

Characterisation of Women in Maxim Gorky's Novel "Mother":

A Marxist Feminist Perspective

Javed Akhter

M.Phil Scholar, Department of English literature, UoB, Quetta

Abstract

Maxim Gorky is one of the great portraitists of typification of women in Russian as well as in world literature. He presents a panoramic gallery of female characters such as Nilovna, Sophia, Natasha, Sasha and Ludmilla in his debate-raging novel "Mother". These female personages belong to the various social classes of the Russian social formation but they possess universality in their personalities whom we have often met every day and everywhere in our daily life. Gorky endows them with class-consciousness, which enables them to involve in the revolutionary proletariat movement, considering Socialism the only way of woman's emancipation and enfranchisement as well as class-liberation. This paper tends to focus on the re-evaluation and investigation into Maxim Gorky's realistic depiction of these women to delineate their revolutionary roles in the structure of his novel as well as in the Russian Communist politics and social formation from a Marxist Feminist perspective in a new and innovative way. How these female figures are developed from their bourgeois and petty-bourgeois class-milieu to the level of radical Marxist activists and militants. How they liberate themselves from their cowed, wretched and oppressed living conditions into which they have been subjugated, tortured and beaten by men.

Key Terms: Political radicalisation, Oppression and subordination of women, Male violence, Capitalism and Socialism.

Introduction

Aleksei Peshkov Maxim Gorky was born in Nizhny Novgorod on March 16; 1868. His father was a journeyman upholsterer. He died of cholera and Gorky became orphan at the age of five. His grandmother reared him in the wretched and impoverished environment. After few years, his mother also died of tuberculosis. His grandfather forced Gorky to leave school and to do job. He underwent a variety of apprenticeships in shoemaking and an icon painting. Afterwards, he

worked as a petty thief and rag picker. However, he went away from home, wandering around Russian empire, changing jobs to live until he became a journalist in the Caucasus in 1892. Gorky emerged at the literary scenario in the Golden Age of Russian literature in the late 1890's in the shadow of the giant writers such as Anton Chekov, Turgenev, Leo Tolstoy and Fyodor Dostoevsky. In 1899, he joined the Sreda (Wednesday), a literary Circle of a group of realist authors who discussed their on-going work in it. He soon became the leading literary person in the circle. In 1903; he edited the Znanie anthologies, publishing the works of the members of the circle. His popularity of artistic achievements and accomplishments crossed the national boundaries in subsequent years.

Gorky was deeply involved in Marxist politics, supporting the Bolsheviks to provide them editorial guidance in their party organ Iskra. After the Bolshevik Revolution, he contributed to save Russian heritage of art and culture from the wanton devastation, and he inspired and guided many young writers. He helped the Soviet government to establish projects of publishing the works of writers, taking care of their economic requirements, he founded many "houses" that provided them food rations and shelter. After leaving the Soviet Union in 1921, he carried out his journalism abroad. In the last years of his life, the Russian people and writers revered him as the doyen of Soviet art and literature. He saw his native town Nizhni Novgorod renamed in his honour. Many theatres, schools, institutions, universities and a main street in Moscow were renamed in his honour in the former Soviet Union. Gorky died of pneumonia in Moscow on June 18, 1936. He was buried in Red Square with full Soviet honours. Some literary historians and critics doubted that Gorky had been slain by his doctors, acting on Joseph Stalin's behalf. As Martin Seymour-Smith writes that, "...he died under mysterious circumstances---probably poisoned on Stalin's orders" (Seymour-Smith, M., 1975, p. 188). In fact, Genrikh Yagoda, chief of secret police confessed at his own trial in 1938 that he had ordered Gorky's assassination. However, no any such proof was found in the KGB literary archives in the 1990s.

