

Question: Describe how patriarchal domination is challenged by Mallika's struggle for survival in the context of partition in *The Final Solution*. (Mallika's Character)

Answer: Manik Bondopadhyaya's *The Final Solution* describes how a woman upholds her 'self' and 'dignity'. The events occur at a time when the motherland is violated through partition.

Mallika challenges the concept that women are docile and submissive from the beginning of the story. She takes upon her the responsibility to provide for her family. She becomes so desperate for survival of her family that she tells Pramatha that she is ready to dance naked if required. Through all these Mallika starts showing signs of power. This has been very essential for her to steer the fate of her family.

However, Mallika's initial attempts to support her family do not free her totally from the typical 'woman' self. Mallika's course of action is similar to 'the other woman' in the story. Like 'the other woman' in the two storey building, Mallika gets ready to trade her body. Partition has resulted in double tragedy for the women folks. They have to suffer the trauma of misplacement, and also they have to sell their bodies to support their family. Bhushan has no role to play in caring for the son. The 'brother' in Pramatha's shelter house is ready to trade the bodies of his wife and sister. Similarly, motherhood forces Mallika to give in to Pramatha's machinations. But her choice of prostitution is also an act of shaping her agency. It is her decision to gain control over her body. The patriarchal culture has defined a different role for her body. But in the context of the partition, Mallika has taken up a violent road that would defy all patriarchal control over her body.

Pramatha's strangulation is an expression of Mallika's roaring resistance to masculine supremacy. In the face of imminent assault from the 'shark' Pramatha, Mallika takes full control of her body and regains total control of her body. The man's body and identity is hit due to Mallika's act of overthrowing patriarchal domination. She even takes the money from the thug Pramatha. Mallika in this way writes her own history. This shows how strong gender identity emerges from the suffering of partition.