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Exploring the concept of love in *Memories of My Melancholy Whores* and *Sold*

¹M. Vinith

¹Assistant Professor of English,

¹ St. John's College of Arts and Science, Nagercoil.

²G. Brishya

²Ph.D Research Scholar, Department of English,

²Holy Cross College, (Autonomous), Nagercoil.

Abstract: Love has a multitude of interpretations and connotations. Love between a mother and her offspring, love between siblings, love between husband and wife, and love between friends are all instances of love. People consistently say that love is sincere and that love is blind, but in the sphere of prostitution, there is a form of love that is beyond physical intimacy. Prostitutes, like anybody else, have sentiments, emotions, and love for their passionate clients. They form emotional bonds with their clients, and the clients develop emotions of affection for the prostitutes as well. This is prominent in Patricia McCormick's *Sold* and Gabriel Garcia Marquez's *Memories of My Melancholy Whore*. This research article delves the concept of affection beyond physical intimacy in both the novels.

Index Terms - Love, sex, hope and betrayal.

I. INTRODUCTION

Age is irrelevant when it comes to being loved and showering love. In *Memories Of My Melancholy Whores*, the old man had a love affair with the young adolescent girl that went beyond sex. He recognises the power of love and realises that sex without love is like looking at the world through a pair of blindfolded eyes. He recognises true love as something more than lust. He looks after the young girl. When she has been absent for months, he hunts for her like a madman. He is brave enough to trade the family treasures for Delgadina's sake. The article unfolds the concept of love and lust in a different dimension.

Lakshmi has an innocent passion for Harish, the child who teaches her the lessons he knows in the novel *Sold*. Among the prostitutes, there is a type of sisterhood affection. Lakshmi has a strong reaction to the street boy who gives her tea and cola because she has paid a large sum of money. It was the same boy who informed Lakshmi about the American aid.

There is a trend in today's world to murder loved ones if there is no prospect of reconciliation. These individuals are oblivious to the true worth of love. They never consider that true love entails releasing the ones you care about. Despite his inability to join with Delgadina, the old man remembered her. The old man's love for Delgadina is evident, since he pines for her even when she is not around, and he makes no attempt to harm her.

In the novel *Sold*, Lakshmi and Harish have a sibling-like relationship since Harish regards Lakshmi as an older sister. "And now there are pages full of Hindi and English words Harish has taught me. Beautiful words like: candy, bread, cricket, pen, crayon, dress, ...and remote control" (*Sold* 176). Harish informs me that today is the holiday of brothers and sisters. He shows me the rag doll that he is going to give to Jeena. "I bought it with my own money," he says. Then he hands me a pencil. It is shiny yellow and it smells of lead and rubber. And possibility. "For you," he says.... A tear is running down my cheek. It quivers a moment on the tip of my nose, then splashes on to my skirt, leaving a small, dark circle. I have been beaten here, locked away, ...How odd it is that I am undone by the simple kindness of a small boy with a yellow pencil.... He walks into our room and I offer him my gift: it is a ball of rags, my old homespun shawl, ripped into shreds and tied in a tight round bundle. He is puzzled at this bundle of ragged cloth. "A soccer ball," I tell him. (*Sold* 188-190) Through her window, Lakshmi always notices the street boy. When his father enters her chamber, the child offers tea in exchange for bread, but she turns away. The street child even offers her tea, but she never drinks it; instead, she imagines how it tastes. When a street child offers her tea one day, she accepts it.

He looks down, fiddles with his wire caddy for a bit, then looks back at me, his dark brown eyes as wide and unblinking as Tali's. Then he takes a cup of tea from the caddy and holds it out to me. "Take this instead", he says. Shake my head. He turns to go, then stops. "I can bring you other things", he says. "I can bring you sweet cakes." I sigh and try to remember the time when a sweet cake was enough to make me happy. I turn my face to the wall. He leaves without making a sound, but I can tell from the aroma that fills the room that once again he has left me a cup of tea. (*Sold* 238-239) The street boy offers her coca cola without any money, when Lakshmi enquires about the free gifts, he replied that they both were alone in the city. Lakshmi has a hidden kindness towards the boy.

