

SHARED CONSCIOUSNESS IN THE NOVELS OF BRONTE, PARIJAT AND ROY

A Mini Research Report

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Submitted by  
Indira Acharya Mishra, PhD  
Associate Professor (English)  
Tribhuvan University, Nepal

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Tribhuvan University

Mahendra Multiple Campus, Dharan

Research Management Cell

### EVALUATION AND APPROVAL

It is approved that this mini research entitled SHARED CONSCIOUSNESS IN THE NOVELS OF BRONTE, PARIJAT AND ROY prepared by **Dr. Indira Acharya Mishra** has maintained both the scope and intensity of its level. It has been evaluated and approved by the under signed members of the evaluation Committee. The committee is convinced that the researcher has worked with necessary studies, careful analysis and systematic presentation.

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Prof. Kedar Prasad Poudel, PhD

External Examiner

Date: 27 July 2020

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Prof. Ashok Kumar Jha, PhD

Chairperson

Research Management Cell

## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this mini research entitled SHARED CONSCIOUSNESS IN THE NOVELS OF BRONTE, PARIJAT AND ROY is my own original work and that it contains no materials previously published in my name. I have not used its materials for the award of any kind and any other degree. The authors and sources of information that are used to support my argument have been duly acknowledged.

Name: Indira Acharya Mishra, PhD

Signature:

Date: 30 March 2020

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## ABSTRACT

This study analyzes three novels authored by female novelists. They are *Wuthering Heights* (1848) by Emily Bronte, *Blue Mimosas* (1965) by Parijat and *The God of Small Things* (1997) by Arundhati Roy. These are the debut novels of these authors who sought fame with them. These authors wrote these novels in different time zones and different geographical locations. They belong to different socio-political and cultural background. Yet, one can trace some common aspects in these novels. These all are female centered novels. These authors portray their primary female characters against the backdrop of patriarchal society in which they suffer a lot and face premature death. This research, in this background, aims to trace the shared consciousness of these authors as manifested in these novels. In the process of tracing the shared consciousness of these authors in the novels, the study examines the portrayal of these characters and traces the causes of their suffering.

The research is based on qualitative approach. To analyze the shared consciousness of these authors in the selected novels, the study has taken insights from feminism. Primarily, it draws the ideas from feminists like Simone de Beauvoir, Kate Millett, Betty Friedan and others. Feminism believes that the labeling of woman as inferior is intrinsically a socially constructed phenomena of the patriarchal society. It believes that women all over the world suffered from more or less the same type of oppression. Thus, it aims to subvert the patriarchal domination both in the private and public spheres. The three novels form the primary source for the analysis. Whereas, critics on these texts and on feminism form secondary source of the study.

The analysis has found that these authors share the feminist consciousness which is the consciousness of victimization of women in patriarchy. The analysis demonstrates that

women experience violence and discrimination within the apparently family relationship. Patriarchal society treats males as superior to females and places them as the head of the family. As the head of the family, men hold control on women and the resources. Thus, family becomes the major site of women's oppression. It is within the family all the female protagonists, Catherine, Sakambari and Ammu experience their first feeling of rejection or discrimination of their sex.

Likewise, since patriarchy is oppressive to them, all the female characters challenge patriarchal authority by disobeying their custodians who control their lives. Catherine disobeyed Hindley accompanying Heathcliff and roaming into the moors. She disobeyed her husband, Mr. Linton, denying separation from Heathcliff. Being a married woman she deviates away from the notion of an ideal wife. Likewise, Sakambari does not care norms of propriety and girl like manner. She looks unfeminine in her short hair and abrupt manner. She calls her brother 'Shiv' and smokes in the face of the seniors. Above all, she challenges the norms of patriarchy by assimilating with the males. Ammu, too, does not fit into the category of 'good-girl.' She marries on her own just to escape unfriendly atmosphere of her parents' house. When her husband decides to trade her to save his job, she protests by maintaining an utter silence. She gives him divorce and returns to her parents with her children and dares to mate an untouchable youth. In this way, all these female novelists portray their protagonists as subversive ones.

In addition, in all these novels, patriarchy and the values it implies are criticized explicitly as well as implicitly. The female characters try to liberate themselves from the restrictive feminine roles assigned to them. All these female characters appear to be subversive to the norms and values of their respective family and society. They defy the patriarchal norms and values of chastity and modesty ascribed to women. In the process

they suffer, yet, they persist at the cost of their life. Denial to submit to the patriarchal scheme becomes fatal to them. The way these novels trace the suffering of their female protagonists reveals that women's precarious condition has been the same irrespective of time and space. Therefore, these texts support feminism that demands equality and rights for women like those enjoyed by men in the families as well as in the societies.

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background

This research analyzes three popular novels, *Wuthering Heights*, *Blue Mimosa* and *The God of Small Things* authored by the three world renowned female novelists, Emily Bronte, Parijat and Arundhati Roy respectively. These are the authors who lived and wrote in different time zones and geographical contexts. Bronte (1818-1848) was born in Thornton, Yorkshire, England, lived there throughout her life and published her first and only novel, *Wuthering Heights* in 1847. Whereas, Parijat (1937-1993) was born in the hill station of Darjeeling, India, moved to Kathmandu, Nepal in 1954 and lived there for the rest of her life. She published her debut novel *Śirīṣako Phūla* [*Blue Mimosa*] in 1965, which won her the prestigious Nepali literary award Madana Prize of 2022 BS. Likewise, Arundhati Roy (1961- ) was born in Shillong, Meghalaya, India. In 1997 Roy published her debut novel, *The God of Small Things*. There lies the gap of 150 years in the publication of these authors' first novel. Though these authors wrote in different social and political backgrounds, geographical contexts and different time zones there lie certain commonalities in their novels.

Bronte lived and wrote in the close patriarchal Victorian society of England. She wrote in the narrow confinement of the era where she had no exposure to the outside world as her sister Charlotte, responding to the critics who were hostile to *Wuthering Heights*, states that for the people who are unfamiliar to the author's environment and upbringing, the book may appear "a rude and strange production" (Qtd. in O'Neill 51). She admits that the coarse and uncouth language is the result of its author's unfamiliarity with the social mannerism. She explains that if its author had town's upbringing and had got the

opportunity to live like a lady or a gentleman, her outlook to the world that she has portrayed in the book would have been different. Though the earlier critics of *Wuthering Heights* were hostile towards it, later critics appreciated the structure, literariness and the originality of the novel and the novel became a classic of English literature.

Parijat was born and wrote in a different environment from Bronte. She published her debut novel *Śirīṣako Phūla* 118 years after Bronte published her novel. She received a university degree and had exposure to the world's literature. However, the society that she belonged was narrow and confined one. Besides, she was paralyzed at the age of 26 which limited her physical mobility. And there lies some similarity between the way critics responded her novel and the way the then critics responded Bronte. Some of the initial critics of Parijat's novel feared that the novel might have corrupting effect on its reader. But other critics have appreciated the newness of the novel's themes and praised its poetic quality. Despite the controversial reviews of the critics, the book has been widely acclaimed, translated to many languages and taught in the universities both in the nation and abroad.

Roy published her debut novel a long time after these two authors left the world. An architect by profession, an actress and activist she sought fame with the publication of her *The God of Small Things*. The novel is praised for its lucid narrative style and its portrayal of unique south Asian themes and characters. Roy's novel became the biggest-selling book by a non-expatriate Indian author and won the 1998 Man Booker Prize for fiction. Yet, Roy too has become a controversial writer because of her ideas on global capitalism. She has written the novel in different socio-political and geographical contexts from Bronte and Parijat. She has excess to education, transportation and communication and wider exposure to the world. But the way she portrays her female protagonist suggests

that the society is not less hostile toward the female gender as it used to be 150 years ago as revealed in her novel.

Mr. Lockwood, a learned gentleman, a narrator in *Wuthering Heights*, finds the inhabitants of Wuthering Heights quite inhospitable on his first visit to it on the capacity of its new tenant. When he dreams Catherine, the protagonist of the novel he fears her of; though she is a mere child pleading to enter the room he denies her entry. He talks to Heathcliff, the owner of the house, referring to Catherine as "She must have been a changeling wicked little soul. She told me she had been walking the earth these twenty years; a just punishment for her mortal transgressions, I have no doubt" (Bronte 42). Lockwood assumes that Catherine must have transgressed the rules of the society thus she had been justly punished. He finds her manner condemnable. Similarly, Suyogbir, the narrator of *Blue Mimosa*, as an experienced man about the ways of the world, finds Sakambari's manner abrupt. He explains, "She came into the room. The atmosphere froze. I wanted to laugh in turn at her name, her behavior, her looks, but my laughter also froze" (Parijat 3). Suyogbir feels uncomfortable because Sakambari's manners violate propriety and modesty expected from a young woman. Likewise, Ammu, the protagonist of Roy's *The God of Small Things* is portrayed as an outcast in her own family. For her family and the society she is a transgressor.

These female authors across the border work with shared consciousness. Catherine, Sakambari and Ammu suffer from tragic fate; battling against the hostile society, they die in their prime age: Catherine is 18 when she died, Sakambari is 22 and Ammu is 31. The way these female authors, who lived and wrote in different time zones and geographical contexts, portray their female characters provide background for the comparative study of these novels. I have purposively chosen the debut novel of these authors as these authors

are known primarily because of these works. I have analyzed the selected novels in the chronological order on the basis of their publication date and finally traced the shared consciousness between these three writers as revealed in the novels.

## 1.2 Statement of the Problem

Bronte, Parijat and Roy are the world famous female novelists who became renowned with their first published novel. These all are female centered novels. Though there lies the gap of 150 years between the publications of these novels, the struggle of these female protagonists suggests that the society has remained unfair to the female sex. All the female protagonists of the novels fell claustrophobic in the society they live in. They feel belittled, thwarted and sinks to loneliness and finally die in their prime youth. Though the world has witnessed a drastic change in the socio- political system; as it has witnessed two World Wars and the United States of Nations has been established to make the world more fair and just ever since Bronte, the way the female protagonists of *Blue Mimosa* and *The God of Small Things* suffer from the common fate like that of *Wuthering Heights* made me curious to make a further study of these novels to find out the shared consciousness of these authors as revealed in the novels. In this endeavor this research will answer the following questions:

- I. What consciousness do these authors share in the selected novels?
- II. How do they portray their female characters?
- III. Why do these female characters suffer?

### **1.3 Objectives of the Study**

The general objective of this research is to trace the shared consciousness of the three women novelists as revealed in the selected novels. The specific objectives of the research are:

- I. to analyze the shared consciousness of the authors of the selected novels.
- II. to examine the portrayal of the female characters, and
- III. to explain the reasons behind the suffering of these characters.

### **1.4 Hypothesis of the Study**

The study assumes that despite different time zones, geographical locations and socio-political contexts in which the selected authors wrote their novels there lies certain commonalities in the manner they portray their female protagonists. The protagonists of these novels are subversive to patriarchal norms and values. The existing norms and values that put women in the narrow confinement are responsible factors behind their sufferings. They suffer because of their transgressive nature. The research assumes that these authors work with the shared consciousness as each of them writes a female centered novel which traces the tragic fate of its female protagonist. These authors write with feminist consciousness and share the themes of gender biasness and vulnerability of women in the male dominated societies. They also share women resistance to the cultural, economic, political and religious constraints imposed upon women. Their protagonists often act contrary to the expectations imposed on them, despite the social cost of transgressing the conventions.

### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

This study has made a comparative study of three novels written by three women who wrote in different time periods and geographical contexts. Bronte wrote in the Victorian time when England ruled the world. Whereas, Parijat and Roy wrote in the late twentieth century in a closed and confined society of South Asia. Though there lie geographical and cultural proximity between Parijat and Roy they too wrote in different socio-political backgrounds. This research, then, will be helpful for the researchers to trace the shared consciousness of writers working in diverse social, political and cultural backgrounds. It will be beneficial for those researchers who want to make a comparative study of such writers. Similarly, since this study compares a native author with an author from her immediate neighboring country, and a classic author from a distant time and place, it will also be helpful for the researchers who want to assess the position of Nepali literature in the world literature. Besides, it will also support those who want to study and analyze the selected works from other perspectives.

### **1.6 Methodology**

Based on the qualitative method, this research has made a comparative study of three women authored novels in the global context to trace the shared consciousness in their novels. It traces the shared features of these authors in terms of thematic analysis and portrayal of characters. For this, the research has drawn insights from liberal feminists, who believe the cause of women's oppression lies deep in traditions and false moral codes practices in patriarchy and suggest for the eradication and reformation of such traditions and moral codes. Besides, it has drawn from other feminists' argument though they belong to different camps because when reading a text from a feminist point of view (regardless of what branches of feminism we apply) Catherine Belsey and Jane Moore suggest that we

should look at "how [it] represents women, what it says about gender relations, how it defines sexual differences" (1). For the working definition of feminism it will take support from Rosemary Tong's *Feminist Thought: A More Comprehensive Introduction*. The three novels form the primary source for the research; whereas, critics on these authors and feminism form the secondary sources. Since *Blue Mimosa* originally appeared in Nepali language, most of the reviews of the book are in Nepali language which I will summarize while reviewing these resources.

### **1.7 Delimitation**

This study is confined with the close and detail study of the selected novels, *Wuthering Heights*, *Blue Mimosa* and *The God of Small Things*. The main focus of the study is to find out the shared consciousness of these authors as revealed in the novels. For this, it focuses on the thematic analysis of the texts and on the portrayal of the female protagonists of the novels.

### **1.8 Chapter Division**

The study is divided into five main chapters and other sub chapters. The first chapter provides the background of the study. It introduces the subject of the study, provides a brief introduction of the three authors and their respective works. Similarly, it explains the objectives, significance and the limitation of the study. The second chapter is the review of literature. It reviews the views of the relevant critics on this topic. The third chapter explains the methodology of the study. It provides the general understanding of feminism as a literary tool and focuses on the ideas of liberal feminists. The fourth chapter traces the shared consciousness of these authors by answering the research questions raised in the first chapter. Finally, the fifth chapter concludes the research.



## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

#### 2.1 Background

The aim of this study is to make a comparative study of three women authored novels from different countries. They are Parijat's *Blue Mimosa*, Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* and Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights*. These authors belong to different time and space. *Wuthering Heights* is a British novel first published in 1847. Likewise, *Shirishko Phool*, a Nepali novel translated into English as *Blue Mimosa*, was first published in 1965 (2022 BS); and *The God of Small Things*, an Indian Novel written in English, was first published in 1997. The authors of these novels lived in different countries and there lies a time difference of more than a century. Yet, the way these authors portray their female protagonists shows that women's suffering has been the same irrespective of time and space. Besides, all these authors have received wide popularity ever since the publication of their debut novels. As soon as these novels were published their appeared plethora of criticisms about the novels, both in favor and against the moral lesson of these novels. Thus, with the aim to examine what consciousness these novelists share in their depiction of female characters this research is conducted. The coming sections provide review of literature of the study.

