



**EXPLORATIONS IN TO FEMINIST UTOPIAS: A CRITICAL STUDY OF KASHIBAI
KANITKAR'S THE PALANQUIN TASSEL, ROKEYA SAKHAWAT HOSSEIN'S *SULTANA'S
DREAM* AND CHARLOTTE PERKINS GILMAN'S *HERLAND*.**

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ABSTRACT

In this article I have presented a critical study of three feminist utopias written in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century viz. *The Palanquin Tassel* (1889), *Sultana's Dream*, (1905), and *Herland* (1915) from a comparative perspective. All these three works provide significant feminist critiques of the society of their times. They are therefore, I argue, significant contributions to the utopian ideas of nineteenth and twentieth century as well as to feminist theory. It is surprising, given the scope of the visions embodied in these works, and their self-evident artistic achievement, that these books are not better known. All these three works were written by women and are specifically feminist interventions in the utopian debates of the time. All the three of them have therefore, I believe, been victims of the overall marginalization of feminist ideas of women's art. This article is a small attempt to redress this trend. *The Palanquin Tassel* (1889) was written by a Marathi writer, and activist Kashibai Kanitkar (1861-1948). The second one *Sultana's Dream* (1905), was written by a Bengali writer, activist and social commentator, Rokeya Sakhawat Hossein (1880-1932). And the third one *Herland* (1915) was written by an American feminist, activist, thinker and philosopher Charlotte Perkins Gilman (1860-1935).

Keywords: Feminism, Utopian, Eponymous, Verisimilitude, Zenana, Palanquin, Parthenogenesis, Venerated.

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According to the oxford English dictionary, the term 'utopia' generally means "any imaginary or indefinitely remote region, country, or locality or a place, state or condition ideally perfect in respect of politics, law customs and conditions". The term 'utopian writing' designates the class of fictional writings that represent an ideal, nonexistent political and social way of life. Utopia therefore

means a place that does not or perhaps cannot exist for perfect happiness; it is an elusive phenomenon. Even then, everyone has a right to pursue their own ideas of a perfect world and writers, thus motivated, have presented their own visions of a future society. As stated in the Encyclopedia of philosophy, "some intellectuals simply need to invent worlds," to them "the construction of a utopia, even if only on paper

is a God-like act and they employ the imaginary to project the ideal”, taking care to redress the wrongs in their society.

From the standpoint of feminism, the significance of utopias cannot be over emphasized. Feminism is a critique of the unequal relations of power between genders in the society. According to Bell Hooks, “Feminism is the struggle to end sexist oppression. Its aim is not to benefit solely any specific group of women, any particular race or class of women. It has the power to transform in a meaningful way all our lives”.

Utopian thinking, in a sense, is crucial to feminism, a movement that could only be produced and challenged by and in a patriarchal world. Feminist fiction and feminist theory are fundamentally utopian in that they declare that which is ‘not-yet’ as the basis for a feminist practice, textual, political, or otherwise. Thinking the ‘not-yet’ is of particular importance for feminists, as it is here that freedom and necessity meet ; for feminists working with narrative the not-yet can rewrite views of the past and present even as it projects possible futures.

According to American writer Sally Miller Gearhart “western feminist utopian fiction is a sort of fiction political: it contrast the present world with an idealized society, criticizes contemporary values and conditions, sees men or masculine systems as the major cause of social and political problems (e.g. war), and presents women as equal to or superior to men, having ownership over their reproductive functions. A common solution to gender oppression or social ills in feminist utopian fiction is to remove men, either showing isolated all-female societies as in Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s Herland or societies where men have died out or been replaced”.

My attempt in this article is to draw attention to the range and quality of issues that the writings of these three eminent women writers of nineteenth and early twentieth century belonging to diverse cultures bring forth. It is surprising, given the scope of these visions embodied in these works and their self-evident artistic achievement, that these books are not better known, making us aware of the cultural politics that takes place in the formation of hegemonic traditions in particular literary cultures.

