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Resistance and it's Failure in *The Dark Room*

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Letter of Recommendation

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Letter of Approval

The thesis titled, *Failure of Resistance in the Dark Room by Meera Banskota* submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University, has been approved by the undersigned members of the research committee:

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Abstract

The Dark Room draws the image of women's insecure stipulation that eventually compels them to bow down before the patriarchy and adopts the course paved by the males despite their numerous efforts and desires. Savitri fails to stay behind outside home and create her own world that could help her to liberate her from the tyrannical bond of associations. She in fact resists a lot to conquer complications that snag the world of liberty but gets mistreated in the world where male dogma overpowers. Her resistance against Ramani's coercion and repression does not limit to her individual matter but is against the entire male community where women are bound to yield before the social constructs as feminine roles such as the mother, wife and daughter of someone. In fact in Indian society women are made to live sacrificing lives at the cost of their delight and joy and similarly they do so throughout their life and without thinking of them. Whatever they do is prone to advantage their relatives and kin and kiths.

Leaving house and family is her confrontation against the male. At the same time her reluctance to accept any sort of charity is the wakefulness of her selfhood. But the patriarchy does not permit her to remain independent and alien in the world of liberation. This is why Savitri fails to create her separate identity and live on her own income. Eventually her return to the patriarchy discloses the fact that her resistance becomes fruitless and proves worthless in the male-dominated society.

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Chapter: I Introduction

Resistance and it's Failure in *The Dark Room*

The Dark Room is a searching look at a difficult marriage and a woman who is the victim in the grip of the male domination and biased policies constituted by such males who are more or less same in the behavior and treatment with females, eventually rebels against the demands of being a good and obedient wife. Revolution is born out of the womb of extreme suppression and oppression. Nothing can cross the limit of tolerance. Similarly Savitri as wife has tolerated a lot of her husband's wrong deeds and domination but she feels that she has ever been under the oppression, she gets committed to doing something for the sake of her individual identity and self-esteem and ultimately leaves her husband's so that she can create her separate identity and recognition. In fact this is a kind of revelation of Savitri's self as well.

The situations and different ups and downs change old Savitri into new one who is before she leaves home and the new one who is after she comes outside the house. She feels changed a lot as she enters the world of challenges and experience. The world in which she has lived for a long time after getting unified in the conjugal bond is really too much oppressive and antagonistic to her. She even decides not to go to her parents' house since she sees probable suppression from the males there.

It is Indian women's intrinsic quality that they are too much tolerant and loving as well as loyal to their families which really compels them to sacrifice even their own freedom and happiness. She is too much concerned to her children despite the fact she sees them as obstacles on the path of her free life simply because mother is mother as she is sacrificing and forgiving. Indian women are filled with unimaginable love and kindness that enliven them in every mode of their life. Women need to be firm in order to be successful in their life. In fact firmness is the secret of

success and it leads one to fight against all sorts of problems and challenges in life. But when Savitri is in the world of experience and challenges she has to work. She knows nothing except some homely tasks such as gardening, cooking and sewing. People do not prefer to pay such workers since in every house women perform their wifely duties without being paid. Hence Savitri does face the crisis of jobs since she is uneducated and unskilled. In the world of experience, skill and education matter a lot and at the same time women are no more considered good if they do not stay with husbands and in the families. Savitri is in very critical situation that she is no more given a job that helps her get paid with such an amount of money that can feed her. She has been trained to do all such jobs which eventually enslave her and make her dependent forever. Despite her innumerable efforts to release her from all sorts of suppression and oppression done by males, she is ultimately forced to go back and take shelter in her husband's house. It shows her incapability and failure.

After all, Savitri fails to reach her destination in patriarchy which unfairly evaluates males and females with different measuring standard. The failure of resistance is because of the nature of society and the Indian culture in totality should be responsible for since she is just a victim in the hands of cultural norms and values which are biased and unfair to a great extent. Any woman in place of Savitri would do the same and would face the similar consequence in the Pre-independence period of India as they were culturally made to do so and have similar faith and creed.

Narayan muses on the futility of life and the helplessness of his protagonist Savitri, filling each scene with undertones of as many hues as there are facets to human nature. Hypocrisy, deception, kindness and despair are all present in their full glory, colored and shaded by the characters, their morality and their situations. *The Dark Room* presents a candid picture of the awakening of an Indian woman who is a

real victim of the oppression caused by her assertive and exigent husband. The novel set around 1930s tells the story of Savitri, a married woman living with her husband and children, trying to assert her individuality and freedom in vain. She is docile and obedient who has endured more than her fair share of humiliations in her long-standing marriage. But even she knows when her bullying husband Ramani has gone too far. For when Ramani insists on taking on an elegant new employee for the Engladia Insurance Company, Savitri recognizes more than a professional interest in the woman. She abandons her attempt and returns home because she cannot live without her children nor can she ignore the established convention altogether.

The Dark Room carves the picture of women's precarious condition that ultimately compels them to bow down before the patriarchy and adopts the path paved by the males despite their innumerable efforts and wishes. Savitri fails to remain outside home and create her own world that could help her to release her from the oppressive bond of relationships. She in fact resists a lot to overcome complications that downside the world of freedom but gets victimized in the world where male ideology overpowers. Her resistance against Ramani's oppression and suppression does not limit to her personal matter but is against the entire male community where women are bound to succumb before the social constructs as feminine roles such as the mother, wife and daughter of someone. In fact in Indian society women are made to live sacrificing lives at the cost of their happiness and pleasure and similarly they do so throughout their life and without thinking of them. Whatever they do is inclined to benefit their relatives and kin and kiths.

Because of Ramani's frequent domination and suppression, Savitri ultimately leaves her family and children in order to revolt against her husband's dominating attitudes at the cost of her children's future and invites challenges so that she can

stand on her own and create the world of her own which could emancipate her from all sorts of dependence and dominations that have been due to being dependent on her husband economically. Now onwards she prefers to do something herself so that she can breathe in the air of freedom and emancipation. In contradiction with her wants and attempts, the family ties and motherly love for children force her to come back home and again make her live the very slavish life and serve the husband and children remaining her away from the world of experience and truth.

Failure of Savitri in general refers to the state or condition of not meeting her desired or intended objective. It may be viewed as the opposite of success. She has indeed planned to create her own world where she lives on her own income and remains self-dependent but eventually her desirable objective remains unfulfilled; and she has to return to the family in which she was ever exploited and dominated. Hence the criteria for failure are heavily dependent on context of use and may be relative to a particular observer or belief system. A situation considered to be a failure by one might be considered a success by another, particularly in cases of direct competition. Savitri's return can be taken in both ways as a failure since she fails to attain her objective that is relatively beneficial to her self and as a success because her return brings a sort of light in her family and reunites the family members that were possibly going to get dismantled. The real situation of Savitri has been very much conflicting and ambivalent, for she cannot decide whatever would be better to do. After all the torment of human frustration, whatever its immediate cause, is the knowledge that the self is in prison, its vital force and mangled-mind leaking away in lonely wasteful self-conflict. Savitri indeed is in wasteful self-conflicting situation since her efforts to detach and remain alone and independent go in vain after her return to the family. Her

failure proves instructive as she learns a lot from her failure that to an Indian uneducated woman family is the source of pleasure and security.

Savitri's resistance overplays the female consciousness and downplays the male-dominated society. Resistance has become a fashionable topic within a diversity of disciplines. The rapid increase of scholarship on resistance is both exciting and productive. The basic idea that resistance naturally deals with some kind of activity that occurs in opposition to someone or something is seen unproblematic. Her resistance against the patriarchy that has constructed policies in the biased way is somehow problematic since the dependent women have to seek meaning of their existence in the very society that is overtly guided by the patriarchal constructs. In fact the connection between resistance and power is not developed beyond the notion that resistance and domination have a cyclical relationship. Savitri revolts and leaves the house and goes away in search of self identity and economic independence as she has got tired of tolerating the domination by Ramani. Thus the relationship between these two is very close and relative.

Savitri is the central female protagonist in *The Dark Room*. She is a good mother and a devoted wife. She is soft and submissive. She does not want to sacrifice her domestic harmony and lives in the rich world of her fancy. She always dresses up smartly and waits patiently for her husband in the evening. She is used to her husband's daily nagging and chiding. She understands fully the psychology of her life partner, Ramani, her husband, who tortures her a good deal and she patiently bears everything because of fear of sin that rules her life.

