

## I. Emerging Female Identity in Sandra Cisneros's *The House on Mango Street*

*The House on Mango Street* is a collection of 44 short character sketches, or stories; highly influenced by economic conditions of the contemporary era. The story is narrated by the protagonist, Esperanza: a teen aged girl. Writer started novel from Marxist point of view as in the very beginning she portrays the issues of financial poverty, the bourgeois instilment of the proletariat concept and desire for beautiful dream like American dream. Cisneros has explored herself into the depth of women's psychosocial realities and examined every vein of women's body, soul and mind. Cisneros is remarkable for raising the issue of liberation conscience against the social rigidities and limitation and the cultural conventions to women's self-realization that shocked the Mexican-American sexiest society and its establishment. She is able to initiate a new discussion about the attitude of patriarchy on women's status in the society; her concerns with question of sexuality and economic condition and division of labor.

Women in Mexican-American society are double marginalized; gender-subaltern and cursed for being poor. Cisneros depicts women's search of freedom in the repressive Mexican-American society of late nineteenth century. Her subtle representation of tormented and self-conflicting women's psychology, tortured by her colleague, sexually harassed, misbehaved, compelled to face many problem for being poor as well as female are remarkable.

She has beautifully illustrated the consequence in women's life that leads to refinement into rebellion in their self-realization that awakens the desire for vigorous longing for liberation: socially and economically.

*The House on Mango Street* is story of a Mexican-American family, where, Esperanza, the protagonist of the novel gets rebellious and seeks liberation from

social and economic oppression because of different consequence that frequently occur in her life. Esperanza's childhood passed in American gender biased allies as tenure, which she hardly remembers in her landscape. Their family consists of six members- Mama, Papa, Carols, Kiki, Nenny and herself, they wander far more in search of good inhabitant, but unfortunately the American gender biased and capitalistic society did not let them stay at a harmonious environment. Esperanza is well known about the position of women in the world. They are being escape goat in the hand of patriarchy. Many Esperanza are born in this world but destined to the same fate, as her grandmother who was taken away wrapping into a sack as "fancy chandelier", therefore, she revolts against the confinement made by gendered society. She wants break through all the social and economic constraints. She opposes women weaknesses of submissiveness in front of unequal deeds made by gender biased society. She summons all the women to fight for their liberation and emancipation. She wants all of them to be self dependent and own themselves and their belongings themselves. Cisneros's central character Esperanza searches for self-respect. In doing so she finds out the reason behind women's confinement and the source of patriarchy's hold over women. She understands the social conditioning plays a vital role in holding women back. She finds it important to acquire a "room" as a space of and for her own. She also tries to make identity as a Mexican-American and tries to create equal space in American society. All her characteral traits, behaviors and thoughts seem to be inclined to Marxist feminist ideas.

*The House on Mango Street* is Cisneros's literary persona, through which she writes about what she sees, feels and encounters. Her experience of living in a minority community, she creates Esperanza as a narrator to depict the problems of Mexican-American women, as they are double marginalized. On the one hand,

Mexican-Americans are suffering in American racial society and on the other, the pathetic condition of being women, in the hand of gender biased society in America. The hardship she including other women faced as a poor, helpless, second sex, other is expressed through her heroine Esperanza. This is the story of Mexican-American women's conflict directly related to their upbringing. She also depicts cultural discrimination, feelings of alienation and degradation associated with poverty too. Ultimately the novel is dominated by Marxist feminism ideology.

Marxist Theory, Marxism was propounded by Karl Marx (1818-1883), a German Philosopher and German sociologist Friedrich Engels (1820-1895). They also called their economic theory as theory of Communism. They announced the advent of Communism in their jointly-written Communist Manifesto of 1848. Marxism still remains significant as it gives us a meaningful way to understand history, literature and current events of contemporary era. It deals with ideology, society, history, and economy. It sees economics as base of superstructure (social, political, and ideological). In other words, one of the fundamental premises of Marxism is material circumstances referring to economic conditions that generate social/political/ideological atmosphere called the historical situation – the other premise. Marxism also highlights socio-economic class division (haves/ bourgeoisie and have-nots/ proletariat) causing class struggle by which all human history is characterized. To Marxism, ideology is ‘the ruling ideas of the ruling class’ or the belief system, and all belief systems are the products of cultural conditioning. For example, capitalism, communism, religion, etc. are not ‘innocent’ but are ‘determined’ (shaped) by the nature of the economic base known as economic determinism.

Many philosophers had contributed on Marxism like French Marxist theoretician,

Louis Althusser (1918-1990), Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci (1841-1934), Raymond Williams (1921- 1988). Marxist critic read any text on the prospective of product of material, historical condition, class based on economic condition, conflict based on ideology, gender and all. Mainly it deals with class conflict. Terry Eagleton states, in his primer *Marxism and Literary Criticism*(1976), “[Marxist criticism] analyses literature in terms of the historical conditions which produce it.” It is, however, not merely ‘sociology of literature’. The business of Marxist literary criticism, is ‘to understand ideologies—the ideas, values and feelings by which men experience their societies at various times’ and ‘to explain the literary work more fully; and this means a sensitive attention to its forms, styles and meanings’. So, the importance of the application of Marxist theory to literary analysis is indisputable.

Similarly, Feminism is a social, political theory or movement in against of male which they call male domination or patriarchal society. The term patriarchy is most common in the theory which they believe male domination (society is dominated by male). Gender bias is most remarkable issue of the theory. Feminism believes that in a patriarchal world, women are deprived from any kind of rights. They are victimizing through different means. Women are behaved as pet, domestic animal, source of entertainment, machine of baby birth and so on. Women don’t have even a minor decision making where they have their direct, may be vital role like number of children, family planning and in at least a decision power on small livestock.

Feminism is a doctrine related on image and ideas advocating women's rights for the equality of the sexes, identity and freedom. Feminism tries to redefine women's activities and goals from a woman centered point of view and refuses to accept the cult of masculine chauvinism and superiority that reduces women to a sex object, a second sex or a submissive other. It seeks to eliminate the subordination,

oppression inequalities and injustices; women suffer because of their sex and defend equal rights for women in political, economic, social, psychological, personal and aesthetic sense.

The nineteenth and twentieth century women had to pass through various challenges as the writer in the society. Feminism became a dominant approach in literature only in late nineteenth century. It had, however, two centuries struggle for the recognition of women's cultural role and achievements. The campaign was earlier started formally through the writing of Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Right of Women* (1792). Wollstonecraft, in her book, claims for the political and social rights of women and goes beyond the notion of patriarchal society. She advocates "the mind does not know sex" and blames that society views woman in "the role of convenient domestic slaves and alluring mistress by denying their economic independence and encouraging them to be 'docile' and attentive to their looks to the exclusion of all else" (cited in Adams 398).

Feminism in general, however, shares certain assumptions and concepts that underlie the diverse ways that individual critics explore in the factors of sexual difference and privilege in the production, the form and content, the reception and the critical analysis, of evaluation of works of literature. Thus feminism is a successful political movement which has become successful in giving due place to writing of non-canonical women writers.

Feminist criticism look for sexual oppression and it attempts to expose all kind of negative vibrant about women and patriarchal ways of thinking that have hurt, pinch women throughout the year or many in whole life. Patriarchy is the main reason of female domination which is developed by male as culture, traditional or natural phenomenon in order to rule upon women with the feeling of hegemony.

German sociologist Friedrich Engels is the founder of Marxist feminism. Marxist feminism is a sub-type of feminist ideology which deals on the matter of dismantling of capitalism as a way to liberate the women from various kinds of domination. It talks that economic inequality, dependence, political confusion and ultimately unhealthy social and cultural relation between men and women are the root of women's domination. Obviously, Feminism ideology has also many branches like Material feminism, Radical Feminism, Socialist Feminism, Marxist feminism and so on.

Engels had published his popular books *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the state* in 1884 where he discussed about shifting from feudalism to private ownership of land that made tremendous effect of the status of women. Engels (1884) argues that a woman's demotion is not a result of her biological disposition but of social relation and that men's efforts to achieve their demand for control of women's labor and sexual faculties. Through a Marxist historical point of view, Engels (1884) analyzes the widespread social phenomena associated with female sexual morality, such as fixation on virginity and sexual purity, incrimination and violent punishment of women who commit adultery and demands that women be submissive to their husbands. So, we can say gender oppression is closely related to class oppression and the relationship between men and women in society is similar to the relation between proletariat and bourgeoisie. Male are supposed to be bourgeoisie to dominate female according to their wish and female are proletariat to dance as puppet.

