

# Gynocritical Study of Colleen Hoover's *It Ends with Us*

**Dr Ranjana Patidar**

Assistant Professor and HOD English Department, SRS Govt. College, Sardarpur. Dhar (M.P.)

## **ABSTRACT:**

Feminism is based, in essence, on the opinion of equality not only between men and woman, but even between women themselves. Feminism is concerned with how women are involved in the process of being and becoming — a process that reduces classification of women as the “Inferior Other Sex”. The study claims that narratives written by feminist writers such as Virginia Woolf, Charlotte Perkins Gilman and Kate Chopin are Gynocritical feminists, writing about an androcentric culture and the patriarchal system of society whose sole aim is to silence and dominate women, indulged in treating them as an inferior sex, and confine them to the roles of nursing and nurturing. The present paper is an attempt to study Colleen Hoover's *It Ends With Us* (2016) under feminist term gynocriticism, shed the light on different aspects related to women's being and becoming including emotions, the objectification of women. The study draws heavily on feminist gynocritics who present different discussions about masculine subjugation of women and feminist's possibility towards self-realization.

**Keyword:** Feminism, Gynocriticism, other inferior- sex, Self-realization.

She was intensely sympathetic. She was immensely charming. She was utterly selfish. She excelled in the difficult arts of the family life. She sacrificed herself daily. If there was chicken, she took the leg; if there was a draught she sat in it—in short she was so constituted that she never had a mind or a wish of her own, but preferred to sympathize always with the minds and wishes of others. (Woolf, Virginia. *Professions For women.* )

This is the representation of the devoted and submissive woman or wife of Victorian times. Virginia Woolf talks about an angel who is a woman and the established patriarchal society wants see every woman in that way. The society always labels the difference between a man and a woman by addressing the latter as the inferior “Other” sex since ages. It is believed that women should be excluded from public life to be kept under the full responsibility of masculine power.

Gynocriticism is more elaborated term which was introduced by an influential American feminist and literary critic / Showalter differentiates feminist criticism and Gynocriticism as,

“The feminist critique is essentially political with theoretical affiliations to Marxist sociology and aesthetics; gynocritics is more self-contained and experimental, with connection to other modes of new feminist research.”

The term refers to the kind of critique mechanism that focuses on female-centric study of women's literature, to develop new models and theories based on the study of women's experience. It centres on female identity, psychodynamics of female creativity, experience, and female language. Gynocriticism is linked with feminist endeavours to get women into the tradition of writing which had otherwise always

been systemically dominated by men. Gynocritics begins when we free ourselves from the linear absolutes of male literary history, when we stop trying to fit women between the lines of male tradition, and focus on newly visible world of female culture.

Gynocriticism is concerned with woman as a writer, for women writers and women's writing are some ways among many that aim to break the patriarchal dominance, marked by women's silence or women's narratives being misrepresented by men.

While gynocriticism is born out of the second feminist wave's acknowledgement of sexual dissimilarities and the uniqueness of women's writing, it has extended to embrace a variety of different approaches for understanding women's literature after identifying the study of the history of women authors as a sustainable topic of scholarly research.

Gynocriticism refers to a kind of criticism with woman as writer of textual meaning, as against woman as reader, the former as a producer of textual meaning and the later as a feminist critique. The present paper analyses Colleen Hoover's *It Ends with Us*, taking into consideration the specificity of women's writings and women's experiences. The paper undertakes how societal norms affect the life and consciousness of women. How these women feel when caught in domestic violence? The paper makes plea that in any cultural setting norms of verbal and non-verbal behaviour necessitate training in communication and that literature can be used as a rich resource to develop the ability to communicate properly in any cultural setting.

*It Ends With Us* was written by Colleen Hoover an American writer and was published in 2016. It tells the story of Lily Bloom, a young woman trying to escape the patterns of violence that defined her youth and adolescence, and to create a new story for her life. As the novel begins, Lily has just buried her father, and is contending with his legacy and the immense amount of physical and emotional pain he caused Lily and her mother. Throughout the novel, though, she develops a more nuanced perspective on her father's life, and on her mother's choice to stay with him. Through her relationships with two men—the passionate, strenuous, and angry Ryle and the calm, enduring, and loving Atlas—Lily begins to understand who she is and what she wants, and how to shape a path forward that isn't marked by violence and suffering.

The book opens with Lily, the central character, she has come to the roof of an apartment to collect her thoughts in peace and make sense of her feelings about her father's death. There she met Ryle who bursts onto the roof and starts kicking a patio chair in rage. This incident clearly establishes that both were caught in some disturbing situation, but the way of dealing is completely different. While Lily is calm and keeps her troubles to herself, Ryle is impatient and violent. Soon the two of them fall in love with each other and starts their relationship. They share some naked truths with each other which become the centre of their relationship. They open up to each other which say about their traumatic past, but Ryle holds back and hides the complete truth. Ryle made up a story that he lost a child patient whom his brother accidentally shot. But he was actually distressed by the fact that he shot his own brother to death when he was just six years old. Lily shares that she lost her virginity to a homeless boy named Atlas whom she loved.

