

Tribhuvan University

Hedwig's Awakening in Wentworth's *The War Brides*

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Declaration

I hereby declare that the thesis entitled, "Hedwig's Awakening in Wentworth's The War Brides" is my original work carried out as a Master's student at the Department of English at Ratna Rajyalaxmi Campus to the extent that assistance from others in the thesis paper's design and conception or in presentation style and linguistic expression are duly acknowledged.

All sources used for thesis have been fully and properly cited. It contains no material which led to a substantial extent has been accepted for the award of any other degree at Tribhuvan University or any other educational institution, except where due acknowledgement is made in the thesis.

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Letter of Approval

This thesis entitled, "Hedwig's Awakening in Wentworth's The War Brides",
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Abstract

Marion Craig Wentworth, through her one act play *The War Brides*, tries to reflect on the contemporary social scenario and the condition of female in patriarchal society. Wentworth's female characters in the play represent all marginalized women of patriarchal society. Wentworth has used two categories of women characters: first category is intelligent and awakened from the male domination, whereas the second is ignorant and want to play supporting role for the patriarchy. The protagonist, Hedwig is of first category and is conscious to revolt against male domination but Minna, Mother Gertrude and Amelia are of second category and play supporting role to flourish patriarchy. Hoffman, Arno, Hertz and Franz are male characters who are departing soldiers and are ready to accept death in the war front for the patriotism and nationalism. These soldiers take things as if they are fated by destiny and want to admit that their lots are what can bring them as what they deserve without opposing social and political norms.

The playwright, through *The War Brides*, shows the impact of gender discrimination to operation upon women and their gradual awakening condition to revolt against males in the patriarchal society. The female protagonist of the play, Hedwig, gradually awakens from the discriminatory male oriented society. She is a pioneer woman in the play who is capable of leading all female characters by awakening them from their marginalized condition in the patriarchal society. *The War Brides* then examines the miserable condition of women who are sidelined by compelling them to get married to departing soldiers and making them war widows at their early age. In the course of development of the plot of the play, the protagonist establishes herself against the patriarchy's social norms of traditional gender role and proves herself equal to male by trying to tear gender barrier created by males. She is the woman of radical vision and wants radical change of male dominated society. To find this conclusion here I used radical feminist theory as research methodology.

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Introduction

The term "awakening" generally means consciousness or enlightenment. The term gives the sense of revival of anything or being roused into action. According to *Oxford Dictionary*, "Awakening" means an occasion when you realize something or become aware of something (90). One can be awakened in various situations but my study is merely concerned with female awakening from gender issue in the play. Sex is natural thing indicated by biological factors, whereas gender is constructed and shaped by society. Gender is categorized into masculine and feminine. Dayanidhi Neupane, in his book *Sociology of Gender*, defines sex and gender as: "Sex are the biological traits that scientists use to assign people into the category of male or female rather than gender which is an understanding of how society shapes our understanding of those biological categories"(1). Dayanidhi's definition further conceptualizes sex as an inherent instinct and gender as collective form given and shaped by society. Likewise, Chris Barker in his book *Making Sense of Cultural Studies*, defines sex as: "Sex concerns the balance of masculinity and femininity within specific men and women" (109).

To some extent, society has found subterfuge to make gender and society as something to do with political and social color, expressing male as powerful and upper hand whereas females as less powerful and underhand. Women are not getting equal rights like men in every field. They are bound by their juridical and social status as wives to serve their husbands by producing children for heirs and citizens as quoted by Michel Foucault in *The Use of Pleasure: Volume 2 of The History of Sexuality*. He quotes:

As far as women were concerned, in fact, they were bound by their juridical and social status as wives; all their sexual activity had to be within the conjugal relationship and their husband had to be their exclusive partner. They were under his power; it was to him that they had to give their children,

who would be citizens and heirs. (145)

This extract reveals that women are legally and socially limited as wives to produce children and serve their single partner, husband, for the sexual activity under his power.

Because of gender inequality, women are raising their voice against male domination demanding gender equality and justice. They don't like so-called male power and subjugation that confines them inside gender barrier constructed by patriarchy. They want to get gender equality and justice by protesting against male domination. They are awakened from gender discrimination in male governed society.

Gender barrier is found in Wentworth's play *The War Brides*. Creating traditional gender role, males have made them behave as house wife and mother-woman role at home by compelling them to do household works like working in the fields, harvesting and gathering crops, cooking, cleaning, bearing children, caring their male partners and so on, since the schema of the males about the role of females seems to be very narrow. Even though males try to limit them inside the frame of a house, females are increasingly trying to work outside the home. Similarly, Hedwig gives priority to her individuality rather than being adhered to social and cultural roles that society asks her to be involved.

