

**GENDER REPRESENTATION IN THE SELECT WORKS OF  
EASTERINE KIRE, TEMSULA AO, MONALISA CHANGKIJA AND  
NINI LUNGALANG**

*(Thesis submitted to the Nagaland University in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the  
award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English)*

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**2017**

**-DECLARATION-**

**I, Petekhrienuo Sorhie, hereby declare that my thesis entitled *Gender Representation in the Select Works of Easterine Kire, Temsula Ao, Monalisa Changkija and Nini Lungalang*, is a record of bonafide research done by me under the supervision of Dr. Rosemary Dzùvichü, in the Department of English, Nagaland University, Kohima Campus during the period of 2014-17 and that it has not been submitted either in full or in part to any other university or institute for the award of any other degree, diploma and title.**

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*CERTIFICATE*

This is to certify that the thesis entitled *Gender Representation in the Select Works Of Easterine Kire, Temsula Ao, Monalisa Changkija and Nini Lungalang* is a bonafide record of research work done by Ms. Petekhrienuo Sorhie, Regn No. 585/2014, Department of English, Nagaland University, Kohima Campus, Meriema during 2013-2017. Submitted to Nagaland University in partial fulfilment of the requirements for award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English, this thesis has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma, associateship, fellowship or other title and that the thesis represents independent and original work on the part of the candidate under my supervision. This is again certified that the research has been undertaken as per UGC regulations 2009 and the candidate has fulfilled the criteria mentioned in the University Ordinances-OC-4, sub-section 5 (i) of the section -9 for submission of the thesis.

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## **-ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS-**

To many- I am grateful for helping, encouraging and guiding me throughout the course of this research work. I am indebted to my research supervisor Dr. Rosemary Dzüvichü who had constantly guided me, provided relevant reading materials and gave me the much needed nudge to keep moving ahead. I am deeply thankful to Dr. Nigamananda Das for willingly sharing his expertise each time his advice is sought – a most helpful soul. I acknowledge Father A.J. Sebastian sdb for being there to guide me especially at the beginning of this venture and for recommending and providing materials for reading. I also acknowledge all the four authors Easterine Kire, Temsula Ao, Monalisa Changkija and Nini Lungalung for happily cooperating and enabling me to interview them more than once. It has been a pleasure and privilege to have known them better through this research. Many thanks to Mezi Sorhie, for painstakingly doing the editing work. Also, my sincere gratitude to all my colleagues and friends who had constantly motivated me towards the completion of this work.

I would also like to acknowledge the libraries of Nagaland University, Khrishna Kanta Handique Library, Guwahati University, State libraries of Nagaland and Assam, North East Social Research Centre (NESRC) for enabling me to access the books and materials vital for my research.

To my mom dearest for her priceless prayers and to all my family members- thank you for being the wind beneath my wings.

To my husband- my pillar through thick and thin- my special thanks for your unconditional support. Surely, I couldn't have done this without you. Eden and Joanna -my heart - Thank you for bearing with me.

Yahweh! I owe you everything.

Kohima

12<sup>th</sup> of June 2017

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## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

## ABBREVIATIONS

ANVR	-	A NAGA VILLAGE REMEMBERED
ATM	-	A TERRIBLE MATRIARCHY
AVM	-	A VILLAGE MORNING
BOS	-	BOOK OF SONGS
CFABD	-	COGITATING FOR A BETTER DEAL
LFMH	-	LABURNUM FOR MY HEAD
LOH	-	LIFE ON HOLD
MM	-	MONSOON MOURNING
OBAN	-	ON BEING A NAGA
OUAL	-	ONCE UPON A LIFE
TJM	-	THE JUNGLE MAJOR
TMY	-	THE MORNING YEARS
WWPP	-	WEAPONS OF WORDS ON PAGES OF PAIN



## **PREFACE**

Gender is the ascribed normative aspect, generally focuses around the human concept of sex a biological, physical division that extends to a broad social construction, shaping and limiting ways of both masculinism and feminism. Whereas Feminism began with acknowledging and understanding the position of women, gender studies seeks to understand both the roles, implications, impacts and potential of male and female interaction. Currently, studying into gender complicities is fast becoming an established interdisciplinary field of study critically engaging with gender realities, gender norms, gender relations and gender identities drawing from intersectional perspectives considering the fact that Gender concepts encompasses all spheres of life.

As in any other society governed around patriarchal principles, gender inequality in Naga society is also rooted in the economic, social, religious, political, and educational structure of its society which affects both its male and female citizens with the female at the disadvantaged end. Conceivably, in the present study, the four writers from Nagaland has taken to addressing gender dynamics rendering a proper revelation to the negativities of the gender system in their own society which is sadly devoid of the fair treatment between its men and women. In so doing, their appetent preference to be in sync with that of an egalitarian way of society which is alien to patriarchal ideology is evident enough. In the light of the above forethought, the present study weaves culture, socio political state of affairs with generic gender

concerns in literature in an attempt to appreciate and determine how proficiently Easterine Kire, Temsula Ao, Monalisa Changkija and Nini Lungalang represent Gender issues within the premise of feminist theory in their texts which serves as the *raison d'être* of the title selection for this study.

The present study discourses along the hypothesis of feminist thoughts through close textual reading. It is an attempt to unravel the theme of gender premised strictly within the parameters of men and women binary relational dynamics intertwined with socio cultural practices in the select works of Easterine Kire, Monalisa Changkija, Dr. Temsula Ao and Nini Lungalang. The study made in-depth investigation into the portrait of gendering in their works. Irrespective of the fact that they maintain similar ideological position in trying to understand and expose the system which promotes gender imbalance, the writers are compared and contrasted in the propensity of their technique and style in addressing gender issues. The study is carried out not only to assess these writers towards addressing gender concerns but it carries with it genuine pursuit to redress women predicaments.

Chapter one of the study is divided into two segments. The first segment introduces the socio-cultural and political background of the writers as well as the women's movement in Nagaland to which the four writers belong to. The introductory segment is written with the intent to acquaint the readers with a clearer understanding of the social cultural perspective from where the writers discourses through different genres of literary production on the thematic considerations of gender. It is also an attempt to locate the four writers in the contribution towards the

wider gamut of women's movement to empowerment and equality through their artistry. The second segment of the introductory chapter presents an introduction to the writers: Easterine Kire, Monalisa Changkija, Dr. Temsula Ao and Nini Lungalang, highlighting on their biographical and professional data as well as enumerations on their various literary works.

Chapter two gives an elaborate consideration on understanding the concept of gender with feminism as the theoretical study area. In order to foster a proper understanding of gender concept development, the chapter looked into the biological and socialization considerations between sex and gender, the historical construction of gender which led to the awakening of feminine consciousness and philosophical ramifications on feminist debate on gender. The chapter also looks into feminism as an organised movement as well as its varied ideologies on gender winding up with a glimpse on the current global dimension of feminism.

Chapter three presents gender discrimination in the context of Patriarchy. In this chapter the study goes into in-depth textual reading method in order to analyse the ways in which gender discrimination is an ingrained part of patriarchal ideology that proliferate the survival and perpetuation of gender disparity in all aspects of life-social, political, cultural, as well as in individual attitudinal set ups.

Chapter Four dwells on dismantling the ideology of gender stereotyping through the short stories of Temsula Ao and Nini Lungalang. Through the delineation

of untraditional female and male roles as projected in their stories- *Laburnum For My Head*, *A Simple question*, *The Jungle Major*, *The Child of Fortune* etc, the authors not only registers a resistance to gendered stereotyping but also question the expediency of the strictly demarcated gender spaces into private and public spheres. The intent of this chapter was to portray the new woman image while stirring up a consciousness towards gainsaying gender stereotyping.

Chapter Five was contrived with the intent to churn out the quintessence of feminist consciousness inherent in select poems of Monalisa Changkija, Temsula Ao and Nini Lungalang. The chapter also investigates into the feminine consciousness of the authors adding a psychoanalytic strain to the exposition of female subjugation corresponding with feminists' principles for liberation through their female characters.

Chapter six is the conclusive chapter wherein the findings and conclusion of all the previous chapters are ruminated and accounted.

## CHAPTER- I

### INTRODUCTION

#### **I: 1: SOCIO-CULTURAL CONSTRUAL IN THE GENDERED TEXT OF EASTERINE KIRE, TEMSULA AO, MONALISA CHANGKIJA AND NINI LUNGALANG**

Every writer is a product of their times in terms of both its historical epoch and social circumstances. Every literary framework springs from the socio cultural and political situational propensity in which it is written. Roland Barthes acknowledges in *The Death of the Author* that the writer “can only imitate a gesture that is always anterior, never original” (“Death of the Author” [www2.iath.virginia.edu.com](http://www2.iath.virginia.edu.com)) and in line with historicism which claims that literature is a product of its age and the meaning of the text can only be discovered by fitting it around other discourses from the same period, the social cultural milieu and experiences of the author’s life becomes pertinent to understand for reason that it throws a clearer light on the substance of their literary output necessitating this preliminary introduction.

A lucid commonality of the four writers under study lies in that they share the same ethnographic setting in most of their works. Amongst several thematic considerations, two prominent and overriding themes considered are gender issues and war and conflict brilliantly intertwist in their works. The four writers in focus come from Nagaland which is situated in the far north east corner of India. Nagaland is a traditional society with its history and traditions of stringent customary norms and

practices which are predominantly patriarchal and patrilineal in nature. Indistinguishable to any other patriarchal society, Naga women too have always been relegated to a subsidiary position. Naga women's harshest reality thereby has been and remains to be the machination of patriarchy which patents customary laws and practices as the guiding principle of dispensing governance and justice in maintaining social order and tribal identity advertently having wide and direct implication on the generic gender equation in the society. The writers belong to this land where the mechanism of patriarchy works at its pristine state; thereby finding its inevitable representation in the author's writing artistry.

Nagaland has the largest mass of different tribes, sixteen in number, bound and governed by their own unique social customs endowing each with distinct norms and practices which are defined as customary laws that in turn in thickly woven and intertwined with their social fabric. Irrespective of their unique tribal identities the common denominator to customary practices under the stipulation of patriarchy is the structural system of status stipulation to man and woman. Reminiscing on Friedrich Engels theory in *Origin of the Family, Private, Property and the State* which states that "the disparities of power between men and women were not based on their inherent natures but were the result of social and historical circumstances, rooted in antiquity" ("Theory of the Origins of Patriarchy." [www.printage.wordpress.com](http://www.printage.wordpress.com)), Naga society too by nature of it being patriarchal complies with gender disparity conferring a higher and privileged status to men and women to a shadowy subaltern position. As maintenance mechanism to their culture and identity, the Nagas ascribes and regulates their community and social affairs according to their customary laws which in turn are binding on regulating the social and personal relationships of its members.

Customary principals which are primal to engendering dissimilate gender status in Nagaland are:

- a) Customary laws stipulate that woman are barred from public platforms where all-encompassing decision making is determined by men including the welfare of their dependents, i.e., their women and children.
- b) Advocates patrilineal practices wherein ancestral descent is through the male line constructing the parameters of the preference of sons to daughters as a direct causative of this.
- c) The birth of a son is deemed auspicious as man is naturally reckoned to be the custodian and protector of the society.
- d) Concurrently, inheritance rights are privileged as the birth- right of the son.
- e) Incongruously, customary laws do not apportion provisions for the protection of the women and in consequence women caught in disloyal acts or defying customary laws are given the harshest of retribution compared to that of man.

Consequentially, both the man and woman are conditioned with the mindset of male supremacy and dominance, logically relegating women to be lesser beings consigned to a position of servitude.

Historically speaking, Nagaland in its purest traditional form is well known for its headhunting practices and their warlike attitude to living. It was then the naturally accepted norm that the man were meant to be engaged in hunting and wars , defending their territories and the women were to tend to domestic chores and field

works. Distinctive demarcation of gender role is observed since the beginning of the earliest recorded Naga history. In existentialist ways, the notion of women's need to be protected and defended as the weaker being by their men was basically a noble instinctive way of life for Nagas but weaving intrinsically into the Naga's social and cultural fabric a typical indicant of gender stratification system.

Substantiation to the gender bias status in Nagaland is evidenced by the earliest raconteurs on the Naga women. J.H.Hutton in *The Angami Nagas* writes, "They are chaste, faithful, merry, and unlike their brothers, never to be seen idle. Their duty it is to fetch the wood, draw the water, cook the food, and brew the liquor, besides working in the fields and weaving cloth at home." (Hutton 173). The position of women among the Angamis would at first sight appear to be but a low one. By the Tenyimia proper and Chakroma she is debarred from inheriting land at all, while among the Eastern Angamis she can only inherit but is subjected to the reversion of the property to the male line on the death of her sons." (ibid. 167). The thought of J.H. Hutton in these lines is well reflected in Easterine Kire's *A Terrible Matriarchy*. W C Smith also records in his book *The Ao-Naga Tribes of Assam*, "Among all these hill tribes the position of women is inferior to that of man. After marriage she becomes a mere household drudge, and quickly loses her good looks, if she ever had any. Her position is not essentially secure until she has borne a child to her husband." (Smith 58). "All property is inherited in the male line, the daughters receiving no share" (ibid. 59). J.P Mills in *The Ao Nagas* echoes thoughts along the same line, "Inheritance is in the male line. Sons, brothers' sons and so on inherit in that order. Though a woman can possess property she cannot inherit it." (Mills 189).



Evolution of Nagaland from primitivism and warring ways of life to a modernized outlook presents a unique dynamism in that whereas those facets of life, be it the culture of headhunting or warfare is now a historical past relic of the Nagas, the central governing customary laws over social cultural and political functioning is carried over to this day and upheld with utmost reverence, for reason that, its guardians who are all man-folk, deem it to be the root identity of their people which is to be guarded at all cost. The spin-off is that despite paradigm shift of social development, the strategic position of both the man and the woman remains unchanged. Owing to this effect are the cultural barriers which are ingrained in the patriarchal culture of the customary practices. Upshot to such a plural existential system, contemporary Naga society presents a blend of traditionalism and modernity. In this changing context, a development driven, modernistic focus on the importance of women and men as equal partners of a progressing society on one hand and the traditional practices of customary laws on the other are playing important decisive roles in shaping the status of the Naga men and women. Attitudinal change despite the changing times seems frustratingly quiescent and despite the frenzied rush to procurance of modernistic yardsticks to life, the fact remains that traditional gendered power-structure remains intact and the gauging scale still weighs heavier to man's side of existence.

Initiation of British contact to this part of the world has promulgated reading and writing as catapultic tools to a wider civilized world, infusing a sense of opportunity in the Naga mind. The westerner's introduction of Christianity and formal education imparted a visible change in outlook of the traditional Nagas. However, Naga society despite of donning a new modernistic driven avatar culture still drags

heavily on women to venture into the public domain. The man's voice still remains to be the over-riding sphere of influence in all facets of living. In an essay entitled '*Benevolent Subordination*' *Social Status of Naga Women*, Temsula Ao opines, "The Nagas are a patriarchal society where women have always been subordinate to men..... their roles are strictly defined by this tradition which says that it is only men who can be decision-makers in important matters both in private and public affairs." (OBAN 46). Monalisa Changkija too in the essay entitled *The Naga Marriage* gives a somber reflection on this and says that, "Naga woman, whatever her educational qualifications, her status, her intelligence, talents and all other attributes, still cooks and serves tea and meals to males when they do the 'decision making'" (CFABD 82).

Notwithstanding all efforts towards modernization, an obligation to reckon with for Naga women till today is the customary laws of the society. All interpretations of advancement for the modern Naga women get forfeited the moment women's status is viewed through the lens of Naga customary laws. Women in Nagaland still suffer from conditioned patriarchal mindset and discriminatory customary. They continue to bear the brunt of this conditioned inferiority mindset. To this day, for the Naga women, there are no land rights, no inheritance or property rights, and no maintenance rights. They are still excluded from traditional decision making bodies in many villages and tribes, whether in village councils or village judiciary. The ongoing display of resistance over the 33% reservation for women in the Nagaland municipal elections stands as an obvious reflection of how women had been invariably and continually being excluded in decision making bodies which is an endorsement of customary practices. Ancestral properties continue to be tantamount to the continuity of male lineage and as such progeny of sons is still the principal thing. Strength of a family is still gauged by the

number of sons and there still exist the tendency to look down on families without one. Auxiliary to the strength that customary practices draw from the traditional foundations of the community, these laws are further strengthened through the special constitutional provisions as given in Article 371(A) of the Constitution of India. The thirteenth amendment of the Indian constitution Article 371(A) provides a blanket legal sanction for the practice of customary laws in Nagaland which puts women at peril of being ineradicably suppressed with discrimination as a part of their identity. As per the special provision, no Acts of the government of India will be made applicable to Nagaland unless and until it is ratified by 2/3 majority vote of the Constituent Assembly of the State. This interface of legal pluralism between the special constitutional legal provision and the traditional customary practices is viewed as a boon in the protection and preservation of the traditional rights and cultural heritage of Nagaland. Conversely, this crucial interface has had negative implications viewed from the gender perspective and as far as the Naga women are concern, Changkija deliberates that “it makes no difference, under the Indian system of governance or whatever system the underground factions have in mind; our Customary Laws, protected under Article 371(A) of the Indian constitution, would still dictate women’s lives.” (CFABD 29). Tamsula Ao too laments in her essay entitled *Benevolent Subordination’-Social Status of Naga Women*, “For centuries Naga society existed on the strength of male superiority and male prerogatives. When book learning became an option, it was the male child who got the first opportunity, and if in a family a female child was allowed to go to school it was only to study up to the stage where she could read the bible and the song sheet. That was considered ‘enough’ for a female.....the girls had to stay back to help the parents in farm work in order to support the brothers studying in towns. It was never considered a sacrifice but the duty of girls to do

so.”(OBAN 46-47). She continued, “...the example of the power structure within the church is one more indicator of the perpetuation of male domination in Naga society in matters of decision making...such male attitude hark back to the culture of a distant past where Naga polity evolved on the principle of exclusion of women from all seats of governance. The exclusion of Naga women from institution of power is determined by cultural traditions that have governed Naga society for centuries and to overhaul the system would be a revolution of far greater implications than the one launched to attain ‘independence’ from the Indian state.” (ibid 47).

The Naga society of today still deems its traditional laws, norms and practices as sacrosanct. Naga Society of today stands at a paradox of traditionalism and modernity. On this account, women are squashed between legal pluralism on one hand and a progressive driven focus within the parameters of performing their feminine roles abiding by the stringent traditional expectations, which are posing as tall road blocks for them to be recognized as equal partners on the other hand. Within such carrefour of tradition with modernity, it may be conjectured that the society’s conception of gender is traced to the basic cultural notions of traditionally assigned roles of men and women. The hypothetical standpoint is that, in encountering with the formal system of education and governance structure attached with all its paraphernalia, the society is yet to acknowledge that equal status conferred to the other half of their population –the women both in private and public spheres is fundamental for the overall development of its society.

Besides socio cultural background, the turbulent political history of the Nagas deserves to be mentioned in relevance to its extensive use in the creative writings of the

four writers. The origin of the Naga political movement is a complex issue and can be traced back with the events in history right from the British Colonial expeditions. Over and above all the myriad struggles that Naga woman face, be it their struggle for social, economic and political recognition and empowerment on equal footing with their counter sex, they are confronted upfront with consequences related to the fifty odd years of the Naga struggle for independence. These four authors are candid chroniclers to the political history of Nagaland in their own right with all of them depicting the complexities of the Naga struggle for freedom. All the four writers have traversed through the protracted course of the Indo Naga Conflict when women directly bore the full brunt of this conflict. Women were left widowed and sons were compromised, leaving them to fend for themselves. There are horrifying experiences of women who were physically violated to the extremities of costing their lives; specimen to such atrocities perpetrated by man on women is Nini Lungalang's work *A Child of Fortune* and Temsula Ao's *The Last song*.

Unique to the four writers under study is that they all belong within this broad canvas of social and cultural setting as its women citizens. Easterine Kire belongs to the Angami Naga tribe, Nini Lungalang belong to the Zeliang Naga tribe and Temsula Ao and Monalisa Changkija to the Ao Naga tribe. All of them are unequivocal in their dismay at the vicious influence of any phallocentric exertion on women. Easterine lived most of her life in Kohima, which is the inhabited area of the Tenyimia – the social cultural mores of which finds reflection in her works. Easterine Kire in *A study guide to A Terrible Matriarchy* presents a factual picture of the Tenyimia culture mirroring the entire Naga society. She points out that, "...there are similarities and affinities with the other Naga tribal cultures because it represents the patriarchal system

of Naga society. Inheritance follows the male line. Sons inherit property from their fathers but daughters do not inherit ancestral properties.....they (daughters) would marry and leave the family. The education of girls was not prioritized.....male heirs are seen as vital to the patriarchal set-up because sons are the ones who will carry the name of the father. If a woman cannot bear a son, the family property would be taken over by the male relatives after the husband's death.”(Kire 3-4). Both Temsula Ao and Manolisa Changkija also expresses that “What is obtained in the pristine rural environment of Naga society was a state of consensual role-playing where women accepted their subordination to men due to very practical reasons....and to address the problem of gender bias in Naga society is in many ways a mind game” (OBAN 49) Monalisa furthers says that, “However educated, exposed and enlightened, Naga men and Naga society have not abandoned our patriarchal core. Now, as far as Naga women are concerned, this means that they have to meet the demands and dictates of both traditional Naga society as well as that of the modern market.” (CFABD 80).

The creative art of the four writers gives adequate evidence that their socio-cultural and political background compounded with their experiences specifically on gender status became the raw material for their artistic sensibilities. In an interview with Karen Rose of Morung Express, a Nagaland Daily entitled ‘Life Inspiring’, Easterine Kire expressed that the source of inspiration behind her writing *The Terrible Matriarchy* was in her words, “I guess it was reflection upon our society’s treatment of girl-children in the past and how it has changed because the girl child herself has fought hard to find her place in the community. If you are looking for inspiration behind the book, I can say it was Naga society itself that was the biggest inspiration. It is itself a book waiting to be written.” (“Life Inspiring.” [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com)).

Nagaland by nature of it being a traditional patriarchal society, the tribal villages has and continued to hold its cultural customary practices as the core of their governance system and regulate their political as well as social life, in the realms of which women are relegated to non-status entity to the present day. Women are excluded from participation in traditional institutions where decision making remains a prerogative of the male members. The Naga Society despite coming a long from the traditional past, the persistence of patriarchy in its pristine state have continued to consciously perpetuate gender inequalities where the clarity of patriarchal prejudices towards gender roles are unmistakable. Against such harsh existential dimensions, the thoughts, dreams and desires of the writers for a gender just society are mediated by the representative form of their literary output. They represent gender issues capturing even the subjective dimensions of social realities while concurrently allowing an objective knowledge of gender bias mechanisms.

## 1:2. Women's Movement in Nagaland

Studying into the history of Naga women, a rough sketch of their movement as a social group can be segmented into three phases. The initial phase goes back to the early fifties. It was during the fifties that we get a glimpse of Naga women involved in the Naga freedom struggle in the capacity of couriers, as carriers of rations for the armed national forces, cooking for the armed brothers. Tracing through the writings of the long protracted Indo-Naga war, there are records of existing women organizations or groups even during this critical times working for the general wellbeing of their respective communities and the Nagas as a whole. Women played remarkable roles not

only as exigencies to the cause of freedom but they also willingly took part as active armed combatants and have an indelible part in the history of Naga freedom struggle. In *The Naga Saga*, a book chronicling the Naga struggle, the author writes, “Then there were those civilian cadres of the Federal Government of Nagaland, both men and women whose sacrifices were equally heroic and legendary.” (Iralu 136).

Women went through unspeakable misery as a result of the war. They fell easy prey to the sadism of warfare and paid heavily physically, sexually, emotionally and mentally, much mention of which is done by the writers under consideration for this study. The emergence of women organizations initially worked for their respective village or community concerns. However, with time their role took to mammoth significance as they stood up in protests against Indian army atrocities, against militarization, rapes and killings, before and after the first Ceasefire agreement between the Government of India and the Naga National Council (NNC). A sample record to the Peace Mission in 1964 by the Sema Women Organisation reports the pitiable condition of the Naga womenfolk and a cry for respite, “ To our deep sorrow, we feel it not ashamed to state that all sane and insane , married and unmarried women of Nagaland are treated with indignities by Indian military troops....all people on earth whether great or small, are sons and daughters of women who should be respected as mothers.” (Iralu 128). Thus, Tribal Women Organizations became crucial harbingers of peace notwithstanding some of the women leaders themselves falling victims in the hands of the enemy.

In the early eighties, a significant development in the women’s organizations saw the coming together of all tribal women groups under one banner as Naga Mothers



Association (NMA). About the year 1984, the second phase of the Naga women's movement can be considered to have begun. The newly formulated conglomeration of all Naga women tribal groups into the Naga Mothers Association's envisioned every Naga adult women as being a member of its constitution in the belief that every woman becomes a mother to the family and the community. Caught in the throes of conflict for decades compounded by the close proximity to the Golden Triangle and unguarded porous borders with neighboring nations, Nagaland became a haven for drug trafficking and alcoholism. The toll of this social menace fell heavily on the youths of Nagaland contravening into the social moral fabric of the society contributing grievously to the already deteriorating situation created by the Indo-Naga conflict in addition to the splintered affects of the National freedom fighters. With this precarious backdrop of the conflict ridden land compounding with the toll of social menace that faced Nagaland, the second phase of the Naga Women saw a twin gargantuan task, i.e., to contain the social crises as well as to campaign for peace. The women of Nagaland soon became fully fledged social as well as peace crusaders.

In a paper written by Mrs. Neidonuo Angami, a founding member of the Naga Mothers Association entitled as *NMA's Role in Peace Initiatives in Nagaland*, she recounts, "Drug addiction and HIV/AIDS prevention and care were the primary activity of NMA until mid-nineties when violence and killings took its toll on our people. We, the mothers of the land, woke up to realize that the number of orphans and widows are increasing every day and that our people are living in fear and unpredictability and we decided to approach and plead to every national worker's groups to shun violence."(Neidonuo 1) Following this when the Naga political fervor reached its heights of killing and bloodshed on its streets, the NMA formed the NMA Peace Team.

On this Mrs Neidonuo says, “We formed the NMA Peace Team under the banner, “Shed No More Blood” and went to every faction or groups with the same message. We also had several meetings and consultations with all the stakeholders at every level and extended our full support for the ceasefire and peaceful settlement through negotiation. We also campaigned against draconian laws and wrote several memorandums to the Government of India and worked in close partnership with Naga People’s Movement for Human Rights for complete withdrawal of the act. When NSCN-IM and the Government of India signed the ceasefire agreement and decided to hold negotiations for a peaceful solution of the Indo-Naga Political crises, Naga Mothers Association not only supported the agreement but extended full cooperation to both the parties. We took part in all the consultations both at home and abroad.” (Neidonuo 1) Born out of a history of wars and conflicts, peace has been a dream for every Naga women and the NMA has brought this into reality, as one study the way Naga women have chartered their own history to peace.

Astride with the women social organizations during this phase, a new hierarchy of women writers including male writers began to use literary craft to address these social challenges faced in their society. Significantly, all the writers Easterine Kire, Temsula Ao, Monalisa Changkija and Nini Lungalang began their writing career during this time frame and they all continue to write including women’s predicaments which became the key concern at all fronts in the third phase of the women’s movement. As impacted by the local situation, their works are heavily embedded with issues relating to both alcohol and drug addiction as well the issue of conflict. In exceedingly candid ways, they captured the most decadent period in the history of Nagaland. It was in these writers that feminist aspirations was begun to be voiced out creating a convergence

with the activist mode of women's movement in Nagaland. K.B Veio Pou rightly said, "Although there are quite a handful of emerging writers, prominent among the Naga writers writing in English today are Easterine Kire(formerly Iralu) (1959- ), Temsula Ao (1945), Nini Lungalang (1948-) and Monalisa Changkija (1960-). While these writers may or may not have s=close associations among themselves, they are contemporaneous and their writings are also reflections of the generation that has seen one of the most turbulent phases in Naga history. Many of their writings traces back to those years when the Nagas armed confrontation with India resulted in untold sufferings of the Nagas. And of course, the present predicament is no less disheartening to behold. These writers have used their literary art to weave the people's history and social realities in their works. Their writings are not debarred of socio-cultural meaning; rather they are powerful recreation of the rich cultural heritage while at the same time acting as commentators on the social ills of the present day" (Pou 46).

The third phase of the Naga Women's movement can be seen by the end of the twentieth century, when women collectively emerged to speak out against discrimination on women, crime and violence against women, detrimental customary laws against women etc at various platforms. The process of women empowerment in Nagaland officially began in the year 2001 when along with the rest of the country; they too celebrated the year of women empowerment. Petitions were written to the State Government on setting up the State Women Commission for protection of Women's rights and as a result of which the State Policy for empowerment of women was envisioned keeping up with the principles of the National Policy for women empowerment. In a major breakthrough during this phase in 2006 the Nagaland State

Women Commission Act was enacted with the mandate to safeguard women's rights and to promote women empowerment.

The Naga women movement which began purely from a social standpoint embarked on creating a niche for women in the state political arena. On this regard, they put up petitions to the head of State for reservation of seats for women in town and Municipalities as per the first Municipal Act adopted in 2001 and with the State Assembly adopting its first Amendment giving 33% reservation for women in Municipalities in 2006. Towards this end, the NMA formed the Joint Action Committee on Reservation (JACWR) exclusively to address this issue and they filed a Writ in the High Court in the year 2011. The Honorable Court passed judgment in favor of Naga women only to be vehemently opposed by the Naga man citing article 371(A) which shelters the customary beliefs of the Nagas. The legitimacy of the Naga women's struggle stands at lock-horns with men's unconvinced mindset to break away from the patriarchal stipulated customary practices. On this Monalisa vehemently voices out in the editorial of her newspaper that, "Male-dominated tribal bodies, as also individual Naga males, who oppose women's reservation in ULBs ~ which do not come under the purview of traditional Naga decision-making bodies ~ opine that Naga men and women are equal and that Naga women have high status in our society ~ if so, why are women debarred from owning and inheriting immovable property and from decision-making bodies and process in our village-republics? If so, why different rules for men and women in our social practices; why rapes, domestic violence and other crimes against women? If so, why have women always been excluded from the martial activities of the

village? The questions are not exhausted but suffice it to say that patriarchal Naga society has never held men and women to be equals ~ the very opposition to women's reservation in ULBs accentuates that ~ reinforced by Naga male-dominate tribal bodies' recent dicta to ex-communicate anyone who contest the ULB elections with 33% women's reservation. Women's reservation is necessitated in patriarchal societies for the historical fact of practiced culture of inequalities ubiquitous in Naga society ~ even if we don't practice dowry, sati, female feticide and infanticide and the caste-system. All patriarchal societies and states deny women access to economic and political powers, starting with land ownership, the primary marker of power hierarchies. Opposition to women's reservation in ULBs not only underlines the badly bruised Naga Male ego but definitely has critical economic connotations accentuating how their economic and political holds are perceived to be threatened, which few realize, much less acknowledge." (Changkija. E-mail Interview. 20 April 2017). On this issue, despite hurdles faced, the Naga women resolutely continue to articulate and stand for the rights of its women and fight against all forms of discrimination. Be it political, education, health, violence against women or armed conflicting situations, the Naga women continues to be strong in their approach for resolutions, justice, accountability and peace in the State of Nagaland.

A confluence of outlook from the writers in consideration employs the warring struggle of the Naga Nation as their main line of creativity amply found in their novels, short stories as well as poems. However, traversing through multifarious complexities of their social state the writers brilliantly manage to incorporate gender issues in their

renderings. Fluent addressers to gender issues they definitely throw light on the patriarchal structure of Naga society which stipulates gender inequality and which is deeply rooted. Concomitantly, with the practice of the patriarchal system, gender inequality becomes an inherent part of the system. Gender inequality in patriarchal societies such as Naga society is rooted in the economic, social, religious, political, and educational structure of society, as well as that of the state to which conditions its right thinking and progressive women citizens cannot remain untouched. Conceivably, these writers from Nagaland has taken to addressing gender relationship, perhaps with a preference to be in sync with that of an egalitarian way of society, which is alien to patriarchal ideology. In the light of the above forethought, the present study weaves culture, socio political state of affairs with generic gender concerns in literature in an attempt to appreciate and determine how proficiently Easterine Kire, Temsula Ao, Monalisa Changkija and Nini Lungalung represent Gender issues within the premise of feminist theory in their texts.

### I: 3: INTRODUCTION OF THE AUTHORS

#### I: 3(a): EASTERINE KIRE

Easterine Kire is a pioneer in the field of literature in Nagaland in more ways than one. Her work *Kelhoukevira* is the first collection of poetry written in English and published individually by a Naga poet in 1982. In 2003, she brought out the first novel in English by a Naga writer entitled *A Naga Village Remembered*. Easterine Kire is innovative and brimming in creativity and style. Even while she was pursuing her doctoral study, she fashioned a fascinating music CD out of her poems. Through the years Kire has proven her prolific ability in writing, be it in poetry or prose. Dexterous handling of thematic variation bear out the writer's supple yet profound understanding and perception of human nature and sensibilities.

Born in a demure peaceful town on 29<sup>th</sup> of March, 1959, Easterine Kire, petite with a quiet simple demeanor is God's own gift to her native land- Nagaland, located in the North East region of India. With Life and all its joy and grief, and the whole gamut of emotions in between situations of life as her spring of inspiration to creative writing, Kire's literary life is colored with success and achievement. A notable feat of Kire is in promulgating the hitherto little known literary world of Nagaland into the Global world of literature. An example is, the European Constitution in its Preamble includes Kire's poems, *The Right to Housing* and *The Right to Dream*. Today, she enjoys worldwide readership. Her poetry and books have been translated to German,

Croatian, Uzbek, Norwegian and Nepali besides her short stories translated to German. Kire also travels extensively and has delivered speeches at several international forums such as in Stavanger, Gothenburg, Frankfurt, Vienna, Barcelona etc. Kire was a guest of Norwegian PEN from 2005-2007. It was during this period that she travelled and spoke extensively on the idea of self-exile, writing in another country, Naga literature and the conflicted state of Nagaland.

Studying into Kire's life, one could see that she was naturally inclined to learning and gifted with an inborn niche at writing. Her academic life began at a most popular school in her native town then, Baptist English School. After completion of the tenth standard she went on to pursue Pre-University degree at Kohima Arts College. She continued her academic pursuit at Shillong, Meghalaya; another state in the North-East India. It may be significant to mention here that Meghalaya is a matriarchal society which is in opposite contrast to the patriarchal nature of society in Nagaland, wherein the author was born and brought up. Perhaps the novel *A Terrible Matriarchy* could be a resultant product of a confluence of experiences and personal witnesses in these two dichotomous societal mechanisms. It was here that Kire completed her Bachelor of Arts degree. She further under-took journalistic studies at Delhi University. Kire completed her Master of Arts Degree in English Literature with a First Class. Following the successful completion of Master's Degree she returned to her hometown and obtained a government job. She worked in the capacity of an Editor under the Directorate of Information and Publicity, Government of Nagaland. In two years' time of donning the job of an Editor, she quit it to begin a career as an academician. She started as a lecturer at the Kohima College from where she moved on to teach in North Eastern Hill University. Simultaneous with her



teaching career, she also continued to write a column for one of the local newspapers, *The Nagaland Observer*. Kire obtained her PhD in English literature from Pune University, India.

Easterine Kire began writing at the tender age of sixteen. It was in the genre of composing poems that she began her prolific writing career. Young Kire at the age of 22 published her first volume of poems written in English in the year 1982, entitled *Kelhoukevira* wherein the main poems mourn the warriors of Nagaland killed in the Indo-Naga conflict. With the publication of her first ever literary output, there has been a seamless progression of a fine literary career. In 1997, Kire created her poem-songs in the form of a music CD. She made a comparative study between Tenyimia and Ibo culture in her work entitled *Folk Elements in Achebe* (2000). This was followed by an extremely vibrant creative work, a collection of poems and folktales complete with sketches and colorful illustrations entitled as *The Windhover Collection* published in 2001. The year 2003 saw two very popular works of Kire. She co-authored with an Australian writer entitled *Ernie Wombat and the Water Dwellers*, the originality of this book is unmissed wherein a glimpse of her native land is given through the eyes of an Australian animal. The other significant work was her first historical novel *A Naga Village Remembered* in which the author gave a narrative about the last battle between the colonial forces of Britain and the Naga village of Khonoma. Easterine Kire's life soon took a different turn. The Indo-Naga conflict had a direct blow on her and peace soon dissipated out of her life particularly from the year 2000-2005. But Providence soon gave her a respite when she accepted the offer of being put on a program as a guest writer in Tromsø, Northern Norway in March 2005 hosted by ICORN. Norway to her was peace and freedom where she was most

productive and she went on to write six books. It is during this self-exile period that she found a new sense of purpose and direction towards heralding a better peaceful future for her people and especially the youths of her native land through new ways. Her hope for peace is not dwindled and she commits to work for a future that is healthy and peaceful. *A Terrible Matriarchy* (2007) is one of her most read novels where she addresses the issue of matriarchal control but intelligently wrought against the backdrop of a patriarchal society. *Naga Folktales Retold* was launched in 2009. In 2010 she published her bestselling novel *Mari*. In narrating the story of the woman Mari in the novel, Kire cleverly weaves in it a beautiful romantic story with stories of the Battle of Kohima during World War II. Today, Easterine Kire has written several books in English including collections of poetry and short stories as well as academic books and articles. Kire has translated over 200 oral poems from her native language, Tenyidie, into English. Her books include *Forest Song* (2011), a volume of spirit stories; and *Bitter Wormwood* (2011), a novel on the Indo-Naga conflict. *A Slice of Stavanger*, a photo poem book written in an attempt to capture the soul of Stavanger city. The year 2012 saw the publication of *JazzPoetry*, *Dinkypu* and *Jazzpoetry* and other Poems. Her 25<sup>th</sup> publication is a children's book entitled as *The Dancing Village* (2015). Kire's latest book is entitled *Son of the Thunder Cloud* was launched in November 2016. Easterine is also the founder and partner of a publishing house, Barkweaver.

