

Tribhuvan University

Lady Windermere's Resistance in Oscar Wilde's *Lady Windermere's Fan*

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This thesis entitled "Lady Windermere's Resistance in Oscar Wilde's *Lady Windermere's Fan*" submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University by Mr. Arjun Prasad Hadkhale has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee.

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the anguish and shocks experienced by the protagonist, Lady Windermere in Oscar Wilde's play *Lady Windermere's Fan*. It reflects not only the suppression of this Lady in her traditional society but also the emancipation of her in male-governed society. Lady Windermere, who realizes the humiliation to be a female and finds physical and mental torture upon her life, fails to find equal status with her husband. She is fed up with her conventional husband, and the systems set in the traditional Victorian society are not acceptable to her as an intellectual woman. The anguish and pain experienced by the protagonist awakens the senses of her precarious existence. However, this Lady is able to find her own self by resisting the patterns set by traditional Victorian society. This is the sublime-perception of her oneself in her society. There is a journey made by the protagonist in her society which is plotted by Oscar Wilde very cleverly. She starts her life from subjugation and ends with emancipation. This emancipation also reflects the emancipation of the entire world of women.

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I: Introduction

This research is a study of British playwright Oscar Wilde's renowned play *Lady Windermere's Fan*. It examines the centre female character, Lady Windermere's impatience with patriarchy or male domination. This is the play about a subordinated Lady for whom the marriage has become an oppressive and exploitative economic arrangement which has bound her to domesticity. It perpetuates the belief that she is protected and provided by her male partner. She is happy and thought to be content that her needs are provided for her. Oscar Wilde, in fact, has presented the condition of a subordinated Lady who has been associated with the passive body.

The play *Lady Windermere's Fan* opens in the morning room of the home in London that Lady Windermere shares with her husband. She explains to her husband that she is upset with the compliments he continues to pay for her. When Lord Darlington, their family partner, pays a call and visits Lady Windermere, he informs that her husband may be betraying her marriage life by making repeated visits to another woman, Mrs. Erlynne. Not only has Lord Windermere been making regular visits but possibly giving Mrs. Erlynne large sum of money. All these rumors have been spreading among London people. On the one hand, this Lady experiences anguish and socks, on the other hand, she is treated badly, and found herself as if she is subordinated by her surrounding. Moreover, she has also been cheated by her husband during her birthday ball. Despite her rejection, her husband calls Mrs. Erlynne in her birthday ball. Angered by her husband's unfaithfulness, she decides to leave him for another lover, Lord Darlington. But later Lady Windermere is followed by Mrs. Erlynne in order to save Lady Windermere's relation with her husband Lord Windermere. Lord Windermere also follows Lady Windermere and assures that he

would not be going against her anymore. He explains to her that he still loves her. At the end of the play, persuading each other, all decide to reconcile to make a good living and possibly regain a good position in a society.

Lady Windermere awakens the sense of her precarious existence in her male-governed society. However, she is able to find her own self by resisting the patterns set by traditional Victorian society and ends her life with emancipation. This emancipation of this Lady also reflects the emancipation of the entire world of women.

This thesis has been studied under four chapters. Chapter one is an introduction to the play *Lady Windermere's Fan*. It also introduces the feminine underpinning as well. Chapter two is the discussion of theoretical tool wherein the contributions of the feminist writers especially of Virginia Woolf and Simone de Beauvoir are discussed, which brought about a great change in the history of feminist literary criticism. Moreover, it seems more significant to mention Virginia Woolf who all the time talks about the room and money that are essential for the development of women's literary and domestic career. In the play, the protagonist Lady Windermere is also seeking liberation for her good domestic life. She feels that women really need freedom for her healthy life. Chapter three is a textual analysis. In the same chapter, the feminine representation of the play and feminine perspective of the writer, Oscar Wilde, are analyzed. Finally, chapter four summarizes the repercussion of Wilde's feministic perspective in the light of *Lady Windermere's Fan*.

Critical responses on Oscar Wilde's *Lady Windermere's Fan*

Oscar Wilde's *Lady Windermere's Fan* has become pivot of many critics, writers and scholars soon after its performance in February 1892. The play won great fame and recognition because it presented the contemporary society as a corrupt

society where morally innocent individuals especially females are out of place. Though it is impossible to include all the criticisms of all the critics in this small project work, I will make an effort to include some of the representative responses.

John Simon, a famous theatre critic, views the play as a social play:

Lady Windermere's Fan is a radical play of innocent Lady. *Lady Windermere's Fan* is a more radical play than it appears—Wilde-Shelves the stereotype of the fallen women, Mrs. Erlynne who is singularly impenitent. On the other hand, it is a play of pure and innocent Lady who rejects her husband and decides to become Lord Darlington's lover. When we meet Lady Windermere, she is still pure and innocent, but during the play she rejects her husband, then draws back from this decision and—with the help of Mrs. Erlynne—she is able to return to her previous life and preserve her marriage. (37)

According to him, as the play begins, Lord Darlington, their family partner is in love with Lady Windermere, a married woman, Lord Windermere's spouse, and wants her to become her mistress. But his great paradox is that he loves Lady Windermere for her purity and innocence. Through her, he wants to recapture his own lost innocence. He says, "she is a good woman. She is the only woman I have ever met in my life and, "This woman has purity and innocence. She has everything we men have lost." The moral situation of Darlington is captured in act 3 when he says to Cecil Graham and Dumby, "we are all in the gutter, but some of us are looking at the stars"(170).

On the other hand, the famous critic Nassar, Christopher proclaims that it is a social comedy mirroring the drift of Victorian life and art towards corruption. He furthermore writes:

Lady Windermere's Fan is a play fragmented and reincarnated in four characters which embodies one of the aforementioned stages with in the framework and atmosphere of social comedy. *Lady Windermere's Fan* the drift of Victorian life and art towards corruption shown in the juxtaposition of four main characters but it is simultaneously obscured by being cast in the world of social comedy. The situation of Wilde's *Lady Windermere's Fan* and Shaw's *Mrs. Warren's Profession* are remarkably similar and there are many counterpoints among the characters of these two plays. Finally, in both plays, society as a whole is presented as Corrupt, "We will have no one in my house about whom there is any scandal," asserts Lady Windermere, but when we meet her guests, it is clear that they all are immoral, from Cecil Graham, to Dumby, to Lady Plymdale and the others. (20)

Here, Nassar Christopher says that *Lady Windermere's Fan* is a fragmented four-act play which is set in the atmosphere of social comedy. This reflects the negative aspects of Victorian life and art towards corruption. He furthermore proclaims that there are so many counterpoints between Wilde's *Lady Windermere's Fan* and G. B. Shaw's *Mrs. Warren's Profession*. Both are set in social boundary and both have presented the society as a whole corruption.

Linda Bridges, who has reviewed a number of plays at Shaw festival in Niagara-on-the-lake Ontario at the Shakespeare festival at Stratford, also reviews Oscar Wilde's *Lady Windermere's Fan*. She sees appearance and reality as the theme of the play. She writes:

Lady Windermere's Fan is certainly a delicious and perfectly crafted play. And, it doesn't abound in moral seriousness. In *Lady*

Windermere's Fan as in *An Ideal Husband* the wrongs and perceived wrongs are shown and the characters struggle with the false idealism of lesser Victorians, in which to worthy of women must never had an impure thought, the man and ignoble one. In the final scene Lord Windermere says, "Child, you and she belongs to the different worlds. Into yours world evil has never entered." And his wife replies "Don't say that, Arthur. There is the same world for all of us, and good and evil, sin and innocence, go through it hand to hand."(59)

Richard Allan Cave makes a thematic study of this Wilde's play. He is of the opinion that Wilde succeeded in de-Anglicizing Englishness in *Lady Windermere's Fan* through the technique of using language in terms of binary opposition. He says:

Wilde is perfectly in control of his dramatic artistry. What he is depicting is a society that is all surface in respects of manners and mores; there are no secured values for emulation behind the facade. *Lady Windermere's Fan* takes this technique to even more subtle lengths from the opening remarks of individuals with highly developed senses of their self importance. Ideally they wish to conduct themselves with due decorum [. . .] But everyone has a secret life. (226-27)

According to Allan, the play *Lady Windermere's Fan* is a play which is perfectly in Control of his dramatic artistry. Self importance and individual emancipation is forecasted in this play. It is the lesson that every human being should construct their codes and conducts for the smooth life and bias in the society.

The above review of literature shows that Wilde has transmuted simple events of human life into universal reveries by giving profound characterization like Lady Windermere, a suppressed woman tending to find her position in patriarchal society.

