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Search for Woman's Selfhood in Suicide in Anita Desai's *Voices in the City*

By

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**Letter of Recommendation**

Ms Anita Khadka has completed her thesis entitled "Search for Woman's Selfhood in Suicide in Anita Desai's *Voices in the City*", under my supervision from May 2013 to July 2013. I recommend this thesis be submitted for viva-voice.

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Mr. Jiva Nath Lamsal

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**Letter of Approval**

This thesis entitled “Search for Woman’s Selfhood in Suicide in Anita Desai’s *Voices in the City*” submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University by Anita Khadka has been approved by the undersigned members of the research committee.

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### **Abstract**

Anita Desai in her novel *Voices in the City* explores and expounds the suffering of women in patriarchal socio- cultural frame through the female characters like Monisha, Amla, Mother, Aunt Lila and her daughter Rita. Set in Calcutta, the novel highlights the problems, isolation, alienation, distorted marital life and domestic violence of women who eventually lose their selfhood in the society which is heavily run by patriarchal norms and values. The major character, Monisha is dissatisfied with her husband and family and commits suicide. The Major cause of her death is the patriarchy which privilege males and dominates females. Instead of enduring life she commits suicide which is a symbol of her rebellion.

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## **I. Portrayal of Patriarchal Excesses in Anita Desai's *Voices in the City***

This research entitled “Search for Woman’s Selfhood in Suicide in Anita Desai’s *Voices in the City*” explicitly deals with the problem of isolation, personal suffering and distorted marital life arising out of the feverish sensitivity of the women characters who lose their way in the city of Calcutta. It narrates the story of Bohemian brother and his two sisters who are highly caught in the transitional phase of India’s changing social and culture norms. The protagonist of the novel Monisha lives in a joint family in Calcutta. Her husband works as a middle class government officer. She is childless and her relationship with her husband is not cordial. She is dissatisfied with her marital relationship and finally commits suicide. Now, the question is why does Monisha commit suicide? Thus, to probe into this problem is the major concern of the research. Moreover, Monisha’s sister Amla’s attachment to Dharma, an already married person, gives a new meaning in her lonely life. To scrutinize such kinds of third world issues of women under the patriarchal society and norms is the major contention of novel.

The major contention of the research is that by foregrounding the death of Monisha, the major character in the novel, as a result of domination and a pathetic behaviour of Jiban, her husband, Desai portrays the excesses of Patriarchy in her novel *Voices in the City*. Moreover, this research explores the women’s issues in patriarchal society where the men are in the front line and women are always in bottom line and the voice of women is not heard by the society.

In the society, gender plays a vital role to determine the man and woman’s relationship. Gender is social construct which asserts that the expectation, capabilities and responsibilities of men and women are not always biologically determined. The gender roles assigned to men and women are significantly defined- structurally and

culturally in ways which create, reinforce and perpetuate the relationship of male dominance and female subordination. Through the process of socialization within the family in educational institutions and other social sphere, patriarchal conditioning plays a central role in the determination of man's domination and woman's subordination. In the patriarchal society women are dominated by the males. They are taken as inferior character in the family and society. In this context, women in the novel *Voice in the City* are victimized; they suffer. They are bound to live an isolated and dissatisfied marital life.

To justify the claim of the researcher this research mobilizes the theoretical concepts of "Third World Feminism". The term "Third World Feminism" designates the experience of third world women that is otherwise than the experience of western women. Third world feminism emerged in the early 1990s thereby challenging the essentialist definitions of femininity of western feminism. The study mainly focuses on the biases, prejudice of the ethnocentric orientation of western feminism. Third world feminism basically deals with the unique experiences of the women in the so-called Third world countries. The feminists who engage in such activities are known as Third world feminist. They scrutinize the loopholes of western feminism in its inability to address the history and heritage of the Third world culture thereby analyzing different types of suppression and marginalization of women in different scenario of global and local patriarchy. Similarly, it distinguishes the vicious functioning of matriarchy that functions as a response to perceived failures of western feminism in the early 1990s. It challenges the essentialist definitions of femininity of western feminism, which are over – emphasized and generalized versions of the experience of upper middle class white women.

Chandra Talpade Mohanty defines the Third World feminism in her essay “Cartographies of Struggle” and says:

Just as it is difficult to speak of a singular entity called “Western Feminism,” it is difficult to generalize about “Third World feminism.” But in much of my scholarship, I have chosen to foreground “Third World Woman” as an analytical and political category; thus I want to recognize and analytically explore the links among the histories and struggle of Third World women against racism, sexism, colonialism, imperialism, and monopoly capital. (46)

In her analyses, the third world feminism is difficult to generalize but she foregrounds it as an analytical and political group. She recognizes and explores third world women along with histories and struggle of third world women against racism, sexism, colonialism, imperialism and monopoly capital.

Similarly, Chandra Talpade Mohanty in her works *Feminism without Borders* (2003) examines a subterranean belief in the power and significance of Third world feminist in struggle for economic and social justice. It emphasizes an enterprise and a struggles and a project that embodies the international commitment for best feminist practices. Through this commitment, she is urging the possibility of the border-less feminism. She writes:

Feminism without borders is not the same as “border-less” feminism. It acknowledges the fault lines, conflicts, differences, fears, and the containment that borders represent. It acknowledge that there is no one sense of a border, that the lines between and through nations , races, classes, sexualities, religions, and disabilities[...] a feminism without

borders must envision change and social justice work across these lines of demarcation and division. (2)

In her analyses, plurality and narrowness of borders avoiding the silence and exclusion is evidential. “Feminism without borders,” stresses the most expansive and inclusive vision of feminism thereby transcending the borders of feminism established by the Western feminist.

Third world women discover and articulate a critique of western feminist scholars for discursive colonization of Third world women’s lives and struggles. Therefore, it produces or represents different icon otherwise than Western humanistic discourse. Mohanty further indicates:

The assumption of women as an already constituted, coherent group with identical interests and desires, regardless of class, ethnic, or racial location, or contradictions implies a notion of gender or sexual difference or even patriarchy that can be applied universally and cross-culturally. (21)

In this way, she focuses on the strategic location of category ‘women’ in relation to the context of analysis. The context of analysis can be anything like kinship structures, the organization of labour or media representations. In designations, she distinguishes the different implication and assumption of women than class, ethnic or racial location.

