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Resistance through Female Bonding in J.K. Rowling's *The Casual Vacancy*

Tribhuvan University

Resistance through Female Bonding in J.K. Rowling's *The Casual Vacancy*

**A Thesis Submitted to the Central Department of English
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts in English**

By

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Letter of Recommendation

Mr. Kishor Prasad Chapagaihas completed his thesis entitled "Resistance through Female Bonding in J.K. Rowling's *The Casual Vacancy*" under my supervision. He carried out his research from October 2017 to April 2017 A.D. I hereby recommend his thesis be submitted for viva voce.

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Letter of Approval

This thesis entitled "Resistance through Female Bonding in J.K. Rowling's *The Casual Vacancy*" submitted to the Department of English, Tribhuvan University, by Mr. Kishor Prasad Chapagai has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee.

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Kishor Prasad Chapagai

Abstract

This research presents how female bonding appears to be a means of resistance in J.K. Rowling's novel *The Casual Vacancy*. Female bonding is a theoretical concept developed by critics like Nancy Chodorow, Chris Beardsly, Judith Butler, and Alberto Godenzi. Female bonding is common resemblance of females to share sympathy and empathy with each other to resist patriarchy. In *The Casual Vacancy*, the first person narrator Patrica narrates several difficulties of her life. Patrica comes from a decent family of moderate income who is forced to work as a governess at the house of elites. Her husband constantly finds fault in her and criticizes her infertility. He is callous and insensitive towards his wife. This provides an excuse for her husband to cheat on Patrica, to divorce her, and to remarry with Anna. Patrica lives with her university friend, Sukhvindar, after she broke up with her husband. Sukhvindar stands in the difficulties of Patrica as a strong pillar. All female characters in the novel are victim of patriarchal ideology; either they are poor or rich. However, Sukhvindar helps Patrica and Patrica helps her mother in her difficulties. Females have bonding to resist patriarchal ideology.

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I. Representation of Female Characters in Rowling's *The Casual Vacancy*

This research is concerned with how the female characters like Patrica, Sukhvindar and Terri of J.K.Rowling's novel *The Casual Vacancy* face frequent challenges from the patriarchal society in one way or other. Patrica, Sukhvindar and Terri including other the female characters do not challenge the patriarchy directly; rather they share resemblances in facing the patriarchy. They provide sympathy and empathy to each other. It is due to the intervention from the patriarchy the feminine harmony is collapsed. From this, we can infer that if the patriarchal domination had not existed, the females would have lie a world of harmony and satisfaction. Drawing on the tool of the relational psychology or the referential- self-conceptualized by Nancy Chodhrow for her *The Reproduction of the Motherhood*, the present research paper attempts to unearth the relational psychology among the female characters in the novel.

The protagonist Patrica is a strong, independent, and confident young woman. She knows what she wants from life and has the zeal to fight the world for it. But life lands her in circumstances where she is let down by everyone around her. The trauma she had faced as a child comes back to haunt her repeatedly. In addition, the memories of distant past simply refuse to leave her. She tries hard to gather all the scattered remains and attempts to quest new order in her life.

Another character Sukhvindar is her best friend who is also a victim to the harsh realities of life. They both seem to have so many similarities when it comes to their hobbies, likes, and dislikes which make them inseparable best friends. But they also have similarities in terms of their life. They both feel left out by their own families. In addition, they have been denied care and affection by their own parents

for various reasons. They grow up to take separate ways in life only to meet one last time which acts as a final nail in the coffin.

Repeatedly life keeps on testing Patrica and she manages to emerge a survivor by winning those tests. But there is time in life when it gets too much for one to bear and one needs to take certain decisions which change our lives forever. Patrica's life has been full of such decisions and yet today once again she is standing at crossroads that demands her to take a life altering decision once more so that she had job as house maid. Though the females do not become united directly to counter the patriarchal domination, their indirect efforts to create harmony between themselves and their commonalities of the experience show the evidence the relational psychology among themselves. They are also common in their assertion of the individual will by challenging the patriarchy.

In *The Casual Vacancy*, important female characters like Patrica, Sukhvindar and Terri are not secure, free, and confident. Several times, they have to face domination. Their increasing sense of willingness to enter into strong pact and solidarity strengthen them to face the threat of patriarchy, harassment and numerous jolts of domestic violence.

J.K.Rowling is profound English novelist and short story writer. In her early writing career,Rowling found herself enticed into writing sensationalist fiction, fascinated with themes that explored taboos and evil. In her novel *The Casual Vacancy*she explorespsychological insight into the characters' minds and actions, tracing the manner in which extreme situations impact on ordinary existence. The protagonist in the novel evolves an awareness of the fragility of happiness and a greater acknowledgement of moral responsibility. The humanistic recognition that

moral values are found not only on human nature but also on human experience becomes the character's means of coping with trauma and violence.

Gerard Genette is a noted critic of novels. Genette looks into the main subject of this novel and then makes the following remarks:

The choice of central character allows Patrica to deal with issues of oppression and abuse of women, isolation and ideas of empathy. *The Casual Vacancy* also mimics some of the stylistic approaches employing ideas of personal growth and coming to age, but representing a character who in fact does not gain in virtue. (56)

In the houses of upper middle class elites, there was the danger that females can be dominated. Robert Bernard reveals the hidden theme of the double consciousness of those women who are unknowingly conscious of the growing effects of passionate upsurge.

The narrator has lost the grace and benefit of coherent consciousness. She is prone to double consciousness. Bernard opines the following views:

Having both passion and security is too much to ask. She may be intelligent and educated, but she can also be terribly immature and irrational. She's not a heroine I'd aspire to be but I admire the fact that she articulates and struggles with her conflicts. There is no stability and integrity in the entire gamut of endeavors and thoughts. (37)

Bernard sees no difference between the life of Patrica and Sukhvindar. He traces the similarity and proximity between authorial life and the individual life of protagonist. Extreme feminist consciousness harms her conscience. The core essence of this work is to portray how the trend to celebrate extended leisure time far in the tower and uncanny landscape give rise to the innovative and experimental way of living.

