

TRIBHUVAN UNIVERSITY

Resistance against the Subjugation of Woman in Conrad's *The Secret Agent*

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By

Suresh Gajurel

Department of English

Hetauda School of Management

Hetauda

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Tribhuvan University
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences
Department of English
Hetauda

Recommendation Letter

This thesis entitled "Resistance against the Subjugation of Woman in Conrad's *The Secret Agent*" has been prepared by Mr. Suresh Gajurel under my supervision. I, hereby, recommend this thesis for viva to the Thesis Committee as a partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in English.

Supervisor

Dadhi Ram Poudyal

Date:

Tribhuvan University

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

This is to certify that the thesis entitled "Resistance against the Subjugation of Woman in Conrad's *The Secret Agent*" by Mr. Suresh Gajurel submitted to the Department of English, Tribhuvan University has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee.

Members of the Research Committee:

Internal Examiner

External Examiner

Head, Department of English
Hetauda School of Management and
Social Sciences

Date:

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Suresh Gajurel

Abstract

Joseph Conrad's *The Secret Agent* provokes the quest for women's independent identity in the newly built London frontier society. This very poignant project 'Resistance against the subjugation of woman' particularly accentuates the issue of the subordination of a woman by the patriarchy. It also portrays women's quest for freedom and autonomy which is possible but not so easy. The act of the latent sense of woman's resistance against patriarchy is expressed in the form of murder. The brutal act of murder can be clearly justified by willingness to fight off subjugation and subordination and the like. The novel *The Secret Agent* apparently reveals how feminist resistance against patriarchal insensitivity and domination can take the form of violence, bloodshed and murder.

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I. Female Identity in Patriarchy: An Introduction

On the ground of female identity in patriarchy, Joseph Conrad's *The Secret Agent* demonstrates how feminist resistance against patriarchal insensitivity and domination can take the form of violence, bloodshed and murder. Apt to new women movement, this novel, encompasses many such striking events. The new woman was a feminist ideal that emerged in the late 19th century and had a profound influence on feminism well into the twentieth. The term 'new women' was popularized by American writer Henry James to describe the growth in the number of feminist, educated, independent career women in Europe and the united states. Kate Chopin, a strong figure of this age, affirms that the only problem with new and aggressive brutality was that the new women moment didn't exactly explicate how a woman was supposed to apply it. The adulterous relations that women read in novels seemed like a fantastic way to overturn convention, but it was not very credible for these new feminists to tell women to cheat on their husband. Jessie Fothergill, Vernon Lee, Mona Caird, Annie E Holdsworth, Netta Syrett are the towering figures of the new women movement.

Accentuated by the Victorian norms and domesticity of the previous generations, the new woman had greater freedom to pursue public role and even flaunt her 'sex appeal' a term coined in the 1920s and linked with the emergence of the new women. She challenged conventional gender roles and met with hostility from men and women who objected to women's public presence and suppose decline in mortality. Expressing autonomy and individuality, the new women represented the tendency of young women at the turn of the-then century to reject their mother's way in favor of, modern choices, killing their own husband too for personal life.

The finest achievement of the new women has been personal liberty. This is the foundation of civilization; and as long as any one class is watched suspiciously, even fondly guarded, and protected, so long will that class not only be weak, and treacherous, individually, but parasitic, and a collective danger to the community. Who has not heard wives commanded for wheedling their husband out of money, or joked because they are hopelessly extravagant? As long as caprice and scheming are considered feminine virtues, as long as man is the only wage earner, doling out sums of money or scattering lavishly, so long will women be degraded, even if they are perfectly contented, and men are willing to labor to keep them in idleness.

Although individual women from pre-historic times have accomplished much, as a class they have been set aside to minister to men's comfort. But when once the higher has been tired, civilization repudiates the lower. Men have come to see that no advance can be made with one half-humanity set apart merely for the function of 'sex' that the children are quite liable to inherit from the mother, and should have opportunities to inherit the accumulated ability and culture and character that is produced only by intellectual and civil activity. The world has tried to move with men for dynamos, and "clinging" women impending every step of progress. They have naturally not been impressed with their duties to society, in its myriad needs or with their own value as individuals.

The new woman, in the sense of the best woman, the flower of all the womanhood for past ages, has come to stay-if civilization is to endure. The suffering of the past has but strengthened her, maternity has deepened her, education is broadening her-and she now knows that she might perfect herself if she would perfect the race and leave her imprint upon immortality, through her offspring or her works and even stabbing her own husband.

As far as the novel is concerned, however violent, inhuman and unjustifiable the murder of Mr. Verloc by his wife, this act of murder can simply be interpreted as an extreme form of resistance against patriarchal subjugation and male insensitivity. Winnie had expected normal things like care, concern, regard and actual understanding of marital life from her husband. His wife Winnie has kept her mother and her retarded brother Stevie with herself. As far as possible she endeavors to make her domestic marital life blissful and happy. She treats her retarded brother Stevie no less than a mother treats her own son. Winnie understood the agony of Stevie. Other than Winnie, Stevie does not have anyone to look after him. In addition, his mother has also become an old woman who lives with her married daughter Winnie. In this way, three different sort of responsibility has fallen into the shoulder of Winnie. She has not troubled her husband Verloc to manage the daily troubles of domestic life. To the best of her knowledge, Winnie sought to make her family and her domestic life a pure haven. In this way, Mr. Verloc is not encumbered by the additional duty of managing the household activities. Winnie's domestic tactfulness and dexterity set Mr. Verloc relatively free from the domestic burden so that he could concentrate upon the outer activities of his professional world.

Mr. Verloc basically failed to understand his wife Winnie's depth of sisterly longing and loss for her retarded brother. Sometimes he belittled Winnie's motherly's care for Stevie. Mr. Verloc failed to acknowledge the depth of Winnie's acute affection and magnanimity towards Steive. For the most part, Mr. Verloc has been living an indolent, dreary life. He has been doing his daily profession which yields meager income. Perhaps, Verloc is inwardly dissatisfied with his meager income. There might be other hidden causes behind Verloc's seething dissatisfaction and discontentment. But these causes did not come out in the dramatic form of

manifestation and exposure. Verloc has been running a shop of cosmetics, pornographic objects and trivial objects necessary in life. Outwardly, this is the life of Mr. Verloc. By nature Verloc is not an aggressive and short-tempered man. But the drabness and dreariness of his family life goaded him to the terrorist life. There was a terrorist gang in which different people belonging to the different strata of lives joined as a member. Vladimir, Ossipon, Professor and Verloc were the active member of that terrorist gang. The member of that terrorist gang made a plan to plant a bomb at the Greenwich observatory. Verloc worked as *The Secret Agent* of that terrorist gang. Many terrorists organized secret meetings in Verloc's house. None of the other member of Verloc knew about Verloc's gradual immersion in the terrorist activities. The gradual descent of Verloc to the underworld of terrorism made him insensitive to and neglectful of the domestic warmth and familiar exchange of care and concern. Verloc was expected to stroll with Stevie. Winnie expected Verloc not to hesitate in giving love and regard to Stevie and his mother-in-law. But Verloc's involvement in the underworld of terrorism kept distance between him and wife Winnie.

While certain instability and misunderstanding continued to crop up in Verloc's house, Verloc proceeded ahead in his underhand mission of setting a bomb at Greenwich observatory. Finally, a bomb was set and the Greenwich observatory was destroyed. The Police inspector Mr. Heat had kept a close eye on the suspected activities of those who were supposed to have secret liaison to the terrorist organization.

A few hours after the Greenwich observatory were destroyed by bomb, the inspector Heat came to the house of Mr. Verloc. The inspector came to the house with the coat which had had the name of Verloc's shop. At that time, Mrs. Verloc had guessed that her dearest brother Stevie lost his life because it was the coat of Stevie.

Moreover, the dominance of male supremacy pervaded into the climax in the Winnie's life especially in her household realm. The incessant torture and sorely oppression upon the cozy life of Winnie eventually dragged toward murder of Mr. Verloc. Mr. Verloc's rude and carefree conduct to Winnie and her mother resulted to ultimate doom of his own life. The monstrous and discourteous behave towards Winnie, beyond of her anticipation and intolerable circumstances pondered to the merciless murder of Mr. Verloc indeed. At the moment, to seek emancipation and identity, Winnie became increasingly irritated and alarmingly angry. She, on the spur of the moment stabbed Mr. Verloc to death.

