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Representation of Women in Charles Dickens' *The Old Curiosity Shop*

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Letter of Approval

The thesis entitled "Representation of Women in Charles Dickens' *The Old Curiosity Shop*" submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University, by Mamata Adhikari has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research committee.

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Abstract

Dickens' attitude towards women is always contradictory. Dickens is ambiguous. He is sympathetic as well as biased towards women which is depicted in his novel *The Old Curiosity Shop*. He is an emotional social critic who shows his deep sympathy towards helpless women in distress which makes him as a supporter of women but at the same time he shows his deep respect to the patriarchal norms and values and become socially biased towards them when he metaphorically represents them as angel and monster in family. Other female characters like Miss Nell and Miss Quilip have surrendered themselves to the patriarchal ideology who are depicted as angel in a family where the strong and revolutionary kind of women like Miss Brass who deny herself to follow the patriarchal ideology is occasionally referred as female dragon.

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Chapter I. Charles Dickens Representation of Women

Charles Dickens shows his ambivalent nature towards women while representing the female characters in the novel *The Old Curiosity Shop*. Charles Dickens who is an emotional social critic always supports socially disadvantage group such as women and shows his sympathy towards them when they are in distress especially he supports those women who are docile, gentle, submissive and surrendered themselves towards the patriarchal ideologies. He seems to follow the patriarchal ideologies when he metaphorically represents the women as an angel or monster. Such metaphorical representation of women makes him to be rigid towards the patriarchal norms and values.

This project focuses on the representation of women in patriarchal society by representing the female characters in the Charles Dickens' novel *The Old Curiosity Shop*. In the text while representing the female characters writer seems to show his ambivalent attitude towards women. The writer shows sympathetic feelings towards the pathetic condition of female characters like Miss Nell and Mrs Quilip while he expresses his dislike towards the strong female character Miss Brass who is categorized as female dragon. Dickens individual sympathy together with his societal biasness makes him as an ambivalent writer towards women. Charles Dickens *The Old Curiosity Shop*, follows the female character Miss Nell, Mrs Quilip and Mrs Brass and the entire city and village throughout.

Miss Nell is the protagonist female. She is the orphan, poor girl of fourteen, she lives with her grandfather almost the times remaining lonely, unwatched and uncared. She has been portrayed as a fairy or angel girl with all kinds of virtues and beauty in her but she had to bear all kinds of sufferings, pains from her early childhood which ultimately takes her life away. Mrs Quilip is at the forefront of the

novel, who is introduced along with her interaction with neighborhood women in her house. Mrs Quilip is an abused wife of her tyrannical husband Mr. Quilip. Mrs Quilip is alike Miss Nell with all kind of feminine virtues and beauty. She is submissive towards her husband although he is wicked and exploits her.

Here in the novel, the writer portrays her as an Angelic woman in a family. There is a strong and aggressive female character, who is Miss Brass, the main authority in Brass law firm. She has lost all kind of feminine virtues like love, pity, sympathy and submissiveness and she has become so rude and masculine. Writer gives such traits in her and occasionally refers her as a female dragon.

This research not only shows womens' plight and suffering but also mirrors the patriarchal representation of women in the Victorian society. So this thesis unmasks the writer ambivalent attitude towards women on the basis of Simone de Bevoir, Marry Wollenscraft and Michel Foucault perspective. Since the major objective of the study is to demonstrate the representation and victimization of female in the patriarchal Victorian society. Mrs Quilip has become victim of domestic violence and Miss Nell has become the victim of sexual harassment.

It is important to note that Charles Dickens is a writer of Victorian period, which was highly dominated by the patriarchal values and norms. During his time there was a trend among the writers to metaphorically represent women either as angel or monster. Victorian writers' along with Dickens seems to show their individual sympathy towards the helpless women in distress but they used to show their resistant, ambivalent and panicked responses towards the revolutionary kind of women where they overtly support to the patriarchal norms and subtly support those women who becomes victim in the patriarchal society. So, the Victorian society which was strictly patriarchal under values the position of women in the society.

Together with the strong patriarchal norms and values which were deeply rooted in the society it was also a period of first wave feminism which raised the feminist issues. In that context males wanted to continue their hegemony and suppressive attitude towards women while women were starting to search for their freedom, equality and social justice. In those circumstances he becomes diplomatic by remaining in the middle path from where he represent women by showing his individual sympathy together with his societal biasness towards women in almost his novel including *The Old Curiosity Shop*.

Dickens' epic like long stories with various kinds of characters and his exhaustive depiction of contemporary life are unforgettable. Dickens wrote many novels among them are *Bleak House* which is considered as Dickens greatest works of social criticism. This novel attacks the society for its failure to be involved in the assistance of the poor. *Our Mutual Friend* is about wealth and poverty. *Oliver Twist* and *Great Expectations* are about child labor which represents his unpleasant childhood experience. *Hard Times* is an assault on the industrial vice and political economy that exploits the working class and deadens society. *Picwick Papers* is an allusion of the Victorian class struggles at the backdrop of the industrial revolution. *Our Mutual Friend* is a representation of the fragment human relationships, families and societies which indicate the extremely dehumanized and acquisitive Victorian society. Charles Dickens most of the novels are social commentaries which also reflect the role of Victorian women as in *Little Dorrit*. Together with these novels other novels which are remarkable for their social criticism are *Nicholas Nickelby*, *A Christmas Carol*, *Barnaby Rudge*, *A Tale of Two Cities*, *David Copperfield* and *The Old Curiosity Shop*.

Moreover, in the group of Charles Dickens, exceedingly popular novels *The Old Curiosity Shop* is regarded as a Black Sheep. *The Old Curiosity Shop* has been consistent in its remarkable ability to alienate countless readers by its sentimentality, clumsy, construction and arbitrary melodramatic sensationalism. Although the novel does not follow the convention developed by Dickens in his later novels and is also not a best seller like his other novels which helped him to establish as a greatest English novelist but this novel *The Old Curiosity Shop* left its own effect of deep sentimentalism and sense of tragedy to the readers. The novel was first appeared as an article in his weekly magazine *Master Humphreys Clock* later that story was extended to the novel. Dickens also wrote article in his daily and weekly magazine. He was not only a popular novelist and journalist in the later part of his life he gave a popular theatrical performance for his own private interest as well as for charity.

The Old Curiosity Shop received so many commentaries at the tragic death of the Nell. The tragic death of Miss Nell at the last part of the novel shook whole readers and different readers gave different opinion about this event in the text. Lord Jeffrey, the austere critic of the Edinburgh review, was found in tears at the tragic death of little Miss Nell who uttered-little Nelly, Bozs little Nelly is dead, others were outraged. Daniel O'connell the Irish M.P. threw the book out of his railway carriage window. Oscar Wilde at the end of the Century is said to have remarked that one must have a heart of stone to read the death of little Nell without laughing but the most severe attack in *The Old Curiosity Shop* Dickens event of the death of Nell was condemn by Aldous Huxley in his *Vulgarity in Literature*.