Once she sits on the banks of the river Sarayu with the intention of getting rid of this vile life. However, she is saved by Mari, the locksmith-cum-burglar. Later, she starts earning her own independent bread with the help of charity. She is happy in the

beginning of her new and independent way of living. But her fear increases in due course. She becomes furious and thinks: “What despicable creations of God are we that we can’t exist without a support. I am like a bamboo pole which cannot stand without a wall to support it” (189). She is quite dependent and vulnerable, can’t exist without other’s support that represents the dependent nature and position of woman in the Indian society. At last, her nostalgia for children and growing homesick compels her to return to her husband’s house.

Apart from these, Savitri is a devoted mother. Her three children Babu, sumati and Kamala receive her immense love. She leaves her house because of her husband’s ill treatment to the children. When Babu is severely beaten by his father, she becomes depressed and doesn’t reply a single word. In order to show her protest, she goes to the dark room next to the store, and throws herself on the floor. Savitri gradually feels very foolish at the thought of her own resentment and comes back in the mainstream of daily activity. She is not in the habit of taking meal before her husband. Ramani correctly remarks: “What a dutiful wife! Would rather starve than precede her husband. You are really like some of the women in our ancient books” (101). She tries her best to correct the ways of her husband but all her efforts prove futile in the end. So she gets bound to leave home in search of her own way that can help her stand on her own feet and create her identity. As she has failed to feel who she is at home, she goes out with hope that she could live on her own. Onwards she does not depend on anyone and live on charity provided to her right from her birth. Her efforts to create a world of her own are very vigorous and commendable. However, she fails to do so because the Indian society is so much male-dominated and biased that it never favors women. Her failure that she cannot be able to make her independent in

the outside society is not because of her incapability but due to society that prevents female individual from going ahead.

In this novel Savitri's role is made so prominent that she attempts to live on her own earning so that she can breathe freely and independently. But the society antagonizes in such a way that her resistance ultimately and she is again forced to return home and live a life-long life of prostitution that is called marriage institution where a licensed male provides her what she needs and in return he sleeps with her and imposes his own ideas and opinions on her and she is compelled to accept them willingly and unwillingly.

In the following chapter, non-western feminism and the position of women in diverse culture as well as the domination over women by men in distinct forms will be mentioned. Furthermore this attempt centralizes on the plight of Indian women right from the beginning of Indian history which has ever been fragile in course of history and even in many countries at the moment as well. The reflection on numerous hindrances on the path of women's progress, prosperity, fame, economic independence, and separate identity is vitalized.

Similarly the third chapter focuses on the analytical approach to the text, *The Dark Room*. Besides all these, the hypothetical statement elaborated with textual evidence in order to strengthen and enhance the thesis promulgation. In this way the fourth chapter and the fifth one conclusion and works cited respectively. In fact the deducing chapter have glance at all previous chapters.

Chapter II

Feminism as Socio-Political Perspective

The term 'female' traditionally has been received in terms of validity and conception as a biological contrast to male 'sex'. Indeed the natural biological contrast pervades each individual sex with distinctive features, physical qualities and assertions that are assumed to be essential and vital to sustain the true nature of human evolution and civilization. In fact the sex is the natural creation. Some social and cultural variations lie in terms of their behavior, manners, food habit, education and the attitude of society towards them. However, these discrepancies are apparently based on society. This is how some biased definitions, along with physical assertions are attached to each sex and are bound to get identified with asymmetrical, hierarchical socio-cultural notions called 'gender'. Nature based female and male relation turns into society based women and men's feminine and masculine relation. The very relation exists as a hierarchical power relation where men dominate women in every social, economic, cultural and religious milieu of human life. The prejudice sustains itself in the form of male domination against female subordination through ideological practices. The patriarchy nurtures the gender based inequalities that present men superior to and more powerful than women.

Feminism is a divergent collection of social theories, political movements and moral philosophies, extensively motivated by experiences of women. Most feminists are especially concerned with social, political, religious, racial and economic inequality between women and men. Some have argued that gendered and sexed identities, such as "woman" and "man" are socially constructed. Feminists differ over the sources of inequality, how to attain equality and the extent to which gender and sexual identities should be questioned and critiqued. Variations in the issues of

feminists are because of their distinct belonging and upbringing to and in diverse cultures and societies.

Feminism is related to discourse that advocates women's rights based on the equality of the sexes. It is a doctrine redefining women's activities and goals from women-centered point of view and refusing to accept the cult of masculine chauvinism and superiority that reduces women to a sex object, a second sex, and 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 a political, economic, psychological, personal and esthetic sense.

It is very much clear that feminism as movement appeared to defend the position of woman race and to create a world of women free from all sorts of male interference and oppression. The level of consciousness in women grew high and they have started thinking of their selves which their sisters had hardly thought of before. Consciousness in women did not limit to the West rather it spread its wings to East and African countries as well. Distinct perspectives of females in the non-western countries came in the course of time and they commenced intellectual revolution with the hope that they would be able to create their own identity and milieu that of freedom and humanity where there is no suppression and exploitation.

Men and women are taught from childhood that they are not the same; they have been socialized to think, talk and act in different ways. Their socialization, where masculine and feminine traits become opposing views in the workforce, begins at birth. References from the last three decades demonstrate this trend. Boys are told to be strong, not to cry, and not to play with dolls. Girls are encouraged to show their feelings and their reinforced play reflects caring labor. In this way girls develop a need for affiliation while boys develop a need for competitiveness (Howe, 1975).

This is further explored by Gilligan, as she illustrates that girls tend to focus on the continuation of relationships. Fairy tales portray men who conquer evil and women who are saved by and marry the prince. These fairy tales which emphasize such things as women's passivity and beauty are indeed gendered scripts and serve to legitimize and support the dominant gender system. Advertisers target little boys in advertisements for sports toys, vehicles and action figures, while girls are the focus for Barbie and make-up. Society's expectations of women's roles are internalized by women who voluntarily withdraw from or never pursue activities or occupations they fear will make them unattractive and men who believe that certain work is inappropriate. Women's bodies are in direct opposition to organizations that value aggressiveness and competitiveness, such as the military, where 'warrior narratives' are prevalent. 'Women's bodies-female sexuality, their ability to pre-create and their pregnancy, breast-feeding, and child-care, menstruation, and mythic "emotionality"-are suspect, stigmatized and used as grounds for control and exclusion.

Every society sets its entire value on the basis of culture through which religion, law, science, family, marriage and sexuality are organized. All existing cultures have evolved out of a slow process of historical development of collaborative world of ideals, activities, processes, institutions, and norms. And the prevailing traditions and cultural norms determine the position and status of women in any society. Regarding the position and life patterns of Indian Hindu woman in the past, Tanika Sarkar indicates at the gender norms and values prescribed for her:

So, was discipline exercised upon her body by iron laws of absolute chastity, extending beyond the death of the husband, through an indissoluble, non-consensual infant from marriage, through austere widowhood and through her proven capacity for self-imposition. All

these together imprinted an inexorable disciplinary regimen upon her person that contained and defined her from infancy to death. (203)

The way women are brought up in the East is different from the West since the context and culture vary. Similarly the type of oppression and exploitation women face in the East has been historically critical and analytical. Basically the Hindu civilization is the matter of prominence that covers the Eastern feminism. It would be noteworthy enough if a glimpse was made on the history of Indian civilization and the condition of women as well as how they have been behaved and how they are treated at the moment.

Indian women in Vedic society had a place of honor and enjoyed equal status with men and independence in action. Aryan society used to regulate the social and domestic life. The Aryan accepted the authority of Vedas and followed the Vedic rules of moral, ethical and religious injunctions. Though a certain degree of social stratification along with gender line was clearly visible, women were adored, respected and recognized. They had right to knowledge and education. The objectives of their marriage were defined to be dharma, the propagation of race, and personal gratification. They were free to choose their conjugal partner and exercised free will in entering into matrimonial bondage. A great emphasis was laid on chastity and fidelity. The Hindu woman was her husband's ardhagini and the marriage rituals sought to stress and reinforce that conjugal intimacy.