What makes these three utopian texts interesting is that all of them have been written by women and all of them are relegated to the corners of literary history in all the three languages. In fact, all of them have been unearthed by feminist scholars in the process of critical scrutiny to which they subjected the specific literary traditions to which these texts belonged. These texts ‘surfaced’ because of the feminist engagement with issues in the formation of literary canon in which these texts had been produced. This article tries to present a re-assessment of these little known but very important feminist utopias produced in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in diverse literary, social and political contexts.

A Critical Study of Kashibai Kanitkar’s *The Palanquin Tassel*:

The Palanquin Tassel was written by Kashibai Kanitkar, a Marathi writer and social activist, who straddled two centuries: 19th and 20th in her life. The Palanquin Tassel is a utopia of feminist concerns. Verisimilitude for the utopia is achieved by the author in a prologue in which she claims to have visited the place, and discovered a written biographical narrative, and obtained permission to publish it. In the prologue the author ushers us into a remote and quaintly named Princely state, and its eponymous capital town called the Palanquin Tassel.

It is a prosperous town, modern in its industrial production, and has enlightened and gender-egalitarian laws and social structure. One of its chief attractions is the well-attended Shibika college where the author spends her night during her visit. The author meets the Lady Principal of the college who informs her that Shibika College was started for wives deserted by their husbands or evicted by oppressive marital family. “They were all married and their husbands being alive.”(p. 238) “The women who come here to study have no homes or families. There are some whose husbands are absconding, and others who are no longer able to endure the oppression meted out by their husbands or parent-in-laws.”(p.239) “To feed and nurture them, train them in some vocation, and make them capable of earning their own livelihood is the aim of the college. There are many institutions

that take pity on widows, but there was not a single institution to provide shelter and sympathy for women such as these. The Ranisaheb of the State therefore opened this institution to look after them. (p.239).

Yet men are not forbidden to enter the college. The Principal says, "There's no such rule. Ranisaheb (princess) made all state jobs hereditary so if the deceased has no male heir to take up his job, his wife, daughter, or daughter-in-law can take it up. As both sexes have access to employment, both are literate. Therefore, persons of both sexes take up any employment. Universal education has thus come about without making it compulsory. (p.239)" When the author asks 'what is the situation here regarding child marriage?' (p.239) The principal replies by saying that 'although there is no special law about it, there's rule in all educational institutions that married boys or girls are not enrolled as students. Colleges have a similar rule. Therefore marriages don't take place until a late age. And now all castes have developed the custom of adult marriage'. (p.239).

Highly impressed by this achievement, the author expresses her desire to know more about the former princess (Ranisaheb) the creator of this ideal society from the lady Principal and handed a manuscript narrative fifteen years previously, with permission to publish it.

It is an account ostensibly written by Manu (Manutai) the younger sister of Ranisaheb. Manutai describes her childhood shared with her beautiful and accomplished older sister Rewatai or simply Tai (Ranisaheb).

The girls' mother nurtures ambitions to marry Rewatai into a wealthy family possessed of pearls and palanquins. And browbeats her husband and brother into finding such a match. Tai's uncle and father finally succeed to everyone's delight in getting as a groom the scion of a small princely state. Their delight soon turns into dismay. At the time of the wedding they realize that they have been tricked into believing that the prince is a handsome, and bright college student, "the boy in college remained in college, and a different one came to the wedding".(p.264) when he is instead mentally challenged.

Tai sadly resigns herself to her fate, but the unhappy parents are prostrated by grief and guilt. They linger on for a few years during which Manu is spared marriage and is educated at home by her older brother Nana. After their parent's death, the two siblings (Nana and Manu) are invited by Tai's mother-in-law, the queen regent, to her state, Sambalpur. Tai's mother-in-law requests Nana to teach and guide Tai and make her capable of running the state and carry on the administration herself without any interference. (p.305) Nana educates Tai so as to make her capable of administering the State when her mother-in-law relinquishes her power. Tai pursued her studies satisfactorily. (p.306).

