

Chapter- I

Introduction

1.1 Life and Works of R. K. Narayan

Rasikpuram Krishnaswami Ayyar Narayanaswami, one of the best-known of the Indo-English writers, was born in Madras (now Chennai), in India on October 10, 1906. He preferred the shortened name as R. K. Narayan at the time of publication of his widely famous novel, *Swami and Friend* in 1935. His father, Rasikpuram Venkatarma Krishnaswami Iyer, was a provincial head master. Narayan's mother, Gnanambal, was quite ill after his birth and enlisted a wet nurse to feed her young son. When she became pregnant again, the two year old Narayan was sent to Madras to live in maternal house. In this way, he spent his early childhood with his maternal grandmother, Parvathi, who was called "Ammani". He lived with her and one of his uncles, T. N. Seshachalam until he was a teenager. He only spent few weeks each summer visiting his parents and siblings.

His grandmother taught him Sanskrit verses and told him stories from Indian epics. He grew up speaking Tamil and learned English at school. He achieved love, affection as well as discipline from his grandmother. R. K. Narayan studied for eight years at Lutheran Mission School close to his grandmother's house in Madras and for a short time at the CRC high school too. When his father was appointed headmaster of the Maharaja's High School in Mysore, Narayan moved back with his parents. To his father's consternation, Narayan was an indifferent student and after graduating high school, he failed the college entrance exam in English as he found the primary textbook too boring to read. He took the exam again a year later and eventually obtained his bachelor's degree from the University of Mysore in 1930. One of the few Indian-English writers, who spent nearly all his time in India, went abroad to the United States in 1956 at the invitation of the Rockefeller foundation.

His grandmother inspired young Narayan a passion for language and for people. He attended the Christian Mission School where, he said, he learned to love the Hindu gods simply because the Christian Chaplain ridiculed them. Narayan learnt Hindu myths and epics from his grandmother which became the inspiring forces for his writing career later. He spent his early years with his grandmother and uncle. Later, he joined to his parents, brothers and sisters in the family home in Mysore. According to his memories, he was never particularly enthusiastic about academic work. Narayan had his education entirely in south India and his mother tongue was Tamil. He settled down in Mysore where the regional language was Kannada. But he has written novels and short stories purely in English and became prominent in English literary field. Narayan married Rajam in 1934 and the conjugal life turned out to be a happy one. Rajam did not know English but she was very much interested in the work of her husband. She always remained as a source of inspiration for him. Narayan has reflected Rajam's character and personality in many of his women characters. But unfortunately, Narayan's happiness didn't remain for long time as Rajam died of typhoid in 1939 leaving young daughter, Hema. The untimely death of Rajam becomes bitter and shattering experience for Narayan that taught him the reality of life too. He never remarried. Like Narayan, a male character named Krishna in "*The English Teacher*" never remarries after his wife Sushila dies leaving daughter. So, a sort of autobiographical tone can be found in "*The English Teacher*".

The day to day life of ordinary middle class people has influenced Narayan's literary life very much. In addition to it, he read numerous British and American magazines and novels which made him very close with western culture. He was taught Hindu culture by his Indian society in general and parents and grandparents in particular. That is why, we feel mixture of these two cultures in his writing that is explicit in *The Dark Room* too.

Narayan had spent a short time in teaching after completing his bachelor's degree. Later he became a reporter to *The Madras Journal* for a short time. This profession could not be sustainable but enabled him to meet with a wide variety of people, and he was provided with the characters for his novels. Although Narayan commenced his literary career with short stories which used to appear in newspapers, he has made contribution to the remarkable development of the Indo-English novel. Narayan is regarded as one of the 'Big Three' of the Indo-Anglican fiction writers—the other two figures are Mulk Raj Anand and Raj Rao. Professor Walsh puts the view, "If Anand is the novelist as reformer, Raj Rao is the novelist as a metaphysical poet and Narayan is simply the novelist as novelist" (1).

In the early stages of his career, his work was championed by the British novelist Graham Greene. Narayan wrote fourteen novels, five volumes of short stories, a number of travelogues and collections of non fiction, condensed versions of Indian epics in English, and the memoir- *My days*(1972). His novel writing began with *Swami and Friends* (1935), which has created Narayan's fictional world which is widely famous and repeated in every type of writing. After publishing first novel, *Swami and Friends*, he gave continuity to novel writing with *The Bachelor of Arts* (1937) and *The Dark Room* (1938). Then the World War II disturbed him from writing novels but the end of the war became the fertile land for his writing as he came up with *The English Teacher* (1945), which was followed by *Mr. Sampath* (1949), *The Financial Experts* (1952) and *Waiting for Mahatma* (1955) etc. *The Guide* (1958), *The Man Eater of Malgudi* (1961), *The Vendor of Sweets* (1967), *The Painter of Signs* (1976), *A Tiger for Malgudi* (1983), *Talkative Man* (1986), *The World of Nagraj* (1990) and *The Grandmother's Tale* (1993) etc. are his major fictional works.

He has made significant contribution in short stories, memoirs, essays and travelogues too. *A Horse and Two Goats* (1970), *Malgudi Days* (1982), *An Astrologer's Day and Other stories* (1947) and *Under the Banyan Tree* are the collections of stories, are his famous short stories. Likewise, *My Dateless Diary* (1964) and *The Emerald's Route* (1980) are his travel books. *Next Sunday* (1960), *Reluctant Guru*, *A Writer's Nightmare* (1988), *A Story Teller's World* and *Salt Sawdust* are his collections of essays or non-fictions. Apart from these, he revived the classic Indian epics that are related with mythology they are: - *Gods, Demons and Others* (1965), *The Ramayana* (1972) and *The Mahabharata* (1972), which are condensing the length of the works and settings in modern surroundings. Among of his works, *The Guide* (1958) has been regarded Narayan's Masterpiece by many critics.

Narayan won numerous awards and honors for his works. He won the national prize of the Sahitya Akademi, the Indian Literary Academy, for *The Guide* in 1958. He was honored with The Padma Bhushan (1964), a coveted Indian award, for distinguished service to literature. In 1980, R. K. Narayan was awarded the Ac Benson Medal by the Royal Society of Literature. He was an honorary member of the society. He was selected an honorary member of the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters in 1982, and nominated to the Rajya Sabha-the upper house of parliament of India in 1989. In addition, the University of Mysore, Delhi University and the University of Leeds conferred honorary doctorates on him. He was awarded Padma Vibhushan in 2000. Narayan lived till age of ninety-four (died on May 13, 2001), writing for more than fifty years and publishing until he was eighty seven.

1.2 His Style of Writing

Narayan's novels are characterized by Chekhovian simplicity and gentle humor. His writing style is marked by simplicity and subtle humor. He told stories of ordinary

people trying to live their simple life in a changing world. The characters in his novels are very ordinary, down-to-earth Indians trying to blend tradition with modernization, often resulting in tragic-comic situations. His writing style is simple, unpretentious and witty, with a unique flavor as if he is writing in the native tongue. Many of Narayan's works are rooted in every day life, though he is not shy of invoking Hindu tales or traditional Indian folklore to emphasize a point.

R. K. Narayan depicts social realism in writing but not photographic reality; he rather represents reality, which is artistic. In this sense, he differs from the French realists and naturalists who were interested in the naked realism of life. William Walsh, a renowned critic observes, "The religious sense of Indian myth is part of Narayan's grip of reality" (98). According to another critic, Bhatnagar, "Narayan depicts a kind of realism which is something more than reportage" (24).

Narayan blends his themes and styles. His stories begin with realistic settings and everyday happenings in the life of a cross-section of Indian society, with characters of all classes. The Malgudi of his novels in India is microcosm. Like Hardy's Wessex, Malgudi is a recurrent locale of his novels. Walsh has further stressed the universal quality of Malgudi: "Whatever happens in India happens in Malgudi and whatever happens in Malgudi happens everywhere" (24). Narayan's novels are set in the imaginary town, Malgudi which reflects the typical Indian way of living that is colored with the touch of modernity.

The characters in Narayan's novels accept their fates with an equanimity that suggests their faith that things will somehow turn out happily. Narayan especially focuses upon Hindu myth in his writing which is blended with some of the modern features in most of his novels and short stories. He presents some characters having traditional view and some other having view of modernity. *The Dark Room* can be taken as an epitome of

such struggle where Savitri, the female protagonist of the novel, is a representative of traditional womanhood. She is spiritually devoted to her husband, Ramani. So, she adores him as a god and she never returns undesirable words even in the time of dispute. But on the other side, Ramani has strong craving for wooing away from traditional religious belief. Ramani becomes irresponsible towards his family. Such type of quality also can be found in Narayan's next novel, *The English Teacher* where Sushila is living traditional life but Krishna, her husband is influenced by western life. According to a prominent critic, Shashi Tharoor, "Narayan follows the familiar pattern taken from the *Puranas* where a demon gets too powerful, threatens the heavens with his elemental forces but finally goes up in the air like a bubble in the sea leaving the universes as calm as before"(80).

N. N. Sharan, another famous critic expresses his opinion similar to Tharoor, "Here we meet a different Narayan who not only asks fundamental questions about good and evil but also furnishes his own answer to them. While doing so, he bases his narrative technique on an ancient Hindu myth" (228). In this way, Sharan regards the novel perfectly based on Hindu myth of Bhasmasura.

Even if Narayan has projected two types of world of values juxtaposing tradition and modernity, he has specially focused on religious themes such as renunciation, incarnation; rebirth, the law of Karma, female issue, marriage and so on. Subtle irony, myth and gentle humor are some elements for portraying ageless rich heritage of Indian culture and tradition. Narayan has strong craftsmanship of blending spiritual and secular ideas with which Indians are usually familiar.

Narayan writes frequently of an everlasting conflict between individuality and the demands of tradition. Furthermore, Narayan has been predominately comic, reflecting with humor- the struggle of the individual consciousness to find peace within the

framework of public life. By regarding the craftsmanship of using the comic elements that is related with ironic aspect, a distinguished critic Mukharjee says:

His ironic dimension is an integral part of his comic vision. He explores the tremendous possibilities of the comic in the common place world of Malgudi. He is essentially a comic ironist who has taken a keen interest in Indian life in and around Malgudi. His humor portrayal of outer and inner conflicts of man with touches of pathos and irony demonstrates his insight into the human reality. (5)

Another critic Hari Prasanna comments on R. K. Narayan's techniques and styles as, "He is an enchanter, it is beautifully written, funny, and haunting evoking marvelously rich detail of the atmosphere of a small town in southern Indian and creating a magical world into which the reader is instantly drawn" (188). He praises Narayan's craftsmanship and finds him as an enchanter who meticulously observes the atmosphere of small town in southern India Malgudi with very funny and hunting story. Narayan handles English language successfully. So, his English language is simple and clear, and flows as of a native writer.

1.3 Critiques on R. K. Narayan and *The Dark Room*

Many critics have thrown light in their own manner on R. K. Narayan in general and *The Dark Room* in particular. One of the critics Professor K. R. S. Iyengar, introducing Narayan's third novel *The Dark Room*, says, "*The Dark Room* which appeared between '*The Bachelor of Arts*' and '*The English Teacher*' is a novel apart, a study of domestic disharmony..." (qtd. in N. N. Sharan 346).