#### 2.2 Critics on *Wuthering Heights*

The only novel of Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights* was first published in 1847 under the male pseudonym Ellis Bell. Since women were not recognized as worthy of literary activities she did not like to reveal her identity as a woman author. In her 1850 biographical notes to the new edition of *Wuthering Heights*, her sister Charlotte Bronte explains:

We did not like to declare ourselves women, because - - without at the time suspecting that our mode of writing and thinking was not what is called 'feminine' – we had a had a vague impression that authoresses are liable to be looked on with prejudice; we had noticed how critics sometimes used for their chastisement the weapon of personality, and for their reward, a flattery, which is not true. (Qtd. in Gordon 127)

Charlotte discloses the prevailing gender biasedness of the existing society. They wrote pseudonymously because they feared that critics might dismiss their writing as a feminine writing which they thought would be trivial and worthless. Charlotte's comment reveals that women were not expected to produce a work of genius. So to protect her work and get public readership she chose the male pseudonym. Yet, the novel received a wide readership as soon as it was published.

Despite its popularity, the novel has fascinated and puzzled the readers ever since its publication. Critics seem to be uncertain about the kind of novel that Bronte has written. They have difference of opinions even about the genre of the novel. Some critics regard it as an autobiographical novel, others view that it is a tragedy. Yet, other critics consider the novel as a psychological one.

The initial critics have some reservation with respect to the moral of the novel. However, they appreciate the originality of the novel and the imaginative power of its author. For instance, immediately after its publication, *The Spectator* is among the first one to make its comment on the novel:

The success is not equal to the abilities of the writer; chiefly because the incidents are too coarse and disagreeable to be attractive, the very best being improbable,

with a moral taint about them, and the villainy not leading to results sufficient to justify the elaborate pains taken in depicting it (Qtd. in Allott 39)

The reviewer for *The Atlas*, 22 January 1848 agrees with the reviewer of *The Spectator* and adds, "We know nothing in the whole range of our fictitious literature which presents such shocking picture of the worst forms of humanity" (Qtd. in Mengham 104). The critics of these periodicals find the moral of the novel unacceptable. They find it indigestible, not suitable for the respectable readers. The Paterson Magazine even suggested its readers to burn *Wuthering Heights*. Obviously, these critics have found the book immoral.

Responding such negative remarks on the novel, Charlotte Bronte in her preface to the 1850 edition of the novel, defends her sister:

Men and women who, perhaps naturally very calm, and with feelings moderate in degree, and little marked in kind, have been trained from their cradle to observe the utmost evenness of manner and guardedness of language, will hardly know what to make of the rough, strong utterance, the harshly manifested passions, the unbridled aversions, and headlong partialities of unlettered moorland hinds and rugged moorland squires, who have grown up untaught and unchecked, except by mentors as harsh as themselves. (Qtd. in Allott 60)

For Charlotte the environment in which Emily Bronte had been grown up is responsible for the harshness in the novel. Following Charlotte Bronte, Sydney Dobell, a critic and poet appreciates Bronte's genius. For him the novel depicts the psychological conflict within Catherine's two natures: the uncanny accuracy with which Bronte prepares for, and then depicts Catherine's delirium. He views that Catherine's dilemma is natural as well as psychological (Qtd. in Allott 57).

Likewise, G.H. Lewes appreciates the novel and asserts its authenticity and relevance:

The visions of madness are not more savage or more remote from ordinary life.

The error committed is an error in art - - the excessive predominance of shadows darkening the picture. One cannot dine off condiments, nor sup off horrors without an indigestion. And, yet, although there is a want of air and light in the picture we cannot deny its truth; somber, rude, brutal, yet true. (Qtd. in Mengham 105)

Most of the early critics were uncomfortable with the moral of the novel. Despite their reservations towards the novel, however, they all accept the power and originality of the novel.

Melvin R. Watson in his analysis of different critics' opinions on *Wuthering Heights* reveals this. He views that there has been plethora of opinions both against and for the novel. Some critics appreciate the novel as "powerful and original" whereas, others criticize it as "awkwardly and illogically" constructed. But either way they found it compelling. Likewise, he points that other critics compare it with Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre* and find it superior to *Wuthering Heights*. Watson observes that most of the early critics found the novel as "the work of immature genius." These critics use terms like hysterical, delirious, nightmarish, primeval, and elemental to describe the book. This shows, as Watson suggests, that the novel was not ignored by the initial reviewers rather they disapproved it. These early critics condemned the novel because it "did not confirm to the accepted standards of Victorian novel writing. . . . Because the novel neither teaches "mankind to avoid one course and take another" nor dissects "any portion of existing society, exhibiting together its weak and strong points. . ." (245). Watson argues that even after the arrival of the second edition of the book its preface by Charlotte Bronte

could not provoke positive response from its critics. Along with these negative reviews on *Wuthering Heights*, critics halfheartedly appreciate the novelty of the book.

Watson, further, mentions that Peter Bayne and T. Wemyss Reid are literary vegetarians who could not stomach the red meat of *Wuthering Heights*. He comments that "they condemn but condone, refusing to swallow, but enjoying the taste" (248). Watson explains that till the end of nineteenth century the novel was taken as a gothic story and fails to elicit appreciation and approval from its critics. Watson finds James Fotheringham's comment on *Wuthering Heights* reasonably satisfactory. For him Fotheringham is one of the first to justify the worth of the novel. Despite his criticism, however, critics continued making negative remarks about the novel.

Watson locates that it was only since 1920 there appeared "more rational, sensible criticism" on *Wuthering Heights* than the previous one. According to him, these critics like the earlier critics make comparison between *Wuthering Heights* and Elizabethan dramas. They too make autobiographical analysis and also focus on the technique and structure of the novel. He points that C. P. Sanger, for example, appreciates Brontë's knowledge on legal matters while analyzing the structure of the novel (261). Watson acknowledges that Lord David Cecil's analysis of the novel is "the most complete, thorough, and penetrating analysis and interpretation" though Cecil focuses on "metaphysical quality of the novel." (262). Watson concludes his remarks saying that since *Wuthering Heights* is a masterpiece it is impossible to make a satisfactory remark on the novel which will be accepted by all the people to all the time.

Similarly, Herbert Goldstone in his article "Wuthering Heights Revisited" analyzes the sources of the novel's "extraordinary force." For him the power of *Wuthering Heights* lies in its strangeness. According to him "the view of life in the book is direct, simple, very

comprehensive, and clearly presented." And, as he notes any book that presents such a view of life is not strange. Nonetheless, he insists that "*Wuthering Heights* has an almost monumental simplicity and depth of feeling that makes it a very moving novel" (175). For him the power of the novel lies in its simplicity. He appreciates the plot of the novel which he finds as clear, unified, and dramatic in its structure. Besides its plot, the novelist's perspective to life, range of emotion, conception of love, differing values and parallel tragic stories are some of the features of the novel that account for its extraordinary force.

Michael S. Macovski is another critic, who in "*Wuthering Heights* and the Rhetoric of Interpretation" insists that despite the readers' "bewilderment" and even "ultimate bafflement" towards the mysteries of the novel "the novel is about the act of interpretation itself." He claims that Brontë presents the entire novel as a story reported at one, two, or three removes by characters like Lockwood, Nelly, and Zillah who distort almost every episode of the story we hear. And the reader is the last in this line of interpretation (354). He asserts that the novel provides models of ongoing comprehension and interpretation for the reader.

Augustus Ralli in his "Emily Brontë: The Problem of Personality" suggests that Emily Brontë "loved liberty, she enjoyed passionately the lonely moors, and she loved wild animals because they were wild" (498). For him she was a woman of genius and her love for nature is reflected in the novel. Likewise, Arnold Shapiro in his article evaluates *Wuthering Heights* as a Victorian novel. He believes that "*Wuthering Heights* is in the same ethical and moral tradition as the other great Victorian novels" (285). He disagrees with the former critics who condemn the novel for being immoral. He notes that Brontë holds strong moral control throughout the novel. She has sympathy for her characters but

she exposes their weakness as well as the weakness of the surrounding society. She approves their virtues but condemns their vices.

Eric P. Levy argues, "Historically, the most celebrated aspect of its uniqueness concerns the portrayal of character" (158). According to him *Wuthering Heights* portrays two types of love experienced in childhood. One is unloved experienced by the children of *Wuthering Heights* where childhood is an experience of neglect, abuse, and rejection. In contrast, the Linton family of Thrushcross Grange is the representative household of over love with its tendency to overprotect and coddle children. Both are flawed love which destroy the adult life of these children (160).

Malcolm Pittock argues that though there are many good essays which illuminate the different aspects of its structure and theme, there is no satisfactory analysis of the novel as a whole. He believes that the book still remains a puzzling one for the critics. He finds, "Their truths are always mingled with the dubious and the false: certain questions are never asked; certain observations never made" (146). Though each interpretation enhances our understanding of the novel, none has approached consensual acceptance.

Patsy Stoneman agrees that early critics were suspicious to *Wuthering Heights*. She believes that it was only with the advent of Freudian theory that women readers began to allow themselves to recognize the curious mixture of fascination and fear induced by *Wuthering Heights* (147). She points that it is Virginia Woolf who wrote an essay on *Wuthering Heights*. But she identifies that it is not connected with feminist.

### **2.3 Critics on *Blue Mimosa***

Like the critics of *Wuthering Heights*, the critics of *Blue Mimosa* have difference of opinions regarding the aesthetic value and moral of the novel. Critic and essayist Shankar Lamichhane, writing the forward to *Śirīṣako Phūla* upon its publication,

appreciates Parijat's skill as a novelist. He claims that *Śirīṣako Phūla* is the best novel ever written centering on the philosophical ideas. He asserts that based on absurdism and nihilism it is an excellent work of art and declares that the contemporary age belongs to Parijat ((n. pag.). Contrary to Lamichhane, Gobinda Bhatta is dismayed by the content of Parijat's debut novel. In his article "Śirīṣako Phūla ki Kāgajko Phūla" ["Mimosa Flower or Flower of Paper"] questions the worth of this novel. He views that the novel is as useless as the flower of paper, though it looks beautiful. Like the flower of paper it is a worthless work of art written in a beautiful style. He asserts that Lamichhane exaggerates the worth of this novel. Bhatta fears that the negative attitude towards life expressed in the novel may have corrupting effect upon its reader. He suggests that art should be for the life's sake and emphasizes on the use value of a work of art (123-28).

On the first death anniversary of Parijat, an anthology on her memory, *Pārijāta Smriiti Grantha* was published. The anthology includes different writers' and critics' opinions on Parijat and her works. Writing on the same anthology, Murari Aryal evaluates Parijat as an uncontested novelist in the Nepali literature. She is the towering figure among the contemporary Nepali novelists. He views that the themes of absurdism and nihilism expressed in her *Śirīṣako Phūla* is the effect of her understanding of the contemporary world devastated by the Second World War that resulted in the loss of human value (59). Critic Hom Subedi, in his article written for the same anthology, investigates Parijat's opinions about *Śirīṣako Phūla* at the time of its publication. He believes that Parijat is the most reviewed writer of Nepali literature. He insists that this novel should be evaluated with respect to Parijat's belief at the time of its publication. Subedi finds some resemblance between Parijat and Sakambari, the main female character of the novel: like



Sakambari Parijat too was a highly self-esteemed, bold, argumentative and strong minded lady (121-122).

Critic of Nepali literature, Ishwar Baral in his article “Barī Kina Marī?” [“Why did Bari Die of?”], analyzes the character of its three principal characters, Suyogbir, Sakambari and Shivraj. He asserts that Bari has been in relationship with her own brother Shivraj and could not accept the presence of another man in her life. When Suyogbir kissed her unexpectedly she could not confront the situation: neither she could confess her illicit relation nor could she accept Suyogbir’s love. Thus, she died all alone because of the guilty conscience (21-47).

Indra Bahadur Rai, a novelist and critic, in his *Nepālī Upanyāsakā Ādhāraharū* [The Foundation of Nepali Novels] critically explores the foundation on which Nepali novels have been written. He evaluates the novels written by twelve representative Nepali novelists and describes the background on which they have written those novels. His analysis includes Parijat as one of the representative Nepali novelists. Rai argues that absurdism is the theme of Parijat’s novels. Likewise, he makes a review of *Śirīṣako Phūla* as an absurdist novel. Rai admits that most of the novels, written prior to *Śirīṣako Phūla*, dealt with individuals' relation to the society. Showing human's relation with the society, according to Rai, those novels explored the hostile relation between the individuals and the society. Unlike these earlier novels, *Śirīṣako Phūla* shows that not only the society but human life itself is chaotic because chaos prevails in the world from the beginning of the creation itself. In such an all pervading situation of chaos the novel, *Śirīṣako Phūla* searches the meaning of human actions and activities (Rai 196).

Rai cites the last line of the novel, a monologue made by its male protagonist, which expresses the character's realization of the human existence. Rai believes that

Parijat exposes the meaninglessness of all human values and emotions. He further adds that the novelist reveals nothingness through the depiction of its characters. According to him, the antihero of this novel, Suyogbir, an ex-army, has fought in the Second World War. Although he has been unable to kill any combatant in the War, he has murdered three innocent women during that time. Hence, the character of the army appears to be absurd. He had never valued love in his life; now he loves Sakambari, the female protagonist and in return desires to be loved by her but gets never. Bari has never been in love with him rather she dies because of his lustful touch (Rai 197).

The novel is narrated from the first person limited point of view from the perspective of Suyogbir who, as mentioned by Rai, notices meaninglessness in the life of Shivraj and Sakambari along with his own experience. Rai explains Suyogbir's admonition at the end of the novel about the meaninglessness of his existence justifies the novel's absurdist perspective. His character exposes the irony of his life. His name, Suyogbir stands for the good conducts but his activities are the epitome of bad ones (Rai 198). War has destroyed the value and significance of life that causes Suyogbir experience nihilism. Whereas, Sakambari experiences nihilism not because of having the experiences of war but because of the mental and moral torture which human beings have been forced to experience in their life (Rai 199). The characters find difficult to get release from this life. We live after losing everything; being empty, we are still living to get nothing. Absurdism elicits in our attempt to understand the world and in our incapability to understand it. Human seeks happiness but remains sad. Parijat has realized this tragic human fate and has expressed her realization through this novel (Rai 196-203). Rai concludes that absurdism and nihilism are the themes of *Śirīṣako Phūla*.

Moreover, Rai also provides a precise analysis of other novels of Parijat. She is the only female novelist among the twelve representative Nepali novelists that the author studies. His text helps to know the specific characteristic features of the Nepali novels.

Krishnachandrasingh Pradhan, a reputed critic of Nepali literature, in his critical essay, “Nepālī Upanyāsa” [“Nepali Novels”], critically analyzes the historical development of Nepali novels.

Pradhan finds novelty both in style and subject matter in Parijat's *Śirīṣako Phūla*. The novel character centered novels as it minutely analyzes the psychology of its characters. He assesses that Sakambari is an intellectual lady who analyzes life's value and expresses dissatisfaction towards the compulsion of human being who is forced to live the meaningless life. Pradhan notes that *Śirīṣako Phūla* has a pessimistic approach towards life that is pervasive in modern human being.

