

Tribhuvan University

Commodification of Women in Anna Burns's *Milkman*

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the

Degree of Master of Arts in English

By

Lochan Neupane

Roll No.: 282987/2069

T.U. Regd. No.: 6-1-325-67-2002

Central Department of English

Kirtipur, Kathmandu

February 2021

Tribhuvan University
Central Department of English

Letter of Recommendation

Lochan Neupane has completed his thesis entitled “Commodification of Women in Anna Burns's *Milkman*” under my supervision. I hereby recommend his thesis be submitted for viva voce.

Raj Kumar Baral

Supervisor

Date: February 2021

Tribhuvan University
Faculty of Humanities and Social Science

Letter of Approval

The thesis entitled “Commodification of Women in Anna Burns's *Milkman*” submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University by Lochan Neupane has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee.

Members of the Research Committee

Raj Kumar Baral

Internal Examiner

Dinesh Bhandari

External Examiner

Head

Central Department of English

Date: _____

Acknowledgements

Inspiration and guidance always play a vital role in every sphere of human life and the present thesis has come to the present shape out of the inspiration and guidance of the people mentioned below. I will always remain grateful to them.

First and foremost, I would like to enunciate my earnest gratitude to my thesis supervisor Raj Kumar Baral for his scholarly guidance, perennial support, and perpetual advices, which enabled me to complete the research.

I am profoundly grateful to Prof. Dr. Jib Lal Sapkota, Head of the Central Department of English, Kirtipur, for granting me the opportunity to carry out this research work. I am truly grateful to all my respected lecturers of Central Department of English, who implicitly or explicitly guided me in my pursuit. Their instructions and suggestions for the research are highly praiseworthy. Equally, I am indebted to Mr. Dinesh Bhandari, Mr. Shankar Subedi, Mr. Hem Lal Pandey, Mr. Khem Raj Khanal and Mr. Laxman Bhatta for their encouragement.

I am much indebted to my respected parents Hari Prasad Neupane and Hari Shova Neupane for their financial support, love, encouragement and environment they have created for my study. I couldn't forget my brothers and sisters Kaushal Neupane and Basanti Neupane for their kind support.

Likewise, my sincere thanks goes to my wife Pushpa Neupane and kids Basrha, Bindu and Alok Neupane for their help, inspiration and affectionate words, which created warm environment for me to successfully complete the research.

February 2021

Lochan Neupane

Abstract

This study examines how women are commodified in Anna Burn's *Milkman*. Females are forced to survive in a nightmare of patriarchal utopia that created inequality in terms of gender. Moreover, women are treated as a commodity in the market, where human values and sentiments have no place in the heart of the mankind. The novel reveals the story of three sisters who are merely treated and consumed as goods. In capitalistic society there is no more humanity remaining in the heart of people. Human value is determined by possessions. Elder Sister, Young Woman and Younger Sister including their widow mother are severely treated. The gap between the haves and the have-nots is clearly exposed through the interpolation of characters. Anna Burns advocates for the end of all evil forms like inequality, injustice and domination upon women on behalf of power and property as Valery Bryson believes that social inequality is due to their lacking of ownership upon property. Commodity like behaviour in the hand of Irish patriarchal society of Young Girl including other female characters determines the submissiveness and subservient role of female in the contemporary society was highly privileged not only on the basis of gender but on the basis of means of production and class too. Brother -in-law does not hesitate to make lewd remarks to a 12 year innocent girl. In this way, women are commodified in terms of means and power which is under the control of male member of the society in Irish Society as described in the novel *Milkman* by Anna Burns.

I. Subordination of in Anna Burn's *Milkman*

This research paper analyzes Anna Burn's *Milkman* and examines how the female characters are presented in the novel. Females are enforced to survive in a nightmare of patriarchal utopia created by males and maleness. Moreover, women are treated as commodity in the market, where human values and sentiments have no place in the heart of the mankind. The novel reveals the story of 'Irish trouble' which is presented from the perspective of a fourteen years old girl. Anna Burns advocates for the ends of all evil forms like inequality, injustice and domination upon women by portraying the inhumane behavior upon them. It talks about such evil forms of experience that women undergo every day. The novel primarily shows the women's position in Ireland and shows how women are commodified in the arena of post-war Irish society. In the novel, the society has been depicted as male dominated, largely stereotypical, patriarchal and hypocritical. She exposes the evils against women in Ireland like inequality, rape, female feticide and violence either it is physical or verbal. Such unequal activities are due to the lack of ownership upon property.

The novel is set against 1970s Ireland during the troubles, an irregular military conflict between Ireland and the separatists of England-backed Northern Ireland. Military violence in the town has harmed the psychology of its city dwellers. The atmosphere is chaotic due to the conflict and riot. Social harmony is almost finished because of the selfish nature of human being. Women are helpless and submissive. A retired army personnel namely Milkman approaches Young Woman of 18 years old living in the town with her widowed mother and younger sisters. As time and again Milkman begins talking with her, the judgmental of towns people immediately misread the situation and they believe that there is illicit relationship between them. Society judges her harshly and makes her social scandal but no one questions

Milkman because he is a male and prosperous by might and right. The Young Woman tries to ignore this blame, "it seemed, this affair with the milkman. But, I had not been having an affair with the milkman. I did not like the Milkman and had been frightened and confused by his pursuing and attempting an affair with me" (1). These lines show the pathetic condition of women characters in Northern Ireland. Their commodification is manifested as Milkman time and again molests her without her consent. Within a capitalist economic system, commodification is the transformation of goods, services, ideas and people into commodities or objects of trade. A commodity at its most basic, according to Karl Marx, is "anything intended for exchange" (24) or any object of economic value. The crisis of capitalism on a world scale falls with special severity on the shoulders of women in the patriarchal society. Marx pointed to the tendency for capitalism to make super-profits from the exploitation of working class people. In *The Capital*, Marx writes:

The labour of women and children was, therefore, the first thing sought for by capitalists who used machinery. That mighty substitute for labour and laborers was forthwith changed into a means for increasing the number of wage-laborers by enrolling, under the direct sway of capital, every member of the workman's family, without distinction of age or sex. Compulsory work for the capitalist usurped the place, not only of the children's play, but also of free labour at home within moderate limits for the support of the family. (394-395)

Marx, in these lines, depicts that capitalism always deals with the profit making projects. It has lost its human sensitivity and moral value. The depicted society in the novel is Irish society, where female characters are treated as second class citizen. Irish society is patriarchal where women are taken as commodity, they are not granted their agency. They are living animalistic life, their identity is snatched forcefully in order to

make them subordinate. There is lack of women agency. Army retired personnel takes Young Woman as commodity. He, whenever meets her, treats as commodity not as human beings which hurts Young Woman's psychology bitterly. He deliberately forces her for physical relationship. He threatens her to kill her boyfriend if she does not agree with his point.

