



Devaluing and Revaluing Women: A Feminist Approach to Chandra Prakash Baniya's *Maharani* [Queen]

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Abstract

Chandra Prakash Baniya's *Maharani* [Queen] is a telling tale of women's exploitation and their glass ceiling in a male dominated society. The novel depicts how women are either risen to the pedestal of 'Goddess' or devalued to the position of a 'whore', but never given a genuine respect. By aggrandizing or derogating the status of women, the patriarchal society has always subordinated, subjugated, and exploited them. The scenario of deprivation of women from attaining their rights is the main concern of the novelist. He suggests that the prevalence of biased treatment for women in every sphere - social, economic, political, literary - is rampant, and from getting secondary position to being thwarted to grow is an unfortunate fate meted out to women in this male-dominated society. Patriarchy, therefore, has become a clog in the route of women's progress. The present paper aims at exploring the pathetic condition of women in the novel, discussing how women become the victim of glass ceiling in a social labyrinth created by males. To address this objective, the study has employed feminism as a tool to examine the condition of women, especially drawing the concept of glass ceiling of women from Judith Butler to interpret the text.

Keywords: Patriarchy, subordination, exploitation, glass ceiling

Introduction

Maharani [Queen] by Chandra Prakash Baniya is a historical fiction which narrates a historical event of Parbat, a Khas Malla Kingdom during the thirteenth to fourteenth centuries and now a district of Gandaki Province, with an imaginative and creative twist. It was *Maharani* that brought the novelist into limelight by making him bag the prestigious Madan Puraskar in 2076 BS. It is a multi-faceted fiction comprising of different shades of life, and reflecting upon the political, economic, and social issues. *Maharani*, as the name suggests, is a pictorial explanation of the life story of a powerful lady Princess Biswapraba (later turned into a queen), her courageous journey, sacrifices, alienation, servitude, and liberation. Most of the critics and reviewers have interpreted this novel as a political fiction revealing the intrigues of court culture, or as a historical fiction. But relatively little attention has been paid to interpret the text through feminist

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gaze. Therefore, the focus of this paper is to dissect the novel with the sharpened tools of feminism. In other words, the major concern of the study is to probe, discuss, analyse, and unclad the feminist issues regarding the subordination and suppression of women in the novel. The present study is an attempt to showcase how all the women characters – Queen Gulbadan, attendant Mangli, Gautami, Queen Jayanti, Princess Biswaprabha, Princess Mahal Basanta, attendant Rambha, Chapali, and Baijanti - have been the victim of glass ceiling by the patriarchal forces. Before delving deep into this vast arena, it is crucial to know the tenets of feminism, and reveal the evil and ugly facets of patriarchy.

The Concept of Glass Ceiling: A Theoretical Perspective

Feminism is a broad concept that cannot be conceptualized within limited boundary of mindset. Theorists have diversified views regarding feminism. Nevertheless, there are some pivotal elements that are common to all of them. Wilfred L. Guerin et al state, "In its diversity feminism is concerned with the marginalization of all women: that is, with their being relegated to a secondary position. Most feminists believe that our culture is patriarchal culture: that is, one organised in favour of the interests of men" (196). The principal view is that the civilization as a whole is pervasively male-centred and takes control of the reigning ideology. Promod K. Nayar writes, "This theory basically focuses on the assumption that gender roles are pre-determined and the woman is trained to fit these roles" (83). The major idea lying behind the concept is that, for ages, women have been pushed to a secondary position by patriarchy. Through the cultural process of social construction, the entire women race is identified as passive, acquiescent, timid, emotional which is in systematic opposition to the active, dominating, creative, adventurous, and rational males. Therefore, the feminists are committed to and are struggling for equal rights for women. They assume that the gender roles are pre-determined and women are indoctrinated to fit into them. In other words, the inequalities, according to them, that exists between men and women are not natural but social. In this sense, feminism is "both a political stance and a theory that focuses on gender as a subject of analysis when reading cultural practices and as a platform to demand equality, rights and justice"(Nayar 83). A. Mukhopadhyay and S. Chakrabarti, in their book *Feminisms* powerfully assert that "Feminism addresses the issue of women's inferior position in society and seeks ways and methods of alleviating the social, cultural, political and economic discriminations that women are subjected to" (1). She rightly points out the biased treatment done towards the women. She critically makes everyone aware of the domination, suppression, exclusion, objectification, and ill-treatment done towards women.

