



**RESEARCH PAPER**

**Resistance, Revolt, and Agency: A Radical Feminist Study of *All the Lives We Never Lived***

<sup>1</sup>Muhammad Amir, <sup>2</sup>Safana Hashmat and <sup>3</sup>Sadaf Rashid

1. MPhil Scholar, Department of English, Government College University, Faisalabad, Punjab, Pakistan
2. PhD Scholar, Department of English, Government College University, Faisalabad, Punjab, Pakistan
3. PhD Scholar, Department of English, Government College University, Faisalabad, Punjab, Pakistan

**\*Corresponding Author:** safanahashmat@gcuf.edu.pk

**ABSTRACT**

This paper studies gender disparity and female victimization in Anuradha Roy's *All the Lives We Never Lived* from radical feminist perspective. It argues that gender discrimination is a fundamental cause of female oppression particularly in Indian context. It emphasizes the need for equal power dynamics and communication between genders to negotiate claustrophobic domesticity and achieve female empowerment. It is a qualitative research that critically studies the problem of female subjugation using Germaine Greer's conceptual paradigm of radical feminism through textual analysis. The paper highlights the imbalanced nature of marriage where men act as dictators and treat women as inferior and sexual objects. Greer pleads the importance of women revolting against patriarchy, and breaking stereotypical gender roles and the protagonist Gayatri acts radically. She establishes her freewill by breaking the bond of her marriage and followed her dreams within an oppressive phallogocentric Indian world, she revolted against patriarchal control and established her agency.

**KEYWORDS** Agency, Castration, Claustrophobic Domesticity, Masculine-Feminine Polarity, Revolt

**Introduction**

Agency refers to an individual's capacity for purposeful action and making personal choices, ensuring self-determination and willpower against oppression. It embodies rationality, freedom, and moral authority it enables to decide the course of one's life. Defined as "the ability to act or perform an action" (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffen, 2013, p. 06), agency empowers individuals to achieve desired outcomes This research delves into the issues of forced marriage, domestic violence and gender-inequality depicted in *All the Lives We Never Lived* (2018) particularly focusing on the idea of sexual castration given by Greer in her book *The Female Eunuch* (1970). This research points out gender discrimination as the main cause the oppression of women within patriarchal practices. The studies women's empowerment, autonomy, and freedom through the lens of radical feminism, asserting that women can assert agency by breaking free from male domination through resistance and revolution. Radical feminism grapples with female silence and exploitation, oppression and marginalization of women in patriarchal societies with radicalized steps. It identifies that women suffer from gender-based violence by male-partners, globally, they have less control over their bodies and they are deprived of basic sexual and reproductive rights. Radical feminism urges women to pursue their personal choices through strong will-power (Greer, 1970). *All the Lives We Never Lived* (2018) addresses the issues of female exploitation, domestic violence, and forced marriage in Indian context but it also showcases female resistance in breaking

heteronormativity in domesticity and marriage that creates a tension between personal choices and traditional norms. Roy gives voice to her female characters in the novel and urges them to struggle for their freedom and choice. The novel presents a strong critique of marginalization and exploitation of women in Indian society. This research explores claustrophobic life for women, resistance against patriarchal practices and struggle for personal freedom by particularly focusing on female characters in the novel. Claustrophobic domesticity, intersectional patriarchal oppression, stereotype gender roles identified and challenged by Roy's *All the Lives We Never Lived* offers a potential subject for radical feminist study because Greer finds traditional domesticity responsible for suppressing female freedom. The research may offer a contribution into the praxis and polemics of radical feminist study in Indian context. Tagged female identity as mother and wife, and male hypocrisy are also problematized in Roy's fiction.

