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Redefinition of Feminine in the Poetry of Adrienne Rich and Sylvia Plath

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation entitled "Redefinition of Feminine in the Poetry of Adrienne Rich and Sylvia Plath" attempts to show the tension and female experience in the poetry of Rich and Plath as the way to the redefinition of feminine. For the purpose this research work focuses on the feminist theories which mainly talk about the female quality and roles as defined by patriarchal norms and values and regard them as obstacle to the career of women.

The poetry of Adrienne Rich and Sylvia Plath evolve from the experiences of being women under male dominated society. The expression of rooted turmoil of their mind not only revolts against patriarchy but also redefines the feminine with the hope to create the new human world in which all women and men can equally exist. By exploring the experiences of women and the tension between personal experiences and political requirements, their aim is to resist against patriarchal domination. Rich asks all women to be conscious of the roles as determined by patriarchy and to overcome them. Plath, who is more aggressive with patriarchal tendencies, shows her disgust with marginalization of women as inferior in patriarchal society.

Both the writers have strong resentment towards patriarchal norms and values. These norms and values are always against women's freedom and equality to men, and treat men as self and women as the other. These writers present these values as social constructions not as natural but as male constructed. Patriarchal society has formed such norms to suit the needs and desires of male. In the process of construction, females are totally disregarded and behaved as the commodities to satisfy the needs and wishes of males who are always cruel to the necessities of women. These writers do not focus on the search for identity of women in such society which is always blind to female needs and desires.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Redefinition of Feminine in Rich and Plath

The poetry of Adrienne Rich and Sylvia Plath exposes the tension between personal and political problems as experienced by women in their poetry. Their poetry evolves from the experience of women in the male dominated society. The expression of rooted turmoil of their mind not only revolts against patriarchy but also redefines the feminine with the hope to create the new human world in which all women and men can equally exist. Rich and Plath through the use of metaphoric language attempt to question the patriarchal worldview which attaches logic and rationality to men and emotion and irrationality to women, and perpetuates the fallacy that men are superior to women. This dissertation, through the analysis of some of their poems along with the feminist ideas, attempts to see their female experiences, resistance against patriarchy, tension between personal and political experiences and the voice of women empowerment as the way to redefine the feminine challenging the patriarchal definition of it.

Adrienne Rich, through her works, explores the female experience in the patriarchal society. Through this exploration, she rejects the patriarchal definition of feminine and asks all women to be conscious and to overcome the roles of women that are determined by patriarchy. She is against the patriarchal definition of femininity according to which women are not admired for her experience and wisdom but for her delicacy and elegance. She rejects this patriarchal view and attempts to redefine the feminine through new perspective which is female perspective too. The emphasis of women on household works, physical beauty and submission to males are the definition of feminine under patriarchal construction. Rich through her works, asks all women to resist against patriarchal roles assigned to women. As her demand women

should not give priority to their physical beauty rather they should try to develop their mind and intellectuality. In her poem "Snapshots of Daughter-in-Law", she explores this very idea. In this poem one of the character, daughter-in-law asks her mother-in-law to reject the female roles which is determined by patriarchy.

Rich has adopted the issues of women as her primary concern. She, through the female characters of her works, explores the experience of women who reject the patriarchal view of feminine by separating themselves from political and social reality that subordinates and marginalizes the females. She observes the patriarchal structure of society as the root of oppression. The main concern of her aesthetics and literature is the female awareness of power that is constructed in the patriarchy. She believes that through the exploration of female experience and the resistance against biased roles attached to women, they should redefine the concept of feminine. This redefinition also helps to create the equal world for all men and women. She uses the poetry as an instrument of social change.

Sylvia Plath too, like Adrienne Rich, rejects the patriarchal definition of feminine through her poetry in which she confesses her psychological fragmentation and explores the inner conflict. Through such exploration, she gives voice to inner self of a woman who suffers under patriarchy. By unpeeling of an outer self of a female character, she shows the spirit of rebellious expressiveness hidden within a person. Even through the presentation of friendly and family relationships in her poetry, she shows the idealized and oppressive nature of friend and family towards a female character. The dominant issues of her poetry like identity crisis, loneliness, frustration towards social life, desire of rebellion against male values are common experiences of women.

Plath also explores the split female self under women's socially constructed roles as a wife, mother, daughter and an artist. Though her characters are conscious of these constructed roles, they cannot defy it due to their dependent identity in the family. By defying death in some of her poems like "Lady Lazarus", she challenges the oppressive relation of males which is also destructive to females. This challenge to male relation with females which is always dominating shows Plath's attempt to discard the male defined and guided feminine. She asks every woman to defy male dominated ideology as done by the female character of "Lady Lazarus". Plath is uncontrollably and violently aggressive towards patriarchal norms and values which marginalize women as secondary. Such aggressiveness with patriarchal tendencies shows her disgust with marginal and inferior roles of women which are patriarchally constructed. Plath believes that this discrimination is only the cultural construction and her effort in the poetry is directed to the recreation of the new world that is a feminine world.

1.2 World-view of Rich and Plath

Born as a daughter of Arnold Rich and Helen Jones on May 16, 1929 in Baltimore, USA, Adrienne Rich had to grow up as a child under patriarchal domination. Being influenced by male dominated ideology, Arnold Rich used to be the man of the house molding and shaping the life style and behavior of his family members. Under the regulation of male dominated family, mother and daughters had to sacrifice what they wanted to be and should follow what they should be on the view of the society. Such male domination in her family has shaped Rich's mind to resist against patriarchal norms and values.

Being the member of an upper-middle-class Jewish family, she deals with her understanding of Jewish identity, the plight of the Jewish people during World War II,

and the position of the American Jewish woman in its aftermath in an important part of her political writing. Beginning with the long autobiographical sequence *Sources* (1983) and continuing with works such as the essay "Split at the Root" (1986) and the more recent volume of poetry *An Atlas of the Difficult Word: Poems 1988-1991* (1991), Rich has repeatedly explored the personal and political implications of her own Jewish identity.

Even after her marriage with Alfred Conrad, an economist at Harvard in 1953, she as a married woman had to struggle the conflicts over prescribed roles of womanhood and those of artistry, over tension between love and anger. Nina Baym in *The Norton Anthology of American Literature* says that *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution* published 1976 contrasts the actual experience of bearing and raising children with the myths fostered by our medical, social, and political institutions" (2712). In 1970, their marriage ended as they separated and divorced. Her divorce case or her freedom from her marriage became the sign of crossing the bar of the norms and values of patriarchal society and then she fully involved in the feminist movement. Rich's commitment to lucidity, communication, community, and social change, and the unusual combination of aesthetics and activism established her as one of the great female writers and activists in America. Adrienne Rich's own comments on political poetry say as much about the importance she attributes to art as a form of social activism. By the mid-1960s Rich had decided that she could not merely limit herself into apolitical aestheticism. And she was calling for a reintegration of the personal and the political in order to create new forms of civilization.

Established as a leading poet of the generation, Adrienne Rich has drawn herself towards the women's liberation movement by shifting from the search for a

personal voice, as a poet, to the perspective of a collective and communal search. Her poetry is not limited to the search for personal identity but focuses on the equal existence of all women. She, as a poet, could find the conditions, provided by Women's liberation movement, in which she could overcome the split between a woman and a poet and could write about the women's existence. She had a great impact of feminist consciousness on her development as a writer. In the beginning of her career, she used to focus on the personal experience. Later the impact of Women's liberation movement and her participation on it helped her to shift her focus. Then she is found as a writer talking about the search for women's liberty and equal existence as male. Her writing does not center on the search for female identity under the patriarchally dominated society rather she emphasizes on the creation of equal world in which there is no domination of one to another. She talks about the patriarchy in the sense of male-dominated civilization that discriminates against the feminine, not only against women.

Rich's career as a political poet was launched with the publication of *Necessities of Life: Poems 1962-1965* in 1966. Several elements of her artistic consciousness and her conception of political poetry can be traced in her interaction with other women who had consistently explored the terrain of political poetry. Partial influence of Edna Millay can be found in Rich in whom she could see a representative example of a writer determined to defend her convictions in every way possible. She could see Millay as a woman who was not afraid to voice her opinion in public, to foreground the connection between art and social activism, and to argue for the right of the female poet to exercise social criticism. Most of all, Rich seems to have valued Millay's belief in the power of the poet to influence public opinion, that is to say, her belief in the conspiracy of poets and the potential of the intuitive imagination. This

influence in Rich helped her to value the power of the poets and their public voice. The earlier poet's sensitivity to injustice and social inequality provided Rich with a tangible model of the political poet's function. Following in the earlier woman's steps, Rich felt that she had to respond to the exciting political climate of the 1960s/1970s, and ignore the negative reception of political writing. She gradually established herself as a public poet, continued to produce political works, and managed to attain public visibility of a status. Her belief in the power of the female poet, and her persistence, integrity, and eagerness to use her public visibility in order to achieve her goal make her an important figure in the context of women's socially conscious poetry.

The works of Adrienne Rich, by exploring the female experience on patriarchal society, reject the patriarchal definition of feminine. Her poem "Snapshots of Daughter-in-Law" presents this idea as its persona asks her daughter-in-law to avoid the role of a woman as determined by patriarchy. Limited to household works, women used to give priority to their beauty which Rich tries to avoid and attempts to redefine the feminine in a new perspective. For this purpose, she focuses on the feminist consciousness of experience in the society of male constructed norms and values rather than focusing on the female identity in the patriarchal society. She believes that the feminist consciousness helps to reconstruct the human world into a redefined world where all men and women can live equally.

Rich asks all women to be conscious of the roles as determined by patriarchy and to overcome them. Such female roles are fixed to women by patriarchy to suit the purpose of the male only. So to reconstruct the new human world women should be conscious of these facts and they should resist against such biased roles attached to women. Rich does not focus on the search for identity of women under patriarchy.