MacRae Johntreats *The Casual Vacancy* as the partly subtle and partly straight forward text. Stephen Wade mentions additional ideas about the novel in the following citation:

The narration is very lucid in a very simple language. The story is set in London, and the author has managed to do justice with both history and time. Lays, treachery, deceit, love, lust, money, name, fame and power. All this comes to life in the pages of this book as you accompany Patrica on her life's journey. (27)

Like many novels, this novel also talks about condition of females. The frequent dilemma of the females is at the center of this novel.

Muller Booth is the first critic to point out the presence of romantic love at the heart of the novel. Certain degree of romantic energy is necessary in order that progressive transformation could arise. In the brief citation mentioned below, Muller makes the following remarks:

The setting is exotic, the subject is erotic, but the story is necrotic. Patrica falls in love madly and so does Sukhvindar with the male counterparts. Even the parents are in extra marital relationships. For more than one hundred pages of ironic dithering about who will have sex with whom, the climax is endlessly delayed. Patrica is a romantic ... granted a libidinous, easily shocked romantic. (47)

Setting, subject and theme are interwoven in such a complex way that it is not easy to guess what sort of effect is likely to arise from such combination. Exotic setting suits quirky content. The ineffectuality of tradition and disintegration of life-affirming grace are brought to the public acknowledgement so that people will feel tempted to

cast aside their obsolete crusher husbands and adopt the new outlook on life. The restrictive thoughts of the past should be dismissed however painful it might be. A good deal of headstrong disposition is instrumental in stabilizing some of the progressive changes that have appeared in life.

Although all these critics and reviewers examined *The Casual Vacancy* from different points of view and then arrived at several findings and conclusions, none of them notices the issue of female bonding. Since, the topic of female bonding is untouched and unexplored; the researcher claims that it is the fresh, new and original topic. The increasing alliance amidst female characters like Patrica and Sukhvindaris sufficient proof to endorse the claim that there is the issue of female bonding in *The Casual Vacancy*. By using the theory of female bonding and gender based feminism, the researcher probes into this topic. The mutual cooperation and collaborations of marginalized, excluded and intimidated girls is the chief domain of this research.

Within the context of human relationships the definition and display of female bonding can be dependent on multiple factors such as age, sexual orientation, culture, race and marital status. Some studies have shown that there is relatively strong female bonding evidence which is shared among single women. Gerard Genette says, “It is evident that this particular cohort of women sees each other as lifelong confidants due to the absence of a lifelong commitment to a spouse” (65). Along with this, the lack of commitment allows women to develop and maintain the strong ties between other single female friends. Female bonding can be further explored within the human context of relationships within the family.

To conduct this research, the researcher makes use of the theory of female bonding. The theory of female bonding focuses on the fact that gender is a construct. In a patriarchal society, several practices, norms, trends, and institutional cults exist to

intensify the gender differences. To justify and buttress the patriarchal society and ideology, the notion of gender difference is intensified. The rationale of gender difference would be proved and restated. So long as gender difference is fostered and disseminated to fulfill the benefit of one group, the other would always be in the disadvantage. So long as gender differences are abolished, it would be difficult to put into practice some of the revolutionary agenda and programs of feminism.

The positive female-female ties which is developed have been described to provide immense emotional, financial and instrumental support; indicating that female bonding is present. In an alternative study, a mother described her daughters as more like sisters, communicating that equality was an essential feature of their current relationships. They used the language of companionate ties. In addition to mother-daughter ties, “sibling ties can be carefully examined for further exemplification in female bonding. There is much evidence that sister-sister ties are the strongest ties that exist, out of the possible combinations of gendered sibling ties which are shared” (Genette 125).

Feminism is one of two subfields that arguably can be situated under the umbrella term gender. For this reason, before examining feminism, it is good to take a brief account of this term. Gender typically refers to the social process of dividing up people and social practices along the lines of sexed identities. The gendering process frequently involves creating hierarchies between the divisions it enacts. One or more categories of sexed identities are privileged or devalued. In modern western societies, gender divides into two. This is not necessarily the case in other times, places and colors. Gender in the modern west usually refers to two distinct and separate categories of human beings as well as to the division of social practices into two fields. “The gendering of social practices” according to

Beardseley, “May be found, for example in contemporary western societies, in a strong association between men and public life and between women and domestic life, even though men and women occupy both spaces”. (10)

Chodorow sees gender differences as compromise formations of the oedipal complex. She begins with Freud’s assertion that the individual is born bisexual and that the child’s mother is its first sexual object. The male child forms this sense of independent agency easily, identifying with the agency and freedom of the father and emulating his possessive interest in the mother/wife. This task is not as simple for the female child. She puts:

The mother identifies with her more strongly, and the daughter attempts to make the father her new love object, but is stymied in her ego formation by the intense bond with the mother. Where male children typically experience love as a dyadic relationship, daughters are caught in a libidinal triangle where the ego is pulled between love for the father, the love of the mother, and concern and worry over the relationship of the father to the mother. (43)

For Chodorow, the contrast between the dyadic and triadic first love experiences explains the social construction of gender roles, the universal degradation of women in culture, cross-cultural patterns in male behavior, and marital strain in the West after Second Wave feminism. In marriage, the woman takes less of an interest in sex and more in the children. Her ambivalence towards sex eventually drives the male away. She devotes her energies to the children once she does reach sexual maturity.

Women to women relation are essential in strengthening the possibility of progress in feminist movement. If women are driven by the common purpose and

goal and if they are sensitive to the suffering of sisterhood, they can face any challenge that comes on the way. In this regard, it is more relevant to quote Chris Beardseley who always stands in favor for woman to woman relation. Beardseley makes the following remarks:

If men/ masculinity is not to be inevitably valued, and women/femininity is to be acknowledged, even celebrated, then woman to woman relationships can no longer be viewed as of marginal significance against women's relationship with men. In a social context in which women are commonly characterized as engaged in a war among themselves over men and incapable of sustained friendships with each other, women-centered feminists typically promote a counter-strategy in which woman to woman relationships are given credit and encouraged. (49)

Chris Beardseley points out clearly the core aspect of women –centered feminism. If feminism aims at reshuffling women's relation with men, the significance of woman to woman relation should not be ignored and marginalized. The collective sense of being the member of organized sisterhood is imperative in reformulating man-woman relation in a new way. Thus the important thing is that it is pretty difficult to launch revolutionary programs of feminist movement without strengthening woman to woman relation from certain viewpoint. Women-centered feminism is supposed to make certain contribution to this direction.

