One is not born a woman, one becomes one.

- Simone de Beauvoir

1.1.0. Society and family are institutions, in which every member has distinguished role, but vesting lot of responsibilities on a woman’s role and honoring a woman for her motherhood capacities (especially more so in India) is the predominant feature. Children are glorified and treasured in any society. Children and women are considered vulnerable categories that need privileges and priority legally and socially and hence they are bestowed with certain privileges. Yet one half of the total population—the women are dissatisfied, hurt and humiliated about their status, feel subjugated and secondary and hence struggle to overthrow the duties entrusted upon them and consequently undergo the dilemma between conformity and non-conformity to the various roles foisted on them at the various stages of their life.

1.1.1. In the recent decades, we witness certain changes in the inter-personal relationship between men and women. There seems to be certain reluctance on women’s part in undertaking the varied roles and in conforming to such roles within the tight cultural, traditional, societal and psychological established norms. Marriages are postponed or the newly weds are divorced no sooner than they get married, and motherhood is considered burdensome and hence pregnancy is postponed or avoided. Women seem to be constantly in search of an extra space to fit in individually and independently. The important feature of the contemporary middle class life is the contradiction between their expectations and the practical life, which especially women experience. Men on the other hand complain that women have lost their feminine charms and that they shirk their responsibilities
and want to enjoy equally a life of freedom as men. Hence, there arises the doubt whether women’s attitude is justified or the men’s acquisition justified.

1.2.0. Women writers in the contemporary world enjoy a greater measure of freedom and no area of life remains exclusively as the male domain. Women do explore prohibited regions of experience boldly. However, the vital investigation is to what extent the modern women writers have succeeded in demolishing the traditional image of women as a mere sex object. It has not yet brought a radical transformation in public attitude towards woman-man relationship. Feminism has to attempt a new definition of women’s role in the wider social frame. Even today, an average woman feels uncertain about her identity as a social being. Conditions of life have no doubt improved a tremendous deal since the days of Jane Austen. Women today have a greater share in social responsibilities. They have also an infinite number of avenues open before them. We have examples of women outshining men in many spheres. Notwithstanding all this, the general notion about woman as a shadow-figure to a male caretaker— the father, the husband or the son, continues to persist. To affirm the dignity and individuality of woman in the family as well as in the wider social life demands a concentrated effort. Though this problem has many other implications such as social, political, psychological and economical, the recent fiction— literary implication is the theme of our deliberations but in the context of social reality. Women’s denial to undertake familial roles has become quite common both in the west and in the east but the society is shocked at women thus avoiding their responsibilities by refusing matrimony and postponing or rejecting motherhood. Women most of them are disgusted with the practical ways of the society as they feel the society is biased, male chauvinistic and discriminatory. Indeed, they glorify their profession and are much successful too than in family. I have endeavored to get an answer to this transitional phase in women through recourse to contemporary literature. To examine this key issue the various texts selected from the chosen authors’ writings are:
Doris Lessing’s:

Martha Quest (1954)

The Proper Marriage (1954)


The Grass is Singing (1990)

and Rajam Krishnan’s

The House (1975)

The Chains (1975)

After the Sound of Fury (1982)

Mailampattu Valli (1992)

The social and literary background of both the authors, exercise much influence on the characteristics of their writing and on the themes they have focused and hence briefed in this chapter.

1.2.1. These selected novels focus on socio familial protest of women who are valued and devalued as per the varied necessities and demands of patriarchy and the patriarchal society and hence these novels are chosen since this dissertation probes the extent and limitation of the protagonists’ assimilation of the laid prescribed norms and standards of the society. In case of rejection, the rationality of their rejection is estimated. Studying the nature of the strategies they employ and the consequential positive and negative effects from the society’s point of view and from the protagonists’ that is the novelists’ point of view of such protest reveal certain facts about women’s state and status. Based on these perceptions possible remedies to overcome the discomfiture of both women and the society are endeavored in the last chapter.
1.2.2. The dissertation elaborates on how the selected novelists depict women who struggle both to assimilate and to shrug off the roles foisted on them. The analysis falls under four broad divisions. It begins with the novelists’ focus on the girl children’s acute consciousness of the sharp differences in nature and nurture and next proceeds to view the complexities of undertaking stereotyped roles of a wife. Thirdly, the foisting of motherhood on them forcefully, its impact on women is analyzed empathetically and finally it casts the female protagonists’ social protest, their capacity for social conformity and non-conformity and the issues germinating thereafter. Introspection into the extent of women’s assimilation of the roles foisted on them draws attention to the accompanying psychological and social problems involved in fitting into the roles or rejecting such roles.

1.3.0. The first chapter probes into the existing phenomenon of the modern women’s tendency to escape patriarchal suffocations and their craving to establish self-identity and examines the extent of this phenomenon reflected in contemporary literature. It identifies from feminist angle the age long male ownership ideologies imbibed by the society as the cause for the deplorable status of women, and the sexual politics which involves creation of mystique as the cause for women’s constant struggle between two ideologies. Each woman at present is a split personality, two contradictory split selves—one feminist and another the feminine, one natural and the other nurtured, one the real and the other artificial. The selected novels along with the literary backdrop and social background signify the much-experienced issue of women—the dichotomy between conformity and non-conformity, especially in the socio economical and historical background of post-war Britain and post-Independence India has multi significance and literature one among them being our main concern. This chapter further focuses the process of analysis and comparison of the novelists Doris Lessing and Rajam Krishnan, their choice of themes and the delineation of their heroines which draw attention to the special endowment of both the novelists’ feminist sensibility and sensitivity, which permeate their literary creations. Their
sense of social responsibility and tendency to uphold political cause is also noteworthy.

1.3.1. Woman’s consciousness that she is being repressed and suppressed and the spread of the message among women has confirmed their secret personal doubts about her subjugation and that personal is also public and hence started the pain and struggle of non-conformity and the other issues germinating out of the non-conformity on women’s part. There are many heart burning issues pertaining to women, their decadence and their legitimate demands for assertion of their rights and identities. The glaring discriminations of women have relegated them to oblivion and obscurity in the society. They were made chattel, deprived of possession and property. It was as though nature had designed them primarily to gratify male desire for male convenience, labor, reproduction and rearing of their offsprings. This is the state of affairs, which has occurred everywhere, throughout the history of humankind. Though women increasingly participate in all spheres of life today, the universal feeling among women is that they yet remain subject to inequality and oppression. It is very shocking to know parents and some of the medical community is counterpart indulging in female feticides and female infanticide.

