

Escaping Patriarchy – For Victory or For Failure: A Comparative Study of the Protagonists of Kate Chopin’s *The Awakening* and Anita Desai’s *Where Shall We Go This Summer?*

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Abstract:

*Women of long past and present, irrespective of the eastern or the western, are still under the domination of men. They are the victims of patriarchy. This realization leads to the emergence of feminism, which is a movement fighting for women’s freedom. There are three sections in which women in patriarchy belong to. First, women with revolting nature who act upon their feelings and fight for their independence; secondly, women who compromise and live their lives in agony; and finally, women who do not even realize their sufferings and take it as their duty to do so. This paper is a comparative study of two such women who belong to the first and second categories – Edna in Kate Chopin’s *The Awakening* (1899) and Sita in Anita Desai’s *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* (1975). With the realization that they had been living their lives not for themselves but for others, both the heroines take ‘escapism’ as their weapon to free themselves from their suppressed and oppressed surroundings. Though Edna belongs to an American society and Sita to an Indian, both face the same torments that are caused by the society in which they live in and by the people around them. Unable to set themselves free, they try to escape from the bitter reality to their own world where they would*

feel the sense of freedom. The difference is their ways of escaping from it – to succeed or to fail.

Key words: patriarchy, feminism, independence, society, escapism, suppressed, oppressed.

Feminism is one among many movements which has no exact definition. It is an outcome of an essential realization that women have been suppressed in the past till the present and changes need to be made for women's better future. This realization is one-step achievement for women's community as it reveals their hidden feelings and powers their long voiceless selves. Feminism can be defined as a movement that calls for equal rights and aims to attain empowerment for women. It is a revolt against patriarchy, victimization and oppression of women. It also highlights the indifferent treatment of women in a society. According to Noor Fathima, feminism is "an anti-musculinist movement of the women, by the 'women' and for the women" (26). Women have been suppressed in every field and their rights are violated since a long time. Their talents are underestimated and their identity as an individual is exploited by the ruling figure, i.e. men. Rosemarie Tong opines that, "to the extent that society holds the false belief that women are, by nature, less intellectually and physically capable than men, it tends to discriminate against women in the academy, the forum, and the marketplace" (2). Since the belief has become deep rooted in the minds of the people, it has taken more than a decade to change it and modern feminists are still trying to do so.

Feminism can also be considered as an intellectual movement because it is through the writings that a woman expresses her sufferings and yearnings for freedom. Though the feminist movement strengthened its power by the 1960s, it has been noted that Christine de Pizan, a French author of the 14th

century, raised her feminist voice in *Letters to the God of Love* (1399) which shows that women are able to fight for their own freedom. In order to make literary feminist voice even stronger, women writers started to disclose the condition of women in the male-dominated society and demand equal rights for women. Some feminist literary works worth mentioning are Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), Elizabeth Gaskell's *The Life of Charlotte Bronte* (1857), Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* (1929), Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949), Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) and Elaine Showalter's *A Literature of Their Own* (1977). Women of all ages, irrespective of their origin – East or West, have been the victims of patriarchy. They face similar problems and difficulties though their situations are different. As the title suggests, this paper focuses on the comparative study about the situations of Kate Chopin's protagonist, Edna Pontellier, in *The Awakening* (1899) and Anita Desai's Sita, in *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* (1975), and the final steps they take in the end. Both the protagonists are women belonging to diverse culture and tradition. Yet, they belong to the same society – patriarchal society. Kate Chopin, an American author of the 19th century, started writing when women's condition in the society was miserable. She believed in women's freedom and individuality and so her works are mainly focused on the distress of women caused by patriarchy and slavery. Shocking the people of her times, her writings were a bold attack on the social norms of the era which limited women's freedom. In this regard the following lines of Floramania Deter are worth quoting:

Unlike many of the feminist writers of her time who were mainly interested in improving the social conditions of women, she looked for an understanding of personal freedom that questioned conventional demands of both men and women. (Deter 2013)

Since 19th century American critics and writers were mostly male, they neglected the motif of her works and failed to accept the idea that women should be given freedom to decide and act upon their choices. Their reviews were mainly centred on Chopin’s portrayal of Louisiana surroundings in her volumes of short stories. As Nancy A. Walker observed that, “ignoring the deeply human themes of her stories, which included wife abuse and the aftermath of slavery, reviewers kept their attention fixed on her style of description, which they found sufficiently decorous to be appropriately feminine” (10).

