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## Portrayal of Woman in K.R. Meera's *Hangwoman*: A Reading

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### Abstract:

K R Meera is a well-known Malayalam journalist, novelist and short story writer. Her novel *Arachar* which appeared in 2012 and Penguin brought out the English translation of this novel entitled *Hangwoman* in 2015 Translated by J.Devika. Feminism is the major theme of *Hangwoman*. Feminism refers to any doctrine that seeks total equality in right for women. The male hegemony over women is the base of feminism. K. R. Meera depicts male dominance on many different levels in her novel *Hangwoman*. The story moves forward through the stream of consciousness of the female protagonist of the novel, Chetna, a unique and exemplary character in South Indian literature. The novel *Hangwoman* is a story of Chetna, a Bengali girl. The protagonist Chetna is regarded as a symbol of self-respect for women, but in reality, she is only a cog in the machinations of the men around her (Chetna is lauded as a symbol of self-respect for women). The prejudice based on gender and caste is also explained in this book. Thus, the present research throws light on the plight of woman and feminism.

**Key words:** Feminism, Self- Respect, Social Status and Subjugation

### Introduction:

*Arachar* is a well-known Malayalam novel written by K. R. Meera. The English translation was done by J. Devika as a *Hangwoman* and released by Arundathy Roy. K R Meera is a well-known Malayalam journalist, novelist and short story writer. Shruthi Rao wrote,

KR Meera's *Hangwoman*, originally "Aarachar" in Malayalam, and translated by J.Devika, is a complex and detailed saga of a woman who breaks free from the clutches of her controlling father, overcomes the manipulation of a man she both desires and detests, and comes into her own. (Rao, 2014: Online)

K. R. Meera's *Hangwoman* (2014) chronicles the history of an executioner family in Kolkata. Chetna Grddha Mullick, a twenty-two-year-old woman who becomes the first professional hangwoman in India, is a member of the Grddha Mullick clan, a line of hangmen whose history dates back to 400 BCE and who have witnessed several historical events throughout the ages. Their sense of professional pride verges on haughtiness. Her 88-year-old father, a veteran of 451 hangings, will be deemed too old when the next, extremely rare occasion to hang someone arises. Chetna is forced to take on the role of the hangman because her brother, whose limbs have been amputated, is unable to do so. Whatever the case, Chetna was born with the desire to hang; in fact, her umbilical cord was used to bind a noose as she emerged from her mother's womb.

### Episode of Jatindranath Banarjee:

The novel opens with Jatindranath Banarjee's prayer for forgiveness after he raped and killed a thirteen-year-old girl being denied. The father of protagonist (Chetana), Phanibhushan Grddha Mullick, a hangman in his eighty-eights, has carried out four hundred and fifty-one hangings. He will be responsible for Jatindranath Banarjee's hanging. If Mr. Banarjee is to be put to death, the old hangman demands a government job for his 22-year-old daughter Chetana. It was going to remain there. However, Sanjeev Kumar Mitra, a journalist, decides to fight for Chetana's appointment as Phanibhushan Grddha Mullick's replacement. Jatindranath Banarjee, who was found guilty of raping and killing a teenage girl, has been given the death penalty and is awaiting his execution. Now, Chetana has been given the task of carrying out the execution, which is extremely unusual for a



woman in Indian tradition. A young adult woman will now be the one to hang the person who raped and killed a small girl. In addition to the court's ruling, it also represents the Almighty's decision.

### Episode of Executioner:

The role of the executioner has been performed by Chetna's family for many generations. Her grandma tells her stories as she grows older, and these are not the kind of stories one would tell a little child. Instead, they are a part of the dark truths of a past that not only affects her family but the entire country. Her family has a story in their family mythology about the city of Kolkata, which was the centre of power in this nation for many years, "We have been here for ever so long – long before the Europeans divided Kolkata into White and Black towns, before the Basaks and Seths set up villages besides the Hoogly." (Meera, 2014, p. 19) The family stories reveal the workings of power because they served as the executioners during Bengal's princely statehood, the colonial era, and the years following independence.