Kire's artistic versatility gets fine expression through different modes of creative writing. Thematic variation in her works is wide ranged. She touches on innocence and purity of the divine; she delights children with story-telling but she also delves on social issues where she goes into the deep recesses of human and social

predicaments. A prominent concern of the writer is the degradation of her birth place which hitherto was utopia like. The loss of this haven like society to the hands of war and conflict appear to bear atrocious impact on the writer, indicated in her number of works on this issue. Kire speaks of this unrest and its touch on her life as thus, “Growing up in Kohima in the 1960s, the conflict fought close to the Naga villages, was never very far from us, the town dwellers. Aged 5 years, my first memory of the conflict includes lying flat on a cold cement floor with my younger brother, when shots reverberated round our neighborhood. While my Grandfather and brother were in bed, a bullet whizzed over their heads and went through the wall. My father was shot at but the bullet hit my cousin in the thigh instead. Curfews and continued periods of gunfire were all part of growing up in Nagaland. Frequently, men came to my Grandfather's house with stories to tell of captured men being tortured and killed. But the conflict took on a much uglier face with the emergence of infighting in the 80s. In 1987, a school friend was killed in the heart of Kohima town. Ever since then, the cycle of killing and counter revenge killing has not abated. Two levels of violence exist in my homeland. On one hand, Indian army atrocities continue. A military convoy began shelling, at random, civilian houses in Kohima in 1995 where many were killed and maimed, including children. A few years before that, many houses were burnt in another town, Mokokchung, resulting in loss of many civilian lives. Civilian killings by the army continue to occur on a smaller scale. On the other level is the infighting from ideological differences between the Naga freedom fighters. From 2000- early 2005, I personally experienced the stress of living in a house that was stalked by armed men at night because of the political writings of my spouse. Threats were also directed at me when an article of mine appeared in the papers protesting the killings. The abnormality of life was something I had resigned myself

to, tapped telephones, every movement of my family closely monitored and the horror of sitting up in the night with a double barrel gun to protect my children against stalkers. The brutality of life in Nagaland, especially the brutalization of many young men made me fear for the safety of my children. My older daughter was traumatized on a short trip when their car was stopped and they were held for questioning by a group holding them at gunpoint. Her sister came within five meters of being shot when armed men began to indiscriminately fire at their human target, felling an innocent citizen. My grown son was kidnapped for three days.” (“Featured Writer.” [www.icorn.org](http://www.icorn.org) ). Kire addresses this issue in *Kelhoukevira* where the writer laments over the loss of peace to war, where the utopia is now totally eclipsed by conflicts, death and destruction. Her other works which dwells on this theme are *Bitter Wormwood* and *Life on Hold*. Easterine Kire’s love for her motherland is obviously reflected in her extensively informed practices of her people in most of her works. She passionately records Naga Folk-Tales in works like *Naga Folktales Retold* and *Folk Elements in Achebe*. Her works for children includes *once in a far away Dorg*(2011), and *The Log Drummer Boy*(2013) etc. *Different Strokes* (2013) is a contemporary story about the struggle of two young student’s owing to their distinction from the rest.

Kire’s deep belief in the divine realm is seen in her religious themes. Her belief in the supernatural gets reflection in *My Book of Angels* (2014). *Thoughts After Easter* (2014), a collection of articles and essays on varying subjects ranging from social and environmental concern, to the personal and the spiritual. The story teller in Kire is gloriously displayed in *A Terrible Matriarchy*. In it is delineated from the cultural perspective the ways of a Naga Tribe- the Tenyimia. A casual reading would

entertain one with a delightful simple journey of a little girl's life. But Kire delves deeper into critiquing the paradox of a woman's life at the hands of societal influence. She becomes the voice of the subjugated women in a patriarchal society. The versatile polarity of the writer in her is captured in the thematic premise of her texts. The serious writer is seen from the standpoint of an eco-feminist and a writer dwelling on issues about peace, War and Conflict of the land to gender predicaments of the society and with the same level of dexterity she also writes stories for children and dwells on heavenly beings in Angels.

Series of recognition marks the teeming artistic endowment of this woman. The number of awards and achievements is testimony enough to show the veracity of her fine and versatile artistic skill in representing life, nature and society in so much as, the litterateur in Kire has garnered global attention and recognition to the modest literary output from Nagaland. A general study of Kire's art projects a gamut of literary works that aims to touch human sensibilities to delight, to retrospect upon. In 2011 she was awarded the Nagaland Governor's medal for excellence in Naga literature. She is also a recipient of the Catalan PEN International Free Voice Award. The Government of India selected her novel *A Terrible Matriarchy* to be translated into six UNESCO languages. Her poems are etched in the European Constitution. Easterine Kire's novel *Bitter Wormwood* was nominated for the prestigious The Hindu Prize in 2013. In 2015 Kire won The Hindu Prize for Best Fiction for her novel *When the River Sleeps* (2014). Easterine Kire is exceptionally one of the finest contemporary writers from Nagaland.

### I: 3(b): TEMSULA AO

The essence of indomitable spirit to life's existence, struggles and its triumph is encapsulated in Temsula Ao's life. Born to be a survivor, Temsula's life can be seen falling conveniently into three worlds –a phase of early childhood struggles, her world of education and emancipation and finally her world of professional success and writing. Temsula Ao was born in the year 1945. From leading a happy childhood enjoying the status of her father's favorite; her early blissful life very soon was stung by the early death of her parents. She became an orphan when she was still in primary school. Her lively pain oblivion life abruptly turns into a world of 'palpable pain and deprivation with no reprieve in sight' (OUAL 26) and the reality of her pitiful state became a debilitating malady to both her physical and mental condition. With her siblings of five they became a bunch of orphans often talked about as 'helpless chicks after the mother hen has been snatched away by a hawk' (ibid 37). Left to fend for themselves with bare minimum resources, their orphaned family soon split up with the youngest two taken to their ancestral village but Temsula was left with her other three siblings. Her childhood which otherwise is scarred by untold miseries of a life in extreme poverty and desolation perhaps did contribute into writing a destiny of resolute determination to survival. For Temsula, the second split up of her family became inevitable at the cruel hands of poverty. Fate would have it that young Temsula would be put in a boarding school to continue her education. But as fate would have it, moving into a new place and a new school beckon a fresh lease to life for the author. This phase unshackled her from consequences of the desperate hopeless poverty stricken life. A turnabout in her academic foundation was achieved at Ridgeway Girl's High school located at Golaghat in Assam. The education which she received from class four to class ten from this school was of such high standard

that it became the corner stone of her future academic career. A strongly felt determination to excel pushed Temsula to draft an exemplary academic record despite tough challenges hurdled her way. Right after she passed matriculation, her life took another dramatic turn and she was married off within a month of passing out from school. Through her marriage is seen a woman growing from a typical custom oriented wife into a woman pressing towards a separate independent identity. Though hard pressed against the vicissitudes of married life, providence fated upon her a destiny to niche a space of success and prominence in the world of literature. Her initial love for literature was seeded in her during her high school days. She says that, “it was the writers included in our English papers in high school who opened a whole new universe for me and I can say with absolute conviction now that my love of literature overtook all other interests after I read them”. (OUAL 159). The year of her marriage she attended an Evening college which eventually was unfairly stopped abruptly. This particular incident had a significant impact on her in that it awakened in her fortitude to fight for justice and not to give in to unjust subjugation. But Temsula continued to keep that fire for learning aflame through books and magazines. During this time she got her first job as an English teacher in Town English Kindergarten School and it was here that she realized here liking to the teaching profession. While on this job she appeared for Intermediate Arts examination at Gauhati University and passed in the first division. Temsula’s unquenched thirst for higher education would ultimately lead her to obtain Bachelor of Arts University Degree as a non-collegiate student, with Distinction, securing the third position in the University. Doors opened for her to further her academic pursuit and she could obtain her Master of Arts Degree securing the 2<sup>nd</sup> position in the university. From Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages, Hyderabad, she received her Post

Graduate Diploma in the Teaching of English Following this, Temsula served at Kohima Arts College but left it for North Eastern Hill University (NEHU) in the year 1975 and served there till the year 2010. It was during her service at NEHU, she was awarded PhD in the year 1983. Simultaneous with the progression in her academic life, her professional life too progressed. The same year that she was awarded her doctoral degree, she became a Reader in the Department of English at NEHU. Temsula was awarded with the Fulbright fellowship to University of Minnesota in the USA, 1984-85. In 1989, Temsula became a Professor at NEHU, Department of English. Two years after her professorship, in 1992 she became the Director of North East Zone Cultural Centre in Dimapur, Nagaland and served in the same capacity till 1997. After her stint as the Director, she rejoined NEHU. The last years of university life saw her as the Head of English Department and subsequently served as Dean, School of Humanities and Education, North- Eastern Hill University, Shillong from 2004 to 2010. Today i.e. to date of year 2017, Temsula continues to serve as the Chairperson of the Nagaland State Women Commission.

Temsula took to serious writing in the genre of poetry during her life at NEHU, Shillong in the eighties. She says, “when my life was defined now as a single parent with acute financial and other assorted problems coupled with the struggle to keep the home fires going and trying to cope with the demands of my job, I also had to contend with an impossible emotional tangle. It was during such moments of internal turmoil that I often turned to poetry for succor”.(OUAL 226) Her career as a young writer didn’t start off on confident footing but with assurances from the university community, she finally mustered courage to send to Writer’s Workshop, Kolkata her first collection of poetry entitled *Songs That Tell*, which they readily



accepted. Her first book of poems was thus published in the year 1988. Writer's Workshop also published her 2<sup>nd</sup> volume of poems called *Songs That Try to Say* in 1992. Her third book of poems called *Songs of Many Moods* was published by Kohima Sahitya Sabha, Kohima, in association with Har-Anand Publications, New Delhi in 1995. After a gap of seven years, she published her next book of poems entitled *Songs from Here and There* in 2003. In 2007 her fifth book of poems called *Songs from the Other Life* was published by Grassworks Books, Pune. Tamsula Ao stumbled into the arena of fiction writing during a listless period of poetic inspiration. Ideas flowed spontaneously producing her first fictional work called *These Hills Called Home: Stories from the War Zone* in 2006. This first fictional work is a short story collection consisting of ten short stories with its thematic premise on insurgency issue in Nagaland capturing the adapting abilities and the veracity of survival of simple ordinary Nagas. In 2009, *Laburnum for my Head* was published which is also a collection of evocative and powerful short stories. . In the year 2000, Tamsula brought out a book called *The Ao-Naga Oral Tradition* which was an inspiration from her stay at Minnesota as a Fulbright fellow. In here, she records the Ao Naga oral and folk tradition, myths and culture. She also has to her credit a book of literary criticism called *Henry James' Quest for an Ideal Heroine* published in 1989. Tamsula Ao's works have been translated into German, French, Assamese, Bengali and Hindi.

Thematic study of Tamsula Ao's works forays issues ranging from Nature, Religion, human relationships, personal experiences, Death, social issues, etc. Gender concerns are a main theme that underlines her works. The writer dons a spirit of anxious interrogation into addressing these themes with constructive purpose. No issue addressed dissipates into hollow lines of her poetry or prose but generates

awareness in the mind of her readers. Underscoring her main concerns are Insurgency problem which wrecked her homeland, Ecological depletion and Women's state of being which makes the writer a feminist with disquieted heart of an eco-feminist with social concerns. Her works thereby resounds with multiplicity in didactic purpose. A major thematic branch under study is the realistic embodiment of women's plight as the subaltern being cast purposefully by the writer in poems like *Woman* which describes the poet's empathetic care and concern for women, the *Creator* expresses the indispensable sorrow of a woman in modern male oriented life, *Requiem* exposes the inhuman practice of bride burning. The freshness of female representation in her works is unmistakable where she talks about female bonding. She also highlights women away from the image of being a quiet submissive person to being witty and courageous in her prose works like *The Jungle Major* and *The Last Song*. Tamsula also talks about an ideal gender relationship in her works *Man to Woman* and *Woman to Man*. As a feminist she not only portrays her opposition to the perverted practices of a patriarchal society but she also proposes a relationship based on mutual respect and co-operation. Mellifluous in reasoned thematic expression, Tamsula Ao is a versatile genius. She is widely esteemed as one of the major literary voices in English to emerge from Nagaland.

Against the backdrop of such magnificent heritage of a life and career, deservingly Tamsula Ao has received accolades and recognitions for her contribution to the world of literature. She was awarded the honorary Padma Shri Award in 2007. In 2009 she received the Governor's Gold Medal from the government of Meghalaya. The prestigious Sahitya Akademi Award was awarded to Tamsula in 2013 for her collection of short stories, *Laburnum for My Head*.

### I: 3(c): MONALISA CHANGKIJA

Monalisa Changkija famed for her characteristic of being a fearless writer and a social activist, is a widely known journalist, poet, writer and speaker from Nagaland. She pioneers in professional journalism in her homeland as being the only woman proprietor, publisher and editor of a leading English Daily in Nagaland called *Nagaland Page* in the Northeast of India. She is also one of the most celebrated poets in the north east region of India. *Nagaland Page*, which started on May 29, 1999, is the second English Daily of Nagaland. However it is the first Daily, which is published seven days a week because prior to its beginning, no newspaper in Nagaland was published on Sundays. Thus, technically perhaps *Nagaland Page* is Nagaland's first English Daily. *Nagaland Page* is empaneled with the Directorate of Advertising & Visual Publicity (DAVP). Monalisa Changkija is also the first Naga journalist, who was a correspondent for several newspapers and magazines outside the state of Nagaland.

Monalisa Changkija was born in Jorhat, Assam on March 2, 1960. She studied at Hemlata Handique Memorial School, and matriculated from Little Flower School, Kohima. An alumna of Patkai Christian College, Chumukedima, she graduated with Honours in Political Science from Hindu College, Delhi University, and also have a Master's Degree in the same subject from Delhi University.

Changkija models a life that dons multiple roles with a touch of finesse. Professionally, she stands tall as a literary figure and as a journalist. The professional art of Monalisa Changkija projects tremendous intellectual commitment towards fostering a healthy and progressive society. Changkija began her journalistic career

in April 1985 and it was during her stint with an English Daily *Nagaland Times* that she discovered her love for writing. Her career begun as a columnist in the Weekly *Nagaland Times*, in 1985, writing a widely read column "The State of Affairs" followed by another column "Of Roses and Thorns" in yet another Dimapur-based Weekly *Ura Mail*, thus becoming the only Columnist in Nagaland, who wrote simultaneously for two rival papers based in the same town. In 1994, she became the Executive Editor of *Nagaland Times*, after the paper was transformed from a Weekly to a Daily.

An Accredited Journalist, Monalisa is noted for her hard-hitting editorials, especially on social issues. She had made her mark as an intrepid journalist right from the time she started her career, not only as a Columnist but also a Cub Reporter. Her first-hand reports on the First Merapani War in June 1985, through which she brought to the public's attention the role of women in such conflict situations after visiting the conflict zone is well-remembered. Her first hand reports on the Second Merapani War in 1991 established her reputation as courageous journalist, especially because she travelled to the conflict zones at night, unaccompanied, and under the most difficult situations. The two Merapani Wars were fought between the Police Forces of Assam and Nagaland and is a part of the border disputes between the two neighboring states. It may be mentioned here that besides the open armed hostilities between the two Police Forces, Army operations were also at its height then when everyone including the menfolk played it safe by staying indoors, particularly at night.

Besides several other such reports under the most difficult situations, Monalisa further established her reputation as a resolute journalist, when in 1987 she traveled

with her 11-month old baby to Mon to cover the then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's visit. At that time, Mon district of Nagaland was practically under military rule and the Armed Forces (Special) Powers Act was strictly enforced by the Army posted to that area, which means the people had to endure the most brutal army operations. Although she and her baby were severely harassed by army personnel and her movements strictly followed, she managed to secure information and data to highlight the plight of the people caught in the crossfire between the Indian Army and Naga insurgents. It must be emphasized here that during those days, the Army did not encourage the people of Mon district to talk about their realities. Her articles, published in Nagaland and other parts of the country, on the grievances of the Angh of Chui and the gross human rights violations, especially of women there, created a consciousness amongst people of the often forgotten people of Mon district.

Perhaps, Monalisa was tested by fire the most, as a journalist, when she was asked to break professional confidentiality, soon after her newspaper started. A former MLA could not reconcile to the fact that a woman could succeed as a journalist hence few months after *Nagaland Page* started, he started faxing her threat letters. Meanwhile, around the same time, a citizen had written his/her opinion in an article titled: "State is a reality and sovereignty is a myth", but with the request that his/her name be withheld. Strongly believing that in a democracy, everyone has a right to the freedom of speech and expression, Monalisa published the article and withheld the name. A certain insurgent group took exception to the article and demanded that Monalisa disclose the name of the writer. She refused and was threatened with dire consequences. Suffice it to say that things became very difficult for her hence the State Government provided Monalisa with armed body-guards and

house guards because she was under severe threat of being eliminated and her newspaper closed down. This insurgent group also exerted patriarchal and familial pressures, typical of tribal societies, on Monalisa to make her disclose the name of the writer but to this day, Monalisa has not broken her professional confidentiality. Thus, she has not only saved the writer, who is a well-known personality, from the wrath of the insurgents but has also earned the respect of the insurgents as an ethical journalist. Monalisa has not only overcome the perils of being a woman and a journalist in a typical patriarchal tribal society but also a society and a state afflicted with numerous conflicts. Interestingly, at the height of army operations in the mid-1980s, a former 3 Corps GOC, who used to read Monalisa's columns regularly, which often highlighted army atrocities, remarked: "She is the only man in Nagaland", while later another 3 Corps GOC, in exasperation with her columns, remarked "She is a very inconvenient woman". In April 2015, Monalisa completed 30 years in her profession as a Journalist. She is a founding member of the Editors' Initiative, an initiative of Northeastern Editors to forge closer ties amongst the Northeastern media in collaboration with PANOS South Asia. For all the attributes that she brings to bear on her work as a Journalist, Editor, Poetess and Social Activist, The Media Foundation has recognized Monalisa Changkija through its 2009 Chameli Devi Jain Award for an Outstanding Woman Media Person. The Award was presented on March 17, 2010, at New Delhi. Monalisa was also a Journalism Mentor at the JM Foundation for Excellence in Journalism, which is an affiliate member of the Association for Education in Journalism & Mass Communication, as well as an Institutional Member of the International Communication Association, the premier global association of communication researchers. Monalisa has been inducted as an

Advisory Board Member of the Geneva-based Globethics.net India Regional programme.

Besides being a professional Journalist, she is also a poet and a prolific writer on varied subjects, and her poems and short stories have been published in several national and regional newspapers and print and online magazines, including *New Frontiers*, the journal of the North East Writers Forum. Monalisa Changkija's poems which have tended to become increasingly popular draws its raw materials from the situational considerations of her time and society. True to the adage that every writer is a product of his or her time and the ambience of the society, Changkija as a versifier articulates her desire that Nagaland as well as the northeast would gain recognition through the prism of poetry as poetry has a unique power to penetrate even the deepest recesses of the heart. She has two anthologies of poetry to her credit, *Weapons of Words on Pages of Pain* and *Monsoon Mourning*. Monalisa published her first collection of poetry in 1993 called *Weapons of Words on Pages of Pain*, in which she sharply backer the cause of women at the hands of violence. This collection has three parts, *Weapons of Words on Pages of Pain*, *To Whom It May Concern* and *Words of Miscellany I & II*. In the first two parts, the poet addresses the issue of domestic violence and the plight of women at hands of violence as both political and personal because, "battery against women and domestic violence exist in large scale in our society, it is political. It is personal because I am a woman". (Preface- WWPP). An enigmatic quality which defines the uniqueness of this poet lies in her technique of making every line of the otherwise short poems loaded with profound connotation of issues afflicting the society. The underlining theme in this collection of poetry resurrects one's sensibilities evocating an introspection that touches the very core of the heart when one comes face to face with the biting reality of the evil capability of a

man's heart. Being brought up from a societal atmosphere where crime of any nature is hushed up for fear of stigmatization and where the sanctity of the family name is held on to tight fistedly, Monalisa chose to be a voice of positive influence and took bold steps into a realm where even Angels fear to tread. Up against a fiercely parochial society she dared to bring out in the open the wounds and injuries of a women in the first two sections of her first volume of poetry. Therefore *Weapons of Words on Pages of Pain* carries a heart that cries out from the depths rendering it to be more of an activist of a book. The collection of poems in *Monsoon Mourning* first published in 2007 by Write-Up Publication, Dimapur, was penned spanning over a period of twenty years since the late 1980s. Quintessential to this collection is that it would “ epitomize the fears, the hopes, the disgust, the shame and so many other human emotions that constantly churn in the hearts of those who live in societies beset with conflicts”.( WWPP –i- ) .

Monalisa Changkija also like her compatriot bards in Easterine Kire and Temsula Ao touches upon other disquieting themes like Violence and Bloodshed, ecological concerns besides gender issues dabbed with personal contemplations on varied issues. Monalisa becomes a social realist against the stark social political turmoil that beset her homeland. Violent bloodsheds in consequent of insurgency problem are captured in poems like *Not Be Dead, Child of Cain; Stop this Nightmare, Shoot* etc. Nevertheless Monalisa also provides a fine departure from the dark spaces of this theme with a burning flame of victory. Exasperation leads to a welcoming release of fear and the poet dares in lines like, “So, if tomorrow my body is riddled with bullets, I shall not be dead”. The poet imagines the event of her own death in the poem *At My Funeral*. One other major theme reflected upon by the poet is on Nature.



Monalisa through the section *Nature Reflections* as the title itself connotes, adequately indicates her apprehensions and regrets over the loss of nature in its pristine state at the hands of human follies. The poet's encumbrance over ecology finds fine reflection in poems like *Wooing Wind –I and II* wherein *one* actually is transported beside the waters of the mountain lake igniting one's olfactory senses to the wooing wind. Nature untouched in these poems is a completion in itself. Departing from the serene site of nature the poet brings a paradox to mind the consequences of the idiocy of nature devastation which in due course would lead to the environmental extermination. The fate of mother earth is threateningly doomed in the poem entitled *Environmental Extinction and Star Wars*. Brilliant intertextual denotation, both explicit and implicit woven under the cover of the fury of nature is penned in *When it rains here*. In a mood of sarcasm, Monalisa exposes how even nature responds to human apathy to its existence, the nonchalance of which invokes the fury of nature on man. Whereas the common man suffers, far from genuine concern are those in power and because they are untouched, apathy is perpetuated. In the poem is recorded a continual line of comparison with nature's fury and enmity bloodshed receiving the same apathetical response at the menace of individualism and greed for fame. The *reflective* poems seem to spring forth from a keen sense of observation and a heartfelt empathy coalesced with intellectual knowledge of mankind and humanity. It doesn't require much intellectual and moral endowment for the reader to grasp the depth of her lyrical essence, the poet immediately ushers the mind and heart to her world of poetry leaving them with silent meditative introspection long after the perusal is done. The humane reasonable mind is pricked to animate pondering over the succinct thought provocative lines in this section of *Monsoon Mourning*. Today her poems are celebrated for thrilling poetic lovers and

the reading community contributing to the growth, development and change in Naga society and beyond.

A prominent citizen in her own right, Monalisa today is much sought after in public forums both in academic and social circles. She has extensively spoken and presented at various platforms like seminars, consultations, conferences, workshops in and out of the State on a plethora of societal issues. Outspoken Monalisa spell eminence in the academic circle for the litterateur that she is; in the public domain for her unequivocal approach to intone issues that are socially impairing. Her articulate verbosity and her writing skill coalesced with her courageous and committed abidance to truth is her greatest sword today at combating social menaces. As a product of her extensive stint on public platforms, the poet has brought out a collection of essays called *Cogitating for a Better Deal* in 2014. The essays dwell on widely ranged topics from societal internal conflicts to the trappings of individualism to the profession of journalism to addressing gender relationship in the complexities of the Naga Marriage bearing testimony to Monalisa's wide itinerary presenting numerous seminar papers across India on varied subjects particularly on Naga issues, women's issues, human rights and media.

Monalisa's literary reputation established itself unobtrusively juxtaposed with her professional fame as a journalist both locally as well as globally. She is the first Naga poet to be invited by the International Indigenous peoples' forum to present her poems in 1997 at Oslo, Norway, where she presented her second collection of poems, *Monsoon Mourning* which reflect Naga society of the late 1980s and 1990s.

The awards that followed her steps to success are many both in the field of Literature and journalism. The year 2009 saw Monalisa awarded with the *2009 Chameli Devi Jain Award* for being an outstanding Woman Media person. On December 14<sup>th</sup>, 2009, in commemoration of 25 years of Poetry (1984-2009), the Poetry Society of India awarded her for her remarkable contributions to Poetry in Nagaland. The Naga Students' Union, Delhi presented her with the NSUD Inspiration Award 2013 in recognition of her esteemed accomplishments in the field of Literature, on the 18<sup>th</sup> of October 2013. Monalisa was awarded the 2013 Governor's Award of Nagaland for distinction in Literature on January 26, 2014. In honoring Women Achievers of Northeast (2013-2014), the FICCI Ladies Organization (FLO), Northeast Chapter awarded her with the 30<sup>th</sup> FICCI Women Achiever of the year 2013-2014 for her outstanding contributions as a journalist.

Monalisa's works is now a part of the academic syllabus at various levels. The Nagaland Board of School Education has also introduced her poem *Child of Cain* in the Alternative English course for ninth standard from the 2007 session. Her works are also included in the syllabus of the undergraduate and post-graduate English courses in Nagaland University. Her poems *Cain's Shoes* and *Maybe* were included for the BA English (Honours) course from the 2012 session and from 2004 session, Monalisa's poems, titled *Of a People Unanswered*, a trilogy, are taught in the MA English course at Nagaland University. Monalisa's poem *Maybe* was also published in *Wings of Poesy: Nagaland University Anthology of Poetry*, published by Macmillan Publishers India Ltd., in 2011. The North East Hills University (NEHU) has also some of her poems for its M. Phil course. Several MA, M. Phil and Ph. D students and scholars have written, and still write, their dissertations and theses on Monalisa's poems, articles, features and Editorials.

The joint portal of the British Council and Zubaan, which deals with women, who ‘deal with words’, features Monalisa in their Profile section. Her short stories and poems have also been included in the two volumes of *The Oxford Anthology of Writings from North-East India*, published by Oxford University Press (OUP), edited by Tilottoma Misra, in 2011. In a feature on poetry from North-East India titled Something Understood, written by Mark Tully, which was broadcast by BBC Radio 4, on May 5, 2011, Monalisa’s poem titled *One of these Decades* was also included.

Monalisa’s poems continue to be published in magazines published by Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) in the UK and USA besides online magazines such as *museindia.com* and *northeastreview.com*, *cosmofunnel.com*, etc. A Fellow of the National Foundation of India (NFI), she was the only member from the Northeast India in the Planning Commission’s National Steering Committee/Working Group on Women’s Empowerment for the 11<sup>th</sup> Five-Year Plan. Monalisa was also a Member of the Governing Body of the North East Zonal Cultural Centre, based at Dimapur. Monalisa is also a Member of the North East Writers’ Forum (NEWF) and of the Friends of Assam and Seven Sisters (FASS), a non-profit, non-Governmental organization and international think-tank and is a Life Member of the Indian Red Cross.

Monalisa has been recently inducted as an Advisory Board Member of the Geneva-based Globethics.net India Regional programme. She is married to Bendangtoshi Longkumer, Managing Director, Nagaland Hotels Limited (NHL). They have two daughters and lives in Dimapur, Nagaland.

### **I: 3(d): NINI LUNGALANG**

Nini Vinguriau Lungalang was born in the year 1948. She got her education at Loreto, Shillong, St. Edmunds College and Delhi University. She obtained her Master of Arts from Nagaland University. Professionally, a pianist par excellence she is also a fine writer from Nagaland. Lungalang currently teaches at Northfield School, Kohima.

From the age of three, Nini Lungalang was taken out from Kohima since her father, being an IAS officer was posted in various places out of Nagaland like Assam, Bengal, Arunachal etc. She was not really exposed to her native culture through peers and friends because she returned to her native land only at the age thirteen. Recourse to this was her mother's insistence of using their native dialect 'tenyidie' at home, which she attaches to one's identity. Perhaps this is the reason why Nini Lungalang attaches supreme importance to her local dialect even though in writing she expresses herself in English.

Nini Lungalang's educational background is quite freakish. She went to school very late, i.e. only at the age of ten. Just about the age of five, she had a rather bad accident when both her legs were crushed rendering her to be inert. Perhaps this is the period when Lungalang developed her love of reading which would later make her a literary brainiac. So she never got the chance to learn her alphabets but during this

time her parents would buy plenty of books to keep her occupied. She continued her reading spree and is still addicted to reading.

Nini Lungalang started teaching very early. When she was only thirteen and still in school, she started her hands on teaching piano. This triggered her interest in garnering exceptional communicating skills. Her love for writing too was visible at a young age when as a boarder in school she would write lots of essays for friends in exchange of chocolates.

Apparently, versifying and writing narratives was initially more of a leisure pursuit for her. In a personal interview with her she recounts, “Basically, I write. Sometimes, I spent a lot of time alone but that doesn’t mean I enjoy loneliness, I enjoy my solitude and sometimes I pick up the pen and scribble a few lines. My collection of poems was inadvertent. I would scribble little things and my husband would find them, staple them together, typed them out and cyclostyle a few copies. It was never for public consumption. One of my relatives found it and much against my will she went and printed it.” (Lungalang. Personal Interview. 29 November 2016).

Nini Lungalang has a collection of poem entitled *The Morning Years* and a short story called *Child of Fortune*. It is regrettable that this writer did not venture further into literary exploits as one is left wanting for more servings of intellectual geniality from her. In an interview with Ashley Tellis, Nini Lungalang opens up her love of metrical composition even when she was still a child. She says, “As a child, I was fascinated with the rhythm of words and its natural progression.” (“Tunes of a piano teacher.” [www.ashley-kirk.com](http://www.ashley-kirk.com)). Lungalang takes to the art of writing and the

potential of words in all seriousness and she says, “There is no short cut to writing poetry. It needs discipline. Correct grammar, good .Vocabulary is vast; one has to hunt around for the exact word that fits your thought. It is not easy but that’s part of the fun of writing poetry. Also, you need something that’s a little more than lexical correctness. The emotional characters, the suggestiveness of a word, as well as its sonic significance are very important.” (“Tunes of a piano teacher.” [www.ashley-kirk.com](http://www.ashley-kirk.com))The perfectionist in Lungalang is mirrored in the finesse of her poems. There is absolutely no untailored verbosity in her art as she herself expresses in the interview with Ashley Tellis, “I prune mercilessly. There are many who get it right the first time. To get to the core of an idea you have to keep stripping off what’s not necessary. All my ideas are not equal and are all not worth poetry. For ordinary people, like me, you have to plot. Being self-critical is important.” (“Tunes of a piano teacher.” [www.ashley-kirk.com](http://www.ashley-kirk.com)).

In her one and only poem collection *The Morning Years*, Lungalang’s commitment to this philosophy of poetic calling is displayed brilliantly in her poems which are endowed with meditative and philosophical qualities giving important premise to the element of thought perfectly coalesced with emotional qualities mingled with beauty, vividness and propriety of language and imagery. Like the other three bards under study, Lungalang too dwells on issues on similar lines with the other three. In her works are seen ecological concerns, gender concerns, concerns on conflict, child labour, motherhood, Human Relationships numbered in deep reflective compositions, the major themes of which are related to concerns regarding gender, ecology and conflict. In most of the poems, the poet is seen to be in somber mood.

Lungalang opens her collection with an immediate sense of nostalgia, in the reminiscing of which, the readers too time travel into this world of simple purity and peace. Her thoughts are the means to transport her to her blissful past, which not a day would she trade for anything. The spirit of reflection through which the poet goes into herself and finds her inspiration for rendering in the opening poem *Morning Years* percolates over other poems like *Chapel*, *I Will Be*, *Bird*, *anniversary Celebrations*, *The Maiden and the Glass Tyrant*. In these reflective poems Lungalang subjects herself in her own experiences, thoughts and feelings rendering the poems deeply lyrical in character.

The rich natural heritage of her motherland is celebrated in poems like *Going Home*. Again the poet is in somber longing for the fresh hill station of her home bedecked by mountains. She would like to leave the city - the world of materialism and go home to live amidst simple minds which resonates with the same sentiments of John Howard Payne in the lines, 'Mid Pleasure and Palaces though we may roam, Be it ever so humble, There is no Place like home' in his poem *Home Sweet Home*. Lungalang takes to new heights, her love and admiration for nature in the poem *On Puliebadze*. Her plea to respect Flora and Fauna resonates throughout the poem. Lungalang turns into a strong crusader for ecological preservation when she bestows divine reverential tribute to *Puliebadze* as 'Holy Ground' and cautions one to be detached from defiling such a sacred place as this. The poet's concern over killings in consequence of violent conflicts are addressed in poems such as *Dirge*, a poetic record of violence in her hometown on the 20<sup>th</sup> of March 1989 where two are killed and maiming eighty lives. A distinctive quality of Nini Lungalang as a poet is her skill



in tackling with an intuitive understanding of human suffering and disposition. In *Street Sweeper* beneath the seemingly simple portrayal of a ragamuffin is a metaphorical reference to the daily labour of a sweet child laid bare from all the charms and finer things of life. Such little sweepers, the poet believes must have their own dreams but tangled. The poet's intuition is so natural and supple that it appears simple. The theme of Death is dealt with in poems like *Requiem for I* and *Death*. Like Monalisa Changkija, she imagines her own demise in the poem *Death*. The poet steps into the shoes of an old dying woman and empathizes with her in the poem *Old Tribal woman waiting to Die in the City Hospital*. Relationships appear to be a matter of interest to the poet. Dwelling on human relationships dabbed with specks of romantic connotation in poems like *To 'M'*, *Vale*, *Deceptions*, *Words*. *Dot* talks about the fragility of human relationship. In *Michael: Command To Manhood* and *Mirror* Lungalang articulates the inner mind of the mother as if that mind is transparent. She seizes the mind and heart in the depths of a mother's Love, pain and sacrifices. In poems like *Anniversary Celebrations*, *Man And Whore*, *After the Party*, the poet dwells on the secret complexities of self-love, the many vanities, the imperceptible quivering of selfishness that creeps into relationships. Gender concerns too find a key place in her poetic compositions. In *Man and Whore* gender imbalance is sensed through the differential position between the man and the woman. Oppression and suppression of gender within parochial parameters of the mindset is echoed in *Mirror*.

The one and only short story by Lungalang called *Child of Fortune* depicts the suffering of the Nagas caught in the times of conflict, the fight for Naga Independence. It portrays the atrocities meted on the village people with women bearing the brunt of violence. Within this bigger web of war and conflict, Lungalang

captures the complexities of gender bearing. These issues are dealt with by the writer with great dexterity indicated or suggested so calmly yet with much force and with so sober a touch. Even though lesser known than her compatriot bards, Lungalang's literary works are undoubtedly no more obscure to the external world especially in the world of the academicians. Today her works are much discussed and reviewed. All her works explicitly enunciates passionate philosophical and the substantial value of the thought that contributes to the writer's success in giving evocative and thought provoking renderings on manifold issues.

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## **Chapter II**

### **ENGAGING FEMINISM INTO UNDERSTANDING GENDER**

Gender has become a subject of worldwide deliberation giving birth to a conundrum of gender theories. Typically the basic understanding of Gender would mean the classification of the anatomy of a person's reproductive system as either male or female with the genital difference between male and female as the basis of such characterization. However, through various waves of gender studies, it has been taken beyond its simple connotation of sexual difference between being male and female to more complex studies of varied sexual orientations. Beyond feminist approach, gender studies have become an intriguing field of influence over a range of older established disciplines such as anthropology, sociology, linguistics and history. Even so, for the sake of the present study, Gender will be considered solely within the parameters of the binary relations of men and women through the lens of feminism.