Although Foucault makes few references to women or to the issue of gender in his writings, his treatment of the relations between power, the body and sexuality has stimulated extensive feminist interest. For Foucault “sexuality is a construct” (54).Foucault's idea that the body and sexuality are cultural constructs

rather than natural phenomena has made a significant contribution to the feminist critique of essentialism. While feminists have found Foucault's analysis of the relations between power and the body illuminating, they have also drawn attention to its limitations. From the perspective of a feminist politics that aims to promote women's autonomy, the tendency of a Foucauldian account of power to reduce social agents to docile bodies seems problematic. Although many feminist theorists remain critical of Foucault's questioning of the categories of the subject and agency on the grounds that such questioning undermines the emancipatory aims of feminism, others have argued that in his late work he develops a more robust account of subjectivity and resistance which, while not without its problems from a feminist perspective, nevertheless has a lot to offer a feminist politics.

For Kate Millet patriarchal religion, popular attitude, and to some degree, science as well assumes these psycho-social distinctions to rest upon biological differences between the sexes, so that where culture is acknowledged as shaping behaviour, it is said to do no more than cooperate with nature. Millet argues:

The heavier musculature of the male, a secondary sexual characteristic and common among mammals, is biological in origin but is also culturally encouraged through breeding, diet and exercise. Yet it is hardly an adequate category on which to base political relations within civilization. Male supremacy, like other political creeds, does not finally reside in physical strength but in the acceptance of a value system, which is not biological. Superior physical strength is not a factor in political relations - vide those of race and class. Civilization has always been able to substitute other methods (technical, weaponry, knowledge) for those of physical

strength, and contemporary civilization has no further need of it. At present, as in the past, physical exertion is very generally a class factor, those at the bother husband performing the most strenuous tasks, whether they are strong or not. (55)

It is often assumed that patriarchy is endemic in human social life, explicable or even inevitable on the grounds of human physiology. Such a theory grants patriarchy logical as well as historical origin.

Miriam Rose is peculiar feminist theorist who holds view similar to that of Barbara. She strongly takes social grouping of women as a means to maintain the integrity of individual differences and social recognition. Rose insists them not to ignore their distinct gender traits. She makes a call to respect those qualities which make woman a distinct individual. Social grouping and harmony amidst women belonging to any community and culture is instrumental in actualizing some of the long cherished visions of freedom and prosperity. The following lines capture Miriam Rose's distinct view in this regard:

This means that feminism is a critical stance that decenters the assumptions of the mainstream in terms of center (men)-periphery (woman). This is a feature of sexuality and Masculinity Studies, which similarly decenters the notions of the norm in relation to sex and power. Feminism not only decenters the usual assumptions about what is central and what is at the margins, but also shifts the subject of the analysis, in that the notion of woman is placed in center stage. This occurs even when feminists questions the validity of this sexed identity. Feminists focus, in short, on that which is deemed marginal/Peripheral. (16)

The issue related with women is placed at the center of feminist discourse. Even the subject of analysis undergoes change. Nothing related with women is left as irrelevant and negligible. Everything appears to be equally important so far as the object of analysis is concerned. If discursive as well as non-referential matters are examined in relation with the politics of the matter, it would remain the same practice which promises many things but yield none of the significant conclusion. Thus, critical attention should be directed by the gender feminists to the specific object of analysis.

The more gender differences are narrowed down, the more optimistic scope feminism acquires. If none of the significant differences between man and woman exist, men will auherhusbandatically come in defense of the rights and freedom of women. Only in the space in which gender differences cease to exist, even the unity and harmony amidst women come to flourish. Only by destroying the patriarchal structure of society, women will not accomplish complete level of freedom and access to different sorts of rights. Thus, that aspect of feminism, which talks about promoting gender bonding and the harmony amidst women, would be quoted and used in this research.

This thesis is divided into three chapters. In the first chapter, the researcher introduces the topic, elaborates on the hypothesis, and quotes different critics' views regarding the text. In the same chapter, the researcher shows the departure also. In the second chapter, the researcher makes a thorough analysis of the text by applying the tool of female bonding. The last chapter contains the conclusive ending of the research.

II. Female Bonding in Rowling's *The Casual Vacancy*

The present research is an example of how the females have shared feelings and actions to cope up with the patriarchal domination. Patrica, Sukhvindar and Terri are the central characters of the novel from the perspective of the female bonding. They have the same situation of being trodden by the patriarchy. The revolt against patriarchy. Though the revolution is not explicit, they involve in the resistance against patriarchy directly or indirectly.

Patrica's father faces economic bankruptcy; extreme economic burden falls on family. Patrica and her mother try their best to face the challenges to run the family. Mother and the daughter are in the same line of the struggle. They talk and share their feelings of being the dominated females in the world of patriarchy. The following lines describe how growing solidarity amidst mother and daughters enable them to cope with economic constraints:

Mother and I were brought up in the strictest seclusion. My mother, being at once highly accomplished, well informed, and fond of employment, took the whole charge of our education on herself which my father undertook to teach us—so that we never even went to school; and, as there was no society in the neighborhood, our only intercourse with the world consisted in a stately tea-party, now and then, with the principal farmers and trades people of the vicinity, and an annual visit to our paternal grandfather's; where himself, our kind grandmamma, a maiden aunt, and two or three elderly ladies and gentlemen, were the only persons we ever saw. (5)

Patrica's mother is a typical English woman who comes from a decent family. Had her husband been economically stronger and secure, she might have come to the

external world for job. Following the financial fiasco of her husband, Patrica's develops determination to face any challenge that comes on her way. The costly responsibility of educating children falls on her shoulder. Even her daughter stands in for her. This beautiful sense of solidarity helps them to cope with any kind of hurdles and hassles that appear on the way. But the father restricts the mother.