Another critic Nagendra Nath Sharan opines, "It presents a candid picture of awakening in an Indian woman who is a real victim of the oppression caused by her assertive and exigent husband" (12).

Sharan has further stressed on domestic violence by comparing two different types of nature that are represented by Savitri and her husband, Ramani.

She is used to her husband's daily nagging and chiding. She understands fully the psychology of her life-partner. She could very easily declare with what temper her husband was in. Ramani tortures her a good deal and she patiently bears everything. Savitri is honest and pious. (76)

Similarly, another female character Shanta Bai in the novel also faces much oppression, especially by male, before Ramani exploits her physically in office that she tells as a past life in the following words:

Well, here is my life story. I was born in Mangalore. I was married when I was twelve to a cousin of mine, who was a gambler and a drunkard. When I was eighteen I found he wouldn't change, and so I left him. My parents would not tolerate it and I had to leave home. I had studied up to the Fifth Form, and now I joined a Mission School. After completing my matriculation, with the help of an aunt, I came to Madras and joined the Women's College. I passed my B.A. three years ago. Since then I have been drifting about. I have had odd teaching jobs and I have also been companion to a few rich children. On the whole it has been a very great struggle. It is all nonsense to say that women's salvation lies in education. It doesn't improve their lot a bit; it leaves them as badly unemployed as the men. (51)

Graham Greene, a prominent critic, observes a strange mixture of humor, sadness and beauty in Narayan's novel. Greene comments on Narayan as "Complete objectivity, complete freedom from comments" (52). Narayan, in most of his novels through the use of imaginary town Malgudi, has attempted to represent patriarchal society that could not

really accept female as an agent in Indian society. Narayan's third novel *The Dark Room* epitomizes the patriarchal mechanism in Indian society. Narayan is a conscious literary artist whose novelistic form is beautifully determined by the dramatic need and nature of his materials.

Narayan's novels are flexible enough to be used in a variety of ways. His fictional work ranges from tragedy to tragic-comedy to pure comedy. His fictions explore idea and ideology that is simply a mirror of life drifting into fantasy and presents a slice of life or to some extent romantic image. Narayan's fictions are domestic comedies rather than tragedies. A renowned critic Sisir Kumar Das says, "Narayan's fictional world is world of Comedy that springs from community with markedly traditional more standards of behaviors and beliefs" (71).

Meenakshi Mukharjee again presents her own view by considering the relation between husband and wife from beginning to final stage of novel.

Even in *The Dark Room*, where the pattern has an unhappy colouring, the norm is set at the beginning: the lopsided family of Ramani, where there is little understanding between husband and wife, but life goes on. The wife makes an unsuccessful attempt to run away and live a life of her own, but ultimately she comes back to the life she had left behind and we come back full circle to where the novel had begun. (124)

Narayan is primarily an artist with comic version. He has delighted his countries readers with simple language and ironic comment. Shashi Tharoor, an Indian critic praises Narayan's craftsmanship in this way: "R. K. Narayan is a master of story teller whose language is simple and unpretentious, whose wit is critical yet healing, and whose characters are drawn with sharp precision and subtle irony" (24). Prof. K. R. S. Iyenger rightly remarks "He is one of the few writers in India who seeks their craft seriously,

constantly striving to improve the instrument, pursuing with a sense of dedication what may often seem to be the mirage of technical perfection” (32).

Narayan is a man with sharp and minute observation. His observation has been reflected in his description of character and Milieu. He is very simple and gentle as well as religious by nature. He has given vivid ideas of Southern Indian life style in most of his writings by portraying reality of life.

Narayan is compared with Thomas Hardy and William Faulkner who also created imaginative setting like “Wessex” and “Yoknapatawpa” respectively. Narayan has beautifully created his imaginary town of Malgudi in which the action of his novels takes place. One of the critics, S. Krishna presents his view by comparing Narayan with Faulkner, an American literary figure in terms of using imaginary town as the following:

One of the important characters of the novel is that it gives its personages, a local habitation and a name. Narayan follows the line of Hardy and achieves his localization. Faulkner is another brilliant name in American who has an excellent master of place in fiction. So, the case with Narayan is in India. Faulkner’s fictional place is Yoknapatawpa: Narayan’s fictional setting is Malgudi. (27)

1.4 Story Synopsis

The story of the novel, *The Dark Room* by R. K. Narayan especially moves around the main characters Savitri, a traditional Hindu woman, and Ramani, a modernist and anti-traditional man. Savitri spiritually devotes to her husband and believes in Hindu religion and traditional view. But Ramani, her husband, in opposition, is man of thinking himself as a man full of everything. In other words, Ramani has aggressive and tyrannical behavior who is obsessed with the harsh and ruder aspects of patriarchal tradition but Savitri is vulnerable and submissive. That’s why, Ramani doesn’t take care of his family

properly whereas Savitri embraces all responsibilities in the family. The novel tells the discord in married life of Ramani and Savitri. Ramani, a pompous and insensitive man, ill treats her in very subtle ways. Savitri looks after her husband and children as well as whole household activities. That is why, all household activities will be in disorder without her presence. Everywhere she presents herself as Sharan comments, "Obedient, loyal, and responsible" (5). Hence, she becomes a responsible female figure in traditional society by bearing all kinds of duties. In each and every matter she works like a slave to Ramani. So, her independence and identity has been limited within four walls of house. Thus, patriarchal norms and values have hovered on Ramani as a result, Savitri becomes victim of it. In this way, marital discord appears due to the couple's different ideologies which are based on traditional view and view of modernity.

Although Ramani is irresponsible toward his family and household activities, he involves in Engladia insurance company enthusiastically. Ramani, being appointed as a senior officer, keeps himself observation in his work all the time. He doesn't consider the space and value for emotions and feelings. Ramani used to punish his son Babu even in minor issues, "His father moved towards him and twisted his ear, saying, "How often have I asked you to keep to your books and mind your business?"(38). Thus, Narayan comments on Ramani by presenting his merciless behavior with his son. Ramani inspired by modernity does not have any space for emotions and feelings but instead of it, he mainly emphasizes on profits and benefits. In opposition to it, Savitri, a devoted traditional Hindu woman, blooms emotional qualities such as love, affection, devotion and responsibility. Hence, these two characters represent two different types of attitudes.

Ramani, an obstinate man by nature, does not adopt any body's advice. In spite of his father's suggestion to continue his further study after passing his matriculation, he didn't care it by delivering bitter reply, "I know better what I must do" (108). In this way,

he does not desire any hindrance and disturbance when he wants to take his own decision. That's why, he considers that his wife does not have any right to object to his friendship with Shanta Bai. But Savitri understands fully the psychology of her life partner, Ramani who tortures her good deal and she patiently bears everything because of the fear of sin that rules her life. Ramani frequently arrives home with his friends without informing his wife that makes problem to Savitri to serve the guests properly- "He just picked up a friend at the club and brought him home for dinner. It made him furious if it was suggested that he should give notice: "We are not so down-and-out yet as not to afford some extra food without having to issue warnings beforehand" (10). He seems very much hypocritical in the sense that he does not want his guests to be known about the lacking in his house.

Ramani is unaware of his kid's health, education etc. He spends most of his time in office but neglects the betterment of his office since he recommends appointing incapable employee for the office but the docile person who can be easily exploited. He doesn't assess of honesty and dedication towards office but instead of it, he compels to resign the capable ones by saying, "The fairy is taking her seat here. She is to be given the best place, and so you have to quit" (58). He is totally guided by individualism so, he never hears other's advice but asserts to his own decision in every affairs.

Sometimes Ramani seems to be liberal and puts desire to go cinema with his wife but wants to leave the children behind. He says, "The children can go some other day. Not a fly extra now" (20). But Savitri being a devoted mother wants to go with them. After hearing her husband's desire to go leaving children at home she expresses such response: "Oh," she said unhappily. She knew it would be useless to plead. All the same she could not restrain herself. "The poor things, let them come, they will enjoy it." Kamala was already making some indistinct impatient noises" (20). Ramani, being guided by

individualism, desires to be isolated from his children too. He wants to enjoy his life in his own way by forgetting everyone. Though his daughter, Sumati, pleads with him, he is insensitive towards her appeal. It also clearly indicates that he has no any feelings, emotions towards his children by overwhelming on his own freedom.

Savitri, inspired by traditional values and Hindu religion, does not take 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” (11). It is clearly understood from the words of Ramani that Savitri bears traditional belief on respect to her husband in every way. On the other hand, Ramani always spends his time getting entertainment with modern achievements like car, films, electricity by neglecting other members of his own family. His life has been drastically changed by the scientific products. He always gets expedition in his car and is familiar with the outer modern world. On the contrary, his wife is confined within the four walls of the house; she hardly gets time for outing with her husband. Hence, she spends her time in the traditional role. Here, we can see the total disparity between the husband and wife where husband representing the modernity and wife representing the traditional Hindu culture.

Shanta Bai, a female newly joined in Ramani’s insurance company, brings the storm in the life of Savitri as Ramani neglects his wife’s desire and favorite piece of furniture, a bench by offering to Shanta Bai. Being disappointed towards his action, Savitri asks him, “If you take away the bench, what am I to sleep on in the afternoons?” (54). Shanta Bai, who has been recruited by Ramani as part of his company, also brings about the serious tension in the scenario. Employing a new face, a female creates rumors which eventually Savitri comes to know after Gangu, her close friend reports to her, “Don’t think I am gossiping, but there was another person with him; perhaps it is that person about whom people are talking all this nonsense. I didn’t want to tell you, but I

thought you might as well know, because what harm is there?" (77). One day Savitri discovers that her husband has more intimacy than a professional interest in the woman and later she demands an explanation from Ramani. She starts suspecting Ramani and her suspicion goes to be proved right that he has made an extra-marital relationship with Shanta Bai. Savitri retreats to dark room when she is deeply hurt. The dark room is the room used to store the junk of the houses. Savitri, being harassed by the incompatible behavior of Ramani, sulks herself in the dark room in her house. Savitri sulking herself in the dark room, to some extent, is the revolt against patriarchal norms and values.

Tired of being ignored by a careless husband who doesn't hesitate to beat his small child Babu cruelly and Ramani neglects his family by enjoying with Shanta Bai. Eventually, Savitri decides to leave house being unable to bear her husband's behavior and says, "Do you think that I will stay in your house, breathe the air of your property, drink the water here, and eat food you buy with your money? No, I'll starve and die in the open, under the sky, a roof for which we need be obliged to no man" (87-88).

Savitri leaves the house in search of her emancipation as she appears to be indecisive to Ramani. Savitri tries to drown herself in Sarrayu river to get liberation from the oppressive husband and patriarchal norms. But her effort proves futile when a blacksmith, saves her life and takes her to his home where she is well looked after by his wife, Ponni. Deeply influenced by the traditional concept of untouchability, higher caste Savitri denies taking any sort of food offered by the blacksmiths, Mari and Ponni. When Savitri denies taking anything from them, Ponni rightly comments, "I see you are a Brahmin and won't stay with us. I will ask someone of your own caste to receive you" (106).

Savitri gets job in a local temple for a meager earning, she finally believes that she has the strength to live all by herself and make sense of her life. But after sometime, she feels the lack of homely environment and needs the help of patriarchal society, and she

feels, “I am like a bamboo pole which cannot stand without a wall to support it. . . .”

