Chapter III

GENDER POLITICS IN THE
PLAYS OF CARYL CHURCHILL

- Introduction
- Owners
- Vinegar Tom
- Cloud Nine
- Top Girls
- Conclusion
The present chapter attempts to evaluate the works selected of Caryl Churchill in the light of gender politics. The plays concentrated on are Owners (1972), Vinegar Tom (1976) Cloud Nine (1979) and Top Girls (1982). The dramatist in these plays raises the issues of woman, lesbian, the gay and the transgender. The claims of these individuals over their being and sexuality have been brought to the centre stage. The sexual orientation of a person if is conventional then it is bound to land the individual in a world of clash and confrontation. The playwright in a bold and confident manner discusses these issues. Domination of a person over the other, according to the playwright is not gender specific rather; it is the consequence of the powers one enjoys.

Owners is the first play that Churchill presented at the Royal Court Theatre in 1972. It consists of two acts and fourteen scenes. The play is about obsession with domestic power. The playwright through this play expresses her socialist views and comments on the capitalist’s values in the contemporary society. It earned recognition to Caryl Churchill all over the world. Commenting on the inspiration behind writing the play, the writer informs:

I was in an old woman’s flat when a young man offering her money to move came round- he was my first image of Worsely and one of the starting points of the play.
Another was wanted one character with the active, achieving attitude of ‘Onward Christian Soldiers’, the other the ‘sitting quietly, doing nothing’ of the Zen poem. The active one had to be a woman, the passive one a man, for their attitudes to show up clearly as what they believed rather than as conventional male and female behaviour. So Marion and Alec developed from that train of thought. I’d read Figes’ Patriarchal Attitudes not long before, which may have affected the character of Clegg, and had recently reread Orton’s Sloane’ which may have done something to the style (Churchill 4)

Churchill attempts to explore the negative side of capitalism and patriarchy through the character of Marion, who is very ambitious and treats all around her as secondary. Her attempt is to treat people around her as dead objects. Her dominating nature has made her husband a scapegoat. The authority she enjoys has been generated through the financial and domestic authority she had. It has turned her into a selfish and aggressive person. She rejects the notion of man’s superiority over woman. She also seems to reject through her behaviour the inferiority of woman. Her dominating nature made the assistant Worsely submissive. He is a mere instrument in the hands of the master. He is ever ready to do anything to delight her. His aim is to please the master even by hurting other people. In order to regain her former lover, she with the help of this assistant burnt his house and brought his pregnant wife on the road.

The play also offers a critical comment on capitalism and materialism. Material prosperity cannot ensure peace and happiness in life is the audible tone of this play. Material recourses like money are a means for life and not the aim of life. Hence, it should not become the priority in life. The play also exposes the greed of modern man for material prosperity. The chase of it, at the end, makes the person realises the futility of money. The issues of materialism and politics in the name of gender have been discussed and depicted with all its hues. The writer also seems
to convey that these issues are interconnected. This interrelationship has
been presented through the character of Marion.

Marion and Clegg is the central couple in the play. Clegg, the
husband is presented as a submissive partner. He is made so by the
powers enjoyed by his wife Marion. Though he appears submissive in
nature his prejudices as a male against woman didn’t die. They are lying
buried beneath his outward appearance. His profession and personality
stand for his biased nature towards the complementary gender. His mind
is put forth very candidly in his dialogue:

But you still don’t see a lady butcher. Apart from the
physical weakness a lady has a squeamishness which is very
proper in the fair sex but shameful in a man (Churchill 9)

The utterance shows his prejudice and ideology as a patriarchal
agent. He believes that woman is inferior, passive, weak and incompetent,
while man is superior, strong and capable. He opines that certain
professions are meant only for man. Woman cannot shoulder
responsibilities of such professions. According to him butchery is a
profession fit for man only. Clegg clearly asserts the rightness of man
based on their physical strength, and demonstrates the female inferiority
based on her physical weakness. Physical power of the person makes one
superior and absence of it makes another inferior. This attitude provides
sufficient scope for the exploitation of woman at the hands of man.

The feminist writer Millet in her book Sexual Politics explains how
man always value the qualities in himself, that he is intelligent, superior,
strong whereas woman is inferior, weak and docile. Man overvalues
himself and devalues other genders such as woman, gay and lesbian.
Clegg is a representative of the conventional man in a patriarchal society.
The very upbringing of a character made him so. His mother is a model
woman for him since she was submissive to the powers of his father.
Simultaneously his father taught how to be a dominating one. Caryl
Churchill through these characters wants to expose the evil effects of raising children in a biased domestic environment. The institution of family, thus, comes under scrutiny. There is a need to reconstruct the nature of filial relationship. Being a child Clegg had inherited the attitudes of his parents. The same had constructed his personality. He took his parent’s relationship as a role model for his temperament. He states:

We were taught to look up my father. My mother literally worshipped him. I’ve seen her on her knees. And he would raise her up, very gracious. She knew how to give a man the right support. He had his chair. The tea was hot on the table when he came in. We never made a sound. (Churchill 9)

The above dialogue of Clegg shows male prejudice and reflects the important role of family in gender construction. Clegg has constructed his ideology through his socialisation in his family. Since his childhood, his family imposed its masculine prejudice on him. While commenting on the nurturing of children in the family Kate Millet argues that family is the chief institution of patriarchy. Family encourages its own members to behave in tune with the patriarchal state, which is ruled by its family heads.

Every moment of the child’s life is a clue to how he or she must think and behave to attain or satisfy the demands, which gender places upon one. (Millett 31)

Further, she adds that through such socialisation children of both sexes acquire the patriarchal policies and behave accordingly throughout their lives.

Sexual politics obtains consent through the “socialisation” of both sexes to basic patriarchal polities with regard to temperament, role, and status. (Millett 26)

In Contrast, Marion can be considered as an unconventional woman. She seems to be having control over her being and life. She leads
her life the way she wanted to. The conventional husband describes her as “She’s physically a very strong woman. And mentally in some respects……. I can’t see any life for myself till she’s gone. And she’s in much better health than I am” (Churchill 8). Through the character of Marion, Churchill attempts to portray woman’s hidden power. Marion could emasculate her husband. She is an educated, cruel, aggressive and dominating woman. She thinks that money can fetch everything for her in this world including people. Marion represents a power of which the traditional males are afraid of. This power was unknown to the woman character due to her taming by the forces controlled by male. In this regard, Michelene Wander in Carry on Under Studies: Theatre and Sexual politics says:

In some ways it (Owners) is attribute to the potential female power, with Marion’s aggression seen as a response to her own childlessness, her non-fulfilment ‘as a woman’. It is an ambiguous and a bleak play, in which the feminine dynamic is subverted by giving Marion social and economic power; but the power which she is given is a class power, the power of Ownership, and this, in a sense, makes her into a ‘man’, emasculating her husband until all he can do is dreaming of killing her. (qtd. in Gitanjali 5)

Alec and Lisa is another couple who is the opposite in nature to Clegg and Marion. They have two children. Due to Marion’s infertility, she convinces Lisa to give her newborn baby to her. In the beginning, Lisa accepts to give her male baby to Marion, but afterwards she changes her mind and asks her baby back. Marion refuses to return the child to his mother. Moreover, Marion not only claims the kid but also the husband of Lisa who was her pervious lover. But Alec didn’t budge to the pressure of Marion. In other words, a person refuses to have control over his being of another person. It infuriates the possessive natured Marion, who, in fit of anger orders Worsely the domestic help to set on fire the house of Alec. The status of the perpetrator’s mind is aptly put forth, thus:
I’m not sorry at all about Alec. Or about the other baby. Not at all. I never knew I could do a thing like that. I might be capable of anything. I’m just beginning to find out what’s possible. (Churchill 67)

It shows her selfish and ruthless nature. Noticeably, the deaths of Alec and the other baby could not generate the feelings of guilt and repentance in Marion. At the same time, she seems to be made aware of her distractive qualities by the incident. The incident also hints at the reality that material concerns are more valuable than that of a human being. The selfishness reflected by the woman also makes it clear that greed is not gender specific. Instead of provoking fear and scare in her heart; she becomes more confident on herself as she can do everything. This play shows how property and money is so important rather than human relationship.

Clegg is depicted as a conventional husband who refuses to take care of the adopted baby. He believes that child-care is solely mother’s responsibility; whereas father has more important responsibilities to shoulder. To him, child-care is secondary responsibility. He is of the opinion that a husband has to discharge valuable duties. Such an ideology devalues one gender and exaggerates the other. It provides a social license and acceptability for the exploitation of woman at the hands of man. He states:

A man can’t be expected to stay at home and look after a baby. He can do it of course because it’s not difficult. Even a woman can do it easily. But it is a waste of real abilities. (Churchill 54)

When Lisa wishes to claim her baby from the pair Marion-Clegg, Clegg the husband attempts to take a revenge on Lisa through exploiting her physically. He knew that his dominant wife Marion was in love with Alec to which he could oppose. The insult meted out to him by this relationship, according to him can be compensated by the exploitation of
the wife of Alec. This shows how a woman has been viewed by man and at the same time it shows how lust driven Marion trespasses the conventional sexuality. The same sort of action is committed by Clegg. Sexual infidelity, in case of a woman is loud and biased whereas in case of man it is not audible. Clegg attempts to exploit Lisa’s motherhood. Her physical submission to him does not amount to a crime since she was doing it for a lofty cause. Her surrender to him is framed by the fixed stereotype of motherhood, which is constituted by our society. Any society belonging to any part of the world, on this basis can be termed as arbitrary in nature. The following dialogue between Lisa and Clegg throws light on their agreement for the physical relationship, thus:

Lisa : I only came to see the baby[...] You will do all you can do for me, won’t you?

Clegg : Give you the baby?

Lisa : That’s what it was for…. We agreed before we started… I want my baby… I want to see him…….

