

2006

– Lok Prasad Rana

Emancipation of the Self in Amy Tan's Novel *The Kitchen God's Wife*: A Feminist Study

Tribhuvan University

Emancipation of the Self in Amy Tan's Novel *The Kitchen God's Wife*:

A Feminist Study

A Dissertation Submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan
University in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts in English

By

Lok Prasad Rana

University Campus

Kirtipur

May 2006

Tribhuvan University

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

This thesis entitled "Emancipation of the Self in Amy Tan's Novel *The Kitchen God's Wife: A Feminist Study*" submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University, by Mr. Lok Prasad Rana has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee.

Members of the Research Committee

Internal Examiner

External Examiner

Head
Central Department of English

Date: _____

Acknowledgements

I express my sincere gratitude to my thesis supervisor Mrs. Anju Gupta, Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University, for the accomplishment of the dissertation.

I am grateful to Prof. Chandra Prakash Sharma, the Head of the Central Department of English for his cooperation.

I am highly obliged to my teachers, Prof. Abhi Subedi, Dr. Krishna Chandra Sharma, Mr. Bijaya Kumar Rauniyar, Mr. Lok Bahadur Chhetri, and Mr. Shankar Subedi for their generous help to complete this work.

Words lack to convey of my sincere gratitude to my parents, brothers Mr. Shyam and Mr. Gyanendra Rana whose warm affection enabled me to accomplish this work.

I thank to Mr. Uday Chandra Chapain, Mr. Balkrishna Sapkota, Mr. Ganga Shrees, and Mr. Anil Thapa Shrish for their valuable suggestion and cooperation. I also thank to Mr. Narayan Basnet of Resunga Computer Center, Kirtipur for the efficient typing.

Kirtipur, Kathmandu

Lok Prasad Rana

May 2006

Abstract

Amy Tan, a Chinese American female writer, breaks off the limitations of male constructed literary tradition and attempts to establish a separate female literary sphere through her extremely influential novel *The Kitchen God's Wife*. Here she exposes her female protagonist, Winnie Louie, with violent spirit and actions to revolt against patriarchy, and the religion, culture and belief that are male made, and relegate women to an inferior and other sex, submissive and complementary to men. Winnie Louie aggressively distorts the male-made values of marriage and motherhood, religion and morality, and womanhood and sexuality. Driven by her strong desire for complete emancipation, she escapes her husband and society, and enters into wider space in America for her absolute freedom and full development of her individuality.

Contents

Acknowledgements	iii
Abstract	iv
I. Emancipation of the Self	1-12
II. Theoretical Modality: Evolution of Feminism	13-29
III. Winnie's Emancipation	30-51
Confucian Ideal for Women in China	31
Relationship between Winnie and Wen Fu	32
Winnie's Version of Freedom	38
Rebellion for Social Emancipation	40
Marriage	40
Religion	42
Patriarchy	43
Domesticity	45
Rebellion for Sexual Emancipation	46
Perspective Shift and Realization of Reality	48
IV. Conclusion	52-55
Works Cited	56-58

Chapter I

Emancipation of the Self

This present research work tries to explore the idea of emancipation of the self in the light of feminism in relation to patriarchal society. So far as the term 'emancipation' is concerned, it has something to do with the theme of liberation of mankind from some sort of domination. Since one feels the sense of suppression, he/she boldly protests against the very domination in order to get space or identity. The term 'emancipation', therefore, refers to that kind of situation where one can get entire freedom from the any social barriers that he/she faces. He/she frees himself/herself from legal, social, or political restrictions. In other words, emancipation implies a situation of an individual who finds himself/herself occupying a space with full of choices for the development of his/her personality. Oxford English Dictionary defines it as "the action of process of setting free from slavery; and hence, generally, from restraints imposed by superior physical force or legal obligation."

So, the meaning of emancipation that I have applied here is a situation of an individual without any social convention that is constructed by the so-called superior people to impose their power upon other people in the society. So, emancipation means to free from social bondages that hinder a person for the development of his/her personality.

Similarly, the term 'self' indicates the individual's essential being that differs him/her from other's particular nature. In other words, self refers to the essence which distinguishes one from other's particular nature.

In modern psychology, the notion of the self has replaced earlier conception of the soul. The concept of the self has been a central feature of many personality

theories, including those of Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung, Carl Rogers, Rollo May and Simone de Beauvoir.

According to Carl Jung, the self is totality consisting of conscious and unconscious contents that dwarfs the ego in intensity. The maturation of the self is the individuation process, which is the goal of the healthy personality. May's approach was existential; he conceived the self as a dynamic entity, alive with potentiality. Beauvoir refers to self as equal to male self with complete power and authority to handle his household as well as outside world. Male is considered to be superior whereas female is inferior in the patriarchal society. On the one hand, male is regarded as 'self' and female is imposed as 'other' on the other hand in the society. Similarly, Oxford English Dictionary defines self as "a person's individuality of essence at particular time or in a particular aspect relation."

Here, my research focuses on the 'self' defined by existential feminist Simone de Beauvoir and it will be analyzed in the light of feminist theories of Elaine Showlter, Simone de Beauvoir and Virginia Woolf.

"My blood was rushing, my thoughts running fast feeling I would soon be free" (Tan 393). This is how Winnie Louie, Amy Tan's heroine in *The Kitchen God's Wife* (1991), is fighting against the hegemonic construction of womanhood of Chinese patriarchal society. Tan exposes her female protagonist with an extravagantly rebellious spirit to break out of the unreasonable social limitations imposed over women. By questioning her real position in the society, Winnie holds a profound longing for absolute freedom that she lacks where she exists. She revolts against the hegemonic tradition and limitations by violating the modes and codes of the contemporary Chinese society and establishing her own female norms and values to attain her real self in the society. Though she predicts the risks of her adventurous

course, she is ascertained to insurrect 'even to suffer' than to survive submissively before the social injustices.

Women in the early twentieth-century Chinese society were placed at the bottom of the hierarchy of their respective husband's household. At the top of the hierarchy was the man, who was granted complete control over his wives and children. He would keep many wives, and the old wives were more powerful than the newer ones. *The Kitchen God's Wife* with its female characters of various natures and actions obviously reflects Tan's attempt to break such traditional hierarchical norms and values of Chinese society. Therefore, her prime concern is woman's emancipation from the slave like condition in China. Her female characters are from different classes thrown together in desperate circumstances in China, separated and then reunited in the United States. She, even in the time when it was too much to imagine the idea of true autonomy for women, often portrays her women protagonists with strong-willed and radical personal desires to change in their life as a complete human being.

Amy Tan is one of those female novelists and storywriters from Chinese American writers who have delved deep into woman's psycho-social realities in the multicultural country; America where Tan is sandwiched between Chinese and American culture that she neither completely follows neither Chinese culture nor American culture during the time of Tan. She was born in Oakland, California, in 1952. Her father, John, an engineer and Baptist minister, and her mother, Daisy, immigrated to the United States in 1940s. At first, Tan thought that she would eventually become a physician. But after the deaths of her father and her brother from the same disease, brain cancer, Tan's mother moved her family to Europe in order to escape the tragedies that they had encountered in the United States. Tan settled in

Switzerland where she completed her high school. It was her unhappy time for her; she felt like an outsider and was still grieving and angry over the losses in her family. So, she decided to be rebellious and wild against her mother whose standard she felt she could not meet. Then she returned to the United States in 1969, where she entered Linfield college in Oregon. While in Oregon, she began to prepare for medical school but quickly decided to pursue literature instead, much to the disappointment of her mother. She transferred to San Jose State University and received bachelor's degree in Linguistics and English. In 1974, she married a Caucasian, lawyer Lou De Mattei and earned an M.A. in Linguistics. After two years in a Ph.D. program at the university of California, Berkeley, Tan decided to quit graduate school in order to work with disable children as a speech therapist. After four years, in this line of work, she became a freelance technical writer, composing speeches for business people in the computer technology industry. This work made her extremely unhappy. So she began to read fiction voraciously again and joined a writers' group, whose members gave her much encouragement to pursue creative writing. She took a trip to China with her mother in 1987 to connect with her Chinese heritage, an element that was lacking in her childhood. She soon realized that best writing came from her Chinese American perspective. As Tamara S. Wagner expresses his view about Amy Tan:

Amy Tan is undoubtedly a Western writer, even though her subject matter, settings, and themes are concerned with the East, or more specifically, with the meeting of East and West, with cultural as well as ethnic hybridity, and with writing the other. The most conspicuous aspect of other work is that the Chinese characters in her novels-the Chinese mother or half-sisters of the American main protagonist-are

other. Novels by British and American writers about experience in Asia form a significant part of both colonial and postcolonial fiction. (5)

So, Amy Tan has basically written her novels and short stories about the mother-daughter bond, maternal love and expectation, generational and cultural conflicts, death and consolation, loss and reunion, disappointment and hope centering on female issues in multicultural society and country taking her themes, settings, characters from Chinese heritage.

Her second novel, *The Kitchen God's Wife* (1991) is a subtle representation of a tormented and self conflicting woman psychology and the consequences in her life that breed frustration, isolation and rebellion that culminates in terrible action like revolt or escape. The novel finally demonstrates a woman's self-realization that has shocked the traditional Chinese patriarchal society. The research aims at projecting a picture of the condition of women who occupy the half sky in the Chinese society. The thesis aims at not only disclosing the sexual discrimination occurring perpetually then and now but also showing how women have been empowered to speak of their rights in the recent era and have cultivated awareness among them. That awareness doesn't remain limited to voicing out the woman rights and sexual equality in the public and to create a political propaganda. The research will probe into a text *The Kitchen God's Wife* by Amy Tan to explore how a woman protagonist, Winnie, tries to redefine the traditionally accepted patriarchal norms advocating female freedom. For this aim, the research will have to dwell upon the theoretical discourses related to gender issues and to be more specific, 'feminist study'. It will shed light on the multiple dimension of the theory and see how these branches under feminism address the central issue of sexual inequality and woman's right as well as woman freedom.

The critical work centers on the protagonist Winnie's morality. Here, a question arises; is she a bad mother, a selfish human being? or an independent human being striving for the quest of self? The issues like identity, self, individuality and freedom have remained unearthed to the sufficient level. And why does Winnie act differently and what are impulses that drive her towards the repulsive estranged woman though she has a husband with good income and children. This research will center on the issues related to why and how the protagonist wages a psychological social and intellectual war against the patriarchal system and tries to come out of every bondage: familial, marital, social and cultural to demonstrate her search for freedom and identity.