(146). Likewise, she is drawn by the love of her son and daughters, feels helpless in the absence of them, and says, “I must see them; I must see Babu, I must see Sumati, and I must see Kamala. Oh...” (146). Because of her submissive traditional quality, she relegates her own ego and surrenders to the Hindu religion and tradition. But on the other hand, modern character like Ramani never surrenders in front of tradition that is represented by his wife, Savitri.

Chapter - II

Theoretical Framework of Feminism and Existentialism

2.1 Feminism

The term 'Feminism' was used by the French dramatist Alexandre Dumas for the first time in 1872 in a pamphlet 'L', to designate the emerging movement for women's rights. With passing of the time it became worldwide cultural movement by demanding complete equality of rights with men of all human rights- socio-political, religious, moral, educational, economic, cultural freedom equality, and legal. This is the main essence of all feminist theories.

Feminism was not regarded as a distinctive and concerted approach in literature until 1960s. It took two centuries for the reorganization of women's cultural roles and achievement and for women's social and political rights although some books were published alerting women's existence before 1960s. One of the important books, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) by Mary Wollstonecraft had also alerted the women for discrimination shown against them. In this essay, she answers the attacks charged by many writers arguing that mind does not know sex. A male has both power of judgment and power of reason. Males get the public places; participate in social, economic and political aspects. But females are compelled to remain in household works, in a way they have no power of judgment. In fact, mind does not know sex but the male patriarchal ideology and education gives false notions of beauty and delicacy. So, Wollstonecraft suggests females not to read such sentimental novels. The patriarchal society, the traditional education system and the sentimental novels teach the females to be sentimental and beautiful but not intellectual. Women are equally intellectual but their intellectuality is suppressed, this is not the fault of women but it is the bias attitude of

patriarchal society which intentionally makes them weak, frail and inferior. Regarding the suppression of the women by their patriarchal values and norms, Wollstonecraft writes:

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

In R. K. Narayan's *The Dark Room* too, females are subjugated by making them ignorant and keeping them far from the power of judgment and other responsible dealing. In this way, any participation of Savitri cannot be seen at the time of decision making except her own decision leaving home in search of her own identity. She is confined within four walls of the house as a result, she does not get outer knowledge of the world and she remains ignorant.

Similarly, John Stuart Mill's *The Subjection of Women* (1869), and the American Margaret Fuller's *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* (1845) also challenged the idea that women's existence is not only to satisfy men and encouraged women to get same opportunities as men in educational, religious, political, economic and social field.

One of the critics, Chris Beasley defines feminism on the basis of collected definitions from some dictionaries and other related books as the following:

Dictionaries usually define it as the advocacy of women's rights based on a belief in the equality of the sexes, and in its broadest use the word refers to every one who is aware of and seeking to end women's subordination in any way and for any reason. Feminism originates in the perception that there is something wrong with society's treatment of women.

(Encyclopedia of feminism, 1987) (Beasley 27)

In the context of R. K. Narayan's novel, *The Dark Room*, with the view of women's rights based on belief in equality, Savitri seeks the support of her husband, Ramani and desires Ramani's liberal behavior to embrace some responsibilities in family too.

Virginia Woolf, a pioneer figure of feminist movement, appeared with her fiction and numerous other essays on women authors and educational, economic, social political disabilities which were formed by patriarchal society. She wrote *A Room of One's Own* (1929) as a reaction towards established patriarchal traditional view that rejects the female from their creativity too. She is not negative towards males but hates patriarchal norms and values. Woolf blames the society for spending less money on female education. Being such imbalance and inequality in society, she wants to balance it, so she is womanish, not feminist; her central argument is that women do not have separate space for writing. She argues that patriarchal society restricts women's creativity by rejecting feminist issue; she hopes to achieve a balance between male self-realization and female self-annihilation. Women, therefore, have to develop their separate sector of art and literature to express their feelings and emotions which are quite different from male's experiences.

According to Woolf, literature is open to every body, libraries can be locked. Although women have creative power, their creativity is repressed creating many difficulties and hindrances. Women are always interrupted while writing in common room so, Woolf wants to be far from male's intrusion by saying: "I must leave them, if only because they stimulate me to wander from my subject into trackless forests where I shall be lost and, very likely, devoured by wild beasts" (825). As Presented Virginia Woolf to the males who have formed the females totally subjugated. Males do not care

any existence of females as well as behave them wildly as if they have no any sensation. That is why, Females need to escape from males for their existence.

Savitri, in *The Dark Room*, attempts to flee from the male dominated society that is about to erase her existence by confining her within four walls of the house. So, she decides to leave the house with strong determination, "Do you think that I will stay in your house, breathe the air of your property, drink the water here, and eat food you buy with your money? No, I'll starve and die in the open, under the sky, a roof for which we need be obliged to no man" (87-88).

Simone De Beauvoir, one of the prominent French existential feminist, raises her voice by showing male's attitude towards female regarding as 'other' and they treat women as weaker sex or second sex. She argues that male is considered as 'Self' and subject but female is treated as 'other' and object. It is social construction based on male domination, which treats women as commodities. By creating binary opposition, males take advantages and get reputation. Likewise, Beauvoir says that paternalism regards women as mystery. It is said that whatever woman does, is for the sake of male. According to her, myths are created to dominate woman. For example, one of the male writers who created myth is D. H. Lawrence. He says that female cannot exist without male, since they are junior to male; a female has to come under the clutch of male. Male makes woman a doll on this socio-economic position. The woman sometime is presented as lovely mother, sometimes as cruel step mother too. Hence, the role of the female is determined by the male's mood and situation, although she is same in all time, Beauvoir says:

In sexuality and maternity woman as subject can claim autonomy; but to be a "true woman" she must accept herself as the Other. The men of today show a certain duplicity of attitude which is painfully lacerating to women;

they are willing on the whole to accept woman as a fellow being, an equal; but they still require her to remain the inessential. (1000)

Likewise, in R. K. Narayan's novel, *The Dark Room*, Savitri being marginalized from the perspective of males also sometime has been regarded as a dutiful wife and sometime has been taken as a mad woman which Ramani, her husband considers: "Savitri, you are trying my patience. What madness is this? Go to bed. For the last time I tell you, go to bed"(87). In this way, Ramani expresses his negative attitude toward Savitri at his angry mood although he used to ask her dutiful wife before it.

Another feminist Elaine Showalter, in her *A Literature of Their Own*, has divided feminist criticism into two approaches: Feminist criticism and Gynocriticism. In feminist criticism, woman interprets the text produced by male and women identify their position. In gynocriticism, woman studies the text produced by women from woman's perspective. But Showalter charges that males mainly dominate all the theories and the theories try to suppress women and their power. These theories are male oriented theories which treat women as inferior and passive creatures but men as vice versa. Showalter feels for the necessity of clearly articulated theory of feminist criticism. She wants to develop separate domain of gynocriticism that rejects the male models and theories, and seeks for a female model since most literary abstractions have offered the proper space only for males not females, which she complains:

Too many literary abstractions which claim to be universal have in fact described only male perceptions, experiences, and options, and have falsified the social and personal contexts in which literature is produced and consumed. In women's fiction, the complacently precise and systematizing male has often been the target of satire, especially when his subject is woman. (1225)

In R. K. Narayan's novel, *The Dark Room*, Savitri, a female character too, sometime has been behaved in childish manner by flattering more than essential matter in terms of making subject matter of mockery but she has been dealt just opposite of admiration which is applied to make satire upon her.

Similarly, Julia Kristeva, a French theorist, with her Article *From One Identity to Another*, talks about two stages: 'Semiotic' and 'Symbolic' which represent female and male pole respectively. Hence, by presenting equal value of semiotic and symbolic stage, she tries to balance gender ideology without any blaming to male oriented society. Kristeva doesn't mean that it is possible and easy to produce the work of art that is completely full of semiotic. There is no signification without combination of both semiotic and symbolic. Like Kristeva, Savitri attempts to make the combination of both male and female aspect which can bring balance on gender case. That's why, she becomes devoted and responsible towards family expecting same type of role from the side of her husband, Ramani but can not achieve such expectation from her husband.

According to Judith Butler, a prominent critic, "The semiotic is described by Kristeva as destroying or eroding the symbolic; it is said to be "before" meaning, as when a psychotic no longer uses words to signify..."(105).

Another 18th century French female writer Germaine Necker De Stael with her *Literature Considered in Its Relation to Social Institution* finds French revolution a new era for intellectual world. She even questions the place of women in society. She says that the place of women in society is still uncertain in many respects, "As soon as a woman is marked as a distinguished person, the public in general is prejudiced against her. The common people never judge except according to certain universal rules to which they can cling without risk" (451). In the Same manner in R. K. Narayan's *The Dark Room*, the uncertainty of life makes Savitiri search her identity by renouncing all kinds of objection

as well as her family to get salvation from the oppression. So, Savitri becomes rebellious for her rights of life with confidently.

M. H. Abrams, a renowned critic, regarding the feminist critical assumptions writes: "To these males, the female characters, when they play a role, are marginal and subordinate, and are represented either as complementary to or in opposition to masculine desires and enterprises" (90). From the very beginning of its trend, women are taken as inferior to men. In the novel, *The Dark Room* too, the suggestion and desire of Savitri are not given any space considering as a minor issue although they are suitable and effective for betterment of house.

Judith Butler, in two influential books, has opposed the notion that the feminist movement requires the concept of a female identity; that is, that there exist essential factors that define a woman as a woman. According to Butler, "The relation between masculine and feminine can't be represented in a signifying economy in which the masculine constitutes the closed circle of signifier and signified" (15).

Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar have described the later history of women's writings in *No Man's Land: The Place of the Woman Writer in the twentieth century*. *The Mad woman in the Attic* (1979) by Gilbert and Gubar stresses especially the psychodynamics of women writers in the nineteenth century.

In its diversity, Feminism is concerned with the revolt against patriarchal domination, which results in their being relegated to a secondary position. Most feminists believe that our culture is a patriarchal culture. Feminist literary critics try to explain how power imbalances due to gender in a given culture, are reflected or challenged by literary texts. Feminism intends to rebel against the hostile environment in which a woman lives. Moreover, all feminist activities including feminist theory and literary criticism have its ultimate goal to change the world by promoting gender equality. This campaign involves

female issue such as reproductive rights, domestic violence, maternity leave, equal pay, sexual harassment, discrimination and sexual violence. Themes explored in feminism include discrimination, stereotyping, objectification, oppression and patriarchy. According to feminist ideology, rights, obligations, status and privilege should not be determined by gender.

Feminism especially, focuses on physical equality and is opposed to gender roles stereotypes and discrimination against women, where women are thought to be passive, weak and helpless. Cultural feminism, one of the branches of feminism, asserts that there are biological differences between men and women. For instance, women are kinder and gentler than men, leading to the mentality that if women ruled the world there would be no wars.

The next branch material feminism inspires to liberate women by improving their material condition in the society. Likewise, Radical feminism views the oppression of women as the most fundamental form of oppression, where one can cross the boundaries of race, economics class and culture. This is a movement intended on social change. It attempts to draw line between biologically determined behaviors and culturally determined behaviors in order to be free both men and women as much as possible from their previous narrow gender roles.