Gorky worked as writer, journalist, publisher, editor and political activist throughout his life, in every genre, novels, short story, play, essay, memoirs and autobiography. His famous novels are “Foma Gordeyev” (1899), “Decadence” or “The Artamonov Business” (1927). His last novel “The Life of Klim Samgin” (1930-1938) remained incomplete. His famous plays are “Nadine” (1902), “Vassa Zheleznova” (1945), “Yegor Bulychev and Others” (1937), “Children of the Sun” (1906), “Barbarians” (1906), “Enemies” (1945), “Queer People” (1945) and “Old Man” (1924). Out of Maxim Gorky’s most famous short stories are “Chelkash” (1895), “Malva” (1897) and “Tales of Italy” (1958?). He wrote autobiographical trilogy “My Childhood” (1915), “In the World” (1917) and “My Universities” (1923). His memoirs of literary friends, his letters and other documents are invaluable assets in the literary history of Russia. His much critical acclaimed masterpieces are his reminiscences of his literary friends such as of Anton Chekhov, Leo Tolstoy, Korolenko, Karonin, Kotsubinsky and Leonid Andreyev. In addition, he wrote many essays, articles and reviews on different literary, social and political topics.

Literature Review

Gorky is one of the initiators and pioneers of Socialist proletarian literature. He wanted to represent the bitterness of the socio-economic, cultural and political conditions of his times. Possessing revolutionary fervour, he wrote for the betterment of the proletarians and landless peasants. He set new social realism best suited for his revolutionary mission. His masterpiece “Mother” is a turning point in the literary history of Russia. It is one of the most important novels of the twentieth century which was written in (1907) in America, on the historical eve of the first Russian peasant-bourgeois Revolution of 1905. It depicts the emerging class-conscious revolutionary proletariat class in Russia. It enjoyed enormous popularity and success and was considered as a model for the socialist proletarian fiction prior and after the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917. The Russian critics hailed Gorky as a true proletarian writer and his novel “Mother” as the model of Socialist proletarian literature. Vladimir Lenin remarks that,

“It is a book of the utmost importance; many workers, who have joined the revolutionary movement impulsively, without properly understanding why, will begin to comprehend after reading *Mother*” (Gorky, M., 1960, Vol.29, Pp.7-8). Mikhail Bakhtin notes that, “After 1905, Gorky knows that Russia is also on the path to revolution” (Bakhtin, M., 1981, p. 23). Francine Du Plessix Gray considers the novel as “the literary model for the Socialist Realist portrayal of women” (Gray, F. D. P., 1989, p.711). Eugenia Knipovich wrote an essay entitled “The Socialist Humanism of Maxim Gorky” (1937) in which he stated about Gorky’s female characters as portrayed in his fiction, that, “Similarly, in women’s lives, Gorky lays bare their torment. They are beaten not out for cruelty alone but because on them the men folk avenge their own sufferings—the anguish and humiliation of their degraded and oppressed lives. Such is the fate of Nilovna (*Mother*), Orlova (*The Orlov Family*), Nikon’s mother (*Summer*), etc.” (Knipovich, E., 2007. 20).

In addition, Chrystyna Marta Hnatiw wrote a dissertation entitled “Women in Gorky’s Prose Fiction 1892 – 1911” (1967) in which she discussed Gorky’s female characters as depicted in his novels and short stories written from 1892 until 1911. Virginia Bennett wrote an essay entitled “Maxim Gorky’s *Mother*: A Primer for Consciousness Raising” (1987) which focuses on the textual analysis of the novel. She states that, although the structure of the novel is pedagogically calculated, starting with its division into two parts (before radicalisation and after), each of which contains 29 chapters. It “meant to be read a few pages at a time and ... intended for serialisation in newspapers or for distribution in leaflet form to be easily assimilated by the unskilled reader in a relatively short period of time” (Bennett, V., 1987, Pp. 86-87). Sarah Elizabeth Pickle wrote a doctoral dissertation under the title of “The Form of Learning is The Learning of Forms: Models of Socialist Aesthetic Education in Gorky, Hacks, and Muller” (2014) in which she conducted a comparative study of Maxim Gorky’s “*Mother*” (1907), Peter Hacks’ “*Das Poetische*” (1966) and Heiner Müller’s “*Mauser*” (1970). Dr Neelam Bhardwaj

wrote a research paper entitled “Maxim Gorky’s Mother through the Lens of Marxist-Feminism” (2016) in which she discussed the novel from a classical Marxist-Feminism, focussing on Marxist paradigm presented in Fredrick Engels’ epoch-making book “The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State”. She did not mention the modern and Post-modern theories of Marxist feminists as well as Marxist belonging to second and third wave feminisms to strengthen her argument in her article. Dr Mohammed Humed Mohammed Bulghaith wrote a research article entitled “The Woman as Archetypal Figure of Challenge and Fortitude in Maxim Gorky’s Mother: A Critical Appraisal” (2014), in which he focussed on characters of women as portrayed in the novel.