When Kate Chopin’s masterpiece, *The Awakening*, was published, both the author and the novel received harsh criticisms due to its content. The novel’s plot takes place during the time when women were forbidden to go beyond the strict rules imposed by society. As such, Edna Pontellier’s behaviour like neglecting her duty as a mother, falling in love with another man and finally abandoning her husband’s home, is considered a grievous act not expected from a woman. For instance, Walker comments:

As a female author, Kate Chopin was especially susceptible to charges that she had written an immoral and potentially dangerous novel. The nineteenth-century “cult of gentility” gave women particular responsibility for safeguarding the moral and spiritual tenor of the family and, by extension, the nation. For a woman writer, then, to portray sympathetically a woman who abdicates her domestic responsibilities in favor of her own needs was to undermine the very fabric of civilized society; if Edna Pontellier was guilty of domestic desertion as well as sexual indiscretion, then Kate Chopin was, as her creator, equally guilty. (142)

In *The Awakening*, Kate Chopin tries to portray the victimized state of women in male dominated society. She also understands that there are many women who don’t realize their pitiful conditions and continue to live a life of dependency – a life which patriarchal society expects of them and in doing so,

“... many souls perish in its tumult” (Chopin 20). They are similar to caged birds which are tied to a limited boundary. One such victim is the protagonist, Edna Pontellier, who, in the beginning did, not realize the reason of her unhappiness. Wife to Leonce Pontellier and mother of two children, Edna is unaware of her liveliness as she has been under the domination of her father since childhood and again falls under the control of her husband after marriage.

Men of patriarchy possess chauvinistic character in them. They see their wives as no less than a material, as an object which belongs to them only. Like any man, Leonce too, feels satisfaction by considering his wife as his sole property and that even Edna has no right on herself. He considers her “a valuable piece of personal property,” on which he could not tolerate any kind of defect like the tanning of her skin due to sun bath to which he remarked disappointedly, “you are burnt beyond recognition” (Chopin 3).

Again, not every woman is fit to live in such a restricted society in which they have to follow strict rules. To live in such a society women need to possess submissive nature, to follow the path which their husbands direct them, to live and die for the husband and children and nothing for themselves. Chopin realized that the perfect residents in such a place are only those who, “idolized their children, worshiped their husbands, and esteemed it a holy privilege to efface themselves as individuals and grow wings as ministering angels” (Chopin 12). Edna’s passionless husband who is always busy and away from home for business, expects her to be like Adele Ratignolle, an epitome of conventional woman of patriarchy. But Edna is different. She feels motherhood as an external force which, in addition to the societal norms, oppresses and questions her self-identity. She does not want to live as somebody’s wife or mother but to live an independent life and have an entity of her own.

Women in male dominated society are not allowed to speak up their thoughts and are forced to learn from their early

age to suppress their own feelings. While men are considered to be the head of the family, the decision maker and the oppressor, women in such surroundings are looked as inferior, the silent listener and the acceptor. Devoid of the freedom that men enjoy, women often live their lives within themselves. As a woman living within restricted boundary, Edna tried to adjust herself. On the other hand, her inner self could not accept such efforts. According to Kate Chopin, Edna “had apprehended instinctively the dual life – that outward existence, which conforms, the inward life which questions” (Chopin 20). Yet, she remained silent until the day she started to realize herself as a human being who can act for her own happiness.

In Grand Isle, Edna felt the sensuous call of the sea which arouses her hunger for independence which she had long buried deep inside herself. Apart from the voice of the sea, Mademoiselle Reisz's music made Edna feel the passion of art and the power of imagination that could take her to another world of fantasy and relieve her from the unidentified sufferings that she often felt as: “... the very passions themselves were aroused within her soul, swaying it, lashing it, as the waves daily beat upon her splendid body.” (Chopin 39)

Falling in love with a bachelor, Robert Lebrun, with whom she shared a space which she had none with her husband, Edna breaks the convention of the society. But unable to break the societal norms and marry a married woman, Robert fled away on the pretext of business. For the second time, Edna “had been denied that which her impassioned, newly awakened being demanded” (Chopin 69).