Critics Krishna Prasad Ghimire and Ram Prasad Gyawali, in their critical text *Aākhyānakāra Pārijāta [Parijat as a Fiction Writer]*, mention that though Parijat has started her literary journey writing poetry she is par excellent in fiction writing as well. Divided into three section, in the novel section of the text, the writers analyze Parijat's ten published novels in details. Examining *Śirīṣako Phūla* in detail they trace absurdism, sadism, negation of life, and death instinct as the major themes revealed in the novel. Like Hom Subedi, mentioned above, these critics also observe autobiographical elements in the novel, especially in the portrayal of Sakambari. They assert that, though *Śirīṣako Phūla* has received both positive and negative comments from the critics, it has brought a kind of upheaval in the field of Nepali novel and even Parijat's later novels are unable to excel its aesthetic value (35). This text helps to understand Parijat and her fictional writings.

Similarly, D. P. Adhikari in his critical essay entitled “Nepālī Upanyāsa Ra Janajīwan” [Nepali Novels and Life Style”] identifies Parijat as a harbinger of meaninglessness in Nepali novel and her *Śirīṣako Phūla* is the first Nepali novel based on nihilism (99-106). He evaluates Parijat as the pioneer of nihilism in Nepali novels and she is the only female novelist included in his analysis. His brief article describes different novelists and the trends followed by them in their novels. Dayaram Shrestha approves that *Śirīṣako Phūla* has brought newness both in structure and texture in Nepali novels. This new trend is widened by Parijat’s *Śirīṣako Phūla*, which reveals the new dimension shown in the history of Nepali novel, as it presents the theme of nihilism in a new way (Shrestha 108).

Purushotam Subedi in *Mirmire*, a monthly magazine, observes that Parijat has a distinct position in the field of Nepali literature because of her committed writing. She has a unique position among the Nepali literary figures. Her Madana Puraskāra winning novel, *Śirīṣako Phūla*, according to Subedi, is one of the most powerful novels in terms of its language, style and subject matter along with its presentation (275). He evaluates the novelist’s position as a national figure of Nepali literature. Likewise, critic Rajendra Subedi, in his *Nepālī Upanyāsa: Paramparā Ra Prabriti* [Nepali Novels: Trends and Tradition], acknowledges Parijat as a versatile writer who has written mainly under the tradition of existentialism and absurdism (308). As an absurdist novel, *Śirīṣako Phūla*, Subedi explains tries to reveal the complexities that came to be linked with existing circumstances of the Nepali society.

Researcher Bhawani Prasad Pandey in his *Pārijātakā Upanyāsamā Samājbādī Yathārthabāda* [Social Realism in Parijat’s Novels], also praises Parijat as a multidimensional author. Among her ten published novels, *Śirīṣako Phūla*, Pandey

elaborates, has widened her popularity as a novelist (193). In this novel she has portrayed the ugly parts of the society. He notices the reflection of contemporary society in her novels and asserts that her characters are the product of the Nepali soil. They are the victims of the then evil practices and ignorance. Pandey claims that her novels the women suffer just because they are women (194).

Krishnahari Baral and Netra Atom, critics of Nepali literature, in their *Upanyāsa Siddhānta Ra Nepālī Upanyāsa [Theory of Novel and Nepali Novels]*, summarize Parijat's *Śirīṣako Phūla* and discuss its structure, plot, characters and characterization, setting, theme, symbol, rhyme and rhythm and title. According to them, *Śirīṣako Phūla* is a pioneering novel that heralds the theme of nihilism and absurdism in Nepali novels. It portrays an intellectual and indomitable female protagonist who is fond of smoking and has the voice like that of a bullet. As a pessimistic, she believes on living for own's sake. Blue Mimosa (*Śirīṣako Phūla*), a beautiful delicate flower that falls upon the first touch of a wasp, stands for the protagonist of the novel, who dies at the single kiss of her one sided love, appropriates the title of the novel. The authors further add that *Śirīṣako Phūla* is a psychoanalytical novel as it analyzes the psyche of its male protagonist and his unfulfilled love for the female protagonist (187-207).

Unlike the above mentioned critics, who have studied Parijat's novels from the absurdist perspective, Arun Gupto opines that existentialism and absurdism are overused in the interpretation of the novel, *Blue Mimosa* and more reading from such perspectives “mar the beauty of critical reading” (10). Thus, he reasons that the novel should be read from different angles. He analyzes the novel from the perspective of Russian Formalism, Structuralism, New Criticism, Psychoanalytical Criticism and Deconstruction. He claims that the novel can be interpreted from the feminist perspective as well (49). Researcher

Simon Gautam agrees that critics analyses on *Śirīṣako Phūla* from absurdism and nihilism is too much. He is upset that critics have missed the multiple aspects of Parijat's writing. He, too, demands that Parijat should be read through different lenses and analyzes the varied experiences of women as depicted in Parijat's novels. He asserts that Parijat was influenced by feminist thought developed in the West during the 1960s. According to him, the anti-hero of *Śirīṣako Phūla*, Suyog is the symbol of hard core patriarch for whom women exist only as an object to satisfy men's sexual urges. For Gautam, Suyog represents the ultimate expression of patriarchal masculinity (145). Gautam adds that Bari is an independent woman and her death “is a woman's value-laden death” (156). She dies fighting against the male imposed value disregarding whether it is called absurd or not. Bari's death is an example of Nepali literature acknowledging the context of hundreds of suppressed women's death in silence. Govinda Raj Bhattarai also agrees that Parijat’s *Śirīṣako Phūla* demonstrates and objects the traditional culture imposed upon women's body (51-53).

Similarly, Harihar Bhandari in his PhD dissertation traces the themes of *Śirīṣako Phūla*. He also agrees that existentialism, Freudian Psychoanalysis and romanticism are the themes of *Śirīṣako Phūla* (77). Khagendra Prasad Luitel, too, in his *Nepālī Upanyāsako Itihāsa [History of Nepali Novel]*, like most of the critics, concludes that Parijat’s *Śirīṣako Phūla* is about absurdism (175-77).

Sudha Tripathi, a feminist critic of Nepali literature, believes that though the subject matter of Parijat’s *Śirīṣako Phūla* is nihilistic its contribution in the field of Nepali novel is quite great (*Nārībādako* 181). Tripathi in her recently published book, *Nepālī Upanyāsamā Nārībādī Paddhati Ra Prayoga [Feminist Trends and Practice in Nepali Novels]*, views that *Śirīṣako Phūla* is concerned with voicing females' issues. It portrays its

central female character as a subversive and indomitable one whose voice is compared with the bullets of a gun. The comparison, according to Tripathi, justifies the protagonist's power. Despite this, Tripathi argues that this novel is an anti-feminist one because feminism cannot be accommodated within the camp of absurdism (35).

Whereas, Mishra Baijayanti, a Nepali poet and critic, views that *Śirīṣako Phūla* is an individualistic novel and may be considered as an asocial novel. She points out that Sakambari, the protagonist dies in self-imprisonment because of Suyogbir's foul touch. Sakambari is a representative of those Nepali women who are forced to destroy themselves because of males' foul touch for in Nepali society the victims themselves are supposed to be the guilty ones (28). Mishra views that the tradition of blaming the victim forces Sakambari to die in seclusion. Likewise, Sundari Thapa (Sushmita Nepal) in her M. Phil. thesis claims that though *Śirīṣako Phūla* has constantly been analyzed as an absurd novel, one can trace feminist approach in it. Analyzing the portrayal of female characters of the novel, she claims that Sakambari, the female protagonist of the novel believes on individual freedom and enjoys her life on her own way (56-62).

Parijat is one of the most read novelists of Nepali literature. Her novel *Śirīṣako Phūla* is the first woman authored Nepali novel to receive the prestigious Nepali literary award Madana Puraskāra. Diverse opinions are put forwarded on the theme and moral aspect of the novel. Nonetheless, all most all the critics unanimously agree upon the esthetic beauty of the novel.

#### **2.4 Critics on *The God of Small Things***

Arundhati Roy debut novel, *The God of Small Things* has been highly esteemed by the critics ever since its publication in 1997. The novel's popularity grew with the announcement of Booker Prize of the year 1997 for this book. In *The New York Times*,

Sarah Lyall reports that *The God of Small Things* was awarded England's prestigious Booker Prize for "The God of Small Things," a soaring story about a set of twins struggling to make sense of the world, themselves and their strange and difficult family in southern India. She quotes the judges who claims the book was written with "extraordinary linguistic inventiveness" (n. pag.). Indeed, many critics believe that the power of the novel lies in its innovative use of language. In his review, James Wood claims that, the greatest pleasure of *The God of Small Things* lies in its language, which makes the novel a play field of linguistic innovations (32). While comparing her style with Salman Rushdie, Ramlal Agarwal asserts that the creative exploitation of Roy's English resembles with Rushdie's felicity of expression in using English (208).

Anna Sujatha Mathai in her review of *The God of Small Things* claims that the central story of the novel is simple, but the plot and novelistic technique for her are very complex. She praises the magic and magnetic quality of the book which engages the reader. In her words: "The main characters are real, and the story is partly autobiographical. Roy's wonderful imagination has taken over, irradiating the memories and stuff of real life with her magic; her irrepressible, and most infectious sense of humour; and her ability to be childlike" (188). She is fascinated by Roy's capacity to revive the childhood innocence through the depiction of the twin characters in the novel.

In addition to these reviews and appreciations of the use of language in the novel, critics have appreciated other aspects of the novel and have analyzed the novel from multiple dimensions highlighting feminism, stylistics, neologism, post-colonialism, postmodernism, eco-criticism and so on. In the line of postmodernism, Jonathan Collins sums up that, Arundhati Roy's novel, *The God of Small Things* as a postmodern, postcolonial novel, works on many levels and can be read in different ways. He points out



intertextual elements of the text as postmodern features, but does not provide detail study on it. Likewise, Kunjo Singh's article "Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*: A Study in the Modernist Perspective" makes an elaborate analysis of the novel from postmodern perspective and focuses on the use of metaphors, similes, puns, synecdoche, personification, oxymoron, paradox, irony, alliteration, end-focus, antithesis, parallelism, anaphora and like that. These are all the narrative devices mostly used by postmodernists. The author concludes that, "Roy has used a highly individualized style to make a universe where small is beautiful in this world" (273).

Archana Bhattacharjee, too, considers Roy's text as a postmodern novel. In her article, "Indian Societal Values: A Study of Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* from Post Modernism Perspective," Bhattacharjee claims that the novel critiques "grand narratives" that value big things governing the Indian society and mentality. Roy's text shows that the unthinkable would become thinkable and the impossible would become possible (2). Despite the existence of love law that dictates 'who should be loved, and how, and how much' the characters move beyond the love law and act what is condemned by the narrative of love law.

In relation to the postmodern writing style, Linda Hutcheon uses the term "historiography metafiction" to describe postmodern narratives that "interweave both history and fiction to reveal that history as a grand narrative has collapsed and has been replaced by islands of plural discourse that emphasize discontinuities, erasures and oclusions" (Qtd. in Patchay 145). According to Hutcheon, this kind of fiction emphasizes "the constructedness" and "fabrication of History", which usually highlight the marginal disruptive elements and present a sanitized version of History. Likewise, the construction of *The God of Small Things* is described by Frederick Luis Aldama as "generously roomy"

and “capable of fitting in anything and everything from the external world and from the subjective world of feelings and thoughts” (<http://www.humanitiesretooled.org>). Aldama means that Roy, in appropriate postmodern fashion, has applied all the narrative techniques humankind has invented, including free indirect speech, stream of consciousness, dramatic narrative, lyrical narrative and prose poem.

Whereas, Sheeba in her article on “Feminism in Arundhati Roy’s *The God of Small Things*” states that the text is in feministic perspective. She argues that Ammu “is like a free bird that wants to fly freely in the open skies. But all of a sudden, her wings are cut down by the callous society and thus she is pulled down to this earth where she has to ‘grovel in the lowly dust’” (24). That is how Roy portrays the sufferings of the protagonist Ammu in the novel.

Elizabeth Outka analyzes the traumatic experiences of the characters of the novel. According to her, the novel “reflects the trauma that certain brutal material realities may produce; in her depiction of collective trauma in particular, Roy pushes against nonmaterialist readings and explores the harmful effects of caste prejudice, sexism, and commercial and political colonizations” (24). She appreciates the sharp eyes of the novelists who reveals the effects of those ill practices of the society.

## **2.5 Conclusion**

The literature review of the three novels reveals that all these three novels are popular novels of world literature. Among them *Wuthering Heights* was written at the time when a woman vocation was not expected to be writing. So, to escape the gender bias perspective of the critics, the author published the novel under male pseudonym. But, the critics of her time found the novel irrespirable and compelling though they were not certain about the moral aspect of the text. Whereas, *Blue Mimosas*, though written a long

time after the publication of *Wuthering Heights*, was written in a country in which women were not educated enough for literary activities. The novel, too, got appreciation for its aesthetic beauty, but the critics of this book also are ambivalent about the moral teaching of the novel. Likewise, *The God of Small Things* received appreciations for the literariness of the novel and have been analyzed from different perspectives.

The critics' opinions are advantageous in the understanding of these novels. The review of literature of the study points some similar aspects in the novels, however, there is no study that analyzes the shared consciousness of the novels. Thus, this research tries to fill this research gap by examining the shared consciousness of these authors as revealed in their novels.

## CHAPTER 3

### CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

#### 3.1. Emergence of Feminism

Women in patriarchy, across space and culture have been treated as inferior to men. In patriarchy men are valued above women. Men are always overpowered with the sense of "I am a man, she is a woman. I am strong, she is weak, I am tough, and she is tender. I am self-sufficient, she is needful" (Ruth 54). Until the 19th century women were regarded as lesser human being and they were deprived from life's opportunities. They were considered less intellectual than men, thus, unfit for public affairs. Women were limited to private sphere where their primary tasks were bearing the children and nurturing them. Men in patriarchy expect women to serve them physically, taking care of their homes, property and children, and doing countless jobs in which they are rarely paid. Since women did all the unpaid, time consuming tasks, men were free to pursue wealth and knowledge. This supported men to dominate women and even enact violence upon them.

Realizing that this state of affair should not be continued, some conscious men and women started raising their voice for women's rights. For example, Mary Wollstonecraft wrote *A Vindication of Rights of Women* (1792) which is regarded as the first work on feminism. She was in favor of women's education which she considered as the only way out of their subordination. She did not consider social accomplishments, such as: dancing, drawing, playing the piano and embroidering as real education. She insisted that daughters should be provided with the same kind of education like that of sons. Following Wollstonecraft other educated and aware women came to the front asking for equal rights to women like that of men. In the 1840s the women's rights movement had started to

emerge in the United States with the Seneca Falls Convention of 1848 and the resulting Declaration of Sentiments, which claimed for women the principles of liberty and equality expounded in the American Declaration of Independence. This was followed by Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony's founding of the National Woman Suffrage Association. In Britain, too, the 1840s onwards saw the emergence of women's suffrage movements.

Feminism is, thus, a term that emerged long after women started questioning their inferior status and demanding an amelioration in their social position. It was only in 1910 the new term feminism was coined to define those activities seeking to emancipate women from patriarchal domination. Oxford English Dictionary included as a new word *feminism* in 1933 and defined it "the opinions and principles of the advocates of the extended recognition of the achievements and claims of women; advocacy of women's rights (Cott 4). Feminism is the conviction that society is prejudicial towards women and it deprives them of individual choices.

