

## PATRIARCHY AND WOMEN SUBORDINATION IN JAMAICA KINCAID'S 'LUCY'

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### **Abstract**

*The portrayal of a woman in writings has consistently been an issue of discussion. A set of attributes for a perfect lady is fixed and the individuals who don't fit in it are scrutinized by patriarchal society. For ages, Man symbolized power, enthusiasm, discretion, and woman, affection, devotion, and sacrifice. Man is to govern and extricate the vulnerable and women are fallible and accomplices to men. Women's rights were exceedingly restricted. Thus far they are forbidden to express a lot of their freedom. Their future is relegated and exhorted to the hunt for a husband who could furnish her with a comfortable life. They are goddesses of nurturing and compassion but are still considered inferior to Man. Even ladies concede it as their destiny and turned into a captive of these precepts. This makes their condition worse. They are now the combatant of a self-destruction legion controlled by man-made rules. We have numerous iconoclast female writers who exhibited their anger towards the world's biased attitude through their writings and celebrate their liberty and power over man and society. Jamaica Kincaid is one of those writers whose protagonists secede themselves from the dream girl image. Her heroines are rebellious and deviant. They affirm their passions without any guilt but being a part of this world, they also have been the victim of the world's discrimination and exploitation. Jamaica Kincaid's 'Lucy' showcases molestation, subjugation, and harassment of females by themselves and its effects on their lives. . In this research paper, we will go through those instances to discuss the problem of girls' upbringing to be perfect and desirable ladies and understand the subjugation of women by both men and women.*

### **Keywords**

*Patriarchy, Gender roles, Women Subordination, Inequality, female objectification*

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## **Introduction**

Patriarchy is the leading impediment to women's advancement and development. From ancient times a woman has been framed in a role of allegiance to man. She has to obey and serve men. According to Genesis God created a woman with a man's rib. "*The use of a rib from man's side emphasizes that both man and woman have equal dignity*". (Bromiley 184). But the world conceived her as a part of ribcage only, unequal to full body and aid to keep its organs safe. Gender discrimination is an unacceptable global issue as swallows opportunities and rights for women. To this day, women are constantly discriminated against, degraded, and treated unequally by men. It is not done by men only but also by women. Females are bound in a perfect image which men in this world have been idolized. In this segregated and Misogynistic world, women are perceived as weak and inferior creatures. Their main motto of life is to make men's life easy and amusing. Somehow women also ratified this as their destiny and carry on to transmit this custom to their prospective offspring with pride. But few oddities would like to write their fate by their own hands and provoke some difference in the society. Jamaica Kincaid is also a name of such exception who wrote out of the league and showed the real psyche, suppressed inside a woman.

**Jamaica Kincaid**, original name **Elaine Potter Richardson**, (born May 25, 1949, St. John's, Antigua), Caribbean American writer whose essays, stories, and novels are evocative portrayals of family relationships and her native Antigua (Britannica). Her female characters have a tremendous assortment. They are from conventional, subjugated, and marginalized to the incredibly modern and liberated. Her protagonists especially Lucy halt the fetters and became an anti-heroine. Our society lauds such male characters but females are criticized to be so. This is the reason Kincaid's books were assaulted by calling them angry. And she knows why she has been criticized. Her female characters are not from another world, they just present the real psyche and emotions of females rampaging the agenda of serfdom.

Lucy is a modern Twenty-first-century girl. She is glad to break the social restrictions for her own sake. Her mother wanted her to be a responsible, respectable, cultural, and angel type of girl. But she didn't choose to walk on the same road as her mother did. She did not accept the exemplary image of a lady in which she has to suppress herself to serve as a female. She left her home and traveled to a distant place far from her family to preserve herself from the destructive guidance of her mother. She worked as an au-pair for her bread and butter, continues her studies on her own, and enjoyed her life as she wanted to. She boldly explored her sexuality and has several

romantic affairs. She is revolting and strong but still was a victim of gender discrimination by her mother, which led her to the emptiness in her life and it left her lonely and somber. It is not only about Lucy, Kincaid gives us copious illustrations of women's sufferings caused by their sacrificial nature. She also exhibits the molestation of women in different stages of life.