Edna's burning desire to be free is visible when she could no longer carry the heavy weight of restrictions and started to follow her heart and do what she wishes to – like the calling off of the reception day on Tuesdays and shifting to a rented house to live alone independently. Emotionally unattached to her husband and the betrayal of her lover compelled Edna to satisfy her sexual desires with a seducer,

Alcee Arobin. By breaking the rules, to some extent, she could feel like an unbound, unchained new creature. According to Jennifer B. Gray, “Edna further experiments with a highly oppositional role, the ‘free-woman,’ a role of individuality and sexual freedom. This role potentially provides a more fulfilling, developed sense of identity for Edna” (56). When Robert leaves her for the second time with a note, “I love you. Good-bye – because I love you” (Chopin 172), she realizes that the societal conventions are too strong to break through. She feels the need to free herself from such pressurizing society. Finally, she goes to the sea where she is first awakened to be a different person and finally walks towards the water till her naked body is fully immersed in it.

Turning the focus to an Indian context, Anita Desai, a novelist, is taken for discussion. She is a winner of the Sahitya Akademi Award and is known for her writings about women’s sensitive and emotional feelings. Her writings reflect the suppression of the typical Indian woman by her husband as well as by her in-laws. She is widely acclaimed for her portrayal of Indian women who are sensitive, emotional, culturally bound and is unable to break through the system easily, yet searches for freedom in their own unique ways. Behnaz Alipour Kaskari expresses thus:

The uniqueness of Anita Desai’s fiction lies in her treatment of feminine sensibility. In India where women have redesigned role, which does not allow any room for individualism, identity and assertion, Anita Desai talks of women who question the age old traditions and want to seek individual growth. (Kaskari 2013)

As seen in most of her writings, Desai is able to voice her feelings against the treatment of women in the patriarchal society. She is fully aware of the fact that women are taught to be submissive in nature from the very childhood and this submissiveness leads them to their own destruction. The critic

Sridevi V. comments about her writings in this way:

As a woman writer she does not profess to be a feminist and yet she voices the fears and concerns, the hopes and aspirations of her characters in her own artistic way. She is deeply fascinated in exploring the social structure through the central characters in her novels. (1)

The novel *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* is about a middle aged woman, Sita, a mother of four children, pregnant with the fifth child and wife to an insensitive, practical husband, Raman. She is sensitive, emotional and frustrated with the kind of life she is living. She grew up without a mother to care for and a father who is unaware of her being, and is forced to isolate herself and create a world of her own.

Giving birth to children and looking after them is considered the most important responsibility of every Indian woman. Every woman is happy to become a mother but they are not child bearing machines. She has to go through that state of nausea, weakness and severe pain every time she gets pregnant. A woman's responsibility is not over just after giving birth. Most men wash their hands off about taking care of babies. But a mother cannot do so. When the child is unwell, she has to wake up at midnights, restless and tired. Sita has undergone these situations and has faced it "with pride, with pleasure – sensual, emotional" (Desai 29). But when she is pregnant for the fifth time, she decides that she cannot start it all over again. Therefore, she leaves her husband's home for Manori, "the island of miracles" (Desai 28) where she lived with her father during her childhood days.

Man-woman relationship is one of the themes that prevails in most of Anita Desai's works. In this novel too, Sita and Raman are more like strangers living under the same roof. A woman's silently listening, doing household chores; and a husband's going to work, returning home but occupied with work, has become a daily routine. In this patriarchal society,

men think themselves to be superior to women because they provide women with social status and financial needs. Apart from supporting their family financially, men also have other responsibilities which they often fail to recognize. This leads to misunderstandings and lack of love. Sita, unable to receive love and care, finally revolted as Anita Desai writes:

Perhaps there had been incidents, thoughts during the day he had not known about, would have left undisturbed had he known. It was as though for seven months she had collected inside her all her resentments, her fears, her rages, and now she flung them outward, flung them from her. (30)

Sita’s outburst is natural as she has been controlling herself for a long time since her insensitive husband could not understand her inner feelings.

As a wife to somebody, a woman tries to keep up that somebody’s image in the society whether he respects her effort or not. Like an obedient wife, Sita tries to keep up her husband’s image by receiving his guests with whom he does business though she considers them “nothing but appetite and sex” (Desai 43). Even though she doesn’t like them she veils her true self for his sake. On the other hand, when Sita expresses her interest to travel alone like a hitchhiker, Raman sees it as “an act of infidelity” (Desai 47). This shows that to a wife, the husband’s likes and dislikes matter; but to a husband, he is concerned only about himself as he believes himself to be the superior.

