

TRIBHUVAN UNIVERSITY

Quest for Inner Peace in R. K. Narayan's *The Dark Room*

**A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Masters of Arts
in English**

Submitted by

Birendra Angdembey

Central Department of English

Tribhuvan University

Kirtipur, Kathmandu, Nepal

April 2010

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-BIRENDRA ANGDEMBEY

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Letter of Recommendation

Mr. Birendra Angdembey has completed his thesis entitled “Quest for Inner Peace in R. K. Narayan’s *The Dark Room*” under my supervision. He carried out his research from March to April 2010. I hereby recommend that his thesis be submitted for viva voce.

Mr. Raj Kumar Baral

Supervisor

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The thesis entitled “Quest for Inner Peace in R. K. Narayan’s *The Dark Room*” submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University by Mr. Birendra Angdembey, has been approved by the undersigned members of the research committee.

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Birendra Angdebey

Abstract

This research explores the quest for inner peace, the supreme state of bliss, in human being represented by Savitri in R. K.Narayan's *The Dark Room*. Savitri, the protagonist of the novel, undergoes through various stages in life: ignorance, series of suffering in her household life, frustration, and realization of reality of the world, and achieves the inner peace, which is the ultimate goal of Buddhism. As the Buddhist philosophy believes that the acceptance of the natural course of life and behave accordingly is the best way for human beings to avoid the suffering in life. To go against it is to invite suffering. Savitri eventually attains the enlightenment through physical and spiritual experience and accepts this truth of the world pursuing the Middle path, as proposed in Buddhism. Although Savitri returns to the previous place, the trivial activities of mundane life do not have any influence on her unlike on ordinary human beings.

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I. R. K. Narayan and His Novels

Born in 1906 Dec. 10, R. K. Narayan was brought up in the house of his grandparents in Purasawalkam, an old section of Madras city. Nayanswami Rasipuram Krishnaswami is abbreviated his name to R. K. Narayan. Since his childhood was spent with his grandparents, he had opportunity to learn Sanskrit verse and hear old stories from ancient epics in the environment of warm affection. His grandparents, especially his grandmother, in fact were his first teacher in Narayan's life who used to supervise his study combining love with discipline. So, the environment he had got was congenial for his childhood phase.

In his early teenage Narayan moved to Mysore where his father was headmaster of a prestigious high school. In Mysore he consistently used to read British and American magazine in his father's full run school library. He was diligent since his early childhood. Hence, the art of telling story seems to have transmitted to him from his grandmother. Henry Miller has recognized him as "a born story teller". Similarly to Anthony West Narayan was a "first-rate story-teller".

Having received his bachelor's degree, Narayan joined in teaching for a short time and then quitting his teaching, he embarked on journalistic job. After some few years service as a journalist in The Madras Journal, he again gave up it as his inclination to creative writing got much stronger. Consequently in 1930s he started to write a novel *Swami and Friends*. So, as we observe his writing career, it is found to have begun from his journalistic writing.

His first novel *Swami and Friends* was published after its several times rejection from publication attaching rejection slips to it. Though his manuscript was returned several times to him considering it is unlikely to be published, he never gave up writing losing his heart. After a perennial painstaking exercise in writing, he turned

his father's long awaited dream into reality identifying himself as an eminent literary writer.

During the period of journalism, Narayan has visited several places of India and got a great chance to come in contact with the people of different walks of life. Later as he writes stories and other literary genres, the experiences he has collected during his journalistic period came to be proved a prolific one to his creative writing. His direct experience of various places with the individuals from various socio-cultural, religious and economic backgrounds provided him ample characters to present in story and subject matter to write on.

R. K. Narayan, beginning his writing from journalism, identified himself as one of "the big three" Indo-Anglican novelists with a profound success. His contribution to the development of the Indian novel in English is tremendous. Writing in English being based on Indian socio-culture, Narayan has remarkably widened the range of Indian cultural value throughout the world. However, Narayan's contribution in elevating Indian literature to the point of international standard is no less than that of his contemporary writers – Mulk Raj Anand and Raja Rao. Unlike them he deliberately avoids political polemics of any kind in subject matter. In this regard professor Walsh, comparatively observing the novels by these 'three big-writers', holds the view, "If Anand is the novelist as reformer, Raja Rao the novelist as the metaphysical poet, Narayan is simply the novelist as novelist" (1 qtd. in Sharan). Anand is the novelist with sharp and critical vision to the social problem of the oppressed and the downtrodden whereas; Narayan writes on less complex subject matter.

Although the novels by Narayan seem simple; they are not really as simple as they appear. Rather they are deceptive in the sense that they are seemingly simple but

when we go into the deeper level of Narayan's novels; our judgment turns out to be fiasco. What makes his novel seem simple is his art of employing the blend of irony and humor. First of all, Narayan is a novelist with high comic sensibility. Thus, he has an art to make even some serious incident easily acceptable by creating humor. He, therefore, is successful one in using the comic mode for depicting the little ironies of life in a fascinating manner.

English is not a foreign language to Narayan, rather it is easily adaptable as if his own native language. Glorifying the adaptability of the English language, Narayan himself said to Graham Green in BBC interview,

I was never aware that I was using a different, foreign language when I wrote in English because it comes to me very easily. I cannot explain how English is a very adaptable language. And it is so transparent it can take on the tint of any country. (qtd. in Sharan 2)

For him, English is an absolutely *swadeshi* language. He uses 'a Bharat brand of English' which suits the prevailing Indian condition. Though Narayan's *swadeshi* stamp upon English language is not as obviously visible as that of Mulk Raj Ananda and Raja Rao; the use of Tamil, Sanskrit and Hindi words in his novels shows his strong adherence to Indianism. He holds the view, "English had for a long time a confined existence in India mainly in hall of learning, justice or administration and now the time is ripe for it 'come to the dusty street, market place and under the banyan tree'" (3 qtd. in Sharan). He is of the opinion that one should not write like the English or American. Narayan's use of simple, sweet and accurate words in comprehensible pattern of sentence presents the incidents and the characters in the story lively. Commenting upon Narayan's writing, V. Y. Katak says, "Our first impression of Narayan's English is that it is extremely limited. He is not interested in

exploring the fuller and deeper possibility of language which he is using" (670).

Narayan, therefore, is a writer having a profound craftsmanship of blending Western technique an eastern material by means of Bharat brand of English. Declaring Narayan as simply "the novelist as novelist", William Walsh appreciates, "His writing is a distinctive blend of western techniques and Eastern material and he has accepted it in a remarkable way in expressing an Indian sensibility his interest in a different point of view to suit the stuff of his novels" (6). Herein, Walsh focuses upon Narayan's technical skill of blurring the discord between Eastern material and western way of writing by artistic fusion.

Narayan has made his edifice of fiction with great care and industry. His ironic dimension is an integral part of his comic vision. He explores the tremendous possibilities of the comic in the commonplace world of *Malgudi*. Since Narayan has a keen interest in Indian life and his humorous portrayal of outer and inner conflicts of man with touches of pathos and irony demonstrates his insight into the human reality. So, Narayan is a comic writer with the awareness of human tragedy. With the blend of irony and humors Narayan makes even serious easily acceptable depicting the irony of life in fascinating manner.

He prefers to work within the small compass of his fictional town *Malgudi* like Hardy and Faulkner. With each of his novels, *Malgudi* unfolds new vistas of life. Its inhabitants have their local trappings but it is certainly true that they are essentially human and have their kinship with all humanity. Narayan's novels appear to be regional at the outset as they set in *Malgudi*. They, however, transcend their limits and barriers providing an ideal setting to the human drama. The inhabitants of *Malgudi* have their kinship with humanity in order that the *Malgudi* acquires universality.

In writing novel, place as an aspect of novel is generally given secondary position in comparison with other aspects; but so is not the case in Narayan's novels, for *Malgudi* keeps parental control over the characters. They feel, think and act in accordance with the socio-cultural system of *Malgudi*. Just as Faulkner's 'Yoknapatawpha' represents South American society; Narayan's '*Malgudi*' represents the south Indian middle-class society of transitional period.

Malgudi is a growing and developing town inhabited with the people of various social grades. It is the place where there is a constant cultural conflict of traditional and modern which sometime generates a great bewilderment in its inhabitants. It draws its sustenance from the human drama that is enacted in it. As the readers read Narayan's novels, they gradually become familiars not only with the principal characters and roads and streets of *Malgudi* but also with the man and women who live in various huts, house and the situation which they undergo. In *Malgudi*, Sarayu River perennially flows in all seasons; factories operate with the labors of different ranks. Similarly the establishments of big cooperative bank, cinema hall, the system of family planning and so on are the evidences of the modern *Malgudi*.

Narayan, from his first novel *Swami and Friends* to *Talkative Man* has written under the influence of the events occurring around him. He often writes the novels bearing the small segment of the Indian middle-class society and its mores and traditions in his mind. So, he operates consistently well within his limited area of experience and achieve substantiality.

Since he is basically rooted in Indian soil and way of existence, he without being didactic, renders an ageless rich heritage of Indian culture and tradition. His presentation of life is realistic. Therefore, the purity of his artistic creed can not be

questioned. "It is free from 'axes' of any kinds", opines N. N. Sharan, a critic on Narayan's novels from *Swami and Friends* to *Talkative Man*. However, his novels unquestionably project an explicit picture of life with moral and cultural norms and values, he never thought of functioning as a missionary, crusader or reformer. The theme of his novels, which has mostly projected his world values, is the theme of juxtaposition of the tradition and modernity in its different aspects.

Though it is all but impossible to delineate all aspects of the writer himself and his works in subtle examination in this brief introduction, a slight effort has been made so as to outline the technical aspect of Narayan's writing through general examination. As we concern the technical aspect of Narayan's novel writing, we find a commendable harmony of form and meaning. So the inextricability of the form and them is one of the chief characteristics of his novels. Scrutinizing the literary technique of Narayan, "the true basis of criticism", says Charles Morgan, "is the harmony of style with subject, of form with vision." Narayan as a novelist attends to his craft very seriously. Being a conscious artist, he is responsible for experimenting with different modes of point of view to suit the material in his novels. His choice of narrative technique or the point of view is one of the important aspects of hi novels. His apt employment of technique functions as a means of exploring the subject and conveying its meaning.

His main concern in plot construction is to tell a story which is readable and interesting. The language he has used in telling story is simple and admirably clean which reflects the virtue of journalistic writing. His traditional concept of a good story saves him from intricacies of a plot. Usually his story has definite form: beginning middle and ending. It proves that the set pattern in most of Narayan's novels is crisis to resolution and then self-awareness.

