CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Introduction

In the course of this thesis, we have analyzed two works of Manju Kapur—A Married Woman (2002), Difficult Daughters (1998) and two works of Anita Nair—The Better Man (1999), Ladies Coupé (2001) in the light of feminist theories. Through analyzing the novels the researcher has attempted to answer these questions: How do women in Manju Kapur and Anita Nair’s works define themselves in marriage? How do these works portray the influence of patriarchy? Do their works describe the self-centered nature of the man and the passiveness of the female? And do they encourage our understanding in terms of issue of gender?

Although our concern is the Indian women and feminism in India, because of common issues among women all over the world a number of Western feminist thinkers are taken into consideration. In this thesis feminist thinkers are categorized into two groups—Western and Indian. The feminists in the Western group are Simone de Beauvoir, Betty Friedan, Luce Irigaray and Elaine Showalter.

Simone de Beauvoir (1974) has adopted the ontological and ethical claims of existentialism through her study. She says from the beginning man has named himself the Self and women the Other, and because Other is a threat to Self, man subordinates Other. Conversations with John Paul Sartre made her to understand the differences between being born a woman and being born a man. She later on wrote The Second Sex.
(1974) which deals with the condition of women in the broadest terms. Throughout the 1950’s, it was the only book that showed the hypocrisies of patriarchal ideology. The problem with this book is that the ideas like existence, Being-for-Itself and Being-in-Itself do not arise directly out of women’s lived experience. These are abstractions that arise from philosopher’s speculations.

In The Second Sex (1974), the women’s body is often taken to be something negative, unfortunate, insignificant, dirty, shameful and burdensome. She sees that women’s individuality is won at the cost of rejecting her reproductive capacities. De Beauvoir attacks the institutions of marriage and motherhood as entirely oppressive ways of existing that women must reject.

Betty Friedan, US feminist, in her book The Feminine Mystique (1963) shows herself as a liberal. Friedan in her writing implicitly shows that she takes woman as a powerless class in terms of gender; she believes that individual with sheer effort can reach the ranks of the powerful class of man. She talks about middle-class women who had everything but they are not satisfied. Her advice is that unless they get college educations and use them productively in the full-time work outside the home, they will be driven to depression.

The Feminist Mystic failed to consider just how difficult it would be for even privileged women to combine marriage and motherhood with a career unless major structural changes were made within, as well as, outside the family. In The Feminist Mystic, women are forced to become like men while The Second Stage (1982) encouraged women to become androgynous human beings.
Luce Irigaray is a postmodern feminist. Her work starts from the premise that established (male) systems of thought fail to represent or take account of the feminine and its desire. Her work *Speculum of the Other Woman* (1974), with its critique of psychoanalysis, led to her marginalization by the Lacanian and Freudian schools. Irigaray's work draws our attention to the idea of speculum. This idea is based on the mirror serving as an instrument to view women's sexual organs; but the speculum looks into the other—the feminine—but finds there only a reflection of itself, the viewer.

Elaine Showalter is a US feminist literary critic and Victorian specialist. In *A Literature of Their Own* (1977) she provides a framework for understanding British Women's literary history, dividing it into three stages: feminine before 1880, feminist between 1880 and 1920, and female since 1920. She believes that biological imagery in women's writing can be useful if other factors also are considered. She states that feminist criticism should focus on women's access to language. She says that language is enough to express women's consciousness, but the problem is that women do not have access to all resources of language; consequently they are forced to be silent. She states that feminist criticism could be divided into two distinct areas—feminist critique and gynocritics. The former is the consumer of male-produced literature and the latter focuses on women as the producers of textual meaning, with the history, themes, genres, and structures of literature by women.

In the second group the researcher talks about Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Rajeswari Sunder Rajan, Indian feminists. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak is taken as the representative voice of *Third World* feminism. She draws our attention to the large number of the colonized that have left no mark on history because they were not
allowed to make themselves heard. And because colonized women went unheard within the patriarchal culture of their own group, they were doubly unheard. She represents the voice of difference among the major postcolonial theorists, while Said and Bhabha ignored the question of difference. They largely ignore cultural differences. However, Spivak tries to be attentive to difference or heterogeneity. Breaking the rules of the academy and trespassing disciplinary boundaries have been central to the intellectual project of Spivak. She (1999) says that she is not so erudite that she can be interdisciplinary, but she can break rules.

Spivak has taken the term subaltern from postcolonial studies to describe the lower layers of colonial and postcolonial society—the homeless, the unemployed, the day labour, and so on. She was aware that categorizations of class can also make the differences among individuals invisible. She talks about female subalterns who are traditionally doubly marginalized. If the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is hidden even more deeply in the shadows.