Much has been written on Gorky’s novel “Mother” in the form of books, dissertations and articles from different theoretical lenses and analytical perspectives, focusing on Pavel, the male protagonist of the novel, socialism and class-conscious revolutionary proletariat class movement of Russia. No researcher concentrates on the revolutionary role of women as embodied in the female figures of the novel from Marxist feminist perspective and the above-mentioned research on the subject seems scanty. Therefore, the on-going research is an attempt to fill the research gap it will hopefully motivate the research scholars on the subject. This is a qualitative study based upon textual and character analysis of females portrayed in the novel under investigation on the bedrock of Marxist feminist hermeneutics. Marxist feminism is a theory of power and its unequal distribution. For the Marxists feminists every social formation is based on class-conflicts of interests between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat as well as gender discrimination between men and women. They want to establish and defend equal socio-economic and political rights of women. They also believe that the conflicts and differences between man and woman are not sociological but naturally biological. The purpose of Marxist feminists is to overcome women’s subordination, subjugation, exploitation, gender-discriminations, and the patriarchy by replacing capitalism with socialism.

Debate and Discussion

Maxim Gorky was perfect revolutionary author and builder of the new Soviet culture who bridged the two epochs of Russian literature. He is trumpeted as one of the great proletarian fiction writers of the world. He depicts a revolutionary proletariat movement against the bourgeois social formation because he is traumatised, shocked and frustrated by the ignorance, poverty, sufferings of the proletarians and peasants as well as the plights of women. He wants to establish Socialism in the tsarist Russian social formation. His novel “Mother” was well appreciated, and still read by now, focusing on the workers’ demonstrations on the eve of May Day in 1902 in Sormovo, an industrial zone near Gorky’s native town of Nizhny Novgorod (Freeborn, R., 1982). The novel presents a realist gloomy portrayal of the bleak living and working conditions of the factory settlement in which the daily life of the working classes filled with hardship, back-breaking labour, poverty and hard drunkenness. The proletarians celebrated May Day in the form of the mass anti-capitalist protest. The Tsarist authorities mercilessly crushed and dispersed their demonstration. Six of its leaders were sent to exile to death in Siberia in a trial. After his father’s death, Pavel Vlassov, a teenager worker living with his mother, Pelagia Nilovna, started to toil in the factory. He made acquainted with his fellow-proletarians who introduced him with political literature. He began engrossing on radical literature banned in the Tsarist regime.

Maxim Gorky portrayed female characters with a revolutionary fervour and enthusiasm, projecting his socialist thoughts and dreams through them. The figure of Nilovna, the widowed mother of a leader of the factory workers, and the prototype of the heroine of “Mother” is drawn in a realist manner. The novel is set principally around Nilovna’s all-round development of personality. Her thoughts and feelings are central to the plot of the novel. She was an incarnation of an illiterate peasant woman, Anna Zalomov, whom the author knew personally. A young worker, Pavel Zalomov began to think for himself and became involved in socialist

revolutionary movement. His mother, Anna, volunteering for the task of distributing political pamphlets, helped in her his revolutionary activity. Nilovna is a fictional person of Anna, whose development of personality started from domestic drudgery, obscurity and poverty to access class-consciousness in the interaction of the revolutionary struggle of the proletarians with whom she established comradeship. Her relation and reaction to the events and people in her life show a clear and vivid picture of her emergence as a revolutionary woman.

