

Addis Ababa University
School of Graduate Studies
Department of Foreign Languages and Literature

**Aspects of Feminism in Two African Novels by Women
Writers: A comparative Approach, Nervous Conditions and
So Long a Letter in focus**



Wondwosen Alemayehu

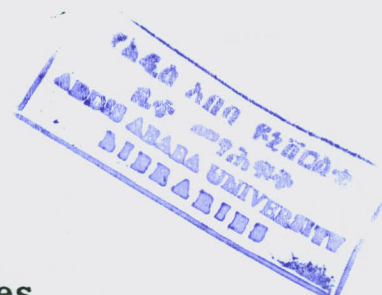
January, 2009

**Aspects of Feminism in Two African Novels by Women
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By

Wondwossen Alemayehu

**A thesis submitted to the Department of Foreign
Languages and Literature for the Degree of M.A. in
Literature**



Institute of Languages Studies

Addis Ababa University

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Aspects of feminism in two African novels by women writers: a comparative approach: Nervous Conditions and So Long a Letter in focus



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January, 2009

Addis Ababa

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my advisor Professor SubbaRao for his constructive suggestions and unfailing support for the successful completion of this research. The research would not have been a reality, had it not been for his advice and support.

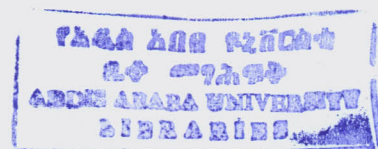
My gratitude also goes to my brother Dr. Abinet Alemayehu for his insightful suggestions and advice and financial assistance.

Last but not least, I would like to express my indebtedness to my parents for their unreserved help and good wishes for the successful completion of the study.

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Abstract

This research aims at examining the prominent features of feminism as reflected in the selected works of fiction. It is believed that feminists raise myriads of issues in their propositions pertinent to their studies. The feminist point of view is one aspect through which a certain work of literature can be examined.

With regard to the feminist point of view the researcher made an attempt to analyze the salient issues that are embodied in the novels selected for the study. The two novels selected for this particular research are Nervous Conditions and So long a letter. The former novel was written by a well known Zimbabwean woman writer, Tsitsi Dangarembga, while the latter was written by a famous Senegalese writer Mariama Ba. Both writers are known for their feminist writings. Various feminist aspects are depicted in the novels. Some of the issues raised in the novels are the issue of the male domination, how the male domination adversely affected women to participate in the walks of life that their male counterparts participate and how women became subordinates in the society.

The thesis is divided into four chapters. The first chapter presents an introduction. The second chapter deals with the review of related literature. The third chapter presents the methodology and the conceptual framework of analysis. The fourth chapter presents the analysis of the selected texts. Finally, the conclusion and recommendations are presented in the fifth and last chapter.

Chapter One

Introduction

1. Background of the Study

The concept of gender equality has become the prominent issue of the contemporary world. At present attempts are being made to encourage women to enhance their self assertion and empowerment. Literature, like the other media, reflects this reality. Literature which can be used as a tool to teach and persuade can play a significant role to change the negative and traditionally accepted norms of people.

This research aims at analyzing some aspects of feminism in two selected novels by two African women writers. The writers are the famous Zimbabwean feminist writer, Tsitsi Dangarembaga and the Senegalese well-known feminist writer, Mariama Ba. Certain aspects of feminism as reflected in the novels of these writers are discussed in the present research study.

The two novels of these writers are as follows: Nervous Conditions by Tsitsi Dangarembaga and So Long a Letter by Mariama Ba. Both are women writers from different parts of Africa.

The study is comparative in nature. It endeavors to investigate the aspects of feminist ideologies reflected in the works of the two selected novels .

In the traditional society of Africa the practice of culture is still imposing a significant impact on the life of the people .In particular, women are the victims of the tradition which is patriarchal in its structure. A study by Weedon (1987) reveals that the male dominant traditions of the society have significantly influenced women by marginalizing and prohibiting them from playing a pivotal role in the outside world. The belief that women's place is in the home is a long time stereotypical outlook that

confined women to some traditionally constructed norms. All these practices suppress women in the patriarchal society. The study focuses on these gender related practices that contribute to women's marginalization.

The following quotation by Warhol and Herndl on feminism will help to understand two important concepts in this work one is the fact that women are under the pressure of men with a kind of stereotypically established patriarchal system, the other is the widely accepted concern of feminists to uncover this unconsciously endorsed ideology.

Feminist critics generally agree that the oppression of women is a fact of life, that gender leaves its traces in literary texts and on literary history and that feminist literary criticism plays a worth while part in the struggle to end oppression in the world outside the text (1982: 25)

Hence, feminism, which examines the social, cultural and political aspects of literary works focusing on the role, position and influence of women in the society, will be a tool for examining the novels written by the selected African women writers. In doing so, the feminist aspects reflected in the novels and the representation of women and men's contribution to patriarchal pattern will be the main focus of the present study.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

In the African society where the rule of patriarchy is not put aside as insignificant, its impact on literature will be an undeniable fact, for an author is not creating any thing with inspiration, but reflecting the actual world in an artistic manner. Thus, it is usual that various works of literature reflect the dependence, submissiveness and lesser consideration of females in socio- economic as well as political scenarios.

It is also the researcher's observation that female characters are portrayed as victims of the patriarchal system whether the victims are aware or unaware of the detrimental effect of the system. They become subject to the male dominant structure. For this reason, with this problem in focus, the researcher has endeavored to investigate the prominent features of feminism as reflected in the two selected two novels by African women writers.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

The research aims at making a comparative analysis of the selected novels based on the prominent feminist aspects reflected in these works of art. It also aims at answering the following questions in particular with regard to the aspects of feminism in the works of the selected African women writers.

- i. What are the aspects of feminism expressed in these literary materials?
- ii. How do the authors attempt to portray the female characters in their novels?
- iii. How can the characters be interpreted from the feminist point of view?
- iv. How are the major characters examined in the selected fictions?
- v. How are women portrayed in the selected novels?
- vi. How can the women and men characters be analyzed?

The above elements are the prime issues for which the researcher proposes to find answers. Literature is the vital record of what men have seen in life, what they have thought and felt about the different aspects of life which have the most immediate and enduring interest for all of us.

By identifying and describing the most observable feminist features in the novels under study, this research aims to establish the basic nature of the selected writers' feminist disposition.

Thus, the description and identification of the prominent feminist features will contribute to the understanding of the novels, will increase awareness of their artistic quality and will also offer insights into certain aspects of their literary art and their aesthetic effect.

1.3 Scope of the Study

This study is limited to the investigation of the prominent feminist features reflected in the selected novels written by the two African women writers. It also intends to examine the novels with regard to their portrayal of women characters.

1.4 Significance of the Study

Gender issue is one of the most striking issues of the contemporary times. Examining females' problems in this regard is an important move in the process of mitigating their problems. In this respect, the role of literature in reflecting women in the African context would be an essential source to unveil the wrong views about women in the society. It is the researcher's hope that this study will contribute its share, in this respect.

Analyzing the content of the novels from the feminist perspective will help to uncover the problems women confront under the patriarchal ideology.

1.5. Limitation of the Study

The problem of evaluating the novels and interpreting them by using only a few available resources has to be mentioned as a limitation for the completeness of this research. Hence the researcher would like to acknowledge in advance the shortcomings that might appear in the

research due to the dearth of resource materials with reference to the novels under study.

1.6 Organization of the Study

This paper comprises five chapters. The first chapter presents the introduction that includes: objectives of the study, statement of the problem, significance of the study, scope of the study and important questions to be raised in the study. The next chapter deals with a review of previously done research findings and issues raised by scholars in the research area. The third chapter deals with the methodology and conceptual analysis of the research. The fourth chapter presents the analysis of the selected texts. The last and fifth chapter presents the conclusion and recommendations.

Chapter Two

Review of Related Literature

In this chapter a brief overview of feminism and its prominent features are presented. The review helps to understand the extent of the problem and gives a glimpse of pertinent literature.

2. Definition of Feminism

To put the definition of feminism in brief, it is the advocacy of the political, social and economic equality of men and women. However, the fact that gender is interwoven with a number of ideologies and is a factor of many variables makes the study of feminism, evidently complicated. In connection, with this, Tyson (1999) states that because of the different views of looking into the problems of women, some feminists call their field in its plural form (i.e feminisms).

Belsay and Moore (1997) and Pope (2002) assert that feminism is political in its nature for the fact that politics is concerned about power, power of domination between genders. In this regard, Feminism, according to Pope, (2002), is “ a politically motivated movement dedicated to personal and social change”. In this definition, it is difficult to tell which sex is the active participant of the movement and it is also difficult to pinpoint to which group change and the movement is needed. This notion is believed to say that the participation in bringing about change is inclusive of both sexes. Therefore, both sexes should strive to change their stereotypical outlooks and that change calls for their joint intellectual effort.

Jane Miller as quoted in Thornham and Purvis (2005:111) defines feminism in an aggressive and strong manner. She says; “the purpose of feminism as I see is to disturb, irrevocably, the steady male gaze and the

unquestioning male possession of the structures of economic and cultural power.

Krishnaswamy, et al. (2001:79) put feminism as” an attempt to formulate the issues and find a solution to gender problems. Thus, feminists will have to engage in a two-fold task: to discover the kind of gender problems and to participate actively in the combat against patriarchal structure.

2.1 The Basic Concern of Feminism

Feminism basically focuses on the social, cultural and economic influence of men on women. Feminists consider the depiction of women in terms of power relationships between men and women. Feminism is, therefore, concerned with the marginalization of women, the male dominance in positions of economic, political, and social power as well as the underrepresentation of the contribution of women.