Whether Winnie's act of murder is a retaliatory measure or is it an extremely radical method of resistance against the brutality and barbarism of patriarchal sensitivity? These two queries have made the researcher ponder upon the position of women in the oppressive and insensitive structure of patriarchal ideology. By making women disconnected from the knowledge regarding to the activities of males in the outer world, the patriarchal society connives at the dreadful privacy and the harmful secrecy of man. This novel raises a couple of issues regarding to the problem of subjection and the affirmative quest for freedom and individuality. Winnie murdered her husband whose terrorist activities are directly accountable for the tragic end of her brother and more to suppress her luxury life. No doubt Winnie's love for her retarded brother Stevie was fathomless. Winnie is feared whether her husband is going to confiscate her soothing life. Thus, mainly to save her personal identity and privilege and due to the lack of her husband's solace and genuine understanding, she stabs her husband mercilessly.

Mr. Verloc failed miserably to plumb the depth of her kind-heartedness and affection. For years of her marital life with Mr. Verloc, Winnie had undergone sterile

and bitter experience of dryness, drabness and dreariness due to the severe oppression. Love for family is an indirect quest for self love and self-dignity by relating to family affectionately. To wrap up, to snatch back her freedom, self identity, jubilant lasting life, Winnie was compelled to send her husband into the tomb and had a deep slumber. Personal identity and feminine essentialism are the vantage points to murder Mr. Verloc thus the out burst of her response took the violent form and manifestation. The provocatively violent form of her aggressive response resulted in the death of her husband and she, consequently, is able to secure her own history.

Literature Review

Conrad's *The Secret Agent* has been read widely as one of the original text that deals with the fresh issue of terrorism, espionage and sense of feminism. It has been criticized in a fierce way from different perspective.

David, a Scottish literary historian and literary critic, advocates about this novel as a bizarre masterpiece that weaves the sensational issue of murder, revenge and terrorism on the ground of feminism so far. Commenting upon the thematic content of *The Secret Agent*, David Daiches remarks:

The *Secret Agent* highlights the fresh theme of terrorism and espionage. In this work Conrad raises a question that is how do we come to terms with the secret sharer, the enemy we are forced to recognized as ourselves. Conrad was a deeply pessimistic novelist but full recognition of this was delayed by Conrad's own comments on his novels and stories which are not always to be trusted. (1156)

A great modernist George A. Panichas has commented upon this novel form its fresh thematic content and mainly talks about the human sensitivity, doom and disruptive nature of the-then society. Vis-à-vis this novel he echoes:

The Secret Agent records the disintegration with all the manifold consequences of both human community and the human soul. The personages who live and move darkly and sinisterly in this monstrous town variously typify the revolutionary spirit that possesses and transform them into the devils of F.M. Dostoevsky. (26)

What George A. wants to say is that *The Secret Agent* portrays no single genuine hero, concentrating instead on a grouping mostly anarchists of characters. Conrad's portrayal throughout is steadfast in its objectivity as he seeks to focus on men and women as shams without principles and without any loyalty to the ideologies and principles.

Brandon Colas has gazed the novel from multiple dimensions such as social upheaval, riot and rampage and subjugation. Hence according to Colas:

Conrad's irony reflects a pessimistic perspective of the British society in *The Secret Agent*. In *The Secret Agent* Conrad's perspective is reflective of a society still reeling from the traumatizing social effects of industrialization. The life without control or choice in *The Secret Agent* is a life without any meaning. Throughout *The Secret Agent*, the usage of geometric imagery shows the ripple effects of evil within society on the micro level. (5)

Brandon has solely focused on the pessimistic dimension of this very novel.

Pessimism is used by Conrad as the perspective to diagnose the socio-political aspects of reality. Brandon has also given critical attention to the stylistic and innovative dimension of the novel.

Hinting at Cosmic Chaos 'Malika Rebai Maamri' has delivered her commentary in the following way:

In *The Secret Agent* Conrad dramatizes the tension between public time and individual freedom. Some of the malaise engendered by the new dimension of time can be found in this tale of the nineteenth century. Conrad has dramatized the issue of nihilism and the helpless predicament of human being. Thus Conrad appears to be the followers of Dostoevsky. (12)

Rebai Maamri has examined *The Secret Agent* vis-a-vis Dostoevsky Nihilistic themes. The comparative effort has enabled Maamri to explore the latent theme of alienation and nihilism.

Although different critics have examined the novel from the different angles, none of them has interpreted the novel from the perspective of feminine issue. Hence, the present researcher wants to seek the fresh issue of the subordination of woman. The researcher thus projects how sometimes an act of murder becomes “The resistance against the subjugation of women by man.”

Subtly on the basis of the story, the present researcher aims at setting forth the contention that Winnie's act of stabling her husband to death has to be interpreted and understood as an iconoclastic reaction against the ruthlessness, insincerity and subjugator ideology of patriarchal society. The way she responded to the immersion of her husband in terrorist activities is an icon-shattering affirmation of freedom from the oppressive and brutal structure of patriarchal society. When the question of murder is viewed from the window of compulsion, this act of murder no longer looks like a murder. On the contrary, it turns out to be a radical affirmation of quest for freedom from the chilling ideology of patriarchal society.

To conduct the present research work, the researcher makes use of the theoretical ideas of radical feminism. Radical feminists at the late 20th century

including Judith Leive, Valerie Solana, Sheila Cronin, Andrea Dworkin, Sharon stone, Catherine Mackinnon are the prominent one. They indeed asserted by opposing standard gender roles and oppression of women and calls for a radical recording of society. In other words radical feminism has become the solid methodological basis of the present research wok. Feminism is a politics which seeks to alter the power relationship between man and woman. The notion of feminism as a politics is exclusive methodological insight on the strength of which the present researcher proceeds ahead. Why does patriarchy succeed in imposing so many acts of injustice, violence and oppression in women? This question needs fresh mind to reply. The researcher straight forwardly asserts that the unequal power relationship between man and women must be abolished and thus delving into the feminist modality of guaranteeing freedom for women. To resist patriarchy, why do women go to the extremity? This query naturally arises in the mind of the every reader of this novel. Patriarchy is so frozen, deaf, and conscienceless that if it is to be threatened to subversion, the spirit of resistance can be heightened.

II. Quest of Feminism

Feminism is widely acknowledged as the organized way of resistance against patriarchal subjugation and domination and is related to the feminist social movement that seeks equal rights for women giving them equal status with man and freedom to decide their careers and life pattern. Simply put, feminism is the liberation movement of women. It has occasionally taken the form of activism in the history of feminism. Feminism has both political as well as socio-cultural value. When its political value becomes prominent, it acquires the political dimension

Feminism is a collection of movements aimed at defining, establishing and defending equal political, economic and social rights and equal opportunities for women. Its concepts overlap with those of women's rights. Feminists are persons whose beliefs and behaviors are based on feminism.

Keith Green and Jill Lebihan have given the historical glimpse of the evolutionary aspect of feminism. The following extract illustrates the case in point:

The first wave of feminism was the activism in the early part of the century that led to the enfranchisement of women. The period of dramatic change in the influence of feminism that took place in the late 1960 and after has therefore become known as the second wave, but even the historical era to which it refers is open to debate. There is even less agreement on any key critical texts that were associated with the women's liberation movement which gathered strength in this period, but the usually, embedded figures are Ann Oakely Kate Millet, Juliet, Mitchell and Germaine Greer. (230)

Green and Lebihan have arrived at the conclusion that the achievements of feminism happened in different historical period. The historical evolution of feminism took

place in a gradual and procedural way. The history of the modern western feminist's movement is divided into three waves. Each is described as dealing with different aspect of the same feminist issues. The first wave refers to the movement of nineteenth though early twentieth century, which dealt mainly with suffrage, working condition and educational rights for women and girls. The second waves (1960s-1980s) dealt with the inequality of laws as well as cultural inequality and role of women in society. The third wave of feminism is late 1980s early 2000 decade is seemed as both a continuation of the second wave and a response to the perceived and achieved failures.

Ultimately the feminist movement leads to the abolition of gender-based discrimination and the empowerment of women. The notion of liberation is at the heart of feminist theory. Feminism is both an intellectual commitment and a political movement that seeks justice for women and the end of sexism in all forms. Feminists disagree about what sexism consists in, and what exactly ought to be done about it. They disagree about what it means to be a woman or a man and what social and political implications gender has or should have. Nonetheless, motivated by the quest for social justice, feminist inquiry provides a wide range of perspectives on social, cultural, economic and political phenomena. Important topic for feminist theory and politics include: the body, class and work, disability, the family globalization, human rights, popular culture, race and racism, reproduction, science, the self, sex work, human trafficking and sexuality.

