

Revival of Fallen Women in Coelho's *The Witch of Portobello*

Bimal K. Shrivastwa

ABSTRACT

The research article aims to explore the attempt of the so-called 'fallen women', the socially excluded women, to revive their status in Paulo Coelho's novel, *The Witch of Portobello*. The principal objective of this research is to analyze how Athena, the protagonist of the novel, exposes the female face of God in a male-dominated society, and to investigate how Athena's relentless struggle throughout her life paves the way for rebuilding the female identity. In addition to the close reading of the text, *The Witch of*, through the explorative, analytical method, the research tool used to conduct this research is feminist criticism, within the conceptual frameworks of such revolutionary French feminists as Sheila Ruth, Luce Irigaray and so forth. The working hypothesis is that Athena practices witchcraft to express the outrage of the whole women community who have been bearing the repression from centuries. She becomes able to prove that women are not witches but sources of creation, and hence they are equivalent to god. The chief finding is that the portrayal of Athena's character and her struggle in *The Witch of Portobello* can be taken as a female's effort to create equal status in patriarchal society avoiding the tag of witch. It is expected that researchers willing to explore Coelho further from feminist or other perspectives can take the paper as a useful reference.

Keywords: Identity, Liberation, Patriarchy, Revival, Witchcraft.

Published Online: June 11, 2022

ISSN: 2736-5522

DOI: 10.24018/ejsocial.2022.2.3.269

B. K. Shrivastwa*

Department of English, Post Graduate
Campus, Tribhuvan University,
Biratnagar, Nepal.

(e-mail: bimalkshrivastav@gmail.com)

**Corresponding Author*

I. INTRODUCTION

The paper is intended to notice the cause as well as the effects of the unusual steps and actions of Athena to recapitulate the female virtue in a male-dominated society in the fiction, *The Witch of Portobello*. Gender issues have been a critical concern not only in the Asian continent but also in the American and European continents. Paulo Coelho has occupied a special place in the critical discourse for his revolutionary characterization of female and liberal thematic approaches. Coelho's bestseller, *The Witch of Portobello*, published in 2006, touches on the sensitive subject of religion, as he usually does in most of his works (Moore, 2007; Youssuf, 2008). Layer by layer, Coelho unveils the inner conflict of a restless, suffering creature, that is, a human being (Eisinger, 1999). Bokadia (2016) marks Coelho advocating for female spiritual liberation and feminine individualism vigorously. *The Witch of Portobello* is written in the form of a biographical inquiry. Coelho returns with another uncanny fusion of philosophy, religious miracle and moral parable (Kristiani & Ardi, 2019; Hanisa, 2016). Though the term 'witch' is taken negatively, Coelho tries to interpret the word 'witch' in a positive way by linking witchcraft to the struggle of getting freedom (Inezirawan, 2017). A witch is a woman who is not scared of confronting challenges, and who communes with her environment skillfully (Coelho, 2010). Coelho has demonstrated Athena as a conscious and courageous woman who not only resists the racist norms of society but also reconstructs identity in her life.

Matt (2008) finds *The Witch of Portobello* to be the story of Sherine Khalil who was born in Transylvania to a Romani mother, Athena. After the death of her mother, the orphan, Sherine, who names herself as Athena, is adopted by a wealthy Lebanese couple and grown up in Beirut. When a war breaks out, her foster parents move with her to London. She goes into a London University to pursue Engineering at the age of nineteen, but soon drops out of her college. Then she marries Lukas at the age of nineteen and gives birth to a son, Nabil Alaihl. They get divorced due to immaturity and economic problems. She works as a bank employee and adopts dance at her workplace to increase the output. She learns the art of calligraphy. Ultimately, Athena learns witchcraft and uses it as a tool of raising awareness for women that they are free and equal as male members of their community (Bokadia, 2016). She gets bad disturbances in her mission by an orthodox Christian Rev Ian Buck and his group, who think that preaching can't be exercised by a divorcee and a woman. Finally, she gets victory. All the shocking events that occur in the life of the protagonist, Athena, in the novel provoke a researcher to analyze the text from a feminist perspective. The

chief research question that lies beneath the survey is how a witch can become a vehicle for reviving female positions. The novelty and significance of the research lies in probing the revolutionary actions of Athena and gripping another level of message of Paulo Coelho and seeing whether such actions are accepted in Nepal.