From different criticisms mentioned above it is clear that different critics have seen this play from different perspectives. Here, I have tried to see this play *Lady Windermere's Fan* from feminist perspective. I have tried to focus upon Lady Windermere's role in this play. My intention is not to categorize the playwright, Oscar Wilde as a feminist playwright. Rather, it is to see him as a writer with full understanding of woman's status and her power in her family. That is why, Oscar Wilde's portrayal of Lady Windermere in this play correlates with his ideas of the female as being equal in society. In fact, Wilde has presented a female, Lady Windermere who has given very insignificant status by her husband and treated as inferior member of her family. She is presented as a means to serve her husband and look after the household and children. So, she has been left in obscurity. Because of all these I think it is really significant to see this play from feminist perspective.

II: Theoretical Discussion: Feminism

Feminism: An Overview

Feminist criticism is actually a part of discourse of new feminism emerged in Europe and America in the late 1960s to revive political and social issues associated with women's participation. Feminism can no longer be accurately described as a theory implying a single and coherent trajectory of thought. Rather, feminism should be understood as a discourse: a discussion of multiple related ideas. Women's Liberation Movement has its origin in Eighteenth century and there has been a continuous agitation for women's rights –social, economical, cultural freedom of equalities of sexes in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth century.

The term “feminism” originated from French word “feminisme” which was coined by socialist Charles Fourier. It was first used to denote the support for women's equal legal and political rights with men. This is the criticism which is still growing and initially guided by the political aims of women's subordination and exclusion from, or marginalization within, a variety of cultural and social areas. Feminists, in fact, refuse to accept inequalities between men and women and insist that they should be questioned. Feminist theory has been produced both from the grass roots and from within the academy, although in recent years it has increasingly housed in- or removed itself to – the academy. Feminist literary theory is not, and has never been, a static phenomenon.

Feminism is a voice against inadequacy, the distortion as well as the ideologies which the males have created. The Feminist writers focus on the women's

rights and emancipations. They also cast their view on the liberation of women from the patriarchal society. Feminism affects the world politically and spiritually as human beings. They advocate for the equality of sex and they reject the tradition of masculinity. Clarifying the term feminism Guerin says, “Feminism and feminist criticism are often defined as a matter of absent rather than what is present [---] Feminists literary critics try to explain how power imbalances due to gender in a given culture reflected in or challenged by the literary text” (196).

Feminists reject the wrong belief of cultural ignorance on women. Feminists aim to eliminate the oppression and discrimination of women on the basis of sex, age, class, religion etc. Feminists have finally recognized that the world they have described is not the whole world, it is just a part. Their main concern is the social distinction between men and women. In other words, feminism refers to any type of theory which discovers the relationship between as one of the inequality and oppression. They aim to identify and see the sources of all kinds of subordination and oppression. On the one hand, defining feminism, Raman Selden says, “Feminist criticism sometime summons up the anger of furies to disturb complacent of patriarchal culture and create a less oppressive climate for women writers and readers, sometime feminist critics have employed wit to deconstruct male dominated way of seeing” (134). On the other hand, defining feminism, Sheiler Ruth says, “Feminism is a perspective, a world view, a kind of activism and political and spiritual theory” (205).

To sum up, feminist criticism is a criticism which is against patriarchy or male centered and controlled belief. This is against the belief that males are active, dominating, rational and creative and females are passive, acquiescent, emotional and conventional. Its main objective is to end sexism, though because of its relation to

other forms of oppression, it will require efforts to end other forms of oppression as well.

Prominent Feminist Theorists

Feminist criticism developed in the late 1960s as a self and concert literature. It is the result of two centuries long struggle for women's rights and freedom of expression, marked by such books as Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of Rights Women* (1792), John Stuart Mill's *The Subjection of Women* (1869), and the American Margaret Fuller's *Women in the Nineteenth Century* (1845).

This criticism continues to be closely related with the movement developed by political feminists for social, economical, cultural freedom and equality. Regarding feminist criticism, Toril Moi says, "Feminist criticism then is a specific kind of political discourse, a critical and theoretical practice committed to the struggle against patriarchy and sexism, not simply a concern of gender in literature." So, it is said that feminism is a recent political ideology. If we look back, many female writers were found very much conscious about their sexes and all they had the same opinion that all women secure the same chance of human rights. Before feminism many women writers were related to feminist concern. They were Madame de Steil, Mary Wollstonecraft, Jane Austen, George Eliot, Margaret Hiller, Virginia Woolf, Rebeca West and Simone de Beauvoir.

In the course of defining, showing the poor condition of women, Roman Sheldon says, "In the pre-mendellian days men regarded their sperm as the active seeds which give form to waiting ovum which lacks identity till it receives the male impress" (134). Women are generally studied as a separate section of work. However, man as a separate section can't even be thought to be studied. Women are always

considered as a part of men. They are pitied upon by the male community. Viewing women as a different entity from men and studying them, many theorists like Plato, Aristotle, Freud and Karl Stern and many others have developed their own theories regarding women have ultimately become a new faculty of science under the name "Feminism". As a new form of a faculty of science, the myths about women have been used by many theorists as their chief weapon to study. The feminists today reject the centuries of male dominated cultures in which women were only viewed for the work they produced. The feminists demand independence for their political, economic, social as well as personal development.

Furthermore, they reject the attitude that regard the traditional masculine characterized power and competition as good and desirable and the feminine characteristics of compassion, tenderness and compromise as weak and ridiculous. They also reject all those theories which tend to separate human beings into two categories.

As far as the prominent feminists are concerned Mary Wollstonecraft is one of the earliest agitators who talked on behalf of fair sex claiming for their liberty of will in her work, *A Vindication of Rights of Women*. In this book, she proves how essential it is for women to acquire rights. Wollstonecraft argues that women are characterized as saying, "I shall think that women a working machine." Wollstonecraft, in fact, emphasizes the need for proper education which considers females rather as women than human beings. She in her essay, "The Vindication of Women's Rights" says, "the neglected education of my fellow creatures is the grand source of misery" (444). She also says in the same essay that women are turned into weak and petty creatures by sheer neglect of proper education and by the morals and manners which are set up by the society.

Since 1969 there has been an explosion of feminist writing without close parallel in the history of previous critical innovations, in a movement that, as Elaine Showalter has remarked, displayed the urgency and excitement of a religious awakening. Showalter who published one of the influential works of recent feminist criticism, *A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists from Bronte to Lessing* in 1977 divided feminist criticism into two types, that which is concerned with women as reader and that which is concerned with women as writer. She is the feminist who also invented the term “gynocriticism” to describe the study of women as writers, in which women are invented to speak for themselves.

She stresses women’s experiences as the main cause to differentiate women’s language from that of the men’s. In the following years a number of feminists have concentrated, not only on the women as a reader, but also on what Elaine Showalter calls “gynocriticism”- a criticism which concerns it with developing a specifically female works written by women, in all aspects of their production, motivation, analysis and interpretation, and all literary forms including journals and letters. Elaine Showalter a leading feminist critic also identified three historical phases of women’s literary development. She says that there is a large difference between the writing of a men and women. She says that male critics have neglected the whole tradition of female writing of men and women. Three phases of female writing according to Showalter are:

(A) Feminine Phase:

According to Showalter, this is the phase started in 1840 and ended in 1880. She opines that in this phase female writers instead developing their own norms and values blindly followed and copied the male tradition of writing. Their main area of writing was domestic life and social living. As they followed the dominant social

standards, they went against the tradition of expressing sexual emotions and experiences. In this phase writers like Bronte Sisters imitated and internalized the dominated male aesthetic traditions and standards.

(B) Feminist Phase:

This phase of female writing according to Showalter began in 1880 and ended in 1920. Female writing of this phase protested against the male domination and oppression highly. Since this second phase of writing, the trend had been changed and the writers had avoided the technique of blindly following and copying. This includes the writers like Elizabeth Robins and Olive Schreiner.

(C) Female Phase:

According to Showalter this phase of female writing was started in 1920 and continues till now. This is the phase known as the phase of self discovery where female writers tried their best to develop their own kind of norms and values. They also tried to develop their own criticism and writing as opposed to male writing. This phase was dawned with Richardson, Katharine Mansfield and Virginia Woolf. This phase was ventured to counterbalance the male dominated literary spheres and realized the historically ex-polarized tendency in literature.

Another precursor who plays significant role on claiming for the women's rights in the modern context is Virginia Woolf. She wrote *A Room of One's Own* (1929) and other fiction and prose as a woman author. In these books, she writes that cultural, economical and educational disabilities raise women's consciousness against what she calls "patriarchal" society. She is not only the major feminist of the third phase of woman writing but also one of the twentieth century woman novelist who is best known for her feminist writing - *A Room of One's Own* and *Three Guineas* where she discusses directly about the women writers throughout modern history. Woolf's

feminism always displayed its own kind of independence. Her concerns were deeper as any novelist would: men's anger at women, misunderstanding between the sexes, above all the psychological conditions under which women and men were brought up. Virtually, all her novels touch upon this matter, and *A Room of One's Own* deals with it directly. Woolf addresses the question of why a sister of Shakespeare would not likely have been able to write anything, let alone a play. Woolf raises her voice for the radical changes and imagines a society in which men and women would come together in the same purpose and desire.

