CHAPTER - II
SOUTH ASIAN FEMINIST REPRESENTATION
(The Woman Warrior)

Maxine Hong Kingston’s *The Woman Warrior* (1976) is a radical breakthrough in the development of American literary tradition. Asian American literature has received global attention and elicited the appreciation of scholarly community with the publication of *The Woman Warrior*. The Modern Language Association has identified *The Woman Warrior* as the most popular 20th century literary text read and taught at all the level across a wide spectrum of academic disciplines (Lim). It has crossed the literary boundaries and is analysed in the light of infinite contemporary critical approaches proving its relevance to every discipline of knowledge. Paul Gray in his article ‘Book of Changes’ opined that the reading communities across the globe have surrendered to seductive intertextual prose and innovative narrative styles of Kingston. (Gray 91). This perception is supported by Sara Black Burn in the article ‘Notes of a Chinese Daughter’ that labeled *The Woman Warrior* as an expanding report for the archives of human experience (Blackburn 39). Miriam Greenspan in the article “slj/Adult Books for Young Adults” published in the *School Library Journal* observed that Kingston captures the pain of American born child who rejects the authority of tradition to honour the values of the land (Greenspan 108). Susan Currier in the *Dictionary of
*Literary Biography* appreciates Kingston’s efforts to reconcile the female identities of America and China (Currier 235).

Apart from the literary appreciation, the novel is elucidated as a representative work of Feminism. Feminist Criticism contests the socially grounded and culturally established institutions of power responsible for inequality between men and women. Over the last several decades, the objectives of Feminist criticism have included the recovery of texts by women that were concealed by the cultural domination of men. It has sought for the outright reevaluation of canonical literature. The roots of modern Feminist Criticism initiated by Simon De Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex* (1949) energized by Kate Millet’s *Sexual Politics* have evolved into gynocriticism. The historical phase of feminist criticism has extended its focus beyond overtly feminist texts and proved that gender is a cultural construct. Feminist criticism approaches literary and artistic texts by focusing on the issues, practices and institutions that influence the lives of women.

French Feminist critic Julia Kristeva in *About Chinese Women* (1974) criticises the categorization of women with slaves by Confucius. In Confucian society women were considered fit for domestic work. In *The Woman Warrior* Kingston has portrayed the patriarchal assumptions that are employed to define Maxine and her family. In China traditional
societies have observed the Three Obediences and the Four Virtues of Confucian Philosophy. Even in America the Chinese immigrant community is asked to retain and subscribe to the old traditions. Kingston has inferred the attitudes of traditional Chinese society to the immigrants. It is pertinent to observe Maxine’s imagination and creativity is influenced by the traditional sayings: “Feeding girls is feeding cowbirds”, “Better to raise geese than girls” (54). The Woman Warrior explores the imposition of tradition and the ways of resistance adopted by the Chinese girls. Maxine denies her gender, more extremely. When her mother scolds her, Maxine wails ‘I’m not a bad girl’. This denial tantamount to her saying that she is not a girl and hence a bad person. Her expanded ambition make her to proclaim that she intends to fell trees during the day time and write about the timber industry at night after work. The Woman Warrior explores Maxine’s dawning of knowledge of her body and the feeling of vulnerable experience. In the context of Maxine’s menarche, Brave Orchid reveals No Name Aunt’s story. She realizes that changes in the body sets her apart from men and makes her feel the status peculiar to femaleness. Like Maxine, Fa Mu Lan prefers to be a boy as violence in life a matter of choice. This stands in contrast to the situation of Women where violence is perpetrated against women in the name of cultural practice.

The Women Warrior is permeated with the images of violence
against women. In almost all the cases, rape is central to the pattern of violence. The rape of No Name Aunt results in pregnancy and prompts riot in the village. It leads to the vandalization of her home and leads to her suicide. Ts’ai Yen is forcibly abducted from her home to become a barbarian’s concubine. The rapes perpetrated culminate in an uninterrupted motherhood. No Name Aunt kills herself and her infant daughter. Ts’ai Yen has to leave her daughters against her wish with their barbarian father. The darker side of female existence is exposed which leads to dehumanization of women. In depicting the ancestral culture, Maxine attempts to create that women experience bodily harm right from their birth. This is evident in the ink drawing owned by Brave Orchid and her husband that depicts starving peasants scavenging the garbage from the river, while pushing the discarded girl babies down the river.

