

Linguistic

[Family](#), [Marriage](#)



Literary criticism is defined as the attempt to explain a literary work through theory. Similar in the short story "A Question of Dowry" written by Siew Yue Killingly, there are few theories that can be used to analyze the story. The most prominent literary criticism that can be used to explain the short story is feminism criticism and reader response. Feminism is defined as gender inequalities and strives for equal rights for women. In the Indian society, women do not have any freedom and rights to decide their own future life partner. The families play a major role in choosing the bridegroom for their daughter. Moreover, arranged marriage is a tradition that has been followed strictly by the Indians. For example, Mr. Ramachandran and Mrs. Ramachandran choose a bridegroom named Thiruchelvam for their daughter Sivasothie. They did not ask her opinion about the bridegroom and said "Sivasothie, you are a very lucky girl. You'll have a doctor for your husband". Sivasothie agrees to the marriage because she has to follow whatever her family has decided for her life as she has no rights to voice out her opinion. This shows that young women in the Indian society do not have freedom to choose their own life partner and also to decide their own future life. Apart from that, young women in Indian society are also mistreated due to dowry. Dowry plays a major role in an Indian wedding. Dowry is a traditional practice where the father of the bride gives a part of his properties to his daughter and son-in-law as the gift of the wedding. This practice turns out to be a cruel action because if the bride's family fails to give the dowry that is demanded by the bridegroom's family, then the wedding will be canceled. In some cases, brides are tortured by their husbands and in-laws after the marriage because the bride's families failed to prepare the dowry.

that demanded by them. For example, Thiruchelvam cancelled the wedding when Mr. Ramachandran told him that he is not able to prepare the dowry as the land that he have is devalued. Thiruchelvam does not think about how hurt will be Sivasothie's and also how it will effect her future life if the weeding is cancel because he also only thinks if " , a man had to have a wife, so why not have one with a reasonable dowry? " This shows that women in the Indian society are mistreated due to dowry and the men are superior to the women. The men can take any action without consider the women's' feelings and their rights. Moreover, the Indian society also has fixed the role and the behavior of the women in the society. They has fixed that a good wife is a woman who are good in cooking and she is very hardworking. Their duty is to do house chores and cook delicious food for the family. For example, Mrs. Ramachandran scolded and spanked Sivasothie's brother, Tamby when he told them that he said to Thiruchelvam that his sister was waiting for him for two hours. Later, she loudly told Tamby that " Sivasothis was been very hard work at kitchen" so that Thiruchelvam will hear it. This is because Mrs. Ramachandran is afraid that Thiruchelvam will have a bad perception about Sivasothie that she is lazy and does not know how to cook and it will affect her marriage. This shows that the society has fixed that the meaning of good wife is a woman who are good in cooking and she is very hardworking. Another literary criticism that can be used to analysis this story is reader response. The reader opines that people in the Indian society are materialistic person and greedy. For example, Thiruchelvam cancel the wedding when he knows that Sivasothie's father cannot give the dowry that he demanded from them without taking Sivasothis's feelings into

consideration. Moreover, he feels that he deserve a good dowry as for his position as a doctor. Furthermore, his love to Sivasothie becomes fake because he gives importance to dowry rather than love. Hence, it shows that Thiruchelvam is a materialistic person where he gives importance to dowry even though he is a doctor and has a good salary. Moreover, the reader opines that the women in the Indian society are like to make comparison and talk at back of the people. For example, Mrs. Ramachandran was very happy about the dowry that they are going to give to Sivasothie as her wedding gift because the dowry that they have prepared for Sivasothie is much more than the dowry that was given by Thangathurai to her son for the wedding. She said to her husband that “ Twenty thousand dollars is not to be scoffed at-that’s more than I can say for what Thangathurai gave his daughter when our son married her-and she had only passed her Form IV too! ” because she is unsatisfied with the dowry that given by Thangathurai to his daughter during the wedding and feels her son deserve better dowry. This shows that the women in the Indian society likes to talk bad about other people and like to make comparison. Apart from that, the reader also opines that some women in the Indian society do not respect their husband and control of their husband. For example, Mrs. Ramachandran calls her husband by his name Ramachandran and it is strictly prohibited in the Indian society. At the ancient times, wives are not even allowed to pronounce their husband name. They have specific titles that used by the wives to call their husband. Moreover, Mrs. Ramachandran also does not give respect to her husband as she calls him as an “ old man”. Furthermore, when Mr. Ramachandran said that the land that given by his father in law as the dowry is devalued, Mrs.

Ramachandran gets angry and insults him by saying “ if he had known what sort of a son-in-law he was getting, he would have made a wiser decision”. This shows that Mrs. Ramachandran is the dominant partner and wants her husband to follow whatever that she said to him. She also does not give chance for her husband to give his opinion and acts as the leader of the family and it is against the norm of the Indian society where the man acts as the leader of the family and all the decisions are made by them. As the conclusion, those days the young Indian women in the Indian society do not have the freedom to decide their own future life. Moreover, dowry system in the society makes the life of the young women to be miserable. Their family has to struggle to prepare the dowry that demanded by the bridegroom’s family until they have to sell their own properties and if they fail to prepare it, the wedding will be cancelled. Other than that, those days the society has fixed the role of the women and how they should behave. The society has fixed that the role of the women is only to cook delicious food for the family and do house chores and should not be lazy. However, at the present the women have their own freedom to choose their life partner and decide their own future. Nowadays the women are going for work, holding a big position in the office; even some become the breadwinner of the family. Yet, the dowry system is still practiced by the Indians but is not as cruel as those days. At the present, both the family shares the expenses of the marriage and as for the dowry the bride only brings whatever that her family wants to give for her wedding. However, there are some cases where the wives are abused by their husband due to dowry. Hence, this dowry system should be abolished in

Indian society and the law must punish severely the person who ask dowry from the bride's family.