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

For the analysis of the proposed hypothesis, the researcher does a close reading of the primary resource, that is, the text, *The Witch of Portobello*, as well as the secondary sources such as the literature written on the text journals, websites and other commentaries. The systematic sampling method is used to test the working hypothesis. Its delimitation primarily lies in studying the text, *The Witch of Portobello*, from a feminist approach with special focus on French feminists such as Sheila Ruth, Luce Irigaray and others.

A. Theoretical Perspective

This research is developed through a theoretical framework based on feminism. It primarily focuses on the impact of Athena's revolutionary actions against her social norms while assessing the novel, *The Witch of Portobello*. French feminism, arose in the 1970s, is a specific kind of political discourse, a critical and theoretical practice committed to the struggle against patriarchy and sexism (Abrams, 1999; Tyson, 2006). The French feminist, Ruth (1990) writes, "Patriarchy is probably the oldest form of exploitation of one part of the population by another" (p. 115). Feminists speak against the Aristotelian notion that the female is female by virtue of a certain natural defectiveness. Another French feminist, Irigaray (1985) argues that phallic society exchanges women's natural qualities for masculine desires. Beauvoir (1974) categorizes women as the 'second sex' because women are identified as inferior to men. She supports her argument by referring to Aristotle, who argued that women are female because they lack certain qualities that men have. Women do not like the way men demand and exploit them as commodities (Irigaray, 1985; Beauvoir, 1974).

The feminist approaches mentioned above are the conceptual framework used to examine how Athena, the protagonist of Coelho's novel *The Witch of Portobello* struggles to revive the true identity of women, challenging the deep-rooted patriarchal norms and values of Brazilian society. The feminist discourse has provided the researcher a chance to know about the female problems, existential issues in general.

III. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Paulo Coelho's novel, *The Witch of Portobello*, has been studied, analyzed and interpreted from different perspectives. Critical appraisals have been made on its theme, characterization, narratives since the time of the publication. There are some critics who have offered their reflections on its theme. It is the theme of The Goddess, or the feminine Face of God, a religious ideology or cult that has been rejected by Christianity (Yousuf, 2008). Callahan (2008) scrutinizes that the novels of Paulo Coelho fascinate the readers with their long, twisting, often circuitous journeys to the core of existence, depicting human destiny and divine interventions. *The Witch of Portobello* is about a woman named Athena, and about how she changes the lives of others, first, as a student, and then as a teacher. The Witch of Portobello is the kind of story that transforms the way readers think about love, passion, joy, and sacrifice (Inezrawan, 2017). Matt (2008) judges, "This is not a novel— it's a treatise. There is a character, Athena, that I never came to care about, and there is no plot. There's an explication of a belief system. That's what this is" (para. 1).

Some other critics have observed the format, characterization, and narrative technique of the novel, *The Witch of Portobello*. Some critics mark the format of the book as something new. The story of Athena is explained by various protagonists such as Athena's mother, her father, a journalist, a doctor and other acquaintances (Goutham, 2007). Ryan (2007) notices that, like *The Alchemist*, *The Witch of Portobello* is the kind of story that will transform the way readers think about love, passion, joy and sacrifice. Part of the mystical fascination of his works lies in his unusual characterization, including the women characters in *The Witch of Portobello* (Bokadia, 2016). Kristiani and Ardi (2019) survey on the witch motif in these words: "The witch archetype, who controls, manipulates, casts spells, and destroys connections with other people and with oneself, also includes creativity, and esoteric qualities such as clairvoyance, is a channel to the divine" (para. 1). Julia (2007) marks Coelho's use of language to be deceptively simple. His use of imagery, metaphoric expressions and the use of aphorism are extremely vivid and effective (Julia, 2007).