## II. Liberation Conscience in Cisneros's *The House on Mango Street*

Sandra Cisneros was born in Chicago in 1954 who had worked as a teacher for several years. She has written several books like, *Caramelo*, *Woman Hollering Creek* and others stories, *My Wicked Wicked Ways*, *Loose Woman*, and a children's book, *Hairs/Pelitos*.

*The House on Mango Street* is a collection of vignettes of Cisneros's mouth speaker Esperanza. Esperanza tells the stories that had happened in her life. She searches for her identity and self-respect in an alienating and almost hostile Mexican-American society where women are taken as commodities. The consciousness of her identity as Mexican-American, the genetic tension she experiences, male chauvinism she observes, accelerate her liberation conscience to establish her own identity as a self dependent women. Her desire to establish her own home, "Not a man's house. Not a daddy's. A house all my own" (Cisneros108) is an urgent expression of her liberation conscience both socially and economically. In these lines Esperanza feels that economic condition is a barrier of women which bounds female within four walls of a house and under the command of so called bread earner male. In this regard, French feminist Simon de Beauvoir in *The Second Sex* created a theoretical basis regarding how patriarchy deals with women in terms of economy. She examines the patriarchal traditions and institutions that control the material and economic condition by which society oppress women. She adds "He thenceforth has complete power over her person and her property [ . . . ] the women's property remains under the guardians' control and the husband's right are only over her person" (127). In these lines Beauvoir brings the reference of women's dominance history. Here she postulates the reference of ancient time on behalf of economy. Though Esperanza in the novel urges for her own house, not her father's from where domination over women starts.

Cultural and gender biased American society taught Cisneros how to face life honestly. Grandmother's forceful marriage generally explores women's condition of how repressive and confining marriage can be for a woman both spiritually and sexually. Mother's and grandmother's stories of their marriage are the nineteenth century's all sorts of taboo subjects as sexuality and marriage. Many of Cisneros's works incorporate the notion of women as repressed being ready to erupt. In 1990 when Pilar E. Rodriguez Aranda asked Cisneros in an interview for *The Americas Review* why she never married or started a family, Cisneros responded, "I've never seen a marriage that is as happy as my living alone . . . my writing is my child and I don't want anything to come between us" (71). She has said that "she enjoys living alone because it gives her time to think and write" (72). Seeing the pathetic condition of her mother and grandmother in a male dominant society where women are dependent on men, Esperanza challenges contemporary Mexican-American society, where marriage is compulsory and if daughter does not get married society raises question upon her femininity. She wants to be independent as she takes marriage as a social taboo and gender doctrine forcefully imposed upon female race. Escaping marriage and economic dependency on males, she wants to liberate herself from this male dominant society. This way she is trying escaping the gendered structure where women usually get the second class status.

Cisneros's *The House on Mango Street* has been traced within many critical approaches since its publication in 1994. The story of this novel makes us realize the troublesome sense of humanity with the sense of troubles faced by the protagonist. Although the Mexican American women in the text often relegate to margin, they run to search for their own identity and independence in Mexican-American society. Especially the character, Esperanza is victimized by Mexican-American upper class



society. Jacqueline Doyle, an ethnic women writer highlights this hegemonic contradiction in her book *More Room of her Own: Sandra Cisneros's The House on Mango Street*. In particular, she states, "Esperanza is the protagonist who inhabits with her mother, father and brother– particularly their dwelling on mango street – represents her poverty, but is also the richness of her subject matter" (7).As described, Esperanza and her family members suffered in terms of gender, identity, economic status and social interaction. The way in which, the incidents are tastelessly drawn and are unnecessarily compromising to poor women's dignity is one of the remarkable feature of Cisneros's writing.

Another critic, Leslie Petty takes Cisneros's work from the perspective of gender subaltern contradictory and complicated point of view. She argues that her work insist on culturally defining the world with some rigid dualities. She further writes:

The characterization of women throughout Mexican literature has been profoundly influenced by two archetypes presents in the Mexican psyche: that of the woman who has kept her virginity and that of the one who has lost it. Cisneros shows how artificial confining cultural stereotypes are, and through her creation of Esperanza, imagines of protagonist who can embody both violations associated with La malice and the Nurturing associated with La Virgin Guadalupe, all the while rejecting the feminine passivity that is promoted by both role models.

(120)

Initiating with revolutionary ideas of Esperanza, Cisneros leads the story to the harsh reality of life of poor, migrant and a woman, subaltern among rich, high classed and male dominated society. Cisneros very artistically plots series of incidences which

leads an ordinary day dreaming girl to a practical and revolutionary thinking being.

Thomas Matchie opines that Esperanza is in a strikingly different position regarding the quest of her identity. After all, she does not set out for a physical journey – her whole narration takes place on Mango Street. He further says:

the importance of physically being on a journey is not so relevant for coming-of-age novels. What the boys go out to see simply comes past Esperanza, so that the effect is the same. She is simply a girl, and does not have the cultural opportunity to leave as they do. What is more important is that Mango Street continues a paradigm of growth where a young person encounters an outside world, evaluates it in relationship to herself, and then forges an identity. (68-69)

Esperanza does not leave her house and neighborhood, but is still able to go on a spiritual quest during which she is formed by the people in her immediate surroundings. Her symbolic journey as a woman and as an artist is important for her coming of age as well. As her looking for answers to her questions and solutions to her problems while she seeks truth and love, Esperanza is not content with the world around her. She does not pay any attention to the surrounding; rather she is determined to her mission as revolutionist.

In the same way, De Valdes takes *The House on Mango Street* as a tension of women under patriarchal norms and values. Mexican-American society is fundamentally stereotypes, it does not let women to equality and judgment. In this connection, he further adds:

This quest for answers takes on an explicit tension because of the depth of the themes the narrator treats, but the manner in which she develops her search for answers is the fundamental dialectic of self-world. She

describes what is around her, she responds to people and places, but, most importantly, she reflects on a world she did not make, and cannot change but must control or she will be destroyed. (58)

In these lines, Esperanza dreams of a house that will be a refuge from the patriarchal society and from the crowded and crumbled house on Mango Street. As she is well instructed from her mother, she wants freedom, equality and self-respect in her society. So, she strongly urges for her own world where she is the owner of herself and her belongings.

Another critic, Diana Kelin in her article "*Coming of Age in Novels by Rodolfo Anaya and Sandra Cisneros*" explores Sandra Cisneros's novel as a rigid book that seeks and advocates only female's space totally rejecting male presence. According to her, for Esperanza, "the notion of house – a space of her own – is critical to her coming of age as a mature person and artist" (23). Here in this line she pictures the house only for women, it will be unjustly claimed of Kelin, because Esperanza does not want a complete solitude, rather she wants to accommodate homeless people, by advocating in courtesy of female she wants to establish fundamental rights of Mexican-American women in the landscape of America as she says:

"One day I'll own my own house, but I will not forget who I am or where I came from. Passing bums will ask. Can I come in? I'll offer them the attic, ask them to stay, because I know how it is to be without a house. Some days after dinner, guests and I will sit in front of a fire.  
(Cisneros 87)

Esperanza does not want to selfishly escape from her liabilities, she wants to help other people as revolutionist, less fortunate than her, to make happier than they are. She actually dreams for her future successful endeavors. She wants to toast all the

women of a fire of equality which they are lacking since many decades.

Another critic, Alvina, E. Quintana in her book *Home Girls: Chicana Literary Voices* traces Cisneros as a pioneer Chicana author and activist who focused on a genre that had been at the margins of mainstream literature. She further adds, "*The House on Mango Street*, she moved away from the poetic style that was common in Chicana literature at the time and began to establish a distinctive Chicana literary space" (55). In these lines Quintana acknowledges Cisneros's contribution to Chicana feminist aesthetics by bringing women to the center of her narrative. Primarily she lives in Chicago city of America, there are many problems since last many decades due to gender biased Mexican-American society. Primarily Cisneros writes poems but now she is aware of women's problem in contemporary American society, therefore, by writing novel she wants to fight against male domination and chauvinism forcefully imposed over female civilization which seems really Marxist feminist to her and book itself.