#### **2.1. Biological and Socialization of Sex and Gender**

As per traditional hypothesis, Gender is defined within the premise of masculinity and femininity. Masculinity is defined as having power and being in control over emotional situations, in household interactions, in workplaces, and in sexual relationships. Such early thinking about the difference between women and men falls in line with the notion of essentialism. The essentialist ideas of gender men's and women's differences are a result of biology. The belief that biology is destiny and that the typical and expected masculine and psychological behavioral traits are seen as being tough, competitive, assertive, ambitious, confident, angry and even violent, successful etc. as against the feminine traits expectancy of being passive and emotionally expressive, vulnerable, nurturing, supportive, dependent, cooperative, warm and accepting the subordinate status to man. These differences are translated into specific character traits, distinctive thought patterns and feelings attributed specifically to each gender.

Corresponding to this role fixation on both genders is traceable to the pre-historic time when the man is assigned to active characteristics and woman to passive characteristics. Echoing this, the feminist writer, Judith Butler opines that sex is natural and comes first. Gender is perceived as a secondary construct which is imposed over this natural distinction. Judith Butler's theorization about gender introduces the "notion of performativity" (Butler preface), an idea that gender is involuntarily performed within the dominant discourses of hetero-reality. Butler in *Gender Trouble* opines that, Performativity of gender is a stylized repetition or miming of the dominant conventions of gender and argues that performativity of gender is, "a repetition and a ritual, which achieves its effects through its naturalization in the context of a body, understood, in part, as a culturally sustained

temporal duration.” (Butler preface). Butler’s conception of gender is perhaps most radical as she asserts that all identity concepts are in fact the effects of institutions, practices, discourses with multiple and diffuse points of origin. She further opines that sex and gender distinction suggests a radical discontinuity between sexed bodies and culturally constructed gender. Thus from this theoretical standpoint of view Sex refers to the biological attributes of being male or female and Gender refers to the socially constructed attributes of being male or female, or of femininity and masculinity.

At its simplest structure, the terms sex and gender are thus concepts used to make a distinction between the biologically different male and female and between the socially different man and woman. Socialization ascribes the specific gender roles and expectations on both the sex as Simone De Beauvoir states, “One is not born, but rather becomes woman. No biological, psychical or economic destiny defines the figure that the human female takes on in society; it is civilization as a whole that elaborates this intermediary product between the male and the eunuch that is called feminine.” (Beauvoir 293). It is then that man and women are plunged into the socializing process to think and act in masculine ways for the male and feminine ways for the female. Attitudes towards gender roles are thus the result from complex interactions among societal, cultural, familial, religious, ethnic and political influences. Gender is the ascribed normative aspect, generally focuses around the human concept of sex, a biological, physical division that extends to a broad social construction, shaping and limiting ways of both masculinity and feminism. Feminist Gender studies accordingly seek to understand both the roles, implications, impacts and potential of male and female interaction. Thus, the apparent generalized understanding of Gender underlined with the universal notion of dichotomous

difference between the two sexes commonly connotes socio cultural difference of women and men, the seed characterization of which lies in their biological division.

## 2.2. Historical and Philosophical Construction of Gender Orientation

Inevitably basic to the considerations of gendered notions is that it is woven into the very structure of the generic feminist movement. Feminism has emerged as a worldwide movement to secure women's rights towards gender equality intertwining Gender and feminist theories. Feminism has its roots in the humanism of the 18th century and in the Industrial Revolution with its issues ranging from political, social, and educational equality of women with men. Feminism in acknowledging and understanding the position of women and their enlightenment to civil rights in society sought to understand the roles, implications, impacts and potential of male and female interaction. A major evolutionary to this feminist movement was thus the discourse on gender dynamics.

The earliest traces of gender role differentiation are drawn from prehistoric ancestors when the male were required to more challenging tasks like that of hunting for survival and female to nurturing roles. Greek Mythology claims that Pandora was the first woman on earth and that it was Pandora's weak will power that succumbed to curiosity leading her to the opening of Pandora's Box which in turn is known to have released all evil in the world which became the source of all ills. Corresponding to this Greek mythology is the biblical story of creation in the Old Testament where God created Adam, the first man put on earth. God saw that Adam needed a helpmate

which led to the creation of Eve out of Adam's ribs. Eve who is considered the first woman on earth and the mother of human race fell prey to the temptation of carnal curiosity and led the man to eat the forbidden fruit which caused the fall of mankind. Ever since, Gender studies in all disciplines goes back to this image of women as projected through Pandora and Eve as being weaker willed and lesser to man. Aristotle too declared as early as the 4<sup>th</sup> Century BC that women were women by virtue of a certain lack of qualities (Jenainati & Groves 5). Such was the traditional outlook on women which was countered vehemently by the Quakers. It was not until the movement of the Enlightenment period otherwise known as the Age of Reason and Individualism dated between 1650 and 1800 which advocated reason and individualism over tradition that the traditional religious views began to swim in under scientific reasoning. A striking outcome of this age is the mind shift from a one to two distinctive set of anatomy. This shift finds its record in Thomas Laqueur's book, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud*. In this, Thomas theorizes that prior to the Enlightenment both women and men had one common sex with variation in the genitalia makeup in that the female genitalia was considered lesser to that of the male genitalia. However, with the 18<sup>th</sup> century Age of Reason, the one sex theory was shifted to two sex theory where a proper and distinct identification of separate anatomical make up and functions were assigned to both the male and the female. This reallocation fashioned the initial studies to gendered differences and is foundational to the many facets and theories pertaining to comprehending the dynamics of Gender.

History records that John Money, a psychologist cum sexologist first coined the terminological distinction between biological sex and gender as a role in 1955. ("Distinguishing between Sex and Gender." [www. link.springer.com](http://www.link.springer.com)) However, the usage



of these terms ‘biological sex’ and ‘gender as a role’ became popular only when feminists begin to embrace this concept in their theory of socialization of gender. A landmark in the study of Gender as a role is Charles Darwin’s evolutionary thought theorized in *The Origin of Species* (1859) which foreshadowed his later work entitled *The descent of man, and selection in relation to sex* (1871) where he theorized that human sex differences evolved based on sexual selection. Darwin espoused the fundamental difference between male and female as, “ Woman seems to differ from man in mental disposition, chiefly in her greater tenderness and less selfishness; and this holds good even with savages....Man is the rival of other men; he delights in competition, and this leads to ambition which passes too easily into selfishness...with women the powers of intuition, of rapid perception and perhaps of imitation, are more strongly marked than man; but some, at least, of these faculties are characteristic of the lower races, and therefore of a past and lower state of civilization .” (Darwin 563 -564). He goes on to advocate that, “The chief distinction in the intellectual powers of the two sexes is shewn by man’s attaining to a higher eminence, in whatever he takes up, than can woman- whether requiring deep thought, reason, or imagination, or merely the use of the senses and hands” (Darwin 564). Stephanie A. Shields and Sunil Bhatia in a paper entitled *Darwin on Race, gender and Culture* writes on the lines of the above statements as thus, “Darwin asserted that male superiority was originally produced by both sexual selection and natural selection and was maintained, in general, by a tendency of some characteristics acquired in adulthood to be transmitted only to offspring of the same sex. Thus, the qualities that adult men acquire in their more rigorous “struggle for life” are more likely to be passed on to their male than to their female offspring.” (Shields & Bhatia 114-115) He observed that it is fortunate for female that most inherited characteristics are transmitted equally to offspring of both

sexes as “otherwise it is probable that man would have become as superior in mental endowment to woman, as the peacock is in ornamental plumage to the peahen.” (Darwin 565). Darwin even offered a remedy for female inferiority that capitalized on the tendency for later-acquired traits to be transmitted to same-sex offspring: “In order that woman should reach the same standard as man, she ought, when nearly an adult, to be trained to energy and perseverance, and to have her reason and imagination trained to the highest point; and then she would probably transmit these qualities chiefly to her adult daughters. (Darwin 565).

The musings of Darwin on gender did not go down well with feminists at a later time. It may be noted that Darwin’s espousal on gender came in the wake of nineteenth- century when scientific considerations were at its peak on gender issues wherein differentiated roles of man and woman became more sharply defined than at any time in history. Consequent to such ideological expressions which gained popular belief on gender identity, the 19<sup>th</sup> century Victorian era saw distinctive gender issues such as the doctrine of *separate spheres* and the era being characterized as the age of *domestic age par excellence*. *Separate spheres* became a foundational basis to studying the ideology of gender. This ideology birthed out of the Industrial revolution which brought about a clear line of disjunctive domain in the role and identity of men and women. Owing to their biological and psychological nature, men and women were relegated with separate social activities and advocated for women to the home sphere and assigned men to the sphere of economic work outside of the house, all the while unbending to men’s authority over the family. Aggravation to the chasm already created was the image of femininity projected by Queen Victoria who modeled the characteristics of being the submissive wife and honorable mother and womanhood committed on full time domesticity. To this image of Queen Victoria is

attached the title “the Angel in the House” and the expectation of the same fell on every women. These doctrines of relegating the women as the weaker being, to domestic or private sphere and the man to public or worldly sphere entrenched the social and political mindset of the 19<sup>th</sup> century feminism which in turn had long standing effect on worldwide feminist movement addressing gender issues.

The Age of Enlightenment gave momentum to the growth of western feminism. The laid down notions of individualism was not received by everyone with warmth and women including some men began to voice out their dissent through print culture. Women began to take advantage of new intellectual trends such as writing and the culture of salon. Such social outlets exposed them to the public and enabled them to have a channel to public voice. Corollary to such outlet is that simultaneous to the promotion of strict gender roles mild positive impact on the representation of and attitude toward women through print culture and the budding of feminism became visible. The French lawyer and political philosopher Montesquieu in *Lettres Persanes* (*Persian Letters*)) and *De l'Esprit des Lois* (*The Spirit of the Laws*) considered his two greatest works, considered at length about women in relation to the society and was rather considerate about the position on women in society. In *Lettres Persanes*, Montesquieu displayed a sense of fairness towards the treatment of women. He liberally espoused the natural right of women to having equality and freedom in all aspects of life and went on to suggest that education was the key yardstick to birthing equality of the sexes. But in *De l'Esprit des Lois*, Montesquieu's attitudes towards women are modified. No longer does he favour freedom and equality for women. He establishes man as the head of the household and of the family placing women in a subordinate position in the family. He espoused the preservation of virtue as one of women's most important obligations in society and also one of the primary functions of the laws. Basically Montesquieu

was sympathetic of the inequality of women and the obstacles they faced in society but holding fast to the traditional idea of man's dominance in marriage and family.

Another thinker Jean Jacques Rousseau viewed women and men occupying separate identity. His most controversial work *Emile* which provoked thoughts of both women and men well into the 1800s specifically delineates the significant role of mothers in educating their children although teaching of girls should be entirely subordinate and dependent on their husbands as is reflected in his writing as that, "the early education of man is also in a woman's hands; his morals, his passions, his tastes, his pleasures, his happiness itself, depend on her. A woman's education must therefore be planned in relation to man." (Rousseau 328). In *Emile*, Rousseau made clear that participatory citizenship is to be a specifically male prerogative and made it clear that woman should be subordinate to man and that she should make herself pleasing to men. The purpose of women was to bear and nurture children and they are devoid of any political right. Rousseau writes, "When I consider the special purpose of woman, when I observe her inclinations or reckon up her duties, everything combines to indicate the mode of education she requires. Men and women are made for each other, but their mutual dependence differs in degree; man is dependent on woman through his desires; woman is dependent on man through her desires and also through her needs; he could do without her better than she can do without him. She cannot fulfil her purpose in life without his aid, without his goodwill, without his respect; she is dependent on our feelings, on the price we put upon her virtue, and the opinion we have of her charms and her deserts. Nature herself has decreed that woman, both for herself and her children, should be at the mercy of man's judgment." (Rousseau 327-328). In *Social Contract* Rousseau promotes the patriarchal family as

the only natural society as implied in the lines, “His first law is to provide for his own preservation, his first cares are those which he owes to himself; and, as soon as he reaches years of discretion, he is the sole judge of the proper means of preserving himself, and consequently becomes his own master. The family then may be called the first model of political societies: the ruler corresponds to the father, and the people to the children; and all, being born free and equal, alienate their liberty only for their own advantage.” (Rousseau 3)

Rousseau’s idea on education came under direct attack by perhaps the most notable philosopher who defended the rights of women in the Enlightenment period was Mary Wollstonecraft. Wollstonecraft, considered one of the earliest feminists in western history and even called as the mother of feminist movement, wrote her first book *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792), wherein she attacks the view of female education put forward by Rousseau and other writers who regarded women as weak and incapable of reasoning effectively. Wollstonecraft viewed female education as integral in the holistic development of society and she, “rejected the education in dependency that Rousseau advocated for them in *Emile*. A woman must be intelligent in her own right, she argued. She cannot assume that her husband will be intelligent! Mary Wollstonecraft maintained that this did not contradict the role of the woman as a mother or a career or of the role of the woman in the home. She maintained that ‘meek wives are, in general, foolish mothers’.” (“Mary Wollstonecraft on Education” <http://infed.org/mobi/mary-wollstonecraft-on-education/>). Deemed as the first representative of early modern feminism, her work rejects the notion of education in dependency and believed women can intellectually be at par with their husbands which she stresses does not come in interference to the roles of women as wives and mothers in the society. She also opined that traditional social and political theories ignored inequalities and oppression in gender field making gender relations complicated and failed to include them in political theory. Clearly, Feminist political

idea that developed in the 20th century traces its ideational roots from *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*.

As aforementioned, the development of salons gave a new height of impetus to the intellectual enlightenment of the female lot. The main intent of opening salons was to meet women's educational needs alternating the otherwise denied formal education to women. These salons became socially acceptable centres which greatly contributed to women's participation in the societal development rather than being mere caretakers of the household. With advocating equality through the medium of literature, Women's acceptance of traditional roles began to dissipate. Eschewing the current image of their inabilities, women became more organised in voicing out their resistance to being outcast from the public sphere. The impact of the women's image portrayed as the 'Angel in the house' (Woolf 3) loomed heavily on women's mind that Virginia Woolf in 1931 painted the typical nature of women within the Victorian patriarchal society in her essay *Professions for Women*. In this also she made the famous statement that, *Killing the Angel in the house was part of the occupation of a women writer*. (Woolf 3).

Besides religion, science and the political sphere even in the economic sphere is seen contributing considerably to the evolving roles of the sexes in the western societies. The concept of social order being maintained through the exercise of power of one social class over another brings about *Conflict Theory* which centers on structures of power and inequality emphasizing on the unequal distribution of resources accorded to men and women in society. Originating from the writings of Karl Marx, *Conflict Theory* is

based on the assumption that society is a stage on which struggles for power and dominance are acted out. The theoretical assumptions of Marx further gave rise to the notion of capitalism which thrives on a class-based system where power falls on the hands of the ruling class ie, the bourgeoisie who are proprietors to farms, factories, natural resources etc and the proletariat workers become their employees. The offshoot is the distinction of social system where the intention of the powerful is to exploit the subordinate class by extracting as much profit as possible from their work. Social scientist and political philosopher Friedrich Engels extended the application of this theory to the family and gender roles. In his book *The Origin of the Family, Private property, and the State* (1884), Engels, “questioned whether women’s roles had always been inferior to men’s. He concluded that women were primarily oppressed by economics and that monogamy, private property, and excluding women from “social production” is at the root of male domination.” (Garbacik 39). This statement was given on the hind side of Engel’s argument that with the emergence of private property and the dawn of capitalistic institutions where he said that a woman’s domestic labor is no longer counted beside the acquisition of the necessities of life by the man; the latter was everything, the former an unimportant extra. The household is an autocracy, and the supremacy of the husband is unquestioned. Engels stalwartly states, “At this early stage we can already see that the emancipation of woman and their equality with men are impossible and remain so, as long as women are excluded from social production and restricted to domestic labor. The emancipation of women becomes feasible only then when women are enabled to take part extensively in social production, and when domestic duties require their attention in a minor degree. (Engels 196).

On the other hand, the construction of Gender dissimilarity was also propounded by Social scientist and psychologist. A tall figure in this is Austrian

neurologist Sigmund Freud who extensively influenced the European and the American mind in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Theories of Gender socialization is significantly drawn from the scientific espouses of Sigmund Freud's Psychoanalysis Theory. Freud's psychoanalytic perspective assumes unconscious factors motivate our behavior. He espouses that experiences or events of first six years of life are determinants of later development of personality. It is of note that attention is given to those experiences. Unconscious motives and conflicts are central and at a later stage, personality problems find its impact on early repressed childhood conflicts. Freud's theory of personality development espouses that children unconsciously model their behavior on the behavior of the parents. In particular the child's identification with the same sex parent shapes a powerful psycho sexual bond that forms the basis for the child's sexual and gender identity. Freud's work is widely engaged with into reading the psychological models of human development. Sigmund Freud's *Structural Theory* of personality places great importance on how conflicts, which are considered mostly unconscious, among the parts of the mind shape behavior and personality. According to Freud, personality develops during childhood and is critically shaped through a series of five psychosexual stages, which he termed as his *Psychosexual Theory of Development*. During each stage, a child is presented with a conflict between biological drives and social expectations; successful navigation of these internal conflicts will lead to mastery of each developmental stage, and ultimately to a fully mature personality. Jaimee Garbacik, a woman specialist in Gender studies comments, "Freud focused much more heavily on studying boys and men than on girls or women, but he made particular note of what he considered the most important event in a young girl's life: the moment she discovers she does not have a penis. Freud speculated that at this moment, females became aware that they are incomplete,



and remain so until they marry and have children. He considered men the basis for civilization and the more fundamental sex. By contrast, he characterized women as secondary, resentful, and less rational. (Garbacik 41). Freud's ideas have since been met with criticism by feminists for seeing women as inadequate relative to men and for assuming men's superiority.

### 2.3. Feminist Ideologies on Gender

The eclectic attribute of feminism was born out of such assumptions and theories on the subjugated status of women to men thereby promulgating their aims as to understand gender inequality and focuses on gender politics, power relations, and sexuality. Period wise feminism is framed popularly into the three phases; all political in nature for each advocated its own analysis of the potentials and possibilities for social change in bringing about the equality of gender. Despite the splits in its ideologies, threading a common weave of alignment to the various stages or waves of feminist movement was the exposition of gender inequality and the advocacy of gender equality in all spheres of doing life. Literature played a major and crucial role in bringing about the feminist ideologies into the open and it became a wide platform where all players for and against women's fight for gender equality could air their standpoint in regard to the myriad issues effecting the in- equilibrium state of gender. In and through the medium of literature was exposed the construction of gender theories knitted in the very fabric of Feminism. Literary figures played a great role in putting thrust to the women's fight towards a gender fair society. Matter of fact, turning on hind- side, it is through the medium of literature that the crux of the gender conundrum can be traced. The war of the pens on gender issues can be traced as far back as the medieval times. As mentioned at the beginning of this text, the

writings of medieval Christians were written on lines of exposing dogmas that women are an inferior being both in mind and body.

Countering this popular belief about women, the task of writing addressing gender inequality proliferated with a number of literary outputs challenging the ideal image of the female as chaste, silent, submissive and obedient. In the 14<sup>th</sup> century, a figure who is known to be the first western woman to voice out through writing is Christine de Pizan, now often named as “a singularly proto- modern woman”. (Quilligan Introduction), “the first gender warrior” (“The first gender warrior: Christine de Pizan”[www.avoiceformen.com/feminism/the-first-gender-war/](http://www.avoiceformen.com/feminism/the-first-gender-war/)). She wrote *The Book of the Cities of Ladies* (1404) in which she exposes the traditional abuse of women. She allegorically represents the roots of misogyny. Christine wrote that, ‘The man or the woman in whom resides greater virtue is the higher’, she argued; ‘neither the loftiness nor the lowliness of a person lies in the body according to the sex, but in the perfection of conduct and virtues.’ (Walters 19). For Christine it was clear that gender inequality has nothing to do with any innate differences between men and women rather it has everything to do with the role of education and opportunities. Jane Anger re-interpreted the book of Genesis in her work, *Her Protection for Women* where she says that, Man was created from dust but women from the men’s body, thereby women are consequently purer and more excellent beings than men. This work was followed by Marguerite de Navarre’s *Heptaméron* who advocated for women’s cause against the attacks of misogyny. *Egalité des homes et des femmes* written in 1622 by Marie de Gournay espoused women’s intellectual prowess as equal to that of men and asserted female denigration noting that all good is forbidden to the female sex. Sor Juana of Mexico, a little known poet and essayist of

the 17<sup>th</sup> century who is but now considered a prominent feminist in the espousal of gender issues. In 1690, in a rebuttal to a critique written by her on a sermon by Antonio Jesuit, a philosopher and writer who was considered the prince of catholic pulpit of his time, the Bishop of Mexico published the critique under the pen name Sor Filotea de la cruz along with a letter condemning her intellectualism as a woman. Sor Juana in a most courageous act published her text entitled *Reply to Sor Filotea*. Dahlia Grossman-Heinze in a paper entitled *My Favourite Feminist: Sor Juana Ines de la cruz* writes in Reply to Sor Filotea, "Sor Juana defended the intellectual rights of women and the rights of women to have access to education and condemned the church for helping to keep women uneducated. Sor Juana explained the ways in which she believed education could be used to serve God and recounted her own life-long struggle to pursue education in a society that did not believe women should be learned." Sor Juana fell afoul of misogynist church authorities for daring to come against the patriarchal and misogynist policies of the church and was silenced. But even though she was silenced in principle the spirit of counter tradition continued. In Europe the Quakers fought and stood for women's space in the religious order. Margaret Fell in a tract entitled *Women's Speaking Justified* addressed women's independence of conscience and free participation in worship and she wrote, "Those that speak against...the spirit of the Lord speaking in a woman, simply by reason of her sex...speak against Christ and his church, and are of the Seed of the Serpent." (Walters 12). The efforts and spirit of these counter tradition and the proto feminists is sustained all the way through the times of organized feminism till date. Predating organized feminist movement therefore is seen an already brewing dissatisfaction at the way women and men were treated differently spurring to questions and resistance to such man made inequality in treatment of the sexes and through the eras of United

States Revolution and the 18<sup>th</sup> century French Revolution sprouted a swift momentum for social change which in turn spurred about a fluidity to addressing gender inequality in an organized manner. With such upheavals of social changes came about the now so called feminism movements. Central to the feminist movement is the critical analyses critiquing the status quo of gender inequalities and the canon that perpetuates subjugated attitude on women through various genres of writing. Women took to vent out their social status so much so that they were referred to as the 'Amazons of the pen'. Leading these amazons is none other than the popular Mary Wollstonecraft. Her famous work entitled *Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792), in which she fiercely advocated for the competency of women's intellect with that of man given an opportunity provided a substantial groundwork of support for upcoming feminists' advocates. Another work which gained significant importance is *Society in America* where Harriet Martineau addressed from a gendered standpoint a focus on women's lives and work and strongly opposed gender inequality. She ponders over how a society which claims to be civilized upholding fairness and equality could endorse a lifestyle which promotes gender bias way of life. She writes, "If a test of civilization be sought, none can be so sure as the condition of that half of society over which the other half has power.....the unconsciousness of both parties as to the injuries suffered by women at the hands of those who hold the power is a sufficient proof of the low degree of civilization in this important particular in which they rest. ("Society in America" [wps.pearsoncustom.com](http://wps.pearsoncustom.com)). Marion Reid wrote *A Plea for Women* in 1843, described as the most effective work after Wollstonecraft in which she talks about the 'woman 's sphere' and that to accept the strict role of womanliness amounts to self-renunciation. She writes, "Womanly' behavior, in practice means 'good humor and attention to her husband, keeping her children neat and clean, and

attending to domestic arrangements'. Reid insists...that this apparently noble and virtuous 'self-renunciation' in practice usually involves a most criminal self-extinction'.(Walters 41-42). Reid's most radical argument for women besides espousing for women's lack of rights for inheritance and education and their subordinated position, she says women are as much compatible with man to voting. Interestingly so, women received radical support from men like William Thompson and John Stuart Mill. John Stuart Mill made quite a remarkable impact with his essay *The Subjection of Women* (1869) wherein he espouses that the subordination of women was wrong and that it is a chief hindrance to human improvement. Jaimee Garbacik writes on Mill's work as thus, "...he espouses his belief that not only should the legal subordination of women be ended and replaced by gender equality, but also that women's situation was worse than slavery, as each "individual [woman]...is in a chronic state of bribery and intimidation combined." He goes on to say that because men want women to like them as well as serve them, they try to indoctrinate women from a young age to think that they're most attractive when meek." (Garbacik 47). Mill's essay clearly defends gender equality by attacking the idea that women are naturally incapable of doing things that men can do and that the basic element of inequality lies in physical force but not in men's moral superiority. John Stuart Mill together with Harriet Taylor, whom he later married published *The Enfranchisement of Women* (1851) which focused on political enfranchisement of women as the title itself indicates. They later wrote essays on women's rights to sue for divorce too.

## First Wave

The era of the eighteenth hundreds therefore expedited in momentum for women's fight for equal rights and treatment birthing to a systematic development of feminist ideologies. The First Wave of feminism was primarily focused on women's equalities, specifically in suffrage rights and also political equality in other areas like inheritance, education ownership of property and the right to run for public office. First Wave ran from the 18<sup>th</sup> century till the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The crucial fight for basic political rights known worldwide as the Women's Suffrage Struggle and the fight for basic civil and legal rights becomes the cornerstone of the first wave. The immense number of sprouting literary and rhetorical exercises saw its first organizational fruit in Seneca Falls, New York, an open forum convention in 1848 led by Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott which deliberated mainly on civil and political rights for women and to denounce gender inequalities. Prominent figures who joined the suffrage ranks are Susan B Anthony, Sojourner Truth and Lucy Stone. Seneca Falls was followed by many rhetoric and organizational platforms to address gender inequality in varied aspects of social, political and economic life. Around this time a newspaper called *Revolution* under the proprietorship of Susan. B. Anthony and with Elizabeth Cady Stanton as an editor was birthed, which actually brought about a revolution to feminism. In their persistence to fighting for women right, the newspaper bore on its masthead a bold declaration which read as, "Men, their rights and nothing more; women, their rights and nothing less." ("The Revolution" [www.accessible-archives.com](http://www.accessible-archives.com)). This paper became the official voice of National Women Suffrage Association in USA.

Feminism coalesced with the abolishment movement which actually furthered the feminist cause. African American women emerge to address both racial issues and

women's rights and some of them opined that race and gender are inseparable barriers. Sojourner Truth (1797-1883), became a prominent figure in the fight for the abolition and women's rights. She stood out for her oratory skills too. She ardently espoused that cutting through the lines of race, color and gender everyone deserves equal access to rights. In her famous speech at 1851 Ohio Women's Rights Convention, she said, "I can carry as much as any men, and can eat as much too, if I can get it. I am as strong as any man that is now. As for intellect, all I can say is, if women have a pint and a quart-why can't she have her little pint full? You need not be afraid to give us our rights for fear we will take too much, for we can't take more than our pint'll hold." ( Garbaceek 50). Lucy Stone, the publisher of Woman's Journal, the longest running first wave periodical fought wholeheartedly for social injustices including slavery and women's liberation. She voices that whether it is in education, marriage, religion and everything, disappointment is the lot of women and she commits to make all efforts to deepen this disappointment in every woman until the woman learns to refuse to bow to it any further. At the same time, The Langham Place ladies led by women like Barbara Leigh Smith and Emily Davies etc. played a key role in the fight for the right to vote. They petitioned that the word 'man' should be replaced by 'person' and that all householders should be enfranchised with no distinction of sex. Meanwhile the working class women too initiated to fight for property rights and education and fight for suffrage alongside upper class women. They moved to seeking for decent wages, fair working hours and more job security. It became obvious that the first wave feminists' predominant concentration was on the fight for suffrage rights. The issue considered as key to placing women on an equal pedestal with man on the legislation agenda brought a bought a strong unanimous feeling amongst the women. The breakthrough for suffrage rights for women did not

come until after the World War 1. In 1914 with the outbreak of the First World War and the mass commissioning of the men into the battlefield resulted in sudden change of role and multiple responsibilities fell on women. Women begin to enter the labour force in unprecedented numbers in various sectors as replacements for their men. Women begin to enter into the public sphere. There was a renewal of attitude towards women and finally women's work in the public sphere too began to be valued. Regarding feminist pursuit to gender equality, the War is generally considered to have considerably broken down traditional attitudinal view on women as best confined to the private sphere. Though not completely emancipated, the war revitalized prospects of change for gender equality in many spheres of life and finally in 1918 suffrage rights were finally granted to women over 30 years of age but who are householders, or the wives of householders or had been to the university. After this major breakthrough there seem to be a lull in feminist movement despite a few feminist who remained active. This is the period that Betty Friedan would later label as the era of 'Feminine Mystique'. The end of the first wave is often linked with the passage on the Nineteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution(1920), granting women the right to vote which also included reforms in higher education, in the workplaces and professions, and in health care.

In the years between the wars, women continued to fight discrimination and opposition to gender inequality despite severe backlash received from the establishment and the media. With many women entering into the public sphere which was always considered as the man's domain, war time press has talked darkly about them as 'flaunting flappers'. The popular press came down heavily upon the women and would portray the feminist as a frustrated spinster or a harridan. They



went further and criticised them as that, ‘they have become so de-sexed and muscled, indeed and the neuter states so patent in them, that the individual is described no longer as “she” but “it”. “Anti –feminist propaganda undermined efforts to promote women’s rights and culminated in the publication of the bestseller *Modern Woman: The Lost Sex* in 1942, which emphasized the need for women to return to the home and give up their high paying jobs in war production. The “lost” women were the independent ones interested in science, art and politics, and those engaged in careers beyond their domestic sphere. The book described feminism as an “expression of emotional illness, of neurosis...at its core a deep illness”. (Jenainati and Groves 77). But the fact remains that through the war experiences women gained a whole new outlook to their own abilities away from their previously assigned role within the domestic sphere. They became increasingly educated and continued to gain access in the public sphere even though their position within the labour force saw a decline. This period saw strong treatises which aspired for gender equality and through which later feminist debates and critics focused upon. Virginia Woolf’s writings displayed acute awareness of gender discrimination and social marginalization even though she is considered to be more of a feminist critic than an activist. Virginia Woolf’s *A Room of One’s Own* (1929), talks about the extent of the backlash and her frustration at the waste of much potential and talents. She espouses a distinctive tradition of women’s writing and argues that women should explore female experience in its own right in their writings and avoid comparative assessment of women’s experience in relation to men’s. Woolf advocated a balance between a ‘male’ self-realization and ‘female’ self –annihilation. She rejected the notion of a separate feminist consciousness and hoped to achieve a femininity of the unconscious in order that there is no conflict between male and female sexuality. In this text, she exposes how women are barred from

social and cultural media such as libraries, universities and exclusive male eating joints and portrays unequal treatment to women on the basis of their gender. In *Three Guineas* (1938), Virginia Woolf dwells on the relations between male power and the professions like law, education, medicine etc. The *Three Guineas* as a sequel to *A Room of One's Own* treads beyond the valuation of unpaid labor into the realm of “potential” labour. She echoes in her work that more of focus should be on the valuation of work done by women as against women’s paid work in her famous lines quoted in *Three Guineas*: “The work of an archbishop is worth £15,000 to the state....but wives and mothers and daughters who work all day and every day, without whose work the state would collapse....are paid nothing whatsoever”. (Woolf 54). Another essay which Woolf produced having gendered impact was *Professions for Women* in which she professed that her own career was hampered for reasons that she was imprisoned and constrained by the dominant ideologies of womanhood and more so for the taboo attached to women expressing female passion which hinders from expressing the truth about one’s own experiences as a body. Woolf’s belief is that when women achieves social and economic status at par with man there would be no hurdles towards development of the women’s full artistic potential. The French prize winning novelist Simone de Beauvoir wrote a crucial book entitled *The Second Sex* (1949) that raised women’s awareness about their marginalized state and to rethink about sex categories and women’s role in the gender equation. Beauvoir is placed at a strategic period of feminist history with her work appearing at the interim between first and second waves of feminist activity that according to Fiona Tolan, Beauvoir is best understood perhaps as a bridge between the two waves: combining the progressive social vision of the first, and beginning to articulate some of the suspicion about femininity and gender that would come to concern proponents of the second.

On *The Second Sex*, Selden, Widdowson and Brooker writes, "...is clearly preoccupied with the 'materialism' of the first wave, it beckons to the second wave in its recognition of the vast difference between the interests of the two sexes and its assault on men's biological and psychological, as well as economic, discrimination against women. (Selden, Widdowson and Brooker 120). Perhaps one of the most famous lines in gender discourse given by Simone, "One is not born, but rather becomes, woman. No biological, physical or economic destiny defines the figure that the human female takes on in society; it is civilization as a whole that elaborates this intermediary product between the male and the eunuch that is called feminine", offers an understanding of the difference between sex and gender and the interaction between social and natural functions of gender on which she says, "only the intervention of another can constitute an individual as *Other*" (Beauvoir 293). Beauvoir posit patriarchy as destructive to gender equality and she writes, "History has shown that men have always held all the concrete powers; from patriarchy's earliest times they have deemed it useful to keep woman in a state of dependence; their codes were set up against her; She was thus concretely established as the Other. This condition served males' economic interests; but it also suited their ontological and moral ambitions." (Beauvoir 163). De Beauvoir explained subjectivity through existential philosophy which espouses that one exists first and through one's acts, one becomes something. She argues in the light of existentialist philosophy that the world has always belonged to males and reasons that "biological and economic situation of primitive hordes led to male supremacy. The female, more than the male, is prey to the species; humanity has always tried to escape from its species' destiny; with the invention of the tool, maintenance of life became activity and project of man, while motherhood left woman riveted to her body like the animal." (Beauvoir 77). But

Beauvoir reasoned that an individual has absolute control over their fate, and neither society nor organized religion should limit our freedom to live authentically but for reason that men have claimed the category of self, of subject, for themselves, women is relegated to the status of *Other*. Beauvoir's interpretation of the social construction of femininity as *Other* raised consciousness amongst women of their inessential status in the relational dynamics of gender and her highly acclaimed work paved way for theoretical discussions amongst subsequent feminist waves.

## Second Wave

Feminism at its eclectic heights came about with women adopting and adapting Simone de Beauvoir's reasoning on gender equation in *The Second Sex* which implies that women's status of oppression originates from the socially constructed status of being the *Other* to men besides increasingly drawing from the thoughts of European postmodern philosophers. Against a tumultuous background in the context of the anti-Vietnam War and the Civil Rights Movements, and having seen such discrimination based on their gender, the second wave feminism which spans from 1960s until about the 1990's, begun with the new battle cry, "The Personal is Political!" (Garbacik 58) wherein their focus was on declaring how public and private spheres could no longer be kept separate. The second wave directed their focus on individuality, women's right over her own body, sexual harassment, rape, domestic violence and reproduction. Two political movements shaped the Second Wave, i.e. The Women's Rights Movement (WRM) and the Women's Liberation Movement (WLM). Whereas the Women's Rights Movement was composed largely of professional women who campaigned to end discrimination against women at work, the movement also attracted middle class women mostly housewives who dissatisfied

with domestic confinement wished to participate in the labor force. The Women's Liberation Movement was formed as a result of Civil Rights Activism and Anti-Vietnam campaigning which emerged out of the New left of the Women's Rights Movement because women felt they were sidelined by their male counterparts and they questioned power dynamics in relationships, fair treatment in workplaces and their own stand in reproductive politics. In this period Freud was heavily castigated for his 'theory of penis envy' which flaunted that the girl's self-perception and her lot is that of inferior castrates by feminists like Betty Friedan, Shulamite Firestone, Kate Millet etc. who refuted that women's status of being considered the gender of the powerless *Other* is a social construct of femininity and had little to do with biology. Friedan down cries Freud's aphorism, 'Anatomy is Destiny' which signifies that a woman's reproductive role, gender identity and sexual preference are determined by the lack of penis consequently implying that women who do not comply to what biology has determined for her is considered abnormal. On the other hand Firestone's rejection of Freud is grounded on the reason of his lack of attention to relationships of power within the family and his seeming oblivion to the power of the father. Despite such castigation there were other feminists who found Freud's theory of psychoanalysis useful in their understanding of the female sexuality. Dorothy Dinnerstein and Nancy Chodorow are two prominent figures who applied a psychoanalytic framework to explore the role of women as mothers in the society. They utilized Freudian concept of pre-oedipal stage of psychosexual development in order to show how sexuality and gender are constructed to give primacy to men over women. Nancy Chodorow's, *Object Relations Theory* rethinks Freud's theory and she propounds that the formation of gender identity is linked to social organization of families in modern western cultures. She advocates that Personality is a result of a

boy's or girl's social-relational experiences from earliest infancy and that the nature and quality of the social relationships that the child experiences are unconsciously appropriated, internalised, and organised by her / him and come to constitute her/his personality." She puts up that "asymmetrical division of labor" characterizes families where women take on the full task of a mother's role and men do not. Women's work is projected as being devalued. Chodorow builds a psychoanalytic reason within the context of the distinct roles played by the mother and father having separate impact on the child's attitude towards gender role difference. In the context of the asymmetrical division of labor "boys and girls develop their identities through psychological separation from the mother. But because girls identify with the mother who is their same sex, they become less detached. Boys identify with the father who is typically absent; consequently, they develop personalities based on detachment. In addition, because the mother is a devalued person, boys and girls learn to devalue traits associated with the mothering role. Girls, however, are more likely than boys to internalize the traits associated with mothering, Chodorow argues that this process of separation and attachment forms the basis for gendered personalities; girls are more likely to be oriented toward others and be affiliative in their personalities, while boys repress their attachment to others." (Joshi 153).