1.4.0. The global social background of the contemporary milieu is essential to understand the significance of Lessing and Rajam Krishnan’s suitability, sincerity and success as literary creative artists. Despite scientific and technological progress, humanity’s unresolved social problems are manifold. One such glaring problem is the deplorable status of women, who comprise half the world’s total population. Though women increasingly participate in all spheres of life today, they yet remain subject to inequality and oppression. This proves detrimental to the society in which they live along with men. Lenin rightly regarded the status of women as the true barometer registering the quality of the democracy and hence the socio-economic and political equality of women was for him the basis for women’s equality in the family. However, corruptive laws deprived women of
their power and property by granting men special privileges. The unequal status of women in the family was legalized in laws governing the family relations, rights and duties of married women in the nineteenth century European society and most vitality in the inheritance law.

1.4.1. Women are a dependency class, who identify their own survival with the prosperity of those who feed them, says Simone de Beauvoir in her book. Class distinction is decided by the position any class holds in the productive mechanism, the relationship it has with the instruments of production, the share it receives from society’s wealth. The class that is alienated from and kept ignorant of the means of production is the female sex. This alienation leads to subordination, dependence and surveillance of the female sex. The result is that the male class thrives by exploiting the female class.

1.4.2. The patriarchal institutions with social and communal sanction have molded women into feminine temperament as wives and mothers because of which wifely role and motherhood have become synonymous with femininity. It is necessary to understand that for women the capacities for role-playing and abilities to get gratification from it have become inescapable because it is patriarchy, which strongly internalizes and psychologically enforces such behavior in the feminine psychic structure via childhood nurturing and it is not the inherent nature.

1.4.3. In Patriarchy the breadwinner, the head of the family, the male head is the supreme ruler; everybody else is his possession who comes under his custody cattle, chattel, children and wife. He is the supreme ruler. ‘Marriage’— institution of ‘Patriarchy’ obliterated the very being or legal existence of woman, since husband and wife were one person in law i.e. single subject. State, society and family are patriarchal institutions and co-operation between family and the larger society was essential because society at large being a patriarchal whole and family a patriarchal unit— the mediator between the individual and the social structure
became an agent. However, wives did not become the equals of their husband in property matters overnight. This is an area into which law stepped delicately and not until 1952 was it openly acknowledged that the wife is no longer her husband’s property and that was the time she began to be regarded to least by law as a partner in all affairs, which are the common concern of man and wife.

1.5.0. In society, human beings are associated with limiting sex roles, irrespective of their individual potential. The family in which the male group dominates the female group merely on account of its sex has led to the denigration of traits regarded as feminine and glorification of certain traits associated with the male such as aggression and violence as virile. Thus, viewed from this light, our society is an oppressive one as far as the female is concerned. Kate Millet, a feminist, identifies this problem in her book Sexual Politics (1970). The essence of this politics according to Millet is power. Patriarchy is its chief institution. Impact on notions of ideology, temperament, role, economic status, division of labour and above all the superior economic position of the male play a part in enforcing patriarchy which in turn influences all other social economic forms such as caste, class, feudality, bureaucracy, religion and literature. She reveals that sex has very definite political implications. She traces sexual politics through history, from the angle of psychology, religion and literature.

1.5.1. In India male domination, family, female servitude though these have originated along with patriarchal setup of the society, it was reinstated strongly, intently, stably in the aristocratic society. Women were prevented totally from being educated and from any sort of production except farming. Though the social setup was transformed along with the growth of aristocracy, the institution of family, which is the perennial source of male domination and female servitude continued without being destructed and the patriarchal society continued without any destruction.
1.5.2. Kate Millet’s succinct formulation of ‘Patriarchy’ explains its characteristics:

Our society like all other historical civilization is a patriarchy. The fact is evident at once, if one recalls that the military, industry, technology, universities sciences, political offices and finance—in short, every avenue of power within the society, including the coercive force of the police, is entirely in male hands (1970:25).

1.6.0. The crux of the thesis is probing the extent to which the protagonists of the chosen novels conform to roles and identities imposed upon them— the varying degree of conformity and the non-conformity, the retrospective of these women establishing their self-identity, the consequences thereafter and its implications on the protagonists themselves and on the society. To understand the significance of the novelists’ extra perception the literary scenario of their contemporary age is required and hence briefed here. A survey of the authors’ background and a brief introduction to the similarities among the protagonists are provided.

1.6.1. Lessing was born in Persia (modern-day Iran) in 1919 to English parents. At an early age, she moved with her family to Rhodesia, in southern Africa, where her father struggled as a farmer. Lessing has described her childhood as an uneven mix of some pleasure and much pain. The natural world, which she explored with her brother, Harry, was one retreat from an otherwise miserable existence. Her mother, obsessed with raising a proper daughter, enforced a rigid system of rules and hygiene at home, and then installed Doris in a convent school, where nuns terrified their charges with stories of hell and damnation. Lessing was later sent to an all-girls high school in the capital of Salisbury, from which she soon dropped out. She attended public schools until her teenage years, when chronic eye problems forced her to return home, thus ending
her formal education. She was thirteen; and it was the end of her formal education but like other women writers from southern African who did not graduate from high school (such as Olive Schreiner and Nadine Gordimer), Lessing made herself into a self-educated intellectual. She recently commented that unhappy childhoods seem to produce fiction writers. As a young woman, Lessing relocated to Salisbury, the capital of Southern Rhodesia, where she supported herself through various secretarial jobs. During World War II, she was active in pro-communist organizations, and in 1949 she emigrated to London, England. In London, Lessing established herself as a fiction writer, critic, journalist, and political activist. She joined the English Communist Party in 1952 and resigned about five years later. In 1956, she was banned from returning to Rhodesia, presumably for anti-apartheid sentiments expressed in her writings, and she continues to live in England. Although details of Lessing's personal life are sketchy, critics agree that in her fiction, Lessing draws significantly from her own experiences.