A woman expects not only financial and material security but also love and care from her male partner. But in the case of Sita, the two male characters – her father and her husband, could not give her the love she deserved. She is the victim of her father’s treatment of partiality between his children during her childhood. After his death, she is totally alienated and a fear of insecurity and the quietness of the island put her into complete loneliness. For a while, Sita was

happy to leave the island behind and shift to the mainland in the hope of security and better life. On the contrary, she found life in the mainland totally different and enclosed with dullness and disappointment.

Having no one to share her emotions and a shoulder to lay her head upon, Sita feels isolated and bored with life. Even her surroundings disturb her mentally – the congested flat in Bombay, the confrontations with her husband, her sons' violent ways of playing, the *ayahs*' fighting wildly on streets and her daughter's destruction of things unconsciously, all seem to contribute to her frustrations. To her, "it is like living in the wilds" (Desai 39). Failing to experience the miracle in the island which she had hoped for, Sita doubted her escape to be a failure. This feeling was confirmed when Raman arrives to the island. She finally learns to reconcile that life has to go on.

Shifting the focus on the comparison of the two protagonists, Edna and Sita, it is clear that they had experienced gradual changes in their lives. From the beginning of their stories, they were already two different individuals facing inner conflicts though they could not define it. Edna cried in the night without knowing the reason of her action but she could feel "an indescribable oppression, which seemed to generate in some unfamiliar part of her consciousness" (Chopin 9). She felt a kind of imprisonment, entrapped in the roles of a wife and a mother. Yet, she couldn't act to set herself free. As for Sita, she keeps waiting, sitting on the balcony, smoking and looking out towards the sea: "I am waiting, she agreed – although for what, she could not tell" (Desai 49). Her waiting symbolizes the hope for some optimistic change that would transform her ennui and make things easier.

Unable to relate themselves to the oppressive surrounding which limits their sense of freedom, both the heroines try to escape from their physical and emotional conflict to a self-made independent world. In order to liberate their female protagonists from their inner agony, the authors,

Kate Chopin and Anita Desai, employed the technique of escapism which is the tendency to escape from bitter realities and daily boring life through fantasy or by creating one's own pleasant world. In *The Awakening*, Edna escapes through various ways. The first time she escapes is through the art of painting in which she feels complete delight. Second comes through the art of music. While Adele learns music not for herself but because "she and her husband considered it a means of brightening the home and making it attractive" (Chopin 36), to Edna, music served as a catalyst for her awakening. Music provided her a chance to escape to the world of imagination. She also finds escapism through swimming as the sea fulfills her sense of freedom. Enjoying this newly gained freedom, Edna wanted to swim till the point, "where no woman had swum before" (Chopin 41). It also fulfills her desire for touch and to be touched. To Sandra M. Gilbert, "Edna is swimming not only with new powers but into a kind of alternative paradise" (52) where she will be liberated from all the sufferings she has been going through as a woman in this patriarchal society.

In the case of Sita in *Where Shall We Go This Summer?*, during her stay in the city of Bombay, her only escape is through 'Waiting'. Even though she herself doesn't know what she is waiting for, she keeps waiting. Anita Desai hints to the readers that the waiting of her protagonist is for a change – a change that would suddenly "burst into festival fireworks", and save her from the "dull- lit, empty shell" (Desai 49). Throughout her life Sita has been controlling her emotions. But when she realizes that she is pregnant with the fifth child, she could neither control nor wait for anything to happen for she knows that "it's not easier. It's harder – harder. It's unbearable" (Desai 29). She also lightens her mind by hoping that life could be better in Manori, the miracle island.

The strongest impulse that both the protagonists, Edna and Sita, experience is to abandon their existing lives and act

for a change. They seem to understand that they have to stop being submissive and change themselves for their own good. To Fathima, “woman, in order to liberate herself and advance, needs to empower herself to confront different institutional structures and cultural practices that subject herself to patriarchal domination and control” (27). Edna Pontellier in *The Awakening*, leaves her husband’s house and lives in a rented apartment which she calls as the “pigeon-house” (Chopin 141). She is finally satisfied with her independency. On the other hand, Sita, in *Where Shall We Go This Summer?*, goes to the Manori island to feel the magical charm which her father had left behind in that island. Her belief in the magical world is so strong that she doesn’t even care of her health condition. For Edna, she had felt the pleasure of being independent earlier in Madame Antoine’s house in the bay of Cheniere Caminada when she escaped from the “feeling of oppression and drowsiness” (Chopin 53) that overcame her during the service in church. After waking up she expresses delightedly, “The whole island seems changed” (Chopin 57). In fact, it was the change in her. She feels fresh like a newborn creature. She could feel a sense of freedom which she had always longed for. In an advanced stage of pregnancy, Sita escapes to Manori island because she neither wants to give birth to the baby nor abort it. She is fond of children but she fears that the baby too will be compelled to adapt in the violent atmosphere. Describing the situation Sita was going through, Shete S. Vijaykumar tries to justify her state by saying that:

Sita’s unwillingness to deliver the baby is symbolic of her desire to prevent the very cycle of experience that makes suffering and violence possible. She thinks that the world is bad and therefore no child-birth should occur into this bad world as the future of children is at stake and uncertainty and gloomy may complicate their lives. (7)

As a child, she has seen the people of Manori island praying to

her father for cure to any problem. She remembers a fisherwoman who was barren before but gave birth to a son with the help of her father's magic. When confronted by her husband, Raman, she blurted out "I think ... what I'm doing is trying to escape from the madness *here*, escape to a place where it might be possible to be sane again" (Desai 32). Her escape is from the disruptive surroundings that her own people create, from the unpleasant, uncared and boring life that she was living.

Their act of escaping is not easily accepted. Gilbert calls Edna, "Chopin's half-mad housewife" (43), and for her, it is the society that doesn't permit her to take such steps because during the time in which the book was written, 19th century American society, women were restricted from crossing their limited boundaries. Society expects women to busy themselves in household chores, take care of children and devote to their respective husbands. Edna wants to escape from her existing identity as a wife and mother of somebody because she has understood that women are like any normal human being who has the right to choose the life the way she wants it to be. By continuing to follow the path which society makes for them, women can never free themselves. When she decides to live alone, Leonce, her husband is worried about his reputation and business. On the other hand, Sita's pregnancy does not permit her to stay in a place where there is lack of communication and no clinics in case of emergency. Her act of escaping is seen as an act of madness. According to Sridevi, Sita is "a bit abnormal and introvert. She wants to escape from the brutal realities and harsh facts of life. She forgets that life is one part full of violence, suffering and pain" (Sridevi 5). Again, she clarifies that Sita's abnormality is the result of her depressed childhood by saying that, "the indifference of her father, alienation from sister, lack of love and care from her mother has made many psychological changes in her" (8).

Edna's oppression is truly male domination. Her

passionless husband, Leonce, sees her as his possession and “he greatly valued his possessions, chiefly because they were his” (Chopin 75-76). Her lover, Robert, does not stand his love but escapes from difficulties caused by love. He left Edna for the second time with a note – “I love you. Good-bye – because I love you” (Chopin 172). He is among those men who suppress the individuality of women, and Arobin is the epitome of those who seek advantages from a lonely woman. Her father, a retired colonel, advised Leonce to keep his wife under his control saying that “authority, coercion are what is needed. Put your foot down good and hard; the only way to manage a wife. Take my word for it” (Chopin 109). Edna realizes that men are men. Whomever she is married to, man will always dominate her because it is the rule of patriarchy. All men expect to see women within the societal restrictions. Women cannot be let free to become an individual, to live a life of her own.

The final escape of Edna Pontellier comes in the form of suicide. She realizes that she cannot lose her self-identity for the sake of anyone and that “she would give the unessential, but she would never sacrifice herself” (Chopin 176). Before walking towards the sea she removed, “the unpleasant, pricking garments from her” (Chopin 177), which she had gained from the world of mankind. Through the ultimate act of suicide, she succeeded in attaining the kind of life she wanted. She is free from the cage of marriage, family and rules imposed by society. In fact, her suicide isn't her actual end. She escapes from all the causes of her oppression and finally proves that she belongs to herself and nobody can take hold of her. In support of this point, Gilbert too posits thus:

For swimming away from the white beach of Grand Isle, from the empty summer colony and the equally empty fictions of marriage and maternity, Edna swims as the novel's last sentences tell us, not into death but back into her own life, back into her own vision, back to the imaginative openness of her childhood. (57)

On the other hand, Sita, in *Where Shall We Go This Summer?*, is unable to achieve her ultimate escape. She realizes that Manori island has no magic left in it and she cannot change the natural cycle of pregnancy and birth. Even her children expect her to admit failure. They could neither adapt nor understand the reason of their visit in the island. To them, “it was life in their flat on Napean Sea Road that had been right and proper, natural and acceptable” (Desai 95). Failing to convince herself of the security in the island, a kind of fear started to creep up on her. Previously, Sita felt that life in the mainland is madness but now it seemed to be the reverse because “it was this so called ‘escape’ to the island that was madness” (Desai 95).