Everything in our lives, whether good or evil affects us most by contrast, Dickens writes confronted with Mr Quilip and Miss Nell we recognize evil immediately by its physically distorted embodiment, good by its beautiful and serene

countenance. Such a simple moral index continually brings the novel close to fairy tale others features contributed to this quality comes from Dickens own childhood experience like poppers, dwarfs, giants, waxworks and the concept of female dragon.

The structural elements of the novel support in creating the novel, the theme, characters and characterization, plot, setting and style comprehensively build in order to contribute to build unified structure and to contribute to give a total meaning of the novel. The novel is emotionally charged. Novel reveal about the pain and sufferings of socially disadvantage groups of the contemporary Victorian society such as poor people, children and women in a very realistic way. It also presents the continuous struggle between good and evil and its continuous existence in the human society. The writing is not straight forward and simple. Novel has a long and complicated sentence even as the characters grapple with uncomplicated questions. Writer use formal language full of complex words and sentences.

In *The Old Curiosity Shop* by presenting evil and good feature through the characters like Miss Nell and Mrs Quilip it makes us think about the existence of good people and bad people in the society and so is our life which consists of positive and negative aspect like happiness and sorrow. Our society together with our life is contradictory so we have to accept these opposite and positive aspects of our life and that will make us to become optimistic towards our life. There are so many criticisms on this novel *The Old Curiosity Shop*. It has been looked from several perspectives by several critics.

Victorian era was the initiation of feminist awakening; so many feminist activists formed the women communities and developed a kind of sisterhood among themselves to support the abused women and to encourage them to react against their husband exploitation. Charles Dickens who belongs to this era actually had sympathy

towards the plight of those male abused women but he also shows his dislike to those activist women who inspire those house wives to deny the male authority to revolt against male dominated values in the family. Regarding to the above mentioned ideas Lisa Surridge makes a comment on her book:

In *The Old Curiosity Shop* Dickens acknowledges the political reality of resistant women and indeed shows a veritable sisterhood of supportive women around Mrs Quilip but simultaneously under cuts their resistance as vicious and shrewish almost as distasteful and in need to reform as Mr. Quilip himself. Strong women characters that protect abused women are depicted as dangerous because they threatened the patriarchal marriage. (68)

It shows Dickens dislike with the strong women who deny males authority and go against them. Dickens as a social critic he had seen poor orphan girls in his society who were exploited by middle aged man by taking the advantage of their helpless and degradable condition. It was also the time of incompatible marriage prevailing in the society in which Dickens had shown these kinds of practices as exploitation of little girls. Regarding to the above mention idea, Lerner comments on the book:

Dickens shows how the ill natured middle aged man attempts to sexually exploit the teenage girls taking the advantage of their simplicity, innocence, poverty and parentless situation when Quilip invites little Nell to be Mrs Quilip the second. Thus these words just make the girl shrink from him and tremble. The point however is that the elderly and villainous Quilip whose hideous vitality forms and ongoing counterpart to Nells frail purity still has the prospects of a new life with a young wife of just fourteen. (76)

Dickens' novels, written in his forties usually portray the relationship of middle aged men with young girls, which show writers added anxiety about gender and masculinity, his own increasing preoccupation with ageing.

Dickens as a male member of the Victorian society had an idealistic view about the women which Dickens favors much in his writings. These idealistic women are capable to preserve their virtue even in the most deplorable condition of their life and such women were portrayed as the angelic women which was one of the most popular assumptions in Victorian society. That society categorized women as either angel or monster in family. Regarding to the idealistic view of Dickens about women Gorhams makes a comment on the book:

Dickens shows the prototype of the Victorian ideal women through the female character Nell who is unfortunately thrust into families that is ill equipped to give her the nurture and support she so desperately need, no one to comfort or advice her and she must solitarily deal with the conflicting feelings brought on by her impending womanhood. Each girl must grapple with these changes while she must simultaneously try to maintain the idealized role of good Victorian daughter who was gentle, loving, self-sacrificing and innocent. (172)

It shows the patriarchal Victorian society which demands Angel like daughter and wife in the family no matter whatever her circumstance is. Dickens who had seen domestic violence in the Victorian society had sympathetic feelings towards the pathetic condition of those male abused women. Although the period is well known for the start of feminist movement on the literature but in family women were exploited by their tyrannical husband who is presented by Dickens through the wicked

male characters who exploit their innocent wife. Regarding the above mentioned ideas, Elizabeth Foyster comments on the book:

Dickens clearly shows the marital violence in Victorian society as Dickens describes a tea party at Quilips house during which in absence of Mr Quilip himself the gathered women discuss the propensity of mankind to tyrannies over the weaker sex while Mrs Quilip bruised and cowed by her husband blushes meekly and say nothing, even her more forceful guests find that words fail them while discussing marital cruelty. (101)

Dickens presents the pathetic condition of women in the hand of their tyrannical husbands in the patriarchal Victorian society. Dickens also shows sympathy towards women through the representation of the plight of lonely wondering women who suffered from sexual and social stigma which is reflected in Lisa Hartsell Jackson comments on the book:

In *The Old Curiosity Shop* Dickens shows the plight of the lonely wondering women through the contemplation of the old man who ponder how curious it would be to imagine Nell in her future life holding her solitary way among a crowd of wild grotesque companions, the only pure fresh youthful object in the throng. (46)

It shows the miserable condition of a homeless, parentless, and young wondering women who face the all kind of suffering including the sexual harassment by the rogues of society in each step.

Dickens is ambivalent towards women while representing them in the novel. Sometimes he is sympathetic to some women characters seeing their pathetic

condition while sometimes he becomes socially biased towards some strong women characters that go against the patriarchal ideology.

While representing the female characters in the novel we find his individual sympathy as well as his societal biasness towards women which makes him as an ambivalent writer towards women. We find his sympathy towards the weak female characters such as Nell, Mrs Quilip and his biasness towards the strong female characters like Miss Brass, Mrs Jinwin. So, while representing the female characters in the novel he has become ambivalent towards them.

As a creative social writer he always expresses his deep sympathy towards the suppressed groups in the society like women, children, and poor people and always desire for their better condition in the society. Dickens had internalized the social and political changes during his period on the other hand being the male member of the patriarchal Victorian society he possesses some societal biasness towards women which makes him to be critical towards the strong female characters that go against the patriarchal norms and values.