The novel has provided insignificant position of the women in Irish society. The major female character of the novel, Young Woman is the victim of patriarchy. The young girl of eighteen years is not only dominated by male characters, but her whole life turns into nightmare, when Irish society traces her as a responsible person of Milkman's death, who throughout her life gives unbearable tortures and maltreatment. Another female character, Young Woman's elder sister, who is also maltreated, therefore she "did not like first brother-in-law either" (1) because he forcefully makes "her pregnant and they got married right away" (1). Women are taken as commodities and their condition is not good in this society. Females are not safe from their nearest and dearest, here it is the same case with elder sister, she discloses the fact that she is insecure due to his brother-in-law, "He never made his comments when my sister was in the room. Always, whenever she leaves the room, it was a switch turned on inside him" (2). Young Woman in her 12 years of age was deliberately molested by her own brother-in-law. Her own brother-in-law seems quite selfish. He mercilessly presented himself in order to take advantages from her as capitalists presented themselves upon working class people.

Women's commodification is revealed like a corporation franchise in the patriarchal Irish society. Anna Burn's *Milkman* reflects not only objectification of women, but also shows how they are turned into mere commodity. The plight of women in a society is due to the superiority complex that has been descended for

many decades. The only fault of facing the tragic plight by the Young Woman in the novel *Milkman* is that she is a female. A retired Army personnel gives ample suffering and pain in her life. She is not allowed to move according to her wish. Her tragedy starts from the very fact that she is taken as a commodity. She is demure and docile and suppressed by capitalist patriarchal ideology. She wants to love with car mechanics and settle her life, but retired army personnel threatened her that he would kill him. Finally, the car mechanic meets his death. Young woman moves with traumatic condition as she triggers towards flashback threaten had given by him. She is compelled to accept the prejudices, patriarchal norms and values because she is in the trap of the capitalist patriarchal ideology. No one is ready to go against the will power of retired army personnel because he is economically as well as politically strong. Hence, she is ready to do each and everything according to the will of that man who controls social structure. She is in the trap of capitalistic ideology.

A retired army personnel known as Milkman attempts to molest the girl of 18 years. Young Woman is able to decide what is right and what is wrong but in Irish patriarchal society in post scenario of warfare women are being made scape goat in terms of possessions. Valerie Bryson raises the voice for women. Her book, *Feminist Political Theory*, has been proved to be influential in the domain of literary Marxist feminism. In this book, she discusses directly the situation of women is like commodity, which are deliberately sells in the market where women are treated in terms of commodity.

Burn's *Milkman* deals with the issue of London when capitalistic economic practices incrementally became institutionalized. From England, this ideology spread over Europe. In London, capitalistic mind set spreads in economics, politics and social affairs. Capitalism became the means of industrialization. The arrival of

capitalism led to the loss of women's ownership upon property and social affairs. Anna Burns in her novel shows the suffering situation of women as three ladies namely Young Woman, Elder Sister and Younger Sister face social problems due to patriarchal mindset. Their suffering is unbearable, the person whom Young Woman trusts, tries to commit rape. As indicated in the novel *Milkman*, Burns tries to show the rise of capitalism in Irish society and subordination of female agency. The rise of capitalism surely did lead to the development of a new form of patriarchy. Milkman type of social tycoons control over economy, power and politics that have great effects upon gender relations, consequently as Sylvia Walby opines, "men remained the dominant gender; all six patriarchal structures continued across this period; only a minor shift in the relative significance of public and private sites of patriarchy, which can be identified as far back as the seventeenth century, accelerated" (214). As Walby opines, man became the dominant entity in the society and started to control over female member. The hidden treasure behind such action is capitalist patriarchal ideology.

The nineteenth and twentieth century women had to pass through various challenges and the vicious circle of economic crisis. Hence Marxist feminism became a dominant approach in literature in twentieth century. Marxist feminist Zillah R. Eisenstein in introductory part writes, "Male supremacy and capitalism are defined as the core relations determining the oppression of women today. This volume is devoted to understanding the dynamic of power involved, which derives from both the class relations of production and the sexual hierarchical relations of society" (1). Male superiority complex and capitalism brought the oppression upon women. Eisenstein demands economic equality to bring equal relationship.

As insisted by Eisenstein, in capitalistic system, relationship between employer and employee is similar to the commodity and its owner. Capitalists have everything but proletariats have nothing except their labor. In the novel *Milkman*, the relationship between these three ladies and male members of that society is the relationship alike master and slave. As master plays with toil of slaves, here Milkman and brother in-law are playing with the conscience of Elder Sister and Young Woman. It indicates that women are maintaining their second class position. In the novel too, *Anna Burns*, shows the unequal situation, which stands against societal norms and structures where men are considered above women. Although, Young Woman is not ready to accept Milkman, he forcefully time and again "frightened and confused by his pursuing and attempting an affair with me" (1). Young Woman is commodified in the hand of Milkman who is the representative of patriarchal society.

Valerie Bryson, a Marxist feminist thinker, sees social inequality is due to lack of property right of women. She believes that as society takes the actual inheritor as male child, preference for male in every sector is the root cause of commodification. Women are unable to control over their body too. Their private spheres such as reproductive right also not is under their control. She further writes:

It may provide insights into women's parallel loss of control over the reproductive process, whereby developments in contraception and reproductive technology have become a means of controlling rather than liberating women; some have also argued that woman has become a packaged, feminised, marketable commodity, and has thus become alienated from her own self and her own sexuality [. . .] Although he was not concerned with the sexual division of labour, many feminists today see this as a central issue and

argue that men and women can only realize their full humanity when domestic responsibilities as well as productive work are shared by all. (66)

Capitalistic mindset is working in favor of patriarchy and quite contradictorily and its agents are making unequal distribution of labour market which is quite beyond the imagination of Karl Marx. Taking the advantage of masculinity power, men are maintaining the unequal distribution. As they are in the super power they formulate different types of unequal judgements in order to make women as slave as Milkman in the novel *Milkman* uses his masculinity army power and time and again treats Young Woman as commodity.

Many critics have wide range of views and commentaries in explicating and defining the novel in different ways. Some critics have viewed it from the trauma point of view, whereas others have defined it as the portrayal of dystopia.

Commenting on its overall thematic structure and contexts, Lisa Allardice sees the *Milkman* from the perspective of trauma. Women in post-war scenario of Ireland are deadily suffered from the havocs of warfare. Allardice further says:

Milkman, a novel ostensibly about the trauma of growing up during the Troubles in 1970s Belfast, unexpectedly beat American heavyweight Richard Powers' eco-epic *The Over Story* and Esi Edugyan's exuberant slave survival story, *Washington Black*, to the prize. It is actually set in an unnamed city, in an unknown era (references to Kate Bush, Sigourney Weaver and Freddie Mercury give us a clue), the characters known only in terms of their relationships to others. (4)

These lines regarding the *Milkman* and its story is traumatic as described in Richard Powers' epic *The Over Story* and Esi Edugyana's *Washington Black*. *Milkman* is a novel that deals with the issue of totalitarian, closed society existing in similarly

oppressive conditions. It is a fiction about an entire society living under extreme pressure which has created trauma in the mind of people.

In an article "Incredible Original: Novel about the Northern Conflict," Jenny Farrell sees the novel from the perspective of dystopia. She takes this novel as the document of social upheavals that has created a black spot in the history of Ireland. Military exercise has created awesome situation in the mind of people of Ireland. Farrell writes:

Milkman reads like a dystopian novel. We are in a time and place where names are not mentioned, places not named, people referred to in terms of their relationship to the anonymous narrator, or by another designation. Almost everything is expressed indirectly, by innuendo. In this way the narrative style of the novel reflects the coded talk of Belfast, where names reveal an either-or identity, and pronunciation is shibboleth. (10)

The critic, in these lines, advocates the issue of novel is dystopia. Farrell insists that place, time, names and places are unrevealed. The relationship of characters is also not expressed. But, the novel is about the suffering of people as depicted in the novel.