Clegg : I didn’t say you could get up. You won’t be suitable unless you lie flat, did you know that, very feminine and do just as you’re told. On your back and underneath is where I like to see a lady. And a man on top. Right on top of the world. Because I know what you ladies like. You like what I give you. I didn’t say you mustn’t move at all. But just in response. (Churchill 52-53-55)

The above utterances of both the characters reveal their take on sexuality and the worth and value of an individual. The mother appears to be mentally and physically submissive on account of her filial love. At the same time, the temperament of the male towards woman appears to be plagued by the bias. His phallic arrogance derecognizes the very being of the woman. His views about the very act of continuation of life also seem to be corrupt and outdated. It disfigures man-woman relationship.
How horribly sexual life of a woman distorts her personhood is made clear through the following dialogue of Clegg. The value of a woman is linked to her sexuality. Her personhood becomes second-rate on account of her sexual relationship. The physical satisfaction of man, according to Clegg, decides her importance and relevance in life. Such biased opinions of man about woman distort the very fabric of relationship. He very openly devalues Lisa in front of her husband on account of her inability to satisfy him physically. Clegg believes in women inferiority and marginality, he makes his patriarchal ideology clear when he tells Liza’s husband Alec that:

I wouldn’t want to waste myself on something as second-rate as your wife. She was quite useful. A handy receptacle. But quite disposable after. (Churchill 56)

The dramatist attempts to depict the reversal of conventional expectation of gender roles in the patriarchal society. The depiction of unconventional roles of male/female proves that gender and its roles are constructed. She portrays wives as active figures and men as passive. The relationship between all characters to some extent can be understood in terms of property. In this play, Churchill explores for optional approaches, which would help to liberate undeveloped human potentials. And this would provide an individual with a more reasonable understanding of reality and the self, away from prejudice and bias.

Through Owners, Churchill depicts the reduction of human relations, and how an individual can express his/her desires and feelings to the world. The characters feel miserable, unhappy and unsatisfied with the current system. With power and money on her side, Marion tries to dominate everybody, including her husband. She is a power-hungry woman of whom man is afraid of. Marion believes that power and money are the tools that can transform a woman into a happy being. But, in her
case, these tools turn out to be the modes for exploitation. It suggests that power breeds lust, irrespective of the person’s biological construction.

Churchill’s Owners presents Marion as an oppressor who behaves according to her whims. She denies the poor any right of their survival. When Alec and his wife, Lisa, refuse to succumb to her orders and decide to leave her home. She objects saying:

But you can’t just go like that. I haven’t paid you to go. Every one of you thinks I will give in. Because I’m a woman, is it? I meant to be kind. I’m meant to understand a woman’s feelings wanting her baby back. I don’t. I won’t. (Churchill 63)

However, Marion threatens him when she comes to know that Alec is not ready to leave his family and go with her. Marion says:

One day I’ll have the pleasure of knowing you’re screaming. Even if you do it silently. (Churchill 67)

Throughout the play, Marion tries to have control over the people she wishes to. She attempts to control her previous lover Alec by using many ways. For example, she bought the house where he lives and adopts his child also. She thought that by money she could buy human being, property, love and affection. When she feels that she is incapable of achieving what she wants to, she turns to be a heartless monster who is ready to destroy everything standing in front of her will.

I can be as terrible as anyone. Soldiers have stuck swords through innocents. I can massacre, too. Into the furnace...Not one of you loves me. But he [the baby] shall grow up to say he does. (Churchill 63)

Churchill suggests that with ownership, the right to take away the lives of other automatically comes. At the same time, the owner has the right to kill the people if they cannot be controlled. Marion thinks that she can obtain control over others even through using inhuman ways. She openly declares, “Why shouldn’t I be Ghengis Khan? Empires only come
by killing. I won't shrink.” (Churchill 63) However, Marion who attempts to own other people's lives and destinies, herself is owned legally by her husband who says:

She's not like other women in just one important respect. She is mine. I have invested heavily in Marion and don't intend to lose any part of my profit. (Churchill 56)

Clegg’s many plans to murder his wife Marion become unsuccessful. Clegg plans to kill Marion on account of the later’s threatening in terms of money and his marital exploitation. Marion had pre-marital relation with Alec and now she has already re-established the same relationship with him. The dilemma with Clegg is that his neither financially independent nor is he dominated. Killing Marion is the only way for him because his self-esteem is hurt by his wife's success. Clegg automatically interprets her success as his own failure. Woman’s success poses a threat to the gender stereotype that woman must be dependent, silent, submissive and incapable of achieving any success. It also proves the false belief that man is independent, strong, aggressive, capable and intelligent than his counterpart. Woman’s success and power can make man feel inferior and threatened. This is because of the double standards the society has on the basis of gender.

A patriarchal person dominates all aspects of family. Therefore, a woman who tries to be independent and responsible is criticized and punished by many people in the patriarchal society. The unconventional woman provokes man's hatred towards her. For example, Clegg hates Marion of being an unconventional wife. Her success, lack of subservience, her attempts to emasculate him incites his hatred. She is a hardworking woman whereas he is an unsuccessful butcher. As the play progresses, one comes to know that his obsession to kill his wife stems from traditional gender bias. He views his wife as property in the same way he views his butcher shop. Both are his two ownerships. When he
finds himself losing his hold over his shop and his wife he plans to murder her. Repeatedly he plans to murder her because he considers her as the real source of his suffering and failure. The play exposes the fact about what it means to be a woman and a man in a patriarchal society. If Marion’s aggressiveness and authoritarianism come from a man it would be acceptable and admired. Likewise, if Alec’s submissiveness and contented domesticity come from a woman it would be acceptable and encouraged.

Certainly, Churchill doesn’t encourage woman to perform man’s role or to be a reflection of male and take male as a model of success but emphasizes on the importance of mutual understanding, respect, love and care for each other. She asserts for the importance of mutual human relationship. Helene Keyssar supports this view in The Dramas of Caryl Churchill: Feminist Theatre, thus:

It is not gender that distinguishes each character from another in Owners but the essential state of being human and the particularities of the individual. (qtd. in Gitanjali 6)

Marion describes herself sincerely, a little too earnestly in fact, and how she is doing hard to achieve success. Her continuous actions make her the woman she is.

I was taught – be clean, be quick, be top, be best, you may not succeed, Marion but what matters is to try your hardest. To push on. Onward Christian Soldiers.... I was never a lazy girl, Marion tries hard. I work like a dog. Most women are fleas but I’m the dog. (Churchill 30)

Marion is a powerful, successful, independent, dominating and hard working person. Though she earns much money, she doesn’t offer a hand to her husband in his needs. Her husband Clegg has a butcher shop and due to some financial problems, he has to close it. Marion doesn’t stand with him and that hurts him. The patriarchal expectation is that a woman must stand with her husband in each and every situation whereas
man need not. She simply tells him “I know very well it’s a sad moment, I can’t be a failure just to help” (Churchill 12)

Owners has one love relationship that is central to the theme of the play. Marion who is a very successful business woman is married to Clegg but wants Alec, and Lisa’s baby. Churchill shows us that what hinders Marion’s path to happiness is her greed to own property and people. Marion wishes to possess everything around her and use them for her pleasure. Though her relationship with Alec ends in a short span of five years, she wants him back. His wish is not important to her. Moreover, he is now married and has children. Marion puts her claim for love, thus:

Empires have been lost for love…. We men of destiny get what we’re after even if we’re destroyed by it... We split the atom. Onward Love me. You are what I want. I want you badly now. And always. I’m keeping you Alec. (Churchill 31-32)

She wants to possess and control him. She has no regret for the wrong she did to him and his family. She doesn’t care of his say in love. Marion asks Alec to be with her: “..leave Lisa. I’ll leave Clegg. You can choose where we go to. I can pay for anywhere in the world” (Churchill 46) Churchill shows the noticeable presence of Marion through her rebellious action and language. The character stands for the idea that what selfishness and greed transform a person into. The issue of love beyond marriage has been brought into the space of debate and discussion. It is really a revolutionary concept that needs to be responded by rationally. Marion has proved that a woman can dominate even beyond her capacity to attend power. This power is seen as unexpected from a woman. Churchill de feminizes Merion. Alec’s weakness is unacceptable as her strength. Marion’s ways to overrule her husband shows inversion of sexual relations and the order of gender politics as well. Marion’s domination over her husband and others reflects at the larger issue of woman’s domination over man.
The dramatist has reversed the conventional expectation of gender roles. She portrays a completely passive man who prefers to stay at home, take care of his children, doesn’t have any desire to dominate anyone and performs domestic works, versus to a very active woman who is hard working, aggressive, greedy, dominated, and economically independent. Reversely Alec represents a nature, which is definitely the opposite of man in the patriarchal society. His philosophy in life is: “Sitting here quietly. Doing nothing. The day goes by itself.” (Churchill 14). While Marion refuses all obligatory norms. She doesn’t hesitate in getting rid of a person who comes in her way to the attainment of cherished desire. Let it be her husband, too. She puts forth her mind, thus:

I said he will have a nanny. Are you going against me, Clegg? It was entirely for you I got the baby. I bought him a shop, for you. If you don’t like the arrangements you can go. Clear right off. It would be a delight never to see you again (Churchill 61)

Her selfishness recognizes no human attachment. She takes to evil actions to achieve her desires. She becomes violent, heartless, forceful and killer. Liza’s tears for getting her child back and her condition doesn’t generate any sympathy in her heart. Even the deaths of Alec and the baby didn’t make her repent. Through Marion’s character Churchill successfully portrays how cruel, aggressive, violent, forceful, determined a woman can be. The desire to own and control is not exclusive to the male characters. Likewise through Alec’s character she displays how passive, peaceful, weak, and indecisive a man can be.