In fact, at the beginning, Nilovna is timid, shadowy and indeterminate personage. Her personality is subdued in favour of her alcoholic braggart husband, Mikhail Vlassov who violently beats her. After the death of her husband, she accepts her son's abruptness, just as she had accepted her husband's cruelty and abuse. Pavel took his drunken lout of a father in both occupation and recreation after the death of his father. However, she has no feelings for her husband. She is fond of her son and thought of his betterment. An initial glimpse of Nilovna's personality is given through Pavel's image of her personality, based on the recollections of his miserable childhood, as a meek and passive woman. As he recollects that, "...he had scarcely been aware of mother's existence during his father's lifetime, so silent had she been, so fearful of being beaten" (Gorky, M., 1971, p. 23). Nilovna also recollects her past life that, "When I think of my own life-oh merciful Jesus! What did I ever live for? Drudgery, beating; never saw anyone but my husband, never knew anything but fear!All my thoughts and all my worries were about one thing-to stuff that brute of mine with food, to do his pleasure without keeping him waiting, so'she shouldn't get angry and beat me-so 'she'd take pity on me just for once! But I don't remember that he ever did. He used to beat me as if it wasn't his wife he was beating, but everybody he had a grudge against. For twenty years, I lived like that." (Gorky, M., 1971, Pp. 115-116). Nilovna further stated that, "Late one night her husband had returned home dead drunk. Seizing her by the arm, he had dragged her out of bed on to the floor and kicked her inside. Got out of here, you bitch! I'm sick of you! He shouted" (Gorky, M., 1971, p. 236). She told Nikolai and Sophia that, "She unrolled the ribbon of grey days that had made up her former

life; recounting the beatings she had received from her husband, marvelling at their inconsequential cause and her inability to prevent them” (Gorky, M., 1971, p. 239). These are the conditions of women in the Russian social formation in which the subjugation and subordination of women were deeply embedded in their unpaid domestic chores, including cooking, cleaning, child-bearing, and caring for the aged and sick. These miserable conditions of women are not unlike those prevailing in the other parts of the world. As Christine Delphy notes that, “All contemporary “developed” societies...depend on the unpaid labour of women for domestic services and child-rearing” (Delphy, C., 1984, p. 60).

Nilovna emerges as a living personality within the context of her relationship with her son and his fellow-proletarians. She as “the housewife emerged, alongside the proletarians the two characteristic labours of developed capitalist society” (Zaretsky, E., 1973. Part 1, p. 114). Later she attended meetings and study circles in which she learned about the cause of poverty and miseries, and subordination of women. In this way, she regenerated and “raised from the dead” by the political activities of her son. Pavel also tried to educate her, stating that, “Just think of the life we live! Here you are forty years old, and what have you ever known? Father beat you- now I know that he took his troubles out on you, all the bitterness of his life. Something kept pressing down on him, but he doesn’t know what. For forty years he slaved here-began when there were only two shops in the whole factory, and now there are seven.....What joys have you ever known? ...What good things have you to remember? Mothers are hardly ever pitied. She knew that. All that he said about the life of women was the bitter, familiar truth, and it evoked those mixed feelings whose unwonted gentleness melted her heart” (Gorky, M., 1971, Pp. 29-30). She had learned to read, but it required such great effort that she quickly tired and could not grasp the relation of one word to another. Nevertheless, she took a childlike pleasure in looking at pictures. They revealed to her a new and wonderful world which she understood, and that she found almost tangible. Life kept endlessly expanding, opening her eyes to one wonder after

another, exciting her thirsting soul by an exhibition of its lavish treasures and inexhaustible beauty (Gorky, M., 1971, Pp. 126, 230).

In the political process of radicalisation, Pelageia Nilovna reached class-consciousness. After imprisonment of his son for organising a May Day demonstration, she devoted herself wholeheartedly to her son's political cause, finding a true family with no, bitterness, or violence among his comrades. As she thought of them that, "There are people who live together in a friendly, peaceful way. They don't quarrel, they don't get drunk, they don't fight over every crust of bread as the people in that other dark life do..."(Gorky, M., 1971, p. 237). At last, the authorities exiled her son to Siberia. Nilovna was also arrested and tortured to death by the police for distributing copies of her son's incendiary defence speech. In this way, she is radicalized "in the spirit of socialism" (Zhdanov, A., 1935, Pp. 15-24). Katerina Clark explains that, "Her final incarnation has already been determined when she begins her progress to consciousness" (Clark, C., 2000, p. 57). Although, as Gorky writes in a letter to his wife, Ekaterina Pavlovna, Nilovna does in her speeches express the author's admiration and faith in the revolution, she seems to exist as an individual in her own right and is a sufficiently vivid character to be more than a representative of the author, an illustration of his thoughts. In this manner, Gorky achieves this vividness through heightening our emotions; we pity and admire Nilovna as we experience her fears and anxieties. Gorky succeeds in portraying a mother whose love for her son, linked with concern for his welfare, is the dominant aspect of her nature. Moreover, his maternal love transforms into universal love for the proletarians, peasants and oppressed women. Without Nilovna's personality, "Mother" would be remembered merely as a series of dialogues on freedom, justice, and the aims of socialism.

