

MULTIFARIOUS IMAGES OF WOMEN FOUND IN PEARL S. BUCK'S '*EAST WIND*: *WEST WIND*'

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ABSTRACT

Literature both reflects and helps to create reality. It is through their preservation in works of art that we know what the stereotypes and archetypes have been and; in turn, know the images influence our view of reality and even our behaviour. It has been justly remarked that a nation's civilization may be estimated by the rank which females hold in the society. The portrayal of varied images of women in a patriarchal society has been the mouthpiece of the literature of many nations. Multifarious images of women exclusively as 'submissive housewives', 'caring mothers', 'sex symbols', 'modest maidens', 'a means of pleasure', 'beautiful bitches', 'faithful wives', 'kitchen slaves', 'bearer of children' and so on in a male-centric societies have been portrayed by prominent writers such as Mary Wollstonecraft, Simone De Beauvoir, Jane Austen, Henry James, Mary Anne Ferguson, Kamala Markandaya, Anita Desai, Pearl S. Buck etc. Pearl S. Buck, one of the renowned American writers can be rightly called as Philanthropist, Crusader of women's rights, a champion of women's liberation. Her experience of both American culture as well as Chinese culture enable her to explore the condition of women in Chinese male dominated societies through the major women characters in her major novels such as East Wind: West wind, The Good Earth, Pavilion of women, The Mother, Peony etc. during the first half of 20th C. She is a pioneer to promote the mutual understanding among different cultures and she is an idealist believing the cultural harmony between the East and the west.

The present paper aims to bring out the multifarious images of women in Buck's novel East wind: west wind and thereby presenting the conflict between tradition and modernity, old and new, and east and the west. Kwei-lan, the chief protagonist has been presented as the 'traditional woman' reared by her mother following the Confucian codes of conduct in the beginning and later on her image as 'the embodiment of change' is emerged. Her mother's image as the 'caring mother' and 'orthodox Chinese woman' representing the whole race of Chinese women is portrayed.

KEYWORDS: Confucianism, Feudalism, Foot Binding