Owners, however, ends a little ambiguously with the unexpected death of Alec who goes into the burning flat to rescue not his child but that of his neighbour. Both Alec and the baby die but the heroism of Alec’s act speaks powerfully and positively for his self.
Vinegar Tom (1976) is a feminist play of Caryl Churchill that depicts the relationship between gender and power in 17th century England. This play shows the marginal position of woman and her social hardships of that time. In other words, it is a depiction of gender bias. The central theme of this play is woman's repression as a universal and everlasting issue in the societies ruled by the patriarchal agents. It is a critique play on patriarchal society where woman is still persecuted at every place. Thus, this play presents the everlasting woman's suffering as a part of cultural activity. In Vinegar Tom, Churchill attempts to:

.....not only deconstruct the subjugation of women, especially with respect of class issues, but also create a psychological realism and multiple subjectivities for her female characters. One of the ways she does this is through the structural manipulation of time frames. (qtd. in Khozaei 575)

Churchill wrote this play for Monstrous Regiment. Monstrous regiment is a theatre company group that was established to focus on woman issues and produce feminist plays. In the introduction of the play, Vinegar Tom, Caryl Churchill comments:

My previous work had been completely solitary...So this was a new way of working...I felt briefly shy and daunted... then happy and stimulated by the discovery of shared ideas and the enormous energy and feeling of possibilities in the still new company (Churchill 129).

The play attempts to show a connection between the medieval attitudes to witch and woman in a patriarchal society. Besides, she attempts to depict woman's position during that time and how it made woman as scapegoat. She states that:

I wanted to write a play about witches with no witches in it; a play not about evil, hysteria and possession by the devil but about poverty, humiliation and prejudice, and how the women accused of witchcraft saw themselves (Churchill 130)
In this play, women are defined as witches because they violate the conventional rules in the patriarchal society. They are poor and don’t have any support, so they become easy victims. The economic condition plays a great role in woman’s humiliation and suffering. In this play, four women were hanged because they were poor, old, single and unconventional. Alisa Solomon in “Witches, Ranters and the Middle Class: The Plays of Caryl Churchill” put forth, thus:

Vinegar Tom concerns the violent expulsion from a repressed society of women who will not conform to acceptable social patterns. Hence, the women who do not fit into the expected female roles are the ones declared as witches. They are condemned to torture and hanging because of their rejection of the society’s values through their lower class lifestyle, and their acknowledged sexuality (qtd. in Khozaei 156)

The dramatist attempts with the help of songs and dramatic narrative to present different voices of women. The play is about superstition, fear of female sexuality and victimisation of woman in an injustice patriarchal society. The actions take place in a small village in the Seventeenth Century England. Different female characters in the play are accused of being witches. These female characters suffer double on the basis of their gender and their class.

The dramatist depicts the plight of women since they were divorced, widowed, married and single. They are subjugated and oppressed in the patriarchal society. Alice and her mother Joan are the first females who are accused of being witches. They are poor, independent, and unconventional. They are alone, don’t have stable income, and don’t have any man to protect them from the society.

Joan is an old woman who is marginalised. She doesn’t have the basic necessities of life such as a proper food, shelter and clothing. When she asks her middle class neighbour some help; the neighbour accuses her
of being a witch. No one believes in her claim that she is not a witch because she was an old woman, weak, poor, and from low class. Finally, she is fed up from her life. She is neither depressed nor annoyed for being called a witch and sentenced to death. Instead, she enjoys and succumbs to this idea as it releases her from subjugation and powerlessness in that patriarchal-capitalist society. The dramatist attempts to highlight the fact how people in authority enjoy the suffering of the weak and vulnerable.

Alice has an illegitimate child. Besides, she acknowledges her sexual liberation. She doesn’t care about any social norms and sleeps with many men. In the first scene Alice and the man whom she sleeps with talk about witch hunts. She expresses her desire to go with him but he accuses her calling a “whore”.

**Man** : A whore? Take a whore with me?

**Alice** : I’m not that.

**Man** : What are you then? What name would you put to yourself? You’re not a wife or a widow. You’re not a virgin. Tell me a name for what you are? (Churchill 137)

According to the patriarchal ideology woman’s existence is defined by her relation to the man. A woman should be either married or a widow or waiting for a husband. She learns from the early childhood that she should keep her body safe and pure for her husband. She doesn’t have right on her own body. Moreover, society denies woman existence as an independent human being. She must relate to man otherwise deserves to be called as “whore”. Alice’s sexuality is not accepted by the society and hence she deserves to be punished. Through her conversation with the man, she reveals her rebellious attitude toward the entire system.

Susan is another victim. She is a married woman. She represents the submissive, traditional and stereotyped woman character. Though she is submissive and weak she also accused of being a witch. She is a housewife
who was suffering from the constant pregnancies. Noticeably, she internalises the patriarchal values about herself. It can be noticed when she reveals her husband’s views to Alice saying:

> They do say the pain is what’s sent to a woman for her sins. I complained last time after churching, and he said I must think on Eve who brought the sin into the world that got me pregnant. I must think on how woman tempts man. (Churchill 146)

The dramatist depicts how the biased ideology of the patriarchal society dates back to the beginning of humankind. In its view, woman caused the humankind’s suffering.

Alice is one of many women in the play who is accused of being witch as she is considered an unconventional woman. The play began with a scene following her sexual encounter with a man who asks “So you think that was no sine we did?” (Churchill 135) She shocks him by her sordid answer “If it was I don’t care” (P136) she continues saying “Any time I’m happy someone says it’s a sin.” (P 136) According to the patriarchal norms, Alice is considered as unconventional woman, and a sexual liberated woman, who doesn’t believe in stereotyped roles of woman. She is from lower social class and known as a prostitute. Her poverty, her gender, her class, and her ignorance to social morality make her a prostitute. She enjoys sex with any man. Though she enjoys her sexual liberty, still she seems trapped by the feeling of guilt. She is not totally free from the stereotypical roles and conventional expectations of woman.

Alice doesn’t have any other choice to overcome such inferiority. She is aware of man’s prejudice and woman inferiority. She has a desire to be like a man, free and could endure all physical and psychological suffering that woman comes across. Her speech suggests that she herself is
aware of her own weakness and her helplessness. Likewise, she highlights the fact that woman is born to suffer throughout her entire life saying:

I hate my body... Blood every month and no way out of that but to be sick and swell up, and no way out of that but pain. No way out of all that till we're old and that's worse. I can't bear to see my mother if she changes her clothes. If I was a man I'd go to London and Scotland and never come back and take a girl under a bush and on my way. (Churchill 146)

The unconventional woman doesn't find any man to marry her. She is not acceptable and ostracized in the patriarchal society by either sex. Alice is a rebellious woman who has an illegitimate child which is absolutely forbidden in the patriarchal society. She is a challengeable character as she dares to have an illegitimate child openly. Even Suzen who is her best friend criticizes her saying:

No one's going to marry you because they know you here. That's why you say you don't want to be married - because no one's going to ask you round here, because they know you. (Churchill 147)

It is safe to assume that loose women are easy to be exploited and abused in the male dominated society. For instance, Jack is Alice neighbour who tries to exploit her sexually. He attempts to exploit and utilise her needs to fulfill his sexual desires. He tells her:

Alice, I'd be good to you. I'm not a poor man. I could give you things for your boy.. (Churchill 148)

He tries to take advantage of her economic situations offering some financial help to her child. When she refuses him, he accuses her of being a witch. The dramatist highlights how man can't bear if a woman could refuse him and drive him away from his desires. Thus, Jack, his wife Margery and the other villagers start to associate every bad thing with Alice and her mother. It shows how the influence of superstition and prejudice is deeply rooted in the society.
Jack accuses Alice that she emasculates him. Blindly, Susan believes him and confirms it. Her attitude shows the lack of sisterhood among these women. Patriarchy oppresses women and turns them against each other. Likewise, Margery, the neighbour accuses Joan of being a witch, because she is poor, old and she gives her bad prayers when she refuses to give her yeast. The dramatist also highlights how poor women are treated by the middle class women. They can be easily victimized and accused. Besides, it shows how woman also can be an oppressor to fellow woman if she is in the position of power. Class and gender discrimination are highly focused throughout the play.

Ellen is another woman who is accused of witchcraft. She is a single woman who wants to help people with preparation of some herbal. She helps others by giving herbal mixtures, with psychological support. She acts as a healer, advisor, single and challenging woman as she could challenge the existing socio-economic problems in her life. Many people go to her for treatment. So, her existence becomes a source of threat against the professional doctor in the play which can be considered as a representation of male power. She gives advice to Betty to get married and Alice to do business. Besides, she gives Alice a good advice how to be an independent woman, and stop thinking about the man whom she met. She helps other people to get rid of their miserable situations. She is also accused of witchery. Many female characters are aware of their own suffering in such society. They feel that it is very challenging to live in such society, which is full of superstitions and preconceived ideas about lower-class women.

Another female character is Betty the landowner’s daughter who doesn’t want to marry the man her parents have chosen for her. This action of her is not acceptable in the patriarchal society. She is not persecuted like other female characters in the play on account of her
strong social status. Charlotte Bunch in Passionate Politics: Feminist Theory in Action:

..class in our society is not only an economic system that determines everyone’s place, but also patterns of behaviour that go with and reflect one’s status. When middle class women carry their attitudes and ways of behaving into the movement, it oppresses working class women. (qtd. in Khozaei 161)

By her rejection to marry the man whom her family chosen for her, she combats the social norms. Unconditionally, woman must follow her parent’s orders in a patriarchal society. She must marry the person her family chooses for her. She goes to Margery to run away from her parent’s pressure, Margery tells her that:

**Margery**: I hear you’re leaving us for better things...I was only saying yesterday, our little Miss Betty that was and now to be a lady with her own house and...

**Betty**: No. They lock me up. I said I won’t marry him so they lock me up. Don’t you know that? (Churchill 140)

Through the expression of Betty one can understand how her father tries to break her rebellious behaviour by locking her up at home. He as a patriarchal agent prefers to keep his daughter as a mere object. He has only the right to determine her future life the way he wants. His ideology is generated from the internalising of the traditional norms that marriage and children are the ways that lead to God and happiness in this life. On her part Margery, the neighbour gives some advice to her to follow her parents’ decision and marry the man and be happy.