Not only this, but literary critics have noted that Cisneros tackles complex theoretical and social issues through apparently simple characters and situations. She raises simple issues and tries to evoke women's sensation over great things that how they are treated in American society. She teaches by her characters rest of the world which is aware of women's situation but pretends as if totally unknown about the sufferings of whole female civilization. In a childish manner, she envisions and makes female aware and ready to fight against such injustices. For example, Deborah L. Madsen in *Understanding Contemporary Chicana Literature* considers her writing to be "both technically and aesthetically accomplished" (35) while another critic Felicia J. Cruz says that "her technique of portraying ground reality vivid social commentary evokes highly personal responses" (915). By these critics' opinion the

book by Cisneros is the document of women's problems due to patriarchal norms and values in Mexican-American gender biased society, which open up the bitter truth that women are suffering since many decades. When women sensed about the inequalities over them on the basis of sex, they slowly and gradually tried to raise question over male doctrine. It was later in 1960 formed as "feminism" which is purely a political movement. It tries to establish women's equality in the American society.

Mexican-American society is totally male-centered where women's are celebrating their pathetic and conditional life, which Cisneros wants to redraw and redefine. In the same way, feminism tries to redefine women's activities and goals from a women centered point of view and refuse to accept the cult of masculine chauvinism and superiority that devalues women to a sex object, a second sex and, or a submissive other. It seeks to eliminate the subordination, oppression, inequalities and injustices. In the novel too, innocent female characters, on the basis of gender suffer because of their sex, but, Sandra Cisneros, through her rebellious characters, Esperanza defends equal rights for women in each and every sphere of life, which is feminist consciousness, that was introduced in 1960's century.

Her thirst of emancipation makes her rebellious as she wants to be waves of the sea and wind of the sky so as to clear all sorts of social boundaries."I want to be like the waves on the sea, like the clouds in the wind, but I'm me. One day. I'll jump out of my skin. I'll shake the sky like a hundred violins" (Cisneros 60-61). This is when Esperanza: Cisneros's heroine in *The House on Mango Street*, fighting against the hegemonic construction of womanhood in patriarchy as feminist. Cisneros in *The House on Mango Street*, exposes her female protagonist with an extravagantly rebellious spirit to break out the unreasonable social limitations imposed over women.

Questioning inward life, Esperanza holds a profound longing for an absolute freedom that she lacks in the society where she exists. And, to attain her longing, she revolts against the limitation by violating the modes and codes of contemporary Mexican-American women's behavior. Though, she predicts the risks of her course, she is ascertained to instruct, "We didn't know she was going to die" (61) than to survive submissively before the social injustices in the lives of contemporary Mexican-American women.

*The House on Mango Street* with its characters of various nature and actions obviously reflects Cisneros's attempt in doing so. As her elementary concern is in women's emancipation, her characters are mostly women of different attitude, realistically representing the attitude of women in the contemporary world. She, even in the time when the idea of true autonomy for women was too much imaginary portrays her passion and liberation conscience. Therefore, they moved from the house on Mango Street, far away, on the other side of town, but the condition did not improve. Landlord's bitter words, too old house, leaking water pipes, fetching water in empty milk gallons, making lines with other tenure for lavatory traced undeniable marks of pain and suffering in her child psychology. It was ordinary hallway stairs. Everybody has to share a room. While she was playing in front of her house, her teacher 'nun' meets and asks where she lives and when teacher comes to know her living in slum area she behaves her in sarcastic way which seeds the idea of class distinction in Esperanza's mind. Since, they are living in slum area she is behaved as other in the class, this provoke a sense of revolt in her for social equality. Esperanza spends her life with many hardships due to gender biased society which opens up liberation conscience in her mindset. She realizes in order to be treated well and equal in this biased society, she needs to be economically strong, that way she will not have

to face neither social discrimination nor gender based discrimination. She realizes ownership of property is a way of liberation for her.

In Spanish, her name means "sadness" but in English, it means "hope", blending these two meanings, she wants to make weapon for whole women civilization's liberation. She worries that her grandmother could not fight against male chauvinism, her marriage was forceful as her grandfather threw a sack over her head and carried her off as if she were a fancy chandelier, but Esperanza is not that type of submissive woman following old code and conducts propound by male gauze. Esperanza, not only this but also criticizes the women who did not fight against the inequalities, As spirit of Marxist feminism comes in her mind, she feels strong desire to speak out for those women of her community who cannot come out of confinement. By writing the stories of the Mexican-American women, their daily lives in American allies, carving of her own home "Not a man's house, Not a daddy's" (108). Suppressed women of her neighborhood, she feels she can create women world by bonding with them and provide equal space for women in American racial and gender biased society.

According to Robin Ganz, biographer of Sandra Cisneros in his article "*Sandra Cisneros: Border Crossing and Beyond*" clarifies her biography. Cisneros was born in Chicago, Illinois on December 20, 1954, the third child and only daughter in a family of seven children. Being the only daughter, she considered herself the "odd number in a set of men" (19). Her father's name was Alfredo Cisneros de oral and her mother was called Elvira Cordero Anguiano. Cisneros's father worked as an upholsterer to support his family and began "a compulsive circular migration between Chicago and Mexico City that became the dominating pattern of Cisneros's childhood" (21). Being the only daughter in a rootless family, she felt herself isolated

from her peers. As she spent most of her time with her mother as noted by Ganz, her mother Elvira was voracious reader, more enlightened and socially conscious. Therefore, Cisneros's one strong female influence was her mother. As Elvira was aware of female condition in Mexican-American society, she well trained her daughter about the situation of women, "she ensured her daughter would not suffer from the same disadvantages" (22). Later, Cisneros became friend with a high school teacher who helped her to write poems about the Vietnam War. With her teacher's encouragement she began to read and write far more throughout her high-school years. In this way, liberation conscience came into the mind and she gave birth to *The House on Mango Street* which advocates for the sense of emancipation among and between Mexican – American women.

The period's nascent ideas concerning women's rights were fully set forth by Mary Wollstonecraft's in *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792), in which she challenged the idea that women exists only to placement and proposed that women receive the same opportunities as men in education, work and politics. In the nineteenth century, however, the awareness of women's need for equality with men crystallized in the movement to obtain women's suffrage rather than in any fundamental of far reaching reevaluation of women's social status, roles and their place in the economy. Economy is one of the fundamental components of women's confinement as her mother. Her mother was totally dependent on her father, that's why her mother was compelled to stay under the control of patriarchy of which Cisneros has acknowledged, therefore, she knowingly as preferred by Wollstonecraft demanded women's independency through her novel. In the later nineteenth century, a few women began to work in the professions, and women as a whole achieved the right to vote in the first half of the twentieth century. But there were still distinct



limits on women's participation in the workplace as well as a set of prevailing notions that tend to confine women to their traditional role as wives, mothers and homemakers.

Cisneros portrays Esperanza as part of an oppressed, working class neighborhood, with very little power. Esperanza is ashamed to live there. She had ideas of living in a house like those of the white middle class society which are displayed in the mass media. "the house, Mango Street is the physical and psychological marker of an oppressive socioeconomic situation that makes Esperanza conscious of her own status in a socioeconomic hierarchy: 'The neighborhood is getting bad,' she says, and this is why people have to move 'a little farther away every time people like us keep moving in'" (Eysturoy, 1996) Esperanza sees the house on Mango Street as a symbol of poverty and she is humiliated by living there.

The women of Mexican-American society are expected to serve their parent's desire whatever they liked. If a daughter denies her parents propose, it is unacceptable at that time. One day Esperanza's mother asks her for marriage, she rejects her propose. Her mother grooms her to get married and settle for a married life. "My mother says when I get older my dusty hair will settle and my blouse will learn to stay clean" (88). In these lines, Esperanza's mother is really anxious about her future. She especially encourages her to get married and settle home as her age in going to over. Women in Mexican-American society has to follow the rules of the society, otherwise they are taken as burden for her parents. It is a traditional mode of thinking of patriarchy that expects women to be sacrificed of, but she is not ready to be escape goat as Woolf believes and encourages women in her essay "Profession for Women." Woolf encourages women not to sacrifice every bit of comfort of her life and responsibilities both physical and mental for daily living and for the maintenance of

her family. She argues that if a woman wants to develop her creativity she has to kill the "angel" in the house who deliberately accepts all the household chores as her essential responsibility. Angels continuously interprets woman's individual creativity and distracts her from what she would really like to do. Woolf suggests that women must kill their angel for the sake of emancipation.

Esperanza's rebellious nature towards Mexican-American society's dogmatism brings a kind of vibration when she rejects her parents' marriage proposal to make her docile. "I decided not to grow up tame like the others who lay their necks on the threshold waiting for the ball and chain" (88). In these lines she seems different from other women as she does not like to be submissive and helpless creature rather she is ready to kill Woolf's "Angel" for her emancipation. Esperanza searches for her own room. She also attempts to kill the angel, "I am one who leaves the table like a man, without putting back the chair or picking up the plate" (89). She decides not to grow up tamed like the girls she sees around her. She wants to grow like "grass growing without a fence" (44). In "A House of My Own" Esperanza hopefully dreams her ideal house where she could create her world without the tension of cleaning other's garbage. She wishes for a house "quite as snow, a space for myself to go" (108) and compares her house with a clean piece of paper which is waiting for a poem to be written. This comparison between a house and the cleanliness of a paper clearly shows Esperanza's thought as feminist, for her own domain where she can display her talent without any conventional responsibilities of Mexican-American socio-political scenario.