Woolf whose feminism went in its own direction and did not go beyond her own upper middle class believed that women have always faced social and economic obstacles to their literary ambitions and thought inferior to men. In *A Room of One's Own* Woolf stands on behalf of women and proclaims that women just need exercise for their faculties. Women were supposed to be very calm generally but women feel just as men feel, the only thing that is important is that they need exercise for their faculties and a field for their efforts as much as their brothers do. In her novel, *Profession of Women*, she discusses the disabling ideology of Nineteenth century. The idea of "the angle in the house" called for women to be sympathetic, unselfish and pure. In order to make space for writing, women had to use wiles and flattery. The taboos of the expression of female passion were another serious restriction. Only the novel gives women a workable space and even then the form has to be reworked for its new purpose expressing the female body.

Feminism as grassroots political activity did not disappear. Women have continued to be active up to the present day in different issues campaign around. Another significant feminist who has to be named is Simone de Beauvoir. She is the existentialist feminist critic and writer from France who strongly opposed the

tendency of treating women as second sex born to assist their male guidance. As Simone de Beauvoir put it, “On isn’t born rather becomes a woman [...] It is civilization as a whole that produces this creature [...] which is described as feminine.” In this way, the masculine in our culture has come to be identified as active, dominating, adventurous, rational, creative and the feminine by systematic to such traits has to be identified as passive, timid, acquiescent, emotional and conventional. In this connection, M. H. Abraham says: “As much more radical critical mode was launched in France by Simone de Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex* (1949) a wide ranging criticism of cultural identification of women as merely the negative “other” to men as the defining and dominating “subject” who is assumed to represent humanity in general, the book also dealt with “the great collective myths” of many writers”.

Simone de Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex* (1949) established the principle of modern feminism. When a woman tries to define herself, she starts by saying, “I am a woman” revealing the fundamental asymmetry between the terms masculine and feminine. “Man” defines the human, not women, women are riveted into a lopsided relationship with men; he is one, she is the other. Beauvoir shows with great erudition that man’s domination has been secured through the ages by an ideological power: legislators, priests, scientists and philosophers have all promoted the idea of women’s subordination. For feminists to break this patriarchal power it is necessary to challenge men at the level of theory, but without entering the theoretical domain of men’s terms. In the same book, Beauvoir argued that women are always situated as the other to men. The man is always the subject-self, the “I” whilst the woman is always the object, the other. And she explicitly expresses the conditions of women so that they could realize their existence. Women have been essential as the one born to be a wife or mother. But she is stripped off motherly rights because rights are also

overpowered by fatherly rights. A wife's duty is to be in the bed to gratify the husband's lust but the husband is not aware whether he is gratifying the lust of his wife. (*The Second Sex* 145)

Today, still at the end of the 20th century, women's conditions are still critical. Still the questions like-“They are women”, “women are inferior” are raised about women. These are real abstract declarations which are disliked by the feminist critics. But in present time feminists proudly defines her,” I am a woman”. Simone de Beauvoir also agrees with the same saying and recognizes her to the certain sex, no fixed sex, no novelty. It is the goal to alert the society to be women writer. She prefers womanhood. According to Beauvoir, each human has his or her own ideology which directs human to a goal. Likewise, it seems her feminine quality has influenced her to revolt against patriarchy. Here, Dorothy Parker can also be counted as an ideal and humanitarian writer whose excellent idea that human beings should be regarded equally is notable in this context. She, in fact, dislikes the interpretation of particular sex.

It is also true that feminists always struggle against anti-feminist view which they claim are narrow and conservative disposition. Life is gift of nature. Human culture and religion also agree with this truth, but the man of society only concern with the anatomy of destiny. Even the great thinkers and philosophers from Plato to other went to extent of disallowing women and servants to take part in politics and philosophy. Helen Cixious is another modern feminist critic who like Showalter and Beauvoir gives importance to women's existence and participation in society. She gives a very provoking message to the women writers, “Write yourself, your body must be heard only then will the immense resource of the conscious spring forth.” According to her, “women's imaginary is inexhaustible and her writing is wonderful like music

and painting” (Selden 541). Elsewhere she writes, “I write women, women must write women and not about men” (288). As passion is biologically different, human writing should also contain diverse reality so that one sex can understand other very closely. In patriarchal society and authority, women writers will still have to struggle more for their self definition. In her essay, *Sorties*, she is searching for women’s existence and actual human rights by arising question, “Where is she?” (288).

School of Feminism:

In the present time, feminism is widely used everywhere and is nationally diverged too. There are differences in the feminism of different countries such as America, England, France, and Germany and to some extent Netherlands. Now, among the various approaches of literary studies, feminist perspective has grown as a legitimate branch. Feminist critics can use whichever methods they like. Guerin and friends suggest that feminists are equivocal and open as males and says, “Male writers seem more interested in closure, female writers often respond with open endings, feminine logic in writing is often associational, male logic sequential that is, goal oriented. Male objectivity is challenged by female subjectivity” (201).

Elaine Showalter who has identified three phases of modern women’s literary development also described four current models of difference taken by many feminists around the world: biological, linguistic, psychological and cultural. According to her, feminist criticism hasn’t had a theoretical basis. It has been as empirical orphan in the theoretical storm. From geographical point of view, Showalter tries to show the diversity of feminist criticism. She writes, “English feminist criticism essentially Marxist stresses the oppression of women, French feminist criticism essentially psychoanalytic stresses the repression of women and American feminist criticism essentially textual stresses the expression of women” (336).

So, there are diversities in feminist criticism in terms of nation varieties. There is emphasis on different elements of feminist critics of different nations. In America, the emphasis is on the literary profession, in France it is concerned with the problem of psychology drawing attention to deconstruction. In fact, in America it is professional bias and the object is institution, in England it is Marxist bias, in France it is psychological bias and in Germany it is bias in reception theory.

French Feminism:

French feminism is more concerned with theoretical aspects. French feminists believe that western thought has been based on a systematic repression of women's experience. These feminists tried to deconstruct the language, philosophy, psychoanalysis and social practices. They also deconstruct the male way of thinking. They also claim that not only the religion but also the language supports the male domination. French feminism like most of the feminism began with a radical political activity.

Helen Cixious argues that until female could express their sexuality in the language, they only can overcome the phallogocentric approach. She describes the psyche of women. She deconstructed the relation of male and female e. g. sun/moon, culture/nature, and man/women. These binary oppositions are rooted in patriarchal society. With the impression of Jacques Derrida's philosophy she regarded women as the source of energy because only women can use a new language in their writing. Roman Selden says that female counterpart can overcome the male when they can project their writing. Her famous essay, "Laugh of the Medusa" (1976) is one of the nice examples of women writing where it is shown how women put their bodies into writing. She rejects the binary opposition of male and female and support the deconstructive method of Derrida. Raman Selden suggested that to get rid of the

patriarchal dominance women should invent their own language. She argues that if all the biological defenses are swept out then there will be feminist.

According to Selden, “French feminism has been much influenced by psychoanalysis, the psychoanalysis of Lacan. French feminists by Lacan’s theory have overcome the hostility towards French shared by most feminists” (Selden 145). French feminists placed the language as the political agenda to derive the meaning of the text. This opines phallogocentric as their language. According to Lacan, a child when identified with the phallus of the father enters for the linguistic order and symbolic order of language. Lacan says that women can’t identify with phallus and thus can’t enter into male symbolic order of language.

Another important French feminist is Julia Kristeva. She focuses on the difference between semiotic and symbolic order of language. She questions the femininity and prefers to see it in position. In her new femininity women are marginalized by the male dominated society. She opines that feminist language is semiotic and pre-oedipal. Semiotic means the stage where baby and mother fused together inside the womb of the mother and symbolic is associated with the law of father. She sees this poetic renovation as the feminist liberalization. Thus, the feminist movement invents anarchism which is found in avante garde. They used to dominate the male dominated society and associated with the mother feminine language that is threatening to patriarchy creature.

Another French feminist Luice Irigraray emphasizes on the need of woman language. She rejects that female sexuality is an unknown identity. She opines that women especially distinguish them from men. She rejects the view of Freud and Plato about women that women are irrational and invisible as imperfect men. She supports Cixious and says that male’s language is rational because their sexuality is centered

on penis. Whereas female sexuality is diffused over their body and therefore, the writing of the female comes as a force which can overcome the patriarchal language. Their writing is expressed through their body. Irigrary further expresses that female sexuality represents women's relationships to masculine and language. She opines that "Women like the mystic is able to lose all senses of personal subjective beings, it is therefore able to slip through patriarchal net" (Newtman 89).