Uma Narayan in *Dislocating Cultures: Identities, Traditions, and Third World Feminism* intends at the related notion of identity, nation and tradition to explore how western and third world feminists have misrepresented third world culture and genders. She writes:

Women in Western context might be unfamiliar with the violence against women connected to the contemporary functioning of the institutions of dowry and arranged marriages. They have no strangers to battery and violence prevalent within their own various forms of marriage and family arrangements. They are no strangers either to the sense of shame that accompanies admitting victimization, or to a multiplicity of material, social, and cultural structures that pose serious impediments to woman seeking assistance or to their leaving abusive relationships. (13)

It shows that Western feminism cannot address different, and so called unique experiences of the Third World women. They ignore to address the cause of dowry murders, dowry related harassment, issues of women poverty, health, work, reproduction illustrates that they are unable to address the social and cultural experience of Third World societies.

Furthermore, she valorizes individualistic exploration of self in this context by amalgamating the core Third World issues. She writes:

A historical and apolitical Western feminist understanding of “Third World traditions” continue to appear, for instance, in more contemporary work on issues such as *sati* and dowry-murder, and in discussion relating to human rights- based interventions into “cultural practices” affecting Third –World women. (43)

Here, she comments on Western feminists on the ground of their colonial stance with respect to their representations of Third World cultures, traditions and problems. In her case study of Sati and dowry-murder is a ferocious history and unique experiences of Third World countries especially that of South Asian societies.

Moreover, she in her essay, "Essence of Culture and a Sense of History," she further writes:

Gender essentialism often conflates socially dominant cultural norms with the culture values and practices of a culture. While gender essentialism often equates the problems, interests, and locations of some socially dominant groups of men and women with those of "all men" and "all women". Cultural essentialism equates the values, world views, and practices of some socially dominant groups with those of "all members of a culture." (88)

Here, Uma Narayan argues that culture essentialism is being generated as a result of self-conscious feminist attempts to avoid gender essentialism.

In the Indian context most of the societies stand on the patriarchal foundation where the men define all the activities. They define many aspects of society and culture from their own perspective whereas females are like a pendulum. They have a very little space in the family, society, cultural and economic sphere and are compelled to remain dominated, oppressed and invisible person mainly as secondary or agent of male authority. The superior attitude of man is fatal causes of the female dissatisfaction. Indian feminist plays a great role on literature where the writers delineated the real condition and real picture of woman status so as to arouse public consciousness hoping to eliminate the inequalities. Woman writers, especially novelists are now succeed to draw a real picture of woman on their creation both in India and abroad. It has come to be realized of a great significance in world literature. Woman authors like Nayantara Sahgal, Rama Mehta, Kamala Markandaya, Manju Kapur, Urvashi Butalia and many others writers have documented this female resistance against a patriarchal domination. Indian feminists who are raising their

voice against the domination and oppression of woman revolve around the terms of subordination, patriarchy, gender, colonization, inequality and violence against women, tradition and modernity, woman's struggle for selfhood as their main agenda.

Gayatri Chakravarti Spivak in her essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" explains that woman suffers from a sense of isolation and have hard time to express their identity. They are sandwiched between two trends of dominations. She argues:

[...] between patriarchy and imperialism, subject constitution and object-formation, the figure of the woman disappears, not into a pristine nothingness, but a violent shuttling which is displaced figuration of the "Third World Woman" caught between tradition and modernization. (89)

Women are really suppressed on the ground of patriarchy and imperialism and suffer from isolation because they have not their own direction and movements, opportunity and rights well. They do not have their identity and little space in the family; they are prey of violence and disappear in the nothingness. A middle class woman, on the other hand might enjoy above- subsistence life style and in some cases might be highly educated (but not necessarily) and decently employed. However, in a patriarchal society, she is vulnerable to subalternity in terms of property, marriage, and divorce, laws of which an expanded account will be given later.

Leela Gandhi in her essay *Post- Colonial Theory* writes that Third World women are ghettoized and secluded from the mainstream culture. Native women suffer difficultly from her Western sibling. Trinh is aggressive towards the European feminist attitude Gandhi further quotes; "[...] by claiming the dubious privilege of preparing the way for ones more 'unfortunate sister', the western feminist creates an inseparable division between I who-have-made-it and you-who-cannot-make-it"(85).

Furthermore, Leela Gandhi explains that post colonial feminist and critics like Trinh T. Minh-Ha, Talpade Mohanty etc and asserts that Third World women become victims par excellence of both the imperial ideology and native and foreign patriarchies. The Third World woman is arguably household in an 'identifiable margin' Gandhi says; "Trinh T. Minh in her book *Woman, Native and Other* describes that whereas she goes the 'native woman' is required to exhibit her ineluctable 'difference' from the primary referent of western feminism it is as if everywhere we go, we become someone's private zoo"(85).

Gayatri Chakravarty Spivak in her essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" asserts that the subaltern classes cannot represent themselves. For they have no adequate means and strategies to do so. As a result, they have to be represented. The elite intellectuals tend to undertake the responsibility of representing the subaltern classes. In such a case, the elite intellectual as a subject of investigation tends to overshadow the subaltern class, the object of investigation. So, the representation fails to become the true voice of the oppressed women, which means that the marginalized women cannot speak. The Subaltern as female, as Spivak argues in "Can Subaltern Speak?" "Can not be heard or read," even if her subalternity is sought to be transcended at the mythic level (104).

Spivak is said to be the first post- colonial theorist with fully feminist agenda. As for as the women of the colonized space are concerned; they are doubly subalternized, according to Spivak. On the one hand, the women like their male counterparts, are suppressed as colonized subjects, and on the other hand, they are also dominated by their male counterparts. In other words, colonialism appears to be more hazardous to females than to the males of colonized spaces. In Spivak's opinion, the identity of women is erased in the very process of rewriting subaltern

subjectivity. “It is rather, that both as object of colonialist historiography and as the subject of insurgency, the ideological construction of gender keeps the male dominant. If, in the context of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, subaltern as female is even deeply in shadow” (82-83).

Moreover, Spivak examines the subaltern status of women, blacks, and other marginalized people in the Third world as an effect of political independence. In her subaltern studies, she refers to the subjection of women or female subjects by dialogue between male dominated West and male-dominated East. She writes:

In subaltern studies, because of the violence of imperialist epistemic, social, and disciplinary inscription, a project understood in essentialist terms must traffic in a radical textual practice of difference [...].

Subaltern historiography must confront the impossibility of such gestures. The narrow epistemic violence of imperialism gives us the imperfect allegory of the general violence that is the possibility of an episteme. (27-28)

Spivak examines the epistemic violence as a colonial experience and her critique is rather academic because of epistemic violence as a terrible side of colonial violence. Hence, it is clearly visible that all feminists are together for change in the social, political or cultural spheres order to reduce discrimination on against woman. Among them Anita Desai is one of the most vocal writers to highlight female issues.