In the same way, Morisol Morales Lardon takes Anna Burn's novel as a social abuse. According to Lardon, *Milkman* is the historical document which tries to dig out historical facts when Northern Ireland was troubled in its peak. Dehumanization, fragmentation, chaos, vandalization and social suffering of the people were rampant in this time. Lardon writes:

Anna Burns' awarded novel *Milkman* (2018) has stirred the minds of critics, reviewers and scholars alike. Set in Northern Ireland, at a time when the Troubles were at its peak, the narrative defiantly targets at what appears to be sexual harassment, to further disclose layers and layers of more

subtle meanings related to sociopolitical (self) control and surveillance, within an atmosphere of pathological silence. (22)

These lines show the historical facts that had happened in post-war scenario of Northern Ireland. How the society was overwhelmed by the bonfire of warfare. This commentary also highlights the fact that the novel as a text defies generic limits. It sounds tragic and comic at the same time. It is about the sexual harassment, legal system of the society that is brought forth through unreal dramatic action.

Milkman has been basically approached through three key themes such as trauma, dystopian novel and social abuse. These studies shed light on various themes and issues raised in the novel through a variety of frame of interpretations on different theoretical perspectives. The novel has not been discussed along the perspective of commodification of women and the theory associated with this. In this sense, women's suffering has remained an unexplored domain of knowledge in the text.

Marxist feminism is a political theory which sees the oppression of women and seeks its resolution from Marxist point of view. This theory states that private property, which gives rise to economic inequality, dependence, political confusion and ultimately unhealthy social relation, between men and women is the root of women's oppression in the current social context.

Marxism, which understands the feminist issues in terms of economic, political and social issues is Marxist feminism. Thus, one of the primary tasks of Marxist feminism "is to create the kind of world in which women will experience themselves as whole persons, as integrated rather than fragmented or splintered beings" (Tong 45). Gender inequality is the production of capitalism and determined by capitalistic mode of production. Gender oppression is class oppression and women's subordination is seen as a form of class oppression (which is maintained like

racism) because it serves the interests of capitalists and ruling class. Marxist feminists have extended traditional Marxist analysis by looking at domestic labor as well as wage work in order to support their position. Marxist feminists argue that domination of women by men is in timely connected with patriarchal capitalism because patriarchy and capitalism are mutually supportive. Within the household, women produce labor power in the sense of bearing children and caring for their husband who are workers, which supports men but the women don't get benefits of their domestic works. Commenting on the operation of patriarchy, Sheila Ruth writes:

Patriarchy is probably the oldest forms of exploitation of one part of population by another. It probably has also served as the model for all other forms of relegation, by they on the basis of race, ethnicity, religion, of class, such on system is established, those in the high caste positions in this case males develop a vested interests in the maintenance of the basic structure and their own advantaged status . . . the short run interests of males as males, and, perhaps more importantly, as traders of political, economic and cultural institutions are best served by maintaining and reinforcing their traditional gender roles. (115)

Marxist feminism finds similarities between male and female in the family and bourgeoisie and proletariat in society. Husband, father or male member is like bourgeoisie in the society and wife in a family is like a proletarian in society. It does not mean that women are suffering only within family but family itself is initiating unit for woman domination. Woman are being exploited in the society on the basis of patriarchal norms and values which are construction of economic power position.

Women are not allowed to go out and work and are just confined in household activities. They do not get wage for their housework nor is their work taken

as actual work. Except housework, they have to perform their natural works. One of the natural tasks is childbearing which is women's unquestionable task. But in patriarchy, society childcare is also women's essential work. They give birth and bring up the baby but male members do not take it as a vital work and if any woman does only child caring in the house she is called workless. But the father or may not be, takes away the child when he wants. This injustice is in patriarchal society. As Tong opines, "woman gives birth, the mother's any child is always known. However, the identity of father is never certain because a woman could have been impregnated by a man other than her husband" (49). Later this child, if male, tries to control mother.

Patriarchal society always sees the woman as a scandal, if she makes relationship with male but quite contradictorily the same task conducted by male member of the society taken as usual. Young Woman is innocent, Milkman follows her wherever she goes, but the society traces it as if she had done great mistake. The contemporary society as depicted in the novel *Milkman* called her socially outcaste women. She should be careful while meeting other males. But in man's case, it is different. Patriarchal society does not seek such strict fidelity from males' simply because in family, males condition is similar to the condition of capitalists in the society. As workers are commodities in capitalistic economic system, women are commodities in family because of influence of capitalistic social system. Friedrich Engels says, "Emancipation of women and their equality with men are impossible and must remain so as long as women are excluded from socially productive work and restricted to housework, which is private. The emancipation of women becomes possible only when women are enabled to take part in production on a large, social scale" (151). For that dismantling of capitalistic economic system is needed

where exploitation of labor is working very strongly. By this reason, women are suffering from the adjective like weak, passive, emotional in patriarchal society as Young Woman suffers in the hand of Milkman.

For the elimination of the oppression of women, capitalist economy should be dismantled which also dismantles the patriarchal social system because it is based on capitalistic system. As workers are alienated from the product, self, other human being and nature, women are also alienated from sex, self, children, and their surroundings. Women do not get their proper place because they are women:

Women are not paid less simply because working class men have succeeded in protecting their own interest at women's expense they have been able to do this because dominant attitude labels any work done by women as inherently inferior to that done by men. (Bryson 241)

They are paid less because of the interest and self-protecting superiority. They evaluate women as if they are commodity of male as their sexes differ from male sex. Women take domestic responsibilities and outward work is generally supposed to be done by males which is categorized as hard work. By this cause also females are treated as weak, "women's domestic responsibilities do mean that they are less able than men to defend their own economic interests" (Bryson 241). Therefore, women's interest, capacity, vigor etc. are neglected because for male women are commodity as the workers for capitalists.

For Marxist feminist, gender oppression is class oppression and women's subordination is seen as a form of class oppression. It believes that women's situation in society, cannot be understood in isolation from its socio-economic context. As the Marxists see the alienation of labor from work, self, human beings and nature women are also alienated, from sex, self, children and from whole surroundings. In

capitalism, labor is treated as a commodity which can be sold and bought. Capitalism intensifies alienation and generalizes it throughout all level of society. The end of alienation requires communism. So, in the society the end of patriarchal domination requires communism. When the classless society emerges, the class discrimination and gender discrimination will be diminished. Because when the classless society is established all people become equal and property will be distributed equally to everybody. Then only in such society women get their proper place and equality. In this context, Katherine Kearns Ruthven writes:

Marxism identifies capitalism (and the modes of production which support it) as a material base of class system which is the source of all oppression, and holds that the specific subject of women will end necessarily in that general dismiss of oppression which is to follow the destructions of capitalism. (28)

The end of women's oppression will end with the end of capitalism and when it is ended, women will be emancipated from the oppression of male domination as well.