Anuradha Roy is an Indian novelist, born in Calcutta in 1967. She is the writer of five novels: *An Atlas of impossible Longing* (2008), *The Folded Earth* (2011), *Sleeping on Jupiter* (2016) and may more. Roy addresses themes of human emotions like respect, love, attention, isolation, loneliness, freedom, comfort, abandonment, longing, family relationships, revenge, freedom, desire for money, search for identity and individuality in her novels (Zaidi & Bhatnagar, 2021). She presents gender discrimination, molestation, cruelty, sexual violence, inequality, racism, male-dominance, clash between tradition and modernity, struggle for self-quest and autonomy. She gives an efficient space to women in private and public spheres through her female characters and traces conflicting nature of men regarding personal choices and national freedom. Roy realistically infuses a new spirit for gender-liberation among women (Zagade, 2016). *All the Lives We Never Lived* (2018) takes place in a fictitious Himalayan village *Muntazir* (one waiting impatiently). The novel addresses the resistance of protagonist Gayatri against traditional gender roles in domestic sphere for her artistic freedom. Gayatri Sen's family blames her to be responsible for her father's death and pushes her into a forced marriage against her wishes. She challenges social conditioning of marital life and struggles hard to get control over her sexuality and not to become a sexual object for her husband. She sneaks her agency into art through a German artist Walter Spies. She is portrayed as an active agent for those who want liberation and equal rights in a patriarchal society. The novel also presents resistance of another female character Mukti Devi but it was against colonial rule. She is a freedom fighter selflessly struggles for national freedom and boldly faces the brutality of colonizers for the sake of her nation. The novel also highlights segments of male-hypocrisy for female freedom by particularly focusing on male characters Nek Chand and Arjun Chacha. Both the male characters are portrayed as misogynist who do not allow their women to make personal choices and impose heteronormative conditioning upon their sexuality. The novel presents stories from 1930 to 1942 of personal liberty, political independence and miseries of WWII through Myshkin Rosario's childhood memories. Roy traces the impact of public life over personal experiences and develops a connection between national history and domestic drama in this novel. This study is highly significant because it gives voice and agency to voiceless i.e. women and adds to the episteme of resistance against subjugation and struggle to achieve agency opening vistas for women empowerment. It opens a new horizon for the scholars to investigate women's exploitation in the existing patriarchal structure to reduce female marginalization, fixed gender roles and female victimization in contemporary world through radical feminist framework.

### Literature Review

Mohajan (2022) defines feminism that feminist discourse questions phallogocentric ideologies, patriarchal attitudes and conventional male ideas about the role and nature

of women. Feminist criticism wants to ensure gender equality and woman empowerment in all spheres of life. Feminism addresses interpersonal and intrapersonal issues of women and encourages them to change status-quo through an active voice. It is described as “a struggle against sexism where male supremacy and female oppression take place” (p. 05). According to Jensen (2021), radical feminism challenges patriarchy that women usually suffer from sexual assault, domestic violence and rape. Man claims right control woman’s reproductive power and her sexuality with the threats of violence and coercion. Radical feminism forces us to think critically about the liberty of male and female bodies, how men abuse and exploit women by commanding their bodies and controlling reproduction and sexuality and fixating gender roles. Jensen as a radical feminist finds primary goal of radical feminism is “the end of patriarchy’s gender system, not merely expanding women’s choices within patriarchy” (p.04). Bryson defines Radical Feminism in her book *Feminist Political Theory* (2003) that radical feminism is a theory of “by and for women” (163). It addresses the roots of oppression through women’s own experiences and does not compromise with existing political agendas. The oppression of a woman is regarded as a universal form of domination. She suggests that women must end patriarchal oppression through their common interests and must struggle together for their own liberation. The power of male has extended to private life and traditional concepts of power and politics are instruments of patriarchal domination. Sugany and Selvaraj (2021) explore societal limitations for female sexuality in *All the Lives We Never Lived*, they explore a search for freedom from pain, rejection, brutality and violence for women in the novel as Gayatri leaves her family and marriage to elope with German artist Walter Spies for the sake of art. They also found male hypocrisy through the characters like Nek Chand as he asks the women of his society to come out against colonial rule for national freedom but he does not allow Gayatri to come out for personal freedom. In an interview of Roy, “Patriarchy is the peculiar thing: even well-meaning men can be deluded into thinking they know what is better for a woman” (Sugany and Selvaraj, 2021, p. 2302). Pearson (2018) explains *All the Lives We Never Lived* (2018) as mother’s struggle for unconventional life. Gayatri runs away from marriage and leaves her family. Her search for identity and happiness takes her to Bali. She pays the price for freedom in the form of illness and isolation. Although the novel does not end with degradation of her personal choices yet it is replete with harsh experiences. Shamsie (2018) writes a review over Nek Chand’s hypocrisy that he wants the women of his country to follow Mukti Devi to fight for national freedom but he is as tyrant in his own home just like British in the subcontinent. The narrator Myshkin seeks the answer of tension between his mother and father and finds that his mother marries with a man who sees dance but for her art has been made irrelevant. Franqui (2018) analyzes *All the Lives We Never Lived* with a clash between Gayatri’s choices and societal expectations. Gayatri becomes irrelevant in Indian marriage market because of her interest in dance and art. Domesticity is considered as an important space for a woman, she must adhere to it, but after her marriage Gayatri has been dehumanized. The repression caused by marriage and restrictions of congested society forces her to leave her home, family, and country. She decides to run away and does not accept slavery of a man.