Feminism which especially flourished after 1960s came to be perceived as simply anti-marriage, anti-children, anti-family and anti-religion. According to most early feminists, marriage and family had been regarded as burdensome so as to approach slavery. In the perspective of feminism, family had been taken as a kind of prison that confines them within four walls. In most of patriarchal society, woman is thought to be other, she is marginalized, defined only by her difference from male values and norms, which mean defined by what she lacks that men have. Therefore, woman who behaves

like a woman is not her own instinctual behavior rather she has been taught to do so. In the context of Hinduism also, our Hindu laws and customs are extremely unfavorable to woman where she is treated as very inferior to man. In the beginning, she is under the subjection of her father until she gets married. After she gets married, she is held under that of her husband, after her husband, she remains under her sons. Therefore, it creates difficulty for the woman in general to create her identity independently under the repressed position in the patriarchal society where woman is taken as 'other' social being.

Emancipation of women and searching of their identity is believed to be started from the 19th century onwards. So, some traces of female's voice for their identity and equality to male can be felt in Ibsen's *A Doll's House*, "When Helmer says, before all else. You 're a wife and a mother." Nora says, "I don't believe in that anymore. I believe that before all else I'm a human being, no less than you-or any way... you are" (592). That's why, the voice of Nora is the voice that has been raised by the women of 19th century for liberation and salvation from the patriarchal norms and values.

The Dark Room, especially illustrates similar male-female relationship. In addition to it, it focuses on the status of women in order to raise female issue. R. K Narayan, who had spent early days of his life with grandmother, might be influenced to concentrate on female issues. Although the novel was written before the commencement of feminism movement of 1960s, it can be judged from the point of view of the feminism.

Savitri, a female character, is confined within four walls of the house and she can not go beyond the household activities. She is made passive although all responsibilities of house occur upon her. In opposition to it, her husband, Ramani always treats her as a second sex and never regards her suggestion. Savitri can neither revolt against him nor can she take it easily, that is why, she becomes victimized in the hands of male, especially, of her husband. Likewise, another female character, Shanta Bai also confronts

same problem as Savitri faces in the house of her husband that Shanta Bai tells as a past experience of life in the novel.

2.2 Existentialism

The term 'Existence' comes from the Latin root "Exsister" from Exstare" a phrase meaning "To stand out" thus, the meaning of existence is to stand in the universe that is incomprehensible. Existence is a trap that shows two ways: kill or continue the life. Existentialism speaks that our existence is futile. For existentialist, man is free and responsible for his own action. Oxford Advance Learners Dictionary writes, "Existentialism is the theory that human beings are free and responsible for their own action in a world without meaning of god" (403). One of the female characters Shanta Bai, in R. K. Narayan's *The Dark Room*, presents herself as a free woman from her traditional society as she leaves her husband without thinking religious belief that has ruled over most females. She becomes bold after leaving her home as well as her parents, and wants to stand in her own foot that's why, she searches a job to exist without family's support. She feels to be free with her and no hindrance can stop her easily for sometime. In addition to it, she is totally responsible for her own action that is why, she expresses her absolute emancipation from the traditional society as well as her own family, which she explains at the time of conversation with Ramani - "Oh, of that you can assure them, If I had a family to hinder me I shouldn't have come here with my application" (51).

Existentialism, related to existence, had shined after World War II. The devastation of the World War II created absurdity in everywhere. That's why, the victimized people saw the world totally absurd, not governed by the laws of providence but by pure chance and contingency. Due to such thinking they couldn't believe in old concepts like morality, humanity, unity and rationality. Sense of alienation and futility of the life made all anxious, that's why, they considered over the role and activities of

individual in the existence of human beings. Such type of estrangement affected all people and they thought for dying better than living in such deplorable condition. So, many writers and philosophers sought at least to reduce if not to alleviate the present condition of human and pacify the victimized people.

Existentialist thinking was long before conceived by the thinkers like Soren Kierkegaard, Dostoevsky, Jean Paul Sartre and Fredriech Nietzsche in the nineteenth century but Jean Paul Sartre, a recognized leader of the group, coined the term “Existentialism”. It is not a new phenomenon but a rethinking and purification of philosophical thinking. Before the modern existentialists we could find some norms of existentialism in the works of St. Augustine, Pascal, Socrates and Duns Scouts in some extent. They were followed by Nietzsche, Dostoevsky, Kierkegaard, Husserl, Heidegger, Jaspers, Camus, Simone De Beauvoir, Gabric, Berdyaev and Maurice Marlean Plarty.

Jean Paul Sartre, one of the existential philosophers, defines existentialism as an attempt to make life continuous by creating a system in which one realizes human loneliness and human subjectivity. In this way, the focus of existentialism is on subjectivity. This philosophy gives emphasis for individual experience rather than abstract thought and knowledge. Sartre writes: “First of all man exists, turn up appear on the scene, and only afterwards defines himself” (13). But here man represents all human beings so, human beings starts to exist on the preliminary stage and slowly make their own identity despite their hard struggle.

Savitri, a female character in R. K. Narayan’s *The Dark Room*, becomes passive in the beginning and she does not have any sign of rebellious spirit as to get her own identity. So, she endures all sorts of trouble and problem although she becomes victimized. By nature, human being tries to exist at the initial stage and later tries to seek one's own identity. Savitri being a human creature, she also can not be exception from it.

That's why, she becomes submissive and passive in the initial days in order to exist. But later she becomes more rebellious than previous in terms of defining herself as a significant gender, "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).

After French theorist Jean Paul Sartre came up with an utmost view of existentialism in the early 1940s, it was employed by Simone De Beauvoir in Existential Feminism. Beauvoir derives Sartre's conviction that man has no basic nature to fall back on, we create ourselves, and there is no essence to cling to. This is also true of the way we perceive the sexes. Beauvoir denies the existence of a basic female nature or male nature- "Women are exactly as free and independent as we choose to be" (qtd. in Gaarder 460). In the novel *The Dark Room* too, having the sense of freedom and independence according to her desire, Savitri becomes rebellious for her betterment of life being independent by remaining away from the clutch of her husband and attempts to establish of her own world where no one can dominate her. Likewise, Simone De Beauvoir has presented view of existentialism most profoundly in her "*The Second Sex*", "What must be hoped for is that the men for their part will unreservedly accept the situation that is coming into existence; only then will women be able to live in that situation without anguish" (1000). By considering the emancipation from the patriarchal intrusion and with the view of getting absolutely freedom from all sort of boundaries formed by patriarchal society, she keeps desire to establish her own existence which can enable her to confront any sort of struggle.

According to a philosopher, Killinger, "The basic attempt of all existentialism has been to establish the separate identity of the individual" (6). In the context of R. K.

Narayan's *The Dark Room* too, Savitri a female protagonist tries to search her own identity in individual form by renouncing family and her attempt to make separate identity without any help from her husband Ramani. That's why, she leaves the house in search of her own separate identity. *The Dark Room* illustrates male–female relationship. Moreover, it concentrates on female issues making a woman, Savitri, a heroine of the novel and empathetic towards women.

Existentialism is really universal, humanistic and meaning-centered philosophical movement. Existentialism especially focuses to maintain existence although human condition is deplorable and intolerable. For that, every one should not care about their condition rather should maintain existence. Hence, the essence of all existentialists is to exist. To incorporate all the existentialists and their philosophical doctrine in this tiny research is impossible. That's why, I have attempted to deal with the main ideas of some of the proponents to support the existential study in this dissertation.

Chapter - III

Victimization of Women in *The Dark Room*

3.1 Female's Position in the Novel

The traditional patriarchal society dominates the females as a habitual culture on the basis of early established values and norms. With the passing of time, on the one hand, the male's practice of behaving in such way increased strongly. On the other hand, the female's habit of enduring increased too. Hence, the traditional patriarchal society reached its climax by marginalizing and subjugating women. The society became male-dominated where females do not have any significant role but instead of it, they are subjugated and considered as a second sex by creating different myths as well as they are confined within household activities. By entangling females into minor activities, they are deprived of several opportunities and kept far from getting any knowledge about the outer world. In this way, they are kept away from the power of judgment. Females have not been provided special participation in social activities in patriarchal society. They are expected to be dedicated, obedient and submissive for their husbands, and responsible, motherly and protective to their children.

In the novel, *The Dark Room*, through the character of Savitri and Shanta Bai, Narayan explores the position of women in traditional patriarchal society regarding its values and norms. Likewise, the role of the religious view also determines the traditional patriarchal society where females should be obedient, dutiful and responsible to their family and husband. Savitri, the central female protagonist has been a devoted and dutiful wife and good mother for her children. She is submissive and kind as well as responsible for her family. That's why, she does not desire sacrificing her domestic harmony under any cost. She endures any sort of troubles and injustice of her husband considering him as a god and she never opposes his behavior although that is not proper in any rate.

Likewise, she is compelled to regard her husband's decision despite it is improper decision. When her son Babu becomes ill and she wants to keep him on the bed for the rest but she does not have any power to keep Babu in house in such a condition too - "Babu did look very ill and she was powerless to keep him in bed; she felt she ought to have asserted herself a little more at the beginning of her married life and then all would have been well" (5). Savitri being a devoted wife cannot say anything in opposition to her husband's decision. She always endures what her husband does. She remains in the fear of her husband's mood as he looks ruthlessly at his children too. Savitri being confined within the four walls of the house cannot go far away and lacks on the knowledge of modernity. So, she is traditional woman and she is afraid of going to neighbor's house without her husband's permission. When her husband arrives in home at the time of going out of the house, she becomes nervous as the following:

Savitri's throat went dry at the sight of her husband. He was pacing the front veranda; he had changed his coat and was wearing a blue blazer. He looked fixedly at her as she came up from the gate and said, "You have made me wait for half an hour." He added, "A Fellow comes home from the office, dog-tired, and he has only the doors and windows to receive him. Where is everybody gone? Anyone could walk in and walk out with all the things in the house."(20)

But sometimes Ramani becomes some romantic to Savitri and takes her to watch the cinema and sits with her as well as behaves kindly at that time:

Ramani sat in a first-class seat with his wife by his side, very erect. He was very proud of his wife. She had a fair complexion and well proportioned features, and her sky-blue *saree* gave her a distinguished appearance. He surveyed her slyly, with a sense of satisfaction at

possessing her. When people in the theatre threw looks at her, it increased his satisfaction all the more, and he leant over and said,"

They are showing *Kuchela*." (22)

In this way, her happiness and pleasure depend on Ramani's mood. Sometime he is also proud of his wife.

Likewise, another female character Shanta Bai is also confined within the four walls of the house and she is treated by subjugating her role in her family where she is compelled to endure patriarchal values and norms. Shanta Bai, an impatient and rebellious female, leaves her house as well as her parents to get freedom and liberation from patriarchal society. She is well treated in terms of not having patriarchal values and norms although she has been taken as plaything, especially by Ramani. Hence, both females remain in the grip of males but they feel different experiences.

The middle part of the novel portrays discord in married life of Savitri as she comes to know the relationship between Ramani and Shanta Bai, which she feels more intimate individually than professionally. After that, the relation between Ramani and Savitri becomes cold. In addition to it, Ramani being an insensitive man ill treats her in very subtle ways. He neglects his family by overwhelming in the romance with Shanta Bai, that is why, Savitri has to take all responsibilities of the house but she does not have any role of decision and suggestion for the betterment of the house. In this way, she is only confined within minor household activities but she does not have any role for special tasks. Even in the case of several beating by Ramani to Babu, she can not do anything in spite of her love and affection toward Babu. Instead of it, she goes to the dark room being helpless- "When he was gone, Savitri rose, went to the dark room next to the store, and threw herself on the floor"(39). In this way, she consoles herself by throwing herself in the floor on the dark room, which is the symbol of her protest to her husband.