Narayan exhibits his interest in the different mode of the point of view to suit the stuff in his novels. Narayan presents everything from the view point of individual and society. Both internal and external viewpoint and their variation are opted as per the necessity. For an instance, the story of *The Dark Room* gets narrated through the third person neutral omniscient point of view. Savitri remains the main viewpoint character in the delineation of most of the incidents. But the focus shifts sometimes.

Besides point of view and plot construction, characterization in an unalienable aspect of novel. In regard to characterization, he often chooses middle-class and fumbles when he goes out of his range. The characters in his novels are deeply rooted in their social reality and they strive for some ambition grappling with their fate. Having their own ambition and hope they struggle hard to work out their destiny. As they struggle sometimes they even surpass the social norms and values. In the novel *The Dark Room*, Mrs. Santa Bai, for example, exceeds the limitation of the social norms of Indian society with her ambition of living economically independent life. Similarly, Mari's burglary is also the violation of socially restricted malpractice. The conflict of the individuals and the society in which they are is one of the recurring characteristic of Narayan's novels. However, in such conflict, always society triumphs at least making them aware of their utter dependence on the society. The protagonists usually set out on a quest for something such as, money, self-identity, love, marriage, meaningful relationship, peace and so on. Narayan's typical characters are caught up in the webs of tension. They exert to come out them and often succeed in their endeavor.

Narayan has produced a sizable body of literacy works from his thirties to eighties, i.e. *Swami and Friends* to *Talkative Man*. On the basis of maturity gained in

literacy writing, his novels are divided into three phases. Early experiment, mature works and later works.

Narayan's first novel *Swami and Friends* was first published from London in October of 1935 and was followed by other three novels. *The Bachelor of Art* (1937), *The Dark Room* (1938), and *The English Teacher* (1945). These are the novels belonged to Narayan's early phase.

And the publication of his fifth novel *Mr. Sampath* in 1949 marks the initiation of Narayan's mature phase in his literary career. Including *Mr. Sampath*, *The Financial Expert* (1952), *Waiting for Mahatma* (1955), *The Guide* and *The Man-Eater of Malgudi* are his major works which constitute second phase of his literacy activity.

Signaling to the rise of third phase, *The Vendor of Sweet* came out in the years of 1967 and ten years later of the publication of *The Vendor of Sweet*, his another work *The Painter of Sings* emerged in 1976 being followed by *A Tiger of Malgudi* and *Talkative Man*.

Narayan's penchant did not confine only within the domain of novel writing. Apart from this, his equal interest in other literacy genres is noted from the publication of his short stories such as; *A Horse and Two Goats*, *Lawley Road*, *Malgudi Days*, his retold legends- *Gods, Demones and Other*, *The Ramayan*, *The Mahabharat*. Besides these, memories like *My Days*, *Travel My Dateless Dairy* and essay entitled *Next Sunday*, *Reluctant Guru*, *The World of Story-Teller* etc. are found in the field of Narayan's literary writing.

First published in 1938 from Macmillan, *The Dark Room* candidly exhibits an explicit picture of the steady deterioration of the marital relationship between Savitri, a typical housewife and her husband, Ramani. Bringing the pressure of married life out, this novel raises a lot of disturbing questions regarding the institution of marriage. Perhaps it may be one of the earliest books upon the question of women's right, gender equality etc.

Before writing this novel, Narayan was somehow obsessed with a philosophy of the 'women's Lib' movement. It is obvious from the depiction of his protagonist, Savitri as an ideal victim in an orthodox Indian social milieu. The novel by such a great writer cannot be inconspicuous to the critical eyes of the number of scholars. After its publication it has received a series of critical responses from different critics in different times.

Though the fact of multiple interpretation of a text cannot be repudiated, some certain themes recur in Narayan's novels. As we concern the themes of Narayan's novels, we notice his novels based on the theme of renunciation for something ultimate, of generational disaffiliations, of conflict between tradition and modernity, of East-West encounter, of education and so on.

A. Hariprasana, a renowned Indian critic, comments on the novel as "a story of marital unhappiness and domestic disharmony; it examines the marriage relationship in state of crisis" (47). This commentary sheds light on family chaos by dint of deteriorating marital relationship in conjugal life.

Likewise, N. N. Sharma, examining the novel, states, "*The Dark Room*" is an 'intervening' but interesting novel depicting domestic disharmony and making a quest

for the identity of its heroin, Savitri” (13). Here lies an implication to an unfit wedlock and female identity crisis.

Showing its thematic resemblance with that of his other novels, another critic, Anthony West, writes, “as in many of Narayan’s novels, conservatism and reform are contrasted with the quite irony and subtle humor” (142). Here, his focus is on the cultural transition of Malgudi, viz. southern part of India and technical aspect of the novel.

Thus, different critics in different times have passed varied interpretations to the novel *The Dark Room* through their own views and various angles. Some of them focus on the theme of female’s submission to the authority of male. Others focus on the theme of unhappy marital relationship as a cause of domestic disharmony. And rest of them, stress on the theme of conflict between conservatism and reformation.

Anyway, these aforementioned critics have subtly examined the relationship between husband and wife, and subdued state of Savitri in patriarchal social system. Somewhere, Savitri has been elevated with eulogization in the worshipping pedestal identifying her as an ideal Hindu housewife, whereas some feminists have raised their voices on behalf of pathetic Savitri. Notwithstanding the text has unquestionably imbued with multiple colours of criticism, none of the critics has proceeded to probe the inner state of Savitri: her mental state prior to getting frustrated, during frustration and after returning to the previously discarded home.

Hence, this researcher intends to scoop out the prime causes behind Savitri’s positive alteration and her changed vision to her family and the society. Hence, this research concentrates on yet untouched facet of the novel stepping into Savitri’s self i.e. the state of equanimity and feeling of altruism through Buddhist view of life.

Having relied on the philosophies of Buddhism and the theories related to Buddhist

philosophy, the researcher will trace out transformation of Savitri in this research work.

The whole research work for the convenient purpose and systematic study has been presented here in four main chapters. And the chapters bearing the topics introduction, theoretical tool, textual analysis and conclusion, albeit deals with separate aspects, function together as supplementary components for the accomplishment of the research work.

The first chapter which basically deals with the introductory portion of this research consists of the general introduction of the writer, his major works, some recurring themes, writing techniques, plot summary, some critical commentaries on the novel *The Dark Room* and the elaboration of the hypothesis. The second chapter is about the discussion of the theoretical tool for the textual analysis. In third chapter the text is analyzed on the basis of Buddhist philosophical perspective. Likewise the fourth chapter is the conclusion of the textual analysis showing the change of Savitri's inner state of mind.

II. Buddhism

The Origin of Buddhism

Buddhism, a religion and philosophy founded by Siddhartha Gautama around the 15th century is a western, name for the teachings of the prince Siddhartha of Magad Kingdom. Though Siddhartha Gautama was brought up in the opulent royal palace in a highly luxurious environment and was not deprived of any material comfort, he was always anxious to see the miserable condition of others especially of human beings. When he became sad to see the human being suffered around, he set out in search of the root causes of suffering, leaving the palace at midnight. And throughout his life, he hankered after the way of releasing human beings from the suffering. Thus, the deliverance from the complex chain of prevailing suffering of this world is the essence of the teaching of Buddha. Whatever the Buddha taught in his life was in verbal form; but posthumously the followers of the Buddha, formulated some certain disciplines, and codified the sermons of the Buddha. Hence, the philosophy of Buddhism sprang from one single motive of suffering caused by ignorance or reality of material world. The experience of suffering leads individuals to the way of deliverance from suffering. Liberation is possible only for those who understand the suffering of this world.

He gave up radical asceticism as fruitless, for he, through this approach, could not attain what he had aimed at. Eventually he adopted a middle path between the life of indulgence and the life of self-denial, sitting under a bo-tree until he attained the enlightenment which he had been searching for long. Once having known this ultimate truth, Buddha underwent a period of intense inner struggle. He began to preach wandering from place to place, gathering a body of disciples, and organizing them into a monastic community known as the *sangha*.

At the core of the Buddhist philosophy is the knowing of the four noble truths:

(1) Life is suffering- human existence, in its very nature, is essentially painful from the moment of birth to the moment to death. Even physical death cannot put lid on the source of sufferings. Life is observed as a cycle. Therefore, according to Buddhist thought, present is the consequence of the past action and the series of present actions determine future. (2) All suffering is caused by ignorance about reality which gives birth to craving. (3) Suffering can be ended by overcoming ignorance and attachment to material world. (4) Morality, wisdom and Samadhi or concentration are the paths to be emancipated from earthly affairs that beget suffering. The term Suffering is a philosophically pregnant term. Thus, all earthly existence is suffering, for the life in this world is nothing but an empirical object constituted with '*rupa*' (form) and '*nama*' (name) which is on the constant flux of change. Moreover, the life in this world undergoes the birth, the old age, the grief, the despair, the non fulfillment of desires, the union with disliked and the separation from dears are unavoidable reality. So, as long as these attributes are not exterminated, life cannot really be happy.

Searching something permanent in the evanescent empirical world is the root cause of suffering. The futile exertion done out of ignorance in pursuit of unattainable goal turns into frustration which is the source of life-long sorrow. Therefore, the world where we are born is full of the sorrow of the individuals who run after material things considering it the ultimate truth. One who gets birth in this world submerges in suffering and is imbued with suffering. Buddhist philosophy, therefore, observes the life in this mundane world full of sufferings.

Buddhism Today

Buddhism today is divided into two major branches known as *Theravada*, the way of the Elder, and *Mahayana*, the great vehicle. The

followers of *Mahayana* refer to *Theravada* using derogatory term '*Hinayan*', the lesser Vehicle. During the second council which took place in Vesali approximately one hundred years after the death of Buddha, i.e. about 383 BC. The Buddhist order split into two schools: the *theravadians* and *mahasanghikas*. The *Theravadins* claim to possess the unadulterated tradition of the Buddha's world, and it is their canon which, in complete form, is handed down in *pali*. The canon of the *Mahasanghikas*, the only one work written in the so-called hybrid Sanskrit - *Mahavastu*, is extended.

Different statements are found in connection of factions in Buddhism, actual causes behind this are still vague. According to a historical source, it happened so because of the disagreement regarding ten disciplinary rules; according to another source it was the concept of the Buddhist saint (*arahant*) that caused the split. In opposition to the conservative monks, one group of them took the view that even saints are exposed to temptation and not necessarily omniscient. In contrast, the concept of the world-transcending saint, they created the world-sympathizing *Bodhisattva*

And in later years, numerous sub-schools split off from the *Theravada* and *Mahasanghika* by next two centuries. *Puggalavada*, *Sarvastivasa*, and *Sautrantika*, for example, traces their origin back to the *Theravada*. Of the *Hinayan* School, the *Puggalavada* is the one that deviated farthest from the orthodox tradition. It interpreted the sermon of the Buddha in such a way that there is, after all, something permanent in the cycle of rebirths, namely the 'person' (*puggala*). They hold the view that the person is neither identical with the Five Groups constituting the neither individual nor different from them. Including *Mahasanghika*, these dissident, factions, except *Puggalavada*,

contributed to the advent of *Mahayana*. Having a long and hot dispute on quality of Buddha, *Mahasanghika* sanctioned the view according to which Buddha is but a miracle-working hero. The *Lalitavister*, which stands at the point of transition from *Hinayana* to *Mahayana*, carries the idealization further and interprets Gotama's life as a 'play' (lalita) of the essentially supramundane Buddha.