Despite the variance in voices, the point of agreement among the feminists is the desire to challenge and change the orthodox assumptions about gender. They critically enlighten the readers of the ways in which sexual stereotyping and marginalization of women are done. They discuss how, by various means of patriarchal control, women are kept aloof of the mainstream agendas by denying them a voice, and thus molding them to be subordinated in all cultural domains like familial, religious, political, economic, social, legal, and artistic. A noted feminist Mary Wollstonecraft in her trailblazing work, *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, refutes Rousseau's philosophy that women are naturally weaker or inferior to men. Wollstonecraft's remarkable finding is that it is through the process of socialization that patriarchy is making women to internalize the patriarchal ideology and to cooperate in their own subordination. French philosopher and novelist Simone de Beauvoir reached at the core essence of the feminist inquiry. In her scholarly creation *The Second Sex*, she strikes at what she named 'the myth of the eternal

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feminine'. Through her famous expression "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman," she rejects the very central idea of 'feminine nature'. She further asserts, "There was no physical or psychological reason why women should be inferior to men, and yet, throughout history and across cultures, women had always been second class citizens. Even when worshipped and adored, they have had no autonomy and received no recognition as rational individuals, any more than when they have been abused and denigrated. (qtd. in Waugh 320)

Beauvoir argues that it is not biology that acts as an agency of oppression of women, but the various instruments of patriarchy, namely education, family, and religion function in that process. She comes up with a remarkable notion of *othering* and claims that throughout the history women have been relegated to the status of permanent *other*, completely sidelining them from the mainstream and identifying them as negative to man. She further writes, "A woman is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her; she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the subject; he is the Absolute she is the other" (qtd. in Bryson 152). In this way, the feminists argue that women are always considered inferior to males.

One of the most prominent among these feminists was Kate Millet who revolutionized the literary world through her ground-breaking claims regarding the inferiority of women. Her dominant argument is that men have institutionalized power over women, and the secondary positioning is not the result of any genetic factor, rather it is a well devised plan. According to her,

The relationship between men and women must be understood as a deeply embedded power structure with political implications." Patriarchal society, she argued, works to inculcate male supremacy through a variety of covert means. Politically, women have negligible representation; the biological sciences legitimize chauvinistic beliefs in female inferiority and social systems. Particularly the family entrench political and social inequality in the private sphere... All aspects of society and culture functioned according to a sexual politics that encouraged women to internalize their own inferiority until it became psychologically rooted. (326)

Millet talks about the deep-rooted impact of indoctrination that is at the heart of female passivity. What is worth noting is the concern of feminists to reclaim themselves and their true self by defying the restrictions of 'constructedness'. Even the gender theorist Judith Butler in her highly influential book *Gender Trouble* took a dig at the idea of self and other by giving a special focus on the fluidity of gender as she states,

Masculine and feminine, as two opposing and mutually defining positions, were artificial constructs supported by imposed heterosexuality. By subverting gender norms, and by refusing the characteristics socially assigned to a particular biological sex, binary gender categories could be deconstructed, and a multitude of possible gender 'positions' would then become available. (qtd. in Waugh 338)

Gender biasness and patriarchy create a situation of 'glass ceiling,' a term exclusively intertwined with patriarchy and a major by-product of male-supremacy. In a general sense, glass ceiling refers to the invisible barriers that obstruct the marginalized from achieving the top ranking posts in any organization or workplace. In its metaphorical sense, it is the barrier that hinders and prevents an individual from making advancement in his/her workplace. In this regard, Vijay Kumar Grover writes,

The term 'Glass Ceiling' was coined in 1979 by Lawrence and Marianne Schreiber of Hewlett & Packard during a conference of the women's Institute for freedom of the Press as a part of discussion on discrepancies between written policies of women promotion and action opportunities for women at Hewlett &

Packard. The term was also used by Gay Bryant in 1984 when she was reported as saying "Women have reached a certain point-I call it the glass ceiling. They're in the top of middle management and they're stopping and getting stuck. There isn't enough room for all those women at the top. Some are going into business for themselves. Others are going out and raising families." Glass ceiling is also used as a political term used to describe "the seen, yet unreachable barrier that keeps minorities and women from rising to the upper rungs of the corporate ladder, regardless of their qualifications or achievements." The glass ceiling metaphor has often been used to describe invisible barriers ("glass") through which women can see elite positions but cannot reach them ("ceiling"). It highlights that there is provision of access, but is denied indirectly, and if at all access turns reality success is denied. The metaphor is also one of the valued expressions used by feminists to present against the invisible barriers in the careers of high achieving women. (1)

In feminist theory, glass ceiling is a concept to the biased and discriminatory barriers that prohibit women from gaining the positions of power and responsibility. Simply, the concept means subtle but persistent obstacles underpinned by prejudiced, discriminatory practices and attitudes done consciously or unconsciously towards qualified and deserving women that prevent them from accessing the hierarchical ascension.