She rather emphasizes on the idea of creating equal world for women which is free from domination and discrimination. According to her, the feminist consciousness and female experience should redefine the feminine. This redefinition creates the world equal for all where women need not starve for the quest for their identity.

In her work *Of Woman Born* she expresses her resistance towards her father and "blames him for his expectation of his wife to sacrifice her career in order to enhance his own" (Henneberg 350). Rich says that her father had authority and control over her mother and herself. He used to deny their right to emotional life and a selfhood beyond his needs and principles. In her early poems like "Juvenilia" and "After Dark", she presents her resentment towards her father. But her later works show the attempt of reconciliation and negotiation with her father. By further exploring the father-daughter relationship, Henneberg says, "Rich's new lens has enabled her to take the time to see beneath the negative traits in order to understand her father more fully and to create a space where she and her father can coexist in peace" (351). Rich's father, an embodiment of patriarchy, has been criticized earlier. But it does not last for long. Rich does not believe only in revolt against patriarchy, she rather attempts to see beneath the negative traits of patriarchy and tries to create the new world for all. This is not the search for female identity on patriarchal society. It rather is the redefinition of the feminine.

Born as a daughter of Otto Plath and Aurelia Plath on 27 October, 1932 in Jamaica district of Boston, Sylvia Plath like Rich had to grow up under the domination of patriarchy. The family had to live under the domination of Otto Plath until his death though it did not last for long as her father died in 1940 when she was only eight years old. This loss became a major turning point in her life. Some of her poems including "Daddy", a famous poem present the father- daughter relationship.

Though she lost her father in her childhood, she felt patriarchal domination in her family. This irremovable impression became the source of her most of the poems.

Her marriage to a great English poet Ted Hughes in 1959 would have been a chance to precede their career further perfectly. But their marriage too did not last for long and turned into divorce in the summer of 1962. Suffering from mental breakdown and depression, she took her own life in 1963. Her well-known autobiographical novel, *The Bell Jar*, effectively dramatizes the stereotyping of women's roles in the 1950s and the turmoil of a young woman. This also presents her heroine's attempted suicide and hospitalization which gives the impression of Plath's first mental breakdown in her real life.

As a brilliant, energetic and highly motivated student, Plath graduated with highest honors and won many prizes. However, beneath this successful person was a person with extreme suffering, frustration and depression. Therefore her most of the poems are about her anxieties, psychological state and depression, the death of her father in her childhood, her broken marriage relation with Hughes and a lone responsibility of her two children enhanced her depression further. In such situation, she started writing poems more feverishly and completed forty poems that were published posthumously in *Ariel* which brought her international reputation.

Sylvia Plath confesses her psychological fragmentation and explores inner conflict in her poetry. Her brilliant use of "internal rhyme, symbolic structures, recording, sharing, recalling, exploring, and relating back to earlier poems in images, tones and subjects" (Wisker 106) has made her poetic work more touching and moving. In most of her poetry, Plath tries to give birth to a creative or deep self hidden within her. She sought to give voice to inner self, a spirit of rebellious expressiveness by unpeeling an outer self. Such expression of inner self can partially

be found in her poems like "Lady Lazarous" and "Ariel". She also presents the family and friendly relations in her poetry in which family and friends both are simultaneously idealized and oppressive. By challenging the bizarre artifice of conventional responses to childbirth, she presents it as controversial relation of mother and child and that relation at the same time is unavoidable and estranging. This view about Rich can also be seen in Gina Wisker's "Viciousness in the Kitchen":

Instead, children are strange, loved, wonderful but/ and essentially other, and Plath conjures the primeval, intuitive, instinctive, demanding version of mother and baby, blood ties which are unavoidable, extraordinarily fulfilling yet estranging, taking the mother out of herself through her tremendous responsibility." (108)

As Wisker has described, we can find the mother-child relation as a controversial relation in some of Plath's poetry. It is presented as the obstacle to the poetic career to some points in which there is estrange relation between mother and child. At the same time she can not avoid the responsibility of a mother towards the child. Though blood ties are unavoidable, Plath presents it as the estrange relation in which mother takes out herself through her responsibility towards her child. Her family oriented poems, like "Daddy", "Morning Song" to name the few, enable her to express the sense of a developing self even though it is oppressed, constrained and conditioned in the society dominated by patriarchy.

In most of Plath's poems, the split female self is at the heart. She presents the problematized ambiguities inherent in women's socially-constructed roles as a wife, mother, daughter, lover, and an artist. She shows each constructed roles as a version of performance and also a version of self. Plath's speaker is always self-aware of these constructed roles yet unable to get out of the trap because of the dependency in a

family for their identity. In "Lady Lazarus" the speaker rises from death and tries to defy it. Death, symbolically referring to male oppressive world, enhances the purpose of the writer where she celebrates the speaker as she attempts to defy death. This attempt refers to her challenge to the oppressive and destructive relationship with male and male domination. In the poem the speaker dares to challenge men and their restricted and conformist roles against women as she says, "Out of the ash/ I rise with my red hair/And I eat men like air" (2747). These lines of the poem "Lady Lazarus" show the speaker's attempt to challenge men and restricted roles against women as determined by men. Here the speaker is rising with her red hair which is symbolic of rebellious power. As she says, "I eat men like air", we know that she is challenging the men and their restricted nature against women.

Plath's challenge to male domination has helped to discard the feminine as defined by male guided social norms and values. Like the persona in "Lady Lazarus" every women should defy the male ideology which is always destructive and oppressive to female. Rather it demands for the new perspective of feminine through the eyes of female that have rose out of patriarchy with new idea and knowledge. Histories show how males supported capitalist strategies of maintaining a marginal labor force of females and youths, reinforcing their patriarchal roles. Plath through her poetry defies such reinforcing patriarchal roles. She thinks that women can unite only around the one thing that brings them together and that is the patriarchal exclusion of women from the sphere of public discourse, whether political, academic, or cultural, and our subordination across a broad spectrum of work and family. The expression of the experience of women being excluded in the patriarchally dominated society and their resentment towards it have been the major themes of the female writer like Sylvia Plath.

Sylvia Plath is more aggressive with patriarchal tendencies, and her poetry shows her disgust with marginalization of women as inferior and secondary in patriarchal society. She shows her rebellion through the spirit of "white Godiva". She is even ready to destroy her life for the betterment of feminine. For this, as she believes, the destruction of patriarchal norms and values is essential. By destroying her life she shows her rejection to such values and tries to bring the destruction of these norms and values. She attempts for this destruction for the creation of the new world. Her poetry addresses the crisis of modern American women—existential loneliness, identity crisis etc. in male-dominated American society. Plath sees poetry as a way to redefine the female premises. By articulating her inner-world experience of being a woman, she is able to address the problems and sufferings of all women.

The simplistic feminist reading presents Plath as the victim of patriarchy. She tries to defy patriarchal values by defying the death as in "Ariel". There is struggle between a woman's poetic power and the power that tries to paralyze the poetic power of a woman. In "Ariel" we can see the dramatic conflict between the opposed external power on poet's body and self. This external force is the patriarchal norms and values which always come as obstacle to the poetic career of woman writer. To challenge these norms, she even does not hesitate to sacrifice her life. She believes that death is better way to life than being the passive victim of patriarchy. Her poems about death do not stand for suicidal ending but as the way to transformed identity in which there is no patriarchal domination and discrimination to women. The fascination with death in a materialistic age goes beyond the danger of death that is transformation of death to life and this is the major issue in her poem "Lady Lazarous". Jon Rosenblatt in "Sylvia Plath: The Drama of Initiation" published in the journal named *Twentieth Century Literature* argues that through the exploration of the death-rebirth theme, she

is making a "tremendously violent struggle to gain control of the [male] psyche" (35). There is not merely craze for death in her poetry; we rather find much control over it. She tries to make a self-discovery through poetry. Through the dramatization of personal experience of pain and suffering under patriarchy, Plath seeks to destroy the entire patriarchal construction.

Patriarchal worldview of language regards metaphoric language as irrational and emotional which is opposed to logic and rationality. Rich and Plath use metaphoric language in their poetry and attempt to challenge the patriarchal worldview. This patriarchal worldview attaches logic and rationality to men and emotion and irrationality to women, and perpetuates the fallacy that men are superior to women. In "Feminism and Metaphor: Friend, Foe, Force?" Sharon Janusz quotes Mery Altman's idea that "feminist criticism, and feminism more generally, have both feared and loved metaphor" (289). Metaphor is feared because it traditionally has been used to resist women by turning her into a trope. But there are some feminist theorists and writers who regard metaphors as appropriate and powerful tools for feminist discourse. These writers, through metaphoric language, attempt to create a new worldview that is vastly different from the traditional phallographic and patriarchal view. They believe that such metaphors, used in a patriarchal, phallographic system, are inherently subversive and as such it can be used by feminists as a most powerful tool to subvert the patriarchal norms and values.

Phallographic reality is synonymous with what feminists refer to as patriarchy that posits and perpetuates the false notion that men are superior to women. Phallographic reality gives supremacy of logic and reason in nearly all social and political matters. This reality is highly privileged in western culture which is masculinist and rationalist tradition. Feminists indict this phallographic reality. "Phallographic reality privileges

logical-scientific discourse, and therefore, metaphorical discourse is inherently subversive in and to the system because it deviates from the dominant reality by using language nonlogically—thereby upsetting logical categories and the status quo" (Janusz, 290). Such metaphoric language can also be found in the poetry of Adrienne Rich and Sylvia Plath. They give priority to subjective and expressive language not to logic and reason as in phallocratic reality.

Patriarchy always associates logic and rationality to men and emotion and irrationality to women. This notion regard that logic and rationality are superior to emotion. Aversion toward the emotions and resulting criticism of the emotions are transferred to metaphor and women because both have been associated with the emotions. There is a tendency to feminize anything pejorative. In this patriarchal convention, metaphor is devaluated as opposed to some sort of objective, logical or positivistic discourse. This patriarchal fallacy associates such metaphor with the feminine. In such patriarchal history, both the metaphor and women are judged not as rational but as things too emotional or as things for decorative purposes. Due to the identification of metaphor with nonrationality, and nonrationality with women, many feminists and female writers suspect and fear metaphor. But Rich and Plath, by disregarding this false notion, use metaphor in their writing and attempt to reconstruct this false notion. They also reject the false association of women with emotion and decorative things as identified by patriarchal norms and values.