The thought of her passionless and practical husband Raman coming to the island upset Sita because she realizes that her escape is over and things will be the same as before – “melancholy and boredom” (Desai 48). With his arrival, Sita is confirmed that her escape is a failure but she is also happy to think that he has come to take her and the children because he loves and misses her. But as she comes to know that the real purpose of his visit is because her daughter Menaka had secretly written to him to take her back, Sita felt dejected like, “a woman unloved, a woman rejected” (Desai 122). She is now clear that neither her husband nor her children understand her. She feels isolated while her husband and children are united, “to fight her, to reject her, to run away and hide from her” (Desai 126).

Unlike Edna, who did not give up herself even for the sake of her children, Sita, on the other hand, easily reconciles with her family and returns to the life from which she wanted to escape. She has been in confusion, in doubt and fear – what if Manori island disgrace her by not showing its charm. Feeling lost as her fear becomes true, Sita had no other way but to accept whatever is offered to her, and Vijaykumar observes that:

Sita's coming back to Bombay is not gesture indicating her realization of the existence of love and understanding between them. It is the result of her newly gained knowledge that there is no magic left in the island. So it is in a state of helplessness and due to a wish to compromise with her husband, she comes back to Bombay. (8)

Admitting her failure, Sita goes back with Raman to Bombay to continue her life like a dumb person, to live with silence. Anita Desai compares Sita's escape to the island with an episode on a stage in which she is like "a player at the end of the performance, clearing the stage, picking the costumes, in equal parts saddened and relieved" (138). She consoles herself by believing that she cannot find solution to her problems by escaping from the problem itself. Life has its own meaning and that it, "had no periods, no stretches. It simply swirled around, muddling and confusing, leading nowhere" (Desai 140).

To some reviewers, Sita's compromise with life and reunion with her family may seem to be a wise step but from a feminist view, it is an act of cowardice and of timidity. By saying this, it does not mean that Sita, too, should have committed suicide but she should not have easily accepted the betrayal of her husband and children that made her feel alienated from them. She knew that nobody in her family understands her and there is no one with whom she can share her feelings. Yet, she is ready to live that life of loneliness though she lives among her people. As for Edna, her final act of suicide is seen as her rebirth into a new world different from the existing one. Through her final act she achieves total independence and also sets an example that an oppressed woman pining for freedom can go to any extent to get it. Gilbert remarks that Edna "is journeying not just toward rebirth but towards a regenerative and revisionary genre, a genre that intends to propose new realities for women by providing new mythic paradigms through which women's lives can be

understood” (58).

The victimized protagonists, Edna and Sita, cannot bring about the ultimate solution but what they can do to free themselves is to search for self-identity in their own ways and what matters is the result of their search whether it is victory or failure. In such cases, any action of their own through which they feel satisfaction is the victory. Edna chooses suicide as her ultimate escape as well as freedom and finds satisfaction through death while Sita's condition is the same as seen in the opening of the novel. She is not satisfied with the life she has been living and she continues to do the same by compromising herself in the end. So, Edna's action is regarded as her victory while Sita's as a failure. Their action shows that Edna belongs to the category of women who fights for their rights and boldly faces anything that comes in their way while Sita belongs to the category of women who do not act and compromise with their unhappy life.

Patriarchy exists in the minds of the people living in a society and its victims are only women. Many women have been and are still the prey to this cruel domination. Years have passed but the condition of women is still the same as patriarchy has been ruling since the past till the present. Through their writings, both the authors have voiced their feminist outlook but it is not in their hands to change it. The ultimate solution to the problems of patriarchy is to change the mindset of people in society. If such changes really occur then men will be able to recognize Edna and Sita in every oppressed woman. A civilized society needs the support of both men and women because one cannot clap hands with a single hand and one should not forget that women are also a part of the society. People should understand that if the condition remains the same then many victims will follow Edna's path and many will be like Sita, oppressed and frustrated, which will only lead towards degradation. To change the society for betterment, it is high time for people to broaden their mindset and understand

the sentiments of women and treat them equally as their fellow human beings.

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