Their relationship seems like a fairy-tale until Ryle first harms Lily. At first the couple enjoys a honeymoon period of peace and togetherness, but soon Ryle turns on a dime. He was so engrossed after burning himself on a hot pan, he was fuming that a drunken Lily has laughed at the situation and shoves her so hard she falls down and hit her temple on a cabinet. After a few seconds of rage and accusation, Ryle switches back into his old self, full of apologies. All of a sudden her past memories rushed in, as

she witnessed her parents' abusive marriage. Lily hears her father's apologies echoing in Ryle's words. Though she has spent her entire life asserting to never recreate her parents' marriage, and never wanted to be in a marriage of physical abuse and violence, but she forgives Ryle, telling him and herself that if it ever happens again, she'll leave him.

Ryle tells her about his past trauma when it happens again, and though he says it's not an excuse. Lily sees his rage in a new light, when the past memories come in they both have utterly different ways to deal, Lily finds gardening as an escaping tool while Ryle started kicking and throwing whatever comes in his way. Lily becomes constructive on the other hand Ryle becomes destructive. She consoles herself by telling herself that their marriage is not like her parents' marriage that the love will not disappear by the act of violence and "He's not like my father" (Hoover, "IEWU", 192). In that way she convinces herself that she is not recreating marriage like her parents'.

The worst thing happens when Ryle tries to rape Lily after he reads her adolescent diaries and come to know about the magnet of fridge. The moment brings all the childhood memories when Lily's mother got raped by her father for getting compliments about her looks. The past parallels the present, it also comes into the present, as Ryle reads Lily's diary entries of her past. Ryle is consumed with rage and jealousy after knowing about Lily and Atlas he justifies himself by saying that he loves Lily more than Atlas does. This sudden, painful confrontation is an irrefutable break for Lily. Lily was heartbroken and disoriented she was aching physically and emotionally, the only person that she thinks like she can call is Atlas, who immediately comes to take her from the apartment to safety. During the medical examination to treat injuries, Lily also learns that she's pregnant with Ryle's baby.

Lily writes in her journal, "People on the outside of situations like these often wonder why the woman goes back to the abuser. I read somewhere once that 85 percent women return to abusive situations. That was before I realized I was in one (Hoover, "IEWU", 283).

Lily visits her mother and let her know about her relationship, over this her mother tells her, "We all have a limit. What we're willing to put up with before we break. When I married your father, I knew exactly what my limit was. But slowly . . . with every incident . . . my limit was pushed a little more. And a little more. The first time your father hit me, he was immediately sorry . . . the fourth time, it was only a slap. And when that happened, I felt relieved. I remember thinking, 'at least he didn't beat me this time. This wasn't so bad'" (Hoover, "IEWU", 335).

Lily finds compassion for her mother and herself as a teenager as well as a newfound determination to live her life on her own. As soon as she sees her daughter on her lap, she knew that she has to leave Ryle, to break the pattern, to break the cycle of abuse.

The patterns of human activities and codes of behaviour define culture in human society. The term culture encompasses the social behaviour, institutions, and norms found in human societies, as well as the knowledge, beliefs, arts, laws, customs, capabilities, and habits of the individuals in these social groups. Humans acquire culture through the learning processes of enculturation and socialization, which is shown by the diversity of cultures across societies. And the way of thinking of individuals introduce changes in any culture. As society want to see a woman as a tamed animal on the other hand women want their place aside to his husband rather an inferior one.

Hoover in *It Ends With Us* portrays two women, a mother-daughter duo, that caught in same situation. Though Lily's mother was a victim of domestic abuse, chose to live her life with his abusive husband. But she played a very important role to make Lily realise that, what is happening to her is not normal, and she should get out of that marriage. If she will stay she will not be able to break the circle. Since

Lily was pregnant her baby will also suffer in the same as Lily suffered in her childhood, which has a psychological effect on her personality.

For a woman it is a bold step to leave her husband for any kind of abuse. Though we live in 21<sup>st</sup> century, a well-educated and more civilized society, there are many women who are victim of domestic violence and domestic rapes. Hoover, through her novel makes plea to the women to realise that they do deserve a happy and comfortable life. There is urgency in tone to be aware about their existence.

The culture and society will change if someone speaks about the mishaps, but for that women should realise what are their limits.

## References:

1. Hoover, Colleen. *It Ends With Us*. Replica Press Pvt. Ltd. 2016. Print.
2. Showalter, Elaine. “ A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists From Bronte to Lessing, Rev. and expanded ed. Princeton: Princeton University Press. 1977.
3. Showalter, Elaine. “Towards a Feminist Poetics”. 1978.
4. Woolf, Virginia. *Professions For women*. 1942.