The second wave saw different strands of feminist ideologies although their end intent remains unanimous of bringing about gender equality in all aspects of life. The liberal strand of feminism espouses that limited access to opportunities is the key hindrance to gender equality and emphasizes on individual rights and equal opportunity as the basis for social justice. They imbibe on the reformist approach which advocates for educating both the sexes towards formulating egalitarian

dynamics in gender relation besides social reforms through law and public policies. They believe that the law is a main mechanism to eliminating the walls of discrimination conducive to creating space for equal opportunities and civil rights to every individual irrespective of their sexes and thus espouses that social change can come through the construction of legislation and that regulation of employment practices should be gender neutral. Socialist Marxist feminism sprouted from the Marxist tenets. This group credits patriarchy and capitalism as the primary cause of social inequalities not excepting gender relations. As in line with Marxist view they perceive that with the end of class oppression even gender oppression would vanish. Social feminist is against the traditional Marxist ideas for subsuming it under broader class oppression and under this purview can be seen two streams of thought, i.e., Marxist Radical stream and the Socialist liberal stream. While Marxist feminism capitalizes on social institutions of private property and capitalism to explicate on oppression based gender inequality, the radical women and freedom socialist Party link gender oppression and class exploitation. Socialist feminism sees a combination of capitalist and patriarchal forces as the source of women oppression. "Classical Marxist sees women's oppression as stemming primarily from capitalism which, in its early period, defined women as the property of men. From the Marxist perspective, the accumulation of profits under capitalism requires the exploitation with minorities; provide a cheap supply of labor on which the profits of capitalism are built. Socialist theorists are, however, critical of classical Marxism for reducing the status of women to an analysis of class relations. While socialist feminist agree that capitalism is a source of women's oppression, they argue that women's situation cannot be understood in terms of class analysis alone. Rather, socialists' feminist programs for change involve both the development of a socialist society, as well as the abolition of

male privilege.” (Joshi 169). Patriarchy is the theoretical watchword of the feminist ideology termed as the Radical Feminist. They perceive the institution of Patriarchy as the root cause that oppresses women and that the root cause of all other inequalities is the oppression of women. Radical feminists also view gender as “the crucial dimension dividing people. They focus on how males dominate women through a system of supporting beliefs and social structures.” (Kramer 15).

Betty Friedan, who is considered as the spokesperson of mainstream middle class American women, wrote *The Feminine Mystique* in 1963. The work testifies Friedan’s keen awareness of gender inequalities. The mystique refers to the traditionally ascribed role of women which is construed as a means of keeping women subordinate to men. In an effort to obliterate the myth of the happy housewife she encourages women to break away from strict domestic role to work outside the home. Friedan argued that women had a “problem that had no name” (Friedan 15). She argues that women should take an honest look into their self - identity and worth and must realize that neither her husband nor her children nor the things in her house, nor sex, nor being like all the other women, can give her a self. (Walters 102).

Women’s fight for liberation from all social inequalities hit its highest popularity with the picketing of Miss America pageant in lieu of their decision to militate against any form of female objectification. Demonstrators picketed because it deemed such beauty contest as exploitative and demeaning to women and they occupied Ladies Home Journal offices resultantly creating public forums to discuss social evils perpetrating on women’s sexual rights like rape, prostitution and abortion



rights. Following this, an Equal Employment Opportunity Commission was formed to address discrimination issues but when it failed to respond to gender concerns, feminist including Betty Friedan became a founding member of the National Organization of Women (NOW), which set out to “bring women into full participation in the mainstream of American society, now, assuming all the privileges and responsibilities thereof in truly equal partnership with men.” (ibid 102). *Ms Magazine* (1970) run by feminist Gloria Steinem gave expressions to feminism in America and also helped in promoting the goals of NOW publicizing the dire need of anti-discrimination laws in regard to equal pay and promoting female workers.

In a diatribe against a stereotype, Mary Ellmann wrote *Thinking About Women* (1968) and this work is supposedly an American modern feminist criticism. She inveighs upon the arbitrarily imposed sexual dichotomy between male and female. She talks about ‘the sexual analogy’ which she considers to be a tool used readily and easily to delimit women’s emotional and intellectual nature because women is stereotyped that her larger character somehow corresponds to her sexual character. Ellmann protests against classifying and stigmatizing roles and attributes, particularly those which relate to the reproductive function of women and the physical superiority of men. *Thinking About Women* essentially is a deft and witty discourse about “derogatory stereotypes of women in literature written by men and also about alternative and subversive points of view in some writings by women.” (Abrams 88).

In England, Germaine Greer, another spokesperson of the feminist movement brought out *The Female Eunuch*, a bestseller in 1970. Greer produced this

revolutionary work which critiqued traditional concept of family structures and the mechanism of the nuclear family as the source of women's disempowerment. She terms heterosexuality to be a form of oppression for reason that it conditions women to conform to society's expectations of femininity and conditioning them to believe that their value depends on their appeal to men. Greer also criticized the workplace and compares it to marriages where women are obliged and pressured to please the male as their superiors. On this, the Vogue magazine quoted her as saying, "Don't just sit there, get his job!" (Jenainiti & Groves 113). Germaine Greer championed sexual liberation as a means of freeing sexual activity from the patriarchal strictures. Eva Figs's *Patriarchal Attitudes* also published in 1970 examines male chauvinism through the ages. She espouses that 'nurture' and not 'nature' shaped all secondary sex characteristics which is commonly termed as feminine and masculine. She centered her arguments around the chauvinistic patriarchal attitudes of influential male thinkers from the men behind the Bible to Sigmund Freud. Figs's opines that women have not made much progress as religious, social and cultural taboos restricting female freedom have not receded even in a little. She also pointed out that the economic aspects of women's oppression and the relationship of sex roles and family structure to the rise of capitalism.

In the same year Shulamite Firestone published *The Dialectic of Sex* (1970) in which she argued that women's capacity for reproduction is the main source of their oppression and proposes a biological revolution to exterminate social inequality and advocated that artificial reproduction is the gateway to women's liberation. Firestone argues that "an egalitarian society could be achieved only through an androgynous system whereby it "no longer matters culturally" who possesses the womb. Under this

system, the traditional structure of the family which ascribed clear sexual roles to each gender would dissolve, as heterosexuality would no longer be compulsory and women would be freed from their domestic confinement.” (ibid 114). Firestone attempts to revise Marx and Engels’ theories of history which overlooked women’s exclusion from society and says that her version of history connotes that sex class rather than economic class is the central concept and her distinguishing point is between the class of men and the class of women. Firestone hopes for a true Feminist Revolution and hopes for on sex.”(Firestone 23) She continues to say that, “for feminist revolution, we need an analysis of dynamics of the sex war as comprehensive as the Marx-Engels analysis of class antagonism was for the economic revolution. More comprehensive, for we are dealing with a larger problem, with an oppression that goes back beyond recorded history to the animal kingdom itself” (Firestone 12). She espouses that wider accessibility to contraception, sterilization and abortion would pave way for women to gain control over the means of reproduction which would ultimately lead to the elimination of sex class discrimination. Firestone argues that women and children, as unpaid house workers directly becomes consumers of the capitalist economy and she details that the biological family based on sex class discrimination benefits capitalism by making possible the confinement of women to the domestic sphere and enabling men to control the public sphere. Capitalism is thus calculated upon the distinctions of women as reproducer and men as producer. But a respite to this is that once women are disentangled from their reproduction responsibility, they will be enabled to become a part of the public work force heralding in women’s economic and personal independence. In a similar line, Ann Oakley too made a case against biological motherhood in *Women’s Work* (1974) and challenged the myth of biological motherhood. She states that women’s need to be mothers is artificially instilled in

them through socialization and refutes idea that women are instinctively drawn to their children asserting that mothers are not born, they are made.

Kate Millet's *Sexual Politics* (1970), a cause-célèbre radical feminist text announces Millet's view of 'Patriarchy' where she took on the onus to analyze patriarchy as a political institution. Millets brings about a distinction between sex and gender from a sociological perspective where sex is biologically determined and gender is a psychological concept. She denounces the view of social scientist where the culturally learned female characteristics are viewed as natural and instead professes that women themselves perpetuate this attitude and that the power structured relationships and the acting out of the sex roles in a relationship of unequal and repressive dominance and subordnance which she termed as 'sexual politics'. Millet in a scathing derision exposes the oppressive patriarchal attitude of male writers and looked to literatures of D.H Lawrence, Henry Miller, Jean Genet and Norman Mailer as examples of misogyny. Millet's *Sexual Politics* provides a powerful critique on patriarchy and her definition of patriarchy is "centered on the concept of sexual domination of females by males and is treated by contemporary feminist movement and its radical feminist stream in particular, as authoritative and virtually definitive (Vidyut 181). Millet notes, "The fact is evident that the military, industry, technology, universities, science, political office, finances – in short every avenue of power within the society, including the coercive force of the police, is entirely in male hands." (Millet 34). Millet observed that in spite of persistent patriarchal domination, women have never ceased to resist and challenge oppression and their subordinate role and "described the women of 1970s as determined to

obliterate the sex/gender system and to create a new, androgynous society in which men and women lead equal lives.”(Jenainati & Groves 119).

Sheila Rowbotham's *Liberation and the New Politics* (1969) and Juliet Mitchell's *Women's Estate* (1971) both were written in response to the emerging Women's Liberation Movement (WLM) in England. Rowbotham helped to start the Women's Liberation Movement and in 1969 she brought out the much influential pamphlet *Liberation and the New Politics* which is widely considered to have been a key text and the first manifesto for the new movement in Britain. In it she argued that socialist theory needed to consider the oppression of women in cultural as well as economic terms. Juliet Mitchell's *Women's Estate* insisted that women should be considered as individuals and espouses that women's lives needs transformation in production, reproduction, sexuality and the socialization of children. Mitchell argued that everywhere women are the most fundamentally oppressed people and hence potentially the most revolutionary.

Mary Daly, a radical feminist philosopher and theologian took a fresh perspective to denounce the mechanics of patriarchy. In *God the Father* (1973) she talks about the function of God in all religion is to act as a legitimizing paradigm for the institution of patriarchy. Daly argues that men's claim to personhood is based on the assumption that they have been created in the image of God, then through the process of power-over they marginalize women as non-persons, impersonal objects and Other and she encourages women to advocate for the notion of God as immanence and to detach God from gender. In a follow up to this thought, Daly wrote her most famous book entitled *Gyn/Ecology* (1978) where she rejected altogether the

term ‘God’ and advocated for women to reach in to their inner wild side which she proposes to be the outlet towards their liberation from social restrictions of feminine behavior. She further advocated for revising of language which mainly represents men’s experience of the world and brought about a feminist dictionary entitled *Webster’s First New Intergalactic Wickedary of the English language* in 1987.

Feminists in the second wave challenged the society’s definition of femininity and its insistence on equating men with “mind” and women with nature and “body” and were acutely aware of the power of male gaze in objectifying the female body. Feminists vehemently took their stand over this issue of representing and stereotyping traditional image femininity through various forms of artwork because it creates a tendency on female consumers to internalize stereotype gender identity. In *Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape* (1975) Susan Brownmiller implies that sexual relations reinforce men’s control over women thereby rendering sex to be both a personal and political concern. This work dwells in detail about the long history of rape in conquest, slavery war etc. and in it Brownmiller disputes that it is the women who fear violence and sexual assault who remain dependent on men’s protection and this directly reinforces the vicious circle of male domination over the female. In *Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape* Brownmiller coined the popular slogan, ‘pornography is the theory and rape the practice’ in a bid to deconstruct the age old male myth of the heroic rapist image. One of the most influential books written on sex differences was Carol Gilligan’s *In a Different Voice* where she opines as that, the qualities which typically win respect in our society-independent thinking, decisiveness, and direct action- are often considered less desirable when embodied by

a woman. Along the same tone, Susan Griffin too raised her voice against the exploitation of women's body and male violence. In her book *Pornography and Silence* (1981) contemptuously spoke against the easy attitude towards pornography by claiming that it liberating for women as well as men and she argues that pornography expresses 'fear of bodily knowledge and a desire to silence eros.

Despite being more racially integrated in its move, Bell Hooks in her work *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Centre* (1984) came down heavily on white feminist and blamed them of their inability to recognize the fact that there are varied divisive prejudices that plague women like sexist attitudes, racism and class privilege. She opines that many of Betty Friedans' concerns were moot and argues that feminists who advocated for career women conveniently ignored the functioning of their home in their absence besides failing to consider the case of single women, women without children and the uneducated ones.

The decade of 1970's which witnessed intense feminist activity on the political and sociological fronts also was an era when feminist academics actively engaged in challenging the Western literary canon. Elaine Showalter was most an influential American feminist critic with her ushering in the tradition of 'gynocriticism' a word coined by her designating it to a form of critical practice whereby the psychodynamics of female creativity is explored and recorded. Showalter in her celebrated work *A Literature of their Own* (1977) outlines a literary history of women writers and attempts to establish a literary tradition reflecting the variety of women's writings as significant contributors to the corpus of western literary writing

and divides women's writing into three phases as, *The Feminine Phase* (1840-80) characterized by writings of women who imitated mainstream publications by men, *The feminist Phase* (1880-20) in which women writers protested their marginalization and thereby maintained a different and often separate position, and *The Female Phase* (1920 onwards) in which women were preoccupied with self-discovery and developed a distinct female identity, style and content. She opines that "while there is no fixed or innate female sexuality or female imagination, there is never the less a profound difference between women's writing and men's, and that a whole tradition of writing has been neglected by male critics." (Selden, Widdowson & Brooker 127) Following this *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979), a work by Sandra M Gilbert and Susan Gubar became one of the most influential works in attempting to establish an Anglo-American literary tradition of women avoiding reference to or incorporating male writers. Showalter's approach to gender also concur with other Anglo-American feminists, such as Ann Oakley who distinguishes between sex as biologically determined and gender as a social construction of feminine and masculine roles. However such a mode of distinction drawn was not agreeable to some feminist critics, especially Judith Butler who is a forerunner of contemporary theorists of deconstructive feminism. Butler's approach questions notions of 'femaleness' which are taken for granted in society and argues that gender distinctions are valid if we accept a social system based on binary oppositions: i.e., seeing woman as opposed to man; feminine as opposite of masculine. Judith Butler "disagrees with the sex/gender split by emphasizing the phenomenon of cross-dressing as an activity which challenges the neat distinction of sex and gender which heterosexual discourse has initiated. Cross-dressing provides the individual with a wider concept of gender identity which does not "normalize male/female dualism." (Jenainiti & Groves



163).Judith Butler is one of the representing figures of gender studies. Her work *Gender Trouble* is one of the “canons” of gender studies with its central argument as that gender is cultural and artificial as well as biological.

### Third Wave

Consequential to the Civil Rights movement and conscious raising groups flounced on people’s consciousness, the second wave saw people from different background including Mexican-American, Native American, Asian –American, lesbians became freer to publicly spot out their varied cultural backgrounds, sexual orientations and personal experiences. The influence of western feminism could be seen on other nations which became more organized which in turn led to Global Feminism which primarily concerned itself with the forward movement of women's rights on a global scale. Feminism no longer remained confined within the narrow gender categorization but begin to seek for alternatives such as lesbianism, heterosexuality and archetypal gender roles, thus opening ways to exploration of sexuality in a broader sense. In *One is Not Born a Woman* (1980), Feminist theorist Monique Wittig urges women to explore lesbianism as a way to reconsider the limits of heterosexuality and expresses that the distinctions between men and women, homosexual and heterosexual were the result of politics and socialization and not any preexisting natural category. Feminism went into a lull even though some women

persisted to seek for workplace rights, maternity leave and rights against discrimination but in 1992 when Clarence Thomas was confirmed as a Supreme Court Judge despite being accused of a sexual harassment case by an African American lawyer Anita Hill, Rebecca Walker rose to the occasion of women still not being valued or heard and she wrote an essay *Becoming the Third Wave* wherein she supported the creation of a third wave of feminism to address remaining obstacles to gender equality. In an impassioned statement she wrote, “To be a feminist is to integrate an ideology of equality and female empowerment into the very fiber of my life. It is to search for personal clarity in the midst of systemic destruction, to join in sisterhood with women when often we are divided, to understand power structures with the intention of challenging them.” (Garbacik 68) Walker launched *The Freedom Ride* in 1992, a voter registration campaign, to invigorate youth activists and created the third wave foundation to finance young women’s political projects. She also publishes an anthology called *To Be Real: Telling the Truth and Changing the Face of feminism* (1994) which sparked new interest and enthusiasm among women for a more truly inclusive feminism. Thus, perhaps the third wave can be identified as a Feminism of a younger generation of women mainly university educated women who acknowledge the legacy of second wave feminism but also identifying its limitations. So, third wave is said to be a response to a perceived backlash against the outcomes of second-wave feminism, and a concern that young women were no longer interested in feminist issues. They borrow from post-structural and contemporary gender and race theories to expand on marginalized populations' experiences and continue to be concerned with the issues of the second wave like the reproductive rights, gay and transgender rights, eliminating sexism and racism, achieving economic equality and social justice for women and other oppressed groups, and environmentalism.

Significantly, this wave also perceived a brewing difference amongst women themselves on the basis of race, ethnicity, class, nationality and religion. They believed gender struggle is due to search of identity rendering this phase of feminism to expand beyond social, political and economic aspects of gender equality to really empowering women towards an independent state of equal identity with man. The work of Naomi Wolf *Fire with Fire* (1993) comes close to describing the third wave mold in particularly her dismissal of the ‘victim feminism’ notion where women are supposedly encouraged to perceive themselves rendered passive by oppression within a second wave formulation. In *Fire with Fire*, Wolf “articulates her perspective as part of a generational shift in common with practically all third wave feminism whose genesis is based on a resistance to the ‘old guard’ or framed in terms of the need for the ‘daughter’ to break away from her feminist ‘mother’ in order to define her own agenda.” (Pilcher & Whelehan 170).

With the progression of the third wave in the 1990’s young feminists are influenced by popular cultural forms such as television, music, literature and film. Sexual abuse, eating disorders and low self esteem were some new key issues of this wave. Some young third wave feminist took to punk rock music culture to address the unequal status of women with men. In the 1990s the pop group called the Spice Girls introduced the phenomenon of ‘Girl Power’ media campaign with the intention to motivate young women to assert themselves. ‘Girl Power’ asserted that women are sexual subjects who should lay claim to male privileges while performing their femininity. They espouses that with ‘Girl Power’ women can use society’s expectations of female behavior to manipulate patriarchy and achieve success through female bonding. The likes of rock star Courtney Love refused to adhere to a feminist

party line but also resisted to be in compliance with the typical image of femininity which is deemed appropriate and compatible with media and mainstream success. . The over representation of men in popular art and society continued to be critiqued by feminists like Kathleen , a member of Bikini Kill, an all female punk band whose “Riot Grrrl” took a frontal role in the punky and youthful new era feminist thoughts. “Riot Grrrl” movement started in 1991 with the claim that activism can be situated in popular culture whereas media in the form of music can be utilized as platforms to communicate political messages. They created fanzines and musicians addressed gender inequality through their songs edging on female independence and sexuality. Traversing beyond music, in 1992 “Riot Grrrl” convention was held in Washington DC where workshops were held on the premise of sexuality, rape, domestic violence and racism.

## 2.4. Global Dimension to Feminist Movement

The macro impetus of feminist movement virtually saw women of every region impacted by the feminist spirit. A global dimension was created in terms of gender equality with the United Nations (UN) establishing a Commission on the Status of Women in 1947. In 1949 the UN further issued its Universal Declaration of Human Rights which protects “the equal rights of men and women”, thereby addressing both the equality and equity issues. Significantly, the number of years from 1975-1985 is known as the United Nations *Decade for Women* when the UN held a series of world conferences on women’s issues in Mexico , Copenhagen and Nairobi where it was acknowledged that feminism ,

“.....constitutes the political expression of the concerns and interests of women from different regions, classes , nationalities and ethnic backgrounds ...There is and must be a diversity of feminisms, responsive to the different needs and concerns of different women, and defined by them for themselves. This diversity builds on a common opposition to gender oppression and hierarchy which, however, is only the first step in articulating and acting upon a political agenda.” (wiki)

The fourth World conference was held in Beijing in the year 1995 where the *Beijing Platform for Action* was signed which included a commitment to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women.

The efforts of the United Nations did bring a convergence of women from the world which advanced the cause of women's equality rights but not without its share of divisions amongst women groups. The sharp division between the so called First World Feminism and Third World Feminism arose and even the popular slogan 'Sisterhood is Powerful' was never a unanimous feeling shared amongst feminists on global scale. Gender disparity was a universal phenomenon; however the discourse of Western feminism or European feminism does not tally with the 'women in the third world' and often relegates them, the women of the developing countries, to a marginal position, denoting a rich variety of cultural, racial and class categories. Third World Feminists strongly asserts that Western feminist discourses do not apply to or reflect their condition for the fact that the social injustices meted against them does not coincide with feminists' issues faced by their West counterpart.

The writers in focus of this thesis belong to the “women in the third world” as all come from a developing country, India. Even though the thematic variation in their works touches upon Western feminists concerns, they also fall in line with third world feminists like Chandra Talpade Mohanty who espouses that woman in the Developing Countries are invariably portrayed as victims of a patriarchal order, which robs them of their voice, dictates their fate and forces them into financial dependence. Mohanty condemns the misrepresentation of the Third World lot by the West as sexually constraint, ignorant and helpless. Gayatri Spivak too adds on to this critical debate with her conception of the “subaltern”. She blames feminists of the west of robbing them of their political voice by generalizing problems and issues of women globally. This, Spivak says, marginalizes non- western woman and ignores their own efforts at countering social and political injustices. She also strongly opines that when non- Western women speak or write from within Western culture they shatter the myth of unity which Western Feminists have long celebrated. However, Spivak suggests that such a different voice should not be seen as a threat to Western Feminism; rather this discourse of otherness should be incorporated and allowed to enrich the “imagined community of women” which Mohanty has identified . (Janainati and Groves 168). The writers under study especially Temsula Ao and Monalisa Changkija too have touched on negative social practices such as Sati and bride pricing practiced in the third world nation of India. In line with feminists such as Nawal Saadawi and Fatima Marnissi, they too had touched upon the complicated social and cultural implications of challenging rituals which are often mistakenly associated with religious practice. Like every other feminists whether it be from the first world or the third world, all four writers of this thesis has represented the women

of their native land and nation , highlighting the various issues faced by women as the subaltern caught in a strong patriarchal society.

Despite such differences, it may be acknowledged that the efforts of feminist movement have brought about a blanket unity in so far as multitudes of gender issues are concerned worldwide, on the tables of the United Nations. Concerning every women are resolutions of the UN which are considered as milestones in the effort of women towards advancement of gender equality in society such as the marking of International Women's Day(IWD) being celebrated since 1977 on 8<sup>th</sup> March to honor women's contributions, celebrate achievements, promote the status of women worldwide and to draw attention to current issues critical to achieving gender equality, In 1970 another landmark achievement is the adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women(CEDAW) wherein was resolved that all stakeholders must adopt measures to end discrimination against women in all forms including incorporating the principle of equality of men and women in their legal system, abolish all discriminatory laws and adopt appropriate ones prohibiting discrimination against women. A major breakthrough towards the move of gender equality came about in the establishment of New UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women). In July 2010, the UN created the UN Women to accelerate progress in meeting the needs of women and girls worldwide. The UN Women are meant to be the lead driver and lead voice advocating for gender equality and women's empowerment globally. They envision being a strong champion in advocating gender equality at all levels - global, regional and local.

The contemporary changes in the structure of society and human relationships sets a paradigm shift from the simple concept of sex difference to deeper and varied explication of gender theories. From the various frameworks of feminism is traced the origin of gender inequality to past traditions that pose to be barriers to women's advancement, the capitalist system that sees women as synonymous to cheap labor, patriarchy that oppresses women and advocates man's supremacy over women and the multiracial aspect which espouses the interactive influence of gender, race and class influences and shapes the relationship between women and men. The foregoing discourse therefore evidently portrays that Gender theory is the progression of feminism and that the field of gender studies emerged from the contemporary feminist movement with the initial goal of bringing women and their experiences to the fore as well as to understand the inferior position of women to men with the main intent to bring about gender equilibrium in all mechanics of social structure. Thus, Gender discourse as an outgrowth of its ideological feminist base acknowledges and understands how researching on women issues highlights, illuminates shapes and defines Gender ideologies which facilitates into exploring gender equity mechanisms.

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## Chapter- III

# CONTEXTUALIZING GENDER DISCRIMINATION WITH PATRIARCHY IN EASTERINE KIRE'S SELECT FICTIONAL WORKS

### 3.1. Introduction

Easterine Kire, one of the most prolific writers of Nagaland is remarkably known for her writings on myriad issues concerning her homeland. Deservingly, she gained popularity especially amongst women when she championed the cause of women through her novel *A Terrible Matriarchy*. She said, “I have dealt with gender issues in *A Terrible Matriarchy* rather sharply.” (Kire. E-mail Interview.13 June 2016). In dealing with gender discrimination in this novel, she appeals to wider universal attention to this grievance as an issue of human rights violation as well. She equates the denial of equal treatment to women with man on the same quantum as a denial of human rights. She says that in dealing with gender issues in *A Terrible Matriarchy* , “it was also the issue of human rights that was behind the story. The little girl is denied the right to education by her grandmother. She is also denied the right to play time and recreation with her friends. Then the other serious thing that I

saw was that she is denied time with her parents and her immediate family. This is a fictional representation of a reality in any Naga family and by writing about it, I have addressed the gender issue but I think its more important to see that I am addressing a human right issue of denying some members of our community the basic rights enjoyed by everyone else. In *Life on Hold*, the girl bears the trauma and sorrow of seeing her beloved give up on what could have been their mutual dream of a normal family life. But here the responsibility goes not to a grandmother or to a gender suppressive society. It is the doing of political leaders that young lives are sacrificed in this manner. Women's rights are indeed important but we should not ignore the denial of human rights that goes along with denial of women's rights." (Kire. E-mail Interview.13 June 2016).

In her usual master stroke, Easterine Kire advances this sense of human rights violation and cleverly weaves it in the form of narratives addressing a universal disquiet on gender balance which lies basic to feminist tenets, thereby exposing the rigid nature of patriarchy and the way it influences the ways of life and attitudes of members posited in such a society. The restraining workings of patriarchy and patrilineal practices visibly is wrought in the plot of *A Terrible Matriarchy* pulling attention to the status of women against the milieu of a strong patriarchal society. In Kire's other works like *Life on Hold* and *A Naga Village Remembered*, though the main concern of these fictional works dealt with a conflict ridden land owing to the Naga National struggle, one cannot help but notice that the spontaneity in the dialogues of its characters which reveals how gender disparity is inexorably wedged into the structure of their social system by way of the existentialist idea of women

being naturally considered the lesser and weaker gender in their equation with the position of man.

### 3.2. Patriarchy and Gender Discrimination

Before proceeding to explication of the author's take on the subject matter, it may be deemed appropriate to dwell on what patriarchy is and how it is invariably entrenched with gender discrimination. At its simplest term Patriarchy means 'the absolute rule of the father or the eldest male member over his family' (Geetha 1 ). Literally patriarchy means rule by the male head of a social unit (a family or tribe, for example). The patriarch, typically a societal elder, has legitimate power over others in the social unit, including other (especially younger) men, all women and children. However, presently, Patriarchy is used not only in its descriptive term that explicates the construction of male authority and power but also as an analytical category and "since the early twentieth century, feminist writers have used the concept to refer to the social system of masculine domination over women. Patriarchy has been a fundamentally important concept in gender studies, leading to the development of a number of theories that aim to identify the bases of women's subordination to men. (Pilcher & Whelehan 93). Perhaps the lead feminist figure who stood up against the ideology of patriarchy is Kate Millet. In *Sexual Politics*, Kate Millet espouses on the two fold principles of patriarchy, i.e. male domination over female and older male's domination over the younger lot. On Patriarchy she says, "The fact is evident that the military, industry, technology, universities, science, political office, finance – in short

every avenue of power within the society, including the coercive force of the police, is entirely in male hands.” (Millet 34) Ever since, one major concern that feminist addresses is to expose the mechanism of patriarchy and to bring about a paradigm shift in the mindset. Patriarchy has become a central concept that feminist writers have been tackling with to explain differential positions of men and women in the society. Conspicuously, it is mostly the women writers who through their renderings represent the subaltern and the marginalized and confronts the patriarchal stipulated gender discriminations. “Feminist theory typically characterizes patriarchy as a social construction. The major effort in feminist criticism went into exposing what might be called the mechanisms of patriarchy, that is, the cultural ‘mind-set’ in men and women which perpetuated sexual inequality.” (Barry 122). In her theory of patriarchy, Sylvia Walby claims to have overcome the earlier problems of reductionism, a historicism, universalism and the tendency to lose agency in social and historical processes. For Walby, patriarchy is a system of social structures and practices, in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women. Walby identifies six structures of patriarchy (household production, paid work, the state, male violence, sexuality, culture) that together are argued to capture the depth, pervasiveness and interconnectedness of women’s subordination.” (Pilcher & Whelehan 95).

Gender discrimination is discriminatory or abusive behavior towards members of the opposite sex “based on gender, especially discrimination against women. It is the belief that one gender is superior to the other, especially that men are superior to women.”(the freedictionary.com). In simple terms Gender discrimination is defined the “Discrimination on grounds of sex or gender.” (“Gender discrimination.” [www.oxforddictionaries.com](http://www.oxforddictionaries.com)). The UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms

of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) defines discrimination against women as “....any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field.” (un.org). Gender Discrimination is the consequence of persistent inequality between men and women in all spheres of life. The dimension and degree of discrimination against women manifest itself in different culture, politics, race, region, countries, and economies differently. However, gender discrimination is considered as a tremendous constraint towards the development process and it is found as a causal factor of violence against women (Jannatul Ferdaush, K.M. Mustafizur Rahman 8). Sylvia Walby in *Theorizing Patriarchy* opines, “Radical feminism is distinguished by its analysis of gender inequalities which men as a group dominates women as a group and are the beneficiaries of the subordination of women.” (Walby 3). It may be deduced that by virtue of patriarchy being a male oriented institution, gender discrimination, which is understood as a means of discrimination based on a person's gender or sex, which more often affects girls and women, is customarily a part and parcel of the patriarchal ideology that stipulates the subaltern status of women.

Easterine Kire brings about the fusion of the patriarchal stipulated gender discrimination in *A Terrible Matriarchy* making it arguably one of the most brilliant and cogent literary work reflecting Gender Discrimination at the hands of Patriarchy. This chapter centers on *A Terrible Matriarchy*, with her other narratives like *Life On Hold* and *A Village Remembered* as its hinterland through which the author exposes



how women are denigrated at various levels of a society under rigidities of patriarchy. The study therefore basically examines gender discrimination advocated by the deeply engendered attitude depicted from the culturally constructed gender perspective with the patriarchal cultural system as the backdrop from a radical feminists stand. Sylvia Walby in *Theorizing Patriarchy* opines, “Radical feminism is distinguished by its analysis of gender inequalities which men as a group dominates women as a group and are the beneficiaries of the subordination of women.” (Walby 3). The origin of women’s oppression is blamed on male control over sexuality. Echoing the sentiments of a feminist Easterine Kire through portrayal of characters like Dielienuo, Nino, Bano, Vimenuo, Zekuo and the Grandmother presents a truthful picture of women, their humble submission, and undeserved humiliation in a society rife with Gender Discrimination which is a direct produce of patriarchy.

### 3.3. Localizing the Backdrop

Easterine Kire writes from the perspective of one situated in the patriarchal system, emphatically echoing her pursuit to a gender fair society. The milieu and the lived experiences of the author’s own life facilitated a raw representation of life’s realities that is beset in the pristine machination of patriarchy. Easterine Kire lived most of her life in Kohima, which is the inhabited area of the Tenyimia – the traditional social and cultural mores of which serves as the setting in her works to be studied.

History substantiates lucid delineation in regard to strict gender entities. Despite the conglomerated tribal state of her native land with each tribe maintaining its own identities, a common liner that connects this distinctive nature is the general consensus of patriarchy in all the tribes. It remains a reality till date that Patriarchy is the harshest reality of the Naga women making all orientation of their life to be governed by the complexities of Gender Discrimination. Easterine Kire blames this to “the perversion of the application of culture. The fault lies with humans who pervert cultural practices to make it appear that culture does not condone the abuse of womenfolk.” (Kire. E-mail Interview.13 June 2016) Thus the Naga society functions along male orientation, cohesively developing and perpetuating of gender biasness, whereby its citizens are conditioned into the psyche of the inferior female and the superior male.

Through her novels, Easterine Kire presents a realistic picture of the deeply rooted gender discrimination in Naga society. Concomitantly, this restraining sense of existence pervades and percolates on to the economic, social, religious, political, and educational structure of its society. Living under such socio-cultural conditions, it is only natural that writers like Easterine kire and her contemporaneous writers under study has taken to addressing gender questions, perhaps with a desire to be in sync with that of an egalitarian way of society, which is alien to patriarchal ideology. Easterine traverses along the many contours of her own society and culture to foreground the intent of this chapter.

### 3.4. Gendered Ancestral Lineage

An emblematic stressor of the patriarchal system where customary law is rebuffed as insensate equated to gender needs is the Right to Inheritance. Forfeiting the truth that women are the actual labor force behind the management of land as well as household needs, traditionally women had no right to own, sell or inherit any portion of ancestral property. The Naga Customary Laws are unambiguous pertaining to its debarment of women in any inheritance matters explicitly marginalizing any notion of gender equality making the right to inheritance as immutably tantamount with the male line. Merriam-Webster dictionary defines this along patriarchal lines that “Patriarchy is defined as social organization marked by the supremacy of the father in the clan or family, the legal dependence of wives and children, and the reckoning of descent and inheritance in the male line.” ([www.Merriam-Webster dictionary.com](http://www.Merriam-Webster.com)). The patrilineal order of the Naga society relegates women to familial roles and it stipulates that descent of the family name is through the male line and Inheritance concurrently is privileged as the birth- right of the son. Therefore, the birth of a son is deemed auspicious as man is naturally the custodian and protector of the society. In such a societal order both the man and woman are naturally conditioned with the mindset of male supremacy and dominance. Easterine Kire in, *A study guide to A Terrible Matriarchy* presents a factual picture of the Tenyimia culture, which is a mirror representation of the all Naga tribes. In talking about the Tenyimia culture, she points out that, “...there are similarities and affinities with the other Naga tribal cultures because it represents the patriarchal system of Naga society. Inheritance follows the male line.” (Kire 3) She also states that, “male heirs are seen as vital to the patriarchal set-up because sons are the ones who will carry the name of the father. If a woman cannot bear a son, the family property would be taken over by the male relatives after the husband’s death.”(Kire 3-4). Kire amply evidenced this in

her novel *A Terrible Matriarchy*. Clearly spelling the venerated consciousness of male progeny, Grandmother dotingly says of her grandson, “I am happy he (Vini) has a son to inherit his name and his house. This house will go to the boy when I am gone”. (ATM 237) And sure enough, even after her death, the Grandmother made it a point to protect this tenet of patriarchal practice. Lieno’s mother paints a realistic patriarchal social picture where sons are considered natural progenitors to lineage continuance and one’s social status. In an effort to rationalize Lieno’s gender predicament and justify grandmothers’ bias attitude towards her, Nino (Lieno’s mother) explains, “Grandmother saw her own mother suffer hardship and poverty and exclusion from many aspects of social life because she had no brothers. It hardened her and made her determined not to suffer as her mother had. I think your grandmother looks at her sons and grandsons as a kind of insurance and she is inclined to take a very conservative attitude toward your brothers by pampering them as she saw other boys being pampered in her childhood. You know that our people say we should love our sons because they are the ones who look after us in our old age” (250). In another instance, Bano tells of Vimenuo’s father, “he was angry his wife has given birth only to daughters. He wanted a boy to carry on his name” (ATM 24) The Grandmother sums up this patriarchal stipulation in saying, “The household that did not have a male heir was considered as barren.” (ATM 35). In *A Terrible Matriarchy*, extremity at preferring sons finds bold expression when the Grandmother goes to extreme level of bribing Leto simply to get his attention. The same nuance of extremity is thrown in the wishful comment of Lieno, “how I so wished I were a boy for then.” (Kire 15). The same preferential status of women is pronounced in lines like, “Bano said that he was angry his wife had given birth only to daughters. He wanted a boy to carry on his name.” (Kire 25) Lieno’s quandary over her humiliation

of being rejected repeatedly simply because she is female reverberates when she would question the question of many a girl, “Was she angry with you for giving birth to a girl?” Lieno confesses, “You say that Grandmother loved me but I know that she held it against me that I was a girl and not a boy. I used to feel I was being punished for being born a girl. For many years, I hated it so much I wished that I was not a girl.” In an e-mail interview with A.J Sebastian, the fictionist says that “the little girl is a combination of many little girls. Some girl readers have told me, ‘I am that little girl, I was mistreated because I was a girl’ some girl-children have suffered more abuse than this one in the story.”(Sebastian 149).

