

INTRODUCTION

Life and Work of Sara Jeannette Duncan:

Sara Jeannette Duncan was born in Brantford, Canada West on December 22, 1861. She was a daughter of Charles Duncan, Scottish born owner and Jane Duncan. She was a Canadian author and journalist. She was called Sara Jeannette Cotes after her marriage to Everard Cotes in 1891. Her column at the *Toronto Globe* and other publications was written under the pseudonym Garth and pen name, Garth Grafton.

Duncan first worked as a school teacher before taking up journalism as a fulltime occupation. In 1886, Duncan made history as the first woman to be hired as a professional journalist in Canada, taking a regular position at the *Toronto Globe*, now the *Globe and Mail*. She later moved to the *Montreal Star*, where she was the paper's parliamentary correspondent.

Duncan published 22 books, including two volumes of personal sketches and a collection of short stories. She served as an editorial writer and a book reviewer for the *Washington Post* (1885–1886), as a columnist for the *Toronto Globe* (1886 - 1887), and finally for the *Montreal Star* (1888 – 1889). During this period she also contributed numerous articles to the *Week*. In September 1888 she set off on a round the world tour and met her future husband, museum curator and journalist Everard Cotes. She married him in December 1890 and spent most of the three decades in India. Only two of her novels drew directly on her Canadian experience including her most brilliant work of fiction, *The Imperialist* (1904). She frequently explored the differences between the Old and the New World in her work (2004).

Duncan had conceived a new project: to travel around the world and write a book about it, and in September, 1818 she set out by train west ward from Montreal, accompanied by the Montreal journalist Lily Lewis. The book she wrote about their travels, *A Social Departure: How Orthodocia and I Went Round the World by Ourselves* (1890) was the most successful she ever published.

After the world tour was finished, she published her book in London. She returned to India for her wedding in December, 1890. She had written two other books, *An American Girl in London* and *Two Girls on a Barge* which appeared under a pseudonym, V. Cecil Cotes in August of the same year.

Set in Authority may be the only book in which she went against her usual practice, stubbornly writing a deliberately political novel when the political novel she had just published, *The Imperialist*, had been a critical failure. If we assume that her Anglo-Indian novels, beginning with *The Simple Adventures of a Memsahib* (1893), constitute a coherent body of work accumulating over fifteen years. There are some successful, some tedious novels such as the "international novel", *An American Girl in London* (1891) and its sequel *A Voyage of Consolation* (1898), the flawed but fascination "new woman" novel *A Daughter of To-day* (1894), the over-extended magazine story *Those Delightful Americans* (1902) and later, enervated failures like *The Consort* (1912) or *His Royal Happiness* (1915).

Two important mature novels, *The Imperialist* (1904) and the social satire *Cousin Cinderella* (1908), each with its Canadian angle, in their term drew on the strengths in social observation.

Set in Authority (1906)

Cousin Cinderella (1908)

Two in a Flat (1908) (as Jane Wintergreen)

The Brunt Offering (1909)

The Consort (1912)

His Royal Happiness (1914)

Title Clear (1922)

The Gold Cure (1924)

Selected Journalism (1978) (ed. by Thomas Tausky)

Critical Opinions on the Select Novels:

1. *A Daughter of Today*:

Misao Dean criticizes that Elfrida Bell, *The Daughter of Today* is an attempt at a realistic picture of a career female artist of the 1890s, who rejects marriage and even love as inimical to her ideal of achievement. According him, Duncan has portrayed a new kind of heroine as well as provided an active, thinking subject for the passive instinctual object of patriarchal fiction. It is explored by Misao Dean, that Duncan deplores the limited exalted sphere to which women are relegated as heroines of sentimental fiction and complaints that such characters are simply static devices for the forwarding of the plot, "the painted pivot of a merry-go-round"(1988).

Thomas Tausky remarks that *A Daughter of Today* is a novel, in which neither bohemian artist nor the bourgeois artist really wins in the end (2009). William Dean Howells and Henry James state that in *A Daughter of Today*, Elfrida cannot articulate her own sexuality to John Kendal, whom she loves; she remains "an incarnate idea" rather than a

woman. Her lofty artistic ideas silence her more fundamental human needs; her inability to establish a dialogue between the psychological factions within her results in her final self-destruction.

Janice Fiamengo declares that the novel "*A Daughter of Today*" is a witty narrative about a modern woman's assault on tradition. As the title suggests the novel follows the adventures of an unconventional young American, Elfrida Bell, who escapes her parents and her hometown to seek fame in Europe, first in Paris, where she takes art lessons and imbibes avant-garde ideology, and then in London, where she becomes a modestly successful journalist. Janice judges that Elfrida who claims to find marriage and child bearing "degrading –horrible!" and aims to take revenge on men by playing heartlessly the game of love. Elfrida exults in her power over men because she has killed natural affection and compassion (2009).

2. *Set in Authority*

In the Appendix of *Set in Authority* (1906), entitled 'Contemporary reviews of *Set in Authority*', *New York Times* points out that *Set in Authority* is Duncan's latest book which shows her broad, deep and enriching intellectual power. Duncan's artistic method is better and clear. Through this novel, she provides a maximum of atmosphere and a minimum of story which is highly artistic and impressive. She has created the atmosphere of London drawing rooms, the gatherings of Anglo-Indian society in Pilaghur and the life of the natives (*Appendix II*: 321). According the *Canadian Magazine*, *Set in Authority* is the novel of Indian life. It gives the information of an idealistic Viceroy. The book provides

the humour and the ironies of the British people's life. So, it is a source of genuine and gentle enjoyment (*Appendix II: 323*).

The Daily Telegraph comments that, *Set in Authority* is a novel of Indian official life. It is brief tragedy of a judicial error. It gives us the picture of an English soldier who is accused of murdering a native. The novel presents the comedy of government and justice going on. The end of book is particularly fine. All people who are interested in India will read this book and praise to authoress (*Appendix II: 318*).

Significance and objective of the study

The present study entitled *The New Woman in Sara Jeanette Duncan's Select Novels* deals with the real and ideal aspects of the new woman in her novels. In these novels Duncan addresses the theme of the 'New woman'. The significance of the 'New Woman' study is to understand woman's great efforts to acquire her aim. The new woman presents her independent place with her intellectual power.

In this light the first objective of the study is to think seriously about woman's position. It is necessary to understand female world and her demands for her own rights. The new woman demands the removal of the social, political, and economic discrimination based on sex, and seeks rights and duties on the basis of individual capacity.

The second important objective is to analyse the select novels in the light of the concept of the New Woman. It is therefore interesting and rewarding to understand the feminist aspects, and

the real ideal position of women with reference to the select novels. The present study is an attempt in this direction.

Scope and limitation of the study:

It is not possible here to analyse each and every novel of Duncan that would widen the scope of the study. The select representative novels of Duncan will amply to represent the concept of the New Woman. It will limit the scope of the study. Therefore the objective of the study is limited one.

Methodology:

The analytical and interpretative methods are used for the present study. The procedure of the study is clearly defined in the chapter scheme.

Chapter Scheme:

The chapter scheme of the present dissertation is as follows:

Introduction

- i. Life and Work of Sara Jeannette Duncan
- ii. Critical Opinions on Select Novels
- iii. Significance and Objective of the Study
- iv. Scope and Limitations of the Study
- v. Methodology

Chapter-I Theoretical Perspective

The Concept of “New Woman”

Chapter-II The New Woman in *A Daughter of To- Day*

Chapter-III The New Woman in *Set in Authority*

Chapter-IV Conclusion

The chapter on conclusion is followed by the bibliography of the various sources used during the study.