The War Brides is a tragic comedy by Wentworth which has remained at the centre of critical interest and has received much critical evaluations after its publication in 1915. *The War Brides* portrays females' marginalized condition in male governed society.

In the play *War Brides*, the protagonist Hedwig is aware of male domination and leads asleep female characters by raising consciousness as Karin Ika asserts her review in her article "A Message to the Emperor" & "The Battle of the Cradle": *Gendered Nationalism and Identity Politics in the Great War*:

In Wentworth's play *War Brides* a major conflict for the protagonist is to thwart the social-constructivism of traditional gender roles as it is persistently

perpetuated by flat characters such as the traditional war bride Minna, and the Mother. Their uncritical pro-patriarchal and pro-war attitude facilitates the nation's re-enforcement of gender inequality in an emergency case like war. Subsequently, it is not merely a patriarchal war the protagonist fights but also a war against female liberation. (14)

Hedwig dislikes role of static characters, Minna and Mother, who are still playing traditional role of women. They are traditional war brides and blind supporters of patriarchal society. They are flourishing gender inequality in the nation state. The protagonist seems to fight against males for the female liberation and tries to alert all the females who are being victimized by the males.

In the play *War Brides*, there is a severe domination and corruption upon female characters by male characters in the name of patriotism and militaristic nationalism. It shows that women should respect men and their dignity deeply, like Hoffman's character, to make women bow down to him as Wendy B. Sharer asserts her review:

Wentworth uses Hoffman's character to critique the perverted patriotism generated by militaristic nationalism and the self-aggrandizement characteristic of the military, upon Hoffman's stage entrance, stage direction explains that he is "accustomed to having the women bow down to him." (75)

The male agent, Hoffman dominates women and puts them under his control which is ideology of patriarchy to show inferiority of women by creating gender barrier. Women around World War First were threatened by war propaganda. They had to play vital role for benefits of men at war time as Olive Schreiner, one of the greatest feminist, puts in her review:

If our European nations should continue in their present semi-civilized condition, which makes war possible, or a few generations longer, highly

possible that as financiers, as managers of the commissariat department, as inspectors of provisions and clothing for the army, women will play a very leading part; and that the nation which is the first to employ its women may be paced at a vast advantage over its fellows in time of war. (66)

War turns out to be an additional problem for women. War is the part of males not for females that has made women weak and powerless, whereas men superior and powerful. Men used them to play role of mother-woman at home and were not allowed to go to war, whereas men used to earn glory and fame by fighting and getting victory in the war. Hedwig's marriage to a departing soldier is not because of her will but due to social will to breed children for future warriors. Like Hedwig, Amelia and Minna are also being persuaded to marry to the departing soldiers for war brides. This kind of force marriage is a means of female suppression.

Tracy E. Higgins gives her view of mothering in her article *By Reason of Their Sex: Feminist Theory Postmodernism and Justice*. She asserts in her review:

Mothering has different social meanings depending upon one's race, class, marital status, or sexual orientation. Moreover, some feminists have argued that to describe the specificity of the category woman as derivative of her role as mother is to reinforce traditional notions about women's role that have undermined women's representation in the political sphere.(1566)

This extract shows that making female's role as a mother-woman is traditional measure of gender difference which underestimates them in political sphere for responsibility of mothering but the protagonist, Hedwig, wants to radicalize women to abolish traditional role of mother by denying to give birth to a baby.

War Brides tries to bring political and social change in the country by presenting the

issue of gender trouble. This play tries to eradicate gender barrier constructed by the culture and politics of the society as *Saya Abro* asserts in her review:

I was so, so looking forward to reading to my daughter, so she could be caught up in it as I was at an early age. I particularly chose the "Whole play" edition because of its broad margins, easy-to-scan pages, and charming illustrations and margin notes that add historical texture to the play. *The war Brides*, personalizes the political and social changes in the country over the past few decades in this play disguised as autobiography—or vice-versa. Unlike most historical narratives from USA, which are pegged to political events? (23)

Overall, these reviews show suppressed condition of females in the male dominated societies. But Wentworth's effort from her play is to awake all the females of male dominated societies with a gentle appeal for males to stop gender discrimination.

Wentworth and Her Dramatic World

Born in St. Poul, in United States of America on January 25, 1871, Wentworth graduated from the University of Minnesota, where she gained understanding regarding injustice around the world. She supported voting rights for women, freedom and peace and justice issues by writing articles and giving speeches promoting her causes. Wentworth appeared at the perfect moment for audience craving peace with her great work *The War Brides*, which was originally published in 1915. She was poet, playwright and suffragist.