First, the subjugation of women by men forces them to be oppressed on every path of life, other, the sacrificial nature of women makes their life more pathetic. Mental harassment of girls starts from their childhood. They are taught that "[T]he relation of male to female is by nature a relation of superior to inferior and ruler to ruled" (Aristotle). They are never considered equivalent to boys and taken less care of. They are given dolls and kitchen items to play with so they can cultivate themselves for their prospective life as a housewife and mother. "*Women have their own role in the household, preserving what the man acquires*" (Clayton). If they fail to accomplish these objectives, only the mother would be responsible and accused of not paying attention to her upbringing. Her failure in familial life becomes more enormous than her success in her working field. According to The World Bank "*Every day, 41,000 girls marry before they are 18 years old. That's 15 million girls every year.*"

Lucy had three brothers and "... *each time a new child was born, mother and father announced with a great seriousness that the new child would go to university in England and study to become a doctor or a lawyer or someone who would occupy an important and influential position in society...*" (130). Where Lucy's brothers were endowed by their parents for a dominant future, Lucy would be a Nurse or an au-pair. Here carrier of a girl and a boy is being discriminated against by their gender roles. As males always hold power in society and home and females take care of others. Lucy did not mind her father thinking of his sons' future because he is a man but her jeremiad was against her mother because Lucy was her offspring. It filled her with pain and agony due to the lack of care and love which partially divided among them, with which she would be nourished but only her brothers got facilitated. "... *whenever I saw her eyes fill up with tears at the thought of how proud she would be at some deed her sons had accomplished, I felt a sword go through my heart, for there was no accompanying scenario in which she saw me, her only identical offspring, in a remotely similar situation*" (130). This negligence affects badly Lucy's mental health. She grew huge hatred towards her mother's impartial behavior. Through her letters, Lucy affirmed her bitterness, "*I reminded her that my whole upbringing had been devoted to preventing her from becoming a slut; I then gave a brief description of my personal life, offering each detail as evidence that my upbringing had been a failure and that, in fact, life as a slut was quite enjoyable,*" (127-128)

Lucy migrated from her beloved country to earn money because her father was in his dotage, her brothers were too young to earn money and her mother was not a working woman. She even has not completed her studies. But she was sent away from her mother and motherland to earn their livelihood. Throughout the novel, her nostalgia reveals to us that she never wanted to leave her country and mother but she had to. Her resentment towards her mother never let her return to her home and she even didn't have any desire to send any help to them. When Lucy was sad over her desertion by her mother for the happy life of her sons and husband. Mariah consoles her by speaking of various women in history and society to justify her mother's action. She gave her a book which's the first line of the first chapter opens with, "*Woman? Very simple, say the fanciers of simple formulas: She is a womb, an ovary; she is a female- this word is sufficient to define her*"(132). Kincaid ironically ridiculed the perception of women in our world. The Female is just considered as the reproductive part like her sole purpose in life is just to bear a child and that is all about a lady. For Aristotle "*the generation of the female is no better than that of a mutilated male*"(Smith, 468). A woman does not have any separate identity of herself, she is an inverse of a male. But Lucy finds that book disgusting and didn't read further. She cannot accept this image of a woman for herself. Mariah who is an educated and modern woman wants her to accept these social norms which makes a woman an object. Mariah is a modern woman but still prejudiced for the role of women in a society like her mother which is to serve a good life to their husbands and families by sacrificing themselves.

In social orders, the world over, particularly male-centric ones, ladies have regularly viewed as property of their dads or spouses with the end goal that their bodies become objects of male control, and their apparent worth gets estimated by their 'immaculateness.' This drives the inconsistent social weights for ladies and young ladies to remain virgins until they wed. These mentalities make a structure for men to accept power over female sexual practices, and have prompted ladies' discipline, and even passing. It is clear how these oppressive frames of mind have prompted viciousness against women. When Lucy had sex for the first time. She didn't mind the virginity of Tanner, her partner. There was no love either. But she finds how gratifying it is to be her first for Tanner, "When he saw it, he first froze with fear and then smiled and said, "O," a notetoo triumphant in his voice" Kincaid (82). Lucy's virginity is more like a souvenir to Tanner. He was joyous to learn that he is the first one and of course the last one to have such privilege from Lucy. The propaganda of virginity is only for females. But what about Tanner? How could males prove their sanity? Or they don't need to, for these social rules are only for females. A woman's body is the only way to prove herself pure