Since the Puranic period, the role and activity of the woman came to be limited and restricted to the basic ends of Hindu existence. The daughters became unwelcome to the then society and son became important to the Hindus as they began to find salvation through son. The concept of sonship was attached to the theory of *Pinda-dan*, and for offering the pinda to the deceased. The previous marriage system

lost its independent value and it began to be treated as a religious act. The marital life was tagged with religion and the latter made her dependent as it was only through marriage that she could attain salvation. Injunctions of Manu merged the wife's individuality with that of her husband and recommended strong restrictions and disciplines of female behavior. There was a deliberate attempt in the dharma shastra of Manu to lower the rank of women. The basic rules for women's behavior are expressed in *the Laws of Manu*, written early in the Christian era. Its passages stress the need to control woman because of the evils of the female character. The ideal women are taken as those who do not strike to break these bonds of control. Moreover, the salvation and happiness of women revolve around their virtue and chastity as daughters, wives and widows. A woman can attain paradise not by any austere penance but as a result of her obedience and devotion to her husband. Susan widely traces the negation of female personality in this ideal of womanhood and quotes Manu in his prescription of the duties of woman:

In childhood, a female must be subject to her father, in youth to her husband, when lord is dead, to his sons; a woman must never be independent ...She who controlling her thoughts, words, and deeds, never slights her lords, resides (after death) with her husband (in heaven), and is called virtuous (wife). (30)

Manu holds that a woman should worship her husband as God whatever his failings. Theoretically woman was never taught to be an individual capable of taking care of herself. Like property, woman had to be constantly protected and guarded. The status of woman declines further with the Mughal period. With the terrors of Turks and their nefarious activities, many social practices came into existence that went against women. The Hindu heroic women began to embrace burning pyre

instead of captivity of Muslims. This led to the evil custom of sati. The Hindus started keeping women in seclusion to keep them out of the sight of the Muslim traitors. Their life came under perpetual worships and the social laws and customs stamped her with mental deficiency. The girls came to get married at any early age, giving rise to the custom of child marriage. The female child came to be considered as a burden and an unwelcome arrival by parents, giving rise to infanticide. Education became beyond the reach of women. The status of women in the society touched its nadir with those vices of sati pratha, purdha system, child marriage, infanticide, and illiteracy.

In reaction to Muslim domination and unjust social practices of the orthodox Hindus, there emerged Bhakti movement during the middle Ages. The saints in different parts of India propagated the ideal of equality between man and man, between man and woman. They preached that all were equal sparks of one supreme deity. Their message was love and devotion. But the concept of loyalty to men was replaced by worshipping God and the saints also conformed to the traditional beliefs and values. Although they did recognize the worthiness of marriage, they stressed upon ascetic turns of mind and lauded renunciation of mundane pleasure.

In the early periods of British Rule, the women were still the subject of abject exploitation and discrimination. The British colonialists made use of systematic exploitation and discrimination in India by making use of middle men who were to serve as a link between the traditional and modern structure. For this, they perceived mainly three institutions: education, religion and military. The educated middle-class found the condition of their women as a barrier in copying the lifestyles of their colonial masters. So, the movement of social reform began during the British rule through few educated Indians who came in contact with western ideals. Reformers such as Ishawar Chandra Vidya Sagar, Mahatma Gandhi, Raja Ram Mohan Roy, and

Tilak laid emphasis on education of the Hindu female, abolition of child marriage, lifting of purdah system, and removal of satipartha. The reformers advocated the emancipation of women and much of the efforts were intended to reform women rather than to reform social conditions which oppressed them. Women were to be educated to become more wives and mothers, for the need of educated men. Under the impact of the West, Indian women experienced a new concept of themselves as persons individually important. But the gain to Hindu women seemed minimal and improvement of their position was negligible.

With the emergence of the industrial era, which coincided with the independence of India, a whole new process of work ethics, technology and consequently a new life-style was introduced. Due to increased contact with other cultures and exposure to new ideologies, the age old ideas and attitudes were challenged. Though the modern women adopted western social ideas, they were, in actual social situation, a queer mixture of east and west. The modernization and subsequent urbanization greatly affected the composition of India's patriarchal families. Consequently individualistic spirit developed around the new economy dealings and the money economy. Western values, attitudes and behavior were to a great extent adopted for work, whereas personal and intimate family life was governed by traditional Hindu believes. Sunita Pathania finds the structures and institutions of traditional culture disrupted with three new modes of economic activities and habitation:

We do not witness a positive liberation from subjugation to which the traditional cultural moulds had subjected women and other weaker sections but a form of uprooting which deprives them of whatever

limited emotional support they could obtain from the earlier cultural moulds. (196)

The Hindu women, despite her education and liberation, is exposed to identify and reflect the virtues of womanhood as portrayed in literature and methodology and fulfill their prime responsibility as a wife. Traditionally, Hindu women could experience four stages of life: studentship, family life, community service, and religious cycle. But after the Mughal invasion, they haven't got any opportunity to go through those stages. The Hindu woman adjusts herself to the life of her husband and does not think of her own right. Her submissiveness and lack of full personal development are closely relegated to family and social system in which the woman is more a member of a group rather than an individual. Margaret Cormak supports the idea that the Hindu society does emphasize on duty, conformity, obedience, self-control, and harmony, and points out:

A woman's sense of self is usually developed within the family pattern. Indian woman's ideal self is that she must get married as it is her primary role. Her security is in her family solidarity and her culture. She is the efficient server of the family, not the thinking individual. (173)

There is little encouragement of ambition, of new ventures, of deviant behavior as female-child gets training in social relationships rather than autonomy over their bodies. But it is within this complaint nature that the Hindu woman finds her psychological security. Girls have a definite place in a structural family group and in structured society. Marriage is taken for granted, Cormak notes: "Her unquestioned future is marriage, so that her security does not lie so much in the love of her husband as in his regard for in her role as efficient housewife and mother" (173). A woman, if

faithful and dutiful, regardless of difficulties or tragedies, will retain the approval of the society. Her education does not seem to be an unnecessary burden, for it is preparation for marriage, the only future for which she is preparing. Her virtue consists of adjusting to conditions, not of changing conditions or in moving to another social space. Her personal happiness, success, and security are much more a part of a society than one's self.

Indian culture is the culture of integration, association, and assimilation. The culture inspires women to find their significance in connection with other people. It possesses the value of self-annihilation and service; the Indian culture prefers order and co-ordination to chaos and disagreement. The very inclination to assimilation has included all discordant tendencies of human beings, and has created a Whole, which is variegated, yet united. The unity is the consequence of the nature of realizing other's inconvenience and a nature of apology. S. R. Bakshi and Lipi Maharjan clarify Indian culture: "Power assimilation of alien races and cultures without losing the individuality of its own essential type of pattern and without at the same time making the diverse elements assimilated lose whatever is essential in them-has been a special characteristic of the Indo-Aryan race and culture complex" (4). The inherent mental formation ready to assimilate others without abandoning one's basic nature of assimilation has shaped the origin of women's consciousness.

Unlike the western women's movement emerged from inferiority to men, the Indian women's movement emerged from the social evils like child marriage, dowry system and purdah system, practiced by male-oriented society in the name of religion. For Indian women, emancipation lies in the absence of the social injustices. While fighting for women's liberation, the Indian women prioritized the development

activities like women education, health, and wealth to produce a self-dependent woman. Jane Freedman quotes Uma Narayan:

Issues that feminist groups in India have politically engaged with include problems of dowry-murder and dowry-related harassment of women, police rape of women in custody; issues relating to women's poverty, health and reproduction; and issues of ecology and communication that affect woman's lives[...] Indian feminism is clearly a response to issues specifically confronting many Indian women. (82-3)

Indian mythological exemplars have powerfully influenced the mode of thought and costume, feelings, expectation, and dreams of Indian women. Indian people worship the mythological figures. Kathryn Hansen accepts the unavoidability of the myths: "The patterns of women's lives, their expectations and ideal, their orientation to social reality, are significantly shaped by the models of womanly conducts set out in stories legends, and songs preserved from the past" (257). Sita, the wife of Ram in Ramayana, is regarded as a chaste, diligent and self-sacrificing spouse. She is the symbol of wifely duty and perfect familial duty. Simultaneously she is a resilient mother who produced adventurous sons-Lava and Kush-who could challenge their own father, Ram. Accordingly, Draupadi, the wife to five pandavs in Mahabharata, possesses a firm, self-respecting will, and a devotion to her husband's progress and security. Yet, she didn't bear the loss of her honor and prestige. Shakambari Jayal writes about the bloom and strong self of Draupadi: "With her delicate beauty she combined an iron will, and thus could pronounce her choice firmly" (255). The mythological figures have been inspiring forces for historical figures.

The accounts of historical heroic behavior have framed a paradigm for Indian people to define their identity and to shape social values for coming generation.