1.3 Comparison and Contrast Between Rich and Plath

Both the writers, Adrienne Rich and Sylvia Plath, have strong resentment towards patriarchal norms and values. These norms and values are always against women's freedom and equality to men, and treat men as self and women as the other. These writers present these values as social constructions not as natural but as male

constructed. Patriarchal society has formed such norms to suit the needs and desires of male. In the process of construction, females are totally disregarded and behaved as the commodities to satisfy the needs and wishes of males who are always cruel to the necessities of women. These writers do not focus on the search for identity of women in such society which is always blind to female needs and desires. They rather attempt to create the new world which can be equal to all. By defying the female roles as described by patriarchy, they ask all women to create new feminine. As publicly visible, prize-winning poets, who also happen to be white, middle-class and educated, they are complicit in the system they seek to reform. This similarity in the two poets' background accounts for the similarities in their critical reception and reservations with which their turn to socially conscious writing was treated. The similarity also helps for the scope of their project, that is to say, their attempt to legitimize political writing as a special literary genre with crucial and broad-ranging social implications.

Adrienne Rich and Sylvia Plath, being the women writers of same society, have many similarities in their expression. They both have the experience of being women excluded in patriarchal society. This experience unites their feeling and they happen to create the theme of female experience under male domination and an attempt to recreate the new world which is equal to all. Through the expression of personal experiences, they seek to address the experiences of all women who suffer under the patriarchal domination. Though the surface study of their poetry seems quite different due to their separate personal feeling, the underlying purpose of the both writers is same that is to redefine the feminine through new perspective by denying the definition of feminine through male eyes. They both have expressed their resentment towards patriarchal domination through the medium of poetry. What differs is only their way of expression. Rich, more explicitly, associates her personal

feeling with political and tries to bring social change. Plath on the other hand writes more apolitical poems which even through the personal expression demand for the social change.

Sylvia Plath shows much aggressiveness towards patriarchy in her poetry in comparison to that of Adrienne Rich. Plath through the medium of confessional poetry expresses her anger towards male who always dominates female. But Rich does not believe in apolitical aestheticism and she usually demands for the reintegration of personal and political in the poetry. So she mostly writes political poems. Unlike Plath she never believes in self destruction in the name of revolt against patriarchy. She rather focuses on feminist consciousness which according to her help to redefine the feminine and create the new world equal to all. On the contrary to this, Plath's attempts to commit suicide and the expression of this in her poetry show that she does not like to live in such discriminating society. This might be her way to challenge the male and male dominated society. But Rich does not believe in this idea. Though some differences can be found in their way of expression, the purpose of them is same that is to go against the patriarchal norms and values which always dominate women and to redefine the feminine through the new perspective.

1.4 Delimitation of the Thesis

This dissertation attempts to show the tension and female experience in the poetry of Rich and Plath as the way to the redefinition of feminine. For this purpose this research work focuses on the feminist theories which mainly talk about the female quality and roles as defined by patriarchal norms and values and regard them as obstacles to the career of women. This work sees how the mind of women is shaped by the patriarchy and how they even regard the patriarchal norms to be right.

Then the works of Rich and Plath along with the feminist ideas of other feminist theories are the main focus of the work which helps to prove the expression of female experience and inner turmoil of their mind emerging from the male dominated society as an attempt to redefine the feminine through the new perspective.

Plath and Rich are two poets of whom this thesis has attempted to make the comparative study mainly focusing on their poetry to redefine the feminine. This study is limited to some selected poems of these above mentioned writers. The selection of the poems and their analysis basically center on the theme which by refusing patriarchal definition attempts to redefine the feminine through the new perspective. I have tried to avoid the lengthy biographical descriptions of the poets as this study does not demand such description. Nevertheless some biographical details are necessarily used in the process of explanation and justification of the related issues. Since the study employs a feminist perspective, the second chapter describes the feminist movement, women's liberation movement and some relevant feministic approaches that are used to textual analysis of the poems. The feministic approaches discussed in the chapter also have the limitation as this short work cannot include all of them. While selecting the approaches the major regard is the ideas of the approach that are relevant and similar to the themes of the selected poems of the mentioned writers.

Textual analysis of the poems is the major part of this study which occupies the third chapter of the dissertation. In this chapter the poems of Adrienne Rich and Sylvia Plath are analyzed through different sub-chapters. The textual analysis of the poems is based on the skeleton formed by the feminist theories. This analysis basically emphasizes the theme of redefinition of feminine. To seek for redefinition automatically demands the previous definition of it. Here the feminine as described by

patriarchy has been the issue which these two female writers have attempted to redefine through their poetry. The final chapter is the conclusion which shows how the poems of these writers help to the redefinition of the feminine. This chapter also provides the gist of the research work and its conclusion.

CHAPTER II: THEORETICAL TOOLS

2.1 Feminism as Critique of Patriarchy

Feminism is the name of a number of social, cultural and political movements, theories and philosophies that are concerned with cultural, political and economic inequalities between men and women that discriminate women. It is not grounded in one's gender, but in rejecting and privately refuting sexist oppression politically, socially, linguistically, and otherwise. Feminism is grounded in the belief that women are oppressed or disadvantaged by comparison with men, and their oppression in a way is unjustified. Under the umbrella of this general characterization, there are many interpretations of women and their oppression. So feminism cannot be a single philosophical doctrine. In spite of this, feminism is loaded with a single experience of being dominated under patriarchy.

Women traditionally had been regarded as inferior to men physically and intellectually. The subjection of this inferiority could be found both in law and religion or theology. Women could not possess property in their own names, engage in business, or control the disposal of their children or even their own persons. Men had dominant power in decision making of every sector. In patriarchal society, there is social, political and economic inequality between sexes which favors the male gender. In such condition, the feminists like Gerda Lerner, Simone de Beauvoir and Virginia Woolf argue that these gendered and sexist identities like man and woman are socially constructed. They, on the basis of this view, forward the idea that the gender and gender-based identities should be questioned and critiqued. Gerda Lerner in the last chapter of her book *The Creation of Patriarchy* argues that women should doubt patriarchal system and should critique the assumptions, values and definition created by patriarchy.

Through the views of feminists like Woolf, de Beauvoir, Lerner to name the few, feminism mainly focuses upon what is absent rather than what is present, reflecting concern with the silencing and marginalization of women in a patriarchal culture, a culture organized in favor of men. Jeannette E. Riley, Kathleen M. Torrens and Susan T. Krumholz in "Contemporary Feminist Writers: Envisioning a Just World" envision the idea "Feminist thought, as a philosophical paradigm, is not concerned merely with the granting of equal rights to women or highlighting the oppression of women" (93). In this point they further say that "our feminist vision of social justice is one which strives to redefine society" (93). Feminism is not merely limited to the commitment and principle to justice for women. Moreover it is concerned to bring about social change on women's behalf.

Feminism is the belief in social, political and economic equality of the sexes, and it is also a movement organized in the belief that gender should not be the predominant factor in shaping a person's social identity or socio-political or economic rights. Patriarchal ideology constructs different identities to men and women on the basis of gender difference which is highly criticized by Simone de Beauvoir in her book *The Second Sex* (1949). Her criticism in this book centers on the idea that the consideration of women as other and men as self is only a social construction based on male domination. She attacks the patriarchal notion which regards female essence prior to individual existence. Like Beauvoir, many feminist writers of early period involved in the debate based on the inherited assumption about women, their capacities and the roles they perform over their dependent status in society. This debate helped to arouse the feminist movement. This movement seeks for independence for women demanding full legal equality, full educational and commercial opportunity, equal compensation, the right to collect wages and the right

to vote. Especially after 1920s, the feminists' focus on right to higher education, trade and profession, married women's right to property, and right to vote shifted to the question of equal standing with men.

Feminism for Adrienne Rich is a social, cultural and political movement which has emerged to liberate women from the cultural trap that has suppressed women's personality. She is strongly against ideological bias which demeans women's value. The ideological bias is reflected in every field from psychology to literature, and to commonsense. One of the article by Adrienne Rich "Women's Studies—Renaissance or Revolution?" presents the view that "not merely language, but thought patterns, intellectual models, perception itself, are organized out of the exclusion and reification of women" (122). Rich connects this view with the idea of Shulamith Firestone who pointed out that the received world-view of women is "the product of the perception of women as Other, as Object" (122). This world-view according to her is "split and rotted with false dichotomies" (122). In the long history of civilization, we can see the supremacy of men where women are relegated to an inferior position. The history of civilization is pervasively patriarchal, male-centered and male controlled.

The function of patriarchy can be endemic only with the cooperation of women. Without the cooperation of female, the system of patriarchy cannot work. Women easily happen to cooperate to this system as they are reinforced to accept the patriarchal ideology throughout the history of human civilization. Gerda Lerner, in this regard, says that the women's cooperation to patriarchy is "secured by a variety of means" like "gender indoctrination", "educational deprivation", denial to knowledge of women's history" and "discrimination in access to economic resources and political power" (142). In the patriarchal society women are viewed as passive sexual objects,

devoted mothers and dutiful wives. In the process of being socialized, women are taught to internalize the patriarchal ideology which identifies masculine as active, dominating, adventurous, rational and creative whereas feminine as passive, acquiescent, timid, emotional and conventional. Male violence against women is normalized and legitimized with the help of patriarchal ideology according to which men are by nature aggressive and dominant, whereas women are by nature passive and submissive. As women internalize the socially constructed gendered and sexual roles, they cannot identify and develop their own desires and needs. They only learn to be submissive towards the needs and desires of men. Literature produces representations of gender difference which contribute to the social perception that men and women are of unequal value.