He likes women to remain within the domestic affairs becoming obedient daughter, dutiful wife, loving and caring mother. Nell and Mrs Quilip are the female characters in the novel who are gentle, loving, innocent, self-sacrificing are representative of the Angelic women in the family. The strong and revolutionary kind of women like Miss Brass has been represented as a demonic woman in a family. Dicken's individual sympathy together with his societal biasness towards women makes him to deal about the women issues remaining in the middle path.

Different critics have commented on the issue of women and fewer critics have commented on the Dickens representation of women clarifying his individual sympathy together with his societal biasness towards women so in this project I am

trying to comment on this subject. First of all being men and becoming the part of patriarchal Victorian society he could not resist against the patriarchal norms and values to fully empower the women. The kind of teachings he got from conventional patriarchal Victorian society make up his mind to have some biasness towards women according to that society he could not go against the Victorian patriarchal ideology.

As the term feminism is defined as a doctrine advocating social political and all other rights of women equal to those of men. Feminism is synonymous to the womens' movement, the feminist movement, womens' liberation, female emancipation, womens' rights, which is defined as a arrange of movements and ideologies that share a common goal to define establish and achieve equal political, economic, cultural, personal and social right for women.

Feminism in parts of the western world has gone through three wave first wave feminism centered on the middle or upper class while women involved in suffrage and political equality. Second wave feminism attempted to further combat social and cultural inequalities. Third wave feminism is continuation to address the financial social and cultural inequalities and includes renewed campaigning for greater influence of women in politics and media. In reaction to political activism feminist have also womens' reproductive rights such as the right to abortion. Feminism is a broader term which include different aspect of humanity despite its focus on the whole issues of women. Feminism is distinguished as liberal and radical feminism in terms of their intensity of demand and the arrogance. Feminism also has affiliation to certain theoretical ideas such as it include political feminism, psychoanalytic Marxist or socialist feminism French feminism, bio feminism, post modernism or post structuralism feminism. This paper apply the feminist ideas of

Simon De Bevoir, Gilbert and Gubar, Marry wollenscraft Virginia Wollenscraft
Virginia wolf in the text *The Old Curiosity Shop*.

The researcher uses feminism as a methodological tool to analyze The Old Curiosity Shop to justify the topic of the study. The study has been divided into three chapters. The first chapter highlights on a very short biographical note of the novelist, literature review, objectives and significance of the study. The second chapter is the textual analysis in which the researcher has made citation and illustration of the activities of the characters to prove the hypothesis. The third chapter is the conclusion and finding of the research.

Chapter II. Feminist Politics in *The Old Curiosity Shop*

The title *The Old Curiosity Shop* is named after the shop of his home town and it still remaining in his home town. Dickens is also well known for taking the name of real places of England in the novel. *The Old Curiosity Shop* is about commodities, objects on exhibition and for sale. The essential thing I have to emphasis is now Dickens seems to be confuse in the categorization of persons and things just as an initial example the vicious lawyer Sampson Brass is described in chapter XII (100) as the ugliest piece of goods in all the stock at *The Old Curiosity Shop* making him a piece of item to be bought and sell like any others. It actually presents capitalistic Victorian society where each people behave other even themselves as things or commodities of the shop and their voice has become the voice of objects. In this way writer shows how the people have become materialistic in the capitalistic Victorian society.

The Old Curiosity Shop is a story of female protagonist 'Nell', whole story revolves round her suffering and struggle till she dies at the end of novel. *The Old Curiosity Shop* is also a novel of contrast, youth and old age, beauty and deformity, freedom and restraint, expansively comic sentimentally tragic it is sometimes fairytale sometimes myth and often Victorian life at its most bleak-haunted by the figures that live in the shadows some of the strongest character of Dickens many creations. Dicken's way of introducing giants, dwarfs and tricksters has made the novel one of the most powerful and bizarre in the presentation of the dark side. It describes tragedy of Nell up rooted from a secure and innocent childhood and cast into a world where evil takes many shapes. The mist fascinating of which is the stunted, lecherous Mr. Quilip. He is Nell tormentor and destroyer and it is his demonic energy that dominates the book. Unlike the other novels of Dickens the idea of evilness is presented

connecting it with the physical deformity and ugliness of characters like Mr Quilip. Almost the novels of Dickens ends with the happy ending of protagonist but this novel ends with the tragic death of protagonist Nell while it brings happy ending to other remaining characters. The novel is semi autobiographical like his other novels such as *David Copperfield* and *Great Expectations* where he presents his unpleasant experience of his early childhood.

Half part of novel is set in the town and remaining half part of the novel is set in countryside of England. He presents town life distorted and chaotic while the countryside life is full of beauty, serenity, sincerity and kindness. The novel presents Victorian people and Victorian way of life where the characters are both from upper middle class and low class comprising both males and females.

The novel shows the complex Victorian time. It was transitional period when the whole society of England was turning away from traditional way of living to the modern way of living. In the context of male female relationship females were starting to seek their rights and equality on the other hand patriarchal Victorian norms and values still existed in the society which wanted to keep women limited within their traditional roles. It was the time when women went outside to handle job on the other hand women had to fulfill their domestic responsibilities as a dutiful wife, loving and caring mother, loyal daughter in patriarchal Victorian society. Dickens as a creative social writer he always had sympathy towards the women. But being a male and a member of patriarchal Victorian society he possesses some societal biasness towards women while representing them in the novel. This makes him as ambivalent writer.

His sympathetic feelings towards Marchioness, the female character is shown as Dickens allowed her to marry Dick Swiveller a good handsome clerk although she

was an illegal child and a poor maid servant. Illegal child like Marchioness are out cast by conservative society like Victorian society but it is the greatness of Dickens his liberal thinking which made him to rise above such kind of hypocrisies' and conservativeness desiring for social change to equity and humanitarian values. Similarly Dickens sympathetic attitudes towards women can be seen in the novel when he presents Mr Quilip, the husband of Mrs Quilip who is always cruel towards his wife and always mistreats her. By showing the pathetic condition of Mrs Quilip in the hand of her tyrannical husband Mr. Quilip. Dickens here shows the domestic violence towards women by their husband. Here he shows male cruelty towards their innocent wives like Mrs Quilip desiring for the women's freedom and happiness. In the same way Dickens also seems sympathetic towards Miss Marchioness as he realizes her compulsion to involve in thieving money from her mistress because she was ill treated maid servant who used to almost live in hunger and Dickens shows that it was only the way to get some money to buy some bread and fulfill her hunger.

On the contrary, Dickens seems critical towards some of the strong female characters like Miss Brass, a professional woman who is main authority in Brass law firm who has been presented like a monster with the loss of feminine qualities like simplicity, gentleness, submissiveness and generosity. She rudely behaves to the person below her level even her brother Sampson Brass is cowed by her. She mistreats poor servant Marchioness here writer presents her so negatively because it seems that in his view when women becomes authoritative women lose their sensibility and becomes cruel towards inferior ones.