Thus, the *Mahanaya* no longer looked upon the Buddha as an ordinary human being, but as a supreme man; they asserted that suffering could be eliminated not only by virtuous conduct and enlightenment but also by wisdom alone. They created the concept of universal 'Emptiness'.

Mahayana, unlike *Hinayana*, regards the Buddha as super-human, the *Sarvastivadins* as heavenly being. So the earthly life of the Buddha and his nirvana are illusions which the timeless and transcendent Buddha projected onto the world in order to lead mankind to knowledge and virtuous conduct. The visibility or invisibility of the Buddha to people depends on action-intentions. They think that the good action-intention opens man's eyes to see the Buddha and his ears for his teaching. Above the Earthly Buddhas of gross-material physiques, according to the teaching of *Mahayana*, there is other super-human nature with subtle physique. On the top of these dharma-principles, the immaterial absolute that is immanent in everything, ranks; and this dharma body is common to all the Buddha.

The doctrine of the Three Bodies constitutes the spiritual skeleton of *Mahayanic buddhology*. The term dharma varies according to the context. The meanings of dharma in common are (a) the cosmic order, the natural law which rules our world, the mental-mechanical functional principle of existence

to which everything must obey in order to be able to exist and (b) the teaching of Buddha in which this natural law is revealed and put into words. Thus, the *Dharmakṣya* is also called reality. As in the *Hinayan* so is in the *Mahayana*, too, existence is regarded as sorrowful, ignorance is regarded as a source of suffering and unliberated birth is thought as unification with old suffering. As to rebirth, Ignorance and Craving are considered as the originating point of suffering even in *Mahayanic* school of thought. Human beings are caught in the net of craving, tied by the fetter of ignorance yoked by the craving for becoming, bound for destruction, cast into the cage of suffering, (and) heading for the prison(of worldly life).

In addition, the only one way to liberation: self-discipline- in *Hinayana*, *Mahayana* recognizes other three ways of deliverance from suffering. *Mahayana* teaches deliverance through the wisdom, through the help of Bodhisattavas, through the assistance of Transcend Buddha or by cult. The objections of *Mahayana* are based on the conviction that suffering belongs to the phenomenal realm and all beings are within the realm of suffering. And for those who are inside the complex maze of suffering, it is impossible to come out of the suffering. Thus, the guide is necessarily needed to open the eyes of the sufferers and show the right path for those who are devoid of wisdom for deliverance.

Both major schools of Buddhism inculcate the conviction of impermanence of self and life as five groups of grasping in their followers. As per the *Hinayanic* belief, action-intention plays a deterministic role for future life. And the propelling forces causing the consciousness to do this are craving and ignorance. Whereas the basis of the *Mahayanic* doctrine of rebirth is the dharma theory, adopted from the later *Hinayana*, i.e. *Mahasāṅghikaya*. According to this theory, there are two kinds of

Dharmas: Non-Conditioned and Conditioned ones. The Dharma that is Non-Conditioned constitutes *Niravan*, for these are not dependent on anything, not influenced by *karma* (action), and devoid of impermanence. On contrary to this, Conditioned Dharmas composes the empirical person in their combination.

Law of Nature

Buddhist analyses this world and everything in this world as the effect of cause. Therefore, we are under the control of law of cause and effect. Our present state of life is the effect of our past action. Desire, love, lust, hatred and greed of ephemeral tactile objects are the causative factors of suffering. All desired things are impossible to fulfill. If some are fulfilled, it keeps us happy only for certain time just like the toys for the children. All loved things are impossible to possess and keep intact forever as nothing has abiding quality. Rather whatever we find in this earth all are on the way to death or decay. Everything is changing, ageing and dying or decaying. Therefore, both the separation from the things we loved and the union with the thing we hated causes suffering. Non-fulfillment of desire, separation from loved and unexpected result results human miseries. And those who venture to go against the law of nature will suffer more. Buddhist believes that one of the ways to deplete the burden of suffering is to accept the natural phenomenon as they are. Searching for everlasting attribute in this ephemeral world, according to Buddhism, is the source of suffering, pain and sorrows. Nothing is permanent except one thing that is everything is changing. So, to accept the reality is to take a leap towards realm of bliss.

Buddhist interprets the whole cosmos as the product of cause. So, the world and the things in this world are the effect of causes and it is an unending process. Therefore, nothing has inherited the attributes that remain the same forever and keeps us happy life long. The unfulfillment of desire and impermanence of happiness

derived from ephemeral things is the effect of cause and effect. In chapter four in *Philosophy of the Buddha* a Buddhist thinker writes:

To stop frustration, stop desire; to stop frustration, stop desiring what will not be attained. To stop desire, remove objects stimulating desire [...]. The goal is the source of aim; remove the goal and you remove the aim out of sight, out of mind. (49)

The desire, which is the result of stimulating object, is the cause of frustration. Buddhists believe that human proclivity, propensity and covetousness are the roots of suffering. Unless the root of suffering is exterminated, it grows again and overshadows blissful aspects. As a result, inner peace is disturbed. These suffering persist till the ignorance remains dominant. Ignorance, according to Buddhist, is the lack of knowledge to understand the causes of suffering, or the secret of happiness. Ignorance is the terrible hindrances to the two transcendental truths, i.e. the truth concerning the cessation of misery and the truth concerning the path leading to the cessation of misery. It fosters illusion by distracting away from the path to the deliverance from suffering. In this connection *Sutta-Pitak* explains:

[...] want of knowledge concerning misery, want of knowledge concerning the origin of misery, want of knowledge concerning the path leading to the cessation of misery, wants of knowledge concerning anteriority, want of knowledge concerning posterity. (qtd. in Warren 170)

According to Buddhism, suffering is the initial stage of deliverance; realization is the effect of suffering; and cessation of sufferings is the effect of realization of suffering. Extinguishing of suffering is the storation of peace. Therefore, suffering and

awareness of suffering is indispensable to ascend into the realm of ultimate realization: supreme bliss.

Bodhisattava

The concept of '*Bodhisattava*' has much wider significant in *Mahayanic* School of Buddhism. It is the name given to those beings who strive systematically for enlightenment, that is buddhahood, or who have already obtained it. *Bodhisattava* lives exclusively for others. Their attitude is directed by *Karuna* (mercifulness or compassion), the wish, without self- interest, to make other happy.

The deepest conviction of the *Bodhisattava* is that there is no difference in essence between him and all other. It is by his belief in the essential identity of all beings and by his compassion that he can be recognized as a *Bodhisattava*. The *Bodhisattava* actively intervene in the world and willingly take the suffering of all beings onto their own shoulders. The *Bodhisattava* solemnly vows:

I take the burden of suffering on myself, I am determined (to do so), I endure it. And why? At all cost I must (lift) the burden (of suffering) of all beings. The reason (for this resolve) is not that I find pleasure in that. (Rather) I have (heard) the supplication of all beings for [...] I am resolved to abide in all the states of woe for uncounted ten millions of world-ages [...] it is better that I alone be (burdened) with suffering than that all these beings should fall into world of woe. (148)

To the same extent that the *Bodhisattava* voluntarily takes the suffering of the world upon himself, he sacrifices his bodily, material and karmic possessions; if by doing so he can bring a being closer to liberation:

My bodies (in all rebirth) as well as all the property and pleasure which I have acquired (and will acquire) in three times (past, present and future), I give away indifferently for the welfare of all being (3, 10)
The (karmic) good which (arises) for me from reflection on (how to make all beings) enter the way to Enlightenment, through this (karmic good) many all beings (gain) the ornament of the way to Enlightenment. (10)

Bodhisattava is of two kinds in *Mahayanaic* school: Earthly and Transcendent ones. The former are human beings like millions of others, recognizable as *Bodhisattava* only by their all-embracing compassion and their determination to strive first and foremost for the salvation of others and not to think of own good. Everybody can be *Bodhisattava*. Without grumbling, patiently and being ready for any sacrifice, the earthly *Bodhisattvas* accept rebirth after rebirth. Thus, they always remain close to suffering beings.

Transcendent *Bodhisattvas* are those who have attained the liberating wisdom (prajna) through the realization of six perfections (paramita) and thus sainthood from which there is no relapse. At the moment of their death they refuse to enter the post-mortal, perfect or static nirvana but would accept instead the *Nirvana* without standstill or active *Nirvana*, a state of deliverance from which in their compassion they can continue to work for the benefit of the world. No longer are they perceptible through the sense organs. They are but visible to the eye of all, they are thought to be acting in the sphere of *samsara* for the mass interest of the being in the world.

Earthly Existence: Suffering

All the earthly existence is suffering: the birth, the old age and death, the grief and despair, the separation from friends, the company of disliked ones, non-

fulfillment of desire are the attributes of such existence. As long as these attributes are not exterminated, life cannot really be happy. These attributes are firmly embedded in life, thus, life is considered sorrowful.

Concerning suffering, Buddhist philosophy accounts for ignorance- the ignorance about the real nature of all tactile objects including human being- the origin of all sufferings. Even the soul is not eternal as per Buddhist's belief, to say the least. Both name and form, the constituting components of an individual, destroy simultaneously. Thus, everything joyful and dear ends in suffering owing to their transitory nature. Because of possessive propensity the ignorant, ordinary individual or unchanged ones desire to have what they love and always want remain away what they had. This bias nature is the cause of human misery. Because of this very human tendency and evanescent nature of this world, there invites the suffering. The happiness derived from the fulfillment of craving (*tanha*) is nothing but a mirage. It is merely false happiness that shortly turns into sorrow.

Originated from ignorance, sufferings in Buddhism are classified into threefold: the suffering from pain (*dukkha-dukkha*), the suffering from change or impermanence (*viparinama-dukkha*), and the suffering arising out of the personality-components (*sankhara-dukkha*).

Samsaric existence, the Five Groups of Grasping, is suffering. By Five Group of Grasping Buddhist means the combination of *rupa* (body), *vedana* (sensation), *sanna* (perception), *sankhara* (mental phenomena), and *vinnana* (consciousness). Firstly, the existence of Five Group of Grasping is connected with the phenomena of birth, illness, longing, antipathy etc., which in themselves are already suffering. Secondly, they are transient. In this connection, in response to monks' inquisitiveness about the permanence of this Five Groups, the Buddha replies:

There is, monk, no body whatsoever which is permanent, fixed, lasting, not subject to the law of decay (and) forever remaining the same.

