

**SUBVERTING THE MONOLITH: A
POSTCOLONIAL FEMINIST STUDY OF
SELECTED SRI LANKAN FICTION**

BY

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**Subverting the Monolith: A Postcolonial Feminist Study of
Selected Sri Lankan Fiction**

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ABSTRACT

Title: Subverting the Monolith: A Postcolonial Feminist Study of Selected Sri Lankan Fiction

This dissertation is a reading of two Sri Lankan novels: *Cinnamon Gardens* (1998) and *A Disobedient Girl* (2009). This project rests on the premise that the western feminists categorize the third world women as a monolithic entity and consider them as other. Both the selected texts provide ample amount of space to examine the rejection of universalism and binaristic hierarchies along with exploration into the representation of the indigenous women by Sri Lankan authors. Postcolonial feminism or the 'Third World feminism' originated as a critique of mainstreams in the western feminist discourse. It investigated the portrayal of women in the literature and society of the colonized countries as marginalized and oppressed, such that they are considered as inferior beings. Therefore, this research contests the totalization and the universalization of western colonial discourse by studying the unique female experiences in the selected novels. To investigate this, Mohanty's essay "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourse" (1984) serves as the main theoretical lens. The major dynamics of the postcolonial feminist stance, studied in this research are: i) The representation of the third world as "monolithic universal image." ii) The representation of the indigenous women by Sri Lankan authors to fight the binary of 'Other.' These two major objectives of this research aid to subvert the monolith assumptions set by some western feminists for the third world women of color (women specifically belonging to areas like India, Bengal, Sri Lanka, Indonesia etc). The novels, *Cinnamon Gardens* (1998) and *A Disobedient Girl* (2009) bring to light the female characters who try to resist and break the colonial and patriarchal imposed dynamics of silencing and suppressing women in the Sri Lankan society. The findings reveal that the novelists have realistically given voice and visibility to the idea of the third world Sri Lankan woman as headstrong, determined, educated, and rational. Thus, this research has problematized the marginalization of the third world brown women at the hand of those western white feminists, who manipulate the women in the third world. Moreover, both writers, Shyam Selvadurai and Ru Freeman, through their novels, depict the

unconventional journey of struggle and empowerment of the Sri Lankan women within their society and norms, howsoever, tyrannical the circumstances may be.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<i>CG</i>	<i>Cinnamon Gardens</i>
<i>ADG</i>	<i>A Disobedient Girl</i>

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my late Dad for his love, endless support and encouragement.
Dad you are not away but in my every breath.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

“If the women of a country are slaves, the men can never be free.” (D. S. Vithanage 4)

This phrase was quoted by the editorial of the *Voice of Women*, a Sri Lankan magazine in 1980 and has been cited in “The Gender Paradox in Sri Lanka” published in 2015. The essence of the above quoted words follows the idea leading to condemnation of the segregation and the insignificance of women in a patriarchal society. The representation of gender is very critical in any society. Women are rendered as a weaker sex and are mostly portrayed as victims and marginalized beings. This gender construct of females in literature gives them a conventional role where they are seen following the traditions and are subservient to patriarchy. With the increase in modernized ways of living and change in the cosmopolitan world, the women have taken up tasks which are masculine in nature and are shedding off the shackles of traditional roles attached to them.

1.1 Background

The long history of prejudices that existed throughout the world in accordance with social and the cultural affairs, led to the initiation of the suffrage movement of the 1940s and subsequent feminist movement in the 1960s and 70s in the West. Feminism is an ideological, political, and social movement with the aim of bringing equal rights to women. This feminist movement led to the emergence of women writers. Subsequently, the field of gynocriticism was developed which promoted the idea that male writers cannot fully understand and represent women in their works. Feminists started reexamining the gender, sex, race, and even language in cultural and literary discourses (Freedman n.p). In short, feminism promoted the reevaluation of norms and set conventions that aimed to look down upon women and led to the efforts that gave women the wings of freedom.

Western literature is categorically rendered as a canon literature throughout the world and is held worthy of being the most authentic source to confront and shed light upon the ideas of patriarchy and gender discrimination. This representation of the west along with the inclusion and acceptance of the third world to this dimension deprives the third

world of its true representation. Hence, western discourse snatches power and agency out of the hands of the third world countries. Consequently, they are left at the mercy of western discourse to define them. In order to resist and fight back such representation, postcolonial literature emerged.

1.2 Postcolonialism

According to Boehmer, postcolonial writing examines the colonial relationship and is set to resist the demeaning colonial perspectives. Decolonization hence demanded a complete overhaul and a new beginning to the central meaning that defined subjects of colonialism and shaped their society along with their culture. Postcolonial literature is deeply marked by cultural segregation and divides created by the empire (Boehmer n.p). This divide created the difference on the basis of which postcolonial theory originated. This divide led to the origin of postcolonial theory and let people of various cultures to identify themselves as their true selves by suppressing the universalism imposed on them by the colonial powers.

Postcolonialism as a term refers to the concept of resisting colonial powers and their discourses that tend to shape the cultures and ideologies of the Other. Postcolonialism aims to subvert the distorted realities created by the colonial agents as a means to exercise their control on the colonized (Tyagi 45-46). Postcolonial discourse is concerned with the articulation of identity and reclaiming the past of the colonized people by making use of Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's notion of decolonizing the mind.

1.3 Postcolonialism and Feminism

Postcolonial literature emerged as a field of study when writers from the once colonized countries, known as the third world, started writing back to the empire. This led them to identify themselves and create their own space in the world of literature. This effort of the third world countries created some consciousness among them as they started to represent themselves in their own perspectives through their writings. The third world women were influenced by the western feminist movements but redesigned their concept of feminism as the western movements only defined the superiority of the west and marked the third world women as other and inferior. Therefore, these writings aided in bringing

forth the ideas and voices of the women who challenged the conventions set by the west. Postcolonial feminism thus intended to give women a platform to express their identity and value which was demeaned by the western feminists.

Postcolonial studies seemed to have engulfed the world like a storm during 1980's and hence is considered to be the most profound and contentious field of study with vast recognition in literary and culture studies. It is a field of supposedly endless debate and argument. This postcolonial literature investigates the clash of two cultures (Tavassoli and Mirzapour 68) which deals with the impression that how one culture empowers the other and deems itself superior to the other culture. Postcolonial study becomes critical of the difference in culture, social, political and religious factors of different nations and considers it of much significance while dealing with them (73). Homi K. Bhabha, in his essay, "The Postcolonial and the Postmodern: The Question of Agency," in *The Location of Culture* (1994), maintains that postcolonial perspectives emerge from the colonial testimony of third world countries and the discourses of minorities within the geopolitical division of East and West, North and South (171). The rational attempt of the postcolonial literature was to shed off the clouds of the western powers. As postcolonial literature emerged from the third world, therefore, it talked about the issue of difference and pondered upon the misrepresentations imposed on the minorities that were divided among the different regions of the east, west, north, and south geography.

During the postcolonial era, the status of women has preoccupied many critics and has occupied their attention. According to Bill Ashcroft, the postcolonial and feminist theory followed 'a path of convergent evolution' (Tavassoli and Mirzapour 67). Therefore, postcolonialism and feminism coincided at a point of interest that both patriarchy and imperialism exert domination and oppression over the subordinate classes i.e. women and colonized individuals. Postcolonial and feminist studies tend to resist the supremacy that means to marginalize and suppress indigenous societies. It emerged due to the vacancy and unavailability of the perspectives of women, marginalized communities, and racial varieties in the historical accounts and literary archives. Therefore, it would be helpful to build an understanding of postcolonialism together with feminism.

Postcolonial theory has its roots in the idea of difference. In feminist theory this difference is conventionally related to the three terms: “recognition, understanding and dialogue” (Ang 192). Spelman strikes the white feminists with the question that are the western feminists “willing to hear everything that they (the third world women) have to say” (192) or they just seem to be all ears only on the things that the white feminists want to hear. The difference is thus created through the idea of ‘us’ and ‘them’ leading to othering the third world women. The white western women seem unprepared to listen and hear to what the ‘other’ has to say and neglect their arguments by universalizing the judgments and idealizing the problems faced by the third world.

Feminist and postcolonial theory seem to struggle for a common cause i.e., resistance against the power aiding discriminatory actions, and hence, can be looked upon as the branches of a same tree. Neil Lazarus, a critic, educator, and a communications consultant, is of the opinion that, “Feminist theory and postcolonial theory are occupied with similar question of representation, voice, marginalization, and the relation between politics and literature” (201). Both feminist and the postcolonial theory present the possibilities to reconstruct the canon (the supreme universal discourse that overpowers women, colonized individuals, and those who are categorized as the Other). While adding to the debate of feminist and postcolonial theory, critics like Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin argue:

Feminist and post-colonial discourses both seek to reinstate the marginalized in the face of the dominant, and early feminist theory, like early nationalist post-colonial criticism, was concerned with inverting the structures of domination, substituting, for instance, a female tradition or traditions for a male-dominated canon. (249)

Postcolonial and feminist theory seem to converge at many points of commonality. The only difference where both diverge is the resistance which postcolonial feminist writers put up towards western feminists who seem to be otherizing the colonized postcolonial feminism as a monolithic representation.

Postcolonial feminism paved the way for women to occupy a stable status in society by replacing the patriarchal conventions used to demean women and induced such

traditions that supported the independence and authority of women in the male dominated society.

The task of the postcolonial theorist is to fill in the “absent colonized subject” (Tyagi 45) in the power discourse with the purpose of subverting the dominant status of the colonizer; whereas the task taken up by the postcolonial feminist is much more complicated. The postcolonial feminist theorist deals with “double colonization” (45), a term coined by Anna Rutherford and Kristen Holst Peterson, which includes a simultaneous oppression of women by colonization and patriarchy. Postcolonial feminism also brings into focus the white feminists who look down upon their indigenous counterparts. White feminists, in haste to voice apprehensions regarding women rights, have overlooked the racial, cultural, religious, and ethnic concerns (45) which play a significant role in the marginalization of third world women. Through their narrative, the white women tend to impose a model on women of colour and wear the image of the oppressor. The women of the so-called third world (because it is a well contested term), felt that their depiction was distorted and eccentric in the western model of feminism. It created a sense of realization among the third world women who felt the need to create their own narrative space which would help them in their identification. Therefore, the women of colour started a resistance against the western feminism and raised their voice to reflect their conception of the idea of feminism that suited them well.

1.4 Postcolonial Feminism

Postcolonial feminism is an entity which is inseparable from postcolonialism and directly takes influence from the political structures and forces attached to it. Despite the strong feminist stance being foregrounded, this postcolonial feminism brings forward the third world feminists who negotiate the political demands like nationalism, liberalism, eco-feminism, socialist feminism along with the challenges like patriarchy, rape, abuse, honour killings, dowry, deaths, domestic violence etc. (Young n.p). The focal point of postcolonial feminism is to highlight the struggles and efforts of the non-western feminists who are still fighting the colonial legacy which was patriarchal, institutional, economic, political and ideological in its nature.

The postcolonial feminist critique decenters the universalizing tendencies of the mainstream feminists who aim to misrepresent the non-western, non-white third world women. This theory has strong links with the indigenous movements and the position that women occupy in these countries (Gogoi and Handique 3). This study, therefore, contests the western hegemonic discourse and fetches agency to the woman of the third world in Sri Lankan fiction. Moreover, it aims to portray that the women in the third world have left behind the submissive and inferior character which the western feminists associate with them.

Postcolonial feminism challenges “traditional white western feminism for the latter’s women association with political liberation movements (Arasu 2).” Women around the world have very different histories with respect to their postcolonial inheritance, involving such experiences as imperial conquest, slavery, enforced migration and even genocide (2). Thus, postcolonial feminist debate for the rewriting of history based on the specific experiences of formerly colonized people and their struggles for survival. Postcolonial feminism not only questions the issues of patriarchy and oppression, it also examines the social inequalities which are embedded in the social, political, cultural and religious context (3). It also fights the marginalization that the West imposes on the East and is critical of western feminists’ view as it cannot allow women in the third world to develop a sense of self.

Postcolonial feminism, also known as third world feminism, was born out of the critique of western feminism which mainly is a white discourse. This type of feminism majorly brought the concerns and experiences of white American and European women to the platform. The history of colonialism in true words is the history of exploitation and mistreatment of the non-white people living in various non-western locales and who are regarded largely as the non-western others. Postcolonial feminism particularly argues that colonized women have been overlooked with respect to their social, racial, class and ethnic concerns and have been tagged under the western feminists’ habit to homogenize and universalize the third world women experiences (Mishra Raj Kumar 131). Two critics, Rajeswari Sunder Rajan and You-me Park, identify two key issues for ‘postcolonial feminism’- representation, and the questions of setting or locale. They argue that while

dealing with the issue of representation, the postcolonial feminist critics have confronted the idea of universal image of women along with the “reification of the third world difference” (131) which in short leads to the production of a “monolithic third world woman” (131). Alcoff, while presenting his ideas about representation, states that the act of speaking about and speaking for, both, are quite problematic and may lead to Spivak’s notion of subject construction and object construction. According to Alcoff, these constructions lead to othering and construction of knowledge is deemed problematic. He refers to it as the “crisis of representation” (Alcoff 100). The face value of feminist projects is to understand, reveal, challenge, and resist the power relations and discourses for the betterment of the lives of groups and individuals. Representation happens to be the vein of these projects. The question of speaking for others, according to Alcoff, is “crucially on the possibility of political effectivity” (102). Postcolonial feminism becomes critical of such representation and claims that the idea of representation is highly influenced by the political gains of the dominant discourse. One of the reasons behind the introduction of the postcolonial theory is to subvert such stereotypes which were originally formed to benefit the western colonial and imperial rhetoric. McLeod in *Beginning postcolonialism* (2000) argues the main reason that women of the third world countries had to form a separate movement was:

the assimilation of “Third World” women within Western feminist discourse suggests that Western feminism remains the primary means by which patriarchy, sexism and chauvinism are challenged. As objects of Western feminist analysis, “Third World” women are robbed of their agency. (McLeod 200)

Western literature is categorically rendered as a canon literature throughout the world and is held worthy of being the most authentic source to confront and shed light upon the ideas of patriarchy and gender discrimination. This representation of the west along with the inclusion and acceptance of the third world to this dimension deprives the third world of its true representation. Hence, postcolonialism and feminism theories intersect at a point where the western discourse seems to be snatching agency out of the hands of the third world countries which are then left at the mercy of the western dialogue to define them.