Hadn’t you better have him, Betty, and be happy? Everyone hopes so. Everyone loves a wedding (Churchill 140)

Since the early childhood of any girl, mother starts preparing her for the marriage. The girl is considered as a guest in her father’s home, and
her real home is her husband’s. The girl is born to be a wife and a mother. The same advice is given to Betty by Ellen, thus:

You get married, Betty, that’s safest... left alone for what? To be like me? There’s no doctor going to save me from being called a witch. Your best chance of being left alone is marry a rich man, because it’s part of his honour to have a wife who does nothing. He has his big house and rose garden and trout stream, he just needs a fine lady to make it complete and you can be that. You can sing and sit on the lawn and change your dresses and order the dinner... What would you rather? Marry a poor man and work all day? (Churchill 169)

Ellen’s advice to Betty is very much significant because it enumerates the traditional role of a woman. In a patriarchal society woman must marry and fit the stereotype role. In other words, being a married woman is only the way for woman to be safe and protected in society. So, Betty is advised to take this chance, marry the rich man and be safe and happy. It reflects the society’s views on the woman’s changing role from the traditional one towards becoming aggressive. On account of this change they are seen as strangers and deserved to be punished. Since we don’t come across Betty’s death at the end of the play, we can assume that her life has been secured because of her class as a wealthy landowner’s daughter and also may be because of her submission to her parents will. She conforms to the role expected of her. The low class woman is exploited and humiliated more than that of the high class woman. John, Alice, Susan and Ellen are poor, from low class hence their end more or less is the same, whereas Betty the landowner’s daughter is treated differentially. The patriarchal and capitalist forces are the main themes in Vinegar Tom.

Those accused women of practicing witchcraft often come from similar backgrounds who are female, poor and from low class. They are nearly outside the boundaries of society. At many occasion, it isn’t
superstition but gender and class discrimination. It is believed that the crime of witchcraft was attributable to woman and the witch hunter is attributed with man. It is nothing but the role of gendered structures of power. Besides, it is not surprising to find that majority of the accused of witchcraft were female and most of the accusers also are female. It blocked the unity and sisterhood among the victimized women. Woman accepts and internalises the patriarchal ideology and therefore can't cross the borders. Even if they pretend that they are free and liberated in reality they are still bonded to the social norms and their conventional roles in the society. The nature of subjugation of woman varies from one place to the other due to the differences in class, caste, religion, ethnicity and the culture. Thus, Joan, Ellen, Suzan and Alice are accused of witchcraft, tortured and murdered, on account of that, Pooja Singhal Purwar, a social activist remarks in The Washington Post’s Rama Lakshmi in 2005.

Often a woman is branded a witch so that you can throw her out of the village and grab her land, or to settle scores, family rivalry, or because powerful men want to punish her for spurning their sexual advances. Sometimes, it is used to punish women who question social norms. (McCoy, 2)

Goody is Parker’s assistant who works to support herself. Her existence is very significant in the play. The dramatist wants to show that when woman is economically strong, then she can manage her life and remain somehow safe. The same thought echoes through the following observation.

For two pounds and our expenses at the inn, you have all that saving, besides knowing you’re free of the threat of sudden illness and death. Yes, it’s interesting work being a searcher and nice to do good at the same time as earning a living. Better than staying home a widow. I’d end up like the old women you see, soft in the head and full of spite with their muttering and spells. (Churchill 168)
The dramatist also wants to depict the fact that the oppressor of woman is not only man, woman also oppresses other woman. Goody, Margery, and Susan became cause of suffering and death of other women. Women can be oppressive to each other. The victim turns victimizer owing to her nurturing.

*Sprenger*: Here are three reasons, first because

*Kramer*: Woman is more credulous and since the aim of the devil is to corrupt faith he attacks them. Second because

*Sprenger*: Women are more impressionable. Third because

*Kramer*: Women have slippery tongues and cannot conceal from other women what by their evil art they know.

*Sprenger*: Women are feeblener in both body and mind so it’s not surprising. (Churchill 177)

Kramer and Sprenger are the witch hunters who believe that women are wicked because they are "more credulous" "more impressionable" and have slippery tongues" (p 177). The weightiest reason, however, for a woman being wicked is her "Carnal lust" which is, according to them, the source of all witchcraft. Sprenger and Kramer believe that for many reasons woman is more likely to perform witchcraft. They insist that woman is weaker to the evil's temptation due to her various weaknesses. According to them, the main reason is that:

....she is more carnal than a man...She was formed a bent of rib/ and so is an imperfect animal (Churchill 177)

Churchill exposes some reasons for women's suffering. It is said that woman is weaker than man not only physically but mentally, emotionally and psychology. Moreover, woman is more sensual and she is weak mind to the devil. She can’t stand in front of the devil's temptation. Such beliefs put woman into the inferior position to the man. Moreover, it is assumed that she is the reason for man's fall. Churchill expresses her
dissatisfaction with the Christian religion through these two characters. They are the most significant means in the play. The characters of Karmer and Sprenger are of the opinion that the rational mentality of woman that rejects oppressions of all sorts is a mental disease and can be cured by the doctrines of religion. Such women are hypnotized by the religious ideology, they are associated with.

In the last scene, when Alice is jailed, she is desperate for getting survive, she makes vain attempt to let out her anger by saying:

I'm not a witch. But I wish I was. If I could live I'd be a witch now after what they've done... Oh if I could meet with the devil now I'd give him anything if he'd give me power. There's no way for us expect by the devil. If I only did have magic, I'd make them feel it (Churchill 175).

This is the only scene that depicts her as being empowered and has some form of control over her own life. The play shows how unconventional women are easily victimized in the patriarchal societies. Churchill effectively makes use of music to depict the worse of woman.

Susan is a poor housewife, mother of three children, and had undergone several miscarriages. Also she is accused of being a witch. She challenges the social and religious code by aborting her child. Packer, the witch hunter, abuses her for murdering the foetus. He states:

..you went to this good witch, and you destroyed the child in your womb by witchcraft, which is a grievous offence. (Churchill 167).

Susan feels guilty about what she has done and declares that:

I was a witch and never knew it. I killed my babies, I never meant it. I didn’t know that I had that mark on me. I’m so wicked. ...if we’re hanged, we’re saved. (Churchill 174)

She internalises the patriarchal notions of women as evil and wicked creatures. She succumbs to their accusation and she accepts that
she is a bad mother and a witch. Moreover, she accuses Alice and Ellen of being witches to the witch hunters saying:

...she [Alice] took me to a cunning woman [Ellen] and they made me take a foul potion to destroy the baby in my womb... and she made a puppet... but that was my baby girl, and the next day she was sick... and she dies (Churchill 167)

Susan accuses them of being witches because they make her drink the potion, which leads to her abortion. Her accusation leads to their death. Her talk shows her traditional ideology. It reflects her unconsciousness. She is unknown of her victimisation. She believes that suffering and oppression is something natural in woman’s life. The notable writer Janelle Reinelt asserts that:

In her conflation of economic and moral codes, Susan shows how women can remain unconscious of their oppression and can victimize themselves and others. The only escape from punishments of torture and death is Betty, the land owner’s daughter. However, while she escapes class oppression, she pays the price of sexual submission: she agrees to marry and become the thing she dreads, “a good wife” (Reinelt 157)

Through this play, the dramatist wants to show how woman is made prisoner through different ideologies. She is made victim. The various forms of oppression do not act separately; they are interconnected to each other forming the patriarchal system. It reflects the various forms of discrimination, humiliation, oppression and marginalisation of woman. It can be said that all these powers are not only constructed by gender, but other factors are contributing and interrelated to form and strengthen the oppression system as race, class. Thus, man dominates woman by practicing various forms of violence.

In the patriarchal society man’s perspectives and contributions are given more value than that of woman’s. Such kind of policy helps to
silence and marginalise woman. Across cultures, religion has been used to oppress woman. It evaluates man and devalues woman. Woman is oppressed due to religious misperception. It can be said that religion plays an important role in shaping a person's perception in the patriarchal society. Man is superior in all religious practices. In 17th century England, church would punish anyone who is believed to be a witch by hanging and burning at the stakes. Churchill attempts to show how religion is used as an instrument to repress and subjugate woman. She points out:

I discovered for the first time the extent of Christian teaching against women and saw the connection between medieval attitudes to witches and continuing attitudes to women in general (Churchill 129)

The ending song in the play Vinegar Tom shows the real face of the hypocritical society. There does not exist a thing like a witch. The rumour in the name has been used to make woman fit for exploitation. Such an imposed identity makes woman voiceless and feeble against the oppressor. Such temper provides legitimacy to the male exploitation of woman. At the same time such a state of mental makeup of both the genders is harmful for the either. Both, man and woman internalise the conventional roles and behave accordingly. Nobody sees it as harmful to herself/ himself and to the society around. As a result, man believes in his superiority as a privilege and woman believes in her inferiority as destiny. Since, woman believes in the superiority of the male, she does not oppose to his moves of oppression. She accepts the ill-treatment of the man, since she believes in his superiority and her inferiority. Acceptance of such an ideology by woman deprives her from all human rights. Her attempts to regain such rights make her evil and witch. On its basis, she is made fit for punishment.

This play includes different voices such as an old beggar widow Joan, a single mother Alice, rebellious girl Betty, and a mother who
miscarries Susan. These women are oppressed by the patriarchy and their economic disadvantages. The dramatist attempts to highlight that there is a close relation between class and gender. Those women accused of practicing witchcraft because of their deviant behaviour, which is against social and patriarchal norms. Their unconventional behaviour such as enjoying sex out of marriage, being alone, poverty, being old, using the right to abortion, healing other women, disobeying parents... etc make them as the easy scapegoats. Due to the double morality standard women have to be incarcerated and persecuted to keep the society pure and secure whereas men go free unpunished and unquestioned.