Rajeswari Sunder Rajan’s work spans discussions about the relationship between gender, postcolonialism and culture in the context of post-independence Indian nationalism. She argues about the relation between women and state in India. She states that citizenship refers to identity, social positioning, cultural assumptions, institutional practices and sense of belonging and hints at the issue of the identitarian differences among its citizens in relation to ethnic, racial, other cultural minorities, instead of just connecting to the question of gender.
Manju Kapur and Anita Nair’s works will be examined in the light of existentialist, liberal, postmodernism, postcolonial feminist thinkers, and the thought of a feminist literary critic Elaine Showalter.

**Manju Kapur’s Works**

In *A Married woman* (2002) Manju Kapur brings up the notion of “one is not born a woman: One becomes one,” as de Beauvoir says. Through these words Astha is brought up “as befits a woman.” Her works show the discontinuity of patriarchy through the history and the diversity of patriarchy as manifested in the lives of its characters.

The marginalization of women through their lives and its tendency to move towards the centre and away is portrayed by the life of Virmati, especially after her marriage. “Dressing-room” is the place occupied by Virmati according to her status as the second wife. Spivak’s view of subalternity highlights the condition of women who are doubly subordinated in their lives who she describes as the gendered-subaltern. The speech acts of the subalterns are normally incomplete. Virmati, Astha, and Ganga participate in such acts throughout the novel. The condition of Ganga was more difficult than the others.

According to the definition of subjectivity in chapter one, Virmati can not be considered a true subject because though she could imagine and think, she could not make any decisions. Her life was always in the control of her family or her husband.
Irigaray (Donovan-2005) believes “how we understand our biology is largely culturally influenced.” She attempts to show how Western culture is biased against women. She points out that the Imaginary body that has dominated Western society is a male body, that Freud considers a girl to be a defective man; because the male as model human being implies that there is just one sex.

Irigaray (Cahil-2005) notes that since Western philosophy fails to recognize the human species as internally differentiated in terms of sex, human existence is limited to the one sex of the male, who in turn stands for the other.

Friedan (1963:72) asserts that it is woman’s anatomy that determines her destiny. The only model of the human being that is free is man. It was only men who shaped the major decisions of society. Women have to take care of their body in order to attain their destiny of marriage. Difference manifest in terms of destiny though differences manifest between the objectives of the two sexes. The male thinks of his career and his economic conditions while the female simply waits for somebody to come and marry her.

Forcing women to remain silent is another method that patriarchy uses to maintain its position. Sunder Rajan (1995) says speech is a form of self-expression and is one’s right. Astha kept silent to protect her husband reputation. Silence is normally considered as the absence of spoken words, however Manju Kapur in A Married Woman shows that silence can be imposed on written words also. Astha again started writing poems,
but Hemant asked her to write about nature, a harmless topic, because her writings about her life showed that she did not have a happy married life.

Indira J. Parikh and Pulin K. Garg (1989:12) discuss the conditions of bringing up children in the Indian family. The conditions have two aspects. On one hand we find the “spiritualism and uniqueness of existence” and on the other hand the newer forms of education and aspirations that refer to the adventure and the discovery of a new world beyond the traditional. Such a context of growing up allows one to ask many questions and achieve new meanings in terms of the experience of being and becoming in Indian society. It is a struggle of growing out of given roles and reaching new roles. These women with new prospective enter the world of their occupation and begin to create a space for themselves. They start to discover their personal sources and go beyond the vision of life defined by social structures. Parikh and Garg are also interested in the relation between speech and identity. They say that women speak of their inner world in order to discover their identity and share these feelings with others without shame and fear.

The relation of the main character of Difficult Daughters (1988) to society is of deconstruction while in A Married Woman (2002) the main character has a relationship of reconstruction. Virmati moves towards deconstruction by breaking the social norm and getting married with a married professor, but Astha’s approach is more one of reconstruction where she tries to maintain her position in her family and moved towards subjectivity.

The difference between the man-to-man relationship and the woman-to-woman relationship appears in Manju Kapur’s works, especially in Difficult Daughters. Harish
talked about his relationship with Virmati without reserve, while Virmati kept silent. She did not want other women to subordinate her by knowing her secrets. In other words, fear of each other prevents women from sharing their experiences and moving towards emancipation.

The Mother-daughter relationship is one important factor in the subjectivity of women. How the mother subordinates her daughter and how a mother transfers her strength to her daughter is highlighted in both novels, especially Difficult Daughters. Establishing a good relationship according to Irigaray is necessary in removing this kind of subordination.