Feminism brings many things to philosophy including not only a variety of particular moral and political claims but ways of asking and answering questions, constructive and critical dialogue with mainstream philosophical views and methods, and new topics of inquiry. The feminist approach discusses the impact of these

traditions on feminist scholarship. Feminist contributions to and interventions in mainstream philosophical debates are covered in entries. Under the rubric 'feminism', topics concern philosophical issues that arise as feminist articulate accounts of sexism, critique, social and cultural practices and develop alternative visions of a just world. In short, they are philosophical topics that arise within feminism.

Although there are many different and sometimes conflicting approaches to feminist philosophy, it is instructive to begin by asking what feminists as a group are committed to considering some of the controversies over what feminism provides a spring board for seeing how feminist commitments generate a host of philosophical topics, especially as those commitments confront the world as we know it.

In the present context of clarifying the theoretical concept, it is relevant to quote the view of Alic Spelman. According to him:

Some feminist scholars object to identifying feminism with these particular moments of political activism, on the grounds that doing so eclipses the fact that there has been resistance to male domination that should be considered feminist throughout history and across cultures. Feminism is not confined to a few white women in the west over the past century. Moreover, even considering only relatively recent efforts to resist male domination in Europe and the US, the emphasis on first and second wave feminism ignores the ongoing resistance to male domination between the 1920's and 1960's. (26)

One strategy for solving these problems would be to identify feminism in terms of a set of ideas or belief or rather than participation in any particular political movement. Here, naturally a question arises, how can a core set of feminist beliefs be identified? Commitment to women's equal right is the striking demand of the feminists.

Thus feminists try to break the silence of women. There is inequality shown in the norms created by males where women are in the plights of following it created by males of their work. Marai Mies says, . . . feminists are those who dare to break the conspiracy of silence about the oppressive, unequal man-woman relationship and who want to change it” (6). She talks in favors of women’s autonomy and for the autonomy, the feminist’s efforts maintain and recreate the innermost subjective human essence in women. The feminists claim to autonomy means a rejection of all tendencies to subsume the women’s question and the women’s movement under some other apparently more general theme or movement. Feminists are in search of a situational leadership. There should be dynamism, diversity, as well as the truly humanistic environment.

The senses of alienation, powerlessness and dependency felt by women in their life have encouraged the emergence of the study of women. The sense of difference has been felt by the female because of increasing self-awareness among women, changes in their relations with men, and desires to extend their social roles.

Another prominent critic, M.H. Abrams states, “Feminist literacy criticism continues in our time to be closely inter-related with the movement by political feminists for social, economic and cultural freedom and equality” (234). Abrams views about feminist status as women’s fight for freedom. It is the search for equality in social, political, educational and cultural aspects. In short, feminism is the quest for autonomous existence required by women.

Although most feminist would probably agree that there is some sense of rights on which achieving equal rights for women is a necessary condition for feminism to succeed, most would also argue that this would not be sufficient. This is because women's oppression under male domination consists solely but also extends

into the structure of our society and the content of our culture, and permeates our consciousness.

Susan James characterizes feminism as follows:

Feminism is grounded on the belief that women are oppressed or disadvantaged by comparison with men, and that their oppression is in some way illegitimate or unjustified. Under the umbrella of this general characterization there are many interpretations of women and their oppression, so that it is a mistake to think of feminism as a single philosophical doctrine or as implying an agreed political program. (76)

Some might prefer to define feminism in terms of a normative claim alone. Feminists are those who believe that women are entitled to equal rights or respects. One is not required to believe that women are currently being treated unjustly. However, it would be harder to identify some of the interesting sources of disagreement both with and within feminism its potential to unite those whose concerns and commitments extend beyond their moral beliefs to their social interpretations and political affiliations.

Feminists are not simply those who are committed in principle to justice for women. Feminists take themselves to have reasons to bring about social change on women's behalf.

Very broadly, one might characterize the goal of feminism to be ending the oppression of women. Women are not only oppressed by sexism but in many ways by classism, Homophobia, racism, ageism.

It might seem that the quest of feminism is to end all forms of oppression. Oppression is unjust and feminists have a moral obligation to fight injustice. One might even believe that in order to accomplish feminism's goals it is necessary to

combat racism and economic exploitation, but also think that there is narrower set of specifically feminist objectives. In other words, opposing oppression in its many forms may be instrumental to feminism but not intrinsic to it.

Bell Hooks argues the major point regarding feminism in the following way:

Feminism, as liberation struggle, must exist apart from a larger struggle to eradicate domination in all its forms of patriarchal domination shares an ideological foundation with racism and other forms of group oppression, and that there is no hope that it can be eradicated while these systems remain intact. This knowledge should consistently inform the direction of feminist theory and practice. (22)

On Hook's account, the defining characteristic that distinguishes feminism from other liberation struggles is its concern with sexism. Defining feminism broadly as a movement to end sexism and sexist oppression would enable the activists to political common goal. It does not imply that women and men will not have radically divergent perspectives on how that goal might be reached.

Feminism is quest to alter the power relationship between man and women. The notion of feminism as a politics is exclusive methodological insight researcher proceeds ahead. Feminist theory is an extension of feminism into theoretical or philosophical fields. It encompasses work in a variety of disciplines. Feminist theory aims to understand gender inequality and focuses on gender politics, power relations and sexuality. While providing a critique of these social and political relations, much of feminist also focuses on the promotion of women's rights and interest. Themes explored in feminist theory include discrimination, stereotyping, objectification especially sexual objectification, oppression and patriarchy.

The American literary critic and feminist Elaine Showalter describes about the phased development of feminist theory. The first she calls 'feminist critique' in which the feminist reader examines the ideologies behind literary phenomena. The second Showalter calls 'Gynocriticism' in which the woman is producer of textual meaning including the psychodynamics of female creativity, linguistics and the problem of a female language, the trajectory of the individual or collective female literary career and literary history. The last phase she calls "gender theory in which the ideological inscription and the literary effects of the sex/gender system are explored" (55). This model has been criticized by the scholar Toril Moi who sees it as an essentialist and deterministic model for female subjectivity and for failing to account for the situation of women outside the west.

Liberal feminism seeks individualistic equality of men and women through political and legal reform without altering the structure of society. Radical feminism considers the male controlled capitalist hierarchy as the defining feature of women's oppression and the total uprooting and reconstruction of society as necessary. Socialist feminism connects oppression of women to exploitation, oppression and labor. Marxist feminists feel that overcoming class oppression overcomes gender oppression.

Radical Feminism: A Theoretical Modality

Radical feminism is a current theoretical Modality perspective within feminism that focuses on the theory of patriarchy as a system of power that organizes society into a complex of relationships based on an assumption that male supremacy oppresses women. Radical feminism on the basis of theoretical modality aims to challenge and overthrow patriarchy by opposing standard gender roles and oppression of women and calls for a radical reordering of society. Early radical feminism arising

within second-wave feminism in the 1960s typically viewed patriarchy as a trans-historical phenomenon prior to or deeper than other sources of oppression, not only the oldest and most universal form of domination but the primary form and the model for all others. Later, politics derived from radical feminism ranged from cultural feminism to more syncretism politics that placed issues of class, economics on a par with patriarchy as sources of oppression.

Radical feminists locate the root cause of women's oppression in patriarchal gender relations, as opposed to legal systems or class conflict.

Radical feminists in western society assert that their society is a patriarchy in which men are the primary oppressors of women. Radical feminists seek to abolish patriarchy. Radical feminism posits the theory that, due to patriarchy, women have come to be viewed as the other to the male norm and as such have been systematically oppressed and marginalized. They also believe that the way to deal with patriarchy and oppression of all kinds is to address the underlying causes of these problems through revolution.

As far as the evolution of radical feminism is concerned, in the 1960s radical feminism emerged simultaneously within liberal feminist and working class feminist discussion. It occurred first in the United States then in the United Kingdom and Australia. In the United States radical feminism developed as a response to some of the perceived falling of the both new left organization. Radical feminist groups spread across the country rapidly from 1968 to 1972. Radical feminism was brought to the UK by America radical feminist and seized on by British radical women as an exciting new theory. As the 1970s progressed, British feminist split into major schools of thought: Socialist and radical. Australian radical feminism developed slightly later

during an extended period of social radicalization, largely as an expression of that radicalization.