### Theoretical Framework

Greer’s concept of castration and revolution is employed as the theoretical framework. The idea has been driven from her work *The Female Eunuch* (1970). Greer points out that female castration takes place in womanhood. She portrays womanhood as a castrated sign upon her body and soul because it eliminates personal freedom by associating her body and soul with “timidity, plumpness, languor, delicacy and preciousness” (p.17). Woman acts as a sexual object who with the passage of time loses her sexual attraction, “she has herself no sex at all” (p.67). Female energy is perverted with

the obstacle of sexlessness because a woman is taught to curb her desires and deny the quest of her sexuality. A woman is born with heteronormative pressures of social conditions. Domestic chores are unjustly imposed upon her to torment her autonomy. Female anxiety stems from domesticity because it prevents her from living by her own choice. Greer finds out prejudice against women that they cannot achieve meaningful life in a patriarchal society because men do not seriously think about them, "Women have very little idea of how much men hate them" (p.279). Greer analyzes narcissistic and altruistic love in term of sexes that man's love centers among male followers and female devotes herself to man. Men live in brotherhood and women could not establish sisterhood. Woman sacrifices self-love by practicing wifedom and motherhood. She sacrifices her interests for the sake of others. She explains modern nuclear family as self-contained, self-centered and short-lived in which man acts like monarch and woman like caretaker for family members which ultimately deprive her of her femininity. Woman lives in isolation and children in suffocation. Male authority cannot be challenged at any forum. Nuclear family intensifies generation gap and family members go stranger from one another. She describes nuclear family as "a locked unit of male-female relationship" (p.258). Greer takes marriage as unequal contract in which a woman is forced to make her husband happy and man is careless about her feelings, "Marriage is the only thing that really scares me" (p.260). Woman lives a meaningless life in marriage that she is confined to her home, "The housewives' life is not real: it is anachronistic and thwarting" (p.312). Women don't live a reliable life in marriage because divorce does not work in female interest. Greer calls the use of makeup as a propaganda machine of femininity. She develops a radicalized counter narrative for female rights that women must resist claustrophobic life in marriage, they must undermine masculine feminine polarity in the form of master and mastered, they must discover an independent soul, must identify friends and enemies, and they must establish the force of sisterhood. Women must get education for awareness which is a better alternative to blind obedience it restores her energy and meaningful status. Greer explains that women must establish self-actualizing love based on "commonality" (p.167). They must appear in natural shape without the use of makeup. They must be self-reliant in their mode, "she cannot be lonely as long as there are people in the world who need her joy and her strength" (p.275). They must share their experiences with one another to identify the nature of domination. They must run away from their homes to find their own room. They must replace impulsive activities like cooking, cloth-washing and housekeeping with pleasure principles. They must form "feminist elite" (p.369). Women's revolution is necessarily situational which can only be fruitful with revolt of norms in individual circumstances. Revolution does not mean a kind of "riotous glee" (p.370). It refers to "purposeful employment of energy in a self-chosen enterprise" (p.370). This theoretical insight is highly applicable for the analysis of the selected novel.