After being educated for four years Tai is handed over the reins by her mother-in-law. It would be interesting to look at the reforms she introduces after ascending the throne. They are far-reaching reforms which benefit women, especially through equal education and employment opportunities. The first change she makes pertains to the name of the State and its royal seal—both bear the words 'Palanquin Tassel'. (p.328). Tai asks Nana to prepare a draft of a law to give women control of their 'stridhan' (the jewellery or wealth given to women by their parents at the time of marriage. (p.326) Tai, Nana and Manu plan to open an institution called Shibika College to help deserted wives and for women trapped in bad marriages. There they are given the kind of education they wanted; the already educated woman can teach, and those who want to devote themselves to serving the nation would be helped to achieve that goal. (p.307) Nana is the originator of this idea. Dwaraki, Amba (childhood friends of Manu) were such women who were invited by Manu, Tai, and Nana to join the institution. Dwaraki's husband deserted her and Amba received no maintenance from her husband and was reduced to penury—she had no support from her parental family. (307).

In order that the State should prosper, Tai encourages every occupation. She spends time and energy on reviving old occupations. She offers state sponsorship to male and female students of different castes, in order to induce them to go abroad for vocational training. She improves

agriculture by giving farmers training and subsidies. A standing crop should never be sold is the rule. (p.326) Thus released from the male oppressive force, feminine abilities flower and flourish in the Princely State transforming the previously oppressive place as a haven, a land of plenty and contentment.

The education of the citizens of Princely State is given a boost by Tai. "So many women had been educated and appointed to state jobs in various departments". (p.329). The little state is transformed into a utopian society of which the hallmark is gender equality.

In working thus for public welfare and running the administration, Tai, Manu, and Nana pass more than twenty-five years of their lives. Having accomplished their task, Tai places a small gem-studded gold Palanquin on the throne, relinquishes power to several committees composed equally of women and men, and goes off with her mentally challenged husband and loving siblings in search of spiritual happiness.

Kashibai impresses us by her ability and courage to dream a feminist dream from her location within a society not given to such dreams. Only by daring to dream cautiously could she affirm her feminist subject position and sculpt a space for both women's creative writing and gender equality. In *The Palanquin Tassel*, apart from the fight for equal opportunities and education for women, the intention of the author is also to portray women as equal if not superior to men in many ways. Kashibai's utopian feminist fiction presents visions of what a society would be like without gender structures and in egalitarian gender relationships. She treats the patriarchal reality as a threatening space for women whereas her utopian story provides the liberating space.

A Critical Study of Rokeya Hossein's Sultana's Dream:

Sultana's Dream was written by Rokeya Sakhawat Hossein, a Bengali Muslim writer, social commentator and activist and published after major and controversial debates about women's education and nature of a suitable curriculum for women had taken place there. The utopia *Sultana's Dream* breaks the silence of the Muslim woman in *Purdah*.

It articulates her anger against the injustice perpetrated on women and against the irrationality of her society. In this feminist fiction Rokeya Sakhawat Hossein contrasts the male and female worlds, and as does so, she tears the veil from the face of the patriarchal world and exposes the value systems that lie hidden underneath.

Sultana's Dream presents a vision of a society, *Ladyland*, in which women rule and men are kept in seclusion. Taking off from the deceptively simple concept that in any civilized society it is those who are a danger to society who should be kept under restraint, as criminals are, Rokeya invents the notion of the 'mardana' an institution in her fictional "*Ladyland*" where men are confined, "just as we are kept in the *Zenana*"(p.9). Since women are "not safe as long as there are men about the streets" (p.9). The situation in *Ladyland* therefore represents an inversion of that in India where "man is lord and master; he has taken to himself all powers and privileges and shut up the women in the *Zenana*." As a consequence, "women have no hand or voice in the management of our social affairs' (p.9).

To the protagonist's hostess in *Ladyland*, Sister Sara, a character whose mind has not been stunted by patriarchal ideology, it is clear that such a travesty of justice and rationality can only occur because the women in India have allowed themselves to be shut up. In a sense, Sister Sara can be said to be the voice of the 'rational' and 'educated' British woman or the voice of Rokeya herself. According to her, they have neglected to preserve their freedom and in the process lost their natural rights. Man might be physically stronger than women, but by the civilized norms of *Ladyland*, brute strength 'does not enable him to dominate the human race" (p.9). The superiority of the mind and a rational approach to problems is clearly indicated in the story of the war against their neighbouring country in which they are being defeated, until the women stepped in and turned their brains against the mere brawn of the enemy. Women, Sister Sara is convinced, can manage everything for they are rational creatures, endowed with intellectual powers and capable therefore not only of anything a man is thought to be fit for, but also of much more.