The Kitchen God's Wife is a story of a married woman with her cruel husband, Wen Fu whose monstrous behaviour and traditional Chinese custom lead her to reject both her husband and her home and escapes in America. The critical moment for Winnie in the novel begins when she was abandoned mysteriously by her mother at age six. Then her father sends her to live with her aunties who manage her traditional marriage with Wen Fu who is like a monster and a devil. Her marriage to Wen Fu turns out to be a terrible one. Wen Fu is horribly abusive: physically, mentally as well as emotionally. She should be submissive and dutiful towards her husband and family without raising any question. Soon after marriage, Wen Fu signs up with the military, as China is recruiting men to defend their country against the invading Japanese. The newlyweds move to Hangchow where Wen Fu trains himself as a member of the American volunteer group led by American pilot Claire Chennault. Winnie eventually discovers that her husband was only accepted because he used his deceased brother's name and credentials and that he is a coward who retreats when his fleet engages in air battle. Because of his social standing, however, no one challenges him. Wen Fu

becomes abusive toward his new wife, often humiliating her sexually. Still, she tries to be a good wife, and her developing friendship with Helen, the wife of another pilot becomes her only supportive relationship.

During the battle, Wen Fu, Winnie, Helen and Jianguo flee to distant parts of the country with the air force group along the way, they learn of the terrible defeats China is suffering, and they feel fortunate to be alive. Traveling in her last months of pregnancy, Winnie anticipates the birth of her first child and is heartbroken when the baby girl is stillborn. Meanwhile, Wen Fu becomes even crueler, especially after he suffers an injury in an auto accident that is his fault. At a military party, Winnie meets a Chinese American man named Jimmy Louie, and she falls in love with him. She feels as if her painful life with Wen Fu has been changed and recovered but they soon separate each other when the party finishes.

Winnie gives birth to a second daughter, who becomes very ill months later, she goes to get the doctor, who is playing mahjong with Wen Fu. Wen Fu refuses to let the doctor attend his daughter who eventually dies. When Winnie is pregnant again, she has a boy, and she vows that she will never make him like his father. She ends several subsequent pregnancies by abortion because she cannot bear the idea of carrying another of Wen Fu's children. In fact, Winnie has been presented as submissive sexual object in the patriarchal society that her duty is determined to reproduce children and to feed them in her family. So, Tan has used her female character, Winnie as submissive and dutiful wife who is taught to live for and sacrifice for others; to always give and never receive; to submit, yield and obey; to be long-suffering. Her 'virtue' is not of her own doing; the society imposes it upon her to worsen her suffering and turmoil life. Then Winnie plans to escape from her unhappy marriage rejecting her husband and her family. So she sends her son to live with

Helen and Jiaguo until she can get away from Wen Fu, but the child dies again during a plague while she is away. Winnie is arrested for deserting her husband and causing her son's death, and she is given the choice between prison and returning to Wen Fu. She chooses prison but is released early because of the help of other female characters, her friend Helen and Auntie Du. Winnie immediately contacts Jimmy whom she has fallen in love during the military party, and he asks her to come to America and be his wife. She makes plan to flee the country, including tricking Wen Fu and his another new wife into signing divorce papers. Wen Fu finds her, tears up the papers, rapes her, and steals her tickets,. Then her intimate female friend, Helen arrives and helps Winnie overpower him. They throw his pants out the window and retrieve the tickets. Winnie arrives safely in America and contacts with her daughter, Pearl who lives in America since her marriage with an America lawyer and Jimmy who becomes her new husband.

Thus, Winnie doesn't reject only her husband and home but also rejects the Chinese custom and Chinese religion specially Confucian religion. She comes into close contact with her daughter and plays as "motherly role" sharing their past events. Another important revolt done by Winnie is that she breaks the patriarchal Chinese myth of the Kitchen God. Winnie creates a new female deity who understands female problem replacing the patriarchal 'kitchen god' in her kitchen room. Then, Winnie as well as other female characters come into one place unifying themselves with their own identity and freedom by breaking the conventional Chinese norms and values that has separated them desperately in the Chinese society.

Similarly, the novel is structured in the service of the theme; how Tan has developed into an artist with experiences and ideas she wants to share to foster social change. The structure reveals the author's epistemological and aesthetic theory. The

book has been divided into 26 chapters which Tan eschews chronological plot and standard non-fiction technique by a synthesizing ancient Chinese myth and imaginative biography to present a kaleidoscopic vision of female characters. It is a personal and highly unconventional work that seeks to emancipate Chinese women through the voice of a female character, Winnie, in the novel.

Since the publication of *The Kitchen God's Wife* in 1991, it has been analyzed and interpreted from various perspectives by various critics. Among several critics, C.L. Chuan views on this novel in thematic sense as he says, "Amy Tan deals poignantly with problems in mother-daughter, husband-wife and native-immigrant relationships."

Similarly, Donna Seaman describes about the situation of Winnie and her arranged marriage in China that Winnie rejects and unfolds her past to her daughter empowering Tan's female characters to break the patriarchal limitations in the society. As he remarks:

Tan follows the spectacularly successful debut, *The Joy Luck Club*, with another winner pressed to tell her American-born daughter the truth about her life in China. Winnie unburdens herself of old angers and fears, recounting her violently war-wrenched youth and the barbaric tyranny of her arranged marriage. Ravishing and vivid drama about the strength of women, the power of love, and the healing aspect of truth. (1)

As another critic, Laura Shapiro comments on this novel, *The Kitchen God's Wife* is an absorbing narrative of Winnie Louie's life [...]long-held secrets her revealed, and a family's myths are transferred ceremoniously to the next generation." When Winnie is able to be a 'real mother' of her daughter, she plays as motherly role

to her daughter telling her their family myths which have been burdens for Chinese women for their independent life in the society. In this context, Winnie becomes a story-teller by breaking the hegemonic tradition telling female stories about female painful life for female listeners.

Likewise, Yuan Yuan supports, "The novel is based on Winnie's painful experiences in China. In fact, the pain and suffering that are central to Winnie's recollection invite repression rather than recall." As he has commented on Winnie's suffering that causes her to gain courage to struggle against the Chinese Patriarchal society for her emancipation.

The novel is also the comic description of late twentieth-century generational clashes in the United States and historical representations of the world war II invading Japanese soldiers in China. As Janice C. Simpson describes Winnie's condition and of China.

For almost all the pages that follow, the yeasty old woman unpacks the rich and terrible secrets of her past, as a young girl in Shanghai growing up amid a plague of sorrows: how they hid in a monastery famous for dragon [...] somehow indomitable as pain, she escaped China and her husband just five days before the communist takeover.

(3)

Winnie experiences her strife and turmoil life with her husband that she struggles through out her youth and she breaks the Chinese conventional norms, values and myth to get her emancipation from the submissive role in China as James Lu expresses his view, "The author lets the heroine tell the Chinese myth of *The Kitchen God's Wife*, thereby linking her complicated and tragic life to that of the

legendary woman [...] the heroine how desires to either drastically revise or completely cast off the image of *The Kitchen God's Wife*."

Regarding the same novel, it is not only about miscommunication and misunderstanding between mother and daughter but also about strong revolt and rejection of her husband and the patriarchal Chinese society escaping her family to United States for her emancipated and autonomous life as Thomas Riggs notes:

The Kitchen God's Wife focuses on a single mother and daughter pair, Winnie and Pearl, the female friendship that support Winnie through her nightmarish first marriage [...] Winnie's narrative of her past opens Pearl's eyes to her mother's trauma as an abandoned child, her psychological and sexual abuses by her first husband, her pain over losing three children, and her courage to escape her bondage. (826)

Thus, after reading different views from varying perspectives, most of the critics have related this novel with painful life of Winnie in the Chinese society and struggle of Winnie for her emancipation escaping from her abusive husband, Wen Fu and the traditional patriarchal society to United States. So, my prime interest in this research is on an issue: "Emancipation of The Self."

To sum up, the entire attempt made by Winnie as well as other characters in this text is to search their absolute emancipation which has been marginalized by the oppressiveness of patriarchal norms, values and culture. To gain this, Winnie erases the existing notions and creates a newer one that favours her. So, she breaches the patriarchal tradition and outlines a matrilineal one. This is what Amy Tan wants to remove the drought of traditional Chinese culture and custom.

This study has been divided into four chapters and some of the chapters are also sub-divided. The first chapter deals with general background of the study. It also

gives a brief introduction of the novel. The second chapter introduces the concept of feminism and evolution of feminism against the patriarchal society. The third chapter is fully an analytical phase which is a textual analysis based on the study of the characters in terms of their languages, roles, thoughts and behaviour in the socio-cultural norms and values of the novel. The final chapter presents the conclusion of this research work.

Chapter II

Theoretical Modality: Evolution of Feminism

Feminism is a political movement which emerged in the late 1960s with an aim to enhance the status of women both in theory and practice. Female who were given less opportunities to forward their ideas through theoretical modes in the past now they try to break the prevalent tradition that woman are inferior in comparison to male ideology. They develop their own theory through which they establish their own position and status in the society. So, feminism defines women as the people who are either oppressed or suppressed by patriarchy of the freedom of self-expression. The growing feminist movement sought to change society's prevailing stereotypes of women as relatively weak, passive, docile, and dependent individuals who are less rational and more emotional than men. Feminists want to achieve greater freedom for women to work, to broaden both women's self-awareness and their opportunities to the point of equality with men.

The hierarchy between the male and female, as the inequality among human beings, in terms of gender and sex, has been prevalent everywhere. The one is privileged and the other endures sorrow and suffering. These bitter realities are the commonplace conditioning of patriarchal societies. This inequality is a by-product of social values and the common consent of human beings which has created a gulf in between people and determined their places in terms of sexes. As males got upper hand in the culture and norms of the society, they began to enjoy it and subjugate their female counterparts. It became a political fact because one shaped their identity as the ruler and the other as the ruled. Right through centuries and ages this notion of patriarchy has determined almost entirely the nature and quality of the society, its values and priorities, the place and image of women within it, and the relation

between sexes. This type of thinking and behaviour caused women to be marginalized. In the prior days, they suffered silently but when gradually they began to discover their 'self' and the consciousness as women they began to raise finger against the patriarchal norms and values. Since then they did not sit idle. They went on struggling to bring back their lost rights and values such as freedom, language, identity and so on. This quest of liberation for a woman, the struggle from equality and identity from bondage leads to feminist awareness.