This idea brings forth the essence of postcolonial feminist theory that emerged to highlight the voice of the third world women.

Some important postcolonial feminist critics and writers are Sara Sulehri, Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Gayatri Spivak, and Trin T. Minha etc. These critics regard the third world women not as a homogenous and universal category, but distinct and separate entities divided from one another on the basis of their ethnic, religious, and cultural factors (Gogoi and Handique 2).

1.5 The Third World

The term “Third World” in the words of Chandra Talpade Mohanty is a non-European geographical area that constitutes the regions of Latin America, the Caribbean, Sub-Saharan Africa, South and South-east Asia, China, and South Africa. Along with this, the indigenous people in Black Latino, Asia, Australia, and U.S who link themselves with the third world countries are also included in this category (Mohanty, Russo and Torres 5).

Kum Kum Sangari claims that the phrase “Third World” does not only specify some geographical areas but refers to the imaginary places. According to Sangari, third world is an expression which is used by the West indiscriminately to refer to a vast group of places in order to unite their political, economic, and imaginary geography as an “underdeveloped terrain” (Sangari 271).

According to Cheryl Johnson-Odim, the third world refers to two connotations. Firstly, it relates to expression of exploited and under-developed entities like countries, regions, and continents. Secondly, it refers to the suppressed nationalities that migrate from these countries to the developed First World countries. He also presents some problems that are a source of conflict among first and the third world feminism and thus puts these two on a far edge from one another. He writes:

While it may be legitimately argued that there is no one school of thought on feminism; among First World feminists — who are not, after all, monolithic — there is still, among Third World women, a widely accepted perception that the

feminism emerging from white, middle-class Western women narrowly confines itself to a struggle against gender discrimination. (314-315)

Mohanty does not categorize the western feminists as monolithic but she contests only the totalizing tendencies of the western feminists that marginalize and consider the non-western as the other. This research also takes upon Mohanty's stance and undermines the totalizing tendencies of the western feminists towards the eastern women.

The third world idea, according to Ama Ata Aidoo, is mislabeling and misnaming the very existence of the people living in the so called third world countries. Aidoo remarks that, "the terms 'third world' and 'postcolonial' are a part of dominant societies' deliberate 'mislaming' of reality. 'Third' to Aidoo is a step close to failure, and she believes that acquiescing to these terms does not make them 'legitimate.' Aidoo finds "many grotesqueries and absurdities in the term Third World" (Katrak xii). For Aidoo, the term "third world" disregards and disrespects the people of these countries and such name given to them by the colonizers does not grant justice to these dominant societies struggling to progress and shun off the patriarchs that bound them to conventionality.

1.6 The Third World Women and Feminism

Women in the third world countries have endured a long period of suppression and choking of their voices under the colonial and patriarchal rule until some started resisting against these actions and raised voice for these women of color. An important critic in this field of postcolonial studies is Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. She is one of the influential critics of postcolonialism, feminism, deconstruction, and Marxism. She was a follower of Derrida and translated his works like the Preface of Derrida's "Of Grammatology" (1967). Spivak is very critical of western Eurocentric attitudes and claims that the knowledge about the third world is always constructed with economic and political interests of the West (V Praveen 48). Spivak's main concern is the cultural difference between the women in the first world and the women in the third world. Her famous essay, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (1988), also critiques the western thought and brings forth the ideas of double colonization on the women of the third world which maintains the fact that women in the colonies were colonized by the patriarchal and imperial ideologies that marginalized them in their own societies. Spivak, in some of her essays, replaces the word colonization by

imperialism to highlight the same agenda being followed in the present times. She writes in her essay:

Between patriarchy and imperialism, subject-constitution and object-formation, the figure of the woman disappears, not into a pristine nothingness, but a violent shuttling which is the displaced figuration of the 'third-world woman' caught between tradition and modernization. (Tavassoli and Mirzapour 70)

Spivak creates the image of the third world woman as lost and having no refined position; rather the third world woman who has just fetched herself out of the colonial rule seems to be caught again in the dichotomies of the patriarchy and imperial agenda that continues to overpower the third world countries. This deprives the third world woman of true representation and her control over her desires remains insignificant. Thus, the figure of the subaltern remains as voiceless and unheard as ever.

Presenting her critical stance in relation to postcolonial literature, Gayatri Spivak in *The Postcolonial Reader* (1995) refers that a liberating piece of writing or politics for one nation may become a colonizing agent for the other (250) and thus may lead to oppression and marginalization of the other. Hence, the Europeans on the basis of this principle created a discourse that defined their goodness over the colonized during the colonial regime.

Sara Suleri, a postcolonial feminist critic and writer, brings a new perspective to the Postcolonial theory. Suleri's autobiographical novel, *Meatless Days* (1989), brings onto stage her postcolonial feminist stance. When she mentions to one of her students in Yale University that there are no women in the third world, she critically highlights the status which women in the third world are conferred by those in power. Suleri critiques that it is the "discourse of convenience" (Bahri 199) from which the women of the third world are made absent and are silenced. In other words, this discourse of convenience becomes a custom and a tradition in that society. In a nutshell, the third world woman exist as only the product of language and is only revolving between the dialogues of those whose power, interests, and desires govern this discourse and therefore, the subaltern subject, the third world woman, disappears.

In the words of Chandra Talpade Mohanty, the third world woman is defined as an arbitrarily constructed image but nevertheless carries this image with it the “authorizing signature of the western humanist discourse” (Mohanty 19). Mohanty criticizes the idea of Third World Women and in order to avoid the discrimination depicted through the expression she has replaced it with the term “women of colour” (Mohanty 7). Furthermore, she adds that this narrative is the source of western hegemonic agenda over these countries. She regards their phrasing of Third world women as a singular monolithic universalized entity as a type of “discursive colonization” (51) that keeps on victimizing and enhancing the difference between the so-called first and third world.

Mohanty critically observes from the postcolonial perspective of feminism that the western feminists are at danger of defining the third world feminism by neglecting the “unique patriarchy” (Kara 851) and only focusing on the commonality of the biological sex. The western feminists fall short at understanding the differences of culture, religion, ethnic, and geographic divisions, and label all women under the domain of their cultural settings. The third world feminism, therefore, is in totality against such global application of commonality to all women in the world. Though, Simone De Beauvoir (1956), a white French feminist herself, argues it:

[O]ne is not born, but rather becomes, a woman. No biological, psychological, or economic fate determines the figure that the human female presents in society; it is civilization as a whole that produces this creature, intermediate between male and eunuch, which is described as feminine. (273)

The third world feminism thus looks upon the difference of culture and societies in which the women reside. Otherwise, if all women are viewed through the same frame, it classifies the women of the third world countries as passive, weak, irrational, irrelevant and uncivilized who are bound to familial traditions and necessities (Kara 852).

Third world feminism emerged as a reaction to the different waves of western feminism that demanded only western feminist rights and demeaned the status of the women in the east i.e., third world women/ women of colour. The western feminist movement was a self-absorbed, constricting, and exclusionary movement which was put in motion by the white middle-class women. As the different waves of feminism, which

took rise in the west, were solely working for their self-benefit under the disguise of “so-called global sisterhood” (852), therefore, such feminism had no concerns with the third world countries.

Barbara Smith (1979), asserts in her delicate article, *Racism and Women’s Studies* that racism should absolutely be excluded from the feminist discourse since feminism is: [a] political theory and practice that struggles to free all women: women of color, working-class women, poor women, disabled women, lesbians, old women, as well as white, economically privileged heterosexual women. Anything less than this vision of total freedom is not feminism, but [is] merely female self-aggrandizement (B. Smith 48)

This idea of Barbara Smith (1979) aggravates the western feminist’s struggle of creating freedom on the ground of their issues and problems while suppressing and stretching the women of colour to the margins. This quasi-sisterhood is thus a deception for the women in the third world colonies who are tricked upon by the masculinity of the so-called sisters (Kara 852). The third world woman’s identity is endangered under the charm of the western feminists and hence white feminists trick the world through their trap of commonality, in short demeaning the women of colour and snatching off their agency.

Audre Lorde names the racist feminist perspectives and the relevant patriarchal thought as the “old and primary tool of all oppressors to keep the oppressed occupied with the master’s concern” (Lorde 114). The white sister’s feminist movement was achieved on the idea of exercising the imperial agenda by overlooking the third world women’s lifestyle along with their cultural practices thus, merging all under the same umbrella of white feminism built on the focal commonality among all women.

Gloria Anzaldua, an American scholar and critic, takes into notice the opinions of the third world women according to whom the western feminists seem to be defining the brown women on the basis of commonality and neglecting the differences among them. The third world women demand that the western feminists stop taking control over their identity. In regards to this claim of brown women, Gloria Anzaldua narrates that the white eyes of the white colonial and imperial powers cannot see the reality of the brown people and can never understand them truly because they are unaware of indigenous language, their variety of culture, their spirit, the schools they go to, their ethnicity and their skill of

writing in their own language (Keating 111). The western feminists seem to be at a great ease in disregarding and neglecting the third world women differences which are deeply associated to their culture and ethnicity. Thus, Anzaldua evaluates from the above propositions that the western feminists follow an agenda and ideology that is deeply rooted in the oppression and subordination of the brown women that leads to the inferiority of the other (El Ouardi and Sandy 133). The white western feminists work upon the idea of suppressing the third world women by marginalizing them on the basis of the western cultural perspectives while overlooking the difference of background, culture, geography, religion and social values, thus showing lack of knowledge towards the comprehension of the brown women lives.

In order to reflect the position that the woman occupy in a third world country, this research investigates two Sri Lankan novels, *Cinnamon Gardens* (1998) and *A Disobedient Girl* (2009), written by Shyam Selvadurai (1957 -) and Ru Freeman (1967 -) respectively. Shyam Selvadurai is one of the most prominent South Asian writers. He was born in Sri Lanka and migrated to Canada at the age of nineteen. His writings are influenced by the British colonial past, traditions, the journeys of migration and return, ethnic and religious conflicts etc. He is the author of *Funny Boy* (1994), *Cinnamon Gardens* (1998), *Story-Wallah* (2003), *Swimming in the Monsoon* (2005), and *The Hungry Ghost* (2013). His novel, *Funny Boy* (1994), is well known for his interweaving of sexuality as a major theme in the South Asian cultural setting of the civil war which broke out among Tamil and Sinhalese ethnic group in Sri Lanka (Dickinson n.p.). Selvadurai's another major achievement in his literary career is his collection, *Story-Wallah*. It brings together the works of many South Asian writers to create a junction among the literature of various countries. A "wallah" is a hawker or a merchant and in this collection, *Story-Wallah*, the writers from various countries hawk their wares from different parts of the South Asian diaspora like Canada, Britain, Malaysia, Guyana, Tanzania etc. It brings in together their tales of cultural values along with their dealings of everyday social and societal issues (DunDurn n.p). In short it maps down a variety of stories jostled against each other creating a maedcrvelous cacophony representing a South Asian bazaar where the goods are on sale symbolizing these stories spread apart to be read and evaluated (Harcourt n.p) .

The novel taken under this study, *Cinnamon Gardens* (1998), is set in 1920's Ceylon (Sri Lanka) which is at the verge of getting independence. Through this novel, Selvadurai tries to represent the colonial and indigenous divide, the difference of faiths and the struggle for independence taking place at that time. This story revolves around the character of a young spirited girl, Annalukshmi, who has her own desires and passions, tends to follow the modernity and identifies herself as a headstrong, independent and strong woman. Another major character is her uncle, Balendran, an upper-class Bourgeois, living in the Colombo colony and who after being rescued by his father from the homosexual relationship is forced into marriage. The induction of the elite relatives of Annalukshmi and Balendran belonging to the conventional thought, the way they are affected by the rebellion and the transforming nature of these characters is well represented by Selvadurai. This novel, in short, moves around the two major characters and their other relations bringing in the political and social issues which shape their lives (Kirkus n.p).