Though a wide variety of criticisms are made about the novel, *The Witch of Portobello*, there are many fields about this text which remain unexplored by critics. The Feministic study is one of them. Therefore, I have investigated the religious and moral values of reviving the so-called witch in *The Witch of Portobello* by applying the theoretical modality of feminism.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Paulo Coelho intends to resurrect the image of the fallen woman, Athena, also the protagonist in the novel, *The Witch of Portobello*, in particular, and the image of all women being marginalized just because of their sex in general. The chief concern of the feminist has been to revolt against the submissive attributes imposed on women culturally, economically and politically (Moi, 1988; Susan, 1995). Athena's reconstruction journey begins from her unknown identity, from a Romanian orphan, brought up by a Lebanese family in Beirut. This fact can be observed in the novel in these lines:

The truth was, though, that a friend of the family, in a moment of malice, had called her 'an ungrateful orphan' and put her lack of manners down to the fact that she was not her parents' real daughter. She had hurled an ashtray at him, cutting his face. (*TWOP*, p. 32)

This incident could be decisive for reviving a journey in search of her true identity. Ruth (1990) argues that there is currently no scientific evidence for innate biological differences between men's and women's minds. Athena adopts the revolutionary ideology advocated by Ruth. Athena thinks both males and females have their own identity, which they love as much as their lives. When a war breaks out in Lebanon, her adoptive parents move to London with her. There she goes to a university to study Engineering. The writer astonishes us narrating how "One day, after almost a semester of equations, calculations and structural studies, she announced that she was going to leave university" (*TWOP*, p. 34). Women can establish their genius and intellectual traits, challenging Rousseau's anti-feminist belief that women cannot equate men in intellect and creativity (Showalter, 1992; Wollstonecraft, 1972). Athena, like the Showalterian woman, has a strong belief that females are independent as male to make any decisions regarding their liberty and equality. She knows it by leaving her university in the middle of the semester: "The following day, she didn't turn up for class" (*TWOP*, p. 35). She marries Lukas, met practicing dance, and very soon they have a child, Nabil Alhaihl. When the couple faces financial and family problems, Athena easily accepts the divorce proposal of her husband and starts living her single life with her son. Actually, it is her strategy to prove that females are also able to live their lives independently in society.

Wollstonecraft (1972) explicated that creativity is an independent entity, a natural gift which belongs to neither male nor female. It is the woman's creativity that assists them to establish their identity. Athena has a natural gift of linking her creativity, her personal interests and hobbies towards establishing her identity. She joins the dance group in her landlord's apartment. She uses dance as the symbol of freedom. This is exemplified in the line: "Yes, when I dance, I'm a free woman or, rather, a free spirit who can travel through the universe, contemplate the present, divine the future, and be transformed into pure energy" (*TWOP*, p. 61). Life has meaning and everybody on this earth has some reasons to act. In this regard, Athena says, "Then we can laugh at our sufferings, large and small, and walk fearlessly, aware that each step has meaning. We can let ourselves be guided by the light emanating from the vertex" (*TWOP*, p. 62). The vertex, here, tries to give the meaning of the identity of an individual. To a question to Athena by her landlord if she joined their dance group in search of love, her answer was "That would be a perfectly good reason, I think, but the answer is no. I came in search of a meaning for my life" (*TWOP*, p. 66). Ruth (1990) reacted against the way patriarchy always attempted to subjugate women's skills. Athena keeps on venturing to establish females' identity in a patriarchal society.