Feminism, thus, generally is a theoretical discourse advocating the rights of women and their political, social and economic equality with men. It is a doctrine redefining women's activities and goals from a woman-centered point of view and refusing to accept the cult of masculine chauvinism and superiority that reduces women to a sex object, a second sex, a submissive other. It seeks to eliminate the subordination, oppression, inequalities and injustices that women suffer because of their sex, and defend equal rights for women in a political, economic, social, psychological, personal and esthetic sense.

So, feminism is a massive complaint against patriarchy. The feminists, today have finally recognized that the world they have described is not the whole world. Its central is with the social distinction between men and women.

Feminism, therefore, "is a term that emerged long after women started questioning their inferior status and demanding an amelioration in their social position" (Freeman 3). Because of its concern, it is also a political theory and practice to free all the social bondages of patriarchy. It is also a commitment to eradicate the ideology of domination.

Some writers and critics have shown their interest in gender issues and have partially contributed to the degenderization process. Philosophers from Plato,

Aristotle, St. Augustine to Aquinas, Hobbes and Rousseau have also depicted women as inferior and immature in their intellectual potential. Plato labeled women as grade three citizens quite incompetent in any important and serious matters that needed deep contemplation. Aristotle declared that the female was female by virtue of certain lack of qualities. So he considered a woman to be an unfinished man. This stands as a dehumanizing and demoralizing tendency of a philosopher like him. He said that the rational soul is not present at all in a slave; in a female it is imperative, and in a child underdeveloped. This statement has demonstrated that a prominent philosopher like him blundered in reasoning owing to his prejudices toward male centrism. The blind followers of Aristotle continued to believe his theory throughout the Middle Ages and women remained far out from the pivot of social and cultural realm.

St. Thomas Aquinas thought woman to be an imperfect man. He said that form was masculine and matter feminine: the superior godlike male intellect impressed its form upon the malleable inert female matter. Rousseau considered that women should be educated to please and complement men. This was not, of course, an accidental proposition. It contains a long history of gender discrimination since mythical and biblical ages. Most of the societies since the remote past have been built upon the patriarchal foundation that therefore have invigorated and unduly authorized men folk to define the world and society. They defined every aspect of society and culture from their perspectives and depicted that in the works of art and literature. Bible is one of the most discriminating holy books that woman is described as to have been created from a rib of a man. This description has pushed women into a degenerate and subordinate position. Similarly, in the non-western cultures and myths, women has been marginalized and given a lower status. Laxmi, the wife of Lord Vishnu, Parvati, the wife of Lord Shiva are seen sitting at the feet of their husbands always dedicated

to carry out their orders and serve them without their own interest. They are appended to their husbands' existence. Sita is stereotypically portrayed as a faithful and a devoted wife of Lord Rama. She moves into the wilderness with her husband and continues to suffer a lot and becomes victimized by another male, Ravana. The sacrifice of her personal existence and identity is what is decoded as an embodiment of Hindu women.

Renaissance opened up newer avenues in various discourses and discoveries like humanity, science, philosophy, literature, arts and others and made revolutionary changes in them towards advancement. Many dreams came true with scientific invention and broader intellectual exercise, but Renaissance writers and artists dwelt little on women's issues nor did they give much importance to gender equality. Women's social, political and economic position did not considerably change. Even the dramatists like Shakespeare despite their bringing of the women on stage, kept representing women as sufferers and passive dependent victims. Gertrude and Ophelia and Hamlet, Desdemona and Emilio and Othello represent a terrible fate and miserable life of women who are made puppets in the hands of male.

Praise and dispraise of mistress were standards of competent writers of the time. A competent writer was one who knew how to produce poems in praise of his mistress' eyebrows for amatory purposes, as well poems dispraising her for comic or satirical purposes. So John Donne wrote the "Ecstasy" in praise of women and "Love Alchemy" dispraising them. Marvell's "To His Coy Mistress" reflects how a woman is flattered and made one to be sexually seduced. She is presented as if her existence lies in her sexual offer to her lover. But they abundantly display a number of misogynistic properties.

With the neoclassical era, the ancient Greek and Roman ideologies and attitude about women persisted. Women had rather been a vulnerable part of society and a target of social satire. Alexander Pope's "The Rape of the Lock" depicts and characterizes a woman as a self-centered and fashionable species prone to the slightest stimulation and worthy of no intellectual respect. He presents Belinda, the heroine of the mock epic as a beauty queen, one whose sole aim in life is to be charming and to be adored by men. Some of the English Restoration dramas portray women as vulgar people concerned with the issues like beauty, sex and money rather than anything triggering mind. Nineteenth century witnessed some women writers in Victorian soil in England or post neoclassical era in Europe, the miserable and frustrating condition of women was not eased. Several voices in favour of women were resisted in both 19th century and early 20th century. Writers like D.H. Lawrence wrote his novels by degrading women with his utmost efforts possible. He bluntly utters his inferiorizing attitude towards women in his novel, *Women in Love*. He doesn't tolerate women as competent as men folks. He pictures passionate, sexual extremity of women in his novels. A psychoanalyst, Sigmund Freud spoke of woman's neurotic problem due to the lack of penis and thrust his belief that women are psychologically sicker than men. Thus, right from the earlier times, women are considered as "non-entity". Their opinions and expressions are ignored. They are rarely asked for their own experience. Women are always considered as someone different. Men have always doubted their intelligence and capacity.

But this situation did not remain the same because women gradually became more conscious of their subordinating position in the society and began to fight against this inequality. Though feminism became a dominant force in the literary studies in the 1960s, it had its origin from two centuries earlier with the publication of

Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792), which is considered to be the first formal enhancement of feminist writing though many others had tried their hands before her as well. Wollstonecraft advocates for the political and social rights of women and argues that society never can retain women only in the role of convenient domestic slaves and alluring mistress by denying their economic independence and encouraging them to be docile and attentive to their looks to the exclusion of all else.

The feminist revolutionary spirit implanted by Wollstonecraft, however, could not accelerate so speedily for more than coming one century. *Women in the Nineteenth Century* (1845) by Margaret Fuller and *The Subjection of Women* (1869) by John Stuart Mill were only the two major works on feminism in the whole nineteenth century.

Virginia Woolf, by writing *A Room of One's Own* (1929), and Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (1949), contributed greatly for the worldwide emergence of feminism in the first half to the twentieth century. Woolf focuses on situation of women authors throughout the history and their cultural, economic and educational disabilities within the patriarchal society which had prevented them from realizing their creative possibilities. The feminist trend of her time was concerned for 'absolute equality' and the 'erasure of differences' between the sexes. But Woolf voiced for radical change as women's freedom and for their suppressed values affecting the concept of power, family and social life that had been shaped by men in the past. Beauvoir, on the other hand, insists "the cultural identification of women as merely the negative object, or 'other', to man as the defining and dominating 'subject' who is assumed to present humanity in general" (Abrams 234). Beauvoir argues that one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman. It is civilization as a whole that produces the

creature which is described as feminine. She also attacks the patriarchal myths of women presuming the female essence prior to individual existence in the work of many male writers.

Going through the different cross-currents like Civil Right Movement and Liberation Movement from the very early part of the twentieth century, feminism in fact, only was established in the form of a theoretical discourse in the late 1960s as a part of the international women's movement. Establishing gender as a fundamental category of literary analysis it tried to present women readers and critics with different perceptions to their literary experiences insisting that experiences of women in and with literature are different from those of men. Mary Ellmann's *Thinking About Women* (1968) is the first book involved exposing the sexual stereotyping of women both in literature and literary criticism and demonstrating the inadequacy of established critical school and methods to deal fairly or sensitively with works written by women. Feminist criticism, then, very quickly moved beyond merely exposing sexism in one work of literature after another promising to begin to record new choices in a new literary history.

Kate Millett's analysis of sexual politics of literature in her *Sexual Politics* (1969) added a note of urgency to the Ellmann's scornful anger. Defining-'politics' as the operation of power relations in society, Millett argues that western institution have manipulated power to establish the dominance of men and subordination of women in society. She also criticizes Freud's psychoanalytical theory for its male bias and analyses the fiction of D.H. Lawrence, Henry Miller, Norman Mailer, and Jean Genet uncovering how they dignify their aggressive 'pallid' selves and degrade women as submissive sexual objects in their works.

Elaine Showalter's *A Literature of their Own: British Woman Novelist from Bronte to Lessing* (1977) is a prominent masterpiece of the theoretical work on feminism. It describes the female literary tradition in the English novels from the Brontes onward as a development of subculture by arguing that since women in general constitute a kind of subculture within the framework of a larger society, their work would demonstrate a unity of values, conventions experiences, and behaviours encroaching on each individual. Showalter divides feminist criticism into two distinct modes. The first mode is ideological which she terms 'feminist critique'. It is concerned with the feminist as reader and it offers feminist reading of texts which considers the images and stereotypes of women in literature, the exclusion and misconceptions about women in criticism, and women-assign in semiotic systems. The second mode of feminist criticism, according to Showalter, is the study of women as writers. She calls it 'gynocritics' and provides the subjects, "the history, styles, themes, genres, and structure of writing by women; the psychodynamics of female creativity; the trajectory of the individual or collective female career; and the devolution and laws of a female literary tradition" (Showalter 248). Showalter, likewise, in her analysis of historical development of feminism presents three important stages of women writing: feminine, feminist and female. First is the female imitation of mainstream (male) literary tradition dated from 1840 to 1880 and it includes the writers like George Eliot and Bronte sisters. The second is the protest against the standards of this dominant tradition concerning social values and rights. It is dated from 1880 to 1920 and it includes the writers like Elizabeth Gaskell, and Oliver Schweiner. The third stage is self-discovery which aims at search for independent identity. It is dated from 1920 onward, and it includes the writers like Dorothy Richardson, Katherine Mansfield and Virginia Woolf.

Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's *Mad woman in the Attic* (1979) is another brilliantly written massive book on historical study of feminism which stresses especially the psychodynamics of women writers in the nineteenth century. Gilbert and Gubar in this book, according to M.H. Abrams,

Propose that the 'anxiety of authorship' that resulted from the stereotype that literary creativity is an exclusively male prerogative, effective in women writers a psychological duplicity that projected a monstrous counter figure to the heroine [...]; such a figure is usually in some sense the author's double, an image of her own anxiety and rage.