Incidents of the novel make us clear that women's self in Mexican-American society is constructed by patriarchy by the will of males in society. All the female characters including Esperanza are living their identityless life or their identity is

constructed by the patriarchal society. They are known in connection with their husbands, children, family and relation. Socially, sexually, morally as well as spiritually, they are not free. Regarding the incident, Virginia Woolf in her essay "*The Bodily Encounter with Mother*" questions the validity of a culture and a society where people forget their mother's contribution and marginalize and suppress them. She also wonders about the social conditioning of man that lets him forget his mother, "he should make progress, advance, go outside and forget her" (418). In contrast, patriarchy has forbidden women's even talking and roaming freedom. In the novel, Sally does the work till late night and feeds her father. But, her father beats her and makes sure she does not talk to the boys. After her marriage, her husband also forbids her from going out of the house without his permission. He treats her as guardian perfectly by keeping her under his control. Another character Minerva, in the novel gets married but her husband leaves her after giving birth to their children. She is compelled to take care of herself including them as her husband "left and keeps leaving" (84). Esperanza observes that these women are entrapped by patriarchal society. Beastly nature of patriarchy oppresses women as a thunderbolt on their lives and almost paralyzed due to their activities which she nearly observes. As she sees the merciless behavior of men upon female civilization forgetting the relationship of placenta insist by Woolf which makes her determine to achieve her goal.

As suggested by Beauvoir, Esperanza desires for a picture-perfect house originates in her family wondering nature. She always dreams of a beautiful house with "a great big yard [. . .] running waters and pipes that worked" (4). From these line, it seems clear that rented life is so troublesome which gives unbearable problem in the life and dreams for her own house, where she would not face problem as they had to "share the yard with the people downstairs" (3) and had to be "careful not to

make too much noises" (3). Lives of female in Mexican-American society are really chaotic, though Esperanza does not like his father's house at all. Ketu K. Katrak in *Politics in the Female Body* maintains a general link between property and woman. She strongly opposes the patriarchal strategy to view the woman themselves have been property. "Physical breakdowns then are not the end point, but those harrowing experiences become catalysts for new beginnings, new self-knowledge and new space for belonging" (144). In these lines Katrak gives feedbacks to revolt and give-up all the physical stuffs offered by patriarchy. It is a hidden politics to keep female in dilemma in property and social peripherals to delve them nowhere. As discussed by Katrak, Esperanza becomes aware of her own subjective perception as she begins to differentiate between family dreams and social realities and becomes conscious of her parent's flattery and white deception that they told them before they went to bed as:

But the house on Mango Street is not the way they told it at all. It's small and red with tight step in front and windows so small you'd think they were holding their breath. Bricks are crumbling in places, and the front door is so swollen you have to push hard to get in. There is not front yard, only four little elms the city planted by the curb. Out back is small garage for the car we don't own yet and a small yard that looks smaller between the two buildings on either side. [. . .] Everybody has to share a bedroom-Mama, Papa, Carols, Kiki, me and Nenny. (4)

In these lines, Esperanza does not like the house they bought for the family. They try to console their children by saying that this is not the end of their moving, it is a "temporary move for the time being" (5) a stop on the way to the dream house, but Esperanza had once humiliated by the nun's sarcastic manner of saying "you live there?" (5) Clearly underscored the poverty-stricken condition of the house. As she

was playing in front of her house, she was asked by the nun, her school teacher about her home. She pointed at their shabby-looking house on the third floor. The nun's immediate reaction awakens her female psychology as she feels marginalized and identityless. She knows the harsh reality of Mexican-American women in align geography. Nun's question develops her inner psyche and her "I" becomes aware for her dream house where grass grows "without a fence" (4). She does not give up her dream of attaining the desire house. She would not compromise her dreams and would regain her self-esteem because she is the "grass" on the big yard "without a fence" (4). "I would like to baptize myself under a new name, a name more like the real me, the one nobody sees" (11). She believes that she must be true to herself to gain self-respect and identity without any support as she is guided by conscience of emancipation that is descended from centuries in the lives of women civilization.

The problem of women in patriarchal society is common and they fight for liberation sharing their pain and agonies. Regarding the female bonding and how they take actions for their destination, Helene Cixous adds "Women's prolonged bonds with their mothers, with their original source of power and energy, have given them a privileged relationship to *escritore feminine* (feminine writing)" (99). These lines clearly suggest that female bonding either physically or psychologically is necessary to share their common problems. As suggested by Cixous, in the novel *Esperanza* is well known about the incident that had happened with her grand-mother. Coincidentally she owns her grandmother's name. Grandmother is obliged to face the problem due to social norms and values. *Esperanza* feels that her name does not match her personality. As she is well educated she knows that her name represents contradictory meaning in different language, "In Spanish it means too many letters. It means sadness, [. . .] in English my name means hope" (10). Although the past of her

grandmother puts her on anxiety. As she is an awakening persona, she overcomes from the past experience and named after her great grandmother who was "a wild horse of a woman" (11). She had to spend a life time "looking out to windows, the way so many women sit their sadness on an elbow" (11). This was a kind of revenge she took against her husband's actions of throwing "a sack over her head to carry her off. Just like that, as if she were a fancy chandelier" (11). Esperanza's grandfather forcefully marries her grandmother. He tried his best to subjugate her as inferior creature. Throughout her life she could not accept her forceful marriage and failure of "becoming the things" (11) she wanted to be. She taught her granddaughter to fight against the unjust task and became source of liberation forever. Esperanza gets her great grandmother's name, but she does not want to "inherit her place by the window" (11) and became the source of emancipation for forthcoming female civilization. She finds that in English her name means hope but in Spanish it means sadness and waiting. She strongly refuses to be stuck in a sad life.. That is why she would like to baptize herself under a new name which she believes will allow her to attain self-determination and identity. Therefore, she blends both of the meaning and creates a new meaning. She is a girl who believes in action and searches for ways of attaining freedom and success

Esperanza's sense of awakening reveals as she compares herself with "four skinny trees" (74). The four skinny trees which are visible from Esperanza's bed room are metaphors of her condition. "Four skinny trees with skinny necks and pointy elbows like mine" (74) are symbol of Esperanza's condition in her father's house. As Esperanza is forcefully being dominated by male gaze, four skinny trees are planted therefore human beings beneficiaries, trees are providing restless service to human kind but getting nothing in return. "Four raggedy executes planted by the city"

(74).are symbol of Esperanza's condition. She feels as the trees, she does not belong to the place; she wants to fly in the sky freely, although she has a physical presence. Her thinking and her psyche is already instructed by the norms and values of the society, which gives her liberation conscience. Skinny trees teach her how to survive in a male dominated hostile environment. She learns the truth of existence from the trees; as she says, "let one forget his reason for being, they'd all drop like tulips in a glass, each with their arms round the other" (74). In these lines, she comes to know that she has to survive with her feeling of not belonging to reach the place where she belongs. Her alienation creates her desire to find out her own home where she could have her real identity and where she could grow up healthy. Her survival amidst surroundings that are negative and her rejection of that environment is not a denial of where she is, rather a continuous fight to survive, at a symbolic level the secret of survival is revealed to Esperanza which urges her to quest for her identity.

Sense of female bonding emerges on Esperanza as she feels woman's liberation on female bonding. Regarding the issue, Beauvoir's book *The Second Sex* advocates for female liberation only possible of their collectivism, "the bonds of work and interest that joined them raised" (140) indicates the emancipation of bonding. As essentials issue *The Second Sex* puts forth, Esperanza's sense of belonging gets a new urn when she meets three sisters. The three sisters emerge as a fairy godmother to Esperanza, they taught her the lesson of freedom, "everything they had told me" (105) as she is able to take revenge by making women's circle. The appearance of three sisters in the novel serves a special purpose for Esperanza. They present a remarkable gift, the gift of self- awakening as:

When you leave you must remember to come back for the others. A circle, understand. You will always be Esperanza. You will always be

Mango Street. You can't erase what you know. You can't forget who you are [ . . . ] I got up to join Lucy and Rachel who were already outside waiting by the door, wondering what I was doing talking to three old ladies who smelled like cinnamon. (105)

The three sisters speak to Esperanza and through their "cinnamon" speech; they evoke her spirit which ultimately leads her to identity and freedom. Lucy and Rachel who are also the victims of Mexican-American gender biased society are awaiting for their better future as Esperanza going to attain them for the group solidarity. They think that group solidarity is only one means of emancipation in future endeavors.