American Feminism:

Another most important feminist criticism is American Feminism. This criticism mainly focuses on the text analysis. This is the criticism which is propounded by Elaine Showalter and later followed by Kate Millett, Carolyn Heilbrun and Judith Fellerly. These critics explained the women's position in patriarchal ideology. These modern American writers Kate Millet, Germaine Greer and M.Ellman emphasize on the emancipations of women and express their aggressive feeling.

Kate Millet expresses that feminism is a political theory a cultural and spiritual product where gender discrimination should wiped out and women should allowed to take free breath as men do in the society. Millet's approach is concerned with the study of social, institutional and personal power relations between the sexes. Toril Moil says, "For Millet the essence of politics is power" (Toril 205). Male is the overall in the society and the female were kept under the patriarchy and it forms the ideology of power.

Millet opposed this view of cultural tradition and fought a struggle for the emancipation of women from such oppression. Her *sexual politics* opens the way in the political feminist writing on literature. She thinks that patriarchy (the father figure) oppresses the women in the society. They treat women as inferior taken as

good wife and underpaid. They were bound to keep under four corners of the domestic rule. She tries to differentiate the gender. And according to her, sex gender has a cultural meaning attached to sexual identity whereas sex is biological aspect. With the sexuality the gender shouldn't dominate the female. Sexual politics means the fighting against the unequal relation of domination and subordination by the male counterpart.

Since ancient period, women were taken as inferior and they were taken as a working class people. But Kate Millet approached the view that these all should be wiped out and women should be treated as a human not as female or oppressive group. He said that gender should be treated equally by the cultural and traditional as well government's rule and regulations. In this connection, Roman Selden says:

The arguments of each oppressed group takes similar forms: the oppressor is seen as consciously endeavoring to sustain the oppression definitely through ideology; each defends its members against misrepresentation and stereotyping in fiction and the media; and each conducts a political struggle to raise consciousness among the oppressed and to effects a radical change in the power relation between oppressor and oppressed. (138)

They also argue that this theory is one which helps to wipe out the ideological oppression of women by men. In *sexual politics* Kate Millet becomes a critic of patriarchal culture. She points at male's oppressive rule on female in her book. The domination and subordination among the gender is regarded as another hetero-sexual oppressive. She thinks that male writer in their fiction exposed oppressive sexual politics. They regard male dominance as the primary thing which is unique in social and economic forms of oppression.

British Feminism:

British feminism is another important mode of feminism. They are the British feminists who went on analyzing the literary works from the standpoint of an inherent patriarchal ideology where the women is marginalized and objected. They focus on cultural practices, products and knowledge. They emphasize on art and culture.

Rosalind Coward looks at the female desire among the various cultural phenomenons. She opines that there is relationship between author, text and sex and said a feminist text can be made by female author which can be political and cultural but can not be biological.

British feminist criticism was organized by New Left, particularly by the ideas of Althusser and Machinery. The traditional Marxist theory and Soviet Realism state that there is a direct relation between the literary text and the class struggle outside the text. It is reflectional in style. The frontal theorists like Althusser and Machinery suggest that literature is completely free. In order to justify this they say two things: base and superstructure. Superstructure has its own principle of formation. This division assigns superstructure production, as opposed to basal products, and holds comparatively free ideology in feminism which is more or less an “unconscious world view”. It is expressed in our behaviors and cultural products.

Resistance against Women’s Oppression

Feminist criticism enunciated as a movement in literary criticism since 1960s emphasizes a kind of reading to literature breaking the traditional monolithic way of examining literature. Feminist literary criticism establishes its relation to the

movement of political feminists for social, economical and cultural freedom of equality as an output of the two centuries old struggle for women's rights.

Virginia Woolf by writing *A Room of One's Own* (1929) displayed how the structures of patriarchal society have prevented women critics to come up their creative possibilities. Later a series of women critics advocated the women's issue, especially in literature, exploring the multiple forms of women's subordination, marginalization, cultural identification, mythification and derogatory stereotypes of women created by the men. As regarded to individual contribution to feminist criticism, Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* (1929) entered as a first blow on patriarchal structure in which she explores deeper concerns on men's anger at women, misunderstanding between the sexes and above all psychological conditions under which women were brought up.

Looking at the conditions of women writers of past Virginia Woolf says that it was considered a sin to write anything at that period. Their attempt wasn't only criticized and condemned but also at the same time they were disfigured and deformed. The society had prevented women writers from writing openly. Women's creativity was satirized as "blue stocking with an itch for scribbling" (919). So, women had to write surreptitiously that results them dull and uncreative. Woolf says, "women must have shut herself in a room in the country to write and been torn a sunder by bitterness and scruples perhaps, though her husband was of the kindest on their married life perfection" (819).

Moreover, Simone de Beauvoir raises many questions concerned with women in her book *The Second Sex*. This book offers historical, biological and psychological perspectives on women, a consideration of prevailing patriarchal myth about women

and as an account of female love and sexuality in virtually all its forms as M. H.

Abrams writes:

The second Sex is a wide-ranging of identification of women as merely the negative objective or “other” man as defining and dominating subject who is assumed to represent humanity in general. The book also deals with the collective myths of women in the works of many male writers. (234)

With the help of *The Second Sex*, She established the principle of women in patriarchal society. In this book she states by saying “I am a woman. No women would do so [...] man defines the human, not women” (Selden 134). It reveals the fundamental asymmetry between the terms masculine and feminine. She also says, “Man defines the human, not human. Women are riveted into a lopsided relationship with man, he is the one, and she is the other” (136).

Furthermore, Kate Millet in her *Sexual Politics* (1969) emphasizes that women should be given power to develop their personalities, economic status and liberty career. She says, “The essence of politics is power claiming that patriarchy, the main cause of women’s suppression, makes them inferior. Patriarchy is extended directly in civil and domestic life, there to constrain women” (137).

So, all the feminists since Elaine Showalter to Kate Millett strongly resisted against the women’s miserable condition of patriarchal society in their writing. They view that the civilization that has developed is pervasively patriarchal- male- centered and controlled, organized and conducted to subordinate women to men in all cultural domain. All concept of gender are cultural constructs that were generated by the omnipresent patriarchal biases of our civilization. They also agree that this patriarchal ideology pervades those writing which have been considered great literature and

which until recently have been written almost entirely by men for men. The most regarded works focus on male protagonist and the female characters are marginal and subordinate, presented either as complementary to or in opposition to masculine desire. All the feminists agree with the point that women should not keep silence. Rather, they should raise their voice against male domination for their right. They also say that whatever the situation, women should not give up their hope. Instead, they should struggle.

On the other hand, when we talk about other genres, this issue has also been raised in the genre, play as the prominent issue. Many playwrights like Henry Ibsen, August Strindberg, Marsha Norman, G. B. Shaw and the greatest playwright William Shakespeare have written so many plays on the female issues. They all argue that feminism should work to liberate women from a system of male-centered values and belief, and should empower them to discover their own female identity. Moreover, Oscar Wilde has also discovered this issue in his plays; *Lady Windermere's Fan*, (1892) *An Ideal Husband*, (1895) and *A women of No Importance*. (1893)

In short, Oscar Wilde's *Lady Windermere's Fan* can also be taken as an instance of feminist writing. This play which is fragmented and reincarnated in the four main characters each of whom embodies one of the four mentioned stages, but with in the framework and atmosphere of social comedy deals with the female issue.. In the play, protagonist, Lady Windermere is very uncomfortable. All the time she has been dominated by her own husband. Here, Oscar Wilde as a feminist writer has presented Windermere's resistance against patriarchy or male domination. She is the one who is docile and subservient to her husband's desire. She is the character brought up in western civilization pervasively patriarchal which has subordinated and

oppressed her. Moreover, she is identified as acquiescent, passive and emotional. In fact, Oscar Wilde is also one of the writer who is in favor of women's resistance

III: Textual Analysis

Lady Windermere's Position in her Family

Lady Windermere, the protagonist and the prominent female character in the Oscar Wilde's play *Lady Windermere's Fan* is living in a terrible world, very vile world. She is living in the male dominated society. Living in such a society completely dominated by patriarchal notion is certainly difficult for this Lady. In the male dominated society woman is not supposed to develop her own interest. She should rather enjoy what her husband enjoys. There has always been the relationship of power between men and women in which women are sometimes idolized but most of the time oppressed and exploited. They have often been the target of male sexual violence. It means they are taken as the object of sexual pleasure. The term "Patriarchy" as defined by most of the feminist scholars is the rule of father, including the rule of older men over younger men and of fathers over daughters as well as husbands over wives. It is a historical process formed by men and women with patriarchal family serving as a basic unit of organization. Kate Millett in *Sexual Politics* emphasizes that patriarchy subordinates the female to male or treats the female as an inferior male increasing self realization and gaining empowerment. This concept, so defined, seems to be precisely the prevailing system of male-female interaction in the beginning of the play, *Lady Windermere's Fan*. Certainly, Lord Windermere, husband of Lady Windermere and Lord Darlington, family partner of Windermere family function as a traditional patriarchal mainly in the beginning portion of the play, by dominating Lady Windermere, protagonist of the play.