Now feminism is recognized as an activism, a political theory that aims to emancipate women from patriarchal restrictions. Focusing on the political aspect of feminism, Toril Moi, a feminist critic, claims, "The word feminist or feminism are political levels indicating support for the aims of the new women's movement" (135). She further clarifies: "Feminist criticism, then, is a specific kind of political discourse, critical and theoretical practice, committed to the struggle against patriarchy and sexism, not simply a concern for gender in literature" (204). Moi explains that it is not only concerned with the gender representation in literature but it is against patriarchy and sexism that underscore women's experiences.

Furthermore, feminism, in principle, advocates for equal social importance of the females. It is a doctrine advocating social and political rights for women equal to those of men (Snodgrass 656). Barbara Smith, a black feminist writer and activist, defines feminism as:

Feminism is the political theory and practice that struggles to free all women: women of color, working-class women, poor women, physically challenged women, lesbians, old women, as well as white, economically privileged heterosexual women. Anything less than this is not feminism, but merely female self-aggrandizement. (49)

Feminism as a movement, then, seeks to enhance the quality of women's lives by defying the norms of society based on male dominance. It is concerned with emancipating women from the shackles, restrictions, norms and customs of society. It demands that women should be treated as autonomous subjects, and not passive objects. Also it seeks to achieve equality between men and women in moral, social, economic and political fields.

### **3.2 Strands of Feminism**

There are many different kinds of feminism and feminists themselves tend to disagree about the ways in which women are disadvantaged and what exactly should be done to get equal rights. Rosemary Tong elucidates that the concept of feminism is never static (216). There lies diversity of opinions among feminists about the origin and causes of women's subordination to men. According to the changing times, the outlook of feminists, too, changes. Consequently, there emerged diverse groups of feminist thought within the feminist camp. Addressing the diversity of feminist thinking, Tong states that "feminist thought resists categorization into tidy school of thought. Interdisciplinary, intersectional, interlocking are the kind of adjectives that best describe the way we

feminists think” (1). Different feminists have different explanation for women’s oppression and have proposed different solutions for its elimination

Liberal Feminism emphasizes that women should be provided with equal opportunities so that they can become equal to men in the society. Liberal feminists, thus, ask for reformation in the social system. Whereas, Radical feminists believe in revolution rather than reformation. They want to change the oppressive patriarchal system which they think is the root cause of women's oppression. They challenge the very system that subjugates women. Marxist and socialist feminists claim that the source of women's oppression is economy and recognize capitalism as their primary enemy. They argue that capitalism is the root cause of women's oppression, and that discrimination against women in domestic life and employment is an effect of capitalist ideologies. Marxist feminists critique the unequal standing in work place and the domestic holds women down. They identify prostitution, domestic works, childcare and marriage as some of the ways in which women are exploited by a patriarchal system that devalues women.

Likewise, psychoanalysis feminists get angry with traditional psychological ideology and argue that Freudian complex is nothing more than the product of men's imaginations - a psychic trap, which women should try to escape. But cultural feminism believe on the essential difference between men and women in terms of biology, personality and behavior. Cultural feminists believe that women are naturally kind and compassionate, tender and nurturing. So if women gain power the world would be a better place. Multicultural, global, and postcolonial feminism focuses on heterogeneous nature of women. They suggests that different women have different problems and the causes of their problems are different. Despite the diverse feminist thoughts they overlap on key issues.

The focus of the present study is on the portrayal of female characters and it bases on liberal feminism. Thus, this strand of feminism is dealt herewith.

### **3.3 Liberal Feminism**

Liberal Feminism received its classic formulation in Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, in John Stuart Mill's *The Subjection of Woman* and in the 19<sup>th</sup> century women's suffrage movement. Its main thrust as mentioned by Tong is:

. . . that female subordination is rooted in a set of customary and legal constraints that blocks women's entrance to and success in the so-called public world. To the extent that society holds the false belief that women are, by nature, less intellectually and physically capable than man, it tends to discriminate against women in the academy, the forum, and the market place. As liberal feminist see it, this discrimination against women is unfair. Women should have as much chance to succeed in the public realm as men do. Gender justice, insist liberal feminist, requires us, first, to make the rules of the fair and, second, to make certain that none of the runners in the race for society's goods and service is systematically disadvantaged. (Tong 2)

Liberal feminists demand equal opportunity for all. The overall goal of liberal feminism is the creation of "a just and compassionate society in which freedom flourishes" (Qtd. in Tong 13). Tong believes that only in such a society can women and men thrive equally.

Tong claims that "women owe to liberal feminists many of the civil, educational, occupational, and reproductive rights they currently enjoy" (47). She believes that the world is more just and fairer for women than it used to be because of liberal feminism. Though there are numerous liberal feminists thinkers, movements and organizations Tong focuses on Mary Wollstonecraft, John Stuart Mill, Harriet Taylor (Mill), the Woman



Suffrage Movement in the United States, Betty Friedan, and the National Organization for Women (NOW).

Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1799) studied the condition of those middle class and wealthy women of her time who had no share in the productive work. In her estimation middle class ladies sacrificed their health, liberty and virtue for the prestige and comfort that their husband provided them. According to her their condition was no better than those of caged birds. She explains:

Because these women were not allowed to exercise outdoor lest they tan their lily-white skin, they lacked healthy bodies. Because they were not permitted to make their own decisions, they lacked liberty. And because they were discouraged from developing their powers of reason – given that a great premium was placed on indulging self and gratifying others, especially men and children – they lacked virtue. (Qtd. in Tong 13)

Wollstonecraft denied that women are, by nature, more pleasure seeking and pleasure giving than man.

Wollstonecraft insisted that society owes girls the same education that it owes boys, simply because all human beings deserve equal chance to develop their rational and moral capacities so they can achieve full personhood. She gave emphasis to reason over emotion. She considered the traditional masculine traits as ideal for both male and female. As Tong notes “she simply assumed traditional male traits were ‘good’ and women – not men were the ones who were rationally and morally deficient” (15). She demanded women not to be treated as an object of men’s pleasure but as persons like the men themselves.

Wollstonecraft claimed that a woman should not be reduced to the “toy of man, his rattle,” which “must jingle in his ears whenever, dismissing reason, he chooses to be amused.” In other words, a woman is not a “mere means,” or instrument, to one or more men’s pleasure or happiness. Rather, she is an “end-in-herself,” a rational agent whose dignity consists in having the capacity for self-determination” (Qtd. in Tong 16).

Justifying women equality to men, she demanded equal rights to women and wrote *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, which as mentioned above is recognized as the first published work on feminism.

John Stuart Mill and Harriet Taylor Mill joined Wollstonecraft in celebrating rationality. Mill and Taylor insist that if society is to achieve sexual equality and gender justice then society must provide women with the same political, economic and educational rights that the men enjoy. Taylor in her ‘Enfranchisement of Women’ and Mill in his ‘The Subjection of Women’ demand for gender justice. Highlighting their opinions on marriage and children Tong mentions that Taylor

. . . accepted the traditional view that maternal ties are stronger than paternal ties, Taylor simply assumed the mother would be the one to rear the children to adulthood in the event of divorce. Thus she cautioned women to have few children. In contrast, Mill urged couples to marry late, have children late, and live in extended families or commune like situations so as to minimize divorce’s disrupting effects on children lives. (17)

Taylor argues that women need to do more than read books and cast ballots; they also need to be partners with men “in labor and gains risks and remunerations of productive industry.” Thus, Taylor predicts that if society gave a bona-fide choice between devoting their lives “to one animal function and its consequences” on the one hand, and writing

great books, discovering new worlds, and building mighty empires on the other, many woman would be only too happy to leave “home, sweet home” behind them (Qtd. in Tong 17). Taylor argues that to be her husband equal partners the wife must earn outside the home. Later feminists critic criticize both Wollstonecraft and Taylor saying that both of them sent women to outside without sending men inside to carry out their share of domestic chores.

Mill too believes that women are capable to do the things done by men if provided with the same opportunities. Like Wollstonecraft he, too, denies the existence of general intellectual or moral differences between men and women. In his ‘The subjection of Women’ argues that if “women’s rational powers were recognized as equal to men’s, then society would reap significant benefits” (Qtd. in Tong 18). All these thinkers, Wollstonecraft, Taylor and Mill believe that men and women are equal on their intellectual ground and they should be provided with equality opportunity.

From the 1850s onward, the campaign for equal rights for women became focused on winning the right to vote (women’s suffrage), and suffragist movements appeared. The history of women's suffrage movement in England can be traced back to mid nineteenth century. The event that marked the beginning of the women's suffrage movement in the U.S. was the Seneca Falls Convention, held in New York State on July 19 and 20, 1848. Organized by Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott, and attended by about 250 women and 40 men, the convention addressed many issues of women's rights, including the right to vote. Seneca Falls Convention produced a Declaration of Sentiments and twelve resolutions. The twelve resolutions as suggested by Tong "emphasized women’s rights to vote, express themselves in public – to speak out on the burning issues of the day,

especially 'in regard to the great subjects of morals and religion,' which women were supposedly more qualified to address than men." (21)

Feminists disagree that women are physically inferior to men and claim that women lower status in the society is man-made. They argue that the inferiority of women is not natural but artificial. For example, Virginia Woolf in her *A Room of One's Own* explains on a lucid way why women authors have less literary production than men. She explains that women lack economic freedom to exercise their creative potentiality. In *A Room of One's Own* she draws readers' attention to women's need for private space and financial independence so that they can write freely. She insists that money provides the opportunity to develop one's writing at professional level.

Woolf refutes the notion that women are less capable than men. Rather she explains that women do not have a private space and money to excel in literary activities as she claims, "A woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction" (7). She explains that women produced inferior works than their male counterparts because they were denied the time and space to produce creative works. She observes that women of her time spent most of their time in the drawing room, a central room where family and friends gathered for tea, children went to when they returned from school, and where guests, women in particular, were taken before and after meals. Women are saddled with house hold duties and are financially and legally bound to their husband. She explains that a quiet study room is needed for reading, writing and to spend long periods of solitude. But by being deprived of rooms of their own, there is little possibility for women to produce good literary works.

Simone de Beauvoir published her seminal text *The Second Sex* (1949) which raises many fundamental questions concerned with women. An encyclopedic in its

coverage, it offers historical, biological and psychological perspectives on women as M.H. Abrams notes: "*The Second Sex* is a wide-ranging criticism of identification of women as merely the negative object or "Other" to man as defining and dominating subject who is assumed to represent humanity in general" (234). The text established the fundamental principal of modern feminism and is remarkable in inspiring women's liberation movements in the late 1960s and early 1970s in the United States, in France, and across the globe.

Beauvoir claims that the inferiority status of women is artificial. In the text she unmasks and debunks traditional masculine claims to authority produced and reproduced in science, psychoanalysis, historical materialism, religion, and literature. She critically analyzes men assumed right to shape, determine, and dominate conversation. She admits early on the text that she "used to get annoyed in abstract discussions to hear men tell [her]: 'You think such and such because you're a woman.'" In response to this conversation stopper, Beauvoir says a woman is forced to answer, "I think it because it is true," rather than "You think the contrary because you are a man." "It is understood a man is in his right by virtue of being a man; it is the woman who is in the wrong" (*Second* 5).

De Beauvoir's primary thesis is that men fundamentally oppress women by characterizing them, on every level, as the *Other*, defined exclusively in opposition to men. Man occupies the role of the self, or subject; woman is the object, the other. He is essential, absolute, and transcendent. She is inessential, incomplete, and mutilated. He extends out into the world to impose his will on it, whereas woman is doomed to immanence, or inwardness. He creates, acts, invents; she waits for him to save her. This distinction is the basis of all de Beauvoir's later arguments. In defining woman exclusively as Other, man is effectively denying her humanity. Her famous phrase "One is not born,

but rather becomes a woman" dismantle traditional assumption about femininity. Her unique contribution lies in understanding women's oppression under patriarchy.

De Beauvoir also discusses various mythical representations of women and demonstrates how these myths have imprinted human consciousness, often to the disservice of women. De Beauvoir hopes to debunk the persistent myth of the "eternal feminine" by showing that it arose from male discomfort with the fact of his own birth. Throughout history, maternity has been both worshipped and reviled: the mother both brings life and heralds death. These mysterious operations get projected onto the woman, who is transformed into a symbol of "life" and in the process is robbed of all individuality. To illustrate the prevalence of these myths, de Beauvoir studies the portrayal of women by five modern writers. In the end of this section, de Beauvoir examines the impact of these myths on individual experience. She concludes that the "eternal feminine" fiction is reinforced by biology, psychoanalysis, history, and literature.

The suffrage movements helped women gain the rights to vote in the USA and in other countries. Then in around 1960 a more rebellious generation of feminists demanded to be fully liberated, women need economic opportunities and sexual freedoms as well as civil liberties. "By the mid-1960s, most liberal feminists had joined an emerging women's rights group such as the National Organization for Women (NOW), the National Women's Political Caucus (NWPC), or the Women's Equity Action League (WEAL)". The general purpose of these groups was to improve women's status "by applying legal, social, and other pressures upon institutions ranging from the Bell Telephone Company to television networks to the major political parties" (Tong 24). NOW is the first explicitly feminist group in the United States in the twentieth century to challenge sex discrimination in all spheres of life: social, political, economic, and personal.

Betty Friedan, one of the founders and first president of NOW wrote *The Feminine Mystique* (1963). In the text, analyzing the situation of the then educated middle-class white women she expresses her dissatisfaction to the situation of the then educated middle-class white women. As she comments that “these women spent too much time cleaning their already tidy homes, improving their already attractive appearances, and indulging their already spoiled children” (Tong 28). She argues that women need to find meaningful work in the full-time, public workforce. She explains that wives and mothers’ partial absence from home would enable husbands and children to become more self-sufficient people, capable of cooking their own meals and doing their own laundry (Tong 28). She insists that men and women are equal and there should be no different role for them.

Other liberal feminists include Gloria Steinem and Rebecca Walker who argue that women inferiority is artificial. The root of women's oppression lies in their lack of access to the civic participation enjoyed by men. They suggest that women, like men, are entitled to their pursuit knowledge and freedom. Thus, they demand for unrestricted access to women to work, market activity, civic participation and other public sphere. The main tenets of liberal feminist thought all human persons are rational and free, share fundamental rights, and are equal.

Moreover, as explained by Tong: “Liberal feminists wish to free women from oppressive gender roles – that is from those roles used as excuses or justifications for giving women a lesser place, or no place at all, in the academy, the forum, and market place” (34). Liberal feminists analyze the role of literature in perpetuating sexist ideologies about female and feminine inferiority. Indeed, the feminist literary theory is developed since the beginning of the contemporary women’s movement with Simone de

Beauvoir, Kate Millett and Betty Friedan. In *The Second Sex* Beauvoir asks what woman is and how she is constructed differently from men. Freidan analyzes seductive images of women in American magazines. Millet writes that the most fundamental concept of power in our society is male dominance. Feminist critics believe that women are oppressed both in society and in literature as well.

One of the aims of the feminist literary critics has been the re-reading of the male texts in order to expose literary bias and ill-informed representations of womanhood, giving rise to the 'images of woman' type of criticism. Here, the aim is to examine representation of women in literature and there by challenge the view of women as Other. Whereas, another aim is to rediscover forgotten or ignored women authored texts and analyze them to trace the feminine way of writing. Motivated by the feminist thoughts, this research analyzes the three famous women novelists across the world. These three women writers, though they lived and wrote in different context, share the common predicament of women in the delineation of their female protagonists.