### Episode of Chetana:

Chetana, the main character, tells the story in her own stream of consciousness. The psychological suffering of Chetana Mullick is skillfully described by the novelist K.R. Meera. Regarding to this Malavika Thayat wrote in her paper entitled *A Feministic Approach to Hangwoman by K R Meera*: K.R. Meera portrays the mental trauma of a twenty-two year old girl who is forced to be the first hangwoman of the country. The book has won numerous accolades: Kendra Sahitya Academy Award, The Odakkuzhal Award, The Vayalar Award etc. (Thayat, 2017: Online)

A love seed has sprouted in her mind as a result of Sanjeev Kumar Mitra, a media prank on the CNC channel. He started a show called 'Hangwoman's Diary' with Phanibhushan Grudha Mullick on a contractual basis. She experiences many terrible things as a young woman of twenty-two. Sanjeev Kumar Mitra's influence on the media caused it to be treated as sensational news. She isn't even allowed to voice her opinions on the show. In the play, her father instructs her in speaking. Phanibhushan uses the current circumstance as an excuse to barter with everyone in order to increase his income. Sanjeev Kumar Mitra has taken it for granted because he wants intriguing news.

"Hey, we are planning the eve of the hanging show in a big way. We need your help and somehow must steal Grddha Da too. Look Chetu, this is a prestige for me." says Sanjeev Kumar Mitra. (Opp. Cite p. 5)

In addition, Sanjeev Kumar Mitra tried to utilize her as a weapon for his media business by sexually abusing her. When Mitra sexually abuses her, she initially feels helpless, but over time she gains control of the situation. She finds her male partner weak to her frank personality when she eagerly enters his room seeking to have sex:

"The training he had received from this world as a man reminded him that sex was the obvious outcome in such a situation. But he was afraid to take a woman who had walked into his bedroom of her own free will." (Ibid, p. 328)

However, Chetna is regarded as a symbol of self-respect for women, but in reality, she is merely a cog in the schemes of the males in her life. She is thrown into a media whirlpool where she struggles to understand her sexuality as it begins to emerge, doubts her ability to carry out a death sentence, and witnesses a string of tragedies that affect her family. She stumbles at first but gradually pulls herself together and takes control of her life, which ultimately results in a flawlessly accomplished resolution (pardon the pun.)

### Objectives of the Study:

The present research explores a social turmoil of Indian women. The primary objective of the paper is to investigate an image of woman i.e. Chetna, Satyapriya, Bhavana, Radhika, Angela, and others. To demonstrate how patriarchy is strengthened by the system, as illustrated in the novel and how the agency and structure fail to function for women.

## Research Methodology:

Present research contains the collection of primary and secondary data, which has been collected from books, journals, other e-resources. The researcher has used a thematic, interpretative and evaluative method to assess Portrayal of Woman in K.R. Meera's *Hangwoman*.

## Conclusion:

The novel is told from Chetna's perspective as a dramatic monologue, where she engages in to both enable and justify her development of a unique and self-controlled personality. Her metamorphosis from an uncertain to a confident but unselfconscious woman is offered as a site by this manner of narration. Regarding to this H.G.Hrai quotes, Meera presents the trajectory of the evolution of Chetna's character with a lot of psychological insight. She moves from a woman who is not very different from a gendered subject in India to an authentic human being who is resourceful enough to act and speak without the fetters of her highly controlled social identity.

Summing up, the book is a reimagining of public discourses at a time when even one position of authority held by a woman who is neither wealthy nor privileged by class or caste can have a substantial impact on such discourses. It cannot be denied that Chetna's job as a hangwoman significantly alters her life and the lives of others around her, whether in positive or negative ways. This revelation causes her to want to utterly reject homosocial patriarchal structures of power and their violent impact on her.

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