1.6.2. The Indian regional writer Rajam Krishnan chosen for comparison with the British Novelist is a renowned female novelist and an important Tamil writer writing in Tamizh an ancient language of South India. She was born in 1925 in Musiri, Trichy District in Tamil Nadu. Her works depict the lives of women in Tamil Nadu, particularly the Brahmin women, in a realist style and lucid language. The intertwining of tradition and modernity is one of the hallmarks of her writing. She is unable to come to terms with what she perceives to be the unchanging plight of women in society, irrespective of whether they are traditional or modern. She once remarked in an interview "It is a shame that the sufferings women underwent in my days dog them even now". Rajam Krishnan's works express her anguish at the way inequities are perpetuated in one form after another. Her novels and short stories have been translated into various Indian languages and English.
I do not fully subscribe to the view that works of fiction are all products of imagination. I, at least, internalise real life “visions”, let them play on my heartstrings and bring them out as literary compositions... I keep going in search of new arenas and new experiences (1998:48).

That encapsulates Rajam Krishnan's credo and describes her contributions to the world of Tamil literature. She has won the Sahithya Academy award and has created sensation among readers for her realistic and feminist focus on the plight and pangs of the middle class women in Indian society.

1.6.3. Considered a powerful contemporary writer primarily in the realist tradition, Lessing has explored many of the most important social, political, psychological, and spiritual issues of the twentieth century. Her works display a broad range of interests and focus on such specific topics as racism, communism, feminism, and mysticism. Her novels, short stories and essays have focused on a wide range of twentieth-century issues and concerns such as the politics of race that she confronted in her early novels set in Africa to the politics of gender which lead to her adoption by the feminist movement to the role of the family and the individual in society explored in her space fiction of the late 1970s and early 1980s.

1.6.3.1. While Lessing is perhaps best known for her acclaimed and controversial novel The Golden Notebook (1982), many critics find the short story form more suited to her temperament and concerns. She is one of the most celebrated and distinguished writers of the second half of the twentieth century. Her most recent books include The Cleft and The Story of General Dann and Mara’s Daughter Griot and The Snow Dog, the two volumes of autobiography, Under My Skin and Walking in the Shade, and the anthology of articles and reviews, Time Bites, A Companion of Honour and a Companion of Literature. She was recently awarded the Nobel Prize in 2007. She lives in North London.
Lessing’s fiction is commonly divided into three distinct phases: The communist theme from 1944 – 1956 during which she was writing radically on social issues; the psychological theme from 1956 – 1967, and after that the Sufi theme which was explored in science fiction setting in the Canopus series. After the Sufist themes, Lessing has worked in all three areas.

When Lessing began her literary career in the 1950s, she was promptly recognized as an accomplished short fiction writer in the realist mode. The tales collected in her first short story volume *The Old Chief's Country* (1952), introduce the theme of alienation, which Lessing delineates chiefly through protagonists of English descent living as colonialists in Africa. Isolated from each other and from the native people by class, age, gender, and racial barriers, these characters suffer the fragmentation that Lessing views as a direct consequence of apartheid. In *African Stories* (1964), Lessing further chronicles racial issues from a variety of social perspectives. Among Lessing's most acclaimed volumes of short fiction, *Five Short Novels* (1955), *The Habit of Loving* (1957), and *African Stories* contain tales concerning racial problems in African settings, the dynamics of married life, and the emancipation of modern women.

Much of Lessing’s fiction has definite political intentions; her involvement with communism is evident in many of her early works. In the Novella *Hunger*, a straightforward social commentary in the manner of Charles Dickens's *Oliver Twist*, Lessing relates the experiences of Jabavu, an impoverished African boy from a small village who comes to a large modern city to better his condition, only to be assaulted by the town's depravity and inequities. Although some critics feel Jabavu's ultimate victory over his own cultural inadequacies and the evil forces operating in such urban white environment strains believability, *Hunger* remains one of Lessing's novellas that are more popular. The pieces in Lessing's later collection *The Temptation of Jack Orkney and Other Stories* (1972) contain analyses of the volatile international political situation during the 1960s. In other stories, Lessing examines the nature of
marriage and childbearing, focusing on how the roles of wife and mother affect her characters' creative lives. In these works, Lessing often presents strong-willed, independent heroines whose needs for love do not counteract their desires for self-sufficiency—a recurrent theme that anticipated many feminist concerns.

1.6.5. Lessing is generally recognized as one of the most important writers of the twentieth century. Using detailed, realistic descriptions, symbolism, and imagery to evoke a wide range of environments and moods, Lessing achieves what Edward J. Fitzgerald termed ‘tension and immediacy’ in her work. Critics argue that her enlightened portrayal of marriage and motherhood, her anti-apartheid stance, and her experimentation with genre and form have made her an exciting and often controversial literary figure. In fact, commentators have regarded her exploration of such complex issues as racism, communism, feminism, psychology, and mysticism as courageous. Several critics have discussed her place within world literature and have investigated her influence on other writers.

1.6.6. Lessing fell into ‘writer’s block’ for sometime because she was depressed about the prospectus of novels. She felt that her contemporary age was not a great age of literature and hence writers fell into despondency and frustration. She expressed her fear about novel becoming extinct with the extinct of middle class the popular genre that was born with middle class. She, at the same time expressed her hope that though cinema and television have been added to the popular arts, where once novel was alone; the novel has one advantage denied to any other artists which is precisely the novelist talks, as an individual to individuals, in a small personal voice. This applies to the author’s own denials about her feminist stand in her writing. The warmth, humanity, and love of people are abundant in her work. The act of getting a story or a novel published is an act of communication. It is an attempt to impose one’s personality and beliefs on other people—"If a writer accepts this responsibility, he must see himself, to use the socialist phrase, as an architect of the soul, and it is a phrase which none of the
old nineteenth-century novelists would have shied away from” (1957:11). Lessing was dissatisfied with the literary trend of her contemporary age is explicit from her criticism: “If there is one thing which distinguishes our literature, it is a confusion of standards and the uncertainty of values” (1957: 9).

1.7.0. Among the women writers who write in Tamizh, Rajam Krishnan is notable. She writes exclusively for certain magazines. Problems viewed through female perceptions are the contents of her stories. Through such writings, she has retained an individual position in the history of the modern Tamil novelists. She is a recipient of New York Herald Tribune International Award in 1950 for a short story; Sahitya Academy Award in 1973; Soviet Land Nehru Award in 1975. She has been honored with several other awards such as Kalaimagal Award in 1953 and Thiru. Vi. Ka. Award in 1991. The Library of Congress has fifty-nine titles by her. She lives in Chennai now.