Pandita Ramabai in the nineteenth century highlighted the injustices to women caused by male-centered society. She refuted the social practices like child marriage, denial to women education, and said that men prevented women from acquiring knowledge because of the fear that they may block their (males) freedom and superiority. Meera Kosambi quotes her:

In reality God has created men and women to be different so that they should co-operate and compliment each other; and the love between husband and wife which is a sharing of joys and sorrows and which is as one life in two bodies is the ultimate love. This love can be achieved only if mutual respect and love exist between them. (137-38)

Ranade has advocated for the mutuality between a wife and husband. Similarly Mirabai, an impressive historical figure in Indian history, has set the example for self-effacement and self-sacrifice. Challenging the contemporary social customs, she abandoned the luxurious but passive familial life, and came on road to devote herself to Krishna the Almighty in Hindu religion. But in the rejection of the social values, she was unknowingly practicing the feminine qualities like a concern for family and a nature of self-denial. Radhika Seshan observes her: “Mirabai’s bhajans are full of references to both her natal and her marital families” (186). She didn’t renounce the inborn inclination to family.

Similarly Phulandevi, a woman from depressed social group, became a stupendous social and historical figure in taking revenge against male-tyranny. As a woman, she came out of socially prescribed womanly values, and took armaments and wore male attire with virility. She killed all males who had exploited her sexually. She

has been an impressive exemplar for women's consciousness to fight against the injustices done to the women. Hansen appreciates Phulandevi as s/he has come to inspire determined commitment to the struggle for equality and justice for women" (282).

Laxmibai, Rani of Jhansi, has become an unforgettable and influential lady in Indian history, whose adventurous, courageous, and ardent spirit protected Jhansi and her people from the British oppression. Hansen analyses her contribution for the nation: "She is unequivocally identified as a great freedom fighter in the first stage of India's was of independence against the British" (267). Her strong, intelligent, and dignified individuality understood the human misery and suffering, and helped the poor. She had a love for helpless people, and a reverence for nation and national culture.

Different movements also regarded the social injustices to be bad and supported women's liberation from the evils. Social Reform in the nineteenth century advocated for the ideals of Vedic period that allowed women to exercise their inner potentialities. Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Swami Dayanand Saraswati, Rabindranath Tagore, and Swami Vivekanda favored for women's upliftment and participation in literary career, teaching, medicine, business and other facets of worldly affairs like women in Vedic period. Anjani Kant writes: "In the 19th century, India began to discover her long cherished ideals and cultural self-consciousness The reformers, who advocated the emancipation of women, aspired the restoration of such healthy and congenial conditions which once prevailed in the early Vedic ideology in the construction of women's emancipation just, as male's values are predominant in society. Forbes points out the significance of the male reformers: "There would have

been no women's movement in India if Indian men in the nineteenth century had not been concerned with modernizing women's roles" (252).

Along with social reform, the National Movement for the freedom of India from the unwanted reign of British people has become a touchstone for women to realize their potentiality. The participation of women in the movement has strengthened them to endure atrocities, and created the national feelings. The prevalent notion that India to Indian people is like a mother, emphasized the liberation of India in the liberation of Indian women from the social oppression. Furthermore, Gandhian ideology spooked them to pursue the dictates of their own conscience, and to believe in their intellect. Ronald J. Terchek and Nitis Das Gupta evaluate the movement: "The Gandhi-led freedom struggle in India ushered in a new era of consciousness on the part of Indian women and thus is an important step towards the emancipation of Indian women" (36). Gandhi was in the opinion that women should be self-assertive, yet they have to comprehend duty and responsibility towards nation and family. British women also emphasized self-reliance.

British women missionaries in India educated Indian women, taught them to be individuals. Kant says: "Under the western impact, Indian women experienced an air of freedom and the stir of the new era It brought to women a total new concept of themselves as persons individually important and nationally needed (61). As it is impossible to escape away from the current of western individualistic culture, the Indian women assert their individuality within the circle of national culture.

It is quite natural that difficulties women face in the non-eastern society are distinct in nature and notion. Most often women in the eastern countries basically in India undergo complications pertaining marriage, maternity, ownership, dowry, profession etc. that all do not trouble the women in the west. The novel *The Dark*

Room craves a clear picture of how women are made fragile and dependent in the Indian society and bound to stay with male figures in all conditions. Furthermore it does convey a message how women suffer the sense of insecurity and joblessness outside the association with male figures. The protagonist, Savitri has stayed with her husband and children for several years but when she feels that her husband Ramani has ex-marital affair with the woman Ms. Shanta Bai recently appointed in his office, she cannot tolerate and finally decides to leave the house.

In fact she does not take notice of her children and husband. Rather she begins thinking of her individuality and self-dependence. She sees every sort of help as a source of charity and thus completely hates and wants to live on her own earning now onwards. As a matter of fact her recognition to her self is appreciative but difficulties she faces to create the world of her own outside in the male-dominated society are very miserable and bad of nature. Nobody believes that she is a good woman as she has left home. People in society suspect and question her moral character. Along with this she cannot have a good job since she has been intellectually crippled. She is not a graduate that she can get a job of commendable nature. She has been made dependent right from her birth because she was born as a woman in India. She has been confined to the house as well to serve husband and other members of the family. She is not well familiar with the outside world that she can tackle with ups and downs to create herself as an independent being. She finally fails to stay away long without husband and children. Rather she comes back home which shows her incapability and failure of resistance in patriarchy. Savitri stands here as the typical Indian women who are uneducated and bound to the arranged marriage. Women in India were trained in such a way that they would be better daughter, wife and mother rather than an independent

human being. Savitri does play the similar role of a wife and has to keep mute before her husband and to obey him:

Be a good girl.” Ramani shouted a moment later, “Savitri, I will count sixty. You must dress and come out before that “Women are exasperating. Only a fool would have anything to do with them. Hours and hours for dressing! Why can’t they put on decent clothes and look presentable at home instead of starting their make-up just when you are in a hurry to be off? Stacks of costly *sarees*, all folded and kept inside, to be worn when going out. Only silly looking rags to gladden our sight at home. Our business stops with paying the bill. It is only the outsider who has the privilege of seeing a pretty dress. (21-2)

Hence Savitri possesses all the qualities mentioned above and therefore her short stay outside the house and family can be tolerated by her and eventually she returns and starts the typical role of a wife and a mother. In fact the similar situation is common in nonwestern society where males’ supremacy is dominant. After all the deliberately made Savitri as a dependent and uneducated wife to Ramani is to represent the usual women in India and at the same time it discloses the women’s actual plight in non-western communities. Similar to Savitri’s case, many women in nonwestern countries do face frequently since socially they are not powerful and made dependent on the male members of the family such father, husband and son respectively in the course of their life. Women attempt their level best to come out of the family trap which is very much exploitive and oppressive once they feel that they have been dominated by males since their birth. But their endeavors become absurd and meaningless in the male-dominated society and ultimately surrender the very family which they belong to. The most important reason for their helplessness is the economy that they are

mostly dependent on the males and cannot be paid well in the society that helps their respectful survival. This is why women in the nonwestern countries basically those women who are uneducated and docile and simple surrender before males despite their innumerable efforts for resistance against oppression and exploitations done by male members. As Savitri's resistance fails, so many women's constant efforts do fail.

Chapter III

Irony of Savitri's Effort for Independence

Offering rare insight into the complexities of Indian middle-class society, R.K. Narayan traces life in the fictional town of Malgudi. *The Dark Room* is a searching look at a difficult marriage and a woman who eventually rebels against the demands of being a good and obedient wife but fails due to her horrible entanglement with the marital life in Indian society. The central character in *The Dark Room* is Savitri, a submissive housewife, who is married to Ramani, an employee of the Engladia Insurance Company. They have three children, Kamala, Sumati and Babu. Savitri is a typical housewife of the Indian society of the contemporary time who is severely dominated and neglected by her husband. There is a dark room in their house where Savitri retires whenever her husband's harshness seems unbearable to her. Focusing on the thematic aspect of *The Dark Room* an Indian critic, Rampal Bhatt says in his book *Narayan's Fictions*:

The Dark Room is this dark, menacing novella. Narayan muses on the futility of life and the helplessness of his protagonist Savitri, filling each scene with understones of as many hues as there are facets to human nature. Hypocrisy, deception, kindness and despair are all present in their full glory, coloured and shaded by the characters, their morality and their situations. (55)

Hence he highlights on the abject plight of the female protagonist, Savitri who is helpless in all ways since she is an obedient and loyal Indian woman with three children. Along with all these she has been trained not to question husband since she takes him as the incarnation of the god and the wife has to worship him for the sake of better life even after physical death. Jobs are conventionally divided on the basis of

male and female in India as women are considered weak and soft so their jobs are of the similar nature. When Babu suffers fever, Savitri informs Ramani about but very cruelly he commands her not to worry about males since they are strong and can fight against minor diseases such as fever. Ramani argues as such: “No, he hasn’t. Go and do any work you like in the kitchen, but leave the training of a grown-up boy to me. It is none of a woman’s business” (1). It shows that women are neglected even in their houses and behaved in such a way that they do not have any rights on children. Savitri’s petition to her husband is very just that their child Babu is suffering from fever but he does not take notice of her emotional responsibility and maternal love. Rather he simply orders her to mind her own business that is of housewife.