There is, monk, no sensation whatsoever ..., no perception

Whatsoever ...,

No mental phenomenon-whatever..., no conscious

whatsoever..., which is permanent, fixed, lasting, not subject to

law of decay. There is nothing which survives death as every

component of human personality is transient (anicca). When all

Five Groups are subject to decay, none of them can be exempt

destruction. (qtd. in Schumann 43)

These sermons interpret human body as a composition of four great elements: the earth, water, fire, and air; and declares that the part of the physical world, which is subject to change. Thus, impermanence, sorrowfulness and non-selfness are the three marks of the individual. Since the sentimental belief remains prevalent in common people, ego continues which bears the suffering.

Therefore, when we wake up from ignorance and understand non-self, such true understanding leads us to the state of equanimity or superior composure. What disturb mind are only the things with which we identify ourselves. If the five groups, which we call 'my' personality, are not taken as self or self-constituents then no misery concerns us: Rather the attitude of impermanence and selflessness enable us to accept the world as it is without any reaction and enables to surmount the pain and suffering of the world.

Acton-Intention (*chetana*)

It is the consciousness of self that binds us to '*kamma*' (action) which are of three kinds: good, bad and neutral. Moreover, one is free to choose the action from the options of three kinds that determines the result. Action in itself does not create suffering but the action-intention (*chetana*) does. The result of those deeds, which are performed without greed, hatred and delusion, is free from suffering. Craving - the action-intention that binds one to *samsar* (world of suffering), originates from the false consciousness of self. The Buddha in the Truth of the Origin of Suffering' pronounces on the antecedent element of the cycle of rebirth, i.e. suffering:

This, monk, is the Noble Truth of Suffering:

Birth is suffering, old age is suffering, illness is suffering, and death is suffering: grief, lamentation, pain, affliction and despair are suffering: to be united with what is unloved, to be separated from what is loved is suffering: not to be obtained what is longed for is suffering: in short, the Five Groups of Grasping are suffering. (qtd. in Schumann 39)

The 'Truth of the Origin of suffering' is of three kinds: the craving for lust, the craving for becoming and destruction. The most vital of them is craving for lust (*kama*) which includes self-indulgence such as sexual desire, the wish to enjoy and possess etc. Irrespective of the fulfillment of desires and its repercussion, being swayed by mad craving individual hankers blindly for the desire that cannot be fulfilled. And when our desires cannot be fulfilled, we, of course, are caught with frustration because of the non-fulfillment of desire. Thus, the object we desire is not the source of the suffering here. It is the covetousness which dwells and gets dominant in us as we are exposed to the tactile objects of this world having ephemeral

quality or nature. Even if craving is satisfied, the satisfaction received from it does not last long because nothing is permanent. If there is, there is only one thing that is everything is impermanent. Therefore, suffering and craving, according to Buddhism, go simultaneously as they inextricably interwoven with each other.

Craving for destruction is the desire to avoid something unpleasant. Therefore, Buddhist philosophy believes that the struggle to prevent unpleasant happening is to invite more sorrow in one's life. Death or any suicide, however, does not lead one to liberation as it only destroys physical aspects but not craving: the craving continues even after the death, which again causes us fall into the ocean of suffering. Therefore, by extinction of self, Buddhist does not necessarily mean death. The extinction of the self means the extinction of all sorts of craving: be it of lust or of joy or of possession etc. The extinction of self means the removal of the consciousness of false 'Ego'. This extinction is what the Buddhist call is *Nibban*- ultimate goal, which cannot be attained through sensory apparatus. However, *Nibban* is realized whenever the '*nama*' aspect of our life having false awareness of egoism is cleansed with the true understanding of the root of ignorance. Thus, the realization of this supreme goal is quiet impossible until we adamantly stick to craving, for the realization of *Nibban* is the outcome of the annihilation of Craving.

Since the craving (*tanha*) as pre the 'Truth of the Origin of Suffering' is the root of suffering, the only possible way of cessation of suffering is the termination of craving. *Nibban* in this sense is the deliverance from *samsaric* affair afflictions and depravities of this world. And both ignorance and craving are extirpated by following the rules of self-discipline or through the self-realization of suffering which enables to avert mundane desires that soon turn out to be frustration.

Right view is one of eightfold path in respect to eschewing the suffering in life. The right view is the understanding of the Buddhist Four Truth and the recognition of impermanency of self. An individual who is convinced of non-selfness takes a step towards the annihilation of suffering, for nothing influences a man who knows the transitoriness of the material world. Right view furthermore consists in discarding the four perverse views. They are: looking for permanent in impermanent, happiness in suffering, self in non-self and beauty in what is ugliness.

The term 'Buddha' means enlightenment or understanding the truth. 'Truth' here means the whole or complete. Thus, understanding truth indicates a complete understanding of the life, the universe and the relation between individual and the world, which is possible only when one steps out by crossing the threshold of the realm of delusion. The underlying causative factor behind indulging with illusion is 'ignorance'. Ignorance, as per the Buddhism, is considered the origin of all sorts of depravities. Until this ingrained ignorance is not cleansed with true knowledge, one always gets confined within the realm of illusion in such a way that he/ she cannot even imagine beyond the realm in which they are since their birth.

False Consciousness of Ego

Ego is the self-esteem or the individual's perception of himself/herself in relation to other people or the outside world. It is the conscious claim or possession over material things by a human being based on his/her perception or experience. According to Buddhism, all signs of an ego are absent. Whatsoever we think as an ego or the manifestation of an ego, in fact, is not ego having abiding nature. Form, feeling, thought, consciousness, sensation, perception, predisposition etc. are not the constituents of ego which continuously change time to time. Therefore, to claim these factors as the constituents of ego is to plunge into the ocean of delusion. Since all

these constituents tend towards destruction, the ego constituted with these factors always tends towards destruction. So there is no ego indeed. Henry Clarke Warren mentions the translated text where Buddha, the Blessed One speaks to his disciples in the *Maha-Vagga*:

"As respect all sensation whatsoever...as respects all perception whatsoever...as respects all predispositions whatsoever...as respects all consciousness whatsoever, past, future, or present, be it subjective or existing outside gross or subtle, mean or exalted, far or near, the correct view in the light of highest knowledge is as follows: 'This is not mine; this am I not; this is not my Ego.'" (qtd. in Warren 147)

Only the individuals who are inside the curtain of illusion cherish the ego that frequently generates nothing but pain and sufferings of all kinds in life. The false notion about the life and the world changes when one realizes the reality. Consequently, one stops claiming this is my form; this am I or this is my consciousness; this am I or this is my feeling; this am I etc. Until the consciousness of 'I' and 'my' remains strong, one is easily affected with trivial matter. When the ego is uprooted then there sprouts altruism which is never debilitated by mundane factors. In right perception of the true nature of name and form, the aversion to form, consciousness, sensation, perception, predisposition etc. arises. Only the person enlightened or blessed with true knowledge can extinguish the flame of ego. The extinguishing of ego is released from the complex snare of greed, anger, worries.

Thus, ego, we most often heard, is an empty sound which is simply created because of our ignorance. The individual who is conscious of his or her 'self' or 'ego' always be the victim of easily resulting egoistical problems. And the exertions of those who fail to step out of ignorance into the realm of true knowledge through

experiences foster the ego which is the root of craving. Jealousy, hostility, rage, hatred etc. are the outcome of ego or self. All these have corrosive effect on equanimity or inner peace. Ego in this sense plays an antecedent role in intensifying suffering. To be precise, Ego, according to Buddhist philosophy, is nowhere in human beings. If ego means name (identity) then name is nothing but an empty sound just given to somebody or something for convenient purpose and it continues or we continue it. Human being is considered just as a fusion of name and form. By form, Buddhist means material aspects and by name, immaterial aspects such as consciousness, thought, sensation, predisposition etc. These all tend towards decay and destruction. When material side destroys, name aspects destroy concomitantly, thus, ego is transitory.

Middle-Path

Middle-path, according Buddhism, is not the rejection of the extreme path: spiritual and material way of life. However, it rejects both extremes ends combining them proportionately. Therefore, Middle-path is considered the right path towards complete and true knowledge which disillusions enabling us to understand the causative factors of misery prevailing on earth. Defining Middle-path A. J. Baham writes,

The middle way avoids extreme yet it does not extremely avoids extremes. If there are times when one needs to ascetic, then let him be ascetic: if at times one should rejoice unrestrainedly, let him show rejoice. But it is foolish to desire to legislate either "Always be ascetic" or "Always rejoice" when such cannot be law of life. (75)

According to middle doctrine of Buddhist philosophy it is neither self indulgence nor self mortification. It imparts knowledge of reality letting individual

experience both spiritual and material aspects of life. Thus, the extremists either indulge in false self or opt for arduous ascetic practice for supreme bliss. However, the bliss attained clinging to the extreme path is not permanent.

Those who adhere firmly to one extreme end i.e. particular belief or principle and accustomed to live and cheer in the world of mirage, take illusory things as the only truth. This tendency of clinging adamantly to extreme and so as to attain enlightenment in the ignorance that hinders in perceiving the whole. Therefore, extremist never understands the whole, for they are utterly overwhelmed by biased attitude. The knowledge resulting from orthodoxy never be true as it does not encompass the whole. So, understanding whole according the Buddhism is enlightenment. The propensity of clinging to particular dogma gives birth to like and dislike; or love and hatred etc. Like illusion, the outcome of ignorance; the blind adherence to the deceptive things as real is the repercussion of illusion, and this blind adherence to particular dogma gives birth to extremism. The extremism of likes and dislikes or love and hatred opens the entrance of all sorts of sufferings in one's life.

Nirvana or Nibban

Nirvana is the state of supreme bliss, totally free from suffering and individual existence. It is a state Buddhists refer to as "Enlightenment". It is the ultimate goal of all Buddhists. The attainment of *Nirvana* breaks the endless cycle of birth and rebirth. Buddhists also consider *Nirvana* as freedom from all worldly concerns such as greed, hatred and ignorance.

The word *Nirvana* means "to extinguish," such as extinguishing the fire. This "extinguishment" is not understood by Buddhists to mean annihilation, however, it is thought of entering into another kind of existence. Defining *Nirvana* Nyanaponika writes in his edited book *Pathways of Buddhist Thought*: "*Nirvana* is the ending of

rebirth, final termination of one's existence within *Samsara*. [...] One common etymological explanation is: '*Nir*' means 'not' and '*vana*' means 'can be rendered as' the effort of blowing' (182).