1.7.1. With more than eighty books to her credit, more stories of Rajam Krishnan’s experiences wait in the wings. Her only religion and philosophy is humanism and she is convinced that without love for fellow human beings, there can be no creativity. Rajam Krishnan’s quest continues. In her recent books, she looks at old values, deconstructs old myths of womanhood, and attempts to reconstruct them. Her faith in Gandhian values, she says, is still very real, and she cannot accept any form of oppression or violence, especially against women.

1.7.2. Like many women of her time, Rajam Krishnan initially wrote about milieus and people familiar to her—psychological insight into the mystery of a young girl’s minds, quite an unchartered territory then. Rajam Krishnan is keenly interested in bringing about social transformation and this is explicit in her novels. Like Lessing she also favors Marxist principles. She views with Marxist lenses the institution called family as enfolding the fundamentals of the social set up, essential for the society for its reproduction and stabilization. Rajam Krishnan’s criticizes the Indian society’s conviction that the chief duty for women in the
family is to prepare workers to be subjugated under labour exploitation and to indulge in reproduction for the rejuvenation existence of the society. For unhindered continuous functioning of these duties, certain conditioning of the mind is created in the society about family and about women in the family.

1.7.3. The theme in most of Rajam Krishnan’s novels is the problems of the middle class women. Hence, the characters are usually those, which face disappointment and dissatisfaction due to the contradictions between their expectations and practical realities of their lives. In these stories such contradictions between their expectations and practical life they live forms the theme of the stories. Her themes reflect the mental frame of middle-class women and the relationship between men and women of the middle-class. The socio-historical and literary background of the era during which Rajam Krishnan emerged as a literary artist throws more insight into her moldings as a writer and enlightens on her significance as a female writer and on the caliber of her novels and her other works.

1.8.0. The socio-literary backdrop of the novels signifies the much-experienced issue of women— the dichotomy between conformity and non-conformity. Literature in the eighteenth and nineteenth century could be almost estimated as gendered with male-texts in which women were molded within tight cultural and social restraints. Many books authored about women by the males in the earlier centuries bore witness to this horror when Virginia wolf visited the British Museum in 1929. Many books were published relating to women such as Women and Poverty but they were totally devoid of any information with regard to women’s rightful claims. The general impact of industrial capitalism on women was that when the working class women were thrown on labour market in the new industrial centers, bourgeois women became economically affluent. However, the middle-class women with no economic function to perform at home and prevented by patriarchal ideologies from work outside became dependent in a more direct way than ever before.
1.8.1. Novel an especially popular genre during the nineteenth and twentieth century reflected women’s confinement to home as most natural. Women were brainwashed through books, which evolved notions demarcating the private and the public spheres of women, home and work and the female sexuality. Women were told to keep the family true, refined, affectionate and faithful is a grander task than to govern the state. The separation between domestic life and production consequently led to the identification of men with the external world of work and women with the internal world of feeling. The middle class women were absolutely excluded from any form of labor to safeguard their chastity and largely in order to protect the home and family as ideals.

1.8.1.1. The bourgeois notion of home and women’s role in it was celebrated greatly because it offered uneconomical luxury and served as a retreat from the external world of competition in an era of tremendous industrial growth. Economic man was supposedly soothed and elevated by the spirituality, virtue and domestic charm of his wife. Due to the new industrial system while men and women had to find new ways of living, definitions and portrayals of female sexuality cherished and thrived.

1.8.1.2. In the Victorian era, John Ruskin gave a *Queen’s Gardens* while Covent Patmore created his *Angel in the House*. Protected, sheltered, isolated, safe within the walls of their gardens, women as mothers become the repositories of all humane virtues. It was the mother who made of home a school of virtue. Patriarchy not only limited a woman to the domestic sphere, it also devalued her work at home. The woman at home with children was not believed to be doing serious work; she was just supposed to be acting out of maternal instinct, doing chores a man would never take on. The claustrophobia of the home added to her powerlessness, creating boredom, lethargy, loneliness and loss of competence.

1.8.1.3. The European social history of the nineteenth century proves that the persistent inequality of women in the economic, political, and cultural fields was
even more pronounced in family relations. ‘Feudalism’ the most powerful social structure in the nineteenth century Europe depended on the inheritance of status and property. A man could see in his children, the defeat of his mortality and the promise that his estates would remain intact in perpetuity. This springs from the primitive instinct to have children and has remained strong from the barbaric days, until the present time. Begetting children to maintain family continuity was valued most in Europe as elsewhere in the world.

1.8.1.4. However, simultaneously along with such developments the labour class women were not only compelled to work in industries and mines but also compelled to reproduce the next generation of labourers. The ruling class women were retained as family women but they did not partake in the production. Nevertheless, they reproduced the progeny to inherit the wealth of the family. Those who refused to incorporate under such regulations from the upper class were isolated from the society and thus punished. The problems of such isolated middle class women are realistically portrayed in the chosen novels without any sensational coloring.

1.8.1.5. Even the rise of the marriage of choice, which is sometimes regarded as the triumph for women who were thus able to suit themselves in their choice of partner, was not wholly happy. Instead of being paired with a man based on financial convenience and parental preference, women were chosen based on a suitor’s tastes. The surplus of marriageable women than the marrying men, and the absence of any other form of employment, made this a difficult experience for many individual women. Women become commodities, chosen by the consumer based on their looks, their reputation, their connections and their dowries. Such a system puts a premium on attractive looks and attractive behaviour, and in the days of the eighteenth century England, attractive behaviour for young women became more and more restricted. The rules of conduct became increasingly limiting as the century wore on, and in time, women internalized these rules into a whole ranges of beliefs about the nature of femininity: docile, unisexual, obedient,
clinging, fearful. Heroines of the fictional world and real women in the real world shared and indeed celebrated these disabling characteristics or else they were stamped as incompetent, victimized and crippled by the society for their non-conformity.