(236)

Gilbert and Gubar's main argument is that artistic creative of the nineteenth century tradition which is perceived basically as a male quality, is in fact patriarchal superimposition upon the women writers who are imprisoned within it. They suggest the female writers first to struggle against the effect of socialization that becomes struggle against men's oppressive reading of women. But they further argue that the women can begin such struggle only by actively seeking a female precursor who, far from representing a threatening force to be denied or killed, proves by example that a revolt against patriarchal authority is possible.

By observing brief scenario of the history of feminist literary criticism, we can divide the development of whole feminist literary criticism into three distinct phases. The first phase was centered on "the misogyny of literary practice: the stereotyped images of women in literature as angles or monsters, the literary abuse or textual harassment of women in classic and popular male literature, and the exclusion of women from literary history" (Showalter, *The New Feminist Criticism* 5). The second phase of it was the discovery that women writers had a literature of their own, whose

historical and thematic, as well as artistic importance, had been obscured by the patriarchal values that dominate the culture. Hundreds of lost women writers were rediscovered, and the territory of the females plot were constructed in this phase. And, the third phase of feminist criticism demanded a radical rethinking of the conceptual ground of literary study, a revision of the accepted theoretical assumptions about reading and writing that have been based entirely on male literary experiences.

Influenced by a great variety of theoretical emergences, the feminism presently has been a broad concept which covers a broader scope and includes different aspects of humanity despite its focus on the entire issues of women. It, now, no more remains a unitary theory or procedure. It manifests a great variety of critical vantage points and procedures, including adaptations of psychoanalytic, Marxist, and diverse post-structuralist theories. According to its affiliation to certain theoretical backgrounds the umbrella concept 'feminism' can be briefly studied by dividing it into the following dimensions:

Socio-Political Feminism:

This dimension of feminism, which is equally known as English model of feminism, has a closer link with Socialism and Marxism. It analyses the connection between gender and class, emphasizes on popular culture, and provides a feminist critique of Marxist literary theory. Deriving their impetus from the changing socio-economic conditions and changing balances of power between the sexes, the leading Marxist and Socialist feminists such as Mary Jacobus, Rosalind Loward, Michele Barrette, Juliet Mitchel and Cora Kaplan combine Marxist theoretical interest in the production and ideology of literature with feminist concerns for women's writing. Marxist and Socialist feminist believe that the text is a part of process of the social construction of meanings and subjectivities. And, literature is one of the ways in

which gender relations and gender ideology are produced and reproduced. Gender, in their opinion is not produced simply by masculinist thought, but rather it is the product of that thought as it related to the particular ways in which women's productive, reproductive and domestic life is organized. They consider the notion of femininity and masculinity as myths or ideologies. Such beliefs, for them, are the values that are not detached from social life but rather are lived or embodied in what we say and do, and have no other existence.

Marxist and Socialist feminism, therefore, often takes an explicitly and aggressively ideological stance, stressing the important contribution of literature and literary criticism to a radical, even revolutionary reformation of culture.

Socio-Historic Feminism

The socio-historic dimension of feminism, which is more popularly known as American school of feminism, tries to recover women's historical experiences as readers and writers. It focuses on exploring the awakening feminine consciousness reflected in literature by and about women. By close textual analysis, it often stresses a psychological maturation not only through recognition of gender difference but also through a growing sense of 'sisterhood' with other women. They tend to recover the patriarchal remains in the male-author texts through close reader and replace them with their own. The socio-historical feminism has its two groups practicing two different ways of feminist criticism.

One group practiced 'feminist critique' examining how women characters are portrayed, exposing the patriarchal ideology implicit in the so-called classic, and demonstrating that attitudes and traditions reinforcing systematic masculine dominance are inscribed in the literary canon. Another group practiced 'gynocriticism' studying writings by women and examining the female literary

tradition to find out how women writers across the ages have perceived themselves and imagined reality. Showalter identifies Thomas Hardy in the first group and Elizabeth Barrett Browning and Muriel Spark in the second.

Patricia Meyer Spacks, Elaine Showalter, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar are the prominent socio-historic feminists who have by their diachronic investigations and studies of the social and historical position of female writer, paved the path for a coherent narrative of female literary history describing the evolutionary stages of women's writing during the last 250 years.

Psychoanalytic and Deconstructive Feminism

The French school of feminism is called psychoanalytic and deconstructive feminism since its base is in Jacques Lacan's Neo-Freudian psychoanalysis, Jacques Derrida's deconstruction and Roland Barthes's structuralism. Using the concepts of structuralism and post-structuralism the psychoanalytic and deconstructive feminists stress the subtle but essential participation of language in the patriarchal forces of society.

Looking at the ways that 'the feminine' has been defined or, represented in the symbolic system of language, metaphysics, psychoanalysis and art, they claim western language in all their features, being male-engendered, male-constituted, and male-dominated discourse.

Discourse, according to them, is 'phallogocentric', centered and organized throughout by implicit recourse to the 'phallus'. So advocating for a revolutionary linguism, an oral break from the dictatorship of patriarchal speech, they try to establish the possibility of a female language which has its source in the mother, in the stage of the mother-child relation before the child acquires the male-centered verbal language and which will not automatically be appropriated into the

'phallogocentric' language. They have described such language as *Lecriture feminine*; a practice of writing in the feminine which undermines the linguistics, syntactically, and metaphorical conventions of western narrative. Such language, in the belief of the most radical French feminists, is connected to the rhythms of the female body and to sexual pleasure through in common understanding, it is only an avant-garde writing style like that of Joyce, Bataile, Mallarme, and even is not necessarily writing by women.

Julia Kristeva's *From One Identity to Another* (1975) and H el ene Cixous's *The Laugh of the Medusa* (1980) are the two important essays on psychoanalytic and deconstructive feminism both of which emphasize women discourse with female morphology speaking their specific experiences. For Kristeva, female discourse that breaks with tradition is a political act of dissidence, a form of feminist action, and for H el ene Cixous, woman's writing has a genuinely revolutionary force. As she argues "when the repressed of their culture and their society return, it is an explosive, utterly destructive, staggering return, with a force never yet unleashed" (Showalter 9).

Beside these major dimensions feminism includes many other aspects such as liberal feminism, radical, black feminist criticism, lesbianism, bio-feminism, postcolonial feminism, existentialist feminism, and feminist myth criticism.

Liberal feminism concerns the issues of equal rights between the sexes and freedom of women for their participation in public world beyond household. It emphasizes not for the revolutionary changes but for reformation and development of a liberal society supporting equal opportunity between sexes. Radical feminism, on the other hand, is an almost revolutionary stream appearing as hostile to patriarchy. It emphasizes for a radical change and rejection of tradition, and it recommends putting women first making the primary concern. It considers the men, as a group, are the

main enemy and advocates for sisterhood of women. Redefining and reestablishing the position of women in society as a respectable and powerful member, radical feminism aims for creating historically clear-cut differences between men and women.

Black feminist criticism protests the 'massive silence' of feminist criticism about women writers and calls for a black feminist aesthetic that would deal with both racial and sexual issues. The major black feminists like Alice Walker, Tony Morrison and Maya Angelou celebrate the black female literary consciousness and believe that they possess rich culture and sexual properties as black and as female. They try to situate the study of black women's writing in context of black history and culture, and explore its thematic and stylistic correspondence with the literature of black men as well as investigate its special use of language and imagery.

Lesbian feminists devote their attention especially to the literature written by lesbian writer or that deals with lesbian relationship in a heterosexual culture. They emphasize powerful bonds between women as significant aspect of all women's writing and prefer the women spending time together and sharing most aspects of their lives with each other. Adrienne Rich defines the term 'Lesbian' as female energy that gravitates towards strong women, who seek a literature that will express that women must be sexually independent to establish the independence of their bodies because they locate the emergence of domination in female sexuality when it is defined by men.

The bio-feminism which is often called corporal feminism raises the issue of women's body as an essential part of women's writing because women have more biological experiences than men do. Experiences like menstruation, gestation,

ovulation and childbirth are mere women's and there lie several important things which are unexplored subjects for men.

The bio-feminists generally stress the importance of the body as a source of imagery. They consider their physicality as a resource rather than destiny. They believe that patriarchal thought has limited female biology to its own narrow specification, and they urge for the frank exposition of their body in their writing.

The branch of feminism that studies the existence of women in the patriarchal society is called existentialist feminism. It has its base on Sartrian notion of existentialism: 'existence precedes the essence'. Simone de Beauvoir, the pioneer of the existentialist feminism, strongly refuses the notion of a female essence prior to individual existence and attacks the patriarchal myths of women that presume false essence. She argues that women are projected as 'other' subordinate being which mystifies their qualities and pushes them into isolation.

Feminist myth critics oppose the patriarchal myths in literary texts that, as they believe, associate men with humanity and relegate women to an inferior position in society. Rejecting the Greco-Roman myths as male constructed, they turn back to the study of pre-Greek myths which have abundant examples of matriarchal norms and values in the societies. They center their discussion on the Great Mother and other female goddesses like Medusa, Casandra, and Isis.

Postcolonial feminists are concerned with the 'double colonization' of third world women under empirical conditions. They argue that the third-world women become victims of both the empirical ideology and native and foreign patriarchies. They are secluded and ghettoized from the mainstream culture and suffered with their western sibling as well. Because the western feminists create an inseparable division between them, the non-western women suffer from a sense of isolation and have hard

time to express their identity. They are stuck between two trends of dominations: patriarchy and imperialism, subject constitution and object formation. The postcolonial feminists accuse of the mainstream feminists 'Eurocentric' in their attitudes towards women in the countries of the third world, trying to impose western model of feminism that is not always appropriate to the particular condition of third world countries. They hardly approve them speaking in favour of women of all ranks and races. They blame them being more imperialist than feminist and claim that true feminist spirit and sentiment lies in the marginalized non-western society. Gayatri Spivok and Talpade Mohanty are important postcolonial feminists who raise their voice in favour of third-world women criticizing the mainstream western feminist trend.

Having diversity in its nature and aspects, the term 'feminism' as the core of all has certain characteristics common to all of the above discussed trends and branches. M.H. Abrams in his *Glossary of Literary Terms* presents them in three points which can briefly be mentioned as follows:

1. The basic view is that western civilization is pervasively patriarchal male-centered and controlled, organized and conducted to subordinate women to men in all cultural domains. From the Hebrew Bible and Greek philosophy to the present, it defines females by negative reference to the male-as an other or kind of non-man.
2. The concepts of gender are cultural constructs that were generated by the omnipresent patriarchal biases of our civilization. So, the masculine in our culture has come to be identified as active; the feminine, by systematic opposition to such traits, has come to be identified as passive, acquiescent, timid, emotional, and conventional.