Baniya's *Maharani*: Critical Analysis *Patriarchy Glorifying Women*

Maharani incorporates the several female characters, ranging from a queen to a maid who have been victimised and caged by patriarchy. All the women characters – Queen Gulbadan, attendant Mangli, Gautami, Queen Jayanti, Princess Biswaprabha, Princess Mahal Basanta, attendant Rambha, Chapali, and Baijanti have been enslaved by the patriarchal forces. The degree of their plight may be different but the highest voltage of thunder strikes upon the protagonist - Princess Biswaprabha. She badly gets hammered and crushed under the pressures of the caliginous patriarchal society.

The males have always occupied a prominent position in the society and always had a special hold on the matters like economics, politics, and many other aspects. They have always enjoyed a high respect and authority in society for they have owned language, education, and the institutionalized power making women work at their will by keeping them subservient and suppressed. The airtight systems of the patriarchy have reduced women to the state of mere imitators, who succumb to the conditioning of male-dominated society without even having a slightest idea of it. Let go the idea of rejection, their conditioning is so convincing that it gets deep-seated in their genes. Women merrily accept their exploitation without a pinch of sorrow thinking it to be their way of life. Beauvoir explains it as a natural acceptance by women in the lines: "[H]ence woman makes no claim for herself as subject because she lacks the concrete means, because she senses the necessary link connecting her to without positing its reciprocity, and because she often derives satisfaction from her role as Other" (10). Such gender roles patronize and cajole women as 'goddess' and 'superpower,' but in reality it is an evil plot devised cunningly by males in power to confine them within their systems by alluring them into the artificial idea of womanhood engendered by society. The very idea of glorifying woman in a role of goddess is just indeed a sly act of patriarchy. In doing so, they entice women into sacrificing their dreams and their potentially powerful nature that stand as a threat to the hollow manhood. The reason behind the conditioning of women is to thwart them from blooming to the utmost. Instead of using force, patriarchy is using

socialization as a tool to indoctrinate the values of inferiority, docility, tenderness, and subordination in women.

There are amplitude of evidences of suppression and domination of women characters in the novel under analysis. In a sober style, the novelist projects a sneak-peek of King Ghanshyam's character who is presented as grandeur, thoughtful, meditative, calm, pensive, and adorer of nature. At the same time, Queen Gulbadan is introduced in a mocking way. She is presented as an intruder, and one who deviates the solemn king from his penance. The novelist narrates the king's state of meditation: "*Akasmāt Maharani Gulbadan... Maharaj ko dhyaan bhanga bhayo*" [The unexpected arrival of Queen Gulbadan...breached the meditative state of King Ghanshyam] (10).

Derogatorily, she is posed as a standard form of servant who addresses all the needs of the King from giving him warm cloth to serving him tea. Although Gulbadan is a queen, she is an epitome of servitude. In this context, Millett writes,

The relationship between men and women must be understood as a deeply embedded power structure with political implications, from this she derived the term 'sexual politics'. Patriarchal society, she argued, works to inculcate male supremacy through a variety of covert means: politically, women have negligible representation, the biological sciences legitimize chauvinistic beliefs in female inferiority; and social systems – particularly the family – entrench political and social inequality in the private sphere. (qtd. in Waugh 326)

In the book, after the novelist introduces the King and the Queen, Mangli - the Queen's personal attendant is described in the novel. She has been gifted to the Queen from her parents from Lamjung along with dowry. The given line here is evidently proving the point: "*Maharani Gulbadan sanga Lamjung durbar bata diajo ma aayeki susare thiye – Mangli*" [Mangali was the personal servant who was gifted as a dowry to Queen Gulbadan] (10). Such an inhuman treatment and introduction of Mangli seems libellous. She is confronted with women's double exploitation. Sarcastically she is given the title of 'expert of courtesy and manners.' She has been trained to be at service without violating any propriety of conduct. How dramatic is it that a woman is always associated with the attributes like mannerism, courtesy, obligation, and care that keep them tightly within the boundary of feministic weakness.