But in some situations, violence reveals the inner strength and willingness and leads to the empowerment of women. Brave Orchid is associated with violence. In the context of violence, she frequently acts. She defeats the sitting Ghost by threatening to burn it, while she is a student in China. She assists at the birth of the babies, as a village doctor. During World War II, she takes care of the victims of bombings. In US, violence shapes the life of Brave Orchid and it is transmuted into a symbolic action. Brave Orchid explains the tale of physical violence to
Maxine. Maxine is inclined to view the frenum cutting episode as powerful proof of her mother’s love. In another instance, Brave Orchid fantasizes about hitting man and decides that Moon Orchid position herself in the middle of the street.

No Name Woman is also empowered through violence and takes control of the events at the end of her brief life. She represents the control of events through her suicide. She shapes the future of the entire village and her community by killing herself in the village well. She fouls the community water supply with her death and takes revenge on the village that has condemned her. She executes the responsibility by drowning her daughter and saves the future of her child from the wretched suffering in life.

The Feminist analysis of The Woman Warrior examines the fate of the women who do not conform to cultural scripts and the existence of women in patriarchal environment. Exploring the Chinese and American cultures, and the existential failure of woman, Maxine examines the travesty of women from girlhood to womanhood. This becomes a psychological and cultural exploration which inclusive of the continuation of maternal lineage. It is pertinent to observe, the novel begins with the struggle of No Name Woman. Every aspect of victimization in her life proves the terrible transition. But strangely her
life is quickly forgotten by her family and the village. She becomes a permanent limbo unmourned and unappeased. She remains erased from family lore and memory, permanently.

Maxine makes dichotomy in the very presentation of No Name Women and Moon Orchid. If No Name Woman is punished by feudal society of China, Moon Orchid is ruined by the contemporary American culture. Brave Orchid discards her comfortable life in Hong Kong as the comfortable first wife of Chinese sojourner turned American physician. Moon Orchid is forced to acknowledge Americanised husband whom she has neither seen nor spoken. This depicts Moon Orchid’s fragile grasp and reality. She is immured and completely baffled by the turn of events in an unfamiliar country. Moon Orchid goes for self introspection and ultimately institutionalizes herself. Maxine proves that American is not a place for discarded first wives, whose mettle is seen in aesthetic appearances. Maxine negotiates the difficulty and the existential problems of women who terribly fail to imbibe the two cultures and battle for supremacy and identity. It is from this perspective Woman Warrior becomes a female buildings roman, as it foregrounds the theme of coming of age. The conflict between ancestral Chinese culture and American environment, Maxine is complicated by the dual heritage of incomprehensibility to churn out a new cultural identity.
Feminism is a major theme in most of women’s literature these days. In the past, even the term women’s literature was unknown and if it was known, it was not considered important. However, the situation has been altered to a great extent after the feminist movement which started nearly two centuries ago.

In this century, says Tillie Olsen in *Silences*, “we have access to areas of work and of life experience previously denied . . .” Women are highly educated and have “for the first time in human history, freedom from compulsory child bearing; freer bodies and attitudes towards sexuality; a beginning of technological easing of household tasks. . .” (Olsen 23)

At last, free of all restrictions, many women belonging to the minority groups are able to express themselves through autobiographies. Kingston’s *The Woman Warrior* has been termed an autobiography. She has made her book a weapon to express her feminist views. The book is unique in more than one sense. The fact that it falls in the category of sexual minority as well as racial minority makes it all the more unique. Her aim is to achieve freedom, not just for herself, but for the female race itself. Belonging to the racial minority, her movement is towards Americanization. There is no doubt that she brings in numerous Chinese myths and legends which make it read like a Chinese book but this is her
way of bringing together Chinese and American cultures. This indirectly indicates her assimilation into American culture: she reads the typical American concerns - individual liberty, the self- into the Chinese myths and legends and uses her reading to deal with them.