The street boy is at my door again today. He is holding a bottle of Coca-Cola. "For you," he says. ... "I have no money," I say to him. "It's OK," he says. I regard him with some suspicion. "Why are you giving this to me?" He shrugs. "And why do you give me tea without asking for anything in return?" He kicks one bare foot against the other. "We are both alone in this city," he says. "Isn't that reason enough?" (*Sold* 241)

According to psychological studies, most people think of a sex worker as someone who does not do a respectable profession when they hear the term. As if they were a mechanical toy, it is expected that they should be owned and played with. Devadasi: a phrase known to Indians, is a ritualised kind of prostitution in which a family donates their daughter to the temple. This is done to entertain society's upper-class men. In India, four women or girls enter the prostitute business every hour. Poverty, physical pleasure, greed, and even retribution are among factors that have contributed to the emergence of prostitution. The cities of Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Pune, and Gwalior are the most popular prostitutions takes place.

In an interview a prostitute named Ravina says "The body is up for sale. It is dark and the smell of ugly men is a part of our life. There is no love; here only sex and all kinds of sex. At times my clients, ask for sex and only sex and some come here to play, while some come here to have some peace." She claims that women in her field sometimes act as counsellors, with clients sharing their difficulties and complaining that their wives don't have time for them after having children. "The problem arises when a customer becomes permanent. Then he wants your soul „that is not for sale", says Ravina. She explained another story of an aged client. "He comes to me and asks me get dressed up like a bride and all he does is stare at me. He says he sees his dead wife in me. So it's not always about sex. (qtd. in Inani)

In *Memory Of My Melancholy Whores*, the old guy admires Delgadina's attractiveness as well. The prostitutes keep him busy and that is the main reason the elderly guy being unmarried.. "Whenever someone asks I always answer with the truth: whores left me no time to be married" (MOMMW 39). Despite the fact that prostitutes, both good and wicked, have played an essential role in the old man's life, he has never experienced true love until he is ninety years old.

He prioritised sex until he was ninety years old, but when he encounters the youthful, innocent Delgadina, his life changes and sex is replaced by love. In his mind, he has even lived with Delgadina.

When he misunderstands Delgadina's status as a whore and develops possessive feelings for her, he becomes rude. He's met a lot of ladies throughout his life, but Delgadina is different.

The affection between the two characters is depicted effectively by Gabriel Garcia Marquez. Following his contact with Delgadina, the old man changes. The man who used to think of women as sex objects has evolved into a new man who values women's souls. The old guy yearns to join Delgadina's soul. Pure love has evolved from lust. A psychological shift has occurred in the old man. Aside from his sexual enjoyment with her, Damiana's affection for the old guy is also a servant-master connection.

Lust is merely a form of physical attraction. Scientists aren't sure why people are drawn to certain people, but some feel it has something to do with pheromones, which are molecules that cause a specific response and behaviour. Sex pheromones are employed in animals to signal when a female is ready to reproduce. Pheromones are used by microscopic organisms, insects, and even mammals to advertise the availability of breeding opportunities. While it is better than a lot of dating scenarios at providing a clear signal, it doesn't seem very romantic. Even if they have no desire to produce children, men and women are physically drawn to specific people. Lust might be a one-night encounter or a shady relationship that lasts weeks or months. People can be sexually attracted to someone they don't even like. People may, on the other hand, fall head over heads in love with someone they truly adore — at least for a brief time. Lust is a powerful energy that may fill people with an overwhelming sensation of longing and consume them.

True love is more than just physical. True love is an emotional tie formed between two people based on mutual respect, admiration, loyalty, and support. It entails caring more for others than for oneself. In most cases, a couple in love has the same life goals and strives to attain them together. True love is capable of overcoming any obstacle and frequently involves self-sacrifice. Love, unlike passion, does not fade away with time. Rather, it strengthens and expands.

There is lust among many people, but only with specific people who are destined to be soul mates, such as Delgadina for the old man and the street kid and the young boy for Lakshmi, can lust turn into love. These affections have the power to transform a person's moral degeneration into virtuous action. The old man, who was addicted to sex, was able to correct his mistake thanks to Delgadina's genuine love. When Lakshmi gets friends with a street boy, she finds a place for herself, and she learns a lot from him. Love has a part to play in Lakshmi and Delgadina's lives; both find relief and healing through love. Lust can be defined as the strong, passionate longing or desire for certain sex, food, drink, money, fame, power, and knowledge. However, according to the resonance of Matthew 5:27-28, lust has come to be particularly associated with sexual desire. "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart".

We can desire sex for a variety of reasons, including the desire to be close to someone, to cling on to or manipulate that person, to harm a third party, to harm ourselves, to define our identity, to have a child, or to achieve a financial or security advantage. In the case of lust, sex is primarily considered for its own sake, or, to be more specific, for the pleasure and release it may provide. It is conceivable, though, to seek sex for oneself without being lustful about it. To be lustful, a desire must be disordered, which means it must be excessively powerful or directed in an unsuitable way. If a person experiences lust but does not act on it, he is lustful but not lecherous; but, if he acts on it frequently or routinely, he is both lustful and lecherous.