To conduct this research, the researcher makes use of the theory of bonding. The theory of female bonding focuses on the fact that gender is a construct. In a patriarchal society, several practices, norms, trends and institutional cults exist to intensify the gender differences. To justify and buttress the patriarchal society and ideology, the notion of gender difference is intensified. The rationale of gender difference would be proved and restated. So long as gender difference is fostered and disseminated to fulfill the benefit of one group, the other would always be in the disadvantage. So long as gender differences are abolished, it would be difficult to put into practice some of the revolutionary agenda and programs of feminism. Alberto Godenzi is a popular theorist of female bonding. She takes the notion of female bonding as the strategy of coping with the pressures exerted by patriarchy in women. She puts emphasis on the notion of the integrity of women. Her view is cited below:

Despite many calls for integrated woman abuse theories, few have made any such attempts. Taking as a starting point that gender blind and conservative theories may still have some value, social bond theory is examined with insights from feminist male peer support theory and other critical perspectives. The goal is not a formal new theory but rather a heuristic designed to show the value of adding feminist insight to gender blind theory. Attachment and involvement

with conventional peers may in fact promulgate violence against women on college campuses. (53)

It is noted that conventional institutions are patriarchal and part of a rape culture. Social fraternities, sports teams may enforce adherence through homophobia and group pressure. Efforts are under way to promote a hyper-masculine culture that encourages men to use coercion and force to increase their count of sexual encounters.

To assist her family, Patrica's mother begins to work going outside the home. The father obstructs her. She tries her best to run the family. At first, she likes this job. It gives her an opportunity to look at the lives and elite people. It also brought certain amount of monthly remuneration with which family could survive on its own. Moreover, the job is supposed to offer her a chance to get intimated with the children whom she teaches. But she has to face several difficulties. There is no chance to get rid of these difficulties and hardships. Surrounded by recurrently occurring problems, even the job of a governess seems to be banal and monotonous. It is due to the interference of father that the mother seems to be mundane and monotonous. Her husband beats her terribly. She can do nothing except accepting every patriarchal norms. The following extract describes those obstacles which are set by patriarchal society:

Did she loathe her father? Or did she love him? Of late, her mind was pushing her to uncover answers to the questions. During all those years she has been sure that she hated her father. But lately Patrica has become indecisive about her feelings towards him. Now there were times when she wanted to hide herself to hide her in her father's embrace. (33)

Peevish tempers of the father are the source of fear for Patrica. She has to face several problems which can arise from the temperamental manners of father. He beats the mother mercilessly. Patrica can do nothing to save her mother. In the society where the patriarchy is the real problem, girls like Patrica can hardly feel encouraged. Various moment have come in her life. In those moments she was not inspired and encouraged. Whim and impulse of males continue to pose challenge to her. Though Shriley makes lots of contribution to the family in making the reconciliation, her father does not recognize her contribution. On the contrary, he continues to impose harsh and bossy dictations on her. Frightened by the bossy and temperamental manners of the father, Patrica comes to share her sorrows and sadness to her mother and sister. It is her mother who provides her with inspiration and enthusiasm. Motivated by the understanding and cooperative nature of her mother.

Woman to woman relation is essential in strengthening the possibility of progress in feminist movement. If women are driven by the common purpose and goal and if they are sensitive to the suffering of sisterhood, they can face any challenge that comes on the way. In this regard, it is more relevant to quote Chris Beaseley who always stands in favor for woman to woman relation. Barseley makes the following remarks:

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typically promote a counter- strategy in which woman to woman relationships are given credit and encouraged. (49)

Chris Beaseley points out clearly the core aspect of women - centered feminism. If feminism aims at reshuffling women's relation with men, the significance of woman to woman relation should not be ignored and marginalized. The collective sense of being the member of organized sisterhood is imperative in reformulating man-woman relation in a new way. Thus the important thing is that it is pretty difficult to launch revolutionary programs of feminist movement without strengthening woman to woman relation from certain viewpoint. Women-centered feminism is supposed to make certain contribution to this direction.

Patrica also tries her best to be close with her mother. She loves her mother very much than that of father. One day she notices her father beating the mother mercilessly. She already had tried to convince her mother to revolt. But the mother remains silent. It makes Patrica sad and passive. Though she scolds her mother for not making the revolution, she love and provides sympathy with the mother. It is what we call female bonding. The following lies shoe how Patrica is providing sympathy and empathy to the mother:

The door was ajar, and what she saw through it was the site that was to haunt her throughout her life. A man intoxicated with alcohol and rage, was kicking her mother who lay cowering on the floor. Her sari was stuffed in her mouth to subdue her howls. Patrica could only hear the stifles cries coming from the dark end of the room, thereafter.(21)

The females challenge the patriarchy though they are unable to provide their voice strong enough to resist patriarchy. They defy and disobey patriarchy. As a Patriarch, the father tries her best to keep them under her control. They are monstrously

notorious and naughty for him. He blames them for keeping rooms dirty at any time. Within half an hour after the room is washed, they make it dirty and viciously unclean. There is acquaintance and proximity between Patrica and the mother. But such a bonding is too feeble. Despite the enfeebled nature of this sense of female bonding, it has enabled Patrica to move ahead confidently in her chosen profession. The following lines throw light on this aspect of the females bonding as Patrica is serious about the incident:

Why was papa hitting ma? What did she do to make father so furious?
 Why was she stuffing the sari the sari in her mouth? Does this happen
 every night? Doesn't she express her anger? Isn't here anyone to listen
 her sufferings and pains? The sight has been inexpressible for her
 young sensitive mind.(22)

The mother knows that the father puts blame on her shoulder, though she knows that it is his children who are noisy and vulgar. But without understanding the situation and ground reality, the father begins to bully and intimidate mother.

Andolsen Barbara argues that feminism has achieved some of its proclaimed agenda and goals. New goals and visions have evolved in the direction of feminist thinking. The new horizon of socio-cultural life has rendered obsolete the old programs of reforms and equality. Barbara briefly points out her viewpoint in the following extract:

Women centered feminism is the popular designation for the largely liberal but sometimes postmodern –infected feminist movement in the west during the 1990s. This movement frequently promotes the idea that western societies have reached an era of post-feminism, suggesting that the goals of second-wave feminism have been

achieved and or that this older form of feminism is now outmoded because it is overly focused on women's victimized status. In this way, third wave feminism often positions itself in antagonism to more established feminist projects and displays doubts about the concept of women as a broad social grouping, arguing that this category is unhelpful. (256)

Barbara does not encourage the trend to study the problem of a single woman as an individual being having distinct sensitivity and understanding of her own. According to Barbara, problems of women should be viewed in broader category. It is imperative to check the group status and position of women in society to find out factors that contribute to the happening of this sort of problem. If women are viewed as social grouping and if their problems are studied in terms of the loopholes of this social grouping, certain uplifting measures can be taken to achieve the intended goals of women centered feminism. Otherwise it would remain a tough and impractical job.