In *A Naga Village Remembered*, we are given a glimpse into Levi’s thoughts after he was approached for marriage by his aunt. Levi lay awake pondering over and “the idea of becoming a householder suddenly seemed attractive to him. To be a title –taker like his father and have many sons to carry his name- surely that was not an unworthy thing to be?” (ANVR 47). Pelhuvino’s response to Levi about their second impending child too celebrates the birth of sons. She tells, “he kicked me hard.” “He? he?” Levi was amused, “how are you so sure it will be a boy again?” “well” replied his wife “are you not a warrior? And destined to be the father of many sons?” (ANVR 59).

In *Life on Hold* the preferring demarcation is drawn when Abeiu nonchalantly and unmistakably displayed his preference for the son over the daughter. The author accounts, “Abeiu was pleased that it was a son. He spent a lot more time in the hospital than he had done at Vinuo’s (the daughter) birth.”(Kire 86). “She (Vinuo) in turn loved school, for it was here that she found the attention she missed at home. Her

father barely glanced at her school work. However, if Zotuo (the son) showed him a drawing he had made, Abeiu would be very interested and praise the boy.”(LOH 95) “She wished Abeiu would not exclude their daughter so obviously. The girl had grown up with a distant father so it probably did not seem strange to her. But when he showed so much affection toward his son, Nime felt a stab of pain in her heart for her daughter.” (ibid 96). The painful stab that Nime, the mother felt towards her daughter is really the pain of every mother who would hopelessly watch their daughters treated as a lesser being at the hands of their own father by virtue that it is the naturalized accepted norm of life under the patriarchal ways of a society. The preference for sons rings sharply in the line, “She had also given birth to a daughter and would soon get pregnant again with perhaps a much desired son.” (LOH 76) The above analysis strongly establishes the stereotyped attitude in identifying men as invariably higher and above women consequential to the preference of sons over daughters.

### 3.5. Decision Making

In the realm of polity, Nagas subscribes to customary laws which form the very foundational core to its governance system. Customary laws are embedded in the culture and values of a community or society; they govern acceptable standards of behavior and are actively enforced by members of the community. It governs a persons’ marriage, divorce, inheritance, child custody etc.” (Singh 17). Governance is strictly male prerogative and under no circumstances a woman is allowed to be a part of public or decision making forums. Nagaland by virtue of it being a traditional patriarchal society, the tribal villages has continued to hold these cultural customary

practices in the regulation of their political as well as social life, in the premise of which women are relegated to non-status entity. Patriarchy has been used critically to explain the main components of authority and power in any social system which automatically privileges men over women such that women have little or no claims to material or intellectual resources of the society. Women thus are found on inferior grounds solely based on reason that she is a woman making her suffer disqualification from decision making institutions where decisions about the community's welfare are determined.

Polarization of Gender space in both public- private sphere of decision making finds lucid representation in *A Naga Village Remembered*. On an evening, out of curiosity of the confidential whispers making rounds amongst the village men, Kovi's wife asked, "Doniu came by last evening to ask for you. Is something up?.... "Its man-talk. Don't ask after the business of the clan" was his short reply. His wife knew better than to ask further. Many men never told their wives about the meetings of the clan and the women could only guess at what went on in the highly secretive all – men meets that infrequently took place. But they knew that it was about grave matters." (ANVR 2). In another section of the same novel, Kire describes precisely the nature of patriarchy that suffuse traditional public sphere for the men. *Thehou* (male meeting place) in its exclusivity debars women from its vicinity as well as male dormitories. She describes as thus, "Talk at the *thehou* (community house) often centered round what was called man's talk. No women were allowed to come to the *thehou* or enter the male dormitories. Reminiscing about hunts and battles in the past made the *thehou* a place where any youth with a man's heart inside him linger or add his stories as well. But if the elders were there, the younger men listened closely

without speaking much....it was good to be called *a thehou no* , a child of the thehou- it meant that such a person was well versed in the stories and customs of the village.” ( ANVR 6). Temsula Ao who belongs to Ao naga tribe speaks of the same reverence to the male in decision making in *On being a Naga*. She wrote, “Such male attitudes hark back to the culture of a distant past where Naga polity evolved on the principle of exclusion of women from all seats of governance.” (OBAN 47).

The sanctity of man’s valued space in decision making is heightened with the de- franchising of women not only in decision making bodies but are also debarred from knowledge of certain deliberations. Kire intrepidly discloses this attitude in *A Naga Village Remembered* in that where she wrote, “Something was brewing in the clan again. There was such movement of the men by night that the women knew they were hatching some plan which they did not want their women to find out. Must be another raid, said the women to one another at the water spot. Mine hasn’t said a word but he’s always at the *thehou* and he has taken to sleeping in the dormitory a lot these days, said another. The women knew better than to ask after men’s business. No self-respecting man ever revealed the talk of the *thehou* to their wives.”(ANVR 34).

Customarily, the position of village priest and village chief are occupied by the man only. Even in the event of sacred festival rituals, it is considered taboo for women to be in its precincts. Every position of importance is always the man’s privilege. Performance of rituals for any important event is carried out by the man in contrast to the non-status of women in public sphere which is seen through the eyes of Piano. As a child, she hidingly witnessed the ritual during *Terhase* carried out by male prorogated clan priests.



Naga society in its truest traditional state exuberate the same expectancy of decision making upon men in public sphere even in the private spheres of domestic decisions too. Anything but decisions even in the home front never rest on the women. The much awed ‘final word’ of the man on decisions defines the voiceless woman in all facets of life. A glimpse of this is given in *A Village Remembered* when Peno gladly relinquishes responsibilities to Levi as soon as he crosses over boyhood to the ability of shouldering a man’s sanctioned responsibilities. When Levi turned sixteen, which in the natural sense is the most vacillating teen age, his mother Peno “relinquished her role and authority to Levi. She never made a decision for the household without consulting him. This field, that plot of land, that boundary dispute with their neighbors- these were the things on which she would say with a note of pride in her voice “ You had better consult Levi-he’s the man of the house now.” (AVR 89) In another instance Piano tells her son, “Alevi, I am proud of you, of the way you are learning to become a responsible householder, aware of your social obligations as an eldest son should be.” (ibid 56).

### 3.6. Gender Disparity in Education

Nagaland was in its primitive state until about the year 1871 when the American Christian missionaries ventured into the savage headhunting land of the Nagas. The advent of the missionaries soon became a redemptive boon to the savage state of living. They began to establish formal educational set ups in the state thereby enabling the Nagas to come in contact with civilization in terms of literacy and

improved ways of living. Up to such times, the Nagas were solely engaged in agro based activities and hunting for their survival. In regard to gender practices against these educational opportunities, the spontaneous predilection waved towards the sons. The earliest seeds of gender inequality in the arena of education which rippled into other social factors are traced back to such times. Easterine Kire gives a fictional representation to this reality faced by the Naga society and in so doing; she presents a suggestive overtone that education is key to bring about a gender just society.

*A Terrible Matriarchy* is a fine allegorical representation to this factual strategic status of women as the subaltern. The fictionist presents in her style of subtlety yet she makes it crystal clear through her characters in this narrative pinning on the demarcated gender space of the two sexes ranging from such issues as sharing of food, longing for attention and love, to education, to naming etc. In the novel the readers are made to see the extensive chasm between girls and boys: whereas women have to struggle and fight for basic rights like education or in making choices regarding marriage and other aspects of life, these opportunities are presented on a platter to the men. Nature would have it that with the auspicious birth of a son comes along all opportunities too. In a fascinating stance to shore-up educational opportunities for both girls and boys, Easterine presents a blend of tradition with modernity as is palpably presented through deliberations between her characters. The grandmother in *A Terrible Matriarchy* is represented as a fierce and undaunted custodian of the ancestral customary practices and mindset. In the following several opinionated lines quoted by the grandmother, one is informed of how the custodians of the traditional Nagan mindset alike the grandmother continue to resist educating girls drenched in the belief of the futility of education for girls. The following

statements of the Grandmother bear witness to this: she says, “: “Men hesitate to court a woman who has too much education” (ATM 97), “I really don’t know what your generation sees in school. Your children are not taught the skills of life because they are too busy studying. I was doing such a good job of teaching the girl to work about the house”(ATM 35). ) “In our day, girls did not go to school..... I really do not approve of girls getting educated. It only makes them get fancy notions about themselves and they forget their place in the society” (ibid 22). The tussle between tradition and modernity comes alive in these words spoken again by the grandmother on the event of Leto’s( grandmother’s grandson) marriage proposal to Vimenuo, whose family is never liked by her, says , “This is what happens when people get it into their heads to educate young girls....But it is all these modern ideas to blame. Educating girls indeed! Education can’t rid you of bad blood I say!” ( ATM 193). In a voice of dissent against this patriarchal cultural mindset on the issue of education, Easterine Kire herself voices out as that, “The education of girls was not prioritized. If the family was poor, only the boys were sent to school.” (Kire 3 ) And obviously the girls are kept for help in domestic chores or field works.

The preferential status readily accorded to male members percolates to the modern day. A situation of privileged option would without a thought slant towards male members. Along the same line Temsula Ao in *On Being a Naga* points out that, “For centuries Naga society existed on the strength of male superiority and male prerogatives. When book-learning became an option, it was the male child who got the first opportunity, and if, in a family, a female child was allowed to go to school it was only to study up to the stage where she could read the Bible and song sheet. That was considered ‘enough’ for a female.” (Ao 46). A truthful conclusive wrap up of this

attitude then is projected when Ao went on to assert that, “The girls had to stay back to help the parents in farm work in order to support the brothers studying in towns. It was never considered a ‘sacrifice’ but the ‘duty’ of girls to do so, even if they happened to be better students. Merit was never the decider, being male was. The changes taking place in rural societies in term of book learning were also practiced on the age-old pattern: advantage to the male.” (OBAN 47).

From the entrenchment of the traditional viewpoint, Easterine Kire guides the readers along a societal transition inclined to modernity and progression and the gradual attitudinal alteration towards even the girl’s rights to education well portrayed in the character of Dielieno. Dielieno’s passage to emancipation and discovery of self-individuality from the initial harsh struggle to survive resistance to availing even basic school education stands paramount in representing the present status of the quintessential Naga women.

Easterine Kire fabricates together the theme of education with discovery of independent separate gender identity with dexterous mastery. The society in *A Terrible Matriarchy* is presented as one making a transition from a traditional society to a modern society. At a closer look, the story line covers five generations from the Grandmother’s parents to her great grandson. In the spirit of understanding that traditions are dynamic and are constantly evolving to suit changing situations, Easterine presents an impasse between the stringent patriarchal tenets as against an attitudinal change towards a progressive society. The evidence that the continuity of the traditional Patriarchal beliefs in its pristine form is no longer endorsed is seen in the breakthrough for Dielieno’s education. In the impasse between Lieno’s parents

and the Grandmother concerning sending Lieno to school, it is significant to note that it was Lieno's mother who first broached the topic to Grandmother who otherwise has been subjugated by the older woman all through the novel. In the author's own words, "The society in *A Terrible Matriarchy* is one making a transition from an agricultural society to a modern society. None of the characters work in the fields. They either go to work in an office or go to school. Mother and Grandmother stay at home. Yet the food habits of an agricultural society are still very much ingrained in them." (Kire 4). The character conflict between Dielieno and the Grandmother can be taken as a symbolical representation of the resistance to the stringent patriarchal stipulations. The tension between this two conspicuously underscore the gradual social transition with Lieno emerging as a strong headed educated woman from the grasp of the all-in-all authority of the traditional figure –the Grandmother. The progressive effects of education is seen in the other fictional narratives as well where education became available even to the daughters without a question or resistance. The incongruity is in the consideration whether education had really liberated women from the grips of patriarchal system. Monalisa Changkija in *Cogitating for a Better Deal* writes about the transformative impact of education on the status women as thus, "However educated, exposed and enlightened, Naga men and Naga women have not abandoned our patriarchal core. Now, as of as Naga women are concerned, this means that they have to meet the demands and dictates of both traditional Naga society as well as that of the modern market. The load on the back of the Naga woman is doubled as today the Naga married woman has to not only meet the demands of the family/home, as a wife and mother, but also the dictates and obligations of her responsibilities as a daughter, daughter-in-law, sister, sister-in-law etc., and at the same time the demands and dictates of her job/career/profession..... Education and academic qualifications,

acquiring expertise, skills, in whatever field, and honing them provides a woman a level playing field in the market and to some extent at home but not actually empower her as a person, not when she is confined to the rules of a patriarchal value-system and must abide by them, as also operate within them.” (Changkija 81). Easterine Kire through her fictional works thus presents an impasse between change and continuity in a woman’s life, moving on with the progression of the society yet defined stringently under the clutches of Patriarchal Societal system.

### 3.7. Internalization of Cultural Practices

An inimitable feature of Kire’s *A Terrible Matriarchy* is the representation of the internalization of social and cultural stipulations by women themselves. Kire eloquently fictionalizes this fact as a key theme in her novel and hence the derivative of the title ‘A Terrible Matriarchy’. Right from the opening of the novel one could sense the tight hands of this terrible matriarchy in the character of the Grandmother. Kire forms a crescendo in approaching this theme. She starts with minutest detail of apportioning meat between the girl and boys and then she went on to write on more serious matters like education and Inheritance rights etc. The opening lines of the novel, *The Terrible Matriarchy* immediately sets the tone of internalization presented in a conversation between the Grandmother and her niece, Dielieno, over apportioning of food (meat). The author straightforward yet in her quiet way depicts a picture of a society wherein ‘most preferences’ are considered man’s prerogative and the women takes the onus to perpetuate it to posterity. The ‘chicken leg’ which is

considered the ‘best portion’ according to the grandmother is, “always for boys. Girls must eat the other portions”. Millet’s work, *Sexual Politics*, announces this view of ‘patriarchy’, which she sees as pervasive and which demands a systematic overview – as a political institution. “Patriarchy subordinates the female to the male or treats the female as an inferior male, and this power is exerted, directly or indirectly, in civil and domestic life to constrain women. Millet borrows from social science the important distinction between ‘sex’ and ‘gender’, where sex is determined biologically but gender is a psychological concept which refers to culturally acquired sexual identity, and she and other feminists have attacked social scientists who treat the culturally learned ‘female’ characteristics (passivity etc.) as ‘natural’. She recognizes that women as much as men perpetrate these attitudes, and the acting-out of these sex-roles in the unequal and repressive relations of domination and subordination is what Millet calls ‘sexual politics’.”(Selden 122) Women themselves are taught, in the process of being socialized, to internalize the reigning patriarchal ideology (that is, the conscious and unconscious presuppositions about male superiority), and so are conditioned to derogate their own sex and to co-operate in their own subordination.(Abrams 122).

In *A Terrible Matriarchy*, the character of the Grandmother, the matriarch of the family, Patriarchy is internalized. The Grandmother is delineated to be an epitomic stature of being an unsympathetic, unyielding, tyrannical and cruel custodian of traditional social and cultural ethics of life. She is depicted to have strongly internalized this classic attitudinal psyche through the society itself but also through her personal experiences at the hands of vindictive patriarchal customary stipulations.

It was the social norms and values that molded Grandmother into a typical model of patriarchal machination as Dielieno's mother explains, "Your Grandmother was the eldest of three children. She grew up in the village and moved to the town only when she married. When she was young she lived through a very hard age. In the village, widows without sons lost their entire husband's property to other male relatives. So she understood that it was very important for a married woman to produce as many male offspring as she could. Her mother did not have brothers and they lost all their lands and fields when her father died. I think she said that her grandfather had given them a small field to cultivate as long as he was alive. But people were unkind and mocked those who could not produce male children.....They (women) would devote the rest of their lives to trying to produce a male heir."(ATM 250). The rigid and cruel reign of the Grandmother is also a way purgation or unleashing of vengeance for the wrongs suffered at the hands of patriarchal norms and at the same time subjecting patriarchy as a tool of advantage, "Please do not hate her, you are wise enough to understand that she is the way she is because she did not want to suffer as her mother had."(ATM 251) Grandmother saw her own mother suffer hardship and poverty and exclusion from many aspects of social life because she had no brothers. It hardened her and made her determined not to suffer as her mother had. The Grandmother, because of her past experience, "had grown up to believe that girls were weak and not as good as boys", "She will always think women have to be dependent on men. That was the way it was when she was young. It is difficult to unlearn things taught to you in childhood" (ATM 251).

Consequently, it was the manifestation of these experiences which perchance had a deep psychological bearing on the grandmother. Ironically, the Grandmother



wearing the mask of an authoritative matriarch actually becomes a fierce custodian and perpetrator of patriarchal order. In her character emerges a convergence between matriarchal power and patriarchal domination. It is by virtue of her absolute authoritative 'iron hand' regulations; she actually becomes an oppressor who perpetuates the domestication and suppression of women shielding the ideology of patriarchal stipulated Gender Discrimination.

### 3.8. Gender Role

Another striking characteristic of Kire's works is the representation of Gender Stereotyping through the lens of Gender role and Gender Identity in the light of patriarchy. Feminist dictionary captures the essence of gender role along the lines of the doctrine of 'separate spheres' and explicates it as follows, "Gender roles are specific activities or behavior norms that are gendered for males or females. Gender roles can be very problematic because it requires people to conform into their roles in order to not be seen as an outcast. Gender roles are sprung on children from the start. If you are a girl, you should want to help your mother in the kitchen and play with dolls. If you are a boy you are encouraged to go play outside, play with tool and toy guns. Boys are to show more aggression and be more self dependent. Then as people get older they are still required to fit in these certain gender roles. Women are to have children, should cook, clean and take care of the children. Men are required to make the money and to do outside chores." ( [afeministdictionary.wordpress.com](http://afeministdictionary.wordpress.com)). Thus, such ingrained patriarchal acceptance of gender roles which gets involuntarily saturated in the psyche of people to don the socio-cultural accepted and expected role of femininity and masculinity gets a fine symbolical expression when Leno in *A*

*Terrible Matriarchy* speaks of a day's activity in school as , "the two boys drew pictures of trees and cars and Vimenuo and I both drew flower."(ATM 29 ) In *Life on Hold* too this role division is symbolically represented when Nime's school arranged an Easter camp and the teachers made the children make their camp first. A sample of a mini patriarchal world is given a glimpse of, in this instance of the natural division of work between the girl and boy students. "The girls fetched firewood and water while the boys helped their teachers set up five shelters.....the two female teachers and the girls had managed to cook a hot meal."(LOH 16).

The natural orientation in thinking and living their assigned gender roles is explicitly expressed in the novels under study. Throughout the narratives a clear segregation of gender role is depicted wherein we see both men and women unquestionably and contentedly carry out these preordained roles.

Easterine Kire seem to concede to Judith Butler's ideas on gender role separation elucidated in *Gender Trouble* where a central concept of the theory is that one's gender is constructed through one's own repetitive performance of gender. According to Judith Butler in *Gender Trouble* , gender is , " stylized repetition of acts.....which are internally discontinuous...[so that] the appearance of substance is precisely that, a constructed identity, a performative accomplishment which the mundane social audience, including the actors themselves, come to believe and to perform in the mode of belief." (artsites.ucsc.edu). This concept of performative theory is further explained as "gender Trouble: feminism and the Subversion of Identity (1990), described the categories of gender and of sexuality as performative, in the sense that the features which a cultural discourse institutes as masculine or feminine, heterosexual or homosexual, the discourse also makes happen, by

establishing an identity that the socialized individual assimilates and the patterns of behavior that he or she proceeds to enact.”(Abrams& Harpham 328).

In *A Terrible Matriarchy* Easterine typify the attitude towards ‘women’ as the ‘other’ where the identity of the woman dissolves into nonentity through Bano who says, “girl-children are never considered real members of the family. Their mission in life is to marry and have children and be able to cook and weave cloths and look after the household. If they got married, they would always be known as somebody’s wife or somebody’s mother and never somebody’s daughter. That way they could not carry on their father’s name” (ATM25). Continuing the demarcation between feminine and masculine roles finds lucid expression in the Grandmother’s words, “We (girls) stayed at home and learned the housework. Then we went to the fields and learned all the fieldworks as well. That way one has no problem with girl-children”. (ATM 22) In one occasion, reprimanding Nino for sending her sons to fetch water, the Grandmother said, “Send the girl next time that is girls’ work. No man in my day has ever fetched water. The girl must start working at home. Don’t let her run about with her brothers anymore. That is not the way to bring up girl-children” (ATM 4). The distinction of gender roles is round up, when in another instance the Grandmother said of her grandsons, “They are boys. Boys will be boys. They will be alright. They should be taught to be manly. In my father’s day, boys never did any work because they had to look after the village and engage enemy warriors in warfare. ....that is why we love our male children so much and we give them the best of food. And we should.” (ATM 35). The reality of imbibing gender roles instinctively is seen in Deilieno too in the moment when her mother comments on her effortlessly tackling domestic chores at a nascent age, “, “I am sometimes

very surprised at your strength, Lieno. The way you took over the household when Pete died. You were just eleven and a half then and yet you took over my role in our family so naturally”. (ATM 251).

The same is pertinently expressed in *A Naga Village Remembered*, “Birthing was a women’s business.”(ANVR 5) Nime in *Life on Hold* renders a bleak sense of hopeless submission in her role as a woman when she says, “He is a hard man to live with but that is my lot in life: to bear his children and endure the harshness of the things he says.” (LOH 81 ) “Nime’s mother did the work. Like many women of her age, she stayed home and did the housework and looked after her children. They used to manage to live on what her husband earned.” (LOH 11 ) The same role of women who is apportioned the domestic familial chores again is seen in *A Naga Village Remembered* when of Kovi’s wife, it is written, “She had been a good woman, keeping herself to her hearth and caring for her husband and children.”(ANVR 8-9).

The normal occupation of the women is seen in lines like, “I have to get back home and cook before your father comes.” (ATM 6), “The women would set out before dawn to fetch firewood” (ANVR 1), “The girl must start working at home.” (ATM 4).A perfect dichotomy of the traditional public -private sphere is also seen in the line, “They (women) continued their weaving, confident that their men would protect them.” (ANVR 3). The chivalry of the man as against the gentle nature of women brings about the truthful picture of the polarization between masculinity and femininity. Easterine Kire through her characters portrays the space of women is a patriarchal set up where women are assigned to perform within the four walls of her house and are seen as ‘child bearers’ ‘care givers’ ‘cooks’ putting everyone’s welfare

above her own which is echoed in Peno's response to Levi, "I will(eat and rest), after everybody's eaten." (ANVR93).

This perceived accepted difference in gender role reflects the doctrine of separate spheres, an ideology of gender. In *The Sociology of Gender*, Kramer says "...this doctrine stated that males and females should dominate in different kinds of social activities because of purportedly essential differences in their biological and psychological nature.....the belief in separate spheres justified relegating women to the home and assigning men to economic work outside it. At the same time, it preserved men's authority in the family, despite the physical segregation of the sexes." (Kramer 29). Dielieno carried the onus of this highly expected female role when she was sent to the grandmother's house, so that she would be domesticated under strict supervision of the Grandmother.

'The patriarchal system provides self – definitions and norms for women. These social norms restrict the social roles of women as mothers and wives. The patriarchal system also amply rewards all those women who learn to passively accept their defined roles. Both wifeness and motherhood become glorified in the patriarchal system. These roles are granted social sanctions and at the same time are also eulogized in local folk lore, in literature, and religion so that women do actively engage themselves in playing their social roles and thus themselves contribute and perpetuate the patriarchal social order'. ("Basic concepts: sex and gender, masculinity and femininity, patriarchy" <http://archive.mu.ac.in/myweb.....>) Therefore, the societal credence of women takes birth from this engendered role division. The attitudinal worth towards a woman is gauged on the scale of how well she carries out household

or domestic chores. Consequent upon this expectation, the feminine disposition of the female members qualifies them to be called *good women* or *Ideal Girl*. Dielieno, the protagonist in *A Terrible Matriarchy* was sent to her Grandmother's house with the intent to churn out and instill feminine disposition in Lieno through the grandmother's imposition of patriarchal expectations on women. When Lieno's mother married into the grandmother's household, she recalls how apprehensive she was of the grandmother because, "Grandmother would not think her eldest son had married a woman who was good only for decorating the room..... eventually she won Grandmother's approval because she was such a good worker". (Kire169).

Precisely then, gender roles in Kire's novels are demarcated along the existentialist ideology where the women's roles are embedded on or is deemed synonymous with domestic, familial and conjugal roles sanctioned by patriarchal creed and the man are seen as manly, guardians of their village, women and children and as warriors. Women are irreversibly allocated to lesser honored roles deemed as secondary citizenry.

### 3.9. Gender Identity

Women are described by Kire in her novel *A terrible Matriarchy* as somebody's wife or somebody's mother and never a person in her individual entity. As sanctioned by socially and culturally constructed gender roles, both men and women adapt as well as adopts their identity gyratory to their specific gender roles. The identity of women as portrayed by Kire rests on their familial domestic and

conjugal roles whereas man's identity is demarcated to public spheres. The woman to a man is deemed 'good' when she is mild, meek, soft spoken and obedient. Dielieno's mother presents the ideal woman image as she advises her daughter thusly, "men don't like women who are aggressive and outspoken. They like wives to be good workers. You are a good worker, Lieno, but you must try to be more docile." (ATM 249).

Women's identity is engrafted with domestic, familial and conjugal roles. Etched in Kovi's musing the typical sanctioned identity of women is described in *A Naga Village Remembered*, "Kovi habitually rose early. Even then, as he walked outside in the morning he saw the women returning in small groups with their carrying baskets stacked with firewood. His heart warmed at the sight, Ah, the old ways are good, he thought, our women do us proud when they show themselves so eager to keep the teaching of their fathers. The women would set out before dawn to fetch firewood for the day. But if they already had firewood for their households, they could be seen fetching water in their water carriers. Smoke curling up from the houses hugging the slopes and the still dark house in the valley signaled that the cooking of the morning meal was in progress." (ANVR 1). In *A Terrible Matriarchy* Dielieno's mother's identity too is built around domesticity. Dielieno tells of her mother as, "Mother worked very hard to make the small four- roomed house look nice. She planted flowers in boxes in front of the house. But it was hard to keep it tidy with the boys always littering the porch with their toys and books. Father did not help much. He would expect mother to clean the house and wash all the clothes and have cooked food ready when he got home." (ATM 47).

Low attitudinal concept of women is a driven impact of the patriarchal system. Women are relegated to a status of a lower human being as the normal and accepted way of life to such an extent that woman themselves concur to their position and identity and are harmonized into the very functioning of patriarchal stipulated dichotomy of gender identity. The demeaning view on a woman's very being in terms of their physical strength in being weaker to man is used as a catchphrase to describe man's weakness. The word *Thenumia* in tenyidie means 'woman'. *Thenumia* here is derogatorily used in opposition to man's honour and bravery, "But it was a matter of honour. A man is not a man if you let another man kill your kin and torch your houses and you do nothing about it. We have a name for such men – Thenumia!" (ANVR 7). On the other hand a man's worth is proven in consonance with his warrior skills, physical strength, hunting skills etc. And for man, the fear of being referred to as a *Thenumia* "drives a man to battle, the need to prove himself worthy of defending his village and his women folk, and to earn ornaments of war." (ANVR 7).

This demeaning attitude is factually mirrored through the Grandmother in *A Terrible Matriarchy*. The Grandmother is adamant to call Lieno by her name but rather refer to her with the pronoun "her" or "the girl" as opposed to calling her brothers in all endearment significantly displaying the female existence to be secondary and shadowy to that of man. This demeaning attitude also is found in yet another derogatory statement made by Levi accusing his wife for their son Sato's gentle ways, saying, "You've made a girl of him, you've coddled him so." (ANVR 97).



Silence is made synonymous with a women's identity. Silence is considered a virtue, irrespective of her situation and circumstances. On several occasions 'Silence' is portrayed as woman's only protective armor. A close reading of the novels establishes that many innocent women suffer in silence at the hands of man and societal judgments. Peno faces a desperate plight in *A Naga Village Remembered* which is described as, "Peno did not know what could cause her husband to go into a rage. Some days he would be angered by her cooking and throw his plate away angrily. On another day it could be Roko's shoddy work on his *dao* and his wife quietly bore the brunt of the anger he bore against his sons." (ANVR 107). Women sadly is helplessly bonded into such predicaments only to find release from it only in the event of the husband's death. The subordinated but expected faithfulness on the part of the women even after the husbands' death is seen when Peno confesses her heart to her son Sato thusly, "I can tell you alone that I feel a treacherous sense of liberation after his (her husband Levi) death, a release from the constant tension of living with the man he had become. But how can I say such things, my son? Is it not so wrong? So disloyal?" (ANVR 117). In *Life on Hold*, Nime too finds herself in the same hopeless state as that of Peno. Confessing her plight in an unhappy married life, Nime shares to her brother that, "he (Zeu, her husband) is a hard man to live with but that is my lot in life: to bear his children and endure the harshness of the things he says. If he is too cruel, I block out his words in my head. I make myself stop hearing him." (LOH 81). The silenced voices of women and their hopeless plight get a sharp summation in Nime's reaction to her husband's berating verbal abuse. In a resigned tone, she confesses that she could do, "Nothing, Nothing at all. I have seen him in his rages and its not something I want directed at me again." (LOH 81).

The Grandmother in *A Terrible Matriarchy* dichotomizes the identity of the two sexes even in the naming process. On closer reading, the meanings of names display the typical traditional and patriarchal stipulated gender Identity and roles, where in there exist a consensual gender role playing and accepted gender identity, where women internalize and carry out their role as subordinated to men. The name *Dielieno* itself spells strict gender stereotyping attached to gendered identity; the name means *Errand Girl* portraying the designated role of women in donning the domestic mantle. A typical day in Lieno's life before her schooling begun was to get up very early in the morning, make fire, fetch water from the water spot, clean the house, tend to the chickens, help in cooking, attend to the Grandmothers' needs etc. all household drudgeries. It is the Grandmother who had named Dielieno thus, but instead calls after her as 'The Girl' in a tone of demeaning antipathy. In contrast to the name 'Dielieno', Grandmother had for instance, named her grandson '*Vinilhoulie*' which means '*to live a good, happy and prosperous life*' and she would in all endearment call after him as 'Vini' to the extent that even after Vini passed away, she continued to call great grandson Salhou as Vini, of which she would say, "it is a good name. I am happy he has a son to inherit his name and his house." (ATM 237).

### 3.10. Conclusion

The foregoing consideration of Gender discrimination in the context of Patriarchy pertinently presents the fictionists' aspiration to address feminists concerns. In a review of the novel *A Terrible Matriarchy* Sushmita Kashyap accurately captures the essence of Kire's narratives. Kashyap writes, "The subtle but

principle theme of the book, however, is about being a woman in a society steeped in customary laws that provide only token gestures to the rights and desires of woman..... The gender divide and the rights of men as opposed to women run throughout the novel....Easterine Kire displays deep insight and writes from the perspective of one situated in the patriarchal world of the Tenyimia society but who has also been exposed to the larger worlds outside – both of which serve to influence her profoundly.”(ATM 309-310). Easterine Kire through her novels responded to gender issues depicting the angst of women as against the milieu of a strong patriarchal society. She poignantly captures the collusion of the dominating order of Patriarchy which subjugates women and registers a protest to this system through her female characters. As Sylvia Walby in *Theorizing Patriarchy* opines, “Radical feminism is distinguished by its analysis of gender inequalities which men as a group dominates women as a group and are the beneficiaries of the subordination of women.” (Walby 3). Patriarchal hegemony becomes a major concern and Kire’s feminine consciousness comes alive in her address to this issue through the fine depiction of social situations and characters which were set against the strong social forces of gender discrimination exacerbating the constraining effect of social, physical and emotional imprisonment. The fictionists become the representative voice of the so called weaker section of the society.

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## CHAPTER – IV

### GAINSAYING GENDER STEREOTYPING IN SELECT SHORT STORIES OF TEMSULA AO AND NINI LUNGALANG

#### 4.1. Introduction

Rendering a revolt against austere socio-cultural construct of gender spheres, the writers Temsula Ao and Nini Lungalang through the art of short stories register their feminists concerns towards women's lock away to lower rung specificities of duty, role and status at all realms of being. The social political turmoil of Indo-Naga struggle commonly forms the background of their stories. Whereas both the writers overtly talks about the warring effects of this struggle on the Naga nation and the helplessness of a society caught in the throes of unrest, conversely, their approach to gainsaying Gender Stereotyping is two pronged; while Temsula Ao explicitly portrays her challenge to gender stereotyping, Nini Lungalang is transeunt in addressing the same issue.

“The word “stereotype” itself comes from the conjunction of two Greek words: *stereos*, meaning “solid,” and *typos*, meaning “the mark of a blow,” or more generally “a model.” Stereotypes thus ought to refer to solid models, and indeed the initial meaning of the term in English referred to a metal plate used to print pages. As

Miller (1982) points out, such a term is likely to give rise to at least two connotations: rigidity and duplication or sameness. When applied to people, then stereotypes are rigid, and they stamp all to whom they apply to with the same characteristics. It should be noted that the actual term was used as early as 1824 (Gordon, 1962, Rudmin, 1989) to refer to formalized behavior, and by the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century it was regularly used to refer to rigid, repetitive, often rhythmic behavior patterns (Schroeder, 1970). But the most familiar use of the term refers to characteristics that we apply to others on the basis of their national, ethnic, or gender groups.” (Schneider 8).

Gender stereotyping traces its dogmatic roots from the ideas of essentialism on gender. As per biological differences which is considered as a work of destiny, essentialist suggest that femininity and masculinity display typical characters specific to its gender exacting into particular patterns of thought, feeling and behavior. “Essentialism sees men as able to think logically, abstractly and analytically, while women are mainly emotional, compassionate and nurturing creatures. Essentialist thinking had repercussions on women’s private and public lives. In private, essentialist ideas were translated into rules of conduct for the woman as a wife, mother and daughter. In public, it was believed that women’s participation should be limited and strictly controlled by a masculine representative of authority such as husband, father, the clergy, the law.” (Jenainiti & Groves 6). The year 1922 saw the introduction of the concept of stereotype when it was used to describe the ‘typical picture’ that comes to mind when thinking about a particular social group by social scientist and distinguished journalist Lippmann in his book *Public Opinion*. (Schneider 8). As a typical picture about a social group, a stereotype may be negative or positive,

accurate or inaccurate, justified or unjustified. It is, though, the negative, the inaccurate, and the justified stereotypes that cause us most concern. Therefore, an adequate understanding of a stereotype must include the idea that stereotypes are not only contained within an individual's mind, but also exist at a collective level. "This shared element of the content of stereotypes makes it possible to identify some easily recognized gender stereotypes. For example, that woman is emotional and unpredictable, is bad drivers or that men are rational and instrumental, bad at housework and like sport. With these in mind, a gender stereotype can be defined as a standardized and often pejorative idea or image held about an individual on the basis of their gender" ( Pilcher & Whelehan 167). Gender Socialization is primary in the derivation age of gender stereotyping. Gender Socialization corroborates with the famous statement of Simone De Beauvoir that, "one is not born, but rather becomes a woman.....it is civilization as a whole that elaborates this intermediary product between the male and the eunuch that is called feminine."(Borde & Malovany-Chevallier 294). Haslanger in *Ontology and Social Construction* says "One way to interpret Beauvoir's claim that one is not born but rather becomes a woman is to take it as a claim about gender socialization: females become women through a process whereby they acquire feminine traits and learn feminine behavior. Masculinity and femininity are thought to be products of nurture or how individuals are brought up. They are *causally constructed* social forces either have a causal role in bringing gendered individuals into existence or (to some substantial sense) shape the way we are *qua* women and men. And the mechanism of construction is social learning. (Haslanger 98). This echoes the belief of radical feminists who "deny the existence of any sexual nature of human beings. They believe that the difference (gender) arises from the different social formations of men and women." (Bhagwat 172). And this



indicates that “something is gendered “when it is, in and of itself, actively engaged in social processes that produce and reproduce distinctions between women and men.” (Pilcher & Whelehan 59). Kate Millet too argues that, “sexual politics obtains consent through a socialization of both sexes to basic patriarchal values , norms and rules with regard to (1) temperament, (2) role, and (3) status.“ (Bhagwat 183) In this sense, then, “‘Gendering’ and ‘gendered’ are concepts which ‘signify outcomes that are socially constructed and give males advantages over females. They describe the production of assumptions about gender as well as the institutions that are shaped by those assumptions.” (Reskin and Padavic 6).