3. This patriarchal ideology pervades those writings which have been considered great literature and written almost entirely by men for men. The most highly regarded literary works focus on male protagonists, and the female characters are marginal and subordinate, presented either as complementary to or in opposition to masculine desires and enterprise.

But, because of its nature of 'playful pluralism', feminism appeared as Annette Kolodny argues, "more like a set of interchangeable strategies than any coherent school or shared goal orientation" (159). Elaine Showalter also agrees with Kolodny's idea saying "until very recently, feminist criticism has not had a theoretical storm" (244). On the other hand, all feminist criticism is in some sense revisionist, questioning the adequacy of accepted conceptual structures. According to Sandra Gilbert, "It wants to decode and demystify, all the disguised questions and answers that have always shadowed the connection between textuality and sexuality, genre and gender, psychosexual identity and cultural, authority (36). Realizing that such feminist obsession with correcting, modifying, supplementing, revising, humanizing, or even attacking male critical theory keeps itself dependent upon it and delays its progress in solving its own theoretical problems, many contemporary feminist critics appeal for the unity and shared goal, and for its own subject, its own system, its own theory, and its own voice. They argue that the feminists most choose to have the argument out at last on their own premises.

The above discussed feminist discourse has helped us to generate arguments and justify the protagonist of Tan's novel *The Kitchen God's Wife* and Winnie Louie's behaviours against male-dominated Chinese society. The discourse has given us a perspective to observe and analyse the novel in a meticulous and a scrupulous manner. It has enabled us to understand the psyche, the intellect and the feelings of female and their urge to bring about significant changes in the society so that a woman will live as an independent human being.

Chapter III

Winnie's Emancipation

Tan has poignantly demonstrated the old repression of woman and has provided the storm of rebellion of rapture the traditional Chinese castle modeled after male selfish ego. So many things might look unpleasant at the superficial sight, but a deeper contemplation finds easy justification of the so-called unfavourable steps taken by the protagonist, Winnie in the novel. The character of Winnie Louie has been portrayed in the novel among the restrictive, traditional socio-cultural circumstances. Other female characters seem to be more unaware in comparison with the activities done by Winnie though they establish supportive relationship with Winnie about the social, culture and conceptual injustice as regards individual emancipation. Freedom for a woman is unthinkable in Chinese society during 1940s. Winnie is not an odd woman attempting to get undeserving freedom, she is the core model of the thousands of women representing the unexpressed desires, wishes and ambition lying beneath thousands of female souls in the late 20th century in China.

Winnie, a revolutionary woman and the victim of socio-economic realities is juxtaposed that she has struggled extravagantly to distort the unreasonable Chinese customs. She is mindful with strong-willed of change and progress playing of her role as a social and moral being that she enables to get her absolute female 'self' at the end of the novel.

The term 'self' used here refers the position and status of women as a human being equal to men in the society. Actually there are two selves of women. One is that defined by males whereas the other is that defined by women themselves. The focus goes to the latter one. In the novel, Winnie finds the place of female self as equal to male self that was lost because she is treated as non-human being in the society. She

finally handles the female position as a complete human being after struggling throughout her youth against the patriarchal norms and values in the society.

Confucian Ideal for Women in China

Confucian ideal was propounded by the greatest Chinese sage, Confucius (551-479 BC) about social and religious conventions which strictly followed "male supremacy" in the society. Male in the society was at the top level. The husband in the society was the god of women who should worship him as their god. So, the ideal had created hierarchical order between husband and wife in the society. The Confucian society of China during the early twentieth century was pervasively and persistently repressive toward women. All the women were bound by Confucianism and principle of morality that believed woman as a submissive and holy sex without passion. The patriarchal institutions in the society required women to be objects in marriage and in motherhood existing as vessels of maternity and sexuality with little opportunity for individuality. They were supposed to be good daughters, wives and moving only from the protection of their father's roof to the protection of their husbands. Moreover, the strictly conventional Confucian society had confined women within the narrow boundaries of domesticity such as cooking, child caring, sewing etc. They were expected to be the chaste and obedient to their husbands and motherly and protective to their children.

Thus, the women of early twentieth century in China had faced social, economic and political suppression and discrimination that the formal status and the authority of husband was at the top of the household. He was granted complete control over his wives and children. Because of their devaluation, they were regarded as disposal property or detachable appendages despite their crucial role in maintaining the family line through childbearing. Their social and familial morals were to obey

and satisfy their husbands and to beautify their families remaining within the modes and codes of social behaviours. Winnie as the product of the Chinese patriarchal society neglects her female friend, Helen telling her, "take it, take it, I have no time to sew anyway, now that I have to take care of my husband" (316). It proves that Chinese women were completely confined within the periphery of her husband and family. As Winnie is not allowed to link with the outside world where she can develop her social, political and personal upliftment. We can see that Confucius is bad in favour of female position in the society. When Winnie realizes her actual position given by the society, she directly charges on him, "I don't know why everyone always thought Confucius was so good, so wise. He made everyone look down on someone else, women were the lowest!" (Tan 123). This aggressive voice against Confucius given by Winnie was really true because he has marginalized women and treated as 'inferior species' in the society.

The ideal of Confucius, therefore, had placed female stance within limited space where women only can involve in submissive duty for their family and husband without link with outside world.

Relationship Between Winnie and Wen Fu

The novel, *The Kitchen God's Wife* is about the struggle for the emancipation of a woman which shows us the sad consequences of the subordination of a married woman. This novel focuses on the conjugal life of a middle class couple and shows us the relationship existing between the husband and the wife, and the possible consequences of that particular kind of relationship. The novel basically deals with the predicament in which a married woman finds herself on account of the excessive suppression which her husband exercises upon her.

The structure of the Chinese society is hierarchical between men and women. All political, social, economic and religious aspects of the society are set according to the male desire and design. The Chinese society, which is patriarchal in nature, demands devotion of wives to their husbands and to the whole society. The patriarchal Chinese society dominates women in all spheres of life. Males play dominant role and they can do whatever they like. But females have to follow all the strict rules and regulations developed by their male partners in society. Simone de Beauvoir rightly says, "thus humanity is male and man defines woman not in herself but as relative to him; she is not regarded as an autonomous being" (*The Second Sex* XVIII). The patriarchal society demands women to be gentle, docile, submissive and observes other norms which are set values, women in such society are encircled within the narrow world.

Winnie, the protagonist of the novel, is married with Wen Fu who is self-centered, arrogant, abusive and cruel. She is the product of patriarchal society, which has taught her nothing more than the ways to behave with her husband, to be a 'good wife', follow and respect the Confucian ideal, and accepting silently the brutality of her husband. When Winnie is married traditionally with Wen Fu without asking her choices about her future husband and life, she is immediately begun to teach of how to be a 'good wife', submissive and dutiful for her husband. Winnie is taught by her mother-in-law in her family as Winnie comments her, "she was the one who taught me how to be a good wife to her youngest son. This mother who spoiled him-she was the one who taught me how to be dutiful to a terrible person" (207). The patriarchal society has many established institutions which are used to suppress women. Marriage is one of the established institutions which gives license to males to dominate females. Wen Fu imposes his rule on his wife because it satisfies his vanity and makes her

subservient to him. The traditional Chinese marriage urges a girl to be an ideal wife; 'good wife' in which she should follow as her role model. Winnie also accepts Wen Fu's bullying and beating without any objection. Without any reason, whenever Wen Fu feels waves of hatred go swirling through him, he shows his temper on Winnie and becomes unjust, aggressive and unfriendly. Because of his brutality against Winnie, she starts understanding what marriage actually is. However, after getting knowledge from Wen Fu's mother, she is proud of being a wife and a mother forgetting her absolute slavery to the situation. Winnie is convinced "to protect my husband so he would protect me. To fear him and think this was respect. To make him a proper hot soup, which was ready to serve only when I had scalded my little figure testing it" (Tan 207). She is given her duty to worship her husband by providing whatever he desires. She always tries her best to be an ideal and submissive wife during her marriage life.

On the other hand, Wen Fu, a product and agent of the patriarchal culture, knows his dominating nature and self-interest will be protected by his adherence to conventional morality. Being a product of patriarchal society, he considers himself a god figure and regards his wife as his slave. He uses the patriarchy granted power to suppress his wife. He starts bullying and beating her, thinking of it as of his marital license, which he should use to show his male ego dominance. Similarly, he uses her as puppet for his enjoyment and treated her as an object that she should make him happy. The first night in the little monastery room what he has whispered her is expressed through her own voice, "telling me how beautiful I was, how happy I made him" (208). Winnie as his ideal wife always devotes her husband to make him happy without caring her real mental and psychological torture. He uses his power and orders her to say "dirty words, words for a woman's body parts-not any woman's

parts, a salt water whores, the kind who would give her body to foreign sailors" (208). He doesn't only order her to "say them!" (209), but also drags her toward the door like a pack of rice. He opens the door then pushes her outside into the corridor of the monastery, where everyone passing by could have seen her naked body. This is what Simone de Beauvoir says, "A wife is what her husband makes her" (520). So, Winnie is treated merely a plastic puppet at the hand of her husband.

In the novel, Winnie being a pure Confucian wife, she worships her husband as god. She is among those Confucian women, who think going against their husband's decision is a great mistake and they are punished such women who have self-decision. So, she is inherently rooted in traditional values and myth of 'the kitchen god' of the Chinese society. In spite of Wen Fu's beating and bullying, she still entertains the wish of reunion with her husband so that she could live as his faithful wife. She shows her deep-rooted cultural conditioning within the Confucian religion. Even when Wen Fu shows his revulsion toward her, she remains faithful to him to the last possible extent. This can be revealed out through her voice, "But I was unhappy knowing my husband was still dissatisfied with me and that I would have to go through more suffering to show him I was a good wife" (210). In every walk of life, she remains faithful to him and gets devoted in his service. She suffers at the hands of her husband and other ill-minded people because of her deep devotion to her husband and her culture. Disregarding his cruel behaviour and rejection, she continuously tries to win his stone like heart by worshipping him like her god and enduring his torture calmly.