Wentworth's world was a world of men and women facing the complex social, personal and fragmented aspects of life as they lived it, not only in America but also in the whole world as well. At her time The World War First had created gender discrimination by supposing men as superior and brave fighters, whereas women inferior, weak, coward and not to fit for the war but for household works. This was her unique ability to portray the miserable condition of women. The interesting issue in her writing is her thinking about

women. People who read her play will find the direct and indirect means of inferiorizing women in male governed society. She proposed *The War Brides* to develop the society by transforming its views especially with regards to women.

Wentworth has authentic knowledge of domestic life and she, therefore, deals with this aspect in her play *The War Brides*. She believes in justice and equality and therefore she has painted the picture of suppressed women in male governed society and their awakened condition. At her time, she had to struggle hard against social and political atmosphere which was uncomfortable for women. In the name of patriotism and nationalism, men used to face death and become heroes, whereas women weak and coward. Having real experience of male governed society, Wentworth produces women consciousness through her tragic comedy *The War Brides*.

The construction of female characters in Wentworth's play reflects the image of women around World War First in general. For all that, the playwright, Wentworth portrays stereotypes of genders, their roles and responsibilities in society. She also puts their representation into question, challenges, and also revises them. Around the First World War, young women were forcefully made to get early marriage to the departing soldiers to produce more children for the future warriors. Encouraging women to get married to departing soldiers and making them war widows is an abuse given to them by the patriarchal society. By giving the reference of World War First, Wentworth portrays male-female conflict of gender issue in male governed society and tries to abolish western paradigm of modernity which is futile and white male biased. She wants to establish norms of male-female relation locally.

In her personal life, Hedwig marries to a departing soldier and finally becomes a war widow. She cannot tolerate intense male domination and commits suicide to abolish society's demand that she must be a mother first and a human being second. It's her motive to escape

from the patriarchal society that she faces death rather than male domination. Her suicidal attempt also proves her challenge and threatens to masculine power.

In *The War Brides*, most of the females are aware of male domination and are trying to rise up by erasing the boundary of femininity created by male dominated society. Hedwig challenges the males by refusing to give birth to a baby against traditional rules male social construction framed in stereotype. It is imperative to explore reasons why a female refuses to give birth to a baby. Her motive of denying bearing a child will be to convince males to stop gender discrimination and teach lesson to live in love and peace. Even though Hedwig is socially and culturally weak, she is filled with determination and revolting sentiments. In her capacity, she has no power to totally transform the society. Nevertheless, she makes a great attempt denying the orthodox social norms by killing herself. She is aware of gender difference thinking it as performance performed by the actors.

Through *The War Brides*, Wentworth conveys us that gender and sex difference are artificial concept developed to suppress women. *The War Brides* has viewed practicing domination against females no matter what social strata they belong. Appealing to an alternative notion of gender revision, Wentworth aims to end traditional concept of femininity as passive, nurturing and submissive. Through this play, Wentworth plays vital role to awake all women from marginalized position. The research aims to establish gender harmony with alternative way of gender difference by radicalizing women and abolishing patriarchal ideology.

Statement of Problems

In the play *The War Brides*, females are compelled to play mother-woman role by staying at home and do household works like cooking, cleaning, washing, gathering crops and bearing children. They are not given chance to work out of home like men. All the prestigious works are captured by males. Only men go to war and earn glory but do not get

women to participate in the war thinking that they are not eligible for the war. Hedwig gradually becomes awakened from gender discrimination in patriarchal society and finally commits suicide. In the play, females are used as machines to produce more children, but Hedwig does not want to bear a baby. This research tries to get involved with possible solution of this issue through these questions:

Why does a female deny giving birth to a baby?

Why cannot females completely abolish patriarchy?

What makes females try to be awakened to revolt against males?

Hypothesis

This research hypothesizes that females deny giving birth to a baby to convince males to stop male domination. Females cannot completely abolish patriarchy because they are made politically, socially, economically and sexually voiceless and powerless by patriarchal ideology. Females in the play are trying to be awakened from their marginalized condition because of male suppressive environment and their inherent intelligence.

Feminist Theory

Feminism is a contemporary social and political movement, motivated by individual and collective experiences of women, which is based on the claim that a society is based on patriarchal principles, according to which men are privileged over women, which results in discrimination against women in public and private life. A prominent feminist critic Irigaray states, "In our social order, women are *products* used and exchanged by men. Their status is that of merchandise, *commodities*" (84). Women are indeed, used as objects to be sold and bought in market by men to satisfy their desire.