The whole of Ladyland is a garden. Every individual house is surrounded by a well kept garden with none of the dirt that is so characteristic of the place where sultana comes from. Sister Sara's house for instance, was "situated in a beautiful heart-shaped garden" (p.10).

The women of Ladyland have developed their world in scientific, rational and humane ways which the men in a patriarchal set up had not been able to do for thousands of years, probably because improving the quality of life had never been a patriarchal priority. Science is used rationally by women because they are women, to sustain life and addressed to answering the needs of citizens, is the key to well-being in Ladyland. The scientific temperament of the women in Ladyland helps them invent quite a few devices which could be used in the house and outside, though only two or three things achieved in the universities are mentioned. Solar heat for cooking, an infinite quantity of water stored in water balloons for use whenever it is needed. Rokeya's ingenuity in writing about this is to be admired. No doubt solar energy was already being used by women in food preservation, for instance, in the case of pickling and drying food material to be stored. But here she introduces the idea of collecting and scientifically storing solar energy for cooking. So the kitchens in Ladyland are not smoke filled and dingy like kitchens of Calcutta. They are bright and airy. Besides solar heat for cooking is something freely available from nature, waiting to be harnessed for creative use.

Thus one university invented a water balloon "to which they attached a number of pipes. By means of this captive balloon which they managed to keep afloat above at the cloudland, they could draw as much water from the atmosphere as they pleased. As the water was incessantly being drawn by the university people, no cloud gathered and the ingenious Lady principal stopped rain and storms there by".(p.11). As a result of which there was no dirt and mud in Ladyland.

They have also introduced simple air travel through the careful use of hydrogen balls and electricity. This machine is used by Sister Sara to take Sultana to visit the Queen who lives a short distance away. Sister Sara does not need the

assistance of a mechanic or driver to run the mechanism. She "screwed a couple of seats on to a square piece of plank. To this plank she attached two smooth and well polished balls, when I asked her what the balls were for, she said they were hydrogen balls and they were used to overcome the force of gravity. The balls were of different capacities, to be used according to the different weights desired to be overcome. She then fastened to the air-car two wings like blades, which, she said, were worked by electricity. After we were comfortably seated she touched a knob and the blades began to whirl, moving faster and faster every moment. At first we were raised to the height of about six or seven feet and then off we flew". (Pp.15-16)

Thus the women of Ladyland invented a convenient mode of travel with none of the polluting fumes or the dust of motor cars or railway engines, and have circumvented the need for roads, which, the author points out are dusty in the summer and muddy in the rains.

Unlike men in the ordinary world who use science mainly to develop bombs and manufacture armaments, the women of Ladyland use science and their intellectual abilities for peaceful existence. One remarkable feature of *Sultana's Dream*, is the necessity for peace, co-operation and peaceful co-existence in the society. Before the women established their rule in Ladyland, they were engaged in scientific research, and men were busy accumulating their military power which failed them when they went to war. And that brings us to what we might call Lady land's bring "creation myth". Seeing that the war was all but lost, the women stepped in and drew on the sun heat which they had stored. Using their brain power they were able to achieve victory, but not before they had asked the men to retire into the Zenana. At that time this request was made only for the sake of propriety. Tired as the men were, they did it meekly, and have ever since been there in spite of their repeated pleas to be let out. The women used concentrated solar heat on the enemy and victory was theirs for sure. The enemy was taken by surprise and did not know how to react or to withstand such an amount of scorching heat. In Ladyland where the female is the

norm, there is peace as well as law and order. There is no need for any oppressive judicial system nor for magistrates or police, for once the men have been banished into the mardana, no crimes have taken place. Left on its own, the female world is law abiding, humane and rational.