According to Weedon (1987) Feminism emphasizes changing the existing power relations between men and women in society. The power relations are in connection with all aspects of life like the family, education and welfare, which according to Weedon, determine the position where woman could be placed in the society.

The concern of feminist critics is many-fold and covers every aspect of women’s lives (Weedon1987:68). They include the very questions of what it is to be a woman, how woman’s femininity and their sexuality are defined for them and how they might begin to redefine them for themselves. The objectification of women as sexual objects, rape and other forms of violence against women within and outside the family, feminist critics believe, are due to the oppression of patriarchy, and are compounded for many women by class and race discrimination. They are the motivating forces behind the feminist theory which must always be accountable to the needs of women in their struggle to transform

patriarchy. Feminists explain the patriarchal structure of society as the starting point of their discussion. The term 'patriarchal' refers to the power relations in which women's interests are subordinated to the interests of men. According to Weedon (1987) these power relations take many forms, from the sexual division of labor and the social organization of procreation to the internalized norms of femininity by which women live. Patriarchal oppression consists of imposing certain social standards of femininity on all biological women, in order to precisely make them believe that the chosen standards for femininity are natural. Thus a woman who refuses to conform can be labeled both 'unfeminine' and 'unnatural'. It is in the patriarchal interest that these two terms (femininity and femaleness) influence the roughly confused patriarchy. In other words, patriarchy wants women to behave that there is such a thing as an essence of femaleness called femininity. Feminists on the contrary have to disentangle this confusion, and must always insist that though women undoubtedly are female, this in no way guarantees that they will be feminine (Belsey et al. 1997:87).

2.2 The Beginning of Feminism

It is believed that women have been victims of gender bias for a long time. However, an organized and systematized form of their movement is only half a century old. Krishnaswamy (et al. 2001), Belsey and Moore (1997) and Pope (2007) state that feminism as a systematic effect started with Simone de Beauvoir's The Second Sex (1949) which depicts the political and philosophical history of women as the institutionalized other, relative to the dominate notions of the male self. It gained momentum in the 1960s when women continued to claim their right to self autonomy and determination. The history of the feminist movement can be categorized into two major movements: first wave feminism, and second wave feminism (de Beauvoir, 1949).

2.2.1 First Wave Feminism

The women's movement which started in the first half of the twentieth century, is known as the first wave feminism. Feminist writers from Olive Schreier to Simone de Beauvoir were writing articles, with the themes of women's material differences from men (Humm, 1992).

Virginia Woolf is a prominent figure in demanding women's economic independence through their employment and domestic parity with men. Of course Woolf's fundamental contribution to feminism is her strong belief that gender attribution is a societal construct which began early in the patriarchal system and thus can be challenged and changed (Humm, 1992)

In this period, women won legal advances and public emancipation and therefore, women's rights as wives, mothers and daughters in terms of divorce and property laws were raised as crucial issues. Besides, women underscored the importance of equal access to education.

2.2.2 Second Wave Feminism

The second wave feminism emphasizes reproduction, experience and difference (Humm 1992). The second wave feminism took reproduction as the prime concern. Feminists argue that women need to have the reproductive rights to decide this issue by themselves.

Both first and second wave feminists believed that women's oppression is related to sexuality. The former, however, like other political theories has concerns with the state in asserting legal educational and equal economic rights for women. The latter, on the other hand, focuses on internalizing women's problems and their solution in dealing with reproduction policies for they believed that the personal is the political.

Humm(1992:11), summarises the goals of the two feminist movements discussed above saying:

The movement from a first wave feminism which is principally concerned with equalities, to a second wave feminism which uses women's differences to oppose the legalities of a patriarchal world, is a radical and visionary formation. In the first movement women are objects sometimes victims of mistaken social knowledge. In the second movement, women are challenging that knowledge from the strength of their own experience.

According to Julia Kristiva, as quoted in Humm (1992) the historical and political phases of feminism can be divided into three categories. Therefore, for Kristiva, the two waves of feminism do not fully represent the historical and political background of feminism.

The first category of feminism identified by Kristiva is liberal feminism which has been attributed to masculine time. This demands equal access to symbolic order (political and professional equality for women). The second category of feminism which is after the students movement of 1968, is radical feminism. This is females' time when they rejected male symbolic order in the name of difference. Activities of this phase of feminism were dedicated to creating a separate and radical women's culture. In the third category of feminism, women stressed that they will not achieve equality without equal distribution of power.

2.3. Feminism

Sex and gender is the starting point in feminism. Feminists argue that gender is the construct of the society, while sex refers to the biological differences which determine human beings as male or female. Gender is a culturally constructed attribute given to distinguishing feminine and masculine differences of dress, social role, expectations etc. (Humm) (1992:72).

For feminists gender is the central concern. Though there are differences in different places in terms of culture, religion, race and ideology the uniformity of its impact on women makes it commonly identifiable. This enables feminists to stand together in combating the prevailing male domination.

In the process of getting rid of gender differences, feminists should be able to unveil the unconsciously adapted attachments of gender (Warhol and Hernmd, 1991). Consequently, ideology as it is an essential concept also plays a central role in Feminism. Ideology, in broad terms, is applicable to all accepted beliefs which bring about an impact on the society. The term ideology usually appears to be transparent or conforming to the usual course of nature. However, in reality, it serves the interest of the patriarchal structure.

Thornham and Purvis (2005:113) expounded ideology and its significance in feminism as follows:

If ideology is the process of making the world , so that we live our lives and construct our identities within the frameworks it provides, and of those frameworks operate through representations, then it is clear that a key concern for feminist criticism must be with ideologies of femininity and the representations through which they circulate.

Ideology as explained by Ruthven (1984), is a system of assumptions which operate in society but never articulated fully. Further, she stated that sexist ideology or the ideology of male dominance, operates by suppressing or dislocating sexual contradiction. For example, sexual contradiction in working areas can either be suppressed by the ideology of 'equal opportunity' or displaced by considering domestic works. She explained that a literary critic then has to reckon traces of ideologies which render a pattern to literature and to point to the distinctions

between what a work intends to say and what a careful reading of it reveals.

The patriarchal structure of ideology is the major concern for feminists. It refers to norms and values that privilege males by promoting traditional gender roles. According to patriarchy, all culturally reflected behaviors are being considered as natural because of their longstanding existence with patriarchal ideologies. Humm (2002) says in this context :“we were all born female or male; but each of us learn to be feminine or masculine according to our experience of the prevailing social norms.”

Feminists, in this respect, believe that feminism is not the question of deciding what a woman is by nature. It is rather a question of examining what a woman is assumed to be in a society or culture; how their assumptions come about and what interest they serve. As a result, they argue that women should get more opportunities. They shouldn't serve patriarchal interests. Furthermore, male domination should be undermined.

Traditional gender roles, portray men as rational, strong, protective, decisive and born for arts and education. On the other hand, women are portrayed as emotional, weak, nurturing and submissive. These roles have been considered as reasons for gender inequalities. Therefore, conventionally, leadership roles and decision-making positions, involving higher wage jobs and those which need mathematical knowledge or logical reasoning have long been reserved for the masculine (Tyson, 1999: 85).

Feminists like Ruthven (1984) and Tyson (1999) believe that the roles of females as prescribed in a patriarchal society are not natural. Tyson (1999) said, that it is natural to give birth or conceive for a woman. However, those biological differences could not justify male dominance over female because there is no scientific evidence which claims males to



be more intelligent, more logical, more courageous or better leaders biologically. Therefore, feminists argue that the deference is the result of cultural programming, the violation of which considers one to be unnatural.

As a result of women's submissiveness and weak determining power women are unable to secure highly paid jobs and are restrained to involve in political agenda. Generally, their being denied the political, economic and social power, paved the way for men to have dominance over women in all areas of life (Tyson, 1999).

Hitherto men had unreserved right on their wife's body, imposing on women's rights. Women were deprived of their individual citizenship and access to education and employment. All these are the result of the patriarchal norms which undermine women's personality (Lister, 1999). In this context, Ruthven (1984) has stated the following: "The feminist project is to end domination" Referring to Andrea Dworkin Ruthven again stated:

In order to do this, we will have to destroy the structure of culture as we know it, its art, its churches, its laws its nuclear families based on father-right and nation states: all of the images, institutions, customs and habits which define women as worthless and invisible victims (Ruthven 1984:6)

Concerning some practical instances of patriarchal programming, Pope (2002) confirmed that both sexes are designed in a certain fashion, for instance, to speak and write in a stereotypically coded way. These instances are believed to be culturally motivated rather than biologically stimulated. As stated above, stereotyping is supposed to be unrealistic, but prevailed through historical periods and cultures.

Based on their reaction to patriarchy, women have been judged as 'good' or 'bad'. Those who accept the patriarchal norms (i.e those who are

submissive, who tolerate familial abuse, consider marriage as the final reward, modest, self-sacrificing, happy with serving the family) are termed as 'good'. On the other hand, those who tend to be open in sexual behaviors or against the patriarchal norm are termed as 'bad' (Tyson, 1999).

2.4. Types of Feminism

As discussed in the preceding sections, feminism is not a simple or single philosophy. Many women and men feminists have different views on Feminism. The following is a brief account of some of the different types of feminism.

2.4.1. Liberal Feminism

Liberal Feminism is characterized by an individual's emphasis on equality. According to liberal feminists, society itself does not need a major overhaul, but rather needs to be changed so that opportunities have to be opened up to allow women to become equals in society. To liberal feminists, increasing the number of women in higher positions that were previously occupied by men is an evidence of the progress. Liberal feminism is the main form of feminism in many parts of the world (Bell, 1999).

2.4.2. Socialist Feminism

Socialist Feminism is sometimes known as Marxist Feminism. Socialist Feminism is different from liberal feminism in that it emphasizes that true equality will not be achieved without equal distribution of power, particularly economic power.