The mother had the sense to be shocked and annoyed at all this, but she had not sense to prevent it. She expected father to prevent unruly and demoniac manners. Despite her hard work and sincerity, Patrica's mother fails to perform the way she is expected by her husband. The following lines show how helpless and embarrassed the mother is in her consistent attempt to handle responsibility:

But how could I—when the guests, with their fine clothes and new faces, continually flattered and indulged them, out of complaisance to their parents—how could I, with my homely garments, every-day face, and honest words, draw them away? I strained every nerve to do so: by striving to amuse reproaching their unmannerly conduct, to make them ashamed to repeat it. (66)

When an individual is forced to perform those things which he or she is unable to do, reverse situation is likely to be created. To some extent, Patrica's mother endures all the hardships that can arise naturally in her job. Thinking that in the preliminary phase of her employment, it is natural for anyone to some face drawbacks in profession. With the help of the harmonious bond between Patrica's mother and herself, Patrica succeeds in resisting the oppressive and torturous behavior of Father.

Miriam Rose is peculiar feminist theorist who holds view similar to that of Barbara. She strongly takes social grouping of women as a means to maintain the integrity of individual differences and social recognition. Rose insists them not to ignore their distinct gender traits. She makes a call to respect those qualities which make woman a distinct individual. Social grouping and harmony amidst women belonging to any community and culture is instrumental in actualizing some of the long cherished visions of freedom and prosperity. The following lines capture Miriam Rose's distinct view in this regard:

This means that feminism is a critical stance that decenters the assumptions of the mainstream in terms of center (men)-periphery (woman). This is a feature of sexuality and Masculinity Studies, which similarly decenters the notions of the norm in relation to sex and power. Feminism not only decenters the usual assumptions about what is central and what is at the margins, but also shifts the subject of the analysis, in that the notion of woman is placed in center stage. This occurs even when feminists questions the validity of this sexed identity. Feminists focus, in short, on that which is deemed marginal/Peripheral. (16)

The issue related with women is placed at the center of feminist discourse. Even the subject of analysis undergoes change. Nothing related with women is left as irrelevant and negligible. Everything appears to be equally important so far as the object of analysis is concerned. If discursive as well as non-referential matters are examined in relation with the politics of the matter, it would remain the same practice which promises many things but yield none of the significant conclusion. Thus, critical attention should be directed by the gender feminists to the specific object of analysis.

Patrica begins to hate her father intensively. She wants to quit home. She begins to revolt in solitude. After quitting her father's house, Patrica is sent to a Christian school. The school has a beautiful environment. There are only the girls. They all live happily. No one is there intervene their relationship. The following extract describes how females are friendly and cooperative in their dealing with each other:

The gate opened to a driveway lined with the tall pine and deodar tree. The girls walk with a short frock and trousers, shrugged her shoulders and made a slight grimace, but took a candle and proceeded before me up the back passage, and down the steep stairs, on a voyage of discovery. Meeting a well-dressed woman Patrica told her what she wanted; but not without considerable hesitation, as she was not quite sure, it happened to be the lady's-maid. (76)

There is a stronger bond of familiarity amidst Patrica and other females. They are already familiar with the internal conditions of each other. Their guidance and advice help them to cope with occupational difficulties comfortably. The growing sense of mutual help guide not only Patrica and Patrica but other girls too. It is the bonding among the females.

Laura Ouzgame has expounded some of the basic tenets of gender difference framework in feminism. Like other feminist, she is critical of the reform oriented ethos that has gained currency in the recent feminist discussion and discourse. Laura's view adds further clarity to the method of the analysis of the text. Her view is mentioned below:

The aim of the gender Difference framework in Feminism was, rather than attempting to locate the marginalized at the edges of existing society, to acknowledge difference positively. Indeed Difference theorizing involves privileging the marginalized, at least strategically. In Feminism this has meant revaluing the Feminine. Such thinking tends towards an at least bifurcated account of different social and cultural positioning. In the modernist identity politics versions of gender difference, this amounts to asserting differently constructed gender politics versions of gender identities and experiences. (21)

Gender difference feminism comes to operate strategically in the field which is entirely dominated by the patriarchal discourse. Since some of the main goal of earlier waves of feminism is already achieved, feminism has renewed option to act and operate strategically. Without operating strategically, it is really difficult to maintain solid ground in the voices of women can be projected. Just by looking critically at the social and cultural positioning of women, none of significant breakthrough will arise. Strategic approach is key to creating solidarity amidst women. By raising directly the political voices alone, it would be tough to expect genuine sense of achievement. Efforts should be made to unite the fragmented voice, unacknowledged experience and unidentified expectation so that the discourse of representation works as a

strategy. Thus the target of gender difference feminism is to revalue the feminine not for the sake of revaluation but for intended strategic purpose.

Patrica's father is harsh and belligerent. He treats the females no less than animals. Most of the time, he is not seen in home. He stays outside home due to some works. Moreover, he is a man fond of travelling a lot. He is fond of exploring unexamined and untested experiences in life. Though outwardly he seems to be gentle and cultivated, he is at heart baser and petty. His unpredictable manner and belligerent attitude are the most dreadful things Patrica has to bear suppression. The following extract throws light on how aggressively volatile and unpredictable Patrica's father is:

To begin with the head: he was, by all accounts, a blustering, roistering, country squire: a devoted fox-hunter, a skilful horse-joker, an active, practical farmer, and a hearty bon vivant. By all accounts, I say; for, except on Sundays, when he went to church, I never saw him from month to month: unless, in crossing the hall or walking in the grounds, the figure of a tall, stout gentleman, with scarlet cheeks and crimson nose, happened to come across me; on which occasions, if he passed near enough to speak, an unceremonious nod, accompanied by a Morning. (78)

The outward projection of Patrica's father gentility is a charade. He has a hollow personality. He is totally devoid of any sensitivity. He takes rapturous delight in blaspheming workers. He cannot pass a single day without scolding workers and his maid. Even if his workers have done works nicely on time, he goes on scolding. He has rarely seen color of happiness and peace in his face. He seems to be disgruntled and morose. The very sight and appearance of father troubles Patrica immensely. At

times, Shriley had made up her mind to quit home. But having seen the cooperative help of mother, she gives up the idea of quitting the home. It is the solidarity and unity amidst the female that the males are countered.