1.8.1.6. Novels are the best mode of writing which echo the climate of the country and society. Doris Lessing is praiseworthy for her exclusive literary art, her novels and writings created so much wave of content among women, after reading her novel, a woman let out a deep sigh– at last somebody tells the truth about men and of course, she is even accused by some women for the raw truth and sincerity. Her own description about novels in her article Small Personal Voice is:

The novel is the only popular art form left where the artist speaks directly, in clear words, to his audience.... The novelist talks as an individual to individuals, in a small personal voice. In an age of committee art, public art, people may begin to feel again a need for the small personal voice; and this will feed confidence into writers because of the knowledge of being needed, the warmth and humanity, and love of people, which is essential for a great age of literature (1957:4).

1.8.1.7. The eighteenth and nineteenth century European novels told a powerful story of male adventure and female suffering, of male freedom and female restrictions. They were written at a time when women had no political or financial rights and they dramatize and glamorize female dependency, but between now and then women have demanded and won political equality, the right to own and keep their property, have been promised financial equality in the labour market and equality of opportunity. Women can control their own fertility, they can be sexually active outside marriage, and they can choose to marry, to co-habit or to live alone.
1.8.1.8. One might therefore expect that the modern novels would reflect, perhaps even celebrate, the liberated heroine. In some ways they do. Heroines of modern best sellers tend to be educated women with jobs. They are shown to be earning their living and they are free to travel. They work mostly as freelancers in glamorous and interesting jobs in the creative arts, fashion and entertainment industries. They are active in their adventures and they improve their positions, becoming wealthier and ascending the social scale during the course of the story. Apparently, these heroines are successfully running their own lives. In contrast to this positive view of ambition and achievement are the stories of businesswomen. Whatever these stories of pain, abuse and perversion are telling, it is not a tale of empowerment and liberation.

1.8.1.9. Intellectuals were concerned that women’s writings should deal with the political commitment and responsibility or in other words should be engaged with contemporary history. This is what woman writers of the late 1920s and 1930s were engaged in. There were debates on what women’s writing is and ought to be and some feminist attack on realism. Lessing’s answer is adopting a pluralist line and her heroines avoid clinging rigidly to fixed meanings and categories. According to Lessing society is constantly changing and capable of accommodating to changing currents and the continual revision to suit modernity is realism.

1.8.2. In the beginning of the fifties, the Tamil novel was already seventy-one years old and had a history of its own not only in India but also in Srilanka and in Malaysia. Sundarajan and Sivapathasundaram on the basis of the major concern of majority of novels and on the basis of the trends in creativity have classified the one hundred year history of Tamil novel in the following manner: 1870-1900 concern for culture; 1900-1940/5: concern for social problems and 1940-1977 concern for the novels as a literary form.
1.8.2.1. During the above-mentioned period in Tamil Literature, novels began to provide popular reading material, which is often referred to as entertainment reading, and it established itself as a serious literary form depicting and describing the life of the people as individuals and members within a social group. The works of novelists like Rajamyer and Madhavaï Venkataramani and Rajagopalan indicate literary maturity of the form beyond its age and many Tamil novels were translated from English novels without any acknowledgments, especially the detective novels. Tamil translation of Saratchandra Chatterjee and Rabindranath Tagore, though not very popular also inspired many Tamil writers and had influence on theme selection and female character portrayal.

1.8.2.2. Many novels in this period reflected all contemporary social political and literary movements. Subramania Barathi ushered in, the modern era in Tamil Literature, he commented on many social problems of the day. Maraimalai Adigal the exponent of the purist Tamil wrote two novels in pure Tamil. Desapakthan Kandan is the first political novel, which discussed Mahatama Gandhi, and his reforms as it were received in Tamil Nadu.

1.8.2.3. In the fifties one major feature of the mode of publication of the Tamil novel was the serialization of the novel in magazines such as ‘todar-kathai’ (the continuing story). In fact, the first major literary novel in Tamil, Kamalambal Charitiram was serialized in the magazine called Viveka Chinthamani. Then it became the gateway socio-political-consciousness aided by wellfarist activities as expansion of education concern of social democracy. Those that were writing short stories in forties and pre-fifties emerged as notable novelist in the fifties. The new writers who came up during sixties are Jayaganthan, Naa Partharasathi, Sundararamasami, Kanesalingam, Illankeeran, Rajam krishnan, D.Selvaraj, Neelampathmanabhan, Asokamithiran, Vannanilavan and others.

1.8.2.4. To get an objective picture of the socio-literary background of Rajam Krishnan’s country to the extent that it affects the novel and to assess the novelists
and their works, knowledge of their source and their market and its influence on the novelists are necessary. Hence, it is inevitable to notice the 1947 Tamil Nadu. This period is marked by the coming into the mainstream of national politics of the socio-political movement, which began to continuously exploit all popular media to propagate their issues (justice party, pseudo-class parties and communist parties).

1.8.2.5. Nehru Era, which emphasizes on heavy industries led to new industrial townships. This gave rise to peripherals formations of capitalism resulting in the emergence of a definably distinct proletariat class. The technological modernization that took place in and amidst a society based on traditional hierarchy, with the same class that appropriate the surplus in the traditional formation receiving the benefits of the post-independence economic activities, was not able to wed economic goals to social transformation. They remained identifiably separate; and this gave raise to new tensions, especially in inter-caste relations. In Tamil Nadu, which has had a history of class in politics and caste-oriented developments, the conflict was being sharpened. There was thus a necessity on the part of the reactivated socially purposive writers to delineate the material and the political reality of caste. This naturally led to a focus on the villages and the rural folk. The short story, by definition and scope, was not equal to this task and quite understandably, the novel had to shoulder the burden of discovering these relationships. These let to a developing of the concept of political democracy aided by such welfare activities as expansion of education, a concern for social democracy voiced clearly by some and not so clearly by others began to emerge. In such a situation, literacy becomes the gateway to socio-political consciousness. Thus, reading soon emerged as a conscious social and political activity.

1.8.2.6. The communication media in the case of India was in non-governmental hands. The press and the film particularly the press began to organize itself on capitalist lines. These provided escapist reading matter
satisfying ‘a deeply felt need for consoling make-believe and sublime of truths’. Disturbing overviews and disagreeable confrontations with the readers were discouraged in the production of literature. This is the beginning of literature as a ‘mass-art’. This was different from the socially purposive literature of the earlier movements. Thus, there were two different wavelengths of literary transmissions. There were three types of writing available during this period (early fifties). The first one is the commercially oriented literary trade coming from the socially purposive writers. The second category was the anti-progressive who was against the propagandism and commercialism of the press and yet there was a third group drawing inspiration from the avant-garde groups in western literature. Jayaganthan of the progressive movement, writers like Akilan, Janakiraman, Naa Parthasarathi and Indira Parthasarathy and also the uncommitted writers were promoted by the neocapitalist institutions and the commercial literature establishments. In this period writers could be grouped under three heads: one editors-turned novelists, next ‘trendy writers’ who made the latest social fads and fancies the subjects matter of the novel and the third those who merit literary analysis.