### **Material and Methods**

This is a qualitative interpretative research that critically studies female status in male dominated society from radical feminist perspective. Textual analysis has been used as a method to study the problematized phenomenon. Through close reading of the novel the study interprets childbearing, mothering, overall domesticity; a result of the claustrophobic life designed for women. Greer finds marriage as a traditional societal condition where women act as subjugated sex and man as master of the family. As an interpretive research, the primary goal of the research is to reveal subjectivity, freedom of choices and individual space for female achieved by the female characters of the novel. Greer's concept of castration and revolution is employed as a key idea to analyze the events and dialogues of this novel.

## Results and Discussion

Female sexuality is described in terms of a specific societal conditioning via timidity, femininity, objectivity and passivity a female is considered as a sexual object for admiration and use for man. She is portrayed with passivity and apathy. Greer claims that female energy perverts from “the denial of female sexuality for the substitution of femininity or sexlessness” (Greer, 1970, p.77). Roy also depicts passive roles and the denial of female sexuality in her novel *All the Lives We Never Lived*. She portrays the protagonist Gayatri’s mother as traditional and patriarchal conditioned woman because she believes in claustrophobic domesticity for women and prefers traditional gender roles. She dislikes Gayatri’s interest in travelling and learning. Her mother warns her of the trip, “what a dangerous, fanciful and expensive plan it is!” (Roy, 2018, p.16). Her mother is a traditional woman, who associates woman with bad soul and evil omen. If any bad incident takes place, some woman is accused of that loss. Her mother blames Gayatri for her father’s death on that misguided trip. If Gayatri had not been interested in exploring the world, her indulgent father would not have embarked on that misguided trip. She cries that, “all those journeys-more than two months away from home! Train journeys, sea voyages, car rides, and strange food” (p.19). Roy shows claustrophobic life as the prescribed domestic space for Indian woman that patriarchal culture forces women to live; in their home and serve family members. Patriarchal practices assume that women are always trapped in evil soul and they must confine to domestic and gender roles rather than on other impulsive activities. Female sexual energy becomes a destructive force when it meets any obstacle. Woman’s sexual energy perverts from the obstacle of gender roles because a woman cannot live and work with her own power. As soon as a girl is born, the first thing taught to her is “passivity and sexlessness” (Greer, 1970, p.96). In the selected text, the protagonist Gayatri’s energy perverts from the obstacle of femininity after her father’s death. Her family members dismiss her tutors for dance and music and they force her into marriage immediately but for her marriage was irrelevant because of her interest in art as the narrator Myshkin says that “world has got around that my mother was sharp-tongued and over-clever. She danced and took singing lessons” (Roy, 2018, p.20). Nek Chand is suggested as a possible groom for her. Gayatri is presented like an object before the groom’s family to be gazed at and to be examined if she can behave well and well serve to guests “Gayatri was being paraded before a possible groom’s family. The groom and his relatives sat in a row in the drawing room being served tea by my mother so that they could examine her as well as her drawing-room manners up close” (p.20). Gayatri is forced to live as a possession of her husband. Nek Chand wants her to stop wonderful hobbies, “...painting, singing, dancing, these are wonderful things...there are hobbies and then there are serious matters. Think of Myshkin...he looks to you as an example” (pp.21-22). He considers the hobby of dancing against the dignity of family and culture. He takes her paint brushes with him to college for a week.