Anita Desai was born on June 24, 1937 in the hill station of Mussorie, Uttar Pardesh, India. She had a brother and two sisters her father D.N Muzumbar was a Bangali engineer and mother Toni Nime was German. Desai’s formal education was in the English language and her writing was always in English as a result. She did her graduation in English literature from Delhi University. She married a business

executive Aswin Desai on December 13, 1958. She had four children. Sons are Rahul and Arjun, daughters are Tani and Kiran.

Desai contributed to various literary publications, including the *New York Times Book Review*, *London Magazine*, *Harper's Bazaar* and *quest*. Her first novel, *Cry the peacock* (1963) is about the rebellious woman, who kills her husband to liberate herself. This novel was published in Britain by Peter Owen, a publisher specialization in literature of the British Commonwealth and continental Europe. In 1965 she published her second novel, *Voices in the City* and other novel- *By-By*, *Blackbird* (1971), *The peacock Garden* (1974), *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* (1975) Sita, pregnant with her fifth child, takes refuge from her marriage on the magical island home stead of her deceased father. *Fire on the Mountain* (1977), *Clear Light of Day* (1980), *The Village by the Sea* (1982), *In Custody* (1984).

In 1992, Desai's children's book *The Village by the Sea* was adopted and filmed as a six-part miniseries by the BBC and in 1993 she co-authored and adaptation of her novel. *In Custody* that was filmed by Merchant- Ivory and released in 1994. Desai wrote two more novels- *Journey to Ithaca* (1999) and short story collection, *Diamond Dust* (2000). Since the 1950s Desai has lived in New Delhi, Calcutta, Bombay, and other Indian cities. She has been a member of the Advisory Board for English of the National Academy of Letters in Delhi and members of the American Academy of Arts and Letters. In 1993 she became a creative writing teacher at Massachusetts Institute of Technology. She has received numerous awards; including the 1978 National Academy of Letters Award for *Fire on the Mountain*, the Guardian Award for Children's fiction for the novel *The Village by the Sea*, the Neil Gunn Prize (1993), the Alberto Moravia Prize for literature (2000), and Benson Medal of Royal Society of literature (2003).

In the novel *Voices in the City* Desai explores the problem of loneliness, alienation and loss of identity of women characters. In the suffocating darkness of their world, they have no communication with each other and distorted marital life. It concerns with human relationship and deals with the issue of how in the absence of meaningful and fruitful relationship the individual suffer. Nirode, one of the male characters is obsessed with the relationship of his mother with major Chadha and considers her as a cannibal. She is having an affair in Kalimpong which itself is a consequence of dissonance in husband- wife relationship.

Woman protagonist Monisha feels suffocated in her husband home. There is no understanding between Monisha and her husband Jiban. She feels lonely, lost and trapped. Her husband, Jiban doesn't bother to ask his wife, when he finds some money missing even from his pocket. Monisha's is an ill matched marriage; her loneliness, sterility, and stress of living in a joint family with an insensitive husband push her to breaking point. Most important element of love in marital life is missing. Finally she commits suicide. Marital discord, the conflict in marital life, is as old institution of marriage itself although it has varied in degrees from time to time and person to person. In the pre-industrial era, a married couple shared mutual commitment, culture values, trust and faith which subordinate the interest of the individuals resulting in the smooth relationship of the family. There were tension, maladjustment in their relationship too, but the moral and religious convictions, economic dependence and the fear of social disapproval kept them together.

Amala, a commercial artist of Bombay comes to Calcutta and ends up as a victim of her own evil ways. She attends cocktail parties, dance clubs and leads loose life. She develops an affair with Dharma who is already married. She is disillusioned

and become unhappy. She is victims of illusion, self- delusion and emotional alienation.

Similarly, another female protagonist Aunt Lila hates men, particularly her fat and self-satisfied, long dead husband. Her daughter Rita has gone through a short-lived wedding. Monisha's mother launches relationship with Chadha and hates his husband and family. Thus, in the novel woman protagonists are living in the unhappy life and try to escape from the loneliness, isolation for search of pleasure and selfhood.

The novel *Voices in City* has been analyzed from various perspectives such as feminism, New Historicism, Marxism, Existentialism and many others. Alka Sexena in her essay "Feminism Time to Stop Suffering in Silence" talks about the woman's suffering and dissatisfaction projected in Desai novels. By foregrounding the suicide of Monisha, Desai projects that the uppish and superior attitude of men is the root cause of female dissatisfaction. Women have suffered in silence, waiting patiently for the day to come when they will be treated with respect and love in the true. It is the high time; woman asserted their human rights and actually got what have been wrongly denied so for (18).

Furthermore, Alka Sexena articulates that *Voices in the City* explores the real picture of patriarchal society where men are superior and women are dominated. Their hands and mouths are closed and only eyes are open but invisible. In the novel, Desai foreground the plight of Monisha, who feels suffocated in her in-law's home. There is no understanding between Monisha and her husband, Jiban. She feels lonely, lost and trapped. She contemplates on her life and asks question:

"Is it what is then, my life? ....only a conundrum is pain, never to arrive at a solution? Only a conundrum is pain, arrive at a solution?"

Only a conundrum is that, then, life?" She realized that there are just two options for her, either to live a meaningless life or to embrace death, meaningless, monotony drives her to an unbearable claustrophobia and she commits suicide. (20)

K. Meera Bai writes in her essay, "Feminism as an Extension of Existentialism: Woman in Indian English Fiction" that Anita Desai's novels are peopled by women who are in perpetual quest for meaning and value of life. The existential struggle of the woman who refuse to float along with the current form the core of Anita Desai novels. Her women characters refuse to surrender their individual selves. Their inability to comprise and surrender inevitably result in isolation and loneliness (30). Anita Desai's women are hypersensitive and highly individualistic. Though they don't voice their protest against uncongenial surrounding and insensitive people, their bruised selves let out a silent cry. They refuse to yield and compromise and prefer death and miserable life. In their existential struggle, they suffer intensely but refuse to be crushed (30). Monisha in Anita Desai's *Voices in the City* seeks to find love that is not binding, that is free of rules, obligations, complicity and stirring of mind and conscience. Her dislike of attachment and involvement is born out of fear. She recoils in disgust when her private self is dissected, discussed and analyzed by her in-laws to find out the reason for her inability to conceive. Her bruised self withdraws into her private world where darkness is the natural element. She flutters like a caged bird seeking freedom, privacy and trust. When she finds that it is a choice between death and mean existence, her decision becomes easy (30).