Women let their oppressors subordinate them by readily internalizing patriarchal values. Such internalizing allows the system to control them through their own beliefs. Betty Friedan describes how fifteen years after the Second World War women chatted only about their husband and their children and how to cook, while their husbands engaged in serious political discussions.

Self-discovery is the recognition of a general situation of domination by the oppressed. One can not achieve power unless one knows that one is a non-power. Kapur shows that women from childhood are not trained how to attain power and maintain it. They always are asked to behave according to the ethics of the home, as Astha was trained. It is man who knows how to handle competition in the market and bribing. In general patriarchy encourages parents to lie to their daughters about the lofty value of love and
devotion. Mothers never show their daughters that neither their lovers nor their husband nor their children are eager to live such idealized roles.

Simone de Beauvoir (1974) says regarding women's sense of inferiority that men represent the positive and neutral while women represent the negative. Their sense of inferiority is the result of their social predicament. Women feel inferior because the requirements of femininity belittle her. De Beauvoir (1974:665) notes that women have never formed an independent society; they have been a part of a group governed by men. Women have never learnt violence nor have they stood in front as the subject before other members of the group.

De Beauvoir (1974) notes that even those privileged women who are economically independent are not identical with men in moral, social, and psychological situations. She was not brought up as a boy consequently she does not have the same experience as men in her adult life.

The notion of work division appears in both of Manju Kapur's novels. The husband is considered the productive worker and move towards a public role while women have to follow her species and take care and rear the children. Domestic work always refers to women. Even working outside does not reduce the burden of housework for women. There are different views of domestic labour. Margaret Benston (1960) believes that this kind of work subordinates women because it is unpaid work and has only use value, but Dalla Costa states that in capitalism, domestic work is productive and produces
surplus value. In such a system women produce labour and so capitalism never allows
the position of housewife to be destroyed.

Becoming a new woman needs change, change in the sense of growing mentally and
demotionally. But growth involved not only pleasure, but also pain. Every move towards
an unfamiliar situation can be dangerous. It means to leave an easier life and to move
towards a difficult one. Consequently growth needs courage and individual strength.

It seems that Virmati did not have the ability to influence the social process nor did she
like politics. She did not see herself as an equal citizen and therefore the concept of
democracy was far from her mind, because democracy emerges through the
participation of women in all aspects—household participation, economic, social and
cultural and political. As it is seen Virmati did not participate in any of these aspects
except in the household. As a result she could not influence the political process at all.
But if we consider the process of empowerment as "individual self-assertion to protest"
then Virmati went through this process. Because she could recognize this system
oppressed girls like her, she made efforts to change conditions, at least in her individual
life and so she wanted to study more and not go through the process of an arranged
marriage. But her attempted suicide and her marriage isolated her and disgraced her
family and to some extent marginalized her. But Shakuntala and Swarna’s case were
different. They participated in political affairs and showed the strength of women
through their abilities. These two women improved their sense of "self-worth" and
made their own decisions about their lives and had an influence on society also. Though
it seems that these two were stronger than Virmati, they worked in the same system and
tried to reconstruct it, yet it was Virmati who deconstructed the system and that’s why society reprimanded her because social rules always predominate over individual rights. Virmati was the one who dared to put her individual rights first.

Friedan (1963) believes that men are the victims of circumstances as well. In her view if women become free then men can achieve to a greater “self-fulfillment”. It might have happened for Harish. Society made Harish marry Ganga and Harish’s life became miserable. If Ganga were free to choose her husband perhaps she would not have chosen Harish because of the gap of knowledge between them. In such a case Harish would also be free and could marry one who could be his companion. There would have been no need of polygamy.

Irigaray (Donovan-2005) believes that there is no true sexual difference otherwise both women and men could achieve subjectivity. Irigaray says the only subjects in Western culture are men and women are considered as the “non-subject, supporting matter.” Virmati and Ganga needed support and Harish supported them. Their relationship, typical in Indian marriages, shows that Western culture and Eastern are the same in terms of considering the male as the only subjectivity.

Anita Nair’s Works

Anita Nair in her works shows the diversity of patriarchy in practice. Her reader comes to see that there are different explanations and definitions of patriarchy. In The Better Man the rule of father is shown. She shows in Ladies Coupé how the rule of father and his tyranny subordinated the other men and women, especially other young men such as Mukundan.
Luce Irigaray uses the theory of sexual difference to explain the system of patriarchy. She elaborates on Freud’s thought, because Freud has an important influence on modern thinking. The neutrality of sex underlines the truth of all discourse in science and logic. The masculine underlies such notions of sexuality. She (1985:70) criticizes Freud for remaining within the confines of the power structure and ideology of the patriarchal type.