Similarly Dickens shows his favour and support to Miss Nell and Mrs Quilip who always remains nonreactive to their hostile patriarchal environment surrendering themselves to patriarchal society. While he shows his dislike to Miss Brass, a strong

female character, who challenges male authority who never surrenders herself to patriarchal society.

These evidences show that Charles Dickens actually like women remaining within home doing domestic works supporting her husband and caring her children. Dickens support towards patriarchy and becomes critical towards women which can be seen as he allows Mr Quilip a middle aged man to get married with young Mrs Quilip who have not even crossed her teenage. Dickens is ambivalent towards women as he sometimes supports some of the women character, while he is sometime critical to other female characters so this novel represent the ambivalent attitude of the writer.

In the novel *The Old Curiosity Shop* except the female character Miss Brass male members are more powerful both economically and socially Here females are exploited by males but the women are always submissive to their husbands in the family women are exploited by males and upper class male exploit the poor class women so low class women are not only exploited but males but by females as well its shows that low class females have become the victim of double exploitation for instance in a family Mrs Quilip is exploited by Mr Quilip according to class Miss Brass who belongs to rich family exploit Miss Marchioness poor orphan maid servant of her.

The novel presents socio economic problems in that time such as poverty stricken people, helpless condition of orphanage in Victorian England, child labor, women exploitation, prostitutions, huge class gap etc.

The novel contains so many characters who comes from low class background while few characters comes from upper middle class background but these few character belonging to class of wealth and power have control over the poor and powerless character from low class background. The old man who is obsessive

gambler Nell Trent is embodiment of Angelic qualities, Daniel Quilip the embodiment of demonic forces Mrs Quilip is true portrayal of idealistic wife according to patriarchy. Fredrick Trent the irresponsible wastrel brother of Nell. Dick Swiveller is emotional. Mr Sampson Brass is insensitive while Miss Brass is also insensitive and masculine women.

Fate plays a vital role in the novel which makes Miss Nell born in poor class and it is the fate that takes her mother away and makes her orphan to be left in the hand of her gambler grandfather who is over ninety and poverty stricken. Instead of looking after by her grandfather she manages everything for him like an elderly mother it is the poverty that makes her grandfather a gambler his obsession for gambling is actually to collect money for Nell to get rid of her poverty and so that she can live a comfortable life. In the name of gaining money he loses everything almost the time his fate makes him a loser. He lost everything he had in gambling due to which they had to leave their home town to countryside to live the life as a beggar. Due to too much hardships Nell ultimately dies she is the person to whom fate makes her to born in poverty and to die in poverty.

Through the moral characters like Nell, Kit, Kit's mother, Dickens shows how morality and humanitarian values exist even in most deplorable condition of poverty while the characters like Mr Quilip, Sampson Brass, Mrs. Brass who comes from rich class background loses the morality and humanitarian values.

As the chapter goes we find Nell who leave to countryside as a fugitive she leads her feeble grandfather like she is her mother and he is her small child. In such a small age she had to bear so many troubles and suffers during the journey. That goes from village to village sometimes begging and sometimes remaining hungry. Some coins shaved by Nell are even loosed by her grandfather in gambling her grandfather

who seems to be great burden for Nell. Victorian people also gave importance to property and wealth which can be seen in Mr. Fredrick. The irresponsible wastrel bother of Nell who believes their maternal grand fathers has money for Nell so he plans to marry Nell with Dick Swiveller easily convincible friend and to share the money equally between them for him the familial relationship is less important than the money. *The Old Curiosity Shop* is also a fairytale. Miss Nell is portrayed as a little Angle while Mr Quilip is portrayed as a little devil it looks like it is a tale of Angle and devil. *The Old Curiosity Shop* Nell is so virtuous so beautiful and so moral without any defect her excessive beauty, innocence and goodness makes her as someone who don't belong to earthly human being but from supernatural world similarly the excessive evilness, immorality, ugliness and over all his demonic appearance makes Quilip the character of Devil. With the beginning of chapter we find comparing Nell's small bed with the bed of fairy and while describing Mr Quilip the writer describes with all kind of evilness like hooked noose, ling and hooked nail and as a wretched dwarf.

Dickens has not represented his good women characters and bad women characters in a moderate way in this novel. His female characters are either too much good or virtuous like Nell and Mrs Quilip who are too good to identify them with angel in family or too much wicked women like Miss Brass who is occasionally referred as a female dragon.

Dickens conservative attitude towards women can be justified as Gilbert and Gunbar in *The Madwomen in Attic* comment on Dickens:

"Likewise, Dickens also creates the characters that represent the extremes of cultural hegemony, the pure women or the women who is confronted by "fear" or "loathing" the images of "angel" and "monster"

have been so ubiquitous throughout literature by men and much preference is always given to the ideal women who is usually an embodiment of true femininity as shaped by patriarchy." (812)

Dickens creates both the Victorian angel in the house through the portrayal of Miss Nell and Mrs Quilip and also the subversion of true female identity through Miss Shaly Brash. The female character Shaly Brass is in contrast with the former women which is a realization of the abandonment of the traditional role of women and the adoption of a new role outside the domestic sphere. Dicken's creation of opposite characters is also parallel to the conflicting ideas of the Nineteenth Century perception of women such as the growing feminist movement. He prefers the women like Miss Nell and Mrs Quilip who have pity, tolerance, love, submissiveness which makes them as an Angel in family while he seems to highly condemn Miss Shaly Brass who is strong and revolutionary woman. She seems to lose feminine virtues and traits as defined by patriarchy so she has been categorized as demonic woman in family. This way of categorizing the women as an Angel and demon is extreme, parochial and patriarchal.

Charles Dickens becomes more rigid towards women when he defines strong female character Miss Brass who is the main authority in Brass law firm with Demon like feature:

Miss Brass -a kind of amazons at common law. Her voice was exceedingly impressive, deep and rich in quality and once heard not easily forgotten her usual dress was a green gown in color not unlike the curtain of the office window made tight to the figure and terminating at the throat where it was fastened behind by a peculiarly large and massive button feeling no doubt that simplicity and plainness

are the soul elegance Miss Brass wore no collar or kerchief except upon her head which was invariably ornamented with a brown gauze scarf like a wing of the fabled vampire.(321)

Simplicity, calmness, gentleness in women is adored by Dickens while he hates the women lacking these feminine qualities in them and categorized them as Demonic women. In this novel Miss Brass has been presented lacking these kinds of feminine virtues in her to be categorized as a demonic woman in the family. This shows Dickens agreements towards the Victorian patriarchal ideologies. In such society women are either highly valorized to the level of angel or so deeply condemned to the level of demon.