Likewise, Urabashi Barat examines in her essay "The Search for Selfhood in the Patriarchal Enclosure: Woman Marriage in Anita Desai *Voices in the City*" that in women's novels therefore, even when they are not concerned explicitly with

exploring the feminine experience, even when they accept the masculine view point, they inevitably indicate, consciously or, unconsciously, their awareness of the woman's alienation from society and self. Indeed, Juliet Mitchell suggests that novel form itself arose out of woman's search for identity within new social structures. The earliest novelist, she believes, were not men but women examining the nature of femininity under patriarchy [...] The woman's search for selfhood, for what Pratt calls the 'achievement of authenticity through individual choice, must battle against the long-held belief that such a desire on the part of women is by itself selfish and contrary to femininity, which should aim at social acceptance rather than freedom and selfhood (55).

Furthermore she says that Monisha's husband Jiban in *Voices in the City* is a boring nonentity, a blind moralist, a rotund, minute-minded and limited official who quotes complacently and mindlessly from Burke and Wordsworth (57). Moreover, she again says that marriage plays an important role in woman's novels, for it is traditionally regarded as the goal and destiny of women, whose inferior social status and restricted access to education and employment limit their aspiration and their sphere of mental activity to getting married, coping with marriage, or in the rare case attempting to secure the happiness of others through denying themselves marriage. Marriage thus becomes not a fulfilment of the self but a symbol of their confinement within the boundaries marked out for them by men through the centuries, of their 'enclosure in the patriarchy' (55).

Rita Roy writes in her essay "Sense and Sensibility" that woman characters in the novels of Anita Desai 's have shown the problem of loneliness, of utter isolation from one's fellow human beings, of lack of real communication that every human being faces all through his life. Anita Desai through her use of the stream of

consciousness technique has treated this theme equally. The cases of Monisha and Amala are no different. From this Monisha becomes the prey of modern civilization (247).

Furthermore, she says that Anita Desai has not only portrayed the submissive nature of women but also explicitly shown in her novels how young men are always ready to work against tradition and their own families, whereas the young woman of the new generation lead them to far greater tragedies and spiritual struggles and put them in the sufferance of unspeakable agonies. These women having no faith in conventional religion and joint family and not following any conspicuous ideal meet nothing but disaster in their lives. Thus eventually they meet with their unnatural death or lose their mental equilibrium (245).

Likewise S.P. Swain and P.M Nayak in their essay “From Self- Alienation to Self Identification” write that:

The individual self struggle for the attachment for an authentic existence and hence it moves from a mistaken and confused awareness of identity to quite self –identification leads to the transcendence of his self- alienated plight. His growth is a march from hysterical phobias and neurotic pride to certitude and fulfilment culminating in either self –abnegation or self- assertion. Self- identification in Desai is but an externalization of self destructive drives. It is a kind of self- fulfilment, a consummation of the split self of the down- hearted individual. (18)

In this regard, the novel needs clear departure though it has been analyzed through various perspectives. Only the common issues are presents through the novel. So, there exists a tough need to carry out research on this novel from a new perspective. However, third world feminism has not been applied yet. From having this fact into

consideration, the present research proposes to study from third world feminism by highlighting the patriarchal excesses of women.

This Thesis is divided into three chapters. The first chapter deals with the issues of women in patriarchal society. It is also clearly deals with the context of the research title. It also includes brief introduction of the patriarchal excesses which come under the third world feminism whereas women are dominated by males and gender biasness in patriarchal society. Thus, this chapter tries to critically observe, analyze and carry out the actual shape of introduction of thesis as complete finding of chapter one.

The second chapter studies Anita Desai's work in relation to the women characters search for selfhood in the patriarchal society how the women characters are lose their selfhood in the patriarchal norms and tries to search their selfhood based on third world feminism.

Finally, the third chapter concludes this research based on the textual analysis of chapter two. Indeed, the conclusion part appears as summing ups of the observation and analysis based on chapter two that prove Desai's *Voices in the City* as "Search for Woman's Selfhood" which finally concretizes the shape of researched work as the finding of the thesis book.

## II. Projection of Search of Woman's Selfhood in Suicide

Anita Desai's "*Voices in the City*" minutely portrays the domination of patriarchy by foregrounding the suicide of Monisha, the protagonist of the novel. The researcher argues that patriarchal excesses represented by Jiban, her husband is the major cause of her death. Moreover, this novel vividly evinces the women's suppression, isolation, distorted marital life of third world women whereas the women are victimized by the male dominated society and the gender biasness in patriarchal society.

In the novel, set in the city of Calcutta; the women protagonist experiences difficulties in its adjustment. It describes that the environment of Calcutta is not fair but only creates unexpected problem. In the city of Calcutta, it has made the life of the people really unfair and polluted. The following line indicates the women selfhood in the city of Calcutta.

On all sides the city pressed down, alight, glow and stirring with its own marsh- bred, monster life that, like ogre, kept one eye open through sleep and waking. Calcutta, Calcutta- likes the rattle of the reckless train; Calcutta, Calcutta –the very pulse beat in its people's veined wrists. (42)

Here, city of Calcutta has been described as a monster city, where life of people is frightened and moved by monster. Monster like ogre is very dangerous who grasp the freedom and right to other and compel to live a life very problematic. Calcutta is the city like the rattle of the reckless train where the destination and direction is not clear. People are very frightened by the city of Calcutta and their pulse beat in veined wrists. So, it's clear that women protagonist in the Calcutta are suppressed and isolated because of the monster city. Along with such trends, the women find difficulties to

locate themselves in complex city of Calcutta where they are forced to suffer from isolation and suppression. So, women protagonist undergoes along with these experiences out of which is search for women selfhood.

Women protagonist lives the life very crucial way. They have not get happiness, satisfactions and love in marital life, their life dissolve in the isolation and suppression. Monisha, the protagonist is married with the mid government officer and live the life with joint family in Calcutta. Her married life is disgusting and boring and lack of love. The following line indicates the women selfhood in the novel:

Look at me, my equipment, my appurtenances. My black wardrobe, my family, my duties of serving fresh *chapatis* to the uncles as they eat, of listening to my mother-in-law as she tells me the remarkably many ways of cooking fish, of being Jiban's wife. If all this were to blow away, what would be left would be very small too, transparent and vulnerable. (111-112)

The above mentioned lines reveal the Monisha's real status in the husband home where the every woman are trapped and compelled to surrounding themselves for house work as a housewife. In the husband's home, she is fully tied with her duties of serving fresh foods to all family and listen the voice of mother – in-law. In the husband's home, mother- in- law is the director of the home. So this is true that women who live with –in- law, are obviously compelled to follow the direction of their mother – in-law. In this regard, Chandra Mohanty Talpade's observation on the position of Third world women is quite relevant. She writes:

The distinction between western feminist representation of woman in the Third world and western feminist self- presentation is a distinction of the same order as that made by some Marxists between the

“maintenance” function of the housewife and the real “productive role of wage labour, or the characterization by developmentalist of the Third world as being engaged in the lesser production of “raw materials” in contrast to the “real” productive activity of the First World. (22)

Moreover, to monisha the house is a prison she wants to thrust her head out of the window for to see outer world but the bars are too closely set and she articulates:

The houses here have aged with grace and are faintly lit by low gas lamps glowing a pale blue in the foliage. The darkness that subdues these roads is warm, clinging, womanish. Large Victorian houses are screened by royal palms; the shuttered windows and lacy balconies make them look like houses in a once- fashionable resort somewhere in Europe, grown very old and deserted long ago to the vicissitudes of soot-black rain and plaster-peeling sun. (124)

Here, the above lines reveal that there are allusion of the Victorian houses which indicate gloomy, dejected minds, self-isolation and solitary confinement.