## CHAPTER 4

### TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

#### 4.1 Background

This project is initiated with the aim to trace the shared consciousness in the three women authored novels. They are *Wuthering Heights*, *Blue Mimosa* and *The God of Small Things*. All these three novels are female centered novels written by three different female novelists who lived in different time zones and different geographical locations. Besides, these authors are from different cultural and social background. Yet, they have written from some common consciousness. They all portray female as the protagonist of their novels and deal with the struggle of the protagonist in a male dominated society. Catherine Earnshaw, Sakambari and Ammu are the protagonists of *Wuthering Heights*, *Blue Mimosa* and *The God of Small Things* respectively. All these female characters appear to be subversive to the norms and values of their respective family and society, which are patriarchal ones. They defy the patriarchal norms and values and try to free themselves from the restriction of patriarchy that limit their freedom. In the process, they suffer; yet, they persist at the cost of their life.

These protagonists denial to submit to the patriarchal scheme becomes fatal to them. They suffer varieties of cruelty. They are mentally and physically abused and tortured. Analyzing the fate of women who do not attune to the scheme of patriarchy, Kate Millett succinctly remarks that patriarchy is so powerful that men are usually able to secure the apparent consent of the very women they oppress. Men do this through institutions such as the academy, the church, and the family, each of which justifies and reinforces women's subordination to men, resulting in most women's internalization of a sense of inferiority to men. Should a woman refuse to accept patriarchal ideology, Millett

predicts, men will use coercion to accomplish what conditioning has failed to achieve. She points out that the streetwise woman realizes that if she wants to survive in patriarchy, she would better act feminine, or else she may be subjected to "a variety of cruelty and barbarities" (Qtd. in Tong 52). The way these female characters suffer suffices Millett's prediction. Their portrayal supports Beauvoir's proclamation, "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman" (295). Taking insights from Beauvoir and other feminists, the coming sections analyze the shared consciousness of the authors found in the selected novels.

#### **4.2 Home as the Site of Discrimination against Women**

Patriarchy literally refers to the 'rule of the father.' But beyond the literal level it is an organizational system that supports male supremacy and female subordination. In this system, males have dominance over females, and this domination manifests in the values, attitudes, customs, expectations, and institutions of the society; and the males' dominance over the females is maintained through the process of socialization. London Feminist Network states that patriarchy is characterized by "unequal power relations between women and men whereby women are systematically disadvantaged and oppressed" (n.pag.). Like the London Feminist Network, feminists believe that patriarchy is discriminatory to women; and patriarchy and women abuse go hand in hand. Under patriarchy women are at the receiving end of the gender based discrimination and violence and they face discrimination and violence in the home itself. Though home stands for love and affection, for women it is the site of violence and discrimination. This is the common understanding shared by the author of these novels.

Millett also views that patriarchal gender roles are repressive to women. And the acting out of these sex-roles in the unequal and repressive relations and domination and subordination is what she calls 'Sexual Politics' (in Selden 215). ) Despite changes, it can

be argued, the fundamental hierarchical structuring of gender relation remains more or less unaltered. Elisa Shrestha in her article "Families are Sites of Love and Affection but also Violence and Discrimination" Published in the *Kathmandu Post*, reports that at least twenty six percent women in Nepal face various form of domestic violence, according to a new report by UN Women. The report, which highlights the changing nature of families across the world, says "families can be places of love but also spaces of violence against women and girls." The report has found, "Across Central and Southern Asia, 23 percent women and girls aged 15 – 49 were subjected to physical or sexual violence by their intimate partners in the last 12 months" (1). Men harass, beat or insult women at home because they think that they need to discipline them with corporal punishment.

All the three female protagonists face gender discrimination from the very beginning of their life. To show that patriarchy treats men and women differently and the discrimination stems from the home itself, these three protagonists are juxtaposed with their male siblings. Their parents treat sons and daughters differently. The protagonists do not have the rights and freedom enjoyed by their brothers. From the very beginning of their life, the female characters in the novels experience violence and discrimination within the family setting.

Catherine, the protagonist of *Wuthering Heights* is portrayed as a wayward and pampered daughter for her father, Mr. Earnshaw. He is loyal and treats both his son and daughter equally. Rather, Catherine is his favorite. He has promised to bring her a whip from the fair of Liverpool. But, since he has found the starving orphan, Heathcliff who he brings with him, he cannot bring the gift. Soon Heathcliff and Catherine become intimates. Mr. Earnshaw does not object. But Hindley, her brother, who is going to be his father's successor, does not like Catherine befriending him for Heathcliff has no status. To deprive

Catherine befriending him, immediately after his father's death, he degrades Heathcliff to the level of servant. Because of the patriarchal inheritance law Hindley, after the death of his father, becomes the in-charge of the family. As a daughter Catherine has no say in the property. Because of this discriminatory practice, Catherine as a daughter, cannot chose a friend on her own.

As Catherine grows, she passionately falls in love with Heathcliff. But she cannot interfere in Hindley's decision to degrade Heathcliff to the level of a servant. She silently bears her lover's mistreatment in her brother's hand, though she feels hurt. This is her abuse and insult. When Catherine returns from Linton after her stay with them Hindley asks Heathcliff that he may greet Catherine "like the other servants." Catherine remains silent, and despite her love for Heathcliff, she cannot marry him. She has no property and Heathcliff as an orphan depends on Hindley for sustenance. If she acts against Hindley's decision and marry Heathcliff they will be thrown to street. She suffers from dilemma and disillusionment. Catherine poignantly explains to Nelly about her decision to marry Linton, when Nelly asked her where the obstacle lies, "'Here! And here!'" replied Catherine, striking one hand on her forehead, and the other on her breast: 'in whichever place the soul lives. In my soul and in my heart, I'm convinced I'm wrong!'" (Bronte 57) Though she agrees to marry him, she is not convinced that she has done the right thing. It clearly indicates that she has been compelled to marry Linton.

Catherine cannot marry on her own because Hindley does not like Heathcliff. Whereas, Hindley when he returns from his university, he comes with his wife and nobody questions his decision. This proves that sons and daughters are treated differently and every one eternalizes the discrimination. Under patriarchy men can do what they like but women cannot. Catherine tells Nelly that she cannot marry him because Hindley has cast

him down so low to marry him now would be to degrade herself. Heathcliff withdraws in a rage of shame, humiliation, and despair, when he overhears this, and, thus, is not present to hear Catherine say that she loves him more deeply than anything else in the world. She says that she and Heathcliff are such kindred spirits that they are essentially the same person. Nonetheless, she insists, she must marry Edgar Linton instead. She clarifies:

I've no more business to marry Edgar Linton than I have to be in Heaven and if the wicked man in there had not brought Heathcliff so low, I should not have thought of it. It would degrade me to marry Heathcliff now. So he shall never know how I love him . . . . Whatever our souls are made of, his and mine are the same. (Bronte 58)

She explains that if she marries Heathcliff they will be beggars. It clearly indicates that despite Catherine's stubborn nature, and despite her passionate love for Heathcliff, she compromises.

When she finds that Heathcliff has run away from Wuthering Heights Catherine cries bitterly, stays whole night outside and become sick. She is psychologically devastated. Later she marries Linton but she has not forgotten her love. So when Heathcliff returns her happiness knows no bounds. She wants to be friend with him. But, now she is under her husband, and needs permission from him to invite Heathcliff to her home. Linton despises Heathcliff and will not allow Catherine his company. He insults Heathcliff, "Your presence is a moral poison that would contaminate the most virtuous: for that cause, and to prevent worse consequences, I shall deny you hereafter admission into this house. . . "(Bronte71). Linton even warns her to choose either of the man. Being mean-minded, Linton resents Heathcliff's presence at his home. Catherine feels so low and

helpless that she becomes sick and dies in agony in her room where she has no one to share her feelings.

In this way, Catherine is harassed by her elder brother and her husband. Indeed, violence against women knows no bounds of country or economic status. It is a global phenomenon. The roots of violence against women, as Chatterji points, are deeply embedded within the patriarchal social structure itself. The structure compels the women subordination, subservience and dependence on men; traps her within the wife-mother-daughter- sister role without offering her access to socially acceptable alternatives as an independent. . ." (31). Catherine first suffers in the hand of her brother and later in the hand of her husband. Directly or indirectly they abuse, insult and blackmail her. Their mistreatments lead her to death.

Like Catherine, Sakambari, too, becomes the victim of gender based violence. Similar to Victorian England, patriarchy is very much a part of 20<sup>th</sup> century Nepali life, and is deeply entrenched in the norms, values and customs of the nation. Since it is commonly held that women are inferior to men, they need to be controlled and guided by men. Though there is no clear indication of Sakambari, the protagonist of *Blue Mimosa*, discriminated by her own family, one can access that she has less life opportunities than her elder brother, Shiv. She is always located and limited within the boundary of her house. Whereas, her brother has complete freedom of movement. He can go anywhere he likes, but there is no incident of Sakambari leaving her house alone, except in one incident in which she goes to visit her mother in the Terai that is also being accompanied by her brother up to the bus station.

Like Catherine, she, too, has her elder brother as her guardian. He makes decision about her life though he cares not to hurt her. He invites Suyogbir, his friend, to her

birthday without consulting her. It shows that as an elder brother he takes it to be for granted. For Sakambari, the home is the site of love and affection, but she suffers from sexual violence within the boundary of her home. Suyogbir keeps on following and taunting her. He asks her irrelevant questions just to attract her attention. Sakambari is a bold and straightforward lady; she does not care who she is talking to. Shiva Raj informs him about the nature of his sisters: "But Bari doesn't care what people think; she gets angry. And that makes me care for her even more" (Parijat 9). Though her brother cares for her he is insensitive to encourage Suyogbir to visit their home.

Suyogbir is a man of patriarchal mindset. For him women exist to quench men's sexual urges. He finds Sakambari very unfeminine but gets fascinated by her. He equates her with a beautiful artifact for men's look and endeavors to possess her. He describes the scene where he sees her alone: "It presented a fascinating piece of art to the eye focused on that scene" (Parijat 11). He looks at the different parts of her, like "her very full breast excited laughter and desire at the same time. That is all I looked at: that is all I saw" (Parijat 12). When he talks to her, her responses displeases him. He finds her insensitive, unfriendly and inhospitable. He thinks she bluntly tells whatever comes in her head; she does not know how to respect the others. Despite her indifference towards her he keeps on following her.

But Sakambari believes on individual freedom and detests other's encroachment in one's life. This is revealed by her opinion on flowers:

'When a bee has entered the pouch it closes its mouth. Inside, the insect dies of suffocation. It is very interesting. There is no insect here now or else you could see yourself, Suyog Ji.'

I looked at her with surprise, but she was not looking at me. I thought to myself, this woman is really bold. . . . Why did she take such pleasure in the fact that these orchids kill insects? Now, talking to her was not merely a formality. I wanted to talk to her. I took a pack of cigarettes from my pocket and offered her one; without hesitation she took it.

After lighting it I asked, "If the bees can't settle here, what's the use of this flower?"

Blowing the cigarette smoke from her mouth, she said, 'The flower won't be spoiled; it is secure' (Parijat 13-14).

Her response to the insect-killing flower reveals her understanding of life and love:

If a flower buds for itself and opens for itself and, as if accepting some compulsion, falls whether it fights the black-bee or not, then why should it fall suffering the sting of the black-bee? It falls only for itself. It falls by its own will. (Parijat 14)

Her manners violate his knowledge about and expectation from women.

Nonetheless, irrespective of her feelings and belief Suyogbir desires to tame and have her. He worries what she says: "She doesn't care how much she embarrasses someone. She is really an outspoken woman. How easily she calls me first 'soldier' and then 'old man.' I think she even embarrasses her brother a bit" (Parijat 17). He reveals his feelings, "She always made me feel worthless," but at the same time he cannot resist his desire for her as he narrates, "She was a young, a blossoming woman . . ." (Parijat 30). It shows his belief system. He, as a man being in the advantageous position to choose, has not been brought up to think of women as likely to refuse him. Suyogbir feels restless and



helpless. He narrates, “Covering my shame, but frightened inside, I kept repeating in my mind, ‘My dear Sakambari, I love you’” (Parijat 45). Though he feels being humiliated and insulted he wants to be closer to her: “The Better I knew Bari, the more I become entangled with her, the more I became hypnotized, the more my interest in her sharpened” (Parijat 49). He fails to control his feelings.

Obviously, Suyogbir thinks that women should comply with his desires. He discloses how brutally he had raped and murdered women while he was in the army without hesitation. As a heterosexual man, he feels that he deserves to have sex with women if he likes. Despite his intense feeling for her, he is unable to disclose it; for he feels helpless and worthless in front her and wonders, “I wondered how or where this woman could be controlled. What substance could melt her? What truth could touch her?” (73). It discloses his macho psychology; he should be in the position to possess a woman of his desire. So when he finds her alone, he draws her and kisses her abruptly. Since Sakambari has not expected such behavior by him, at least in her own home; she turns to silence and dies. Suyogbir's monologue reveals that he has murdered her, he has raped her in the board daylight. Susan Moller Okin mentions, “Many violations of women’s basic human rights occur within families and are justified by reference to culture, religion or tradition” (33). The cultural aspects associated with the purity of women’s body forced her to die in silence. Since “most cultures as we know them today are patriarchal” (Bunch 251) women have no right to their body until now.

Although the story incidents of the novel, *The God of Small Things* take place 150 years later than the story of *Wuthering Heights*, the protagonist of the novel suffers from worse condition than those of the previous two protagonists. From the very beginning, she becomes the victim of patriarchal mindset. Her father, a prototype patriarch suffers from

inferiority complex. His wife is far younger than him and is much more successful in business than him. He is shocked when the realization comes to him that “he was an old man when his wife was still in her prime” (Roy 47). He resents the attention and regard she receives from people at Ayemenem and tries to take revenge on her for every trifle. From her childhood Ammu is exposed to the violence. Her father, Bennan Ipe (Pappachi) battered, bullied and made her suffer throughout her early years. Pappachi would donate money to orphanages and leprosy clinics. "But alone with his wife and children he turned in a monstrous bully, with a streak of vicious cunning. They were beaten, humiliated and made to suffer" (Roy 180). Besides the physical violence, she experiences other type of discriminations from her parents.

Pappachi retires the very year Ammu finishes her schooling. The family shifts from Delhi to Ayemenem. Pappachi considers that college education is an unnecessary expense for a girl, so Ammu is confined to Ayemenem house. Her education is abruptly stopped; whereas, her brother goes to Oxford for higher education. Ayemenem House itself is symbolic of male supremacy. It has, “Love Laws (that) lay down who should be loved. And how. And how much” (Roy 177). The treatment he used to meet out to his wife and daughter is highly deplorable. In this novel, patriarchy as the power center of the social system tends to be physically aggressive, even violent to women.