The writer shows if women are given power, they become more violent and tyrannical in the case of Miss Brass who is the main authority in Brass law firm. She has lost the female virtues like pity, tolerance, love, gentleness, and simplicity and become masculine. Miss Shally Brass behaves so harshly and rudely to the people below her level. She even bosses her brother Mr. Brass who is cowed by her. Her masculine and bossy nature towards her brother can be seen in the conversation between Marchioness and Mr. Swiveller:

Not half what Miss Shally is, he isn't, replied the small servant, Shaking her head, 'Bless, you he'd never do anything without her' Oh! He wouldn't, wouldn't he? Said Dick Miss Sally keeps him in such order, said the small servant, ' he always asks her advice, Bless you, you wouldn't believe how much he catches it.'(531)

This shows Miss Sally is masculine and bossy in nature and she is different from other ideal females like Miss Nell and Miss Quilip who are full of the feminine virtues like love, pity, gentleness, sympathy and submissiveness. Miss Brass inhuman

treatment towards her maid servant Marchioness is so much pathetic that the poor innocent maid servant is not even given enough food to fulfill her appetite. This makes Miss Brass too much wicked with loss of humanitarian feelings which makes writer to represent her as a female dragon. Dick Swiveller makes a remark in the text:

I don't believe that small servant ever has anything to eat---she's going to feed the servant. Now or never!!--Miss Brass opening the safe brought from it a dreary waste of cold potatoes, looking as eatable as Stonehenge. This she placed before the small servant---.The small servant liked hard enough at it with her hungry eyes to see every shred of it, small as it was and answered 'yes'---.The hungry creature answered with a faint 'No'. (350-351)

Writer here represent Miss Marchioness so much wicked to associate herself not with the ordinary human being but with devil like creature that have lost all kinds of humanity feelings of love, pity, sympathy towards the helpless and destitute ones. Similarly in the text Dick Swiveller who frequently refers Miss Brass as a female dragon:

Of no use asking the dragon thought Dick one day, as he sat contemplating the features of Miss Sally Brass I suspect if I asked any question on that head, or alliance would be at an end. I wonder whether she is a dragon by the by, or something in the mermaid way. She has rather a scaly appearance. But Mermaids are fond of looking themselves in glass, which she can't be, and they have a habit of combing their hair which she hasn't. No she's a dragon. (350)

Through the utterance of the character Dick Swiveller writer has represents Miss Brass as a female dragon. He metaphorically represent Miss Brass a women as a

dragon which shows writers conservative attitude towards women and his agreement to the patriarchal ideologies which heightens women level to the angel or condemns them to the level of Monster.

Rising above all kinds of hypocrisies and parochial thinking Charles Dickens also becomes more liberal in his thinking when he allows Dick Swiveller to get married with Miss Marchioness a ill treated little maid servant of Miss Shaley Brass who is also a illegal child. Such condition had made her to live in the pathetic condition. Dick Swiveller who was going to get married with Miss Nell in the hope to get some fortune ultimately falls deeply in love and get married with little servant Miss Marchioness. He accepts Miss Marchioness as his wife knowing she was an illegal child who was not only outcast by society but also in humanly treated by her mistress Miss Marchioness. The happy wedding between Dick and Miss Marchioness is presented in the last part of the novel as the writer makes a remark:

Then it occurred to him, but not for the first time, that if she would marry him how comfortable they might be" So Richard asked her whatever she said it wasn't No',. and they were married in good earnest that day week which gave Mr Swiveller frequent occasion to remark at diverse subsequent periods that there had been a young lady saving up for him after all. (668)

This shows Dickens sympathetic feeling and his support to the socially unprivileged people like Miss Marchioness the female character in the novel. Miss Marchioness is liberally allowed to get happily married with Dick Swiveller a good handsome clerk although she was an illegal child and a poor maid servant. The illegal child like Marchioness are outcast by conservative society like Victorian society but it is the greatness of Dickens and his liberal thinking which made him to rise above such kind

of hypocrisies and conservativeness desiring for social change to equality and humanitarian values.

The novel shows writers high concern towards the plight of children especially the girl child through the character Miss Nell the poor orphan girl child of fourteen who is living with her grandfather over ninety. She is looking after him like a child managing all household affairs like an elderly woman by seen over burden of a girl child in such a small age writer's heart is melted. In the beginning part of the novel through his first person narration he makes a remark:

It always grieves me to contemplate the initiation of children into the ways of life when they are scarcely more than infants. It checks their confidence and simplicity two of the best qualities that heaven gives them and demands that they share our sorrows before they are capable of entering into our enjoyments. (48)

This shows Dickens was against girl child labor who opposed keeping girl child as a house maid. It also reveals the trend of keeping small girls as a house maid in the Victorian society which shows Dickens perspective who wants the children like Miss Nell to fully enjoy innocence world of their childhood before they entered to the world of experience or adulthood.

He expresses his deep sympathy towards female character Nell when he ponders about her parentless, careless, loneliness and insecure condition in the beginning part of the novel through his first person narration.

" I sat down in my easy chairs and felling back upon its ample cushions, pictured to myself the child in her bed: alone, unwatched, uncared (for save by angels) yet sleeping peacefully. So very young, so spiritual, so slight, and fairy like a creature passing the long dull nights

in such an uncongenial place. I could not dismiss it from my thoughts."(55)

Writer is tormented by thinking about the pathetic condition of Miss Nell a young, beautiful and innocent girl is unsafe due to her parentless, lonely and uncared condition in the hostile environment where there is fear of sexual harassment by the evil nature man in her surrounding so it looks like her virginity and purity is in danger in such condition she is left to be looked at by God.

In the some way Dickens shows his individual sympathy towards Mrs Quilip who is the victim of her tyrant and demon like husband Mr Quilip of the novel. Mrs Jinwin mother of Mrs Quilip who had seen her daughter tortured by her cruel son- in law Mr Quilip always become sympathetic towards her daughter and makes a remark in the women community about her daughter's pathetic condition and her extreme hatred towards her son- in law:

If he is !, interposed the mother, putting down her tea cup and brushing the crumbs out of her lap, preparatory to make a solemn deceleration.

If he is! He is the greatest tyrant that ever lived she daren't call her soul her own , he makes her tremble with a word and even with a look he frightens her to death and she hasn't the spirit to give him a word back, no, not a single word. (77)

This shows actually Dickens had seen extreme exploitation of women in the society and Mrs Quilip is the representative of those abused women and Mr Quilip is the representative of tyrant husband and through the pathetic condition of Mrs Quilip and tyrant behavior of Mr Quilip we find Dickens deep sympathy towards those male abused women while his hatred towards those tyrant males.