Savitri's position is just like the position of Nora in *A Doll's House*. She becomes mere puppet in the hands of her husband and follows without any protest whatever Ramani orders her. Regarding the traditional Hindu religious values, she regards her husband as a god and never exchanges any bitter words to him. She is so devoted to her husband that she can't take meal before him, so, seeing this, Ramani says, "What a dutiful wife! Would rather starve than precede her husband. You are really like some of the women in our ancient books" (11).

A woman cannot be herself in the society, which is exclusively masculine with laws framed by men and judicial system that judges feminine conduct from masculine point of view. When the male dominates the female, it is their religious obligation not to utter any words against them. Female regards male superior to female thinking as a god which is the product of male dominated society guided by Hindu religion, which has deep rooted upon all females of society. Hence, they have been shaped to think male in such way- "Men are impetuous. One moment they will be all temper and the next all kindness. Men have to bear many worries and burdens, and you must overlook it if they are sometimes unreasonable" (46). Thus, females are shaped to regard male to be superior and to take male's wild behavior in positive form.

Savitri, however, seems to be bold and responsible but in the hands of her husband, who is tyrannical and unkind, becomes weak and powerless. Woman in practical life is judged by man's law as though she was not a woman but a man. Women's identities are constructed and categorized in the society by the male and if the female tries to go beyond such assumptions, they are paralyzed or physically punished. In the same way, Savitri is designed and shaped by Ramani with his own consciousness and patriarchal norms and values. Therefore, Savitri's identity is confined within the walls of her own house. However, in some circumstances, Savitri seems to be versatile but under

the patriarchal values, norms and religious rules, she seems to be helpless and remains within the limited space.

When Ramani comes home after disappearing some days being irresponsible toward house, Savitri suspects on his character. She tries to know about the reality what she had heard. With the growing of her suspicion, the relation between them becomes cold and bitter. But Ramani ignores her not telling anything about the rumors, that's why, Savitri spends her life totally in depression. In this way, her attitude towards Ramani also changes with her suspicion. Before it, she regarded him as a god and never uttered any words against him but now she doubts on his character by saying:

"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)

Thus, Savitri becomes much aggressive doubting on Ramani's immoral character so, she considers him wanton and impure person. She also looks at him by the glimpse of hatred.

Although Savitri has been portrayed as a devoted, submissive and vulnerable woman in the initial days, she becomes more dynamic and rebellious towards patriarchal norms and values that makes them dull and remaining in the grip of their husband for long time. After being conscious about her existence and separate identity, she desires to leave the house in search of her own identity. The question of identity remains with Savitri as she seems to be submissive rather than rebellious, not even able to protest minor incidence with ordinary gusto and feeling with her husband. She leaves the house renouncing all kind of bonds, and bestows all jewelries to her husband, which were once given by male- "Take them away. They are also a man's gift"(88). Hence, Savitri wants to

be far from males and the things that are belonged to males. But after leaving house, she suffers from the parting of her children and eventually, she returns back to the house without settling any problem or getting any achievement. In this way, she comes back to her husband's house to be dominated again as before without any improvement.

Likewise, Shanta Bai, another female character also being dominated in her family, comes to search her own identity by remaining far from the male's clutch but she cannot get her own separate existence and identity. Instead of it, she has been a plaything in the hands of Ramani, a male. Ramani spends most of his time with Shanta Bai being closer than professional relation neglecting his family. Although he is insensitive person toward family, he becomes sensitive towards Shanta Bai and asks her about any hurt due to his behavior. Shanta Bai also keeps the double relation with him whom she says: "Oh no. Nothing can hurt me. In the office you are the chief, and now—" (63). In addition to it, she becomes so intimate with Ramani that she always wants to spend her time with him and she expresses her desire of going to watch cinema in this way: "Shall we go to a picture tonight?" (69).

By overwhelming in the love with Ramani, Shanta Bai also cannot get any identity of her own since she seeks support of Ramani in most of her time. Although Shanta Bai is far away from her husband and patriarchal society, she is still in the grip of another male Ramani. That's why, Shanta Bai also fails to find her separate identity.

In this way, both females portrayed in the novel are unable to get their own separate identity and have become dominated in the hands of male. In spite of their attempt to break the early established patriarchal values and norms, they can't dismantle easily since they are deeply rooted in traditional societies. Moreover, females are habituated to endure such oppressions to some extent rather than rebelling against patriarchal society.

3.2 Victimization of Women in the Novel

The patriarchal institution emphasizes the male's significant role in terms of making male powerful and superior than the female. Although women have equal rights to exist in this world, they are subjugated and marginalized. Men neglect women's basic needs whereas males have been provided with the favorable aspects that have made them distinct than females. Similarly, female has been regarded as a slave of the male, that's why, female's roles and participation are determined on the basis of patriarchal values and norms. But these patriarchal values and norms always hinder the female from the way of freedom, equality and justice by keeping them out of the access to the knowledge. Hence, the females remain far from the consciousness about their existence. As a result, they suffer from the oppression by the male dominated society.

The novel portrays two different worlds represented by male and female thereby revealing the victimization of women either socio-culturally or physically. Savitri's traditional view regarding religion and husband, and Ramani's view of modernity and patriarchal stance generate tension in which Savitri becomes victim in the hands of her faithless husband. She not only becomes victim in the hands of her husband but also from her traditional belief in Hindu religion. Savitri, being unconscious about her existence, totally depends upon her husband, Ramani and he also treats her as a doll thinking her vulnerable and passive. Likewise, she has been confined within household activities. That is why, she does not have any idea about other external activities from house and she becomes ignorant and innocent in many cases. So, Ramani sometimes behaves her as a child and says: "You have to learn a lot yet. You are still a child, perhaps a precocious child, but a child all the same"(12). Hence, Ramani considers Savitri as a child who is ignorant about many things, so, she has to learn a lot yet. Although she bears all responsibilities of the family, she has been thought to be a child by Ramani. Thus, he

degrades her in order to show own superiority to her, which also makes her upsetting. Furthermore, Ramani takes advantage of her ignorance from time to time.

In each and every case, Savitri has been controlled by male especially by her husband even in minor activities. She is not allowed to go anywhere without her husband's permission. Being restricted by the male dominated society, she is even frightened to go to her neighbor's house. Once when she visits a neighbor's house, Ramani arrives in his house and searches her surrounding of house. Ramani, not finding Savitri anywhere, sends his daughter Kamala to find her. Savitri hears the arrival of her husband then becomes frightened in this way, "Savitri rose, saying to Janamma, "I must be going." She almost ran out of the house"(19). Hence, she spends her life in fear of her husband even in small issues.

Ramani being irresponsible toward his family also adds more responsibility to Savitri, as a result, she always have to think about the betterment of the family. But in the time of important decision for the welfare of house, she is ignored and she is not given any space for suggestion and judgment. That also generates unpleasant feeling in her heart and hence, becomes victimized in patriarchal society. Ramani neither thinks the problem of the family, nor informs Savitri while bringing guests in home. At this time, she is in trouble how to serve the guests properly. Thus, she suffers by the irresponsible behavior of Ramani from time to time.

Although she is devoted and lovely mother for her children, she has not been given any space to pour her love and affection towards her children at the time of leaving house in search of her own identity. Neither she can take their children with her nor can she pour her love to them going near:

"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. Go

yourself, if you want. They are my children." She hesitated for a moment and then said, "Yes, you are right. They are yours, absolutely. You paid the midwife and the nurse. You pay for their clothes and teachers. You are right. Didn't I say that a woman owns nothing?" She broke down, starting at their fidgeting forms on the beds. "What will they do without me?"(88)

Hence, Ramani exploits her by depriving from the love of her children and makes her more victimized. Savitri, a traditional Hindu religious woman, always thinks her husband as a god and never exchanges any bitter words against him. She endures his wild behavior that also creates sadness in her soul. But Ramani, in opposition, does not hear any suggestion offered by Savitri and disappears from time to time neglecting his family.

Like Savitri Shanta Bai, another female character also suffers from the suppression of the male dominated society guided by patriarchal values and norms. In the beginning, she is dominated by the hands of her husband. That's why, she is far from the access of freedom, equality and woman rights in a patriarchal society. She leaves the house being unable to bear such oppression in traditional family. But later, she breathes the fresh air of absolutely freedom only for short time before Ramani exploits her physically. Although Shanta Bai becomes rebellious to patriarchal values and norms, she has been taken as a plaything in the hands of the male and becomes victimized, "Ramani rushed at her, locked her in his arms, and implored her to be courageous"(69). Thus, Ramani asks her not to think society as a hindrance at the time of taking romance and provokes her to be courageous by damn caring society too. In this way, Shanta Bai has been treated as a plaything in the hands of male, Ramani.

The main female protagonist, Savitri becomes more victimized than other female characters due to her submissive, vulnerable nature. Savitri being limited within four walls of the house cannot discover Ramani's immoral character, who is keeping an extra

marital relationship with Shanta Bai. After knowing such relationship between her husband, Ramani and Shanta Bai, she becomes more victimized than ever. However, she conceals all miseries, aroused in her heart, with her children while they ask seeing her swollen and red eyes, "Savitri saw herself in the mirror in the evening. Her eyes were swollen, her nose was red. The girls came home from school. Kamala cried, "Mother, your eyes are very red. Have you been crying?"(79). She becomes more victimized after knowing Ramani's love affair with Shanta Bai and weeps to pacify herself not going against her husband. In a sense, it is also natural that a married woman never endures next woman coming in her husband's life. That is why, Savitri becomes more aggressive to remove Shanta Bai away from her conjugal life. She does not take any negative action but tries to be more beautiful than Shanta Bai.

Similarly, Savitri feels more grief bearing all responsibilities since Ramani used to disappear in time to time neglecting the family to enjoy the company of Shanta Bai. Ramani has taken Savitri's favorite piece of furniture to the office for Shanta Bai, it also makes her wounded but she can't do anything. With the passing of time, his relation with Shanta Bai increases day by day, they become so intimate that Ramani spends most of his time with Shanta Bai ignoring his family. Shanta Bai, too, more interested to get his company and desires to spend much time with him:

"To the river, to the river. You have a mad woman beside you tonight."

After about an hour at the river she suggested going back to her room. I can't sleep tonight," she said as soon as she got down at Race-Course

Road. Would you care to step in? Shall we sit up and chat till dawn?" (71)

Thus, Shanta Bai expresses her inner feeling that always seeks the favor of Ramani. She also wants to spend most of her time with the company of Ramani by enjoying with him.

Ramani spends several nights with Shanta Bai and goes to house in the next morning but his wife Savitri does not sleep calmly until he comes. By spending whole night with Shanta Bai, he reaches home in the next morning and Savitri expresses her worry about him, "When Ramani came up the veranda steps, she said, "I was very anxious all night" (71). It also proves that Savitri suffers from his absence at night but Ramani never thinks about her and family.