The women's attitude to Nature is quite different as this female world uses nature to the fullest extent making it yield as much as it can. It is non – invasive and it does not turn nature into a commodity to be indiscriminately used for profit making. In this sense Rokeya anticipates the eco-feminist critique of capitalist system of production, based solely on profiteering and warmongering.

Education is the basis of these women's achievements. The theme of education is central in Sultana's Dream. The education of the citizens of Ladyland was given a boost by the Queen who liked science very much. It led to the education of all the women in the country. As a result education spread far and wide among women and early marriage also stopped. Their Queen circulated an order that all the women in her country should be educated. "Accordingly a number of girl's Schools were founded and supported by the government" (p.11).

Sultana after visiting the Queen, and after seeing all the universities, laboratories and observatories gets into the air-car with Sister Sara but as soon as it began moving the dreamer Sultana somehow slips down and wakes up from her dream with a jolt, "...I somehow slipped down and the fall startled me out of my dream. And on opening my eyes, I found myself in my own bedroom still lounging in the easy chair!" (p.18).

For Rokeya, it was a jolt back into the reality of the social situation of the burqa clad, secluded, economically dependent, ideological oppressed, physically and mentally 'retarded' women of nineteenth century Bengal operating within the framework provided by the patriarchal norms of the time. It is precisely this jolt back into reality that made her work relentlessly beyond the limits set by society on her as a Muslim woman, in order to change the position of women during her times or at least begin a new way of thinking about the infinite possibilities available to a woman too.

Critical study of Gilman's Herland:

Herland written by Charlotte Perkins Gilman, an American feminist, emerges from a completely different socio-political and cultural context. Herland was the culmination of the dreams of its author, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, whose writings were a major source of inspiration for the American women's movement.

Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *Herland* is a feminist utopia, as it envisions an all-female community that reproduces parthenogenetically (by virgin birth) and venerates motherhood; it has made tremendous scientific advances, yet lives in total harmony with nature. It directly challenges the various oppressive practices she witnessed and experienced in her own life as well as the ideological role they played in women's oppression. Through the alternatives she offers to the patriarchal family, politics, statecraft, academy, her imaginative reconstruction of the world around her can be seen.

The multiple facets of her ideological protest and creative articulation are unfolded through the reactions of three men who 'discover' it--the sociologist narrator Vandyck Jennings and his two friends Jeff Margrave and Terry Nicholson. *Herland* is situated on a geographically isolated mountain top. According to Terry, in *Herland* "there isn't home in the whole pitiful place" (p.98). Every kind of domestic work had been centralized. "They had every one of them, the two rooms a bath, theory realized. From earliest childhood each had a separate bed room with toilet conveniences" (p.125). Since this was the case, they had no kitchen in the individual quarter. "For food [they] either went to any convenient eating-house, ordered a meal brought in, or took it with [them] to the woods" (p.125). Besides this, there were "little shaded tables among the trees and flowers" (p.43) where people could eat. Their food consisted mainly of fruits and nuts and cakes, with water to drink and some preparation like cocoa. "Every tree bore fruit-edible fruit" (p.79). "Their fruit and nuts, grains and berries, kept on almost the year through" (p.79).

Just as children were reared communally by specialized persons, housework is also done by persons who had specialized in that field. The otherwise 'domestic task' of child rearing is taken up by the community, therefore also the other tasks

which are associated with domestic work. Another factor which necessitated the discharge of domestic duties by specialized household workers is the fact that the inhabitants of Herland do not live in one place all the time since their work takes them all around the country. No individual 'owns' a house in Herland. The land is "in a state of perfect cultivation" (p.11). "There was no dirt", "there was no smoke" (p.19). Cleaning had evidently been centralized. "Everything was beauty, order, perfect cleanness, and the pleasantest sense of home over it all" (p.19), the explorers find as they near the town and later during the course of their stay in Herland.