Although feminism is often considered a unique ideology, this theory actually makes a large number of routes created under the influence of various factors that may be related to the historical and cultural specificity, the legal status of women in certain countries or simply

different feminist approaches to solve the problems that female population faces. Although there are a number of specified routes, the main differences between them are reduced to the extent to which relations within the patriarchal society are considered to be the cause of all forms of discrimination against women.

Since the late 1960s feminist criticism has developed and different critical theories such as: Liberal, Marxist, Psychoanalytic, Socialist, Existentialist, and radical theories have appeared. All these different theories agree that society is wholly patriarchal where women are dominated by men socially, politically, sexually or educationally.

Radical Feminism

Radical feminism is a branch of feminism that quests a radical reordering of society in which male supremacy is eliminated in all social and economic context. Radical feminism emerges in early 1968 as a response to deeper understandings of women's oppression.

Radical feminism's theoretical watchword is *patriarchy*, or men's pervasive oppression and exploitation of women, which can be found wherever men and women are in contact with each other; in private as well as in public life. Radical feminists view society as fundamentally a patriarchy in which men dominate and oppress women. Even though it argues patriarchy as very hard to eradicate, radical feminists tries to abolish it in order to liberate everyone from an unjust society by challenging existing social norms and institutions. This includes opposing the sexual objectification of women, raising public awareness about such issues as rape and violence against women, and challenging the concept of gender.

Radical feminism, like other feminism raises women agendas of gender equality, freedom, gender justice, women rights etc. but the fundamental difference of this theory from other feminisms is that other feminist theories raise women agendas normally, whereas radical feminist theory raises women issues intensely or deeply. Radical feminists are more

revolutionary and intense feminist feeling who provoke anti male agendas for fundamental reformation of existing social and political norms of patriarchal society. Other feminist theories generally concern with female discrimination, whereas radical feminism deeply raises the issue of female oppression from male side and represents the serious change of the thought of feminism as Denise Thompson asserts her view of radicalization, "Radical feminist's emphasis is on the primacy of women's oppression, and hence the primacy of male domination, go further than this" (135). Radical feminism goes beyond women discrimination to women oppression and encourages women to be awakened by radicalizing them to protest against power-centered males. Radicalism in the theory is considered the most dynamic and developing approach. What is astonishing about Radical Feminists is their exceptional boldness in challenging against male supremacy and bringing up the issue of sexuality to the field of discussion.

Radical feminism is a movement for reaction of liberal feminism. While liberal feminists are considered as the reformists, the radical feminists regard themselves as the revolutionary ones. While liberal feminists try hard to find a place for women in system of patriarchy, the radical feminists move further to the ideas of revolution. The radical feminists' desire to improve women's condition emerged in the context of their participation in radical social movements, such as the civil-rights and anti-Vietnam War movements. The most marked revolutionary idea of this radical feminist movement is practice of consciousness-raising into feminist thought.

Radical feminists believe that women should understand their own sexuality and find out the importance of their bodies. They believe that, women should free their selves and fulfill their needs. Rosemarie Tong states, "Radical feminist writings inspire women of all races and classes not only to celebrate women's reproductive and sexual powers in bold and new ways, but also to use these powers joyously and wisely" (72). It is no matter in what way

women use their sexual and reproductive power but they should free their selves any way in the male governed society.

Radical feminists locate the root cause of women's oppression in patriarchal gender relations and argue that, because of patriarchy, women have come to be viewed as the "other" to the male norm, and as such have been systematically oppressed and marginalized. They further assert that men as a class benefit from the oppression of women. Radical feminist theory is not generally defined as a belief that all men always benefit from the oppression of all women. Rather, it maintains that the primary element of patriarchy is a relationship of dominance, where one party is dominant and exploits the other for the benefit of the former. Radical feminists believe that men, as a class, use social systems and other methods of control to keep women suppressed.

Role of Radical Feminism in Female Awakening

From the origin of human beings women are marginalized by males who used to show their dominant roles over women by beating or torturing them and making their lives insecure. Women's role was limited within the confinement of house-works and they became the source of entertainment for men and had to please their husbands at any cost. Because of gender differences women had been compelled to lead a poor life in patriarchal society. Gender difference caused women to remain within the four walls of a house. The patriarchal society had its own norms, values and culture. In such a society, women have to be deeply loyal to males by approving males' ideas blindly without opposing them. Women's free wills are drilled by males. Women are not given open environment of their choices in dressing, talking, working, meeting people and funeral procession. By imposing these norms, values and culture upon women men dominated women.