Beauvoir (1974) criticizes patriarchy for exploiting women in domestic service. Athena always attempts to fight against patriarchy by reconstructing the meaning of life, creating a feminine image. She finds job as a bank employee in London, where she becomes popular among other working staff and equally contributes to increasing the bank's productivity. Her bank manager confesses:

Her efficiency increased, even though her workload remained unchanged. Her colleagues, who, up until then, had never exchanged more than a Good morning or a Goodnight with her, started asking her out to lunch. When they came back, they seemed very pleased, and the department's productivity made a giant leap. (*TWOP*, pp. 72-73)

It is also a good satire to contemporary society that discriminates women on the edge for the same works.

Woolf (1992) proposed that women have their own room and identity by doing something unique. Athena's activities in every field signify how she is determined to shape her independent identity. Leaving the bank job, when Athena moves to Dubai and starts her professional career in a dealership, she does not continue dancing as she did in London. There, she devotes herself to learning "art of calligraphy" (*TWOP*, p. 102) to make her identity through it. Her boss in Dubai appreciates Nabil, her son, who guides Athena to learn calligraphy. Athena earns such familiarity through her devotion towards her works (Kristiani & Ardi, 2019). She is professionally successful, and earns money as much as she needs. She can easily find her love and settlement well. But she does not move through this line. She wants to know about her

birthmother and the place where she was born. Athena's foster parents could not sleep for a whole week when Athena decides to go in search of her birthmother, saying "Whereabouts in Romania was I born" (*TWOP*, p. 103)? Samira, Athena's fostering mother, consults the psychiatrist to find out why Athena is always unhappy though she has everything. The psychiatrist clarifies, "We all want to know where we came from. In your daughter's case, I think it's perfectly reasonable that she should want to go in search of her roots" (*TWOP*, p. 103).

Kriesteva (1985) regards that women must revolt against the marginalization of the female sex by men because men don't know about the equal potential of both sexes. Whenever Athena intends to know about her real motherland, the patriarchal mindset of her contemporary society tries to kill her desire. Samira, her adoptive mother, consults the psychiatrist at the surface level. Actually, she does so from the side of her husband, the representation of patriarchal society. But Athena, a restless person, says, "I've always been a very restless person" (*TWOP*, p. 147). The core objective behind this is to stop Athena from going in search of her origin.

Rich (1995) was troubled because women are observed as a politics to control each circle of ladies by men. Athena keeps on battling against all the unfair politics of men. It is her great courage to revolt against the strict and traditional rules. During her visit to Transylvania, her motherland, she drinks alcohol. Athena fights though treated as forbidden among gypsy women. The narrator reminds us: "She orders a whisky. One of our women would never do that" (*TWOP*, p. 126). All the time, Athena is very conscious of the independence of all females. Walker (1984) regards that a womanist works for the survival and wholeness of her people. Athena wants to convey the message to her motherland that every female should be free and live their lives as they are willing. The tool she uses for this is dance: "She raised her arms in the air and cried, 'When I die, bury me standing, because I've spent all my life on my knees'" (*TWOP*, p.131).

It is not taken easily if women like to search for their identity. Even their family members may not give their company. Patriarchy is probably the oldest form of exploitation of one part of the population by another (Abrams, 1999; Fine, 2010; Ruth, 1990; Tyson, 2006). In the case of Athena too her foster parents did not permit her at the beginning. But she travels the strange land where she was born. She wants to discover her birthmother and her roots:

Who am I? What blood runs in my veins? Yesterday, when I found out where you were, I was absolutely terrified. Where do I start? I suppose, like all gypsies, you can read the future in the cards, don't you? (*TWOP*, p. 140)

Coelho is attempting to explore the feminine side of God. For many centuries, religion has been linked to male figures such as Brahma, Bishnu, Jesus Christ, Buddha, and Mohammad in religions (Lerner, 1986). There are significant places of Goddesses in many religions but they are not exposed well. Athena wants to establish her position in her society. Athena tries to convince her foster mother what she is going to do is absolutely to fill up the blank spaces, that is, create her own identity in society (Kristiani & Ardi, 2019). By telling all this, Athena hints her mother that she is going to do witchcraft. The so-called normal people would speak against it. This shows she is totally focused at her mission to be recognized by the people:

I feel that I have a mission. While we were celebrating life and nature, I discovered things I didn't even know existed. What I thought could be found only through dance is everywhere. And it has the face of a woman (*TWOP*, p. 151).

