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**The Definitive Solution: Protecting Women's Dignity, Safety, and Personal Autonomy :  
A Critique**

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**Abstract**

*In modern times Feminism has acquired prime importance in all literary genres. It has challenged all traditional ideas. **Feminism in India** is a set of movements aimed at defining, establishing, and defending equal political, economic, and social rights and equal opportunities for women in India. Women make half of the community. Their humiliation, sufferings, neglect is reflected through female literature. In the human history, woman became the perfect symbol of respect, chastity and pride for the community. **'The Final Solution'** is a short story written by Manik Bandopadhyay, a prolific Bengali writer. It forwards the need of protection of Dignity and Chastity of Women. It presents the plight of women during post partition period. In this short story, Mallika's family is presented as the 'Refugees,' who had lost their everything - land, home, cattle, relatives, belongings...etc. The ending part of this short story narrates how Pramatha tries to take undue advantage of Mallika's critical situation, how he manages to enjoy her first before engaging her to prostitution, how she denied all this and hits him with the wine bottle. She told Asha that she found a way out to all this misfortune and that was her **final solution**. All this shows her determination to face any worse situation. She found a new way of living life. **Message of this story is that dignity and chastity of woman must be protected and respected at all costs.** It presents a section of humanity degraded itself to the level of beasts. Mallika has found a way out that is her self defence and **final solution**.*

**Key Words:** *Feminism, woman, dignity, chastity, protection, solution*

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**Introduction :**

In the modern times Feminism has acquired prime importance in all literary genres. It has challenged all traditional ideas. The main objective of this National Conference is to discuss about the practical challenges encountered about feminism and to find out possible positive solutions to them. People should be made aware of the power of ideal man-woman relationship. Serious thinking about equal status of women in human society is very necessary. Considering this socio-cultural scene of feminism, the present research paper deals with one of the subthemes of this national conference, 'Women empowerment & current scenario.' We all know that Literature presents different colors and times of human life. It reflects contemporary scenario of human society. Writers are greatly affected by all these changing issues. They try to react and respond to all this through their writings. They observed, experienced, registered and understood all this and then they try to interpret it directly or indirectly, giving some message to humanity.

**Feminism in India** is a set of movements aimed at defining, establishing, and defending equal political, economic, and social rights and equal opportunities for women in India. It is the pursuit of women's rights in the society. Indian feminists also have fought against culture-specific, gender biased issues. Indian feminist movements have tried to uplift women. But, we all know that women living in modern India still face many issues of discrimination. Though there is much "on-paper" advancement, female problems still remain which keep women deprived from fully taking advantage of new rights and opportunities in India. It is clear that in human history woman has always remained at the centre and as a symbol of respect, chastity and pride for the whole community. Women make half of the community. Their humiliation, sufferings, neglect is reflected through female literature. Particularly, female writers have presented this plight of women through their writings. In this male dominated society, the actual treatment given to women all over the world is different. It tells a different, disturbing truth and story. Society respects, honors and protects women, but behind all this the truth is that she always remains as man's victim of selfish, patriarchal dominance and superiority. In the human history, woman became the perfect symbol of respect, chastity and pride for the community. But, in the past they were labeled as the 'spoils of war,' possession

of the mighty men. They were like products to be bought and sold in the market. The Partition of India was the result of the British policy 'Divide and Rule.' Lord Mountbatten himself writes,

***"Partition was sheer madness. One day Indians will bitterly regret this decision."***

(Partition Literature)

During and after partition, contemporary society was the mixture of hope and despair, expectation and frustration, mass hatred, anger between religious, social groups...etc. Impact of partition on women was like sudden earthquake. Millions were displaced, converted, abducted, raped, and killed. All this was very tragic. The trend was such that to humiliate women meant to humiliate the enemy. Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs all did the same. It was the clear evidence of the insane, hypocritical male dominated society. Women were treated like commodities that could be bought and sold for handful of money. Such impact of Partition on women reduced their status as slaves, animals and prostitutes...etc. The same is presented through partition literature.