Natasha Vasilyevna as a fictional personage is constructed schematically around a single aspect, her dedication to the revolution. We see her only in the revolutionary milieu, at the socialist meetings and study circles. This reappears in her reaction and attitude to the revolutionary

movement. She examines the social origin of suffering” (Gorky, M., 1971, p. 31); Vesovshchikov says, “If it’s time to fight, why sit with folded hands?” (Gorky, M., 1971, p. 34) When Natasha reads accounts of the workers' uprisings in various parts of the world, Nilovna listens attentively and is surprised because it is all relatively new and strange to her. She is fascinated by the readings and is favourably impressed by Natasha. Pavel informs his mother about Natasha that she is a teacher and she has been cast off by her middle-class family “Her father is rich. He’s in iron business and owns a lot of property. He disowned her because she chose this path in life. She was brought up in comfort, used to having everything she wanted. But now she walks seven versts at night all alone...” (Gorky, M., 1971, p. 46). Natasha also tells Nilovna that, “My father is a rough man, and so is my brother. And a drunkard besides. My elder sister is unhappy-she married a man many years older than herself-very rich but greedy. I feel sorry for my mother. She’s a simple woman like you. As tiny as mouse, and runs as fast as a mouse and is just as afraid of everybody” (Gorky, M., 1971, p. 48).She further told Nilovna about her mother that, “My mother died, the poor darling....Such a pity! She wasn’t even fifty years old. She could have lived much longer. But on the other hand, I can’t help thinking that death was preferable to life she led. She was always alone, nobody loved her, nobody needed her, and she was constantly terrorised by my father’s shouts. Do you call that living? Other people live in the hope of something better, but there was nothing my mother could look forward to but further insults” (Gorky, M., 1971, p. 274). The brutal patriarchal behaviour of Natasha’s father and brother was cause of her pains and predicaments that related her to the revolutionary proletariat movement. Mother is impressed by her involvement in the revolutionary movement that is sufficient to arouse her interest and admiration for the woman. Making a favourable impression on Nilovna, Natasha assisted mother to distribute party literature among the factory hands. Her enthusiasm and self-sacrifice enhances mother's growing respect and admiration for all the revolutionaries.

Sasha, as a fictional personage, remains in the background until just before May Day uprising, appearing like Natasha at the meetings, and schematically drawn as another dedicated revolutionary. In a conversation with Pavel just before the planned uprising, Sasha emerges as a girl in love with Pavel. When, concerned about his safety, she asks Pavel to decline from carrying the flag at May Day demonstration, fearing that he is endangering his life. Somehow, her words are overpowered by Pavel's declaration of dedication and commitment to the revolution. It is noteworthy that Sasha accepts his decision as final. Later, when Pavel is in prison, she appears to be ashamed of revealing her feelings for him. Having indicated in the presence of her comrades and taking interest in the plan of escape from prison thus, we are to assume that her major concern was really for Pavel's safety, she has no personal interest in the plan. We would like to have seen the relationship between Sasha and Pavel develops on a more personal level. The impression that we are left with is that, as Egor says, love is of secondary importance to the ideal of dedication to the revolution. In contrast, to Nilovna who reveals her feelings for Pavel, is his beloved Sasha who takes care to conceal her emotions for Pavel. Their love-relationship is different from any of the heroines delineated in Gorky's novels "Foma Gordeyev" and "Troie", where candid and aggressive women approach the man, offering their love. At the beginning of the novel, Nilovna's restrained manner indicates that she does not feel at ease in Sasha's presence. Sasha in turn is at first severe and aloof towards the mother. It is only later, when the revolutionary, Egor told Nilovna that Sashahas left her family for revolutionary cause that her attitude hiplines to change. "Besides she was brought up for an easy life." She is "daughter of a country gentleman. Her father's pig, according to what she says" (Gorky, M., 1971, p. 108).When Eror tells her that Sasha carried out the threat of going on a hunger- strike after she had been insulted by a prison guard, Nilovna is filled with respect and admiration for the proud and determined revolutionary girl. When shehears about the sacrifices of the revolutionaries, Nilovna's respect is increased for the socialists.