Feminism is a movement which belongs very much to our century though it started almost two centuries ago. The struggle for women’s rights was marked by Mary Wollstonecraft’s *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, John Stuart Mill’s *The Subjection of Women*, Margaret Fuller’s *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*, Virginia Woolf’s *A Room of One’s Own* and Simon de Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex*. This movement regained vigour in the 1960’s, the age of revolutions. As quoted in *A Feminist Dictionary*, feminism means:

a movement seeking the reorganisation of the world upon a basis of sex-equality in all human relations; a movement which would reject every differentiation between individuals upon the ground of sex, would abolish all sex privileges and sex burdens, and would strive to set up the recognition of the common humanity of woman and man as the foundation of law and custom. (Kramaræ and Treichier 158)
The feminist movement is a protest against the male-dominated society, its inequities, restriction, penalties and denials. Kingston is certainly not a hard core feminist. She is trying to fight the injustice meted out to her sex. She, like her mother and grandmother, does not believe in being confined to the kitchen. By comparing and contrasting the characteristics of her characters she is trying to expose the sexual discrimination rampant in her contemporary society. The feminism she uses is “liberal feminism.”

Liberal feminism believes that the general subordination of the woman is rooted in a set of customary and legal constraints that try to hinder the efforts, progress and success of women in this world. The male-centered society falsely believes that women are by nature intellectually and physically less capable than men. It excludes women from the academy, the forum and the market place. Kingston is merely trying to prove this belief as incorrect. The feminism we come across in The Woman Warrior is not total feminism, in the sense that none of the characters denies the traditional role of a wife or mother, though they fight for equality and identity. Being a feminist meant “a rejection of the traditional manner of female fulfillment- - motherhood” (Sevenhuijen and de Vries 13).
Kingston often encountered women who believed in the society “where ‘marriage’ was often used as a euphemism for sexual relations, where sexual oppression thrives and where women lacks even the knowledge of their oppression” (Yudkin 88). So Kingston grew up revolting against such a society.

*Asian American Feminism:* Kingston’s *The Woman Warrior* is a unique and successful literary work of the 1970s in the United States. Among the many features of the book, one which made it popular is the ethnic identity of the author – a Chinese American female, who tells the stories of female Chinese Americans. As *The Woman Warrior* is a narrative of a feminist who has an ethnic background, therefore, by narrating their silences and voices she expresses the oppression of Chinese American women and also represents their feminist awareness as minority Americans. Because of the differences in ethnic, social, historical and cultural backgrounds, the development of Asian American feminism differs greatly from the white mainstream feminist movement in the United States.

Before discussing the contents of Asian American feminism, it is perhaps useful to define the term “feminism” and present some background knowledge of the feminist movements in the United States. “Feminism”, according to *Encyclopedia Britannica*, is “the belief
in the social, economic, and political equality of the sexes”. In fact, feminism can be understood in two different senses. On the one hand, feminism can be understood as “theory” – “systems of concepts, propositions and analysis that describe and explain women’s situations and experiences and support recommendations about how to improve them”; on the other hand, feminism can also be understood as a kind of “social movement, one that may generate and be aided by theory” (Frye 195). Both of them share the idea that “women controlling adequate resources… live well” (Frye 195). Particularly in the sense of “movement”, feminism becomes a social and historical phenomenon. When women are oppressed by social arrangements, there are tendencies among women to resistance, rebellion, and creative alternative world-making. At a certain time and place, when the tendencies intensify, they become a “movement”:

a pattern of acts and happenings that is recognizable in its context as a force oriented to critiquing and substantially changing those social arrangements” which may “generate historic change, and subside or become diffuse again over time. (Frye 196)

In general, the history of feminist movements can be divided into three periods, or “waves” (Krolokke 1). The first wave refers to the feminist
movement of the 19th through early 20th centuries, which dealt mainly with the Suffrage movement, such as women’s rights of voting, inheritance, access to education and the job market (2). The second wave of feminist activity began in the early 1960s and lasted through the late 1980s and it mainly dealt with the inequality of laws, as well as cultural inequalities, such as childcare, abortion, job market etc. The movement encouraged women to understand aspects of their own personal lives as “deeply politicized” and reflective of a “sexist structure of power”. If first-wave feminism focused upon women’s political rights, such as suffrage, second-wave feminism was largely concerned with other issues of equality, such as the end to discrimination. The feminist activist and author Carol Hanisch coined the slogan “The Personal is Political” which became synonymous with the second wave. In fact, second-wave feminists saw women’s cultural and political inequalities as inextricably linked and encouraged women to understand aspects of their personal lives as deeply politicized and as reflecting sexist power structures (Krolokke 7-14).