The female characters who submissively follow the roles assigned to women are virtuous in the eyes of men. Even in literature, such women are represented either as goddesses or as loving mothers or as devoted wives. The feminist thinkers like regard such representation as misrepresentation of women in literature and demand for the change of such submission. On the other hand the women who try to define themselves by confronting the power of authority have often been represented either as whores or as monsters. From the patriarchal point of view such women are terrible objects in that they eschew the submissive silence of domesticity. But from the female perspective, those monster or whore women are simple women who seek the power of self-articulation by rejecting the patriarchal values that undermine females. The feminists attack these kinds of misrepresentation of women in the mainstream of literature which according to them is also a malestream.

There are different kinds of feminisms such as liberal feminism, radical feminism, socialist feminism and eco-feminism to name a few of them. They have

different opinions of their own. Liberal feminism believes that all women are capable of asserting their ability to achieve equality therefore it is possible for change to happen without altering the structure of society. On the contrary to this radical feminism sees male-based authority and power structure as responsible factor for oppression and inequality. According to the radical feminists, the uprooting and subsequent reconstruction of patriarchally dominated society is essential for the freedom of women. Socialist feminists on the other hand regard the oppression of women as exploitation of labor, the idea of Marxism. They view that women are oppressed and dominated due to the discrimination of division of labor. Women are limited to domestic spheres and their labor is devalued by the patriarchal system. Socialist feminists see the oppression of women as a part of the capitalist system and they see the need to work alongside men and all other groups. Eco-feminism connects ecology with feminism. According to this view, women are exploited by men who have power just like the environment being exploited by the owner of the land for their own profit and success. Women are also being exploited by men who regard women and environment both as passive and helpless. Eco-feminists give the solution that women should work towards creating healthy environment and in ending the destruction of land which also refers to the elimination of male domination upon females.

Different written documents on feminism deal with a diverse and multiple grouping of ideas and actions. So feminism, as argued by Jane Freedman in her book *Feminism*, "is not one unitary concept" (1). Freedman states that though feminism cannot be defined in a single idea, a common definition of it lies in the assertion that the concern of feminism is "with women's inferior position in society" (1). It also concerns with the discrimination encountered by women because of sex. Despite of

the differences in the view of several types and subtypes of feminism, what they share commonly is that all the forms of it rises from the experience of being excluded, inferior, oppressed and dominated under patriarchal world. This patriarchal world according to Gerda Lerner is a world in which females are dominated by males in family and in society. Lerner makes the point that "the system of patriarchy is a historic construct; it has a beginning; it will have an end" (152). She presents the idea that since patriarchy as a system has a beginning in history; it can also have an end. She has the belief that the male dominance upon females is historically constructed, it is not natural. Since the system of patriarchy is historically constructed, it should have an end. Like Lerner, other feminist thinkers, too, have the opinion that male control of public and private worlds is the one that have constructed patriarchy. According to them, this male control must be eliminated by eliminating gendered roles, sexual status and temperament. These gendered based ideas have been constructed under patriarchy, which for feminists are not natural. In this regard, feminism is not grounded on the basis of one's gender but in rejecting and refuting sexist oppression politically, socially, privately, linguistically and otherwise.

Throughout the human history of about four thousand years, the life of women is shaped under the umbrella of patriarchy. The subordination of females by males is lifelong. This "paternalistic dominance" (Lerner, 142) has been developed and acted upon in an unwritten contract for exchange. Women are obliged to surrender to males for all kind of subordination only to get economic support and protection from males. Women used to take this contract as rational choice in the condition of powerlessness and economic dependency. As Lerner says, women by exchanging their social, political, economic, intellectual and sexual subordination to men could acquire the power of the class to men and they could dominate and exploit the lower class people.

In such a situation women could not see themselves as a part of the oppressed group under patriarchy. Women could not be conscious of their subordination throughout the history because their mind was psychologically shaped to internalize their own inferiority and unawareness of their own history.

Women are taught to internalize and accept the superiority of men. This is due to the male hegemony over the symbol system. By symbol system, Lerner means "educational deprivation of women and male monopoly on definition" (144). Men created and defined symbols which would suit them. The every symbols of gender expresses male as powerful and whole whereas female as powerless, unfinished and lacking in autonomy. This according to Lerner is only symbolic construction which has explained the world in the terms of male and kept themselves at the center and female at the margin. The feminists say that men have described the human world only through their viewpoint and experiences. This symbol system has not included the experiences of women. To define humanity in proper sense, it should represent the equal parts of men and women and their thoughts, experiences and insights. The patriarchal framework cannot include the experiences and insights of females. So, the feminists demand for the transformation of the consciousness of women. The change without this consciousness is impossible. For the transformation of consciousness of women, they should, at first, free themselves from the enslavement of their subordination to men.

2.2 Feminism: The Consciousness of Women

Revolution is natural after a long period of victimization. Throughout the long history of patriarchal society, women had to be the victims of patriarchy. Being dominated and suppressed by the patriarchal values that served the purpose of male only, women could not get equality and liberty. The patriarchal ideology has created a

lot of false assumption regarding women and their nature. Inferiority of women to men, sexual and gendered differences, ideological biases and the biased roles of women are some examples of assumptions which are constructed under patriarchal culture. In such a situation, the women had to struggle much to erase such assumption attached to women and to have the equal identity in patriarchal society and to face various difficulties to establish their identity as human beings and as literary persons in the mainstream of literature. Women often become feminists by becoming conscious of, and by critiquing, the power of symbolic misrepresentation of women.

Revolution is always based on upgrading the experiences of the dominated or oppressed group. Such group has to be conscious of their experiences under certain oppression. Gerda Lerner, in *The Creation of Patriarchy*, focuses on how women in Western culture got trapped and dominated in a patriarchal world. She forwards the opinion that unless women are conscious of their condition in the patriarchal society, their liberty and equality to men cannot be possible. She suggests two steps for the shift on consciousness of women. Firstly, women should be, at least for a time, women-centered. Secondly, they should avoid the patriarchal thought behind as far as possible. By being women-centered Lerner means to ignore the evidence of women's marginality which is only the result of patriarchal intervention. Women should use the concepts and methods from the "vantage point of the centrality of women" (151). In patriarchal thought and system, the space for women is empty. So, women cannot create liberating thought and revolutionary theory from that empty space created by patriarchy. Women should move to centre from marginal position. This transformation also causes the transformation of the system.

To step outside of patriarchal thought means developing courage to stand alone. The patriarchal system has always ignored the experiences of women. In such a

condition, women should come out of patriarchal thought and trust the female experiences. They should be skeptical towards patriarchal system of thought and they must critique the patriarchally created assumptions, values and definitions about women. By thinking themselves out of patriarchy, women "add transforming insights to the process of redefinition" (152). To empower women, they should at first be made conscious of their reality under patriarchal ideologies. Then they should critique such false ideologies which are merely patriarchal constructions. If we observe the history women writers and thinkers have attempted to establish their own history by criticizing the existing history which according to them is patriarchally constructed. Most of them share the idea that they should create the new way of seeing the patriarchal world creating the world without any discrimination. In "Contemporary Feminist Writers: Envisioning a Just World", a work by Jeannette E. Riley in collaboration with Kathleen M. Torrens and Susan T. Krumholz, the writers argue

... writers share a common thread, arguing that we need to create a new way of seeing and interacting with the world around us, recognize our individual responsibilities for creating better communities, question government actions, and seek, above all, a society that sustains people regardless of gender, race, class, ethnicity, sexuality, or access to resources. (94)

The women writers of earlier phase were afraid of the patriarchal tendency which would regard them as mad women for their audacity. So, they were scared to express what and how they wished to say. Due to the internalization of patriarchal ideology which always devalues women's thought and experiences, women have learnt to mistrust and devalue their own experiences and even devalue them. But time made them conscious of their rights and they became aware of their victimization

under patriarchy. So, they picked up the pen and started to write and they could be able to prove their ability as of men. During the early period there were few women who became thinkers and writers with much difficulty. Women's literary voices were easily marginalized by the established male domination. Nevertheless it survived as women managed to struggle under male hegemony. Through such women, a female perspective and alternative to patriarchal thought have been achieved to some extent.

Different undergoing movements of the early parts of twentieth century like Civil Rights Movements, Liberation Movements and many others helped the feminism to form its shape as a movement. After 1960s it got its formal shape of Feminist Movement. It is a political movement which is struggled for social, cultural, and legal freedom for the women and their equality to men. This movement questions the male authority prevailed in the mainstream thought, which according to feminists, is also a malestream. Though feminism is introduced as a distinctive approach in the late 1960s, it has a two century long history marked by the books like *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792) of Mary Wollstonescraft, *A Room of One's Own* (1929) of Virginia Woolf, *The Second Sex* (1949) of Simone de Beauvoir and *The Mad Women in the Attic* (1974) of Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar etc.

One of the prominent precursor of feminism, Mary Wollstonecraft focuses on the equal opportunity for women as men to education to develop their rational faculty. Her main focus is that "the mind does not know sex" (394). Here she means to say that the way the individual is educated develops his/her mind. It is not the difference in sex that differentiates the intellectual faculty of man and woman. Rather women are learnt to fix the impression and internalize the "ideas that give a sexual character to mind" (395). According to Wollstonescraft "females, who are made women of when they are mere children, and brought back to childhood when they ought to leave the

go-cart forever, have not sufficient strength of mind to efface the superinductions of art that have smoothed nature" (395). Women are learnt false notion of "beauty and delicacy" (395) which stop the growth of their mind and weakens them and they cannot examine the false assumptions associated to them. Due to the way they are educated, "their highest praise is to obey unargued" (396). The way women behave is the "inevitable consequence of their education" (396). So, women should be educated as the way men are and they should perform the roles as of men. Only then the equal intellectuality as of men can be expected from women. Their growth of mind is not the result of the sexual difference but of the internalization of false notion in the process of learning.