The women in Herland are given "proper" education which makes them remarkable for their composure, fearlessness and physical agility. The three men see the first women in *Herland* among the trees and later running with easy strides. Children, communally reared, are the sole focus of their thoughts. A great deal of effort, time and energy has gone into devising their games and literature. They are taught by an "association of hilarious experiment and achievement" (p.108). The things they learn are "related" "to one another and to the national prosperity" (p.100). They grow up "in a wide, friendly world, and know it for theirs from the first" (p.101). The utopian enthusiasm for becoming better human beings results in an eagerness to learn which continues even when they are adults.

In many ways this utopian novel may be considered Gilman's most explicit statement of admiration and love for women. This utopia is a land inhabited only by women and girl children, procreation occurring through parthenogenesis. Faithfully worshipping the "Goddess of Mother love" and interacting co-operatively, respectfully, and affectionately, women demonstrated their capacity to build a utopia. Most important, because they were not confined within the isolation of the private selfish home, women could use their nurturing capacities for social and community service. Trusting childcare only to the "highest artists", Herlanders developed the true "womanly" virtues: "Beauty, Health, Strength, Intellect, and Goodness etc." Motherhood---- "the power of mother-love" or the "maternal instinct"--- is here "raised to its highest

power" (p.57) and venerated. Endowed with the abstract force of an idea mother-love is not "a brute passion a mere 'instinct' a wholly personal feeling" but a "religion" (p.68) which includes the "limitless feeling of sisterhood" that wide unity in service (p.69). Life is a "long cycle of motherhood" (p.59). In Herland the "essential distinction of motherhood was the dominant note of their whole culture". Motherhood was the "great, tender, limitless uplifting force" (p.57).

Motherhood as a part of nineteenth century ideology reinforced the sexual division of labour, shaped beliefs and behaviour, perpetuated myths of morally ennobling womanhood which confined women to the domestic and reproductive sphere, and so maintained their subordinate role. By placing the work of producing and nurturing future generations on women it effectively cut them off from social and political participation. The feminist espousal of motherhood on the other hand stemmed from an inability to resolve the contradictions between women's biological role and motherhood as an ideological construct. Gilman's inability to see any incompatibility between a woman's function as wife and mother, and her full development as independent human beings seems to be a result of her idea that the economic dependence of married women was the central problem. Gilman claimed that "mother love is the fountain of all our human affection, but mother love as limited by the home, does not have the range and efficacy proper to our time". She envisaged the emancipated twentieth century woman as a mother, economically free, a world-servant instead of a house-servant; a mother knowing the world and living in it. An outcome of women's economic independence in Herland is that they are free from conventional femininity. The narrator Vandyck realizes that "feminine charms" are "not" feminine at all; but mere reflected masculinity--developed to please us because they had to please us and in no way essential to the real fulfillment of their great process" (p.59). Though Gilman attacks the nineteenth century idea of the home as a privatized enclave as claustrophobic ---- there is no "analogue" for the private home and the nuclear family in *Herland*, their "mental outlook was so collective, the

limitations on a wholly personal life were inconceivable" (p.97), she is still susceptible to its emotive quality. Therefore in *Herland* the women give their "surrendering devotion", "service" and "loyalty", "collectively to one another", to their "country and race" rather to one man and his family (p.95). In *Herland* we notice that women did not want to fight, and to oppress. Instead there is unselfishness and creative indulgence which make the women want to know more about the other world where the three men came from. Gilman equates militarism with male authoritarianism, aggression, and possessiveness, and sees woman as instinctive guardians of peace.

Herlanders, as the three men discover, were a peace loving set of women. While they came to accost the three intruders in their country, "they had no weapons" with them. When Terry Nicholson, Jeff Margrave and Vandyck Jennings try to fight and run away they do not fight back but gently use anesthesia. Vandyck comments, "they're perfectly harmless" (p.26). When the women 'caught' the men escaping Herlanders did not use violence. They had no kings, and no priests, and no aristocracies. They were sisters, and as they grew, together---not by competition, but by united action" (p.60). In their land there is no violence and if ever anyone fights as Terry Nicholson did, instead of fighting back, they believed that "anesthesia would be kinder". (p.146).