Socialist feminists argue that power and economic advantages are distributed unevenly. Thus, it is not enough for women to individually work to rise to powerful positions in society; rather, power needs to be

redistributed through society. In general, socialist feminists focus on collective change.

2.4.3. Radical Feminism

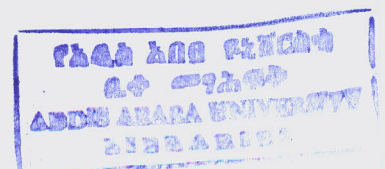
Radical Feminism is similar to socialist feminists in its emphasis on the need for a drastic change in order to achieve genuine equality for women and the two philosophies are grouped together in addition radical feminists believe that society is extremely patriarchal and until patriarchy is transformed at all levels, the system will remain unjust. Radical feminists are separatist feminists who believe that men and women need to maintain separate institutions and relationships (Alice, 1990)

2.5. The Concept of Patriarchy and Language

The impact of patriarchal culture is still noticed in this contemporary world. Pope (2002) believes that language is a prominent medium which displays how men and women are portrayed in different disposition . Tyson (1999) also endeavored to identify words which have sexual connotations such as *slut* and *stud* that have a suppressive impact on female's sexuality.

According to Pope (2002), patriarchal structure has a significant impact on language. Pope explained that males are addressed in a similar way throughout their lives while women are differently addressed in different stages of their lives. For instance, males are addressed as Mr. whether they are married or not whereas women are addressed as Miss if they are not married and Mrs. when they get married. This way of addressing people suggests the impact of patriarchy on the sexes.

Pope (2002) also asserted that English like many other languages is rife with terms that suggest patriarchy, Mentioning that terms related to the masculine are constructed to have positive connotations while terms



related to the feminine are constructed to bear a negative connotation in the society.

2.6 Gender Roles

Human studies that are concerned with the characteristics and formation of social structure and how social interactions are carried on put gender role construction at the centre of their explanations. In her book Gender Roles: A Sociological Perspective, Lindsey (2005) defines gender roles as the ascribed roles that a society places upon women in association with their biological sex.

Terms such as 'sex role' and 'gender role' are usually used interchangeably to define the expected behaviors of either sex. Nicolson (1996) uses the term 'sex roles' to define the expected behavior placed upon women and men in association with their biological sexes.

But Lindsey has a perspective different from that of Nicolas regarding the use of the terms. According to Lindsey (2005), the concepts 'role' and gender are sociological while the concept 'sex' is biological. She argues that adding the concept 'role' which is sociological with biological 'sex' creates confusion. She suggests that for the sake of clarity it is preferable to combine the two sociological concepts and use the term 'gender roles' instead of 'sex roles' when referring to the socially ascribed male and female roles.

In the context of this research the concept 'gender roles' will be used to explain the societal association of roles and behaviors of women and men characters in relation to their biological sex. Therefore, explanations on gender role construction and what causes the differences in role and status between the sexes are the basic premise of the study.

2.6.1 Factors Influencing Gender Roles

Explanations as to the difference between women and men tend to centralize on biological and socialization factors. There are explanations that take biological factors as determinant for women and men to have developed their own distinctive characteristics, personalities and also to perform different domestic and social roles.

The other category of explanation defines the origin of gender role differences in terms of the process of socialization. For instance, Frieze (1978) explained that society creates and places upon women and men different expectations based on their difference in reproductive function. Further, this difference in expected behaviors is transmitted from generation to generation through socialization.

Explanations on the different roles and status assignment to women and men maintain that the social and cultural gender role construction has a link with the biological designation of female and male. Among those who reflect their perspective in this regard is Paula Nicholson. In her book Gender, Power and Organization (1996), she defines the roles assigned to women and men as a complex interconnection of sex, gender and everyday experience. From a psychological perspective, Nicholson points out, that biological designation as female or male is the basis for socially ascribed roles of women and men. She argues that based on anatomy society establishes meanings and representations regarding women's and men's roles. she further argues:

Anatomy /biology has a clearly social meaning recapitulated in the discourse on gendered behavior... so that when we look at women, the female body symbolizes an entire 'social history' through which others can understand her and through which she makes sense of her own lie. (Nicholson, 1996, pp. 9-10)

The emphasis of Nicholson's argument is on the notion of destiny. According to her, in relation to their biological title women and men are socialized in different ways that ultimately determine their destiny. She argues that the socially and culturally constructed values and norms of society stipulate and set the limits of individuals experience in that women and men have different lives and outlooks of the world.

Nicholson argues that social expectations ascribed to women and men create a hierarchal gender relationship between them in which men are considered superior to women. She defines gender relations as power relations in which men and male values have a superior status over women and female values. For Nicholson, gender relations are an integral part of patriarchal power structure, which is maintained through socialization into gender roles. She asserts that gender relations are about the attainment and preserving of power.

2.6.2 The Role of Culture in Maintaining Gender Roles

Bernice Lott (1987) observes that based on their biological sex, females and males are made to pass through different social processes so that they develop different cultures and experiences of understanding their worlds differently. According to Lott, there is a difference between being female/male and "becoming a culturally defined" women/men (Lott, 1987: vii). In her book, Women's Lives: Themes and Variations in Gender Learning, Lott defines gender as a social and cultural construction that begins from the birth of a child. She states, "Cultures begin at birth to shape highly flexible and teachable human infants not only into unique individuals but also into two categories of gender" (Lott, 1987:29)

Weedon (1987) explores how cultures demonstrate the hierarchical status of the sexes from the very day of the birth of a child. In her work she refers to the difference in celebration of the birth of a male and a female child. She explains that in most cases the birth of a boy

child is celebrated while that of a girl child is perceived as a mere acceptance of the 'gift' of nature. It may be added here that in some societies in Asia and Africa, the birth of a female child is considered as a curse for economic and social reasons.

Weedon (1987) also points out that male children, especially the first born are honored while the birth of a girl is often a cause for lamentation. She observes that the society puts the blame on the women if couples fail to have a son. According to Weedon (1987) in most cases failing to have a son can be a cause for marriage dissolution or the woman would be forced to accept her husband's affairs with other women.

For Lindsey (2005) such kinds of actions are a reflection of stereotype attitudes. Stereotype, according to her, refers to those "... over simplified conceptions that people who occupy the same status group share certain traits in common" (Lindsey, 2005:3). Lindsey further explains that these conceptions are a result of rigidly defined roles. She says, most of the time stereotypes tend to focus on negative traits rather than positive ones and therefore become causes of discrimination on the basis of those who are assumed to have negative traits.

2.6.3 The Role of Socialization in Maintaining Gender Roles

Socialization, as defined by Helen O'Connell (2002), is "the process of learning by which people of all ages acquire the cultures of their society and of the various groups within the society to which they belong." (O'Connell, 1994:70). Social institutions such as family, school, religious and political institutions, together with the law and media play an important role in maintaining gender roles. We learn their modes of operation and the value which they seek to maintain as true, natural or good. As children, we learn what girls and boys should be and, later, what women and men should be" (Weedon, 1987:3)

Of these institutions, the family is the most crucial one in shaping children's character, identity and self-image. As Lindsey states, the family is an institution where children gain their first orientation towards social norms, values and attitudes, including their gender identity. In this regard parents play the most pivotal role. As Lindsey (2005) states, "gender-typing of infants by parents begins on the day of the child's birth... Both parents are likely to describe infant sons as strong, tough, and alert and infant daughters as delicate, gentle, and awkward, regardless of the weight or length of their infants" (Lindsey, 2005:62).

These stereotype descriptions are manifested through different role assignment and different ways of socialization in which female and male happen to be exposed to different situations in the course of their life. For instance, during childhood "... girls are socialized into being people-oriented and dependent, while work, and particularly success at work, was perceived to be masculine and as such undesirable for women" (Nicholson, 1996: 24).

In support of this , Lindsey asserts, "Gender socialization in early childhood helps boys develop confidence which permits them to explore realms outside the home independent of adult supervision, whereas girls develop low self-esteem which tend to reserve and keep them closer to home" (Lindsey, 2005: 62). For mothers, the expectations placed upon women are nurturing, loving and caring, passivity, home-making and availability to the needs of the family at all times, while for men, expectations for their behaviors as fathers are "... bread- winner, disciplinarian, home technology expert and ultimate decision maker in the household." (Lindsey, 2005, 2)

Weedon (1987) also maintains that the notion of the ideal woman/ mother calls for specific behavior on the role of women, (Weedon, 1987:2). According to her, these expectations placed upon women determine

women's destiny in terms of accessing the labor market and other social services that are necessary for women in the public life.

The main thrust of social scientists, whose explanations are being used in this research, is that the socially and culturally constructed gender roles placed different expectations on women and men and eventually brought about difference in status between the sexes. They argue that the difference in gender roles is accountable for the hierarchical relationship between women and men in which women are subordinated to men. And this hierarchical gender relation is maintained through socialization of gender roles by which women are subordinated to men. In her book "A Vindication of the Rights of Women", Mary Wollstonecraft (1988) criticizes the socialization process that causes difference in status and privileges of women and men as corrupt and unjust. She said that societal norms and values are responsible for the creation of unjust and corrupt socialization process which brought about unequal power relation between women and men. She argued that women also need to be allowed to pass through the socialization process that gives them the liberty to experience the world in a manner that men do.

Nicholson (1996) maintains that 'women's biological capacities to bear and feed children are presented in patriarchal societies as the determining features of what is 'natural' and conversely what is 'unnatural'. Childlessness and traits contrary to the nurturing role, such as aspiring to and achieving social power, are presented as unfeminine and somehow 'damaging to potential femininity' (Nicholson, 1996:10).

Weedon (1987) also states that the patriarchal assumption puts the biological difference of women from men as a justification for women to be assigned with exclusive, domestic and social tasks and to assume a particular status and thus resist ideas towards changing it.

