



Research Paper

## Breaking Ties: From a Subaltern Viewpoint

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### Abstract

*Sarah Aboobacker was a prominent author and writer who has succeeded in revealing the patriarchal and unjust rules imposed on the women in Islam religion. Her novels are simple and portray the evils of the social and religious codes which apply only to the women's community that is made according to the convenience of men. Her books concentrate on the oppression and discrimination faced by the Muslim women in Kerala and Karnataka and throw light on the patriarchal conventions and male chauvinism existing in the society. This paper will analyze how 'Breaking Ties' as an example of a feminist text which portrays the subaltern experience of the Muslim women and how these patriarchy, oppression, marginalization and Gender disparity exploited the life of a young innocent girl.*

**Keywords:** Patriarchy, Gender discrimination, Oppression, Inequality, Marginalization.

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'Chandragiri Theeradalli' is a prominent novel and also a feminist text by the Kannada writer Sarah Aboobacker, which was later translated into English with the title 'Breaking Ties'. The novel introduces the readers to the miserable lives of Muslim women in Coastal Karnataka and Kerala. The author was also from a Muslim community. She was the first girl in her community to pass the matriculation exam. Her writing style is very simple and direct and mainly centered on the terrible lives of Muslim women and how they are excluded from all the major and minor decisions in their life and not allowed to claim their freedom and equality in the social, political and religious system.

This novel has made a huge impact on the Muslim patriarchal society questioning its social evils constructed against women depriving them of their freedom and opinions. It is the story of a voiceless girl and her damaged life caused by her patriarchal father and by the religious rules that restricts her to make decisions in her own life. This novel reveals to the world the sacrifice that a woman has to make to live in a Muslim society and her life as a puppet in the hands of a male-dominated society losing the real joy of life and living a life directed by the men in their lives.

The novel is about a young girl named Nadira who married at the age of fourteen and her struggle to control her own life according to her wishes which were not possible under the rules of her violent father. The other main characters of the novel include Nadira's father Mahammad Khan, her mother Fatima and her husband Rashid.

The novel can be analyzed as a subaltern text, as it projects many accounts of domination over Muslim women and they are defenseless. The story discusses marital rape, social issues and divorce and how women are denied the chance to decide the vital events of their life. This novel gives a gist of the problems faced by the Muslim women and reveals the subaltern circumstance of the illiterate women, oppression of the poor and the exploitation of their life by the Muslim patriarchy.

This story depicts the suppression and discrimination of Muslim women imposed by the Muslim community and patriarchal society. The themes of hypocrisy and double standards are very much relevant in this novel. Because of the unfair Muslim rules in the community, women have been restricted all kinds of freedom and no right to gain an education. They are supposed to wear burka outside of their house. The women are married at an early age when they don't know anything about marital relationships. In the novel Fatima, Nadira's mother is married to Khan at eleven years of age which shows that she is just a little girl. After the marriage, women are supposed to act according to the likes and dislikes of a man, whether she likes it or not. All such rules are a result of the male-dominated patriarchal society and these men make the laws in such a way that everything is convenient for them without thinking about the rights and freedom of women as men enjoy without any authority over them to control their actions. In Nadira's case, when she needs to remarry her

husband Rashid, an unfair rule is imposed on the women of a Muslim community that she needs to marry another man just for a night and spends a night with that person and can get the Talaq or divorce the next morning and the woman needs to wait for three months to know whether she is pregnant. If pregnant she needs to live one year with him and then she can remarry her first husband. This is one of the inadequate religious rules concerning marriage and women have no voice in taking such decisions she is supposed to obey these rules without considering her mental or physical scenario and none of this applies to men.

The men are given complete freedom to choose the decision of marriage or divorce and they can break the marriage by just uttering the word 'Talaq' three times, which seems to be an irrelevant method and he can give divorce without consenting anybody. The Muslim community blindly believes and follows all the rules in their religious system, but sometimes they also find it wrong and unnecessary but they can't raise their voices against the rules and authority. Women have been restricted to all kinds of freedom and denied the right to education because society pictures women as ideal wives who shouldn't leave the house, caring for husbands, children and the elderly, cooking food and doing all the household chores without complaining. From the novel, we can derive a conclusion that the societal and religious rules and the patriarchal domination exploited the life of young Nadira without involving her in the decisions of her life.

The novel is about the tragic story of a fourteen-year girl Nadira, she is from a Muslim community and is uneducated, and she always obeys her father and does all the household chores without complaining and suddenly she was married to a man named Rashid. This new life was somehow started very happily and continued for a year and then the problem arises when Khan, her father approached Rashid and asked for some money for his second daughter's marriage, but Rashid was unable to give the money. Furious by this incident Khan took Nadira and her baby to his house without enquiring about this to her and without Rashid's knowledge. Later when Rashid approached Khan to send his wife back to his house, Khan cunningly manipulated him to get talaq from him and lied about Nadira that she is not interested in living with him anymore.

Later Nadira realized that her father is responsible for breaking her relationship with Rashid. Then somehow both Nadira and Rashid contacted through letters, but she found it difficult to read and write letters as she is illiterate. Later Rashid's mother came to her house and took their baby to Rashid's house and at last Khan decided to help her remarry Rashid. But when he consulted about this with the chief authority figure in their community there is some procedures to be followed before remarrying. So for that, she needs to get married to another man and spend a night with him and can get the talaq the next day, but needs to live with that person if she is pregnant and later can remarry the first husband. But Nadira is not happy with this rule and reluctantly she agreed to marry a person for one day and Khan with the help of his friend found such a person for one-day marriage. But Nadira feels very irritated and uncomfortable spending a night with a stranger. She wanted to avoid that situation, so she went outside to the riverside of Chandragiri river and after spending some time thinking about her husband and child, she can't spend the night with another man and jumped into the river, thus escaping from the harsh realities of life.

The story highlights the making of the religious rules, regulations and customs that the patriarchal hegemony has used against women for its convenience. The novel questions the patriarchal order and demands reform and justice for women. Resistance to patriarchal ideology is implicit in the question which points out absolute disregard for the woman as an equal partner in marriage or her feelings.

Being silenced by the patriarchy that controls women's lives in the name of religion, the protagonist an uneducated Muslim girl is unable to write her story of misery and indignity. The author suggests in the second half of the book takes for a Muslim girl to go to school and gives a voice in the first, to the predicament of Muslim women within the unilateral practices and customs of marriage in Islam. The first and second parts as twin narratives constitute an internal critique of Muslim patriarchy. The novel brings out the elements of triple oppression of family, society and religion and this made her escape into freedom through death.

Aboobacker seems to challenge this ignorance by positioning a strong female personality based on her personality strength rather than family and social expectations. She criticizes men's religious and cultural tendencies towards male brotherhood. She challenges the domination of men by emphasizing her strong female character who negotiates with all possible identities to continue to stick to her beliefs and actions.

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