But with the development of time the movement named feminism came into existence to deny the male culture, male norms and values that undervalued women as complement

parts of men. Feminism, as a movement, aimed at awakening women in all sides. Its overall goal was to develop all round personalities of women. This movement tried to make conscious to the women by gender difference they were not inferior to men. They could be equal to men if they got the same education, opportunities, and chances. They can fulfill the responsibility like men if they are provided it by considering them as equal to men.

With the pace of time, a branch of feminist movement called radical feminism developed as the reaction of liberal feminism which could not bring any effective change to the system of patriarchy to uplift women's status and therefore radical feminism came into existence as deep understanding of women's poor condition in patriarchal society due to discrimination to suppression of women by men. This movement adds more encouragement to women by making them conscious and revolutionary against male domination. Critics of radical feminism enlighten women by participating them in social movement like civil rights to get radical change from the precarious existence of women in a male governed society. Thinking to bring extreme change of women's poor condition in male centered society which the liberal feminism could not change well, radical feminism starts to play a great role to find the root cause of female discrimination to female suppression and improve their condition by awakening and radicalizing them in patriarchal society.

By contribution of radical feminist writers, women in a male governed society began to deeply understand the ways of exploitation upon them by their fathers, brothers, and husbands. Being conscious revolutionary women, they began to realize the inferior status of women deeply not because of their sex difference but because of male culture and values and started to do revolution against males to bring back their rights and liberties. Being awakened radical women, they attempted to abolish rather than reform male domination of patriarchal society with a great challenge and revolution by bringing marginalized and frustrated women into centre.

Awakening From Gender Discrimination to Operation

An artificial opposition masculine/feminine had been understood variously by people. All the sides of male were weighty and significant. He was the victor because of his anatomy, whereas the female had a series of negative values because of a different anatomy. Cixous notes that each opposition is hierarchy and is biased to women.

A fundamental goal of radical feminist theory was to analyze gender relations. The study of gender relations included feminist issues. The purpose of radical feminist theory was to avoid thinking about gender. Radical Feminists are proud of their femaleness and have made a vital tool to femininity to perceive their existence. Viewing the discrimination upon women by patriarchal culture and society, Judith Butler writes in her book *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*:

If it is possible to speak of a “man” with a masculine attribute and to understand that attribute as a happy but accidental feature of that man, then it is also possible to speak of a “man” with a feminine attribute, whatever that is, but still to maintain the integrity of the gender. But once we dispense with the priority of “man” and “woman” as abiding substances, then it is no longer possible to subordinate dis-sonant gendered features as so many secondary and accidental characteristics of gender ontology that is fundamentally intact.(32)

Even though the society has divided man and woman by constructing an artificial wall of gender difference, some distinct qualities of a man assemble with a woman. Some men hold feminine characteristics of cowardice, weak heartiness, shy and women as brave, strong and forward than men. So, it is reasonless to categorize men and women in the issue of gender. Society has made gender to dominate women and to make men powerful. In this view, sense of nihilism is discovered showing nothingness in gender difference. Gender

Biasness is an abuse for healthy society where men and women must live happily and peacefully by co-operating each other.

In patriarchal society, men define women as other and men as universal because of gender difference. The radical feminist insisted that the root of women's oppression were buried deep in patriarchy was sex/gender system. Kate Millet in her *Sexual Politics* (1970) argued that sex is political primarily because the male-female relationship which is determined by it. Because of gender difference, men control of the public and private world. The patriarchal ideology exaggerated gender differences between men and women, making certain that men always had "masculine" roles and women always had the subordinate ones. This ideology became the tool for men to oppress women in patriarchal society.

By discussing the question of gender and sexuality, radical feminist movement awakened women from their miserable existence in male governed society. By making conscious to females about their insecure situation, this movement helped women to be bold and gain not only in legal, political, and economic liberties and equalities but also in sexual ones. Radical feminist movement awakened women that they will always remain subordinate to men unless inferiority of gender concept is completely irradiated from patriarchy.

Awakening From Domestic Affairs

Because of the male oriented social structure from the very beginning of the social history, the concept of the society about women is not good. Women are expected to stay at home and confine themselves to domestic duties and social graces-playing music and decorating themselves for men. In a sense they are satisfied with their given status in society. They have no idea about their secondary object like female position in the family. Stating this situation Rosemarie quotes Friedan:

"According to Friedan, the feminine mystique - that is, the idea that women can find satisfaction exclusively in the traditional role of wife and mother.