In addition, the main argument here is that the biological difference between women and men by itself cannot account for the hierarchical relationship between women and men. But it is the social and cultural values and meanings attached to it that ascribe different social status for the sexes (Weedon, 1987).

2.6.4 The Gender Division of Labor and Women's Subordination

Feminist scholars argue that the gender-division of labor is the root of women's oppression. The rationale of this argument is two-fold: on the one hand the division itself is based on the assumed traits of women such as emotionality, lack of capacity to reasoning, and their 'natural' task of nurturing. On the other hand, the division brought about women's subordination. Thus the rule of men over women as a system prevails (McDowell and Pringle, (1996).

As Sheila Ruth (1995) put it, in traditional way of life, the division of labor between the husband and the wife took the form of bread winner and home maker respectively. In this situation the husband is skilled to be eligible to work in paid market while the wife specializes in unpaid labor. The implication of this arrangement is that wife is economically dependent on her husband and the husband assumes full authority over his wife.

McDowel and Pringle (1996) also note that women and men in the family are designed for different positions. This designation is accompanied with distinctive division of labor that can be explained through domestic and public sphere dichotomy. Traditionally women are designated to the home and communal affairs while the public sphere is reserved for men. The domestic sphere and the division of labor assigned to women is associated with issues of personal or family affairs and unpaid labor. Thus the division of labor and designation of positions removed women from the labor market and eventually made them dependent on men for economic and social security.

In their article entitled “Invisible women, Invisible poverty” in the book of *Women and Poverty in Africa* Jane Millar and Caroline Glendining (1987) also maintain that the gender based division of labor accounts for women’s poverty. They argue that the gender division of labor that pushed women to the domestic and communal affairs has prevented them from access to labor market. Therefore, they assert that being marginalized from the wage market, women assume a position subordinate to men who are perceived as economic providers.

Though it manifests itself through different forms, the public private dichotomy that is embedded in the gender division of labor has a universal face. In the African context, the notion that ‘a women’s place is at home’ is taken for granted. Thus restricted from public life women are made to be confined to domestic and communal activities which are not considered significant. As noted by Nawal El Saadawi:

The woman has been deprived of her capacity for mental psychological and even physical creativity. Her capacity for child-bearing and her creative human motherhood have been transformed into bonds, burdens and agony, all of which exhaust and weaken her, rather than strengthen or develop her abilities (Saadawi, 1994: 222).

The central theme of feminists is that the gender division of labor that places women and men in different spheres accounts for the prevalence of unequal power relation between the sexes which resulted in women’s oppression. They also argue that gender inequality and women’s secondary status is not a mere individual’s ‘bad’ intention but it is created through and espoused by a system of patriarchy, which is a social and cultural construction (Hooks, 1984).

Weedon (1987) also maintains that the gender relationships between women and men, which are patriarchal, are structural. She states that

they exist in the institutions and social practices of our society and cannot be explained by the intentions, good or bad, of individual women or men. (Weedon 1987:3).

2.7. Feminism and Literature

In Feminism and literature two important points will be raised. The first point to be discussed is women as writers and the second point is how women are represented in literary works. The ideology which is patriarchal in its nature has profoundly affected women both as writers and their under representation in literary production. Though women had the opportunity to be included in literary canon before the feminist movement in 1960s, they had for long been deprived of being included into the literary canon. In this regard, Tyson (1999) said: forgetting the case of race, it is daring to say that women were unfairly taken out of the domain. In an endeavor to pass this impediment, some literary works were produced with a pseudonym. Ruthven (1984) in connection with women's writing said that the absence of women's literary work from a literary history is an evidence for the presence of impeding patriarchal structure.

However, because of the emergence of feminism females writings began to flourish. The works of females as of the movement focus on redirecting and rewriting the western established relations between men and women. Evans (1997:107) addressed this situation as follows :

Anyone not reading the works of feminist authors of the early 1970s can have no doubt that the project of these works was both to re-think and to reconstruct the social world in radically different ways. Patriarchy was to be defined and overthrown and women were to assume a measure of hitherto unknown power and autonomy.

As to women's representation, women heroines, in contrast to men heroes, were absent even in the nineteenth century for the eventually constructed womanhood was an impediment for the prevailing patriarchal society .But works especially after 1970 reveal the development of females literary

works. Yet females literary works remain suppressed. In a more concise way, Ruthven (1984) concluded that it becomes traditional for a hero to succeed and a heroine, if she is lucky, merely to survive in narrative discourse. In short, it is hold that male writers misinterpret women (Pope, 2002).

2.8. Feminist Criticism

In the preceding sections, it has been discussed that literature as a product of cultural heritage represents woman as she comfortably accepted the patriarchal structure. As a result women are repressed and the oppression is reflected through literature. The endeavor to change the image of women in the society is ultimately the concern of feminist critics.

Feminist criticism, according to Bellesy and Moore (1997:104), “is a specific kind of political discourse: a critical and theoretical practice committed to the struggle against patriarchy and sexism”. Politicizing feminist criticism is to indicate its concern of power relations between genders as , the concept of personal is political. Thus viable feminist criticism and theory has to touch upon the social, institutional and personal power relationships between the male and the female.

In the light of the ideological influence of patriarchy on literature, Tyson(1999) recommends to feminist critics to view literary works apart from the texts superficial intention. She asserts that patriarchal literature is concerned about male domination.

Feminist literary critics approach a literary work from the point of view of its influence on women in socio-cultural, political and economic discourses. Therefore, feminists concentrate on the marginalization of women, the minor consideration of their contribution and the male dominance in socio-economic and political areas. Their ultimate goal is to do away with the oppression of women and the minor consideration of their contribution and the male dominance in socio-economic and political

areas. Their ultimate goal is to do away with the oppression of women such that the freedom of women is secured.

As already hinted earlier, with regard to the technique the feminists utilize, feminist critics do not have a single constructed framework of criticism. This has for long been an arguable point among the feminists. They use various strategies such as Marxist, psychoanalytic, structuralism and deconstructionist theories to enlighten the invisible elements of patriarchy. In this respect, Ruthven (1984:25) describes the other side of feminist criticism as follows: “lining a single best methodology is not only dysfunctional but also an attribute of patriarchy.” Here she wants to disregard the notion of using a single method of feminist criticism.

With respect to the above factual statement, Toril Moi in Belsey and Moore (1997:105) asserted that the pluralistic approach of feminist critics is parallel to the socialist critics. It is recommended that feminists would be effective when they employ various approaches to meet their objective. A key word, she added, is ‘appropriation’ in the sense of adaptation.

Tyson (1999:93) suggested that feminists should be mindful of the patriarchal nature of literary theories though they fashion it to uncover the deep-rooted patriarchal ideology. In other words, the prime intention/objective of the afore-mentioned literary theories should be to enhance our understanding of women’s experience both in the past and the present and to foster our appreciation of women’s values in the world.

2.9. A brief Review of Previous Related Studies

The researcher has made an attempt to review previously conducted researches in order to claim the originality of the research. The researcher was able to procure some research studies carried out in Addis Ababa University. In the MA thesis written by Wodalat Gedamu, entitled “Analysis of Emechata’s two novels The Slave Girl and Destination Biafra (June 2005), Wodalat has divided the female characters into two

categories: women portrayed as victims of the culture and those who are depicted as strong or liberated women.

In the MA thesis written by Rahel Itana entitled, "A Portrayal of Women in the Novels of Ousmane Sembene and Cyprian Ekwensi" Rahel has made an attempt to analyze the problems that women face and how they are portrayed in the society. She prominently mentioned some female characters who were able to resist the male dominant structure in the society.

The thesis entitled "Feminist trends in Achebe's post colonial novels" by Gebremariam Haile has made an extensive attempt to explore how women were made to be oppressed by the male dominant culture. The women were set to be dominated by the patriarchal culture.

Besides the critical analysis of women's portrayal, Gebremariam endeavored to examine previously conducted research studies in connection with the portrayal of women. He cited Zerihun Asfaw's study on "The Images of Women in the Short Stories Written between 1957 and 1993, and disclosed the fact that female characters are represented stereotypically.

Gebremariam has also mentioned some senior essays written on women characters. He winds up with his assertion that Askale Lema's (1978 E.C) "Images of Feudal women characters in seven novels" exposes the ostentations, vicious and greedy behavior of female characters. On the other hand, Yeshe Tadesse's (1978 E.C) "Images of Women in Five Plays," exposes the delicate, sensitive and uncritical nature of the characters. The work by Teferi Melese (1978 E.C) "Images of Young Girls in Five Plays" deals with findings that correspond with Yeshe Tadesse's (1978 E.C).

Mulumebet Zenebe's (1988 E.C) "A Comparative Analysis of Women writers", Alem Bayleyegne's (1984 E.C) "Images of Women in the Works of Three Authoresses", and Mulualem Denbegna's (2006) MA thesis on

“Aspects of Feminism in Amedi’s The Concubine and The Great Ponds and Emechata’s Second Class Citizen: A post structuralist Approach” are some of the research works that came up with a new inspiration into the depiction of female characters. All the three studies reflect the positive representation of female characters.

The MA thesis by Teshome Egere entitled “The Portrayal of Women in Dhaba’s selected Afan Oromo prose Fiction” and Yihenew Melese’s work entitled “A Feminist reading of Tobbiya and Endewotach Kerech” are worth mentioning. These two researches which center on inland literature concluded that the representation of females in the literatures of their interest comprises two groups of women: those who strongly challenge patriarchal domination and others who are under the influence of patriarchal ideology.

Two other research works of relevance are done on different genres. One is by Tigist Defaru (2006). Tigist has made an attempt to demonstrate how females are portrayed in two domestic films: ‘Kezkaza Wolafen’ and ‘Semayawi Feres’. She asserted that female actresses were portrayed as sacrificing objects of male gaze and as dependents.