Savitri’s life is indeed the life which anyone can play as he prefers. She has to do everything as her husband directs to and even she does not deserve to remain silent and mute. Rather she is forced to change her emotional mood as well. Ramani’s way of treating with is not that of with a life partner but with a hired servant. She cannot speak whenever her husband is the central figure in making commentary. Her role even in the family discussion is of a subordinate:

Savitri never interrupted this running commentary with an explaining, and her silence sometimes infuriated her husband. “Saving up your energy by being silent! Saving at up for what purpose? When a man asks you something you could do worse than honour him with a reply.” Sometimes, if she offered an explanation, as occasionally happened, she would be told, “Shut up. (3)

It clarifies that women in the male dominated society are not permitted to assert their feelings and emotions. They do not have any safe ground neither can keep quiet nor can they speak. Rather they are pushed to the domain of dilemma and confusion.

Similarly Savitri is in very startling situation. When she attempts to explain any statement she is stopped and while being silent, her silence is taken in very humorous way. She is socially so much poor that she cannot breathe of freedom and individuality. Rather her self is shattered in such a way she gets lost despite the presence of her body. It further emphasizes on the extreme cruelty and oppression over women by male figures. In fact religious books which are always taken as the source of basic knowledge and morals have also marginalized women in many ways. As mentioned in the holy book, Sita was so obedient wife to Rama that she went to the forest with her husband for the sake of just wifely duty. Similarly, Doropadi did stay with her husbands in the forest for a long time to complete her wifely role. Such religious allusions further add the fact that women have always played instrumental roles in males' life. Therefore males prefer their wives to imitate such ancient women who outsmarted their roles. Hence Ramani does want Savitri to perform similar role of wife: "What a dutiful wife! Would rather starve than precede her husband. You are really like some of the women in our ancient books" (11). Ramani expects a lot from Savitri but he himself is not ready to do any thing for the sake of her happiness. He becomes self-centered and never thinks of Savitri's self and emotion that she is also a human being who does need love and human behavior. It is the male ego which is deep-rooted in such a way that cannot be hurled away from the practice. Despite the fact that a little girl has grown up as a woman and has also become the mother of few children she is taken as the child. Males think that women never get mature mentally rather they remain childish even in their youth and age. This is why Ramani tells Savitri as such: "You have to learn a lot yet. You are still a child, perhaps a precocious child, but a child all the same" (12). Ramani does not see any change in his wife Savitri and therefore he tells her to learn a lot and become mature mentally so

that she can deal with the family affair. It gets clear that he thinks himself superior to her and even undermines her potentials and capacity. This is indeed a kind of psychological exploitation. Instead of encouraging her, his efforts are to subdue her wants and wills. In this way Ramani imposes his authority and creates his false supremacy. He always torments her psyche just scolding and behaving with in an inhuman manner. Women are taught males' ideologies and trained that they should look beautiful and before going outside home they need to be beautiful well and then they should leave houses with males so that they can be considered well-cultured and civilized. But when such beautifying process consumes time males blame women that they are just women and they do not have any serious jobs and this is why they spend their entire time in doing unproductive things. This is the conflicting nature of the male ideology in patriarchy. In this regard Narayan says:

Be a good girl." Ramani shouted a moment later, "Savitri, I will count sixty. You must dress and come out before that "Women are exasperating. Only a fool would have anything to do with them. Hours and hours for dressing! Why can't they put on decent clothes and look presentable at home instead of starting their make-up just when you are in a hurry to be off? Stacks of costly *sarees*, all folded and kept inside, to be worn when going out. Only silly looking rags to gladden our sight at home. Our business stops with paying the bill. It is only the outsider who has the privilege of seeing a pretty dress. (21-2)

This discloses Ramani's mean nature and rigid behavior. On the one hand he wants her to get ready so soon and on the other he dislikes when she puts on decent clothes. This is the point of utter domination in the sense that he wants her to look beautiful inside house so that he only derives pleasure from beautiful and lovely sight of her

poster. Furthermore he says that he is the owner and master of the family that he affords on each and every thing. He pays the bill means he earns money and Savitri does not make money since she stays home and works inside and looks after children. Out of doing all these homely tasks she is no more paid. Rather economically she depends on her husband now. This economic dependence has degraded her position and made her feel valueless and parasite on charity. A critic, Shubhdra Sen in her master book *Gender and Caste in India* says in the concern: “Economic dependence in India paralyses and worsens the women condition in the family and they are made inferior to men. But the fault lies in the male ideology that they train girls different from boys assuming that girls have to go to someone’s houses and do not earn money for parents” (9). Hence Sen clarifies the fact that women are taken other’s property even at parental home. Parents do not prefer to afford money on their education presuming that their daughters will not stay at their home any longer.

Since males are taken physically stronger than women they are preferred to conduct such sorts of jobs which need a lot of manly power. Playing with dolls is considered as the women’s business and boys should not be permitted to play with such things. In fact this is the male ideology and concept in patriarchy. Hence Ramani commands his son not to play with dolls since that is no more the job of males. Narayan avers regarding this mean mentality of Ramani. In two minutes he was ready to do his work. The girls jeered: “Are you a girl to take a hand in the doll business? Go and play cricket. You are a man” (30). Here Ramani demarcates between the jobs and games on the basis of gender. He is a typical male and vomits all male consciousness and shows that male’s duties are different from females’. He wants his son Babu to play cricket as it is taken as the male game and playing with doll is female’s job. Similarly males want females to keep silent docile and submissive. Girls

are even trained to be submissive and shy right from the beginning of infancy. When women are submissive and silent men become very much pleased. To evaluate girls' qualities, men take their submissive and docile nature into account. In the regard Ramani's view and wants can be expressed here: "This submissiveness pleased Ramani. He said, "You must be a good girl otherwise people won't like you." He placed the lantern on the window-sill. Kamala turned to go and took a few steps. "Little girl, don't shuffle your Feet while walking," said Ramani" (37). Ramani teaches Kamala to be an obedient and cultured girl so that males like her. The trainings given to Kamal are not to make her intellectual and independent. Rather such trainings enslave her and make her depend on the others. Furthermore, such training prepares her to meet the taste of her future husband. After all she is to live for others and there is no her individual identity and recognition. Males think that women cannot rationalize and therefore they need to be guided at every step of their life.

Their emotional aspect is over the rational one. Males do not think that they have even been born from the womb of women. Rather they simply turn blind in case it is the female issue and don't think more beyond the surface reality. When the suppression crosses the limit, anyone can turn intolerant and revolt against that. Savitri gets upset with the irresponsible behavior of her husband that he has always treated her as if she is just a hired servant at home and she does not deserve any right to make any decision about the family affair. There is a drastic change in her psyche when she has found her husband too much rude and oppressive. She protests just by ignoring everything going on in the family but her resistance is very indirect. She cannot even revolt in open and direct way since she does not have any grip on earning and house. Savitri states as such: "Do the cooking without the vegetables and the mustard or go and ask whoever is keen on having them for money. Don't come and

mention them to me” (39). She expresses her revolting feelings and shows no concern towards the family affair. In fact she cannot directly protest against Ramani since she is already trained not to speak a lot before males. At the same time she has always been silent in her conjugal life as well as her resistance is no more mature yet. This is just the initial phase of her reaction in a critical manner.

Sujata Thakur critically looks at the psychological development of Savitri in her book *A Tussle between Modern India and the Old One*:

The Dark Room centralizes the protagonist, Savitri who is very mute and tolerant in the beginning of her marriage as she is committed to fulfilling each and every desire of her dear husband Ramani. She loves him too much but she is in confusion whether Ramani loves her too. She represents the old Indian women who are determined to performing their wifely duties by hook and crook just for the sake of their husbands. However they never expect any monetary profit from them. This nature and women’s virtue qualify them to be selfless and sacrificing (17).