Finally, no willing to kneel down before the patriarchal oppression, Esperanza chooses the ultimate goal of her liberation and shifts into the world where she could emancipate herself as Marxist Feminist believes. She crosses all the boundaries and marched so far away to create matriarchal empire with a new reality for women by providing new mythic paradigms through which women's lives can be understood.

Females and males are the member of the society. The society becomes complete only having equal relationship between these two groups. Sometimes, there is a situation where people of different social position have to perform different roles according to the norms of the society. By nature, there are only two groups of people in the world; one is male and another is female. Both of them are the part of same society but the society treats man and woman differently which is the very remarkable issue for Marxist feminism ideology. Literature is a mean to depict such situation either through words or image. The image portrays the actual condition of women of the particular society within the time sphere. "I like to tell stories. I am going to tell you a story about a girl who did not belong (Cisneros, 109) or participate because this story tells the pathetic condition of female in particular society, where women's freedom is



snatched under iron cage framed by the representative of patriarchy either they are father, husband or son etc. The deeper analysis of "one day I will pack bags of books and papers. One day I will say good bye to Mango. I am too strong for her to keep me here forever. One day I will go away" (110) indicates towards her acknowledgements of unjustly treatment over female.

As she gets awareness she wants to get rid from all sorts of confinements. She seems determined and ascertained to win her single goal of her liberation primarily and secondarily, the whole female. In these lines, she seems closer to the thoughts of Ketu K. Katrak of her book *The Politics of Female body*, where she affirms that women face the conditions and adopt them as the society's demands and ultimately they challenged the society wisely. She further affirms that:

Despite tragic and negative conclusions- madness, death, suicide, other forms of social exclusion and un-belonging-in in women's text, it is important to regularize the only available avenue of resistance. Women writers portray how their protagonist resists their patriarchy or colonial oppression covertly from within the system rather than other political resistance or imprisonment depicted more commonly. (3)

In these lines, critic's assumption is that, the protagonist fights against all the confinements for her liberation although she has to face troublesome consequences. It is not easy to breakdown the rules and regulation propounded by patriarchy, but until and unless she remains silence, there is no hope of emancipation. In the novel, as Esperanza is caught with liberation conscience, she seeks for her own house.

Esperanza's dream house becomes the extension of her own persona. She deliberately denies the existence of her present house to one of her friends Alicia and reveals to her that she never develop any feeling of belonging for the house as:

Alicia says and points to the house I am ashamed of. No, this isn't my house I say and shake my head as if shaking could undo the year I've lived here. I don't belong I don't ever want to come from here. You have a home Alicia, and one day you'll go there, to a town you remember, but me I never had a house not even a photograph . . . only one I dream of. (106-107)

In conversation between Alicia and Esperanza, Esperanza clearly denies the house where she lives. As defined by Katrak in her book, symbolically Esperanza denotes the house that is made by patriarchy where female's fundamental rights are confined, though in these lines, she expresses her dissatisfaction towards this house. She knows that she does not belong to the hostile ugly world she lives in. Her rejection of her house on Mango Street is a rejection of social confinement and cultural hostility where Mexican-American females are doomed in.

The 'House' which Esperanza deliberately talks about is her ideal house where her own reason works. The imagery of house is in a constant flux between a negative and a positive, between the house the narrator has and the one she would like to have. On the level of the narrative voice of Esperanza, there seems the sense of belonging and identity. It is clear from the first place that the house is much more than a place to live. To her a house is not only a place to live, eat and sleep but a place to belong and to bloom. She further says:

A house all my own. With my porch and my pillow, my pretty purple petunias. My book and my stories. My two shoes waiting beside the bed. Nobody to shake a stick at. Nobody's garbage to pick up after. Only a house quiet as snow, a space for myself to go clean as paper before the poem. (108)

In these lines, she urgently demands for her dream house without any restriction, where her will power and reason would flourish. Symbolically, she presents the place where she lives in is a Mexican-American confinement where her fundamental rights are bitterly butchered. From this one can make constant comparison between the houses on Mango Street where she lives and her dream house.

Regarding the issue, that Esperanza directly denies the unnecessary burden of patriarchal society. A feminist thinks namely Marry Wollstonecraft who flourished her thinking regarding the women's problem. In her writing, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* she urges for women to become independent decision maker. She further says that feminist do not seek revolutionary changes in society rather want reform in the existing societal structure in a democratic way. Since she believes that the existing gender inequality here frisks nobody even though it is harmful to women. They don't hesitate to work with men who support their beliefs and aims. The basic aim of feminism is to gain equal opportunity among sexes, which could lead women to achieve higher status. She further says:

If women to be excluded without having a voice, from a participation of the natural rights to mankind, prove first, toward the charge of injustice and inconsistency, that they want reasonless this flaw in your new constitution will ever knew that man must in same shape, act like a tyrant and tyranny, in whatever part of society it rears its brazen front will ever undermine mortality. (46)

In these lines, Wollstonecraft advocates for equality between male and female. As male and female are two sides of a same coin, it is essential to treat women humanly otherwise there is possibility of tyranny, inconsistency and intolerable questions about humanism, question about genesis and question about existence.

In the same way, the protagonist of the novel, Esperanza in "Burns in the Attic" chapter illustrates dream and sorrow about her dream house. She wants "a house on a hill like the ones with the garden (Cisneros, 86) where her father works. She generally used to visit the house on holidays but now she feels ashamed to go there since "all of us staring out of the window like the hungry. I am tired of looking at what we can't have" (86). Her going there and seeing the incident that had happened there, strikes her mind and she is aware about what is right and what is wrong and in this way the liberation conscience emerges on the mindset. Though, she is on her way to get rid from hostile and ugly Mexican-American society, she is still optimistic about having her own house where she will offer a place to come in and stay. Her dream to establish a house as she describes would be the place of wish-fulfillment.

"A House of My Own" postulates the wish of women as Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* expands the dream of women. In this book Woolf advocates for whole women's future which is snatched under the control of patriarchy. Patriarchal society does not let women to handle property. Her central argument is that women don't have money and that patriarchal society has prevented women from realizing their creative possibilities. In the novel, as she grows up Esperanza feels that house under the kind control of her father. She believes that where there is domination, reason cannot flourish well. As her grandmother was known as "a wild horse of a woman" (Cisneros 10) could not do better any more as her grandfather, a representative of patriarchal society perceive her as "a fancy chandelier" (11). As Esperanza learns the lesson from her grandmother, how female members are the victims in the hand of patriarchy. She never compromises with it rather she is determined to establish her identity in Mexican-American society and says, "I have

inherited her name, but don't want to inherit her place by the window" (11). In these lines, she opens her secret that she has inherited her grandmother's name, no matter but she is not a submissive type of women who follow the rules and regulation especially propounded to make female subordinate and docile.

Liberation conscience emerges on her as her mother makes her conscious about the lives of women in Mexican-American society time and again. Esperanza too loves her family, especially her mother, who is one of the visible role models for her. Mother depicted as a rearing and caring figure, an embodiment of security, safety and stability. It is also the mother who encourages Esperanza to study and to be independent as possible, "Esperanza, you go to school, study hard [. . .] Go to take care all your own, she says shaking her head" (91). Esperanza's mother teaches her about the inevitability of education which opens up third eye of human beings that dissects what is right and wrong thoroughly, as described by Mary Wollstonecraft in the book *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*. In this book she calls for women to be educated equally to men. She believes education brings fundamental change in human consciousness, which is essential to reform society as well.

Mother of Esperanza regularly advises her so as to get rid of docile and submissive fate that has been coined descended from ancestral period in Mexican-American society especially for women. Patriarchy attributes women as beautiful, demure, well cultured and many more as weapons through which later forcefully laden its extremism and hostility. Her mother is victim of it and she makes to Esperanza too aware so that her daughter would not have destiny similar to her. She also advises Esperanza not to be superficial like she was at her age. "Shame is bad thing, you know. It keeps you down. You want to know why I quit school, because I did not have nice clothes. No clothes, but I had brains" (91). In these lines her mother

expresses her dissatisfaction towards patriarchal society as it does not let her minimum requirement of school dress and she was deprived of education. Although she was as competent as her male colleagues, her femininity became curse for her. Therefore, she wants to make Esperanza able to establish her identity.