The true virtue of a woman manifests in her actions, not in her sex and race (Ruth, 1990; Rich, 1995). Athena's actions demonstrate her virtues wherever she visits. In Transylvania, Athena wants to meet her teacher from whom she had learnt spiritual practice. Athena meets a doctor, Deidre O'Neill, known as Edda in Transylvania and is impressed after they exchange their ideas regarding life. Edda wants to share her knowledge with a suitable woman who aims to do something innovative in her life. She believes Athena does not misuse the knowledge and skills against humanity:

I was sure she would listen to me, mainly because she was the kind of person who never refuses a challenge. Teach people to be different. That's all! Happiness would be feeling satisfied with everything she already had—a lover, a son, a job. And Athena, like me, wasn't born for that kind of life (*TWOP*, pp. 161–62).

Athena learns magic and witchcraft with the aim of finding her recognition in her society. Similarly, she has the power to convince other women about how they are losing their identity under domination. Like her teacher, Edda, she always asks her pupils focus themselves to be different: "Try to be different. That's all" (*TWOP*, p. 177). Athena is learning about the Mother since she is working on a play about the female face of God. During the conversation between them, Athena delivers her view that practicing witchcraft is

not the exercise for gaining exotic powers. In the real sense, it is the expression of protest of the whole women community who have been bearing the repression from centuries. Therefore, becoming a witch is the best way of recovering their lost identity, to fight against the categorization of women as the “second sex” (Beauvoir, 1974, p. 1). Gradually, Athena starts thinking about her position in the community. Finally, Athena starts questioning herself about her existence. Actually, it is Athena’s strategy to provoke such feelings in the hearts of her pupils. In this way, Athena is able to play a role of campaigner, to arouse the feelings of searching for the self-identity of her followers by tracking the female face of God:

After millennia of male domination, we are returning to the cult of the Great Mother. The Greeks called her Gaia, and according to the myth, she was born out of Chaos, the void that existed before the universe. With her came Eros, the god of love, and then she gave birth to the Sea and the Sky (*TWOP*, pp. 178–79).

Butler (1999) argues that women are committed to deconstructing the political and cultural inequalities plotted by men. Athena wants to explain that females are the creators and protectors. If needed, they can become destructive too. This method of explanation is Athena’s strategy to challenge the male-dominated society. She illustrates the example from Greek myths and gives stresses that once there was such a situation in which the Great Mother created everything without the presence of males. But men tried to oppress women in the course of time:

But as man became established as the principal political power in the cities, Gaia was forgotten, and was replaced by Zeus, Ares, Apollo and company, all of whom were competent enough, but didn’t have the same allure as the Mother who originated everything (*TWOP*, p. 179).

Coelho presents the bitter reality in the novel about how males feel jealousy and create obstruction when they see some women struggling to get their freedom. Since a very long time ago, males have been dominating females economically and females have been trying hard to get rid of this domination (Ruth, 1990; Irigary, 1985). If women have developed witchcraft to announce their struggle for freedom, males have interpreted it in a negative way. Athena wants to prove all these claims are only accusations. In this course, she confronts a number of barriers by the male dominated society. The theater director insults Athena when she tries to deliver her message among a group of actresses. Actually, the theater director is the representative male who does not like the independence of females. Women need to run a long and relentless campaign to break such barriers. Equally, the campaign should be run with strong unity among women in a systematic way. In the course of spreading her spiritual message, Athena has already won the heart of the group of actresses: “Athena wasn’t like that, and I was determined to see her again, especially after what the director had said about her” (*TWOP*, p. 198). They are well convinced what Athena is doing is absolutely right.