Around Christmastime, Winnie, Helen and their husbands attend on American party where Winnie dances with Jimmy and are introduced to each other. When she gets home that night, Wen Fu becomes angry with her because one of the other Pilots

had made a joke about how the American men were taking the Chinese women, alluding to the dance between Winnie and Jimmy Louie. So, Wen Fu scolds her with poisonous words, "Whore!, Fox-devil!, Traitor !" (Tan 392). But she doesn't protest against him rather she lets these insults roll over her because she is defined typical Confucian wife to be submissive one before her husband. He doesn't satisfy scolding in such way but also orders to write divorce paper threatening her, "if you don't write this I will kill you" (392). She still becomes submissive and loyal toward her husband though she is treated as his slave. She writes that paper and gives him but he tears it up and throws every piece of paper on the floor. He shows his barbaric and tyrannic behaviour to his wife pointing his gun at her head and threatens her, "Get down!, Beg me!" (Tan 393). He, thus, orders to beg for forgiveness while the gun is still pointing at her head, but he doesn't change his mind. Then keeping the gun pointed at her, he rapes her which can be seen in her voice,

That night, with a gun to my head he raped me, telling me I had lost the privileges of a wife, and now had only the duties of a whore. He made me do one terrible thing after another. He made me murmur thanks to him. He made me beg for more of his punishment. I did all these things until I was senseless, laughing and crying, all feeling in my body gone. (394)

His actions show that the patriarchal society which has always fallen behind in ensuring the safety and respectability of women, will never have the energy, dynamism and sensitivity to think of their happiness and dreams.

His patriarchal anger shows even to his child when Winnie is with her child, Yiku, dissatisfied with his child, "Oh ! she is very ugly !, Bald as a monk, fat as a greedy one. How could I come to have such an ugly child ?" (323). That makes her

more psychological suffering in her life. He doesn't take responsibility of his child and behaves like that of small creature. By the time, Winnie is seven months pregnant with another baby, Yiku becomes sick. So, Winnie goes to Wen Fu where he is playing mahjong with a doctor and other men, but Wen Fu ignores her and tell her that he doesn't care if the child dies. He then tells the doctor not to go because, "my wife is exaggerating [...]. The baby sneezed once, she thinks its pneumonia. Sit down, sit down, keep playing" (336). Then Winnie returns to the house, not knowing what to do, but when Yiku begins to shake, she takes the baby where the doctor and Wen Fu are playing but Wen Fu again he scolds her, "you stupid woman ! then cursed. Why didn't you tell me she was this way? What kind of mother you are !" (336). Thus, Winnie is not only treated as machine for child factory but also as the second class submissive slave with dependent life given duty for taking care of her children and family even though the decision for such duty in the family also should be taken from her husband. Everything depends on the mood and desire of her husband for her duty. So, Winnie's marriage is based not on love, but on a sense of duty, of gratitude to the deep class feeling. Winnie, however, retained a profound love for the man who was forever beyond her reach.

Her life is always confined within the periphery of her husband. Her world always remains within his bed room and kitchen room fulfilling her duty without rejection and protest against him. As she charges him:

Everyday I had to listen to him beg me to unite him. He begged me to climb into bed with him. He begged me to take off my clothes. And when I would not do any of these things, he cursed me at the top of his voice. He accused me of sleeping with other pilots. He said this loud enough for everyone in the hallway to hear. (314)

This expression reveals out that Winnie is not only used as puppet for his enjoyment and relax that she always follows and accepts his demands dutifully but he doesn't remain to accusing of sleeping with other pilots though she strictly devotes to her husband as god.

After her many futile attempts, Winnie plans to escape away from her husband because of his tyrannic behaviour but she is arrested and put in jail accusing her of stealing his property and his son. However, she is released with the help of her female friend, Helen and enables to escape from her husband to find her actual identity and enters an open world where she can develop her personality and individuality without any obstacles.

Thus, her relationship with Wen Fu is not an equal status of husband and wife in their conjugal life in which both are equally responsible for their successful married life. He rather treats her as slave and object only for his enjoyment. Her life with Wen Fu becomes excessive suffering, painful, turmoil and submissive. She spends traumatic and invisible life with Wen Fu during her conjugal life.

Winnie's Fersion of Freedom

Winnie as a rebellious and awakened character in the novel searches for absolute freedom as equal to men in the patriarchal society. Her excessive suffering gives her new impetus to struggle against such unreasonable convention and limited female roles. This gives her the desire to seek alternative roles. It provokes her search for freedom that transcends a feminine role confined to *The Kitchen God's* 'wife' who always worships and sacrifices to wife and mother do not demand for the sacrifice of her individuality. So, she reveals out her strong desire that "my blood was rushing, my thought running fast, feeling I would soon be free" (393) breaking the conventional Chinese patriarchal norms and values. She takes firm determination to break such

inhumanistic tradition which has made her invisible and confined creature in the society.

By realizing her condition, Winnie tries to stand alone with the action of her own instinctive and impulsive mind dominated by the traditional message from the center of her being. The elusive 'self' which, according to her, is the only thing she will never give up. She does indeed become a more natural being with growing freedom from the social restraints. The essential purpose of her rebellion is to ease her passage from the socially defined 'submissive wife' position to the position of 'self' to journey from socially structured freedom to the individual freedom.

In fact, Winnie is the strongly rebellious character emerging individuality of a woman representing whole Chinese women, who refuse to be defined by the prevailing stereotypes of passive femininity. Winnie searches for her freedom and identity as a human individual defying the rules and laws of society which expects her accepting its ideal of 'good wife' in the society. Rejecting the social obligations of her class and sex, she tries to form a congenial social circle of her own. She moves towards independence by denying her husband and his conjugal rights and moving into a separate dwelling. Her every step that she takes toward relieving herself from the obligations added to strength and courage to revolt against the society with the expansion as an individual human being. Her extreme painful life helps her to get courage and she hopes, "I was still dreaming of celebrations I would bold, of happiness yet to come" (186). She struggles against the conventions with her optimistic future life which ultimately makes her 'emancipated self' in the society.

So, the freedom that Winnie seeks for is neither of a confining and disposed women being only the possession of her husband and caretaker of her children nor of desexes life without love and human relationship with her husband. She rather prefers

to be identified as a free-woman, autonomous woman and an independent individual with absolute freedom opposing to the demands of patriarchy in the society.

Rebellion for Social Emancipation

Winnie, the protagonist, who is extremely exploited because of unreasonable tradition when she has been made a lifeless object without connection of human relationship. She is confined within four walls of private world in the society. By realizing her actual position in the society, she feels that it is not a condition of life which fits her, and begins to struggle with growing ferocity to discard and even to destroy the conventions which she has lived with. Her target of attack, basically, is over marriage, domesticity, religion, patriarchy for they are the major social aspects to violate her freedom in her understanding.

Marriage

Marriage is one of the oldest, most distinctive of human institutions. It is legal union of a man and woman for the purpose of living together. Marriage is essentially a form of relationship, socially approved and regulated between individuals who commit to one another with the expectation of a stable and lasting intimate relationship.

Marriage is a very important social activity in the life of a woman. In a traditional marriage, the husband assumes responsibility for providing for the family, and the wife takes cares of the house and children. He is not only bread winner but also the boss of his family. So wife becomes inferior and absolutely dependent on her husband. Marriage, therefore, determines the fate of a woman to a much greater extend than it does to the destiny of a man. A good marriage is a welcome protection for the woman, a bad one is worse than a painful chain. In marriage, the husband and wife are one person in law but it is not true in practice. After marriage a woman loses

her rights, her responsibilities and even her identity. Talking about marriage, Simone de Beauvoir compares marriage with 'prostitution'. She further states, "the only difference between women who sell themselves in prostitution and those who sell themselves in marriage is in price and the length of time the contract runs" (Beauvoir 619). For her, the sexual act in both cases, is a service; the one is hired for life by one man, the other has several clients who pay her by the piece. She also adds that the marriage woman is protected by one male against all others; the prostitute is defended by all against the exclusive tyranny of each.

Marriage in Winnie's perception, is the first aspect to entrap her into social limits by exploiting her individual 'self'. Her traditional marriage with the man named Wen Fu, turns out to be a terrible one. Wen Fu is horribly abusive-physically, mentally and emotionally. So, she attacks on that marriage, "it was a very bad marriage. I made a mistake" (99). She feels that her marriage is one of the most lamentable spectacles in her life. Then, she begins to examine whether marriage is or is not a powerful agent in the development and formation of a woman's character by battling to escape her matrimonial restraints. Winnie's anger with her marriage in the novel apparently begins just after the traditional marriage. She confesses Pearl about her marriage, as a 'mistaken act'. Winnie shows her aggressiveness to her husband, "I did not love Wen Fu, even at the beginning" (168). It clearly shows that she strongly protests her marriage life and wants to get away from her traditional marriage because she rather chooses to stay in prison and becomes a beggar than to stay with her husband. She argues with Auntie Du, "I am glad to face those kinds of dangers rather than by husband" (396). Thus, she doesn't want to be submissive and confined by surrendering to him as his 'good wife' rather she attempts to break the limitations of

traditional marriage and leaves her home and husband for the search of her true identity as an autonomous individual.

Religion

Religion, as it is practiced by social institutions is as much a reflection and expression of that culture's ideals, attitudes, and needs. One of the valuable functions of the great religious traditions serve is the unification of large groups of people around a given set of symbols. Religion has provided the ideological and moral basis for the status and role of men and women in society. The people's notion about the proper role of women at home and in society, and the social restrictions on women are all rooted in religious conceptions regarding women. The peculiar disabilities attached to women all over the world is based on religion. Woman's basic disabilities originate in religion. Woman is temptress and is warned against in almost all religions of the world. Obviously, the Chinese patriarchal society has used religion as a means to show males as superior and woman as inferior.

Hence Confucian religion plays the dominant role to make female 'submissive wife' in her family which advocates 'supremacy of male' in the society. But Winnie rejects such hierarchical concept of the religion and follows Christian religion because she realizes what the foreign teachers taught her, "Confucius is bad, Jesus is good!" (122) in her school. She feels Christian more humanistic than Confucian religion because she criticizes and attacks on Confucius and his ideal in her aggressive voice, "I don't know why everyone always thought Confucius was so good, so wide. He made everyone look down on someone else, women were the lowest !" (123). She hates Confucius and his ideal which has marginalized her from the mainstream of the Chinese society. So, at the end of novel, she leaves her Confucian society and enters

into Christian society where she can develop her individuality according to her choice.