Deprived of meaningful goals, these women dust and polish their furniture as if they were Sisyphus rolling an enormous boulder as a steep hill only to have it roll down again". (256)

They were totally unaware about their state of being and most of them believed that was what their natural role and duties and followed them without any complain. Not only ordinary people, even the scholars thought in the same way and helped to strengthen this concept. The patriarchal society thought that women were naturally inferior to men. Women internalized their subordinate position and accepted their role to be weak and passive. Their duties were to please men. They had to be useful to men and they had to win their love. These were women's duties in ages and that were taught to women from childhood.

Women followed their duties made by patriarchal society without any question and they never tried to challenge it because of social and political system of patriarchy in which they are made voiceless in male suppressive environment. The male structure society compelled women to think that was their destiny and women did not think necessary to revolt against this thinking. Thus, it became easy for men to convince women that their role in life was to be wives and mothers and to serve the family. Generally women were taught 'drawing room' piano playing and dancing in the place of real education like boys got. Rosemarie quotes Betty Friedan in *Feminist Thought* that, "Patriarchal society thinks women are ideally suited only for certain occupations - teaching, nursing, and clerking - and are largely incapable of other tasks" (28). Women had to look after their younger brothers and sisters. They were taught domestic skills such as sewing and laundry work aimed at making them good house wives and mothers in the place of independent human being.

Radical feminist movement enlightened the women about their confinement within the four walls of a house. Rosemarie Tong asserts, "Feminists tend to agree; a person's biological sex should in no way determine his or her psychological or social gender" (31).

This movement made conscious to the female about the domestic oppression by male upon women and then, it encouraged the women to challenge male-oriented social structure that prevented women in public life. Making women conscious, radical feminist's movement gave inspiration to question the assigned role of female in the society with understanding of women operation on the deepest possible level.

Hedwig as an Awakened Female

The playwright, Wentworth, shows Hedwig's gradual awakening from the marginalized condition created by the male-oriented society. She is awakened from marriage system, domesticity, gender discrimination or gender inequality in the male governed society. She realizes women's ignorance in marriage making decision to departing soldiers who persuade them for marriage and made them war widows as one of the suppression to womanhood.

By the use of female characters, Wentworth uncovers the women's inferior existence in a male governed society of her time and then leaves a message to the whole women of the world to awaken from male structured society in order to abolish existing norms, values and culture so that women can be equal to male by giving the examples of the awakened lady, Hedwig, the protagonist of *The War Brides*.

The War Brides begins from the conversation between Mother Gertrude and Amelia. Amelia is trying to go to war front to nurse wounded soldiers but Mother Gertrude wants her to stay and look after Hedwig. The protagonist, Hedwig, is newly married to a departing soldier and was pregnant. She was in great grief because her husband, Franz was killed in the war making her a widow. All the female characters in the play are becoming war brides and finally war widows who aren't even asked to join with the males for the war. Female characters have been marginalized and made them to internalize their inferior status in this play. Amelia is persuaded by Hoffman, a soldier, to marry him but Hedwig wants to dismiss

the marriage by awakening her not to marry such an unknown man by falling in temptation of widow's pension. She says:

Marry this man, whom you scarcely know, whom surely you cannot love!

Why you make a mock of marriage! It isn't that they have tempted you with the widow's pension? It is so tiny; it's next to nothing. Surely you wouldn't yield to that? (32)

Hedwig is conscious towards the ideology of patriarchal society that compels young girls to marry to a man who is not known before, without considering the condition of their future life. It is forceful marriage which is indeed a bad fortune for innocent girl like Amelia. But Mother Gertrude and Minna are traditional women who accept traditional role of women to get early marriage and play mother- women role by bearing more children.

Hedwig gradually awakens from the male-oriented society because of her inherent intelligence and male suppressive environment. She awakens all women of patriarchal society to be human being first and mother second. Even though it's natural to get marriage and bear children, Hedwig denies giving birth to a baby as a challenge against patriarchy's ideology to think women's first duty is to play the role of mothering by bearing babies. She also alerts women to come out of the confined four walls of a house and involve with men for works which are different from domestic works.

Wentworth, by presenting Hedwig as an awakened girl, amidst the patriarchal society claims the fact that women too are intellectual beings and their participation makes the social life more effective. So, she chooses the female protagonist in her famous play *The War Brides*. Even though the protagonist cannot totally overthrow patriarchy because she is politically and socially made powerless, she tries to awaken all marginalized women from male domination by raising consciousness to them.