The third wave of feminism, starting from early 1990s and lasting until now, is seen as a continuation and a response to the perceived failures of the second wave, though Black feminism and Asian
American feminism, appeared before 1990s, started to emerge already in the 1970s. During this period, ethnic, sexual, and identity issues obtained more attention, and feminist writers and critics rooted in the second wave like Gloria Anzaldúa, bell hooks, Chela Sandoval, Cherrie Moraga, Audre Lorde, Maxine Hong Kingston, and many other feminists of color, started to call for a new subjectivity in feminist voice. They sought to negotiate prominent space within feminist thought for consideration of race-related subjectivities. They focus on the intersection between race and gender, for example, on the double marginalization issue – that they act both as a woman and as an ethnic minority woman. The intersection between race and gender remained prominent through the Hill-Thomas hearings in the U.S., but began to shift with the Freedom Ride 1992. This drive to register voters in poor minority communities was surrounded with a rhetoric that focused on rallying young feminists. For many, the rallying of the young is the emphasis that has stuck within third wave feminism (Krolokke 2006, 15-20).

During the history of the feminist movements, women of the United States have always been in a pioneer position. However, many of them have been white middle-class women, although already in year 1851 Sojourner Truth, a daughter of slaves, delivered
her famous “Ain’t I a Woman” speech at Women’s Rights Convention in Ohio, which represented women of other ethnicities and classes, and thus enlarged the definition of “feminism” (Truth). From the Civil Rights Movement in the United States and the collapse of European colonialism in Africa, the Caribbean, parts of Latin America and Southeast Asia to the women in former European colonies and the Third World have proposed “post-colonial” and “Third World” versions of feminist ideology. Some postcolonial feminists, such as Chandra Talpade Mohanty, criticize U.S. and Western European feminists for being ethnocentric and isolationist. Some prominent U.S. feminists, for example, Angela Davis and Alice Walker, have shared this view. Among them, one of the most vocal critics of the women’s liberation movement has been African American feminist and intellectual Bell Hooks, who argues that this movement glossed over race and class and thus failed to address “the issues that divided women” (Hooks). She highlighted the lack of minority voices in the women’s movement in her book Feminist Theory from Margin to Center (1984).

Being part of feminism of colour, Asian American feminism shares similarities with African American feminism. As Caroline Chung Simpson points out in her book review on Dragon Ladies: Asian
American Feminists Breathe Fire (1999) “…the apparent solidarity of the early Asian American studies movement was often achieved at the neglect of Asian American women…” (Simpson 1). Because of the socio-historical reasons, Asian American women were not involved in the feminist movements as they developed in the US. They were too preoccupied with economic survival, lacked the language skills to communicate and integrate into the mainstream society, and they were culturally cut off from the white middle class among whom the “feminist consciousness” first developed. In fact, they were not even officially identified as a single group, for example, Asian American women. This relates to many issues in The Woman Warrior in connection with “silence” and “voice”. Kingston, as an Asian American feminist, is helping Asian American women find their own voice, their own feminism, and she is, in her way, providing that voice.

Throughout The Woman Warrior, it is very obvious that Kingston tries to employ Western feminist ideology to rebel against the patriarchal Chinese American society. She writes about the silent and victimized Chinese women, whose tragic stories result from the traditional patriarchal Chinese culture. She also rewrites the classic Chinese literature to remove the traditional Confucian doctrines on women and creates new Chinese women who demand independence and
equality. For example, in *The Woman Warrior*, Kingston’s Mulan is different from the Mulan in traditional Chinese literature. After she comes back to the village, Kingston’s Mulan emphasizes that “I am the female revenger” (Kingston 45). Throughout the book Kingston repeatedly shows her detestation towards some Chinese sayings such as “Girls are maggots in the rice”, “It is more profitable to raise geese than daughters” (Kingston 45). In fact, as Madsen points out (235):

In each of the five sections of the narrative, there is offered a feminine character or a feminine role (daughter, student, warrior, writer) which offers a model of feminine identity; but the effect of this multiplicity of roles is not to clarify but to render identity mysterious…Kingston tries to find a voice …to reach an understanding of how women can relate to each other within the terms of a brutally misogynistic Chinese culture and an American culture comprised of conflicting gender values.