Some women conscious of feminist movement embody both the rebellious and conformist conviction. The closer scrutiny of their activities and thinking yields a new level of understanding. Gender does not just appear as the socially constructed category which has to be dismantled. Of course gender is the category which is the outcome of social happening and individual's interaction with social practices and institutions. But the lingering effect of an individual's immersion in gender category is really shocking. It is baffling. The notion of gender as the constructed category needs manipulation so that it would could facilitate women to obtain sense of solidarity. With this aspect of feminist thinking, Clara Cohen makes additional remarks:

Ironically, it would seem that gender is disputed both on the grounds that it is associated with the diminution of a focus on particular sexed identities and with the shoring up of such identities. Still others view gender's concern with sexed identities as precisely the means to undo these identities. What this debate signals is an ongoing discussion central to the entire field of gender /sexuality theory regarding the question of whether focus on particular identity groups is politically helpful or harmful. (13)

Certain degree of ambivalence exists in the reformist agenda of gender difference feminism or women centered feminism. Both the political and apolitical advantages should not be sought for while executing some of the topmost agenda and prescribed

goals of feminism. To make feminist vision far more viable, Clara Cohen has sought to bring the true reformist ethos from the plethora of confusion.

After some duration of friendship Patrica and Sukhvindar have to separate to each other. Whether it was her childhood, because the little one went through home violence as each day her little eye confronted with 'how brutally her father beat her mother' or it was her father highly designated cop known for his lavish life style but had never love for his daughter and wished always for a son .

Patrica finally prayed to God to bring back her high school friend Sukhvindar "who was the only person able to understand her emotion, thoughts and picked her hand tightly, gave consolation and would show her a way"(67). Patrica, also betrayed by time, husband and she herself turned out to be drunkard. After schooling life both the friend, Patrica and Sukhvindar moved in their own way promising to meet each other again in future. And fortunately one day both friends met with each other with different positions of life. Patrica, who was going to start a new life with her own man and Patrica who wanted to leave her man "because he betrayed her and slept with another woman"(105) . From this point Patrica became more and more stronger and chose the road "To her home- The iron gate-Her school from where she began the journey of life-to live once again" (105).

Margareta Flannery holds different kind of view regarding to the economic profile and position of women in Patriarchal society. If Zetkin holds patriarchy as the mechanism to foster exploitation of women by men, Flannery holds different kind of view. She says that ideology is not important in the Marxist Feminist analysis. She argues that social class of women is far more important than the concept of ideology. Her view runs as follows:

For Feminists, the concept of social class is considered to be more important than the concept of patriarchy since the latter is seen as a form of ideology that stems from class exploitation. Women are not a sex class because the only thing they have in common is their sex - an upper class woman, for example, has little if nothing in common with a working class woman. In addition, there is general agreement amongst feminists. (72)

The concept of women as the sex class should be abolished in order to boost their economic strength and status. The idea of being an attractive woman capable of tempting man of substance should be kept at bay if and only if women are to be empowered economically. Without economic empowerment, it is pretty challenging to upgrade the working condition.

The characters of Patrica and Sukhvindar slowly unfold with well-constructed backgrounds of disturbed childhood, distanced families and a series of events that also justify their outlook towards life. Isolated from the rest of the students in the boarding school, they develop a strong kinship owing to their family backgrounds and their common interest in literature. After a few blissful years of companionship, Patrica and Sukhvindar part ways and proceed with their lives that never stopped surprising them. James Mather argues:

Very good script and a strong story line. The book is about two women from different walks of life, growing up at the same boarding school, sharing their experiences and coming to love each other. Both women suffer deeply from the social stigma and the patriarchal society. At a later point the story moves into a direction where both their lives get badly intertwined into a seemingly impossible situation. (91)

When this best-seller was published, it put the mother-daughter relationship and female psychology on the map. *The Reproduction of Mothering* was chosen by Contemporary Sociology as one of the ten most influential books of the past twenty-five years. With a new preface by the author, this updated edition is testament to the formative effect that Nancy Chodorow's work continues to exert on psychoanalysis, social science, and the humanities. Chodorow argues:

The sexual division of labor and women's responsibility for child care are linked to and generate male dominance." A family dynamic in which the mother is the primary caretaker (primary object for the infant, as well as it's primary love), is bad for the psychological development of children, but worse for boys. Insofar as the family unit produces children who are un/fit for society, this must also be understood as a cultural problem. If mothering produces boys who are independent, averse to connection, prone to fear of women (in short patriarchal men), then wonders if co-parenting might produce less anxiety about the feminine in boys, and therefore less hatred of women? (55)

Chodorow denies that there is a biological imperative for mothers to mother beyond lactation. Technology makes it possible for a variety of others to participate in "mothering" practices. Women's work and their social status are highly marginalized by their potential / actual dual role in modern societies (child-rarer and worker). Employers are able to exploit this dual role to pay women lower wages. Men are able to exploit this dual role by receiving unpaid services within the home. The main reason for women's lower status in relation to men is the fact that they are generally economically dependent upon their male partner. Male power over women is

consolidated by ideological myths about women. These myths are part of a powerful socializing influence upon women that leads them to define their major role as that of mother, housekeeper and child-rarer.

The willingness of women to play dual role has made them the recipient of lower wages. They are paid low amount in comparison to their male counterparts. In addition, men are tempted to get the unpaid service from women. To get continuously the unpaid service of women, men have created several myths and tales about women. These images and myths about an affectionate mother serving altruistically to her husband and children are ploys to exercise power influence over women.