She takes her mother as a role model of her life, she loves her mother very much, but on the other hand she takes her father as weak, breadwinner man. Symbolically, she takes her father primarily as a representative of her mother's oppressor and secondarily whole female civilization including herself. Esperanza describes him as "my papa, his thick hands and thick shoes, who wakes up tired in the dark, who combs his hair with water, drinks his coffee, and is gone before we wake" (56-57). Esperanza calling her father "shoes" expresses her dissatisfaction as he deviate from his duty. When Esperanza understand his father is a representative of male gaze, and played crucial role to make them docile and submissive. As he is not present in Esperanza's life as much as her mother, she takes her father "thick " and 'Shoes" and his works too accordingly.

It is patriarchy, who strongly forbids women to expose in public place and relationships. Society's prevailing stereotype of women as relatively weak, passive and dependent individuals who are less rational and emotional than men assumes them to be confined within four walls of a house. "The boys and the girls live in separate worlds. The boy in their universe and we in ours" (Cisneros 8) indicates that there is biasness between girls and boys in Mexican-American society, where boys are free and girls are tamed within the boundary. They are not allowed to go outside and make their destiny, whatever patriarchy allows they are compelled to perceive. In the novel, Esperanza is the victim of patriarchy; which divides and rules. As they were four sisters within a house but "Carols and Kiki are each other's best friend . . .

not ours" (8) shows the groupism among and between sisters. "Nenny is too young to be my friend. She's just my sister and that was not my fault" (8) shows the closest relationship with her younger sister Nenny, although it is not always a loving relationship. Sometimes Nenny is more a burden for her than a partner. Her mother has responsibilities around the house and her father has to work, it is Esperanza's duty as an older sister to take care about Nenny. However, this responsibility affects the relationship of the sisters, while Esperanza wants a friend who would be her equal and understand her problems; she has to babysit her baby sister instead. This involuntarily mothering role of Esperanza evokes sense of rejection of the social responsibility that she is assigned to and pursues her for her individuality.

Another female character, Grandmother, a rebellious character in the novel, plays a vital role for awakening Esperanza from her oppressed status in the society. She is not only grandmother to her but also a teacher who teaches her to break the social limitations and encourages her with confidence to violate the social norms and values. Esperanza's grandmother was unwilling to be married, but she was eventually forced to marriage by Esperanza's grandfather, who "threw a sack over her head and carried her off. Just like that, as if she was a fancy chandelier" (12) which happened to her, she never forgave him. As she was a strong wild and powerful woman spent the rest of her life as a broken shadow, revolt against male domination as "She looked out of the window her whole life, the way so many women sit their sadness on an elbow" (11). Not only Esperanza's grandmother, other female characters are also tamed under male supervision, which becomes the source of liberation conscience to Esperanza.

Another source of awakening of Esperanza is her friend Sally, She gets married to escape from her abusive father who frequently beats her. She gets married to change her future "young and not ready" (101) where her realizing, productive and

creative possibilities hindered and prevented in patriarchal societies as advocated by Woolf in her fabulous book *A Room of One's Own*. Sally does not escape patriarchal society's codes and conducts, rather, she s herself from father's house to the cruel hand of her husband and destined as:

She is happy, except some time her husband gets angry [. . .] except he won't let her talk on the telephone. And he does not let her look out of the window. And he does not like her friends, so nobody gets to visit her unless he is working. She sits at home because she is afraid to go outside without his permission; she looks at all the things they own: the towels and the toaster, the alarm clock and the drapes. She likes looking at the walls, at how neatly their corners meet, the linoleum roses on the floor, the ceiling smooth as weeding cake. (101-102)

Sally tries to escape from patriarchal brutalities shifting from the custody of her father to the lap of her husband. For her it would be an easy escape but she is bitterly made escape goat in the hand of her husband, where she lives her soul-less life as commodities and a wedding cake ready to be cut at any time. This is most probably the most potent positive role-model for Esperanza's awakening.

Similarly, another awakening factor of Esperanza is Alicia, who is a university level student, her enormous passion and continuity for study gives positive symptom of her successful future. Although she tries to change her life through education, her mother, who is supportive to her ambition, dies. As her mother died she has to take care of father, responsibilities of mother shift upon her head. She could not take rest day and night as she has to perform as an obedient student and a good housekeeper. Because of exhaustion, as she "studies all night" (32), she starts to hallucinate "sees the mice" (32). Instead of help, promotion, love and affection her father mocks her



hallucinations and her effort to study. Since her father plays a villainous role on her life, she develops negative feeling towards him. Consequently she starts to see whole patriarchal system and its representatives as wild animal and merciless creatures. "Is afraid of nothing except four legged fur. And fathers" (32) indicates her perception towards her father primarily and secondarily whole patriarchal society.

Woolf in her writing focuses on the situation of women according to economic and educational disabilities within the patriarchal society which had prevented them in terms of money and mind, but another feminist thinker Kate Millet in her *Sexual Politics* exposes that women are suffering not only by money and mind rather they are being sexual object whenever and wherever they (patriarchy) want. In her book, she attacks the male bias in Freud's psycho analytical theory and condemns Freud as a prime source of the patriarchal attitudes. In the same way, Esperanza, the heroine of Cisneros develops feelings of love for Sire; a boy who keeps looking at her. She understands the looking of Sire and enjoys his presence nearby her. "It made your blood freeze to have somebody look at you like that" (72-73). When Sire comes near her, she feels a kind of echo of her feelings. Her sexual desire arises in her body and says, "I want to sit out bad at night, a boy around my neck and the wind under my skirt. Not this way, every evening talking to the trees leaning out my window, imaging what I can't see" (73). Esperanza, in these lines seems to be in romantic mood, but the activities of Sire makes her conscious that Sire does not wish for platonic love with her rather he wants to play with her body, which she comes to know when Sire's relationship with Lois: a baby girl completely in her childhood is exposed. "She is tiny and pretty and smells like baby's skin. [. . .] I saw her barefoot baby toenails all painted pale pale pink, like little pink seashells, and she-smells pink like babies do" (73). In these lines we can observe how patriarchy plays with the

bodies of female. Innocent children are compelled to lose their virginity, their future and are commodified in delusion of so-called love and affection. In a real sense, Sire does not love Lois neither Esperanza. Actually, he wants to play with their body and soul. After observing the activities of Sire, a representative of Mexican-American society she understands the fate of women in this society which evokes the sense of liberation conscience on her.

Sense of strong feminism and loss of innocence exemplifies through the action of Esperanza in "The Monkey Gardens". Esperanza does not approve Sally's flirting with boys and when they exchange Sally's kiss for her stolen keys, Esperanza strongly opposes and horrified and says, "I don't know why, but something inside me wanted to throw a stick. Something wanted to say no when I watched Sally going into the garden with Tito's buddies all grinning. It was just a kiss, that's all" (96-97). Esperanza views the involuntary activities by the boy upon Sally, as a member of same family. Esperanza revolts against boys as she wanted to throw a stick and bricks to them, because Esperanza is well known about the hawk eyes of boys upon Sally's personal affair. First of all as a friend they steal her key but later demands kiss on its return, which Esperanza directly rejects as she is well known about their trick and later complains to Sally's mother. It can be taken as a resurrection of her femininity.

Through the series of illustrative sketch of women's condition in Mexican-American society in the text, Esperanza yearns for a personal space, a resurrection of her femaleness. Her thirst for "a space for myself to go, clean as a paper before the poem" (Cisneros 108) echoes Virginia Woolf's declaration of the need of a private room for a women to develop her creativity. Esperanza's strong restless desire is "Not a flat. Not an apartment in back" (108) rather Woolf's desire for freedom to flourish in the society equal to men. Esperanza's description of *The House on Mango Street*

represents the spiritual suffocation where she suffers a lot. The room she lives in with her younger sister is in a shabby and small house. The windows of her father's house are "so small you'd think they were holding their breath" (4) indicates towards the mutation of her voice. There is no chance to escape from male chauvinism, therefore, so as to get rid of such suffocating society, Esperanza is demanding and in search of her own house where women's will power works.

By bringing the women characters to the center of her novel Cisneros brings the condition of Mexican-American women to the fore. She also presents her female characters as empowered protagonist. Through these characters she tries to expose the hidden cult of male ideology. In her novel, *The House on Mango Street*, feminist characteristic such as voice against sexual exclusiveness, rejection of the marginalization of all women, disregard to culture as patriarchal culture, examine the experience of women from all areas and classes and study of sexual, social and political issues can be seen.