Women are considered as a part of nature as the result of their reproductivity, but men are a part of culture. Hence, women were sent to the margin to be at the service of the center, because the centre needs the margin in order to validate itself, Spivak says (Leela Gandhi-1998:84). In The Better Man the slippery nature of the term marginality in terms of mistress and age is portrayed. Achunthan’s mistress sent Paru Kutty to the margin and Bhasi was marginalized because of his youth.

Anita Nair shows how becoming a subject is a complicated process; and hints that the subject is always in the process of construction. The most obvious example of subjectivity is Bhasi who said no and put his self first as Bhasi did. In these two novels there are different forms of subjectivity and as Sunder Rajan notes the differences are in terms of race, age, nationalism and ethnicity among women. That is why women are not a homogenized group in terms of their subjectivity.

Subordination according to Sebasti L. Raj (1991) has two different forms—internal oppression and external. External oppression is the “Social conditioning and a wrong value-system which women acquire through the process of socialization.” Internal oppression is the internalized patriarchal value system which acts as the “voice of
conscience.” Feminists need to consider how many factors—arising from the discriminating socio-cultural values, attitudes and practices of those values—have contributed to the subordination of women in society.

Betty Friedan (1963:92) notes that Freud’s concept of super-ego helped to liberate man from “shoulds” and the oppression of the past that prevents a child from becoming an adult. But Freudian thought could create a new super-ego that controls educated modern American women with a new tyranny of the “shoulds”, chaining women to images of their past, preventing their growth and achieving an individual identity. Friedan says modern research showed later that much of what Freud believed to be biological, instinctual, and changeless were the result of specific cultural cases and most of his description of the characteristics of universal human nature was only applicable to certain middle-class European men and women at the end of the nineteenth century. Sunder Rajan (2000-14) believes that women’s identity is traditionally based on a binary opposition to men according to their biological difference and their reproductive abilities. She criticizes those feminists who reject the biological essentialism that overlooks the available forms of female identity.

Simone de Beauvoir (1974) uses an ontological explanation based on women’s being to explain women’s oppression. She says that women’s Otherness emerges from their lack of power not the loss of a phallus. She tries to separate women as a biological entity from femininity as a social construction. Biology alone cannot explain why women are considered as other because our conceptions of biology can not be understood outside of its social, economic and psychological context. Anita Nair in Ladies Coupé shows that women also consider other women as Other to construct a sense of self. The women in the coupé saw Marikolanthu as Other. The same novel also shows how
Brahmanism and Hinduism and the Otherness of non-Brahmin and non-Hindu people are incorporated into the construction of the self. Akhila’s mother could forgive Jaya for selling her body because she was Brahmin but Katherine Webber was isolated and considered Other because she did not follow Hindu moral standards.

Friedan (1963:269) talks how the sciences of human behavior are interested in the basic human need to grow. Thinkers like Bergson to Kurt Goldstein, Jung, Adler, Rank, Tillich and existentialists work debate on a new conception of the psychologically healthy man, normality and pathology. Normality for them means “highest excellence of which we are capable.” They say man can fulfil himself and become what he can be when he is happy, healthy, and self-accepting without guilt.

Friedan (1963:276) talks about high and low dominance feeling. People with high dominance feeling are those with self-confidence, self-assurance, high evaluation of the self, and a lack of shyness, timidity, self-consciousness or embarrassment. People with low-dominance feeling are those who lack self-confidence, self-assurance and self-esteem, and have extensive feelings of specific inferiority, shyness, timidity and fearfulness. Maslow (Friedan-1963:277) finds that the higher strength in terms of self in a woman makes her more concerned about other people and the problems of the world than herself.

Irigaray (1996) explores a ground for a possible inner-subjectivity between the two sexes. She rejects the demands for equality. She attempts to find a new era of sexual difference in which women and men establish lasting relationships with one another without reducing the other to the status of object. Spivak talks about the term speak
while Irigaray sees the importance of responding to the question of “how am I to listen to you?” This question says that she listens to the other’s words as something unique and irreducible, as something new, and unknown. This kind of listening does not mean that she knows the other and there is no need to listen to her. This kind of listening occurs between Mukundan and Bhasi, Mukundan and Anjana, Bhasi and his wife in The Better Man; and Akhila and Hari in Ladies Coupé.

Women are socialized in India to accept the violence of their husbands towards them. Violence can be physical or mental. Mental violence is more complex. Paru Kutty faced mental torment, because her husband described his sexual relationship with his mistress to her.