The female protagonist, Lady Windermere is totally alienated and dominated. She is unaware of her female identity. Actually, she does not know who she is and where her position is in the society. Not only her husband is against her but also society and its people are against her. She remains mute accepting social norms of the patriarchal society and she suppresses her humanly desires. Lady Windermere, in the play, is forced into silence by her closet patriarchal authority, by the man she believes in. Her own husband always dominates her and asks her to keep silence which is illustrated by the following dialogue uttered by Lady Windermere's husband:

LORD WINDERMERE. Remember that: Ah. Margaret! A wife should trust her husband.

LADY WINDERMERE. London is full of women who trust their husbands. One can always recognize them. They look so unhappy. I am not going to be one of them. (*moves up*). (182)

Here, it is clear that Lady Windermere's position is very miserable since she is always asked to trust her husband and asked to keep silence. Her position lies on her husband. Her husband, who belongs to the high class of British society, behaves and treats women as in traditional society, i.e. woman has to live under the control of man. He, in fact, hates women's individuality and freedom, his own wife's and believes in male domination to such an extent that he gives least freedom to his wife.

This play, on the other hand, examines the unconscious and miserable existence of woman along with improper education, physical and mental torture upon woman and her absence in economic right through the depiction of Lady Windermere, the protagonist of the play. On the one level, the play exposes the protagonist's gradual awakening from the improper education system imposed upon her by the

male-oriented society. On the other hand, it makes us realize the absence of women in economic right, marriage-making decision and ill treatment of males upon women.

Lady Windermere and Mrs. Erlynne are the female characters of the play, *Lady Windermere's Fan*. Through them, Oscar Wilde uncovers the women's very precarious existence in a male governed society of his time. With the help of these characters he leaves a message to the whole women of the world to awake and resist from the male structured society in order to reform existing norms and values so that women can be equal to man. By giving the instance of the Lady Windermere, the protagonist of *Lady Windermere's Fan*, he has asked all the downtrodden and pitiable women to seek emancipation from male dominance.

Lady Windermere's Fan begins with the description of Lady Windermere through the painful realization of the protagonist about women's subordination and submissive role:

LADY WINDERMERE. To stay in this house any longer is impossible
 Tonight a man who loves me offered me his whole life. I
 refused it. I will offer him mine now. I will go to him! (*puts on
 cloak and goes to the door, then turns back. Sits down at table
 and writes a letter, and puts it into an envelope, and leaves it
 on table*) Arthur has never understood me. When he reads this
 he will, [---] It is he who has broken the bond of marriage-not I.
 I only break its bondage. (191)

According to Lady Windermere, she has been subordinated by her own family member, by her own husband. She says that on the previous night she refused a man who offered his whole life. Now, she finds a painful situation in her home. She also

realizes that her husband has never understood her. Here, this lady examines her own miserable existence along with improper mental torture upon her.

Despite her poor situation, Lady Windermere gradually awakens from the male oriented society along with the development of the play. She becomes an enlightened woman. So, her reunion with her husband at the end of the play is not a submissive instance but an equal to man. The prime focus of the play is on the idea of heroine and her awakens and her resistance. She represents conventional femininity, a romantic heroine. As Lady Windermere becomes a heroine by growing up, Oscar Wilde makes the point that social and literary conventions collaborate with biology to construct femininity.

Female characters apart from Lady Windermere have also been marginalized in the play. They are made to internalize their inferior status in the play. Apart from Lady Windermere's position, other's position is also sympathetic. They are also subordinated and marginalized. They are bought and sold like the slaves for other's advantages which can also be illustrated by the remark made by Lady Windermere, "You talk as if you had heart. Women like you and me have no hearts. Hearts is not in you. You are bought and sold" (182). Here, Lady Windermere tells Mrs. Erlynne that women are treated as if they lack heart. Males think that anything can be done upon them which they just accept, they never react. She also means that women around her are similar to the workers who are bought and sold. They behave women badly as if they do not know anything about the outside world. So, female characters apart from the protagonist have also been subordinated. Moreover, they have given very insignificant statuses and treated as inferior members of their family.

On the other hand, another female character, Mrs. Erlynne, who is from a rich educated family, has to lead a life of solitude and subordination in the play. She has to

accept male cultures and values without questioning them. Instead of proper education, economic status and equal right to male, she is compelled to pass subordinated life. She is the female who is abandoned by her husband. So, she is passing a solitude life. She is fond of romance and fashion. She is interested in second marriage. Moreover, she has a passion of wonderful life. But her problem is that she has a poor economic status and she has to depict her life on others since she is abandoned by her husband. Here, the important thing to notice is that these all things are resulting or prevailing because of marginalization of women. They are dependent upon their family members and their male partners. But as the play gradually develops women characters in the play realize their position in their family and forecast that in spite of differences, women are equal.

So, despite their miserable situation, they realize that femininity is a cultural construct. One is not born as a woman, one becomes one. The roles of women in the society are cultural construct because female infants do not know who they are. They are just like clay. And it is the society which shapes them as a female. In the play, Lady Windermere who is having a very poor condition in her family realizes that the subordination between the sexes no longer exists in any society. In spite of differences, women are equal. According to her, this is just a cultural construct. In fact, all human beings whether males or females are equal and no domination lasts long. Anyway, the protagonist Lady Windermere seeks to analyze the conditions which shape her life and wants to explore cultural understanding of what it means to be a woman. She feels that she needs to understand her subordination and her exclusion from, or marginalization within, a variety of inequalities between women and men that are natural and inevitable and insists that they should be questioned.

When we keenly go through the play, we can notice that Oscar Wilde agrees with Lady Windermere that the male violence against women in the family is an expression of male domination. She believes that violence is inextricably linked to all acts of violence in the society that occur between the powerful and powerless, the dominant and dominated. Male supremacy encourages the use of abusive force to maintain male domination of women. She thinks that it is the western philosophical notion of hierarchical rule and coercive authority that is the root cause of violence between those who dominate and those who are dominated. It is the belief system that is the foundation on which sexist ideology and other ideologies of group oppression are based. They can be eliminated only when this foundation is eliminated.

One of the most distinctive quality of women, which the men do not possess, is reflected in the play through the medium of Lady Windermere by the playwright Oscar Wilde. Wilde instinctively understands persons and events. In the play, this quality is termed as “intuition” which the men community do not possess. Wilde, here, has thrown some light on this quality of the female and has praised her for having it. Besides this, the playwright has presented males as cowards who always outrage the rule of society they are living in. According to him, males do not have understanding of others especially of females. They always go outside the boundary. In this play, Lady Windermere proclaims that though males are always afraid of the outside world, they never seem normal but rather seem hard. They always seem to be dominating women. In this connection Lady Windermere says, “Men are such cowards. They outrage every law of the world and afraid of the world’s tongue” (192).

As the play progresses, Lady Windermere finds her position miserable in her own family. She says males are such timid who never dare to show love for their family members but instead they get afraid of the world and its people behind them.

This situation is quite similar to that of the other women of traditional British society. Every male seems feminist and talks as if they love their wife in every way but in practicality they are always found dominating females. In real life they make the situation very worse. Though they are afraid of the world's tongue, in practical life they are always subordinating and dominating females.

On the other hand, when we analyze the lines mentioned in the play, we can derive the conclusion that Lady Windermere is not a woman. No one can try to cheat her because she is made a woman by her playwright Oscar Wilde and her contemporary situation. To her the conventional ideas of marital fidelity meant nothing in comparison with the demands of that unfortunate young. Here, this Lady is not the object male culture thinks but she is the subject who is the main actor of Windermere family. Lady Windermere simply makes the impression that she is vigorous feminist who is determined to be valued at her proper worth and who captures the opportunity to make her position clear in the family. That demands her husband Lord Windermere to realize the truth.

To Lady Windermere in a real sense neither her husband, Lord Windermere nor her family partner, Lord Darlington who consoles and looks for her is a worthy mate. In the play, in many situations, Lady Windermere not only shatters her husband's over confidence but also severally reprimands Lord Darlington for his wrong indulgence in someone's settled domestic life. The expression made by Lady Windermere expresses that she is teaching something to these two males Lord Windermere, her own husband and Lord Darlington, her family partner. According to her, males are hovering on and around her just to make her condition worse. Both want Lady Windermere to become their wife without whom they think they can not live and enjoy life but reality is something different that both love for her physical

beauty but in practicality both want to dominate her and compel her resistance against them. So, as the play progresses, she determines to think herself about her pathetic condition and domination done upon her and she seems to know far better ideas than those male counterparts. So, this Lady seems to understand more and far better than those persons and represents the feminist ideology.