According to Greer, nuclear family is a self-centered and short-lived system where a father acts as a dictator and woman as caretaker of the family. Elders cannot be challenged openly. Woman lives in isolation from her community and children live in suffocation as Greer writes that “her horizon shrinks to the house and shopping centre” (Greer, 1970, p.252). Roy presents a picture of nuclear family system in the text *All the Lives We Never Lived* through different events and dialogues of characters. Arjun acts as a monarch in his family that he stops Dinu’s mother to enjoy music concert. He bursts out on Nek Chand when he saw Gayatri’s sitting with foreign visitors, “have you taken leave of your senses” (Roy, 2018, p. 53). He considers a female singer Akhtari Bai a prostitute and does not let her sing in his house, “A woman! A singing and dancing girl? Take her to the mango orchards!” (p.97). Dinu’s mother is a traditional woman that she

lives within the boundary of her house; she wears a stretched sari and fixes a red kumkum on her forehead, a symbol of Hindu religion. She takes domesticity as God blessing for a woman. The narrator Myshkin tells the isolation of Dinu's mother:

Dinu's mother would never have dreamed of leaving her house in a Tonga with two strangers... Dinu's mother was known only as Dinu's mother; no body remembered her name anymore. She rarely came out of the house and met no men other than Dinu's relatives and my father and grandfather (p.52).

Greer defines the life of housewife as unreal and anachronistic. She lives a claustrophobic life in home, "A housewife's work has no results: it simply has to be done again. Bringing up children is not a real occupation" (Greer, 1970, p.312). In the selected text, Nek Chand considers domesticity a private space for woman. Only woman is faithful who takes care of her traditions. He unjustly imposes impulsive activity of childbearing upon Gayatri against her wishes and asks her to follow "authority, respect and discipline" (Roy, 2018, p.66). She would be worthless in Indian society if she violates the discipline of society, "lose face and you lose authority; lose authority and you have lost everything" (p.66). These references show that woman is made responsible for discipline and she is given no space for personal choices in society. Roy exposes societal limitations for female choices and societal support for male-chauvinism by particularly focusing on the Character of Gayatri and Nek Chand in *All the Lives We Never Lived* (2018). Indian society considers Gayatri's trip with Walter Spies as an unforgettable betrayal and crime due to which rest of the family members suffer from a catastrophic disgrace. Nek Chand leaves eating and smoking, stops going to *Muntazir Sava Ghar* and passes the whole day in reading books because he listens some triggering remarks from his colleagues and students as the narrator cries, "My mother has poured petrol and set a match to every bridge between herself and her family. After such desertion, what forgiveness" (Roy, 2018, p.107). Myshkin is named sold bastard by his class fellows. His glasses and tooth are broken in a murderous encounter. He considers himself deserve for it because, "My mother has run away from us. She has gone off with another man" (p.107). Society does not condemn Nek Chand's second marriage with a Nepali woman Lippi and his promiscuity is justified, "Too many men make a mob" (p.139). Ram Saran washes and cleans outbuilding to welcome him. Lizards and spiders are chased out from the walls. Everyone wants to hear his voice as the narrator describes, "The entire house came out when my father appeared at the door and shouted, Anybody there!" (p.137) whereas Lippi suffers from humiliation in Indian society as the character Banno Didi mutters, "If that woman thinks, she can order me to bring her hot water and all the rest, she is wrong" (p.138). Myshkin does not call her mother and does not guide her even to bathroom and kitchen. Greer argues that woman is sexually castrated in the practice motherhood. It is an irreversible system of oppression in which a woman sacrifices for others. She considers mothering a free award of paternity. The novel *All the Lives We Never Lived* begins with Myshkin's lines "In my childhood, I was known as the boy whose mother had run off an English man...the day my mother left was like any other" (Roy, 2018, p.02) which according to Greer's perspective is Gayatri's way of resistance against oppressive system of motherhood. Nek Chand enforces her to adopt motherhood and maturity and considers painting and singing are not the job of an honourable woman. Her revolt annoys him who has lost his wife to English man. Gayatri is different from other Indian women because she considers motherhood as an impulsive activity for her and replaces it with her interest in painting and dance. She always reminds Myshkin about her journey with her father Agni Sen and Rabindranath Tagore to Java and Bali, "I am going to take you. We will make the same voyage. We will find Walter again, and he will show us a thousand things" (p.18). According to Greer women should not enter into socially sanctioned relationships like marriage. They must take radical steps and should