Patriarchy

Patriarchy, a male made doctrine that rules over female world accord with male convenient in the society. Women in early twenty century China have had the only avenue of patriarchal ideology of expression and attainment, and all other doors were shut. They had been largely deprived of a means of structured interaction, and been kept isolated in their individual homes relating more to men than each other. The one who rebels against the dominant discourse would be punished through mainstream social ridicule as Winnie's mother, 'a modern Shanghai woman' had been punished and shunned for her opinions and self-determination. Sketching such condition, Tan in *The Kitchen God's Wife*, explores how women are kept in cages and what obstacles the protagonist, Winnie Louie encounters when she attempts to escape.

Winnie's consciousness of how social structures and attitudes have modeled her from birth and limited her opportunities, allows her to resist the dominant patriarchal ideology. She, adopting oppositional ideologies, takes drastic actions to elude the system into which she is born and lived. She shows her bitter anger to her father because he, as the purely product of the patriarchal society, has let her marry with the bad man, Wen Fu, without asking her own choice about her marriage. He was the one who has made her painful and unhappy life. So, she charges on her father:

He was the one who mistreated my own mother ! He was the one who refused to see me when I was growing up. He was the one who let me marry a bad man. He did not care that he was giving me an unhappy future. Why should I sacrifice my happiness for him? (Tan 458)

So, patriarchy is another dominant aspect which has made her life painful and submissive.

Surprisingly, Winnie shows in this novel more of masculine traits than feminine since she wishes to present herself as a revolutionary character against patriarchal oppression. Her leaving of her husband, home, children, replacing the Chinese patriarchal myth of 'the kitchen god' and creating female deity in her kitchen room who understands female problems as female myth and opening flower shop as her business are the examples of her activities that such things are not expected by women of her time.

When Winnie was arrested by the police accusing of her leaving her husband and stealing jewelry. She stood before judge and says, "I would rather sleep on the concrete floor of a jail" (477) rejecting to stay with her husband. One of the striking protest of the patriarchy is that she shows her masculine qualities grasping her husband's gun and threatens him, "take off your pants" (503) pointing at him and then "he scrambled out of his pants, then threw them to Hulan. Hulan found the tickets and held them up to me, triumphant" (503). This drastic action clearly proves that she protests strongly and overpowers her husband since her husband is a product of the whole patriarchal society. Then she enables to escape her husband and society and enters into new open world America.

Similarly, realizing her actual position she; as a woman, is being ruled and controlled by the patriarchal power, she creates her own female myth destroying the patriarchal myth of 'The Kitchen God' which Winnie says to her daughter Pearl:

And then I saw that picture of Kitchen God, watching me, smiling, so happy to see me unhappy. I took his picture out of the frame. I put it

over my stove. You go see Wen Fu ! You go to hell down below ! I
watched his smiling face being eaten up by the fire. (Tan 529)

This adventurous and strong revolt against the patriarchy proves that Winnie destroys the patriarchal myth and, frees and gains her 'emancipated self' after reinventing female norms and values in her new society.

Domesticity

Domesticity is another dominant aspect which keeps women within small world. From the primitive age, women began to look after the household whereas men took the responsibility of earning bread. Housekeeping and all of its attendant duties, care of children, including teaching her daughters, nursing and other service occupations and worshipping her husband are said to be the legitimate occupations for women in patriarchy. Women are supposed to carry out that part of any job that is repetitive, routine, uninteresting. Women may be cooks, not chefs; dress makers, not designers. As in the novel, Tan has presented Winnie's tasks are not wholly specified, but comprise the satisfaction of almost every kind of physical and emotional need voiced by her husband and children, as well as those services that may be required for smooth maintenance of a family life. Her labour is limited neither by time nor by personal need. She is expected to perform at whatever hours need arise-breakfast of whatever time the family must rise, when her family return home. This is her daily routine which she has to follow strictly, otherwise, she is simply a housewife not doing her job.

In the analysis of her housework, we find that all those activities that are private and isolating in nature are performed exclusively by her. But realizing her actual position, she breaks the circle of her private world and paves her way to the public world being as 'business-woman' of flower shop as equal to 'businessman' in

Chinatown which can be seen in the voice of her daughter, Pearl, "my mother and Auntie Helen co-own Ding Ho Flower shop on Ross Alley in Chinatown. They got the idea of starting the business about twenty-five years ago [...] I suppose, in some way, the flower shop became the dream that would replace the disasters" (7). She widens her place from kitchen room to public world where she can deal with so many different people intellectually and economically in her job.

Thus, finally, not willing to kneel down before the patriarchal oppression, Winnie chooses the ultimate alternative of escaping the Chinese patriarchy and lives in America only where, according to her final realization, she creates a matriarchal empire with new realities for women by providing new mythic paradigms through which women's lives can be understood.

Rebellion for Sexual Emancipation

Sexual liberation means freedom from sexually abusive relationship between husband and wife. It is the act of flirting with another person of the society after frustration from sexual violence from the husband. Sexual violence was one of the dominant problems for the women of late 20th century.

The early 20th century ideal of female believed that women did not have the same sexual desires as men. It considered them as the purer, passionless, sexually innocent and morally superior to men. As Tan has presented her protagonist, Winnie as sexually innocent and ignorant at the beginning of the novel what she views about sex, "I thought of sex as something mysterious, like going to a remote place in China. sometimes it was a cold, dark forest. Sometimes it was a temple in the sky. That was my feeling about sex" (194).

But it doesn't remain pure after her marriage with Wen Fu. Her innocence about sex is destroyed violently by her monster like husband. She faces excessive

sexual exploitation from her husband that she is made whore, prostitute by her husband. Her body is drastically changed into machine for children factory one after another. So she begins to dissatisfy with him as a right partner for her conjugal life what she says to Pearl, "I was afraid to love my husband right from the beginning" (200). Winnie begins to search for ideal relationship with right partner just after her marriage with Wen Fu because she is treated as an object for his sexual enjoyment. Similarly, she complains about her husband to her female friend, Helen, "Unnatural desires", and "overabundance of maleness" (233). These phrases clearly point out that Winnie is searching for sexual freedom from her husband because she realizes that she is excessively treated as object having no feeling of human being. Awakening to her sexual right, Winnie begins to attack strongly over the unequal sexual relation with her husband disaffirming the sexual demand of her husband whenever he desires. She boldly rejects him, "we can't do this anymore" (232). This statement proves that he has used her for his sexual enjoyment without caring her as human body. She has to fulfill his demand whenever he desires. However, she continues to attempt to get freedom from her husband each and every step but in vain. She tries to break completely her relationship with her husband as his wife and she strongly begins to reject her husband threatening him "stop !, stop !" (Tan 232) to do it.

Her strong desire for sexual freedom from her husband can be traced when she falls in love with another man, Jimmy Louie who was extremely kind in an American party. By understanding her real position given by her society, she leaves her abusive husband overpowering him and stays with Jimmy Louie as his wife. But it doesn't mean that women can't live without men and she can't exist without a man rather it is the drastic and rebellious action of Winnie against her husband from his abusive sexual exploitation that compels her for her struggle for freedom. And it is the desire

to search for sexual freedom that Winnie has found her right partner in America for her gentle and human sexual relationship with Jimmy Louie since 'sex' is an inevitable and universal truth to establish warm human relationship, and for the continuity of human life and existence. In this stage, Winnie has established her as a woman with sexually matured, woman with sexual passion in a gentle way as equal to man after escaping herself husband and society. She breaks the sexual discrimination of hierarchy between man and woman, husband and wife, and establishes equal role and existence between husband and wife in her new world.

Perspective Shift and Realization of Reality

Although Winnie Louie from the very beginning of the novel realizes her suppressed and exploited status in the society as a woman and intends to rebel for her entire freedom, her perspective on locating the 'freedom' is not stable. In the beginning of the novel, Winnie appears not so much satisfied with her marital life as it seems lacking a true happiness. Her existence in between the two opposite extremes earlier experience of severity and present observation of freedom of expression of the women in China-has begun to awaken her gradually. Her living with uncle's family, treatment of her husband, her friendship with Peanut, Helen and the atmosphere of intimacy among the other women in China teach her to understand actual realization in the society.

Winnie as an educated and influenced so much by her mother's action that she was dynamic and revolutionary in nature with the sense of change and progress as a complete human being. So, Winnie also is a like that of her mother as 'modern Shanghai woman.' Her realization of reality begins to shift when she is left in her Aunties' home. They behave with her as a guest in the sense that she has to wait to get something from the family, "never asking for things, waiting instead for someone"

(133) to get permission from the family to do something. Though she has intimate relationship with their daughter Peanut, they see her differently in each and every behaviour and what they behave and think to their daughter is different with the behaviour to Winnie. So, Winnie complains about the behaviour of her uncle who would only give a pat on the head and say, "weiwei, you are back" (134) hence he would give money, candied plums to his daughter when they returned together from school. Although he is the brother of her own father, he treats her as servant; 'other' in the family because he is also the product of the Chinese patriarchy and uses his license over her innocence life. But she realizes her position in the patriarchal society the behaviour like slave done by her own uncle. Then she attempts to distort such unreasonable convention between 'we' and 'other' in the society.

Like as an experimentalist, she presumes achieving freedom from one way and experiments over it, but when she fails, she looks for another way. But being driven by powerful desire, she never gives up her efforts and surrenders before the social conventions. Rather she collects a new finding from each of her experimentations which additionally awaken her for moving ahead in her course of exploring freedom.

Her perspective of shift is changed to be more Christian than Confucian when she attends the missionary school where she learns "Confucius is bad, Jesus is good !, girls can be teachers, girls do not have to marry" (122). She knows Christian is more humanistic and free religion with free choices and self-decision in comparison to Confucian religion which had kept her more submissive and dutiful to her family and her husband. She further criticizes on Confucius and his ideal being ruled over all Chinese women that she charges him, "I don't know why everyone always thought Confucius was so good, so wise. He made everyone look down on someone else, women were the lowest !" (123). She realizes that Confucius and ideal for woman is

bad and inhumanistic because it has confined all the women within the four walls of private world with limited submissive duties. But her strong desire doesn't postpone rather she continues to change her life and begins to dream for her future life with open world where she can feel as complete human being. So her strong desire to get freedom can be seen in her own voice, "I looked around and the house and thought, soon I will no longer have to see these walls and all the unhappiness they keep inside" (457).