Issues of Lady Windermere's awakening

Lady Windermere, in this play, represents a female who has been relegated to a secondary position. She has been brought up in a male centered and controlled society. She is the member of a society in which civilization is pervasively patriarchal. In this society all men are bad who are in favor of oppressive system. But Lady Windermere no longer stays passive. Her miserable situation makes her awake against oppressive people. She thinks that all men are oppressors. They never care of women. Here in the following dialogue, the duchess of Berwick also says that all men in London are bad. They never try to grow better but only try to grow old. The duchess of Berwick says that men become old but they never become good:

LADY WINDERMERE. Are all men bad?

DUCHESS OF BERWICK. Oh, all of them, my dear, all of them,
without any exception, and they never grow any better. Men
become old. But they never good.

LADY WINDERMERE. Windermere and I married for love.

DUCHESS OF BERWICK. Yes, we begin like that. (173)

Though women are taken as passive, acquiescent and emotional in practicality men are passive and bad. These above lines and the motto of this play really support that men make women passive because men are always found bad. Here, in this play too, Lady Windermere is made passive. She has been exploited. No one is serious about

her status. She is the one who is mentally as well as physically tortured. On the other hand, these following lines certainly clarify that she is not only mentally tired but also physically tired since she has to perform all the tasks herself which is clear from the following conversation:

LORD WINDERMERE. Have you said good-night to my wife?

MRS ERLYNEE (*crushing letters in her hand*). Yes.

LORD WINDERMERE. Where is she?

MRS ERLYNEE. She is very tired. She has gone to bed. She said she had a headache.

LORD WINDERMERE. I must go to her? You will excuse me?

MRS ERLYNEE (*rising hurriedly*). Oh, no! It's nothing serious. She is only tired that is all. (193)

These quoted lines certainly show the pathetic condition of Lady Windermere. She has to work all day. Even in her own birthday she has to manage all the things herself. Her husband is neither giving her sympathy nor her other family members. Oscar Wilde, through the character and behavior of Lord Windermere shows how woman is forced to live a miserable life in patriarchy. In this given dialogue, her husband is asking Miss. Erlynne whether he should go to his wife or not. Definitely, it shows his indifference to his wife. Her husband thinks that her duty is to be in bed to gratify his lust but he is not aware whether he is gratifying his wife or not. So, her wife stands as an example of male agent dominating and defining the subject (female). So, these all elements are working as the agents which make Lady Windermere to awake to identify her situation or position in her family.

In the past, in Victorian society, there had been a tendency of treating women as a Second Sex to assist their male guard. But all the feminists agree that one is not

born, rather becomes a female. In *Lady Windermere's Fan* too Lady Windermere has been made a female by her own husband. She is taken as a female, a negative object who is supposed to be the dominating and defining subject. In the play, Lady Windermere has been suffering because of her own husband and his dominating nature. Her husband treats her and behaves her as in traditional society, i.e. woman has to live under the control of man. He hates his own wife's individuality and freedom to such an extent that he gives least freedom to his wife. So, Oscar Wilde through the medium of the Lady Windermere shows how male values and norms seem to trap women in their rigorous grip.

In this play, Lady Windermere who has been passing tensed life clarifies that she is not going to compromise anymore with her husband. She is not going to be spoiled anymore. So, in the play, *Lady Windermere's Fan* her husband's domination is the main cause of Lady Windermere's awakening. The more her husband dominates and seems indifference to her the more she tends to think to resist against him. So, she is not an ordinary lady who is going to be dominated anymore. She represents a lady who is against any compromise made upon her which is clearer from the following dialogue:

LADY WINDERMERE. Don't spoil it by saying extravagant silly things to me [. . .] my mother died when I was a mere child. I live always with Lady Julia, my father's elder sister, you know. She was stern to me but she taught me what the world is forgetting, the differences that there is between what is right and what is wrong. She allowed me no compromise. I allow of none. (167)

From these lines we come to know that Lady Windermere was poverty –stricken woman from her childhood. She had struggled and suffered a lot. Nevertheless, she was taught what is right and what is wrong. Thought, Lady Windermere has been subordinated from the early portion. She is the Lady who is morally powerful. She is stronger than other characters and superior to Lord Windermere, her husband. It is obvious that she is economically poor as well because her husband is not supporting her. Even, she is not allowed to see the bank book. She is managing everything herself. Moreover, she is managing her small birthday ball herself. Later on when it is found that her husband has become intimate friend of a woman, launching with her, paying her bills and giving her large amount of money, Lady Windermere could not console herself angered by her husband’s unfaithfulness and feels very sad and reacts in following way:

LADY WINDERMERE. My husband-what has he got to do with any women of this Kind?

DUCHESS OF BERWICK. Ah, what indeed dear? This is the point. He goes to see her continually, stops for hours at a time, and while he is there she is not at home to anyone. We looked upon him as being such a model husband, but I am afraid there is no doubt about it. And the worst of it all is that I have told that this woman has got a great deal of money out of him.

LADY WINDERMERE. Oh, I can’t believe it!

DUCHESS OF BERWICK. But its quite true, my dear. The whole London Knows it. (171)

From this conversation we also come to know that Lord Windermere is said to have an affair with another woman and spending great amount of money on her. On the one

hand, he is working as an active agent of domination over his own life partner. On the other hand, he is running after another woman. Certainly, these all things are giving anguish and mental torture to his wife. So, this is definitely another cause of Windermere's awakening. She is not a passive character developed by playwright Wilde who is instead very much conscious of her character. She is very much bold and courageous female who determines to resist against her husband. She feels that her heart is broken. She also discovers that her husband is really subordinating her and is being indifferent to her which is also clear from the following explosive exchange of words exchange between wife and husband:

LORD WINDERMERE. You are not what I thought you were. You
are just the same as every other women.

LADY WINDERMERE. You break my heart!

LORD WINDERMERE. Mine is already broken.

LADY WINDERMERE. Tomorrow I leave England. This is the last
time I shall ever look on you. (188)

From these quoted lines it is illustrated that Lady Windermere is not an ordinary female but she is the female who thinks that radical revolt helps to get her position back. She thinks that her resistance will definitely help her get her husband back. In this sense, she is superior to all. When she feels that her husband has broken her heart, she threatens to go with another person, Lord Darlington who loves Lady Windermere heartily. She leaves home but waits until her own husband comes back. Lastly, when her husband comes and follows her, she becomes successful to convince her husband. Thus, Lady Windermere performs the revolutionary act to create her own female existence.

In short, Lady Windermere is an active and changeable character who resists to get her existence back. Definitely, her miserable position, husband's illicit affair with another woman and her mental torture are the issues of her awakening. So, she is the moral and revolutionary character developed by Wilde. Moreover, Lady Windermere is the good production in female world. She is good and nice extremely in the sense that she goes to struggle without taking help of other characters of the play.

Resistance of Lady Windermere

Definitely, women resist challenging the conventional society. Education, knowledge and conscious soul make them resist. Education and knowledge teach them to be conscious of the equal rights and to be self-dependent. Thoughtfully, women resist for the juxtaposition of right and want to change unjust rule which has snatched the rights of females. It orders the females whatever it likes. But the females who have strong spirit can not endure and resist. Such bad and immoral patriarchy makes them resist. Knowledge with conscious soul and education helps to resist. When women are conscious of the right of them, they resist. Women resist to achieve the equal right in pervasively patriarchal society. The origin of patriarchy has created blind and narrow society which has suppressed the women. The untouchable social codes have not got justice. It has dominated female voices. So, females are compelled to resist and words are the strongest weapons for them to resist.

Women want to change the mythical rule of patriarchy. Women resist for the equal rights in society. So, they go for resistance against the evils of society and struggle ceaselessly to achieve the success in life. Up to this period, women are in dark cave. When they are conscious, they resist against males patriarchy for light, the sun (Knowledge, truth). Women mainly resist diminishing male energy. Every rule

which is made unjustly for female should be changed so that woman can survive as the equal good human.

The important thing is that female who can resist against the traditional thoughts and wins is a strong female and she can survive in this world with her strong power. The female who does not sell herself to achieve her success is a good female who will be praised even by patriarchal society like Lady Windermere in this play. We see that females are victimized by males in the society. But the female should be qualified to achieve the right. Those who are powerful and courageous like Lady Windermere can only dig out the established codes of patriarchal society and can replace it with new rules. Those females who are stronger and who are not tempt for money or who are not greedy can resist.