The individual life history of women is linked to her physiological destiny. She passes through different periods of her life each of which is uniform and monotonous. This transition from one stage to the other is sudden and in each transition point women are asked to behave more and more according to cultural norms and values. We see several examples of this in Anita Nair’s novels. For instance, Marikolanthu was asked not to run around like a little girl and walk with her head bent like all modest women after her first menstruation.

So What?

The definition of marriage is different from one woman to the other in regard to class, caste and religion. Simone de Beauvoir asserts that marriage is the destiny given to women by society traditionally. A girl’s plan for the future is to get married, but the fundamental project for man is economic success. This may explain the behavior of
husbands towards their wife. From the very beginning of marriage, man marginalizes his wife and this lasts his whole life. A man is socially independent. He is a complete individual, while a woman’s identity is defined in relation to man.

Anita Nair shows more concern about the life of middle-class women. Those women who are not middle-class are presented in terms of how they are connected to a middle-class family, such as being servant in their house. For example Marikolanthu was not from a middle-class family but throughout her life she was connected to middle-class families as their servant.

In India women do not choose their husband, they simply pray for a good groom. They have no idea about who is the right one to spend their life with. It is in the later stages of self-realization that a woman develops the sense of which husband is truly suitable for her.

The meaning of marriage for Prabha Devi was to wait. Whole her life she had simply waited. Margaret thought myth was a tool in men’s hand to support their position. She concluded that as civilization developed, men discovered that the best way to control women is to create myths that explain the unexplainable that simplify the complex and rationalize the irrational. The tragedy is that many women internalize these myths as a correct reflection of what it really means to be a woman.

Marriage does not always mean oppression of the woman. The condition of Akhila’s parent shows marriage can be source of strength for both partners. His parents find satisfaction in each others presence. Marriage for Anjana means being tortured
physically and humiliated. But with Mukundan she felt she was a woman and needed to
love and be loved. Damayanti, Bhasi's wife was content and satisfied. She was a
widow when she married Bhasi. Her previous marriage always bothered her and she
thought that Bhasi would find a better woman and leave her.

Marriage for Kasturi was an initiation into womanhood, intimacy and procreation. She
did not have any control over her body, and as a result she gave birth to eleven children.
Virmati's marriage brought about a conflict between individual rights and social norms
resulting in disgrace isolation.

Manju Kapur has used two different styles in expressing her concerns about women
issues. Comparing her two novels I see that in Difficult Daughters, she portrays a
women's life in a natural way, but in A Married Woman it seems as if she is at times
using her characters to support her feminist views. The relationships between characters
are shallow and it is not convincing. The themes of both novels are about independence;
Kapur successfully shows how women struggle towards achieving independence
clashes with their internalizing the idea of marriage as women's destiny.

The theme of The Better Man is about internalizing "the rule of father". In this novel
we can see that patriarchy also impacts the life of men in addition to its outcomes of
gender inequality and exploitation of women. The theme of Ladies Coupé is about
whether a woman can live alone? Anita Nair by portraying a large number of women's
characters in this novel not only allows us to examine different kinds of patriarchy in
Indian society regarding caste, socio-economic conditions, and especially class, but also
gives us a chance to analyze the diversity among women regarding subjectivity, self-
realization and empowerment.
Kapur portrays the changes in the life of a woman in a negative fashion. She is a girl in her parents place and then in husband place she is the wife, mother, and daughter-in-law. As a result, she has to play different role in her life accordingly. In comparison we see that Kapur deals with becoming woman and a wife in her novel while these issues do not come up in Anita Nair’s works—The Better Man and Ladies Coupé.

The passiveness of women while they are in the paternal place and later in their husband’s home is portrayed clearly in the work of both writers. Their passiveness combines with their subalternity to make them invisible in their lives. They are passive and unable to use the tools of communication to make themselves heard.

In Difficult Daughters we have three difficult daughters—Shakuntala, Virmati, and Swarna. Each one had their own special way of life which differed from the others. Shakuntala and Swarna were independent and had political interest, but Shakuntala did not get married while Swarna did. Virmati did not have any political interests though she could understand the importance of the issue. She followed her own way and married a married man.

Swarna is the only example of successful marriage in all of Kapur’s novels. She remained politically active, and kept her identity. Her interests were maintained alongside with her marriage. Kapur does not portray Swarna’s life after marriage in detail, to the extent she shows us Swarna’s life, and we can see that an important factor in her successful marriage is the fact that her husband saw her as a subject with her own identity.
Both writers portray the family as a foundation built from women's sacrifices. Accordingly talking about self is a crime. This conditioning goes to the extent that they should ignore even the betrayals of their husband.