Dhammapada (202-04) describes *Nirvana* as the supreme bliss in the following lines:

Hunger is the worst of diseases, the body the greatest of pains; if one knows this truly, that is nirvana, the highest happiness. Health is the greatest of gifts, contentedness the best riches; trust is the best of relationships, nirvana the supreme bliss. (qtd. in Nyanaponika 183)

Nirvana, as the supreme bliss, it is inexplicable, one will successfully realize it and the surest ways to attain nirvana according to Buddhist conception is the self-extinction.

The way of understanding *Nirvana* is varied in the different schools of Buddhism. According to *Theravada Buddhism*, nirvana is an "unbinding" of the mind from defilements: the mental "effluents" of sensuality, views, becoming, and ignorance. It is liberation from the cycle of death and rebirth and freedom from the effects of mundane affairs. Similarly, in *Mahayana Buddhism* *Nirvana* is the extinguishing of dualities and a merging with *Nirvana* and *Samsara* into an absolute existence. Thus, most schools of Buddhism explain *Nirvana* as a state of supreme bliss or peace, and this state may be experienced in life, or it may be entered into at death.

Buddhism teaches its followers that in this life they are only temporary vessels of body, emotions, thoughts, tendencies, and knowledge. There is no sense of self or soul when in this world. A fundamental concept of Buddhism is the notion that the

goal of one's life is to break the cycles of death and birth. Rebirth exists because of the individual's craving and desires to live in this world. The ultimate goal of a Buddhist is to achieve freedom from the cycle of rebirth and attain *Nirvana*, the enlightened state in which the person is free from any kind of sufferings caused by greed, hatred, and ignorance.

The attainment of *Nirvana* marks the end of *samsara*. So, *Nirvana* should not be understood as everlasting life, for this would not be qualitatively different from the potentially endless continuation of *samsaric* existence. Nor should *Nirvana* be understood as the kind of annihilation which the materialists assume to occur at death. It is the state beyond suffering or a state of freedom from cycle of birth and rebirth. The one, who attains *Nirvana* shows love for others, becomes compassionate and sympathetic to other people, and has patience in every earthly affair.

III. Savitiri's Quest for Inner Peace

Critical Synopsis of the Novel

The whole story of *The Dark Room* revolves around Savitri who is in full charge of domestic chore. Ramani, an employee of the Englandia Insurance Company, is exigent and assertive husband of Savitri. They have three children, Kamala, Sumati and Babu. There is a dark room in their house where Savitri retires whenever her husband's harshness seems unbearable to her.

Before the arrival of Santa Bai in between Savitri and Ramani, everything is as usual except some normal domestic tension. But when the Insurance Company takes a decision to take in more women probationers into its branches, Ramiani being smitten by her, strongly recommends Mrs. Santa Bai to be employed as a trainee in his office. And the growing intimacy between Mrs. Santa Bai and Ramani brews suspicion in Savitri about her husband's character. When the rumor of debauchery reaches to the ears of Savitri from one of her friends; being unable to control herself she deserts the house because of her strong abhorrence to her husband. She is so much frustrated that she at once decides to commit suicide by drowning herself into Sarayu River. Her suicidal attempt fails when Mari coincidentally notice and rescues her from the river. And then she is taken to their house where Savitri does not want to stay for long with them as she wants to live self-dependent life. Therefore, she works as a care taker in a temple near the village. After a single day, she all of a sudden realizes her necessity for her children and society. After all, she returns to previously abandoned house where she performs her duty genuinely. Now she is not affected with any sort of trivial things, for she has attained equanimity and is replete with altruism.

Savitri's Ignorance and Suffering

Savitri, the major character in the novel *The Dark Room* by R. K. Narayan, is a sufferer as she suffers much more than other characters. She undergoes the innumerable series of sufferings throughout the story. From the very beginning of the story she is mentally restless. Even in her hiatus, she is occupied with the worries and tension of family. It shows that she is firmly attached to household chores. She suffers because of her attachment to domesticity. She ignorantly seeks happiness in the things that generate suffering. She indulges herself in illusion thinking them as an ultimate because of her ignorance. It is seen that her suffering has never declined; rather it rises up to such stage that it compels her abandon her family in which she has been living for fifteen years. She suffers because of the lack of knowledge of the reality. She instead of accepting the reality goes against it strengthens the knot of her sufferings.

All these happen to her because of her high ambition or dream of transforming her moderate family into ideal one, providing with ample of love and family care. She attempts to avoid unpleasant happenings in family and stores happiness, which is called the action-intention and craving, according to Buddhism. Therefore, she suffers because of her action-intention or craving. She opts various arduous ways for the sake of the happiness of her family sacrificing her own happiness but what she gets in return is nothing but pains and sufferings. She is very sensitive to care for her family members. Therefore, she is affected much even with the trivial things happening in the family. It is apparently seen in the beginning chapter of the novel.

The story unfolds with the reluctance of Babu, the son, for going to school pretending as if he was seriously sick, and Savitri's worries about the condition of his health. Ramani, his father, wants him to go to school. He inquires Savitri about the boy, and she replies in one word saying "Nothing". It shows Savitri's mental

disturbance because of intense worries about the poor health condition of Babu and the fear of Ramani. Here she suffers double.

Later, when Ramani asked her to leave the boy with him and do her work, Savitri timidly says, “He is not well. The boy has fever. Can’t you see how ill the boy is?” It implies her serious concern about the health condition of the boy. Her mind is fully occupied with the condition of the boy and becomes worried because of her excess love and care. As Buddhist believes that the love of tactile object is the root cause of suffering, Savitri suffers because of her family affection. Describing the worried state of Savitri the narrator says she “ceased to pay attention to it and ate in silence. Her thought reverted to Babu. The boy looked unwell and perhaps at that moment he was very ill in his classroom” (5).

All her worries, tension, greed, love, hatred, pain sorrows etc. are the various forms of suffering as these never let her mind be in peace and calm. Buddhist believes self, or ego is the main factors that generate the sense of ‘I’ and ‘my’, and then love, greed, hatred etc. that drags into the whirlpool of suffering. Self according to Buddhism is the product of false consciousness of individual. Therefore, ignorance is the root cause of all sufferings; it is the seed of false consciousness. Unless darkness of ignorance is exterminated with the light of knowledge, one cannot come out of the complex maze of suffering.

Savitri struggles in the world of mirage searching peace and happiness because of her ignorance, and therefore, she suffers. She suffers not because of her action but because of her action-intention such as desire and ambition. She is restless and full of tension, fear and worries because of her covetous proclivity. Without knowing the causes of suffering, she does futile attempts to release herself from the clutch of suffering. The more she attempts the more she snares in the trap of suffering.

So, Savitri's suffering is not the consequence of her actions; rather it is the effect of her desire wants ambition, fear and greed. As she has been victim of desire, greed and fear, she does not realize mental peace. She searches happiness in the world of sorrow. On the contrary, she undergoes more pains and suffering. It is her expectation that makes the result different. She instructs her children how to walk and play. She lucks up everything in kitchen cupboard and serves them out herself; it shows that she is full of greed, expectation, desire and so on.

Whenever her cherished delicate dream is shaken by the law of nature, she suffers from mental sickness, or almost breaks down. She is blind to the reality that nothing is in her control that's why she tries to attain unattainable thing. Her expectation vanishes in air; as a result all her hopes, desires and ambitions change into despair and frustration. In this sense she herself is responsible in submerging herself in the ocean of suffering. She is so sensitive to the health of her children that she worries more than is necessary regarding the physical growth of her eldest daughter Sumati. As she was eating tiffin, Savitri observes her and talks to herself, "[...] why this girl getting thinner everyday. She is eleven years old and still looks as she was three years ago, as if a whiff of wind could push her off her feet, frail and floating [...]" (7). She is also equally attentive to the departure, arrival and dinning of her husband, Ramani. The narrator in the story describes it:

Savitri hovered between the cook and her husband watching every item on his dining leaf, and instructing the cook to bring a second or third helping [...]. She comes out of the kitchen to see him off. He gives money and stride out. For a moment Savitri lingers in a doorway to hear the protest and growls at the chervolt as it is taken out of the garage. (3-4)

Savitri is always careful about the arrival of Ramani and the horn of his car. She always keeps herself stand by to welcome the arrival of her husband. These activities of Savitri narrated above shows that she is too worried about her children and frightened with her assertive husband, Ramani. These fears and worries always haunt Savitri's mind. However she does not understand the cause of suffering and strives more to settle the tension and worries as much as she could. She does not stop struggling for the sake of family happiness. But she cannot retain happiness in her family.

Whatever she gets from her arduous performance she did with the intention of storing peace and happiness in the family is mere burden of sufferings. She is ignorant to the secret of the law of nature i.e. everything is changing perpetually and happens in accordance with the law of nature. Thus, she torments herself seeking harmonious and ideal pattern to give to her family. She is in the world of mirage or illusion. This world according to Buddhism is full of suffering and all worldly phenomenons happen according to the mysterious law of cause and effect; but not according to our desire and wish. Therefore, all the desired things are not attainable and all unwanted things are not avoidable. If attained, that does not keep us happy forever. After certain time the happiness attained from earthly activities, or things again invites suffering.

Therefore, Savitri's every endeavor, guided by her desire and expectation of achieving something better than she had, does not bring even a slight depletion in her sufferings. Reverse to it, it piles more burden of suffering leading her up to the culmination of frustration. The moment she finds herself suffering, she stops striving and recourses to the dark room, secluding herself from all family members, she spends time in loneliness. She rejects even food and water remaining detached from other. She refuses everything not because of her awareness of the cause of suffering

but because of her ego i.e. anger, cross and suppressed resentment. Therefore, she fails to identify its causative factors and suffers.

The day before Navaratri, Ramani slaps Babu following his mischief to disconnect the electricity while illuminating the worship room with colorful bulbs. Savitri is helpless despite her love and protection; she cannot save him from father's punishment. She is hurt and feels frail. The narrator describes Savitri's anxiety and vulnerable condition in the following lines:

When he has gone, Savitri rose, went to the dark room next to the store, and threw herself on the floor. Later cook tracked her down there and requested her to take her food but she refused. Two children came to her one by one, tried to coax her. She turned her face to the wall and shut her eyes. (39)

All these sulky activities of Savitri show her mental commotion. She is angry because she loves Babu much and she finds herself weak to protect the boy. This aforementioned paragraph derived from the story shows that Savitri is victim of her excess love to Babu and her ego. She is affected more than necessary. Babu himself, as he was trying to coax his mother, asks, "Why do you go on lying there? It was only a slight slap that he gave me after all. You make too much of it. I am going to school now." Therefore, it is not the slap Babu received from his father affected her so much. She is hurt because of her ego and her love towards her son rather than the punishment. She says, "Don't ask me," when the cook asks her what he should cook. She is unable to think that father is the responsible member in the family to control if someone in family does wrong, or takes wrong path. Savitri suffers from her sensitivity and excess love towards Babu. It is nothing other than her self-esteem or ego.