1.8.2.7. Under this long list is included our chosen Tamil novelist Rajam Krishnan along with Akilan, Naa Parthasarathi, Anuthama, Jayaganthan, Indira Parthasarathy and T.Janakiraman. Novel though as a serial has serious literary limitations, some of the writers of the third group have successfully overcome these limitations and Rajam Krishnan is one among them. These novelists put into words and intensify the ‘daydreams’ of the readers with considerable technical skill. In the case of Tamil novels the ‘day dreams’ are included not only to social matters but historical also. During this period, another significant feature is that the lives, experiences and problems those Tamils living beyond Tamil Nadu were brought into the main stream of Tamil literary expression. In the sixties, the emphasis changed from pre-independence history of the struggle to post-independence conscience with a note of disenchantment of the glory of
independence. These novels reveal the shock of discovering the reality and eroded the sense of ‘romanticism’ and pushed them more and more into seeing the real world in realistic terms. However, there has also been unobtrusive change in the very concept of historical novel. Rajam Krishnan’s Vallaikaram (1969) is a historical novel on the liberation of Goa. It is a well-documented study, consciously weaving the fictive element to explore the human relation into the documented historical events. She deserves credit for having taken the Tamil historical novel out of Tamil Nadu. Rajam Krishnan is an eminent author of many Tamil novels, which are genuine and hard-hitting pictures of life in different parts of the country. When she writes about the life of a certain people, she makes sure of gaining first-hand knowledge by observing them at close quarters. Her novels are vigorous pleas for the immediate emancipation of the oppressed as well as for the cause of women. Rajam’s Verukku Nir (Water for the Roots, 1972) won her the Sahitya Academy Award in 1973. The novel’s brilliance lies in its realistic and objective portrayal of the socio-political realities of India in the late 1960s. During the same period ‘political novels’ exposed the sordid and cursed living condition and also depicted the emerging of the political consciousness and the on-going political struggle headed by the Marxist oriented Militant youth. The socialist-realistic prospective portrayed the proletarianization of the peasantry and surfs. The literary portrayal of the fairly well entrenched middle classes in the novel is becoming clearer. The growing sense of alienation this class was facing alienation in the context of Tamil Nadu implies both the alienation from the traditional society in terms of both physical living and in terms of values and the alienation of the individual in the modern urbanized society.

1.8.2.8. It is a well-known fact of literary history that such alienation of the individual which is the product of real capitalist development, that inspired some of the best European novels. Terry Eagleton’s description about novel is, “The novel arises when the harmonious integration of man and his world is shattered; the hero of the fiction is now in search of a totality, estranged from a world either
too large or too narrow to give shape to his desires haunted by the disparity between the empirical reality and a vanished absolute. The novel’s form is ironic; it is the epic of a world abandoned by God” (1976:27). It is of course impossible to apply in toto this explanation to understand their third world situation where rural-urban dichotomy implies the existence of parallel socioeconomic formations. This seems to be the most significant of yet persisting legacies of colonialism. That is why it has been suggested that one has to understand the process of defeudalization in proper perspective to familiarize oneself with the social reality the Tamil novelist confronted with. However, we do have in contemporary Tamil novel ‘alienated’ heroes and heroines in search of a totality, estranged from a world either too large or too narrow to give shape to his or her desires. In this context, Rajam Krishnan has not only attained importance as a novelist but has also published enough to enable us to assess and indicate her place in the history of Tamil novel. The process of defeudalization and the factor of social alienation have been, in a cumulative sense, both the cause of and effect of the disruption of the family as a social unit and its emergence as the microcosmic unit that reflects the conflicting social relationships that are seen in a wider social framework. Hence, almost all the novelists of this period have almost necessarily probed into the problem of the transformation that the family as an institution, is undergoing in Tamil speaking areas, to reflect the changing social relationships.

1.8.2.9. This focus on the family necessarily implies an investigation of the changing role of the woman who as mother, wife, sister and daughter has constituted the cornerstone of the Indian family. In this context, Rajam Krishnan is significant, in a way she is the most serious Tamil novelist today.

Like other major novelists, she does not write because she has been commissioned to do so or because she would like to record her impression of a phenomenon. Rajam Krishnan very much as if a seasoned western writer would spend
considerable time very closely with the locale and characters
or the problem she wants to portray in her novel (1988:28) – K.Sivathambry in his book The Growth of Novel in India (1988). This gives an air of authenticity to her novels like Allaivaikarail, which is about the miseries of the seafaring people. She is a highly credited novelist for the very fact that she has written novels on all the important contemporary problems of the Tamil Nadu ranging from Brahmin-Nonbrahmin controversy – Roja Ithalgal (1974) and to women’s liberation movement – Veedu (The House) (1978). During the period, so many of the male writers used female names as pseudonyms under the influence of mass-oriented journals. They write a lot of sentimental trash and while some women writers are specializing in that sort of writing, it is very refreshing to find a woman novelist standing uncompromisingly firm on her determination to write novels, which deal with serious problems that confront the society today. Her Veedu (1978) though not given much recognition, is as important in Tamil Literature as Ibsen’s A Doll’s House was to European theatre. Rajam Krishnan concentrates on her characters. Her uniqueness is her seriousness in the choice of the theme and locale. She is one of the most important Tamil Novelists.

1.9.0. The strange discrepancy between the reality of their lives as women and the image to which they were trying to conform with, led women to question the feminine ideal of motherhood in both the countries. Women had to speak out and protest against the existing patriarchal norms when it became difficult for them to sustain a split within themselves – conforming outwardly to one reality, while trying to maintain inwardly the values it denies. The conflict between women’s desires and the dominant values of femininity, which made women voice their protest led to a change in attitude towards feminine hood which one can term as the ‘feminist’ phase. A feminist analysis of patriarchy discloses that the intricate relationship between patriarchy and its smaller unit the family with societal
sanction has deprived women of their rights and has awarded them the chattel rank.