Mekonen Fekadu’s (2005) MA thesis entitled “Images of Women in the Fiction of Selected Women Writers: A Comparative Black Feminist Study” focuses on studying the objective of black women authoresses. To this end, he has rated the portrayal of women in the works into five major categories. As victims of gender and class oppression, as mothers, as rebellious and non-conformists, as custodians of cultural values and tradition and as figures of female solidity and upholders of family relation. In conclusion, he said, “It seems black women writers have a common agenda- to deconstruct the stereotypical image of women and fight against several forms of oppression that women still suffer in Africa”.

Although the above works have some relevance in terms of the portrayal of women, the researcher believes that none of these works have dealt with the prominent features of feminism as reflected in the novels selected for the present study. Therefore, the researcher feels that this study offers a new perspective in view of the feminist aspects reflected in the selected African novels by two African women writers.

Chapter Three

3. Materials and Methodology

3.1 Source

The study was conducted on the prominent features of feminism reflected in the novels selected for the study. The study mainly relies on the analysis of secondary data that were collected from the existing documents or some other published materials available in the library. Primary sources except the selected texts are not utilized in this particular research as a result of the prime nature of the research, therefore, the research was purely conducted based on secondary sources.

3.1 Method of Data Collection

The method of data collection that was used in this study includes the analysis of documents pertinent to the research. Secondary data were collected from journals and other written materials which have a direct or indirect relationship with the study.

3.3 Method of Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using comparative relationships between the selected texts for analysis. A comparison between Nervous Conditions and So Long a Letter was made based on the following factors: patriarchy, gender, education and labour division. The information was available in the secondary sources.

3.4 Method of Data Interpretation

Data interpretation is the final work of the study, and it is made from the analyzed facts.

Here are some techniques of interpretation that were used in this research.

- A reasonable explanation of the relation obtained across the four variables(i.e. patriarchy ,gender ,education ,and labour division)
- All relevant factors considered to affect the problems to be interpreted.
- The data were interpreted based on the feminist aspects presented in the research.

3.5 Conceptual Framework of the Analysis

In the analysis of the selected texts, the researcher made use of various ideas and concepts in terms of feminist ideology. Under this, the researcher would attempt to explain the aspects which the present research is concerned with.

First of all, an attempt is made to study, how the male domination resulted in the subjection of women in the society. The issue of patriarchy is considered as the point of reference in studying how women were considered inferior in the developing society. Besides, for feminists patriarchy is the foundation for the inception of many theories and speculations in their writings. Because it is believed by feminists that patriarchal structure have profusely given a secondary position to women in the society. Hence, the role of patriarchy as portrayed in the selected novels is one of the aspects to be examined for the study. It is also believed that the domination could be taken as the signal to evaluate as to how women were imposed on and deprived of their rights in the society.

The next parameter the researcher used to evaluate the status of women in the given society was the influence of gender on education. The researcher made an attempt to assess how gender made a negative impact on the success of women regarding education. Gender as the socially constructed norm of the society has exercised a significant influence in the participation of women in education. In the society

where patriarchy prevailed women were precluded from participating in education as a result of their femaleness. For this reason, the researcher endeavored to examine the extent of how gender has become an impediment for women in their participation in education.

The third parameter used to evaluate the status of women in the selected works of fiction is the division of labour in the society. According to feminists, the labour division is believed to be the foundation for the subordination of women in the society. Consequently the division was investigated as to how it brought about the subordination of women in the society.

By and large, the researcher made an effort to use the above elements or parameters in the process of developing the major arguments in the present research, as much as possible.

Chapter Four

4. Text Analysis

In this chapter of the research, the researcher made an attempt to make an analysis of the prominent features of feminism reflected in the selected texts. The selected texts are the novels written by two African women writers. The first novel to be analyzed is Nervous Conditions, written by the well-known Zimbabwean woman writer Tsitsi Dangarembga. In the novel many aspects of feminism are reflected. A number of feminist ideas are reflected that make the writer a feminist.

Some of the feminist aspects reflected through the novel are related to the following points: patriarchy, education, gender labor division and women's subordination. According to the researcher these are the prominent feminist features foregrounded in Dangarembga's novel Nervous Conditions.

The other novel the researcher attempted to analyze is the novel written by a well-known Senegalese writer, Mariama Ba. She is known for her novels that are marked by feminist views. Her novels are, So Long a Letter and The Scarlet Song. The researcher has made an attempt to analyze Mariama Ba's first novel- So Long a Letter because of the constraints of time and other factors.

In Mariama Ba's So Long a Letter, as Dangarembga's Nervous Conditions, some issues pertinent to the feminist views are involved. Some of the issues that are prominently discussed in So Long a Letter are believed to have relevance with Dangarembga's Nervous Conditions. The feminist points that are stressed in Ba's novel have relevance with Dangarembga's novel. Therefore, the researcher would like to make the

analysis of the two selected novels based on patriarchy, education, gender, and labour division and women's subordination. Before the analysis of the texts, synopsis of the two novels is presented below.

4.1 Synopsis of Nervous Conditions

The narrator by the name Tambu starts by narrating the death of her brother Nhamo. She explains that she was unfeeling at her brother's death for he had imposed on her in his life time not to pursue her education. She also states that she was discouraged by her parents not to pursue her education further. Tambu states that she got the opportunity to enter school soon after the death of her brother. Her brother's death turned out to be an opportunity for her emancipation to follow the western education. She discloses that she was strongly imposed by her brother so as not to pursue her education. Her brother, Nhamo, discouraged his sister saying that she would not be able to learn for the mere reason that she was a girl. For this reason, Tambu, expresses her joy at her brother's death for one of the people who strove to impede her from achieving her goal is removed out of her way.

Tambudazi also stated that she was discouraged from pursuing her education by her illiterate parents. They made a strong attempt to force their daughter to stay at home. However, she believed that her parents attempted to preclude her from continuing her education due to their lack of understanding the value of education. In addition, her uncle Babamukuro, used to encourage her brother, Nhamo, more than her, for the stereotypical belief that priority should be given for males. However, after her brother's death due to the absence of males in the family who could take over her dead brother's position she was made to pursue her education. As a result, understanding her interest in education, her uncle Babamukuru made her join school. Tambu was forced to quit her school because of the financial challenge she encountered and

because of her uncle's move to overseas with his family for further education.

Tambu had made an effort to secure money sufficient for the school fee. She had produced maize in a small plot of land and had sold it. The money she obtained by selling the sack of corn enabled her to pay for her school fees.

Her uncle, Babamukuru, returned from abroad after attending his higher education. His wife, Maiguru, also got the opportunity to attend her postgraduate studies along with her husband. Babamukuru and his wife had two children. The eldest son was Chido and the younger daughter was Nyasha. After Nhamo's death Babamukuru took his brother's daughter with him and made her take up the school which she quitted because of the challenge she encountered. Tambu was happy for she was able to resume her education with her uncle's assistance. She left her village and joined the mission school headed by her uncle, Babamukuru.

Babamukuru's daughter, Nyasha, is an intelligent student. As she lived abroad with her parents, she developed some peculiar character that was unsuitable to her original country. Though she is intelligent, she displays the behavior which is strange to the norm of her society. Nyasha has the habit of doing things her own way and these made her misunderstood by her father who was strict in keeping the norm of the society. As a result, Nyasha and her father were engaged in a continual conflict. In contrast, Nyasha and Tambu became best friends helping each other in different circumstances. Nyasha because of her father's domination came to be depressed and began to neglect her school studies. On the other hand, Tambudazi, since she came across the influence of her parents and her brother from the beginning, resolved to endure all the circumstances that might hinder her future plan of education.

Babamukuru, because of his being authoritative and dictatorial in nature, not only imposes on his daughter but also his wife. His wife, Maiguru, though she was highly educated, was prevented by marriage to make the most out of herself. She was unable to use any opportunity for herself. Maiguru, though she was well-educated believed that she was subordinate to her husband.

Finally Nyasha as a result of her father's strict imposition, became unsuccessful and was unable to achieve her goals in education whereas Tambu made her way to college despite all the challenging circumstances set ahead to obstacle her future.

4.2 Patriarchy and language in Nervous conditions

In this section of the research, an attempt is made to explore how patriarchy was depicted in Nervous Conditions and how the characters in the novel reacted to it.

The issue of male domination is the central point in Dangarembga's novel- Nervous Conditions. As the researcher has attempted to elaborate in the review section, the issue of male domination is a long time structure that prevailed in the African society.

The patriarchal structure that prevailed in the society, is believed to have been countered by feminists that have appeared in different times. Feminists believe that patriarchy is the prime cause for the consideration of women as inferior. In Nervous Conditions, there are numerous instances where women are dominated by the patriarchal structure in the society. This pattern of the society was strongly refuted by some female characters like Tambu and Nyasha ; whereas some other female characters, such as, Babamukuru's wife, Maiguru and Lucia, have become the victims of the domination in different circumstances. The characters have also described the negative consequences of the domination thereby making a strong attempt to subvert it.

The patriarchal pattern is believed to have made women subservient in the society. This situation is reflected by different characters in the novel. The central character who has made a relentless effort in challenging the structure of male dominance is Tambudazi. She made an incessant and persistent effort to subvert the ruling pattern of patriarchy. The first instance of the prevalence of the male dominant structure is depicted through the character's opposition of having the access to education by her brother. Her brother reflects the notion that he should be given precedence in access to education rather than his sister. His claiming the priority to attend education can be taken as an instance of the prevalence of the patriarchal domination in the society.