Another important feminist precursor Virginia Woolf hates patriarchal norms and values but she is not harsh to males and goes beyond sexuality. She in her book *A Room of One's Own* attacks the patriarchal society which has prevented women from realizing their creative possibility. She believes that women have to face social and economic obstacles to their literary ambitions. "If a woman wrote, she would have to write in the common sitting-room" (821). Woolf quotes Miss Nightingale who has complained that "women never have half an hour.....that they can call their own" (821). Nightingale here tries to say that women are always interrupted. The female writers have lack of time and place which they can call their own. It is not only the matter of space and time; they even do not have their own sentences which can express their feelings. In this regard Woolf says "perhaps the first thing she would find, setting pen to paper, was that there was no common sentence ready for her use" (825).

Woolf praises the seventeenth and eighteenth century women writers who could write well despite of all these obstacles they had to face under patriarchy.

According to her literature is open to all and women's mind can not be locked even if the libraries are locked to them. She challenges the patriarchal notion by saying, "Locked up your libraries if you like; but there is no gate, no lock, no bolt that you can set upon the freedom of my mind" (825). Virginia Woolf in this way speaks for the problems faced by women writers though she rejects the feminist stance. She here presents the opinion that if women are provided equal social and economic opportunity as of men, they can freely develop their talents equal to men. Woolf does not see the biological and sexual differences but sees the difference in social, economic and psychological conditions under which men and women are brought up.

Simone de Beauvoir, who has produced perhaps the greatest classics of Post World War II feminism, refuses the notion of a female essence prior to individual existence and attacks the patriarchal myths of women that presume that false essence. Her criticism centers on the idea that paternalism considers women as the essential "Other" (993) or "Object" and male as "self" or "subject". According to Beauvoir, this is only a social construction based on male domination which treats women as commodities. She also critiques the ideology of men which defines them as "transcendent and female as immanent" (994). This concept of transcendence is male power. Woman is not woman by birth. It is just a gender concept which is nothing more than a social and cultural construction. She believes that through literature myth is created and institutionalized and accepted in society. Beauvoir in *The Second Sex* (1949), presents her plea for the abolition of the myth of the "eternal feminine" (999).

The collaborated work of the two contemporary feminists Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Mad Women in the Attic* (1974), explores the female literary tradition and women's "anxiety of authorship" (1234). They say that the anxiety of women writers is different from that of Bloom's patriarchal model, anxiety of

influence. This is because the women writers have to struggle against the effect of socialization. The effect of socialization refers to men's oppressive reading of women. They also assert that variety of physical and mental illness of women are the result of their socialized anxieties. By making the study of women writers, their literary tradition and feminist literary theory, Gilbert and Gubar posit the problems of woman writers in patriarchal culture and tradition:

Whether she is a passive angel or and active monster, in other words, the woman writer feels herself to be literally or figuratively crippled by the debilitating alternatives her culture offers her, and the crippling effects of her conditioning sometimes seem to 'breed' like sentences of death in the bloody shoes she inherits from her literary forefathers.

(1241)

Here they assert the view that it is debilitating to be any woman in a society where they are warned that if they do not behave like angels, they must be monsters. In such a situation female writers feel being crippled under the patriarchal culture and language.

Gilbert and Gubar state that female writers fear that they are inferior to male writers and cannot become the precursor. Another fear of women writers is that they do not have female precursor to imitate. Due to these fears female writers often have anxiety of authorship. The writers before nineteenth century were in dilemma because they could not word upon the imageries created by male writers and they did not have language and metaphors of female. Gilbert and Gubar reject the man's oppressive reading of women and demand for a separate feminine paradigm.

Gerda Lerner like other feminist thinkers is against gender difference. She says that gender difference existed prior to class difference. Class differences were constituted on the basis of patriarchal relations. Lerner in this regard says that "class is not a separate construct from gender; rather, class is expressed in generic terms" (138). The relationship of men to the means of production determines their class. But in the case of women, their sexual ties to a man determine the class they belong to. Women gain access to means of production only through men—their fathers, husbands. Breaking their ties to men easily declasses them. The identity of women is based on their relation to male throughout the history of human civilization. This is much clear when we see Lerner's idea that "vast majority of single women are, by definition, marginal and dependent on the protection of male kin. This is true throughout historical time upto the middle of the twentieth century in the Western world and still is true in most of the underdeveloped countries today" (141). The oppression and exploitation of males to females also depend upon the economic status of women today; the women who have more economic power are able to have control over their lives even in patriarchal society. In the societies where women have no economic power female sexuality is commodified by men. The commodification of female sexuality, labor power and her reproductive power are appropriated by men to suit their purpose and desire.

Through the different ideas presented by different feminist writers, it becomes clear that all of them in one way or the other criticize the patriarchy. Patriarchy, according to them, creates and constructs the false ideology which is always against women and their needs and desires. They argue that the difference in sex does not create difference in intellectuality of men and women. These differences are only patriarchal constructions which are internalized through the process of socialization

and regarded as truth. By criticizing this patriarchal construction of ideology, they emphasize on the idea that women should be conscious of their social, economic and political condition in the society. Unless their consciousness is empowered, the independent identity and equal existence of women is not possible. When they become conscious, they begin to question the norms and values of patriarchy which always serve the needs and desires of men. Only after that, the redefinition of the feminine is possible.

CHAPTER III: TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

Sylvia Plath and Adrienne Rich write in a vein of self-definition that represents definition of the whole feminity. Their poetry, by exposing the tension between personal and political problems experienced by women, critiques male domination and attempts to redefine the feminine in a new perspective by challenging the patriarchal definition. Self-definition, by rejecting the masculine definition of faminity, with its assertions of female identity and its emphasis of a central mythology of the self has been distinctively female poetic mode of their writing.

Sylvia Plath, as a female confessional poet, reveals her private life of suffering, rage and anxiety as major themes of her writing and manages to make private as public. Her personal rage and anxiety represent the experiences of all women. Though not a confessional poet, Adrienne Rich too expresses her personal experiences along with her political concern in her works. By defining their sufferings, both the writers attempt to define their identity which is their poetic goal. But their defining identity is not limited to the search for female identity in male dominated society. Rather they are concerned with the redefinition of the feminine by severely critiquing the traditional definition which is purely male constructed definition that serves the needs and desires of males.

As female poets, Rich and Plath face the fact that they are mythologized as the incarnation of otherness, the term used by Simone de Beauvoir and they have the anthologies full of male metaphors. On such a condition, they sometimes may not avoid the prevalent definitions of their feminity. Still, most of the works express their distress at the disparity between male myth regarding them and their own sense of female along with their triumphant repudiation of the male created myths about female. Their poetic career is pioneered by "a mode of reticence conquered by

assertion and self-examination, self-definition within or against the context of prevailing male definition of women" (Gilbert, 449).

By doubting the likeness to domesticity, in the poem "Snapshots of Daughter-in-Law" Adrienne Rich asks herself "Has Nature shown/her household books to you, daughter-in-law, / that her sons never saw?" (Baym, 2716) and rejects traditionally defined role of a woman. Sylvia Plath by rejecting to be a woman on the shape of a monster, in her poem "Ariel" defines herself as an "arrow" to be shot "in to the red eye" (2747) to free herself and the whole feminity.

3.1 Exploration of Women Experiences and Imposed Restraints of Patriarchy

Adrienne Rich massively explores the roles and restrictions assigned to women especially by men. Males in patriarchal society are dominant and they determine the fixed roles to females which include what women should do and what they should not. Even the women internalize such false assumptions as truth because of their dependence on males. Along with the restraints, Rich explores the female experiences of being bound to certain chores, duties through her poetry. She also attacks women's lunacy to beautify an artificial life. Despite of the consciousness of women, they cannot speak against patriarchy. This is because of the fear of being labeled. In her poems, Rich explores the pain and suffering of women due to their subordination to men, and she further moves towards personal and political possibilities of breaking the patriarchal wall of restraints to liberate women from long run servility and subordination.

In the title poem of the collection *Snapshots of Daughter-in-Law* (1963), Adrienne Rich explores the world of personal experiences along with the political concern. The personal experience of women with duties and responsibilities of the

household is the main focus: "Nervy, glowering, your daughter / wipes the teaspoons, grows another way. / Banging the coffee-pot into the sink" (2714). Through the presentation of a character like "daughter-in-law" who is bound to the set of duties and rituals established by men, she shows her lament towards self-indulgence and lack of women which is the result of the feminine mystique. She also explores her dissatisfaction towards the culture which esteems female for their external, artificial beauty rather than their knowledge and wisdom. Rich identifies herself with the daughter-in-law and she is critical of her mother-in-law, who still prefers external beauty.

You, once a belle in Shreveport,
with henna-colored hair, skin like a peachbud,
still have your dresses copied from that time,
and play a Chopin prelude
called by Cortot: "*Delicious recollections*
float like perfume through the memory." (2714)

These lines show Rich's resentment towards the waste of women's energy in the prime of their life under the false culture which praises women for their ornamental beauty. This false culture is established by men and is re-enforced by compliance of women.

Under the false notion of patriarchal culture, women lack the feminist consciousness and they regard false values as truth because their mind is

[...] moldering like wedding-cake,
heavy with useless experience, rich
with suspicion, rumor, fantasy,
crumbling to pieces under the knife-edge
of mere fact. In the prime of your life. (2714)

The speaker is not satisfied with another female character "you" whose mind is filled with useless experiences, suspicions, rumor and fantasy. Here "you" refers to any woman who prefers domestic life as defined by men. These lines give the view of Rich that many women lack the feminist consciousness though they are in the prime of their life. Their intellectuality is crumbled into pieces "under the knife-edge of mere fact" which refers to the false notion of patriarchy. The dissatisfaction of the speaker towards another character explores the poet's desire to break the conventional roles determined to women.