In patriarchal society, it is not allowed for woman to have a child out of wedlock, or to abort the child, refuse the man her family chosen for her or express her love ...etc. Many roles and regulations woman must follow to be able to live in the patriarchal society. The dramatist attempts to highlight how women’s own experiences, the women’s movement and feminist writing have played the important role in raising women’s consciousness about their oppression. Thus, through this play Churchill wants:

...to illustrate that modern women _women who curse, women who enjoy sex and feel no need for relationships, women brave enough to make their own choices regarding pregnancies, women who are old and alone_ would have been hanged, burned or tortured as witches a few centuries ago. (qtd. in Khozaei 574)

Actually, education plays a very important role in changing the thinking of people in the society. The main concern of education is to liberate the mind from all odd ideologies. Traditional norms are deeply rooted and difficult to mold over night. Besides, women must be aware of their right, value themselves to overcome all injustice norms. Through this play, the dramatist attempts to explore the different forms of oppression such as the oppressive forces of capitalism on working class and middle
class women and the oppressive forces of patriarchy in society. She attempts to dismantle patriarchal ideology in society and improve the woman’s position in society. It depicts woman’s struggle in such societies.

Churchill attempts to highlight the strong relation between class and gender. It is important to understand the external and internal sources that oppress women and determine the relationship between man and woman.

The un-awakened man and woman appear to be the tools for propagating the conventional life. It is important to study the historical factors and conditions that construct and establish the unequal social relations between man and woman. Such analysis will help to create a kind of consciousness and awareness in society. Man attempts to keep woman under his control and uses her for his domestic services. The oppression of woman is everywhere, within and without home. The working woman faces double suffering gender oppression and class exploitation. Woman is conditioned to be accepting rather than questioning. According to Marx analyses of a woman’s oppression inside the family is very essential to understand the woman’s suffering as a whole.

Cloud Nine is considered as one of Churchill’s outstanding plays. It was performed in 1979. It consists of two acts. First act takes place in Colonial Africa during the British rule in the 1870. And the second act sets in London 1979s. Churchill emphasizes the central theme of gender and racial discrimination by using different settings. Through the deconstruction of linear time, the dramatist tends to portray how gender is constructed throughout history. Besides, it highlights the woman’s position at different time. It is about gender politics, women issues and social power system. The dramatist attempts to unsettle the gender identities determined by the patriarchal ideology. It shows how gender is constructed according to the interests of the patriarchal agents. It portrays
the artificial concept of gender. Besides, it explains how gender is shaped through the repetition of various acts. How an individual is suppressed within the patriarchal regulation is successfully highlighted. The close reading of the play suggests how woman challenges the central position of man within the patriarchal society.

Cloud Nine depicts a great challenge against the human tendencies in theatrical representation. In this play, the dramatist tries to show the hidden picture of society by using some techniques. By using some theatrical devices such as cross gender- cross racial and cross generations the dramatist tries to challenge the fixed norms that enforced on society. Act one begins with the white father Clive who attempts to control the rebellious natives. Clive is the head of the family, who rules his family and the African domestic help with his patriarchal and racial tendencies. He is a representative of the two forces that spoils domestic peace and social harmony. His biased nature reflects through his utterance, thus:

This is my family. Though far from home
We serve the Queen wherever we may roam
I am a father to the natives here,
And father to my family so dear (Churchill 251)

Clive is the embodiment of the patriarchal and racist mentality. He wanted everyone around him to be a passive follower of these two powers. He forces women to surrender for his physical pleasure. It is, therefore, Kritizer, a well-known writer commenting on this issue reflected in the plays of Churchill, says:

.....lack of ability to express sexual desires directly characterizes those with little power (Kritzer 117)

Betty, Clive's wife is played by a male actor in the first act. As kritizer points out:

.....makes gender visible by separating feminine gender from the female body (Kritzer 113)
The sexual relationship between a man and a woman is effectively highlighted throughout the play. Man as the patriarchal agent is fit to rule. He has all rights to govern and control everything around him. On other hand, woman has to obey. She is totally ruled by him. Woman is subjugated from their birth until their death. Besides, a woman should associate with a man. Thus, they should marry and be a mother. Without marriage, her very existence is impossible. It gives space to her. These are the orientations she is trapped in. All her energies and potentials have been exhausted by fitting herself in these stereotypes. This is the central thread around which the plot of Cloud Nine revolves. The play highlights how gender is constructed within the patriarchal society. The upbringing of the children is done with adhering to the gender discriminative attitude of the parents. The boy is raised with a liberal mentality whereas the girl is raised in restricted zone. In course of time, it affects the gender roles of the concerned. The person in course of time internalises the specific role as a natural thing. The dramatist uses the cross gender roles (cross-dressing) to construct a fully male-defined female gender, destitute to everything feminine even physical presence of the female body. It seems that, Betty indirectly internalises the patriarchal values as she introduces herself as man creation saying:

    I am a man’s creation as you see,
    And what men want is what I want to be. (Churchill 251)

Clive occupies a central position in all social relations. Betty stands for the absence of woman in the patriarchal society. The well-known writer Elin Diamond points out that:

    The point is not that the male is feminized but that the female is absent. What remains is a dress, a palpitation, a scream, all encoded female behaviours adding up to a trace denoting absent. The woman Betty is not represented; she lacks symbolisation in culture. (Diamond 97)
Churchill represents woman-lacking individuality. Woman is controlled and mastered by her male in the patriarchal society. Man is designer and maker of woman. Betty’s intention is to meet her husband expectations as she declares:

I live for Clive. The whole aim of my life
Is to be what he looks for in a wife (Churchill 251)

Furthermore, their daughter Victoria is played by a dummy, which absolutely represents the social norms, imposed on female. It illustrates the social inequality practiced by the agents of patriarchy. The dramatist dehumanizes Victoria’s character to show how patriarchy reduces female to an object. In the Victorian age woman was deprived from all rights. She is marginalised and denied a voice. In act one, woman has been shown weak, victimized and mutely following the patriarchal norms.

Clive strives throughout the act one to vindicate and control the world he wants to have- a traditional family, a faithful wife, a manly son, obedient servant, mistress….etc

My wife is all I dreamt a wife should be,
And everything she is she owes to me. (Churchill 251)

The dramatist highlight the fact that woman is ranked inferior to man even if he is a servant. When Betty complains about the black servant Joshua to Clive, he pretends that he scolds him and asks him to obey Betty. Actually, he winks at him secretly. He doesn’t take her complain into his consideration. This incident shows that women are inferior even to their male servant. Man is ranked to a high position than women even if he is a black and servant.

The dramatist portrays Clive’s attempts to construct his son’s identity. He introduces him into the traditional zone of male behaviour. He attempts to incorporate Edward into the male circle. His intention is to secure his son’s manliness by using different ways such as he tries to
associate him with the conventional male world of aggression and cruelty. Clive declares his responsibility to teach his son how to grow as a man saying:

My son is young. I’m doing all I can
To teach him to grow up to be a man. (Churchill 252).

Edward is learning how to be a hard man then automatically he will be able to perform his gender appropriately. So, social norms force the individuals to perform their gender-coded behaviours. As the agent of patriarchy, all traditional norms are embodied in Clive. His authority over his son gives him the right to direct his son’s behaviour the way he believes fit to his biological sex. Edward internalises the code of masculinity through his father. In other words, the patriarchal code forces him to be like his father, nevertheless he finds it is very difficult to act as they want him to be saying:

What father wants I’d dearly like to be.
I find it rather hard as you can see. (Churchill 252)

Gender is not a natural act rather then it is a matter of learning. Clive tries to force Edward to acquire the manhood codes by eliminating any feminine act. For example, Edward playing with his sister’s doll seems unacceptable because dolls are associated with girls not boys. In this regard the notable feminist Diane Elam in her book Feminist and Deconstruction points out:

Woman might refer to more than a biological female, man to more than a biological male.....There is no natural or justifiable reason why one toilet or group of people should be called “Ladies” and the other “Gentlemen” Nor is there any a priori justification for enforcing this division. Rather, enforcement is justified through a number of social conventions. (Elam 46)

Edward attempts to be a woman though he is a man is an important indication to prove that gender is performed and his identity is culturally
constructed. In spite of his father’s lectures about concept of manhood; he prefers to be a woman. Clive scolds his son since he plays with a doll. Edward on his part tries to justify his action saying, he is minding the doll for his sister. Though he knows well that his behaviour is not acceptable in the patriarchal society, he can’t control his irregular behaviour and tries to justify it. As the patriarchal agent, Clive attempts to make his son’s behaviour of playing with a doll is acceptable to the gender’ norms. As he justifies it saying: “...manly of you Edward, to take care of your little sister.” (Churchill 257)

Woman internalises the patriarchal norms and she constructs her children performance accordingly. Betty also scolds Edward for holding the doll as it is considered as a feminine act.

Well I should give it to Ellen quickly. You don’t want papa to see you with a doll. (Churchill 257)

Betty as a mother tries to constitute her son to behave according to his gender. Clive wants to immobilise Edward’s gender diversity and shapes it in the direction of masculinity codes. He as a patriarchal agent encourages and discourages his son to perform his constructed role in society. For example, he allows him to drink champagne to encourage his sense of masculinity.

Edward : Can I have some?
Maud : Oh no Edward, not for you.
Clive : Give him half a glass.
Maud : If your father says so. (Churchill 264)

Clive uses some ways to make his son acquire the manhood codes. In a patriarchal society, femininity is associated with coyness and boldness with masculinity. Clive scolds his son for being soft, as butterfingers when he couldn’t catch the ball. And when the situation comes Edward tries to perform what he has learned and practices his masculinity. For example,
Edward tries to protect his mother from the black servant’s ignorance and misbehaviour. He scolds Joshua for not obeying his mother’s orders.