The major feminist critics generally agree that their goals are to expose patriarchal premises and resulting prejudices, to promote discovery and reevaluation of literature by women and to examine social, cultural and psycho - sexual contents of literature and literary criticism. So as to reveal women's situation in Mexican-American society Cisneros also exposes the pathetic condition of women in the hand of patriarchy. Her mouth speaker, Esperanza endures sexual assaults which makes her focus in her life, and she finds writing as a vehicle to escape the harshness of male chauvinism and wants to create a world where she can live peacefully as suggested by Wollstonecraft. Wollstonecraft believes in equality when there is equal education to both men and women.

In *Vindication of the Rights of Women* Mary Wollstonecraft calls for women

and men to be equally educated. This work was unique in suggesting that the betterment of women's status be effected through such political change on the radical reform of national educational systems. Such change would benefit all societies. So, Wollstonecraft attacks the sentimental novels of her time for their pernicious influences on women's intellectual development. Everything women see or hear in sentimental novels serves to fix impressions that call forth emotions giving a sexual character to the mind. Mary Wollstonecraft states, "the reading of novel make women and particularly ladies of fashion, very fond of using strong impassions and superlatives in conversation" (399). In these lines, Wollstonecraft emphasizes study as a strong weapon which develops reasoning capacity and ability to dissect what is right and what is wrong. In the novel too, Esperanza deliberately suggests Alicia to complete her university level education which would develop a sense of consciousness that has happening in her life.

Wollstonecraft further opines that due to the traditional educational system, women are compelled to study those novels, which aren't intellectual but are sentimental. Due to the impact of those novels, women cannot exercise their intellectuality but are trapped in the sentimentality which leads them to a concept that a knowledgeable man is nothing in comparison to brave rake. A woman chases a rake that easily rouses her emotion which she learns from the sentimental novels:

Women subjected by ignorance to their sensations and only taught to look for happiness in love, refine on sensual feeling and adopt metaphysical notions respecting that passion, which lead them shamefully to neglect the duties of life, and frequently in the midst of these sublime refinements they plump into actual vice. (398)

They read such novels and make on ideal picture of male and female in their mind.

They are not taught how to appreciate or how to tackle with society. So, they cannot make good decision and choose a rake, luxury and brave person.

Mary Wollstonecraft has said that the patriarchal society, the traditional education system, and the sentimental novels teach females to be sentimental and beautiful, but not intellectual. The female are not affected by the misinterpretation and they are taught how to tackle with society. Instead they learn to remain passive as the commodity of male. In fact, women are equally intellectual but their intellectuality is suppressed. This is not the fault of women but it is the bias attitude of patriarchal society which intentionally makes them weak, failing and inferior. Wollstonecraft sows the seeds of revolution in the mind of women for seeking of their identity.

Elaine Showalter is most influential among gynocritics who want to make a minute survey of the development of female consciousness, attitude and their role in the society which were always overshadowed by the male chauvinistic society and male - centric social ideology. She wants to alter the mode of history of women's consciousness, their contribution to the whole human civilization and after all the development of female conscious expression in literature. One of the major assumptions of gyno-criticism is that writing by women is always dominated by a gender consciousness. Gender is a cultural construct. There is no distinction between the experience of men and women. The aim of gyno-criticism is to read the literature of women as women. The subject of gyno-criticism are the history, styles, themes genres, and structure of writing by women; the psychodynamics of female creativity; the trajectory of the individual or collective female career and evolution or laws of a female literary tradition. As claimed by Elaine Showalter, patriarchal society has dogmatized females as child producing machine, sex-pleasuring object which Esperanza rejects in the novel. As her mother proposes her for marriage she directly

rejects it. She is conscious about patriarchy and says, "I would like to baptize myself under a new name, a name more like the real me, the one nobody sees" (11). In these lines, Esperanza challenges hitherto existing Mexican-American patriarchal bitter exercises upon women. She is in rebellious mode and wants to introduce herself with self-identity.

According to Showalter, feminism tries to establish their own canonicity of literary writing and criticism by excluding male as Esperanza wants. So that the female issue such as household, pregnancy, abortion, gestation, delivery, mother daughter relation and so forth can be highlighted. Showalter's view is that in the history the whole trend of female writing was reflected by males. So, she wants to reconstruct the history which would reject the true position of women and the female writers and then writing. Her view is that though there is greater significance in female writings, the male critics misinterpreted the female experiences expressed in the writings and devaluated and overlooked the female written texts. Showalter, one of the gyno-critics, complains that males mainly dominate all the theories and try to suppress women and their power. She says that we should not disregard theory but we have to criticize them. She feels for the necessity of clearly articulated theory of feminist criticism, Showalter in *Towards a Feminist Poetics* suggests to, "Work for the analysis of woman's literature to develop new models based on the study of female experience rather than to adapt male models and theories" (1227). She wants separate identity for woman. So, she wants to develop different domain of gyno-criticism that rejects the male models and theories and seeks for a female model. To make the literature of woman different and special, there is a need of reconstruction of its past and rediscovery of the scores of women writers. Showalter does not outrightly protest male domination. She does it by reconstructing the female writing and

history and these criticizes them by challenging the absolute stream of male history, and wants to free women from male domination. She attacked the phallogocentric domination and phallogocentric language and so advocated for female language that would express and interpret women experience and to create female identity.

Another feminist writer, Virginia Woolf belongs to such era which was the era of growth. There was unrest, upheavals and regular changes in every step of life. Her book, *A Room of One's Own* (1929), has been proved to be influential in the domain of literary feminism. In this book she discusses directly the situation of women writers through modern history. Her central argument is that women don't have money and that a patriarchal society has prevented women from realizing their creative possibilities. If some of the female character in the society own any property, unfortunately they cannot use it rather their male counterparts use it without their agreement. They snatch from them or take decision without asking them. It means women are being treated as second class citizens; they are not addressed in a well manner. In the same way, Edna, a female character in the novel *The House on Mango Street* owns a house on her name. "Edna is the lady who owns the building next to you. She used to own a building big as a whale, but her brother sold it. Their mother said no, no, don't ever sell it. I won't. And then she closed her eyes and he sold it" (12). Edna, a female character owns a big house but in that very house, a representative of patriarchal society her brother sells it. His mother's pitiful pledge "no, no, don't ever sell it" could not melt his heart, or he is cruel as he owns patriarchal norms and values. Therefore, Woolf's argument for equal right distribution on economy for women's liberation is applicable.

Woolf from her viewpoint clearly visualizes and puts remarkable opinion for women's emancipation in this modern world. Therefore, she is on the way of

important process of modern feminist criticism. According to her, not only ordinary women rather women who write for women's upliftment are themselves suffering from social and economic problem. She continually examined the problems faced by women writers. She believed that women had always faced social and economic obstacles to their literary ambitions. Rejecting a feminist consciousness, she hoped to achieve a balance between a male 'self-realization' and female's 'self-annihilation'. Her ultimate belief was that women could freely developed their artistic talents if they achieved social and economic equality with men.

Woolf says, "Women need exercise for their faculties and field for their efforts as much as their brothers do. Therefore, she declared that libraries can be locked out but freedom of women's mind cannot be locked" (818). Woolf focuses on situation of women authors throughout the history and their cultural economic and educational disabilities within the patriarchal society which had prevented them from realizing their creative possibilities. The feminist trend of her time was concerned for 'absolute equality' and the erasure of differences between the sexes. But Woolf voiced for radical change as women's freedom and for their suppressed values affecting the concept of power, family and social life that had been shaped by men in the past. Hence, Woolf was an important precursor of feminist criticism who in her book *A Room of One's Own* that a patriarchal society has hindered and prevented women for realizing their productive and creative possibilities.

A milestone in the rise of modern feminism was Simone de Beauvoir's book *The Second Sex* (1949) which raised feminist consciousness by appealing to the idea that liberation for women was liberation for men too. Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* was a wide ranging critique of the cultural identification of women as negative object or "other" to men as the dominating subject who is assumed to represent humanity in



general. The book also deals with the great collective myths of women in the works of many male writers:

We have seen women as flesh; the flesh of the male is produced and the mother's body and re-created in the embraces of the woman in love. The woman is related to nature, she incarnated its value of blood, open rose, siren, the curve of a hill, she represents to man the fertile soil, the sap, the maternal beauty and the soul of the world. She can hold the keys to poetry: she can be media between this world and the beyond: grace or oracle, star of sorceress, she opens the door to the supernatural, the surreal. She is doomed to immanence, and through her passivity she bestows peace and harmony-but if she declines this role, she is seen forth with as a praying mantis, an ogress. (994)

While talking about the myth, she has uttered transcendence and immanence.