Prejudice or discrimination based on a person's sex or gender is known as sexism or gender discrimination. It contains the notion that one gender or sex is inherently superior to the other. Sexism can impact people of any gender, but it disproportionately affects women and girls. It has been described as "women's hatred" and "entrenched prejudice towards women." Sex, according to Sold, is a violation of self, a bodily manifestation of power that has profound and long-term physical and psychological consequences for those who are subjected to it. Women are purchased and sold in the novel, and McCormick uses this to highlight the reality that women are viewed as sexual objects.

Women in ancient times were not the same as women now. Women in Egypt were reliant on their fathers or husbands. They enjoyed property rights and were permitted to attend judicial proceedings. Women in

the Anglo-Saxon era had the same rights as men in society. However, there is little evidence to back up the claim that many pre-agricultural communities gave women a higher position than they do now. The dominance of one gender over the other became commonplace after the development of agriculture and sedentary cultures. In the ancient world, sexism included blocking women from advancing politically and denying them the right to vote or hold political office. Women in ancient China were taught Confucian ideas, similar to Sati in India, that a woman should obey her father in childhood, husband in marriage, and son in widowhood. Even if the world has progressed in technological and economic spheres, gender disparity still exists in today's society.

Sold is a novel that focuses on sexism in today's environment. It is not just the tremendously unfair event that occurs, but also the little things that work in the background, threateningly, and require one's attention. In comparison to many Western countries, sexism appears to be even more widespread in non-western countries. Patriarchy and male chauvinism have a significant impact on women. Women had equal standing with men throughout the early Vedic period; women were free to choose their life mates and allowed to study Veda. This has faded in the mediaeval period, and women now face challenges such as Sati, Devadhasi, Purdah, and Jauhar. In today's society, however, women have the right to formal education and the freedom to practise any religion they choose. The constitution includes provisions for women's safety and security, as well as equal rights for men and women. Even if some women have reached the pinnacles, others are unaware of their basic rights.

Women have been regarded as sexual objects since the dawn of mankind. In both public and private life, they have been subjected to humiliation, exploitation, and abuse by men. Society's rules fluctuate from one person to the next. When Lakshmi menstruates for the first time in the novel *Sold*, Ama teaches her on how a woman should conduct if she wants to be socially accepted in her village.

Now, she says, you must carry yourself with modesty, bow your head in the presence of men, and cover yourself with your shawl. Never look a man in the eye. Never allow yourself to be alone with a man who is not family. And never look at growing pumpkins or cucumbers when you are bleeding. Otherwise they will rot. (*Sold* 21) These new restrictions imply that women in Lakshmi's society are submissive to men, and that womanhood is connected with filth and even danger. While Lakshmi accepts the new norms and obligations that come with becoming a woman, some of them appear to be unfair to her. For the first time, she begins to question the social laws that control her world: "I ask Ama why. 'Why,' I say, 'must women suffer so?'" (*Sold* 22). Endurance, a feature reserved only for women, is evident throughout. Words like "bow" and "cover" imply that women had to conceal their strength. Despite the fact that women are born free, they are enslaved in some fashion. The biggest issues that exist in society are the regulations that are created by the people themselves. There are numerous rules and regulations in the world, but there are some that are special to women.

Lakshmi grew up in a society where women are unable to choose their own life partners. In a variety of activities, there is a widespread cultural assumption that men are more socially respected and capable than women. Lakshmi and Ama can handle their household responsibilities without the assistance of a male. They are, however, unaware of their potential. Women believe that having a man in their home will improve their social standing. Ama was ecstatic to have Lakshmi's stepfather in their home, despite the fact that he did not work. "Ama says we are lucky we have a man at all" (*Sold* 14). Navi Pillay, High Commissioner for Human Rights, has stated that: "Women are frequently treated as property; they are sold into marriage, into trafficking, into sexual slavery" (Valuing Women as Autonomous Being: Women's Sexual and Reproductive Health Right). The novel *Sold* introduces readers to a cultural and social milieu with which they are unfamiliar, and they frequently encounter just sex rather than love. Under the guise of sex, love has been devalued. The narrative begins in Nepal and subsequently moves to India. These two locations are fairly patriarchal, with rituals and customs that support male-female power imbalances.