Ammu is a victim of the patriarchal attitude that gives importance to sons and not to daughters. Woman, in order to achieve her freedom, seeks marriage as an alternative to the bondage created by the parental family. Beauvoir rightly remarks, “There is unanimous agreement that getting a husband – or in some cases a ‘protector’ – is for her the most important of undertakings... She will free herself from the paternal home, from her mother’s hold, she will open up her future not by active conquest but by delivering

herself up, passive and docile, into the hands of a new master” (*Second* 352). Ammu wants an escape from her home where there is no scope for her for a settled life as far as she is considered. She wants to go away from her home. The narrator reads her mind:

All day she dreamed of escaping from Ayemenem and the clutches of her ill-tempered father and bitter, long-suffering mother. She hatched several wretched little plans to escape. Eventually, one worked. Pappachi agrees to let her spend the summer with a distant aunt who lived in Calcutta. (Roy 38-39).

In a wedding reception in Calcutta, Ammu comes across a well-built, pleasant looking young man of twenty five working as an assistant manager of a tea estate in Assam. The man proposes to Ammu. She accepts the proposal, not because she loves the man but she thought that “anything, anyone at all, would be better than returning to Ayemenem” (Roy 39). So, she accepts the proposal to avoid the hostile home.

Ammu hopes that her marriage with Baba would give her the comfort, affection and love that was lacking in her parental home. But she receives no warmth or affection from her husband as well. He is an irresponsible boorish alcoholic, who loses his temper and beats his wife in his alcoholic stupor. Ammu's predicament is similar to the average Indian women who suffer at the hand their drunkard husband. The narrator comments: “The Kathakali men took off their make-up and went home to beat their wives” (Roy 236). Indian men respect the goddess but not the real woman.

Ammu delivers twin children all alone in the hospital. She receives no emotional solace from Baba. He is even indifferent to his children. Ammu realizes that she had actually fallen out of the frying pan into the fire. She suffers much more than she did at her parents' home. Her disappointment becomes unbearable when her husband, suspended from his job for alcoholism, sought to bargain by providing Ammu for his boss, Mr.

Hollick, the English Manager of the tea estate. Mr. Hollick suggests that he go on leave and “Ammu be sent to his bungalow to be looked after” (Roy 42). Her refusal aggravates physical and mental torture. Her husband “grew uncomfortable and then infuriated by her silence. Suddenly he lunged at her, grabbed her hair, punched her and then passed out from the effort” (Roy 42). The status of the head of the family provides Baba the power to batter his wife.

Marriage subjugates and enslaves woman. It leads her to “aimless days indefinitely repeated, life that slips away gently toward death without questioning its purpose” (Beauvoir 466). Baba tortured her because for him the wife is only a part of the goods, articles, a man owns. Baba, Ammu’s husband, is willing to prostitute his wife to save his job. He is of the opinion that his wife should obey him irrespective of his command. Ammu suffers beatings from her husband just because she is a woman. But, she refuses to be a silent sufferer and retaliates violently. The final outcome is that she leaves her husband and returns unwelcomed to her parents in Ayemenem, “to very thing that she had fled from only a few years ago. Except that now she had two young children. And no more dreams” (Roy 42). As a daughter, a divorce her condition becomes more vulnerable than it was.

Ammu breaks the bond of marriage and comes home, the home which she dreaded as a teenager. The home she discarded becomes the very place of refuge. But being a daughter estranged from her husband, she is made to feel unwanted in her parent’s home, whereas an estranged son, her brother, Chacko not only receives a warm welcome, he remains the rightful inheritor of the family fortune. Baby Kochamma's views reveals the vulnerable position of divorced daughters in the parents' home. The narrator reports:

As a divorced daughter- according to Baby Kochamma, she had no position anywhere at all. And as for a divorced daughter from a love marriage, well words could not describe Baby Kochamma's outrage. As for a divorced daughter from intercommunity love marriage Baby Kochamma chose to remain quiveringly silent on the subject. (Roy 45)

Ammu soon realizes patriarchal biasness to married daughter. Relatives, near and distant, come to see her discomfiture while they religiously express their lip sympathy, so that Ammu "quickly learned to recognize and despise the ugly face of sympathy" (Roy 43). Ammu is blamed for the failure of her marriage and also for the shame she brings on the family.

The way Ammu's parents deprive her from gaining higher education reminds the eighteenth century's patriarchal mindset of England. In her *Vindication of the Rights of Women* Wollstonecraft criticizes patriarchal bias mind-set that got manifested in the education system of England. Because of the flawed education provided to women were distorted into sexual and passionate beings and grow subordinate to men. Wollstonecraft decries for the bias educational system of her time and demands that daughters should be educated like that of the sons. She warns, "Society is wasting its assets if it retains women in the role of convenient domestic slaves and alluring mistresses, denies them economic independence and encourages them to be docile and attentive to their looks to the inclusion of all else" (Qtd. in Adams 394). She views that women pursued sensibility because they had been taught to do so. Ammu's hasty marriage with Baba supports her prediction.

Ammu realizes that though she lives in her parental house with her mother and brother she has no "locusts stand I" (Roy 150) because of the male chauvinistic society.

Ammu, a divorcee, is not accepted by her family members. With no right to anything whatsoever, and constantly being made to feel dejected and low, Ammu is lured by Velutha's meaningful gaze. Unable to hold herself she breaks free of all the constraints and barriers and walks into the life-infusing company of the despised Paravan. She suffers from the worst consequences. Ammu is locked in the room for touching the untouchable. For spoiling the family honor by breaking cast and class hierarchy. When Ammu goes to the police station to defend Velutha, the police officer treats her as a prostitute. She is castigated vehemently and finally disowned by the family. She is discouraged from visiting Rahel who is kept at Ayemenem.

Men can have as many wives as they like. Megan K. Mass, a developmental psychologist, who has done extensive research on gender and sexual socialization, observes that boys are often rewarded while exhibiting masculine traits like aggression and violence. Her study found that forty five percent of women said that they expected to experience some kind of sexual violence just because they are women, whereas, none of the men reported a fear of sexual violence (9). She claims that boys spend their childhoods practicing getting what they want. For example, Chacko, her brother has relation with number of female workers in his factory. But when Ammu has relation with Velutha, the second man in her life, she is condemned as adulterous. She is not forgiven for crossing the boundary. In death she is alone in a grimy, dingy room of Bharat lodge in Allepey. She is denied dignity of a funeral as the church refuses to bury Ammu; so Chacko wraps her in a dirty bed sheet and burns her. Like Catherine and Sakambari she, too, dies early. She dies at the age of thirty one, "Not old, not young, but a viable, die – able age" (Roy 161). Ammu suffers from those cruelty because she is a woman.

All these three female protagonists experience gender based discrimination and violence at home. Despite changes, it can be argued, the fundamental hierarchical structuring of gender relation remains more or less unaltered. A new report by UN Women mentions that "families can be places of love but also spaces of violence against women and girls." The report has found that "Across Central and Southern Asia, 23 percent women and girls aged 15 – 49 were subjected to physical or sexual violence by their intimate partners in the last 12 months as the report shows" ( Shrestha, Elisa 1). Men harass, beat or insult women at home because they think that they need to discipline them with corporal punishment. They become victim of violence just because they are women. The authors share the consciousness of women's victimization under patriarchy.

#### **4.3 Women as Transgressors**

Under patriarchy girls are socialized, encouraged and coerced into adopting feminine personalities and interests. They are forced to perform the feminine gender roles. Cast in the background of conservative patriarchal society, the protagonists of these novels are expected to inculcate the feminine traits and submit to the will of men. Their respective family and society attempt to discipline them in the submissive feminine roles. Beauvoir contends that "all history has been made by male" (*Second* 1). She explains: "Legislators, priests, philosophers, writers and scientists have striven to show that the subordinate position of woman is willed in heaven and advantageous on earth. The religion invented by men reflected this wish for domination" (*Second* 11). Patriarchy treats the woman as the second sex who exists in relation to man, the first sex. Beauvoir demands that this state of affairs should come to an end. The authors of these novels have depicted a society in which women are treated as the 'second sex.' But, gradually, the female characters start revolting against this injustice heaped upon them.

The protagonists of these novels find that the feminine roles given to them as limiting and restricting. They experience violence and discrimination while maintaining these roles. They are not only ill-treated but are also abused and exploited and looked down. Thus, to free themselves from these mistreatments, they fight against the patriarchal oppression by transgressing those laws that their family and society has made for them. Millett also views that patriarchal gender roles are repressive to women. And the acting out of these sex-roles in the unequal and repressive relations and domination and subordination is what Millett calls 'Sexual Politics' (in Selden 215). Patriarchal social, political and economic rules are against women. They control women by controlling their natural wishes and desires. All the three protagonists, Catherine, Sakambari and Ammu make sense that discrimination against girl children is a crucial aspect of patriarchy. In the process of liberating themselves from the restriction of patriarchy, they transgress those rules that their family and society have set for them.

Catherine in *Wuthering Heights*, from the very beginning, appears to be quite subversive. She is quite unfeminine and unnatural when analyzed in terms of culture and manners. She lacks the qualities of 'womanhood' like modesty, subservience, humility, though a set of "culturally defined characteristics" (Moi 114). Seen from the patriarchal perspective she is wicked and wild girl, who is unable to fit to the design of patriarchy. As a Victorian daughter she is expected to engage herself with the feminine tasks in the company of Nelly Dean. But she prefers scampering on the moors. She and Heathcliff are determined to "grow up as rude as savages" (Bronte 49). By disobeying her brother, who wants her to behave like a lady, she revolts against patriarchy. She writes in her diary: "Hindley is a detestable substitute – his conduct to Heathcliff is atrocious – H. and I are



going to rebel – we took our initiary step this evening" (25). She starts her revolution by disobeying Hindley, her brother, the head of the family who stands for patriarchy.

She also transgresses the religious norms. She throws the Bible in the form of "dingy nook" and announces that she hates "a good book" (Bronte 26). Commenting her unconventional manners Nelly remarks:

Certainly, she had ways with her such as I never saw a child take up before; and she put all of us past out patience fifty times and oftener in a day: from the hour she came downstairs till the hour she went to bed, we had not a minute's security that she wouldn't be in mischief. . . . A wild, wicked slip she was. (Bronte 45)

Catherine manners do not match with the feminine ideals prescribed by patriarchy. She is uncultured and immodest. In addition she is a disbeliever of religious scripture.

By defying the dictates of her brother and the society, she transgress the Victorian norms and values attached to modesty and decency. Though she marries Linton for the financial security, as Hindley has degraded Heathcliff to the status of a servant and as a daughter she has no property right, she strongly claims that nothing on earth can separate her from Heathcliff. She announces, "I am Heathcliff . . . he's more than I am" (83). Nelly fails to understand her unconventional thought. Catherine challenges patriarchal authority by defying the dictate of her brother, of the Bible, and of Nelly Dean who stands as the mother figure.

Her marriage to Mr. Linton, a bourgeois gentle man, can be interpreted as her compromise with the norms of her family. But it is understandable, that she married him when Heathcliff disappeared. She has harmonious relation to Linton not because she is submissive and a devoted wife, but Linton cares not to excite her true feelings. A good wife should be meek and submissive, self-restraint, a sense of service and dedication are

supposed to be important traits of a woman. Contrary to these traits, Catherine is aggressive and stubborn, but sensitive at the same time. Tyson explains that people "internalize the norms and values of patriarchy" that cast women as emotional, weak, nurturing and submissive (85). But Catherine rejects those norms and values. So, when Heathcliff returns to Thrushcross Grange she insists continuing befriending with him regardless of Linton's objection. Their obvious affection for one another makes Edgar uncomfortable and jealous. In a rage, Edgar declares that Catherine must choose between Heathcliff and himself.

Nonetheless, Catherine remains stubborn and follows the dictates of her heart. She refuses to speak to Linton; locking herself in a room she refuses to eat. Instead of succumbing to her husband's meanness she decides to break his heart by breaking her own (Bronte 117). She calls her husband "the meanest thing" and address him as "that creature" (Bronte 100). This violates the patriarchal expectation of ideal wife envisioned as 'Angel in the House.' Victorian societal sensibilities had very skilfully constructed the paradigm of the 'Angel in the House'. The female is an 'Angel'-- they float across the house; their feet are never seen; their actions never to be perceived; their voices never to be heard. Catherine breaks out of this stereotype, refuses to get manipulated by the stronger sex, till the very end refuses to be made into his plaything, her answer is simple and her voice is determined. Since males control both of the public and private worlds, Millett insists that males' control must be eliminated if women are to be liberated. For this men and women have to eliminate gender roles. Catherine portrayal reminds this feminist stand.

Written and published more than hundred years after the publication of *Wuthering Heights* (1847), in *Blue Mimosas* (1965) this Nepali writer shows that societal sensibilities have not changed, they are very much the same. In the context of Nepali women,

Victorian mentality had not changed much from 1847 to 1965. Patriarchy has continued to treat women as object of men desire and has to comply with him- she is silent and subjugated, has no voice of her own. She is to smile, and then keep smiling. She is not expected to express anything that she might have in her heart, and she must stay content with whatever patriarchy has in heart for her unquestionably. Indeed, women are little objects of males' gratification. This state of affair is objectionable for the writers who write from feminist consciousness. This consciousness manifests in the portrayal of Sakambari who too transgresses the patriarchal norms and values prescribed for women.

In the portrayal of her female protagonist in *Blue Mimosa*, Parijat aligns with Bronte. From the very beginning of the story, Sakambari is portrayed as a deviant and she emerges as a subversive female character. She defies the norms and values that a girl or lady is expected to observe in of the sixties of the Nepali society. The plot of the novel unfolds with Suyogbir's visit to his friend's house where he encounters his friends' three sisters. He narrates his encounter with Sakambari:

'My name is Sakambari.' Her voice burst in on us like a bullet. Startled, I turned toward the door and saw a woman of twenty-four. She was about five-feet-three, fair, with very large breasts on an extremely thin body. She wore gold-rimmed glasses on deep-set, sparkling black eyes. Her hair was cut very close to her head, in the style of ancient Hebrew soldiers, and her small, white lobes wore earrings of black stones.

She came into the room. The atmosphere froze. I wanted to laugh in turn at her name, her behavior, her looks, but my laughter also froze. (3)

Suyogbir is a man of traditional mindset. He finds Sakambari very unfeminine who violates the norms of propriety and modesty expected from a young lady. She abruptly

enters the room and takes the initiation of introducing herself. Suyogbir compares her voice with “a bullet.” To express the inconveniences that they experienced he says “the atmosphere froze.” The quote also hints the difficulties that Suyogbir would face while dealing with the protagonist.

Suyogbir denies to treat women as individual beings like the men. For him they are the sexual objects to gratify males' erotic desires. His focus is on their age, their complexion, the costume they wear, their figure, hips, breasts, legs, neck and hair styles. He immediately evaluates them from their outward appearance. Whereas, Sakambari disregards male's gaze. Her appearance, dress and the makeup defy the notion of feminine beauty prescribed by patriarchy. Likewise, her manners also do not match with the normativity of femininity.

Suyogbir thinks that Sakambari bluntly tells whatever comes in her head; she does not know how to respect the others. For him she is subversive and indomitable. He evaluates, “She was not the kind of woman who immediately feels helpless” (12). Obviously, the traditional attributes attached to women like shy, submissive, kind and cooperative fail to define her. Her response to the insect-killing flower reveals her understanding of life and love:

If a flower buds for itself and opens for itself and, as if accepting some compulsion, falls whether it fights the black-bee or not, then why should it fall suffering the sting of the black-bee? It falls only for itself. It falls by its own will.