In the Victorian period money played a vital role in the marriage relation between male and female. Girls wanted financially strong person as a husband similarly male also wanted to be economically secure by marrying the girl with the property. Dick Swiveller thinks about marrying to Miss Nell who is supposed to have property. He feels mentally relief and has a sweet dream of their future life but before knowing about the property of Miss Nell he had denied marrying Miss Nell. "In a very few minutes Mr Swiveller was fast asleep dreaming that he had married Nelly Trent and come into the property and that this first act of power was to lay waste the market garden of Mr Chaggs and turn it into a brick-field". (118)

Victorian people gave importance to property and wealth in the marriage this can be seen in male character Mr. Dick Swiveller who agrees to get married with Miss Nell only when he knew from Nell irresponsible wretched brother Mr. Fedrick that their maternal grandfather has deposited money for Miss Nell.

Victorian society had certain perceptions about the good or ideal women who were heightened to the level of either goddess or angel in family and such society always taught the women to be an ideal daughter, wife and mother throughout their life. Regarding to this idea Virginia Woolf makes a comment on her book *A Room of One's Own*:

She was intensely sympathetic. She was immensely charming she was utterly unselfish. She excelled in the difficult arts of family life. She sacrifices herself daily. If there was chicken, she took the leg. If there was a drought, she sat in it-in short she was so constituted that she never had a mind or wish of her own, but preferred to sympathize always with the minds and wishes of others. Above all –I need not say it – she was pure. (168)

In the text *The Old Curiosity Shop* the female characters Miss Nell and Mrs Quilip are idealistic Victorian women who have been represented as angelic women in family with all kind of feminine virtues such as sacrificing, submissiveness, Kindness, faithfulness and are subservient towards the husband after their marriage while towards their parents before their marriage abandoning all kind of personal happiness, freedom, equality, comfort and always thinking about others comfort and happiness in their family. This is more evident from the fact that Mr. Quilip who always mistreat and exploit Mrs Quilip his wife but his wife is subservient to him who not only respect him as her lord but also she loves him dearly and is too much worried about him if he leaves away his home for days as Mrs Quilip express her extreme happiness when her irresponsible husband Mr Quilip arrives home after many days:

I am glad to see you Quilip in deed I am. In truth Mrs Quilip did seem a great deal more glad to behold her lord then might have been expected and did evince a degree of interest in his safety which all things considered was rather an accountable---How could you go away so long without saying a word to me or letting me hear of you or know anything about you?" asked the poor little women sobbing 'How could you be so cruel Quilip?" (455-456)

This gives the picture of ideal Victorian wife who is submissive towards her husband although he is wicked and unfaithful towards her. This idea seems to be similar to the patriarchal assumptions which taught women to remain as ideal wife towards her husband no matter if her husband is not faithful and is irresponsible towards her.

Writers like Charles Dickens in patriarchal Victorian society created their works by supporting the patriarchal assumptions of the society to the great extent while they show their critical attitude towards conservative patriarchal assumptions to

some extent because the writers like him who make their living through writing had to establish their position in the society supporting to those patriarchal assumptions because Victorian society was strictly patriarchal. Regarding to this above mention idea Ellen Miller Casey makes a comment on her book *Review of Dissenting Women in Dickens Novels: the Subversion of Domestic Ideology and Dickens and Imagination:*

Charles Dickens among other nineteenth century writers took the liberty of expressing their perception of the society in which they lived through their writings. Brenda Ayres argues that Dickens both advocated and resisted patriarchy, overtly promoting the ideology of domesticity while covertly subverting that ideology especially through his presentation of a typical woman. (704)

In the text he seems to emphasize greatly to the Victorian patriarchal ideology where he highly support and shows his sympathetic feelings towards the weak female characters like Miss Nell and Mrs Quilip who seems to surrender themselves to the patriarchal ideology while he shows his negative attitude towards the strong and revolutionary female character Miss Brass who seems denying herself to follow the patriarchal norms and values in the text.

In the Victorian society patriarchal ideology of the women as an angel or virgin was highly emphasized. Regarding to the above mention idea Steven Seidman makes a comment in his article *The Power of Desire and the Danger of Pleasure: Victorian Sexuality Reconsidered* "The Victorian society denied any forms of sexual feelings in women and restricted the role of sex to a procreative one" (47). The two female characters Miss Nell and Mrs Quilip have been portrayed preserving their purity. Miss Nell who is a pure virgin girl she struggle much to preserve her virginity.

She is the girl who even abandons her home town and move to countryside as a fugitive to live a life of bagger because to avoid Mr Quilip amorous advances towards her who intended to sexually exploit her taking the advantage of her helpless condition. Another woman Mrs Quilip is so pure, devoted and faithful towards her husband although her husband is a lecherous and wicked person. Dickens presents the pathetic condition of a helpless poor orphan girl like Miss Nell. Taking the advantage of such a vulnerable condition the lecherous evil man like Mr Quilip wants to exploit them sexually in the society and in such society it becomes hard for those girls to save their purity and virginity:

To be Mrs Quilip the second when Mrs Quilip first is dead sweet Nell, said the Quilip, wrinkle of his eyes and luring her towards him with his bend forefinger to be my wife, my little cherry cheeked red lipped wife. Say that Mrs Quilip lives five years on only for you will be just the proper age for me. Ha, Ha be a good girl, Nelly very good girl and see if one of these days you don't come to be Mrs Quilip of Tower Hill.

(93)

Patriarchal ideology highly emphasized about girls purity and virginity but at the same time the helpless and the innocent girl like Nell are attempted to exploit by evil natured man like Mr Quilip in the same patriarchal society. Where the girls like Miss Nell has to struggle much to save her own purity and virginity which value much to her rather than her life. This is the main cause why Miss Nell leaves her home town and move to the countryside as a fugitive to live a life as a beggar in order to avoid the amorous advances of Mr Quilip towards her.

In the same way he had also felt the importance of women in the society. He had conceptualized that without uplifting women's status the society cannot uplift

but the Victorian society which was strictly patriarchal made Dickens to hesitate to fully empower the women in his works. On the other hand he also seems to support women due to various reasons.

First Dickens in his period and in his society had seen various kinds of exploitation, suffering, suppression of the women such scenes of the society inspired him to write in support of women. As a social critic he was more sensitive towards the oppressed groups in the society. So he not only express his deep sympathy towards women but also the children and poor people who were leading life in a pathetic condition during his period and his society which compelled him to address these groups in his writing.

Actually Dickens work can be taken as a guideline to reform the society because his works are the mirror of society where he has reflected the social evil and incongruities such as gender biasness exploitation and suppression of socially disadvantage groups, hierarchical disintegration huge class gap, degrading effect of aristocratic and Bourgeois class towards poor, helpless and labor class people in a very realistic way in this way it also helps to create awareness among the people against social injustice, inequality and lack of freedom.