she must remain pure and virgin. Only girls are taught to prevent themselves from fornication so their chastity could be presented as a medal to their husbands. And if females didn't found spotless their social and familial life would be destroyed. Their sexuality had got diminished to their body's liberty. This is why our society pressures many on women to be husbands. A mother always teaches her daughter how to bow their heads, dress decently, speak softly and in low frequency. She asked her daughter to walk home straight after work or school and not to let males attract her. She must not wear anything which sexually arouses a male whether it would be a dress or makeup. If anyone harassed her it will be considered her fault. She must embrace an ideal image according to the their age. Lucy paid great attention to her mother's transition, "*The absence of red lipstick on my mother's mouth after they were all born*" (131). Lipstick and that to be red, a common cosmetics, consider as a tool to present sexuality. It is believed that "*the effect of cosmetics use on attributions concerning the likelihood of provoking sexual harassment and of being sexually harassed.*" (Workman and Johnson). Lucy's mother wore red lipstick, a stereotypical coitus signifier, which got vanished after the birth of her brothers. As soon as she fulfilled the purpose of child birth she lost her right to look attractive. Even she herself gave up the idea of being desirable to be safe and respectable. Such acts of devastation by mothers or mother-like figures imprint a blueprint of patriarchal society in their minds. Those females who act according to the patriarchal culture are appreciated. And by such patriarchal traditions, women annihilate themselves and their offspring. They became female fathers who want their daughters to submit themselves to male formed society. Kincaid replicates this idea with an instance of a masculine ghost inside a female body. A girl who was possessed by the ghost of a man and "*.being beaten by what possessed her*" (21). There is another girl "*who had her throat cut*" (21) by a man. The ghost of a man is a metaphor for the radical rules made by man for his possession of women. Every girl's life is controlled by these two, men and its ghost inside them. But where all the female characters excepted it, Lucy raised the question that "*why should her life be reduced to these two possibilities*" (21). For Lucy, her mother became that masculine ghost who was trying to possess Lucy's free feminine will to accept the subjugation. But she loathes her mom as a result of what she sees as irrational confinements that her mom has forced on her. Mariah also fits in the same metaphor. Lin writes "*Mariah adopts a masculinized view unconsciously and makes herself the "object of desire."* She always relied on men for her perception. That is why she has been bothered by her uncle, who was an old impotent man, who blamed her for their not functional sexual chemistry. He said it is she just who isn't able to tempt him, "*He was an old, impotent man and that he found it easier to blame a young girl for his condition than to face the possibility that in this area he was all washed up.*" This left a blemish at the

forefront of her thoughts everlastingly and it was so difficult for her to cope with that. She never got herself satisfied in that undesirable image created by her uncle of herself. "Women have been scapegoated," said Butterworth in his article, "the discouraging trend of society is to blame women as a group. From issues of childhood development to the vile behavior of men, women are predominantly blamed as the root cause." When Mariah's husband betrayed her and left, Mariah was again made to ratify that it is her failure to keep her husband bouncing. This left her bitter for a lifetime. The sweet and lively Mariah became cold. The pain of betrayal broke her to the core. Lewis was the one who must have been punished for his unfaithfulness but it was Mariah who was suffering mentally. Because it is how females are still manipulated by men.

It has been for centuries that man hides their immodesty behind a woman or puts all the blame on her. Even she does not accept the fact that her man could be immodest. If a man has extramarital affair, so the blame falls on the other woman that he was tempted by her. In Kincaid's *Lucy*, we find women fighting for one man who has a relationship with both of them and they are ready to kill each other to get the sole possession of their lover. Sylvie, a friend of Lucy's mother got a bite scar on her cheek from her husband's lover in fighting and was sent to prison. In the whole process of fighting and punishing, the man for whom they fought was excluded. None of them questioned on that man's fidelity because each of them may believe that he loved her and it is the fault of another woman who came between them. On Lucy's island, it was common for men to move on from one woman to another. But only women were left behind to face the world alone with the spot of insanity. Sylvie's status as a good woman was tarnished. So now she is undesirable and socially unaccepted. Nobody wants to be in her touch now because of her imprisonment. Lucy's mother met her secretly because she fears her husband who doesn't like Sylvie because of her social status. Although he himself had several affairs. Our society can accept an immoral man but not a hostile woman. This is how double standards of society throttle females live.

### **Conclusion**

Throughout the novel, we find Lucy as an antihero who discarded the idea of being submissive. She never gave access to her emotions and body in anybody's hands. She wanted to be different from those women of her society who were emotionally attached with men and those men were the reason for their annihilation. Her mother, Sylvie, and Mariah destroyed their future for such cause.

And this mental harassment continues from birth to death, which is not only done by men but also by women. In childhood their mothers teach them, after marriage, their mothers-in-law explain it to them, then, later on, they transfer what

they learned to their daughters. And this is how women themselves are responsible for their pathetic condition because they have considered this mental oppression, this mental slavery as their destiny.

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