Ramani involved with Shanta Bai, spends several nights out of the house and his absence in the house creates suspicion to Savitri. Later she knows his relation with Shanta Bai then becomes unhappy and tries to know about this relationship but Ramani ignores her curiosity. After that, she eventually decides to leave the house by considering her existence and attempts to find her own separate identity. In this way, Savitri decides to leave the house as an idea to get salvation from the suppression formed by male dominated society. When she leaves house, she becomes more free and independent for sometime. But gradually, she is equally tormented from the attachment and affection of her children and the house. She thinks herself helpless in the absence of her children and family. In this moment too, she suffers as before although there are not any patriarchal values and norms like in her family to disturb her freedom. Hence, a central female character Savitri never breathes the fresh air of absolute freedom in any condition.

After suffering from every corners of life, Savitri again decides to return back to her family without any settlement and improvement. Even though she gets a job in a temple and receives the things for survival, she cannot feel herself to be independent for long time. She is pulled by the love and attachment of her children and family. Thus, she is compelled to return back to the family and she goes to blacksmith's house where once she had spent sometime and states her desire to go home, "She knocked on the door. Ponni invited her in. "No. I am going. I have just come to tell you I am going home"

(147). Hence, she comes back to her husband's house without creating any new identity of her. In this way, Savitri again comes in same house to be dominated like before and becomes victimized in the hands of male again. But her husband Ramani never changes his attitude towards her.

This problem of oppression can't be settled by the attempt of Savitri, that is why, she is forced to live there being pleased with her family even in victimized condition. In spite of her consciousness about her existence, she cannot do any thing to improve her status which can be felt from her unsuccessful actions. Hence, especially female characters have become victims in the hands of male as they are forced to live in male dominated society where all rules and laws are constructed in the favor of men regarding men superior and women inferior.

Even though all victim characters attempt to remove their victimized condition by revolting against the patriarchal society's norms and values which the society has embraced, they cannot get success in their attempt as they wish. In the initial stage of their rebellion they look success but later they again are victimized as before. In the novel too, Savitri and Shanta Bai both, once become victims in the hands of their husband, become free and independent for sometime. But later they are compelled to live in the clutch of the male again. Thus, females have not been provided freedom and equality as males by patriarchal society which is traditional with orthodox view.

Female characters, suffered from the male dominated society, attempt to dismantle the patriarchal values and norms as a reaction of their rebellion campaign. But they cannot dissolve these rules and laws due to their strong establishment in the society. Furthermore, they are habituated by increasing their endurable power of domination. The male dominated society always applies its rules and laws as culture and females also realize its stronghold as they can't remain far away from the male dominated society

forever. Although they remain in distance from patriarchal society for sometime, they are compelled to live with their oppressors and bear the same behaviors from them, like Savitri does after returning in the house.

The suppression on females created by male started with human civilization and has continued till now by following early established rules and laws constructed by male on behalf of them. That's why, it has deeply rooted in our society and cannot be overthrown by small attacks of female. As a result, the females presented in the novel, are obligated to revere early established patriarchal values and norms. Similarly, the different ideological views; regarding traditional conventions and view of modernity also create tension between two poles such as Ramani's inclination to modernity and Savitri's belief in traditional view. In the same manner, male's patriarchal stance following patriarchal values and norms, and female's desire of getting freedom and equality to men becomes two different concepts. That's why, there happens struggle between these two polarities. But females are suffered due to lack of power and laws which are formed in the favor of male neglecting female's desire and their innate rights too.

Likewise, all female characters are made victims in the hands of male, and they try to escape from the suppression and leave the society for the short time. But they are unable to remove the inequality and injustice in any rate, and they return in same society without any resolution. Hence, the female always become victims in the hands of male as they are forced to regard the patriarchal values and norms which are formulated by men. So, men never think better position for female in terms of becoming superior and valuable than female. So, Savitri's ultimate search for identity remains in question as she is not able to break the conventions of the patriarchal system, and returns home with more vulnerable conscience.

3.3 Identity Crisis of the Women

Women presented in this novel, fully depend on their husband as well as on their family. Being ignorant towards self reliant all female characters in the novel rely on their husband for survival, and they are destined to follow the norms and values of male dominated society. That is why, they do not have any separate identity and they are compelled to remain under the male forever. Being the novel based on Indian society, caste system, exploitation of women, untouchability system, male dominated society, rural poverty life and so on are all the thematic areas that can give the true picture of the consciousness of Indian people and society, where female have been made totally to be devoted to their husband and patriarchal values and norms. In this way, their identities position is felt after being submerged by the male. A woman cannot be powerful in her consideration due to the problem of oppression by male. Male, being powerful with laws formed by men, always enables to do any work without female's support.

Savitri, main female protagonist, seems to be bold and brave but in the hands of her husband Ramani, becomes powerless and weak. Woman, in practical life, is evaluated by men's law. So, Ramani forcefully imposes his power upon Savitri's suggestion although that is suitable according to circumstances, considering her as an inferior to male- "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). So, women's business and identities are constructed and determined in the society by male. That's why, females have lack of their own identity.

The dark room, where Savitri spends her unpleasant moment, has lack of light and hence becomes dark, she compares herself with it. In the dark, nothing is visible and transparent which shows the place for the woman suffered from the identity crisis. In the same way, Savitri's identity is quite dark and uncertain. So, Savitri is always suffering

from the crisis of identity in all the situation of her life. That's why, Savitri realizes that a part of her is dead symbolizing her emotional death. So, with in the family, Savitri is under going identity crisis due to the aggressive and tyrannical husband, Ramani who is obsessed with the male dominated society. The question of identity remains with Savitri as she seems to be vulnerable and submissive rather than rebellious.

Although Savitri leaves the house in search of her own separate identity, she returns back to be depended upon same tyrannical husband, Ramani. In the beginning of her journey for searching identity, she expects to be emancipation from all family boundaries and male dominated society. She gets a job in a temple and feels to be independent and becomes happy in the beginning as the following:

Savitri felt very happy. She saw a new life opening before her. What more fitting life, she thought, could one choose than serving a god in his shrine? A half measure of rice was more than what she deserved, she felt. She could manage very well with it. She would dedicate her life to the service of God, numb her senses and memory, forget the world, and spend the rest of her years thus and die. (132)

In spite of her independence life, her happiness turns into unpleasant moment later. She becomes more depressing after she feels herself helpless and she is equally drawn by the attachment of their home and children- "I can't keep away from my children and home"(147). In this way, she feels herself helpless in the absence of her children and home although the male dominated values and norms are hovering upon the female. That is why, she again wants to be dominated in same patriarchal society rather than spending helpless life without support of patriarchal society comparing her with a bamboo pole. She again feels depended upon patriarchal society without getting her distinct identity. Hence, she also fails to search her own identity and she has also crisis of identity. In this

way, females have to depend upon the male's mood and their judgment where female's judgment has been thought to be inferior in front of male as Savitri is facing in the novel:

How impotent she was, she thought; she had not the slightest power to do any thing at home, and that after fifteen years of married life. Babu did look very ill and she was powerless to keep him in bed; she felt she ought to have asserted herself a little more at the beginning of her married life and then all would have been well. (5)

Similarly, another female character, Shanta Bai, being a member of patriarchal society, feels some restrictions and obstacles in her family where she has to depend upon her family and she does not have any distinct role in her family. That is why, she does not have any separate identity without her family too. After feeling the crisis of identity, Shanta Bai, breaks the patriarchal values and norms, and wants to seek her own identity being self reliant. Although she has been able to leave husband and engages in insurance company, she cannot get any progress more than previous status as she has to depend upon Ramani's mood, as she tells-"Well, I take your word for it. I will do whatever you advise me to do"(56). In this way, she is still determined by male's suggestion and she has also crisis of identity but unlike other characters.

Likewise, other minor characters Gangu and Janamma are also equally suffered in terms of searching their own identity where Gangu attempts to be a renowned film star, a famous musician as well as to become a popular leader:

It was her ambition to become a film star, though she lacked any striking figure or features or acting ability; she wanted to be a professional musician, though she had no voice; she hoped to be sent some day as Malgudi delegate to the All-India Women's Conference; to be elected to

various municipal and legislative bodies; and to become a Congress leader.

(15)

Although Gangu has strong craving to make own separate identity, she cannot make her own desired status fulfill, that is why, she is in crisis of her own identity. Although another female character, Janamma is not so ambitious like Gangu also suffers from the crisis of her own identity and she does not walk freely among people, "She never moved very freely among people. Savitri had a great regard for her, and consulted her whenever she was seriously worried"(16). Hence, Janamma not being interested to search her own identity like Gangu, also equally sufferers from her crisis of identity.

In this way, all female characters suffer from the crisis of identity since the male dominated society influences female deeply and makes compel them to depend upon their husband and family for their survival. The ignorance of self reliant has become female far from their identity. That is why, they all have same problem of identity. Nevertheless, Savitri leaves home in search of her own self and her own identity but proves futile in the end as Savitri returns to her house without any new identity. It shows that women's emancipation in the patriarchal society is extremely difficult since they are shaped and constructed in such way that they become quite vulnerable to the new life and identity. So woman's identity is always in question in the patriarchal society.

3.4 Absurd Life of female Characters in the Novel

The concept of absurdism and nihilism has emerged after the dreadful world war which generated negative impact on the human life and civilization. It holds the belief that the world is beyond rational, explanation, and the universe is chaotic, human beings have to commit his/her to something important to make life meaningful. Therefore, absurdism holds the principle that human experience is seen as fragmented and purposeless. Life does not have definite meaning, which has come to a halt due to the

undesired actions that demonstrate the meaninglessness of existence. This annulment between man and his life truly constitutes the feeling of absurdity. If a human tries to find his or her existence in the world, he/she will suffer from the existential crisis. In this crisis, human being isolates himself /herself from the society and the world because they do not know what else they have to do. Oftentimes, characters become alone and feel the sense of isolation. So, this isolation brings absurdity within their conscience life. So, for them life seems to be meaningless and senseless.

The meaningless life of female characters generates absurdism in the novel. Females, dominated and suffered from male society, have futile and meaningless life. Hence, all females are destined to do same routine; confining within same household activities that bores them and think life to be meaningless.

Life seems to be quite absurd than other for the central female character, Savitri, where she suffers from the absurdity of life. In the patriarchal society women are fully subdued and subjugated from their roles, and life does not have any meaning and value to them. The feeling of crisis remained within them leads them to the sense of absurdity too. Especially, the life of women only can take the fresh air of their own with full freedom and independence. But in the situation of Savitri, in *The Dark Room*, has lack to create a sense of liberation and independence within her. Ramani, Savitri's husband, treats her as a slave in the house. In each and every matter, she becomes slave of Ramani and loses her identity being submissive all the time. Ramani thinks his wife, Savitri as a puppet and he likes to use her according to his desire even in a trivial matter. When Ramani is about to go for office after wearing his official dress, he calls Savitri and says, "Dressed in a silk suit, and with a sun-hat on, he stood at the street door and called, "Who is there?" Which meant, "Savitri, come here and see me off." When Savitri come he said, "Close this door" (3). In each situation she becomes a doll rather than to show her own self and identity. So,

Savitri's position in the house is quite vulnerable, and this vulnerability leads her inner conflict within her. The conflict between her and patriarchal society's norms makes her life meaningless. The daily routine, involving only in minor household activities, does not give proper meaning to her life.

