie *Silent Light* which is directed by Carlos Rygadas. Miriam had played a leading role in this movie. Besides, Miriam explains her own feelings and emotions through this novel. The protagonist of the novel is *Irma Voth* such an eminent woman, as she was born in Mennonite community; she has to flexible in certain places. When the novel opens her family members won't talk with her. Because she married a local young man against of her father wishes. As a result, she was isolated by her family. She has one young sister and two younger brothers. The relation between Irma and her sister Aggie is strongly delineated by the author. When all the family members annoyed on Irma she doesn't contemplate it. Though she was isolated by her boyfriend, she doesn't consider him. When the novel came to the turning point she became very famous among Mennonite community. In many places of this novel Irma's sister Aggie tried to talk with her but her father restricted her. The result Irma returned to the loneliness life. After a year passed Irma's husband came to Irma in the mean time she does not accept her. At one point Aggie left her own house and lived with Irma. When they came to know that their mother got a new baby, both Irma and Aggie visited there and Irma's mother

also solicited to carry the baby with Irma. At finally with the child Irma lived a happy life. Mean time everybody realized their mistake and they came to Irma's home and stayed with her.

All My Puny Sorrows:

In the third novel *All My Puny Sorrows* gives the details of a good relation between two sisters. This novel is considered as a semi-autobiography of Miriam Toews. In 1998, her father committed suicide himself similarly after twelve years later her sister also committed suicide. The central character Yolandi wants to save her sister Elfrieda. When the novel begins with Yolandi is a famous author and her sister Elfieda is a famous Pianist. Later Yolandi has two children and Elfieda has no child because of her doting husband. Elfieda lives very happy life with money and she is such a wonderful pianist. Nevertheless she was not happy with her husband and the circumstance where she lived. She felt loneliness and she always think about her past days with her younger sister Yolandi. Yolandi lived in other side in Canada. At once, when Yolandi came to know that Elfieda is going to suicide, Yolandi came there and saved her. When Elfieda tried to suicide for the second time Yolandi arrived there and stopped it. Finally Yolandi wrote that, "*she wanted to die but I wanted her to live and we were enemies who loved each other*". There are people there around us like Elfieda. From this novel we came to know that, how much she loved her own sister. Though Elfieda gains lot of happiness from the people like money, playing Piano etc... She lived the loneliness life from her husband.

Swing Low:

The fourth novel which the researcher has chosen is *Swing Low*. It is the form of prologue and epilogue, *Swing Low* is written entirely from Mel Toews's nostalgically narrates his memories. Miriam Toews has her father tell his story from bed as he waits in a Steinbach hospital to be transferred to a psychiatric facility in Winnipeg. Mel turns to writing to make sense of his condition, to review his life in the hope of seeing it more clearly. He remembers himself as an anxious child, the son of a despondent father and an alcoholic mother, who never once made him feel loved. At seventeen he was diagnosed with manic depression. His psychiatrist's predictions were grim: Mel shouldn't count on marrying, starting a family or holding down a job. With great courage and determination, Mel went on to do all three: he married his childhood sweetheart, had two happy daughters and was a highly respected and beloved teacher for forty years.

Although Mel was able to keep his disorder hidden from the community, his family frequently witnessed his unravelling. Over the years this schism between his public and private life grew wider. An outgoing and tireless trailblazer at school, he often collapsed into silence and despair at home. Ironically, in trying to win his family's love through hard work and accomplishments, he deprived them of what they yearned for most: his presence, his voice. Once he retired from teaching – "the daily ritual of stepping outside himself" – Mel lost his creative outlet and, with it, his hope.

In the *Globe and Mail*, author Moira Farr described *Swing Low* as "audacious, original and profoundly moving." She added: "Getting into the head of your own father – your own largely silent, mentally ill father, who killed himself – has to be a kind of literary high-wire act that few would dare to try.. Healing is a likely outcome of a book imbued with the righteous anger, compassion and humanity of *Swing Low*."

Conclusion:

In all Miriam Toews' works dealt with different themes, among them majorly Segregation and Loneliness play a vital role. The first novel *A Complicated Kindness* the protagonist Nomi lived the isolation life from her family similarly in the second novel *Irma Voth* the protagonist also lived an isolation life besides in third novel *All My Puny Sorrows*, though Elfieda gained lot of happiness from the people through playing piano she was not happy instead of that she tried to commit suicide. In the fourth novel *Swing Low* tells the story of Miriam's father's life. It is like an autobiography of her father. The whole description is about how her father spends his days from childhood to till his death. In all the above novels, the protagonists move to many countries like, the US, the UK and Canada. When they move to other countries they cannot survive the life as their own. Instead they face many problems like, solitariness, identity crisis, racism, etc.. Besides they are all encountered by isolation or loneliness. When they live in their own country they do not have any problem. But when they move to other countries they face many problems. Specifically, the researcher has found the major issues of migration and the loneliness of the protagonists of Miriam's selected novels.

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