Virmati believes that marriage is her destiny. Though she is more educated than the other women in her family and economically independent, she could not live independently. She deeply internalized the idea that a woman had to be protected either by a father or husband. The conflict that she faced was between her individual rights and cultural norms. She was asked to get married. Though she followed this social norm, she broke another by becoming the second wife of a professor. Marriage for her meant being passive, being Other, being exploited and sacrificing. Education and marriage were two important issues in her life. But achieving them could not fulfill her. Education is supposed to bring awareness and make women to ask questions. But Virmati did not achieve this level of education. It's interesting to ask here when the education of both Swarna and Virmati was essentially the same, how different were the outcomes. Swarna became a politician and asked serious questions while Virmati was engaged in her love affairs with Harish. Though the importance of education is not to be ignored, how education is applied is even more important and involves the consideration of other factors in life. Education brought independence and subjectivity to Swarna and Shakuntala, but it did not do the same for Virmati. Feminists consider education as an effective means of achieving emancipation. But one must also consider the kind of education that is useful in emancipation. Kasturi's training to be a good housewife was also a form of education within the patriarchal system.
Marriage for Astha meant to follow her husband's wills without question. She was forced to sacrifice as an ideal of the Indian wife. Her marriage at first was based on an illusion. She admired her husband and children, but later she saw they could get on without her. In the middle of her married life she felt that something was wrong in her life because she was not satisfied and happy. It was Aijaz who helped her to fulfill herself through political participation and later on it was Pipeelika who made her aware of her marital condition and helped her to go through the process of self-realization. In Astha's life it was her education that enabled her to find a teacher's job and become familiar with Aijaz and Pipeelika's perspectives and her life. Perhaps the answer to the question as to why Virmati education did not bring her subjectivity and independence is that education provides women with potential knowledge and it is women who have to realize it in a practical way.

The influence of patriarchy on women's lives is found in all spheres of life. Women are brought up by adjusting to patriarchal norms. They have to become women and becoming happens through cultural norms. They are forced to become women, marginalized and addressed as Other in order to protect the self of the males. Virmati and Astha were not allowed to enter the main stream, not because of the lack of an organ but because of the lack of power. They were supposed to marry and have a family. They were not trained from childhood to take up a position and even if they were given such a chance, the lack of self-confidence would prevent her from maintaining power and managing it. Consequently we find that Astha gave up managing her inheritance money and preferred to give it to Hemant to double it.
Comparing Virmati with Astha, we find that no sooner Astha found a chance to participate in political activities she took it, but Virmati, though she admired Swarna and other political activists and had plenty of opportunities, never took part in any activity.

Patriarchy maintains its power and value through fear, myth and language and education. Anita Nair shows Achunthan using his body language to impose fear of other and without much effort maintain his position as the father at home and in public. The language he used forced those addressed to be Others and made them to consider themselves as inferior one by repeating the last part of his statement. For example he told Mukundan: “All you will be fit for is ploughing the fields!” and then asked: “Tell me, what will you be fit for when you grow up?” (170) Patriarchy uses everything to support itself; education is also another method it uses toward this objective. So it seems this area needs more investigation. It makes sense if feminists at first work on a global kind of education and then on the education regarding different nations.

Gender inequality sees women as unequal to men. Gender as Lerner (1986:138) says is “the cultural definition of behavior defined as appropriate to the sexes in a given society at a given time.” Liberal feminism describes it with regard to the term sexism similar to the ideology of racism that refers to prejudices and discriminatory practices against women. Marxism feminist says that within any class women have fewer advantages than men in regard to access to material goods, power status and possibilities for self-actualization. Social feminism hints at women’s oppression and understanding in a way that brings together knowledge of class oppression and gender oppression. Capitalist patriarchy appears in the capitalist mode of production, and a patriarchal structuring of
the relations there. The important thing is that the production of things is in the control of men, and the women role is in the production of life. Radical feminists look at patriarchy as the power of men over women especially over their sexual functions. In all theories, social control is based on gender inequality maintained through social cultural mechanisms and any tendency to remove this inequality is called a deviance. Anita Nair in *Ladies Coupé* shows how brothers of Akhila decided to go either to college or finish school while Padma, Akhila’s sister, was supposed just play with ribbons for her hair and glass bangles for wrist. The presence of Meenakshi in public as a shopkeeper or insurance agent looks odd according to social custom. In *Ladies Coupé* we consider the complicity of the division between sex and gender. Gender is seen as a social construct, but underlying that idea is a notion that although gender is not determined by biology, it is a social elaboration in specific contexts of the obvious facts of biological sex difference. The problem is that the elaboration of the social determinations and entailments of gender in all their specificity has effectively left the relationship between sex and gender very under-theorized. It needs investigation to solve the problem of how to link what we might call dominate cultural models of gender to the specific experiences and situations of particular groups or individuals within that social context. Akhila’s gender role was complex, often she had to follow the role of a father and support her brothers and sister but at the same time she had to ask for her younger brother’s permission whenever she wanted to go to a trip and enjoy herself. Anita Nair in her writing in *The Better Man* shows how patriarchy suppresses men also and men in such a system were not allowed to show their fear and weakness. Men can not show their fear because as Freidan says in a patriarchal system men have to be supermen. Akhila’s father is suspected of committing suicide to be released of the burden of his family members and it was a girl who started carrying all the burden on her shoulder.
The events of *Difficult Daughters* happened mostly before partition and some after that while the events of *A Married Women* happened a long time after partition. The sign of change can be seen in women's lives since the time of partition. In the second novel the atmosphere is such that if women want to be subject and participate in different activities, they can do it more easily.