Furthermore, Monisha is also happy to given task in the home and this is the remedy of her loneliness. “I am glad they give me so much work to do. I am glad to be occupied in cutting vegetable, serving food, brushing small children’s hair. Only I wish I were away from the aunts and the uncles, the cousins and nieces and nephew” (115).

In this way, Monisha only occupied with the house work like cutting vegetable, serving food, brushing small children’ hair this is the daily routing of her work. In this context Chandra Mohanty Talpade explains the distinction between Third World woman and western women:

This average Third world woman leads an essentially truncated life based on her feminine gender (read: sexuality constrained) and her being “Third world” (read: ignorant, poor, uneducated, tradition-bound, domestic, family-oriented, victimized, etc). This, I suggest, is in contrast to the (implicit) self-representation of western women as educated, as modern, as having control over their own bodies and sexuality and the freedom to make their own decisions. (22)

This shows that Third World women are gender biased and the cause of their gender they are ignorant, poor, uneducated, tradition- bound, domestic, family –oriented and victimized in patriarchal society but in the western context, women as educated, as modern, as having control over their own bodies and sexuality and the freedom to make their own decision. Thus, Third women are suppressed in the patriarchal society. Likewise, Uma Narayan indicates:

Women’s subordination to their confinement to domestic roles and the private sphere can constitute problematic essentialist generalizations if they ignore that the links between femininity and the private sphere are not transhistorical but have arisen in particular historical contexts. Thus, while the ideology of domesticity may have immured many middle class women in the home, it also sanctioned the ethnocentric exploitation of women slaves and working whose most pressing problems did not result from their confinement to the private sphere. (86-87)

Here, the writer urges that gender essentialism does not merely charge women’s generalization as hegemonic in that they represent the problems of privileged women, white, Western, middle class, heterosexual as women’s issues.

Monisha lives in a very disgusting way where she is the part of back biting for her family members. She has no child so every family member looks her different way.

‘No, no, the doctor has said it is not the womb, It is these tubes, what d’ you call them, Fallopian or Pallopien, what is it-they are blocked’.  
[...] ‘But it is the tubes, they are blocked.’ Like a burst of wild feathers, released full in my face, comes the realization that they are talking of me, my organs, the reasons I cannot have a child. I can’t leave these vegetables I am cutting up for them –that would create a disturbance –but I stop listening and regard my insides: my ovaries, my tubes, all my recesses moist with blood, washed in blood, laid open, laid bare to their scrutiny. (113)

Here, the above mentioned lines reveal that the protagonist Monisha is suppressed by the patriarchal society where the women are lead as a part of child birthing. In this case when Monisha is not able to give a child the people are talking about her sterility and say, she is a blocked tube. So, we come to know that how the women are dominated in their own family and the society and forced to live a depressed and distorted life very badly. Along with such tendency, women selfhood is major point of discussion.

In the patriarchal society women are really a part of absurd life, they are like a toy and real object of tolerance of different parts of suffering. The following lines indicate Monisha’s pain.

I am accused of theft. These pettiest of people, they regard me as meaner than them. To be regarded so low by men and women themselves so low, it is to be laid on a level that solitude that becomes

me most naturally. I am willing to accept this status then and to be live here, a little beyond and below everyone else, in exile. (135)

Here, it depicts the solitude life with a lot of pain in the husband's home where women are bound to tolerate all the pain silently even they are accused of theft.

Women are regarded as a low status and not higher than men. Women are inferior and compelled to endure all the pain in patriarchal society. So, Neera Desai and Maithreyi Krishanaraj emphasize:

Subtle expression of patriarchy was through symbolism giving message of inferiority of women through legends highlights the self sacrificing, self effacing pure image of women and through the ritual practices which day in and day out emphasized the dominant role of a woman as a faithful wife and devout mother. (258)

They focus that women are dominated in their home by their husband. The salvation and happiness of women revolves around their virtue and chastity as daughter, wives and mother.

Furthermore, Monisha's mother in law blames her when she finds some money displaced in Jiban's pockets. Monisha indicates:

Jiban's mother called out 'Money has been stolen, you know, Jiban's money.' I turned to look at Jiban standing disconsolately, down in the courtyard below and he did not look at me. From the other end of the, balcony his mother shouted the details across to me. 'He left it in the cupboard when he went to the office: My son is always careful of his things only you were in the room at that time. When you left, you shut the door and none of the servants could have gone in. Of course the servant will be dismissed, all of them. I will not have a thief in my

house, I say, I will not have a thief in my house. Who is to tell who this thief is? After all, you were the only person who was in the room all day. (136)

In the above mentioned lines reveal that women are suppressed in the family and victimized by their own family and pass away by pathetic condition. In their own home they are blamed by unexpected cases like theft and so on. So, we come to know that how the women are treated in their husband home and forced to accept the fake evidence in silence way. In this regard Meera asserts:

Indian society remains firmly rooted in the patriarchy ideology which is premised upon male supremacy and legitimization of woman's oppression. Because this basic ideology remains largely unchallenged and unchanged, violence against women is also perpetuated, sometimes in the old forms and sometimes in different and newer guise. (19)

Here, the writer presents that Indian society is based on the patriarchal ideology where the women are oppressed by male supremacy. Moreover, Kalindi examines:

The Indian woman is a slave to the so-called institutionalized cultural shackles. Her mobility is restricted, her self expression is monitored and her thought influenced by others in her milieu. She is the victim of suspicion by her brothers, parent, husband and in laws. (30)

In this way, women are victimized by males and in laws in the home as a norm of patriarchal society. They are slave in their own home and lives in restricted life.

The woman in order to achieve her freedom and seeks marriage as an alternative to the bondage created by the parental family and patriarchy society. She resents the role of daughter and looks forward to the role of a wife with hope that the

new role will help in winning her freedom. Women are living a solitude life without husband and family love. Here, the line indicates the situation.