While early radical feminists including Judith Lieve, Valerie Solana, Robin Morgan, Sharon Stone posited that the root cause of all other inequalities is the oppression of women, some radical feminists acknowledge the simultaneous and intersecting effect of other independent categories of oppression as well. These other categories of oppression may include but are not limited to, oppression based on gender identity, race, social class, perceived attractiveness, sexual orientation and ability.

Andrea Dworkin, the leading radical feminist, opines her view in the following way:

Patriarchy is not always a single-sided as the belief that all men always benefit from the oppression of all women. Patriarchal theory maintains that the primary element of patriarchy is a relationship of dominance, where one party is dominant and exploits the other party for the benefit of the former. Radical feminists believe that men use social systems and other methods of control to keep non-dominant men and women suppressed. Radical feminists also believe that eliminating patriarchy, and other systems which perpetuate the domination of one group over another, will liberate everyone from an unjust society. (35)

Radical feminism holds accountable the biased socio-cultural structure which facilitates the subjugation of women by men. The subjugation of women by men is manmade. Hence it can be abolished. By changing the patriarchal structure and mechanism, the position of women in society can be uplifted.

Radical feminism got sexual politics recognized as a public issue. It has created the vocabulary with which the second wave of feminism entered popular culture. It sparked the drive to legalize abortion. Radical feminists were the first to demand total equality in the so-called private sphere. They furthermore created the atmosphere of urgency that almost led to the passage of the Equal Rights Amendment. The influence of radical feminism can be seen in the adoption of these issues.

Judith Brown has offered her view on the ideology of radical feminism in *The Essential Writing* in the following way:

The ideology of radical feminism in the United States developed as a component of the women's liberation movement. It grew largely due to the influence of the civil rights movement that had gained momentum in 1960s, many of the women who took up the cause of radical feminism had previous experience with radical protest in the struggle against racism. Many local women's groups in the late sixties offered diplomatic statements of radical feminism's ideologies. The radical feminist were opposed to patriarchy, but not necessarily capitalism. They opposed so-called male dominated national liberation struggle.

(17)

These followers and practitioners of radical feminism helped to make the connection that translated radical protest for racial equality over the struggle for women's rights by witnessing the discrimination and oppression to which the black population was subjected. They were able to gain strength and motivation to do the same for their fellow women.

Radical feminists took up the cause and advocated for a variety of women's issues, including abortion, the equal rights amendment, access to credit and equal pay.

While certainly worthy causes for advocacy, they failed to stir up enough interest among most of the women's fringe groups of society. Those involved had gradually come to believe that not only the middle-class nuclear family oppressed women, but also social movements and organizations that claimed to stand for human liberation, notably the counter culture, the new left and Marxist political parties, all of which they considered to be male-dominated and male-oriented. Women in countercultural groups related that the gender relations present in such groups were very much those of mainstream culture.

As a form of practice, radical feminists introduced the use of conscious raising groups. These groups brought together intellectual, workers and middle class women in developed western countries to discuss their experiences. During these discussions, women noted a shared and repressive system regardless of their political affiliation or social class. Based on these discussions, the women drew the conclusion that ending patriarchy was the most necessary step towards a truly free society. These consciousness raising sessions allowed early radical feminists to develop a political ideology based on common experiences women faced with male supremacy.

Well, some of the supporters of the murder of their own kin and more often husband to get back the female identity are justified by various theorists. Radical feminism was not and it is not only a movement of ideology and theory. Radical feminists also took direct action. In 1968, they protested against the miss America pageant by throwing high heels and feminine account regents into a garbage bin, to represent freedom (*Wrath on Men*). (30) In 1970, they also staged a sit-in at the ladies home journal" (31). In addition they held speak outs about topic such as rape. Valerie Jean Solans, the strict feminist writer, dares to stab the men who come across her way for her self identity and freedom in her popular master piece SCUM manifesto. Thus

stabbing man for the self possession and emancipation is vehemently compatible enough to the case of *The Secret Agent*. Solans, an American radical feminist writer is best known for her attempted murder of Andy Warhol in 1968. She wrote SCUM manifesto, which urged women to overthrow the government, eliminate the money system, institute complete automation and eliminate the male sex. This quoted lines which illustrate much about murderous act as in the novel *The Secret Agent* that is uttered by Valerie solans:

“ Life’’ in this “ society’’ being at best, an utter bore and no aspect of “society’’ being at all relevant to women, there remains to civic – minded, responsible thrill- seeking females only to overthrow the government ever ready to own husband. Its now technically possible to reproduce without the aid of males and to produce only females. We must begin immediately to do so. The male is biological accident. (30)

An American feminist, Elaine Showalter published one influential work of feminist criticism, *Towards the feminist poetics* (1977). In this work, Showalter provides a survey of the literature written by famous female writers of eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Through this work Showalter violently raised a question about the problems of not including the books written by female writers in the literary course and to be printed. Further than this, she argued for the separate canon building of the female’s literary texts. She says that women’s literature must go beyond this scenarios of compromise, murder, madness and death...its purpose is to discover the new world either forcefully standing against male chauvinism or creating bloodshed.

On the ground of radical feminism, some of the radical feminists have highlighted some of the core remarks one after another. Andrinne Cecile Rich, an American notable feminist, argues that it was necessary to break the taboo about

lesbianism and reject the heterosexuality routinely forced upon women in her famous masterpiece “secrets and silence”. She says No women is really an insider in the institutions fathered by masculine consciousness. When we allow ourselves to believe we are, we lose touch with parts of ourselves defined as unacceptable by that consciousness. Rich remarks:

It was crucial that we understand feminism in the deepest, most radical sense: as that love for ourselves and other women, that commitment to the freedom of all of us, which transcends the category of “sexual preference” and the issue of civil rights, to become politics of asking women’s questions, demanding a world in which the integrity of all women-not a chosen few-shall be honored and validated in every respect of culture. (107)

Much male fear of feminism in becoming whole human beings, women will lease to mother man, to provide the beast, the lullaby, the continuous attention associated by the infant with the mother. Much male fear of feminism is infantilism- the longing to remain the mother’s son, to possess a woman who exists purely for him. Judith Levine hates man very violently. She spreads her remark in the name of opposing the man and their so called supremacy in her notable book “Harmful to Mirrors”. She says:

Man- hating is everywhere, but everywhere it is twisted and transformed, disguised, tranquilized and qualified. It coexists, never peacefully, with the love, desire, respect and need women also feel for man. Always man hating is shadowed by its milder, more diplomatic and doubtful twin, ambivalence. (83)

Another revolutionary figure of 20th century, Andrea Dworkin, on behalf of women's right and privilege asserts through her book "the political memoir of a feminist militant" that women are the genuine chariot of the contemporary time, they can subvert all existing discrimination and bias from beneath level. Moreover she reveals her desire to see a man beaten to a bloody pulp and treat them as a pig. She says:

Since marriage constitutes slavery for women, it is clear that the women's movement must concentrate on attacking this institution.

Freedom for women cannot be won without the abolition of marriage. I want to see a man beaten to a bloody pulp with high-heel shoved in his month, like an apple in the mouth of a pig. (85)

Aforementioned facts illustrate that the feminism that emerged from these discussion stood first and foremost for the liberation of women, as women, from the oppression of men in their own lives, as well as men in power. This feminism was radical in both a political sense and in the sense of seeking the root cause of the oppression of women. Radical feminism claimed that a totalizing ideology and social formation dominated women in the interest of men. Radical feminism was not and is not only a set of abstract thought which is the product of serious reflection. Most of the radical feminists believe in action. Radical feminism leads to actions. They try to perform and execute what they most frequently preach.

Self Identity and Autonomy

The concepts of self-identity and autonomy have great amalgam. The concept 'autonomy' expresses the positive goal for the feminist movement. It is the freedom from domination regarding the bodies and lives, thus Maria Mies says, 'the feminists claim to autonomy... means a rejection of all tendencies to subsume the women's question and the women's movement under some other apparently more

general theme of movement” (41). Self identity and autonomy are associated with persons. We are autonomous to social processes which bring us into being as self for ourselves and others.