1.9.1. Feminism is a philosophy that fights against masculine and feminine definitions and aims at placing women in a just perspective. The word ‘feminism’ however must be understood in its broadest sense as referring to an intense awareness of identity as a woman, and interest in feminine problems. “It’s meaning should not be restricted to the advocacy of women’s rights” (Feminism: The Movement and the Ideology: 21) Firestone a feminist in her book, The Dialectic of Sex (1970) wrote that Marx and Engels paid inadequate attention to sex. She devises a category termed ‘sex class’. From early childhood, women were trained to accept a system which divided society into male and female spheres, with appropriate roles for each and which allocated ‘public power’ exclusively to the male sphere. Lessing’s own viewpoint in this direction is: “We all know there is a terrible gap between the public and the private conscience, and that until we bridge it will never be safe…” (1957: 14) Ever since antiquity, there have been women fighting to free this half of the total population of the world from male oppression. The inequities against which the feminists protest, the — legal, economic and social restrictions on the basic rights of women have existed throughout history and in all civilizations. Even after the suffragists’ victory to vote, social pressures continue to restrict women’s freedom as effectively as the constitutional barriers have done earlier. A feminine mystique evolved, which sanctified the elements of women’s experience that proved paradoxically to be most oppressive.

1.9.2. Feminism was novel and hence popular as a new trend. However, the significance of the trend and the extent it has improved or its striving to improve the status of the deprived, subjugated, second-class citizens namely women and the genuinity of the trend is worth comprehending. It is the feminists who shoulder the responsibility of uncovering the history of women, those aspects of the social world, which identification as prime movers of historical change and
the location of those prime movers, have to be challenged to avoid women’s history being ignored or patronized. Marxism has subordinated women’s history as it has subordinated the history of women’s oppression to the history of class struggle. However, radical feminists argue that the oppression of women by men is primary fundamental and irreducible, the earliest oppression which provides the model for all subsequent forms including those of class and race.

1.9.3. Feminists also identified one particular media as the chief manifestation of this general pattern, which is the definition, and portrayal of sexuality, particularly of female sexuality. Elaine Showalter observes in *The New Feminist Criticism:*

> In its earlier years, feminist criticism concentrated on exposing the misogyny of literary practice: the stereotyped images of women in literature as angels or monsters, the literary abuse or external harassments of women in classic and popular male literature and the exclusion of women from literary history (1985: 5)

For example, in literature, English novels placed central importance on the concepts of love and personal relationships as moral structures. This helped to maintain the ever-widening division between the private and the public in women’s life. This split became acute in mid-Victorian England due to new industrial systems and the resultant transformed economy. Feminists opposed such literary tradition, which on one hand created the pure, chaste virgin of respectable fiction who blossomed into the model wife and mother—an angel in the house whose charms are strictly domestic and on the other hand created the cruel women whose sexuality corrupted the social order. Thus, the Rose and the Lily stereotyping of women in Fiction arose.

1.10.0. If we examine in the context of feminist movements we can trace the vital reasons for women’s secondary and subjugated status. Along with the origin
of property, its counterpart the institution of patriarchy is identified as the foundation upon which the female oppression and suppression is structured. The repercussions of the origin of private property, the society ultimately split into public and private spheres, based upon division of labor, patriarchal institutionalising of female subjugation through sexual politics—these vital and basic issues are elaborated in this chapter.

1.10.1. Highly gender-specific endorsement of female endeavour and achievement is an investigation of constructions of women’s power and its representations in relation to highlighting the unusual emphasis, drawing attention to themes of submission and domination, practical, physical and competitive female ability, gender equality and female superiority are evident in Lessing as a female feminist creative artist.

1.10.2. ‘Endorsing the Female’ by contrast to ‘usurping the male’ looks at fictional forms, which are normally, associated with a female readership or with concerns, which mainly relate to women. Examining areas of fantasy, sexuality and social involvement in fiction by or for women is undertaken in a study of aspects of endorsing the female in women’s fiction.

1.10.3. Clearly, women’s story writing has to be concerned with both ‘endorsing the female’ and ‘usurping the male’. Powerful and unpleasant emotions are explored, expressed and endorsed in relation to the common place of women’s lives, especially where there is lack of social acknowledgement for their importance. Women’s stories reveal the destructive nature of patriarchal marriage. The expectations of the patriarchal marriage inform and underpin the apparently female realm of female sexuality in novels explored here. These writers emphasize the release aspect, confounding traditional stereotypes of confinement, curiosity and desire, and substituting multiple alternatives which endorse those unheard, denied, subsumed female voices. They are engaged in reassessing, readjusting or undermining existing power relations, to address the vexed
questions of power quite explicitly, both in the private or domestic sphere and in terms of public and political life. The selected authors try to overcome the traditional untangling from traditional constraints and structures and begin to search for new languages and new forms to represent women’s experience. They have endeavored to put together a history of relatively little heard voices. This by itself provides an alternative to the canonical patriarchal narratives of nationalism and literary tradition.

1.10.4. Of course, it is necessary to rewrite history or of new history as women do not figure in history because, they did not make it. However, feminists feel this may be a strenuous time long process but adding a supplementary, a dystrophic—a potential radical fictional space in which women can unravel and re-imaging existing power relations can be worked out. Hence, these networks of power are seen through a different lens with gender as the focus and the ways in which women might begin to challenge such authority are speculated.