The attitudes of husbands towards their wives are different in *A Married Woman*: Astha brought a change in Hemant with a little bit effort and made him respect her individuality. But such a change did not give Astha her liberty; it was just to attract Astha's attention in order that she stayed with him and keep sacrificing. Manju Kapur attempts to show the conflict between modernity and tradition, in the novel.

In *The Better Man* the theme is completely different from whatever is happening in *Ladies Coupé*. Through these novels especially *The Better Man*, patriarchy is shown as the power of fathers: a familial-social, ideological, political system in which men-by force, direct pressure, or through ritual, tradition, law, and language, customs, etiquette, education, and the division of labour—determine what part women shall or shall not play, where the female is everywhere subsumed under the male. It does not necessarily imply that no woman has power, or that all women in a given culture may not have a certain amount of power. Anita Nair in this novel shows very clearly how her protagonist internalized his father rules and then later on how he entered in the process of self-realization and to what extend he went further.

*Ladies Coupé* is a gallery of women's characters from different casts and classes. They were the women who did not want equality. They were in the search for their *selves*. 
They attempted to realize their selves and what had to do to bring change to their lives and be happy. For example Prabha Devi found out that she had lost herself and start thinking and analyzing her life and reached the point where with a little care of herself, the change would come. It was not the kind of serious political decision or activity but the result was as important for her. Akhila also realized that there was a woman in her that needs care and attention in the end.

Both writers mostly portray the life of middle-class Indian women. There is only one exception, the case in Ladies Coupé of Marikolanthu who was a domestic worker. Consequently both writers fail to show the conditions of lower-class women. If we search through all four novels, we won’t find a single divorced woman in any of them. The question of divorce only comes up in The Better Man, where Anjana is in the process of getting divorced.

The orientation of this thesis is to examine the issues of women empowerment as manifested in the events of the novels of two novel writers using the theories of six feminist thinkers. If empowerment is taken as an overcoming of forces that marginalize women, then most of the characters achieve to it with regard to their potential abilities and interests. But this empowerment does not give them social or political liberty. They achieve self-realization to the extent that they could think and behave freely and select those things that might satisfy themselves.

The theorists who were most helpful in discussing the issues of empowerment are those whose use of language and terms comes closer to the actual situations faced by women.
The other theorists were more concerned about discussing universal features of language or culture, and so my use of their ideas is restricted to particular issues.

The theorists with a more application oriented approach are Simone de Beauvoir who uses the ontology of women to analyze their conditions and Rajeswari Sunder Rajan, who analyses women conditions in India using different case studies. These two thinkers talk in a concrete way.

The other theorists tended to deal with more abstract problems. Betty Friedan’s ideas are restricted mostly to the problem which has no name and the terms superwoman and superman. Luce Irigaray’s ideas focus on true sexual difference and mother-daughter relationships and also her explanation towards this statement “How am I to listen to you?”. The idea of subaltern, their condition, gendered subaltern, and different kinds of representations are taken from Spivak. The idea of different phases of the evolution of women’s literature is taken from Elaine Showalter to place the works of these writers within a historical context. Though the ideas of these feminists provide powerful insight into women’s issues, I have drawn support and additional insight from some other feminist and humanist thinkers some of whose names I have noted in the beginning.

In summary, according to the events in the novels we find that all women do not necessarily want equality with men but they do want to be seen as a subject, and in terms of difference, subjectivity has a different meaning for each. Internalized patriarchal values have an important effect on the life of women. If women begin to bring these values to the surface they can move on in their journey towards emancipation.
As it is seen there is no homogenous body of feminist theory. And the division between different groups of women, as well as between practicing feminists, makes it impossible for such homogeneity to arise.