The male characters are always mentioned with high respect, whereas on the part of women characters, they are tied with loyalty as if, to be loyal, caring, and serving is an inborn trait of them. Attaching women to the negative qualities like demureness, inferiority, biological weakness, dependency, and subservience is logically a pseudo-psycho trap to ingrain within them a male-centric point of view. Like Beauvoir, Millett claims,

Women were subjected to an artificially constructed idea of the feminine.

Women's oppression was achieved by a combination of physical violence and cultural pressure. All aspects of society and culture functioned according to a sexual politics that encouraged women to internalize their own inferiority until it became psychologically rooted. (qtd. in Waugh 326)

Queen Gulbadan is a perfect emblem of an ideal Hindu wife who asks for obedience, devotion, loyalty, and patient service. In a true spirit, the phrase 'ideal women' is a patriarchal hegemonic ideology that restricts a woman to achieve her height by constraining her within the limits of matrimonial extremities and hence enslaving herself with her own consent. The marriage of a woman comes as a major setback for her flourishing; for instance, "Marriage subjugates and enslaves woman and it leads her to aimless days indefinitely repeated, life that slips away gently toward death without questioning its purpose" (Beauvoir, 500). The sole purpose of Queen Gulbadan and

Mangli's life appears to serve their male counterparts. This is the result of their upbringing in a social milieu that deliberately trained them to be frivolous and incapable of doing anything meaningful and worthy for themselves. This passive acceptance of the women of their vanity, weakness, and frivolity as natural attributes makes them intellectually unreasonable human beings, who are without logic to ask for themselves leading them to a life of humiliation and dogged subservience.

Marriage as an Agency of Patriarchy

Queen Gulbadan fittingly in a role of an ideal wife is the result of her conditioning and social 'constructedness' that has always taught girls that to serve husband is their prime responsibility. Throughout the conversation between the King and the Queen, it is seen how all the positive attributes like calm, intellectual, serious, meditative, and courageous are aligned to the side of the King, but the Queen is shown to be low esteemed, tender, weak, under confident, and blindly devoted towards king and unworthy of any intellectual pursuit. Praising her for her wondrous look is just a trick to entangle her within the locks of beautifying herself and proving it to be mandatory inborn character of woman. This keeps her at bay from recognizing her strengths and her calibre which may lead her to a new height posing a potential threat to the malehood.

Marriage as a social institution acts as an agency of patriarchy that tames women to the servitude of men and hence obstructs the path that leads them to a liberal independent life. In an illusion of security, they lead a life that is utterly bereft of absolute liberty. Such woman is like a kite whose string is in the hand of some male in power. In this regard, French feminist Christine Delphy claims, "Marriage is a labour contract through which men exploit women's labour and become their economic masters, and that because most women perform this unpaid labour, the position of all women in the employment market is depressed and marriage continues to appear their most viable economic option" (35). An apparent gap of stature is seen between the King and the Queen. The former is a supreme ruler and the latter is always tailing around the former. The line "*Maharani ka Sukumar hatkelaharule euta kachaura adabsath Maharaj hajurma takryaye*" [Queen Gulbadan offered a bowl of soup with her soft, tender hands with due respect] (10) testifies the status-quo between the oppressor and the oppressed.

In the novel, it is also seen how Queen Gulbadan is ignored whenever she tries to show her intellectuality and how flawlessly the king derails her by praising her beauty. The irony is that the Queen accepts all this without any grudge. She does not have a slightest idea that her vitality is being crumpled and she is being silenced. Her essence is being destroyed by making her nurture the stereotypes propagated by patriarchy. The rationality of women is crippled by shadowing it under the burden of beautification. Beauvoir opines that "The worst curse on woman is her exclusion from warrior expeditions; it is not in giving life but in risking his life that man raises himself above the animal, this is why throughout humanity superiority has been granted not to the sex that gives birth but to the one that kills" (125). Similarly, child bearing and rearing have been seen as the worst of the reasons that obstruct the path of women's self-development. A major time and energy is wasted in the process of motherhood and Queen Gulbadan is not an exception to it. The most notorious radical feminist Shulamith Firestone in her book *The Dialect of Sex* argues that "It is their role as reproducers that has handicapped women over the centuries and made possible men's patriarchal power: The heart of women's oppression is her child-bearing and child-rearing role" (qtd. in Bryson 204). The second chapter shows a confrontation in the courtship where only male members are the indulgent ones and the female members are wiped out. The given lines back up the