(14)

Sakambari's response to Suyogbir reveals her ideological stand. She believes on free will of individuals. Whereas, Suyogbir finds her opinion quite absurd. He is surprised when she unhesitatingly accepts the offer of cigarette made by him and smokes in his face. This

is quite unconventional in the context of Nepal in the sixties. Suyogbir finds her manner quite embarrassing:

For a moment Bari's words made me feel miserable. I thought, she just says whatever comes into her head. She doesn't care how much she embarrasses someone. She is really an outspoken woman. How easily she calls me first 'soldier' and then 'old man.' I think she even embarrasses her brother a bit. (17)

Being embarrassed, he does not dare to face her. Nonetheless, he passionately falls in love with her. He tries his best to impress her; praises her saying that long hair suits her.

Contrary to his expectation, he gets shocked when he finds that she has shaved her hair like that of a widow. This indicates that she does not care to charm other, especially men by her physical appearance. Though Suyogbir feels being humiliated and insulted he wants to be closer to her. "The Better I knew Bari, the more I become entangled with her, the more I became hypnotized, the more my interest in her sharpened" (49). Suyogbir's fascination and attraction for Sakambari suggests that not only traditional women are beautiful. Sakambari's portrayal defy the definition of feminine beauty.

Suyogbir is a heterosexual macho man, who has easy access to women, and thinks that he deserves to have sex with women irrespective of their desire and consent. His passion for Sakambari reminds him his past. He had raped and murdered innocent women. But feels helpless and worthless in front of Sakambari and wonders, "I wondered how or where this woman could be controlled. What substance could melt her? What truth could touch her?" (73). His worries and anxieties reveal his patriarchal mind set. Since men are grown up claiming for what they want, he senses failure when he cannot woo Sakambari. So, when he finds her alone in the evening he abruptly kisses her. After the incident she turns to silence and dies. He confesses, "I have killed Sakambari. In broad daylight I raped

Sakambari . . . . Bari died proving the emotion of my true love a rape” (96). The bold and juvenile Bari turns to silence and death. Her death supports Tyson proclamation that if a woman wants to survive she needs to play the role of a good girl, a virgin who will be ideal wife and mother in future; a promiscuous with loose moral will be rejected from not only getting married but will also be socially excluded (89).

Sakambari's withdrawal to silence and then to death is unexpected because the narrator confesses that she is not a coward to die of humiliation. Thus, Sakambari's withdrawal to silent death should be interpreted symbolically. It is apt to quote Katrak, who observes, “overt defiance of patriarchal structures carried severe penalties such as social exclusion and exile from community, and even death [ . . . ]” (58). It should also be understood in the social context of the then Nepali society where it would be impossible for an unconventional woman like Sakambari to live. Even if she had protested, she would not have got justice rather she herself would have been blamed for provoking the man. It is aptly said, “Women must pay severe costs for confronting tradition” (Katrak 157). Sakambari as a transgressor, breaches the norms of propriety expected from women. Thus, she becomes the victim of sexual violence. Her death shows the violation of women's human rights in the name of culture under patriarchy. Susan Moller Okin mentions, “Many violations of women's basic human rights occur within families and are justified by reference to culture, religion or tradition” (33). The cultural aspects associated with the purity of women's body leads her silence death.

There lies a gap of nearly hundred and fifty years between the publication of *Wuthering Heights* and *The God of Small things*. During this period the world has changed a lot. Because of Human Rights Movements and Women Rights Movements, countries across the world have become more liberal. With social, cultural and political changes, a

change has also come about the ideas and thoughts of women. Yet, in spite of women's gains in terms of education and empowerment, the ideological foundations of gender relations have barely changed. It is still difficult to remove entrenched patriarchal practices at all levels of society. Rita Manchanda in her study on the women movement and Maoist insurgency in Nepal, highlights this grim reality in the context of South Asia:

In South Asia, both nation state-building projects and armed revolutionary class struggles have seen the mobilization of women and its corollary, the subsuming of the women's question in nationalist or socialist projects and ideological strictures that in the aftermath pull women back to the gender discriminatory regimes of the personal sphere. (238)

Though women have taken active part in the nation- building and revolutionary projects like the men, after the completion of those projects women are sent back to private sphere and their roles are limited to traditional feminine gender roles. It is still difficult to remove entrenched patriarchal practices from the society.

Portrayal of Ammu, the protagonist of *The God of Small Things* reveals that patriarchy is all pervasive and women's predicament in the twentieth century India is no less bad than those of Victorian England. Ammu's position is more vulnerable than that of Catherine and Sakambari. She experiences more discrimination and violence than those two female characters. Like Catherine and Sakambari, since the norms and values of her family and society are oppressive to women, she subverts them. In this regards, Roy resembles with her predecessors in the portrayal of subversive female protagonist.

Born in the conservative family, Ammu has grown experiencing and witnessing gender violence. She has seen her mother silently bearing the beating and torture meted to her. Her mother silence to the persistence injustice supports Beauvoir's complain about

women's inaction to change their positions. She complains: "If woman seems to be inessential [being] which never becomes the essential, it is because she herself fails to bring about this change" ("Introduction" 10). Her mother remains silent and indifferent even towards her daughter's suffering. When Ammu's education is abruptly halted because of her father's decision the mother is reluctant to take any step. Ammu sees no hope for gaining education and love in the family.

It shows how the institution of marriage has been set up to men's advantages. In *The Second Sex*, Beauvoir explains that, since the beginning of social organization, men, as physically stronger beings, were better adapted to heavy manual work involved in hunting, fishing and defending the tribe. Women were involved in domestic work and raising children. Men consequently had more freedom to invent systems of thought and social and political organization because they did not bear children. These conceptual, social and political systems then developed to favor male's interests rather than society's interests. Women have been obliged to adapt to this patriarchal system, which maintains them in a subordinate position (446). The husband is free to do as he pleases whereas the wife will always be subordinate, secondary and parasitic in her dependence on him. Both Ammu and her mother depend on the father as a daughter and as a wife.

Ammu feels imprisoned within the status of a daughter; because the same family has readily sent their son abroad for higher studies. Beauvoir claims that there is no such thing as "feminine nature." She denies the existence of pre-ordained human nature and emphasizes for the freedom of each person to create himself or herself as a self-governing individuals (in Waugh 321). Ammu realizes that there will be no freedom and happiness in her parental home. She decides to take decision of her life. Her action is a kind of threat to the normativity of society, and can be interpreted as a feminist intervention in the given



social context. A girl is expected to wait for her parents to arrange her marriage. But to escape the cold and gloomy environment of her parents' house, she marries on her own.

Ammu expects emotional solace and love in marriage. Beauvoir aptly explains women's expectation in marriage:

There is unanimous agreement that getting a husband – or in some cases a ‘protector’ – is for her the most important of undertakings... She will free herself from the paternal home, from her mother’s hold, she will open up her future not by active conquest but by delivering herself up, passive and docile, into the hands of a new master. (352)

Women in marriage are expected to display certain attributes, like submissiveness, kindness, self-sacrifice and perseverance in order to be socially approved. Ammu is well aware of her role of a virtuous wife. Analyzing the construction of feminine in high-born women, in the South Asian context, anthropologist Subhadra Mitra Channa remarks, “Women must keep quiet, women must tolerate – that is what most high-born women were taught by their parents” (116). Ammu tries her best to accommodate with her husband who turns to be alcoholic and irresponsible.

This social role of a wife expects a woman to attend to the emotional and physical needs of others, effacing one’s self. The loss of ‘self’ may not be felt by those who willingly sacrifice their self for the sake of their family. Conflict arises when one is not willing to compromise. Then not compromising with the traditional feminine role becomes conflicting and problematic. Ammu’s self-esteem is put to severe test when her husband shows willingness to send her to Mr. Hollick to be looked after. This decision shatters her mite. She is not treated as an individual but as a commodity. She is a pawn in the hands of

her husband. All her expectations and dreams are shattered and she comes back home with a lot of frustration.

Ammu as a divorcee receives a very cold response from her mother. Neither Ammu nor her children receive any kind of sustenance from Mammachi. “As she grew older, Ammu learned to live with this cold, calculating cruelty” (Roy 181-182). She neither surrenders nor escapes from the problems but with great strength faces the challenge. But when she reads Velutha's inviting eyes she decides to accept his love and rejoice her body. They realize that both of them have gifts to offer each other. Roy vividly describes the poignant moments when they become aware of each other as a man and a woman: “Clouded eyes held clouded eyes in a steady gaze and a luminous woman opened herself to a luminous man” (Roy 336). She finds peace, joy and contentment in surrendering herself completely to him.

Ammu defies the norms of patriarchy and dares to love and mate outside the bounds of race and class. The revolt of Ammu is against the torture and the hypocrisy of a male-chauvinist society. She takes a strong stand against injustice despite her limitations. She struggles not only against history but also to be a woman to attain her feminine fulfillment which is denied by men, Pappachi, Chacko and Baba. Her daring act of getting out of herself and intensely loving a Paravan, an untouchable shows her strength of mind. She does not endorse the rules applicable to the touchable femininity while enjoying her body with an untouchable. But for this, she is mercilessly persecuted by the society, so cruelly annihilated by the combined vengeance of all her people that she suffers from trauma and dies all alone.

This justifies Millett who points that women who are not obedient towards those rules set for them will be intimidated. She asserts that the streetwise woman realizes that if

she wants to survive in patriarchy, she would better act feminine, or else she may be subjected to “a variety of cruelties and barbarities” (Qtd. in Tong 52). Ammu breaches patriarchal tradition by violating the values of chastity attached to female body. Not only her body has become profane, she is a matter of shame for the society; and as a fallen woman she is called a prostitute and pushed to death. By laying importance on chastity and moral conduct, patriarchal society makes an attempt to restrict woman's sexuality. Her people find Ammu's ways offensive because her stubbornness and free spirit are a threat to the traditions of her society.

Anti-essentialist or constructivist feminists argue that the inferior status of women in the society has been culturally produced. Gender, they insist, sees not what males or females are but how a given culture sees them. Thus, to say that women are timid, sweet, stupid, intuitive and emotional is to continue the myth created by patriarchy just to submit them to men's will. Feminists do not believe that 'anatomy is destiny' and present evidences to show that gender roles are culturally, not biologically determined. They demand that feminist writers should avoid stereotyping female characters. All these female authors share this feminist consciousness in the portrayal of their female characters. In their bold portrayal of women as transgressors of patriarchal gender roles, these authors challenge patriarchy and its subjection of women. They challenge gender stereotypes by portraying assertive and bold female characters who deny to submit to the men at the cost of their self-respect. They deny the norms of decency and modesty attached to female gender. They challenge patriarchal authority by disobeying their custodians who control their lives.

#### 4.4 Defying Femininity

Patriarchy prescribes certain gender traits for men and women to be masculine and feminine and discipline them accordingly through coercion and punishment. People "internalize the norms and values of patriarchy which privileges men by promoting traditional gender roles" that cast men as rational, strong, protective, and decisive whereas, they cast women as emotional, weak, nurturing and submissive (Tyson 85). Since men are believed to be rational, strong and protective, patriarchy creates a role of a provider to males and treat them as the head of the family. Placing males as head of the family and superior to women, make men feel that women are their property. Men think that women must submit to them. Men beat women if they deny to submit to their desire. Tracing the cause of violence against women under patriarchy Raewyn Connell explains, "When dependent women do not confirm to demands from their husband or boyfriend, they are beaten" (*Gender* 3). Feminists like Beauvoir, Millett, Friedan and others believe that patriarchal gender roles are repressive to women. They view that playing the traditional gender roles promotes men power and legitimizes men's exploitation of women.

The roots of violence against women, as Chatterji points, are deeply embedded within the patriarchal social structure itself. The structure compels the women subordination, subservience and dependence on men; traps her within the wife-mother-daughter- sister role without offering her access to socially acceptable alternatives as an independent. . . (31). Since patriarchy sees women as inferior to men and perceives women as sex objects, feminists reason that women should avoid uncritically playing traditional gender roles imposed on them. Similarly, they demand that women writers should refrain from depicting stereotypical female characters limited to secondary roles to their male counterparts.

Seen in this light the protagonists of all these novels are portrayed from the feminists' perspective. In all these novels, patriarchy and the values it implies are criticized explicitly as well as implicitly. None of them endorse traditional feminine traits in the portrayal of their lead female characters. The protagonists are critical towards the gender roles prescribed to them. They do not limit themselves in maintaining the ethos of patriarchy. They are non-conformist and move beyond the traditional social roles of a good daughter, devoted wife and ideal mother. These female protagonists resist a system that subjugates and silences them and enjoy their life as they wish. Their denial to accept the normativity of femininity becomes fatal for them.

Catherine Earnshaw denies to obey her brother, her custodian and take the rambling in the moors with her childhood mate Heathcliff who her brother despises. Hindley cannot stand her sister falling in love with this man below standard. To separate them, he degrades Heathcliff to the status of a servant. So when Catherine returns from Thrushcross Grange staying there for five weeks, and completely being changed, he feels proud. Nelly reports how he receives her: "Hindley lifted her from her horse, exclaiming delightedly, 'Why, Cathy, you are quite a beauty! I should scarcely have known you: you look like a lady now.'" He insultingly calls him, "You may come and wish Miss Catherine welcome, like the other servants" (Bronte 37). Hindley's aim is to make Catherine recognize her status. Despite Hindley's prohibition she continues befriending him.

She loves Heathcliff passionately, yet she decides to marry Linton. For financial security, not only for her sake, but also to support Heathcliff. Nelly is shocked to hear her unconventional thought. Nonetheless, evaluates that "she was full of ambition—and led her to adopt a double character without exactly intending to deceive anyone" (Bronte 47). Unlike, traditional female character, she is aggressive and quarrels and fights with her

suitor. She violets the notion of modesty. Linton, who is to propose her, finds her manner unbearable, as he criticizes, "You've made me afraid and ashamed of you" (Bronte 51)! But they negotiated. Catherine poignantly explains why she has accepted Linton's marriage proposal: ". . . if the wicked man in there had not brought Heathcliff so low, I shouldn't have thought of it" (Bronte 58). She is not hesitant; she makes clear about her intention. This is very much unlike the feminine character envisioned by the Victorian society.

After marriage a woman is expected to submit to the will of his husband. But when Heathcliff reappears she shows her natural fondness to him and wants to share her happiness with her husband. But her husband despises Heathcliff. Their obvious affection for one another makes Edgar uncomfortable and jealous. In a rage, Edgar declares that Catherine must choose between Heathcliff and himself. He fears her fondness will disturb the power relation of his home. She does not obey him; rather she neglects his challenge, locking herself in a room and refusing to eat. This shows her free spirit and stubbornness.

Linton's meanness shocks Catherine. She has no one to share her joys and sorrows. She becomes restless and turns apathetic towards everything. Heathcliff asks Nelly whether she has mentioned his name or not. When Nelly responds negatively, he expresses his anger, "You say she never mentions my name, and that I am never mentioned to her. To whom should she mention me if I am a forbidden topic in the house? She thinks you are all spies for her husband. Oh, I've no doubt she's in hell among you!" (Bronte 75) This shows how patriarchal marriage entraps women. A stable marriage, in patriarchal setting, requires sacrifice from the part of the woman. She should be meek and submissive, self-restraint, and have a sense of service and dedication to her husband and the in-laws. Catherine denies showcasing these traits, consequently, she suffers.