Here are abundant concepts about selfhood and autonomy in the feminist movement. But the most common concepts among feminist is “ individual independence”, “dominance”, “perennial identity” and “the right to individual choice”. The emphasis on individualism refers to the autonomous existence. Women in the patriarchy should fight for their individuality. Women should unite for their self identity which is taken as the essential thing for women’s development. If the person is independent she/he can live her/his life well. Feminists think that woman is biological person or subject and the element of spirit that characterizes the feminist writing. In Louis Marin’s view, “... writing of the self gives rise to a theoretical and methodological occasion allowing us to grasp with greater rigor and precision the manner in which these two sets of signifiers function” (199).

The individualistic sense of uniqueness and self consciousness is wide spread which is not shared to the same extent by people. Self is inseparable from the network of kinship relation that is used pronoun ‘I’. Every person has feelings of self identity and need their own autonomy. Identity is the social construction indeed. Women in the patriarchal society live with false identity. They are restricted to go outside from the house. Feminism is the movement which demands autonomous existence and true identity of female. Therefore, true identity and autonomous existence are the necessary components.

Writing for self is for visual portrait and signification. All the markers of possession and of the appropriation of the written object emerge from the tensions inscribed within “I”. Self is the representation of “I”. Women are in search of “I” or

subjectivity. Simone de Beauvoir says, “In sexuality and maternity women as subject can claim autonomy; but to be a true woman she must accept herself as the other” (1000). The feminist ambition to maintain and recreate this innermost subjective human essence in women is expressed and preserved in the concept of autonomy. Everyone is free to fulfill all her/his desires and needs that individual freedom is identical. With the choice of self-activity and subjectivity of the person Maria Mies focuses on autonomy and claims:

Autonomy means the preservation of human essence in women...It is also a struggle concept which was developed the women wanted to separate from mixed, male domination organizations and to from their autonomous organization, with their own analysis, programs and methods. (40-41)

The feminists approach mentioned above are useful to find out the main causes of why the protagonist of Joseph Conrad's novel *The Secret Agent* searches the self identity and autonomy by challenging the deep rooted patriarchal norm and values. The feminist discourse has provided chances to understand the text better. It has shown the way to know the female problems, identity and existence and their search for self identity and autonomy. Feminism can be taken as any theory which sees the relationship between the sexes as one of inequality, subordination and oppression. Thus the main target of the feminist has become to change or revolt against such misconception and the gender construction. The feminists take it as the weapon to fight against patriarchy. They put female in the supreme place and show that women are also bold enough to decide whatever is better for their life. Joseph Conrad's *The Secret Agent* is no an exception to fall on these phenomena. Feminists write for freedom, autonomy and self identity of the women. They think that man should take

females as their necessary counterparts and help them to come in the independent area. Feminists view that only a feminist struggle will particularly change relation between man and women that concerns issues such as sexuality, violence, gender discrimination, espionage, emancipation, freedom and equality for women.

III. Male Chauvinism and Patronization on Female Sensitivity

Joseph Conrad's *The Secret Agent* is the pioneering piece of fiction which raises some of the fresh issues of paramount importance. Espionage, the hazards of European diplomacy, terrorism and the rising feminist awakening are the striking issues which are explored by Joseph Conrad in his masterwork *The Secret Agent*. The issue of feminist importance exists at the heart of this novel. Moreover, the sense of male chauvinism and patronization can be explicitly figured out through this novel. Winnie, at first, seems to have dreadfully submissive and subservient personality. She is, in the very beginning, totally dependent upon the will and intention of her husband. To her, her husband represents the might, discipline, social order and authority which is exercised to keep intact the family integrity. She obeys faithfully the order and implication of the patriarchal hierarchy and authority. She has not harbored any inclination towards freedom. She, rather, continued to live as if her marital relationship to her husband is the be-all and the end-all of her life. That means, it is the substantial support of her life. So much attachment and importance were adhered by Winnie to what her husband Verloc represented. The bond of family love and affection is what Winnie likes most. She appreciates the values like emotional affection, mutual exchange of trust, the friendly atmosphere in family and loyalty and constant attention from the head of family.

One after the other, all these normal and necessary expectations of Winnie dwindled down gradually. The growing suspicious life of her husband Verloc brings so much stress in her delicate sensibility that makes her aware of the patriarchal insensitivity and disinterestedness. Trust is the central of the novel. The Secret agent without trust between Stevie and Mr. Verloc and Mr. Verloc and his wife especially, Winnie, many events that transpire throughout the novels pages would not have been

possible. Male chauvinism is apparently triggered out throughout this novel. It is crystal clear that Winnie's merciless treat, her pathetic condition, torturous and disastrous phenomena are the mainly highlighted issues that are also weaved poignantly in the novel *The Secret Agent*. To get rid of such problematic and severe restrictions on her life, her rebellion took the large sphere. Winnie married Mr. Verloc for the pure reason that she needs a husband who can support not only her but her retarded brother and her mother too. But female domination clenched the pinnacle of zenith and obliged to stab to Verloc irreluctantly.

Verloc has a family. He lives with his wife Winnie, Winnie's brother Stevie and Verloc's mother-in-law. In this way, Verloc's family has made room for Stevie and Winnie's mother. Stevie is mentally retarded. Mother-in-law is also in a position to need care and attention Winnie feels love towards Stevie. Winnie feels as if she is the nurturer and caretaker of Stevie. Since the responsibility of taking care of Stevie fell into Winnie's hand, she started loving Stevie as though he is no less than her own son. Day after day her compassionate affection towards Stevie increased. She started treating him compassionately.

When the family integrity and harmony remained intact, her husband Verloc has been living the hypocritical life of a double deafer. He has run a small shop from which he sells pornographic items, and other grocery items. Outwardly, he is supposed to have enjoyed happy, cozy and warm domestic life. But beneath the veneer of happy domesticity, his secret liaison with espionage is hidden. He had been working as the agent of a group of extremists who are making a grand plan to plant a bomb in the Greenwich observatory. In the beginning of Verloc's secret orientation with espionage, Winnie was not aware of her husband's secret involvement in the activities of espionage. Winnie always presented herself as the open book before her

husband Verloc. She also expected similar kind of straight forwardness from her husband. Furthermore, she anticipated that her husband could show affectionate gesture to Stevie. The foremost expectation of Winnie is that Verloc could extend a grain of affection to Stevie. But the secret schedule and outer occupational life made Verloc to disregard and trivialize those emotional values which women always praise.

Mr. Verloc lives a clandestine life. His activities and schedule-based life is surreptitious. There is patriarchal boorishness and chauvinistic trait in the personality of Mr. Verloc. The following extract is highly illustrative of the Chauvinistic disposition of Verloc:

It clattered; and at that signal, through the dusty glass door behind the painted deal counter, Mr. Verloc would issue hastily from the parlor at the back. His eyes were naturally heavy; he had an air of having wallowed, fully dressed, all day on an unmade bed. Another man would have felt such an appearance a distinct disadvantage. In a commercial transaction of the retail order much depends on the sellers engaging and amiable aspect. But Mr. Verloc knew his business, and remained undisturbed by any sort of aesthetic doubt about his appearance. With a firm, steady-eyed impudence, he would proceed to sell over the counter some object looking obviously groups. (14)

Above depicted remark implies the sense of male chauvinism in crystal clear way. Tentatively, Mr. Verloc's chauvinism is an almost natural product of the national concept in so far it springs directly from the old idea of the national mission. Mr Verloc seems very offensive and abusive upon female sensitivity basically on Winnie. Verloc's this petty and wretched act frequently resulted in a high sense of anti-responsibility for the welfare of backward people mainly Winnie and her mother. The

language of this extract is carefully crafted. It is designed to evoke the chauvinistic and patriarchal haughtiness. Obviously, Verloc seems to be devoted to the betterment of domestic life. His chauvinistic rigidity and patriarchal hardihood are not obviously noticeable at the manifest level. But the repressed disposition surely carries within itself the propensity to subjugate the affectionate and compassionate nature of women.

Mr. Verloc seems committed to the idea of making domestic life far more comfortable and well-managed. Every family member is highly appreciative of the talent of Verloc to maintain a sound domestic life. His mother, his mother-in-law, his wife's brother all live in the family. Verloc does his best to provide every kind of well-managed comfortable life to his family members and his slight anti-feminist and moody conduct nearly engulfed him. The following extract serves as the good example of the concern of Verloc to the neatness and the cleanliness of domestic life.