real position of women in the court: “*Harek bisaya ma chhalphal garera nirnaya ma pugna ka lagi bolayine bhai bhardaar haru ko bhela lai ‘Durbaar Basne’ bhaninthyo*” [The special gathering of the male members of the court to discuss and make judgement on special cases was called ‘Durbaar Basne’] (Baniya 16). This proves that even ‘the Queen’ along with other women is treated as an outcast when it comes to show active involvement in decision-making and political affairs. They are present but just as an excluded member. This exclusion is an inherent patriarchal construct that shuns women from attaining any notable rank. Another line “*Durbar ma bishes paristhiti bahek aghipachhi Maharani ko upasthiti aniwarya manidainthyo*” [The presence of Queen was not regarded important except on the special situation] (16) shows the secondary position of Queen Gulbadan, who does not owe any dignified identity but just a stamp of the remote government. This seems irksome and inconsiderate but is a stark reality. They are just dinky. This is how the males reinforce their superiority and proprietorship over their follow females. Regarding this important and unimportant status-quo, Beauvoir states, “She is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her; she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the Subject, he the Absolute – She is the Other” (16). In the case of clash between Budhe and Jange, Jange’s wife Gautami Sunaar has been widowed and is imploring the King for justice as in her language she has been robbed of everything. This is the patriarchal socialisation that has always indoctrinated the notion that her essence lies in being subordinated. She is a trifle on her own. They are on this earth to play second fiddle to their men folk.

The women are so over-protected from their childhood that they feel secured under some male-figure and in absence of them they feel lost. This predicament of Gautami is just a repercussion of her upbringing that has barred her from being independent and a combatant. This futility has nothing to do with biology and preordination. This is a patriarchal construct that hinders the women to get full-fledged confidence. Here, Millet argues,

Patriarchy is primarily maintained by a process of conditioning which starts with childhood socialisation within the family and is reinforced by education, literature and religion to such an extent that its values are internalised by men and women alike; for some women this leads to self-hatred, self-rejection and an acceptance of inferiority. Despite the success of this ‘interior colonisation’, patriarchy also rests upon economic exploitation and the use or threat of force.

This means that its history is a record of man’s inhumanity to woman. (39)

After the trail and tribulation, the verdict comes as a slap on the face of womanhood. The all-pervasive, all-powerful King orders Budhe to take care of Gautami’s kids and property. Instead of encouraging her to take the responsibility of her family by being brave and adventurous, she is shifted from one mode of slavery to other. It reveals the crude sexual domination involved in the whole game of power-play. It is a trick of a patriarchal ideology to have an absolute control over women. Once again a male comes as a saviour and a woman is assigned a tag of parasite.

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The male tyranny mushrooming from everywhere appropriately suits in the context of the fiction. The decision of the males for the marriage of the prospective King to the princess of Khanchi as well as Deupur shows the peak of male chauvinism. It is a major phallogocentric pattern to make the males privileged and to trample women under their feet. In the course of bringing the princesses to the palace, it becomes crystal clear that the education being imparted there is also gender specific. The princesses will achieve training on courtly skills, decorum, rituals that will transform them into passive

being, who will readily internalize their submissiveness and will complement their ignorance and docility. Contrary to this, the prince is being given the sort of education that helps him explore his inner strength, leading him to create his own identity and ornaments him with the virtues of intelligence, force, and efficacy. In her book *Gyn/Ecology*, the American feminist Mary Daly argued that “religion, law and science were all methods of patriarchal control working to define and limit woman” (qtd. in Waugh 324). With the movement of the plot, the novelist introduces Princess Biswaprabha, the protagonist of the novel. She comes with a thud of dazzle. Along with exquisite beauty, she is bestowed upon with the eclectic energy that challenges the limits of patriarchy and shrugs the cocoon which has belittled and vilified women. Princess Biswaprabha is astonishingly a powerful lady who knows the skills like horse riding, archery, and leadership; she is equally quick-witted and insightful. She is alert and ingenious in absolute contrast with Mahalbasant. Princess Biswaprabha knew no barriers and was a kind of liberated, independent woman full of enthusiasm and vigour, and scarcely scared of anyone. She stood erect against the male imperialism proving herself to be an autonomous individual. Here, Princess Biswaprabha is not an appendage to Prince Malebam, rather she stands equal or above him in the virtues.