#### 4.2. Gendered Lived Experiences of the Authors

Both Temsula and Nini’s personas were atypical of the ‘Angel in the House’ Image. Most uniquely, a peep into their personal lives, one discovers astonishingly similar character traits. However, in juxtaposing their familial background, visible is the wide divergent yarns of upbringing, who are nonetheless born and brought up and influenced by the selfsame socio-cultural mechanism of patriarchal system.

Treading further into the author’s lives, one cannot help but draw a supposition which renders a psychoanalytic strain to the writer’s candid tackle of Gender Stereotyping through their female characters. All through their life, both the writers since their childhood never subscribed to the typical division of gender role even though they could never really escape the virilities of the patriarchal society. Therefore creating an impression of their personal resistance to the mechanism of

patriarchal mindset, a shadow of their individuality seems to have been engrafted into their heroines. Through a number of female characters in the short stories they offer a respite to the stringent feminine social etiquettes and mores faithfully donned according to the expectations of the patriarchal social order.

The lives of the authors read adjacently portray a picture as diverse as could be except for the common injections of their socio cultural milieu. Vicissitudes of life was far from kind to Tamsula until she created a niche for herself through formal education as she records in a memoir *Once Upon a Life*. Whereas Nini had a comfortable life coming from an affluent family with parents who are well educated, her mother as the first Naga woman Bachelor of Arts Degree holder and her father an IPS officer. Tamsula tasted life at its wretched worse when she lost both her parents and was left an orphan at a tender age- while she was still in primary school; at such a tender age, the journey to fend life for herself begun in a world of man. In the preface to *Once upon a Life*, she writes, “It was as if I was a stray who needed to be rescued and tethered to a responsible post; and the obvious solution was that I had to be married off. At that point of time, the idea of marriage was remote and vague to me, it existed only in fairy-tale romances; it did not happen like this where barely a month out of boarding school you are virtually pushed into an alliance with a complete stranger and expected to become his shadow for the rest of your life. All my protestations were brushed aside and eventually I too gave in to the inevitable. My fate was sealed. For my family, the marriage was the best solution to the problem called Tamsula, and they were overjoyed because they thought they found me the most perfect placement in life. But for me it was a mad plunge into the unknown. My predicament can be best compared to an-initiated novice being pushed into a dark and

alien space to contend with unfamiliar and dangerous players; my only weapons of self-defense being natural instincts and a will to survive.” (Ao xi). Unlike Temsula, Nini led a closely nurtured life. At the age of three, she was taken away from her native land to different hotspots due to the high profile job nature of her father. It was only after she was fairly grown up at the age of thirteen that she came back to Nagaland. Hence, Nini says, “In a way, I have not been really exposed to our native culture through peers and friends.” (Lungalang. Personal Interview. 29 November 2016). Otherwise her family roots show an intensely patriarchal set up. Nini’s father was from the High Priest Clan in the Zeliang Naga community. Her grandfather was the last High Priest of their community and so, “they were amazingly clannish: Patriarchy was almost built into my father’s genes. On occasions like Christmas, girls (daughters) are given Rs.10 and boys (sons) Rs.100. Girls do all the work but boys get more. I suppose it was in the nature of things. I don’t think my father felt that he was being unfair, that was just the way things were. But my mother always try to be fair, we had a lot of home task. The boys had to see to the compound and the firewood and girls had to work in the house, that way there was always perfect justice. But they were of the old school so they had to insist that we stick in our proper slots.” (Lungalang. Personal Interview. 29 November 2016). Temsula writes in *Once upon a Life*, about the influential impact of the context of one’s birth and heritage as that, “I have gained an insight that is relevant to all: to every life lived on this earth, there is an inner context, the context of a person’s birth and heritage, no matter how obscure or insignificant it may seem to an outsider. He is both a product of and subject to this truth.” (Ao xii)

### 4.3. Psychoanalytic Reflection

Temusula and Nini's resistance to be stereotyped into a gender slot reflects strong individuality in them. Resilient to have equal identity in their own right, they openly displayed their might to be equal to their counterpart even as a child. Their personal character traits especially that of Temsula's finds representation in her heroines. Extraction of few incidences from the pages of the authors lives sets in alignment the projection of the indomitable quest to defeat subordination of gender. Temsula on her tryst with her brother and his friends on the fishing expeditions and adventures at climbing trees, she says, ""“They (boys) would discourage me by saying that girls cannot do these things. But I followed them regardless and sometimes out of extreme annoyance they would throw pebbles at me shouting, ‘Go away, we don’t want girls, they bring bad luck’. But I obstinately followed them ..... To ensure that I would not be shooed off, I volunteered to carry their fishing rods as well as the tin cans which held the slimy worms used as bait.” (OUAL39 ) “There was another thing which the boys thought only they could do: climbing trees. But I had other ideas and started to climb trees whenever they indulged in tree-climbing games. In order to become as skillful as them, I started shimmying up the guava tree behind our house when I was alone. I became quite good at it and began to enjoy the experience...the boys found out what I was doing and said that no girl could be as good a tree-climber as a boy. I said I could prove him wrong.” (OUAL 40).

In a fascinating semblance, Nini's earliest tryst to trounce on gender stereotyping too dates back to her early childhood. She said, “I wanted to be like my

brothers. I despised playing with girls because my eldest brother badly wanted me to become a man. Apparently, he failed but it was not due to lack of trying” Lungalang. Personal Interview. 29 November 2016). Nini anecdotes her brother’s attempt to turn her into a boy, “at a young age, behind our bungalow was a water tank with a tall ladder to climb on. My father who knew his son very well said that, if ever I hear you try to climb the ladder you and I will have a talk. That dictum didn’t apply to me: I suppose it just never occurred to my father that I might try it being a girl. One day when our parents went out, my brother said, if you want to be a boy then climb this ladder. I could climb to the top but I couldn’t come down, curled up in fear, until I was rescued by an aunt.” (Lungalang. Personal Interview. 29 November 2016). She confessed her regular early childhood trainings in becoming more like a boy. Her brother taught her to fight like a man and instilled in her mind two points to become a good fighter, i.e., 1). Never to cry, 2). Bash up people it doesn’t really matter where you hit, you hit hard and fast and first. Nini continued to reminisce, “I was taken to a convent at six years of age and I started my piano lessons at that time and my piano teacher objected to my skinned knuckles and sometimes a black eye. I didn’t want to play with girls; I wanted to play with my brothers and friends. On this, my brother would say that I was behaving like a girl and that was the worse insult that I could ever stomach.” (Lungalang. Personal Interview. 29 November 2016). She added, “It is true that boys have far more freedom and they do have more fun.” (Lungalang. Personal Interview. 29 November 2016).

In describing her experiences to carrying out the role of a wife, Temsula plainly describes the socially prescribed gender role of the man and woman as spouses. She penned, “When I burned the rice or botched up the curry with too much

salt in half –cooked meat, it was the silent stare of the man which devastated me because it told me how disappointed he was at my ineptness. Here I was, so eager to please him and make him happy; instead my efforts were turning out to be just the opposite..... I vowed to myself that I would learn to be a better cook, a better ‘wife’ and better manager of the household.” (OUAL 172) She also expresses about her marriage as, “Growing up’ within the conventional mores of marriage was not easy. There were so many taboos regarding what a married woman should or should not do: be reserved with boys, never shout or laugh loudly in the presence of elders, do not answer back to your husband even if you think he is wrong etc, etc. So I tried growing up within these parameters.” (OUAL 176 ). Her confrontation with the men folk in her family about attending the evening college, then, is a summation of the feministic fortitude in her which speaks of women as never the lesser soul and ever rejecting any form of subaltern treatment, even in such gripping terms of being based and dictated in a staunch patriarchal society. On which she wrote, “a dormant aspect of my personality seemed to have been awakened which resolved to fight for justice for myself.....I could not yet define what I felt exactly but of one thing I was confident: I would never give in meekly to such blatant attempt at unjust subjugation.”(OUAL 175).

Preliminary indwelling on the personal lives of the author was decussated for a critical and comparative study of the portrayal of their female characters corresponding to their own character traits and personal experiences which are projected through their short stories. The authors in discussion may not have consciously applied any psychological theories in their art of characterization per se, however, from a Freudian viewpoint, which “focuses on applying the theories of

Sigmund Freud, a psychoanalytic criticism of a literary work may frame the text as a window into the mind of the author. This form of psychoanalytic criticism imagines the text as a display of the author's psychology, a window into his or her particular neuroses." ([www.saylor.org](http://www.saylor.org)), a study in the lives of the writers in focus immediately sets course into the psychoanalytic realm of writing as " interpreting the text, then, becomes an exercise in finding direct and indirect evidence of the author's childhood traumas, psychological instabilities, and/or inconsistencies. Ultimately, Sigmund Freud's dream theories especially influence such readings because they examine the literary work as they would a dream, as an expression of the author's hidden desires and anxieties."([www.saylor.org](http://www.saylor.org)). In line with psychoanalytic criticism, the case in point here may well be that the texts are construed more in the repressed state of the author's minds and not in as much as what the authors deliberately employs this theoretical establishment into constructing their stories because " that literary texts, like dreams, express the secret unconscious desires and anxieties of the author, that a literary work is a manifestation of the author's own neuroses. One may psychoanalyze a particular character within a literary work, but it is usually assumed that all such characters are projections of the author's psyche. In a nutshell, the key to understanding the history of psychoanalytic literary criticism is to recognize that literary criticism is about books and psychoanalysis is about minds. Therefore, the psychoanalytic critic can only talk about the minds associated with the book." ("psychoanalysis in literature".[www. vfire.up.krakow...com](http://www.vfire.up.krakow...com))

Edging around Nancy Chowdrow's *Object Relations Theory* which talks about the development of gender stereotyping through psychological process impacted by socio relational experiences and asymmetrical division of labour between

the male and female through which Chowdrow constructs a psychoanalytic reason within the context of the distinct roles played by the mother and father impacting on the child's attitudinal qualities towards gender role difference, both Temsula and Nini presents socio-cultural backgrounds that subscribes typically to the psychoanalyses theorists contention that gender stereotyping is developed from birth having varied forms of influences. In their works is candidly presented the clearly demarcated lines of the private and public spheres. Alike psychoanalysis itself, this chapter critically attempt to put in tandem the substantiation of psychoanalytic effect incorporating within the authors own childhood experiences, family life , traumas , fixations etc projecting a resistance to gender stereotyping traceable in the behavior of the characters in the literary work.

#### 4.4. Undoing Gender Stereotyping

In a close affinity to Betty Friedan's call through her work *The Feminine Mystique* wherein she opines that the traditionally ascribed role of women is construed as a means of keeping women subordinate to men and therein encourages women to break away from such a constructed role of being the happy wife, both the writers in focus delineates resilient feministic sensibility palpably portrayed through the female characters of their short stories which may well be a manifestation of their own feministic desire and pursuance.

In tandem with V. Geetha's notion that society is responsible for assigning roles to men and women hence stereotypes can be challenged by changing the content of media messages, by showing women in more enabling and empowering roles, by



re-writing textbooks on the basis of gender equality, by reversing male and female roles and functions, both the story tellers in focus uses their art of short stories as launching pads to highlight that since roles in gender stereotyping is simply learned through a psychological process of growing up within a certain social system, a common ambition in them, however varied their approach, is to bring about an unlearning or undoing of such restrictive constructs, thereby voicing feminists aim to diminish the influence of socialization and openly challenges the typified subaltern role of the female to male and emancipation is denoted. V. Geetha states, psychoanalysis offers one of the most influential and thought-provoking arguments about the making of masculinity and femininity. Though these arguments refer to the making of individual identities, as individuals mature from infancy to adulthood, they possess a historical dimension since the constitution of individual men and women always happens within specific historical and social contexts.(Geetha 71-72). Temsula Ao says in an introductory note to her story *Laburnum for My Head*, “ Stories live in every heart; some get told, many others remain unheard-stories about individual experiences made universal by imagination; stories that are jokes, and sometimes prayers; and those that are not always a figment of the mind but are, at times , confessions.” (LFMH introductory note).

Thusly, gender stereotype consists of beliefs about the psychological traits and characteristics of, as well as the activities appropriate to, men or women. Gender roles are defined by behaviors, but gender stereotypes are beliefs and attitudes about masculinity and femininity. The concepts of gender role and gender stereotype tend to be related. When people associate a pattern of behavior with either women or men, they may overlook individual variations and exceptions and come to believe that the

behavior is inevitably associated with one gender but not the other. Therefore, gender roles furnish the material for gender stereotypes. “Gender stereotypes are very influential; they affect conceptualizations of women and men and establish social categories for gender. These categories represent what people think, and even when beliefs vary from reality, the beliefs can be very powerful forces in judgments of self and others.” ([www.ablongman.com/partners\\_in\\_psych](http://www.ablongman.com/partners_in_psych))

The ravages of a conflict ridden land torn amidst the struggles of nations and ethnic clashes are used as the background of the short stories under consideration. Both the writers lived in a time when the socio-political history of North East India including their native land faced a severely trying period which witnessed the rise of insurgency in a quest for sovereignty, which continues to be till date. Both the writers express an acute awareness to this complex socio political situation of their native land wherein its citizens are caught in the diabolical web of conflict between the varied groups of insurgents or rebel forces and the Indian government. It is an indelible part of Naga political history that women endured through painstaking perpetration of exploitation both physical and sexual saturated in rivers of blood and tears. In capturing the anguished and exploited state of the common people of Nagaland, with extraordinary dexterity both the writers wove into their stories astonishing disposition of the women doubly caught between such a time as this and the immaculately held stipulations of patriarchy. Against such antagonistic state to the safe and equal bearing on women, their heroines are double removed from an ideal state of well being. However, the author’s gumption and commitment to a gender fair society is exemplified through the presentation of a reversal of image producing a

sense of disaffiliate relief from the typified woman wholly submissive to their function as ‘the other’.

Raconteurs to the kind of simple, rural way of life in their native land and in chronicling the complexities of the political turmoil, they successfully captivate their readers with the intricacies of the living ways in such an environment including the gendering roles played so naturally as an ingrained way of life by both men and women captured in the fictional world of their short stories. Thereby, confirming the process of socialization as greatly influential in the construction of gender roles and in its process influencing the psyche of both the genders to play their demarcated roles as a normal way of creation and life. They excel in portraying a realistic picture of gender role division in Nagaland which subscribes heavily on the customary laws enforced by the so called man made patriarchs of patriarchy but with equal brilliance, the two writers straddle the typical with the untypical and treads through the pages of their works with a defiant stroke to overcome gender stereotyped roles which is further decussated in succeeding deliberations.

#### 4.5. Untraditional Female Characterization

The detailed naturalness and the creative insight of both Temsula and Nini convincingly delve into the workings of their female character’s mind and they create literary characters that defy the traditional image of the both the man and the woman in the select short stories to be considered upon. While considering the novel as a whole which doubly records the political state of affairs and the gendered division of labour and role, tucked in it are moments with female character portrayals that

explicate and echoes larger character traits of women that the feminists advocates as delineated below . The short stories to be analyzed in this chapter are *Laburnum for my Head*, *A Simple*, *The Jungle Major*, *Sonny*, and *A Child of Fortune*.

## Lentina

*Laburnum for my Head* is a brilliant work of art rendering to a seemingly simple story a master piece which is wrought in high metaphorical representations. A splendid representation of gender binary is created through the use of varied symbolical elements. Right from the commencement of the story, the narration makes a satirical attack by comparative usage of male ego with ‘silly headstones’ on graves. Termed as ‘concrete vanities’, the headstones are used to represent the ways of man, wherein man’s egoism is directly confronted with the finer ways of femininity. In a pointed contrast to the lifeless headstones, bright, lively and very yellow Laburnum is used to symbolize femininity. Lentina had always admired, “these yellow flowers for what she thought was their femininity.” (LFMH 2). Paradoxical lines are drawn between masculinity and femininity against the graphics of a graveyard where headstones stand in description against the beautiful laburnum flowers in the usage of lines such as, “But each year as the bush grew taller and the blossoms more plentiful, the phenomenon stood out as a magnificent incongruity, in the space where man tries to cling to a make- believe permanence..... but nature has a way of upstaging even the hardest rock and granite edifices fabricated by man.” ( LFMH 1) “The particular spot displays nothing that man has improvised.”(LFMH 2), “The seasons play out a pantomime of beauty and baldness on the tree standing on the edge of lifeless opulence.”(LFMH 2) The headstones in the old cemetery bear mute testimony....the

laburnum on the other hand is alive and ever unchanging in its seasonal cycles.....to out-do all the vainglorious specimens erected in marble and granite.” (LFMH 2). These lines explicitly express the egoistic and prideful trait of masculinity put against humility which is used as a typical character trait of femininity, “The way the laburnum hung their heads earthward appealed to her because she attributed humility to the gesture.”(LFMH 2). Temsula continues to construct another atypical distinguishing attribute representatively of masculinity and femininity in the line, “She had always admired these yellow flowers for what she thought was their femininity; they were not brazen like the gulmohars with their orange and dark pink blossoms.” ((LFMH 2). This comparative tussle finds its finality in the story of Lentina where her struggle and success to make survive the flower laburnum against all odds stands as a metaphorical provenance signifying feminists’ aspirations in progress to free themselves from conventional shackles that are so retrograde.

Contravention to all traditional norms of orthodox patriarchal society, Temsula portrays a figurative challenge through the role of Lentina literally as well as metaphorically. In a brave move towards unshackling ritualistic connotation to gender division, the writer weaves an analogous account to gainsaying gender stereotyping starting from the death and funeral rites of Lentina’s husband. Lentina is literally made to put up an unconventional move of defiance, the narrative of which states, “Lentina surprised everyone, including herself, by announcing that she was going to accompany her husband on his last journey. Usually it is the men who take part in the last rites at the gravesite and stay on to supervise the erection of the temporary fence around the fresh grave. But when Lentina saw the group, including her sons and her own brothers, stepping out of the house behind the hearse, some

impulse urged her to join them. Her words were met with silence, because no one was prepared to voice dissent at such a moment.” (LFMH 4)

In a splendid stroke of intellect, the author plants an allegorical depiction of a dichotomous standpoint in gender identity deep in the heart of Lentina. The decision taken to have a laburnum tree in place of headstones in her grave sets the tone to a journey symbolizing feminist sensibilities to break away from man-made construction of gender stereotyping. Lentina’s decision to have the flower for her head in place of ‘silly headstones’, her focused pursuance towards the realization of her desire and the triumph of the laburnum’s bloom stands as a literary pictogram to feminists’ resistance to suppressive stereotyping. The story line therefore evokes a different context to depict the evolution of women’s struggle against the patriarchal and tradition bound mindset which spells out gender roles in a prescriptive fashion.

Uniquely one observes an impasse between the fragility of the flower and the stubborn will of Lentina to grow it at all cost presenting two sides of femininity. Temsula departs from the tradition of painting women in negative humility. Laburnum which is used to symbolizing humility as a distinctive trait of being female takes a more passive note whereas the role of Lentina presents a blend of quiet yet obdurate spirit in her pursuit to fulfilling her feminine dreams, apparently, to which the author’s advocacy is inclined to.

A different shade to women’s breakaway from the traditionally perceived and accepted notions about women as submissive and dull witted is depicted in the characters of Imdongla in *A Simple Question* and Khatila in *The Jungle Major*.

Temsula has shaped and maneuvered these female characters in such dexterity that the spontaneity of her heroines in display of sterling mental capacity emanate a spirit of emancipation from rigid gender stereotyping corroborating with Simone de Beauvoir who states, “There are also women who take on the challenge of the most robust males.” (Beauvoir 745).

Both the short stories, *A Simple Question* and *The Jungle Major* share a common backdrop, that of an insurgency conflict ridden place, born out of the Naga nationalism. The women are caught in deep predicaments of such socio-political situation where they faced sexual perpetration as is reflected in few other short stories besides being a part of a society which is wrought deeply in the mechanism of patriarchy where women are never considered fit to voice out in public forums let alone decision making. Against gut wrenching situational quandaries, Temsula significantly models her heroines, Imdongla and Khatila in a way that defies the traditional portrayal of women as dull witted, dependent, fearful, timid and weak, and she resorts to heightening feminine abilities through the use of mental prowess. Imdongla and Khatila becomes the mouthpiece of the author that women are equally competent and even stronger than man, even if not in terms of muscular might, in terms of emotional and mental strength, wit and presence of mind.

### Imdongla

Imdongla, in *A Simple Question* was otherwise just another Naga rural woman confined to the stereotypical female role. Her husband is a Goanbura of their village. It may be mentioned that Goanburas of Naga villages enjoy high status in the

community who are deemed to play key role in the safekeeping and decision making of their respective communities. They are deemed to have high wisdom in dealing with the matters of their community. To be a Goanbura was exclusively a man's privilege. In confronting the socially sanctioned stringent roles of gender, Temsula does a role reversal between the man and the woman. The first glimpse of this role reversal is seen in the role of Imdongla who is described as barely literate, but 'otherwise a worldly woman, knowledgeable about the history and politics of the village' and her husband Tekaba, the Goanbura. Squashed in the convoluted politics of the ravaged land, the quandary of the village people mounted heavier with the compulsion of paying tax to the insurgent groups in the form of rice, livestock and money and the reluctance or protest of which was met with severe beatings not even sparing 'the goanburahs and the village elders'. The male characters like Tekaba and the village man are portrayed in untraditional image, far from the chivalrous, protecting figureheads. On the other hand, Imdongla proved to be gutsy, brave, outspoken, prudent and witty trouncing all the men of her village put together. It was her sheer presence of mind "which had saved Tekaba from being beaten" (LFMH 82) several times over. An anecdote in the story displaying Imdongla's superior mental and emotional prowess and her audacious courage in contrast to the timorous and silent male figureheads unfold as thus, "Once the collectors had gathered in front of her house, and were berating a villager for bringing less rice than he was supposed to and asking him why he had dared disobey the command. The petrified villager could not say anything in his own defense. Imdongla was watching the unfolding scenario from the house. Then the leader turned to her husband Teka and said, 'What do you have to say about this?' At this point Imdongla decided that if she did not intervene both the men would be beaten mercilessly. Dashing inside, she grabbed a basket of



freshly husked rice and came out shouting, ' hey, Toshi, why don't you tell this man that I could not return this rice to you this morning as promised. Remember you lent it to my son for the age-set feast? Here it is.' So saying she set the basket on the ground and turned to the collector, 'You can see, brother, this is more than what he has to give, please take the lot and go, otherwise you will be caught in the rain.' The sky was indeed turning dark with rain-clouds. The man looked at her for some time, gestured to his soldiers to gather the rice and left the village at a running pace, leaving both her husband and the villager dumbstruck." (ibid 82-83).

In a brilliant sketch drawn to confront gender stereotyping, the author paints a classic example of a patriarchal society. As aforementioned public forums and decision making is never a realm for women in the traditional Naga society to participate but Imdongla defies this norm in the face of another tax collection quandary imposed on the village. She, "forcefully butted in to advice resisting the so-and so's from the jungle." (ibid 85). Irrespective of the numerous times that Imdongla comes to the rescue of her village and her husband, her husband in this instance dons the mantle of the typical male role to 'hush her' and even ridicules her intellect. Tekaba snubs at his wife, "keep quiet, woman, you know nothing." ( ibid 85).

Temsula beckons a resistance and questions gender discrimination and male domination completely infringed by patriarchal dictates and culturally prescriptive code evolved especially to exploit, subdue and dominate women through Imdongla's irate response to her husband. Masculinity is laid bare of its weaknesses seen through the questions berated at man by Imdongla. Her firm authorial sweep fluently manages

femininity to come face to face with masculinity in a forthright depiction of gender power-play, completely untraditional in disposition. Imdongla labels her husband not better than ‘a statue’ in times which otherwise calls for man and especially somebody in the status of a goanburah to man up in defense and protection of his people. Subsequent aberration to gender stereotyping is palpable when Imdongla continues berating at the men, “And you venerable elders, where is your wisdom? Your courage? Can’t some of you go to the jungle and talk to the leaders.....Don’t you see what’s happening to our children and women?” (LFMH 85).

In a sharp distinction to the depiction of men as being imprudent and in a state of neurotic inertia impelled by deep fear and timidity, Temsula launches Imdongla’s bravery and her sharp and quick wittiness to reach lofty heights in the incident involving the capture of Tekaba along with the elders of the village by the Indian soldiers. Yet again Temsula delineates the unique feminists that she is in advocating gender equality while respecting the individuality and responsibilities of being a woman and wife in the gender equation through Imdongla who stood tall in the face of gripping terror displaying bravery of distinction yet fiercely donning the role of a faithful wife. The fierce tussle initiated between Imdongla and the army captain in the release of Tekaba and others presents a significant symbolical representation to the universal women’s fight against tyrannical oppression of masculine might. The total vexation of the captain at Imdongla’s stance only expresses her inner strength and indomitable resilience against any figurative power of oppression in saving the men - folk of the village from the hands of the soldiers. In fact, Imdongla dared to taunt the captain which utterly exasperates him to see red that, “The captain saw that short of shooting her, there was no other way of getting rid of her. She sat in front of Tekaba’s

enclosure and when the captain approached her, she stood up and made as if to take off her waist cloth which he knew was the ultimate insult a Naga woman could hurl at a man signifying his emasculation.” (LFMH 86). The paradox is drawn clearly with Imdongla single handedly rescuing her husband along with the men yet again besides unsettling the military confidence of the captain with her simple question, “what do you want from us?”, and the petty thievery of the matchbox. The victory of Imdongla catapults femininity to a whole new level of significance. The female character of Imdongla is writ with femininity in the protective position portraying a role reversal to hitherto considered women to be always the mild and weak protected being.

## Khatila

Reverberation of the same attribution of bravery, resilience and quick wit displayed in the character of Imdongla finds a continuum in Khatila too in the short story *The Jungle Major*. The main plot of the story too deals with the extreme quandary of the village caught in the new wave of patriotic fervor. The narrative on the extremities of life situation faced by the villages accentuates the extraordinary unction of presence of mind and wittiness in Khatila. A reading into their situation celebrates in itself the potential of women as intellectual beings lesser to none. The plight of the villagers felt as though, “It seemed that a pall had descended upon the entire land. Some villages, to which the underground belonged, were severely punished. The houses were ransacked by security forces, the grain in their barns was burnt and the people themselves were herded into camps away from the village and kept in virtual imprisonment .....Numerous stories proliferated of women being molested by the security forces and the obstinate ones who refused to give information being severely beaten; not only that sometimes they would be hung

upside down and subjected to unspeakable tortures like chilli powder being rammed into their extremities.” (TJM 3). Khatila’s village would have encountered the same fate if not for her quick thinking presence of mind and her astonishing courage in the face of nerve wrenching circumstances.

With the political fervor rising up, in time Punaba, Khatila’s husband also joined the underground forces which invited the intrusion of the Indian army into her house. They army will leave behind threats not only upon to Khatila but the entire village included so much that, “if they were withholding vital information about the rebels, they would come back and raze their village to the ground.”(ibid 4). A striking inclusion to her bravery is her sense of patriotic commitment to her people and she is a woman who at all cost would, “play the part of a dutiful woman...she could not antagonize the village authorities in any way.” (ibid 4).

Khatila’s continued somber stance of repeated indifference to the intruding army men connotes an inborn resoluteness in fearless disposition possessing superior emotional and intellectual ability. The climax of this situational trajectory divergently placed with Khatila’s prudent presence of mind is seen when Punaba comes to visit her. On a restful and unsuspecting morning, they were warned of the approaching Indian army to their house by Punaba’s security personnel. In nerve wrecking moments of quandary wherein there was no chance of escapade for Punaba which in turn compromises the safety of the entire village, Khatila’s effective presence of mind reaches a numinous state. The reader is held breathless the entire time duration during which Khatila unfolds a dramatic charade spinning a plot with her husband as a mute household servant all the time parading the escapade with utmost dexterity. With the

culmination in the plot, Khatila's astute perspicacity in wrestling down the suspecting army captain with unprecedented calmness reaches its climax too. The captain taken aback by her calmness had, "expected to see a cowering woman, crazy with fear for her husband and herself, he was confronted by a disheveled but defiant person who displayed no agitation and seemed to be utterly oblivious to any danger." (TJM 6). And the charade beautifully culminates in the celebration of Khatila's sterling disposition in the lines which says, "The young and unexperienced army officer did not realize that the beautiful but simple village woman had thus foiled a meticulously planned 'operation' of the mighty Indian army and that a prized quarry had simply walked away to freedom." (ibid 7).

The author gives a fine allegorical representation to the value of women in line with Betty Friedan who in *The Feminine Mystique* tries to obliterate the myth of the woman as a happy and contented housewife and niche for themselves a self-identity. On similar lines Tamsula through the characters of Imdongla and Khatila delineates an aura to women who are expressive, headstrong, intelligent and can very well don the protective role not only for herself but significantly for her husband as well as the entire community proving the paramount significance of women's role in the overall survival of society.

Confronting deeply drenched traditional attitude to female identity as always the tilted lower end in the gender balance or scale with male identity, with great ingenious artistry Tamsula delineates her female characters putting them on a high pedestal crediting them with superior intellectual ability and perhaps a daring patriotic sensitivity equaled to that of the male. A culminating celebration of this quality is the

heroine of Temsula- Apenyo in *The Last song* when she ‘stood her ground’ singing away the turmoil raging around her, perpetuating that indomitable spirit deep within her to linger on in the soul of every women.

#### 4.6. Defying Traditional Moors through Sexuality

Temsula Ao strikes a chord with universality in challenging gender stereotyping through the use of sexuality. Consonant to feminist aspirations she too challenges the archetypal female image of the Victorian period striking a common chord with the typical domesticated role of Naga women, who cannot deviate from the chaste, obedient and the pure woman image. The perfect woman is described in both cases as perfect ladies, well-behaved and with good morals. While Temsula may have her unique views on ideal femininity advocating liberated status of women while still advocating the importance of the woman’s responsibilities as a wife and mother, she did not shy away from depicting women who fell short of this stereotypical image. She departs from the perfect, chaste with good morals image of women.

Employing the context of toppling gender stereotyping through sexuality, Temsula also brings about the theme of gender discrimination as stated by Simone De Beauvoir in *The Second Sex*, “Man’s anatomical destiny’ is profoundly different from woman’s. Their moral and social situations are no less different. Patriarchal civilization condemned woman to chastity; the right of man to relieve his sexual desires is more or less openly recognized, whereas woman is confined within marriage; for her the act of the flesh, if not sanctified by the code, by a sacrament, is a

fault, a fall, a defeat, a weakness; she is obliged to defend her virtue, her honour; if she 'gives in' or if she 'falls', she arouses disdain, whereas even the blame inflicted on her vanquisher brings him admiration." (Beauvoir 397).

Beset in a very conservative society in which women were raised to be confined to domestic work and be an angel in the house and society par excellence, Temsula sparked resistance and a break away from the stereotype for women. Many of Temsula's heroines succumb to consensual premarital or out of wedlock passion only to be socially objurgated. Suchlike, the author treats these flawed women with sympathy by placing values on them like her Imnala in *The Night*, Lipoktula and Martha in *The Three Women*, Sonny's beloved in *Sonny*. In *The Night*, Imnala appeared naïve yielding easily to male charm and seductive overtures. In the first instance she was impregnated being "...Completely bowled over by the man's ordour and pledges of eternal love, she became his willing lover." (Ao 45). Humiliating consequences later brings 'an ashen taste to her mouth'. However at a later time, Imnala yet again succumbs to the charade flattery of Tekatoba. When the inevitable happened, "in spite of her awareness that what was happening was not only wrong but also extremely dangerous for her, she gave in to primeval urging." (Ao 50). In both the cases, Imnala was used like rags only to be thrown away. On the other hand, the men involved were not principled or courageous enough to claim responsibility to their faults. They would rather hide behind the curtains of patriarchal stipulated customary practices of their land because as perfidious as the man's actions are, society forgives and forgets whereas the moral questioning always falls on the woman and the woman is reduced to the mercy of societal judgment. In the context of such gender biasness, Simone de Beauvoir states, "from primitive civilizations to our

times, the bed has always been accepted as a service' for a woman for which the male thanks her with gifts or guarantees her keep: but to serve is to give herself up to a master; there is no reciprocity at all in this relationship." (Beauvoir 397).

In *The Three Women* both Lipoktula and Martha too gets impregnated reprehensively. In Lipoktula's case, she accounts that she was raped but she confesses that she did not fight enough to avert what happened between Medemla's father and her. Martha too succumbs to pre marital intimacy, so is with Sonny's beloved. In delineating such women branded as 'fallen woman' (LFMH 98), Tamsula liquefy traditional norms of established traditional image of women and men painting a larger picture of a society that is not ready to give way to the reversal role of gender.

#### 4.7. Interiorized Resistance to Gender Stereotyping

Author Nini Lungalung too in sync with Tamsula Ao challenges the patriarchal stipulated stereotyping on gender. However, there is a sharp distinction in which the two authors challenge this. Unlike Tamsula, Lungalung's approach is deeply philosophical and interiorized. The author's subjectivity drives the narrative into the deep recesses of the protagonist's mind in *The Child of Fortune*. *The Child of Fortune* which is a simple story of a little girl and her mother caught in the turbulent times of the Naga National Struggle - a nation steeped with patriarchal values. However, the author propels the little girl Rokono and her mother to sublime heights casting them as symbolical figurines to the deep cravings of every woman rising way beyond man made detrimental shackles.



Lungalung decorously corroborates with Temsula's advocacy of femininity which values the role and responsibility of women as wives and mothers in concurrence to not adhering to representing strictly construed gendered spaces. Lungalung impinges on the crux of patriarchy through Rokono's mother. In so doing, the author leads the readers into the recesses of her character's mind where a clear confrontation to the patriarchal order of life is delineated representing the unspoken desires of every woman.

It was as if Mother Nature herself acquiescence in perfect symphony with this mother's surreptitious desire in an intense magical moment when, "On an evening as she sat in enforced idleness, she saw the new moon low in the sky holding the old moon in the circle of her horns. Pale she was, the moon, and fragile as the finger nail of a newborn. As she gazed, she felt the first stab of birthing pain. An omen, she thought, and smiled her secret smile; it will be a woman she thought exultantly. She will be my joy." (Lungalng 94). The author creates a thrilling sense of trepidation as she ventures to denigrate the classic characteristic of patriarchy's celebration of male progeny.

The pulse of trepidation to the moment of birth reaches a feverish intensity with the comments made by the women who came in 'the sisterhood of pain' even as the birthing mother writhes in pain. Echoing the accepted custom of patrilineal fervor, the women heartens the mother saying, "You will have a strong son, they crooned, and he will defend you and avenge his father's death" (Lungalang 94). The mother's dissent, tussle and her triumph against the socially and culturally constructed mindset

drenched in gender biasness in writ in the lines, “No! She gasped as she twisted with pain. It will be a woman, as beautiful and constant as the moon that always returns, and it was a woman.” (Lungalang 94).

Customarily in the Angami Naga traditions which serve as the social milieu to this story, the birth of a son is received with great celebration but the birth of a daughter faces disdain aspersions in comments like ‘hou! Orü!’, which means, ‘Oh Well! A son would have been better!’ Unlike such stereotypical expectations, Lungalung portrays a welcoming sight in the birth of the child and named her to be the ‘Child of Fortune’ as an epitome of hope. Rokono’s birth was received with, “a murmur of approval from the young women” and “it was as if her birth had made them whole again.” (Lungalang 94).

Reversal of role is portrayed in the sons attending to the daughter’s needs cheerfully and Rokono grew to be child who “was a joy to behold.....everyone had affection for this child.” (Lungalang 96). Lungalang calculatedly makes the child dumb using it as an allegorical representation and the author says that, “Rokono stands for the voiceless women of all ages where Patriarchy is almost built in the man’s genes. Even if she had protested it won’t have been of any relevance at all and the mother realizes it. It was such a painful realization.” (Lungalang. Personal Interview. 29 November 2016). Lungalang may not be as vocal like Temsula but evidently the spirit of feminism certainly lurks in her heart and mind.