The woman from the past has been limited to the domestic affairs and she can never speak against male domination though she is aware of this fact. If she dared, she would be accused of being a shrew and a whore but male would not be blamed even if they did more than a female. Due to the fear of being "labeled harpy, shrew and whore" women could not dare to go against the patriarchal restrictions imposed to them.

a woman, partly brave and partly good,
 who fought with what she partly understood.
 Few men about her would or could do more,
 hence she was labeled harpy, shrew and whore.(2716)

The women, who are conscious of their condition in the patriarchal society, seek their independent identity. But they cannot fight against patriarchy because of the anxiety that they would be recognized as a shrew or a whore. On the contrary to this, the women who are patient and can bear any physical and mental hurt are praised as angels. The second part of the poem depicts such women as:

Sometimes she's left the tapstream scald her arm,
 a match burn to her thumbnail,

or held her hand above the kettle's snout
 right in the woolly steam. They are probably angels,
 since nothing hurts her anymore, except
 each morning's grit blowing into her eyes. (2715)

The domestic roles of woman and many other rituals imposed upon them like tapstream causing injury on her arm, a match-stick burning her nail and kettle's woolly steam hurting her hand are supposed to be tolerated with patience. And such women are called angels because nothing hurts them.

Though women are conscious of the male domination and the patriarchal restraints to women, they cannot fight against it openly. This is due to their internalization of the patriarchal values and their fear of being unfeminine. Aunt Jennifer in the poem "Aunt Jennifer's Tigers" also suffers from the restraints of male domination. The female character, Jennifer, of the poem "Aunt Jennifer's Tigers" also reveals the experiences of woman under male domination. Despite her creative genius, she is obliged to suffer as she cannot speak against her husband who symbolizes whole system of patriarchy: "The massive weight of Uncle's wedding band /Sits heavily upon Aunt Jennifer's hand" (Baym 1919). Domesticated and subdued by patriarchy, she cannot do anything not as a wife of her husband but as an artist even after her death: "When Aunt is dead, her terrified hands will lie/Still ringed with ordeals she was mastered by" (1919). The experiences of the female character, Jennifer, are contrasted with the activities of the tigers which are her creation as an artist. Jennifer is always afraid of her husband who also stands for the whole patriarchal world and its constructions. She feels the difficulty even while creating her art at the sight of her husband despite of her wits:

Aunt Jennifer's fingers fluttering through her wool
 Find even the ivory needle hard to pull.

The massive weight of Uncle's wedding band
Sits heavily upon Aunt Jennifer's hand. (1919)

Unlike Jennifer, the animals painted on the work of art "do not fear the man beneath the tree" (1919). They instead walk "in sleek chivalric certainty" (1919). The animals of her own creation sharply contrast the experiences of their creator. Due to the internalization of servility and subordination throughout the long period, Jennifer is scared of male domination and cannot stand independently and freely. But the tigers of her creation are not afraid and "they in the panes that she made/ Will go on prancing, proud and unafraid" (1919). This presentation of free life of the tigers implicitly refers to Jennifer's desire to live the free life like her own creation. This also shows that she is conscious of the condition under patriarchy and wishes for its change though she herself cannot revolt against it. But Adrienne Rich through the exploration of these restraints to women under patriarchally constructed norms and values attempts to voice against it.

Adrienne Rich's two poems "The Snapshots of Daughter-in-Law" and "Aunt Jennifer's Tigers" discussed above, basically focus on the exploration of female experiences of duties and responsibilities defined by patriarchal restraints and their inability to fight against it. But even through such expressions, the main aim of Rich is to see the female world through a new perspective that totally differs from patriarchal worldview towards the feminine.

Sylvia Plath, remarkably more furious and rebellious than Adrienne Rich, not only presents woman character as a revolutionary woman but she also presents her as a pathetic victim under patriarchal restraints. As a confessional poet, she exposes the women's experiences of pain and endless sufferings caused by the restraints of

patriarchal society. Even through these expressions her aim is to deny the patriarchally created false notions of feminine and to achieve freedom and equality.

Plath through her poem "The Applicant" explores the experiences of women and the restraints imposed upon them by patriarchy that is male dominated social structure. This poem shows the criteria in which men evaluate women to suit their purposes. The applicant is a lady who is interviewed by an interviewer who represents the male world. This interviewer is looking for a lady who is dependant on artificiality:

First, are you our sort of a person?

Do you wear

A glass eye, false teeth or a crutch,

A brace or a hook,

Rubber breasts or a rubber crotch,

Stitches to show something's missing? No, no? Then

How can we give you a thing? (2753)

If the lady does not wear glass eye, false teeth, rubber breasts etc. she is not selected by the interviewer. This shows that male worldview values women for their artificiality or physical out-looking not the inner quality and intellectuality.

The applicant is ordered to open her hand which according to the interviewer is empty. This empty hand shows how women are compliant and how they surrender to males. Patriarchal worldview limits the empty hands of woman to fill with domestic, futile activities:

Here is a hand

To fill it and willing

To bring teacups and roll away headaches

And do whatever you tell it. (2753)

Woman is shown as if she has nothing of her own. Even her body is naked and males provide her a suit that is "black and stiff" (2753) which refers to dead and feeling less situation provided to women. The male world offers shield for the safety of woman's nudity, but it is a type of shield which is likely to bury her in the suit that represents deadly environment of women as imposed by patriarchy. In the name of saving her from the shame, it ultimately buries her down:

I notice you are stark naked.

How about this suit—

Black and stiff, but not a bad fit.

Will you marry it?

It is waterproof, shatterproof, proof

Against fire and bombs through the roof.

Believe me, they'll bury you in it. (2753)

The suit is said to be waterproof and shatterproof which protects from fire and bombs. The suit seems to be protective but its black and stiff quality refers to death. So the suit is likely to kill the woman's personality and individuality. It ultimately buries her down. This black and stiff suit refers to the patriarchal norms and values in which women should adjust them.

The male interviewer makes the claim that her head is empty. He also wants to justify his claim and says, "Now your head, excuse me, is empty. / I have the ticket for that" (2753). The patriarchal society as represented here by the interviewer, regard as if they have no intellectuality. It compares women with the blank sheet of paper on

which males write. Woman's own life is empty and she has to begin it being dependant upon the man. The woman is addressed as a living doll that can sew, cook and talk: "A living doll, everywhere you look. / It can sew, it can cook, / It can talk, talk, talk" (2753). Once the woman accepts the exploitative shield, her career begins under male domination and she becomes a living doll which males will play what way they like.

By exploring the experiences of all women through the experiences of an applicant, Plath wants to suggest that women should avoid the male notions about them. Implicitly Plath means to say that women should not surrender themselves on the way men evaluate them. Once they do so, their career begins under male domination and they lose freedom forever. How male evaluate and define feminine should be avoided to live the free, independent life. Plath through this poem asks to redefine the female quality not as defined by patriarchy but as women themselves view it.

3.2 Resistance against patriarchy

Despite of some differences between the poetic view of Sylvia Plath and Adrienne Rich, what they share commonly is their resistance against patriarchy. They both regard patriarchy as the root of oppression especially upon females. Through their poetry, Rich and Plath try to redefine the feminine by resisting against patriarchal definition of it. They challenge not only men but also their creation such as language, culture, politics and social structures which has created different norms and values to males and females. Plath's "Ariel", "Lady Lazarus" and "Daddy", and Rich's "Snapshots of Daughter-in-Law" are discussed here to see how they have explored their resistance against patriarchy.

Sylvia Plath is more aggressive and rebellious against patriarchally created norms and values which always victimize women. By demonstrating long period of repression of women under male-dominated society, she also raises the voice of rebellion to cast off the repression. In one of her famous poem "Lady Lazarus", Plath's bitter resentment towards patriarchal society is extraordinarily expressed. Her rage against male domination is demonstrated through her suicide attempt where she regards the act of dying as an art: "Dying / Is an art, like everything else. / I do it exceptionally well" (2746).

Plath through the image of rebirth attacks men and their patriarchal notion. She at the end of the poem "Lady Lazarus" threatens to "eat men like air" (2747). She challenges men due to the unbearable sufferings and pain caused by them. She challenges men to be aware as she has courage to rise against patriarchy and to cast it down:

Herr God, Herr Lucifer

Beware

Beware.

Out of the ash

I rise with my red hair

And I eat men like air. (2747)

The phrase "out of ash" suggests the birth of Phoenix from the ashes of traditionally burnt woman. According to myth Phoenix emerges out of ash as the drops of water fall upon it. Like the drops of water, what makes woman to emerge here in the poem is the patriarchal domination. This image of Phoenix reveals that a new woman is being born despite tortured and destroyed identity of women due to the age-long

social, political, cultural, literary and economic discrimination. Here she means that all men should be aware because a woman with a new spirit is resurrected and she will "eat men like air".

In this poem, the speaker's search for power to defy death and cast off oppressive relationship with men and life is shown through the allusion of mythical story in which Lazarus is resurrected from death by Jesus. In the story of Lazarus of Bethany in the Gospel of John, Jesus raises Lazarus from the death so that the people may believe his power. Although Lazarus died, Jesus miraculously raised him from the dead. However, this resurrection was not fueled by love or mercy, but out of Jesus' desire to advertise his own power. This parallels Herr Doktor's talent for raising Lady Lazarus from suicide attempt. Plath also suggests that Doktor's struggle for power leads her destruction unlike mythical Lazarus who was benefited even if his resurrection was inspired to reveal god's power. He exploits his power and dominance over Lady Lazarus, and she must fight to control her life. He resurrects her in front of a crowd, so that his "opus" can be admired and his power acknowledged.

"Daddy", one of the famous poems published in *Ariel* is a controversially mythologized poem which explores the friendly and familiar relationship between father and daughter in "unfamiliar, violent, obsessive imagery and sounds" (Wisker, 109). Through this poem Plath explores her strong contempt against her dead father who also symbolizes masculine authority. Though her father was already dead when she was ten—"I was ten when they buried you" (2749), she had to suffer his male domination and feel long period suffocation:

I never could tell where you
Put your foot, your root,
I never could talk to you.

The tongue stuck in my jaw.

It stuck in a barb wire snare.

Ich, ich, ich, ich,

I could hardly speak. (2748)

Despite of her ignorance about her father's existence and identity, she could feel his tongue which caused her suffocation.