Ru Freeman is a Sri Lankan writer and activist. She is the author of *A Disobedient Girl* (2009) and *On Sal Mal Lane* (2013). Her novels, with their political and creative aspects, have gained international fame and acceptance. She is a member of Asian American Literary Review, Bread Loaf Writer's Conference, Yaddo, Hedgebrook, Virginia Center for the Creative Arts, and the Lannan Foundation. She also edited an anthology, a collection of 65 American poets and different views of dis/engagement with Palestine. She is also a winner of Janet Heidinger Kafka Prize which was awarded to her in 2014 by an American woman on her writings. She now contributes in Huffington Post through her writings on different books and politics (Freeman, About Ru n.p.). The novel, *A Disobedient Girl* (2009), is set against the volatile background of the prejudice and class differences prevailing in Sri Lanka. It engulfs a heart-rending tale of power and struggle of the human spirit with the will to survive and transcend the challenging stroke of tragedy (Schuster n.p). This novel, *A Disobedient Girl* (2009), revolves around two main protagonists a young girl, Latha and a mother, Biso. Both these women thrive through the oppression that makes them weak and subservient. However, they try to fight for what they deserve rather than what they are made to submit.

Both, Shyam Selvadurai and Ru Freeman, have written many books but the selection of novels made for this research are *Cinnamon Gardens* (1998) and *A Disobedient Girl* (2009). These novels bring forth new perspectives of the image of the indigenous women of a third world country, who are inclined to follow their dreams, are independent and rational to take up decisions for themselves. Moreover, the theoretical lens of Mohanty also supports the image of women as portrayed in these novels where the ordinary women are influenced to take up the position of subjects.

Therefore, it may be seen that women have suffered for a long time under patriarchal oppression and have been silenced. Such a representation deracinates women from their lived experiences which shape their lives. This study puts forth the understanding that without any historical and locally situated evidence the women struggle becomes absences, and they lose their agency. The body of existing scholarship on the subject is predominantly western and needs to incorporate more perspectives of feminism from the global south. This research, therefore, foregrounds the role of the indigenous women in the Sri Lankan society and investigates the extent this indigenous feminism challenges the universalizing tendencies of the western feminism. The thesis statement of this research may be stated as given in the next sub-section.

1.7 Thesis Statement

Through a critical reading of selected Sri Lankan fictional writings and by using Mohanty's feminist perspective, this research subverts certain monolithic ideas of some Western Feminists who may be seen as stereotyping the image of indigenous women.

1.8 Research Questions

1. In what ways do western feminists categorize the third world Sri Lankan women within a "monolithic universal image"?
2. How do the selected Sri Lankan novels, *Cinnamon Gardens* and *A Disobedient Girl* deconstruct the binary of 'Other' and question the Western idea of a "monolithic universal image of a third world woman"?

1.9 Rationale and Significance of the Study

Third world countries, being the developing nations, are considered backward in all walks of life. Therefore, they are constructing their literary critical insights in literature among many other fields. The evolving modern status of women in the third world countries is not explored much in the Sri Lankan society, creating doubt about the image of women. This research takes the indigenous women of Sri Lanka as its focal point and explores how the women in Sri Lanka gain agency, fight patriarchy and oppression, and are independent to a great extent. This study aims to bring forth the portrayal of the native Sri Lankan women in comparison to the image constructed by Western feminism. The status of the women in the third world countries is misguided by western feminists who define them as oppressed and victimized. They define these women by categorizing them as other, and therefore, gain superiority by depicting themselves as empowered, modern, and independent. The unfamiliarity of the western feminists towards the differences between themselves and non-western women leads them to make certain claims. Mohanty reminds us that western feminists, by rejecting the third world difference, “appropriate and colonize the fundamental complexities and conflicts which characterize the lives of women of different classes, religions, cultures, races and castes in these countries” (335). They discursively articulate overgeneralized views for non-western feminism and non-western feminists, ignoring the fact that the basic tenants of western feminism apply mostly to the women in industrialized countries. Consequently, their idea of global sisterhood oppresses the non-western feminists. Western feminists pigeonhole non-western women by overlooking variations of race, religion, and culture within them. Both, non-western and third world feminists, share a large part of their ideology by rejecting the notions of western feminists that marginalize them.

This research examines two aspects about the nonwestern postcolonial women. The first aspect is the image of third world women as projected by the west, while the second explores the way in which Sri Lankan fiction constructs the identity of third world women. This study uses Mohanty’s essay, “Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses” (1984) as its theoretical lens, in which Mohanty rejects the monolithic universal image of the brown women created by the west and reveals the autonomous identity of these women.

The years of publication of the novels selected for this research are about ten years apart. Despite the gap of a decade, both novels emphasize the autonomous status of third world Sri Lankan women. *Cinnamon Gardens* (1998) explores the indigenous women's status in the society still under the colonial rule while *A Disobedient Girl* (2009) investigates a woman's role in her life and society within an independent state. This difference of societies, one under colonial rule and the other as an independent state brings us to an understanding that Sri Lankan women are not only self-willed today but have been the same to a great extent under colonial rule.

1.10 Delimitation

This research takes into consideration the depiction of the Sri Lankan women in the selected Sri Lankan texts. For this purpose, this research is delimited to only two Sri Lankan novels, *Cinnamon Gardens* (1998) and *A Disobedient Girl* (2009), written by Shyam Selvadurai and Ru Freeman respectively.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

In history it has always been encountered that some of the western feminists seem to marginalize and distort the image of the third world women and misrepresent them in the eyes of the world as passive, docile, and uneducated. The white feminists through this representation of the women of color have created the image of the eastern women as the other. The white feminists have tread on the boundaries of the third world women's historical background and the set customs of their societies which sets them apart from the white women experiences (El Ouardi and Sandy 130). Following sections in this review of related literature would help us navigate through the different aspects of feminism.

2.2 Background

The feminist movement has changed over time depending upon its ideological trait and the comprehension of the user. Usually, the term feminism is used to refer the ways and efforts for improving the women lives (Shaheed n.p). With changing trends and modernism this monolithic idea expanded to a pluralistic array of meanings grounded on the "experiential differences" (Phillips n.p) which paved way for the black and third world feminisms.

Following the five years of the women activism the focus of these women became the higher and more serious issues that concerned the women lives rather than the gender relations. Another major point that led to the divergence of the idea of feminism was the concern related to historical, conceptual, and geographical location of the women. These three factors highly influenced the ideas of feminism and produced divergence in the monolithic stream of feminist movement. The field of feminism, with time, started to strike with multiple voices of women from different class and ethnicities reflecting new identities and developing an understanding of the intersectionality (Shaheed n.p). This divergence of variety of women with difference in their lived realities was not accepted easily and entailed some period of comprehension towards the women diversities.

The feminist movement gained popularity and widespread fame near the twentieth century. It conjoined the efforts made to achieve the socio-political rights and the cultural roles that affected the lives of women. The feminist movement gave rise to various forms of criticisms and other movements to come to surface. Feminism divided itself into three major movements depending on the diversity of the time period of its origin (Annapurany 424). The basic goals that feminism aimed were to challenge the gender bias, set in accordance to the traditions in the society, to change the position and status of women in the society and the political regime along with challenging the women subordination in relation to men (McBrid and Mazur 236). The feminist movements, in short, served the purpose of elevating the status of women in their societies.

However, over time the feminist movement came to be contested by many scholars and critics. One of the reasons for such condemnation was that it appeared to be only associated to the western feminism i.e. from where it originated. Secondly, the connotation of the term feminism altered over time. According to Karen Offen, the very first idea to explore this change is to differentiate between the individualistic and relational feminism. The individualistic feminism focused on the rights of women as the human rights grounded on the set ideologies while the relational feminism looked upon the women rights set on the basis of their traditional influence and involvement in the family and child rearing process (Crossley and Hurwitz 02). When it came to the 1960's, the feminist movement was further classified into three major types namely socialist, liberal, and radical feminism. The socialist feminism gained a lot of popularity and remained a dominant movement of feminism in various countries at that time. This variety of feminism worked on the ideology that capitalism oppresses women and is a source of their marginalization in the society. Radical feminist movement followed nearly the same concept and trails back to the theory of Simone De Beauvoir known as "sex class" (02). The radical approach defined the "fundamental transformation of all institutions in society" (02) to remove the gender bias already prevalent between them. This was made necessary to give women equality and proper rights that may not suppress them under the dominion of patriarchy, colonial agenda and the government.

Liberal feminism revolved around the idea of power and believed that women are deprived of power under patriarchal institutions that only circulate it among themselves and cage the women within the four walls of their houses and domesticity (Crossley and Hurwitz 02).

Transnational feminism has been prevalent in existence since long. Dating back to the World War II, the women made unions and alliances in order to strengthen and elevate the status of women. Many organizations like the International Council of Women, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, International Alliance for Women and Women's International Democratic Federation organized themselves to fight against the suffrage of women and laid down basic principles to provide foundation for the transnational feminists for the purpose of promoting the women concerns in the global arena of politics (Rupp n.p). The transnational feminist movements also seek help of the private and government organizations including the NGO's and international funders that allow these women to present their local interests in the global arena (Crossley and Hurwitz 03). Another sort of women's liberation that rose was the crossover women's development. The fundamental objective of this development was the utilization of other women's activist developments' components and apparatuses as a spread and camouflage to conquer different causes or claims (03).

2.3 Impacts of Women's Movement on Other Movements

Nancy Whittier respects two sorts of impacts of the women' development on different developments.

- Generative impacts followed changing the methods of dissent and affecting more phases of disagreement to happen. One of the instances of generative impact women's activist development was the enrollment of various developments against the issue of youngster sexual maltreatment (Taylor n.p).
- Spillover impacts were comprehensive of affecting different developments with the structures, strategies and culture of women's activist developments. A case of such impact is the development of bosom malignant growth activism which happened because of the expansion in privileges of women with the endeavors of the women's activists (Taylor n.p).

2.4 Different Phases of Feminism

The history of the feminist movements roughly breaks down into the four following movements.

2.4.1 First wave of Feminism

The first wave of feminism emerged during the late nineteenth and early twenties in the context of the liberal politics and industrialization as both were associated to the liberal women's rights movement and socialist feminist. This phase got the crowning significance when the women were rewarded with the freedom to vote in 1918. This stage includes the initiation of various women movements in the West and its consequent developments. The significant effect of this phase was that it forged a novel pathway for the women to gain agency and sovereignty in the tyrannical and chauvinist society of male dominance (Robertson 6-7). In the initial stage this movement was intermingled with other reform movements but later shaped itself to form a unique and independent movement. Virginia Woolf's *The Room of One's Own* and Simone De Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* emerged as a canon during this first phase of feminism (Krolokke n.p). The notion of women bisexuality and raising of women voice through women writings gave women a path to speak out to the world. The major effort of women through this phase was to exert the focus on othering of the women in the patriarchal societies of the western locales as the second sex.

2.4.2 Second wave of Feminism

The second wave of feminism can be referred as the radical feminism and emerged during the 1960's and the early 1970's. Women during this phase joined movements to protest against the pageant competition shows that they depicted the image of women as cattle being raided on the stage. The main slogans of this movement were "The Personal is Political" and "Sisterhood is Powerful". These slogans and liberation posters were meant to empower women and bound them through unity. Other issues that were highlighted through this wave were the bread and butter issues, problems at workplace, domestic concerns of marriage equality and women freedom as an individual (Robertson n.p). *According to Clare Synders:*

In short, classic second-wave feminism argues that in patriarchal society women share common experiences, and through a sharing of their experiences with one another in consciousness raising (CR) groups, they can generate knowledge about their own oppression. (184)

The second wave of feminism inculcates such issues that were later changed to gender, racial and other feminist studies. The difference between sex and gender was clarified during this wave which led to the explanation of social and cultural factors which gave meaning to this difference (Krolokke n.p.).

2.4.3 Third wave of Feminism

Generation X led to form the third wave of feminism paving way for significant changes and developments in the western feminist movements. According to Britannica:

The third wave was made possible by the greater economic and professional power and status achieved by women of the second wave, the massive expansion in opportunities for the dissemination of ideas created by the information revolution of the late 20th century, and the coming of age of Generation X scholars and activists. (Britannica n.p.)

Influenced by the postmodernist ideology this movement started questioning, rejecting and redefining the words, phrases and ideas that were linked to womanhood, gender, sexuality, beauty, femininity and masculinity. The third wave created a realization and gave much depth to the idea of sexual liberation that origination in the second wave. This idea was elaborated firstly to consciousness of the gender identity and later to the construction of one's own "authentic gender identity" (Brunell n.p.).

2.4.4 Third world feminism

Western feminist movements seemed to be the center of each individual's attention but were only concerned with the rights and issues of the western white women. The women in the east were seen in silence and thus were snubbed by these dominant western women. Postcolonial or third world feminism emerged as a critique towards these above waves and movements of feminism that only defined the western women superiority and freedom while suppressing the third world women under the tag of the other. The

emergence of third world feminism set out with defining the indigenous women thus elaborating the difference among the third world and the western white women which socially and culturally sets them apart.

2.5 Placement of my Research in the Body of Existing Literature

This research explores the selected Sri Lankan novels, *Cinnamon Gardens* (1998) and *A Disobedient Girl* (2009), focusing on the postcolonial feminist perspective involving Mohanty's Critical lens. In order to give value to this idea of my research, literature review plays a vital role. The literature review sheds light on different researches already brought to existence and the various elements highlighted with respect to the novels and theory included in this dissertation. These works are cited to create a gap and a vacancy that this research aims to fill in. This chapter reviews some of the existing literature on the concept and treatment of women in the third world countries and how it has changed over time. Therefore, the literature review has been categorized into following divisions: i) Review of literature with respect to the status of South Asian women ii) Review of literature with respect to theory iii) Review of literature with respect to novels.

The selected aspects of the literature review provide a constructive pathway for this research to highlight the gaps that this research aims to fill.