'**The Final Solution**' is a short story written by Manik Bandopadhyay, a prolific Bengali writer. Later on it is translated in English by Rani Ray. It forwards the need of protection of Dignity and Chastity of Women. It presents the plight of women during post partition period. In this short story, Mallika's family is presented as the 'Refugees,' who had lost their everything- land, home, cattle, relatives, belongings...etc. Bhushan, a sick young man suffering from fever is presented as the head of the family. Mallika, his wife, a poor, shelter less, helpless, support less young woman. Khokon was their starving, sick child. Asha, Bhushan's sister. Pramatha is presented as the villain. It was said that he was working as a volunteer, a social worker for '**Help and Welfare Society**.' Ranmlochan was his assistant. There are other two minor characters- a young student and his companion, a young girl. They tried to convince Mallika about Pramatha's real evil nature. They told her that Pramatha was a wolf in the garb of a social worker.

This short story proceeds in a simple, straightforward way. Mallika's refugee family was forlorn. Anyhow they got a small space to sit on the railway platform. Mallika was anxious about their future. Her husband, Bhushan was ill and couldn't do anything for them. That was the main problem. Their son Khokon was starving. Mallika had to do something for saving her husband and her son. The whole family was hungry for many days. They were searching for the helping hand that could uplift them from this critical situation. Pramatha and his assistant,

Ramlochan were looking for such forlorn, young women to be misused for their own selfish purposes, to misuse them as prostitutes. Both claimed that they were working for 'Help and Welfare Society.' It was set up by the govt. to help the refugees. They were in search of the victims and Mallika's family badly needed help and support. Pramatha assured Mallika to give her shelter, food for her son, treatment for Bhushan, job and money to both Mallika and Asha. They became happy for some time. Mallika thought that though Pramatha's intentions were bad, time being she could succeed in saving her son and family. She made her mind to face any calamity and to accept any challenge. Women are gifted with inborn extra qualities than men. Mallika realized Pramatha's evil mind when he was not ready to give job to Bhushan. But, he offered job to Mallika and Asha.

Anyhow, temporarily they were settled in a Muslim house. Ramlochan told Mallika that Pramatha broke riots there and the muslim family fled away. All other families stared at Mallika with dull and vacant eyes. All this was very strange and different. But, Mallika accepted all this as her luck and decided to face it bravely. Middle part of this short story narrates about Pramatha's evil acts, well dressed women coming in and going out in the car. She realized that it was prostitution. She remembered the advice of that young boy and girl on the railway platform. But, time and situation was changed. So, she left that thought. It was disrespectful society. Mallika could not imagine that how could Pramatha manage all these expenses – house rents, family expenditures, car, driver and so on. The ending part of this short story narrates how Pramatha tries to take undue advantage of Mallika's critical situation, how he manages to enjoy her first before engaging her to prostitution, how she denied all this. Writer provides all details about Pramatha's advances-drinking wine, drawing Mallika close to him. She could not tolerate all this. She freed his arms, caught the bottle and with fierce strength hit it on Pramatha's head. He became unconscious. She knew that he was not dead. So, she tried to tight his neck by her sari. But, left it incomplete and she went to the shelter. She told Asha that she found a way out to all this misfortune and that was her **final solution**. Now, she found a new way to live this new life. At the very end she assures Asha that hereafter they will not be hungry again. Her son will have milk four times a day. Story ends with Mallika's affirmation, *"I'll go to the railway station every evening in my rayed sari, the sharks will come again to pick me up, for sure...But this time I'll be carrying a sharp knife with me. I'll hide it so that no one finds out..."*

All this shows her determination to face any worse situation. She found a new way of living life. **Message of this story is that basic dignity and chastity of woman must be protected and respected at all costs.** It presents a section of humanity degraded itself to the level of beasts. Pramatha was the agent of evil who forced helpless, needy women into prostitution. Exploitation, violence and contempt towards women became common. To all this Mallika has found a way out that is her self defense and *final solution*. Might is right. Self defense by any means is justifiable. Mallika at the very end emerges as the new woman having power and confidence to handle the situation. It suggests that hereafter this new, empowered woman will not tolerate indignity, exploitation and injustice done to her. This story forwards the idea that circumstances transform people into courageous and unusual persons. They behave unpredictably. Norms, ethics, beliefs, morals don't matter. Adversity teaches how to survive. In the course of the time Mallika has learned it and acted fiercely. It clearly shows degradation of man. Women are presented as victims, though they are not weak. They are protectors of humanity. Mallika resolved to be strong and fought against injustice. Here the conflict is between Mallika, an individual and the insane society.

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