In the capitalistic system, all kinds of discriminations and injustice existing in the society are hidden. "Workers work very hard for the production of the factory and produce a large quantity but none of them get name or any other mark of their individual contribution" (Tyson 58). So the workers are alienated from the production. They find the work unpleasant but they are bound to do their work. "Workers' humanization becomes the actual source of his or her dehumanization, the worker is bound to undergo a major psychological crisis" (Tong 44). Therefore, workers are alienated from other human beings as well, because they see around them their co-workers as competition for job and promotion as the capitalist system encourages. This sense of competition for job and promotion alienate workers from their co-workers. In this system, finally workers are alienated from the nature itself,

“because the kind of work they do and condition under which they do, it make them see nature as an obstacle to their survival (Tong 44). So, they are alienated from natural itself also because of capitalistic economic system. Therefore, the most important aspect for elimination of alienation is the eradication of capitalism.

Some Marxist feminists have argued that women’s position in society primarily benefits capitalism and capitalist rather than men. Margaret Benton argues:

Capitalism benefits from a large reserve of labor force women to keep wages down and profits up. In their roles in secondary breadwinners, married women provide source of cheap easily exploitable labor because women have been socialized to comply and submit, they form a docile labor force that can be readily manipulated and easily fired when not required. (607)

Women’s exploitation is everywhere. Before and after marriage women become the victim of sexual exploitation. Marxist feminist Catherine compares sex to work, capital to men, worker to women, commodity to sex/women, capitalist accumulation to female sexual desire etc. There is no place for women’s sexual desire in society. If a husband or boyfriend wants to have sexual relation then that is the desire of wife/girlfriend also. Tong brings the concept of Marx and Engels and sees marriage as a form of prostitution. Marx and Engels implicitly accepted the services that can be prostituted are not limited to sexual service sold by prostitute wife. Therefore, in patriarchal society husband-wife relationship is unequal relation, which is similar to bourgeoisie proletariat or employer- employee relationship.

Heidi Hartmann compares the situation to a marriage in which the husband represents Marxism, the wife represents Feminism, and it is the husband who has all power. She says, “The marriage of Marxism and feminism has been like the marriage of husband and wife and depicted in this common law, Marxism and feminism are the

one that one is Marxism” (607). In terms of the Marxist theory, a woman appears insignificant; they sit on the sidelines of the grand struggle between capital and labors. Marxists may explain capitalism, but this doesn't explain patriarchy. Marxism can explain why capitalists exploit workers but not why men exploit women. Michellel Barret attacks Marxist theories which see capitalism, alone benefiting from the exploitation of women. She points out that working class men benefit from the labor of their own wives as well as capitalists.

Marital relationship is the beginning of prostitution also because a wife sleeps with her husband whenever he wants so that she can get support for livelihood. It doesn't mean that before marriage, women do not suffer from sexual exploitation. In the novel, Elder Sister for her survival lives with her husband, Young Woman also bearing molestation as he is feeding her, if she exposes the evidence that she has been maltreated in the hand of her brother-in-law, the society will take it as her mistake. She is helpless, she does not have money but male has money. Money protects him whereas lack of money is curse for the female of same participation.

Male centric capitalistic ideology of Irish society assumes women to be objects in marriage and in motherhood existing as vessels of maternity and sexuality. They were supposed to be good daughters, wives and mothers moving only from the protection of their father's roof to the protection of their husbands. Moreover, the strictly conventional of Irish society had confined women within the narrow boundaries of domesticity. They were expected to be chaste and obedient to their husband primarily and whole patriarchy centric male subjugation.

Milkman is a story of Anna Burn's mouth speaker Young Woman. Young Woman tells the stories that had happened in her life. She searches for her identity and self-respect in an alienating and almost hostile Irish society where women are

taken as commodities. The consciousness of her identity as Irish woman, the genetic tension she experiences, male chauvinism she observes, accelerate her quest for freedom, to establish her own world and identity as a woman. Her desire to establish for her own life has forcefully caged her life. She is unwilling to love making with milkman because she is well aware about "his sights on me and had started in on destroying me" (171) is an urgent rejection of her commodification as Irish society is guide by male centric ideology and the male member of the society take female as commodity, women are not taken as human beings as "this new man got her pregnant and they got married right away. He made lewd remarks about me to me from the first moment he met me" (1). In these lines Young Woman and her sister are commodified. Irish social setting is also a barrier of women which binds female within four walls of a house and the things to be played in the hands of male member. In this regard, Valeri Bryson created a theoretical basis regarding how patriarchy deals with women in terms of commodity. She says, "while the inequalities that may exist between men and women are seen as of little practical importance or theoretical interest" (1). She examines the patriarchal traditions and institutions that control the power politics by which society oppresses women.

II. Objectification of Women in Anna Burn's *Milkman*

The patriarchal institutions in the twentieth century Irish society required women to be objects in marriage, motherhood existing as vessels of maternity and sexuality with little opportunity for individuality. They were supposed to be good daughters, wives and mothers moving only from the protection of their father's roof to the protection of their husbands. Moreover, the strictly conventional society of twentieth century Ireland had confined women within the narrow boundaries of domesticity. They were expected to be closer and obedient to their husbands; and motherly, and protective to their children.

As such, women's commodification is like a corporation in the patriarchal world. Burn's *Milkman* reflects not only objectification of women, but also shows how they are turned into mere commodity. The plight of women in a society is because of this faith that males are superior to the females. The only fault for facing the tragic plight by the Young Woman in the novel *Milkman* is that she is a female. Her tragedy starts from the very fact that she is taken as a commodity. This female character is demure and docile and she is suppressed by capitalist patriarchal ideology, when it comes to her happiness and freedom. She is ready to accept the prejudice, patriarchal norms and values because she is in the trap of the capitalist patriarchal ideology. She is ready to do according to the societal structure because she is in the trap of capitalism.

Young Woman is well acknowledged for that injustice, but the contemporary society is maintaining patriarchal status quo, which she could not cross at all.

Milkman, a retired paramilitary officer, casts his hawk eyes upon Young Woman, who is half of his age and she does not like him but due to the fear of death danger, she could not resist him. Milkman gives penetrating circumstances which do not let

her in her normal condition. Beyond her desire, he continuously follows her in order to make her sexually abuse. Young Woman is seeing a car mechanic a couple of years older than her. As usual, she also prefers boy friend which is similar age to her. She likes him but the matter of fact is untold to Milkman. Milkman was dangerous person "much more frightening, much more dangerous, stepped from out of nowhere onto the scene" (2). Young Woman is not able to live her life happily without any constraints. Milkman was the problem of her who has taken her as a puppet and wants to play with it. Milkman as he is in the position of power and politics, keeps threatening whole society, no one can resist and go against with his will, though Young Woman is merely a commodity like things in his hand.

Regarding the commodification of women, marxist feminist Valerie Bryson argued that "woman has become a packaged, feminised, marketable commodity, and has thus become alienated from her own self and her own sexuality" (77). The concept of Bryson is that female in capitalistic society are compelled to sell themselves as marketable commodity. In capitalistic patriarchal society female are treated as bonded labour within the demarcation line perpetuated by male member of the society. They have lost their control over their body. Their sexuality is not under control of them. Male member of the society uses their sexuality as a defiance weapon in order to control over their body.