Her brother's clear expression and contemptuous attitude towards his sister could be assumed as another indication of the male domination in the family of the central character and in the society at large. In the life time of her brother, he used to show disdainful outlook to his sister for the mere reason that he was pursuing his education at the time while she was forced to stay at home without education. This could be termed as an evidence of the prevailing situation of the patriarchal structure. In the family of Tambu, her parents used to expect their son to liberate them from poverty by taking up a decent profession after his education. Her parents expectation of their son to mitigate their financial challenges by giving less consideration to their daughter could also be assumed as the manifestation of the male domination in the society. The following paragraph could be taken as the description of the above situation:

Nhamo, if given the chance, my uncle said, would distinguish himself academically, at least sufficiently to enter a decent profession. With the money earned in this way, my uncle said, Nhamo would lift our branch of the family out of the squalor in which we were living. (4)

Women's having less expectation by their family to become the source of their financial assistance, is evidence to the existence of patriarchal rule in the society. In this instance, women are more expected to be domestic helpers of their parents than the financial providers of their family.

Tambu's restriction by her parents to remain working in the field and her brother's refusal to help in the field is another instance of her brother's depiction of superiority over her which is believed to have emanated from the patriarchal norm in the society. The following paragraph explains Nhamo's degrading outlook about his sister:

Helping in the field or with the livestock or the firewood, any of the tasks he used to do willingly before he went to the mission, became a bad joke.(7)

Nhamo's reluctance to help in the field after he went to the Mission School, shows his patronizing attitude to his sister. The treatment of his sister in an offensive condescending way is believed to be the negative consequence of the pattern that considers women as inferior. The following paragraph from the novel indicates how he mistreats and dominates his sister.

Knowing that he did not need help, that he only wanted to demonstrate to us and himself that he had the power, the authority to make us do things for him, I hated fetching my brother's luggage. (10)

The other character through whom the patriarchal norm became apparent was Babamukuru. He is a character typical of the signification of the patriarchal norm in the society Babamukuru is a highly authoritative character who displays a governing power over the members of his family. The following paragraph describes the character's unquestioned authoritative power.

Babamukuru was always impressive when he made these speeches of his. He was a rigid, imposing perfectionist, steely enough in character to function in the puritanical way that he expected, or rather insisted, that the rest of the world should function. (88)

The above description of the character indicates his commanding nature which is typical of the patriarchal society.

Babamukuru is best described as the most authoritative person who wants others do things in his own way. The character he displays to his wife and children could be taken as an instance of his dominating nature. The continual conflict between him and his daughter Nyasha arises from the tendency of his being rigid and his imposition on others to do things in the way he wants. The following words of Nyasha (his daughter) illustrates this point:

It is the same every where. But he has no right to treat me like that, as though I am water to be poured wherever he wants. I know I should trust and obey and all that, but really he has not the right. (121)

In the above paragraph Babamukuru's daughter, Nyasha, protests that she has the right to do things her own way. Though the norm of male domination appears to be widespread in almost every part of the worlds, she makes it clear that she would like to obey her father without being imposed to do things at others disposal..

The other instance where the effect of male domination is revealed was between Babamukuru and his wife, Maiguru, though his wife was equal in educational level to her husband. She was deprived by marriage of the things she wanted to do. The following paragraph proves the above fact:

I felt sorry for Maiguru because she could not use the money she earned for her own purposes and had been prevented by marriage from doing the things she wanted to do (103)

The narrator Tambu states that, Maiguru, became subject of her husband though she was well educated to understand patriarchal situation that had deterred her from doing the things she wanted to do.

The above descriptions are instances of the prevalence of male domination in the given society. The narrator implies that the patriarchal structure was almost rampant every where at least in the areas where she was able to observe. She stated that women had become victims of their femaleness in places where male domination prevailed. For this reason, she recommends that women should insist to submit themselves to the pattern that makes them subordinates in the society. Therefore the result is 'nervous conditions' which ruins their life.

4.3 The Effect of Gender on Education in Nervous conditions

This section offers an assessment of the relationship between gender and education based on the selected novel. It will strive to give an overview of how gender affected educational opportunity.

Gender is believed to have an impact on the educational opportunity of citizens in the society where male domination prevails. The socially constructed norm introduces a hierarchical relation between men and women for the mere reason of their biological sex. Many women are believed to have lost educational opportunity because of the socially constructed norm which limits their position according to their biological sex.

With regard to Dangarembga's novel Nervous Conditions, many female characters have become victims of being denied educational opportunities in connection with their biological sex. Gender appears to have played a profound role in determining the destiny of women in

education. The novel reveals that women are deterred from pursuing in education owing to the effect of gender. Some female characters depicted in the novel have become the victim of the impact of gender, while some male characters are portrayed imposing on the female characters and denying them educational opportunity.

Among the female characters who have incurred an obstacle to pursue her education was the heroine, Tambudazi. Tambudazi passes through a number of challenges and inconveniences in pursuing her education further. Though she had a profound interest to continue her education, the members of her family have seriously intervened to obstruct her efforts. The parents of the heroine are the principal figures who endeavor to hold her back with the intention that education would be of no avail for her. The following words of the heroines further illustrate this point:

Can you cook books and feed them to your husband? Stay at home with your mother. Learn to cook and clean. Grow vegetables. (15)

The above words of her father are expressed with the clear intention to impede his daughter from her goal to achieve in education. Her father believes that women should stay at home with the speculation that she will not succeed in education. It is clear that the father's notion originated from the stereotypical attitude that restricts women in the male dominant society. The father emphasized that the woman's primary preoccupation was to become a helpmate to her husband and pre occupied with the household activities. This attitude could be termed as an instance of gender having a considerable influence in determining the educational destiny of women.

The heroine complained to her mother that her father informed her that she did not need to be educated. Her mother however, had the same notion as her father that women do not have the power to decide things



by themselves. She made things clear to her daughter that womanhood has got to do with a number of intricacies so that she had no authority to decide to help daughter to pursue her education. The following passage reflects the above attitude of the heroine's mother.

This business of womanhood is a burden, she said. How could it be? Aren't we the ones who bear children? when it is like that you can't just decide today I want to do this tomorrow I want to do that, the next day I want to be educated. (16).

Tambu's brother influence on her not to continue her education further is another instance of hindrance she encountered because of her femaleness. Her brother constantly strove to persuade her that she would never be successful in her education because of her being a girl. He had the conviction that women would not be effective in the area of education for the mere reason of their biological sex. The following conversation between the heroine (Tambu) and her brother (Nhamo) substantiates the above point:

But I want to go to school,
Wanting won't help
Why not?

It is the same everywhere. Because you are a girl. It was out. (21)

The above extract indicates the heroine's brother stereotypical attitude about her inability to attend education though she had the interest to pursue her education further. Nhamo could be taken as typical person who had the outlook that women are unable to be successful in education.

The heroine comes to complain that the interests of women were considered as a secondary importance in her family. She felt that women's feelings are assumed insignificant and not worth listening to. The following complaint of the heroine illustrates the point:

The needs and sensibilities of the women in my family were not considered a priority or even legitimate (12)

The heroine made a strong effort to scrape some money to enable her to pay for her school fees. However, her parents were pessimistic of her being successful whatsoever. The following statement of the heroine's mother proves the above information.

Do you think I have not told her her efforts will come to nothing? (25)

Tambu was able to meet her school fee by the money she secured by selling a small sack of maize she produced in her small plot of land. However, her father came over to school and declared that the money belongs to him as long as little Tambu belonged to him. He earnestly told the school officials to give him the money back. This is an instance of the traditional attitude that women are considered as source of income before they are given in marriage. The following quotation illustrates this:

Have you ever heard of a woman who remains in her father's house? Growled my father. She will meet a young man and I will have lost every thing. (30)

However, the school officials suggested that to be able to send one's daughter to school is one way of investment. The other instance of the effect of gender is shown on Tambu's father's pleading with her to renounce her tendencies which he believes unnatural with regard to females. The following paragraph can reveal this:

My father called me aside to implore me to curb my unnatural inclinations. It was natural for me to stay at home and prepare for the home coming (34)

Her father believed that it was natural for a girl to stay at home and prepare for the home coming. This is the attitude that retards women's development and forces them to be confined to the home.

The other character who becomes a victim of her femaleness as a result, came to fail in her educational progress is Nyasha. This character had a

unique intelligence and a peculiar character. Nyasha was strongly dominated by her father, Babamukuru, to behave in the way he wanted her to behave. Nyasha was frustrated and neglected her education because of her father's domination.

Nyasha was strongly discouraged and came to depart herself because of her father's incessant impact on her to live in accordance with the norm of the society. Nyasha's deprivation to exercise her personal right drives her into seclusion and failure in her educational performance. The following passage illustrates this aspect:

Nyasha's exuberant nature suffered under these chilly conditions and even Maiguru sometimes observed. /104/

These main characters in the novel have encountered an obstacle to achieve their goal in their education due to the prevalence of the male domination in the society. However, one of the characters (i.e. Tambu) persisted and resisted the influence of the domination and became successful in her education. While the other character (i.e. Nyasha) lost her desire for education due to her inability to sustain the ruling nature of her father which was a typical representative of male dominant society.

4.4 Labor Division and Women's Subordination in Nervous Conditions

In this section an attempt is made to evaluate the correlation between labor division and women's subordination. It will be examined how labor division brought about women's subordination as reflected in the novel.

The gender-based division of labour is also described in Dangarembaga's novel. There are female characters who have become victims of the division thereby considered subordinates in the society. One of the characters who was victimized by the division of labour in the male

dominant society was the heroine, Tambudazi herself. The character was forced by the members of her own family who zealously guarded the norms of their patriarchal society.