According to Connell (2005), hegemonic masculinity guarantees the dominant position of men and the subordination of women. Athena struggles against the norms set by hegemonic masculinity. Athena’s struggle for reestablishing her true identity moves into a peak when her spiritual exercise is disturbed by Rev. Ian Buck and his parishioners accuse her act like “the satanic cult at the heart of England” (*TWOP*, p. 269). Rev. Ian Buck openly blames Athena for invoking the Devil. Fricker (2007) reminds us that in addition to social and political injustices, women suffer from epistemic injustices. Rev. Ian Buck is an icon of carrying out epistemic injustices. There are two intentions behind his remarks at her. First, he wants to spread the message that “Athena is trying to create insecurity in the city” (*TWOP*, p. 197). Irigary (1985) rightly states that in patriarchal society subjugation occurs in the form of psychological repression.

Rev. Ian Buck blames that what Athena is doing is totally wrong for society. What she claims as she is the Goddess of Wisdom is also wrong. Next, he wants her not to be able to raise her head in future making women conscious of their position in society. He makes a series of attack on Athena and her spiritual exercises using different ways. First, he makes verbal complaints; next, he attacks her with petitions. Similarly, he writes letters to the local newspaper explaining how Athena is doing the practices of devil’s act.

All the accusations of Rev. Ian Buck cannot move Athena from her stand. Women are central agents to maintain human society and community (Kriesteva, 1985). Athena is so firm to her mission of maintaining her society and community. Instead, more people are informed on this and the number of her followers increases. After careful consideration, they decide to protest by mobilizing the local community. By using this strategy, “Rev. Buck and his group conduct a protest campaign demanding to stop the activities of Athena immediately” (*TWOP*, p. 265). As usual, they accuse her of acting as devil worshipping. They act as if they are the true followers of Christ and it is only their own duty to make city peaceful (Youssuf, 2017). With regular protests, they make the government officials probe the activities of Athena, to maintain peace and security in the city. It is very hard to bear that a single lady instead creates her fame in society.

After a careful study on the incidents, “The government officials were unable to take any action towards Athena and her group” (*TWOP*, p. 266). The officials clarified that it is their freedom of worship allowed by British rules. But Rev. Buck accuses officials that they have been influenced by the power of Athena. Men do many intrigues to demoralize the feminine gender (Butler, 1999). Buck and his parishioners invent other strategies for their protest. They attack Athena and her followers in the name of Jesus. Now, they give the color of religion to their protests. Equally, they ignore the teaching of Christ that all creatures are equal. Their superficial protest results in clashes:

They say they’re fighting in the name of Jesus, but what they really want is for people to continue to ignore the teachings of Christ, according to which ‘we are all gods,’ said the well-known actress Andrea McCain, one of Sherine Khalil’s, or Athena’s, followers (*TWOP*, p. 271).

Though the protest has been transformed into violence, Athena does not want to discontinue what she is doing. She thinks she is not doing anything wrong, so she does not think about stopping it: “Mrs. Khalil emphatically rejected any suggestion that she should stop the meetings because of the disturbances” (*TWP*, p. 272). Rather, she makes the defense that what she is doing is not wrong but Mr. Buck’s activities are creating violence. She claims she is following British rules to practice any rituals freely.

Lerner (1986) is critical to the way men can’t tolerate it when a woman struggles to secure her position in society. The events that occur in *The Witch of Portobello* justify how a male-dominated society reacts when a lady tries to take her own position. Buck is a representative character of male-dominated society who does not like a female living with dignity. Buck “gives a direct threat to stop her activities” (*TWOP*, p. 276). The more he conducts a protest campaign, the more Athena’s fame gets spread. In spite of big threat, she goes to the station for the next event on the following Monday. This day presents the evidence that Athena has been able to resurrect her female identity to some extent. Many people are gathered demonstrating placards defending freedom of religion and freedom of speech to support the event. Actually, this is her success as a female in creating her position by winning the hearts of people. People have strong beliefs that Athena is their only friend who can remove the difficulties from their lives (Youssuf, 2017). People like her as a freedom fighter for women’s emancipation. When Athena arrives, “she was received with applause, handwritten notes and requests for help; some people threw flowers, and one lady of uncertain age asked her to keep on fighting for women’s freedom and for the right to worship the Mother” (*TWOP*, p. 276). Buck’s group is unable to continue their protest campaign, perhaps because of the crowd in favor of Athena. The ceremony passes off normally.