escape from exclusive male dependence because gender acts in master and mastered dichotomy, where men possess oppressive energy against women, as Greer claims, “the castration of women has been carried out in terms of a masculine feminine polarity” (Greer, 1970, p.18). The protagonist Gayatri is portrayed as a revolutionary woman in the novel *All the Lives We Never Lived* that she does not want marriage and she wonders over the status of bride that a woman cannot be a bride in masculine-feminine polarity, “I want to be married! I want to be a bride!” (Roy, 2018, p.20). Gayatri does not marry for love, economic and social security but she is forcefully thrown into this sanctioned relationship to abandon her autonomy. As soon as Gayatri enters in marital relation, her husband asks her to stop impulsive activities and focus to have children, “the trouble with you, Gayatri is that all you want to do is live off your memories, past glory” (p.13).

Greer argues that mode of revolt ensures independence and freedom for women. Roy portrays Gayatri as a revolutionary and responsible woman in the novel who is politically aware of patriarchal practices she makes angry conversation with her husband Nek Chand over calling her interest in art as mere hobbies, “I have not been dancing in the garden. I have stopped everything. I don’t sing. I don’t dance. I hardly ever paint. What more do you want” (p.22). The protagonist aggressively responds to his disgusting words, “Im.Pul.Sive!” (p.22). When Nek Chand claims for being so-called progressive personality because of allowing every kind of freedom to her, Gayatri exposes his patriarchal mindset “My freedom is something you store in a locked iron safe?” (p.22). He does not like Gayatri’s question for freedom and criticizes her way of talking, “you talk as if we’re in a fish market” (p.22). The narrator Myshkin resembles his parents with two persons standing on an island together with different languages. The following references explore Gayatri as a responsible but rebellious woman who clears understands the dominant attitude of a patriarchal man and nature of oppression. She radically resists against his abusive remarks against her passion of singing and dancing. Greer claims that women can get liberation through self-realization they must resist against the status-quo and chose a way of life at their own. Roy presents Gayatri as a determined woman who radically resists against male-domination for her freedom. Nek Chand asks her to follow discipline of family that it does not signify her slavery. He claims that it is a method that requires her living within reason. Gayatri challenges his discipline, “Do know you there are women flying planes now? And you lecture me about authority and respect for just sitting in the garden with some friends!” (p.66). Gayatri blames him of narrow-mindedness that she was not alone with Walter Spies and Baryl De Zoete but Brijin and Lisa were also there. He justifies his open-mindedness that she has never been asked to listen Mukti Devi but she has only been recommended to think about country beyond selfish needs, “Our country is in turmoil, our people are fighting for freedom, and you think only for yourself” (p.66). National freedom does not matter for Gayatri because she would not be free after national independence. She questions her personal freedom in front of Nek Chand :

What good will the great nation’s freedom do for me? Tell me that! Will it make me free? Will I be able to choose how to live? Could I go off and be alone in a village as Walter has been doing? Could I be there and paint as well? Or walk down the street and sing a song? Could I spend a night out under the stars away from the town as your father did the other day? Even Myshkin is freer than I am! (Roy, 2018, pp.66-67).

These lines not only questions Nek Chand but also questions the compromised nature of liberty given to women especially in Indian context. Greer claims that men have never seriously thought about the status of women. Nek Chand considers Gayatri’s personal freedom as superficial. He preaches her that she should think for the freedom of whole nation from colonial rule. He gives the example of Mukti Devi who loses her

hearing and suffers brutality of colonizers for the sake of Indian freedom, "a woman alone, being marched off to prison by a squad of burly men, yet she showed no signs of fear" (p.93) she is an inspiration to all women for personal freedom. Gayatri considers Mukti Devi as a regular freedom fighter because struggles for male-structured freedom of the nation not based on egalitarian grounds. Nek Chand asks Gayatri to put aside her personal desires for collective freedom. The following textual lines point out his prejudice against personal freedom for women:

Your notion of freedom is superficial...we are fighting to free a whole nation from foreign oppression. Men and women are sacrificing everything. They are setting their own desires for this. One day, after the British are thrown out, centuries of oppression will be gone and we'll all be free... We will wake to a new dawn in which the air will be different. And you? you can only think of hairstyles and singing songs (Roy, 2018, p.67).