Overall we can say Dickens wrote in support of not only the women but also many oppressed groups in the society such as working class, children and other socially disadvantage groups.

There is no doubt that Dickens was highly sympathetic towards the plight of socially disadvantage groups including women in the society but he gives a silent agreement to a patriarchal society which sees women best place is to remain within domestic sphere fulfilling her domestic responsibilities. His ambivalent attitude towards women is more revealed in the fact that the novel highly valorizes the

feminine virtue in the same time it ridicule all the women. The feminine qualities like the gentleness, humility and softness of women is both strongly supported and ridiculed. There is a great victory of Mr Quilip the tyrannical husband of Mrs Quilip over all neighborhood women who joined together to sympathize and to encourage Mrs Quilip to be strong and react against her husband's cruelty but readers are by no means invited to take part in the cackling neighbor sympathy for her. The petty spitefulness, the cowardice blind egoism of neighborhood women in fact invites readers to laugh at first.

In the Victorian society the home was an important sphere and in the domestic sphere it outlines the relation between husband and wife and on a larger scales it outlined the relations between husband and wife on a larger scale. So, domestic ideology was highly emphasized on women while male spend most of the time in outside business being carefree about domestic affairs. Regarding to the above mention idea Ruckert Katie makes a comment on his book *Women a Law, Women's Issues Then and Now*:

The ideology of the home was greatly emphasized by the Victorians and they also believed that it was important to preserve the identity of the home even at the cost of demeaning any claim by adult women, daughters and wives to social and legal equality, individuality or rights independent of the men they are attached to. (174)

In the novel the female characters like Miss Nell and Miss Quilip seems almost the time managing their household affairs becoming worried about their family members while the male members like Mr Trent grandfather of Miss Nell and Mr Quilip husband of Mrs Quilip engage themselves outside either in gambling or in their

business affairs. This shows the domestic ideology was highly imposed on female while male were carefree about these domestic matters.

There was a trend in patriarchal Victorian society which metaphorically represent women as angel and monster which was also one of the basic trait of writing among the Victorian writers because this kind of representation of women become a culture in such society where women categorized with the subversive feminine symbols or the feminine symbols of transcendence. Regarding to the above mention idea Gilbert and Gubar makes a comment on the book *Madwomen in the Attic*:

Both the subversive feminine symbols (witches, evil eye menstrual pollution, castrating mothers) and the feminine symbols of transcendence (mother, goddesses, merciful dispensers of salvation) female symbols of justice can appear from certain points of view to stand both under and over the sphere of cultures hegemony. (814)

When we analyze text we find that Miss Nell and Mrs Quilip who surrender themselves towards the patriarchal ideologies are submissive, kind, faithful and loyal are the ideal Victorian women who are represented as angel in the family but opposite to these two female character is Miss Brass where she is defined cruel with lack of feminine virtues like love, pity, sympathy, submissiveness in her and she deny to surrender herself to the patriarchal ideologies where she is represented as a monster women in family by Dickens.

Law of Victorian society deprived women from the right to property so Victorian women were totally dependent upon male member in their family as a means of their survival. Regarding to the above mention idea Mary Lindon Shanley makes a comment on the book *Feminism, Marriage, and the Law in Victorian England*:

In Victorian society married women could not independently sign contracts nor draft valid wills and any married women property legally belonged to her husband. Unfortunately, marriage did not entirely offer economic stability and independence for women since Victorian society was very patriarchal. There were laws which forced women to be subservient to their husbands, for example, the common law doctrines of covertures, which the Victorians felt defined roles ordained by the natural and theological order which meant that through marriage man and woman became one person. (102)

In the text female characters like Miss Nell and Mrs Quilip are economically dependent on male members in their family. Miss Nell is economically dependent on her grandfather Mr Trent while Mrs Quilip is economically dependent on her tyrannical husband Mr Quilip. That is also one of the causes why Mrs Quilip is unable to resist against her husband cruelty.

In the industrial Victorian society women for the first time went outside their home to handle job and became a career women. It was the time when women started to become career conscious and economically independent. Regarding to above mention idea, Beddoe makes a comment on his book *Discovering Women's History: A Practical Guide to Researching the Lives of Women since 1800* " The industrial revolution brought about change in focus on women labor. Women had the opportunity to explore prospects outside the family establishment or even earn money" (92). In the text apart from other women Miss Brass is a career woman who is main authority in Brass law firm is strong and revolutionary in nature due to her education and her economic independence.

In mind, she was of a strong and vigorous turn, having from her earliest youth devoted herself with on common ardor to the study of the law. Not wasting her speculation upon its eagle flights which are but tracing it attentively through all the slippery and eel-like crawlings in which way it commonly pursues its. (321)

This shows the career consciousness among Victorian women who desire to become economically independent and establish their individual identity in the patriarchal society.

Economic independence in women makes women strong and revolutionary searching for their personal rights and freedom so the writer like Charles Dickens who prefer the women to remain within domestic affairs he mostly portrays women in his text who are economically dependent on male member in the family so that they remain subservient to the males in the families which shows his support to the patriarchal assumptions about women. Regarding to the above mention idea Elaine Showalter makes a comment on a book *A Literature of Their Own* "Dickens does not depict female characters who have economic liberty as those expressed by later feminist writers. His female characters are women who are yearning for financial freedom, unlike the modern women who are independent and self-sufficient "(9). In the text Miss Nell and Mrs Quilip are financially dependent on male members in the family so they are forced to be subservient towards their parents or towards their husband who are the means for their survival. Mrs Jinwin who is mother of Mrs Quilip seems to be so much strong in the women community when she makes an attack against those tyrannical husbands as she utters:

Owe indeed, ma, am! replied Mrs Jinwin when my poor husband, her father was alive, if he had ever ventured a cross word' to me, I 'd have

the good lady did not finish the sentence but she twisted off the head of a shrimp with a vindictiveness which seemed to imply the action was some degree a substitute for words. (75)

Mrs Jinwin is more sympathetic towards her daughter who is severely exploited in the in hand of her son in law Mr Quilip and had her extreme hatred towards her son in law. Seeing such a pathetic condition of her daughter she even tries to encourage her to react against her husband cruelty in the absence of Mr Quilip himself. "Do you hear that Betsy? said Mrs Jinwin in a warning voice How often have I said the very same words to you and almost gone down on my knees when spoke 'em!" (75). Mrs Jinwin who also appears to be strong women giving big words against male domination in women community and in front of her daughter but in presence of Mr Quilip her voice is suppressed and she has become failure to save Mrs Quilip from her husband cruelty. "His fair enemies tossed their heads slightly as they sought their respective bonnets and shawls but left all verbal contention to Mrs Jinwin who finding herself in the position of champion made a faint struggle to sustain character" (77).