Both Lungalang and Temsula echoes Kate Millet’s opinion in *Sexual Politics* in which she says that ultimately all power resides in the use of force and that

physical force plays a determining role in contemporary patriarchy. The first articles on rape appeared in feminist publications in the 70s, following which rape became the feminist issue of the day. Susan Griffin's analysis in *Rape: the All-American Crime* showed that power is constituted by, develops, and is exercised through the interconnection of sexuality, aggression, violence and masculinity. In the short stories of both Temsula and Lungalang is found engendered sexual exploitation and violence. Temsula also uses sexuality to delineate gender relation and takes it to an almost numinous realm. Women are portrayed as vulnerable beings to violence on account of their female sexuality which is seen in the form of rape, sexual harassment and other forms of violence against women. There are several instances in both Temsula and Lungalang's renderings where women's sexuality is used to display man's false power. Both the writers exposed discriminatory gender violence in addressing the sadistic use of rape, in the same line with feminist concerns especially that of the second wave feminists whose one particular concern was the issue of rape. Historically, rape has occurred in the course of war, wherein soldiers have raped women from the opposing force inflicting defeat through their sexual lust, reducing women's body to a mere object. Feminist explanations locate the cause of this crime within society. They suggest that the crime of rape and sexual assault is a crime of power. Rape and sexual assault is an abuse of power, which: a) is a result of unequal power between perpetrator and victim; b) reinforces the inequality of power in this relationship; and c) reinforces the inequality of power between men and women. Feminist theory focuses on the wider picture of women living in a society which is dominated by men. Rape and sexual assault is seen as one of the ways in which men enact their dominance in a violent way over women, children and other men. It rejects

ideas that rape results from sexual attraction or from the way victims/survivors dress or behave.

#### 4.8. Hiatus to Sexual Exploitation

Both Temsula Ao and Nini Lungalang depict sexual violation on women in the form of rape and delineate how women's bodies become part of the terrain of conflict. Their stories of women's plight caught in war like situations shows how rape and sexual abuse is but a by-product of war and a display of man's socialization to an attitude of degrading women to the lowest form of objectifying tool to man's lustful gratification. Both Lungalang and Temsula in their stories refer aplenty to such sexual atrocities. A heart wrenching depiction of barefaced sexual crime against women is seen in *The Last Song*. Temsula recounts, "There was chaos everywhere....Libeni was now frantic. Calling out her daughter's name loudly, she began to search for her in the direction where she was last seen being dragged away by the leader. When she came upon the scene at last, what she saw turned her stomach: the young Captain was raping Apenyo while a few other soldiers were watching the act and seemed to be waiting for their turn. The mother, crazed by what she was witnessing, rushed forward with an animal-like growl as if to haul the man off her daughter's body but a soldier grabbed her and pinned her down on the ground. He too began to unzip his trousers and when Libeni realized what would follow next, she spat on the soldier's face and tried to twist herself free of his grasp. But this only further aroused him; he bashed her head on the hard ground several times knocking her unconscious and raped her limp body...The small band of soldiers then took their turn, even though by the time the fourth one mounted, the woman was already dead."

(Ao28). Nini Lungalang in *Child of Fortune* exposes the same sexual violence meted on women by male perpetrators. In the story Lungalang recounts of this ordeal not once but twice where every woman but one became victim to this devilry ordeal. Lungalang narrates, “Just before the planting time that year, one day, the soldiers came in great numbers....They went about raping women young and old with great cheering. Only one woman, though stripped naked, was spared since she was huge and pregnant.” (Lungalang 93). A repetition of the same gruesome ordeal ensues after a gap of four years when again the soldiers swarmed in on the village like hornets roaring and shooting into the air and again, ‘the men were tied and beaten. Again, the women raped.’ In another story entitled *The Jungle Major* Temsula narrates extreme atrocities borne by women at the hands of sadistic maleness perpetrated through soldiers. She details, “ Numerous stories proliferated of women being molested by the security forces and the obstinate ones who refused to give information being severely beaten; not only that, sometimes they would be hung upside down and subjected to unspeakable tortures like chilli powder being rammed into their extremities.” (Ao 3).

Lungalang cleverly entwines the quandaries of Rokono and her mother, of being entrapped forever in patriarchal mores of conduct and of being caught in the risk of sexual exploitation as a symbolical representation of the plight of women based in patriarchal societies and those women caught in warring situations. The mother’s courage and decision in *The Child of Fortune* too speaks of the female’s delusion to live a peaceful and gender just life liberated from being discriminated and exploited by their male counterpart. Disparaging over the fate of her daughter and herself, the mother decides to vindicate and unfetter themselves out of life’s bleak miseries. The author says, “I think that was the only choice open to Rokono’s mother.

She could have hidden but they had no options left – death is better than living that wretched life.” (Lungalang. Personal Interview. 29 November 2016). In such a claustrophobic situation, the author uses freedom in death as an ultimate symbol to freedom from all anomalies of life and a society that does not endorse a fair living of both the gender, defying a life of subjugation.

#### 4.9. Conclusion

The foregoing analysis provides evidence of changed gender roles and a clear gainsaying to stereotypical gendered construction. As opposed to traditional moorings to women being submissive, dull and so on, all the women characters studied of both Temsula and Lungalang are innately strong and wise, emotionally tough in the like of Lentina, Imdongla, Imnala, Rokono’s mother Lipoktula, Martha and Sonny’s Beloved. Conversely, male roles such as Punaba and Tekaba takes the role of the defended unlike traditional male expectant roles as protector, confident, bold, brave, dominant etc. Both Temsula and Lungalang sheathes a resistance to gendered stereotyping and question the expediency of the strictly demarcated gender spaces into private and public spheres. In infringing on socially and culturally dictated prescriptive codes and mores of doing gender, the authors under study break down and transcend the fraught categories of male and female, thus disrupting the traditional gender norms and conventions, showing them to be socially and culturally constructed and succeed in brilliantly stirring up a consciousness towards gainsaying gender stereotyping.

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## CHAPTER – V

### FEMININE CONSCIOUSNESS IN SELECT POEMS OF MONALISA CHANGKIJA, TEMSULA AO AND NINI LUNGALANG

#### 5.1. Introduction

Feminine consciousness can be defined as the paradigm of awareness within the impounds of feminist or proto-feminist consciousness of the inequality of women with men and a determination to overcome it as elucidated in detail by the historian Gerda Lerner. According to Gerda Lerner Feminine Consciousness is:

1. *The awareness of women that they belong to a subordinate group and that , as members of such a group, they have suffered wrongs,*
2. *The recognition that their condition of subordination is not natural, but societally determined,*
3. *The development of a sense of sisterhood,*
4. *The autonomous definition by women of their goals and strategies for changing their condition, and*
5. *The development of an alternative vision of the future. ( Gerda 232)*

The current chapter intends to trace the streak of feminist consciousness inherent in select poems of Monalisa Changkija, Temsula Ao and Nini Lungalang. In raising consciousness to the denigrated and subdued feminine state who exist as shadows to man and society, they also raise consciousness to the need of a breakthrough from the many archetype images or status of women. Even a cursory glance at their poems mirrors the dissatisfaction of the writers against certain established norms or conventions of their society and its culture. This chapter is therefore contrived to investigate into the feminine consciousness of the authors while analysis with corresponding justification will be made in their depiction of the subjugated women posited and deeply wedged in traditional social norms and customs.

## 5.2. Accentuating Feminine Sensibilities

In compliance to the theoretical base of feminism that emerged as a worldwide movement to secure women's rights on one hand and love, respect, sympathy and understanding from their male counterpart on the other hand, Monalisa Changkija, Temsula Ao and Nini Lungalang who are all remarkable women poets burrows out gender related women predicaments allied to the complicity of power structures with patriarchy as “Femininity as a cultural construct inscribes the society’s views about woman through conventions and inhibits woman’s individuality. The Statement “one is not born a woman, but one becomes one” (Beauvoir) calls attention to the issue under consideration.” (Sebastian 14) Their works display the pursuit of feminism from the culturally constructed gender perspective with the patriarchal system

as the backdrop- like how the element of feminism is portrayed in their works as an offshoot of the male dominated system. As women writers, they all display deep insight and writes from the perspective of one situated in the patriarchal system, experiencing personally the dominance of the masculinity and the littleness of femininity.

Towards this intent, that sequence which aligns the poetic artists in focus lies in their common concern to advocating gender equality. Through their works, they perpetuate the spirit of feminism where in portraying women's predicament, the factors contributing to the subaltern status of women and the engendered inequality is being exposed. All the poets, Monalisa Changkija, Dr.Temsula Ao and Nini Lungalang, channelizes a pursuance to voice out the silent voices of women and a pursuit to Feminism against the milieu of a strong patriarchal society and dominance, depicting the angst of women through the lens of poetry and samely, "...They argue that feminism should work to liberate women from a system of male-centered values and beliefs, and should empower them to discover their own uniquely female identity" Tolan (323).

A laconic consideration to the ideological base essentially relays a clearer perception towards the understanding of the poet's feminine sensibilities. The ideology of gender issues drawn on the apparent lines of feminism addresses the fundamental differences between man and women. Gendered feminine consciousness is addressed from the perspective of feministic recognition of the gender differences by way of values, mode of behavior, life patterns and the vulnerability of women made out by the needs of the family, society and the state substantiated with the notion that "It is widely held that while one's sex as a man and woman is determined

by anatomy, the prevailing concepts of gender- of the traits that are conceived to constitute what is masculine and what is feminine in temperament and behavior- are largely, if not entirely, social constructs that were generated by the pervasive patriarchal biases of our civilization.” (Abrams 122). The fact that all these four poets are female natives of a predominantly patriarchal society conceivably makes their renderings on gender complexities original, more forceful and realistic.

For the purpose of this chapter, the poems that are considered are Monalisa Changkija’s collection of poetry *Weapons of Words on Pages of Pain, Don’t wake me up from Monsoon Mourning*, Selection of poems were made from Temsula Ao’s Collections of Poetry : ‘Songs that Tell’ – *Woman , Requiem , ‘Songs of Many Moods’- The Creator, Despair , Songs from Here and There – A village Morning, A village Morning II, A village Morning III*, and *The Leaf Shredder, Man to Woman, Woman to Man* from ‘Song from the Other Life’ and Nini Lungalang’s poems – *Mirror, Requiem for ‘I’, Man and Whore, Anniversary Celebrations* and *After the Party*.

The lyrical message in all the above mentioned poems examines feminist investigation of women's space in social besides personalized settings. The works depict the status of women and the implications this generates constituting a critical element of feminine consciousness. Representational poetic symbols are used to articulate how women have woken up to seek and break off, out of their prescribed gender roles which are drawn in line with traditionalist values. The assessment on the power of women, both over themselves and other elements in their world finds critical importance in their poems wherein the issue of sexuality and the control over one's

own sexual identity constitute a major issue. A more subtle theme that emerges is the powerfully prevalent convergence of women's role and gender biasness with other rudiments of social stratification.

### 5.3. Culture Confluent with Gender Disparity

A major theme that gets repeated consideration in their poems is the machination of Gender stereotyping sheltered by patriarchal mindset which is invariably rife with the overall supremacy of the male. The poets attributes the angst of women to be rooted in the cultural and social transactions of a given society which is echoed in Simone de Beauvoir's statement, "one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman. No biological, psychical or economic destiny defines the figure that the human female takes on in society; it is civilization as a whole that elaborates this intermediary product between the male and the eunuch that is called feminine." (Beauvoir 294).

By this cultural and socialization process, the masculine in our culture has come to be widely identified as active, dominating, adventurous, rational, and creative; the feminine, by systematic opposition to such traits, has come to be identified as passive, acquiescent, timid, emotional, and conventional (Abrams 122). Temsula Ao, in *A Village Morning I, II and III* delineates the dynamics of assigned gender roles for women relegated to domestic chores and largely defined in terms of being the submissive, passive and all enduring gender role. As already depicted in the previous chapters, the pictorial description of the socially ascribed domestic segregated role of women resonates in *A Village Morning I* too. The woman gets up

before anybody else for 'myriad chores' await her. She overrides her most basic need for a bath and is reduced to only elusive inner longing. Temsula immediately paints the multiple roles of the woman while the man snores away without a care only to wake up and be a whining critic over the woman's chores. The woman begins her austere defined domestic chores, she makes the fire for cooking, she tends to rearing animals, and she dons the caretaking role with dexterity. Everyone's welfare is looked into sans hers, until the morning chaos is over.

In *A Village Morning II*, the supposedly female chores confront the man with the woman coming down with black fever. And it is here that the poet emphatically represents gendered stereotyping when she pens in between stanzas the dichotomy of gender roles. In so doing, a subtle message emerges, posting the ambivalent but imperative female role in instituting the successful existence of a family headed by man. Thus, it is actually ironical that the supposedly strong, all able- man who stands to be the pictogram of a towering strength for his family and the guardian of society is portrayed as a total failure in handling what is generally accepted as menial kitchen responsibilities. Temsula in her own seemingly simple style cleverly addresses the tedious and tiresome everyday chores of women, through a reversal of role between the man and woman. She puts the cap of domestic responsibility on the man which immediately reduces him to a state of 'helplessness' and this failure is manifests in his curses on the woman. Such a farfetched comparison may be taken to denote the far distanced gapping of gender roles as exhibited in lines below-

These morning manuals

Are maddening

He knows these are not  
 A man's job and begins  
 To curse his wife  
 For leaving him so helpless  
 In a woman's place (AVM II 184)

Right after, the reader is given to witness through the thoughts of the man as to how household chores and its management is far from the glittered wave of a magical wand, but is toughly laborious. Because the woman gets the assigned role synonymous to household chores, the skill, the efforts, the labor, the time goes down to the attitudinal drain of being taken for granted conveniently so or is overlooked. If not, the conveniently set roles of gender being undisturbed, the man would have just woken up to be served by the woman getting him readied for his day ahead. Interestingly so and with a dab of humour, the poet makes quite a witty hyperbolic statement when she compares the morning's predicament of the man at shouldering the 'domestic chores' of the house with that of a 'battle'. On a typical village morning the man would, as the poet writes-

Waking up to a hot meal,  
 Then picking up his shawl and dao  
 Marching out with other men  
 As though to conquer  
 The world outside the hearth, (185)

Monalisa too collude to the wide open disparity of gender role dichotomy where women's role is assigned to domestic care giving spheres. She brings home this fact emphatically in poems like *Making Believe* where the woman's roles is clearly delineated to *doing the dishes* and in *Field of Baby's Breaths* with lines like, *sing and sew, cook and indulge in floral delights, as women are expected to*. In *Field of Baby's Breaths*, Monalisa carves out two images of women. She juxtaposes the very feminine image of a woman perfectly fitted into her culturally and socially constructed role of being dainty governing her attitudinal approach to doing life. On the contrary, the atypical image to the profusely innate feminineness is painted an image of a woman who is whittled out differently to shed the semantic synonymity of women as stereotypically delicate domestic creatures. Hence, to be such a woman, she has to be:

Cut and Created

From a different type of stone

To meet the needs of

A different type of times.

Times that denied me

The chance to sing and sew,

Cook and indulge in floral delights,

As women are expected to.

Times that required I

Break out of the mould,

Abandon the stereotypes

And get into my working clothes. (MM 13)



#### 5.4. Women Against Women

The irony of gender abuse within the same gender is emphatically addressed by all the three bards. In *Village Morning III* a shadow of the strict oppressive hands of the grandmother seen in *A Terrible Matriarchy* emerges. A picture of the same oppressive hands of certain women who perpetuate oppression on their own kind is delineated in the figure of the stepmother upon her step daughter. Through the stepmother and the extreme suffering of the stepdaughter is portrayed the visible internalization of the patriarchal mindset in women thereby resulting in women indulging in gender abuse within the same gender. The same shade of this paradoxical incongruity of women suffering at the hand of their own gender is also seen in the poem *Mirror* by Nini Lungalang. In the poem, Nini portrays the image of an overbearing mother on her daughter. The telling message is that oppressive perpetuation of pre-conceived role and identity of girls even before they are born is strictly kept guard by the mother herself. The mother would assert herself which is an epitome of feminine acquiescence to the subaltern role into her own daughter which finds reflection in the words of Elaine Showalter that, ‘...a girl’s core gender identity is positive and built upon sameness, continuity, and identification with the mother’ (Showalter 320). Thus in instances, women’s mind becomes consciously or unconsciously drenched in the workings of patriarchy. Nini comments on this poem saying, “The Adolescent’s encounter with her mother speaks of a universally accepted truth that mothers demand more of their daughter. It is a universal phenomenon”

(Lungalang. Personal Interview. 29 November 2016). The daughter's consternate trepidation over her mother's extreme imposition finds voice in the poetic lines:

In her day dreams, she'd see me,  
 She'd see me the way she wanted to see me  
 Sometimes I'd see that phantom child  
 And it would anger me to unreasoning hatred  
 I'd see it in the things she'd say  
 "Why aren't you? Why can't you?  
 Why do you always..? Why do you never...?  
 And I would weep in wild frustration  
 Weep hot and helpless, hopeless tears (TMY 10)

In the poem, *Village Morning III*, against the backdrop of an extremely cold wintry morning is described an equally dismal condition of this girl being compared to a beast of burden. The girl mentioned in the preceding poem goes through the precincts of psychological and emotional abusive turmoil whereas abuse in this poem is taken further to infliction of physical mistreatment plunging her into a pit of dark hopelessness with not a ray of light. Her powerless shape at the abusive hands of her stepmother is captured in the lines below:

Like the misery and loneliness  
 Of her orphan-self now turned  
 Into a beast of burden

Showered with constant abuse  
And given little sustenance.

&

But she is past caring  
Because for her  
It is yet another  
Miserable Morning. (VM III 187)

In a stark similitude to the resigned spirit of the girl to her fate, the poet Monalisa Changkija also dwells in *Don't Wake Me Up*, a poem in *Monsoon Mourning*, where the woman depicted here would not like to be awakened in the morning, come the worse of consequent situations. She is beyond botheration of even death. The poet perhaps is even trying to convey the message that possibly death is much better an option than to be living a woman's life which is deemed equivalent to a 'beast of burden' and She concludes by saying:

I'll be asleep and if it falls down on me  
  
Neither the sky nor I will break. (MM 16)

## 5.5. Gender Relationship

The poets present the dynamics of gender relationship through the lens of marital Institution. Simone de Beauvoir opines that tradition expects woman to consider marriage as her destiny. She writes, “Marriage has always been presented in radically different ways for men and for women. The two sexes are necessary for each other, but this necessity has never fostered reciprocity; women have never constituted a caste establishing exchanges and contracts on an equal footing with men. Man is a socially autonomous and complete individual” (Beauvoir 452). She further opines that Marriage for man, “is advantageous to unload some of the chores onto woman; the man himself wishes to have a stable sexual life, he desires posterity, and society requires him to contribute to its perpetuation.” (ibid 452). Thus, it can be deduced that in a marriage, the woman has a servitude nature of function where she is to service the man and the society with procreation. It is to the responsibility of the woman to satisfy the male’s sexual needs and to take care of the household in exchange of the man’s support and his gifts or a marriage settlement. Therefore Beauvoir considers marriage, “to be obscene in principle in so far as it transforms into rights and duties those mutual relations, which should be founded on spontaneous urge.” (Bhagwat 112).

In the light of Simone de Beauvoir’s exposition on the institution of marriage, poet Temsula also dwells on the contractual relational approach to gendered relation in the marriage institution in her poems *Man to Woman* and *Woman to Man*. In *Man to Woman*, the man haggles his side of the case to courting the woman into marriage with him. In so doing, the man flickers alive, the otherwise vainly amorous desires of every woman’s heart, with a fine use of flattery showered over the woman’s physical appearance and igniting the flames of passion in her heart. Veiled in the highly

romantic proposition for marriage, Temsula clearly demarcates the distinctive roles of both the men and the women in the institution of marriage. The woman's place is, at the loom. Besides the fire-side and besides the passionate connotation to the proposal, the man also promises to carry out that which is his responsibility, to provide for the woman and *build a new house*. In the poem, the man in says *I want you by my fire-side* in exchange of his promise- *For I am an honest hard-working farmer who will always cherish his daughter*.

Validating to Simone de Beauvoir's opinion that, "in primitive times, the clan, the paternal gents, treats her almost like a thing; she is part of payments to which two groups mutually consent and that for a long period the contracts were signed between father-in-law and son-in-law not between husband and wife. Thereby, a girl's free choice was highly restricted and celibacy-except in rare cases where it bears a sacred connotation – ranked her as a parasite and pariah; marriage was her only means of survival and only justification of her existence. Beauvoir goes on to say that, "Even civilizations that ignore the father's generative role demand that she be under the protection of a husband; and she also has the function of satisfying the male's sexual needs and caring for the home." (Beauvoir 452), Temsula too gives the readers a glimpse to the miniscule role played by women in marriage talks and agreements. The execution and decisions becomes man's prerogative which gets highlighted in lines:

When the time is right

My maternal uncle will bring my offer in the night

So tell your mother to tell your father  
To accept my offer (BoS 288)

In the poem *Woman to Man*, the woman speaks in preference to the marriage proposal of the simple yet hardworking and honest man over the other seemingly better proposal. The poet paints the picture of the woman where she readily and happily acknowledges her domestic role in exchange of the promised passionate love of the simple man. Marriage thusly painted by Temsula is quite an ideal contract wherein fixed notions on gender relationship is deeply drenched in the psyche of both the male and female gender to the point that it almost appears to be a natural thing and quite crucial to maintain and sustain a blissful gender relationship seen through the portrayal of marriage . Symbolically, the woman's consent in lines below portrays the deep attitudinal consensus to the differentiated gender relational dynamics:

That his daughter prefers  
The house of Bamboo and thatch  
  
Where the bonfire of our hearts  
Will shame the flames of the hearth  
  
And in that house I shall place  
My precious loom (292)

The poet, Monalisa Changkija too addresses the issue of marriage but she takes it to a totally different dimension. If Beauvoir considers marriage to be obscene as far as it transforms into rights and duties which otherwise should be actually based on spontaneous urge between the man and woman, Monalisa paints the institution of marriage to be a totally lopsided arrangement where every right belongs to the man and every duty belongs to the woman. In marriage, the woman becomes a servicing object bearing the brunt of the man's desires and might. Monalisa considers marriage as obscene and she utterly disparages at the supposedly 'sacred' marriage institution and rebuffs at the marital home because she considers it to be a breeding ground for all types of violence and subjugation on women just as Simone de Beauvoir says, says that for women, marriage institution becomes a space where the woman is "integrated as slave or vassal into the family group dominated by fathers and brothers, has always been given in marriage to males by other males." (Beauvoir 452).

Marriage which supposedly should be grounded on mutual love as is projected in *Man to Woman* and *Woman to Man* gets absolutely distorted and this same marriage is now considered to be a bed of physical violence, mental torture and emotional destruction meted on the woman by the man. Home, the supposedly safest haven to the woman incarnates into a torture asylum. Monalisa records utter marital violence as thus:

Violence-induced miscarriages,  
 Black-eyed and bloodied-lips  
 Blue-bruises and broken- ribs  
 Within the sanctity of marriages

And security of homes... (WWPP 7)

In the poets' own word, "Naga woman have not attained equality in today's Naga marriage simply because our society and our males have not abandoned the foundation and roots of our existence –patriarchy."(CFABD 80). The modern marriage today even though not strictly ruled by traditional exchanges, is still governed by a society where ancient structures and values still survive. Perhaps, the same thought urges Beauvoir to state that even, "modern marriage can be understood only in light of the past it perpetuates." (Beauvoir 451). In *Just So You Know That....* Changkija interrogates into the binary dynamics of gender relationship about marriage as thusly in the following:

So we live islands unto ourselves  
 Submerging totally into  
 The lives of our Best Halves,  
 As if we never have our own  
 Or had before our marriage vows.  
 But yet we allow  
 Matrimony to consume our past,  
 Present and future  
 And surrender to it without queries. (WWPP 41)

In yet another poem, Monalisa professes, to remain single is bliss. Her exasperation is seen in the sharp contrast made between remaining unmarried as



‘paradise’ to being married and be treated as ‘animals’ and ‘servants’. On this the poet articulates that:

‘Walking alone  
Through the  
Passage of time  
And falling into  
The abyss of  
The irredeemable  
Would be paradise,  
Than living in  
“Sacred matrimony”  
With anyone  
Who sees no  
Difference between  
Animals, servants  
And wives (9)

The poet makes a sardonic reference to the “God fearing Chaste women” and connotes that they are no better than the “Morally –loose women” for reason that they beget sons who batter their wives:

If Prostitutes and other  
“Morally-loose women”  
Are social evils,

So are “God fearing  
 Chaste woman”  
 Who have mothered  
 Wife-battering sons (6)

Idealistic passion of love in the swathe of romantic relationships comes under serrated ironical whip of the poet. Futility of yearning for a man’s love never to be reciprocated is caught in the versification of the poem *After the Party* by Nini Lungalang. Monalisa exposes how even a love relationship, which otherwise connotes to finer emotions of affection, pleasure, tenderness, sacred bond, mutuality etc, soon becomes sore only to metamorphose into an ugly trap of exploitative bondage and women’s doom with marriage as the catalytic agent. A woman’s dream in love becomes fast tainted and becomes a paradise lost. Even love doesn’t survive at the hands of man’s whim and fancy; love soon turns into a prison. Monalisa draws the realistic sharp line of distinction to women’s position pre and post marriage. She verbalizes on how a female’s identity and freedom gets extinct post marriage and she step into invisibility over- shadowed by the man. The love so sweetly painted in the marriage poems by Temsula in *Man to Woman* and *Woman to Man* dons a differing avatar when love is now infused with sheer odium and rancor in lines below as penned by Monalisa. Love is now reduced to nothing but a conundrum to women’s never-ending angst in such a socio cultural set up where maleness is a celebration. Love marriage is rendered to nothing more than a myth by the poet.

I am no longer in bondage  
 For you have ceased to be

My unquenchable thirst  
 And insatiable crave (23)  
  
 This cannot be an offering  
 Of apologies  
 Because I cannot forgive  
 Anyone who has taken  
 So much of me  
 And contributed  
 So generously  
 To the erosion  
 Of the earlier me,  
 All in the name of love  
 And other such sentiments,  
 Culminating always  
 In my imprisonment within  
 Emotional relationships (22)

Nini Lungalang harmonizes with her compatriot bard Monalisa in whipping up the lamentable visage of marriage in her poem *Anniversary Celebrations*. She caricatures marriage as a phony defunct institution which is portrayed as merely a vilification quarter of two separate souls glued together for trepidation of societal stigmatic backlash. She views marriage as “a compound-duple contrapuntal pulse” (Lungalang 23). Through a personal encounter of such a marriage she in a mood of disenchantment penned *Anniversary Celebrations*. She recounts, “A person I know

and his wife went through a difficult patch. They would constantly be sniping at each other. How miserable this people were having to live with each other and unable to get rid of their shackles. Divorce was not the answer. The wife was not to be blamed because the husband was a slipshod philanderer and a drunkard and never a successful husband or father. In the poem, he is trying to be so polite but it is only superficial politeness; there is no real togetherness. They do big talk when they don't really mean it.” (Lungalang, Personal Interview. 29 November 2016). She poetizes this marriage as thus:

We think in different languages now.

What is it to you, then,

If I should leave or not?

For even in our deepest moments

You and I are always separate. (TMY 22)

Continuum to the issue of marriage, Monalisa makes a reference to the practice of the dowry culture in India which is a chief socio cultural menace for the third world feminists. It is this devilry social practice which has women objectified denigrating them into materialistic acquisition commodities. A rhetorical semblance is aligned between the discriminatory practices of dowry, with women who are economically dependent and women who are unable to bear a son. There is ironical reference to how much women are valued in such a social set up according to the expectations on her. Women are dutifully expected to bear sons for continuity of the male lineage, failing of which she is deemed to be ‘cursed’. The status of women is

reduced to ashes if she is unable to provide her price; for her value is gauged according to the dowry that comes with her to the house she thought she could call a home: These women are reduced to or destined to be at the mercies of societal judgments and repercussions in cases where the women cannot pay up her price to be a wife, a mother:

Dowry-less Brides  
 Penny-less Wives, and  
 Son-less Mothers  
 Have their  
 Destinies written  
 On invisible  
 Tongues of flames (3)

Over the same issue, Temsula provokes the thoughts and hearts to a deep questioning of the culture of dowry. She endorses the fact that oppression with its myriad faces challenges the existence of a gender fair society. The poet talks about an incidence of dowry death in the poem *Requiem?* In the poem, the woman becomes a hopeless victim of avarice. Sad reality is that it will merely be another accident accompanied with no sign of compunction. Recompense for the man is Freedom and the man scuttles to *rehearsing for another round of phera*. But what about the women whose penalty lies in death? For the woman, the poet laments in grievous apprehension:

Who will mourn?  
 Mothers and Fathers

Millstones with daughters?

Or daughters who are simply born? (BoS 41)

In an almost mystical connection to the poem *Requiem?*, Nini Lungalang bridges it with her poem carrying the same title *Requiem for 'I'*. It is as if the poet here is mourning together with her compatriot bard Temsula over the death of the pitiable woman in *Requiem?* Nini puts the woman to rest in peaceful death from a life that was led in 'anger and tears..' and so she says,

And so, dear one, sleep,

I do not grudge your rest,

And wake, when you will,

To a finer, plane of living

In peace. (TMY 34)

## 5.6. Asymmetrical Gender Identity

Along the same continuum of sentiments, the poets address inequality in the considerations of gender identity sanctioning Simone de Beauvoir's statement that "one is not born a woman, but becomes one." (Beauvoir 293) All the poets articulate their concern in that femininity as a cultural construct inscribes the society's views about women through conventions and inhibits women's individuality defining women to roles and identities as per its norms. Contemptuous over the disparaging device to the destruction of the female identity the patriarchal stringently preset gender identity occupies a core concern in their poems. Temsula dwelled on this core

issue through a rural set up as differing to Monalisa who portrays the same through a more urbanized setting. In *Cogitating For A Better Deal*. Monalisa opines, “However educated, exposed and enlightened, Naga men and Naga society have not abandoned our patriarchal core”. (CFABD 80) She says of educated Naga women as that, “This (education/academic qualification) does not actually empower her as a person, not when she is confined to the rules of a patriarchal value-system and must abide by them, as also co-operate with them”(Kikhi 74) Monalisa makes a scathing derision at the patriarchal social set up. The lines below highlights the poet’s sentiment in that mostly a woman’s life gets itself sandwiched between the rigid cruelties of patriarchy and her social and household responsibilities. The poet penned her concern as thus:

A battered wife  
 Is a living testimony  
 Of man’s inability  
 And fear of inferiority,  
 Well-concealed by a  
 Mask of “masculinity”  
 In a patriarchal society (*WWPP*: 8)

You refuse to look at reality,  
 Reinforce oppressive rules of society  
 To play the injured party  
 And degrade me with violence  
 To establish your superiority (120)

The poets also examines the asymmetrical gender identity where every space that is honorably held high and revered belongs for man to dwell in and all that space which no one would choose to tread on belongs for women to dwell in. Monalisa Changkija describes this distorted gender positions when she writes:

We will remain the way we were,  
 You, the man on the pedestal,  
 I, the woman under it. (14)

This *under* position of women penned in the poem above by Monalisa is further detailed by Temsula in the poem *Woman*. She wrote of women's identity as

Nature fashioned her thus.  
 To bear the burden  
 To hold the seed  
 And feed  
 Every other need  
 But hers.....  
 Man beguiled her  
 Into submission  
 Thus establishing  
 Timeless dominion  
 While he forayed and strayed (BoS 17)



Nini Lungalung seals the spheres of difference between man and woman in the poem *Anniversary Celebrations* in her collection of poems *The Morning Years*. The poet takes the realm of severance from the physical surface to mental, emotional and spiritual spheres. This irreversible point of disparity is captured in the lines:

What is it to you, then,  
 If I should leave or not ?  
 For even in our deepest moments  
 You and I are always separate (TMY 23)

The very title of the poem *Man And Whore*, significantly highlight gendered space where women is seen no more better than a whore for man to use so as to appease their masculine desires and display their superiority. A.J. Sebastian comments on this poem as thus, “In *Man and Whore*, Nini Lungalang examines the basic distorted gender positions in a male-female dialogue. The title itself reflects the woman in the darker side as the whore. He on the contrary remains the unsullied man. For a dialogue to be successful, both the parties have to be on an equal pedestal. But the case in hand is of the man who begins with a male dominated position of looking down upon his female counterpart as a whore. He is excellent in his dissembling and looks down upon her only as a plaything of his lust.” ( Sebastian,A.J 231 ) Sebastian also goes on to comment, “The poem projects the woman as a subaltern in her victim position.....Her speech is one of subordination as she is nothing more than a whore to him. She becomes a mere cog in the machine of his lust.” (Sebastian,A.J 231). Through the poem, Nini portrays femininity being extinguished to a minion and if there be any flicker of existence, to being a mere object of retribute for man to flame

his egoistic identity of supremacy. The poet's own comment of the poem reads as thus, "The man evidently felt he is far more superior which in itself is gendered connoted. He is using the woman as an object, and in spite of his moral laxity he is stupid enough to think that he is morally superior. I've noticed that since I've spoken to a few of such women: they don't do it for enjoyment but only out of sheer need. I think she is humanely speaking, I think she is a better person because she treats him as an equal. She's not proud of what she's doing but she realizes his need also. So that ways I believe she is infinitely made superior to him." (Lungalang. Personal Interview. 29 November 2016).

A woman's sense of being is captured in the poem *Nocturne* by Nini Lungalang. Swathed deep within the myriad responsibilities of the present 'today' and the same old works awaiting 'tomorrow', the woman feels the narrow limits of living her life. In a personal touch to this poem, the poet confesses that, "when I wrote that poem I don't know why but I was feeling rather claustrophobic, I was going through a phase of social claustrophobia" (Lungalang. Personal Interview. 29 November 2016).

Perhaps the most lucid representation of identity characteristics regarding both the women and men is etched in the poem *Unseen Faces* by Monalisa Changkija. In segregating the distinct gender spaces, she addresses the concept of separate spheres and delineates men to 'public glory' and women as 'unseen faces'. She attributes the men with the qualities of a warrior –'brave and mighty' –bringing glory to his tribe but 'tears' to his vanquished. She points out that men are 'the councilor-astute and acute, clever and calculating, whose mind mastered the subjugation of people 'who

had the right but not the might' (WWPP 42). In contrast, Changkija writes about women as:

Write now of them  
 Patient and enduring  
 Tending and caring  
 Enabling warriors and councilors  
 To conduct the affairs  
 Of the human races,  
 Write now of them,  
 Who always remain unseen faces. (WWPP 42)

## 5.7. Violence Against Women

The culture of violence against women is a core feminist issue, a human rights issue and a major concern in the world society today. On the issue of violence against women, “according to a 2005 study, globally, women and girls ages 15 to 44 are more likely to be maimed or killed by men than by malaria, cancer, war and traffic accidents combined.” (Garbacik 61). Studies reveal discrimination against women costs many female lives each day. Globally, at least one in three women and girls has been beaten or sexually abused in her lifetime. Jaimee Garbacik, a specialist in Gender studies states that, “second wave feminists made great strides in establishing women’s shelters and resources for domestic abuse, but many assaults and violent

crimes against women are committed by strangers or acquaintances. ...Studies further suggest that most domestic battering and intimate partner homicide victims results from an abusive partner's overwhelming desire for control. In other words, its about power." (61) 'To understand the nature and forms of steadily increasing gender violence, we have to view the nature of violence as a maintenance mechanism of a patriarchal society. In a patriarchal society the role played by women is generally devalued and are not allocated a high status. In the framework of such a social organization, violence against women is rationalized and is motivated to achieve the subordination of women. The widespread violence against women is seen both as an indicator and a means of perpetuating the subordinate status of women' (Yadav 24). Gender-based violence thus is violence that is directed against a person on the basis of gender. It constitutes a breach of the fundamental right to life, liberty, security, and dignity, equality between women and men, non-discrimination and physical and mental integrity. Gender-based violence reflects and reinforces inequalities between men and women. The United Nations Organization's statement on gender violence reads "any act of gender based violence that results in or is likely to result in physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty whether occurring in public or private life'(www.unfpa.com ). Thus, Gender Violence is related to aggressive and offensive behavior against women, be it against their body or their sensibility.