Her commentary over Indian women in general clarifies the fact that Indian women are committed to living for others and they do not worry any more for them. They are happy when their male relatives are in ecstasy and are living rapturous life. But males never attempt to understand this sacrificing nature of women and value them accordingly. Rather they ignore every sort of vitality of women and behave with them assuming them as puppets and thoughtless and fragile creatures. Women are not only dominated in single and any alien class and family but they are treated more or less in the same way everywhere and in every class. It can be pretty clear through the statement by the male cook in Ramani’s house:

The cook said, “Only once has my wife tried to interfere, and then I nearly broke her bones. She has learnt to leave me alone now. Women

must be taught their place.” With this he dismissed the subject and turned to the immediate business on hand. “I’m responsible for the running of the house today. I’m going to show these people what I can do. The mistress of the house said, ‘Do anything, don’t ask me,’ and I could well cook a dinner that a dog wouldn’t touch.(41)

The cook has also internalized the fact women are the creatures that need to be taught and guided by males. He senses that women are inferior to men and it is the duty of males to instruct them about different kinds of things. Women should not be left free to do what they prefer since they are just women thoughtless and irrational creatures. His mentality and concept is no more of his own rather it is the common concept and perspective of males in the male dominated-society towards. Despite the fact that women belong to the well-do families their plight is similar to the women who are in abject poverty regarding gender issues. When Savitri grows a little bit revolting after seeing all mishaps and drawbacks on the part of Ramani’s behavior and deals with children, she tries her level best to express her opinions before Ramani in order to bring him in the right direction. But when she tells her neighboring woman, she is stopped from doing any thing beyond the wants and deeds of Ramani. Hence Savitri is not only made to believe in male ideology but also other women are trained in such strict and rigid manners that they easily believe in male ideologies and accept them with asking any questions. Narayan expresses the views of a woman in *The Dark Room* to expose the internalized male ideology:

That makes it worse. You should either let your words out or feel that everything your husband does is right. As for me, I have never opposed my husband or argued with him at any time in my life. I might have occasionally

suggested an alternative, but nothing more. What he does is right. It is a wife's duty to feel so. (46)

Indian women have been trained in such a way that they prefer to live for the sake of males' happiness and policies. They attempt to become the paragon of virtue and purity. They are said not to disobey the males and rather agree with the decisions made by males. They blindly and uncritically accept whatever males create and do. Women are taken as the harbingers of peace and happiness and their duties are to keep silent and maintain harmony in the family. Hence the neighboring woman's suggestion clarifies the fact that they should not raise any questions to the male deeds. To her, husbands are the incarnate of gods and wives must worship to them since they always play the protectors to the females. Savitri is made to feel about the wifely duty and play her role so smartly and tactfully. One of the Indian woman critic, Srijana Kher states regarding the imprinted male ideologies on women's minds:

Women in eastern countries are born naturally as human beings but later they are women provided that they get trained in such a way that they automatically male ideologies and assimilate them in very obedient manner without any sharp critical questions that they need to raise as human beings. Their reasoning faculty is made to remain veiled and they accept everything that males do. They feel that males do everything that is good and unquestionable since they are by birth superior to them and have been the guiding gender in the society to maintain peace and harmony. (51)

The above mentioned thoughts are of the great significance in regard to the broad study of women's psychology and their concepts and attitudes towards males. Kher has attempted to say that women are not women by birth. Rather they are made to be

so. The male ideologies are imposed on their innocent and inexperienced minds in such a way that they feel responsible to go ahead in their life accordingly. They blindly believe in males such as father, husband and son respectively. Savirti while suspecting her husband's character she is told not to be so suspicious about Ramani simply because husbands should not be questioned any more since their every deed is commendable and good. One woman advises another in such submissive way that she is morally forced not to doubt his moral aspect any more. Males expect women to be submissive and docile that is pretty clear from the excerpt below:

Whatever it is, I must see a picture tonight. If you are not coming with me, I am going alone. If you are coming, I am prepared to share my food with you." She added, "Perhaps you don't wish to be seen in public with me; perhaps your wife will object; perhaps-All of which suggestions he indignantly repudiated. He asserted with much bravado that he cared not a straw for public opinion, and that his wife was not the sort to question him or dictate to him. (70)

Ramani's conversation with Shanta Bai about the probable objection in their frequent meeting makes it clear that Ramani does not see any protest from his wife Savitri since she is very simple and uncritical. To him his wife does not raise voice against him and does not attempt to stop him from doing any thing he likes. Furthermore he expects his wife submissive and receptive. Savitri's over fidelity has made him to exploit her in different aspects of life. The fact is that Indian women hardly go against their males' deeds and decisions. This is why they victimize women assuming that they will not be interrupted any more. Ramani is afraid of the public and shows his concern with that as well but he does not think of his wife. Rather he ignores her position and tells Shanta Bai that she cannot dictate and question him since he is the

master and the head of the family. To him the public is more important than Savitri since she is just a woman and she depends on him in all ways. One thing is very much clear that Indian women can bear any sort of fault of their darling husbands but they can never tolerate the presence of other women in their lives. They remain silent till the bucket is filled with exploitation and suppression. But when the very pail is filled over with oppression, women appear in revolting manner and state. They initially protest in very subtle manner but later expose their anger and protest through distinct acts and deeds. Hence Savitri protests when her husband has given away the family bench to Shanta Bai who has begun staying in the office recently. The revolt can be felt in the extract below:

Why not? When there was the bench I could just rest on it for a moment when I felt tired; and now I have to squat down on the floor every time. The bench is gone. Nothing remains in this house everything has to be sent away to the office. Go and tell your father that I want the bench back immediately. He is in his room. Go and tell him. (74)

Hence, the protest is against the male decision. Savitri thinks males do whatever they like. They never think of the emotional aspect of women and impose their ideas on women in all ways boycotting family sensitive bonds and values. The bench is no more the matter of debate and conflict. The clash between Savitri and Ramani is because of his negligence towards the family especially towards Savitri. When she feels that she is paid no attention she expresses her anger and disagreement to the decision made by Ramani. The feeling has not been taken notice of by Ramani and this is what has made Savitri revolting and express her disagreement. The family is based on common consent between husband and wife. But when either of them ignores other, the clash takes and that ultimately turns into an ocean of sorrow and

tears. Go and tell your father discloses the fact that she has been hurt or she would speak so. The revolt is very subtle and indirect as it is the initial phase. She knows the fact that everyone in the family is afraid of Ramani since he is all in all of the family. He earns money and feeds everybody. This is the reason everybody gets afraid of him. Nobody dares to speak against his decisions. Even children hardly attempt to say something before Ramani. It shows that the milieu of the family is very much oppressive and in fact Savitri is confined to this oppressive house where she never feels independent. Rather she always feels that she is just dependent and paralyzed economically and socially. The very dependence has made her to get exploited in every aspect of life. When she comes to know that her husband is interested in somebody else, she begins comparing her with that woman assuming her as a commodity that consumers take interest in them if they are better. Whatever she thinks now is justifiable and probable. She is very much worried since Ramani has begun staying out late. In course of searching reason of his late stay outside, she says:

I am middle-aged, old-fashioned, plain. How can I help it? She must be young and pretty. He has not been coming home before midnight for weeks. And yesterday he didn't come home at all; came only in the morning, and wouldn't talk to me." She said, blowing her nose, "He is indifferent even to the children. Tell me everything! (78-9)

The above extract makes it clear that Ramani has caused the situation of suspicion. Had he come home on time nobody would have doubted. But his late coming home and sometimes not even returning home has sprouted the seed of suspicion in Savitri's mind. Savitri is right all in all. She is worried about the family life which is just and very much probable. As a matter of fact males are responsible for all sorts of conflicts in the family. Here Ramani does not become serious about his manner that is to say he

spends his time with another woman as if he is having ex-marital relationship. Indian women are honest, obedient and sacred in the affair of family and marriage so do they expect males to be. But when there is some sort of indifference and negligence on the part of males they cannot tolerate. They feel that they have lost everything provided that their conjugal life is oriented towards dishonesty and disloyalty.

When she comes to know that her husband is interested in someone else, she realizes the fact she should maintain her beauty to win Ramani. She attempts her level best to look beautiful so that she can please her darling husband. She does everything to meet the taste of males since it is the basic requirement and the demand of the male-dominated society. Despite her such efforts, she cannot restore conjugal happiness in her life. Rather her hope and expectations are dismantled when he comes home late again. Now she gets aggressive and thinks of her individual identity. She becomes aware of her selfhood and says: "I'm a human being," she said, through her heavy breathing. You men will never grant that. For you we are playthings when you feel like hugging and slaves at other times. Don't think that you can fondle us when you like and kick us when you choose" (85).