The problem of husband and wife relation is not confined within Savitri and Ramani in Malgudi; rather it is the problem of all couples in the patriarchal society where women are identified as marginalized group which Janamma, one of the female characters also regards, "As for me, I have never opposed my husband or argued with him at any time in my life" (46). In this way, all females have spent their lives regarding their husband with religious view bearing own meaningless life; victimized by suppression by male. Surrounded by inequality and injustice of males, females have become more sufferers and their life becomes meaningless too. So, they all feel the life totally futile and absurd where life has no any value for them. In the novel, Savitri especially, becomes more victimized and feels the world gloomy and dark. Furthermore, she spends most of her time in the dark room at the time of sorrow where she feels her life dark as the dark room. In this way, Savitri does not see any golden future and possibility except her sorrow and remembers her life to be futile. Apart from this, her husband Ramani creates anxious from time to time such as she is neglected by overwhelming in love with Shanta Bai and does not arrive home until several days. So, Savitri feels totally meaninglessness life in Ramani's absence, "When she was alone and when the children's voices were not heard, her mind reverted to its obsession: he hasn't came, he hasn't come, he doesn't care for me now (before the mirror), perhaps she is better than I am" (83). Hence, she pours her expression of meaningless life in the absence of her husband who never cares about her and makes her life absurd. After some dispute with Ramani, Savitri thinks her life to be valueless and leaves the house for getting salvation from meaningless life. Savitri

spends enjoy life after getting job in a temple for sometime and feels comfortable life for short time. But later her life too changes into gloomy and absurd life as she becomes helpless and nobody is with her in spite of her independence life. Gradually, she feels depressing and sees her life to be meaningless without support of her family and she feels to be frightened - "As the hours advanced and the stillness grew deeper, her fears also increased. She was furious with herself at this: "What despicable creations of God are we that we can't exist without a support" (146). Hence, she considers life totally meaningless without support of anyone that is why, Savitri feels helpless and meaningless life without the company of anybody.

Similarly, another female character Shanta Bai too, realizes her life to be boring that creates futility in her life and becomes upset in spite of her independence life,

"Life is one continuous boredom," Shanta Bai said, locking her arms behind her head and leaning back on the pillow. "I started out on life wanting to do things, but here I am vegetating. All day long I listen to Pereira's humour and to Kantaiengar's rudeness, and then come here and lie down on the couch. 'As wind along the waste'. Have you read Omar Khayyam?" (116)

Shanta Bai expresses her inner felling which becomes tedious so as to live pleurably because she has not got success as she had thought. Hence, she becomes sad and feels the life being boredom as well as meaningless.

Hence, female characters presented in the novel are equally suffered from the life of absurdity and meaninglessness. Although they spend independent life in their foot, they feel the sadness and boredom while they are unable to keep the life with pleasure and freedom. So, absurdity of life has haunted to all female characters. But Savitri and Shanta Bai, being more rebellious against patriarchal values and norms, desire to stay distance

from the patriarchal society. In the absence of their family and children, they feel life to be boring and helpless that also generates meaninglessness in their life, hence their life becomes absurd.

However, the female vexes from the meaninglessness of life and seek to exist society by compromising with unfavorable aspect too. Regarding the view of existentialism, females emphasize for existence than being. They exist their life although their life is full of sorrow and gloomy. In this way, especially, female characters become victimized bearing meaninglessness life throughout the novel.

3.5 A Challenge to the Patriarchal Society

The traditional patriarchal society never considers women as equal sex to male but always thinks as a second sex or other sex. Males constitute the rules and laws in favors of men and try to keep the females in the clutch of men; to be kept under males. That is why, females do not have any freedom for their rights. Females are destined in the hands of males and their life depends on male's treatment. The patriarchal stance does not provide any opportunity and participation to the female in the place of judgment. Likewise, significant roles have not been offered to the females. They are kept far from the knowledge of equality and justice. In this way, they have been dominated and suppressed keeping them ignorant about many cases. They are deprived of their human rights and they have been prepared to depend upon the male. Thus, most powerful role has been provided to males. In opposition to it, females have been neglected thinking as a puppet in the hands of males.

In this way, females have been taken as playthings by considering having no sensation with them. The oppression arranged by the male becomes the causes of protest and females, who are conscious, want to take equal freedom, justice and other opportunities as men have got. But the patriarchal society does not digest such protest of

the females and try to repress more than before. Hence, the oppression raises rebellion and many victimized women become rebellious to challenge the patriarchal stance. That's why, females are ready to renounce all kind of boundaries that are formed by patriarchal society. Women become aggressive towards these values and norms, and want to dismantle it. Hence, the patriarchal norms and laws, formed on favor of male by subjugating female, creates imbalance in society. That is why, female tries to challenge the patriarchal societies to keep the balance.

With the rise of consciousness in female for their existence after becoming domination in the hands of male, females attempt to break patriarchal values and norms that have subjugated them by making victims in the hands of males. That's why, they try to violate the rules and values of patriarchal society to be free from the encroachment of males. In the novel, Savitri and Shanta Bai, in the initial days, become passive and endure what the males do. But after being consciousness and more victimized by male, they become rebellious for their rights and existence. As a result, they become bold and want to dismantle such patriarchal norms by protesting against it.

Savitri irritated by the male's suppression, opposes male dominated society and neglects family, and run off the house by rebelling against patriarchal norms, "She threw a look at the children, at him, turned round and walked out, softly closing the door behind her "(88). In this way, Savitri leaves the house as a reaction against male's suppression by challenging male dominated society and she tries to show that female can live happily without male's support and help. Although she is alone to oppose the patriarchal society, she tries to be independent and searches for her own identity. She wants to take the fresh air where no one could suppress her. Thus, she becomes free from the hands of male and remains far from family. Savitri also protests her husband's manner which treats her as a plaything and doesn't pay any attention towards her and family by enjoying with Shanta

Bai. The overload of the suppression that makes Savitri become bold and does not want to be treated as a doll in his husband's hands. At the time of dispute, Ramani tries to console her and she abruptly protests his manner in this way, "Don't touch me!" she cried, moving away from him" (87). Hence, she wants to remain far from his company by challenging early established rules and norms.

Although they become success to be independent and needless the support of their family for sometime, they are unable to maintain it for long time. So, they can not be totally independent without the help of males, whereas Shanta Bai is supported by Ramani and Savitri is helped by Mari, a blacksmith. In this way, both females have to depend on males for their some freedom and equality too. In addition to it, they become helpless without the support of males due to the powerful patriarchal stance and become failure in their missions. Hence, they become victimized even though they formulate their reaction toward male dominated society by challenging it.

3.6 Impact of Hindu Religious View on the Females

Malgudi, an Indian culture society presented in the novel, adopts traditional conventions with religious beliefs which have played vital role to generate further domination upon female by male. The society, being superstitious and conservative, applies many rules and conventions by pursuing early established norms and values. Females follow the religious view without thinking its negative aspect as many religious beliefs are prepared for suppression of female. For instance, a husband has been regarded as a god and a female must not exchange any words against her husband, but female neither has been taken as a goddess nor male are restricted to utter any words against female. Hence, the religious belief is also based only on the favor of male. The fear of sin can be found in women than men since women are deeply influenced by Hindu religious

beliefs. That is why, females are ready to sacrifice themselves in the name of religion, which is helping the males to be even more oppressive.

In the novel too, the central female protagonist Savitri is influenced by Hindu religion blindly. That is why, she also regards her husband, Ramani as a god and never returns any utterance in opposition to him. She is a devoted wife and does not take meal before him as well as being a loving mother to their children. Similarly, other minor female characters like Gangu and Janamma are also fully devoted to Hindu religion. But Gangu is more religious than Janamma who visits temple frequently, “Gangu was tolerated in the Extension: she was interesting; with all her talk, she was very religious, visiting the temple regularly, and she was not immoral” (16). In the same manner, Janamma is devoted to her husband and regards him as a god and never opposes him, she says: “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). Thus, Janamma expresses her servile attitude toward her husband. In addition to it, she also presents instances of the dedication of wives for their husband in this way:

Her own grandmother who slaved cheerfully for her husband who had three concubines at home; her aunt who was beaten every day by her husband and had never uttered a word of protest for fifty years; another friend of her mother’s who was prepared to jump into a well if her husband so directed her; and so on, . (47)

Hence, Janamma portrays the dedication of wives toward their husband by regarding them as gods although women have to bear difficult situations.

A female character Shanta Bai does not seem to be devoted to her husband as she is inclined to the view of modernity than traditional religious view. In the initial days of

her married life, she was devoted to her husband but her husband's behavior diverted her attitude. Thus, her attitude toward husband or male can be little different from other female character. But she too, suffers in the hands of the males like other females. Savitri, devoted to religious beliefs, wants to watch religious picture and sometime Ramani also takes her for cinema which can keep her devoted female for religion. Hence, being influenced by Hindu religious beliefs, she endures whatever Ramani does and never opposes him. In this way, they become more victimized and submissive remembering religious convention. But on the other side, her husband Ramani always treats her as an object thinking as a puppet and never considers her deplorable condition.

Comparatively, females have been more shaped to follow the religious values and norms than males. Although females try to dismantle all patriarchal values and norms considering them as hindrance of equal rights and freedom, they do not consider religious values and norms as a hindrance to get freedom and equality. But these religious values and norms exploit them indirectly rather than other conventions. Likewise, Savitri always remains in fear of sin which is also related with religious theme. After some dispute with her husband Savitri, searching her own identity, leaves her house and attempts to commit suicide by drowning in the Sarayu river. At that time, she thinks about her sin which she committed - "In Yama's world the cauldron must be ready for me for the sin of talking back to a husband and disobeying him, but what could I do? What could I do...no, no, I can't die. I must go back home. I won't, I won't" (94). Thus, she expresses her inner feeling that is associated with sin which she commits by disputing with her husband and leaving the children in deplorable condition.

Malgudi society, based on traditional and Indian culture, equally embraces caste system as a norm of traditional conventions. That is why, the discrimination between lower caste and higher caste also can be felt here. Hence, the untouchability system has

deeply influenced the female characters in the novel. After leaving house, Savitri has been brought to the blacksmith's house by rescuing her from her suicide attempt. When she finds they are blacksmith, a lower caste family and she desires to go any other place. Blacksmith family understand Savitri's attitude toward caste system and Ponni says, "I see you are a Brahmin and won't stay with us. I will ask someone of your own caste to receive you" (106). In this way, the untouchability system has influenced all females in Malgudi society where higher caste people neither like to stay nor eat food with lower caste people. So, Savitri, a Brahmin woman from higher caste family ignores the blacksmith regarding untouchability system strongly. In this way, untouchability system makes Savitri stay far from Blacksmith's family being alone and later feels helpless without support of anyone. Hence, she desires to return back her house.

3.7 Inability to Adjust in the Modern Indian Society

After the dreadful world war II, the sense of modernity emerged with the consideration of human's desire towards materialism. At that time, people were fascinated by luxurious food, sex and other immoral activities ignoring spiritualism. The development of modernity changed the life of human beings too. As a result, their desire and wish also changed according to the demand of time. In this way, human being tried to break the traditional values and norms in terms of fulfilling their desires and needs. But some people had suffered from the view of modernity since they were unknown about modernism. So, these unknown people had difficulty to adjust in such modern world by adopting traditional view. In the same manner, the Indian Malgudi society presented in the novel is also influenced by view of modernity and some characters are drawn towards modernity by seeking luxurious life. That is why, these characters are following to gain materialistic thing rather than broaden their spiritual view.