2.6 Selected Aspects of Literature Review

The literature review is divided into three sections which may be enumerated as follows:

- Review of literature with respect to the status of South Asian women
- Review of literature in the light of theory
- Review of literature with respect to novels

The first section highlights the exploration of status of women occupied in different countries of the third world and these women react to the circumstances and situations around them. The second section of literature review also inculcates the description and gives insight to the conceptual frameworks of postcolonial feminism widely used in the analysis of different novels. The last section of the literature review positions on the

existing literature on the two novels taken under study in this research, *Cinnamon Gardens* (1998) and *A Disobedient Girl* (2009).

2.6.1 Review of literature with respect to the status of South Asian women

Sri Lanka, being one of the third world countries has been under the influence of the norms and legal systems introduced by the British colonial government. The situation of women in Sri Lanka even in the present is affected by those principles along with the traditional values, patriarchy and the customs taken up by the post-independence societies. During the transition years after the independence, the Sri Lankan policy makers introduced new concepts regarding the health and education of women in order to improve their quality and standards of living (Jayaweera and Pal ix). Education served as one of the important factors to raise the status of women in the Sri Lankan society. The introduction of free primary, secondary education along with the higher university studies in 1945 led to provide rapid increment in the opportunities for women to get education. The change of medium from English to the native regional languages aided the educational sector. Another major contribution of the educational field was the decline in the gender differences that caused inequality. Women have had taken up influential positions in the economic sector and have been a strong helping hand in the labor of Sri Lanka. The participation of women in the labor gradually increased and crossed the male participation in the 1960's (x). Women also became carriers of success in the foreign exchange cooperation and also expanded home based earning that aided women who had certain domestic issues. The state policy also encouraged the rights of unemployed women regarding their employment that would let them to walk in the society with respect and independence (xi).

According to a distinguished Sri Lankan Feminist, Hewamanne (2006), under the colonial rule the women in the Sri Lankan society were reflected as inferior and low beings in the society where the particulars that defined the domesticity of the Sri Lankan women were based on difference within the Sri Lankan culture and those set within the colonial contexts (Wickramasinghe 6). The role of the women in the Sri Lankan society was spacious and was not limited to the tasks of childbearing, cooking at home and their dependence on their husbands rather when the colonization process came in the women of

Sri Lanka through their collective efforts as wives and mothers, already seemed to enjoy a particular freedom in their traditional society. The women were considered as the hub that would keep the family united and ongoing together. The women, in short, were very much clear about their rights and roles in their homes and in their societies despite of accepting and following what colonial powers had introduced (D. S. Vithanage 9). The role of the Sri Lankan women in the history had been politically strong as this nation had elected a woman for the first time as the first Prime Minister and President of its country and had influenced other women of many countries and ethnicities in decision making and surpassing the day to day challenges (7). This depicts the strength of women in Sri Lanka, a third world country, at the time of early colonization when women were aware of their rights and worked for their family. Moreover, they also seemed rational enough to do things on their own rather than just following the orders of the empire.

One of the researches held on the marginalization of Sri Lankan women deals with the institution of marriage as a strong force of constructing oppression. Marriage, operating as a social institution, has limited the role of woman in Sri Lanka in certain occupations and behaviors, and even molding the woman's role in how society expects her to be a daughter, a sister, a mother, and a wife. In every society, women continue to grapple with socio-economic, politico-cultural elements that marginalize them, and women in Sri Lanka are faced with the same predicament (D. S. Vithanage 4). Sri Lanka has a long history of women activists fighting for the rights of women and resisting against the exploitation, abuse, slavery and oppression done on the hands of patriarchy (4).

Sri Lanka being a South Asian country shares a history of experiences of colonial rule with Pakistan and India. Their struggles, resistance, and challenges with regard to women's position seem to have many things in common. Therefore, Indo-Pakistan feminism can be seen parallel to Sri Lankan feminist discourse. Some of the already done research which has explored the status of women in Pakistani and Indian feminist discourse are discussed as follows.

“Pakistani Feminist Fiction and the Empowerment of Women” (2009) written by Zia Ahmed is based on the analysis of Pakistani fiction. This article assists in determining the role of women in the Pakistani societies. This research reflects the happy and the

unhappy women, victimized and independent women, and very vividly, represents their struggle to become a strong autonomous subject. The women in Pakistani literature are also displayed as “obsessed by demons of social taboos” (92) created by the patriarchal powers and act as instruments of demeaning women in the society. The women in the old days were bound to follow the traditions but the modern-day realities brought a new consciousness for these women. Ahmed has taken into consideration two novels of Bapsi Sidwa, *The Bride* (2006) and *Ice-Candy Man* (2004). In the novel, *The Bride* (2006) Ahmed investigates the life of a girl who is lost in a train and is then taken into custody by Qasim who gives her a new name (93). She grows up to be a subaltern as is forced to do tasks she is unwilling, is married off without her consent and suffers under tyranny of her husband and when tries to raise her voice she is “mercilessly beaten” (94) . Despite all these disastrous happenings this girl, remains determined to fight the circumstances and come out of the shadow of patriarchy. The struggle of this leads her to achieve freedom and an independent role in her life. Another novel that Ahmed examines in this study is the novel, *The Holy Woman* (2002) written by Qaisra Shahraz. The protagonist is a strong character who in the initial stages of her life is forced by her patriarchal father to transform into a “holy woman” (95). She takes up this challenge but fights the chains which are attached to this concept that are just myths and only serve to cage women under the patriarchal setup. Similarly, other novels like *Maps for Lost Lovers* (2004) by Nadeem Aslam and *The Moth Smoke* (2000) by Mohsin Hamid are discussed by the researcher which also shed light to portray the women sufferings and struggles in the Pakistani society. The women characters in this research evolve through the psychological development of being a victim and subaltern to a woman of strength and strong will (92). These novels inculcate the various aspects of women’s life and experiences to bring forth the changing images of these women.

In Pakistan, most of the women are deprived of their rights which are assigned to them by constitution of Pakistan and religion Islam. This discrimination done with women on the end of patriarchy and power leads to a stressful dissent among both the sexes within a society. Therefore, the women in Pakistan depict concerns regarding the political and social inequality in order to create a balanced developed society (Butt and Khalid 70). Pakistan is a polygonal society constructed of heterogeneous cultures. In the wake of

globalization and with diversity of cultural aspect, Pakistan seems to face unparalleled challenges regarding the status of women. Some of the common biased attitude that the women have experienced in Pakistan are suppression of women in socio-cultural affairs, silencing of women voices in politics thus absenting them from the political screen and marginalization of women on basis of religious dogmas and patriarchal chauvinism (72). In an interview, *Women and Politics in Pakistan: Sham Participation*, Shehar Bano Khan expresses her views regarding the Pakistani women, “a Pakistani woman feels no different. She feels the transfer of power from British imperialism has shifted to state colonization. For her, freedom has yet to come (72-73)”. It indicates that the women in Pakistan have never experienced freedom rather have just shifted as slaves from one colonial rule to another i.e. from the British colonial rule to western imperialism along with indigenous colonization. The women seem to be enchained under the social and cultural norms and are far removed from self-empowerment.

Shashi Deshpande is a liberal Indian woman who is also a contemporary novelist. She brings forth the circumstances of the Indian society especially dealing with the issues and involvement of women. Her novels explore the themes of women in efforts to examine and understand themselves, their roles in socio-economic social setup, their history and relationship to others in their respective society (Narayan n.p.). Shashi Deshpande portrays the confined lives of the women in a realist manner. Shashi’s manner of presentation of women in her novels varies from being vulnerable to avatars and resisting the male chauvinism with their strong voices. In one of the researches, “Suffering of Female Characters in Shashi Deshpande’s *The Dark Holds No Terror*” written by A. Thirumani Aarthilaxmi deals with the critical perspective captured by Deshpande in relation to the women in the Indian society. This research article presents Sarita, the protagonist, as a victim of male chauvinism. Though, Sarita struggles hard to break away from the patriarchal shackles that had bound her in her parental home but is recaptured under them after her marriage. The novel deals with the problems of the middle class educated women. She is a doctor and a mother of two children but her husband could not bear her success and fame therefore he beats her and physically abuses her. Sarita like a typical Indian wife tries to stay calm to save her marriage by silencing her voice which she used to break away from the suppression of her parents. She therefore, becomes a victim

under the male marginalization and suffers in the matrimonial circus. She had suffered a lot in her childhood and has scars of being marginalized at every instant in comparison to her brother who later dies and even then, it is Sarita who is blamed by her mother to be the killer of her brother. Sarita is mentally caged under such blames and hates her mother for acting as a cog in the patriarchal system and says in her most bitter words that if her mother is a woman she hates to be a woman herself (Aarthilaxmi 5). When she becomes successful in suppressing the dominance of her parents and marries with her choice, she seems to feel free from the heavy burden of patriarchal tyranny but Saru is mistaken. Her husband takes out his frustration over Sarita by torturing her. Thus, in the end it is Sarita who once again escapes from her husband's tyranny and moves to her father's house just in the pretentious cloud of taking care of him. Though she seems marginalized and voiceless in most of the incidents in the novel, Deshpande has carved the character of Sarita with such composure that she seems to have the ability of self-evaluation and awareness of her guilt. This self-awareness helps her to purify her heart and move away from the situations that tend to overpower her identity (Aarthilaxmi n.p).

Another article that explores the women status is, "A Women's Quest for Identity: A Feminist Analysis of Shashi Deshpande's *The Dark Holds No Terror*" (2017) which is written by Syeda Saba Batool. According to Batool, this novel of Shashi depicts the "discord and disillusionment" (Batool 37) of the well-educated woman in a traditional Indian society. Batool explores and examines Shashi's efforts of women sensibility in a patriarchal society. Manu, husband of Saru, represents the conventional masculine authority and mind setup of patriarchal power. Though Manu marries Sarita out of love and happiness but is unable to prevent her from his commanding nature. Manu could not stand the fame and power that Sarita enjoys in the society because of her financial independence. She is respected among all because of her profession as a doctor. Manu is unable to digest Sarita taking a better place than him; therefore, he tortures her and becomes a beast towards her in darkness when all others are unaware of his hideous deeds. But Sarita does not let herself stay embedded under the forces that try to suppress her rather she moves on in her life with a more practical and realistic overview towards her life. "My life is my own –somehow, she felt as if she had found it now, the connecting link. It means you are just a strutting, grimacing puppet, standing futilely on the stage for a brief while between

areas of darkness. If I have been puppet, it is because I made myself one. I have been clinging unto the tenuous shadow of a marriage whose substance has long since disintegrated because I have been afraid of providing my mother right” (Shashi 220). Sarita’s life is a journey to her self-fulfillment, realization, autonomy and individuality (Batool 42). Sarita in short, realizes her worth and does not let her will power down in front of anyone. She rejects to become a patriarchal possession and maintains her own individuality by shunning the masculine power that held her back from her success. Sarita thus, postures as an example of a brown woman carrying power in her own hands and making decisions for her own self in short governing her own circle of life.

One of the most popular beliefs in feminism is to obtain the equal rights, power and status for women as associated to other men in the society. In one of the articles, “Feminism and literature: A Study of Anita Nair’s *Mistress*” (2018), the researcher Madhu Jindal writes that from the ancient times women are considered and created as souls of dependence in literature and this dependency can be effectively identified from one of the couplets mentioned in Manu, the ancient codifier of Hindu law:

Duteous girl obeys her father,
 Husband sways the duteous wife,
 Son controls the widowed mother,
 Never free is a women’s life. (Jindal 1282)

Men and women are complementary for each other. Therefore, one sex cannot claim superiority over the other. This research article by Jindal aims to highlight the power and importance of women in day to day life and presents their contributions which are of utmost importance in the development of a nation. The writer brings into notice many Indian women writers who have acquired spatiality in the world through their writings in literature and have become voice of many other women. In short, these women writers have created a platform for women in the patriarchal society where they can speak up for themselves. Some of the female Indian writers who speak for the women rights and status include Arundhati Roy, Jhumpa Lahiri, Manju Kapur, Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande, Anita Nair, etc. Anita Nair is an Indian bestselling author of fiction and poetry. Some of her books like *The Better Man* and *The Ladies Coupe* have been translated into nearly

twenty-one languages (1283). This novel, *Mistress* deals with various relationships including man-women, pre-marital, marital, post-marital along with the hostility between a man and a woman though her main concern remains on the development of “the personality and the genius” (1284) which seems quite difficult to achieve. This research centers its attention on the concept of a free woman who seems to have transcended the social and political boundaries and have adopted a “mental and emotional attitude” (1284). She in this novel tries to present the self-realization of the married Indian woman who had been under the suppression of patriarchy of men and a rebellion that is born out of this tyranny gives hope to others that there is change outside and women no more have to stay silent and submissive to the traditional patriarchy (1285). This research, therefore, analyses a strong unconventional role of a woman in a male-centered society and presents the struggles and decisions that a married woman makes in order to become independent.