In her stubbornness and free spirit Sakambari matches Catherine. She, too, is an unconventional lady who follows the dictates of her own heart. At the very first meeting, Suyogbir is shocked by her appearance. She has short hair and has abrupt manner. Suyogbir represents hard core patriarchal values. He expects women to be shy, submissive and silent. He believes that they are fond of beautifying themselves to attract males' attention. His expectations about women resurfaces when Sakambari abruptly enters the room where they are sitting and introduces herself. Her appearance also does not match with the way young girls generally look. Especially, "her hair that was cut very close to her head, in the style of ancient Hebrew soldiers", does not fit for a young lady (Parijat 3). Her manners breaches feminine ideals.

The more Suyogbir knows her the more unfeminine he finds her. He is of the notion that girls prefer to be called by their pet name. He believes that women are fond of flattery and proposes to call her by her pet name "Bari." He narrates, "Most women are pleased and happy to be called by their pet name, but Bari did not look as if she were" (Parijat 26). She remains indifferent towards his flattery. He wonders what a rash woman she is. He suspects whether there flows some anti-human element in her blood. Her manner defies his understanding of womanhood.

Sakambari is unfeminine; witty, bold and straight forward she speaks her mind, irrespective of the social expectations and makes her own decisions. Once Suyogbir to impress her recommends that long hair suits her. But to his surprise: "She was like a widow who had come from Haridwar with a shaven head or a mad woman who had just cut her hair. After that I did not dare say anything. I felt wounded and desolate" (Parijat 48). His comparison to her with the Hindu widow reminds Judith Lorber's and Patricia Yancey Martin's observation:

Cultural views about the body are more than aesthetic; they are moral judgment too. When a person's body contradicts social conventions regarding weight, height, and shape that person may be viewed as lacking in self-control and self-respect. Conversely, people whose bodies comply with valued conventions are admired, praised and held up to others as ideals to be emulated. In short, by judging, rewarding and punishing people of different body sizes, shapes, weights, and musculature, members of a social group persuade and coerce each other to construct socially acceptable (and similar-looking) bodies [ . . .]. How you look to the other person (masculine or feminine) is tied to who you are (woman or man) your social identity is your gendered identity. (254)

Her disregard to her look can be interpreted in terms her feminist awareness. Because the beauty myth created by patriarchy and distributed by the beauty industry disempower women. By trimming her hair short in an unconventional manner, she resists the traditional definition of feminine beauty and resists the Hindu cultural value attached to the body of an unmarried woman. She denies to mold herself as an object of look to gratify men's lustful look.

Suyogbir finds Sakambari as a challenge to his masculine ego for she is indifferent to him and is not lured by his flattery. He is of the opinion that women are there to please men and they are not expected to contradict them. This is the first time he faces a woman who does not compromise with a man. He expresses his sense of helplessness: "I wondered how or where this woman could be controlled. What substance could melt her?" (Parijat 72). It reveals his masculine ego; motivated by patriarchal notion he wants to control her as a woman. He has not grown to expect defeat with a woman. So he tries to possess her anyway. Connell argues that gender is "a key dimension of personal life,



social relations and culture” (*Gender ix*), than to stray outside of established gender norms is to invite danger to one’s life. Sakambari is a threat to Suyogbir in particular and to patriarchy in general.

Suyogbir fails to attract and woo Sakambari. So he feels defeated; he finds himself weaker and lesser human being than Sakambari, a woman. This is not acceptable for him. As a patriarchal man, he fails to acknowledge that women too are individuals and they too have personal choices. Thus, when he finds her all alone, led by his passion, he kissed her. He reports, "I caught hold of her white neck and kissed her soft lips” (*Parijat 77*). This is quite humiliating and insulting for Sakambari. She has not expected this from him within her own home. She could not bear this, she turns to silence and dies. Katrak explains, “Women must pay severe costs for confronting tradition” (157). Sakambari has violated the tradition by being bold and assertive and not responding men's flattery positively. Above all she breaches the feminine tradition by approaching a man all alone.

To sum up, the analysis shows that though there has been social and political changes during the period these female authors published their debut novels, the fundamental thought about women remains, to some extent, the same. Patriarchy is still pervasive and women suffer from gender based violence and discrimination within the home. Patriarchal society treats males as superior to females and places them as the head of the family. Mostly, the father is the head of the family; when the father dies his eldest son occupies his position. As the head of the family men think that women are their property; as they have provided them, they must submit to their desire. Females are disciplined to embrace feminine gender roles and act feminine. Those who deviate from normativity of femininity are punished. Catherine, Sakambari and Ammu resent the role of a good daughter or good wife. Their disobedience of their custodians leads to their death.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

#### **Predicament of Women in Patriarchy**

This research aims to trace the shared consciousness between three women authored novels across the border. They are *Wuthering Heights* by Emily Bronte, *Blue Mimosa* by Parijat and *The God of Small Things* by Arundhati Roy. These are the debut novels of all these authors, who belong to different time and geographical zones. They wrote in different cultural backgrounds. Yet, the way they portray their female characters fascinated me to examine what consciousness do these authors share in their novels. These all are female centered novels. All these protagonists are put in the backdrop of society which is hostile and unfriendly to women. In the process of analysis I have tried to examine the portrayal of the lead female characters and their sufferings in the backdrop of patriarchal society.

The first and foremost consciousness that the authors of these novels share is the consciousness that patriarchy is oppressive to women. It sanctions violence and discrimination against women. It treats men and women differently and the discrimination and violence against women stem from the home. All the three female protagonists of these novels face gender discrimination from the very beginning of their life. To show that patriarchy treats men and women differently and home is the site of discrimination and violence against women, these three protagonists are juxtaposed with their male siblings. The sons and daughters are treated differently in their respective family. These female characters do not have the rights and freedom enjoyed by their brothers. As these characters grow, they realize that women suffer within the home in the hands of men because of bias gender roles assigned to women.

Under patriarchy men are placed as head of the family and women are subordinated to them. This privilege position makes men think that women should obey and submit to their will. The head of the family has the authority to use the resources as per his choices and desires. Because of this discriminatory practices, Catherine, the protagonist of *Wuthering Heights* suffers. After her father's death, her brother, Hindley as a successor to his father becomes the head of the family. He degrades Heathcliff to the level of a servant and deprives Catherine from marrying Heathcliff, her soul mate. Because of the discriminatory inheritance law, penniless Catherine, implicitly, is forced to marry Edgar Linton. She expects to support Heathcliff, for as a wife, she would share her husband's property. But, contrary to her expectation, when Heathcliff returns to Thrushcross Grange, Linton not only debars Heathcliff entry to his house but also warns her too choose either of them. Linton as a husband controls her life. Linton's meanness and his apathy towards her interests drag her towards depression; being helpless and restless she dies.

Similar to Victorian England, patriarchy is very much a part of 20<sup>th</sup> century Nepali life, and is deeply entrenched in the norms, values and customs of the nation. In Nepali society also males' dominance over women is a common phenomenon. Though there is no clear indication of Sakambari, the protagonist of *Blue Mimosa*, discriminated by her own family members, one can access that she has less life opportunities than her elder brother, Shiv. She is always located and limited within the boundary of her house. Whereas, her brother has complete freedom of movement. In addition, Shiv as the head of the family decides who his sisters should get married and who to invite in the family gathering. Accordingly, he invites Suyogbir to his house. He never takes consent from Sakambari whenever he invites him even in her birthday. This creates trouble in her life.

Under patriarchy boys are expected to be brave and "macho" behavior in men gets interpreted and accepted as the right to inflict violence on women. But women are expected to be not only chaste, but also obedient and "good". The typical "good woman" is someone who prioritizes the honor of the family and maintains the "culture of silence" at the cost of her suffering. Because of this different gender role expectations of male and female, women tend to hide the physical and sexual harassment. Parijat highlights this issue in *Blue Mimosas*. Suyogbir is a macho man. He believes that men can have sex with women if they like; if the woman is unwilling the man may use force. When he is unable to charm Sakambari with his cajoling and coaxing, he uses force. Finding her all alone he abruptly kisses her. Grown in the patriarchal society, Sakambari despite her boldness, could not protest making loud noise. Even if she has done, it is understandable, justice would have been denied because of the tradition of blaming the victim. She would be blamed for losing virginity and chastity, the highly valued women's virtues in patriarchy. Fear of social scandal and feeling of humiliation lead her to silent death

Similarly, Ammu is discriminated at her home. She and her mother become the target of her father professional failure. They are frequently beaten. Whereas, her brother Chacko is in the position to warn his father not to repeat any nonsense by beating his wife. The father obeys to the son. Her father denies higher education to her, but at the same time her brother goes to Oxford for his study. Frustrated Ammu marries on her own. Her brother also marries on his own. Both get divorce. But Chacko's single status is readily accepted, whereas, Ammu is humiliated and insulted. Besides, Chacko is encouraged to have affairs with different women to quench his men's need, but Ammu is thrown out from her house in an allegation of adultery when she sleeps with the second man in her life.

Patriarchal gender roles cast men as strong, decisive, rational and protective while women are seen as emotional, irrational, weak, nurturing and submissive. These stereotypes of masculinity and femininity have been internalized by both men and women. It is because of these gender stereotypes that women are at a disadvantage and are vulnerable to violence and other kinds of discriminations and injustices. The second consciousness that these authors share is under patriarchy women are encouraged, forced and coerced to adopt feminine personalities and interests. If women fail to embrace feminine traits and transgress the norms and values ascribed to them they become the target of cruelties. All the female protagonists are portrayed as subversive to feminine gender roles assigned to them. They deny playing the feminine role at the cost of their individuality. Their subversive personality brought them misfortune.

Finally, they share that though feminine gender roles are limiting and exploitative, women have to obey them for the sake of survival. Disobedience to patriarchy brings them casualties. All the three protagonists deny being silent, submissive and obedient. They emerge as rebels and transgressors who transgress the patriarchal norms and values of their respective society. They deny to obey their father, brother, husband or boyfriend against their will. Catherine, first of all, disregards her brother's dictate and accompanies Heathcliff. Later, she challenges Linton her husband not giving up Heathcliff from her life. So does Sakambari in her defiance of feminine norms. Neither she has the feminine personality nor does she have feminine interests. She is bold and assertive; she smokes in the face of seniors and do not hesitates to talk to senior males. She disobeys the dictates of patriarchy, remains indifferent to the presence of a man and approaches him carelessly.

In the process of sharing the feminist consciousness these authors portray their female characters as transgressors, and Ammu is the worst transgressors. Thus, she suffers

much throughout her life. First she disobeys the norms of arranged marriages and marries on her own. She makes a wrong choice and falls prey to an alcoholic husband who wants to prostitute her to save his job. When she denies he physically abuses her. This time, she breaches the norms of an ideal wife. Instead of enduring the torture, she fights back, gives him a divorce and returns to her parents' house though unwelcomed. Lastly, she disobeys the love law and challenges the norms of chastity as a valued feminine virtue. She defames family honor and prestige by sleeping with an untouchable. Her family disowns her, consequently she receives a miserable death.

The analysis demonstrates that though there has been social and political changes from Brontë to Roy, yet, the fundamental thought about women remains, to some extent, the same. Patriarchy is still pervasive and women suffer from gender-based violence and discrimination both at home and away from the home. Females are disciplined to embrace those restrictive feminine gender roles and act feminine. Thus, those who deviate from the normativity of femininity are punished. These are the consciousness shared by these novelists in their novels.

Obviously, these women novelists have used fiction as a medium to bring to light the experiences of women. The feelings of suppression, dejection, alienation and loneliness are exemplified in their novels. The protagonists in the novels are women who desire to live for themselves. They collide with the society's bias norms and values. The tone of the novels is sympathetic towards their unconventional acts. The authors support the protagonists and their actions; they rather put blame for their actions on the rigidity of the contemporary society. None of the female characters conform to the image of an enduring and self-sacrificing wife and mother envisioned by patriarchy.

In conclusion, one can trace feminists' consciousness in their portrayal. They differ from the stereotyped female characters who allow them to be exploited. The primary focus of feminist fictions is to bring into focus the untold suffering of women under a patriarchal society. They attempt to do away with the secondary position ascribed to women and interrogate the cultural prescriptions that subordinate and trivialize women and treat them as inferior. Therefore, these texts support feminism that demands equality and rights for women like those enjoyed by men in the families as well as in the societies. Inspired from the feminist that is the consciousness of victimization, this analysis has traced the shared consciousness of these three female authors beyond the boarder. Future researchers can examine the narrative techniques and themes of these novels.

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## APPENDIX

## ANNOUNCEMENT FOR MINI RESEARCH PROPOSALS



**लघु अनुसन्धान प्रस्ताव आह्वान सम्बन्धमा**

उपर्युक्त सम्बन्धमा अनुसन्धान व्यवस्थापन एकाइ (Research Management Cell), महेन्द्र बहुमुखी क्याम्पस, धरान विभूवन विश्वविद्यालयका अनुसन्धान केन्द्र, केन्द्रीय विभाग तथा आंगिक क्याम्पसहरूमा कार्यरत प्राध्यापकहरूका लागि निम्न सर्तहरूमा आधारित भएर आफ्नो रुचि र कार्यरत विशिष्ट विषय तथा क्षेत्रमा केन्द्रित रहेर लघु अनुसन्धान प्रस्ताव पेश गर्नका लागि आह्वान गरिँदछ।

**सर्तहरू**

१. अनुसन्धान प्रस्ताव २०१९ कार्तिक १५ गते राती १२:०० बजेभित्र आइसक्नु पर्नेछ। अनुसन्धान प्रस्ताव email address: rmc.mmc.dharan@gmail.com मा Subject मा Mini-research लेखेर पठाउनु पर्नेछ।
२. यस सम्बन्धी अन्य कार्यतालिका तथा सूचना एकरङ्को सूचनापट्टीमा वरिष्ठ प्रकाशित गरिनेछ।
३. कुनै अन्य निकाय वा संस्थाबाट प्राप्त भए बाहेक लघु अनुसन्धानको सम्पूर्ण व्यवहार अनुसन्धानकर्ता आफैले व्यहोर्नु पर्नेछ।
४. अनुसन्धान प्रस्ताव A4 paper size मा 1 inch all sides margin मा Double Space Line मा टाइप गरिएको १५ देखि २० पृष्ठसम्मको हुनु पर्नेछ। अनुसन्धान प्रस्ताव Times New Roman (12 pt) वा Preeti (15 pt) font मा हुनुपर्नेछ।
५. अनुसन्धान प्रस्तावको हर्षा विश्वविद्यालय अनुदान आयोग (UGC) से तोके अनुसारको हुनुपर्नेछ।
६. अनुसन्धान प्रस्ताव छनौट तथा यससँग सम्बन्धित अन्य विषयमा अनुसन्धान व्यवस्थापन एकाइ, महेन्द्र बहुमुखी क्याम्पस, धरानको निर्णय अन्तिम हुनेछ।