Women have been relegated to a secondary and inferior status in modern society. Female children are considered a burden for their families in Lakshmi's village since they must spend money on their marriage. "A son will always be a son, they say. But a girl is like a goat. Good as long as she gives you milk and butter. But not worth crying over when it's time to make a stew" (*Sold* 14). A human being has never been compared to an animal, thus the comparison of a female to a goat appears strange. McCormick has used

this analogy to demonstrate how male chauvinistic culture discriminates against women. There are many bad guys in this tale, such as the stepfather, Uncle Husband, and a parade of clients, but there are also some good men, such as Harish, an American man, and the street boy selling tea. Harish shared some of the words he had learned in school. She is saved from becoming a drug addict by the child who sells tea. A man from the United States arrives to assist her. These are the kind-hearted folks who are assisting Lakshmi without regard for sex.

The purpose of power is to maintain advantages and privileges. Men gain influence in their families and in society at large through utilising violence and other forms of punishment. One of the most consistent patterns in power distribution is that of men and women. Women are frequently thought to be powerless in comparison to men. These gender roles tend to reinforce the power imbalances on which they are based. As a result, power and gender are inextricably intertwined. Both men and women have wielded power in *Sold*. Some female characters in the novel, such as Mumtaz, Auntie Bimla, and Bajai Sita, who are lower-class women, attempt to gain control over other female characters. Mumtaz, Uncle Husband, and Auntie Bimla, for example, use their powers to make money. Other characters, such as the stepfather and the men who come to the Happiness House, abuse their position of authority and exploit the ladies. This emphasises the notion that being a female character does not automatically make one sympathetic, and being a male character does not automatically make one wicked.

Power is directly linked to deception, societal values, control, and violence in the novel. Corruption among public officials has always existed in some form or another, while the shape and colour of it has changed over time and from place to place. People used to pay one other to do evil things, but now the situation is flipped, and bribes are offered to do the right things at the right moment. Police officers are supposed to serve for the people's welfare as government employees, however they are involved in corruption and allow crimes to go unnoticed. They have such vast powers that they can easily mishandle an honest person. Sold the cop assists Mumtaz in her business in the novel.

"Is that man a goonda?" I ask Shahanna.

"He's worse", she says. "He's a policeman".

I don't understand

"Policemen are supposed to stop people like Mumtaz from selling girls," she says.

"But she gives this one money each week and he looks the other way". (*Sold* 165)

Sexual harassment, rape, and other types of sexual violence may be encouraged by sexism. All of these offences are involved in the injustice done to Lakshmi in *Sold*. In recent years, violence against women has become a popular issue of concern in India. When people think of domestic violence, they typically think of physical attack and do not consider the consequences. Abuse can be classified into various kinds, each with its own set of effects. The long-term erosion of personality that occurs as a result of domestic violence is unavoidable. "In the days that follow, many people come to my room. Some are real, some are not...I cannot tell which of the things do to me are real, and which are nightmares" (*Sold* 129). Lakshmi is a talented student in her school, but she sacrifices her studies to help her family survive, and she finds up in Happiness House. Despite the bad environment, Lakshmi did not abandon her desire to learn. Delgadina, on the other hand, must abandon her studies in order to work in Rosa Cabarcas' button factory and prostitution home. Harish teaches Lakshmi several words and sentences in secret. This article discusses the denial of education to women. Lakshmi, like other women in her culture, is subjected to misogyny.

In the instance of Lakshmi, her stepfather's inactivity and involvement in gambling is the primary cause of her unhappiness. The novel's initial setting in Nepal depicts tradition-based gender discrimination in which men are given control over women, as evidenced by Lakshmi and Ama's treatment by Lakshmi's stepfather. When the setting progressively switches to India, men and women are given equal power. Mumtaz whips, cheats, and starves her daughters into submission in the brothel home. In order to run the brothel house, she even pays a cop. Because of their sexuality, women are oppressed and stigmatised. Though the old man feels lustful at first, he eventually discovers genuine love. Even in the memories of the young girl, he adores. Lakshmi has had several relationships with many types of men, but she yearns for the brotherly affection of the little child. Lust and sex have been completely replaced by pure love.

CONCLUSION

To sum up everything that has been stated so far, both the genders should have equal access to education and career opportunities. To sustain equality in society, gender equality must be prioritised. Women who are illiterate and unaware of their rights must be educated. Women should break free from the shackles of convention and habit that prohibit them from expressing their talents. Women must emerge as a new being in the male chauvinistic society in order to get empowerment. Education and self-awareness can help a woman break free from sexism and the lustful life she doesn't want to live.

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