If only love existed that not binding, that is free of rules, obligations, complicity and all stirring of mind or conscience, then- but there is no such love. It is not there in my relationship with Jiban, which is filled only by loneliness and a desperate urge to succeed and once plunged me into the most calamitous pleasures and pains, fears and regrets and never again will it possess me. (134)

The above lines reveal that married life is occupied with full of joy and happiness along with a lot of love. Married life without love is incomplete, unfortunately women in patriarchal society only bound with pain and torture. They are live in a disgusting and boring life as a wife. Monisha live with her husband but she never gets love by her husband. He has not any feelings for Monisha to sharing love. He never feels bore when he found displace the money from his pocket. He said, 'Why didn't you tell me before you took it?' (136). Actually, he is the one of the part of patriarchy. Similarly, she is too silent for the family, and the world distrust her silence. Monisha falls a victim to their callousness and apathy. She develops a regressive attitude. In addition to, she develops a love for a life – in- death which would be release from her death in life existence. She wants to lose herself in eternal sleep. Monisha is to live a boring and weary life. Alienated from her husband, Monisha, feels that life is much alike 'a kangaroo that lies on its back pouch, alas, is empty' (119). In this regard Alka Saxena examines women position:

Women are indeed living at the mercy of men at present a woman's existence depends on the men who come in to her life lies in the hands of her father, husband or son, depending on whether she is married,

unmarried or widowed. The men determine her fate, make decision on her behalf and decide what is good or bad for her. (23-24)

However, women are exploited, victimized and marginalized group in patriarchal society. Women are depends on the men and moved by male hands. Their all rights being violated and women have been suffering in silence.

Isolation is the major issue for the women who live lonely and problematic life. In the novel Monisha thinking about Kalimpong for Jiban's last posting. The solitude of the jungles there the aqueous of the bamboo groves and the earth laid with great fallen leaves. The bell-like dignity of the elephant on whom we rode through the jungles. Jiban away on tour, I alone with myself, no visitor at all (116). Monisha suffer and oppressed by sense of suffocation. Like the crowd in the city of Calcutta, She finds her husband's house crowded with family members, guest and relatives. Monisha completely withdraws herself from the rest of the family and spend her days in utter loneliness. When people were enjoying the ball and music, Monisha, remains indifferent as she agrees that " These people know and feel something I do not they are all nodding in agreement with the singer, they understand what she is singing to them" (239). She comments "what a waste, what a waste it has been, the life enclosed in a locked container merely, as an observer, and so imperfect, so handicapped. I have attended death. I should remain alone, apart and enclosed within myself, beyond their touch" (237-238). Thus, Trinh T. Minhha articulates:

The understanding of difference is a shared responsibility which requires a minimum of willingness to reach out to the unknown. As Audre Larde says, women of today are still being called upon to stretch across the gap of male igonorence, and to educate men as to our existence and our needs. This is an old and primary tools of all

oppressors to keep the oppressed occupied with the master's concerns. Now, we hear that it is the task of black and third world women to educate white women in the face of tremendous resistance, as to our existence, our differences, our relative roles in our joint survival. This is a diversion of energies and tragic repetitions of racist patriarchal thought. (247-48)

Here, Trinh. T. Minhha analyses that women are still in male ignorance wherever white educate women are powerful in their existence than black and third world women.

Monisha is worried of her involvement and has led her life without a touch of love or hate of warmth she feels "there is no escape from it" (113). Monisha feels herself empty and she says:

But I have no faith, no alternative to my confused despair, there is nothing I can give myself to, and so I must stay. The family get here, and their surroundings, tell men such a life cannot be lived-a-life dedicated to nothing that husk is a protection from death. Ah yes, yes, then it is a choice between death and mean existences, and that, surely, is not a different choice. (121)

She identifies her life between mean existence and death, for it is death which delivers her from the ferocious assaults of existence. This imperfect life, enclosed in a container did not appeal to her so she decide on to remain alone, apart and enclosed within herself, beyond their touch, by the final act of suicide.

Furthermore, Women are surrounding in the home and their desires are disappeared in the cloud but they are doing nothing for themselves. Here, this line reveals the women suppression. Lives spent in waiting for nothing, waiting on men

self-centred and indifferent and hungry and demanding and critical, waiting for death and dying misunderstood, always behind bars, those terrifying, black bars that shut us in, in the old houses in the old city (120).

Above line reveals the bitter truth of patriarchal society where women suppressed in the own home by men high attitude. Women are the play things for the men they used the women for their hunger and demand. In this critical situation women are just waiting for death behind the bars their mouths and eyes are closed in the family and society. Thus, the text is more highlighted for women selfhood. Moreover, she feels tired in crowded city of Calcutta and her responsibility and she utters:

I am so tired of it, this crowd. In Calcutta, it is everywhere.

Deceptively, it is a quite crowd- passive, but distressed. Till there is reason for anger and then a sullen yellow flame of bitterness and sarcasm starts up and it is vicious, mordant. Not the anger that brings up two fistfuls of defiance or makes the curved dagger flourish, but anger that broods and festers like a pus- filled boil. (118)

Here the above lines reveal that Monisha is extremely tired in crowded city of Calcutta where she found passiveness and distress which brings the life in anger and bitterness.

Monisha is married woman who lives behind the bars and observe the situation silent way. She sees many women and their circumstances in the city where they are charged by men and made for men. The lines show the women circumstance.

I see many women, always Bengali women, who follow five paces behind their men. They wear saris of the dullest colours, being and fawn and off- white, like the female birds in the cages and there is something infinitely gentle, infinitely patient about their long eyes, the

curve of their shoulders, their manner of walking, which arouses not aggressiveness in one as the women of the north do, but a protective feeling. (120)

Above lines reveal that Monisha a women protagonist in the novel sees the Bengali women are dominated in the home. They have not their own choices they are like a female birds trapped in the cages where the birds are snatched by their free life of flying on the open sky. Likewise, women are imprisoned in the home like a cage birds they have no voice for their freedom and selfhood. Thus the text is more sensitive for women selfhood.

It also gives several instances of how the women are suppressed in the home and compelled to live the life as a cage birds. Men take women as the object of pleasure and beauty. They are confined within the four walls of a house. In this context Monisha articulates:

I think that what separates me from this family heaving and rolling beneath me in its dreams of account books, pensions, examination results, store rooms, births, marriages, ovaries, wombs, dowries, locks, keys, property, litigation, wills, bequests, orphans, adoption, relations, marriages, births and property –I think that what separates me from this family is fact that not one of them ever sleeps out under the stars at night. (137)

Monisha takes several responsibility in the home she is busy every time for complete her task. She feels everything in the home is usual and nothing separate from family. She got everything in the family that means a lot of housework and responsibility. She engages herself within the housework and no dreams for her own identity. Hence, we

come to know that women selfhood is the main agenda for the text. In this regards Mohanty asserts:

Homework assumes a significant role in the contemporary capitalist global economy. [...] analyzing the homework as a wage laborer (rather than an entrepreneur who controls both her labor and the market for it) dependent on the employer for work that is carried out usually in the “home” or domestic premises, makes it possible to understand the systematic invisibility of this form of work.[...] characterization of “housewife,” “mother,” and “homemakers” make it impossible to see home workers as workers earning regular wages and entitled to the rights of workers. (159)

Here, she analyses that woman role in the home is minor it is not evaluate by the lance of capitalist if they work as a employer in the other side they get wages but in the domestic premises their work is not evaluated with wages and they are suppress in their home by their family as a dependence handicapped person.