This shows in the patriarchal society though there were some women like Mrs Jinwin who seems to be strong women outside home when they speak against male domination and exploitation towards women in women communities. But such women become failure to resist against male domination and tyranny within their own family and they are unable to save themselves and their own daughter and sister from male exploitation because they are financially dependent on those male members in family who are the means for their survival.

Lack of women education not only degrades the women status in the society but such condition degrades the whole society. Regarding to this idea first feminist

mother of feminism Mary Wollstencraft on her *Vindication of Rights of Women* makes a remark on the importance of women education in the society:

The importance of education not only for women own personal development is also stating in her preface that my main argument is built on this simple principle that if 'women' not prepared by education to become the companion of man she will stop the progress of knowledge and virtues for truth must be common to all, she contends that society will degenerate without educated women particularly mothers are the primary educators of young children. (70)

In the text we find the condition of women education is so poor. Miss Nell who even has not crossed her teenage is expected to get married while Mrs Quilip is also a married in so young age with Mr Quilip. The education is important for the psychological and economical development of the individual. Lack of education in these two women has made them economically dependent on their parents or husbands and psychologically they are more conservative who surrender themselves to the patriarchal ideology. Such condition of them has degrade their status and make them weak as a result male member got chance to dominate and exploit them so male too have degraded themselves due to the lack of women education and the society as a whole seems to degenerate and degrade.

In the Victorian society marriage was highly based on money. Parents of the young girls always think their daughters to get married with a good fortune gentleman so that they can live an economically secure life. Regarding to this idea Mary Wollstencraft comments on her book *Vindication of Rights of Women*, " Girls marry merely to better themselves to borrow a significant vulgar phrase, and have such perfect power over their hearts as not to permit themselves to fall in love till a man

with a superior fortune offers"(75). In *The Old Curiosity Shop* the young girls are expected to get a good fortune husband. In the case of Miss Nell her grandfather Mr Trent always thinks his granddaughter Miss Nell to get married with a rich gentle man so that she could be financially secure to live a comfortable and happy life then after.

In the patriarchal society male is primary sex while female are secondary sex. In such society women are socially, politically and economically subordinate to male.

Although there is biological difference between male and female but there is no strong point to say that female are weaker than male because women can do all the things that man can but it is the society which deny developing such kinds of ability to women. They are suppress by the patriarchal norms and assumptions from very beginning of their life in the patriarchal family system as well as patriarchal society which only encourage and force women to follow the domestic ideologies instead of teaching them to develop their ability and skills as man. Regarding to the above mention idea Simone De Beauvoir makes a comment on her book *The Second Sex*:

Beauvoir says a woman knows how to be as active, effective and silent as a man. She says that women handle masculine logic "as skillfully as man if she has to". But her situation keeps her being useful, preparing food, clothes and lodging. She worries because she does not do anything, she complains, she cries, and she may threaten suicide. She protests but doesn't escape her lot. (72)

The female character like Miss Brass shows that woman can be as capable and efficient as males in the society. She is the professional women like male. Being a career woman she is economically independent and so she is independent in her decision and action like male. She is the main authority in Brass law firm. Her brother although is a male cannot take the independent decision and opinion to run the office

without her help. Miss Brass is more efficient and capable to run the office than male members in her law firm. She is able to handle the office being the head of the office while other male employees are dependent on her. This shows that if in the family and in the society women are given the same environment as male are given than women also can develop their ability and skills as male and become equal to male. Miss Brass is unlike the weak female characters like Miss Nell and Mrs Quilip who surrender themselves to the patriarchal ideology because from their very beginning they got the patriarchal teaching in the family and in the society which they follow as the ideology of their own life. So these women are unable to develop their individual ability and liberal thinking as males.

Through this novel Dickens tries to show the true life of English Victorian society. The book can also be looked as an attempt made by Dickens for social reform by making those ruling class people enlighten about the social problems. Thus this analysis shows that the life of socially disadvantage group such as women, workers and children was very pathetic during English Victorian period. The lower class people were exploited and dehumanized by those rich class people and Dickens writes in the favor of those destitute, women and children hoping for the uplifting of the socio-economic status of these groups.

Chapter III. Dickens as an Ambivalent Writer towards Women

The Old Curiosity Shop reveals Dickens ambivalent nature towards women.

Dickens shows his sympathy towards the women in distress which shows his individual sympathy towards the socially disadvantage groups like women. Together with such kind of feeling towards women he also becomes rigid towards patriarchal norms and values of Victorian society when he metaphorically represents women as an angel or monster in the family. This kind of patriarchal feelings towards women makes him to possess societal biasness towards women. His individual sympathy together with his societal biasness towards women makes him as an ambivalent writer towards women.

In the text writer shows his sympathy towards two female characters who are Miss Nell and Mrs Quilip. Miss Nell is presented in a pathetic condition where she is an orphan, poverty stricken, innocent girl with all kind of feminine virtues and beauty as defined by patriarchy. She is a young beautiful girl who lives in parentless, poor, innocent and careless situation. Whose virginity and purity even is in danger in such condition. She struggle much in her life to preserve her virginity and purity. The too much sufferings of her life ultimately take her life in the young age of sixteen. Similarly like her, there is another female character who is Mrs Quilip. She is alike Miss Nell with all kinds of feminine virtues and beauty in her but her life is also full of pain and sufferings. She has become the victim of domestic violence. Her husband Mr Quilip exploits her so much. He is always cruel towards her but she as an idealistic Victorian wife remains faithful, submissive, worried and shows deep love towards him. Charles Dickens shows his full support to these two weak female characters Miss Nell and Mrs Quilip who surrender themselves to the patriarchal ideology but opposite to these two female characters who is Miss Shalley Brass.

Writer shows his negative attitude towards her and condemns her by occasionally referring her as a female dragon. Miss Brass is presented with lack of feminine virtues like love, pity, sympathy and she is presented with masculine and bossy nature. Her brother Mr Brass is cowed by her. Her inhuman treatment towards her poor maid servant Miss Marchioness is more pathetic. This kind of cruel and masculine nature of Miss Brass makes her to metaphorically represent by Charles Dickens as a female dragon. The metaphorical representation of women as an angel and monster shows writers agreement to the patriarchal attitude towards women.

In summary, A feminist study of Dickens novel *The Old Curiosity Shop* shows that Dickens as a creative social writer was sympathetic with the plight of Victorian women but as a male member of a patriarchal Victorian society he also shows his societal biasness towards women to some extent. His representation of the female characters is a portrayal of the Victorian ideologies and assumptions about women. Unlike the other novelists who strongly promoted the Victorian gender construction through their writings during his time Dickens subtly criticizes the treatment of women by the patriarchal society.

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