Sophia Ivanovna is sketched before her appearance in the novel. Nilovna's first impression of the woman is a favourable one. Her brother, Nikolay Ivanovich, informs us that she is daughter of a factory manager and widow who has been in exile along with her husband in Siberia. Her husband ran away and died in Europe of consumption. Sophia is at present an active member of the Communist party. She tells Nilovna about her life that, "I seem to live in a delirium. This was when I was in exile in a tiny provincial town. I had nothing to do, and nothing to think about except myself. As a means of whiling away the time, I would go over and over all my misfortunes: I had quarrelled with a father whom I loved; I had been expelled from school and held up as shameful example; I had been put up in jail; a close friend had betrayed me; my husband had been arrested; I had been put in jail again and exiled; then my husband had died. It seemed to me I was the unhappiest creature in the world. But all my misfortunes, and ten times more, could not equal one month of your life, Pelagia Nilovna. Yours was daily torture, drawn out year after year. Where do people get strength to endure such suffering?" (Gorky, M., 1971, p. 240). Contrary to our expectations, (we expect someone like Sasha), Sophia shows herself to be friendly and light-hearted person. Her humorous accounts of her escapades and adventures with spies add a light touch to revolutionary activity. Sophia becomes Nilovna's co-worker, comrade and helps to brighten her days during Pavel's imprisonment. When later Gorky presents her on her travels round the country as an ardent lover of nature and a romantic heart, as she sings love-songs and recites romantic poetry, Sophia becomes for a moment vivid and living human being. However, she fades as an individual the moment that Gorky delineates her as preacher among the peasants, instilling into them faith in the future of the revolution. The hackneyed clichés that add nothing to Sophia's portrait and can well be attributed to any of the other optimistic revolutionaries. We are surprised to read that the comradeship between the mother and Sophia ends so abruptly, Gorky gives us no hint or warning. It appears that Sophia and Nilovna trust each other and enjoy travelling. Nilovna is antagonized by Sophia's

inconsistent behaviour that is insufficient in view of what we have been shown of their close relationship and compatibility.

The revolutionary, Lyudmila Vasilyevna replaces Sophia as Nilovna's comrade and co-worker. At first Nilovna is antagonized by Lyudmila's domineering and abrupt manner. However, upon seeing that Lyudmila, in addition to sacrificing her personal happiness for the revolutionary work, has taken it upon herself to nurse Egor during his illness, Nilovna's attitude changes to one of respect. In addition, Lyudmila's praise of Pavel's integrity and courage gives Nilovna reassurance just at the time when it is needed, during Pavel's imprisonment. Lyudmila informs us of her experience of exile, jail and trials with Egor that, "We lived together in exile.....We went out there together and served our sentences...Sometimes it was horrid...simply unbearable. Many people lost heart..." (Gorky, M., 1971, p. 291). Like the other female figures, she at the expense of her personal happiness has dedicated herself to the revolution. Unfortunately, she is presented only in the revolutionary milieu and consequently we tend to remember her as merely an exemplary revolutionary woman.

Nilovna, a woman capable of fear, at times is even over whelmed by it and plagued by loneliness and craving human companionship stands out from the other females as a live human being. She takes an active participation and heroic role in political struggle of the proletarians for socialism. This is not to say that the other women are emotionless. Sasha does show concern for Pavel's welfare. After the trial, she is gentle towards the mother and even speaks of Pavel with tenderness. Natasha at one time recalls her mother with nostalgia. Sophia's artistic nature reveals itself in her love of music and romantic poetry. Lyudmila admits to loneliness, when she states sadly that her only visitors are those involved in revolutionary movement. However, all these human emotions are sublimated in the image of staunch, dedicated and committed revolutionaries Communist women. The portrayals of the female personages largely drawn by Gorky are as self- sacrificing and enthusiastic model revolutionaries, it would have been

interesting to see the revolutionaries' attitude and reaction to Nilovna's re-awakening. When Pavel is sent to exile to death in Siberia, Nilovna states that "they can't kill" (Gorky, M., 1971, p. 448) a resuscitated living spirit which she has achieved in socialism. The other revolutionary women reacted to her speech after the trial. Some revolutionary traits of these revolutionary women of Gorky can be trace back to the female figures of the wives of Decembrists, Princess Volkonskaia and Countess Trubetskaia as portrayed in Nekrasov's poem "Russian Women", who joined their husbands in Siberian exile, sacrificing their aristocratic pleasures for the sake of Decembrist movement. Gorky's female characters also possess much in common with Marianne, the heroine of Turgenev's novel "Virgin Soil". She is modelled on revolutionary women such as Vera Zasulich, Anesa Armand, Olga Liubatovich and Rosa Luxemburg. She suffers "for all poor, the oppressed, the wretched in Russia". She struggles with her lover Nezhdnov for the cause of women's emancipation, preparing the poor peasants for revolution to overthrow the Tsarist rule.