In the novel, Ramani, his son, Babu and up to some extent Shanta Bai, seem to be modernist as they are keeping desire of freedom, luxurious life and anti traditional view. In this way, Ramani's fascination towards valuable car, cinema and club can be taken as his materialistic desire. Similarly, Babu's attraction in electricity and cricket has been presented as materialism, and Shanta Bai's desire of going to watch picture with Ramani also can be taken as her longing to modernism. But on the other hand, including central female character, Savitri, Gangu, Janamma and Ponni believe on traditional view blindly. That is why, they do not have any sense of modernity and they are not attracted towards materialistic things although the society is facing some sense of modernity. Hence, the inability of adjustment according to time and situation has made these traditional women victimized in the modern Indian society which is presented in the novel. In that society, these victimized females never try to follow the modernity. But instead it, they are strongly devoted to the traditional values and norms regarding them to be obedient and dedicated. Neither they go out of the house nor do they get any knowledge of outer world. That is why, they are unfamiliar with modern things.

In the novel, we can observe some tussle between traditional view and view of modernity. For instance, the dispute between Ramani and Savitri based on two different views where Savitri wants to be devoted and responsible towards family by regarding traditional values and norms. She also expects her husband's positive view towards her concept; following traditional view. But her husband Ramani, attracted to modern things, is never sensitive and responsible towards his family. He wants to enjoy in the modern world where he sees life more comfortable and enjoyable. In this way, he spends most of his time by traveling in car with Shanta Bai in the following way:

Ramani laughed faithfully and drove the car towards the river. She sat nestling close to him as he drove, and said suddenly, "Lets us drive round

the town once and then go to the river". Ramani stopped, reversed, and drove the car into the town and about the streets. "I 'm rather mad tonight," she said. "I hope you don't mind it." (71)

Likewise, another female character Shanta Bai is also drawn to the modern things and freedom, that is why, she leaves the house in search of freedom and later involves in modern things- movies, car, etc.-"She asked suddenly, "Shall we go to a picture tonight?" This was the first time she had suggested this, and Ramani sat more or less stunned. "I said shall we go to a picture tonight?" she repeated with emphasis "(69). In this way, she presents her desire toward modern products like cinema. Hence, she can exist in modern Indian society easily although she is equally victimized in the male dominated society. She never thinks about traditional beliefs which had made her to confine within household activities. So, she loves unconventional things than old conventional that she says, "Oh, I love unconventional things," she said. "Otherwise I shouldn't be here, but nursing children and cooking for a husband. Come in, come in, see how I have made a home for myself"(62). Hence, Shanta Bai becomes able to achieve modern things being inclined with modern productivity by neglecting traditional household activities.

Similarly, Savitri's son Babu is also interested in modern products, that is why, he is crazy for cricket and participates in tournament too, "I got only one chance to bat, and I made twenty runs" (153). In the same manner, he is equally interested in electricity, the modern products. So, he can exist in this world easily than other characters that still follow traditional values. In opposition to it, Savitri, the female protagonist of this novel, remains far from the access of modern world. She might have been so ignorant about such modern things confining only within household activities. Likewise, other female characters such as Gangu, Janamma and Ponni become confined within four walls of house by regarding traditional values and norms. Then, they too, become ignorant about

modern world and they do not desire of any modern things. Gangu's desire of becoming musician and leader may not come true due to the lack of continuous struggle in modern society where she is surrounded by traditional values and norms. So, she cannot exist happily in modern Indian society with her traditional belief and custom.

Likewise, Savitri never thinks about modern world in spite of her freedom after leaving house due to the deep influence of traditional norms. Hence, she becomes more victimized in the modern Indian society due to her inability to exist in such modern society. The characters presented in the novel as victims become conscious after they become more sufferers and think about their existence. For their existence, they can act any sort of activities by renouncing all patriarchal values and norms but they cannot violate traditional religious beliefs easily. Thus, they can't enter in the modern world due to their deep impression of traditional belief and they become ignorant about modern things. By remaining far from modern world, they cannot digest modern manners easily. In this way, there happens tussle between two polarities; embracing traditional view and regarding view of modernity. Eventually, the characters interested in modern things can live happily and freely in comparison to the characters inclined to traditional view. But the problem of inability to adjust in such modern Indian society occurs in life of traditional characters like Savitri, Gangu, Janamma and Ponni. Moreover, the people engaged in traditional life never like modern life due to the defect of modern values and norms where life is totally free without any spiritual value.

Hence, the modernists have been considered immoral from the view of traditional not having spiritualism concept. The traditional women neither can take the modernity as usual process nor can they get victory over the modernity by following traditional blindly. As a result, traditional women are habituated to follow old values and norms and cannot go beyond it easily. Thus, the dichotomy of ideological view creates problem in their life

too. Females become unable to ignore modern view as modernity has developed in their family. That is why, they suffer from the different attitudes and they are unable to adjust themselves to their new and strange world.

In this way, the inability of most females except Shanta Bai creates problem to adjust in Malgudi society which is presented in the novel. The traditional females, inclined to spiritualism, never consider getting materialistic things although the society is influenced by modern products. But instead of it, they consider the modern world to be valueless and inferior with lack of morality, spiritual thought and humanity. In this way, the traditional females are not tempted to the modern products by considering their traditional view to be more superior to view of modernity. But the society, where the traditional females too live, is totally fascinated by modern products with the demand of time and passage of time. Hence, the society, being influenced by modernity, embraces modern culture with the development of modern technology, and the society also changes its some conventions. But the attitudes of traditional females don't change with the changing of time. Their traditional culture becomes meaningless and valueless in comparison to modern culture. Thus, they feel difficulty to adjust in such strange world being unable to adjust them in modern society without knowing view of modernity. As a result, they remain victims in modern society as they can't change their concept with the passage of time.

Chapter - IV

Obligatory Acceptance of the Patriarchal Society

The research work critically examines the victimization of women by observing the relation between men and women, role of the religion and traditional values and norms which embrace superstition and conservative thought by offering the superiority to males. Hence, this research specially focuses on the oppression of the females in the male dominated society and the inter gender conflict where females are represented in trivial things and treated as playing things in the hands of the males. Females are marginalized, subjugated and confined within household activities, which is the reality of traditional male dominated society.

The Dark Room especially, focuses on the inter gender conflict by presenting two different worlds that the different characters represent – traditional world by Savitri, a female, and modern world by Ramani, a male. In addition to it, the clash between traditional view and view of modernity is not only by the shake of conflict in culture but also it is associated with inter gender conflict, where most of females have followed traditional world and males have followed modern world. Thus, the tussle between traditional world and modern world is the conflict of inter gender conflict too. Apart from this, the ideological dichotomy between male and female, the male's patriarchal stance, view of modernity and female's desire for freedom and equality create conflict in the novel. In addition to other causes, the immorality and irresponsibility of the male that is represented by Ramani make a female, Savitri a victim. In this case, she becomes more aggressive toward him and a kind of conflict occurs between them. Savitri tries to search her own identity by ignoring patriarchal values and norms. In this way, she attempts to get salvation from the grip of male which always makes her victimized. Likewise, Shanta Bai, another female character, also gets much oppression by her husband and becomes

victimized in the hands of male. But she leaves her husband and society in search of freedom and her own identity. After being appointed in Insurance Company as an employee, Shanta Bai is exploited physically in the grip of the male-Ramani.

Generally, in a patriarchal society where traditional values and norms dominate females and a female's status is always deplorable and pathetic. A woman is considered to be inferior, helpless and passive. That is why, she is confined within household activities and no significant role is offered to her. Although she is physically and mentally capable, she is marginalized and subordinated by thinking second sex. Moreover, she is considered the 'other' and this 'otherness' is what makes her life absurd and critical. Being marginalized from their roles females do not have any specific values. As a result, the question of identity especially, a woman's identity can arise with the craving of independence and freedom in the society. However, such freedom and independence for woman cannot be digestible in male dominated society and thus, women suffer from the crisis of identity.

If the long history of human civilization and its development is studied, a woman has been taken to be inferior and she is kept down by creating binary opposition. Hence, the identity of woman and the position of woman in general and especially Indian women in particular have been paradoxical. The culture, developed in the mind of males, considers the female as the 'other' and deprives of their creation and innate rights. But in opposition to it, males are considered to be superior to female, that is why, women should regard what males order. Moreover, women are compelled to live the life of slave by suffering in the family as well as being subjugated in the society too. In this way, difficulty is created to search their identity independently under the repressed position in the patriarchal society.

In *The Dark Room*, female characters suffer from the norms and values of traditional patriarchal society which is based on Hindu religion. Savitri, being dogmatic toward Hindu religion, keeps the desire to be dominated by considering her husband as a god. She regards her husband to be superior to her. She is fully devoted toward husband, Ramani but he never thinks her as a capable and dedicated wife. Ramani neglects the family overwhelming in the love of Shanta Bai whom Ramani exploits physically by offering job in his company. Hence, both females are exploited and marginalized in the hands of male who considers the women as playing things. Both females are incapable to remain independent without his favor. So, they can't oppose his manner and action as they are compelled to endure whatever males do. Mainly, Savitri being weak, vulnerable and submissive never interferes with the wishes of her husband. This situation leads Savitri nowhere and her own identity becomes invisible in the family and in the society too. In this way, she faces the crisis of identity. Being influenced by the traditional values and norms she cannot go against the patriarchal stance which makes her marginalized, subjugated and inferior in comparison to male. On the contrary, males guided by view of modernity, seek to go far away from the responsibilities and embrace the immoral aspects of life.

Hence, the females irritated by the male's activities, become aggressive and change their attitudes towards males to exist as a capable and free woman in their own identity. That is why, they leave the house renouncing all obstacles created by patriarchal stance based on traditional cultural norms and values. In the novel, Savitri escapes from the home in search of her own identity as well as to be free from domination by violating all harsh and rude aspects of values and norms established by patriarchal society. It keeps her far from the victimizers for a moment but later she is obligated to return back in same patriarchal society. So, females attempt make the males consider about women's

deplorable situation where they are treated as 'other' or 'secondary' although males are insensitive toward their status.

Although Savitri leaves the house for the emancipation from oppression and search for identity, she cannot get her own separate identity. So, she returns to her house to be dominated like before without any settlement and improvement in the condition. She herself cannot dare to exist without any help from the patriarchal society. So, she thinks herself helpless expressing inner spirit: "I am like a bamboo pole which cannot stand without a wall to support it. . . ." (146). In this way, she herself wants to be trapped in such patriarchal society with obligatory acceptance of patriarchal society which makes her victim in the hands of male again. On the other side, Ramani never changes his mind and follows his daily routine as before. Savitri fails to establish her separate identity although she escapes from the house to search for her own identity.

Even though the victimized condition of the female has been presented in this novel, any idea of resolution has not been effective for the settlement of the problem. Thus, the females suffering from the male dominated society, desire to remain away from the society as an option for freedom. However, they return back and compromise with the existing society without any progress on their previous status. Eventually, females exist in the same, male dominated society due to their obligatory situation which makes them accept the society. Females can only escape momentarily from the male dominated society, but complete freedom seems still unachievable. Hence, the females neither can bring improvement in their status revolting against the society nor males consider females to be equal. The concept of gender equality still seems to be far cry for the females. Unless the society starts looking upon females without the glasses of patriarchy, the situation will not improve.

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