Buddhist sees this world as an ocean of pain and those who get birth in this world plunge into this ocean. Whatever we do, we do in illusion. One cannot get rid of suffering because of the veil of love i.e. attachment with desire, passion, stimulating tactile objects; love with dears and nears of unpleasant thing, separation from kith and kin. These all are the hindrances of deliverance from the world of suffering. In the story Savitri is an example of victim of fear, excess love and care and ego. She loves Babu much, so she cannot tolerate Babu being slapped from his father. The Buddhist believes that it is human propensity to have thing loved with them and unharmed; but the reality is not so. Suffering, therefore, originates from discordance of human proclivity and the reality. If the things loved are harmed a bit, that harms its lover too much, troubles much. So a lover is always full of fear and tear of separation from loved or dears ones and union with unloved. Attachment to ephemeral things seeking inner solace is interpreted as the hindrances to attain inner peace and bliss. All the earthly things are nothing but chain in the journey to the realm of supreme bliss.

Savitri's ignorance - attachment to household life adamantly ignoring other aspects of life are the underlying causes of her anxieties. The Buddhist believes that ignorance gives birth to craving which is called bad action-intention by *Hinyanic Cult*. Every birth is considered sorrowful. Here in the case of Savitri, her suffering takes rebirth even though she tries to cease, or sometimes surmounts it. Her relentless exertion for the amelioration of family, her concern in domestic courses is her futile attempts to sweep away the miseries of family. She is always haunted with the fear of happening something unpleasant in her family, and is desirous to enjoy the family happiness. This very desire and expectation of her never let her be free from worries, anxieties, and fear in her life.

Besides this, Savitri longs for her bygone days comparing herself with her past standing in front of mirror. Observing herself she says:

Let me admit my compulsion has become rather sooty, and these dark rings under to eyes. I am getting careless about my hair [...] she stood close to the mirror, with her nose almost touching the glass [...] my checks, too, were rosy and my hair come down to my hips before I had my two miscarriages and three child births. (81)

These lines also exhibit her attachment toward her beauty, which is her ignorance that the beauty is impermanent. Sitting beside the river Sarayu she reflects on her early days. She recalls “how he had written to her in all the early letters that he hadn’t met anyone with a skin as fair as hers, or with her eyes or hair or checks” (92).

This nostalgic reflection of Savitri implies that she strongly wants her past which means permanency of her beauty and happiness of her early days. But it is unattainable desire. So she suffers from her desire for something permanent. Nothing is permanent or has abiding quality in the transitory world, as Buddhist believes, everything, even soul, does not survive after death. The whole cosmos, according to Buddhist philosophy, is changing in concomitantly with the flow of time. And we are impotent like a tiny mote of dust. Even self never remains constant. Here Savitri seems to have been narcissistic due to the instability of changing world. She is the victim of nostalgia. The more she tries to capture her past, and retains present expecting better future, the more she sinks in the quake sand of suffering. Her nostalgia, regression, remorse are the different form of sufferings.

She longs to keep her family intact causes her suffer more. She goes on instructing her children and cooks and reminds her husband about his duties towards family. But nothing goes as per her wish. She teaches Kamala how to walk slowly as

she prances. She says, “Why don’t you walk like a normal female, Kamala?” similarly she instructs Sumati to come together with Kamala. She asks Sumati why she does not keep Kamala with her and allow to come running through the streets, keep an eye on the girl. Here she is unnecessarily worried concerning the activities of her children. She has forgotten that it is a natural process that the age factor determines the activities of children. Change in activities in the passage of time is also the law of nature. Savitri suffers because she goes against the rule of nature. Birth, growth, getting old and death are inevitable. So whatever there are in this world are constantly changing according to the law of cause and effects.

Savitri is unable to liberate herself from the ocean of suffering (*samsar*) because she is accustomed to the world of mirage, or illusion, and is attached to the sense stimulating objects of the ephemeral world. She runs after the things that result suffering thinking that they are the sources of happiness. Since she has been tethered by the earthly activities, she cannot liberate herself from the clutches of the sorrowful world. She, without understanding the reality and the existence in this world, enslaves herself hankering after the worldly happiness that resembles the perishable bubble of water. So the happiness she attains from her strenuous labors soon changes into sorrow.

Therefore, in return of her sacrifice she gets burden of tension and worries, she only worries about her family members and about the household chores although she has a cook and other servants to do the works. Her sensitive and vulnerable self are the factors that create tension, pain, sorrow, anger etc. in Savitri. In the story when Ramani comments on the preparation observing the monotonous items, she regrets with the cook about the preparation as saying,

We ought not to have repeated the brinjals today. We had it yesterday [...] No more of it this week whatever happens [...] perhaps you would have done well to reduce the tamarind in the sauce. Your master doesn't like tamarind very much. (4)

These lines indicate that she has been the victim of regression, the other form of suffering. When the cook delays a little, she herself starts the kitchen. She always keeps on observing as the cook works. When the cook comes to his duty a bit late being deceived by the tower clock, Savitri reacts and says,

I was about to light the oven for coffee. If you can't be back at two o'clock, you can tell me. I will do this tiffin business myself. I do so many things already one more will make no difference. You can come of your leisure and do whatever is left undone. (8)

Here Savitri's suffering manifests in the form of resentment. Similarly, as she gets ready for shopping she instructs the cook because she is very sensitive to household task. She wants perfection in each piece of work which is almost impossible. It inflicts more anxiety in her compared to other members in her family.

Savitri's inability to face reality of the world is another root cause of her suffering. Instead of searching for outlet of problems she always tries to conceal problem and weakness. When Gangu pours the information of the Ramani's debauchery with Santa Bai in her ear, she tries to conceal it diverting the talk to another subject matter saying "I heard that you were about to make records of some of our songs." This shows that Savitri's mind is replete with fear and tension.

Her attempts to escape the unpleasant things lead her to the depth of suffering. Her craving for destruction supplies impulse to her to judge good and bad and avoid the latter. Her love for liked and hatred to unloved develops bias attitude I her.

Therefore, she always keeps herself vigil to avert bad or unpleasant things. However, she is rewarded with suffering because nothing happens according to her desire. She is so much sensitive to domesticity that she is always ready with the list of instruction to remind the duty of the cook who has been working there for long. Before she goes out she gives instruction,

I'm going out. If the children come from school before I return, give them coffee and tiffin. Babu will come in the evening. He is not quite well. Give him coffee. Don't compel him to take tiffin if he doesn't want it. (9)

The lines reveal her anxiety regarding the timely tiffin of children and her suspicious nature towards the cooks. She suspects the cook, which is traced in the text as the narrator says,

The cook served her in Sullen silence [...] He was affected acutely by both by criticism and by hunger, [...] other cooks might have eased the situation by snatching a gulp of milk...but not he; Savitri locked up there commodities in the kitchen cupboard and served them out herself. (4)

It shows that Savitri is also the victim of greed and suspicion, which are the root cause of the suffering.

Savitri's Craving for Destruction

According to Buddhist philosophy, craving for destruction is one of the sources of suffering. The endeavor of avoiding something unpleasant from happening is futile. One who wants to avoid unpleasant thing always fosters the fear in the mind, and the fear never let one be free and happy. The attempt to avoid unpleasant means the refusal of unloved things and desire to unite with loved. But reality is different, for

nothing happens in accordance with our wishes. Suffering arises the moment when we unite with the things unloved and get separated from the thing loved. Buddhism believes that worldly love never gives solace. It rather impedes the way to the realm of peace and bliss.

Savitri, in the story, is plagued with fear. She always tries hard to avoid unpleasant things happening in her family. She sacrifices her earthly comfort for the sake of her family nevertheless she is full of doubt whether she is able to have happy family. She lacks right mindfulness; she, therefore, recurses to the god in order to avoid mishap in her life. The following lines are the evidences how she recurses to the god for her earthly happiness and prosperity.

She went to the worshipping-room, lighted the wicks and incense,
threw on the images on the wooden pedestal handfuls of hibiscus,
jasmine and nerium, and muttered all the sacred chants she had learned
from her mother years ago. She prostrated herself before the gods. (4)

She loses confidence. She worships the god for the material pleasure and success. She suffers not only because of her attachment to the mundane activities of household life, but also because of her suspicion and lack of confidence in her for avoiding the possible mishap. Her prostration in front of the image of god indicates her surrender to the overwhelming anxieties of the material world.

Savitri tries to mollify her fears escaping the reality. It is traced in the conversation between Gangu and Savitri herself. When Gangu asks about the bench, “What happened to the bench which used to be here all these days? You are lying on the floor. Savitri says, “Something or other has happened to it” (16).

These all show that Savitri’s mind is replete with fear, tension, and worries because of her inability to face the reality. In this sense she is escapist, who wants to

escape from reality and live in illusion. According to Buddhism, acceptance of reality is the ultimate solution of suffering. As long as Savitri tries to escape from the reality she is entangled with the complex loop of sufferings. She does all these because of her fear she is afraid of something that may happen and shatter the whole family.

Savitri's Ego: The Cause of her Suffering

As per the philosophy of Buddhism, self is merely the combination of *nama* such as thought, feeling, emotion, lust, greed, hatred etc. and *rupa*, the physical aspect. In Buddhism, it is believed that even the self (soul) gets destroyed along with the destruction of all its constituents. So, self doesn't survive after death. The realization of 'self' is the false-consciousness. They claim 'self' as the source of suffering. The extinction of self is the annihilation of all passion, greed, anger, emotion etc. They always drag humans into the whirlpool of suffering. Till the self persists, remains dominant; 'I' and 'My' ego survive. Thus, it is the very self that garners the sufferings of various forms. When this false consciousness of 'I' and 'my' drives us, we cannot liberate ourselves from the world of matters as ego hugely chains us to the world of illusion.