Indeed, Kingston does promote Asian American feminism through *The Woman Warrior*. In addition, as Madsen continues to state, the emergence of Asian American feminists, as well as other feminists of color, raises the feminist issue of “double consciousness”, which is distinct from the traditional theoretical perspective:
the perceived contradiction between what one is in oneself and the cultural image imposed by the racism of others, a contradiction that prevents women of color achieving full subjectivity or selfhood. In literary terms, these issues make urgent the problem of constructing a feminist ‘voice’ with which women of color can articulate their experiences both in literary and theoretical discourses. (Madsen 213-214)

Chinese American woman is forced to confront and the complexities of gender identity for Chinese American women, given their exoticisation by WASP culture. As women of colour feminist movements began to challenge mainstream feminism in this period, so ethnic feminist texts like Kingston’s began to gain prominence and attention from white feminist readers too, and something of a two-way exchange began to occur. Much of this early feminist work centered upon issues of maternity, as an integral part of female identity and as a metaphor of feminism itself. For example, the Asian American contributions to the major 1981 ethnic feminist anthology, *this Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, often included a focus upon issues of motherhood, such as: Nellie Wong’s essay on growing up; Genny Lim’s piece on versions of womanhood; Mitsuye Yamada’s piece on the hardships of her mother’s
life and the connections between motherhood and stereotyping; and Merle Woo’s ‘letter to ma’, in which she explicitly addressed the complexities of the mother-daughter relationship.

In *Chinese American Women Writers: The Tradition Behind Maxine Hong Kingston* (1990), Amy Ling also refers to works by Han Suyin, Lin Tai-yi, the Eaton sisters, Mai-mai Sze, the Lin sisters, Janet Lim, Virginia Lee, Diana Chang and Anna Chennault, and wryly comments the ‘Kingston is not an isolated Athena’. (Ling)

The status of women in India has been subject to many great changes over the past few millennia. From equal status with men in ancient times through the low points of the medieval period, to the promotion of equal rights by many reformers, the history of women in India has been eventful. In modern India, women have held high offices in India including that of the President, Prime Minister, Speaker of the Lok Sabha and Leader of the Opposition. As of 2011, the Speaker of the Lok Sabha and the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha (Lower House of the parliament) were women. However, women in India continue to face atrocities such as rape, acid throwing, dowry killings while young girls are forced into prostitution; as of late rape has seen a sharp increase following several high profile cases of young girls brutally raped in public areas. According to a global poll conducted by Thomson
Reuters, India is the “fourth most dangerous country” in the world for women and the worst country for women among the G20 countries. (Hepinstall)

*Kingston’s post feminism:* Kingston as a product of sixties counterculture and second-wave feminism, though, and to suggest that writers like Amy Tan and Fae Myenne Ng have simply followed in her wake. The nature of feminism and other cultural movements has changed immeasurably since 1976. One development is the emergence of postfeminism. Roughly dated as corresponding to the latter 1980s and the 1990s, postfeminism is defined by Ann Brooks as ‘the theoretical meeting ground between feminism and anti-foundationalist movements such as postcolonialism’, and, as such, it seeks to ‘challenge the hegemonic assumptions held by second wave feminist epistemologies.

Maxine Hong Kingston’s long-standing coterminous interest in women’s issues, pacifism, civil rights and theories of social responsibility, in fact prematurely ushered her brand of feminism into the realm of postfeminism, which was only to emerge as a widespread phenomenon much later. It is worth nothing, for instance, that Kingston was identified as a key figure in Chela Sandoval’s 1991 retrospective essay on ‘U.S. Third World Feminism’, which was identified as a post-1971 phenomenon, and which also included Toni Morrison, Leslie Marmon
Feminist criticism, which exists in many forms, has a vast agenda with an array of goals. Very generally, it is a way of examining literature and art based on a philosophical stance that advocates equal rights and equal opportunities for women. Seeking social, cultural, political, and personal changes that will enable an agenda of equality, feminist criticism is grounded in the assumption that social institutions are predicated on a culturally established, uneven distribution of power between men and women.