Gayatri feels that her home is a prison where she cannot live freely. Rabi Babu's sanctuary is the best place for her living where she would pursue her personal desires in art, "Do you know what I would do if I were free at this minute? I would leave this house and never come back. I would fall at Rabi Babu's feet and would beg for sanctuary. I would paint" (p.67). Gayatri resembles her home to jail where she cannot pursue her agency in art, "it's a glass jar under which I'm trapped" (p.67). Greer claims that woman must establish their will-power. They must claim for "returning our souls to our bodies" (Greer, 1970, p. 167). If they recover their souls, they will be able to resist against male-domination and paternalist society. Gayatri appears as a powerful woman who knows how to live a life and follow her dreams. She exposes societal prejudice against women. Nek Chand accuses her of selfishness who thinks only of herself. He calls himself as an open-minded person for thinking beyond selfish needs, "I have an open mind. I read all kinds of literature..." (Roy, 2018, p.75). Gayatri exposes his narrow-mindedness, "where is your open mind when it comes to painting? How can you condemn pictures you have never seen...literature has nothing to do with it" (p.75). These references show Gayatri's will power that she fearlessly resists against male-chauvinism. She exposes Nek Chand's hypocrisy for female freedom that he does not let her pursue agency in art. Greer argues that woman can get liberation from patriarchal practices only if she revolts against cultural norms. Woman's war is necessarily situational which can only be won by rejecting traditions in individual circumstances. Roy portrays Gayatri as a rebellious protagonist in *All the Lives We never lived* who challenges patriarchal abhorrence against female singer who is treated like a prostitute in Indian society. Akhtari Bai is invited to a music concert by Brijin Chacha but his older brother Arjun lets no woman from his family take care of her as Akhtari Bai expresses "I am no more than the village cockerel imitating a koel" (p.101). Gayatri rejects patriarchal forces and spends the whole day with Akhtari Bai in her room on the request of Brijin. She hears the stories of earning fame and money from Akhtari Bai which develops a sense of rebel for a different life to her. Arjun Chacha warns women of his family not to attend the musical event but Gayatri attends it and breaks the traditions as the narrator Myshkin points out her sitting with singer, "Next to them, stood my mother leaning against a tree" (p.101).

Greer believes that true love only develops between the people of common interests based on understanding, trust and commonality. The great world can emerge for woman if sexes are seen as communication between potent, gentle and tender people and sexes should be rescued from "the traffic of masterful and mastered, sexual and neutral" (Greer, 1970, p.21). She argues that female sex is pursued as a sexual object for other sexual being in master and mastered relationship. Roy portrays Gayatri Rozario and Agni Sen's sexual relationship based on mutual consent, true love, harmony and common interests the narrator Myshkin tells Gayatri's travelling with her father Agni



Sen, "the joyous adventure my mother fell back upon when daily life defeated her was a boat ride" (Roy, 2018 p.13). Gayatri Rozario travels with Agni Sen to Bali in 1927 at the age of seventeen and meets a German artist Walter Spies at a lake. Her father hires tutors for painting and dancing, "He got tutors for her to learn languages and painting, dance and classical music, all this in an age when women sang and danced to entertain rich men" (p.14). He nurtures Gayatri differently and makes her different from other women through education, "accomplished, educated and aware of gifts" (p.20). This research also explores a cordial relationship between Walter Spies and the protagonist Gayatri. Walter Spies takes her and her father to concerts of dancing, "the man was a German artist and musician called Walter Spies...and he took Gayatri, her father and their friends to dance performers, to concerts, to beaches, to painting schools, she sat beside him with excitement" (Roy, 2018, p. 14). He also tells the stories of Rama and Sita behind those dances which made Gayatri wonder that people of Java know the whole of Ramayana and Indian have forgotten their mythological figures, "...had no connection with India at all!" (p.14). Gayatri Rozario always remembers Walter Spies and tells Myshkin that she would once again meet with him and would learn many things from him, "one day, you will go to Java and Bali, Myshkin. I am going to take you... We will find Walter again and he will show us a thousand things" (p.18).