Textual Substantiality

According to the patriarchal social order, women's first duty was to serve men by playing role of mother and doing household works. Wentworth in *The War Brides* observed the issue of female's denial to give birth to a baby. Treating them as "breeding machines" is an insult to their womanhood which keeps them into social limits. Hedwig says, "A breeding machine! Why not call it what it is? Speak the naked truth for once" (31). Hedwig feels to be insulted by men for treating them as breeding machines which is man's ideology to suppress women and she, therefore, refuses to breed children which as a challenge for males from females side.

Hedwig is awakened from male schema to use them as dolls and treat them as animals carrying heavy load. She says, "You use us, and use us dolls, beasts of burden, and you expect us to bear it forever dumbly; but I won't! I shall cry out till I die" (34). Men use women as play things which are fully under their control and behave them inhumanly like the pack of horse. Such burden cannot be tolerated by women rather they plan to protest against men for their cruel behavior.

All incidents of the play make us clear that women's self in Wentworth's society was constructed by patriarchy – by the will of males in society. Wentworth shows male domination over women by giving a reference of the World War First. Hedwig and all other female characters do not have their own selves. Their identity is fixed by the patriarchal society. They remain as the society wished from them. The female protagonist of this play emerges as an awakened human being by her experience of precarious women existence in male structured society.

Wentworth in *The War Brides* explores how women are discriminated and what obstacles the protagonist Hedwig encounters in her male dominated society because of traditional gender roles. Gender discrimination had determined the rule of women as

complementary being of male. Almost women characters in *The War Brides* internalize the male constructed ideology of gender discrimination. They are made to remain being feminine. These female characters have become the victim due to their biological anatomy, too. But Hedwig by her experience of miserable existence of women awakens her male created gender discrimination; therefore, her behaviours are not of the feminine trait.

Mother Gertrude and Minna are flat characters who accept the patriarchal ideology of making females play mother-woman role. They are not sensible and intelligent woman like the protagonist, Hedwig. They like traditional system of marriage and feel glorious to be war brides for the patriotism and nationalism. But Hedwig opposes patriarchal society's traditional gender roles that suppressed women. She tries to alert Mother Gertrude and Minna from the system of male governed society's gender difference. Minna is afraid of the bitter truth that Hedwig revealed about her ignorance to support patriarchy in getting early marriage and producing more children. Seeing her stupid attitude, Hedwig awakens her with this quote. She quotes her, "Afraid of the truth, you mean you see it at last in all its brutal bareness. Poor little Minna! But you need not afraid of me, little Minna" (42).

Minna is innocent woman who doesn't understand patriarchal society's plan to make a woman mother first and human being second. She is ready to bear more children for the nation. But Hedwig is opposite of it and wants to revolt against the monarch by awakening all women in the nation to stop giving birth to children thinking that it is the ideology of patriarchy to compel them to produce more children.

All female characters in *The War Brides* have become victim of a male governed society because patriarchy could not digest individual thinking of a woman. Gender discrimination has been deeply seated in male psyche. Because of hardship and difficulties posed to them, Hedwig is awakened and makes conscious to other female characters, who generally represent all women of contemporary patriarchal society, to dismiss gender

discrimination constructed by males in male governed society.

In patriarchal society, women are not given freedom in every field and they are treated badly by men. Men and women are equally created by the nature but so-called male oriented society does not provide equality to women. Women are enclosed into various social codes made by men in the society. Women are not given equal freedom to participate in different organizations, politics, and other educational fields. They are considered as weak, coward, emotional, weepy and so on, whereas men are regarded as strong, brave, hero, knowledgeable and broad minded. All these binaries are created by male dominated society to suppress women and show male superiority in the society.

All female characters in the play are deprived of women rights. They are considered as men's complimentary part. To serve men, they have to play role of mothering by giving birth to babies and being busy in domestic works. The protagonist, Hedwig is aware of all types of male dominations and tries to establish women freedom and equality in the society. She wants to get equal right to involve in politics and other opportunities like men. She reacts with courage against Hertz, a military agent, to sit with him in his councils to shape the destiny of the nation. She says:

Who give you the men? We women. We bear and rear and agonized. Well, if we are fit for that, we are fit to have a voice in the fate of the men we bear. If we can bring forth the men for the nation, we can sit with you in your councils and shape the destiny of the nation. (54)

Hedwig's voice against men in the nation is to get equality and freedom like men. Women are considered to be fit for producing sons to the nation but they are not thought to be fit to run the nation. Hedwig is conscious woman who wants to sit with men to make the destiny of the nation. She wants to overturn male oriented society's norms that considers women as inferior to men and tries to establish social norms suitable for women.