“Feminism in Anita Nair’s *Ladies Coupe*” (2017) is a research article written by Bartakke Kalyani Jitendra. This study unveils the women’s status as discussed in this novel. She mostly portrays women as strong and independent subjects who struggle in their lives to achieve freedom and self-realization. The woman’s capacity to assert her own rights and individuality in marriage and develop into a full-fledged woman of prospective as a human being is an essential theme explored through this research (Jitendra 233). Akhila, the protagonist of the novel, has an endangered fate as she is born a woman but her self-discovery starts with her journey at the train. She is the eldest daughter in a middle-class Brahmin family (233). She discovers herself through her engagement with the fellow travelers. Akhila turns out to be a rational woman and questions the norms of the society that only meant to suppress the women. Through her strong will power and determination, Akhila achieves the status of an “autonomous subject” (234). Professor Jitendra in his research, while showing the strength of Akhila, quotes from Sunita Sinha’s article, “Post – Colonial Women Writers New Perspectives” (2008), “She is empowered to reclaim her lost love and relates herself from the hold of conventions and family expectations” (234). This depicts the forte of Akhila that she uses to free herself from the social responsibilities and focuses her attention on her desires and wish. These researches bring into focus the various viewpoints about how the women have transformed over time, the role they occupy and in some cases their subservience towards patriarchy.

The postcolonial and feminist perspectives seem to be occupied by the same kind of oppression, marginalization, gender bias, representation and voice along with the relationship between the politics and literature. Like the above two theories, postcolonial and feminist theories, the postcolonial feminism- feminism congruent with broad postcolonial perspectives- (Bahri 197) also becomes quite critical of the western mainstream feminism which takes into account the marginalization and othering of the third world women/ women of colour.

One of the articles, “Through Third World Women’s Eyes: The Shortcomings of Western Feminist Scholarship on the Third World”, is written by Dr. Alaaa Alghamdi. This article was published in Journal of Gender and Feminist Studies in 2014. This research paper focuses to describe the position of the Muslim women in the third world societies and in the world in general, along with their participation to create their status in the male centered society. The western feminists have directly or indirectly taken part in maintaining the status of these third world women. The researcher claims that these western women have not been successful in defining their sisters from the other part of the world accurately and had led to marginalize them by imposing the western principles on these third world women overlooking the difference of their culture, region, ethnicity, race, geography, political and economic notions (Al-Sarrani and Alghamdi 2). The researcher supports this idea by linking it to the work of Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Under Western Eyes and provides evidence from Gayatri Spivak’s Essay, Can the Subaltern Speak? (1978) where Spivak narrates the traditional custom of Satti being abolished by the British government as an excuse in the face of saving Indian women from cruelty. But Spivak is of the view that were the third world Indian women given any right to choose whether they wanted the custom of satti or not? Where as in India most of the women freely chose the tradition as a part of their religion and culture and Spivak believes that through this obliteration the Indian women lost a part of their cultural heritage (2). One of the researchers Leila Ahmed writes down in her article, “Feminism and Cross-Cultural Inquiry: The Terms of Discourse in Islam” (1989), that “the colonial powers and their agents, and in particular the missionaries through the schools they founded did indeed explicitly set out to undermine Islam through the training and remolding of women” (144). Therefore, the western women are considered to be a threat to the culture of these third world countries and hence

subsidize to colonize this part of the world. The western feminists thus marginalize and generalize these colonized people as the 'Other' (Al-Sarrani and Alghamdi 5). Another limitation that the researcher uncovers in relation to the western feminist's agenda is the misunderstanding about the religious practices of women in Islam and claims that the conceptualizing a group or class of people on the basis of one symbol and connotation is the dehumanization of that group and narrates the example of "conceptualizing Muslims by headscarves" (6). Covering the head or wearing a veil is a religious practice of Muslim women which has been taken up by the western women as a tool of oppression and marginalization. It is clearly observed that many Muslim women obey the religious custom but some do not and thus are not forced to do it rather it depends upon their comfort. The researcher in the above article tends to unravel the misrepresentations and the oppression caused by the western feminists over the third world women and brings into concern that the religious, political, economic and geographical elements pave way to create a difference among different parts of the world hence, no rules or principles applicable to one part can be generalized over the other.

An Indian physicist and activist, Vandhana Shiva in *Staying Alive: Women, Ecology and Development* present a strong link between colonization and women's oppression in the colonized countries. She traced back the destruction of nature as a start to the suppression of women in the third world countries. Bringing this ideology to the context of Sri Lankan society, the history provides an indication of the connection between women and nature which was threatened by the alien force of the colonizers (Shiva n.p). In the past the Sri Lankan women had a major role in the agricultural sector and had deep association with the greenery around them. These women were explorers and ecologists and took up their tasks with great care and attention. Before the time of colonization, the women worked in the field along with their men. Some of these tasks include sowing of seeds once the men have raked their fields and when the harvest was ready these women would gather to grind and separate the seeds. The women were independent enough to gather up and bring food and indigenous medicines by wading over long distances. Furthermore, the Sri Lankan women were skilled in making roofs from coconut leaves giving protection and shelter to their family (D. S. Vithanage 17). The women therefore were not only cooking and taking care of their families inside the house but would provide

their families with medicines and food brought from outside with huge toil and efforts along with providing safety to their family like a guardian and head of a family. This independence and the role of women in the society was endangered by the arrival of the colonizers who with the aim of civilization turned the world into a machine. They turned everything to benefit them, created industries, cut the plantation and hence deprived women of their daily tasks thus clawing away their independence in the colonizers' fists.

The next section reviews the literature already explored with respect to the theory incorporated in this research.

2.6.2 Review of literature in the light of theory

The theory incorporated in this research is Mohanty's stance of postcolonial feminism. The postcolonial feminist theory gives agency to the absent colonized subject by voicing it and shatters the silences that surround them. Postcolonial feminism has been explored a lot by researchers in order to create the space for third world women in the hegemonic literature of the West. Mohanty being one of the postcolonial feminists also strives to create consciousness among women of the colonial and imperial agenda of the western feminism that supports the victimization of third world women. Some researches already explored on these ideas are discussed below.

Women in the third world have long been deprived of their rights under the colonial rule and being the women of colour are suppressed under the double colonization of the rulers and the patriarchal brown men. A research is carried on the novel *Joy of the Motherhood* (1979) which is written by Buchi Emecheta. She is a Nigerian based British novelist, play wright and also write autobiographies. Some of her famous novels include *Second Class Citizen* (1974), *The Bride Price* (1976), *The Slave Girl* (1977). This novel explores the life of a Nigerian woman who is in search to complete her identity by achieving the motherhood by giving birth to a son who is considered to be a pride in a patriarchal centered society. The researcher has done a postcolonial feminist analysis by using Mohanty's lens in which she demands women's solidarity based on the common context of struggle against the hierarchical powers like colonialism, capitalism, racism, and patriarchy. The protagonist Nnu Ego is a traditional female living in Lagos, a colonized state, where she spends all her life living as an oppressed and victimized female. She is a

victim of double marginalization. The researcher in this study focuses on the idea of Mohanty that capitalist and colonialist project aids in the oppression of the women and thus increase their suffering (Barfi, Kohzadi and Azizmohammadi 26-35). This research centers on depicting the third world women as victims under the colonial regime whose hegemonic and capitalist agenda serves their colonial mentality and encourages in the suppression of women. This study represents the third world women as suffering under the colonization and is deprived of their rights and desires.

In modern times the women have taken up stand against the tyrannical patriarchy that once served as an agent of dominating them. They have changed their status from object to the subject hood and are masters of their own will. The research, “Postcolonial Feminist Analysis: According to Chandra Mohanty and Deniz Kandiyoti” (n.d.), has been conducted on two novels written by Anita Desai and her daughter Kiran Desai, *Clear Light of the Day* (1980) and *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006), respectively. Chandra Talpade Mohanty’s article, “Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourse”, is taken as a theoretical lens to analyze the empowered women in the third world. In the novel, *Clear Light of the Day* (1980), Anita Desai has shown women as autonomous subjects thus striving their way through the tyranny of the patriarchal setup. Bimla, the protagonist, is headstrong and independent and takes the role of the bread earner of her family. The character of Bimla shedding of the traditional shackles and taking upon the masculine traits makes her a strong unconventional woman of the third world. In the other novel, *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006), Anwar explores the two generations of women where one is the grandmother, and the other is the granddaughter. Sai, the granddaughter is an independent woman with strong will power. She is the strong women of the modern world. Through her character the researcher investigates the rejection of the western concept of feminism about the women of color or the brown women whom the western feminists victimize by their misrepresentation. Sai is the “new woman” (3) of the modern India. She is portrayed as a woman of strong will and is not easily influenced by the cultural and religious ideologies (8) rather have her own stance upon it. Sai being a third world woman is liberated to decide what’s best for her and can openly blame the injustices imposed on her by patriarchy (8). The image of the monolithic universal third world woman is subverted by the researcher to depict how the women are taking stand and have

come out of the patriarchy that once chained them. Through these ideas the notion of third world woman is challenged and the western feminist concept is rejected.

One of the articles, “Postcolonial feminist reading of Khaled Hosseini’s *A Thousand Splendid Suns*”, depicts the social, cultural and political aspects that support the reduction, degradation and the ferocity endured by the female characters in the novels. From a postcolonial feministic perspective, this paper attempts to investigate the plights of women, particularly the two major characters of the novel, Mariam and Laila, which are enforced on them through the patriarchal culture and standards. Postcolonial feminism investigates the homogenization and the universalism attached exclusively to the feminist movement of the western women and their lifestyle. The female characters in the novel, *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (2007), are revealed as strong and are in search of identifying themselves. The quench to attain individuality and to shun the identity of other, remains at the heart of the novel. The novel represents a contrary idea to the western thought of feminism of women being passive and docile as Simone de Beauvoir states that women are defined and differentiated with reference to a man and is considered as the man’s other and is sensed as incidental and inessential (Shabaniradx and Seifi 241). Afghan community has been under transformation due to the colonization and effects of wars and invasions brought many changes in the cultural and social structures of this society. The oppression of women, hence, is one of the consequences that females had to endure as mentioned in the novel. The incursion of Afghans by Taliban’s led to the marginalization and silencing of the Afghan women in their own society. In the novel, Khaled Hosseini mentions several sets of rules laid down by Taliban for women to follow. The women were not allowed to wear jewelry, fancy clothes, go out without a man, and seek education. The schools for girls were closed and women were not allowed to speak in public unless spoken to (246). Rasheed therefore, represents the ideology of Taliban who even mold the religious education according to their own will and misuse it. The veiling of women by burqa was made compulsory and was forced on women and Rasheed in the novel did the same with his two wives, Marian and Laila. He used to beat them and eventually turned them into Spivak’s subaltern whose voice was unable to be heard by the patriarchal Rasheed. This novel though on one side depicts the foreign ideologies intermixing with the indigenous to suppress the third world women but on the other hand it deals with the resistance that

women reflect towards these patriarchal constructions that chain them. Mariam and Laila though suffer the brutality of Rasheed but strive together to catch freedom and run away from his hideous trap of patriarchy and colonization. Mariam's idea of complete abandonment of her roles is a struggle to achieve a new self-identification. The runaway plan along with Mariam's decision to kill Rasheed reveals her resistance and opposition towards the ill treatment and marginalization of women in the Afghan society (250-251). Laila in efforts to construct a new sense of self detaches herself from the compulsions and oppression of patriarchy and the foreign external force. To achieve freedom like Mariam, she abandons all her sufferings behind to start a new life with Tariq. Laila's character is different than the other females in the novel. Laila is educated and never lets herself to be fully subjugated to the margins that women had to suffer under the Taliban regime (251).

Shabaniradx and Seifi through their article bring into concern the change of ideologies and culture with the intervention of other forces into the society which leads to the double colonization of women and they become deprived of their rights and such framework leads to the silencing of women and loss of their self-identity. The role of women as explored in the novel, *The Thousand Splendid Suns* (2007), through the characters of Mariam and Laila throw light on the strength and resistance of women towards the vindication of patriarchal rules set up by the males in the society of a third world country.

“Silence is not Silent”: A Postcolonial Feminist Appraisal of Women Silence in Mia Couto's *Confession of the Lioness*”, written by Samya Achiri explores the postcolonial feminist perspective in the African society. In this article the researcher has brought to light a black female who emerges as a focal to postcolonial feminist perspective. The novel, *Confessions of the Lioness*, brings various levels of a colonized society with respect to the issues of women. One level deal with the oppression and marginalization of women in the African society. This idea has been critically explored by the researcher under Mohanty's lens of double colonization. They experienced delineation on the hands of European and indigenous domination (Achiri 45). Mariamar's mother is one such victim. Mia Couto in her novel through the mouth of Mariamar pictures this colonization in the following words that the women “had always been contained, kept in shadows” (Achiri 45). Moreover, the

maid of Naftalinda suffers from a cruel punishment and the beastly act of men kills her soul. She tries to rise against the tradition set by the despotic. The judiciary, the white colonizers, also fails to help the maid to attain justice that points out to the paradoxical attitude of saving brown women from the brown men (Spivak n.p.).

The second level that the researcher examines is the strength and bravery of the women living in the colonized African patriarchal society. According to the African tradition, *shitala*, a meeting of elderly people is taking place. *Shitala* forbids the interference of women's opinion in the decision-making process and is considered as a despicable act. Despite being aware of the customs and the strict rules that bound them, she disobeys *Shitala* and speaks in front of the elderly men. When she is reprimanded by her husband and other men that it was a private meeting and she should pay heed before speaking among the men Naftalinda screams out, "I'm not scared. I am like the lions that attack us: I've lost my fear of men" (Couto 86-87). She is so much devastated by the act of crime done to her maid that she demands justice. She vividly describes it to the committee of elderly men that "there's no longer anywhere I can't go" (Couto 86-87).