## Conclusion

This research highlighted the issues of sexual torture, domestic violence and female agency in *All the Lives We Never Lived* by Anuradha Roy. The research finds out that in Indian context marriage is a patriarchal institution where woman lives a miserable and claustrophobic life. The research challenges male-domination through revolution and resistance against oppressive norms either running away from marriage and domesticity or defy male dictated femininity, she must strive for agency and empowerment. The novel presents oppression and claustrophobic domesticity in Indian society the protagonist Gayatri lives a miserable married life Nek Chand gives her no value personal choices. She makes effort for her agency in Indian society and speaks against the brutality of Nek Chand. She constructs her personal identity and chooses her own way of life. She fights against her patriarchal husband Nek Chand for her freedom and leaves family to pursue her passion for art. The study concludes that gender discrimination occurs in marriage where gender acts in master and slave dichotomy. Gender must be established on equality, as communication between the people of common interests to ensure equality between sexes. This research finds out that women can make their world if they muster up courage and speak against male-brutalities like Gayatri does. Roy highlights gender discrimination in every field of social life especially Indian women where women face otherness because of social customs that conserve them and do not allow them to raise voice against patriarchy. The study finds out that Indian society must either educate their men to well-behave with women and develop an organic system of family based on harmony and equality. Indian men must understand the feelings of their women and give them a proper space in family and society.

**References**

- Ashcroft, B., Griffiths, G., & Tiffin, H. (2013). *Postcolonial studies: The key concepts*. Routledge.
- Bryson, V. (2003). *Feminist political theory: An introduction* (2nd ed.). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Franqui, L. (2018, December 21). *Nytimes.com*. The New York Times - Breaking News, US News, World News and Videos.
- Greer, G. (1970). *The female eunuch*. McGraw-Hill Companies.
- Jensen, R. (2021). Getting radical: Feminism, patriarchy, and the sexual-exploitation industries. *Dignity: A Journal of Analysis of Exploitation and Violence*, 6(2). <https://doi.org/10.23860/dignity.2021.06.02.06>
- Kumar Mohajan, H. (2022). An overview on the feminism and its categories. *Research and Advances in Education*, 1(3), 11-26. <https://doi.org/10.56397/rae.2022.09.02>
- Nitin Bhatnagar, S. Z. (2021). Theme of loneliness in Anuradha Roy's the folded earth: A psychological study. *Psychology and Education Journal*, 58(1), 5723-5731. <https://doi.org/10.17762/pae.v58i1.2208>
- Pearson, E. (2018, December 14). Review: "All the lives we never lived," by Anuradha Roy. *Star Tribune*
- Roy, A. (2008). *An atlas of impossible longing*. Quercus Publishing.
- Roy, A. (2011). *The folded earth: A novel*. Simon & Schuster.
- Roy, A. (2016). *Sleeping on Jupiter*. Quercus.
- Shamsie, K. (2018, June 9). *All the lives we never lived by Anuradha Roy review – compelling tale of history and family*. the Guardian.
- Suganya, K., & Selvaraj, A. (2021). Quest for self in the novel All the lives we never lived by Anuradha Roy. *Turkish Online Journal of Qualitative Inquiry*, 12(9), 2298-2302.
- Zagade, S. H. (2016). Reflection of nostalgia from nuanace in Anuradha Roy's The Folded Earth. 3. *LangLit An International Peer-Reviewed Open Access Journal*, 3(2), 695-698.