**Betty** : Joshua, fetch me some blue thread from my sewing box. It is on the piano.

**Joshua** : You’ve got legs under that skirt.

**Betty** : Joshua.

**Joshua** : And more than legs.

**Betty** : Edward, are you going to stand there and let a servant insult your mother?

**Edward** : Joshua, get my mother’s thread.

**Joshua** : Oh little Eddy, playing at master. It’s only a joke.

**Edward** : Don’t speak to my mother like that again.

**Joshua** : Ladies have no sense of humour. You like a joke with Joshua (Churchill 278)

Edward represents the body of masculinity. His expression of gender is fixed within the patriarchal culture. According to the patriarchal norms, man should be able to protect woman. He must be in a position of power whereas women don’t. Betty as a conventional mother makes Edward lead the situation to encourage his masculinity sense. He pretends the authority of the master and orders Joshua to obey his mother. His mimicry exposes the artificiality of gender concept. Churchill proves that gender is acquired through imitation and repetition. The renowned feminist writer Butler notes that:

...such acts, gestures, enactments, generally construed, are performative in the sense that the essence or identity that they otherwise purport to express are fabrications manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means (Butler 417)

Mrs. Saunders comes to Clive’s house searching for protection. She is a rich widow. Mrs. Saunders unlike Betty is an assertive liberated and independent woman. Clive tries to make sexual advantage of her. He
treats her as an object of desire. This shows how man tries to use every chance to exploit woman. She comes to seek protection from the disobedient natives. Clive confidently tells her that she would be in danger if he doesn’t protect her. However, she doesn’t feel afraid to challenge Clive’s opinion as she dears to reject his advancement. Afterwards, Clive leaves Mrs. Saunders unsatisfied after getting his satisfaction. He doesn’t cares for her feeling because he believes in man superiority and woman inferiority. Therefore, he cares only about his needs and desires ignoring hers. The same ideology gives man the right to use and abuse woman. Clive tells Mrs. Saunders that: “You terrify me. You are dark like this continent. Mysterious, Treacherous” (Churchill 263) Clive considers her as a woman with a hidden danger. She is described as the deceitful and dangerous being.

Betty tells her mother that she feels bored at home as she has nothing to do at home but waiting for her husband who is busy in his own work. As a mother, she gives her daughter some advices to observe patience and be a good wife. It is a set of rules and norms. For instance,

Betty you have to learn to be patient. I am patient. My mama was very patient. (Churchill 258)

This remark echoes the structure of gender performance in the patriarchal society. There is a sort of repetition of the views passed down generations that indicates it is not a singular act. It is a set of rules and norms. Like Clive, Maud is the representative of the traditional norms of society. She is the spokesperson for the patriarchal norms. She warns her daughter to not interfere in her husband’s business. Moreover, she links the state of submissiveness with the feminine codes and the state of having power with the masculine code, which assumes gender as not real identity but a social construct. Maud, the mother, internalises the patriarchal norms. Blindly, she believes in man’s potentialities. She puts it forth, thus:
Clive knows what is happening. Clive will know what to do. Your father always knew what to do. (Churchill 274)

Woman internalises the patriarchal policy and treats it as a fact. She believes in man's superiority and her inferiority. Maud believes that Clive knows everything because he is a man. She values man and devalues woman. When Edward says Victoria doesn't like her doll, she announces that Victoria will learn to play with it. She demonstrates that gender is performed and acquired. It isn't something natural but it is something to be acquired and constructed. This play highlights several issues under patriarchy, especially man-woman and parent-child relationships which are shaped and constructed by the patriarchal norms. Joan Mill claims that:

All women are brought up from the very earliest years in the belief that their ideal of character is the very opposite to that of men; not self-will, and government by self-control, but submission, and yielding to the control of others. (qtd. in Ball 46)

In the act two the characters appear free to express their desires, free to use language to express their demands. There is a shift in setting from home to the park, from private to the public place. The actions take place in a park which indicates that there is some sort of liberation to express such issues at public place. The dramatist highlights the possibilities for changes in society. She focuses on the issues of gender and sexuality. Churchill depicts the major changes in the second act, change in society, its mentality and approach towards sexual liberation. The characters appear to speed up their process of emancipation. Betty in the second act is played by a woman. It indicates the changes in her life and how she becomes real to herself. In act one Clive was totally responsible for the driving action. Everything was under his control. Whereas Betty was unable to act according to her wish and desires. In act two, the dramatist depicts sexual liberation and attempts for independence. Clive is
the central character in the act one whereas Betty is the central character in act two. Betty now becomes involved in her quest for her individuality. It is assumed that man is not only the oppressor of woman but class, race and culture are the association with him.

Lin represents the unconventional mother who attempts to bring up her daughter Cathy according to her own way. She asks Cathy to paint a car and blood everywhere. She wants her daughter to paint the things which is traditionally associated with the manliness gender. She wants to make her daughter aggressive, rebellious, cruel and brave. Churchill attempts through Lin’s character to turn the established norms upside down. Lin tries to teach her how to be active, aware of her right. The mother tells her daughter not to submit to any oppression. Lin believes that gender is not internal identity but it is acquired. She encourages her to perform against the traditional established norms in society. She wants her daughter to acquire the masculine codes. Her action indicates that the masculine gender can be acquired by a female performatively.

The way she brings up her daughter indicates her rebellion against the traditional established gender norms. She wants to bring up her daughter in a different way than that of her one. She allows her to play with gun. According to the patriarchal norms, gun is associated with the male as the toy is associated with the female gender. In the first act one Edward is not allowed to play with his sister’s toy as it is for girls. In act two Lin encourages her daughter to play with the gun and everything masculine.

Don’t hit him, Cathy, kill him. Point the gun, kiou, kiou, kiou. That’s the way. (Churchill 291)

The mother encourages her daughter to be equal to other male children playing in the park. She lets her wear jeans, acts as a boy. However, Cathy is teased by the boys when she tries to play with them.
Her presence is not encouraged and welcomed. Besides, they treated her as a protrusive and snoop thing. Thus, Cathy wants to wear frocks to be acceptable. Cathy fluctuates between feminine and masculine norms. Obviously, clothes increase the confusion and complexity to the sexual difference. Wearing jeans is indicator of the masculine gender. Similarly, wearing frocks indicates the feminine gender. Clothes somehow act to determine one’s gender. Line doesn’t want her daughter to wear frocks, earring, neck less... etc. She wants to reject the femininity in her daughter’s appearance. So, gender is constructed as a result of such acts and gestures. Butler claims that:

There is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very ‘expressions’ that are said to be its results. (qtd. in Litosseliti 26)

The mother constructs her daughter’s identity as a rude person; she tries to change the false ideology of womanhood that woman has to be soft, voiceless, submissive, and polite. She attempts to defy the constructed roles of the individual. The relation of mother-daughter is discussed differently throughout the play.

Lin : Oh! Cathy what happened?
Betty : She’s been assaulted.
Victoria : It’s a nosebleed.
Cathy : Took my ice cream.
Cathy : They hit me. I can’t play. They said I’m a girl.
Betty : Those dreadful boys, the gang, the Dead Hand. (Churchill 317)

Lin believes that gender is something to be learned and acquired. She considers gender as something not real and an artificial concept. Thus, she encourages her daughter to perform the acts that can be the manifestations of masculinity. The way she attempts to raise her daughter indicates her rebellious action on the established norms. She rebels against
the constructed gender norms. She doesn’t want her daughter to be submissive, afraid of gun and blood. It indicates the artificiality of male gender and it can be acquired by a girl performance. Lin tries to defy the stereotypical representation of girl. She attempts to change the current patriarchal norms.

The women characters are learned and tamed to perform their gender specific roles according to their biological sex. Churchill considers the body is a place of gender representation. Her plays depict the woman’s oppression in the patriarchal society and her marginalisation by the entire system. The purpose of the representation of woman and other marginal groups is to explore new possibilities to deal with them and accept their differences. In act two Betty, begins to value herself as independent woman. She separates herself from dominations in her life. She gives importance to her own feeling and desires without feeling guilty. She becomes real to her own identity. Betty from act one comes and embraces Betty from act two. They become one. Kritzer states in this regard that:

The embrace does not integrate past and present or the two characters. Rather, it shows that Betty of Act Two now feels herself, for the first time, to be separate from her Act One self, but acknowledges as well their continuing oneness. (Kritzer 127)

The final scene of the play throws light on the inevitability of coexistence between man and woman. Together they can find meaning in life and not throw separation. The relationship, provided, be based on mutual respect and understanding.

Certainly, Cloud Nine challenges the conventional ways of performing the gender notions, norms, laws, behaviours, taboos and values which are constructed by the patriarchy and its agents. Act two could be considered as a completely different act in terms of gender liberation. Victoria becomes a flesh and blood individual. She begins to
become true to herself. Likewise, Edward becomes able to express and enjoy his life the way he wants. In other words, all previously demonized actions in act 1 become freely and openly expressed. The play focuses on many issues related to history, race, class and gender. It aims to empower the individual to accept and respect different people around. Churchill chooses to end Cloud Nine with an open-ended scene, thereby empowering the reader to be dynamic and take some active actions for exploring new possibilities for better changes. She tries to make her readers recover what is intentionally hidden.