It appeared that Mr. Verloc was ready to take him over together with his wife's mother and with the furniture, which was the whole visible fortune of the family. Mr. Verloc gathered everything as it came to his broad, good natured breast. The furniture was disposed to the best advantage all over the house, but Mrs. Verloc's mother was confined to two back rooms on the first floor. Mr. Verloc thought that some occupation would be good for him. His spare time he occupied by drawing circles with compass and pencil on a piece of paper. (18-19)

Mr. Verloc gave every impression of being immensely affectionate towards his family. As the head of family, he did his level best in making his family exemplary and happy. Beneath the show of his domestic accountability and gentlemanliness lies fervent longing to act as *The Secret Agent* of a terrorist gang. The latent longing of

Verloc is submerged beneath the tendency to make domestic life attractive and neatly alluring.

Viewed from the perspective of Winnie's mother, Mr. Verloc tends to acquire the gentlemanly characteristics. But the perspective of Mr. Vladimir sounds somewhat different. Vladimir says that Verloc is indolent. Verloc's much more fascination towards the domestic life made him lazy and lethargic. Once, Verloc came to the Russian embassy in England seeking a job in secret agent. On the embassy Verloc happens to talk to Vladimir concerning his interest in the secret service. Vladimir makes frank inquiry over Verloc's interest and his work experience. Having listened to the words of Mr. Verloc, Mr. Vladimir arrives at the following conclusion:

But, as I've said, you are a lazy fellow; you don't use your opportunities. In the time of Baron Stott- Wareham we had a lot of soft-headed people running this embassy. They caused fellows of your sort to form a false conception of the nature of secret service fund. It is my business to correct this misapprehension by telling you what the secret service is not. It is not a philanthropic institution. I've had you called here on purpose to tell you this. (28)

Viewed from Mr. Vladimir's angle Mr. Verloc does not seem to have possessed essential smartness which is keyed to the professional success. In the internal domestic life he is quite meticulous and appreciably sensitive. But in the active Professional world, he really lacks nuance and tact that are vital to boost the professional success. On the oasis of male chauvinism, once Winnie's instant docility encouraged him, whilst her aspect of only temporary and silent acquiescence provoked him a little. Mr. Verloc mutters assertively:

Let me tell you, Winnie,' he said with great authority, 'that your place is here this evening, hang it all! You brought the damned police high and low about my ears- I don't blame you- but it's your doing all the same- you'd better take his confounded hat off. I can't let you go out, old and silly girl, shame on you including your rotten ancestors and predecessors. (180)

To wrap up, Mr. Verloc chauvinism and patronization is mostly highlighted and weaved through this novel. Moreover, Mr. Verloc's blind allegiance and simple minded devotion to one's maleness that is mixed with open or disguised belligerence towards has been keenly defined from various persons. The gradual negligence of the family, earn enmity between friends and his unfinished wrath upon Winnie and her mother directly trigger out about the severe male chauvinism through this very novel *The Secret Agent*.

Catastrophe on Masculine Supremacy

Verloc's laziness is proverbial. His fate brings out the sense of catastrophe and hallucination so far. Apparently it is deemed as ill fate on masculine supremacy. Actually his lethargy prevented him from achieving a job with lucrative aspect in the Russian Embassy in Britain. In his own family he is praised for his gentlemanly quality. But outwardly, Verloc is considered as a lazy lout not gifted with a professional caliber. Whatever may be the case, Verloc is obviously dissatisfied with the way he is living his present life. He hardly reveals those intense feelings and emotions which are hidden within the depth of his core self. When Verloc's wife asks him to care for Stevie, Verloc does as he is told. Seen outwardly, Verloc is able to maintain the integrity of the semblance of his family status and social standing.

Mr. Verloc once saw no writing on the wall. He turned to his wife again, repeating, with some emphasis. Mr. Verloc says:

I would have taken him by the throat. As true as I stand here, if I had not thought of you then I would have choked the life out of the brute before I let him get up. And don't you think he would have been anxious to call the police – either. He would not have dared. You understand why – don't you. 'no, 'said Mrs verloc in an unhesitant and furious voice and stared at him in aggressive way. What the hell you are talking about? (173)

Verloc's social standing is not as it appears to the people and his neighbors. But it seems he has been enjoying love and affection within his family. In the outer world he is not taken as the man endowed with potentiality which is key to professional success. Verloc's family life witnessed disaster because of Verloc's lack of sensitivity. Verloc lacks the rational power to understand the acuteness and delicacy of feminine sentiments and sobriety. Winnie expected Verloc to love her retarded brother Stevie really. Stevie was in need of love and affection. There was nobody to care him except his sister Winnie. Winnie pleaded Verloc to love and care Stevie as though Stevie is no less than their own son. But Verloc plays with these genuine feelings and experiences of Winnie. Verloc does not demonstrate an air of genuine regard and affection for Winnie's cherished feelings and opinions. The following extract highlights the above mentioned point:

Mr. Verloc extended as much recognition to Stevie as a man not particularly fond of animals may give to his wife's beloved cat. This recognition, benevolent and perfunctory, was essentially of the same quality. Both women admitted to themselves that not much more could

be reasonably expected. It was enough to earn for Mr. Verloc the old woman's reverential gratitude. In the early days, made skeptical by the trials of friendless life, she used sometimes to ask anxiously- you don't think, my dear, that Mr. Verloc is getting tired of seeing Stevie about?

To this Winnie replied habitually by a slight toss of her head. (41)

Verloc treated Stevie no less than the beloved pet of Winnie. When Winnie was awake to this kind of inhuman and insensitive treatment of Verloc, she is stupendously startled. She, sometimes, felt guilty of telling Verloc to care for Stevie. She had never guessed that Verloc was so mean and lowly. Yet she is duty bound to him under the burden of marital relationship.

Verloc had no genuine regard and respect for the sanctity of his wife's feelings. He always sought to trivialize it. His trivializing behaviors were dagger to her heart. She perceived the gap between how much she had expected from her husband and what Verloc really was. Mrs. Verloc had such a sensitive and delicate nature- which Verloc did not understand. This is the source of bitterness and misery in Winnie's life. Mr. Verloc's magnanimity was not more than human. She had exasperated him at last. She echoes in this way:

Can't you say something? You have your own dodges for vexing a man. Oh, yes! I know your deaf-and-dumb trick. I've seen you at it before today. But just now it won't do. And to begin with, take this damned thing off. One can't tell whether one is talking to a dummy or to a live woman. (180)

The union, break up, elopement and relation and its importance in the lives of neighbors are very, very important to Winnie. There is the mention of an episode of romance but Mr. Verloc simply dismisses it as the futile event which contains no

interest and taste in his life. The following extract illustrates and illuminates the dismissive nature of Mr. Verloc:

There had been a steady young fellow, only son of a butcher in the next street, helping his father in business, with whom Winnie had been walking out with obvious gusto. He was dependent on his father, it is true but the business was good, and his prospects excellent. He took Winnie to the theatre on several evenings. Then just as she began to dread to hear of their engagement that romance came to an abrupt end and Winnie went about looking very dull. But Mr. Verloc, turning up providentially to occupy the first floor front bedroom, there had been no more question of the young butcher. It was clearly providential.

(42)

Mr. Verloc has a dismissive nature. Outwardly, he has preserved ideality in his disposition and temperament. It is this sort of silent bullying nature that lacerates the delicate feelings of Mrs. Verloc. Mrs. Verloc had expected that a small favor of her husband could bring in-depth joy and contentment. But Verloc hardly thinks in this direction.

Fed up with the dreariness and drabness of domestic life, Mr. Verloc turns to the boastful but empty political speech and rhetorically heightened situation created by the political extremists. A group of anti capitalist extremist assembled on the main road and began to delivery powerful rhetoric. Whether they were Marxist rebels or not, it is not mentioned clearly either. But it is clear from the available information that they are anti-capitalist sensationalists and extremists. Their rhetoric of radicalism and iconoclasm gave energy and force to the dull and drab Mr. Verloc. As a result, Mr. Verloc paid crucial attention to their speech. Like a man who lost track on desert

Mr. Verloc found the oasis of political rhetoric and appeal that is why he felt glued to the politically charged area from which he was attending political rally and agitation.

