

UGC Sponsored Minor Research Project

MRP(H)-1188/10-11/KLCA007/UGC-SWRO

**THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF A LATINA WRITER:
ECHOES OF GENDER IN BLACK AND WHITE IN
JULIA ALVAREZ'S *SAVING THE WORLD***

Submitted by

Ms. Pretty John .P

Assistant Professor, Department of English

Carmel College, Mala, Kerala

SUMMARY

Creativity is a problematic term in contemporary literary critique. It draws attention towards the major difficulties faced by women writers and evaluates the status of women writers with regard to their position in the male-dominated society. The analysis delves into the unconventional attitudes taken by the female protagonist Alma Heubner, a Latina writer in Julia Alvarez's *Saving the World* and the resistance shown by her to the First World male-centered literary world. The study shows how the woman novelist has appropriated her writings into a subversive force that challenges the phallogentric organization of society.

The protagonist's "writer's block" seems to become the benign source for her literary / artistic creativity. The study highlights psychological factors that qualify the woman character- writer's life, how the female writer-protagonist's psychic conflicts related to her gender and sexuality turn out to be artistically productive, offering a new dimension to women's writings. This also looks at how Alma Heubner offers resistance to her cultural "Othering." The life of this female writer-character certainly becomes instrumental in creating a change in the social psyche, the collective unconscious of the readers, especially women readers.

The novel gives a vivid portrait of a Latina woman writer turning fifty, fighting middle age, gender discrimination, racial segregation and writer's block. Alma is of the impression that a writer will lose his/her freedom succumbing to the glamour of the book-biz world. She is forced to participate in all these publicity enhancing events. The author has thus made the incipit or opening a bit different by incorporating several issues in the

publishing business. Alma's bitterness and disenchantment with the book-biz world and her self-conscious ethnicity reflect the attitude of the writer Alvarez. The writer-character thus becomes the voice of her writer-creator, Alvarez.

The study emphasizes to establish the intricate connection between creativity and gender in *Saving the World* irrespective of culture and nationality. This study of culture of two different communities in two different centuries provides scope for cultural semiotics in the novel. People in the Third World countries are depicted as being used as guinea pigs by the First World countries. These mere products or commodities are signs of globalization in this consumerist world. The representatives of the First World countries, under the pretext of saving the world from some dreadful, deadly disease usually come to the Third World countries like the Dominican Republic with empty promises in order to test their drugs on these poor people. They are not testing this vaccine in their countries. Once the medicine is approved, the poor lots in the Third World countries will not be able to afford these medications. If anyone goes against them, they are either exterminated or made speechless.

The bicentennial celebrations of the Spanish Royal Philanthropic Expedition of 1803, which had vaccinated orphans with cowpox and brought them as live carriers from Spain to Asia and some African countries through Central America to save the world from smallpox epidemics, was held in 2003. Even history has forgotten to give a surname to the woman who had made it a success whereas Dr. Francisco Balmis is glorified by his countrymen during this bicentennial celebration. The silent speech of the oppressed, suffering from marginalization of class, colour and gender, has just been reduced to a monotonous semiotic pattern.

Saving the World is not just historical fiction. The historical narrative is based on the real smallpox expedition of 1803. The novel slips between past and present. There are multiple time-spaces co-existing next to each other. The multiple embedded narratives give space to many voices. It refers to many narratives like the discourse of history, poverty, exploitation, ethnicity, class discrimination, creativity, gender bias, power politics, commodification, racism, slavery, colonialism, alienation, ambition, literature and publishing business through a series of parallels and binary oppositions. As the narrative focus alternates and shifts throughout the novel, it provides scope for the study of cultures of two different communities in two different centuries and to draw attention towards the major difficulties faced by the marginalized groups in this age of commodification.

Creativity is a problematic term in contemporary literary critique. It draws attention towards the major difficulties faced by women writers and evaluates the status of women writers with regard to their position in the male-dominated society. The analysis delves into the unconventional attitudes taken by the female protagonist Alma Heubner, a Latina writer in Julia Alvarez's *Saving the World* and the resistance shown by her to the First World male-centered literary world. The study shows how the woman novelist has appropriated her writings into a subversive force that challenges the phallogentric organization of society.

The protagonist's "writer's block seems to become the benign source for her literary / artistic creativity. The study highlights psychological factors that qualify the woman character- writer's life, how the female writer-protagonist's psychic conflicts related to her gender and sexuality turn out to be artistically productive, offering a new dimension to women's writings. This also looks at how Alma Heubner offers resistance to

her cultural “Othering.” The life of this female writer-character certainly becomes instrumental in creating a change in the social psyche, the collective unconscious of the readers, especially women readers.

The novel gives a vivid portrait of a Latina woman writer turning fifty, fighting middle age, gender discrimination, racial segregation and writer’s block. Alma is of the impression that a writer will lose his/her freedom succumbing to the glamour of the book-biz world. She is forced to participate in all these publicity enhancing events. The author has thus made the incipit or opening a bit different by incorporating several issues in the publishing business. Alma’s bitterness and disenchantment with the book-biz world and her self-conscious ethnicity reflect the attitude of the writer Alvarez. The writer-character thus becomes the voice of her writer-creator, Alvarez.

The study emphasizes to establish the intricate connection between creativity and gender in *Saving the World* irrespective of culture and nationality. This study of culture of two different communities in two different centuries provides scope for cultural semiotics in the novel. People in the Third World countries are depicted as being used as guinea pigs by the First World countries. These mere products or commodities are signs of globalization in this consumerist world. The representatives of the First World countries, under the pretext of saving the world from some dreadful, deadly disease usually come to the Third World countries like the Dominican Republic with empty promises in order to test their drugs on these poor people. They are not testing this vaccine in their countries. Once the medicine is approved, the poor lots in the Third World countries will not be able to afford these medications. If anyone goes against them, they are either exterminated or made speechless.

The bicentennial celebrations of the Spanish Royal Philanthropic Expedition of 1803, which had vaccinated orphans with cowpox and brought them as live carriers from Spain to Asia and some African countries through Central America to save the world from smallpox epidemics, was held in 2003. Even history has forgotten to give a surname to the woman who had made it a success whereas Dr. Francisco Balmis is glorified by his countrymen during this bicentennial celebration. The silent speech of the oppressed, suffering from marginalization of class, colour and gender, has just been reduced to a monotonous semiotic pattern.

Saving the World is not just historical fiction. The historical narrative is based on the real smallpox expedition of 1803. The novel slips between past and present. There are multiple time-spaces co-existing next to each other. The multiple embedded narratives give space to many voices. It refers to many narratives like the discourse of history, poverty, exploitation, ethnicity, class discrimination, creativity, gender bias, power politics, commodification, racism, slavery, colonialism, alienation, ambition, literature and publishing business through a series of parallels and binary oppositions. As the narrative focus alternates and shifts throughout the novel, it provides scope for the study of cultures of two different communities in two different centuries and to draw attention towards the major difficulties faced by the marginalized groups in this age of commodification.