

Gender inequality and power of women in the handmaid's tale and parable of the SO...

[Sociology](#), [Human Rights](#)



Introduction

We are in the 21st century, but gender role is still a critical issue in our society. In our society, men are considered strong; and women are weak. In some place's women are not allowed to go out for work; they must stay home and take care of children. In our society, we heard many times how women mistreated in some places. Men treat women as a thing that they can use and then throw away. Margaret Atwood's novel *The Handmaid's Tale* and Octavia E. Butler's novel *Parable of the Sower*, we see women were suffering because they considered as a weak. We know that women treated so badly, and they have disfigured life in society. We see mistreatment toward women. One of the reasons might be that men think women can't fight back. If a woman decides to fight back, nobody will able to stop her. For example, in the *Parable of the Sower*, Lauren decides to fight against the situation; and she succeeded to survive. Some of the people might think that *parable of the sower* is not a feminist book, but I think it is a feminist book. Because we see the mistreatment and inequality against women like *handmaid's tale*, Lauren's hyper-empathy and leadership skills show us that women can be strong.

Why These Books Are Feminist?

First of all, what is feminism mean? Feminism is “ the theory of the political, economic, and social equality of the sexes.” In the other words that women must treat equally. We live in a society where gender is not equal. We saw that *The Handmaid's Tale* is directly related to women's rights and suffer, and *Parable of the Sower* indirectly relate to women suffer. Atwood's *The*

Handmaid's Tale is the feminist book because women are the one who suffer in Gilead society. They lost their freedom; they face inequality and abuse. They lost their own identity and known by their husband and masters name. On the other hand, Parable of the Sower is the feminist because the book tries to show us the power of women. It tells us that women can do anything to survive in difficult time. We see that women don't have any freedom and stay with the boundaries. Time to time we learn about women's disfigured life and how they treated. Lauren, who is a young black woman change our view about women that they can be strong as men. We see that how Lauren able to survive and create her own religious and lead a new society.

Gender Inequality

Gender inequality is an essential concern whether it is in The Handmaid's Tale or Parable of the Sower. In Gilead society, women were not treated equally to men. The male member has more rights or power in their hands. Women are totally under control of them. Women are not allowed to read or write anything. They can't go outside for work. In the article, the author mentions, Simone de Beauvoir's theories in The Second Sex. Beauvoir argues that in the patriarchal society, being women defined as men's 'Other'. Woman consider as other because they are not a man. Women always seen as opposed to what men are. If men are strong, women are weak. Behman Zarrinjooee's article " Women's oppressed and disfigured life in Margaret Atwood's The Handmaid's Tale" points out that " Men are responsible for all activities; women are confined and are just for men's use and interest" (67). In other words, women are only a thing for men whom

they use for their interest. "... such as prostitution and monthly sexual acts" (Zarrinjooee 68). In the Gilead, women not treated as human but they are a sexual object for men whom they use for their pleasure and needs. Men can do anything they want to do, but women must do what they told to do. In society, the most important roles for women are wives and mother.

In the Parable of the Sower, women stay within the community, while men go beyond the wall for adventure and find work. Women are expected to marry and have children; men are expected to protect themselves and their families. We see that women are mistreated. We see that women are raped regardless of their age. In the novel, we hear the violence toward the girl. Shahnavaaz mention that " from " a little girl, naked, maybe seven years old with blood running down her bare thighs", to Lidia " only eight years old and raped too" to Zehra who cannot tell what happened to her rather calling in you know"(43). Women are facing violence, no matter if they are seven eight-year-old child or women. In that society women's suffering seems normal because Lauren knows it what would happen to Zahra when she said you know. They both share the same thread to their womanhood.

Power of Women

In the Gilead, women are considered as they are reproduction machines and women are defined based on their biology and their capacity for reproduction. The author points out that women's capacity to give birth to a child is defined. " The biological mother in Gilead are women who were forced and educated in Red center to be ready for their role as handmaids before they are placed into commander's household and do their duty"

(Zarrinjooee 69). Red center is the place which teaches them that maternal role is their destiny and they cannot refuse it. In the Handmaid's tale, Offred and other handmaid accept their role that maternity is their biological destiny. As Offred describe "resign my body freely, to the use of others. They can do what they like with me. I object" (Handmaid's Tale 282). Offred knows that she is an object for men, and they can do it anything with her, In the Gilead society, men have power over women and their body.

We see that women were treated badly; and they were just a thing for men whom they can use to enjoy. The main reason women were treated like this is "men aware of how easy it is dominate and brutalize women" (shahnavaz 43). In other words, men think that women are weak, and they can easily dominate them and make them do anything they want. They think that in this world women cannot survive without anyone's help which proved wrong by the Lauren. She proved that women can do anything if they want to do. She is teenage girl, but she is much mature than other kids in her age. Lauren knows that they are in danger while her friend Jonna believes that there is no harm would come on their community. She starts preparing herself emergency kit which safe her from any danger.

When her community destroy, she decides to go north and disguise as a man to safe travel. Even though she hides herself under the men disguise, but she cannot hide her disorder which is called hyper-empathy. Hyper-empathy is considered feminine condition in which people feel another people's pain. They can feel the pain as it is their own pain. Even though Lauren agree that her disorder is her weakness, but it can see as her strength. Her disorder

keeps her realizing that all the people are like her who suffer both physically and emotionally. Lauren's hyper empathy help her fight against the harsh world and learn new ways to survive. Her disorder made her strong because she wanted to survive and safe. Hyperempathy is her power to survive; not only her but other people who want to survive. her hyper empathy plays a role for her to keep hope and belief toward humanism. Her hyper empathy makes her great leader because she can feel other pain and help other in tough situation.

Conclusion

We see that women were suffering in both books but if women make her mind she can fight back in tough situation and make her way to survive. Parable of the Sower is a feminist book because it shows that women can take care herself and other without anyone's help. There are other female characters in the book who are strong women. They also face hard times: but they were able to survive.