In the survey of female resistance in *Lady Windermere's Fan*, the resistance of Lady Windermere is clearly illustrated against the established rules of society. Many females have followed the rules of male chauvinistic society because they are condemned to follow the traditional norms and social values. Those who resist against such norms and values are taken negatively. But there are some females who still oppose the established unjust rules for their rights and freedom. Such women should have powerful spirit with education. Such women are called social rebels. We should not serve the mankind to bring powerful thought with the civilized humanity. The female who lives luxuries life can not revolt such society. They are covered with patriarchal society. The female like Lady Windermere who can go or oppose against the bad matters of patriarchy can resist. She can not endure. So, she fights with notions or thoughts. These kinds of rules have suppressed the females. The female who goes against patriarchal notion of the society is brilliant female. Only the powerful and strong spirited women who do not like compliments can raise the voice

against patriarchy and can resist against the male domination. Here, Lady Windermere represents such lady who is against any complements made over her which is also illustrated from the following dialogue between Lady Windermere and Lord Darlington:

LADY WINDERMERE. Lord Darlington, you annoyed me last night at the Foreign Office. I am afraid you are going to annoy me again.

LORD DARLINGTON. I, Lady Windermere?

LADY WINDERMERE. Well, you kept paying elaborate compliments whole evening.

LORD DARLINGTON (*smiling*). Ah, nowadays, we are all of us so hard up, that the only pleasant things to pay are compliments. They are the only things we can pay.

LADY WINDERMERE (*shaking her hands*). No, I am talking very seriously. You mustn't Laugh, I am quite serious. I don't like compliments, and I don't I don't See why a man should think he is pleasing a women enormously when he Says her a whole heap of things that he doesn't mean.(166)

Here, we view that woman Lady Windermere does not like compliments made over her. This woman who has powerful spirit and high class morality not only oppose their family members but also oppose their family partners like Lord Darlington. So, such educated peoples do not want to become a savage. In fact, female like Windermere who want to resist the society and its restrictions imposed upon her does not value the marital beauty. Such female can not endure the speech and doing of liar made upon them. Through this context, it is clear that Lady Windermere who is also a

part of British high class society has been under the chain of oppression. She has been dominated not only by her husband but also by her family partner like Lord Darlington who has always been complaining the females.

Here, when we notice the society presented in the play, we find that it is not fully developed society but rather a developing Victorian society where people are in the dark cave and its influence had gone to this high class family too. So, the education affects according to the society. The female who wants good and virtuous life is dominated. The patriarchal society does not give focus on logic, reason, ideas and thoughtful mind with truth. It is covered with the tyrannical rule. Those intellectual males who respect females, can find rarely. So, patriarchy has snatched the rights of women. Definitely, this is illustrated by the above speech made by Lord Darlington. Lord Darlington who only compliments women also realizes the pain of women to some extent and says that women also have very hard life in that developing modern life. He, to some extent, realizes the difficulties of females and says that women are rather mercenary:

LORD DARLINGTON (*raising and moving chair*). And I must say I think you are very hard life in this modern time, Lady Windermere. Of course there is much against it, I admit. Most women, for instance, nowadays, are rather mercenary.

LADY WINDERMERE. Don't talk about such people.

LORD DARLINGTON. Well, then, setting mercenary people aside, who, of course, are dreadful, do you think women who have committed what the world calls a fault should never be forgiven?

LADY WINDERMERE (*standing at table*). I think they should never be forgiven. (166)

When we see those lines it is very obvious that now as the time passes women are rather mercenary. They become the fighters against their domination for their rights. On the other hand, according to Lady Windermere, not only males but also the females who are involved in fault activities or oppression should not be forgiven. One should raise the voice against and go against it. It means not only females but also males who want good and virtuous life should not be dominated.

In this play, there are not only the characters who are against feminism and feminists but there are some of the characters who also stand on behalf of women. They urge the sufferers resist against their domination rather than to keep silence. According to the character like Duchess of Berwick, their husbands would really forget their existence if they do not nag at them time to time. They have to remind their legal rights so that they can remain in proper position and can not go against women's desire and subordination. In this connection, it is better to mention Duchess of Berwick's speech:

DUCHESS OF BERWICK. Oh! Men don't matter. With women it is different. We're good, some of us, at least. But we are positively getting elbowed into the corner. Our husband would really forget their existence if we didn't nag at them from time to time, just to remind them that we have a perfect right to do so.(170)

In these lines, Oscar Wilde calculates the whole Victorians society and does not see the value in this Victorian patriarchal society. It had always dominated the females. Female like Lady Windermere has to resist to get their identity and position not only

in the family but also in the society, corrupted society like this society. According to Duchess of Berwick, females should remind their husbands for their legal rights so that they can not impose restrictions over females.

One the other hand, Duchess of Berwick claims that for males, in the corrupted society like Victorians, there does not lay any rule. Rules do not matter for males. So, in patriarchal society males always dominate female. For males only the rules matter whereas for female they have to nag at them time to time. To avoid tyrant's rule of society females themselves have to rise up their voice. Thoughtfully, patriarchal society has loved the aristocrats and sophisticated things with material world. It has loved money rather than the simplicity of life. So the patriarchal has less knowledge which comes with thought and intellect. Here, to make the society knowledgeable female like Windermere has to rebel against the dark sides of her life and society.

This play, in short, highlights the thoughtful, creative and philosophical woman, Lady Windermere who resists the male codes or domination. This Lady's strength in this play is valuable that Oscar Wilde has trodden upon the male values and embedded the female values at the highest point. The character like Lady Windermere has crossed the old, conventional patriarchy which has ignored the female values in language, culture and voice. Male values the silence of female and want to dominate the females. So, to provide the central position, women should raise voice against the male values. Males like Lord Windermere establish the values for their own benefit ignoring the values of females. So, this Lady has been a clever, active and dynamic character in this play. A woman like Lady Windermere thinks that cry is only refuse of pain. Instead of crying they think they should raise their voice against dominating agents (monsters) which is clearer from the following dialogue:

DUCHESS OF BERWICK. Pretty child! I was like once. Now, I know that all men are Monsters. (Lady Windermere *rings bell*) The only thing to do is to feed the wretches well. A good cook does wonders, and that I know you have. My dear Margaret, you are not going to cry?

LADY WINDERMERE. You needn't be afraid, duchess, I never cry.

DUCHSS OF BERWICK. That's quit right, dear. Crying is the refuge of plain women but the ruin of pretty ones. (173)

By this dialogue it is also obviously clear that all men just pretend to be good but in their practical life they are no exceptional than monsters. Here, Duchess of Berwick names the oppressors monsters because for the women domination is the tyrant ruling. So, female protagonist of this play, Lady Windermere has strength to resist the established notion of established society. Here, she has a purpose to invent the female values or we can say that invention is the perspective of this text. In this way, female crosses the way of patriarchy.

Conventionally, the play *Lady Windermere's Fan* is a rebellious text to tread upon the male values especially against Lady Windermere's husband, Lord Arthur Windermere, because the text shows the weak and blind nature of the male, Lord Arthur. In the case of Lady Windermere she is not only mentally tortured but also economically ruined. She has to manage all the things herself. She is neither supported by her husband nor by other family members. She is the one who is really unknown about the economic status of her own family. Even she is not allowed to see the bank book of her own home which is clearer from following quoted lines:

LORD WINDERMERE. Well, dear, have the fan been sent home yet?

(*see Book*) Margaret, you have cut open my bank book. You have no right to do such a thing!

LADY WINDERMERE. You think it wrong that you are found out, don't you?

LORD WINDERMERE. I think it wrong that a wife should spy on her husband. (174)

Lady Windermere in this play as a family rebel is assigned a revolutionary character. Oscar Wilde has highlighted Lady Windermere as a perfect heroine with philosophical mind to bring the female values at height. From the above quoted dialogue it is clear that this Lady rebels against her husband. Now, she is speaking without any hesitation. At first, she says that she is unknown about bank book. Now, she also determines to see it and wants to find whether her husband is extravagantly spending or not and found that she is economically ruined. Moreover, she discovers that her husband is having an illicit affair with another woman and giving a large amount of money to that woman. Her husband, on the other hand, says that it is wrong that a wife should spy on her husband. In such a way, he dominates woman, her own life partner. Men think it is right for them to spy on their wives but think wrong to spy on their husbands. So, it proves that in this Lord's family this Lady is mentally as well as economically ruined and oppressed by her own life partner, own husband, Lord Windermere.

We can say that this play has created a space for female character, Lady Windermere. This Lady's fearlessness against patriarchy is very much symbolic and metaphoric. Oscar Wilde has composed this play as the weapon to cut the male values. Creating the rudeness of Lord Windermere he has given less importance to the

male's world. In the early portion of the play when she discovers that her position is very weak, she determines to present herself boldly. She finds that economically she has no status in her family. On the one hand, her husband does not care her. On the other hand, in London a gossip is there that her husband is having an illicit affair with another woman. Now, she completely realizes that she is alone in world. Now she determines to quarrel. She determines to rebel:

LORD WINDERMERE. Ah, Margaret, do this for my sake;

LADY WINDERMERE. What has that to do with me?