As theorized by Bryson, in the novel *Milkman* too, female members are suffering due to their female sexuality. The contemporary social setting of Irish society is solely responsible for their suffering and being commodified within the vicious circle of male gaze. Young Woman's eldest sister is the victim of patriarchal society. Her eldest sister was in physical relationship with her first boyfriend who deceives her for a long time and later "got dumped for cheating on her" (Burns 1). As

claimed by Bryson, Irish women as described in the novel are marginalized as they are born with their femininity. Present brother-in-law is not a good personality, rather he keeps debauch nature. Who first pretends as if a good boyfriend with eldest sister, but later keeps sexual contact, makes her pregnant and got married. His debauch nature can be seen in these lines as:

In his compulsion he made things up about other people's exlives. About my sexlife. When I was younger, when I was twelve, when he appeared on my eldest sister's rebound after her long-term boyfriend got dumped for cheating on her, this new man got her pregnant and they got married right away. He made lewed remarks about me to me from the first moment he met me - about my quainte, my tail, my contry, my box, my jar, my contrariness, my monosyllable and he used words, words sexual, I did not understand. He knew I didn't understand them but that I knew enough to grap they were sexual. That was what gave him pleasure. He was thirty-five. Twelve ad thirty-five. That was a twenty three years' difference too. (1-2)

In these lines, it is clearly visible that how women in contemporary Irish socieity are commodified. First of all, female members of that socieity seems quite miserable as they are treated as a sex-dolly. Their feelings and emotions are materialized and not taken sincerely. Eldest Sister dreams of love and affection with her first boyfriend and imagines beautiful life, but unfortunately that person deceives her. Their love and affection was only for physical passion and calm his sexual hunger. As quickly as he flew away, another one comes in her life in order to maintain his passion, but she becomes pregnant which makes compell to marry with her. As they were dwelling in the same house, he starts to mistreat Young Woman whose age was only 12 years. His intention to remain there is to molest Young Woman in her early age which she

hardly grasps to know. As described in the novel, women are in double marginalization; one of being women and another they are not given economic prosperity.

As Irish society is patriarchal, all the means of resources and in the position of political power, there is patriarchy and its representatives. Women are not given any chance to employment and exhibit them into income generating places. They are domesticated and bound within the four walls of it. In this connection, Bryson again says:

Women's lack of political and economic rights were not for . . . facets of female subordination, but were causally related to what she increasingly saw as the central aspect of oppression –their sexual exploitation by men. Here she argued that if a woman is unable to sell her labour to earn a living then she is forced to sell her body (either temporarily as a prostitute or permanently as a wife), and that men denied women the vote primarily as a means of covering up sexual vice. (81)

Bryson, in these lines, shows the reign of terror in terms of their political and economic affairs, on which women are punished by the male centric ideology that politicizes upon female civilization. Women are not taken as human beings, they are taken as inferior creatures unable to do any creative and decisive role except providing sexual amusement and producing child. Nineteenth century Britain is the society of biasness, "fear of male sexuality had been a dominant strand in nineteenth-century feminism in both Britain and the United States" (Bryson 81), therefore, Anna Burns knowingly wants to show the commodification of women through this novel as her character, radically neglects the nineteenth century Irish society as, "I did not like twentieth-century books because I did not like the twentieth century" (5). Young

Woman is well aware about the suffering of women due to the patriarchal ideology, where women are neglected, although they are married or unmarried.

Regarding the underestimation of women, Young Woman puts her dissatisfaction with her elder sister's marriage. She talks about her brother-in-law of being bad nature. He always tries to conduct maltreatment with her. He in her elder sister's absence, utters verbal utterances regarding the "lewd remarks" (1). She is not happy with such remarks and revolts against him. In any cost, he tries to establish lewd relationship with her. Brother-in-law wants to domesticate her. He does not like of her communication with other male member. He thinks that if she communicates with other people, she will be socialized and could find what is wrong and what is right and he could not make her treat as commodity. Regarding the socialization of women, Jean Grimshaw writes, ". . . almost everything that women learn to desire is 'wrong' in the sense that it undermines female creativity and autonomy, and almost every facet of female socialisation helps to channel female desire into these 'wrong objects'" (21). Grimshaw excavates the hidden reality of women how and why they are under control of male chauvanism. Patriarchal ideology has maintained that very troop through which it makes control over female civilization. Women are not appeared in public places and they are strongly prohibited two way communication and put their argument. If they do so, they would be socialized and protest their domination. With the fear of downfall of their empire of domination, brother-in-law does not want her talking with the man in car and he sends his wife, Young Woman's elder daughter in order to scold her.

Eldest sister came round to see me because her husband, my now forty-one-year-old brother-in-law, had sent her round to see me. She was to apprise me and to warn me. She said I had been seen talking with this man. 'Fuck off,' I

said. 'What's that mean - Been seen? Who's been seein' me? Your husband?'

'You'd better listen to me,' she said. But I wouldn't listen because of him and his double standards, and because of her putting up with them. (4)

As insisted by Grimshaw, her brother-in-law plays an active to make Young Woman as commodity. He is so clever "He never made his comments when my sister was in the room. Always, whenever she'd leave the room, it was a switch turned on inside him" (2) and "he made his remarks" (2) on her. She respects him so that she "did not speak because I did not know how to respond to this person" (2). The person who time and again treats with her sister as commodity like behaviour, Elder Sister believes her husbands words and comes to the point of debate with her own sister as she has comitted a great mistake because she loves her husband very much. In Lois Tyson's term she is a "patriarchal woman" (85).

In fact, the Elder Sister has been a puppet in this patriarchal society. Whatever she does, she does for the male members for her family on the one hand, she has to be faithful for her husband and on the other hand she has to help her sister to ascend to the Irish social setting. She has internalized the patriarchal norms and values as she can do nothing against the decision of her husband. She maintains traditional gender roles and regulations of the contemporary Irish society. Elder Sister has also been the victim of traditional gender role and a means of preserve the patriarchal status.

Further defining the traditional gender rule and its aim to preserve the patriarchal status quo Tyson says:

Traditional gender roles cast men as rational, strong, protective, and decisive; they cast women as emotional (irrational), weak, nurturing and submissive.

These gender roles have been used very successfully to justify inequalities,

which still occur today, such as excluding women from equal access to leadership and decision-making position. (85)

As Tyson stresses, the woman does not have any access to the leadership and decision making process. The same submissive nature is also seen in the Elder Sister's situation too. Though, she is an elder sister, she can do nothing against the will of her husband because she is taken as a weak, submissive and nurturing only. On the other hand brother-in-law is presented as valiant, decisive, strong and protective. He himself pretends as if he is a real lover of her wife, but actually he is making suppression over her.

As such, even love is a means to suppress women. Brother-in-law's behaviour (love) is a mere means of satisfying the physical and mental demands of the men folk. The male take love for pleasure and love is a way to achieve the same. Being a brother-in-law, he would be responsible towards Young Woman rather trying to take advantage within the gown of relationship, she express her dissatisfaction as "this new man got her pregnant and they got married right away" (1). Patriarchal society takes women as commodity, play with it for the sake of its pleasure. Elder Sister is too much exploited by the patriarchy.