The following extract highlights the point which is echoed by Mr Verloc:

History is made by men, but they do not make it in their heads. The ideas that are born in their consciousness play an insignificant part in the march of events. History is dominated and determined by the tool and the production- by the force of economic conditions. (42)

On the ground of female history, Winnie has secured it since the very beginning mostly before her marriage. When her husband dares to secure the history she couldn't tolerate and decided to stab her own husband. On the spur of the moment, Winnie could scratch, kick and bite and stab too; but for stabbing she wanted a knife. Winnie sat still under the black veil, in her own home, like a masked and mysterious visitor of impenetrable intentions. Mr. Verloc magnanimity was not more than human. She had exasperated him at last in an offensive way. Thus this remark is as milestone on the basis for the catastrophe of masculine supremacy. Winnie utters:

can't you say something? You have own dodges for vexing a man. Oh, yes! I know deaf-and-dumb trick. I've seen you at it before today. But just not it won't do. And to begin with, take this damned this off. One can't tell whether one is talking to a dummy or to live woman. Don't dare to exhibit your stupidity, darn! (183)

Mr. Verloc felt profoundly drawn to the secret agenda and planning of the terrorist gang. He expressed his willingness to work as *The Secret Agent* of those terrorist. Most often, secret meetings of those terrorists took place in the house of Mr. Verloc. The following extract is necessary to assert the increasing terrorist orientation of the socialists:

On the other side of the fireplace, in the horse-hair armchair where Mrs. Verloc's mother was generally privileged to sit, Karl Yundt giggled grimly, with a faint black grimace of a toothless mouth. The terrorist as he called himself was old and bold with a narrow, snow white wisp of a goatee hanging limply from his chin. An extraordinary expression of underhand malevolence survived in his extinguished eyes. When he rose painfully thrusting forward of a skinny groping hand deformed by gouty swelling suggested the effort of a moribund murderer summoning all his remaining strength for a last stab. (43)

In a nutshell, aforementioned vivid remarks apparently illustrate that catastrophe on male supremacy is the most highlighted issue in this novel. Winnie ultimately could secure her rights and dignity after taking the right action against Mr. Verloc, her husband. It is obvious that no any female can be suppressed and dominated in the spur of moment. Therefore, this novel is an exemplary about the female sensitivity and liberty.

Women Vehement Rebellion

Women resistance on male supremacy has been clearly portrayed on it. Unexpected women rebellion is a foremost poignant asset throughout this piece. Here, a man, Verloc, found of domestic simplicity has turned to the ugly mission of murder, violence, bloodshed and terrorism. The domestic peace and purity is set beside the tendency to indulge in terrorist act. It typically focuses on how women struggle to get rid of patriarchal ideology and establish women's identity. In *The Secret Agent* specific form of female advocacy empowers woman and provides the major route for woman to resist the fate of being objectified and victimized. Here, Winnie's histories

are buried; as numerous women in history are deprived of their birth names. Her identities disappear like air without leaving any of their traces of life stories. In *The Secret Agent* Conrad's oral act of story-telling to reader may signify her revolt against male domination and to establish their repressed histories on the ground of women rebellion. In this novel, the gradual orientation of Mr. Verloc towards terrorism is unknown to Winnie, her mother and Stevie. By keeping his family members in ignorance, Verloc was clandestinely involved in the gang.

Mr. Vladimir had denied a job to Mr. Verloc in the embassy. To take revenge on Mr. Vladimir also, Verloc thought several times and came to a conclusion that it is the good opportunity to participate in the terrorist activities. The following extract highlights the point that is uttered by Vladimir against Mr Verloc:

Lost for a whole minute in the abyss of meditation, Mr. Verloc did not reach the depth of these abstract considerations. Perhaps he was not able. In any case he had not the time. He was pulled by the sudden recollection of Mr. Vladimir another of his associates, whom in virtue of subtle moral affinities he was capable of judging correctly. He considered him as dangerous. A shade of envy crept into his thoughts. Loafing was all very well for these fellows, who knew not Mr. Vladimir. (52)

The above cited excerpt proves that Verloc is really just the opposite. He appears as mean and vindictive.

Mr. Verloc says, stepping slowly down two steps, entered the kitchen, took a tumbler off the dresser, and holding it in his hand, approached the sink, without looking at his wife. Verloc echoes:

It wasn't the old Baron who would have had the wicked folly of getting me to call on him at eleven in the morning. There are two or three in this town that, if they had seen me going in, would have made no bones about knocking me on the head sooner or later. It was a silly, murderous trick to expose for nothing a man-like me. (172)

When Verloc's nearness to terrorism was increasing, his influence on the domestic order was also in trouble. He did not succeed in maintaining the smooth integrity and order of the family. The following paragraph exemplifies the point that Conrad annotates on the ground of Verloc's traits:

Mr. Verloc cared nothing for Stevie's excitement, but he felt horribly wakeful, and dreaded facing the darkness and silence that would follow the extinguishing of the lamp. This dread led him to make the remark that Stevie had disregarded his suggestion to go to bed. Mrs. Verloc, falling into the trap, started to demonstrate at length to her husband that this was not impudence of any sort, but simply excitement. There was no young man of his age in London more willing and docile than Stephen she affirmed. (55)

Domestic responsibility and accountability are gradually qualities of small importance. Verloc failed to obey familial responsibility and accountability. Because of the burden of domestic monotony, Verloc felt appealed and attracted towards the fatal rhetoric of terrorism. His willingness to work as the agent of terrorist is a cogent evidence of how a monstrous reality has flourished beneath the veil of domesticity and dignity.

Participants in the secret mission including Verloc were eager to involve in terrorism. They are the group of anarchists and revolutionaries who often move

around the house of Verloc. In general, they are unsympathetic people who feel dispossessed of their heritage or suffer from frustrating mediocre lives. Verloc is the example of a cynical man without political convictions who finds espionage and discussions of anarchy a useful way to make a living. Mr. Verloc seems a predator who preys mainly on women, using political discussion and agitation as a mask. Mr. Verloc is portrayed as a pawn of foreign power. He is at the tip of the command of an agent at Russian embassy. The following extract illuminates the point no sooner Conrad pondered his chilling feeling towards Mr. Verloc hereby:

Solidarity with the extremist form of action is one thing and Silly recklessness is another he said, with a sort of moody brutality. I don't know what came to Verloc. There is some mystery there. However, he is gone. You may take it as you like but under the circumstances the only policy for the militant revolutionary group is to disclaim all connection with this demand freak of yours. How to make the disclaimer convincing enough is what bothers me. (70)

Verloc is cynical in the sense that he wants to make money by covertly taking part in the secret mission. Within the domestic life, he pretends to behave in an ideal way. Before the gang of his mother-in-law he is totally a man with dignity, self-esteem and good social standing. But his outer stand is cynical. Indirectly, he likes to earn money by participating in espionage.

All the participants in the terroristic cell decide to blow by bomb the Greenwich observatory in London. Verloc was enjoying the new prospect of terroristic adventure; he had already produced different kind of impressions within his family members. Once, Mr. Verloc used to think that Stevie is a nuisance. This sort of treatment of Stevie by Verloc was disliked by Winnie.

Winnie was gradually wrapped by suspicion whether she could wear the crown of triumph from her optimism that had been securing since her conjugal life. Reversely, her hope shattered pieces and pieces and totally overwhelmed by grief and melancholy no sooner she came to know that Mr Verloc is at the verge of disrupting her destiny and history. Below mentioned remark apparently illustrates that Winnie's rebellion against patriarchy is so-telling. Winnie murmurs:

Mr Verloc, getting off the sofa with ponderous reluctance, opened the door leading into the kitchen to get more air and thus disclosed Winnie, seated very good and quiet at a deal table, drawing circles, circles; innumerable circles, concentric, eccentric' a coruscating whirl of circles that by their tangled multitude of repeated curves, uniformity of form and confusion of intersecting lines suggested a rendering of cosmic chaos, the symbolism of a mad art attempting the inconceivable. (162)

Mr. Verloc comes back from his trip ten days later, still distracted by his troubles. Winnie is similarly distracted by Stevie's depression at his mother's sudden departure. At breakfast, the first day of Mr. Verloc's return, Stevie becomes agitated when the neighbour women begins to complain about the difficulties of raising children on little money. That afternoon, Mr Verloc decides to go for a walk, and Winnie requests that he take Stevie with him. This surprises Mr. Verloc, as Winnie has never made this request before. However, he agrees to do it. Winnie assures Mr. Verloc that he need not worry about Stevie wondering off, since she knows he will find his way home on his own if necessary.