LORD WINDERMERE. How hard these good women are!

LADY WINDERMERE. How weak bad men are!

LORD WINDERMERE. Margaret, none of us men may be good enough for the women we marry- that is quit true-but you imagine I would ever-oh, the suggestion is monstrous!

LADY WINDERMERE. Why should *you* different from other men? I am told that there is hardly a husband in London who does not waste his life over *some* shameful passion.(177)

From this above quoted dialogue it is clear that the men like Lord Windermere are always subordinating their wives. It is also clear that such behaviors shown by their husbands definitely lead wives to act forcefully and revolt against their own family partners.

Moreover, Lady Windermere is a character who is very much conscious of her character and right. She is very much bold and courageous female. Her capacity lies in her intellect that she can not endure the domination of others. She seems very strong from the very beginning. She is morally powerful. She shows beauty with humanity rather than with the product of capitalism. She has innocence and simple

nature which can not be defeated by males. She is stronger than all other characters and superior to Lord Windermere, her husband. We find her radical revolt to get her position in her family. Moreover in the middle portion of the play, she identifies the fact that her husband is having an affair with another woman in town and she also hears that he is going to invite her in Lady Windermere's birthday party. Now, she totally realizes that she is neglected and suppressed by her husband and bursts with her husband in following way:

LADY WINDERMERE. Arthur, if that woman comes here, I shall
insult her.

LORD WINDERMERE. Margaret, don't say that.

LADY WINDERMERE. I mean it.

LORD WINDERMERE. Child, if you did such a thing, there's not a
men in London who wouldn't pity you.

LADY WINDERMERE. There is not a *good* women in London who
wouldn't applaud me. We have been too lax. We must make an
example. I propose to begin tonight (*picking up fan*) Yes, you
gave me this fan today; it was your birthday present. If that
woman crosses my threshold, I shall strike her across the face
with it.

LORD WINDERMERE. Margaret, you couldn't do such a thing.

LADY WINDERMERE. You don't know me. (177)

Here, it has been discovered that Margaret, Lady Windermere who has been very much dominated is talented with natural quality. Now, she is going to resist against her husband. Education, knowledge and conscious soul make her resist. She clarifies that she is such a determined Lady who can strike others against her domination. She

says that she can strike others with the fan if they cross her threshold. The most important thing we notice after reading this play is that she is definitely dynamic and changeable character who can change according to the necessity of time. It proves that she is not the static. She is not passive, but active, intellectual, strong and thoughtful woman who can merge all the elements of society in her small task. She can change her according to time and place. So, now she determines that she is going to leave him for another lover and going to live separately. On the other hand, she says that if that woman whom her husband is said to be loved is leaved behind she would not do what she has said:

LADY WINDERMERE (*speaking to Lord Windermere*). Arthur; if that woman comes here- I warn you-

LORD WINDERMEE. Margaret, you'll ruin us!

LADY WINDERMERE. Us! From this moment my life is separate from yours. But if you wish to avoid a public scandal, write at once to this woman, and tell her that I forbid her to come here!

LORD WINDERMERE. I will not-I can not –she must come!

LADY WINDERMERE. Then I shall do exactly as I have said. You leave me no choice. (178)

Definitely, the patriarchal society thinks a wife should trust her husband. She should keep silence but Lady Windermere is strong enough that she crosses the boundaries of patriarchal society. The strong opinion of male oriented society is that women should keep silence. Such society thinks that silence is the good way of life of women. Lady Windermere in the text is an energetic, dynamic, active and intellectual character who has strong opinion among the people. She has strong voice to oppose the male notions. *Lady Windermere's Fan* is generated to qualify Lady Windermere as a

stronger figure to oppose the male notions or values replacing them with female values especially of her husband. The text seeks the intellectual world of female with the assistance of female figure who is dominated by the traditional patriarchy in the play that has the intimacy with women's world, society, culture and language.

As the play progresses, Lady Windermere after discovering his husband's illicit affair determines to leave her husband, her child and home. She again and again confronts her husband but he instead invites Mrs. Erlynne in her birthday ball. Angered by her husband's unfaithfulness, she leaves for another lover, Lord Darlington. But at last, her husband follows Lady Windermere in order to save Windermere's relation with him. He furthermore convinces her wife that he instead loves his own wife. Thus, by revolting hard Lady Windermere gets her husband back. This following dialogue also clarifies that there is reunion between husband and wife at the end of the play:

LADY WINDERMERE. Don't say that, Arthur. There is the same world for all of us, and good and evil, sin and innocence, go through it hand in hand. To shut one's eyes to half of life that one may live secularly is as though one blinded oneself that one might walk with more safely in a land of pit and precipice.

LORD WINDERMERE (*moves down stage with her*). Darling, who do you say that;

LADY WINDERMERE (*sits on sofa*). Because I, who had my eyes to life, Come to the brink. And one who had separated us-

LORD WINDERMERE. We were never separated.

LADY WINDERMERE. We never must be again. Oh, Arthur, don't
love me less, and I will trust you absolutely. Let us go to Selby.

In this Rose garden at Selby the roses are white and red. (216)

In such a way, this play ends happily in which both husband and wife resettle. Lady Windermere breaking the codes of her own husband, Lord Windermere, identifies her position and gets her husband back. Her liking or desire never takes wrong direction. She wins a certain freedom at the end. She discovers that she is economically neglected. She had poor conditions in her own family though she belongs to the Lord's family. She also discovers that her husband is having an affair and resists against him. And lastly by resisting she is successful to know the fact and to convince her husband. Moreover, she is able to reconcile with her husband to make a good and happy living.

In short, by presenting this subordinated woman who struggle and prevent her husband from having illicit affair with another woman, Miss Erlynne, Oscar Wilde is trying to show woman's impatience with patriarchy or male domination. If Lady Windermere, Margaret, have not resisted, her husband would have gone out of her control and her life would have ruined. A head of this, she ought to face very poor economic life. So, the contradiction between two characters Lady Windermere and Lord Windermere is really strong segment of this play. Lady Windermere, though, female has no passiveness. She is strong enough to bring good path in her life. In fact, when we observe the strong resistance of Lady Windermere, she has the mysterious power to struggle the life everywhere without victimization. So, she is strong enough to save her life from shortcomings of her surrounding. She is the character who can see the further happenings and quest for the balance of life and can solve it. It also

creates the mystery of Lady Windermere's power to change the mind of proud male patriarchy.

IV: Conclusion

Oscar Wilde's play, *Lady Windermere's Fan* is a social play full of feminist elements. In this play, Wilde has focused upon a downtrodden and pitiable woman, Lady Windermere who seeks emancipation from male oriented society. So, he has portrayed this Lady as a conscious, bold, courageous woman who fights against patriarchy. Through her powerful speech and power she challenges patriarchal society and proves herself superior to her husband and other male characters. Her courage leads her to victory. So, Wilde has created the inventive writing and language to raise the voice upon the root of patriarchy.

Obviously, we find that Oscar Wilde is a creative playwright who has provided a lot of space for woman in his plays. *Lady Windermere's Fan* is one of the greatest sources to provide the prominent place for woman. The mythic rule of patriarchy ignores the female voices. This play *Lady Windermere's Fan* beats those patriarchal rules which have not recognized the values and importance of woman. So,

this play is an attempt to challenge the male values which are conventional, traditional and blind. The origin of patriarchy should be placed by intellect of woman which is the prime focus of this play. This active female Lady Windermere is the symbolic representation of female values. Therefore, Oscar Wilde's opinion towards females is very positive.

Approximately, Lady Windermere has done the resistance to place the female values with strength and power. She shows the impatience with her husband and she does not fear with the evil power of her society. This lady is powerful morally. So, she has strong confidence and can determine whatever she likes. Her liking never goes in wrong way crossing the boundary of morality. So, she can be taken as a reformer and teacher of her own family and society as well.

In this play, Lady Windermere's doings and actions depend upon her resistance that she has struggled a lot. So, she is definitely an active figure of the play. So, this play represents the female voice positively and intellectually.

Feminism reveals that women should have powerful voice to replace the old patriarchy with new rules that should give peace and rights for the women. Such kind of voice can be found in *Lady Windermere's Fan*. By presenting the active subordinated women who struggle and prevent her husband from having illicit affair with another woman and also regains her lost position in her family, Oscar Wilde is trying to show a woman's impatience with patriarchy. In the play, Lady Windermere resisted against her husband and male chauvinism for her identity in her family and society.

Oscar Wilde, one of the great English writer has known the meaning of knowledge and keeps the rays of knowledge within the mind of females through the medium of dialogue and language. *Lady Windermere's Fan* also keeps the rays of

light in the mind of female. Oscar Wilde has placed the daring, intellectual and courageous female full of conscious spirit and mind in this play. So, this text *Lady Windermere's Fan* is very interesting to find out the conscious female mind.

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