The status of women in *Herland* is an inversion of the contemporary: the male is merely the sex object while the female represents the whole world of action. Women have no need of men for emotional, financial, or social security, or even for sexual fulfillment. Gilman posits a total freedom of choice for them. The sense that Herland reverses contemporary conditions, with men having to adapt to women's norms, however holds only at a superficial level. The norms Gilman creates are not arbitrary or oppressive and approximate an ideal presumably desirable for both sexes.

The utopia explores the feasibility of relationships within this context of conventional men and free women. In the egalitarian ethos of Herland, the conventionally masculine Terry seems grotesque, as his "intense masculinity" (p.74) finds no counterpart, "nothing to oppose, to struggle

with, to conquer" (p.99). In his frustration he ends up abusing the women by calling them "neuters" or "boys" (p.87) and the country by dubbing it a "perpetual Sunday school" (p.99). Jeff is transported by this land of "universal peace and good will and mutual affection" (p.98). The narrator Vandyck finds the intelligence of the women "impressive" but "mortifying" (p.78). The women see the three as "but men" (p.66) who need protection. Yet the men appreciate Herland enough to conceive of the possibility of relationships with the women, but since the women have no notion of "sex-love" (p.88) the relationships have to be conducted at the level of friendship and equality if they are to succeed.

Herland is ready to experiment with reestablishing a bisexual state----"Fatherhood" and "Brotherhood" will be "the dawn of a new era" (p.119). Eventually all three marry and face the problems of a marriage where the women does not habitually adapt herself to her husband and his life, has a firmly established independent lifestyle, continues her profession with the husband as assistant, lives in her separate apartment and cannot see why she should join up in a "home" and take up housekeeping duties. Terry suffers with these women who have no "ideals of wifehood"(p.124). Though he is confident before his wedding his marriage fails because of his physical brutality and he is expelled from Herland. Significantly, only Jeff, with goodness analogous to *Herland's* perfection, is capable of a simple conversion to their values. Jeff has an "angel streak" (p.124), something not male, in him which allows him to worship and live contentedly with Celis. Very significantly she is the only wife who gets pregnant. The whole of Herland is looking forward with enthusiasm to this birth which is going to take place.

In the end Jeff does not want to return to their "noise and dirt, "vice and crime," "disease and degeneracy" (p.135). The travelers are forbidden to reveal the location of Herland to a world not yet ready for it. The world outside hopes for change, Herland is achieved hope---- a place for progress, equality, security, and creative human relations. The conclusion of *Herland* encompasses change: in an ever more conscious utopian direction within *Herland*, and as a historical possibility in America.

Jeff's staying on is a promise both of the perpetuation of Herland, and of a continued flexibility predicated on a utopian vision of the future. Vandyck's return to America accompanied by Ellador, an embodiment of the utopian impulse, presages a transmission of Herland's values to America and a political transformation there. Gilman utopian projections should be understood in relation to social changes that were taking place in her time, as well as the development which were considered desirable. Herland is rooted in Gilman's exposure to contemporary sociology and women's communities, her 'cultural feminism' and the belief that 'traditionally defined feminine values are superior to traditionally accepted masculine values' her faith in education as 'a major tool for social transformation', and her view of 'fiction as a legitimate mode of discourse'.

Conclusion

The three works were produced by women who belonged to three diverse cultures. One was Kashibai Kanitkar, a high caste Hindu Brahmin writer from the initial decades of the twentieth century Maharashtra, India, another was Rokeya Hossein, a upper class Muslim writer from Bengal, again from the initial decades of the twentieth century and the third was Charlotte Perkins Gilman from the USA, again writing around the same time. Yet they obviously wrote without any knowledge about each other. Their utopias are fired by their feminist concerns, and are fine examples of a mind which transcends reality, imaginatively breaking the bonds of the existing social order. In many ways feminism itself in its aspiration and in its critique of society can be regarded as embodying utopian dimensions. These three utopias therefore contribute to utopian thinking in general and to feminist theory in particular. All the three authors realize the repressive force of a male patriarchal community on women. They dismiss patriarchal oppression and release natural feminine creativity in their ideal communities. Thus released, feminine resourcefulness achieves more than what patriarchal male society has not been able to achieve for years.

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