Top Girls (1982) portrays a clear picture of woman’s world. The aim of this play is to investigate the oppressive forces of patriarchy on woman throughout history. It gives a real depiction on the position of woman in male-dominated societies and her vain struggle against the oppressive patriarchal agents. Through six female characters, Churchill skilfully represents sixteen different female characters. She depicts the different ways of woman’s experience and life. She tries to picture women’s world in present and in the past. The central theme goes around Marlene who is a symbol of gender equality and liberation at the work place. Through this play, the dramatist attempts to show different kinds of experiences that woman was and is experienced. Churchill through this play attempts to explore many aspects of woman’s life throughout history. She uses different techniques and violates the chronological order of time and place. Different female characters from different chronological background are invited to celebrate Marlene’s promotion as a managing director. She aims to depict different situations faced by different characters at different times and places. These “symbolise the exploitation of women throughout the ages, providing the perspective for evaluating the contemporary model of success in Marlene” (Innes 465). Churchill portrays how women try to survive in the patriarchal system.
This play consists of three acts, act one shows a celebration of dinner party arranged by Marlene with five historical women characters. Act two depicts the official life of Marlene and her colleagues at the work place. Act three takes place a year earlier at Joyce’s home. In act one these strange characters gather to celebrate Marlene’s success. Though they are from different time and place, they resemble in their experience of humiliation and subjection. They all are exploited and victimized by the same system. All of them attempt to violate the patriarchal system either by adopting or by revolting against it.

Marlene is the central character in the play; she experiences the domestic violence from her early childhood. She suffers because her mother is being abused by her father. At the same time her mother doesn’t show any opposition to overcome such ill treatment. Like many voiceless women, her mother doesn’t consider such mistreatment as something unnatural. To her it is normal for a wife. So this acceptance and blind obedience encourages the husband to continue with his brutality as part of his right. Such unhealthy environment leaves a great impression on the children’s mind and identity. Marlene decides not to be like her mother.

Marlene is the representation of the new, liberated and modern woman. Though Marlene and Joyce are sisters and grown up in the same environment, they choose to live differently. Joyce symbolises the traditional woman who doesn’t try to enjoy none of the benefits yielded by the women’s liberation movement. She prefers to remain as a hard-working laborer woman.

**Joyce** : You said Mother had a wasted life.

**Marlene** : Yes I do. Married to that bastard..... I don’t want to talk about him.

**Joyce** : You started, I was talking about her. She had a rotten life because she had nothing. She went hungry.
Marlene: She was hungry because he drank the money. He used to hit her…. She didn’t hit him…. I had to get out, .....I knew when I was thirteen, out of their house, out of them, never let that happen to me, never let him, make my own way, out. (Churchill 138)

Marlene’s father is a stereotyped male in the society. On the other hand, her mother represents the traditional woman in the patriarchal society where she has to be submissive, obedient and weak. Marlene decides to change her fate as a working class woman. She left her house at the age of thirteen. She attempts to free herself from the control of the male over her, the abusive father and society at large. Though she hates her father as an aggressive man in the patriarchal society, she doesn’t hate all men as she becomes pregnant at the age of seventeenth. Marlene doesn’t want to get married and become one like her mother. She decides to give her baby to her married sister Joyce. She doesn’t want to be tied to the domestic duty and responsibility of being mother. To her, her pregnancy may tie her down to the domestic life and spoil all her future plans to be independent and successful woman. Through such decision she attempts to escape from the traditional norms imposed on woman by the institution of marriage. It authorizes the male (husband) to dominate, abuse, exploit and practice all forms of domestic violence against the woman (wife). Though Marlene appears powerful and confident, she sometimes gets trapped by the existence and feels repent once over her experience in life. Through her conversation with her sister, she reveals that she has some feeling of guilt towards her own daughter and about her future as a woman.

I’ve had two abortions, are you interested? Shall I tell you about them? Well I won’t, it’s boring, it wasn’t a problem. I don’t like messy talk about blood/ and what a bad .....time we all had. I don’t want a baby. I don’t want to talk about gynaecology. (Churchill 135)
This utterance expresses her feeling about the baby. It is a sense of objection, as she is unsatisfied with the entire system. She is against all the unjust codes in the name of social and biological forms, where woman alone has to bear the consequences of a sexual relation. Besides, man doesn’t show any kind of responsibility. Moreover, woman has to suffer the feeling of guilt, shame whereas man is free from all these feelings. In other words, woman has to suffer double privately and publicly. Marlene is an example of this sort of existence. By giving her child to her sister, she wishes to reconstruct her life afresh.

The strange characters who attend the dinner in act one are Marlene, Pope Joan, Griselda, Isabella Bird, Lady Nijo and Dull Gret. Joan represents the ninth century when woman was considered as subordinate and second-class citizen. She had no right to educate. Joan as an ambitious girl violates the patriarchal system to get knowledge and be successful in life. She disguises herself as a boy to be able to enter the church and school. She acquired a lot of knowledge and she could occupy the top position in the Church. Her success indicates that woman also can achieve things of her choice. She can even perform better than man. Joan’s becoming the pope testifies it. The patriarchal system supports man’s superiority over woman. In such system woman is not allowed to occupy such reserved position and be in a place of power. By becoming a pope she got the power to deconstruct the system. As a Pope she gets the authority to do everything, even change the truth, she tells Marlene

I had thought the Pope would know everything. I thought God would speak to me directly. But of course he knew I was a woman..... And I realised I did know the truth. Because whatever the Pope says, that’s true..... Yes, I enjoyed being Pope. I consecrated bishops and let people kiss my feet. I received the King of England when he came to submit to the church. Unfortunately there were earthquakes, and some village reported it had drained blood, and in France there was a plague of giant grasshoppers, but I don’t think that can have been my fault, do you?..... The grasshoppers
fell on the English Channel and were washed up on shore and their bodies rotted and poisoned the air and everyone in those parts died. (Churchill 68-69)

Her expression suggests her victory over the patriarchal system. She suspects that God will never talk to her since she is a woman. A woman is not supposed to dare and be in such reserved position. It made her conclude that all the natural disasters had happened as a punishment to her as she dared to achieve what was not expected by a woman. Thus, it can be assumed that all institutions are constructed for man’s benefit. For example church as the most holy place is constructed to support masculinity. She succeeds to defeat all barriers and proves that woman can occupy position. Though she achieves her goal and becomes a Pope, unconsciously she internalises the patriarchal norms. She holds herself responsible for every bad thing that had happened. Her ignorance and little knowledge about her body as a woman constructed her tragic downfall. In the patriarchal society woman is punished and man is set free. The pope can have children simply because he doesn’t give birth to them. The physical weakness of woman makes her inferior to a man since her body will show the result of the action. Woman’s action makes her naturally responsible for it. Hence, she deserves the social and natural punishment. On the other hand, man is free from any responsibility; no one asks or blames him for any action because he is superior. Joan protests about all such unjust norms against her as a woman, which is the result of her biological weakness saying “If it hadn’t been for the baby I expect I’d have lived to an old age like Theodora of Alexandria. Who lived as a monk.”(p 69) It explores how her physical form has sealed her tragic destiny. In the patriarchal society, sex can determine the individual’s worth and destiny rather than talent, hard working and intelligence. Joan suffers the consequences of the physical relationship alone. The physical form of woman makes her inferior to man and liable for social
punishment. Joan protests against the entire system where human being face all unjust based on the individual’s gender.

Griselda is another character representing the 13th century life. She is from poor family and got married to Marquis. She got unusual chance to be the Marquis’s wife and enjoyed wealth and higher position in the society. The dramatist attempts to highlight the difference and consequences of being obedient and of being rebel in the patriarchal society through the characters of Joan and Griselda.

Griselda: And he came and spoke to my father..... My father could hardly speak. The Marquis said it wasn’t an order, I could say no, but if I said yes I must always obey him in everything.

Marlene: That’s when you should have suspected.

Griselda: But of course a wife must obey her husband. And of course I must obey the Marquis. I’d rather obey the Marquis than a boy from the village. (Churchill 77)

In a patriarchal society woman is tamed to obey their husband and follow all norms unconditionally. The Marquis asks for the complete obedience. She accepts all Marquis’s conditions because she considers it as something natural and a man’s right. Though she becomes Marquis’s wife, her status would never be equal to her husband because of her gender and her class. The ideal woman should obey her husband without any questions. Griselda’s husband asks her to prove her loyalty to him by allowing her children to be killed. She doesn’t have any other option but to obey him. When her husband takes her children away she doesn’t show any kind of objection from her side. Such an acceptance shows that woman considers her man as something more important than her children and her own life.

The patriarchal society gives the father right to do whatever he wants with his wife and children “It was Walter’s child to do what he
liked with...... I had promised...... He wanted to see if I loved him enough”. (Churchill 77) Further, the husband lets her go to her father home and prepare for his new marriage. Griselda obeys him in everything, and she didn’t show any kind of objection towards all unjust treatments meted out to her. Therefore, it can be assumed that woman like Griselda has participated to strength the existence of the patriarchal structure. Her submission to her husband’s will without any questioning indicates her helplessness since she considers it something natural. She finds the system strongly rooted in the psyche of society. Finally, she is rewarded after passing all tests, and proved her loyalty and obedience. “And he stayed behind and put his arms round me and kissed me. I felt half asleep with shock..... Well I fainted. Then I cried and kissed the children..... of course, I loved them.” (Churchill 79)

The patriarchal system maintains its power by using punishment and rewarding. Griselda is rewarded for her obedience. However, she has to suffer psychologically to get her husband’s favour and rewards at the end. The same thing happened to lady Nijo, the Japanese woman of the thirteen century. Her father sent her to serve the ex-emperor at the age of fourteen.

**Nijo** : ....then the time came I did nothing but cry. My thin gown were badly ripped.....

**Marlene** : Are you saying he raped you?

**Nijo** : No, of course not, Marlene. I belonged to him, it was what I was brought for from a baby. I soon found I was sad if he stayed away. It was depressing day after day not knowing when he would come. I never enjoyed taking other women to him..... my father was a very religious man. Just before he died he said to me, ‘Serve His Majesty, be respectful, if you lose his favour enter holy orders.(Churchill 56-57)
Since the early childhood, parents start teaching their daughter how to be obedient, respectful, and submissive to her husband and how to consider the husband as everything for her. In other words, they construct their daughter’s inferiority and tragic life. Like Nijo, her father as a religious man teaches her to do everything the Emperor wants unconditionally. He orders her to be respectful and obedient to receive his favours. Woman’s life is decided by her father then by her husband. She doesn’t have the right to decide her life the way she wants.