In the novel, the author has focused traditional notions of male which has undermined female roles and responsibilities. Young Woman leads the courtesan role that has constructed male society. Young Woman has encouraged against the male construction. Nonetheless, the powerful courtesan Young Woman has dominated in the social environment and heredity. One night just after sundown, Young Woman walks home from a French class. Milkman approaches her, warning that if she does not stop seeing may-be-boyfriend, he will kill him. Young Woman is paralyzed with terror. She created submission is restructured to form a new gender identity which is

also subverted in novel. There is struggle between Car mechanic and Milkman. Both of them are patriarchal representatives. One is trying his best to acquire her lovingly and another one is forcefully. In patriarchal settings, Valarie Bryson believes that :

. . . private oppression could be simply legislated away, but it seemed clear that the lot of a woman trapped in a violent marriage would be better if she had the legal right to leave her husband and to achieve economic independence; rights of education and employment were clearly also of practical importance to single women who would otherwise have no role in society or reasonable source of income. (34-35)

Bryson puts forward that women's private and fundamental rights are being snatched by making laws, rules and regulations. They are not granted to live their according to their will. Male member of the society disseminates fundamental rights of women in terms of education, employment and even in their private life affairs too.

As insisted by Valarie Bryson, Young Woman in each and every step of her either private or public life being commodity within the mainframe of patriarchal ideology that prevails in the contemporary Irish society, where women "cannot talk about 'women' or 'men' as stable political identities, let alone claim that women deserve equal opportunities, suffer from patriarchal oppression" (Bryson 4). Extreme domination upon female civilization has created a wound in their mindset. Consequently they fear to raise their voice against inequality as Young Woman's mother suggests her not to do anything beyond patriarchal imagination. She further expresses bitter words as:

She spoke of other meetings then, between me and the Milkman, besides the two to which I admitted. The community was keeping her abreast, she said, which meant she knew I met him regularly for immoral trysts and

assinations, knew too, of what we got up to in places too indecent even to give the dot dot dot' to. 'You're some sort of mob-woman,' she said. 'Out of the pale. Lost your intrinsic rights and wrongs. You make it hard, wee girl, to love you and if your poor father was alive, certainly he'd have something to say about this'. (54-55)

Widow woman is quite anxious towards her daughter's future therefore she expresses her bitter words towards her regarding her future endeavors. It was due to the society that back biting about the so-called relationship between her and Milkman. The contemporary Irish society is fully based on patriarchal norms and values that works in favour of male centric ideology. Hence, her mother too could not cross that very boundary. She bestowed upon her. Actually neither she loves Milkman nor she dates to him rather Milkman harasses her time and again, she slowly and gradually escapes from him because he threatens her to death and he can do it being a person of paramilitary personnel. As he deserves political power, he bitterly exercises upon her which makes her commodity.

In capitalistic society, women are treated as commodity. They set freedom but cannot experience it. In family, their voices do not get any place, where her husbands, boyfriends, fathers and other male members are dictators as Young Woman is losing her freedom from her own mother, elder daughter and brother-in-law who are her nearest and dearest. Her relatives, supposed nearest persons try to impose their desire upon her. Therefore, she feels alienated from nature and surroundings. While taking the theoretical base, working class women are more suppressed than the higher or bourgeoisie class women because working class woman are treated badly by the higher class women and working class men also try to manipulate working class woman according to their will, but bourgeoisie women suffer only from the male

members of their own class. Similar is the condition of Young Woman. First of all, she suffers from brother-in-law and later car mechanics, mother, sister, neighbours and so on.

As Marxist feminists insist that gender oppression is class oppression and women's subordination is seen as a form of class oppression. It believes that women's situation in society, cannot be understood in isolation from its socio-economic context. As the Marxists see the alienation of labor from work, self, human beings and nature women are also alienated, from sex, self, children and from whole surroundings. In capitalism, labor is treated as a commodity which can be sold and bought. Capitalism intensifies alienation and generalizes it throughout all level of society. The end of alienation requires communism. So, in the society the end of patriarchal domination requires communism. When the classless society emerges, the class discrimination and gender discrimination will be diminished. In this context, K.K. Ruthven writes:

Marxism identifies capitalism (and the modes of production which support it) as a material base of class system which is the source of all oppression, and holds that the specific subject of women will end necessarily in that general dismissal of oppression which is to follow the destructions of capitalism. (28)

The end of women's oppression will end with the end of capitalism and when it is ended, women will be emancipated from the oppression of male domination as well. In the capitalistic system, all kinds of discriminations and injustice existing in the society are hidden. Capitalists on behalf of its use they use women as per their necessity. Milkman has different types of cars. "I only noticed him and his cars when he started putting himself in them in front of me" (Burns 2-3). In order to capture her attention, Milkman appears in different cars, "van- small, white, nondescript, shape

shifting. From time to time he was seen at the wheel of the van too" (3). It means, as a paramilitary officer he does have all the sources enough to make victim the girls of the town.

Young Woman's family is poor, they live within a poor condition with old mother as they have lost their father and brother who would earn and feed them. It was the time of riot where bombarding and shooting is common. In this chaotic condition, Young Woman moves here and there in order to complete her study. She many of the times gauges her way with bare foot, in this situation, Milkman appears in front of her with his beautiful car and invites her to stay in car as:

I will give you a lift.' This was said casually, the passenger door already opening. I was startled out of my reading. I had not heard this car drive up. Had not seen before either. This man at the wheel of it. He was leaning over, looking out at me, smiling and friendly by way of being obliging . . . People who had cars her often would stop and offer lifts to others going into and out of the area. (3)

Manipulation of money is the best means to tempting Young Woman victim.

Capitalist society thinks women and poor as their play things. They want to play with their soul and body. On that very ground, Milkman as he owns different types of cars wants to control over Young Woman. In surface level, it seems that he is providing help to her but his hidden interest is quite different, ". . . indeed helpful, but I understood he had to make use of me because he was excited by the car . . ." (17). By manipulating property, he wants to play with Young Woman which she understands and rejects. She is aware about the domination that was happening to her.

Young Woman escapes from the conspiracy of Milkman's car game but she could not escape from the rumor that prevails in her society. The false gossip of

relationship between Milkman and Young Woman prevails throughout the society which makes her unhappy because she was facing false blame and stigmatized. In capitalistic patriarchal society women are not allowed to live their lives in their own way. Elder Sister is the victim of male gaze. Many men came in her life and play with her body, no one loves her neither she too. When her first boyfriend until and unless one year plays with her body, he lets her. Second man comes in his life in order to fulfill his sexual hunger, but accidentally she becomes pregnant and they are compelled to marry each other. If she would not pregnant second man's primary concern was to fulfill his desire and flip away like first one. Milkman on the way to consume her, "again this milkman was picking up on my secret desires and dreams. But he was the wrong man" (167). She was aware about the wrong deeds and selfishness of milkman. The milkman time again follows her in order to take advantage of her body. There is no any single lapse of love and affection between the couple because their marriage is accidental. Husband is totally deviated from his responsibility of being husband, his only and one hidden interest seems to be established "his predatory nature pushed me into frozenness every time" (2), to make her sexually abuse.

