PREFACE

I am obnoxious to each carping tongue
Who say my hand a needle better fits..

Ann Brad Street

In patriarchy, male privilege has been associated with control over power and production, circulation of pleasure and representation of desires. Social patterns have been designed to accommodate male preferences and modes of gratification. Female sexuality has been relegated to a marginalized position to disallow pleasures and gratification; the woman’s body has been inscribed or ‘imprinted’ by ‘his story’. In all the cultures, woman has always been subjugated by ‘male gaze’ and power practices.

The repressed semiotic energies explode to the surface to expose the inscribed body (of the woman), and dialogize its desire for re-invention. Two such voices, which rose to break the silence and taboos on woman’s body and thus disintegrated the male version of the woman, are of esteemed Noble Laureates Toni Morrison and Elfriede Jelinek. These two feminists exposed the complex web of power structures operating in society and showed their concerns about gender oppression. It has been my endeavor to survey these writers’
attempts to bring out gender, race, class and power issues in their respective patriarchies through their works. These laureates not only unfold a radical feminist vision but also interrogate the binaries of male/female, black/white, power/powerless, domination/surrender and so on.

I have discussed the fiction of Toni Morrison and Elfriede Jelinek according to the theme of norms of gender discourse for women. The justification for undertaking this programme of research lies behind the fact that, so far no independent study of two Noble Laureates, dealing with the similar subject and discourse has been made in this territory, presenting a compact picture of norms of gender discourse, male oppressive society, patriarchal notions of women and women's resistance on the same, as presented by the esteemed instigators.

My method of searching the very aspect has been analytical and interpretive; i.e I have analyzed and interpreted incidents, characters and their psyche to bring out the norms of gender discourse for women and address the issue of women's representation in their patriarchies.

My thesis contains seven chapters. Chapter I is the introductory chapter, in which I have discussed various gender norms constructed for women through Morrison and Jelinek's characters, which are fiercely oppressive to women. This chapter presents the efforts of these novelists to challenge the conventional boundaries of thought
patterns. Chapter II discusses the wounded psyche of females and condemns the doctrine of female dependency on the male world. Chapter III presents the psychological turmoil of female sex due to heavily loaded oppressive gender norms and attacks the myth that sexual performance automatically grants manhood. Chapter IV presents the unity of flesh and spirit and discusses the gender norms like sexual slavery and marital rape. This chapter defines Morrison's and Jelinek's attempts to establish female selfhood. Chapter V depicts various repressive forces working on women in the form of paternalism, 'sexual politics' in marital relationships and sexual stereotyping. This chapter also uncovers the painful history of women's humiliation and writer's courage to reject and negate the symbol of woman to sex and seduction. Chapter VI presents various narrative techniques to convey the plot and codes successfully and chapter VII attempts to conclude how the works of these laureates move beyond the conservative tenets of representational feminism to envision the concerns of gender.