In their discussions of characters' rapid change throughout the novel, both Clark and Alyssa Dinega remark upon how seemingly uncomplicated their extreme transformations are. For her part, Clark draws a parallel between the descriptions of Gorky's characters and depersonalised and cliché descriptions of heroes in medieval hagiography. Following Clark, Dinega writes that both "are largely schematic and their personalities shallow and superficially drawn: two-dimensional icons rather than three-dimensional portraits Both are malleable and manipulable, particularly to an empathetic reader's particular situation" (Dinega, A., 1998, p.94). Critics like Bennett and Clark have aptly identified common feminist themes and hagiographic character descriptions, respectively, in "Mother" and Nikolay Gavrilovich Chernyshevsky's utopian socialist novel "What is to be done?" For the representation of an alternative radicalism, one, which may seem akin to, but is in fact quite different from, the solely didactic approach to education provided in Gorky's description of the characters in Pavel's group. Vera Pavlovna's

development from intelligent self-driven petty-bourgeois girl to intelligent self-driven emancipated woman seems less extraordinary and of less significant than Gorky's characters' movement from virtual ignorance to radical consciousness. Vera Pavlovna's ascendancy to the immortal stage where all ideals pale beside her is the all-round development of her personality. Chernyshevsky's narrator reveals the characters' development through the process of self-consciousness, when Vera Pavlovna and her comrades are first introduced; they are already at a relatively advanced stage in progress towards their goal. (Bennett, V., 1987, p. 91; Clark, K., 2000, p.59).

Whereas, Gorky's narrative reveals the characters' development through the process of class-consciousness, his characters culminate the height of political radicalisation, where the struggle for women's liberations closely interlinked with class struggle against capitalism. Gorky did not believe that struggle for women's emancipation cannot be succeeded or ".....culture alone cannot liberate women: a more fundamental revolution in means and forces of production is required" (Barrett, 1980, Pp. 112–113). On the contrary, Gorky believed that women could only be emancipated in socialism. As Michèle Barrett writes that, "Since women's oppression is "entrenched in the structure of capitalism," the struggle for women's liberation and the struggle for socialism cannot be disengaged" (Barrett, M., 1980, Pp.258–259). Gorky and his female characters are not only Marxists but they are also Marxist feminists who believe that women's emancipation is closely linked to class-struggle and it cannot be achieved within capitalism but also it is only possible to replace this system with a socialist planned economy. Similarly, Socialist revolution cannot be successful without the participation and support of the proletariat class women. As Karl Marx opines that, "Everyone who knows anything of history also knows that great social revolutions are impossible without the feminine ferment" (Marx, K., 2010. 43).

Conclusion

Applying Marxist feminist hermeneutics to Gorky's art of typification in "Mother", this paper concludes that Gorky dismantles the Orthodox, archaic; patriarchal, ascetic stereotypes of women's roles in the tsarist Russia in which the lot of women was worse than that of the slaves. His revolutionary female figures are actually gravediggers of the bourgeoisie who retain a saintly entropic refinement and sense of equality between the genders and classes through the brutal patriarchal treatment of men. They cannot imagine the success of woman's emancipation without the struggle for Socialism. Therefore, they participate in the revolutionary proletariat class movement to liberate themselves from their double bondage of wage-slavery and male oppression because they understand the fact that subjugation of women is a trans-class phenomenon in the patriarchal capitalist social formation that reinforces male supremacy over women. Women's oppression cannot be eliminated until capitalism is replaced by socialism that produces the material ethos for the emergence of socialist sisterhood. Gorky believes that women oppression is rooted in the socio-economic and political conditions of capitalism and women's liberation cannot be archived without class-struggle against this system. Similarly, the success of Socialist revolution also depends upon participation, cooperation and support of the proletariat class women.

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