As society is carried away by sentimental rationalism, whereas females are further crushed because they don't produce utility to the society as males provide. Women are criticized by men even if they do things correctly which is because of their powerlessness in male governed society. The schema of males towards females is generally negative through which males blame females in many ways to make them inferior. This bitter truth is another paradigm of female suppression. This, however, has quite dominant role in the lives of women. They are quashed into compromising mood even though they want to pursue revolt.

Hedwig's motive of suicide

The protagonist, Hedwig is presented as a brave lady who protests patriarchal ideology of dominating women by compelling them to play traditional role of women. In this play she shows her exceptional boldness in her protest against males' ideology to get women force marriage and treat them as child bearing machine. She is a conscious woman who awakens all females of the play by giving role of leadership.

Through development of the plot of the play, she raises female agendas to break down male power by challenging them not to bear children anymore unless they compromise with her to stop male domination. She has many agendas related to women like stopping early and force marriage, establishing gender equality and harmony, eliminating mental schema of males to think them as breeding machine, abolishing male suppressive environment and so on. She time and again raises these agendas in front of male characters but they do not listen to her, instead they threaten her to be quiet like tombstone and be still, otherwise she is threatened to be arrested. When Hedwig told Hertz that she would be quiet if he promised her to stop male domination, Hertz threatens her, "You will keep quiet. Quiet as a tombstone, if I have anything to say about it" (53). Hedwig is made to be powerless in front of males, though she tries to boldly oppose males' ill behavior. Minna and Mother Gertrude, though they are similar victims, could not support in her protest against male domination because of their

innocence and traditional attitudes. Finally, she commits suicide by shooting herself.

Here, her suicidal event is due to severe and ongoing female oppression which is deeply rooted in patriarchy. Hedwig is ready to die rather than to live in a male suppressive environment where female's marginal voice is not heard by males, instead they pose extra suppression to them by threatening them to be quiet time and again. Her suicide also indicates her intense motive to challenge males to stop male domination for gender harmony.

Conclusion

Wentworth's one act play *The War Brides* has established the foundation of radical feminism. From the overall study of her play, it can be concluded that her main concern is centered to the women in relation to men and the society they live in. Wentworth has highly contributed to the women's issues taking the favour of the women. In *The War Brides* she has focused on women by analyzing their real problems of life deeply. Wentworth's arguments for the women's realm are unforgettable. Through *The War Brides*, she has radicalized women by awakening them to realize their marginalized condition in patriarchal society with female agendas of domestic affairs, gender discrimination, early and force marriage, freedom and equality etc.

Hedwig is introduced to us as a conscious and brave woman who shows her leadership to awaken and lead all the female characters in the play. She is the pioneer woman character who shows her courage to dismiss gender barrier created by males with her challenge of refusing to breed a child in patriarchal society. Her refusal in bearing a baby is to teach lesson to all males of patriarchal society that they must stop woman suppression and should establish gender harmony. Except Hedwig other female characters, who work and behave like ancient ones, are good example of feminine. They blindly support traditional gender roles made by males. Mother Gertrude and Minna are sleep women of patriarchal culture who want to give continuity to traditional gender role by marrying to departing

soldiers and bearing more children. Similarly, Amelia is innocent girl who is persuaded to marry to a departing soldier, Hoffman. Male characters in the play like Hertz, Hoffman, Arno, and Franz are departing soldiers and agents of the male governed society; suppress women by making them war widows.

During Wentworth's time, women's condition was pitiable which has created gender role to serve men by women supposing them not to fit for the war. They were suppressed terribly in male oriented society by making them war widows which was abuse to female created by patriarchal ideology. Their involvement outside was not allowed rather society wanted to keep women as an object to entertain and please males. Wentworth, the true feminist of the time, created Hedwig, an awakened woman, who gradually awakens from the means of domination of male in her society. By creating a conscious woman in *The War Brides*, Wentworth gives message to society that women by nature are not inferior beings but existing male oriented culture, value, political system made them inferior. If women get equal opportunity, they can be equal to male to develop their personality.

Thus Wentworth, having radical feminist vision of life, shows deep feminist concerns to her women characters to promote and liberate them from their general status. Though Wentworth is not an outspoken feminist to lead a feminist movement, she has tactfully undermined the gender based patriarchal ideology challenging the existing social norm that has mastered men to dominate women. She has also shaken the power-centered males by creating the world of woman 'protagonist' in her play. She has thus shattered these males' dreams to monopolize the territory of the protagonist. In short, her advocacy for women's social, political and legal rights is the matter of great feminist concerns in *The War Brides*. Even though it is hard to totally abolish patriarchy, as a feminist playwright, she aims to change women's emotional and sentimental mentality by awakening them from their insecure existence and making them revolutionary to protest against it.

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