Feminist criticism’s goals have evolved over the last several decades, but generally speaking, those goals first include the recovery of texts (both literary and artistic) by women whose efforts have been overlooked, ignored, or possibly even suppressed by environments in which cultural production is dominated by men. Also sought is the reevaluation of canonical literature and art to discover how these works—generally by men—embody the cultural attitudes that have contributed to the oppression of women.

Although modern feminist criticism has its origins at least as far back as Simon de Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex* (1949), its contemporary
roots lie in the 1970s. In its first stage, feminist criticism, energized by Kate Millett’s *Sexual Politics* (1969), focused on identifying misogyny and gender bias, not only in literature and art, but also in the culture at large. The work of the earliest feminist critics uncovered and analyzed the definitive gender biases evident in literary works generally acknowledged to be canonical or widely accepted. Second-phase feminist criticism—called gynocriticism—involved efforts to uncover women’s texts, to identity forgotten works in which female authors privilege the woman’s perspective, to discover answers to questions about how women’s writing differs from men’s. The third historic phase of feminist criticism is the most inclusive, extending its focus beyond overtly feminist texts to include works by all women, label and intersecting with gender studies to concentrate its efforts on examining gender as a cultural construction, as a system of categories in which *woman* and *man* are not complete opposites, not distinct categories, but rather points along a system of identifications.

Like any other novel, the representative novels of Feminism are densely textured with a lot of literary devices which include archetypes, icons, image clusters, linguistic patterns, motifs, symbols and allusions. Kingston employs all these literary devices with references to Chinese embroiders, history and mythology. Invoking images from American
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culture, Kingston establishes the juxtaposition of Chinese culture with American culture crating a palimpsest variations in story and multiples of signification. Thus she invites the reader to experience the layers of meaning. In *The Woman Warrior*, the controlling motif is story telling. It is introduced with the first sentence and implied in the book’s final reference to Ts’ai Yen’s poem. Storytelling is employed by Brave Orchid as motif and strategy in the novel. It is a means through which she transmits the elements of Chinese culture to her American daughter. It is a method through which that same daughter comes to terms with Brave Orchid’s words. Eventually throughout the novel, the Storytelling becomes the avenue to the Self and a means to the articulation of identity. From a different perspective, Storytelling functions as ethnography in the novel. It is an act of recording cultural values and an assertion of cultural identity. Brave Orchid appropriates the tales of Mulan, Yue Fei, Ts’ai Yen, the big eaters, the emperor’s knot and the family stories. Engaging in an act of self creation, she embraces and internalizes the stories of Chinese heritage. She combines this with a fresh approach to describe the American experience. It is to be firmly believed that the act of storytelling empowers the storyteller. Fa Mu Lan derives strength from the narrative oppression. Maxine breaks her own silence to tell her own story. Through her revisionist storytelling she provides an account of the transformation of her community from victimization to self affirmation.
Storytelling is considered as an act of unraveling the past. It is also considered as an act of celebrating rituals and practices of the past. Brave Orchids talk story is subversive in nature. It provides a way for her daughter to reconstruct the life of No Name Woman. Retelling the story of her aunt’s transgression, she silences her aunt and the truth of her life is buried in words and recreations. Storytelling is also an avenue for social commentary. It becomes a commentary on the narrative shapes of the lives of individuals. It functions as a metaphor for encompassing the universal experience. Kingston employs this as a strategy for examining and challenging the construction of gender roles in a patriarchal society. Kingston’s fascination for storytelling cannot be completely perceived as a narrative device and motif. It is the attempt of a feminist to immerse in regional Chinese culture as a strategy for survival. This is the spirit of Feminism and Kingston often indulges in the acts of cultural subversion. Kingston completely subscribes to the exploration of past to bring back the significance of oral tradition in transmitting the history and culture completely from the feminist perspective. The credentials of South Asian Feminism lie in reviving the significance of traditional history and reinterpreting it to contest the contemporary neo colonial cultural domination.
Another dominant Feminist motif in *The Woman Warrior* is Ghosts. This is referred in the subtitle ‘Memoirs of Girlhood among Ghosts’. Kingston emphasizes the fact that her usage of the word ‘Ghost’ come from both Chinese and American culture. According to her this is the loose translation of ‘kuei’, a Chinese word rendered as ‘demon’. From the Western perspective, Ghosts are characterized as invisible and lack of substance. In the novel Ghosts appear in many guises. There is a ‘Little Ghost’ NO Name Woman’s never Christened baby. There are American Ghosts, such as ‘Taxi Ghosts’, ‘Police Ghosts’ and ‘Mexican Ghosts’. Brave Orchid considers America as ‘Terrible Ghost Country’ inhabited by different races and communities. She describes her own American born children as Ghosts as they do not subscribe to traditional Chinese culture. She labels No Name Aunt as Ghost. In addition to these considerations, Brave Orchid considers Maxine to be a Ghost. Her life is circumscribed by these ambiguous and malevolent beings. Maxine wishes to be in a ghost free territory. She wishes to execute her imagination by dread of ghosts. Eventually, Ghosts need to be perceived as symbols of separation from China and America. She views the people around her as ghosts but acknowledges them to be Americans. Considering herself as an outsider in America, Brave Orchid experiences nowhere belongingness. The Feminist motif of employing ‘Ghost’ becomes an act of understanding separation and space. It is an attempt to decipher the
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spatial and cultural inequalities. It leads to the eventual recognition of the cultural absence of woman and their recognition.