Furthermore, Monisha’s sister Amla who came to Calcutta from Bombay for commercial artist found her sister Monisha’s indifference attitude after marriage. Monisha seemed to suffer some shock, too, in thus regarding her sister-shock at feeling such a crepuscular passion of remembrance and longing at the fresh sight of Amla (142).

Another women protagonist in the novel Aunt Lila she is aware by the men dominated society where the men are superior and women are always inferior. So she hates man for their demon attitude. Aunt Lila seemed not to like that question. She did not like men (143).

Here, the lines reveal that women are unsatisfied with men because of men high attitude towards women. They dislike men and their behaviours. Women are totally depressed by the men domination so they hate the men.

Furthermore, Rita is daughter of Aunt Lila who completely lost her faith in men she doesn't believe in men because of their bad manners towards women. Rita who had lost her faith in men, after a spectacularly short-lived marriage, and was seeking something 'more rare, more responsible' in the physics laboratories in Paris (145).

Here, the lines reveal that when women know the reality of suffer they are not believed with men and nonsense rule and regulation of society and they begin to accept modernization and do short-lived marriage like Rita. In this way the text elaborate how the third world women are caught up between traditionlization and modernization. In this regard Sara Suleri elucidates:

It is still prepared to great an uneasy selfhood to a voice that is best described as the property of "Postcolonial Woman" whether this voice represents perspectives as divergent as the African American, or, the post-colonial culture location, its imbrications of race and gender are accorded an iconicity that is altogether too good to be true. (758)

Here, the Suleri analyses that the creation of icon through the imbrications of race and gender is the Third World women's identity, which is dreadful.

Aunt Lila house is image of devil which is the sign of oppression in brooding city. Aunt Lila's house had been oppressive enough, even at noon, but the spirit of this garden, shadowed as it was by the brooding city, was more than merely oppressive (149).

Amla wants to live a life as freeway and remove an old tradition for stay away from loneliness. She had gone to parties alone in Bombay, but here she was overcome by a stifling fear and she wished she could have Nirod or Monisha with her and knew it was hopeless to ask either of them to (162).

Above lines reveal that when people feels alone they want to engage for remove loneliness. So, Amla also join the parties in Bombay and wants to fling the loneliness from the life.

For women in patriarchal society the word of freedom is so old because they have no freedom in their life just they are dreaming about the free life. So, Aunt Lila quotes: 'Freedom, Freedom!' strange how often the old, withered woman used this word, strange how often it rang through the exhausted, crumbling house of marble and dry rot. 'Freedom came the year I was twelve years old (177). Moreover, she upset with life of loneliness and always aware to women for their independence and the loneliness. She articulates:

Even if you don't, take pride in your independence, in this wonderful liberty you have of choosing undertaking a career, any career. Our country belongs to its men, [...]. The recollection of her daughter often brought on this confused, shadowy relapse into the eccentricities of old and loneliness. (143)

Isolation is the major point of discussion in the novel. Every woman characters lives the isolated life full of agony. Amla felt her heart slice open, felt pain enter at the sight of his emaciation, at his complete isolation gone so far beyond anyone's touch (181). Similarly, Amla love with Dharma is not meaningful that is only a physical attraction. Amla's loves, knowing no possibility of manifestation, become are uncontrollable desire to communicate, signalling with forlorn glow-warm desperation

from the still twilight of her frustration (191). Moreover, she realizes that she is just surviving as she says “Surviving! Yes, I’m surviving- I supposed that is just what one would call this state of existing, just breathing and eating and going around with perpetual headache and stomachache”(164). In this regard Spivak presents that women suffer from a sense of isolation and have hard time to express their identity. They are sandwiched between two trends of dominations. She articulates:

[...] between patriarchy and imperialism subject constitutes and object-formation, the figure of the woman disappears, not into a pristine nothingness, but a violent shuttling which is the displaced figuration of the ‘third world woman’ caught between tradition and modernization.(89)

Monisha undergoes the problem of alienation, loneliness and solitude life. The image of darkness in part two of the novel, a section that deals with Monisha’s broken hearts in the face of dark and dangerous forces of life:

I will have only darkness. Only dark spaces between the stars for they are only things on earth that can comfort me, rub and balm into my wounds, into my throbbing head and bring me this coolness, this stillness, this interval of peace. Even sleep has not this sweet, swaying stillness as these immensities of night sky to which I top my face, allowing them to fall into my eyes, and fall. Sleeps has nightmares this. This empty darkness has not so much as a dream. It is one unlit waste a desert to which my heart truly belongs. (137)

The dark image explores the dim and dark life of the Monisha. It suggests the emotional estrangement and abortive desire for a life of detachment in the deafening in the cacophony of Calcutta. Monisha search for her selfhood in one unlit waste to

which heart truly belongs. She longs to be one with the dark spaces between the stars. These dark spaces between the star and immensities of night sky symbolized her agony and remind her of her emotional alienation from the family. Moreover, she engulfed in the dark side of life day by day and feels herself lost she further articulates:

I grow smaller every day, shrink and lose, more of my weight, my appurtenance, the symbol of my existence that used to establish me in the eyes of this world. I am already too small to be regarded much by anyone. I will be invisible yet. (138)

Here, the lines reveal that how Monisha think herself weak and smaller she lost her patient and become completely engulfed in the patriarchal society. However, Sara Suleri articulets :

[...] If realism is the Eurocentric and patriarchal pattern of adjudicating between disparate cultural and ethnic realities, then it is surely the task of radical feminism to provide an alternative perspective. In the vociferous discourse that such a task has produced, however, the question of alternative is all too greatly subsumed either into the radical strategies that are designed to dictate the course of situated experience, or into the methodological imperative that impel a work related to Woman, Native, Other such as bell Hooks.(763-764)

She analyses that Third world feminism as radical feminism, which provides an alternative perspective representing different disparate cultural and ethnic realities. It is inclusive and egalitarian activities to raise the different socio-cultural realities of the then marginalized Third World women. Likewise, Neera Desai quotes Chakravati from the source of Ramayan story.