A twist in plot comes with the arrival of Malebam’s step brother Bhadribam who accuses king Ghanshyam of prejudice and allegedly claims to be a rightful heir of the throne. This revengeful clash is an outcome of the miserable death of King’s second wife Jayanti, who was left to suffer in isolation. This tussle between the princes to strengthen their status and to fulfil their coveted longings turns into a dreadful game of slaughter. The way Princess Biswaprabha outsmarts other males, makes her prickly for them. In the meantime, Bhadribam and his alliance use the deep bond of love between Prince Malebam and Princess Biswaprabha as their weapon. They ask for the Princess as a compensation for the throne. The mystic tone of Dilli Bhujel while saying, “*Tyaso bhaya dekhin sanjeevini buti miligay*” [If so, then we got an elixir, a triumph card] (261) shows how women have always been used as a rook of chess on whose shoulder the men put their guns to promote their hollow masculinity. There begins the game of victimisation and commoditization of Princess Biswaprabha. The coward males use women as a shield to assure their well-being. The Princess is blackmailed by the males in power on the name of love. She is made a scapegoat and is fetishized as an object ready to be sacrificed on the altar of masculine power. A fatal blow hit her hard giving her enormous pangs and pathos of pain. She felt like walking on a double-edged sword. Here a transgressive female is eventually penalized for her actions, and the patriarchal moral code is reasserted and strengthened. The effort of Princess Biswaprabha to wildize herself is stopped by the tentacles of patriarchy. In this context, Firestone affirms,

Love perhaps even more than child-bearing, is the pivotal of women’s oppression today (Firestone, 1979, p. 121) and that love in a patriarchal society cannot be based upon equality, but reflects women’s economic and social dependency and ensures that they will not challenge their sub-ordinate position. (qtd. in Bryson 200-01)

After a failure to persuade Prince Malebam to forget his love for the sake of Parbat and its sovereignty, they start agitating the Princess. It seemed the whole male-universe colluded to bring the women’s progress to halt. She is convinced to sacrificing her love. In the process of persuasion, the supremos wheedled her by saying “*Devi Katyayani le devta ko hit kalyaan ko Nimita Mahisasur kan sayan kaksha mai hatya garya ki thiyen...mahaan banaunya ho*” [Goddess Katayayani murdered Mahissasur in his own bedroom...sacrifice makes one great] (285). Princes Biswaprabha is forced to surrender herself in front of patriarchal forces. This is a case of acute brutality by male that in the

name of glorification, society exploits and silences them. In a split second, she is projected as a magnificent figure by the males, but in reality she is being ruined by them. They are subjects to be voiceless. Her self-assertion and confidence left her. A vacuum was created within her. This is what is known to be dichotomization between privileged and oppressed. The former imposes and the latter assimilates it for she fears being a deviant. After becoming an idol of sacrifice, Princess Biswaprabha is honoured as *Rajmata*, and unfortunately, this deplorable condition comes with total acceptance by her as Millet argues, “We are not accustomed to associate patriarchy with force. So perfect is its system of socialisation, so complete the general assent to its values, so long and so universally has it prevailed in human society that scarcely seems to require violent implementation” (qtd. in Bryson 217). Princess Biswaprabha becomes alien to herself after getting married to Bhadribam. The culturally induced role of femininity outweighed her natural instincts. Still, she saves Parbat from the invasion of her husband Bhadribam, and thereby leading to the brutal massacre of him. After all these sacrifices, she is glorified as a Goddess which for her seems like a mockery, a curse. Her dignity is outraged and she feels to be a culprit, a jinxed. Finally, she acknowledges herself by taking *Sannyasha* by rejecting the eternal chain of suppression and the vicious cycle of masculine domination.

Conclusion

Baniya spills the bean over the agonizing situation of women’s powerlessness in the male-dominated society. The tendencies of meekness, care, subordination, docility, patience, endurance, and forbearance – all the traits stereotypical to women, are result of high-level conditioning through the agencies of patriarchy like family, culture, religion, and education. These channels have so naturally imposed the masculine control that women have accepted it with ease as norms. This acceptance has limited their horizon and pushed them to domestic and mental slavery. Conspiracies control the women characters in *Maharani* by keeping them within the boundary of patriarchal values either by curtailing their growth or by commoditising them.

The result is that all women characters in the novel are completely drenched in the pool of glass ceiling. Despite having a good experience and decision-making capacity, and the art of horse riding, Princess Biswaprabha's advancement is always thwarted. King Ghanashyam and the high level mentors are always being deleterious to women's progression. The women characters like Queen Gulbadan, Princess Biswaprabha, Princess Mahalbasnt and Budhe's wife - all are excluded from important opportunities and are denied a say in decision-making process. There come various situations and circumstances in the lives of women characters where they could independently and intellectually deal with their problems and realise their potentiality. But this never happens because patriarchy in its subtle form prevents women from rising beyond a certain level in a hierarchy.

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