The heroine was compelled to be engaged in the household activities while she had a strong interest in education. Her parents used to persuade her to limit herself to the household chores instead of pursuing her education. The labor division prevailing in the society has subjected women for more subordination. For instance the heroine's parental persuasion to remain at home evidently implied women's being subservient in the society. In the following extract the heroine's complaints to her mother of being coerced to remain at home is illustrated:

He says I must learn to be a good wife. Look at Maiguru, I continued, unaware how viciously. She is a better wife than you! (16)

The heroine's compulsion to learn to be a good wife rather than being educated suggests the woman's limitation to some specific activities that are assumed feminine in the society.

The other instance which signifies the existence of labor division in the society is the heroine's brother's (Nhamo) claim to go to school for himself while he imposes his sister to engage herself to help in the field. The following passage substantiates the observation.

After the planting, after the crop had germinated, all through the rain season until the plants were tall and sturdy, we weeded, using our hands and our hoes. (6).

Nhamo's escapist tendency to help in the field and his notion of restricting such activities to women implies his consideration of women as subordinates or dependents.

The gender-based labor division evidently has resulted in woman to be dependent on her husband. The woman will be engaged as a home-maker while the husband comes to be a provider.

This statement could be substantiated through the relationship between the heroine's mother and father. The mother is engaged in the household activities while the father is engaged in the outdoor activities striving to provide to the family. The following passage could be mentioned as the mother's notion that the relationship between wife and husband should always remain as home-maker and provider:

And you think you are so different, so much better than the rest of us? Accept your lot and enjoy what you can of it. (20)

Maiguru is also another female character in the novel who was obliged to be confined to the household activities while her husband was considered the provider of the family. In the following passage the narrator discloses her being ashamed of Maiguru for her being deprived of the opportunity to utilize her high educational qualifications for her own benefit:

Personally, I thought it was a great shame that Maiguru had been deprived of the opportunity to make the most of herself, even if she had accepted that deprivation, I was all for people being given opportunities (103)

The character's being deprived of making the most of herself by marriage could be cited as the indication for the subordination of women. As she was supposed to be subordinate to her husband, she was unable to do the things that she was interested to do. The following passage from the novel illustrates the above as well:

I felt sorry for Maiguru because she could not use the money she earned for her own purposes and had been prevented by marriage from doing the things she wanted to do (103)



The expected behaviors set by the culture of the society should be met by women. They are expected to do what the culture and the norm of the society expect of them. All such things that limit women to the home have sprung from the influence of labor division determined by patriarchy.

Besides, women are maltreated and made victims of their femaleness. They are made to be subordinate because of the socially constructed attitude on biological sex. For instance the prominent character Nyasha counters her father's mistreatment in the following way:

Babamukuru condemning Nyasha to whoredom, making her a victim of her femaleness, just as I had felt victimized at home in the days when Nhamo went to school and grew my maize. The victimization I saw was universal. It did not depend on poverty, on lack of education or on tradition.

(118)

The heroine who narrates the story also explains in the above passage that the gender based treatment of women is not unique to a certain area. She puts it that it is universal. She also states that the victimization is not based on poverty, on lack of education or on tradition and implies that the victimization has risen from the stereotypical outlook towards women as inferior because of their femaleness .

As a result, gender has exerted a profound influence on women preventing them from participating in the activities socially marked out for men. The women characters argue that gender should not deter women to be engaged in any activity as far as they have the capacity to work. The heroine is forced by her parents in order not to pursue her education and further more not to be engaged in the positions that she was interested in.

The division of labor due to gender can be taken as the root for the subordination of women. Women are assumed as inferior for the fact that they are limited to the home by the imposition of tradition. Hence, the gender based labor division has made a significant contribution to the subordination of women. Therefore, since the labor division was the root cause for the subordination, women should strive to avoid the gender-based labor division as the narrator implies on several occasions.

4.5 Synopsis of Mariama Ba's So Long a Letter

Mariama Ba's novel So Long a Letter begins with the heroine Mrs. Ramatoulaye's reply letter to her friend Asiato. She narrates from memory of the experiences she had gone through in her childhood with her friend. She states that they had a long time friendship that had left an indelible mark in the mind of the heroine, Ramatoulaye. They both had been together in the ups and downs of life in their forty years of friendship.

Asiato, to whom she is addressing her letter, had encountered divorce sometimes before. But now, Ramatoulaye, the protagonist in the novel, became a widow. The death of her husband is the prime reason behind writing back the letter in reply to her friend's letter.

The heroine lost her husband due to his heart failure. He encountered a serious heart attack while he was on duty in his office. The heroine who is the wife of the deceased tries to see things in retrospect. She tries to recollect the happy days they had passed in their married life. The heroine's in deep in sorrow with the unexpected death of her husband. She is so distressed by his death and anxious of what is going to happen to her family.

During his life time, the heroine's husband, had married a second wife who was young. The heroine seems to be irritated by her husband's second marriage. She complains that the second wife was favored more

than her, though she had a thirty years marriage relationship with the deceased husband. She was indignant at the second family of her deceased husband and at him for being partial towards the second wife.

The heroine explains that the second wife of the deceased was more beneficiary than herself. She states that she was deserted and despised and deliberately made her unable to avail herself of the wedlock. In this regard, the heroine complains that injustice was done to her.

Binetou, the second wife of the deceased, claims to be an heir of the share of the possession of the deceased. However, the heroine who is the first wife of the deceased was indignant towards the second wife for claiming a share in the property of the deceased. Besides, the brother of the deceased wants to marry the heroine without her willingness. Owing to this, the heroine strongly denounces the unjust situation thrust upon her.

The protagonist constantly questions as to why her husband had to marry a second wife. She tries to state that her husband had made a serious mistake in having a second marriage. She goes on explaining that her husband made a moral damage to her by his second marriage. Therefore, she complains that her husband was so irresponsible to have a second marriage.

Ramatolaye's husband had his higher education in France. She yearned to see him back after completing his education. As Ramatoulaye had fallen in love with him, suspected him of deserting her. She was suspicious of him that he had an affair with a white woman while attending his education overseas.

Ramatolaye hopes to see the emancipation of women in Senegal, strives to break the bondage of tradition that hold them behind. She looks ahead to women to emancipate themselves from the superstition that

prevailed in the society, and from some old customs. She also strives for the promotion of women.

The heroine says that she was happy in her marriage with her husband. However, she expresses her remorse of having been cheated by her husband. She complains that her husband indulged in a polygamous life. She speaks with a strong indignation that her beloved husband married another woman and left her. She openly expresses her resentment and vehement indignation at this unfair situation. She constantly questions as to why her husband had thought of marrying a second wife. She asserts that his second marriage was by no means justifiable and reasonable. She also expounds that she became a victim of this unjust situation and hopes to start a new life.

Because of her husband's desertion, her daughter suggests to her mother to divorce her husband, as her husband rejected both her and her mother.

The second wife of the deceased was happy to marry an old man of great wealth. However, the first wife is unable to decide what to do after her thirty years of married life with her husband and after giving birth to twelve children by him.

She states that she was deserted as a result of her husband's second marriage. She narrates in a strong remorseful manner that she is now left abandoned and forced to lead a solitary life. She promises to herself to be ready to endure all the challenges coming up because of her husband and his death.

On the other hand, the heroine's best friend Aissatou had encountered a similar experience of betrayal in her marriage by her husband. The heroine and her friend Aissatou therefore share experiences that are similar yet they react differently. The writer therefore leaves it for the reader to decide who is right in their actions and who is not.

4.6 Patriarchy in So Long a Letter

The male dominance or patriarchy is the central issue in Mariama Ba's So Long a Letter. It is emphasized in the novel that women are totally dominated and considered inferior in the society. The novel also describes in detail how women are dominated deprived of their rights in the society, cheated and deserted by their husbands who are polygamous.

The novel stresses the patriarchal situation that left women subordinate to men in the society. It especially narrates the heroine's agonizing experience in her marriage. The heroine's husband married a second wife and as a result the heroine is deeply distressed by the situation. The heroine complains that she was abandoned and exposed to various problems because of her husband's second marriage. In the following extract the heroine expresses her indignation because of her husband's second marriage:

His abandonment of his first family was the outcome of the choice of a new life. He rejected us. He mapped out his future without taking our existence into account. (9)

The patriarchal structure that prevailed in the society made women unable to avail of the opportunities available in the society. The society gave more opportunities to the males in every walk of life. As a result, the women were stripped of the opportunities they should get in the society. Patriarchy appears to be strong in the society where the heroine lives in particular. She also expresses that patriarchy is strongly dominant in many parts of Africa in general. The following passage from the novel reveals this fact:

And to think that I loved this man passionately, to think that I gave him thirty years of my life, to think that twelve

times over I carried his child. The addition of a rival to my life was not enough for him. In loving someone else, he burned his past, both morally and materially he dared to commit such an act of disavowal. (P.12)

The male dominant situation in the society resulted in various consequences in the society. The male domination left women to remain at home and become subservient to men. The women who were forced to remain at home were deprived of the opportunity that the men had. The males had the educational opportunity and were appointed in different positions. The women had been deprived of various opportunities that the males usually had in the society. For instance the heroine complains that women were exposed to exploitation through polygamous life of men in the society. In the following quotation the heroine express her distress:

From then on, my life changed, I had prepared myself for equal sharing, according to the precepts of Islam concerning polygamous life. I was left with empty hands. (46)

The heroine in Mariama Ba's, So Long a Letter, expresses her distress that she was dispossessed of her possessions by the second wife of her husband. The second wife claims to share the wealth of the husband even after his death. As a result the first wife was totally depressed by the situation. She was deeply sorrowful of the case that she was stripped of her material possession.

The atmosphere of the male dominance strongly restrained women from participating in the areas of their interest. They merely became dependent on men for the fact that they were confined to home without any freedom to seek employment outside.