Savitri, in the novel, is portrayed as a victim of her false consciousness. Seemingly she is totally devoted to her family sacrificing her own personal happiness. However, her latent self unknowingly surfaces when she reaches at the climax of her mental suffering. The same woman who used to shake because of fear and could not talk clearly to her husband sometimes she becomes bold asserting her 'self'. When she discovers her husband's flirtation with Santa Bai, her expectation from Ramani crumbles away. She stands besides his cot and says,

"I'm not going to, till you promise to come to your sense." I'm a human being [...]. For you we are playthings when you feel like

hugging and slaves of other times. Don't think that you can fondle us when you like and kick us when you choose. (85)

Her revolt in the climax of distress intensifies her suffering instead of reduction. The following extract derived from the story apparently shows the rebellion of Savitri against the conduct of her husband. When her husband tries to touch her, she strongly reacts:

Don't touch me! You're dirty, you are impure and burn my skin [...] I can't cleanse myself the impurity of your touch [...]. Do you think I am going to stay here? We are responsible for our position: we accept food, shelter, and comforts that you give, and are what we are. Do you think that I will stay in your house, breathe the air of your property, drink the water here, and eat food you buy with your money? No. I'll starve and die in the open, under the sky, a roof for which we need be obliged to no man. (87-88)

Savitri in this stage is a bit disillusioned. However, her awareness of (ego) self becomes exigent along with her disillusionment. Here she is again victimized by self. Therefore, she rather experiences more distress. 'Self' which is supposed to be annihilated for the realization of permanent tranquility becomes dominant in Savitri. Though she comes out from delusion, she is trapped by ego. She, in this sense, is still ignorant. Buddhism observes identity or self is simply a false assumption, and believes individual as the fusion of five *Skendhas* (elements) that go to their own place after the death. According to Buddhist philosophy hankering for self is to garner miseries. Thus, the extinction of self is the extinction of all forms of suffering.

Moreover, regarding suffering and deliverance from suffering, Buddhism takes suffering as the initial stage. It is believed that only the sufferer realizes it and

sets out in the quest for deliverance (*Nibban*). Those who do not realize suffering are devoid of knowledge and indulged in illusion. So, Savitri does not realize that she is suffering though out her fifteen years' stay together with Ramani and three children; it is because of her ignorance. But when she knows all of her sacrifices turns into vile dust after she discovers that her love and care is not strong enough to keep her husband with her, all of a sudden she understands that what she has been doing is meaningless.

Savitri's Quest for Inner Peace

Savitri struggles for 15 years sacrificing her own happiness and desire for the sake of family. She does not care her personal happiness rather she takes the problem of other family members as her own. She does these all in search of inner peace. But the problem with Savitri is the expectation of result as per her wish. She lacks the knowledge that everything happens on its own. Each and every phenomenon has mysterious law that is beyond the domain of human knowledge and cannot be understood by our mental apparatus.

Engrossing herself in household responsibility, she wants to prove herself a perfect house wife. To some extent, she succeeds attaining transitory happiness and peace on the accomplishment of her duty. Nonetheless, such happiness sooner or later changes into worries and tension. So, Savitri tends to be searching peace and bliss amidst the piles of suffering in the world of mirage. She enslaves herself to keep family intact and becomes a scapegoat for the happiness and harmony of her family. Her arduous task keeps her family intact until her vision of knowledge was blind-folded by ignorance. After fifteen years of her relentless strenuous sacrifices she is rewarded with the despair and intolerable frustration in life. Her husband is indifferent to her contributions for the family and entertains himself in infidelity.

After she discovers that her husband has illegal affair with one of the lady staff, she finds that whatever she has done in past fifteen years is futile. Her relation with her husband does not grow as she has expected. When she is disillusioned she finds her contribution is worthless. Being extremely frustrated, Savitri decides to commit suicide, for she understands her desolate condition and sorrowful existence. She relinquishes house, husband even her three children and sets out at night to be away from the world of suffering in search of inner peace.

She threw a look at the children, at him, turned round and walked out softly closing the door behind her [...]. She walked all the way to the north end of the town she opened the gate a little; let herself out [...] she walked down the silent street. It was very nearly midnight and reached the river an hour later. (88 – 90)

These lines vividly project her understanding about the bitter reality and her departure from household life like Siddharth in search of inner peace. Although she abandons her family at midnight following extreme frustration and cross in search of *Nibban*, she is always obsessed with memory of her household life.

Before she leaves the house she puts off whatever ornaments she is wearing. It shows her first step to renounce the material world. She in frustration leaves all her jewelry and revolts against her husband's authority and the attachment to the material world. The hot conversation between Savitri and Ramani is presented with narrator's comments:

“Very well. Take your things and get out this moment”

“Things? I don't possess anything in this world. What possession can a woman call her own expect her body? Everything else that she has is her father's, her husband's, or her son's. So take these, too...”. She

removed her diamond, earrings the diamond studs on her nose, her necklace, gold bangles and rings and threw them at him. (88)

Even after Savitri leaves family and wanders in pursuit of peace she does not attain it as the memory of her children and fear trail her mind. When she leaves house, she watches the sleeping children and thinks, “What will they do without me?” “Will the children sleep there in the dark without me?” The questions about the children and their future never set her mind free. Wherever she goes she is fully occupied with such questions. She attempts to kill her in anxiety. Once she thinks to draw herself to get rid of suffering; at this time as well, the love of her children abstains her to do so. She imagines about the future life of her children and her own trying to console her,

“... Babu would perhaps not come home at all but spend his time in the office and not think of her; Sumati and Kamala would marry and go away and get wrapped up in their own family bother and give their mother a thought once in a way when there was nothing else to think about” (92)

She is day dreaming, meanwhile, the memory of her sister who his now in Rangoon flashes in her mind. She says herself she,

Must go and see my sister in Rangoon too. What a happy couple those two are never irritating each other, beautifully balanced. She has always been the luckier since childhood. She was the one to escape thrashing, to be given the first sweets and pencil [...] no wonder the same luck persists in marriage, too. (92)

Here, Savitri thinks of her sister’s happy married life. She is always luckier than Savitri since childhood. The love of her children and memory of her sister make Savitri decide not to kill her; and she plans to visit her sister. She also reflects back to

her happy moments with her husband. She thinks “How he had written to her in all the early letters that he hadn’t met anyone with a skin as fair as hers, or with her eyes or hair or cheeks.” (92)

All the lines quoted above from the story show that she was completely distraught. Therefore, she fails to attain inner peace physically exterminating her. Wherever she goes mentally she is attached with her family and relations, which suffers her more than she was with her family. Again here her attempt to be in peace becomes futile.

Buddhism believes any attempt to get rid of suffering without understanding the causative factors is root cause of human suffering. According to it, the more one attempts to enjoy peace and bliss fostering ignorance, the more he/she suffers. In this light, Savitri is ignorant to understand that the very love for the children and the memory of her past life are the causative factors of her suffering. And she is unable to release herself from this worldly attachment, which makes her oscillate between two extremes of self-indulgence and self-mortification.

Standing in water she thinks,

In Yama’s world the cauldron must be ready for me for the sin of
talking back to a husband and disobeying him, but what could I do?

What could I do ... no, no, I can’t die. I must go back home. I won’t, I
won’t. (94)

It shows Savitri’s divided mentality, which is also one of the causes of her suffering. She wants to kill herself by drawing in water at the sometime she does not want to die, but she lunges for peace. Thus, on the one hand she wants to live secluded life, on the other hand she worries thinking about the future of her children.

The reference from the story exposes her mental turmoil as she thinks, “Sumati and Kamala must study up to B.A. and not depend for their salvation on marriage.” The striking gong takes her back to the moment when Babu and Sumati were ill and she counts,

One, two, three... I've never seen this hour before, always been asleep. Not always, when Babu had the chicken pox and Sumati had typhoid I've counted the gong at this hour on several nights. And also when he had his headache. How many nights have I sat up all night, yes, even at three o'clock, and held his throbbing head [...] ? (93)

It shows that Savitri's mind is not free from her experience of past, present, and the fear of future. She is always haunted by past memories. The past events that run across her memory imply that she is not detached from her former world. Sitting beside the river she recalls her past fears and muses over future. She talks to herself as:

Afraid of one's father, teacher and everybody in early life, afraid of one's husband, children, and neighbor in later life-fear, fear, in one's heart till the funeral pyre was lit, and then fear of being sentenced by Yama to be held down in a cauldron of boiling oil...how many sins have I not committed? ... Not many, I have always performed my daily pooja without fail. (91)

This extract gives the implications of Savitri's fear after death. According to Buddhist philosophy, nothing exists after death even the 'soul'. So, to be anxious about the life after death is nothing but another cause of suffering in this *samsaric* affair. Because of her fret and fever, she cannot liberate herself from the clutch of suffering; rather she suffers much more.

Though she torments herself alienating from family and material world in search of blissful life, her mind never becomes free from earthly worries and fears. Buddhist believes that until and unless the mind is replete with worries, fear, hatred, greed etc. even death cannot liberate us from suffering. *Nibban* is not physical death. It is the death of such components that create suffering in life.

In the case of Savitri, the factors of suffering get stronger and stronger as she fails to identify that love, fear, and attachment to earthly matters are the root cause of her never-ending suffering.

After she is rescued from the Sarayu River by Mari, a locksmith, and his wife Ponni requests her to go to their house but she refuses:

“You should have left me alone. [...]” “No where. I will stay here”
[...] “Or come with me to my house. My home is humble, but I will gladly clear a corner for you. Savitri declined the offer. [...] “No. Leave me alone.” [...] “No I won’t come anywhere.” [...] “Please go away. Leave me alone”[...]. “Why do you trouble yourself about me?” I will come with you on condition that you don’t trouble me to come under your roof every other roof. I will remain under the sky. (104 – 107)

In this excerpt, Ponni tells Savitri that she will be happy to welcome her but Savitri denies the offer. She rejects material comfort and even charity. It gives the implication of her renunciation of material aspects. Ponni offers Savitri with coconut and plantains she refuses saying “I don’t need these”. “I am not hungry.” Though she renounces and sets out to mollify her worries, tension and rage in isolation, her ego which the Buddhist believes the originator of suffering is still alive within her. Savitri says asserting her ego,

I am resolved never to accept food or shelter which I have not earned”
[...] you don't want me to starve, give me some work. I can cook,
scrub, sew... I know a little gardening too. I had a beautiful garden
once. I can look after children. [...] Any work which will keep my life
in my body, though why it should I can't stay, is suitable for me. I
don't want to depend on any one hereafter for the miserable handful of
food I need every day. (122,131)

These lines shed light on her egoistic nature. She has left home, tried to finish her, and is rescued. At this moment, she badly needs company and something to survive; however, she asserts her ego and refuses everything. She argues she can earn her living. She still gives more importance to her self. So, it is not Savitri is speaking now but her ego, which is another cause of suffering. Buddhism teaches that the ego is constituted with the transitory components such as: love, hatred, like, dislike etc. Therefore, ego tethers human being to the earthly affairs.

Savitri refuses the charity on the one hand and works at temple near by the village as a care taker on the other. She cannot utterly refuse the material needs and accepts it for her survival; likewise she secludes herself from normal household life and lives like a nun. According to Buddhism, Middle-path is the rejection of material aspect and spiritual aspect, and at the same time it is the acceptance of both aspects. Middle-path is not exclusive, rather inclusive. It is the way paved on the proportionate combination of self indulgence and self mortification, matter and spiritual, desire and renunciation etc. only through which the true knowledge of the reality is achieved; and such knowledge is called enlightenment, (*Buddhatwa*). She experiences the life in temple which is neither completely attached to earthly affairs, that she is away from

her home, children, husband etc., nor of complete renunciation. Her experience both aspects of life tremendously widens her vision towards the world.