According to her, every man asserts his freedom and transcendence and considers women doomed. As male superiority makes himself selfish and he exercises unimaginable acts to fulfill his lust. In the novel, Esperanza acknowledges sex as a violent act as she faces sexual assault on work place. A man at work starts kissing her and "doesn't let go" (Cisneros 55). That kiss was not a kiss of love rather it was forcefully imposed upon Esperanza which makes her feel like a victim, which remains on her psyche forever as a black spot of patriarchy. In this way Beauvoir's claim that women are treated as second sex is a believable argument which can be seen in the novel too.

Kate Millett is one of the modern feminists in America. Her *Sexual Politics* (1969) is a very popular work in the field of feminism. It signifies the mechanisms that express and enforce the relations of power in society; she analyzed western social

arrangements and institutions as covert way of manipulating power so as to establish and perpetuate the dominance of men and the subordination of women. In her book she attacks the male bias in Freud's psychoanalytic theory. Kate Millett's *Sexual Politics* (1909) condemns Freud as a prime source of the patriarchal attitudes against which feminists must fight. For Kate Millett, the essence of politics is power, and the task of feminist critics and theorists is to expose the way in which male dominance over female contributes the most pervasive ideology and provides its power. So, feminist criticism is a specific kind of political discourse: a critical and theoretical practice committed to the struggle against patriarchy and sexism. So, feminists have politicized existing critical method for female identity and feminist criticism has emerged from the new avenue of radical ground like other political radicalists.

Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's *Mad Woman in the Attic* (1979) is another brilliant book of a historical study of feminism which stresses especially the psychodynamics of women writers in the nineteenth century. Gilbert and Gubar in this book, according to M. H. Abrahams:

propose that the 'anxiety of authorship' that resulted from the stereotype that literary creativity is an exclusively male prerogative, effective in women writers a psychological duplicity that projected a monstrous counter figure to the heroine ... such a figure is usually in some sense that author's double, an image of her own anxiety and rage.  
(236)

Gilbert and Gubar's main argument is that artistic creativity of the nineteenth century tradition, which is perceived basically as a male quality, is in fact, patriarchal superimposition upon the women writers who are imprisoned within it. They suggest that the female writers should first struggle against men's oppressive reading of

women. But they further argue that the women writers can begin strongly only by actively seeking a female precursor who, far from representing a threatening force to be denied or killed, proves by example that a revolt against patriarchal authority is possible.

Gilbert and Gubar have made the full leap to a feminist aesthetic. In *The Mad Women in the Attic: The Women Writer and the Nineteenth Century Literary Imagination*, they offer a more theoretical comparative method which defines a mode of imaginative expression uniquely female: formed in response to literary traditions and social contexts which are undeniable male. They describe the formal strategies-conscious and unconscious - which women writers have devised in order to make their fictions reflect either their own lived experience of the fantasized words they have created to make their realities hearable. The book is extraordinarily exciting: deeply insightful, broadly imaginative and breathtaking risky. Its failures as well as its successes spark further formulations. It is the work to which most feminist criticism and theory of next year's will have to refer in support and disagreement. Gilbert and Gubar show that the dominant patriarchal ideology at this time presents artistic creativity as a fundamentally male quality: since creativity is defined as male, it follows that the dominant literary images of femininity are male fantasies too. Women are denied the right to create their own images of femaleness and, instead, must seek to conform to the patriarchal standards imposed upon them; hence the figure of the madwoman which features in all the nineteenth-century novels in Gilbert and Gubar's study and which they claim is an equally crucial figure in twentieth-century fiction by women.

When we analyze the development of whole feminist, literary criticism, we can find the existence of feminism from the very earlier literary history. Females

were presented as stereotypical figures like angels, monsters and witches. Gradually women writers became conscious and insisted for a literature of their own whose historical and thematic, as well as artistic importance had been observed by patriarchal norms and values. Wollstonecraft claims for the political and social rights of women and goes beyond the strictly patriarchal society. Showalter does not outrightly protest male 'domination. She does it by reconstructing the female writing and history and then criticizes them by challenging the absolute stream of male history and wants to free women from male domination as attempt by Cisneros in the novel, *The House on Mango Street* where she wants to stay and create her new world by writing. Showalter, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar seek for the social and historical position of female writers. Woolf calls a patriarchal society that have hindered and prevented women for realizing their productive and creative possibilities. Beauvoir raises feminist consciousness by appealing to the idea that it is the liberation of men too. All feminist criticisms are in some sense revisionist, questioning the adequacy of accepted patriarchal conceptual structures.

The above mentioned feminist approaches help us to see why protagonist of Cisneros's novel *The House on Mango Street* changes her self-perception, behaviors in the male-dominated Mexican-American society by challenging the established norms and values. The feminist discourse has given us a perspective to observe and analyze the novel along the line of feminist critique. It has enabled us to understand the psyche, the intellect and the feelings of female and their urge to bring about significant changes in the society so that women can live as independent human being.

Esperanza's thoughts and attitudes towards life is an encouragement for ever women. Her attempt, despite having horrendous events liberates herself from established patriarchal web to establish her own identity which can open the eyes of

ignorant women who have never thought of fighting against the patriarchal orthodoxy. Esperanza exists from the belief that women are the possession of man and they are to assist men. She is well aware that she always talks about *A Room of One's Own* as imagined by Virginia Woolf, where Esperanza imagines only females presence, she deliberately time and again talks about that she is not like her grandmother, accept and demure forceful married, rather she encourages Sally not to get married, complete university level education and understand the hidden interest of Mexican-American gendered society.

### III. Marxist Feminism in core of *The House on Mango Street*

As Marxist feminist, the central character Esperanza attempts to avoid patriarchal constructions through self-invention. As she surges through various ups and downs in her life which give her a kind of question on her existence. Therefore, she consciously avoids the circumstances of man-made myths about women in her life. She attempts to liberate herself from the established patriarchal web to establish her own identity that would be milestone to open the eyes of ignorant women who have never thought of fighting against the convention. She desperately searches for her identity and tries to locate and reconstruct it. She urges for a room where she breathe in oxygen that feels her own, feel relaxed and explore her own life. Esperanza attempts to avoid patriarchal construction. She consciously avoids the influence of manmade myths about women in her life. She clearly rejects the marriage proposal proposed to her. She desperately searches for an identity of her own. *The House on Mango Street* is the symbol of patriarchal institution where she including whole women civilization has been losing their real identity. Therefore, she urges for a room where she can breathe and explore her life. She dares to cross the demarcation line set by the Mexican-American patriarchal society and attempts to free women entrapped in patriarchal narratives. Those women should give birth to children and look after them by managing time and by casting aside their individual self and interest. Their main purpose is to please their husband and maintain their role properly. They are objectified and identified like angel, monsters and so on. They are "Second Sex" as Simon de Beauvoir says women are supposed to serve their husbands, please them, and do household works caring the children and working in the kitchen. Their every happiness and sorrows, praise and complains must be in accordance with men's wishes. Since their ancestral period they have been facing such tremendous realities

but such brutalities some time turn positive. They strike the conscience on female and they revolt against it. This novel is also Cisneros's revolt against all sorts of discrimination and she searches the place where she can nurture her identity. Cisneros through the female character Esperanza explores the place where presence of male is dominant. She seeks for a room where male characters are prohibited and she can freely apply her formula not for only her rather whole female civilizations' emancipation.

Finally, Sandra Cisneros's novel *The House on Mango Street* has been successful to raise of female liberation through her economic and social empowerment as it deals with many evidence related to women and their revolution. Those revolution occurred not only because of feminism but also due to extreme poverty, economic crisis. Cisneros protest against male chauvinism, by presenting the female characters as powerful and self searching individual. Her protagonist Esperanza refuses to be defined by the prevailing stereotypes of passive femininity, and searches for her identity as a human individual defying the rules and law of Mexican-American society that expects her to take the subordinate role of female dependent on male bread winners and owners. She prefers to be identified as free-woman, one who opposes the demand of patriarchy.

All in all, Cisneros's novel *The House on Mango Street* is an example of a working woman's search for liberation from a patriarchal, classed and biased society. Her central character Esperanza chooses to attain freedom through economic and social liberation. In this novel, Cisneros have very reasonably argued that economic liberation is the most for a woman to be treated equally in this gender biased world. Until and unless she owns her belongings, she cannot have control over herself and her property. Women are suffering more because of their economic dependence to

their fathers, brothers, husbands and sons. If they are able to create a space of their own they do not need to be dominated by anyone. Therefore, economic and social liberation is the must for creating a gender equal society.



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