This depicts that Naftalinda becomes a lioness herself and is fearless of the despotic men. She gives insight to a strong African woman of colour. Through this incident, Couto tries to unveil the sexist tradition that regards women as dead and fails to let them speak thus silencing their voices under the mounds of the patriarchal power. But Naftalinda's character speaks out not only to the macho indigenous men but the tyrannical colonizers who also fail to give justice to her maid.

Kara lays out the feminist perspective of the third world women in regard to their relation with the colonizers in "The Inferior Sex: A Third World Feminist Approach to Wole Soyinka's *The Lion and the Jewel*". Soyinka's *The Lion and the Jewel* is a play based on humour and satire encapsulating the gender bias and colonial rule over the black people. It highlights how the glorious image created by the westerns influence the third world people as a result of which they suffer under the unrealistic and falsified shadow of the colonial rulers. Soyinka used English language in the most auspicious manner and held it against the natives of this language. Using the canon language, Wole blurted out the marginalization, sufferings and ostracism that the black people had undergone during the

white man's rule. Sidi is a woman who is depicted as a generalized female gender in the black society. She is reflective of a simple woman bound in a patriarchal and colonial ruled Nigeria. In the play, Soyinka depicts the norm of the black community where a woman is the one who performs the household chores. In the start of the play, Sidi is shown as carrying the pail of water which depicts that women are not only performing the work at home but are responsible for other tasks outside the household vicinity. This depicts the work load that the women share in the patriarchal system. Lakunle, a school teacher, who represents the western colonial thought, criticizes Sidi for carrying such heavy pail of water and calls her unwomanly.

Sidi is assessed by the western colonizers as a gender outside her biological gender which demeans her identity. This is the double colonization that a third world woman suffers under the colonial and patriarchal rule. This burden of carrying the pail of water is associated to the women in the patriarchal system but in the western eye it seems very unwomanly for a woman to perform such act. This mentality marginalizes the women of colour in a colonized patriarchal society and hence, the women stay under the burden of double marginalization. According to Lakunle, Sidi being a woman is a weaker sex. On this Sidi becomes rebellious and speaks for herself:

[i]s it a weaker breed who pounds the yam

or bends all day to plant the millet

With a child strapped to her back. (Soyinka 4)

She defends herself by narrating the loads of work she is capable of doing and sharing the burden if men in the daily life. Therefore, she tells that she is not weak rather is strong enough to do any kind of work. She performs the work of a farmer, labourer and a mother thus taking part in the economic and day to day activities within her society. This stance of Sidi speaks on behalf of other black and the third world women that they are not weak or submissive. Though they are doubly marginalized by the colonial and patriarchal tyranny, still they take part in economic stability of their society and work for their families and themselves because of the norms set in the society. Wole Soyinka in his play, *The Lion and the Jewel*, describes the white colonizers as a hideous power behind making the third

world conditions even worse. He presents the gruesome reality of the colonizers in taking part in the patriarchal tyranny of the natives thus demeaning the identity of women and making their lives more miserable. One of the customs of patriarchal society in Nigeria was polygamy. The colonizers aided the patriarchs in this act because more marriages would lead to more children which would result in the increase in the number of labourers working for the economic development of the colonizers. The most secure way for a man to obtain more labor is to have many children, produced and raised by many women. Thus, they make polygamy a “vicious circle for natives” (Kara 860). In short, it deteriorated the social and economic conditions of the black people which in return made the women lives more wretched and pitiful.

Ashapura Devi, a Bengali writer, in her novel “*The First Promise* (2009)”, lays down the story of efforts and struggles of a woman in the nineteenth century Bengal. Satya is a girl born in the colonial Bengal under the British rule. She is not allowed to go to school therefore she learns to read and write at home and is educated by her mother. When she grows eight years old, Satya becomes the victim of child marriage. This marriage leads to various trials that Satya encompasses to achieve her identity. Her marriage marks to a journey from her conservative town, Nathiyanandpur to a city of dreams and promises, Calcutta. Ashapura Devi characterizes Satyawati as a strong woman with considerable non-feminine traits set only for men at that time. She has keen interest for getting education which was only a delight that was offered to men in the colonial time. Also, she has profound desire of fishing (S. Mishra 454). These interests of Satyawati alienate her from other marginalized women of the colonized Bengal where women were made victims of patriarchy. Once Satya while talking to her father says, “...Huh! As if I fear the dark!” (Devi 23). The courage of Satya depicts her composure and strength to fight the darkness patriarchy and colonial power imposed on women in the nineteenth century Bengal. Satyawati does not become a true embodiment of a “Sati savitri wife” which in other terms is a slave. When she is tried to be tamed by her mother-in-law such as how to sit and how to eat properly. But Satya does not approve of her mother-in-law reprimanding her. Moreover, her husband feels as the “loss of a clay doll for a wife” (Devi 191). Nabakumar, husband of Satya, seems to have an image of Satya as a sati savitri wife but when sees her rebellious nature he feels at loss. At that time the women were assumed to be like a puppet

who obeys as they are told. Ashapura Devi carves the character of Satyawati with unconventional traits associated to women at the times of colonized Bengal. She gives women the strength to argue against men to fight for their wishes.

In the novel, *The First Promise*, Satya argues to go to the Calcutta and no one can stop her due to her sheer determination. She says, I will, will, will go to Calcutta! Just to check out for myself if a woman is struck down by thunder when she steps into the city!” (Devi 230). These lines depict the fortitude and resilience of Satya to do such things from which the women were refrained. The women were confined to limited spaces, mostly their homes. Satya was born in a village and such women were considered recessive and poor therefore, were supposed to stay at their homes. But Satya desires to go beyond the limits set for women by the society’s patriarchal and colonial tyranny. The husband of Satya looking at her courageous and compassionate nature tells her that she is ready to take any kind of risk. Risk is associated with power and courage which are the traits given to men by the patriarchal mentality. Thus, Nabakumar claims that Satya should have been a man rather than a woman (S. Mishra 455). Satya throughout the novel tries to reform the lives of other women through her independent journey of self-existence. Through the mouthpiece of Satya, Ashapura Devi embarks the most profound question out of curiosity to seek answer from the society and the world that Aren’t women humans? (Devi 391). This sentence assists as a hallmark to the feminist approach in the novel, *The First Promise* and serves the purpose of Ashapura Devi’s purpose of writing that the Bengali women are rational enough to question and argue for their identity. This research focuses on the journey of a young Bengali girl who bears unjust and biased conduct of the patriarchal and colonial marginalization but maintains to fight for her and other women independent existence.

The above researches discussed in this section take into account the women in various third world countries and explores how the women have changed overtime and what status they occupy at present. This dissertation brings into concern the Sri Lankan women and explores how far the Sri Lankan women have tried to transform and challenge the set conventions of western feminism that bound them as victims in the eyes of the other.

The next section reviews the literature already explored with respect to the two selected Sri Lankan novels.

2.6.3 Review of literature with respect to novels

The novel, *Cinnamon Gardens* (1998), has been explored with respect to different aspects. Some of the researches already done, discussed below, assist in understanding and investigating much more that is still left to be revealed.

The article, “Gender and Women Rights in Shyam Selvadurai’s *Cinnamon Gardens*” (2015), focuses on the perspectives of the neglecting of women rights in the colonial Ceylon, now Sri Lanka. The narrative deals with the issues of oppression and injustice between genders, ethnic, and religious minorities, and the sexual taboo relations that were taken as influence from the colonial masters by the colonized and the way these different classes became the victims of discrimination and injustices of the British and indigenous colonization (Padmaja 164). The man-made laws even deprive women of their basic freedom. The cry for equality and to search a rightful place in the world remains the foremost struggle of women. The characterization of Annalukshmi in the novel, *Cinnamon Gardens*, though depicts a strong role yet there remain some marks of patriarchy along with other women who are marginalized and are subservient to the colonial patriarchy (162). This research paper brings out the events that lead to suppress women and the women continue to suffer from double marginalization in the colonial times of Ceylon.

Love has always been a major theme of most of the novels written so far but some novels present the critical issues that bind love to social and political boundaries and affect the individual. “Past matters: Queer contestations of colonial masculinity in Leslie de Noronha’s *The Dew Drop Inn* and Shyam Selvadurai’s *Cinnamon Gardens*” (2015), reflects the same-sex love depicting a queer colonial identity and its influence in Ceylon. This narrative investigates the love desire of Balendren and his niece Annalukshmi, where one reflects the transgression of sexuality as he boldly accepts his affair with Richard and the other depicts its close relation and emancipation of Annalukshmi desires with the decolonization of Ceylon (Bakshi 545). Selvadurai in one of his interviews to the Canadian Bookseller Association stressed upon the significance of the novel: “I think of *Cinnamon Gardens* not as a historical novel, but more as a metaphor for the present” (553). *Cinnamon*

Gardens thus acts as a bildungsroman in regard to the circumstances of the gender differences along with the political game of the colonial setup which is still evident in today's world through the imperial means of the powers in the third world countries.

Similarly, another article, "Indigenizing Sexuality and National Citizenship: Shyam Selvadurai's *Cinnamon Gardens*" (2009), portrays the idea of sexuality and nationality in this novel. Shyam Selvadurai's historical novel *Cinnamon Gardens*, set in the 1927-28 Ceylon depicts the period of colonial end in Sri Lanka. It contributes the ideas of induction of sexuality and gender role in the national discourses of a country. This novel indigenizes the theme of sexuality with rest of the themes like that of gender, ethnicity and nationalism thus intermingling the idea of sexuality throughout the course of the novel. The researcher through this article argues that there is no direct link between the nationality and its adjoining with the sexuality but there are incidents that give the impression of sexuality being the pivot and center of the novel. Heather Smyth's (2009) observation that *Cinnamon Gardens* indigenizes and legitimizes "gay sexuality in Sri Lankan space and history" (Smyth 20) is equally applicable to Noronha's text in its Indian context. This theme of sexuality remains one of the most critical issue related to gender that haunts Belandran throughout his life in the colonial Ceylon and how personal life invades the political situation of the country.

Home remains a significant feature and an element of debate among the individuals of the third world countries. The diasporic minorities living away from their home, to which they are attached by roots, suffer from a sense of loss and lack of fixity of their identity. "Narratives of home': Interrogating Selvadurai's Representation of Home in *Funny Boy*, *Cinnamon Gardens*, and *The Hungry Ghosts*" (2017), which is written by Soumi Goswami explores the concept of Home. The word home is a multidimensional concept linked with multiple connotations and is of critical importance in Diaspora studies. The meaning of home does not specifically vary when articulated from different locations but also is deeply affected by the race, ethnicity, cultural values, gender, class and sexuality (Goswami n. pag). According to Jasbir Jain who writes in *The Diaspora Writes Home: Subcontinental Narratives* that for diasporic writers the concept of home is not merely a creative expression but it represents their connectivity 'as if being called back answering a

summon' (Jain 11). This article investigates the shifting relationship of Shyam Selvadurai with his home country, Sri Lanka through his characters. This article also focuses on the Selvadurai's use of memory, history, trauma and dislocation in the light of his personal, emotional and the political turmoil in his country. In the novel, *Cinnamon Gardens* Selvadurai represents his hyphenated and hybrid identity through his homosexuality (his relation to Richard and his marriage to his Sri Lankan wife). The arrival of Richard in Sri Lanka after a long time seems to Balendran a great threat to his married life and endangers his safety of home. The characters of Annalukshmi and Balendran representing the perspectives of grand narratives of colonialism and nationalism also fail to encompass the emotions and identities that the word home evokes. The representation of the elite's life and their greed for power depicts the advancements towards the polarization of the ethnic varieties and violence. Moreover, Selvadurai in this novel seems to be haunted by the sense of loss and questions the fabrication of a new country where the interests of the majority are built upon at the cost of the minorities and where the ethnicity seems to play its major role. The grand narrative of ethnic hatred and segregation is set at the heart of the novel unravelling a nation's identity which had been a home to a diverse nature of people for a thousand of years (28-30). In short, Selvadurai makes an effort to create a consciousness of his identity between a host and home country and how it effects his identity and of many other Sri Lankans at the hands of the consequences laid out by the stereotypes, traditions, ethnicity and the nationalistic discourses.

The article, "Gender and Women Rights in Shyam Selvadurai's *Cinnamon Gardens*" (2015), focuses on the perspectives of the neglecting of women rights in the colonial Ceylon, now Sri Lanka. The narrative deals with the issues of oppression and injustice between genders, ethnic, and religious minorities, and the sexual taboo relations that were taken as influence from the colonial masters by the colonized and the way these different classes became the victims of discrimination and injustices of the British and indigenous colonization (Padmaja 164). The man-made laws even deprive women of their basic freedom. The cry for equality and to search a rightful place in the world remains the foremost struggle of women. The characterization of Annalukshmi in the novel, *Cinnamon Gardens*, though depicts a strong role yet there remain some marks of patriarchy along with other women who are marginalized and are subservient to the colonial patriarchy

(162). Padmaja brings out the events that lead to suppress women and the women continue to suffer from double marginalization in the colonial times of Ceylon.