The main protagonist in the story Patrica is a strong, independent and confident young lady. She knows what she wants from life and has the zeal to fight the world for it. But life lands her in circumstances where she is let down by everyone around her. The trauma she had faced as a child comes back to haunt her again and again. And the memories of distant past simply refuse to leave her. She tries hard to gather all the scattered remains and attempt revitalize herself. The issue of the female bonding is further evident from the following lines:

The other protagonist Terri and is her best friend Patrica who unfortunately is also a victim to the harsh realities of life. They both seem to have so many similarities when it comes to their hobbies, likes and dislikes which makes them inseparable best friends. But sadly they also have similarities in terms of their life. They both feel left out by their own families. And they both have been denied care and affection by their own parents for various reasons. They both grow up to take separate ways in life only to meet one last time which acts as a final nail in the coffin. (132)

Terri is a school friend of Patrica. She is a "nice person" (125), who clean early on Saturday morning. Patrica seems a little petty at first when she describes Terri as a person who needs others to acknowledge her niceness—Terri actually is a genuinely nice person. Terri is nice, but her boyfriend, Damien, is pretty awful. “The demon seed, sometimes with horrible looks” (134). Patrica is in her life at this point. She helps Terri to be raped by her boyfriend at school.

Spivak coined the term "strategic essentialism," which refers to a sort of temporary solidarity for the purpose of social action. For example, women's groups have many different agendas that potentially make it difficult for feminists to work together for common causes; "Strategic essentialism" allows for disparate groups to accept temporarily an "essentialist" position that enables them able to act cohesively. However, while others have built upon this idea of "strategic essentialism," Spivak has since retracted use of this term (65). Spivak's notion of strategic essentialism can be found in the unity of Patrica and Terri. Time and again life keeps on testing Patrica and she manage to emerge a survivor by winning those tests. But there is time in life when it gets too much for one to bear and one needs to take certain decisions which change our lives forever. Terri encourages her:

I cannot do this; I cannot just be a wife. I do not understand how anyone does it—there is literally nothing to do but wait. Wait for a man to come home and love you. Either that or look around for something to distract you. When did you become so weak? I do not know. I do not know where that strength went; I do not remember losing it. (87)

Patrica's life has been full of such decisions and yet today once again she is standing at crossroads which demands her to take a life altering decision once more so that she can try on the support of Terri.

Chris Beardseley is the leading gender difference in feminism. She hints at women's group identity. Union among women is key to reaching the ultimate destination of liberation. Her view is mentioned below in a precise way:

Gender Difference feminists give value to women's group identity as women, and try to avoid using men/masculine as the standard of comparison. They suggest that women should be considered in their own terms. Hence, the focus is not on a universal human nature but upon positively re-valuing group identities like women/ the feminine. Where the equality perspective associated with strongly modernist accounts like liberal and Marxist feminisms is inclined to argue that difference between men and women is either a myth or produced to perpetuate women's oppression and should be transcended, Gender Difference theorists accept and even celebrate difference which they argue should not be read as inferiority. (46)

Gender difference is not always the sources of domination. It does not always foster the climate for oppression and subjugation of women by men. Even if gender differences are abolished, women may not be totally free from the pitfalls and hazards set by patriarchy as the booby trap to those women who are on the way to securing the prospect of liberation and individual dignity. Unless and until women are guided by the common cause of sacrifice for the collectivization of their freedom, it would be really difficult to actualize the dream of liberation. Several evidences can be forwarded to claim that many women have not supported other women who have

been struggling for justice and equality. One group of women must have active sense of empathy and participation in the struggles of another group of women who are victimized. If the sorrow of women does not touch the other, and if they do not unite their efforts, how can they secure the sound prospect of freedom? Group identity of women is cornerstone in guaranteeing the freedom and justice for women. This is the core essence of female bonding.

In the novel *The Casual Vacancy* Patrica Watson is an alcoholic suffering from the dissolution of her marriage her unnamed husband, who left her for another woman. Patrica's drinking has caused her to lose her job and have frequent binges and blackouts, during which she harasses he husband by phone and sometimes even in person. He is now married to, and has a daughter with, his former mistress. A situation that fuels Patrica's self-destructive tendencies, as it was her inability to conceive a child that sparked her alcoholism. Margret Flannery believes:

Though Patrica is a chirpy girl, she has had her share of problems in the form of a broken family. In each other, the two young girls find their faithful confidantes and cultivate a deep friendship. Both females have secrets of their own — a painful past that refuses to abandon their thoughts. Post their studies, they take different paths - Patrica in her quest to live with dignity and independence and her mother, who strives to find an honest relationship. But life takes different turns.

(213)

The relationship between Patrica and her mother deepens. They have known each other. They are already on the way to minimize their differences in terms of taste, preference, and viewpoints. A female cooperating with other female is noticeably

present in the relationship between Patrica, her mother and friends Terri and Sukhvindar. Sukhvindar asserts:

Who has to say that once I run, I will find that is not enough? Who has to say I won't end up feeling exactly the way I do right now-not safe, but stifled? Maybe I'll want to run again, and again, and eventually I'll end up back on those old tracks, because there's nowhere left to go.

Maybe. Maybe not. You have to take the risk, don't you? (90)

Sukhvindar is the most secure in herself as she is beautiful, married, and has a child. Terri is somewhat unstable; she had a child in a relationship that fell apart as a result of her inability to care for her child, but she is still confident in her looks and has a husband. Patrica is the most unstable character in the book, and she herself realizes that her downward spiral into alcoholism that eventually caused her to lose her husband and looks resulted from her inability to have a child. However these characters share common sympathy to each other.

Monique Wittig a theorist who elaborates on the notion of subjectivity. Formation of subjectivity of women should be treated as a historically constructed category. It is relevant to cite the view of Wittig to reinforce the constructed nature of Alice's subjectivity. The following lines reflect Wittig's idea on female subjectivity:

A materialist feminist approach to women's oppression destroy the idea that women are a natural group: a racial group of a special kind, a group perceived as natural, and a group of men considered as material specific in their bodies. What the analysis accomplishes on the level of ideas, practice makes actual at the level of facts: b its

very existence, lesbian society destroys the artificial fact constituting women as a natural group. (220)

A lesbian society pragmatically reveals that the division from men of which women has been the object is a political one and shows that we have ideologically rebuilt into a natural group. There should have a strong gender bonding between Alice and her mother in law. It would not be surprising if Rosalie betrays Shriley.