It is said that, male and female are the two wheels of the same cart. In one's absence that very cart could not run. But this saying is limited only in the books and women in the society are dehumanizing brutally. In *Milkman*, there seems vicious inequalities between two sexes. Women dare not to speak against the brutalities of male members upon them. The postulation of scenario in the novel is the time during warfare during Irish revolution where most of the women are in double marginalization. On the one hand, Young Woman is being commodified due to her femininity and other hand para-military soldier threatens day and night and gives death threatens. In happening so, Virginia Woolf a feminist thinker says that, there is gap

between male and female in terms of economic independency, that's why women are rooted under the dogmatism of patriarchy.

Virginia Woolf in her sentimental novel *A Room of One's Own* discusses the primary and economic independence to develop and write text as male writes. Due to the lack of right to freedom and property, women are being prevented from realizing their creative possibilities by patriarchal society. She hopes to achieve a balance between a male self realization and female self annihilation. The tradition of women's writing is affected by male's tradition. She also makes a survey of the women writers from the seventeenth century to nineteenth century. She wanted boldness and decency in the society so as to deal with the problems on her own. By being what male wanted when to do, there was no escape from the traditional sense of male domination on the females imposed on them, since ages. From the beginning her life, Young Woman is being stalked by Milkman, "again his Milkman was picking up on my secret desires and dreams. But he was the wrong man. And this taking me for granted was without my acquiescence" (167). These lines also further notify that how the situation of Young Woman is. By this expression, she is not granted to live life in her own way, Milkman time and again stalks her as he takes her as his private property. Without her consent he plays with her secret desires that she keeps in her imagination which could not possibly flourished at all.

Milkman is a story of women during the time of Irish revolution. Anna Burns tells the stories that had happened in their lives. Among these women Young Woman who primarily loses her identity seems good that is kept in the market under control of Milkman. She searches for her identity and self-respect in an alienating and almost hostile Irish society where women are taken as commodities. The consciousness of her identity as Irish woman, the genetic tension she experiences, male chauvinism she

observes, accelerate her liberation conscience to establish her own identity as a woman who can exercise freely. Her desire to establish for her own identity tormented when Milkman treats her as commodity. "We'd had a fight about, maybe-boyfriend and me, because the Milkman was keeping up the pressure by continuing to highlight it, to make veiled threats, to count down time (Burns 168) is an urgent expression of her commodification. In these lines Young Woman feels that there is no way out of her liberation. Economic as well as politically Milkman is strong and he keeps death threaten to her that she must "stop seeing the young guy or else. Again, he did this by mentioning maybe-boyfriend" (168). Ground breaking truth of Young Woman that she could not love and make relationship with maybe-boyfriend due to the threat of Milkman is that he takes Young Woman as a commodity and completely controls over it. Patriarchal society and its condition is also a barrier of women which bounds female within four walls of a house.

French feminist Simon de Beauvoir in *The Second Sex* created a theoretical basis regarding how patriarchy deals with women in terms of economy. She examines the patriarchal traditions and institutions that control the material and economic condition by which society oppress women. She adds, "He thenceforth has complete power over her person and her property . . . the women's property remains under the guardians' control and the husbands right are only over her person" (127). In these lines Beauvoir brings the reference of women's dominance history where they are treated as a commodity. They are not taken as human beings. Here, Beauvoir postulates the reference of power and politics over women which has turned women as a personal property of the people who are in power and politics. Though, Young Woman in the novel is treated as a personal property in the hand of Milkman.

Patriarchal society is too much biased society where each and every codes and conducts are maintained. In order to maintain domination upon women different types of social templates which Elaine Showalter's view is that in the history the whole trend of female writing was reflected by males. So, she wants to reconstruct the history which would reject the true position of women and the female writers and then writing. Her view is that patriarchal society creates different types of discourses rejecting the women's fundamental right. As Showalter believes, in the novel too, Young Woman's eldest sister "did not go to her dead man's funeral because being married now to somebody else" (169). She is not allowed to take part in her paternal relative's death ceremony because "she wasn't supposed still to be in love with him" (169). One daughter marry off, society does not let her right to take part in funeral procession because social discourse created by patriarchal society is responsible for it. The eldest sister seems to be commodified in this sense that her fundamental right to join funeral procession is snatched by the contemporary society which in the words of Showalter should be restructured. Showalter further writes in *Towards a Feminist Poetics*, "Work for the analysis of woman's literature to develop new models based on the study of female experience rather than to adapt male models and theories" (1227). She wants inevitability of restructure the social models and theories which are responsible for women's suffering. To make the literature of woman different and special, there is a need of reconstruction of its past and rediscovery of the scores of women writers.

Dictatorship of male member upon female civilization is another notion of women's suffering in Irish society. Social settings as well as each and every members of that society are deceptive. All of them either Milkman, brother-in-law, maybe boyfriend or car mechanics are playing with the emotions of female. As patriarchal

havoc falls on Ma and Elder Daughter, they are also in favor of patriarchal status quo. They also seem in favour of patriarchy. Brother-in-law wants to calm his sexual hunger and time and again tries his best as he finds Young Woman alone which she rejects. In turn, he makes conspiracy and started to black mail her. He gossips with his wife that her sister seems talking with boys in the street and this is rumor in the city. And "Elder Sister came round to see me because her husband, my now-forty-one-year brother-in-law, had sent her round to see me" (4). As he fails to establish sexual relationship with her, she badly treated in the hand of her elder sister. Elder sister is compelled to follow the order of her husband and scolds her own sister. Although, she is well known about the social inequalities that how male members are playing their conscience. They are compelled to bear this inequality. In these lines, it is clearly visible that male member when he could not use her, makes conspiracy in order to kill her social dignity and compel her to perceive whatever he wants to do. Brother-in-law does not respect her rather he wants to make her commodity as male member of the parochial society take female civilization as goods that can be used whenever and wherever they like.

Brother-in-law first of all makes sexual relationship with Elder Sister, his intense was not marrying her but accidentally she becomes pregnant and he compels to marry her. He is not a responsible person to stay within dignity and familial responsibility, rather he wants to commit rape within the circumference of relationship as Mary Ryan writes:

For a long time, Irish women's lives were strictly confined to the private domain, and women's issues were largely silenced and hidden from public knowledge. Additionally, both Church and state maintained that women should hold a certain morality, particularly relating to areas of sexuality and

reproduction. As a result, until relatively recently, Irish women's issues remained largely ignored and therefore unremarked upon. (92)

Irish women's lives have traditionally been repressed: women's sexuality and domestic violence, both issues which were once considered taboo for open discussion. In the novel too, women are facing the same issue, women are presented as meek and fragile goods that can be breakdown anytime and anywhere. Their agency is not taken as human beings and they are treated as a commodity.

Feminism is a range of political movements, ideologies, and social movements that share a common goal: to define, establish, and achieve political, economic, personal, and social rights for women that are equal to those of men. This thesis also discusses how these same issues are being represented in the novel *Milkman*. The then Irish society as represented in the novel *Milkman* is totally patriarchal where women are not taken as human beings. In order to show the inequality, brutality, injustice upon women, Anna Burns providing a frank and positive voice for these largely female issues and for the everyday experiences of women in Ireland.

This includes seeking to establish equal opportunities for women in education and employment. Feminist movements have campaigned and continue to campaign for women's rights, including the right to vote, to hold public office, to work, to earn fair wages or equal pay, to own property, to receive education, to enter contracts, to have equal rights within marriage, implement their free will, to make decision themselves upon their body and to have maternity right. Feminists have also worked to promote bodily autonomy and integrity, and to protect women and girls from rape, sexual harassment, and domestic violence. Feminist campaigns are generally considered to be one of the main forces behind major historical societal changes for women's rights.