The poets under study also address this very pertinent universal issue of Gender Violence. They too delve into and render in their poems, gender inequality and sexually discriminated based gender violence. Aggressive and offensive behavior against women explicitly gets exposed in their poems. Mention may be made that

amongst all the poets in focus, the one who comes right on at the forefront and who stands out loud and tall in addressing gender violence is Monalisa Changkija. She takes on the voice of a feminist activist and champions this cause through her collection of poems entitled *Weapons of Words on Pages of Pain*. Her words in this collection truly turn into weapons where she also emphatically exposes those hands, perpetrating Gender Violence. Changkija empathizes with those women victims of violence with her collection of poetry - *Weapons of Words on Pages of Pain*. The poet records:

These weapons of words  
On my Pages of Pain  
Are merely records  
Of violence that reign  
In households  
Of untold grieving souls (*WW PP* 19)

To Changkija, women are but *untold grieving souls* and Silence is woman's only cover because masculinity in its lust for power mutes the feminine voice and maims the feminine being. Monalisa opens her collection of poems by making a reference to God's creation of man. She muses on God's creation of man in his own image and seem to be disillusioned to see the manifold untold miseries and violence meted on women perpetrated by this creation of God. Would it be that the poet even questions the image of God after whose image, man is created. God is justice in its pristine form but the poet is led to question the value or futility of creating man after His own image, if this man is made capable of extreme devilry. She writes:

If God made man  
 In His own image,  
 Where shall the  
 Battered seek Justice? (*WWPP*: 1)

The poets, in addressing gender violence address a global phenomenon in that violence against women is woven into the very fabric of the world society. Changkija states, “They (violence) are realities in every society.” (Preface *WWPP*). Throughout the world, women are still relegated to the second class status that makes them more vulnerable to abuse and less able to be defensive. The poets point out that Domestic violence on women is all pervasive and cuts across all social and economic categories. The lines in *Weapons of Words on Pages of Pain* are wrought with cries of pain; pain of the subaltern. The poet depicts ‘violence on women’ as perpetuating female submission to male dominance. The poets write from the perspective of every violated woman posited in a society drenched with patriarchal ideologies. The silently writhing cries of women are then being represented from the deepest chasm of the poet’s heart. Changkija states, “The first part of the collection, *Weapons of Words on Pages of Pain* and *To Whom It May Concern* reflect some of my thoughts on abused and battered women, on domestic violence and on women’s ability to rise above the second class citizenry. Yes, I am empathizing with and also crying out at the same time along with women who have suffered and continue to suffer in a discriminatory society” (Changkija ii) In the ‘After-Word’ of her collection Monalisa writes, “Domestic Violence is the most powerful and effective means of perpetuating patriarchy resulting in the suppression, oppression and repression of women, which manifest in other crimes against women outside the home. When women are not safe

at home in the midst of her flesh and blood, her family members, let us have no illusions that women would be safe anywhere outside the home” (61). Echoing forth the larger perspective of Gender violence as a global phenomenon where abusers and victims come from all classes, nationalities, economic strata and ages, both Temsula and Changkija too confer to this universal actuality of the plight of the female, young and old, lowly or elevated in society. They also addresses mental trauma and the psychological impact of violence on women, perhaps the *raison d'être* of why the poets take on this predicament with raw contemptuous sarcasm.

Along the same wavelength Changkija states, “We must understand that domestic violence happens, and rampantly too, because men believe that they have the right to physically, mentally and psychologically abuse, assault and battery on women, who men actually believe are their property. This is women’s reality because our cultures, traditions, laws, religions, social interactions and all other aspects of our lives are patriarchal. Domestic violence also happens because women too perpetuate it by having internalized patriarchal ideologies, beliefs and value systems.”(*WWPP* 61)

The poets mince no word to come against the traditional cultural mentality of man in particular and society in general, in taking it as the normal or the usual’ way of life to subjugate women and devaluing them as only an object or a property they own. Man thinks it to be their birth right to treat the wives as no better than animals and servants: In a strong opposition violence meted against women, Changkija emphatically projects that the violence that man perpetrates on women is but only a manifestation of their ‘inability; and ‘inferiority’. Violence is only a façade to their lustful display of physical power and might and men resort to violence to satiate the

male ego and false pride in being physically stronger crushing women with verbal, mental and physical abuses.

Man's Inadequacies

And Insecurities

Speak in the

Language of Violence (4)

## 5.8. Traps of Women's Subordination

The poet Temsula Ao registers remarkable and explicit confrontation on the stark realities of women thickly entwined in the grips of the so called cultural and social norms. Resonant ripples of feminist concern is sounded along the lines that, 'The basic view is that Western Civilization is pervasively patriarchal (ruled by the father) – that is, it is male centered and controlled, and is organized and conducted in such a way as to subordinate women to men in all cultural domains: familial, religious, political, economic, social, legal, and artistic.' (Abrams 122) In *Woman* Temsula also lucidly present the exasperating predicament of women at the hands of Nature, Custom, Man and Religion. In this poem is presented the women as eternally trapped in the mechanisms of the universe without a respite. The poet presents the space of women as having no option but to succumb to living nature's way where she is fashioned *to bear the burden and to hold the seed* and put everyone's need above hers. She must abide by society's customs as much as she hates it because stipulation demands that *custom prevailed* and religion too perpetuate the idea of women as the *beast of burden*. Man becomes a chief instrument in the hands of such a society and forever women are trapped in the hands of society endorsing man's dominion. Temsula writes:



Man beguiled her  
 Into submission  
 Thus establishing  
 Timeless dominion (BoS 17)

The poem *Despair* aptly describes the trapped and the helpless and as the title itself indicates the utter despairing position of women in the hands of man. Of the man, therefore, the poet writes:

But relentless  
 And remorseless,  
 He sits unmoving  
 And unmoved  
 In the deepest downs  
 Of my lonely soul. (BoS 143)

Therefore, the world is considered a man's world in the poem *The Creator* where even if the woman is powered to hold the seed and beget, this power to create quickly dwindles and the initial euphoric power of catching the man into her world swirls a reversal and soon nature takes precedence wherein, the woman becomes *the caught*. Her world is now swirled into a web of struggles and she dissolves into *the nameless half of the entire man*. On this the poet pens as thus:

But burdened  
 With the woman in me  
 The catcher  
 Became the caught  
 Struggling to preserve  
 The self from dissolving  
 Into a domestic web  
 And becoming  
 The nameless half  
 Of the entire man (BoS 128)

## 5.9. Voice of Protest and Assertion

True to the spirit of the feminism wave where, 'A feminist questions and fights against a male dominated social system of which women are also often part of. Their struggle is against injustices being done to women and all those who are responsible for this, be they men or women. The goal of feminism is not to set women against men, but to create a gender sensitive society, which treats men and women as equals. The ultimate goal of feminism is to establish a society which is committed to gender equality in thought' (Rita and Roy 34), the poets in focus through their poetic sensibilities unveils their deeply felt concern and speak out for women in a quest to locate women's fair share of identity in a highly patriarchal society. All the poets proves accurate to that, "Feminist literature highlights and condemns the inequalities and injustices in the treatment of women—the disadvantages women have to bear on

account of their gender” (Kumar 9). In the process of addressing this whole nexus of discrimination of the female, the poets seem to yield and hope dwindles wherein an overshadow of an exasperated surrendered spirit eclipses. Changkija, in an instance of rare submission gave way in lines below to the deeply entrenched traditional mindset of gender equation where all fairness of living a life dissipate into the abnormal scale of society which endorses discrimination of its fairer sex, a society where women will always be taken as the lower human being when she writes:

Now I see, decades of new years  
 Will not alter all that within us.  
 We will remain the way we were,  
 You, the man on the pedestal,  
 I, the Woman under it (*WWPP* 14)

In Temsula’s poem *The Leaf–Shredder* a major challenge to women’s space in society is exposed which reflects the same advocacy that Changkija takes on in the above poem where woman remains to be under the high authoritative position of man. One of the main patriarchal male dominated society’s focal point is male progeny. This predicament of such women who is unable to procreate is fated to be chased away from the house and is then considered accursed. Therefore, the chief responsibility of a woman in a marriage is to bear sons to the man lest she is thrown out as a useless object to be fast replaced. The wife then is no more than a child bearing machine.

'He calls me barren and says I am a curse  
 On his clan and demands a son by next harvest  
 Or he'll take another woman who will  
 Hold his seed and give him sons.' (BoS 252)

The staunch persistence of Gender Inequality in the world social fabric had thus been a foremost subject of feminism where, 'A feminist perspective demonstrates that gender hierarchy is so persistent that even in movements that purport to be gender inclusive, mobilization, leadership patterns, strategies, and even outcomes are gendered' and 'while theories of gender in social movements tend to emphasize the movements' maintenance and reproduction of gender inequality, they often neglect processes of resistance and change in gender relation. But perhaps influenced by the tradition of gynocriticism expounded by Elaine Showalter, the poets in focus too draw attention to this unequal gender relation between man and woman through their artistic expertise while registering a resistance to discrimination of the fairer sex through their poems. They also present a resistance to male dominance and ways of the society and they also voices in the truest spirit of feminism just as feminists "...Argue that feminism should work to liberate women from a system of male-centered values and beliefs, and should empower them to discover their own uniquely female identity" (Tolan 323). Changkija's artistic expression of self assertion as a woman posited in such a male dominated society is recorded in her collection of succinct yet powerful poems. Her words truly turn into weapons of resistance in several of her poems.

Ah, but you forget  
 My weapons of words  
 I leave behind  
 on these Pages of Pain (*WWPP*: 12)

and

Immured as I am  
 In situations overwhelming  
 I refuse to acknowledge  
 The barred doors around me.  
 Somewhere there is a window  
 With hinges not too taut  
 For my feminine strength and will  
 To open and escape (*WWPP*: 24)

If Changkija, in an instance of a poem echoed a sense of hopeless despair, instantaneously she picks up that unmistakable flare of feminine indomitable spirit. She stands tall in her fight for the fairer being when she commits to stand, and voice out in resistance to discriminatory impositions on women. She would not be bowed down despite any consequences. In a representative voice to women, the poet Changkija makes a strong statement when she says women as much as men have an identity of their own and that the identity of women does not revolve around that of men. In a pursuit to feminine liberty, She writes:

I have discovered  
 Your life isn't more precious  
 Your time isn't more valuable  
 Your professional isn't more noble  
 Your pay-cheque isn't heavier  
 Your status isn't more important  
 Than mine (20)

Monalisa Changkija's boldness bear out genuine gender concerns to pull women above the "second class citizenry". The poet then appeals to every woman to set their sights towards the skies and to break the bars and fly for freedom *to swirl with Swallows and chirp with Sparrows* (25).

Just as "Writing is a means of creating a place in the world, the use of the personal voice and self-revelation is means of self-assertion" (Bruce 152), both Changkija and Temsula uses the personal pronoun 'I' that resonates with their commitment to the cause of the woman as they identifies themselves with every women in their cry for freedom. A continuum of the same sentiment is found in Charlotte Bronte who writes, "I do not wish women to have power over men; but over themselves," and above all, "Be the heroine of your life and not the victim".Changkija in an almost audacious note writes:

I being what I am,  
 And imprisoned within an invisible cell,  
 Shall not be stilled.

I know I will pay  
 For what I have to say,  
 But I must write against  
 Unseen chains,  
 On these Pages of Pain (*WWPP*: 14)

Temsula on the hand in a subtle contemplative note resolves to create the real woman perhaps undaunted by the so called man's world. She imagines *a brave new world* for such real women. Towards this same connotation, Temsula uses the imagery of mythological brave female figures in the like of Medea, Clytemnestra, femme fatale Borgia. Cleopatra etc to epitomize the image of the brave, free independent woman and the poets invokes through these exemplary characters, a quest for feminine identity. She articulates a call to women to *shake off the hold that nature devised and man improvised* in the poem *Woman*. A sense of dark remonstrance is found in the poem *Despair* wherein the poets vent out the exasperated state of utter protest to man's lust of power over her as poetized thusly:

I despise him  
 I defy him  
 And invite  
 Every passing Joy  
 And visiting laughter  
 To deny him supremacy. (BoS 143)

### 5.10. Conclusion

In the spirit of the feminists in the late 1960s, all the poets raised a consciousness and awareness to gender equality or gender bias through their poetic art. Sensitive, outspoken and critical of the gendered state of affairs in their homeland, they have poignantly captured unforgettable accounts of women registering their protest against patriarchal hegemony. Evidently and justifiably, they define feminism in their works, showing awareness of women fated to belong to a subordinate group and as such have suffered wrongs. They also explicitly express their consciousness in the recognition that women's condition of subordination is not natural, but socially determined. The feminist consciousness in them churns a determination to gendered protest, a resistance to being looked down as just another useful or useless object. The inflamed spirit of feminism shines forth in the poetic output of all these poets as they expose the countless sufferings of women at the hands of man, social and cultural impositions. A juxtaposition of the demure femininity but its unbroken spirit finds articulation in the poets even as they intelligibly applaud the strength of women and the fierce spirit of women's quest for freedom to live her life.

In penning the angst of women, Changkija commits to fights against injustices meted on women through 'Weapons of Words'. The essence of their poems is thus a celebration of the feminine protest to their subjugated status. Despite of painting a deeply dismal picture of violated women, their renderings does not dissipate into absolute despondency. Instead they make a counter-shot at the devilment of societal



evils on women by making liberating allegorical references of women with ‘bird’ ‘Swallows’ and Sparrows’, where women will break free from all bondages. There is hope in their poems. Changkija writes:

Somewhere there is a window  
 With hinges not too taut  
 For my feminine strength and will  
 To open and escape (WWPP 24)

And

But if you don’t reach out  
 To hold my hand  
 I’d still break the bars and fly (WWPP 28)

Atwin to this allegorical representation of ‘women’s freedom’ to a ‘bird’s flight’ is beautifully captured in the lines:

Though wounded, you whirled and flew away.....  
 Free! Free at Last! (TMY 16)

The poetic renderings definitely are writ with various and timeless monitions to the agencies of injustices and cruelties against womankind. Feminine consciousness in all the poets is unmistakably visible.

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## CHAPTER – VI

### CONCLUSION

*My task which I am trying to achieve is, by the  
power of the written word, to make you hear,  
to make you feel – it is, above all, to make you  
see. That – and no more, and it is everything.*  
– Conrad

Easterine Kire, Monalisa Changkija, Temsula Ao and Nini Lungalang chime a harmonious chord with Joseph Conrad's thought in the quote etched above. Through their literary proficiency, they stand as representative figurines to the voices of their native people in general and their fellow women in particular. The representational stance of these writers can be summed up in the words of Manolisa Changkija, “, “A writer's core responsibility is to represent the voice of the people, to speak up for the people, whether violated women, abused children, discriminated disabled people, etc, as also to write against injustice, discrimination, racism, and all other ills and evils in and of society.”(Changkija. E-mail Interview. 14 July 2016).

Representation has been associated with aesthetics (art) and semiotics (signs). The term 'representation' carries a range of meanings and interpretations. In literary theory, 'representation' is commonly defined in three ways, (a) -To look like or resemble, (b)-To stand in for something or someone and (c)-To present a second time; to re-present” (Wikipedia). In representing the gender dilemmas, the writers under study join in the tradition of feminist representation as “from the outset of the second

wave, representation became one of the crucial areas of feminist debate.”( Pilcher & Whelehan 135). Their literary texts too are representational articulations to the endorsement of a gender just society thereby corroborating with the thought that, “Any text....is conceived as a discourse which, although it may seem to present, or reflect, an external reality, in fact consists of what are called representations- that is, verbal formation which are the “ideological products” or cultural constructs of the historical conditions specific to an era.....these cultural and ideological representations in texts serve mainly to reproduce, confirm and propagate the complex power structures of domination and subordination which characterize a given society.” (Abrams & Harpham 245)

The present study discourses along the hypothesis of feminist thoughts through close textual reading. It is an attempt to unravel the theme of gender premised strictly within the parameters of men and women binary relational dynamics intertwined with socio cultural practices in the select works of Easterine Kire, Monalisa Changkija, Dr. Temsula Ao and Nini Lungalang. The study made in-depth investigation into the portrait of gendering in their works. Irrespective of the fact that they maintain similar ideological position in trying to understand and expose the system which promotes gender imbalance , the writers are compared and contrasted in the propensity of their technique and style in addressing gender issues. The study is carried out not only to assess these writers towards addressing gender concerns but it carries with it genuine pursuit to redress women predicaments.

Chapter one of the study is divided into two segments. The first segment introduces the socio-cultural and political background of the writers as well as the women's movement in Nagaland to which the four writers belong to. The introductory segment is written with the intent to acquaint the readers with a clearer understanding of the social cultural perspective from where the writers discourses through different genres of literary production on the thematic considerations of gender. It is also an attempt to locate the four writers in the contribution towards the wider gamut of women's movement to empowerment and equality through their artistry. The second segment of the introductory chapter presents an introduction to the writers: Easterine Kire, Monalisa Changkija, Dr. Temsula Ao and Nini Lungalang, highlighting on their biographical and professional data as well as enumerations on their various literary works.

Chapter two gives an elaborate consideration on understanding the concept of gender with feminism as the theoretical study area. In order to foster a proper understanding of gender concept development, the chapter looked into the biological and socialization considerations between sex and gender, the historical construction of gender which led to the awakening of feminine consciousness and philosophical ramifications on feminist debate on gender. The chapter also looks into feminism as an organised movement as well as its varied ideologies on gender winding up with a glimpse on the current global dimension of feminism.

Chapter three presents gender discrimination in the context of Patriarchy. In this chapter the study goes into in dept textual reading method in order to analyse the ways in which gender discrimination is an ingrained part of patriarchal ideology that

proliferate the survival and perpetuation of gender disparity in all aspects of life- social, political, cultural, as well as in individual attitudinal set ups.

Chapter Four dwells on dismantling the ideology of gender stereotyping through the short stories of Temsula Ao and Nini Lungalang. Through the delineation of untraditional female and male roles as projected in their stories- *Laburnum For My Head*, *A Simple question*, *The Jungle Major*, *The Child of Fortune* etc., the authors not only registers a resistance to gendered stereotyping but also question the expediency of the strictly demarcated gender spaces into private and public spheres. The intent of this chapter was to portray the new woman image while stirring up a consciousness towards gainsaying gender stereotyping.

Chapter Five was contrived with the intent to churn out the quintessence of feminist consciousness inherent in select poems of Monalisa Changkija, Temsula Ao and Nini Lungalang. The chapter also investigates into the feminine consciousness of the authors adding a psychoanalytic strain to the exposition of female subjugation corresponding with feminists' principles for liberation through their female characters.

Chapter six is the conclusive chapter wherein the findings and conclusion of all the previous chapters are ruminated and accounted.

As discussed in the foregoing chapters, the natural orientation of being born and brought up in a society that is wrought deeply in its cultural mechanisms wherein gender inequality is its understood and accepted norm, the authorial sweep of the

authors in focus takes over the task and responsibility to address this issue in an effort to encourage and launch the women to an era of self-expressivity, independent self and to stand on equal footing with man. To this effect all the four bards commit to the pursuit of feminism from a culturally constructed gender perspective with the patriarchal system as the backdrop. As female writers belonging to the same existential gender predicaments they write with deep insight from the perspective of one experiencing firsthand the dominance of the male and the subjugation of female credited on being thoroughly soaked in engendered attitudes.

The writings of the four have bona fide foundation laid upon their own life situations. Since they sincerely share their participatory lived experiences, their writings on women's oppression and gender discriminations are genuinely credible. Truly, they write from an extremely personalised corner just as Changkija says, "As any woman in a patriarchal society, I have also been a victim of the patriarchal value system, besides growing up seeing other girls and women experiencing the same and I cannot remain silent about this institutionalized injustice and violence against women and the victimization thereof." (Changkija. E-mail Interview. 14 July 2016). Kire also confesses that it was a therapeutic exercise for her on writing *A Terrible Matriarchy*, and she says, "I think I called it therapeutic because throughout my adult life I had seen gender abuse around me in our society. I had also gathered a great deal of understanding about how the perceived gender abuse was more complex than it appeared. For example, the story mirrors the abuse of gender within the same gender which is something not talked about before. It helped me to personally understand many issues in my personal life and that is why it was therapeutic although I have to state that the little girl is not me. People get confused since I used the personal



pronoun and used first person narrative. However it is not my autobiography. It is a book where I understand the underbelly of the society to which I belong.”(Kire. E-mail Interview.13 June 2016) Thus, the writers brilliantly inter- weaves the realities and experiences of their lives into their fictional world.

As opposed to Feminism that has assumed an aggressive and militant dimension in the West, feminism is more ambivalent in India. In the context of Nagaland, the emergence of women as an established organised feminist group is still its vestigial stage. However, the writers of this present study have sure created a niche for feminization through literature with their works on gender and women as the rudimentary cornerstone. Thence Easterine Kire, Monalisa Changkija, Temsula Ao and Nini Lungalang can irrefutably be called as pioneers in literary expression and representation of female consciousness as far as Nagaland is concern. They write consciously from a gendered perspective as a representative of the internally marginalized half of the human race. As members of the second sex, they share the collective experiences and collective oppression of women which they represent in their works as a direct product of the women’s movement which was begun in the 1960s. According to Peter Barry, the women’s movement was, “in important ways, literary from the start, in the sense that it realized the significance of the images of women promulgated by literature, and saw it as vital to combat them and question their authority and their coherence. In this sense the women’s movement has always been crucially concerned with books and literature, so that feminist criticism should not be seen as an off-shoot or a spin –off from feminism which is remote from the ultimate aims of the movement, but as one of its most practical ways of influencing everyday conduct and attitudes.” (Barry 122). ) Therein “the representation of women

in literature , then was felt to be one of the most important forms of socialization, since it provided the role models which indicated to women, and men, what constituted acceptable versions of the ‘feminine’ and legitimate feminine goals and aspirations. “(ibid 122). K. B.Veio Pou in his writing *Literary Cultures of India’s Northeast* aligns the four writers to a continuity of Kate Showalter’s, the feminist phase and the female phase as he records in reference to Easterine Kire, Monalisa Changkija, Dr. Temsula Ao and Nini Lungalang ,that “An interesting aspect of these Naga writers mentioned above is that they are all women . Women seem to have taken the helm in promoting Naga literature! .....when it comes to literature , though, women preceding men can also be looked upon as ‘carved out space’ to engage in subject matters where women were previously kept out from political spaces. These Naga writers have based their writings on experiences of the world they have lived through and continue to live today. Therefore, through their works a collective experience for the Nagas is exhibited, particularly of the recent and turbulent past that continues to linger as a force even while they engage with issues of the present times. The literary experiences of these writers have generated great interest among the readers because they disclose another panorama of the Naga life, the less talked about everyday lives. And therein also lies the power of literature which history may not be able to write about: the simple and ordinary individual experiences of the episodic past.” (Pou 48-49)

Even though the authors cannot be strictly isolated in their writing style per se, the stronger attributes intrinsic to classify distinctiveness in each of them like the activist in Monalisa Changkija , the philosopher that Nini Lungalang is, the realist in Easterine Kire and Temsula Ao as the socialist , whips up an interesting melange of approach and perspective in tackling gender issues. The difference in them is

miniscule as compared to the similitude grounds they tread on. Monalisa Changkija takes on a more vociferous and raucous stance in her assertion on violence against women and courageously exposes the perpetrators to this menace. Temsula is predominantly socialist in her approach as a writer. Many of her works are entrenched with matters concerning the society. In her works considered in this study, the writer whips sharply at the societal mores bearing heavily on the women and she dares to rebuff it. Easterine Kire is truly an ardent realist capturing even the infinitesimal and ordinary details of common people. Easterine's approach seems simple yet highly intelligent and she projects a style of persuasive exuberance aimed at expressing flaws in the generic gender make up in her society. Nini Lingalang proves to be the most philosophical of them all. She brings about high metaphorical references to represent the anomalies in her society rendering her works with the touch of a suave writer. All the four of them are unanimous in their vision of an androgynous future where the egalitarian way of life will be upheld and thrive as well.

The writers display a universal aura while still rooted in their native soil attitudinally, in that, they too address the core issue of western feminism in addressing the subjugated status of women, identifying the basis of gender inequality and reprisal to bring a turnabout in the gender equation in all aspects of life. But the writers also creates an affinity with the third world feminism in that they identify women's status in terms of domesticity, home, family, village or community lives and that women are invariably portrayed as victims of a patriarchal order which robs them of their voice, dictates their fate, and forces them into enslavement and dependency. Nonetheless, these writers have created a confluence of both sides of feminism mentioned above garnering an inimitable place in the gamut of feminist world literature having

contributed significantly through Naga feminist literature in English. They have taken Nagaland into the world of feminism specifically in the light of socialist radical feminism. Another aspect contributing to their universal outlook is manifest in their drive to address women's rights as a human rights issue. They share an outrage at the violation of women's rights to even access the most basic ways of life like right to speak, right to education, right to recreation etc. which are amply addressed in their works.

The writers have established a fresh artistic taste in that they are valiant and unequivocal in their content and expression, but not without sense of responsibility and modesty in their expectations. They put themselves in the shoes of every violated woman. Through their female characters they embrace the so called masculine roles with feminine passion, inner stillness, confidence and self-worth drawing a fissiparous line from the suffocating fences of despotic suppression for women but at the same time advocating a sense of empathic mutuality between the genders. They negotiate a mutuality of status with man whilst never shrugging off their responsibilities as a wife, mother and daughter in line with the adage, 'with empowerment comes responsibilities'.

The writers unveil the inner urges of their female characters through interior monologue and confessions to depict their situations which in turn echo forth the inner turmoil of women through varied moods and nuances. These techniques facilitated the writers to delve deeper into the psycho-emotional reality of the female characters. In so doing, they empathize with women and along with a daub of kindred feeling, they do not submit any justification for orchestrating women behaviors or

actions that may be inappropriate or are against socially accepted order, rather women are given the liberty to act in their own ways in an effort to churn out a sense of independent identity and free will for women.

Additionally, in exploring the female psyche of their characters they could address a perennially flagitious issue that confronts the violated Naga women. In them the deep issue of 'silence' that lingers as a defensive measure to their plight is probed out. The writers give a lucid representation of the consciences in relevance to the context of Naga women's inability to speak out for fear of violence in the hands of men and societal judgment, maintaining fidelity to societal expectations. 'Silence' for Naga women stands to be their refuge but not without its evil repercussions. It is then only through such effective medium of creative accentuation with a stratagem to create cognizance of a gender just society, that the subaltern speaks. Portraits of women in their works assume multiplicity of images. They convincingly create realistic and reasonable portraits of women without a trace of idealisation. Amid the regular images of women, certain women are portrayed as donning the role of patriarchs and custodians of traditional conduct of life through who is presented the existing sentient reality of gender abuse within the same gender.

The paradox of resistance and negotiation seem to coexist in foregrounding their feminist concerns. The writers try to maintain a balance between being both feminine and feminist at the same time. Indubitably, as women they project a sense of disquiet, of social claustrophobia, an acute awareness of lack of liberty and an overriding desire and aspiration to break away from the traditional fetters that are extremely retrograde and do not legitimize women to grow as individuals. But they

also acquiesce with Tori Moi's opinion about the three terms, 'feminism', 'femaleness', and 'femininity' which are frequently used to discuss feminist gender issues, of which she said, "in a general way, I see 'feminism as a political position, 'femaleness' as a matter of biology and femininity as a set of culturally defined characteristic. (Moi 182). Quest to integrate 'feminine', 'femaleness' and 'feminism' is seen in their scathing attack against man made chains and handcuffs that imprison women endorsed by society but they are not necessarily anti-man. The writers seem to be negotiating a wholeness of inter-twining and inter-dependency with men and society advocating an ideal concept of living between men and women as equal partners, complementing and supplementing each other, presented through the plurality and complexities of men and women characters in their works. They argue that gender identity cannot be construed in strict cubicle isolations, a specimen classification of which is tabled below.

Women	Men
Submissive, timid, contended of their subordinated state:  <i>Dielieno's mother, Rokono's mother, village women in the fictions and short stories, Nime etc.</i>	Sexual and violence Perpetrators, vindictive:  <i>Abeiu, Roko, the army caption(ASQ), Army sexual perpetrators etc.</i>
Rebellious, witty, strong emotionally, assertive: <i>Lentina, Khatila, Imdongla, Sonny's beloved, Dielieno, Apenyo etc.</i>	Timid, weak, dull witted:  <i>Village Goanburas, Tekaba etc.</i>
Tyrannical ,vindictive <i>The Grandmother, The step mother in A village Morning etc.</i>	Level-headed , Sensible: <i>Zeus, Dielieno's father, Leto, Levi, sato etc.</i>

The writers burrow deep into the root cause of gender inequality and they are able to realise and identify the crux to this matter. They bring to light the various

agencies responsible in harboring the perpetuation of gender quandaries in the like of socio-cultural and religious practices, men as well as women themselves. Mindset is identified as another trap web which is conditioned to pose as a theatre bed to internalization of subordinating practices as per society's imposition. They represent the mind as being intrinsically related to the adopted concept of the gender gap. Commenting on the intricacy of progress in terms of gender equation embedded in attitudinal change as far as their native community is concern, Temsula opines that, "One comes across young men between 35-50 age group who have an enlightened mind and they do express their willingness to have women in the political organizations too but there are certain very intransigent old men who put their foot down and they still want to rule the rooster. This group of emancipated men will also have to fight within their own circle before they can help women, the willingness is there but it will take some time for them to cross that hurdle." (Ao. Personal Interview. 27 May 2017).

Intentioned rebellion is noticeable in these women writers against existing institutions that keeps alive phallocentric exertions. They are unequivocal in showing openly their disgruntled vexation at the insidious institution of patriarchy. They use family and domestic life, love and marriage; warring situations etc. to represent that male cruelty and female subordination are direct penalties of the institution of patriarchy. Their literariness birthed a hierarchy of feminist writers addressing the core social issues confronting the women of Nagaland with the mainstay of their work wrought with the essential rebellious spirit against perpetrators of women's *under* and *shadowy* position and exploring holistic emancipation and empowerment of women's

individuality. The impassioned repulsion that these four writers perceive and feel towards the governing mechanism of patriarchy befalling its negativities and biasness against gender equity resounds through statements such as these: “Male attitude will not change in a hurry. This has to do with the century’s old tradition that had governed our religions because all Nagas like to be identified with the tribal and village authorities and men think that they own it where women had no participation all throughout.” (Ao. Personal Interview. 27 May 2017). Treading along the same thoughts, Nini too comments that, “Until we there is a shift in our way of thinking, the prognosis is not very cheerful for women.” (Lungalang. Personal Interview. 3 May 2017). Perhaps the most scathing remarks on patriarchy resounds in the words of Monalisa Changkija articulated in the Indian Express in regard to Naga women’s fight for 33% reservation in Urban Local bodies. She wrote, “Opposition to women’s participation in decision-making bodies and processes is centuries-old in Naga society. Our customary laws are deeply rooted in patriarchy. So for Naga tribal bodies to naively argue that such reservations violate Article 371 (A) of the Constitution of India and would adversely affect Naga culture and customs would be to miss the point of the argument against reservations. The core of the issue — like most other issues — is the ownership of land and resources. Naga culture and customs debar women from land ownership; hence our customary laws preclude women from inheriting land. This is exactly what Article 371 (A) protects — the social, cultural and customary practices of the Nagas, which are germane to land ownership and inheritance thereof. Much as Naga scholars acclaim Nagas’ “purest form of democracy” in sovereign village-republics and compare it to the “democracy” of the



Greek city-states, the fact is, this “democracy” is pertinent only to males — only males have the right to land ownership; only males can participate in the village parliament. It’s patriarchy in its purest form, actually.” (Changkija. E-mail Interview. 20 April 2017). A roundup comment on Gender Equality against the backdrop of patriarchy echoes as thus in the voice of Easterine Kire, “Some people will still be there who do not approve of gender equality even fifty years from now. But we should look at gender equality not so much as women doing the same things as men, but women in a place where they are respected for their intellect and for their contributions to society which are many. The households, for the majority, run smoothly due to the contributions of women cooking, caring for their children, washing their clothes cleaning the house and so on, and in addition, working in offices to supplement the family income. We should see gender equality as a place where we acknowledge all the labour provided by women. Maybe we can start with paying them for the immense amount of work they do. If the other members contribute in helping and there is labour division in the household, that will be a sign of gender equality starting from the home, the most important arena. Gender equality is not political policies being shaped and signed by someone sitting in an office; it is the society changing their mindset from thinking of women as inferior intellectually, to acknowledging that she has wisdom and the ability to take good, far seeing decisions and because of that ability, she needs to be part of decision-making. One can only hope we will be able to achieve that kind of equality in fifty years.” (Kire. E-mail Interview. 20 April 2017). The same shared glimmer of hope for gender equality glistens for Temsula too. She says, “It will take years, a few generations but we are getting there eventually.” (Ao. Personal Interview. 27 May 2017).

All the four writers strongly represent the stark realities of gender dynamics in their society that shows the extent of interior embedment in their feminine consciousness of the inequality of women and men and registers a determination to resist it. In so doing they have created and raised a consciousness to the new image of women who dare to stand up for their rights as equal partners dismantling the notion of stringent 'separate spheres' between the genders and defying conventional and hierarchical world of hetero-sexuality.

They are able to build a kindred spirit and bring unity in fragmentation. Their works professes that women have begun to take strides in search of their identities and individuality, of a liberated independence. In brilliantly representing the gender complexities they are able to formulate and ignite anew feminine consciousness in every human mind and heart which has the potential to herald in a new paradigm of wholeness in inter-dependence, empathetic society respecting and honouring the sacred relational binary between the men and women favoring egalitarianism.

Teeming with intellect and presence of mind the writers give a breather from the suffocating description of phallocentric squeezing grip over women's physical, mental and emotional well-being. They are successful in purgation of latent subversive feeling and discontent existence as a woman in the readers by shouldering their responsibility in swathing this feeling of despondency with a spirit of positivity and hope. Formal education as well as attitudinal change in both the gender is depicted as key benchmarks to overcome women's subordinated status. The writers are able to build a kindred spirit and bring unity in fragmentation. Their work

professes that women have begun to take strides in search of their identity and individuality and of a liberated independent existence. In brilliantly representing the gender complexities, they are able to formulate and ignite anew feminine consciousness in the reader's mind and heart which has the potential to herald in a new paradigm of wholeness in inter-dependence, empathetic society, respecting and honoring the sacred relational bond between the men and women favoring egalitarianism.

The study identified that the writers in focus obligated themselves to addressing gender issues but only from a socialistic perspective. This unbolts a wide open scope for further research studies leaving a plethora of gender issues to be addressed from myriad standpoints. The present study may conclude with other suggestive comments that can be remedial towards a gender just society from the writers under study obtained through personal and email interviews.

*"The fault lies not with culture but rather with the perversion of the application of culture. The fault lies with the humans who pervert cultural practices to make it appear that culture does not condone the abuse of womenfolk. We need to examine carefully if a cultural practice is actually being applied in the right way or in an abusive manner."* Easterine Kire (Kire. E-mail Interview.13 June 2016).

*"Women need to venture out of their shells and approach the traditional patriarchs telling them that times have changed so that they too should introspect about injustices embedded in customary laws and traditions of our land regarding the status of women. Women must venture to make the men understand that when women ask for equal status, we are only trying to strengthen the fabric of our society by adding to it the strength of women for the general and ultimate good of all Nagas."* Temsula Ao (Ao. Personal Interview. 27 March 2016).

*“ While the status of men-before and now- remains the same, for women some change has started over a decade or so, but this change is slow and still very unsure and worse still, it is mainly cosmetic. Naga society, or for that matter any patriarchal society, has never accorded equal status to men and women, so while women are clawing their way towards being mainstreamed , equal status as men is still a long distance away for women. To bridge the gender gap is an issue of revisiting value-systems pertaining to the core beliefs of the equality of men and women as full-fledged human beings.”* Monalisa Changkija (Changkija. E-mail Interview. 14 July 2016).

*“I am a feminist but certainly I am not a feminist of that brassiere burning category because I think there’s no need to be strident about asserting our equality. I certainly would not attempt to do certain things that man are better at doing and things are not always five plus five equals ten sometimes its six plus four equals ten. In the human ratings, I believe we are absolutely equal and I insist on being treated so, it’s not about being the same number. Unfortunately in our Naga society, women are treated even now as inferior from the cradle to the grave.”* Nini Lungalang (Lungalung. Personal Interview. 29 November 2016).

In an afterthought, the sagacious and compelling representation of gender by Easterine Kire, Temsula Ao, Monalisa Changkija and Nini Lungalang does put afire an optimistic belief with their envisioned horizon of a society drawn along gendered amity with both women and men deemed and treated on equal quantum of doing life. However, one cannot help but ponder over the interim expanse between the now and the envisioned horizon. One thinks - Is there really any scope and space for women’s free and all out existence? Is education really an enough means to vanquish inequality? Is denial of cultural practices really a heralding factor of total equality and liberty for women? If patriarchy is traced as the main hurdle to women’s subjugated

status, can patriarchy ever be obliterated? In the spur of this thought, it seems any leading of such questions or quest for a gender fair society appear synonymous to straddling in a hollow circle without an outlet or any resolute answer. Thusly, while the writers through their works fashioned a microcosm representation of Naga society mirroring a bigger worldview on gender challenges expressively laid out in their artistry, it is for the readers to see, reflect upon and act.

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