Revolution arises from the heart of suppression and no one can bear oppression much. Human beings are after all rational who think and use their sense organs to find out the truth and implement the very truth to lead their life in right and considerable direction. Needless to say Savitri is a thinking being. She has lived the life of daughter, wife and mother hitherto now. But she does not want to think of others' happiness on the cost of her freedom, happiness, and individual identity. This is a very radical change in her psyche that shakes her and forces her to even kick out such family which has never taken care of her individual freedom and selfhood. The above mentioned excerpt discloses the realistic face of males and their inner psyche.

In fact males are so selfish that they use women assuming they are just commodities and means of entertainment. But when women think gravely of their position in the family institution, they get to the gate of truth. Before this they remain in the world of illusion created by males. Indeed males take women as playthings that Savitri feels and expresses her agitated emotion before her husband. This is a sort of revolt and warning as well that she is not going to live the life of a puppet now onwards.

However, Ramani does not think that she has grown and understood males' ideology and their nature. Rather he tries to appease her anger and agitation calling her a pet. He wants her to be a good girl and forget all previous things. He further attempts to touch her but she denies and tells him not to touch her any more. Her boldness and awareness get pretty clear in the extract below:

Don't touch me!" she cried, moving away from him. "You are dirty, you are impure. Even if I burn my skin I can't cleanse myself of the impurity of your touch." He clenched his teeth and raised his hands.

She said, "All right, strike me. I am not afraid." He lowered his hands and said, "Woman, get away now."(87)

Hence it gets pretty clear that women in India once find their husbands with other women having illicit relationship they get desperately disappointed about the marital bond as well. They lose hope and think now onwards their conjugal relationship is dismantled and broken into pieces. Beating is much severe kind of punishment males give to women in case they grow aggressive and cannot control women through persuasion. Ramani is a typical Indian male who carries the tradition of punishing wives by raising his hands. He is so inhuman that he tries to control Savitri by beating her. Males are socially, religiously, economically and physically stronger than women. This is why they always attempt to enslave women. When women deny

living life of slaves and dependency, they are severely punished. But Savitri is ready to be punished but not ready to spend even single moment with him. Ramani holds the family and controls the economic affair as well. The culture in which women have to go to the husband's house after marriage makes women live the life of slaves depending on husbands and sons. They cannot breathe in the fresh and pure air of freedom since they live in others' houses and eat on others' earning. This hazardous situation faces because of unfair and biased social structure. Savitri is run away from the house simply because she does not own the house and economically depends on Ramani. If the situation were reversed, Ramani would not dare to command her to get away from the house. Savitri learns a lot about the life of women in patriarchy and realizes the fact that women do not own any thing in the world run by male ideologies. She becomes so strong out of her long experience in the conjugal life. She feels alienated and thinks that no one is there on whom she will depend now onwards. She gets committed not to living in this biased, impure and unfair world where there is no justice and suitable milieu for women. She resists a lot against the male world after getting fully aware of the realistic world:

Things? I don't possess anything in this world. What possession can a woman call her own except her body? Everything else that she has is her father's, her husband's, or her son's. So take these too....' She removed her diamond earrings, the diamond studs on her nose, her necklace, gold bangles rings, and threw them at him. "Now, come on, children, get up! Let us get out." She tried to go near the children. He barred her way. Don't touch them or talk to them. (88)

Savitri here philosophizes about the plight of the entire woman race that is just the means of amusement and entertainment to the male race. As a matter of fact in

patriarchy women do not have any thing of their own as property. Whatever they use are owned by males such father, husband and son as daughter, wife and mother respectively. They do not have even their own identity. First they are recognized as daughter secondly as wife and finally as mother of someone. Throughout all phases of their life women never get identified separately. It is a great tragedy on the part of the entire human race. Women are in fact as source of human origin and without them the continuation of human generation cannot be imagined. However they live the life of parasite and get recognized in association with males. Furthermore the male-dominated society has made women slaves to men who are consciously unconscious about the hazards women face in course of their life. The above extract makes it clear that women are made more cultured and religious in the name of beautifying them to please men. They are trained to look beautiful and to beautify them they need money and thus ultimately they have to depend on males economically. Things that women wear do not belong to them since they do not earn money. Rather economically they are dependent on males. Here Savitri comes to know the fact that everything she has belongs to others except her body. In fact she is absolutely right all along. Putting off all sorts of jewels that have been the means of slavery to her displays the fact she protests against the male world and ideology. She rather thinks of her self and gets committed to either leaving the human world or creating her separate identity going away from the kin and kith. Her complaint is not simply against her husband but against the entire male race simply because she is a typical woman character intentionally created by Narayan *The Dark Room*.

There are a lot of differences between the old Savitri who is before she leaves home and the new one who is after she comes outside the house. She feels changed a lot as she enters the world of challenges and experience. The world in which she has

lived for a long time after getting unified in the conjugal bond is really too much oppressive and antagonistic to her. She even decides not go to her parents' house she sees probable suppression from the males there. But before doing anything she recalls her acts made in course of time as such:

So strange indeed did this statement sound to her that she asked herself: "Am I the same old Savitri or am I someone else? Perhaps this is just a dream. And I must be someone else posing as Savitri because I couldn't have had the courage to talk back to my husband. I have never done it in my life. I couldn't have had the courage to walk the streets at midnight. I am afraid to go even a hundred yards from the house unescorted. (90-1)

Savitri is reborn in the sense that she recognizes her real self and comes to know her potentials. Before this she has never even dared to walk alone means she has always lived the life of dependency and parasite. She has always followed the track of tradition and culture. She has never attempted to talk so boldly with her husband because of fear. It is the fear which has ever deprived her of her unalienable rights and made her depend on others. Once she loses fear and gets bold finds a drastic change within her self and recognizes her being. This transformation shakes the entire male world which is illusive, confusing and oppressive. In fact resistance against the male ideology paves a path to her so that she walks along. But the path she is determined to approaching is too much complicated and challenging. The bitter truth of life is one has to depend on others if s/he is capable of earning. The same situation appears before Savitri after she has come outside the house. She faces existential problems since she does not see anyone to energize her for continuation of her further life. She is in dilemma and cannot decide what she should do now onwards. An uneducated

woman made dependent right from her birth first on father, secondly on husband and finally she would depend on her son if stayed home feels confused. This dilemma ultimately forces her to commit suicide since she does not want to live on charity provided by either father or her husband. Along with this she cannot make money herself since she is no more educated and skilled. The alternative she sees is just begging. Her situation is very puzzling:

No one who could not live by herself should be allowed to exist. If I take the train and go to my parents, I shall feed on my father's pension; if I go back home, I shall be living on my husband's earnings, and later, on Babu. What can I do by myself? Unfit to earn a handful of rice except by begging. If I had gone to a college and studied, I might have become a teacher or something. [...] What is the difference between a prostitute and a married woman?-the prostitute changes her men, but a married woman doesn't; that's all, but both earn their food and shelter in the same manner. (93)

Savitri's confused state enforces her to think a lot about the marital and the position of women in patriarchy. She sounds very philosophical and critical since she has come across the similar situation. She knows better who males are and how they play their roles of oppressors and masters. They always think and feel superior to women. In Indian culture women are trained right from their birth in such a way that they get bound to depend on father, husband and on son respectively at different stages of their life. They always live for others and do everything for the sake of others' happiness. Women are very tolerant and bear every sort of ups and downs in their life. But when they realize that they have been under the oppression and exploitation, they revolt against such system

created by males in patriarchy like Savitri. Savitri has already stayed long in the conjugal bond and experienced a lot how males behave with women. In fact men suppress and impose their ideas. Love is just the matter of pretension in the many marriage bonds. Furthermore Savitri's marriage has taught her the actual facet of marriage life and the true nature of males. Now she concludes that the marriage is life-long prostitution institution in which husbands pay and feed their wives throughout their conjugal life. In fact Savitri is true and her conclusion is justifiable in the case males just treat with women as if they are puppets and senseless creatures. If marriage does not guarantee the common and mutual respect of both wife and husband they should quit the marriage bond and start living separately. If women do not make money to survive on, they are similar to prostitutes. But now onwards she is determined to living on her own earning since she does not prefer to live of a prostitute. Along with this she doesn't want to go to any males either to her father's house and or to her husband since to her both of them are oppressors and enemies to women race. From the human existential perspective her decision is right and commendable. However, it seems impractical and improbable in real life of women in India. In fact that makes her fail in the matter of resistance against her family and basically husband.