This poem presents Plath's sense of haunting by her dead father for thirty years. Through the use of the image of a foot inside the shoe, she shows how suffocating is for women to live under patriarchical domination. Inside the black shoe, the foot becomes pale and white. Black shoe refers to the patriarchal notion which is dead and feelingless towards women. Under such situation, a woman barely dares to breathe, these suffering and suffocation continued for thirty years. But the very beginning lines of the poem show that these haunting memory and image of her father are out-dated and no more appropriate:

You do not do, you do not do

Any more, black shoe

In which I have lived like a foot

For thirty years, poor and white,

Barley daring to breathe or Achoo. (2748)

After thirty-year-long suffering and suffocation, she tries to exorcise his influence and says, "Daddy, I have had to kill you." Her wish to escape the oppressive love-hate relationship with her father's memory to become a free woman is succeeded at the end as she is able to get "through" by making him "lie back". This shows her aggression against not only her father but the whole system of masculinity. Her personal rage is

communalized to all women as she, in the later part of the poem says, "Every woman adores a Fascist, / The boot in the face, the brute/ Brute heart of a brute like you" (2749).

Plath compares innocent victimization of female with the monumental victimization of Jews: "I began to talk like a Jew / I think I may well be a Jew" (2749). The male domination is so disastrous that she compares the suffering of women with that of that of a Jew. The male oppressor is compared with a Nazi, a wartime oppressor flattering Polish civilizations. She is snared and silenced, forced to speak the oppressor's language, the German "ich". She cannot understand the obscure and vulgar language of the oppressor so vents out her rage against male language.

Adrienne Rich, who views the patriarchal structure of society as the root of oppression, has used poetry as an instrument of social change. She rejects the traditional masculine aesthetic. By rejecting the patriarchy and its every construction like language, culture, and social structure etc. she shows the necessities of re-ordering social values and structures, and redefining feminine. She struggles with the cultural trap to create women's independent identity. In her poetry, she raises a socially and politically conscious voice which strongly urges for equality and justice. She challenges language, culture, politics and social structures which are merely patriarchal construction that create different norms and values to males and females.

Rich asserts that even the language is patriarchal creation so it cannot be used to explore the female experiences. Women are obliged to use the male's language which is oppressor's language and it posits female at lower position to males. Therefore she rejects the patriarchal language and stresses that women should reclaim language which might express their voices. Restrictions and limitations upon the female expression are created even through the language. Rich, in her poem "A

Valediction Forbidding Mourning", expresses the idea that women's every attempt to express their "swirling wants" is attacked by the grammar that is man-made (2719). This attack creates obstacle on the way of female progress especially in the field of writing. As women write their theme is under duress and their expression becomes meaningless in patriarchal language. The first stanza of the poem presents the difficult situation of the female writers as Rich says:

My swirling wants. Your frozen lips.

The grammar turned and attacked me.

Themes, written under duress.

Emptiness of the notations. (2719)

Through the exploration of the situation of females under the man-made language, Rich shows her resentment towards such biased language which always undermines women and creates hindrance to the expression of their feelings.

At the end of the poem, Rich asserts that she will no longer mourn for not being able to explore through male-made language. Instead she will create the new form of language by changing the grammar or she will start "To do something very common, in my own ways" (2719). Elissa Greenwald in her article published in *Journal of American Culture* presents Rich's idea of language as "Language itself must be purged, for the oppressor's language deliberately distorts or deletes the fact of oppression" (99). This poem shows Rich's vision of the existing language which is purely man-made and cannot address the female experiences. Her mission is to break down the existing language and to create another which suits for female: "To do something very common, in my own way" (2719). She criticizes the male language using the metaphor of drug which "slowed the healing of wounds" (2719). She asks

the women after her death not to mourn for "the failure of criticism to locate the pain" (2719).

Her poem "Snapshots of Daughter-in-Law" illustrates her resistance towards the patriarchal norms and values which limit women within the household activities. By exploring the effects of patriarchal society Rich forwards her views of personal and political ways of breaking these boundaries imposed upon females to liberate women from the restriction. At the beginning of the poem, she shows the identity of women associated to men and the life of women limited to household works. She also presents the patriarchal society which emphasizes the female's physical beauty rather than her intelligence and knowledge. By critiquing this, Rich says that a woman loses her individual identity and life as she yields to male domination: "A thinking woman sleeps with monsters. / The beak that grips her, she becomes" (2715). The "thinking woman" refers to the underlying strength of women and that strength is obliged to "sleep with monsters" which reveal the violent attitude of men towards women.

Rich, in the later part of the poem, advocate her resentment towards patriarchally created definition of feminine and appeals all women to shrug off mysterious illusion of femininity:

Yes, think

of the odds! or shrug them off forever.

This luxury of the precious child,

Time's precious chronic invalid,--

would we, darlings, resign it if we could? (2717)

Here "luxury of the precious child" refers to the feminine mystique defined by patriarchal ideology. These mystiques make women's life deficient and create invalid

and worthless proposition for women. As a women-liberating poet, Rich calls for the imaginative identification with all women for the re-creation of a female community. This community will resist the destructive ideology of patriarchy and create a new world in which women and men will have social, political and economic equality. For this purpose, she envisions a heroine who emerges with feminist consciousness by discarding the patriarchal beliefs:

Well,
 she's ling about her coming, who must be
 more merciless to herself than history.
 Her mind full to the wind, I see her plunge
 breasted and glancing through the currents,
 taking the light upon her
 at least as beautiful as any boy
 or helicopter,
 poised, still coming,
 her fine blades making the air wince
 but her cargo
 no promise then:
 delivered
 palpable
 ours. (2717-18)

Rich imagines the heroine who will no longer be defined by the traditional feminine quality as prescribed by men. Her mind is filled with the mysteries of blood and birth, the reproductive functions. This is because she has come through the patriarchal history. Yet she must be "more merciless to herself than history".

3.3 Conflict of Personal Experiences and Political Requirements

Adrienne Rich and Sylvia Plath, through their poetry, not only explore their personal experiences of pain and sufferings under patriarchy but also express their political concerns for the social change. On the one hand these writers express the personal experiences of women. On the other hand they explore their political concern in which they demand for the improved society where women do not suffer the discrimination and domination created by men. They also speak for the empowerment of women to revolt against patriarchy.

In the poem "Snapshots of Daughter-in-Law", Rich's frustration regarding the condition of females in patriarchal society and her will for the change receive their vivid and unequivocal expression. The conflict between personal experiences and political concern is best expressed through the female character who cannot obey the angel despite of her will:

Banging the coffee-pot into the sink
she hears the angels chiding, and looks out
past the raked gardens to the sloppy sky.
Only a week since They said: *Have no patience.*
The next time it was: *Be insatiable.*
Then: *Save yourself; others you cannot save.* (2715)

The angels show their disapproval towards the woman who is limited to the domesticity and they ask her not to be patient and to save herself. The patriarchal system teaches women to be patient, satiable and to work and live for others especially men. These are the stereotypical roles of women created and imposed by men. Despite of the fact that these roles mark the marginalization of women, they

happen to internalize them. The angels tell that the question of patience and satiety is unfavorable to women. Therefore through the medium of angels, Rich asks all the women to avoid them which always dehumanize womanhood.

Sylvia Plath's "Ariel", the title poem of the collection *Ariel*, explores the tension between female personal experiences and their political concern for the changed world as it documents the extreme sufferings of women and their aspiration for the free world. Ariel, the horse that she uses to ride, also connotes a spirit of *The Tempest* by Shakespeare in which Ariel always seeks liberation. Here in the poem, this Ariel symbolizes the rebellious spirit of the female speaker. The violent riding of the horse refers to protest against patriarchal construction and wish for the revision. The darkness and stasis, that is motionless, reveal the life of women which is subordinated and marginalized by patriarchy: "Stasis in darkness/ Then the substanceless blue/ Pour of tor and distances" (2747). The rider's movement from darkness to light and from stasis to activity reinforces the speaker's transformation from confusion to understanding, from unconscious to conscious and from restriction to freedom:

And I
Am the arrow,
The dew that flies
Suicidal, at one with the drive
Into the red
Eye, the cauldron of morning. (2747-48)

The speaker calls herself an arrow that is shot into the red eye which symbolizes the patriarchal tradition. Through the use of the image of arrow, Plath shows her resentment towards male domination and her desire to protest it.

"Morning Song", the opening poem in *Ariel* (1966), expresses Plath's conflicted feelings of speaker's role as a mother and a poet. Her personal experiences are expressed through mother who recently has given birth to a baby. On the other hand her worry of probable sacrifice of her poetic career is expressed through her dislike to a newly born baby: "I'm no more your mother/ Than the cloud that distills a mirror to reflect its own slow/ Effacement at the wind's hand" (2744). The speaker calls herself no more the child's mother. Rather she compares herself to cloud which cleans the mirror to reflect its own destruction by the wind. This surreal image of comparing herself as cloud and its effacement suggests that the speaker is worried about her possible damage and disturbance to her poetic career.

Even in the poem "Lady Lazarus", Plath's focus on free life without male domination is best explored through the expression of female suffering and struggle against male authority. The female character, Lady Lazarus, is a legendary figure, who has suffered almost all variety of torture. Thus Plath has included all greatest contemporary examples of the brutality and persecution such as the sadistic medical experiments on the Jews by Nazi doctors and the Nazis' use of their Jew victims' bodies in the production of lampshades and other objects along with the female sufferings in patriarchal society. By establishing the realistic social context through these allusions and examples of suffering and brutality of the contemporary society, Plath demands for the immediate change to create the society without any discrimination. For this purpose she envisions the resurrection of Lady Lazarus who will eat the men, the oppressors, like air. Lady Lazarus's aggressive tone suggests that she wants to see if her appearance startles or shocks him so that she might gain an advantage over him: "O my enemy / Do I terrify?" (2745). Her language demonstrates her willingness to fight against this cruelty.