Bomb was planted in the Greenwich observatory. Verloc was assigned with the secret task of planting the bomb in the Greenwich observatory. The prime purpose

of setting the bomb is to weaken the power of Britain's state mechanism. Each member of this terrorist organization had had vested interest in executing the violent and destructive plan. Mr. Verloc had hand in fulfilling the ambitious plan of earning money. He put his outward image of being a gentleman at Stake. Bomb was planted as the series of master plan and eventually it exploded shattering the Greenwich observatory into pieces. The following extract is highly illustrative of the above mentioned fact that is narrated by Conrad about Verloc:

The bomb no I would not say that exactly. We may never find that out. But it's clear that he is connected with this in some way, which we can find out without much trouble. His countenance had that look of grave , overbearing indifference once well known and much dreaded by the better sort of thieves. Chief Inspector Heat, though what is called a man, was not a smiling animal. But his inward state was that of satisfaction at the passively receptive attitude of the Assistant Commissioner, who murmured gently. (106)

After the bomb destroyed the observatory, many people lost their lives.

A kind of fatal fear pervaded the surrounding of the observatory. Public fear soared to peak. The terrorists were quite happy that their destructive mission has come true.

In the evening when Verloc , his wife and other members expect Stevie were living in their home, the inspector Heat had come. The inspector came up with an overcoat. The inspector told Winnie that the man who had worn this coat is dead in the explosion of Greenwich observatory. Winnie quickly identified that the man who lost his life is her retarded brother Stevie who died in the bomb explosion at the Greenwich observatory, she became enormously angry with Verloc and her anger with Verloc knew no bound. She instantly thought that had Verloc taken care of

Stevie, he would not have been dead at bomb explosion in the Greenwich Observatory. In addition, Mrs. Verloc had secretly guessed that her husband had secret connection to the terrorist group. She had secretly estimated that the secret agent of terrorists is none other than her own husband. Because she had invested so much emotion and affection Stevie that death of Stevie made her broken hearted. She felt that her life is sinking below the quicksand of emptiness and sterility. The following extract exemplifies the point on the ground of insensitivity that provokes out women rebellion. Conrad depicts amidst the novel:

An incredible as it may appear; the eyes of Mrs. Verloc seemed to grow still larger. The audible wish of Mr verloc's overflowing heart flowed into an empty place in his wife's memory Greenwich Park. A park! That is where the boy was killed. A park- smashed branches, torn leaves, gravel, bits of brotherly flesh and bone, all spouting up together in the manner of firework. She remembered now what she had heard, and she remembered it pictorially. They had to gather him up with shovel. Trembling all over with irrepressible shudders she saw before her the very implement with its ghastly load scraped up from the ground. Mrs Verloc closed her eyes desperately, throwing upon that vision the night of her eyelids. (211)

This extract dramatizes the situations of Mrs Verloc's extreme agony and anguish following the unprecedented and disastrous end of Stevie and her suspicion to lose her history. She came to know, at this disastrous moment, that being deprived of her cozy life actually she had cultivated the sense of being true to one self and wanted to secure her history herself. The tragic death of Stevie and devastation of her private life shocked her to the extreme point . She then decided to do something for her

desperate and woebegone plights she got to get aloof from such predicament. That is why she decided to take bold initiative and action against her lazy and lethargic fellow.

At that time the torrents of anger welled up in her heart. She grew conscious of freedom. She wanted to do what an individual does when he or she becomes aware of individuality and freedom. The following extract highlights the point under the depiction of her wrath against her husband Mr. Verloc. She mutters:

Yes, answered obediently Mrs Verloc, the free women. She commanded her wits now her vocal organs. She felt herself to be in almost preternaturally perfect control of every fiber of her body. It was all her own, because the bargain was at an end. She was clear sighted. She had become cunning. She chose to answer him so readily for her private life. She did not wish that man to change his position on the sofa which was very suitable to the circumstances. She succeeded. The man did not stir. But after answering him she remained leaning negligently against the mantelpiece in the attitude of a resting Wayfarer. (211)

Mrs. Verloc became aware of her position in the family under the grip of her husband. For the first time in her life she happens to know that she is subjugated and inferiorized. So, she decides to retaliate her husband who is straight forwardly accountable for the disastrous doom of her destiny. The following extract exemplifies the case in point that is spoken by Winnie:

Mrs. Verloc had let go the knife, and her extraordinary resemblance to her late brother had faded, had become very ordinary now. She drew a deep breath, the first cays breath since chief Inspector Heat had

exhibited to her the labeled piece of Stevie's overcoat. She leaned forward on her folded arms over the side to the sofa. She adopted that easy attitude not in order to watch or gloat over the body of Mr Verloc, but because of the adulatory and swinging movements of the parlor. To the last its decorum had remained undisturbed unseemly shrieks and other misplaced sincerities of conduct. And after the striking of blow, this respectability was continued in immobility and Silence. (213)

Winnie murdered her husband because he is irresponsible for her feelings, emotion and out of her desire and more often incessant suppression and traumatic oppression. Actually, Mrs. Verloc is reacting to the silent and oppressive insensitivity and disinterestedness of her husband. Her fierce determination to challenge patriarchy took the form of murdering her own husband.

The researcher seeks to assent that murdering her husband is a radical act of affirming the demand of a subjugated lady. Viewed from the perspective of radical feminism, Winnie's act of murder appears to be the fierce and extreme form of radical resistance against the patriarchal subjugation.

IV. Conclusion

Joseph Conrad's *The Secret Agent* is one of innovative novel of the early twentieth century. It has incorporated different kinds of fresh issues of the time. Each issue it has raised needs serious examination and elucidation. However, far from offering any sentimental picture, *The Secret Agent* is Conrad's funniest novel. Its savagely witty picture of human absurdity, irresponsibility and misunderstanding is written in an ironic style that provokes laughter and unease at the same time, and that continuous to provide one of the most disturbing visions of aspiration and futility in the 20th century literature. The issue of primary importance is that this novel presents a female character Winnie, wife of Verloc, who kills her husband when she comes to know that her husband is fully responsible for the disastrous events of her private life and traumatic exploitation at her and more poignantly out of her female sensitivity, seriousness and privilege. His ruthless wrath upon Winnie and her mother resulted him into death either. This act of murdering her husband by wife is interpreted as resistance against the patriarchal subjugation and domination.

Conrad is, primarily, noteworthy novelist who is fond of exploring the complex issue of European colonialisms and inter country diplomacy. Espionage, terrorist threat and resistance form below are some of the fresh issues of the then time in which the novel *The Secret Agent* was written. This novel raises to the extreme level the intensity of feminist resistance. Conrad, though his stand on feminism is not explicitly clear, has vindicated that the end justifies the means. For the sake of her self-integrity, freedom and individuality, she fought against the bondage of patriarchy. But her resistance took an extreme form. When she knew that her husband's gradual inappropriate dealing with her and no sooner she suspected that she is going to lose her history that she was previously possessed, resulted this doom that is brutal

murder. This act of murder is the key factor in the completion of this research work. On the strength of this crucial issue the researcher puts forward the claim that feminist resistance against the cruel disinterestedness and insensitivity can take as much radical form as it is capable of taking. However, murderous and criminal her act, her violent deed strikes within itself the seed of emancipation from the clutch of patriarchy.

Patriarchy is so frozen, so deadened, so deep-rooted and finally so insensitive that it can't either be halted or its clock just because of the pressure of simple kind of resistance. Being hit and assaulted by moderate kind of resistance, patriarchy won't bow down. Patriarchy is the one-headed monster to abolish for which extreme and radical action is necessary. This is perfectly applied in Joseph Conrad's novel *The Secret Agent*.

Mr Verloc is the main character of this novel. Outwardly, he has produced the impression that he is the gentleman with considerable dignity and self-esteem within the family surrounding; he had obtained a good mark of domestic dignity and pride. Each family member of Verloc's family had had the high opinion of him. They thought that Verloc is seeking the ideal to them; Verloc symbolizes masculinity bent upon accomplishing the ideal point. In running the domestic life, Verloc produced ever impression of being a sincere and loyal husband. In taking care of Stevie also Verloc did exactly what he is expected to do.

The ideal façade and the gentlemanly conduct of Verloc is a mask behind which monster of patriarchal masculinity threatens. To earn money he compromised the humanitarian values. Just to earn money, he participated secretly in terrorist act of planting bomb in the Greenwich observatory. He turned towards destructive mission. His heedlessness and negligence upon the cozy life of Winnie, his disinterestedness

and shit on the realm of female identity and more especially incessant spiritual and psychological torture to Winnie, summoned his own destruction. Thus, it can be concluded that Winnie's act, however illegal and extreme can be vindicated as a consciously directed move forward on the spur of the devastation by which a researcher is dragged to come on the ground of feminism.

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