The heroine complains that both she and the second wife were given unequal consideration by the relatives of their husband even after his death. The first wife feels she was disregarded or disdained by the

relatives of her husband. She also argues that she deserved to be given more consideration for the fact that she had been his wife for about thirty years and gave birth to twelve children for him. The following paragraph substantiates this point:

Our sisters in-law give equal consideration to thirty years and five years of married life. With the same ease and the same words, they celebrate twelve maternities and three (.4)

The life of women in every aspect is clearly depicted in the novel. The protagonist expresses her remorse that the second wife benefited in becoming an heir of the property of their husband.

In general the issue of patriarchal structures are vividly described and refuted in Mariama Ba's So Long a Letter through the life of the central character. The character has shown how women are marginalized and suggests how to subvert the situation that dominates them.

4.7 Labor Division and women's Subordination in Mariama Ba's So Long a Letter

The issue of labor division based on gender is mentioned in many parts of Mariama Ba's novel. As stated in the literature review, the gender based labor division is the foundation of patriarchal structure.

The heroine in the novel has revealed her strength in taking part in the occupation of a teacher already designed for males by the society. Women are not expected to work in the areas designed for males. Hence, the heroine has made an attempt to break the socially constructed norm that subordinates women. The following paragraph shows that the heroine accomplished an activity primarily assigned to males.

As I am a school teacher on friendly terms with the pupils' parents, and as I have been Modou's companion for thirty years, I receive the greater share of many and many envelopes. (p. 6)

From the above passage we can understand that the heroine is a school teacher unlike many women in the developing countries. Many women in Africa are not fortunate enough to have education. As a result, they are obliged to remain at home and become housewives.

The gender based division of labor is one of the instruments which strengthens the patriarchal structure in the society. It has played a central role in intensifying the male domination in the system. It has its own significant role in subjugating women and confining them to the home. The division has played a pivotal role in redoubling the exploitation of women for many reasons.

The subordination of women can be manifested in different aspects other than the labor division that primarily reflect women's subordination. For instance, as stated in the novel women are made to sit in a separate place according to the ordinances of their religion. The separate area allotted to women implies that they are given a subordinate area. The following quotation proves this fact :

In the women's corner, nothing but noise, resonant laughter loud talk, hand slaps, strident exclamations. Friends who have not seen each other for a long time hug each other noisily. (6)

The above paragraph from the novel suggests that women are to sit in a separate place in accordance with the patriarchal tradition of the society. This makes its own contribution to the subordination of women. It deters women from having involvement in different positions in the community.

Women are considered inferior and of secondary importance by the patriarchal society and the heroine in this particular novel endeavored to articulate the detrimental effect of this situation. In the following paragraph the heroine expresses her indignation or resentment at this situation.

The misery that was the lot of these women was rolled back with the invasion of the new happiness that changed their lives, filled out their cheeks, brightened their eyes. (40)

In essence, the above observation shows that women are doomed to live in a miserable conditions as they are considered inferior. Women's oppression and their being limited to the home have strongly contributed to their subordination.

The heroine's husband indulged in a second marriage for he was a man of great wealth. His marriage indicates that he was proud of his wealth and free to do whatever he like with his money.

The heroine's exposure to a public life has made her able to discern the intricate problems of women in the society. Her being a school-teacher has enabled her to pinpoint the evil that prevailed in the society. She is able to recognize how women become inferior subjects in the society. Her being the victim of her husband's desertion, has taught her a lesson that there are a number of women who have become victims of the patriarchal tradition in her country and in Africa in general.

However the heroine was strong enough to withstand the patriarchal situation prevailing in her society because of her being educated. She was able to reveal the subordination of women in every corner of life in the society. Hence, it is believed that the labor- division that had firmly established in the society, became the cornerstone to result in the subordination of women. However, the heroine implies the fact that the participation of women in every areas of life will definitely pave the way for the elimination of the attitude that renders a secondary position to women. Their being encouraged to take part in all walks of life and motivated for education would ultimately do away with the subordination of women. She also exhorts women to look to a bright new future that breaks the social forces that undermines women .

4.8 Women and Education in Nervous Conditions and So Long a Letter

In this section the researcher would like to offer a short overview of how education influenced the life of the major characters in the two selected novels- Nervous Conditions and So Long a Letter.

Education has been the stumbling block keeping women from attaining equal status in society, separating them from their male counterparts. It has also been the door to this elusive dream of equality. Before women gained the right and privilege of higher education they were believed to be lower- class citizens.

Without education to empower women, many believed that they should not hold the power to influence politics or even make decisions about their own property. Women were stripped off their dignity and privileges by men of the community and even by their own parents and husbands. However, in the two novels the central characters were finally able to break free from these social constraints through education.

In connection with the selected novels, the major characters have made a strong attempt to attain education. For instance, one of the major characters in Nervous Conditions. Tambu, was distressed over the fact that she was set apart from the world by education. She wanted to be educated, and through this knowledge wanted to gain a sense of self-worth and the power to change history. She understood that education was the foundation to empower women. She knew that the struggle for women's education had been a battle ground that had not yet reached its highest level. She made an ardent struggle to break the tradition that restrained her from attaining education. She objected to be submissive to the norm that impeded her from achieving her goal in education. She refused to conform to the norm that kept her uneducated through her life. She denounced the social balance that kept women as subordinates

and subservient in the society. She also refuted the notion that receiving education was considered an act of “nonconformity.” She countered the preordained place in society that restrained women to stay at home. She strove to fight back the notion that kept women entangled with their traditional status. She fought to end the discrimination based on sex towards any educational opportunity in the society.

The character has made a strong resistance against all the members of the family, and the society who discouraged her from achieving her goal of higher education. She chose to achieve her goal by enduring all the forces of her environment that endeavored to hamper her vision of education.

The character has also made a profound effort to impact the attitudes of her family through education. She made a persistent unyielding struggle to influence her family and the society at large to change their economic and social challenges through education. She attempted to teach them that education was the only instrument that would bring about a significant social change.

In the second novel selected for this research, So Long a Letter, the central character has stressed the importance of change needed to eliminate harmful traditions that impeded the development of women. The character has striven to struggle by revealing the social issues that have a detrimental effect to the progress of women in the society at large.

The characters have persistently suggested the importance of change needed in the society. They endeavored to comment that women should strive to transform the societal norm that hinders them from participating in education. They made a strong struggle to challenge the norm that kept them to stay in the backward tradition and live up to the traditional norm. The characters have resisted the tradition that deterred them to improve their life. They brought to light the harmful traditions

that became setback to themselves and they sacrificed in resisting social norms that deterred women from development. Hence the characters have become role models to many women and paved the way for transformation. The characters have demonstrated that change will come only when every part of the society makes an incessant effort to challenge the situation that prevents women from changing themselves.

Thus the two novels under study illustrate clearly how women in general and those in Africa are dominated by patriarchy, how they are deprived of educational opportunities, how the discriminating gender division of labour suppressed them or how they have been made subordinate to men. Nevertheless, the two central characters in these two novels have proved by their courage, perseverance and unswerving efforts succeed in education and showed that education is immediate instrument that can liberate women and empower them to become equal to men in society.

Chapter Five

Conclusion

In this research, more or less, an attempt has been made by the researcher to depict some of the prominent features of feminist aspects as reflected in the novels selected for this particular research. As feminists argued, the prevalence of gender inequality has resulted in the domination of one biological sex over the other. It was shown that women became the victim of the male domination in the society where the patriarchal structure prevails. As a result, they were precluded from having equal opportunity in the society because of the unbalanced social forces that benefit one part of the society at the expense of the other. The unequal treatment of gender has become a consequence for the feminists to refute and propose hypothesis to fight the situation. They endeavored to propose various solutions to mitigate the problem that impedes the development of women.

Feminists have undertaken an incessant effort to subvert the situation that renders a secondary place in the in the society and ,as a result, striven to encourage women to enhance their self-assertion. They have prominently used literature as an instrument to reflect the existing reality, to persuade and change the attitude of people to transform their negative attitude towards women. Feminists raise various spectrums of ideas, having the patriarchal structure as the foundation for the inception of feminist theories. They basically contradict the patriarchal structure that considers women as inferior and allows men to occupy primary positions in society.

The issue of male domination was cited as the primary factor for feminists to refute the structural strata prevailed in the society. The male domination have given women a secondary place and resulted in assigning women an inferior consideration by the society. It also

contributed to the to the subjugated position and a secondary place given to women. Hence, it is proved that the structure has made women to be dependents in the society.

Women were forfeited their right to have equal opportunity in the society. Such inequality have risen from the unbalanced social forces that prevail in the society. The unequal position has deterred women from the opportunities that their male counterparts enjoy in the society. For instance, in the patriarchal society women were prevented from participating in education like their male counterparts. This precluded them from having the educational opportunity because of the negative attitude towards women. The researcher in his analysis of the novels has made an endeavor to show how they were prevented from having the opportunity unlike their male counterparts in the society.

The division of labor in the society is another instance that paved the way for the subordination of women in the society .Women's being enforced to stay at home and engaged in the household activities while their males counterparts participate in the out- door activities implies the gender division of labor existing in the society. This division is the foundation for the patriarchal structure prevailing in the society. Furthermore, the characters depicted in the novels selected for the study made an effort to subvert the patriarchal situation that prevailed in the society while some character have remained a victim of the male domination.

The main characters in the two novels opposed the notion that restricted women to helping around the home. They endeavored to explain audaciously that they should be given equal opportunities with their male counterparts. They constantly raised the issues that restrains women to inferior positions and prevents them from having equal opportunities in every area of life. In different places in the novels they

attempted to communicate as to why women are put to an unfair situation in the society. In general the two main characters in the novels underlined the fact that women should strive to emancipate themselves from all the social forces that prohibit them from equally participating in all opportunities. They stressed that it is only through education that women would be able to break through the challenges that the culture imposes on them.

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DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, declare that this is my work and that all sources of material used for this have been duly acknowledged.

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