3.4 Advocacy for Women Empowerment

Adrienne Rich and Sylvia Plath, though their way differs, demand for the improved society. For the fulfillment of this purpose, they raise the voice and ask for the women empowerment which is to revolt against patriarchy.

In comparison to Sylvia Plath Rich seems to be more liberal. She speaks for the empowerment of women to create the world where no one will suffer. Taking the line of Mary Woolstonecraft Rich says that women should be empowered intellectually and she emphasizes on education of women. In her poem "The Diamond Cutters", she says that only the physical attack on patriarchy creates no changes. By using the image of "stone" which refers to patriarchal system, she makes the point that "stone is still a stone" despite of the resistance of "the hammer-blows of time":

However legendary
 The stone is still a stone,
 Though it had once resisted
 The weight of Africa,
 The hammer-blows of time (1920)

Here "hammer-blows" refers to the unanimous force of women that is used to break the male power. But this blow has been ineffective. By showing the failure of physical attack of women against patriarchal power, she is for the need of female intelligence.

The blind physical force devoid of intelligence, used against male as a mode of creation, was emerged from the darkness. But this force failed as male took strong and fumbling form upon the smoky walls created by females:

Now, you intelligence
 So late dredged up from dark

Upon whose smoky walls
 Bison took fumbling form
 Or flint was edged on flint— (1920)

The walls upon which female tried to create force is created by patriarchy. Here Bison stands for male who took form on smoky walls. To attack the ice or stone, intelligence along with the determinate will of women is required: "Now, careful arriviste, / Delineate at will / Incisions in the ice" (1920).

Rich asks all women to "be serious" because only the physical attack may turn to be contemptuous which will create hatred on the part of women. So women should learn even to respect the males, adversary, and to use the refined tools. Rich presents a suggestion for women to elevate themselves and use refined tools in order to create the dignified position: "Respect the adversary, / Meet it with tools refined, / And thereby set your price" (1920). Such expression of Rich shows that she is against reversed hierarchy.

Rich goes on giving instructions to women to liberate them from the "stone" that is male domination. In fourth stanza of the poem, she asks them to be hard of heart and says only then male domination leaves you free: "Be hard of heart, because / The stone must leave your hand" (1920). By giving the example of Shebas who was carried away by physical passion, Rich further asks women to keep away the passionate desire. She has the opinion that when human beings are overpowered by the desires they lose their foresight and love what they have done not what they do. So, she demands women to be guided by Apollonian desire not by Dionysian thrust. A truly liberate woman is she who has liberated herself from Dionysian passion that is patriarchal grips:

Although you liberate
 Pure and expensive fires
 Fit to enamour Shebas,
 And because all you do
 For too-familiar hands,
 Keep your desire apart.
 Love only what you do,
 And not what you have done. (1920)

Rich asks women not to love what they have done. This is because they have more to do. Women should be proud only when they "set the final spoke of flame" (1920) in the tricky notion of patriarchy: "Be proud, when you have set / The final spoke of flame / In that prismatic wheel" (1920). Women should destroy the "prismatic wheel" which refers to the false notion of patriarchy. Through the image of the sun, Rich refers to the forthcoming light, the symbol of liberation. She also forwards her view that the sun should shine in both the false and true. This means that women should set the light in both true and false then only they can see the loopholes of their rebellious career. Then they know that many things are to be done further:

And nothing's left this day
 Except to see the sun
 Shine in the false and the true,
 And know that Africa
 Will yield you more to do. (1920)

Through this poem, Rich shows the difficult life of women who are revolting against patriarchy. Diamond cutters are the women who are revolting against patriarchy that dominated women throughout the history. The life of the diamond

cutters is compared to the rebellious women. On the background of precious work of diamond, the life of workers is difficult. Despite of the difficulty, the forthcoming result is precious like diamond. To be success in this task, Rich has provided many suggestions to the women. She primarily emphasizes on the women empowerment based on intelligence and education rather than physical strength to fight against patriarchy.

Adrienne Rich in her another poem "Power" asserts her view that selfless and devoted work of women ultimately results in legitimate power. By giving the example of life of Marie Curie who suffered from radiation sickness and got power at the end, Rich wants to project the idea that women should bear suffering to get power. The power achieved through lifelong suffering and devotion will be legitimate power which contrasts to the "illegitimate and self-centered power" (Hamilton, 154) of males. To get the power women should be empowered with selflessness and devotion to their work despite of pain and suffering.

Marie Curie suffered from the radium which created wounds on her body. Cataractes on her eyes, cracked skin of her fingertips were all created by the radium on which study she spent her life. But Curie was so devoted to her work that she denied these pain and suffering till the end:

Marie Curie:

she must have known she suffered from radiation sickness

her body bombarded for years by the element

she had purified

It seems she denied to the end

the source of the cataracts on her eyes

the cracked and suppurating skin of her finger-ends

till she could no longer hold a test-tube or a pencil. (2722)

The same element which she had purified was the cause of the damage on her body. But what she did was that she denied all these till the completion of her work.

The result of the long devoted work was her success to get power and she at the end had the death of a famous woman scientist. She could get this success by denying the suffering caused by her own work. The same element which caused her wounds became the source of her power:

She died a famous woman denying

her wounds

denying

her wounds came from the same source as her power. (2722)

By projecting the life of Marie Curie in this poem Rich has made the representation of all women's life. As radium was the source of both wounds and power of Marie Curie, patriarchy which is the source of pain and sufferings to women can also be the source of power too. Patriarchal domination has created a lot of sufferings and pains in the life of women. But women's selfless devotion to their work can turn this to the source of their power.

CHAPTER IV: CONCLUSION

The poems of Adrienne Rich and Sylvia Plath express the experiences of women under patriarchal norms and values along with their resistance against the restraints created by male domination. Through these expressions, their aim is to define the feminine in a new perspective challenging the patriarchal worldview of attaching false notions to the women. By redefining the traditionally defined feminine through new perspective they wish to create a new world where men and women can live equally without any discrimination. Despite of the different views and perspectives explored in their creation, what they commonly share is the female poetic mode of writing that emerged with the vein of self-definition which represents the definition of the whole femininity. Their definition of femininity is not merely limited to the search of patriarchy. But they aim at the creation of a new world of equality by critiquing the male constructed world where women are always treated as other, inferior beings.

Adrienne Rich, by questioning the female experiences of social inequalities, critiques those women who waste their time and energy on external beauty for the sake of their personal identities. In her poem "The Snapshots of Daughter-in-Law", she argues that women should not waste their time and energy on physical beauty and domesticity to please the men for the sake of their individual identity. In this poem, Rich doubts the duties and responsibilities of females along with their restraints assigned to them by patriarchally constructed norms and values. Through this, she shows how patriarchy creates the restrictions for women about what they should do and what they should not. These restrictions are established as rules first by men and later reinforced by the women's compliance. Rich in this context posits her strong

opinion that women should not limit them in these restrictions imposed upon them by males.

Rich argues that women at first should be conscious of their dominated identity. Her belief is that the female consciousness of the patriarchal society can reconstruct the world which is equal for all women and men. Her poem "Aunt Jennifer's Tigers" perpetuates the idea that though women are conscious of the fact of their subordinated and marginalized status, they cannot struggle against it. This is due to the internalization of patriarchal constructions as the truth. Through the exploration of the characters like daughter-in-law and Aunt Jennifer, Rich accumulates her voice against those women who are compliant to male domination and says that a woman loses her individual identity and life at the moment she surrenders to male domination. So women should emerge with feminist consciousness by discarding the patriarchal beliefs and assumption about them.

Rich also raises her voice about the women empowerment. She says that women should be intellectually powerful to fight against patriarchy. Only the physical resistance cannot work effectively to free women from the male domination practiced through the long period of history. So Rich asks all women to be serious, to respect the males though they are source of domination and to use the refined tools to get dignified position and success. She further asks women to cast off the passionate desires projecting the idea that a truly liberated woman is she who is free from Dionysian passion that is patriarchal grips. She even opines in her poem "Power" that women should learn to suffer in order to get legitimate power. If women can bear suffering created by patriarchy, the same troublesome patriarchy can be the source of their power.

Sylvia Plath, who is more aggressive than Adrienne Rich, expresses her terrible anger at the patriarchally constructed norms and values that subordinate females and marginalize feminist concerns. Her rage against male domination is presented through her suicide attempts and the imagery of rebirth. In her poem "Lady Lazarus", she threatens men to eat like air after she rises out of the ash. She wants to project the idea that as the female character of this poem all women should have the courage to challenge men. Plath in "Daddy" explores her strong contempt against masculine authority that is represented through her father.

Plath sees the patriarchally structured society as the root of oppression and uses the poetry as an instrument of social change. Her use of comparison of female suffering with that of a Jew and the male oppressor with a Nazi shows that she has experienced male domination as a very disastrous issue. In "Daddy" she also says that she cannot understand the obscure and vulgar language of the oppressor that is male created language. In her another poem "Ariel", the horse she rides symbolizes the rebellious spirit of a woman that seeks liberation. The violent riding refers to the protest against patriarchally constructed society and the wish for revisioning it. Even the image of an arrow, shot into the red eye, expresses her violent anger towards male domination and her desire to protest against it. Through the exploration of female experiences along with the mythical allusions, she demands for the change of discriminating society. This is also one way to redefine the feminine in a new perspective by critiquing the male definition.

Rich and Plath by rejecting the male domination as well as patriarchally constructed language, culture and social structure, show the need of re-ordering social values and structures and the redefinition of the feminine. They raise socially, politically and culturally conscious voice of women that strongly urges for the

equality and justice through the redefinition of male constructed norms and values. Both of them are exclusively rebellious against patriarchal definition of women as other, inferior, mysterious and sub-human etc. So their personal endeavor is concerned towards the redefinition of it. Their aim through poetic career is the achievement of freedom, equal identity, justice and the creation of a new world without any discrimination. For this what needed is the redefinition of the feminity by critiquing the male worldview of it.

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