

TRIBHUVAN UNIVERSITY

Emancipation through Suicide in Plath's *The Bell Jar*

**A thesis submitted to the Central Department of English
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Masters of Arts in English**

By

Jamuna Poudel

Central Department of English

Kirtipur, Kathmandu

March 2007

TRIBHUVAN UNIVERSITY

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

This Thesis entitled **Emancipation through Suicide in Plath's *The Bell Jar***,
submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University, by Jamuna Poudel,
has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee.

Members of the Research Committee

Internal Examiner

External Examiner

Head

Central Department of English

Date: _____

Acknowledgements

The thesis entitled **Emancipation through Suicide in Plath's *The Bell Jar*** is an outcome of the inspiration and support of different people. I am very much grateful to Dr. Krishna Chandra Sharma, the Head of the Central Department of English for his encouragement and approval to write this dissertation. I am extremely grateful to my respected teacher and supervisor Mr. Tika Lamsal for providing me invaluable suggestion and scholarly guidance despite his busy schedule without whose companionship and supervision my thesis would never have come to this form. I am deeply indebted to him. No words can be adequate to express my gratitude to him.

Similarly, I am greatly indebted to Prof. Abhi N. Subedi, Prof. C. P. Sharma, Dr. Beerendra Pandey, Dr. Shreedhar Gautam, Mr. Srijon Chhetri and Mr. Puspa Raj Acharya for their creative guidance. I would like to thank my friends Malati, Ravi, Prem and brothers Evanath, Shiva, Bhuwan, Daya Nidhi and my parents whose support and encouragement is unforgettable. I thank Mrs. Naina G. C. of Nature Computer, Nayabazaar, Kirtipur, for her excellent computer typing and designing.

Last but not least these acknowledgements would be incomplete without mentioning my deep appreciation for the role played by my husband Mr. Jagannath Adhikari for his support and creative guidance.

March 2007

Jamuna Poudel

Abstract

The Bell Jar (1963), a confessional and autobiographical novel by Sylvia Plath, depicts the adventures of a young woman in a male-dominated society that does not let her true potential burgeon. Plath's alter ego, Esther, begins her career as a scholarship student at a prestigious women's college and works at an internship for ladies' Day Magazine in New York city. In course of development of this novel she faces a sense of anxiety and depression due to her ambitious revolutionary and independent nature. The society is gender-biased in which women are suppressed and confined. Esther's pain and despair grows deeper when she fails to reconcile the conflicts within her. This leads to her mental breakdown, and she has to undergo electroshock therapy in front of indifferent and unkind doctors. At the end of the novel, though she seems to be transformed, she cannot resolve the problem she faces within and outside and attempts to commit suicide several times. Her suicide does not perish herself, and is not taken as annihilation but as rejuvenation, resurrection and transcendence to the world where she finds her liberation. As such, Esther undergoes liberating transformation through suicide.

Contents

Acknowledgements iii

Abstract iv

I. Introduction Error! Bookmark not defined.-11

II. Feminist Emancipation Error! Bookmark not defined.-28

Historical Background Error! Bookmark not defined.-22

Patriarchy Error! Bookmark not defined.

Seeking for Selfhood Error! Bookmark not defined.

Suicide and Emancipation Error! Bookmark not defined.

III. Emancipation through Suicide Error! Bookmark not defined.-45

Esther's Search for Independent Life 29

Esther's Struggle to Escape from *The Bell Jar* Error! Bookmark not defined.

Esther's Achievement of Emancipation Error! Bookmark not defined.

IV. Conclusion Error! Bookmark not defined.-47

Works Cited 48-49