The pagan society perceived women in power as equivalent to men collectively (Irigary, 1985). Athena possesses paganian power. She dances like Hagia Sofia, the god of the church. It is the manifestation of another facet of her. During this stage, her followers ask her different questions related to their difficulties. In turn, she explains each of the problems and provides them the suitable solutions. She turns herself again in the form of Athena, “There were no aggressive comments, and the ceremony passed off as normal, with dancing, the appearance of Hagia Sofia, and a final celebration, and that was that” (*TWOP*, p. 276). Because of the aggression of Rev. Ian Buck and his parishioners, regular news coverage of her rituals by the local newspapers, government officials concern about her security. This equally proves that Athena is successful in establishing her position in her society.

Athena frequently suffers many troubles and comments, but she easily ignores them and moves ahead. She involves herself to getting the real happiness and, therefore, living a real life. What she desires from her life is not prosperity and so-called respect, but her true identity, an experience of reality. In this way, Paulo Coelho succeeds in invoking the female face of God in this novel, *The Witch of Portobello*, resurrecting ‘fallen women’, women who have been cast away from society. Athena is able to remain alive in them even after her death. Coelho has revived the image of women in general through the characterization of a heroic female figure.

V. CONCLUSION

Coelho’s novel, *The Witch of Portobello* portrays the female hero to attack the dogmatic society, which neglects females for their supremacy and to revive the prestige and identity of women fallen by the prejudiced members of patriarchal society. Coelho is of the view that psychological and intellectual emancipation of women is the primary requisite that would bring forward social and physical freedom. The novel strongly tries to raise the female voice. Athena relentlessly struggles from childhood to her death to establish her free identity in patriarchal society. In this 21st Century, a number of conscious women have been raising questions against gender discrimination and trying to stand on their own. Athena is a representative character of such female figures. Her entire life journey in the novel, *The Witch of Portobello*, explicitly signifies her strong desire to awaken society. This impulse forces Athena to become a spiritual

leader, a freelance speaker of her city. Orientals have no problem with taking the female face of God for granted. In the Occidental dogma, God is a personality strictly belonging to males. Coelho makes a sincere effort to change that. He expects to substitute the materialistic, fake, hopeless world of male with the divine virtues of females. Thus, it can be concluded that Coelho has demonstrated Athena as a conscious and bold woman who fights for women's rights against patriarchal society. It is strongly recommended that research scholars intend to notice the potentiality of women in general, and the feminist drive in Coelho in particular can take this exploration as a reference.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The author is thankful to the Research Management Cell of Post Graduate Campus, a constituent campus of Tribhuvan University, Biratnagar, Nepal for providing valuable technical and methodological guidelines during the preparation of the paper. The researcher has no conflict of interest to disclose.