An analysis of the development of the 'Sita' legend in a historical context however reveals that the emphasis on chastity and the assumption that ideal marriage is based on female devotion are aspects which were grafted on to an originally simple story. Over the centuries important details added to the story have had a crucial influential on the shaping of the feminine identity. (297-98)

Thus, it is clear that, the beginning has been made to reconstruct history from the women's perspective. Hindu males live in a fake mythology and claim that there is no any exploitation as well as subordination of women in the Hindu society. Moreover, Chandra Mohanty Talpade articulates:

For in the context of a first/ Third world balance of power, feminist analysis that perpetrate and sustain the hegemony of the idea of the superiority of the west produce a corresponding set of universal image such as the veiled woman, the powerful mother, the chaste virgin, the obedient wife, and so on. (4)

Chandra Mohanty Talpade analyses that third world women are surrounding with the house and take a responsibilities as powerful mother, the chaste virgin, the obedient wife, veiled woman wherever western women are powerful.

Monisha's Mother lives in Kalimpong and made relationship with Major Chadha but her son Nirod doesn't like her mother affair with Major Chadha. He, in no way, likes and loves her mother for becoming the mistress of Major Chadha, after the death of his father. This line gives the spite for the mother and her friend.

Ask her about the love that made her swallow father whole, like a cobra swallows a fat, petrified rat, then spews him out in one flabby yellow mess. Ask her about the love that makes her perch on her

mountain top, mending so patiently and surely for retirement and tedium and the last wormy twisting of lust to send Major Chadha-Chadha! - into her open arms. (188)

Above lines reveal that women do not have to marry life after the husband's death. The patriarchal society does not give the freedom for women to make relationship with other. So, Mother Otima's son Nirode hates his mother for her relationship with Major Chadha and thinks she is like a cobra but he is not aware by her mother loneliness after his father death and made relationship with Major Chadha. In this way we come to know that how the women are mistreated by their life and they have no life after their husband death. Hence, the text is contextual for women selfhood.

Monisha, has not pleasure life she is lives in a loneliness and depressed life, her sister Amla feels about Monisha and quotes: "She was filled with lust to take up an axe and chop through all this dead, soggy, termite- gnawed wood in order to get at Monisha, the lost princess of the fairy tale who sat somewhere in the deepest shadows of this forest, silent and unattainable" (192). It is, therefore she wants her selfhood and says "How can I- I want to be independent too" (193).

Furthermore, Mother also feels her daughter Monisha condition of loneliness and unsatisfied marital life and says. "Monisha, alone was untouched. More than ever before, she felt the power of fear over her. To being with she persuaded herself that what she feared was this fountain of raw passion these strolling musicians had spent up in their spectator's hearts"(236).

In the search for her selfhood she ultimately discovers that it is the absence of love "that makes us, brother and sister, such object rebels, such craven tragedians yet she fails to see beyond despair, to connect and identify with the wholeness of her being" (134). Monisha's mean existence leads her to think that death is the only

alternative to her agonized living. As a result, she commits suicide feeling that there is “no faith, no alternative to my despair, there is nothing I can give myself to [...]” (121), thinking that is the only way to relief.

Monisha dies; screaming for life, for the first experience of real feeling of pain awakens in her a desire to live. “Monisha was on fire to experience desire, to experience feeling” (239). Monisha spoke the dying words ‘No! No! No!’ can be analyzed as sign of assertion. The pain of burning enables her to self-actualize, therefore, she concludes that one has to make the best of it when one gets a life. Her effort to fight with fire can be seen as her desire to live and accept the life. “Here it was on her eyes, her face, here it came there, all over with her arms she wrestled with it, she fought it, it was not what she wanted she screamed ‘No! No! No!’ screamed, screamed. Fell unconscious” (240).

Monisha commits suicide by fire herself and engulfed herself in distorted marital life. The following lines show the evident of her suicide.

The oil soaking her garments responded with a leap of recognition.  
Two elements had met and in their embrace she was caught. Warmth,  
heart, terrible heat, a bright glare, smoke, an unbearably loud noise,  
bubbling, hissing, a gigantic cracking and whipping in her ears heat  
seared her eyeballs- a great fog enveloped her, not the white one of  
dreams but black, acrid, thick- and God, the pains! (240)

Above lines reveal that her kerosene- soaked saree and blouse responds to the flame. The match struck fire, and its clear flame was as straight and golden as a promise kept and she was caught by fire. To escape from mean existence she accepts death and destroys all the responsibilities and her duties. She comes to know that only the solution to all problems is to exist amidst all troubles, pain and suffering. Her death is

the symbol of women's life destroyed by their agonized and disputed life. Her death very clearly shows the excesses of patriarchy. It is because of the agony and trauma inflicted by patriarchal brutalities, represented by Jiban, Monisha has to end her life as there is no other way out. She chooses death than the unending pain, suffering, isolation and alienation.

### III. Conclusion: Monisha's Suicide and Patriarchal Excesses

After the discussion and analysis of Anita Desai's novel *Voices in the City* the research comes to the conclusion that patriarchal excesses, represented by her husband, Jiban, is the major cause of Monisha's suicide.

Indeed in the patriarchal society, women are dominated by males, female are treated as inferior in the family and society. In this context, Anita Desai's *Voices in the City* is well taken the issues of woman protagonist Monisha, who explores her selfhood by opposing the existing norms of patriarchy. Thus this novel perfectly covers the issues of major woman protagonist Monisha and other female characters foregrounding the suffering, isolation and violent marital life in the existing norms of patriarchy. This is not only the problem of Monisha and other woman characters in the novel but it is a red symbol of several women's violence in the Third world especially South Asian society.

Desai's *Voices in the City* project foregrounds Monisha's suicide amidst the fault line of patriarchy supported by women themselves. Monisha marries Jiban who works as mid government officer. Monisha lives her marital life with joint family in the city of Calcutta where she finds herself alone and unhappy. She has no child. So her mother in-law and other family members tease her as a "blocked tube". She is accused of theft in her own home by her mother-in law. Her husband also does not bother to ask his wife when he finds some money missing from his pocket. An important element of love in marital life is missing in her life. They have no communication each other, no sharing of feelings. Monisha's is ill matched marriage, her loneliness, sterility and stress of living with in-law in joint family and disgusting husband push her to the breaking point. Monisha fights an insistent battle against her

lost self and it leads in the process doomed to degeneration and destruction. Finally she commits suicide.

To wrap up, Monisha explores her selfhood thereby opposing to become a victim of the domestic violence which is the cause of patriarchal system. Monisha tries to oppose her distorted marriage life and resist to any exploitation of male cultures. Moreover, she challenges male dominated culture in patriarchal society by commits suicide as a rebel.

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