Most strikingly, her desire to establish herself as complete human being in the society runs smoothly and speedily after her traditional marriage with Wen Fu. Her conjugal life doesn't remain happy with her husband. Marriage life for her becomes the life of prostitution and body without life as a means for his entertainment and relax. As marriage is one of the established institutions of patriarchy which gives license to males to dominate females in the society. She realizes her traditional marriage has caused her more suffering and turmoil in her life. After awakening her real position, she compares her life with the changeless painting as she determines, "My life has been like that painting nobody wants, the same season, everyday the same misery, no hope of changing. And now I was crying. That's why I must find a way to leave my marriage" (460).

She starts continually to perceive her actual position in the society and develops her status by changing her life from the status quo. Because of her small world; the kitchen room and bed room which are symbolically and physically confined and limited world where she can't change her life for the development of her life. So she determines to find a way to leave her marriage life which has made her life miserable and painful. She breaks her submissive duty of worshipping to her husband as a god. That can be revealed out through her voice, "nobody worshipped

me for living with Wen Fu. I was like that wife of kitchen God. Nobody worshipped her either. He got all the excuses. He got all the credit. She was forgotten" (322). Then she shifts her job as business by opening flower shop in Chinatown where she can deal with so many people in such open world. It shows that she has changed from dependent life into independent life economically.

Because of her turmoil and strife, and true psychological disconnection with her husband, she begins to shift her love relationship with another man, Jimmy neglecting her abusive husband for the treatment her painful life. At the end of the novel, she completely disconnects her relationship with Wen Fu and becomes a life partner of American man, Jimmy. Winnie marries Jimmy Louie not because of duty but for love with equal human relationship between them.

In this way, Winnie's perspective on locating freedom, she keeps on changing from the beginning to end of the novel. She understands her realities and ultimately she sets free herself from every social bond such as marriage, patriarchy, religion. Her bitter reality leads Winnie to her final decision of escaping her husband, society in the expanse of an absolute freedom that she extremely longs for. Preferring to escape rather than to surrender to be dutiful and submissive wife before the convention that has exploited her real 'self', she leaves her husband and family, and enters into wider space in America where she feels her life is full of choices with absolute freedom.

Chapter IV

Conclusion

Freedom is a grand term that encompasses multitude aspects of human life such as social, psychological, economic, political, ethnic, gender as well as cultural ones. Everyone strives for freedom though unknown about the causes and consequences of the presence or absence of it. Freedom implies a situation of an individual who finds himself or herself occupying a space with full of choices for the development of his or her personality.

Different social, cultural, authoritative and many other man made factors may hinder the freedom of an individual. Even more, women may be double exploited; first by the common hindrances and second by men's perspectives and behaviours of 'second sex'- a submissive and complementary to them, towards women. Women, therefore, have to battle with more obstacles for their perfect individuality. Their first effort should be in equating themselves to the males eliminating all kind of gender inequalities and discriminations in society and establishing their own sphere analogues to that of men. Then they only come to the concern of a complete liberation of their 'selves.'

Tan, in her novel, *The Kitchen God's Wife*, portrays her protagonist, Winnie as a revolutionary character for women's liberation from the shackles and restraints of the society. Tan has exposed a stunning account of a married woman's social, sexual and psychological self-discovery and violation of social, sexual limitations for her absolute emancipation. The protagonist, Winnie Louie, a Chinese woman of the early twentieth century, is allowed to disrupt the sacred institutions of marriage and temporary Chinese womanhood, and to disregard moral concepts without repenting.

The society where Winnie lives that believes women are for the pleasure, good wife, and assistance of men; their role of complementary to that of men and they should fulfill their natural feminine functions. It considers them different from men and warns not to compete with them but to be submissive and dependent on them for everything, especially for their identities, the social definition of who they are. It has rewarded them for the limited role of 'good wife', submissive and mistress all of which are pleasing and beneficial to men. One who does not seek her identity through man is a threat to its social value. But, this is what, Winnie does by abandoning her marital, maternal and familial roles.

After realizing her own position given by the society, she strongly attempts to achieve a complete victory that is not enough to destroy a set of values and leave a normative vacuum; they have to be replaced with something alternative, declaring its opposition to the status quo. If women are the way they are, because society has made them that way, they can only change their life significantly by changing society. Winnie, therefore, takes many radical actions not only for destroying the set of social values but also for establishing alternative values for women of their own. She rejects the traditional female role of 'good wife' and reconstructs an alternative, oppositional role of a 'free-woman' which demands a female life with personal emotions, individuality and self-identity. In the effort of adopting her redefined identity, Winnie discards the religious practices of Chinese myth; the god of Kitchen that has suffocated her 'self' by violating her freedom; breaks the marital chain that binds her wings by imprisoning her within the domestic periphery; and ignores the maternal relation which seeks to drag her into the soul's slavery by arousing her emotion and sentiment. Thus, after realizing her world in which she is living utterly false and decides to leave that false world in order to develop her own personality. when she

starts understanding her position with her husband. She finds herself a silly creature living only for her husband's pleasure. In order to develop her personality freely, she escapes her husband and society, and enters into a wider world where she can find greater sensibility of independence.

Escaping, therefore, is not the activity of surrender and continuity of marginalized life for Winnie; rather, it is the radical and drastic activity of seeking freedom by breaking patriarchal norms and values of the society. As the society is conventional with certain moralities, norms, and values that bind people, especially women, within certain limitations. Since Winnie escapes from the Chinese society, she breaks the limitations and circle of the Chinese society.

The writer, Amy Tan, thus, sees defects in the patriarchal system. According to her, this very system is the sole cause of women's suffering. Winnie badly suffers because she is entrapped in the false snares spread by the patriarchy. Tan has shown her progressive nature by presenting gradual development in her protagonist's consciousness. Winnie presents herself as passive, receptive, and innocent at the beginning, but in due course of time she starts understanding her position in her respective family and society. In order to show her discontent towards her social system, Tan presents her central character as rebellious towards the end. Winnie defines and subverts her traditional duty, which is assigned to her by her society, and becomes successful in breaking the labyrinth of eccentric design. She dares to prove the norms of her society as tyrannical and prejudiced, so as to give equal rights and opportunities to women. By projecting Winnie as a bold and dynamic character in the text, Tan wants to convince that women can handle any type of problem if they get equal opportunities. She also wants to convey a message that if women have to live

under continuous domination of males as Winnie lives, after sometime they revolt against domination to exercise her own will freely.

By defying and subverting the dead habits of patriarchal society, Winnie enters into the open world to exercise her free will without any obstacle. Tan has shown her central character, Winnie, leaving her narrow world and entering into the wider world which symbolically indicates discarding traditional systems and developing complete personality. In short, traditional dead system and values should be repudiated for the full development of a person and in such repudiation lies the freedom of the individual.

Works Cited

- Adams, Bella. "Representing History in Amy Tan's *The Kitchen God's Wife*." *MELUS*. 28. 2 (2003): 9-30.
- Adams, Hazard. Ed. *Critical Theory Since Plato*. New York: Harcourt Brace, 1992.
- Baber, Rey E. *Marriage and the Family*. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1939.
- Beauvoir, Simone de. *The Second Sex*. Ed. H.M. Parshley. New York: Vintage Books, 1973.
- Bloom, Harold. *Asian American Women Writers*. Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publishers, 1997.
- Charters, Ann. *The Story and Its Writer: An Introduction to Short Fiction*. Bedford: Boston, 1995.
- Chen, Xiaomei. "Reading Mother's Tale-Reconstructing Women's Space in Amy Tan and Zhang Jie Chinese Literature: Essay, Articles, Reviews." *CLEAR* 16 (1994): 111-32.
- Derrida, Jacques. "Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences." *Critical Theory Since Plato*. Ed. Hazard Adams. New York: Harcourt, 1992. 1116-26.
- Doren, Charles Van. *A History of Knowledge*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1991.
- Foucault, Michel. "Truth and Power." *Critical Theory Since Plato*. Ed. Hazard Adams. New York: Harcourt, 1992. 1135-45.
- Freeman, Jane. *Feminism*. New Delhi: Viva, 2002.
- Gilbert, Sandra M. and Susan Gubar. *The Madwoman in the Attic*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1971.

- Goldenberg, Nadmi R. *Changing of the Gods: Feminism and the End of Traditional Religion*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1979.
- Heung, Marina. "Daughter-Text/Mother-Text: Matrilineage in Amy Tan's *Joy Luck Club*." *Feminist Studies*. 19.3 (1993): 597-616.
- Kingston, Maxine Hong. *China Men*. New York: Random, 1977.
- Kolodny, Annette. "Dancing Through the Minefield." *The New Feminist Criticism*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1985. 144-64.
- Lu, James. "Enacting Asian American Transformations: An Inter-Ethnic Perspective". *Theory, Culture and Criticism*. 23. 4 (1998): 85-99.
- Riggs, Thomas. *Reference Guide to American Literature*. 4th ed. United States: St. James Press, 2000.
- Ruth, Sheila. *Issues in Feminism*. USA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1990.
- Said, Edward. *Orientalism*. London: Vintage, 1994.
- Seaman, Donna. Book Review: *The Kitchen God's Wife*. *American Libraries*. Jul-Aug. 22. 7 (1991): 688.
- Seldan, Raman. *A Reader's Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory*. 2nd ed. London: Longman, 1990.
- Shapiro, Laura. "From China, With Love: *The Kitchen God's Wife*." *Newsweek*. 117. 25, (1991): 663-64.
- Showalter, Elaine. *The New Feminist Criticism*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1985.
- Tan, Amy. *The Joy Luck Club*. New York: Ballantine, 1989.
- - -. *The Kitchen God's Wife*. New York: Ballantine, 1991.
- Wagner, Tamara S. "A Barrage of Ethnic Comparisons: Occidental Stereotypes in Amy Tan's Novels." *Studies in Contemporary Fiction*. 45. 4 (2004): 435-46.

Wekerle, Gerda R. et al. Eds. *New Space For Women*. Colorado: West View Press
1980.

Wollstonecraft, Mary. "A Vindication of the Right of Women." *Critical Theory
Since Plato*. Ed. Hazard Adams. New York: Harcourt, 1992. 395-99.

Wong, Shawn. *Asian American Literature*. New York: Harper Collins College
Publishers, 1996.

Woolf, Virginia. "A Room of One's Own." *Critical Theory Since Plato*. Ed. Hazard
Adams. New York: Harcourt Brace, 1992.

Yuan, Yuan. "The Semiotics of China Narratives in the Con/texts of Kingston and
Tan." *Atlanta, Ga* 40. 3 (1999): 293-303.