Motherly love never loses its grip. Rather women are tolerant and docile as well as compromising that they keep on being in love with those who are even possibly to lose their freedom for the sake of children's happiness and satisfaction. She is more concerned to her children than to her husband after she is outside the house since she is more a mother than a wife. As a mother she is soft-hearted and cannot forget them as she sees possibility that her children would badly be treated by

another woman if Ramani brought her home. She keeps on thinking of the family affair despite the fact that she is now free from that oppressive husband:

She was an individual with pride and with a soul, and she wasn't going to submit to everything hereafter. Would he be searching for her now?

It was more likely he had brought the other one and kept her in the house. Would she be ill-treating the children? Savitri wished that she had asked Janamma or Gangu to keep an eye on the children.

But...children? Let them alone. They were his; he paid the midwife, and it was his duty to look after them. (103)

She thinks that her husband would bring another woman as her children's stepmother and she would behave with them so badly that Savitri could not bear. She can face any kind of situation and compromise for her happiness and is ready to lose moments of freedom as well for the sake of her children's happiness. In fact she cannot forget her children despite the fact that she is alone and wants to remain so. It is Indian women's intrinsic quality that they are too much tolerant and loving as well as loyal to their families which really compels them to sacrifice even their own freedom and happiness. Her concern to children clarifies the fact that mother is mother because she is sacrificing and forgiving. Indian women are filled with unimaginable love and kindness that enliven them in every mode of their life.

Women need to be firm in order to be successful in their life. In fact firmness is the secret of success and it leads one to fight against all sorts of problems and challenges in life. But when Savitri is in the world of experience and challenges she has to work. She knows nothing except some homely tasks such as gardening, cooking and sewing. People do not prefer to pay such workers since in every house women perform their wifely duties without being paid.

Hence Savitri does face the crisis of jobs since she is uneducated and unskilled. In the world of experience, skill and education matter a lot and at the same time women are no more considered good if they do not stay with husbands and in the families. Savitri is in very critical situation that she is no more given a job that helps her get paid with such an amount of money that can feed her. She has been trained to do all such jobs which eventually enslave her and make her dependent forever. Despite her innumerable efforts to release her from all sorts of suppression and oppression done by males, she is ultimately forced to go back and take shelter in her husband's house. It shows her incapability and failure. She cannot indeed make her independent and a thinking being. It is the plight of Indian women in the pre-independence period of India. Women then resisted against dominating ideologies in patriarchy but they failed and similar situation Savitri does face in Narayan's *The Dark Room*. Savitri in the initial phase of her conjugal life remains docile and demure and does not question anything her husband Ramani does but her stay in the oppressive and dominating milieu teaches Savitri a lot about the human self and revolutionizes her in such a way that she starts suspecting her husband's indifference towards family and delay to come home from the office. She has been mute till she feels dominated and exploited in the family.

There is a drastic and sudden change in her thought process and commences revolting against any sort of domination and oppression and eventually leaves the house without thinking of the children and the husband. She gets strong and bold as if she was an iron pillar and cannot be broken. This is why she kicks out each sort of family bond and goes outside to face challenges and find out her separate identity. Leaving house and family is her resistance against the male. At the same time her

unwillingness to accept any sort of charity is the awareness of her selfhood. But the patriarchy does not permit her to remain independent and alien in the world of emancipation. This is why Savitri fails to create her separate identity and live on her own income. Eventually her return to the patriarchy discloses the fact that her resistance becomes futile and proves meaningless in the male-dominated society.

Chapter IV: Conclusion

Narayan in *The Dark Room* figures out the contemporary realistic situation of women who were trained to depend on male images such as father, husband, and son gradually at distinct stages of their life and remain obedient and docile in all cases. Hence the novel, *The Dark Room* centralizes the protagonist Savitri who represents all Indian women of the pre-independence period of India. She is an uneducated and unskilled typical Indian woman who has always been obedient, docile, submissive and receptive throughout her conjugal life. She has never attempted to question her husband assuming that males should not be intervened while they are performing their roles since what they do is right and at the same time women do not have to suspect males' decision. In fact women are very tolerant and sacrificing. Along with all these qualities they are ready to suffer a lot for the sake of their children's happiness. They are soft-hearted since they are forgiving and never get selfish and greedy for their momentary pleasure. They always think of others' happiness and pleasure. They can bear everything but cannot tolerate when their husbands turn rude and get interested in other women. This is the most intolerable thing to them. It is natural they need dealing so softly and in very meek manner or they will feel bad and turn unhappy.

Savitri expects her husband be always in love with her and never ignore her. She sees her future only in the life supported by her dear husband Ramani and goodness of their children. She is indeed dependent on her husband in all ways economically, socially, emotionally and sexually but when Ramani gets interested in the woman recently appointed in his Insurance company office Shanta Bai, his behavior and manner are drastically changed. Furthermore he starts neglecting his family especially Savitri. His indifference to the family affair and his wife Savitri brings about a psychological rift between husband and wife which is natural as well.

Along with all these he has given away the bench on which Savitri is used to having rest. The information about Ramani's relationship with Shanta Bai sows the seed of suspicion in the mind of Savitri. Right from then her resistance commences and strongly opposes. But her revolt is very much indirect. She cannot oppose males directly as she has been trained not question males' deeds and their decisions. At the same time she has always been dependent on husband's charity and is still eating on that as well. She loves children too much. In fact she has given birth to them but at the moment she is deprived of claiming that they belong to her. This miserable situation enforces her to make some new steps into her life so that she can live her own life and can help her self be respected and recognized separately. She has got tired of suppression and exploitation and when this oppression crosses its limit she is forced to quit her husband's house since the house she has ever lived in does not belong to her. The first house belonged to her father and the present house belongs to Ramani her husband.

Savitri turns strong and starts making decisions her own with the hope that she will be able to release her from the trap of oppression and suppression. She cannot bear the presence of another woman into her husband's life. When she gets tired from tolerance she turns and bold and gets ready even to leave the house without children. The fact reflects here that Indian women are holy pure and sacred and they take their marriage as the sacred bond between and husband and wife but Savitri find her marriage bond very much fragile and impure where there is dishonesty and treachery which ultimately weaken it more and even can be breached.

As a matter of fact in patriarchy women do not have any thing of their own as property. Whatever they use are owned by males such father, husband and son as daughter, wife and mother respectively. They do not have even their own identity.

First they are recognized as daughter secondly as wife and finally as mother of someone. Throughout all phases of their life women never get identified separately. It is a great tragedy on the part of the entire human race. Women are in fact as source of human origin and without them the continuation of human generation cannot be imagined. However they live the life of parasite and get recognized in association with males. Furthermore the male-dominated society has made women slaves to men who are consciously unconscious about the hazards women face in course of their life.

The situations and different ups and downs change old Savitri into new one who is before she leaves home and the new one who is after she comes outside the house. She feels changed a lot as she enters the world of challenges and experience. The world in which she has lived for a long time after getting unified in the conjugal bond is really too much oppressive and antagonistic to her. She even decides not to go to her parents' house since she sees probable suppression from the males there.

It is Indian women's intrinsic quality that they are too much tolerant and loving as well as loyal to their families which really compels them to sacrifice even their own freedom and happiness. She is too much concerned to her children despite the fact she sees them as obstacles on the path of her free life simply because mother is mother as she is sacrificing and forgiving. Indian women are filled with unimaginable love and kindness that enliven them in every mode of their life. Women need to be firm in order to be successful in their life. In fact firmness is the secret of success and it leads one to fight against all sorts of problems and challenges in life. But when Savitri is in the world of experience and challenges she has to work. She knows nothing except some homely tasks such as gardening, cooking and sewing. People do not prefer to pay such workers since in every house women perform their wifely duties without being paid. Hence Savitri does face the crisis of jobs since she is

uneducated and unskilled. In the world of experience, skill and education matter a lot and at the same time women are no more considered good if they do not stay with husbands and in the families. Savitri is in very critical situation that she is no more given a job that helps her get paid with such an amount of money that can feed her. She has been trained to do all such jobs which eventually enslave her and make her dependent forever. Despite her innumerable efforts to release her from all sorts of suppression and oppression done by males, she is ultimately forced to go back and take shelter in her husband's house. It shows her incapability and failure.

After all, Savitri fails to reach her destination in patriarchy which unfairly evaluates males and females with different measuring standard. The failure of resistance is because of the nature of society and the Indian culture in totality should be responsible for since she is just a victim in the hands of cultural norms and values which are biased and unfair to a great extent. Any woman in place of Savitri would do the same and would face the similar consequence in the Pre-independence period of India as they were culturally made to do so and have similar faith and creed.

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