The novel has lot many allusions folding the entire universe into its theme. Allusions indicate references to persons, places, events and works of art. Generally, in creating allusions, the author believes in the knowledge of the reader and makes references to the tradition of history, culture and other aspects. But in The Woman Warrior allusions come from unfamiliar culture and they demand cultural translation. Kingston employs these allusions as a representation of Feminist consciousness. The allusions are impenetrable without translation. They foreground important issues contextualizing the events. In The Woman Warrior, they invoke Chinese history, legend, folktale and geography. They establish connections with other texts from Chinese culture and art. Kingston separates her ancestral heritage of China from the American culture. The central allusion in the novel is Fa Mu Lan. Introducing Fa Mu Lan in the chapter ‘White Tigers’, Kingston recounts the story of an young girl lured away from home by a bird and trained by mysterious old couple in the martial arts. Returning home she takes the place of her father in the army, only to liberate the village from the oppressive baron. Concealing her gender beneath the warrior’s armor, she leads an army of hundreds of peasants to victory over the aristocracy. After the victory, she returns
home to execute the traditional responsibilities of wife and mother. This is the life of much admired Chinese Folk heroine. This has become the subject of legend, poetry, drama and became the most popular ballad from Tang dynasty. This tale of woman as the central leader of liberation from the subjugation becomes a perpetual allusion that stands of Women’s centrality. This proves woman as the liberator from the slavery, defender of the nation, family and above all the source of life. Kingston with the objective of espousing Feminist consciousness implies creative improvisation and draws material from different sources to the theme of the novel. To create the character of woman warrior, Kingston invokes the written ballad and the story of General Yue Fei from 12th century. She also indicates in one of her interviews that the swordswoman figure in the contemporary Kung fu movies is inspired by the genesis of the heroine of ‘White Tigers’. In The Woman Warrior Fa Mu Lan is motivated by the need to prove herself and also by the parents desire for revenge. With her mastery in martial arts, she wins the strategies in the battle and performs extraordinary feats. Addressed as Original swords woman, she conceives a child during military campaign concealing her pregnancy beneath the artfully altered armor. Considering the emperor of nation as the enemy, she fights against the oppressive forces in civil war. Kingston creates a heroine who balances the domestic responsibility and her loyalty to the country. Kingston elaborates the Fa Mu Lan’s stories
providing the descriptions of the battles and transforms this into a western epic. Kingston combines Graeco European tradition combining aspects of Chinese folklore and Western literature to create a new role model for American girls. She makes South Asian American Feminism as a new source for consolidating the contemporary women’s identity.

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