1.10.5. A vying between conformity and non-conformity to roles foisted on women is a much-experienced issue among women at present globally. Our society is still an oppressive one as far as the female is concerned and the oppression is universal inspite of cultural and traditional differences. Kate Millet, a renowned feminist identifies this problem as ‘Sexual Politics’—the essence of which is power. The family, the chief institution of patriarchy regarding certain traits as feminine and hence denigrating them and glorifying certain other traits considered as masculine was prevalent is obvious through a glance at the literary backdrop of the contemporary novelists. Feminists opposed the stereotyped literary tradition, which either created the pure, chaste virgin of the respectable fiction or the cruel women who corrupted the social order through their sexuality. It is interesting to note that both the novelists share uniqueness in their social milieu during which they started emerging as female writers. Lessing wrote in post-war period and Rajam Krishnan during post-Independence period. However, they were born in upper-class families, their themes, characters are from
middleclass, and both were drawn by Marxist principles and took part actively in
the party. Their writing is androgynous and both take pluralist views on female
issues. They never advocate a world devoid of men. The novelists themselves are
identified in the persona of the protagonists. Lessing herself in her autobiography
has stressed on keeping up with changing times, “Living in the midst of this
whirlwind of change, it is impossible to make final judgments or absolute
statements of value” (1957:15). In her ‘Preface’ to The Golden Notebook also she
repeats that those that must stay must remember, always and all the time, they are
being molded and patterned to fit into the narrow and particular needs of this
particular society. “One is a writer at all because one represents, makes
articulate, is continuously and invisibly fed by, numbers of people who are
inarticulate, to whom one belongs, to whom one is responsible” (1957:4). Hence,
both the novelists focus is on the acute consciousness among the female
protagonists towards sexual politics the socialization of both sexes into basic
categorization, which has strong impact creating two categories, and anything and
everything connected with female category, is always derogatory. This state is
achieved through psychological conditioning. In the ensuing chapters, the
protagonists are studied under four dimensions: the chosen novelists’ focus of
their protagonists in their capacities as daughters, wives, mothers and in relation
to their roles in the society that is in their career, profession or as social workers.

1.11.0. The themes of the novels selected and the literary backdrop of the novels
signify the much-experienced issue of women— the dichotomy between
conformity and non-conformity. The women’s craving for shedding off the
femininity foisted on them and their inherent quest for establishing their self-
identity have resulted in the universal dilemma between conformity and non-
conformity that women undergo. The fact that the selected novelists depict
women who struggle to shrug off the roles foisted on them was highlighted. This
predominant trait in both the novelists crowns their novels as the feminist critique.
The changing attitude towards feminine mystique in the context of the feminist
movement was surveyed, highlighting issues such as the creation of the mystique and the sexual politics implemented through the institutions of patriarchy. Patriarchy imposes varied roles on women. Conforming to such roles is unconditionally compulsory. The causes for modern women’s tendency to escape patriarchal suffocations were identified, the reason behind their priority and dedication they owe their career and their craving to establish self-identity. It next becomes necessary to probe whether the theme and characterization of the selected novels vitally reinforce the socio-familial protest of women who are valued and devalued as per the varied necessities and demands of the patriarchal society, which forms the dissertation’s nucleus. The novelists’ manifestation of the present deplorable status of women; the origin and implications of monogamous heterosexual marriage; the burden of bearing and rearing, introspection into their inherent craving for establishing their self-identity and through what strategies their self-identity is established are elaborated in the following chapters. The sexual politics that involves creation of mystique; the extent to which women are able to assimilate the roles foisted on them; the psychological and social problems involved in fitting into such roles or rejecting such roles shall be scrutinized. The strategies of their rejection and assimilation and the author’s special endowment of feminist sensibility and sensitivity, which is apparent in their art and autobiographies, shall be probed in the subsequent chapters.

1.11.1. The second chapter **Daughter: Not Born but Becomes** makes a close survey on Lessing’s daughter characters and Rajam Krishnan’s daughter characters— the extent of their cherishing or rejecting the daughter’s role. This chapter evaluates the female protagonist’s sensitivity as a girl child until her teens, until she reaches the next stage, namely the wifehood and her aptitude as the daughter of a family in her later years. The degree to which she realizes her subjugation, her consciousness towards the breeding methodologies in families, the social and psychological conditioning that are the tools of saddling femininity
on girl children, the protagonists’ acute awareness of such discriminations and their questioning attitude regarding the differential breeding between boys and girls are elaborated.

1.11.2. The third chapter **Wife: Marriage Mars Heaven** contains as the crux the process of woman’s conformity and non-conformity in her capacity as a wife to the familial and social established norms of the patriarchy—though mostly marriage is her career; the intricacies of fitting into such role are deeply analyzed. This chapter begins with the investigation into the protagonists’ very choice of marriage, which throws light on their state and status and then undertakes to scan the extent of Lessing’s and Rajam Krishnan’s heroines assimilating or rejecting the role of wives entrusted upon them, be it forcefully or out of their own choice. This chapter illuminates the unique crisis that all married women face, which has far fetched implications in feminine and feminist parlances and ends upon enhancing the novelists’ brilliance as feminist critiques especially for capturing the intricacies of marriage the major institution of patriarchy which is vile mostly.

1.11.3. The fourth chapter **Mother: Bearing and Rearing** discusses how the women’s capacities for mothering and abilities to get gratification from it are strongly internalized and psychologically enforced by being built into the feminine psychic structure. The male ownership anxieties and the overthrow of ‘mother right’ are identified as the historical reasons behind the mother’s burden of bearing and the stressful rearing responsibilities. The ensuing contradictions and conflicts arising in women gave birth to the feminist phase of women who realized their discontent. It is interesting to note how the modern mothers who protest and contradict with their traditional mothers cope with their roles molded by the necessity and practical situations of her modern life. The chapter proceeds to analyze whether these modern mothers suffer or rather assimilate their roles easily.
1.11.4. The fifth chapter **Woman as a Social Entity: Rocking and Ruling** estimates the social consciousness of the novelists, their perspective regarding the society in relation to the status it accords women, the way the novelists focus women as a social entity. In this connection, it becomes necessary to undertake an analysis as to the nature of role that the society assigns to women and responsibilities and capacities it expects from her. The fifth chapter further proceeds into an inspection of women’s willingness in accepting the socially invested roles, their ability to fit into the slots and rejection or revolt on the other hand. It also surveys women’s expectations from the society, the scope and the possibilities of fulfilling women’s societal expectations and the scope of women achieving the required societal transformations if any as befitting the female dimensions.

1.11.5. The sixth chapter **Conclusion** reinstates the novelists’ endeavor and success in intricately establishing through the selected novels the universal dilemma between conforming to roles foisted on women—socially, psychologically and patriarchally. The constant internal vying between conforming to established notions and standards, her inability and unwillingness to conform has always been problematic to women and hence the need to relieve women from it is stressed. All the protagonists execute a socio familial protest from their capacity as a daughter, as a wife or as a beloved or as a single woman, as a mother and as an employed woman in the society, which salient feature renders all the familial novels of Lessing and Rajam Krishnan and especially the selected novels the esteem of vibrant feminist critique.