In the novel *Milkman*, there are lots of advocates and quite diplomatically Anna Burns has spoken for the equality between men and women by portraying heart rendering situation of Young Woman as she is not allowed to live with her morality. Patriarchal society from each and every angle gives her unnecessary torture; she cannot live with her desire rather patriarchal codes and conducts she has to follow. Her struggle in the midst of patriarchal havoc gives her unnecessary burden which creates traumatic situation in her life. Commodity like behaviour in the hand of Irish patriarchal society of young girl including other female characters determines the submissive and subservient role of female. Women have always been dominated by the men in the patriarchal society where men are the head of the household and the rule makers. Men are the supreme authority and women are the followers. These things, even in the 21 century it is not the new or surprising things because it is still being practiced in the society of England and there are not any women in the world that had not been through this discrimination at least once in their life time. It is not that, women have not fought for their rights, but their condition could not resemble.

III. Socio-economic Status of Women as the Cause of Exploitation

After critically examining the portrayal of women in early twentieth century Irish society, this research work has found out the cause behind desertion of women in Anna Burns's *Milkman*. To identify the causes of abandonment, this research has studied the characters and their behaviours towards each other as well and found that the male female relation and their attitudes are the central issues of this novel. After examining the different, events, attitudes and conversation between characters, the researcher has found out that male's attitude towards females is not better than the attitude and behaviour to the object. Although their roles are varied, all women are subservient because of culture, old rigid tradition and values of Irish society.

All the female characters in the novel, mistress or servant, are taken as mere commodities that are used by the male characters for their own convenience. The females are dominated by males not only because they are women but also because they are from lower class and economically dependent on the male characters. They are used as means to fulfill male's erotic desires and also compelled to do so because they don't have their capacity of earning by themselves. Though the protagonist of the novel is so young and beautiful, old brother-in-law of thirty-five years old doesn't hesitate to make lewd remarks to Young Woman, a 12 years old innocent girl. His superiority lies not in his age, strength or sexual vitality but in his being privileged as male and having money. Not only brother-in-law, rather Milkman, a Car-mechanics, as well as other male characters' behaviors reveal men's attitude towards women in the Irish patriarchal society.

The novel has been presented in flash-back technique where Young Woman is presented in a pathetic condition. The character Somebody McSomebody puts a gun on her breasts addresses her as cat and threatens her to shoot at the same day Milkman

was died. As Anna Burns postulates the scenario of Irish revolution in this novel, female members during the time of revolution are commodified. Milkman, a paramilitary retire officer comes in the life of Young Woman and he begins stalking her and the community begins to nurture a false rumor that they are involved in an affair, for which they blame the Young Woman. But, in fact Young Woman do not like even talk to Milkman rather she likes car mechanic. As Milkman notices that Young Woman likes car mechanics, he time and again threatens her to kill car mechanics which later comes true. Unfortunately the then society traces car mechanics murder's responsible person to her. Young Woman could not walk freely, the Milkman, a middle-aged and married member of the paramilitary officer offers her a ride. Young Woman is made an 'object of choice' by Milkman.

Young Woman's elder sister is another female character who is commodified in the hand of her first long term boyfriend who uses her for a long time and leaves her. Then first brother-in-law enters her life in order to use her mentally as well as sexually, but unfortunately she gets pregnant and gets married with him. Although, they are husband and wife, neither he pays any attention towards her nor he loves her, rather he is dwelling with her in order to calm his physical necessity, and he time and again tries to molest Young Woman too. Here, Elder Sister is commodified as a means to fulfill the desires of her husband. Not only she is objectified, but Young Woman is also abused time and again by him. Likewise, mother is also compelled to undergo with the patriarchal status quo. As patriarchal society says, she is compelled to say to do to her daughters. Young Woman tries to live her life in her own way, but ma time and again warns her not to do because she is mentally, psychologically and economically exploited. Other women characters in the novel are also subservient. They all are used as a means to meet men's convenience. No stones are left unturned

to abuse and exploit them though they are doing their work honestly. This all has happened due to the then socio-economic context of the Irish society.

In sum, the prominent aspect of this novel is how women are portrayed in the early twentieth century Irish society. The role of the women in Irish society is woven throughout this novel. Depending on their social status, each female character within the novel provides readers with a different perspective of woman's role during that period. In addition to their roles, the author includes the trials and tribulations these women have to face as well. As a whole, the importance of these female characters is based upon their contribution to fulfill the ego of males and as being providers of support to both family and order of the society. The society where the norms, values and customs of patriarchy are in upper hand they get the sole authority of property. In such society, women have been dominated, suppressed, confined and are not allowed any sort of freedom. Freedom is possible when the distribution of political and economic system is equal.

Works Cited

- Allardice, Lisa. "It's Nice to Feel I'm Solvent." *Gulf Times*, Thursday, October 25, 2018, p. 4.
- Beauvoir, Simone De. *The Second Sex*. Bantam, 1952.
- Bryson, Valerie. *Feminist Political Theory*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.
- Burns, Anna. *Milkman*. Faber and Faber, 2018.
- Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. Routledge, 1990.
- Eisenstein, Zillah R. (ed.). "Introduction." *Capitalist Patriarchy and the Case for Socialist Feminism*. Monthly Review Press, 1979, pp. 1-4.
- Engels, Friedrich. *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, Lawrence and Wishatt, 1991.
- Farrell, Jenny. "Incredibly original" Novel about the Northern Conflict." *Socialist Voice*. No. 168, February 2019, p. 10.
- Grimshaw, Jean. "Mary Wollstonecraft and the Tension in Feminism Philosophy." *Socialism, Feminism and Philosophy: A Radical Philosophy Reader*, SeanSayers and Peter Osbore (eds.), Routledge, 1990, pp. 9-26.
- Hartmann, Heidi. *The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism: Toward a more Progressive Union in Lydia Sargent*. University of Chicago Press, 1976.
- Ladrón, Marisol Morales. "Silence as an Architectural Form of Containment in Anna Burns' *Milkman*." *Difference and Indifference in Irish Studies*. International AEDEI Conference, University of Alcalá, 29th - 31st May 2019, p. 22.
- Marx, Karl. *The Communist Manifesto*. Yale University Press, 1948.
- - - . *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*. Progressive Publishers, 1965.

- Ryan, Mary. "A Feminism of Their Own?: Irish Women's History and Contemporary Irish Women's Writing." *Estudios Irlandeses*, No. 5, 2010, pp. 92-101.
- Ruth, Sheila. *Issues in Feminism*. Mayfield Publishing, 1995.
- Ruthven, Katherine Kearns. *Feminist Literary Studies*. Cambridge University Press, 1991.
- Showalter, Elaine. "Towards a Feminist Poetics." *Critical Theory Since Plato*, Edited by Hazard Adams, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1992, pp. 1224-1233.
- Tong, Rosemarie. *Feminist Thought*. West View Press, 1989.
- Tyson, Lois. *Critical Theory Today*. Garland Publishing Inc., 1999.
- Walby, Sylvia. "Theorizing Patriarchy." *Sociology*, vol. 23, no. 2, May 1989, pp. 213-234.