Lady Nijo thinks that the life she is leading, the oppression, the subjection and all the bad experiences she had gone through is something natural in woman’s life. In the patriarchal society, man has all rights to do whatever he wants with his woman. So, Nijo sees the emperor’s oppression as something natural and part of his right. She violates the system by taking another lover as a revenge on the entire system. This system empowers man to have many women and at the same time illegalises woman to do so. Nijo thinks that she is taking revenge by cheating the emperor. Noticeably, she is the one who suffers psychologically and physically from her deed because she lost her children.

...My first child was His Majesty’s, which unfortunately died, but my second was Akebono’s... Now His Majesty hadn’t been near me for two months so he thought I was four months pregnant when I was really six, so when I reached the ninth month I announced I was seriously ill..... It was only a girl but I was sorry to lose it. Then I told the emperor that the baby had miscarried because of my illness, and there you are. The danger was past. (Churchill 70)

Her utterance indicates her devaluation as woman. She internalises the patriarchal policy and she victimizes herself and others. The patriarchal values permit man to do whatever he wants to and forbids woman. Woman should be a symbol of purity. When Nijo takes other
lovers secretly; she expresses her objection to the entire system she lives in. She is helpless to resist it because it is too strong to uproot or change. Her deeds can be understood as unconscious protest against the injustice values in the patriarchal society. The double standards of the morality are applied biased. Nijo bears the mark of her deed since she becomes pregnant. Thus, she has to scarify her child to save her position. This baby may end her life as the emperor’s woman and as a respectable woman in the society. So, she has to pay for her action. She doesn’t have any option but to suppress her affection for the survival of the baby. Her question to Griselda about her feeling when her children were taken away from her reveals her dilemma. “But did you feel anything for them... Did you feel anything for the children?..... Nobody gave me back my children” (Churchill 79). She wishes to know what is Griselda’s feeling when her husband took her children away from her. Noticeably, she feels jealous of Griselda who can get her children back. From these two experiences of Nijo and Griselda, it can be said that Griselda remains submissive and obedient so she is rewarded. Besides, she can get her children back and live with respect and love from her husband and society. On the other hand, Nijo has dared to go against the system so she is punished. She is deprived of her children, her lovers and everything she has and finally she has to live alone as a nun.

Such stories aim to strengthen the system and implant the desirable and undesirable qualities in a woman in the patriarchal society. Isabella is another female character who Marlene introduces as the Victorian traveler. The ideal woman of the Victorian time is supposed to circle around home and family. They do domestic and charity works. It is unnatural for women during the Victorian times to practice any activities outside the home. By her father’s death, Isabella becomes free from the male domination in her life.
Whenever I came back to England I felt I had so much to atone for..... I did no good in my life. I spent years in self-gratification. So I hurled myself into committees, I nursed the people of Tobermory I lectured the Young women’s Christian Association on Thrift. .....My travels must do good to someone beside myself. I wore myself out with good causes. (Churchill 72)

Home is the expected place for women. Isabella tries to fit with the conventional norms in the society, but she finds it too hard since she has health problems. So, she starts her journey again as soon as her husband dies. With his death, she sets out on a journey that will lead her to a sense of fulfilment. She travels and gets a lot of experience of this world. But she could not set herself free from the patriarchal ideology that moulds every woman’s psyche. Though Isabella seems free from the male supremacy in her life, unconsciously she still appears trapped in the conventional norms. Furthermore, she feels unsatisfied with herself because she dares to break the constructed norms. She considers the enjoyments of life are not meant for woman. By violating norms, she feels guilty.

Dull Gret is an important female character in the play, who articulates less and believes in action. To her thinking and speaking for the rights of the woman is not as important as the action for the same. Hers is a case of a woman who doesn’t complain against the oppressors; instead, wish to work out the action plan. It is her believe that action yields fruits

We’d all had family killed. My big son die on a wheel. Birds eat him. My baby, a soldier run her through with a sword. I’d had enough, I was mad, I hate the bastards. I come out of my front door that morning and shout till my neighbours come out and I said, “Come on, we’re going where the evil come from and pay the bastards out.’ And they come out just as they was..... I’ve got a sword in my hand from somewhere .....You just keep running on and fighting you didn’t stop for nothing. Oh we give them devils such a beating. (Churchill 82)
Through her last utterance, she hints at the answer to all issues related to woman. To her, nothing can be changed through crying and regretting. The problems can be changed only through action and unity. There is no guarantee that the action will yield victory, but its continuation is essential.

There are several similarities between these six characters. They live in the patriarchal society and try to survive by using different strategies. Though they are aware of their right in the patriarchal society, they are subjugated, exploited and paid for their successes. Marlene achieves her success by scarifying her motherhood, giving her daughter away and her family. She pursues her success in the patriarchal society and attains personhood. Griselda has to scarify her children and her emotion to be an ideal woman and to keep her social status. Nijo also sacrifices her children for the social status. Isabella pays with her comfort and feeling. Gret scarifies all her children. The question that remains unresolved whether the satisfactory achieved is worth the sacrifice. Are they satisfied with their successes? When Marlene asks “Oh God, why are we all so miserable? (Churchill 72) It suggests that in spite of all the sacrifices, no one of them feels satisfied and happy with what they have achieved. The play is viewed as anti - feminist. It is, therefore, Ashton, a well known writer commenting on this issue reflected in Top Girls play, thus:

Critics have sometimes questioned the ideological purpose of Marlene, or Top Girls in general, asking whether to read Marlene and the play as a celebration of women’s achievements or a critique of bourgeois feminism? (Aston 40)

Churchill depicts the negative effects when woman breaks the norms. Furthermore, she attempts to illustrate through the experiences of those women characters that the patriarchal system has existed since centuries and passed down to the generations. It is supported by religion and flourishes with the marriage institution. Thus, marriage is considered
as the institution where woman is subjugated and oppressed. She has to abide by rules to remain relevant and acceptable in a patriarchal society. To overcome such marginalisation, woman should be aware of her position in the society. Moreover, she must rethink and re-examine her way of struggling against all odd norms in the society. Likewise Churchill attempts to highlight the importance of unity among women to achieve their liberation. They must know that individual struggle will never and ever, uproot and defeat the unjust system. Since the system is deeply rooted. To attack such well constructed system, woman should be conscious about her capacities and identities. She has to reject the pro-male social structure. The blind imitation of the oppressive structure is of no use to her. She has to reconstruct a new one.

When Marlene gets the chance to be in the position of power, she tends to practice her power over the powerless victims. For example, at the workplace she shows her dominating nature when she interviews another woman. Though the interviewed woman has a lot of talent than the job required and needed, Marlene smashes her hope, capacity and talents by appointing her in a section wherein her ability and talent are of no use. This is because there is a lack of sisterhood. Through this play Churchill depicts the negative effects when woman follows man's strategies for achieving success as she is “adopting exactly those aggressive and predatory values which have for centuries oppressed women” (Innes 466) Moreover, Marlene appears as a cruel woman when she was talking to Mrs. Kidd the man’s counterpart wife. When Marlene promoted, Mrs. Kidd, tells her how this incident has a bad effect on her husband’s mind. Marlene shows her careless and tells her he can leave the place if it is hard for him to accept her as a manager. Mrs. Kidd represents the traditional woman. She internalises the patriarchal norms. She accepts as true man’s superiority over woman. She emphasizes that her husband deserves to be promoted rather than Marlene only because he is a male. In her opinion,
Marlene should give man the priority otherwise; she will be unnatural to the established norms. Moreover, man has the right to be superior not only at home but also at the work place. Marlene proves her ability as she could take on a traditionally male profession. She achieved advancement at the work place. Brutally, she has defeated all male companions.

Woman is considered as a second-class citizen at private and public spheres. Her gender makes her illegible for equality. Her education, experience, patient and sacrifice, don’t give her identity. Mrs. Kidd and her husband don’t want to accept Marlene’s promotion. This incident shows that man is not the only villain in a man dominated society. Woman also appears as the main enemy of woman.

The oppressive forces of patriarchy have distorted the healthy relationship between not only man and woman but also the relationship between women to woman. There seems to be a solid relationship between patriarchy with religion, class, caste and culture. The life of a woman is surrounded by these allies of patriarchy they leave no space for woman where she could breathe. It suggests that when woman attains power position, she practices her power in discriminating other women. This play aims to investigate the oppressive forces of patriarchy on women throughout history.

The position of woman in male-dominated society and her ‘vain struggle against the oppressive patriarchal agents is effectively highlighted. In spite of the accomplishments women characters appear that they are still submissive, helpless, full of confusion, and don’t have real direction in their lives.

The image of woman that emerges through the works of Churchill is promising as well as discouraging. The awakened woman who decides to walk on the path of her choice is discouraged and trapped by the traditional networks designed and executed by patriarchy. The women
characters of Churchill, at the initial stage appear to be confident and self-reliant. The character like Betty in Cloud Nine, who designs her image on her own, achieves success and leads life without man. The experience of Betty conveys the idea that a life of fulfilment is possible only through a positive relationship between man and woman. At the end of the play, she seems to have arrived to the conclusion that a woman's life without man is empty. The play conveys the idea that man and woman are not contradictory to each other but complimentary. The unconventional women meet tragic end since they challenged the conventional mentality of society and patriarchy. The social class of the woman also plays an important role in designing her identity and acceptability. The women characters in Top Girls prosper in life in the fields they were interested in. The achievements in their lives, at the end, convert them with the reality that they need a protective zone. The women seem hypnotized by the age old traditions and customs wherein woman was placed in. Theirs is a journey begins from nowhere to nowhere.
REFERENCES


Jane Sunderland and Lia Litosseliti. Gender Identity and Discourse Analysis: Theoretical and Empirical Considerations. In Gender Identity and