Helen Cixous argues says that “what permits this elimination of the between nature and the interpreter is the extraordinary opening of the field of subjectivity” (231). In the light of subjectivity, the researcher explores essential elements from the novel. The theory of feminism particularly postmodern feminism and the feminism of Simon de Beauvoir focus on the fact that gender is a construct. In a patriarchal society, several practices, norms, trends and institutional cults exist to intensify the gender differences. To justify and buttress the patriarchal society and ideology, the notion of gender difference is intensifies. The rationale of gender difference would be proved and restated. So long as gender difference is fostered and disseminated to fulfill the benefit of one group, the other would always be in the disadvantage. The core essence of feminism is that gender is the socio-cultural construct. The dominant trends, cusher husbands, beliefs and ideologies have given birth to the notion of gender differences. So long as gender differences are abolished, it would be difficult to put into practice some of the revolutionary agenda and programs of feminism.

Excerpt the moral debauchery of Patrica; there are many positive attributes which charm Patrica. Her flirtatious manner is the last point of her vulnerability. Once, Patrica comes to meet Sukhvindar who is with her friend, Weston. Thinking that it would be suitable time to introduce a male figure with Patrica, Sukhvindartakes Edward Weston with her and welcomes Patrica. The following excerpt highlights the case in point:

Patrica now became extremely beneficent to the poor cottagers. Her acquaintance among them was more widely extended; her visits to their humble dwellings were more frequent and excursive than they had ever been before. Hereby, she earned among them the reputation of a condescending and very charitable young lady; and their encomiums were sure to be repeated: whom also she had thus a daily chance of meeting in one or other of their abodes, or in her transits to and fro. (112)

Thus feminine represents nurture and female nature in this usage. Femininity is a cultural construct: one is not born a woman, one becomes one, as Simone de Beauvoir puts it. Seen in this perspective, patriarchal oppression consists of imposing certain social standards of femininity on all biological women, in order precisely to make us believe that the chosen standards for femininity are natural. Thus a woman who refuses to conform can be labeled both unfeminine and unnatural. It is in the patriarchal interest that these two terms stay thoroughly consumed. Patriarchy, in other words, wants us to believe that there is such a thing as an essence of femaleness called femininity.

Hence, it can be concluded that Patrica's struggles with the hurdles set by patriarchy are exemplary. Lots of lessons can be deduced from the trials and tribulations which she faced on her way to freedom and economic independence. Via supportive, inspiring and strategic help of other female figures her mother, Sukhvindar and Terri, Patrica finally succeeds in achieving what she intends to achieve right from the beginning. She is a main figure who resists patriarchy via the strategy of female bonding. Patrica's success is to be free from the clutches of patriarchy. Patrica kills her husband her husband Watson to be free from patriarchal bond. In one way or other, the females cooperate to resist the patriarchy.

III. Rowling's Vision of Gender Harmony

This research yields the finding that female bonding is instrumental in women's resistance against patriarchy. A thorough analysis of *The Casual Vacancy* offers the finding that modern women of the middle class are pressurized to develop gender bonding to resist the pressures and constraints imposed by patriarchy. In the face of strong social exclusion and condemnation, Patrica remains poised and unmoved. She continues to endure it. She does not feel resigned and defeated. On the contrary, she demonstrates that brand of subjectivity which is indomitable. For a short span of time, she tends to be depressed and disappointed. But she transforms her misery and melancholy into the higher level of power.

To the utter dismay of her offenders, Patrica cultivates strong sense of determination to fight against the entire patriarchal system. She has to fight against the entire community that takes delight in mocking her. Amidst strong public mockery and mendacity, she affirms her sanity. Her battle for justice takes momentum due to her strong determination. Patrica's awareness of her importance ranges from her submissive tone to assertive stand and from assertive outlook to compromising viewpoint. She is ready to display any kind of temperament and disposition to create favorable situation in which she is deprived of nice opportunity.

Excessive sentimentality on the part of boldness of Patrica is obviously noticeable. She counters the patriarchy with the help of her mother and other female characters like Sukhvindar and Terri. When she happens to be surrounded by harsh mockery and strong public denunciation, she cultivates a great deal of fortitude in the presence of these characters. In her search for justice, she is relentlessly committed and determined. A good deal of rationality is manifested in her behavior while dealing with mischievous people. She remains cool and calm in her dealing with her

trustworthy husband who is too monstrous to betray her up to the last moment. But she kills him to be free from shackles of patriarchy.

No single locus of Patrica's subjectivity is found throughout the novel. Her style of approaching problem shifts from one moment to the other. But that does not mean she is endowed by nature to handle situations in this way. The existing situations and adverse circumstances are largely responsible for her shifting mode of subjectivity. The variations in the locus of her subjectivity are the effects of socio-cultural restrictions and rigidity. In this regard, it would be fair to conclude that Shriley is compelled to cultivate various versions of subjectivity because the unfavorable circumstances put pressures in her.

The more Patrica faces adverse charges leveled against her, the more assertive and bold she appears to be. Singular line of reactions and responses cannot take her to the intended destination. She internalizes this bitter fact. That is why she is far more flexible and adaptive. To be more specific, question of surviving with dignity in hostile society inextricably joined in Patrica's adaptability, flexibility, sentimentality, fortitude, and assertiveness.

While giving vent to her bad temper, Patrica increasingly appears to be methodical. In really tough and adverse conditions, she relies on her premonition and intuition that situation, no matter how hostile, can turn to her favor. Her reliance on her intuitive mode of perceiving reality has helped her a lot. That is why her troubled subject position sometimes verges on disintegration and picks up to the level of confidence and assertiveness. Patrica's victory shows how assertion of female subject position is going to be successful. After establishing her innocence and justice, she succeeds in gaining back those things, which she had lost in the course of fighting

against hazards and hindrances. She expresses her wish to attend to the ordinary domestic world.

Any girl endowed with the rebellious conscience must have the rash audacity to tolerate alienation and estrangement. Those women who defy and challenge the established tradition and norms must face the suffering, agony and anguish. That is why; Patrica develops the habit to insist upon the acceptance of her own will and passion after killing her hostile husband. As far as possible, she tries her best to create an aura in which her decision will gain an upper hand with the help of bonding with other female characters.

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