Love has always been a major theme of most of the novels written so far but some novels present the critical issues that bind love to social and political boundaries and affect the individual. “Past matters: Queer Contestations of Colonial Masculinity in Leslie de Noronha’s *The Dew Drop Inn* and Shyam Selvadurai’s *Cinnamon Gardens*” (2015), reflects the same-sex love depicting a queer colonial identity and its influence in Ceylon. This narrative investigates the love desire of Balendren and his niece Annalukshmi, where one reflects the transgression of sexuality as he boldly accepts his affair with Richard and the other depicts its close relation and emancipation of Annalukshmi desires with the decolonization of Ceylon (Bakshi 545). Selvadurai in one of his interviews to the Canadian Bookseller Association stressed upon the significance of the novel: “I think of *Cinnamon Gardens* not as a historical novel, but more as a metaphor for the present” (553). *Cinnamon Gardens* thus acts as a bildungsroman in regard to the circumstances of the gender differences along with the political game of the colonial setup which is still evident in today’s world through the imperial means of the powers in the third world countries.

Kailas Bapurao Aute’s article “Resisting Hegemonic Ideology: Study of *Funny Boy* and *Cinnamon Gardens*” (2017) has been published in the International Journal of English Language, Literature in Humanities. In this article the researcher has tried to unravel the postcolonial ideas in the two novels written by Shyam Selvadurai. In the novel, *Cinnamon Gardens* (1998), the critic investigates the postcolonial and anti-patriarchal ideologies that the characters tend to follow and reveal in 1920’s Ceylon during the time of transition. Shyam Selvadurai belonged to the minority Tamil class and brings forth this ethnic conflict that was a major drawback of Ceylon at that time. He tries to intermingle the postcolonial politics, historical material and personal experience to project his ideology through his writings. This article displays the experiences and struggles of the two main protagonists, Annalukshmi and Balendran, who prefer their desires over the social norms but also reveal some ways in which they are made to conform to the society by snubbing their personal desires and needs. The rebellious nature and the problems faced by the characters like Annalukshmi, Balendran and Arul depict the victimization, oppression, ethnic intolerance

and patriarchy that prevailed in Sri Lanka at the time (Aute 386). Balendran's consciousness of his homosexuality and Annalukshmi's desire to live outside the marriage norms coincide with the Ceylon's struggle for independence thus reflecting its ideology (387).

Identity is the focal point of an individual's personality and helps to define the actual nature of the person. This identity is a topic of great dispute in the novels written by the postcolonial writers who while living under the colonial rule seem to have lost the real sense of their identity and depict the same through their writings. In the article, "Conformity and Conflict: Reading Identity in Shyam Selvadurai's *Funny Boy* and *Cinnamon Gardens*" which has been written by Kalaichelvi Panchalingam, a very similar idea has been taken up under study. The researcher investigates the identity and third space of his characters which he finds distinctive and workable in these both novels. Panchalingam argues that for Selvadurai the third space is not merely an in-between space but a marvelous open space and acknowledges it as an opportunity that opens up to broad horizons (Panchalingam 68). This article tries to portray the impacts of the societal pressures on the identity of an individual and the situations when these individuals are forced to conform to the norms which often results in conflict. Sometimes such pressure gives birth to the victimization and suppression of an individual and distorts his identity along with the change in his impression of the society in which he resides (66). The homosexual character of Balendran, Seelan's identity as an outcast, Annalukshmi's parents' conflict of religion all are analyzed to view how the identities of these individuals rotate throughout the novel and also brings into focus the circumstances that pave way for the hybrid nature of these characters.

The novel, *A Disobedient Girl* (2009), written by Ru Freeman has also been examined by some critics. An article, "'Small Town Identities and Innocence' in Sri Lankan American Women's Writings" which is written by Shashikala Assella concentrates on the influences of the urban culture on the ordinary, simple and innocent women in the rural settings. The main stance of Assella in this study is to explore the gender of women and the extent to which they are affected by modernity (Assella 2). The two novels, *The Lament of the Dhobi Woman* (2010) and *A Disobedient Girl* (1998) are the primary focus

of Assella. The novel, *A Disobedient Girl* (2009), unveils and condemns the stereotyping of the pure rural and corrupt urban psyche set as a standard in the society. The dichotomy of urban and rural is expressed through the two narratives of Biso and Latha employed by Ru Freeman in her novel. This binary of the innocence and corrupt is created under the hold of western influence on the economy and culture of the indigenous land (3-10).

A book review, “*A Disobedient Girl (2009)* by Ru Freeman”, written by Kristen Chen throws lights on the insights of the story. The story of two women, Biso and Latha, moves forward between the alternate chapters. Thara, the Vithanages’ daughter and mistress of the household shares a typical friendship with Latha but it gets tensed and complex as they approach their adulthood and the societal norms become clear to their eyes. Biso’s story revolves around her adventure on the train after she leaves her husband but eventually ends up losing all her children. Both these women, Biso and Latha, lives converge at a point revealing the link in their stories (Chen 177). Ru Freeman in the novel gives lead to the women who are struggling and have risked everything to achieve better lives. These characters fight the circumstances and prevail in ways that make the readers question the notion of love and compassion (178) .

The review of the literature of the primary texts of this research signifies the various angles on which the critics have already pondered upon. The novel, *Cinnamon Gardens* (1998), has been explored at a larger scale than the novel, *A Disobedient Girl* (2009), which has been a less examined text by the critics and researchers. This research aims to bring forth a new perspective of these novels and puts the third world women in the center to decenter the western concept about them. This study highlights the emerging status of women which rejects the conventional ideas attached to the women in the third world for a long period of time.

CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I have discussed the theoretical perspectives and the research methodology that I consider appropriate to analyze the selected works of fiction. A review of the available critical scholarship has enabled me to develop a critical insight into the theoretical approach that can be effectively used to analyze my primary texts. The basic features of Mohanty's theory extracted from her essay, "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourse" (1984), set forth in order to accomplish this research study are likely to provide the theoretical support for this project. As my research lies in the qualitative paradigm, the research method which I have followed is largely subjective. Therefore, I have employed Belsey's textual analysis as presented in her essay "Textual Analysis as a Research Method" in order to analyze my primary texts. Moreover, textual analysis, which seeks to interpret a text by acknowledging the various possibilities and diversities of meaning, is likely to be useful in reading the selected texts.

3.2 Theoretical Framework for this Study

The following research incorporates the theoretical concepts of Chandra Talpade Mohanty which she mentions in her essay, "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourse" (1984). This essay is a part of her book *Feminism without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity* (2003). This book is divided into three sections: Decolonizing Feminism, Demystifying Capitalism, and Reorienting Feminism. This essay, "Under Western Eyes" (1984), is taken from the first part Decolonizing Feminism. In this essay, Chandra Talpade Mohanty evaluates the concept of homogeneous standard universalized image of the third world women as shaped by the western feminists. She seems to make an effort to dismantle and deconstruct this model in her essay by bringing into consideration the various cultural, social and political norms that help in redefining the assumptions that are held standardized for all women by the western feminists. Likewise, I have chosen Mohanty's perspective which is likely to support the

argument of my thesis which also aims to challenge the monolithic assumptions tagged upon third world women, to destabilize the colonizer's image as a "mirror or foil through which colonial ways of seeing and gendering becomes a norm" (Al-Saji 884) and reveal the third world Sri Lankan's women diversity of experience.

In "Under Western Eyes" (1984), Mohanty censures the homogeneous viewpoints and presuppositions in the Western women's activist texts that emphasize on women in the third world. She explicitly comments on the Western woman's rights in a selected gathering of writings delivered by Fran Hosken, Maria Cutrufelli, Juliette Minces, Beverly Lindsay, and Patricia Jeffery distributed by Zed Press in what is entitled the Third World Series (Mohanty 336). Most of these discourses elaborate the third world women as a group of homogenous and universal victims of chauvinism, colonial process, familial system, development process along with different cultural activities (338). Mohanty condemns those western discourses that displayed the ill and false representation of the third world countries and their women.

Mohanty elaborates that the western feminism is not at all homogenous or universal nor Mohanty treats it as a monolith rather she critiques and comments only on those particular writers who "codify Others as non-western and themselves as (implicitly) western (334). These western feminists represent themselves by defining the third world women. According to Mohanty, this project of the western feminism is clearly the extension of colonial process and recreates the idea of political domination through the discursive practice. The feminist scholarly writings thus, produced by some writers in the west are usually categorized in the terms and relations of power and are produced with the purpose of fulfilling the ideological agenda of colonialism of these white feminists.

According to Mohanty, the discourse and texts created by the western women writers codify their insightful works and are likely to colonize and ghettoize the non-western and non-white women. Mohanty vividly states that the colonization of the western feminist group that tend to demean the brown women have transformed it into "discursive one" (Mohanty 333) which is based upon certain kind of "scholarship and knowledge" that codifies the truth about these third world women in accordance to the feminists interests of the U.S and Western Europe (334). The third world women are therefore, tagged as other

and become the victims of marginalization. Mohanty reveals the stereotyping of the women in the east by the west. She contends, to mark women in the third world nations as “ignorant, poor, uneducated, tradition-bound, domestic, family-oriented, victimized, etc.” (337) ignoring the surviving multifaceted nature, decent variety, and assortment of women in the non-Western world. Mohanty challenges the ideas that over-generalize the non-Western women without thinking about the class, ethnic, and racial settings to which they have a place with.

According to Mohanty there are different ways in which the authors of the books published under zed press series represent the third world women as victims of patriarchy, as universally dependent, bound and oppressed by familial systems and confined within religious ideologies. This eurocentrism and totalization of the west towards the third world leaves them no room for agency. Thus, the diversity of experience of women in the third world dies. This research therefore aims to reflect such nuanced characters by using Mohanty lens who are shattering the shackles of colonial and patriarchal chains. Through this effort, this research tries to contend the eccentric and monolithic representation of the third world Sri Lankan women.

3.3 Definition of woman and women

Mohanty in her essay very carefully analyzes the term feminism. According to her, feminism is a trans-historical and political position. For her, the very essential idea is that of the term western. According to Mohanty feminism in the western locales are all associated and influenced by the western narrative, as all the feminism is western feminism, all the feminist scholarship is the western scholarship and all the western feminist scholarship is the same and universal (Mohanty 334). Elizabeth Spelman also writes in this opinion that if the women are oppressed by sexism then it cannot be judged that all the sexism done on the women is the same and universal. This realization convicts any reductionist, essentializing definition of women’s oppression as a universal female experience. In the same manner, Mohanty condemns this idea of universalism and believes that everything cannot be categorized into one group rather things differ from one another on the basis of small differences.

Mohanty brings forward the idea of “Third World Difference-that stable ahistorical something that apparently oppresses most if not all women in these countries” (Mohanty 335). According to Mohanty, this third world difference is the product of the sexual difference which occurs in the form of “cross-culturally singular, monolithic notion” (335) of the male chauvinism. The western feminist scholars use this third world difference as a tool to colonize the lives of women who belong to different race, caste, colour, religion in these third world countries. Hence, this leads to the “systemization and homogenization” (335) of the suppression and marginalization of women in the third world countries through the power generated by the west on the basis of this difference.

Mohanty in her essay, “Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourse” (1984), states the view of Anour Abdel-Malek who writes that the impact of western feminist scholarship on the third world should be analyzed and “examined in terms of its inscription” (335) especially in the relationship of the power and struggle. Moreover while commenting on the politics in the discourse of culture Anour Abdel-Malek states that “contemporary imperialism is, in real sense, a hegemonic imperialism, exercising to a maximum degree a rationalized violence taken to a higher level than ever before-through fire and sword , but also through an attempt to control hearts and minds” (Abdel-Malek 145-146). The colonial agenda, in the contemporary times, has modified to take an imperial form through which they still carry to colonize and occupy the souls of third world people.

Mohanty through her critique draws an attention towards the western hegemonic ideological agenda of serving their political effect through the western feminist writings about the third world women or women of colour. These writings, publications and magazines are full of consumption of ideas and information are created in the context the global hegemonic power of the white feminists that try to dominate the discourse of the world through representing the third world women. In Mohanty’s view this representation done on the part of the western feminists to define the brown women leads to develop a sense of white feminists’ conflation with the imperial agenda in the eyes of the third world women (Mohanty 336). The idea of the sisterly effort of the white feminists in defining their counterparts living in the third world countries does not seem to bring out the true representation of women of colour who are culturally, socially, religiously and

ideologically different from each other as well as the white western feminists. Therefore, this misrepresentation done on the behalf of the white feminists that call upon the brown women as others create a doubt in the minds of the brown women regarding the white feminists as being the carriers of colonial legacy.

Mohanty critically views the discursive colonization which the western feminists promote through the phrase the Third World Women and identify women as archetypal victims. According to Mohanty when Hosken and Lindsay express and fight for the rights of human and the problems that women face in case of female genital mutilation, they all focus on the male induced violence over the weak victimized females (338). Mohanty names these women as objects who defend themselves in their struggle against men and defines the male counterpart as the subject who is the perpetrator of violence and oppression on the women. She very vividly condemns this misrepresentation of the women as archetypal, weak and submissive which leads them into a passive powerless position. This targeting and discrimination of women by the patriarchy and west thus endorses silence in these women (349-351). Mohanty denounces the totalization done on the part of West and criticizes the dual system in which this hegemonic agenda traps the world. The distribution of power and taking control of all power functions in hand, the west creates the binary of perpetrator and oppressor and through this discursive colonization the other is deemed vulnerable, weak and subservient (352). Mohanty believes that it is the representation of the third world women that sustains the illusion of the first world (353). According to Mohanty the same idea follows in feminism where the women in the West try to take authority and create their own image of the third world and show them as inferior and less liberal than the west.

3.4 Research Methodology

This research is exploratory and interpretive in nature. The exploratory nature of the research attempts to bring out new perspectives and directions out of the work being analyzed, which is also categorized as a soul of a good research (Swedberg 2). Interpretive research aims to uncover meaning toward a better understanding of the issues involved in the research (Alvermann 488). This research is studied under the research method of qualitative textual analysis.