The researcher of this thesis is concerned that the very fact of writing and talking about other people's lives can never be clearly separated from the question of whether or not one is speaking for them. This is a perennial problem for all feminist social scientists, in spite of a commitment to feminist methodologies and participatory research.

Women are everywhere associated with nature, partly as the result of their reproductive functions, while men are associated with culture. It is suggested that the devaluing of nature in relation to culture accounts for the hierarchical relation between women and men.

One of the most important factors that prevent women from attaining liberty is their lack of having any special category. They belong to different classes and castes. They are not homogeneous. It is true that paying attention to this issue lets us cover all areas of women's lives but apart from that simply asserting the heterogeneity of women can not solve any problems. One should suggest ways of dealing with such a variety of people. Women need power to change their destiny but how power can be found without building any special group. It is clear that an individual can not bring any change into the society. She can just change her private life to some extent.

One of the things that became clear through the analysis of these two novels is that women had the strength in themselves but the problem was that they get caught in the
webs of patriarchy and forgot their strength. They need to move towards self-realization but the process each one went through is different from the other.

The sharing of information is not something women generally do. Each and every woman has her own experience but for the sake of family honor they keep quiet. Sharing experiences is very necessary for those women who attempt to transcend old roles and crystallize their identities on the basis of new definitions and roles. Sharing experiences helps women to take part in the process of creating a new ethos and of adding new elements to the cultural heritage. If women open up and talk about their private lives then they can share their experience and go towards building their own subjectivity. This dialogue helps them to find out even what are their individual rights and to ask for those rights. But as we see in *A Married Woman* Astha could not comment about the lives of other women. She thought they might think that she didn’t have a good married life and perhaps it might spoil her husband’s reputation. It would be very useful that feminists work on the notion of building trust among women themselves.

Elaine Showalter (1977) notes that last phase of the evolution of women’s literature is female phase which is characterized by self-discovery, and identity issues. This last phase is very close to the way these novelists portray the conditions of women. Both of them tries to show women’s experience through their novels with the exception of *The Better Man* Anita Nair’s portrays the conditions of men alongside women and shows the experiences of men, the nature of self-discovery of her male protagonists through her female eyes.
All other thinkers bring their theories to explain women’s problems while Showalter focuses on the methods of narration that they apply to the writing of women. According to Showalter the narrative form has the potential of communicating what the real conditions of self-discovery might be and as such can contribute to the transformation of women’s condition. We see the change as a result of self-discovery in all these works. Such a change leads women and men towards subjectivity and helps them to achieve empowerment. These works speak of a women’s culture proliferation and, in their own way, revive women’s language by presenting literary styles and forms that emerge from female psychology.

The major sequence in gynocritical reading which moves from reality, to author, to reader, to reality can be seen in both writers’ works but considering different kinds of representation, it is obvious that it is Darstellung which though is not exact reality, it is very close to it.

These novels with portraying the women experiences follow the subjective framework which is against scientific criticism that tries to avoid subjective, as Showalter’s elaborate this issue.

This research can just enlighten how women are subordinated in their private lives and also in public. And how they have been captured in the network of a patriarchal system and how they behaved towards different aspects of such a system. Knowing how patriarchy subordinates and oppresses women may help to determine the ways it controls women and then to work in order to remove its domination over women. So researches can help women to get to know that they are oppressed at first, then how they are oppressed, and then women can themselves decide how to become free.
If mothers get to know that how much their roles in building their daughter's subjectivity is important then they may try to empower themselves in order to transfer their power to their daughters. If they know that some of those customs they are forcing their daughters to follow support patriarchal values and oppress their daughters they definitely will react against these customs. And if they discover how subordinating each other is a means to keep men's control over women effortlessly they may think about their behavior towards other women more. Women subordinate each other to keep themselves in the center. Because of the lack of having enough access to the power and facilities in the society, whenever any woman gets any position, she tries to subordinate other women in order to keep her own position safe. To remove such subordination, women's proper access to good positions—politically and financially should be increased.

It is true that showing woman's subordination and deficiency is the first step toward women's emancipation but the second step can be how to strengthen women and move away from a passive role. Kapur showing the lack of imagination in women helps feminists find out the reason for such a lack in any society and also to find out ways to activate their imagination according to the diversity of women. They need an active imagination to move forward and meet the public challenges with men. But at the same time women have to be given the chance to get enough knowledge about the rules of play in public. Alongside this knowledge, women need the skills linked to those rules in order to put step in the decision making processes. In this researcher's view women can use all the reasonable possible ways available in society in order to bring a change for better in their lives even if it is very small.