Her meeting with the people of different nature and attitude during her stay away from home enables her to understand the cosmic world better. The couple of Maria and Ponni, who are from lower caste, survive repairing locks and sometimes from burglary. Although they are more wretched, sullen and frustrated, Savitri finds them satisfied with their life condition. They are married for twenty years but have no child and they are in poverty; yet they are happy and living in harmony. Ponni expresses her dissatisfaction for having no child “we have been married for twenty years and I have promised offering to our all gods, but I am not blessed yet” (122). Savitri compares Ponni’s happy conjugal life with her own and says “I have three children my son is just thirteen. He is very intelligent and knows a lot of things about electricity. My two girls are reading in a school; very intelligent creatures” (122). She has children and husband but now away from them and living miserable life while Ponni does not have child and she is happy at home with her husband. From these characters, Savitri learns that one should be satisfied with their present condition accepting the reality of the world. Through her experiences she understands that there is no such place which is free from tensions, worries, frustration, pain etc. Even in the secluded life she finds herself imprisoned within the sorrow and suffering.

She wants to stay under the tree, but she is bound to take refuge to Maria’s hut. She rejects food and other charities, but she is bound to accept it. By and by she understands that she is the victim of circumstances when she shows her stubbornness, Ponni forces her to go to villages saying, “I won’t let you stay here. If you persist in moving neither way, I will send my husband to the town and bring someone from there to carry you back home” (107). From this she understands that nowhere she is

free to do whatever she likes. She detaches herself from her family but she is still entangled with the earthly affairs. From the contact with different people of various class and their sufferings, Savitri is disillusioned that the suffering is all pervasive. Everywhere the world is full of suffering. And nobody surmounts over suffering until they can realize and accept the earthly reality.

In the course of searching the place where she can earn her living by herself and live blissful life, she happens to meet a priest who wants to be called as the servant of god and performs daily ritual activities in the temple. As soon as she is appointed in service of the temple, the priest instructs her to perform duty in rude way. She has to bear rude behavior of the old man. The priest orders her saying: "Come in, don't try to spend the whole day standing there." The old man assigns her duty and tells her "whatever she is, we are not concerned with it now, she may be a king's wife or a judge's cousin. What do I care? I am a servant of Subramanian, and I don't care for anyone in this world" (140).

The above statements show that he is rude, merciless and proud of his position. He does not bother about the problem, feeling and sentiments of Savitri. He wants Savitri to handle heavy duty in meager wage. One day, as she was sleeping getting fatigued after a routine work and fear she suffered the previous night, the old man woke her up scolding,

Hey, get up, get up, ...it is four o'clock and you are still sleeping. You think you are employed to sleep? "...You" have lift the garbage of a week, why haven't you swept this properly?" ... these, these don't tell me that you are blind. (143)

She spends her more difficult and miserable days in temple. She has to bear all the adversity after she leaves her home. With such behavior of the old man, she

becomes more disillusioned. She is not rewarded with appreciation of her work although she works hard. In the beginning she was happy having the opportunity to offer her service to the god. However, her happiness is momentary. It shortly turns to frustration. The narrator comments:

Savitri felt very happy. She saw a new life opening before her, Want more fitting life, she thought, could one choose than serving a god in shrine? A half measure of rice was more with it. She would dedicate her life to the service of God [...] spend the rest of her years thus and die. (132)

And she is satisfied with what she earns entering her new life. She feels it triumphant and says it “is my own rice, my very own and I am not obliged to any one for this. This is nobody’s charity to me. But soon her happiness and sense of victory begins to wane and she finds herself amidst suffering.

She realizes the suffering is all pervasive in the world. She finds herself hurled into the crowd of sufferers as one of them. She infers her existence, position and responsibility as human being in world of suffering. Suddenly, she while enjoying her new life as caretaker of temple, realizes that she is not separate or distinct from millions individual in the world. Her eyes open to the reality that all existence is suffering. She also understands that nobody escapes the suffering and surmounts it through futile endeavor. Giving account of Savitri’s disillusionment the narrator writes: “As she saw him at the door, Savitri felt suddenly dissolute. She would have to be all alone in this dark temple, with the dim oil-lamp and stars, and the massive tree looming over the wall” (145). When she is alone inside the room she asks herself as saying, “of what should I be afraid, was there no escape from fear and charity?” respondint the old man she says, “I am not afraid of anything [...] I am living in God’s

house and he will protect me” (145). Having realized that there is no escape from fret and fever, Savitri is prepared to accept the reality of these earthly affairs. She is now not afraid of anyone and anything; she knows there is no point to be afraid but to accept that there is fear, love, wickedness, hatred, depravity and so on. Understanding of these *samsaric* affairs enables her to face the reality.

Savitri, reflecting her past in solitude, mutters:

What despicable creation of god are we that we cannot exist without a support. I am like a bamboo pole, which cannot stand with a wall to support it [...] a wretched fate wouldn't let me drown first time. I cannot go near the water again. This is defeat. I accept it. I am no good for this fight. (146)

This excerpt shows Savitri's acceptance of the law of nature. She is now enlightened and assimilates her self with the changing nature of the world. Through her continuous experience of the earthly phenomena, her perception about human existence and the world changes. She is suddenly tempted with the love of family and memory of children, but her love towards family is of different from before. After the annihilation of herself she feels easy to return to home; her vision towards family, society and world has changed. She goes back to her previous place but not previous state. She finds family neither happy nor troublesome.

When Ramani jokes her food and suggests her eat well to grow fat, she does not laugh because she has known it is miserable joke. She reflects “A part of me is dead.” It shows that her previous ‘self’ has already been extenuated. Now she is not touched with mundane things.

No earthly things and activities pleases or shocks her because she has attained the knowledge relinquishing extreme paths, i.e. rejecting to enslave to mundane

activities of household chores and all material things, even food. Her stay in temple is the *Middle-path* opted by Gautam Buddha. During her stay in temple she adopts both paths-material and spiritual.

She knows all feelings, sentiments, impulse, love etc. are roots of sorrow. Therefore, she let everything happen according to the law of nature. She does not lament or regret over them. She only observes ephemeral phenomenon of this world being detached from them. So at the end of the story, she decides not to call Maria although wants to give him food, water and a magnificent gift. She does not want to disturb him. At first her impulse urges her to call Maria, but immediately she changes her mind and says “let him go, don’t call him.” thinking “why should I call here? What have I?” (162).

Thus, the journey of Savitri’s life begins with adverse suffering caused by her ignorance, as she adheres only to her household life: material world for happiness. She undergoes a series of sufferings in her life and finally understands the root causes of all her suffering: love, greed, hatred, ego, and desire etc. as impediment for the supreme bliss. She attains knowledge through her continuous experiences with all aspects of the material world. Now she understands that one cannot be happy merely clinging to any of the extremes of life on earth. Accepting the course of nature, she reaches at the state of equanimity, and now she is no more previous Savitri with full of cravings but full of altruism. She has finally attained inner peace and she is back in the same place but with changed attitude towards life and world.

IV. Conclusion

Savitri, in the novel by R. K. Narayan is a victim of suffering whose roles begins from ignorance, undergoes suffering and ends in knowledge through the experience of material world. Savitri, from the Buddhist perspective, is an example of

sufferer in the material world. Underlying causative factor of her suffering is her ignorance about the reality of her life and the world which Buddhist calls the law of nature i.e. every phenomenon happens according to the law of nature which is irrevocable and inevitable. In the story, Savitri suffers more because of lack of knowledge that nothing is in the control of her hand, and everything happens according to the law of cause and effect. Her desire and her arduous endeavor to change her family into ideal one generate tension and fear in her mind. Whatever she expects, she gets opposite result. Therefore, main source of Savitri's suffering is her desire and expectation which later changes into frustrations. The more she sacrifices her personal happiness for the sake of permanent happiness for the whole family, the more she is worried and fearful.

Her blind adherence to material world, i.e. household life in pursuit of inner peace is another cause of her suffering. Her hankering and indulgence in the ephemeral happiness of her material world indicates that she is in the world of illusion which Buddhist calls the world of mirage. Whatever happiness she derives from her exertion is easily affected by trivial things. She fosters illusion sacrificing her own personal happiness for permanent solace, but reverse to her expectation she is rewarded with sorrows and worries.

Next causative factor of Savitri's suffering is her inability of preparing herself to accept the world as it is, or change herself according to the world. Degree of suffering increases in Savitri because she struggles against the law of cause and effect. Therefore, her mind is always replete with fear of happening something unexpected and desire for loved things. As much she exerts for peace and happiness so much her mind is gripped with anxiety.

She is an ideal woman. When her idealism fails to match the reality, she gets frustrated. Her each and every hope ends in frustration because of her ignorance about the adverse result of desire. Savitri's suffering gets intense along with her desire to keep her family intact giving ideal form to it. Her hope of transforming her family into ideal one gradually shatters and turns into frustration. When she discovers Ramani's debauchery with his newly appointed assistant her suffering exceeds the limitation of her tolerance. So she renounces her former life with her family intending to get rid of pain and suffering she had when she was attached to household life.

Although she attempts to exterminate all the sufferings she undergoes through suicide; her love to children grows stronger. So, wherever she goes her mind trails the past memories which prevent her from entering into another life.

She fails to attain what she aims at because of her extremism. When she is in household life all the time she engrosses herself in domestic activities being over sensitive to domestic chores for solace and happiness. Therefore, the happiness and peace she attains from her domestic chores is ephemeral.

The major flaw with Savitri is her extremism. Her strong but blind adherence to material world, before her worries and tension gets intolerable and her abandonment of her domestic life after she finds herself a victim of miseries that is the root cause of disturbance of her mental peace.

After the failure of her suicidal attempt enters into the life which is the life of neither complete renunciation nor exclusively attached with material world. In this stage, Savitri's two extreme paths of life get merged into one. She experiences both spiritual and material life living in seclusion as care taker of a temple. This stage of Savitri's life is similar to the middle path proposed by Buddhist philosophy. During

her short stay at temple she experiences both physical and spiritual aspects of life, which takes her to complete understanding of earthly reality. Savitri's experiences in different modes and stages of her life enlighten her. She realizes reality of life which changes her attitude to the world. Finally she returns to her former place with her changed self. She is now not affected with fears, hatred, desire, greed, etc. Although she returns to her household life she is not easily affected by the trivial things because of her entrance into the stage of acceptance which is in Buddhist's term *Nibban*.

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