REFERENCES

- Abrams, M. H. (1999). *A glossary of literary terms*. (7th ed.). Earl McPeck, 88–89.
- Beauvoir, S. de (1974). *The second sex*. Vintage Books Edition, 65–68.
- Bokadia, P. (2016, February 18). Review of the witch of Portobello. *Wordpress*. <https://priyasybokadia.wordpress.com/2016/02/18/review-of-the-witch-of-portobello-by-paulo-coelho/>.
- Butler, J. (1999). *Gender trouble; feminism and the subversion of identity*. Routledge, 231.
- Callahan, B. (2008, January 24). The witch of Portobello. *Amazon.co.UK Paulo Coelho: Books*. <https://www.amazon.witch-portobello-pailo-coelho/dp/00613380x>.
- Coelho, P. (2010, October 10). Paulo Coelho — Paulo Coelho writes on official site. www.paolocoeelhoblog.com.
- Coelho, P. (2007). *The witch of Portobello*. Harper Collins Publishers India Ltd.
- Connel, R. (2005). *Masculinities*. Allen & Unwin, 324.
- Eisinger, Chester E. (1999). Coelho, Paulo. *Contemporary novelists*. St. James.
- Fine, C. (2010). *Delusions of gender*. W.W. Norton & Company, 243–246.
- Fricke, M. (2007). *Epistemic injustice: Power and the ethics of knowing*. Oxford University Press, 1.
- Goutham, P. (2007). *Witch of Portobello, the Paulo Coelho reviews*. <https://m.mouthshut.com>.
- Hanisa, H. (2016). Analysis of the main character, plot and conflict in the novel the witch of Portobello' by Paulo Coelho. *SI thesis*. UniversitasMataram.
- https://www.krishisanskriti.org/vol_image/12Oct201802100503%20%2020C%20%20Jothi%20%20%20%20%20%2013-16.pdf.
- Inezirawan (2017, February 5). *Analysis of the novel, the witch of Portobello by Paulo Coelho through intrinsic approaches*. <https://yochebedblog.wordpress.com/2017/02/05/analysis-of-novel-the-witch-of-portobello-by-paulo-coelho-through-intrinsic-approaches/>.
- Irigary, L. (1985). *The sex which is not one*. (C. Porter, Trans.). Rowman & Littlefield, 181.
- Julia (2007, October 30). Reviews on the witch of Portobello by Paulo Coelho. *goodreads.com*. <https://www.goodreads.com/review/show/8428356>.
- Kriesteva, J. (1985). *Desire in language: A semiotic approach to literature and art*. Columbia University Press, 34.
- Kristiani, N. and P. Ardi (2019, December). Archetypes symbolizing Athena's personality development in The Witch of Portobello. *Elite Journal*, 6(2). https://www.researchgate.net/Publication/337784406_ARCHETYPES_SYMBOLISING_ATHENA'S_PERSONALITY_DEVELOPMENT_IN_THE_WITCH_OF_PORTOBELLO
- Lerner, G. (1986). *The creation of patriarchy*. Oxford University Press, 109.
- Matt (2008, March 30). Start your review with the witch of Portobello. *goodreads.com*. <https://www.goodreads.com/user/show/1018790-matt>.
- Moi, T. (1988). Feminist literary criticism. In Jefferson (Ed.), *Modern literary theory*. Bastford, 204.
- Moore, F. (2007). *Witch of Portobello, the Paulo Coelho reviews*. <https://m.mouthshut.com>.
- Rich, A. (1995). *Of woman born: Motherhood as experience and institution*. Rutgers University Press.
- Ruth, S. (1990). *Issues in feminism: An introduction to women's studies*. Mayfield Publishing Company, 68.
- Ryan, H. (May 15, 2007). The witch of Portobello- Paulo Coelho-paperback. Harpercollins. <https://www.harpercollins.com>.
- Showalter, E. (1992). Towards a feminist poetics. In H. Adams (Ed.), *Critical theory since Plato*. Harcourt, 447.
- Susan, M. (1995). *The Oxford companion to philosophy*. Oxford UP, 78.
- Tyson, L. (2006). *Critical theory today*. Routledge, 125.
- Walker, A. (1984). *In search of our mothers' gardens*. Hartcourt Barce Jovanovich, xi.
- Wollstonecraft, M. (1792). A vindication of the rights of woman. In H. Adams (Ed.), *Critical theory since Plato*. Harcourt.
- Woolf, V. (1992). A roof of our own. In H. Adams (Ed.), *Critical theory since Plato*. Harcourt.
- Yousuf, M. (2017). The witch of Portobello. *Maha's journal*. <https://www.mahayoussuf.wordpress.com>.