3.5 Research Method

Textual analysis as defined by Alan Mckee (2003) is about the way the humans in different contexts make sense of their world. It benefits in interpreting various outlooks through interpretive means. It also takes into account the social context that the readers of the texts bring to the table (J. A. Smith 3).

This research employs Catherine Belsey's model of textual analysis as presented in her essay "Textual Analysis as a Research Method" included in Gabriele Griffin's book *Research Methods for English Studies* (2005) to analyze *Cinnamon Gardens* (1998) by Shyam Selvadurai and *A Disobedient Girl* (2009) by Ru Freeman. The reason for such selection is that Belsey's textual analysis is presented as a close reading of cultural production. She mentions that "...where cultural criticism includes English, cultural history and cultural studies, as well as any other discipline that focuses on texts" (Belsey 157). Furthermore, her argument also rests on the premise that words are signifiers leading to multiple interpretations and meanings. Belsey says:

According to the theory of language I have invoked, there can be no final signified: no one true meaning can come to light ... Meaning is not anchored in anything outside signification itself ... meanings are always ultimately undecidable. (Belsey 172-173)

In line with this argument, I have attempted to avoid any essentialist interpretation/s. The point that meaning making varies from theorist to theorist and is different in different contexts is the basis of textual analysis. This approach is useful as my theorist Mohanty proposes a counter-discourse to the monolithic assumptions of western feminism that they are likely to associate with the third world women. Mohanty, therefore, attempts to subvert the totalization and eurocentric binarism created by some of the West in their literary discourses. Textual analysis as outlined by Belsey largely rests on a text's cultural background, its production, and consumption. It attempts to find out different interpretations of a text and assess how text is a product of different discourses. Keeping this in view, I have attempted to uncover the importance of culture in the degree of autonomy the women have in their respective regions. It therefore, substantiates the argument of my thesis which is shaped through the analysis of the selected texts.

This mode of textual analysis compliments Mohanty's Feminist stance and provides a more critical perspective to interpret and explore the selected novels, *Cinnamon Gardens* (1998) and *A Disobedient Girl* (2009). In the next chapter, I attempt to answer my research questions through the analysis of selected fiction in the light of the chosen theoretical framework.

CHAPTER 4

THE THIRD WORLD FEMINISM: A CRITIQUE OF WESTERN FEMINIST'S UNIVERSALISM

4.1 Introduction

The conjuncture between postcolonialism and feminism is very critical in the present emerging scenario. Chandra Talpade Mohanty brings significant contribution to this field and comments on the status and depiction of the third world women. In her essay, "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourse" (1984), she locates the idea of the western feminism in contrast to the third world feminism. This reductive approach on the part of the liberal western feminism leads to the formation of the strict binaries and self-representation of the western women as superior while the third world women are projected as poor, marginalized and inferior (Mohanty 42).

Therefore, Mohanty brings a counter-discourse to reject and refute these western women's remarks about the third world women through which they try to suppress the third world individualities. Such discriminatory behavior, according to Mohanty needs to be criticized, condemned and must be subverted. Moreover, the essential aim of postcolonial and third world feminism lies in the fact that it originated to name the bias attitude of those colonial and imperial powers that demeaned the women of colour as submissive and marginalized.

Herein lays a feminist analysis that locates the struggles of the third world women and incorporates the challenge of these indigenous women who try to fight against this binary.

4.2 *Cinnamon Gardens* (1998)

4.2.1 Introduction

Cinnamon Gardens (1998) is Shyam Selvadurai's second novel, following his prize-winning success novel, *Funny Boy* (1994). After its inauguration, *Cinnamon Gardens* (1998) was highly praised by the readers. This fame led to the immediate translation of this

novel into a few dialects. In this novel, Selvadurai describes the multifaceted universe of 1920s Ceylon seen from the viewpoint of the ground-breaking high societies of Colombo's rich suburb. It introduces the audience to a well-mannered society managed by decorum, ceremonies, and antiquated conventions that prescribe the method of getting things done: the teas, the meals, the gatherings, the day-by-day meetings and week by week journeys with relatives, the oversight of workers, escorts, and cultivators. Thus, *Cinnamon Gardens* (1998) is an interesting read that explores the sophisticated and artificial society of the colonized Ceylon. It is a novel about the dangers and compensations of autonomy of a state under colonial rule and the liberation of women from the indigenous and patriarchal strains (Richardson n.p).

The first and, seemingly, most unique character of *Cinnamon Gardens* (1998) is Annalukshmi, niece of the family patriarch, the powerful Mudaliyar Navaratnam, whose activity is to help British government specialists to complete their pioneer strategy. She is an exceptionally insightful, well-educated, and affluent young woman who knows precisely what she needs. She battles for (and in the end accomplishes) autonomy in a general public where a women's vocation is considered a disgrace and is generally opted by the women who are excessively poor or excessively appalling to actually get a spouse. Selvadurai very fascinatingly brings forward the way that Annalukshmi endeavors to liberate her from the weights of society, the inward battles of her uncle Balendran, a secluded gay, who picks marriage and decency instead of following Richard Howard, the love of his life and the struggles of Louisa Barnett, the strong willed authority, who is compelled to bring up her little girls alone, while her significant other appreciates an existence with his fancy woman abroad.

4.2.2 Deconstructing the Other, A textual Analysis of *Cinnamon Gardens* (1998)

The analysis of the novel, *Cinnamon Gardens* paves way to dismantle the binary created by the western feminists of othering the brown women. Following are some themes analyzed to highlight the third world struggles of defining and constructing themselves as free and independent subjects.

4.2.2.1 Education

Annalukshmi despite belonging to a third world country appears as an independent woman. She is well educated and stands first in her degree of English literature. Selvadurai sets his tone to subvert some of the usual western rhetoric about the third world women when he writes, “...her achievements were remarkable- or, depending on your conviction, appalling” (CG 3).

This achievement is a source of comfiture for the rest of the boys’ schools in the vicinity. Annalukshmi being a woman surpasses the patriarchal oppression through her education and maintains an upper hand over them. She bears affinity to Mohanty’s stance of rejecting the western feminist idea of third world women as uneducated. In this novel, it can be witnessed that an educated Sri Lankan woman challenges the idea of all indigenous women being uneducated. The protagonist, Annalukshmi, reflects a character of strength and composure which in short, questions the western feminist universal notions that demean the status of the third world indigenous women.

Education brings with itself different rewards and one can be seen in the form of the occupation. Annalukshmi adopts teaching to make herself independent economically, socially, and personally which leads to the implementation of her identity as a comprehensive woman of strength. She’s unconventionality is portrayed through her career as a teacher. Though this occupation is considered misfit for the women by her family and they try to snub her but she opts it against all odds and pursues it happily. So, Annalukshmi reflects a woman of free will. At the time depicted in this novel, there were many restrictions imposed on the Sri Lankan women who were confined to do limited tasks but the representation of Annalukshmi brings into light such character of women even in those times that had a sense of responsibility and a vision of their own. This description by Selvadurai in his novels challenges the same notion that Mohanty points out in her own essay regarding the third world women who are categorized as “a singular monolithic subject” (Mohanty 17). He brings forth such composed and unrestricted character of his protagonist in the Sri Lankan society to oppose the western agenda that delineates all women in Sri Lanka as inferior, weak, and marginalized under the patriarchy.

4.2.2.2 Transport

Another instance that adds to this debate is Annalukshmi's resolve to drive a bicycle. Usually, at this time, the indigenous women of Sri Lanka were considered respectable to travel by Rickshaws and bicycles were not meant to be a decent source of transportation for these women. Selvadurai mentions this concept in his novel and reflects it through a dialogue spoken by one of Annalukshmi's sister, Kumudini. Here Kumidini becomes the mouthpiece of the society and says: "It's one thing for the European women to ride bicycles. We can't" (CG 8). This restriction imposed on the Sri Lankan women by the society confines them within cages but Annalukshmi breaks away from these norms and customs that seem to marginalize women and fights against it. She does not let the society silence her; rather, she takes the position of the subject and decides the things for her own. She seems indifferent to society's norms. Through her efforts, she tries to evoke some sense of consciousness among her sisters that if they also express some strength and bravery then the Sri Lankan women will also find it easy and conventional to ride a bicycle themselves which ultimately will lead to their liberty in this regard. In the novel, *Cinnamon Gardens*, Analukshmi while replying to Kumudini's conventional thought says, "European women can ride bicycles and do all sort of other stuff because a few brave women made a start" (CG 8). The protagonist, Annalukshmi, does not feel herself or any other Sri Lankan woman as low and inferior to the European women and supports her arguments by claiming that the European women are free and independent because some of them showed through their tasks to the world that they are capable of doing anything and are free socially, economically and politically. Like Mohanty's stance she appears as a strong third world Sri Lankan woman who does not sit back to be subservient to the European talk rather rejects the monolithic assumption tagged to the colonial indigenous women. She does not give way to the other people's opinion over this and protests even against her mother who forbids her from riding a bicycle. She calls out to her mother, "I shall ride it anyway" (CG 8). The sisters of Annalukshmi while portraying the society's thinking try to hinder her from using a bicycle by making an attempt to attack on her physical appearance and respect which is dear to every individual and was even of great importance for women in Ceylon.

Manohari, a sister of Annalukshmi, rebukes her by saying, "You think you are wondrously adventurous Akka, but the truth is you look an absolute fright on that bicycle"

(CG 17). The criticism is not limited to her house rather all people in her vicinity including the teachers at school mock her. One of the teachers, Margery De Soya, at her school mocked Annalukshmi behind her back in front of the whole staffroom making her resemblance parallel to that of a peon. Margery De Soya criticizes Annalukshmi and devalues her identity by insulting her status and capabilities. This action of these women, to demean and devalue Annalukshmi's status by comparing her to petty and low things, act as an influence of the western powers intended to other the third world women. Her strong will power depicts her courage and lack of fear of the consequences which she might have to face. Therefore, she is the one who rides the bicycle to set an example for the other women to get inspiration and break free from the set conventions that hold them back. She, as the protagonist of this narrative, authorizes herself and deconstructs the idea of women in the third world being weak and inferior.

This act is also a source of inspiration for other women in the locality who look at Annalukshmi with admiration and awe while “a few pleading to be allowed to have a turn on the bicycle” (CG 19). In this novel, Selvadurai while crafting his protagonist brings out the idea of power and courage as displayed in the following lines. “Annalukshmi was not going to let herself be stopped by the ridiculous conventions of society” (CG 9). Another instance highlighting the freedom and triumph of Annalukshmi is when the writer narrates,

here she was riding her bicycle to school. The deliciously cool wind flapped against her sari and crept underneath it ... she began to pedal faster, blissfully unaware of the looks she was getting from pedestrians and motorists. (CG 17)

These lines emphasize Annalukshmi's fighting spirit and show her resolve to break all stereotypes associated with women in the third world Sri Lankan colony. Mohanty's stance coincides with her free will and her staunch urge to follow her desires despite any resistance that comes in her way. Like Mohanty's rhetoric, this act shuns all arguments that associate the third world woman to a monolithic category of being passive and submissive.

4.2.2.3 Father as Strength

Annalukshmi in one of her conversations to Nancy, her friend, relates the story of her father. Her father appears to be a nonconformist and had never let the society narrow his gaze when it came to his daughters. Annalukshmi claims that she and her father shared a strong attachment when she was a child. Her parents had no son but only daughters, still

they were not biased towards them. Murugasu, Annalukshmi's father, trains her in every aspect and considers that she "was better than a son" (CG 216). Murugasu taught her to do account, how the rubber was made, told her how to swim and also made her aware of the business they ran. Such training was not allowed for women in the colonial times and was only meant for men. Murugasu is even physically abusive towards his wife due to the religious differences. After the death of Murugasu's father, the clash of the religious difference between Murugasu and Louisa fanned the growing distance and led to break their family apart. However, the support of Annalukshmi's parents to make her stand on her feet with courage and pride presents a new outlook towards the treatment of third world woman's strength and status in the Sri Lankan society in contrast to the colonial and western white feminist thought about them.

4.2.2.4 Strength of Louisa as a Wife and Mother

Louisa, the mother of Annalukshmi, also represents a figure of strong will and determination in some instances. Louisa is illustrated as a mother with strength and resistance in her soul. Living in a familial system she is offended by her husband's behavior towards her and their daughters, as her husband, Murugasu is offensive and beats her. She tries to keep calm and bear the situation until one day when Murugasu pulls off Annalukshmi's hair and slaps her over a petty issue. This act is unbearable for Louisa and therefore she decides to break off the subversive silence boiling inside her and gives life to her voice.

Another instance that forces Louisa to part ways with Murugasu is the change of his religion. She does not give in to her husband's religion by staying firm and determined on her religion and decides the same for her daughters. This clash of religion becomes the major bone of contention and tears away the relation between the husband and wife. After the separation, Louisa becomes the man of her family, supports them, provides them protection and brings them up as respectable women of the society. She keeps her status of marriage hidden from the other people for the sake of her daughter's pride and status in the society while she remains in distress and agony under the shade of her ill and broken relationship. Being a third world Sri Lankan mother, she does not abandon her daughters. She sees them as her courage to raise and lift herself in the society and move forward in her life. Mohanty in her theory also brings in the similar idea of a brown woman who is

not weak and docile rather is strong and courageous to uplift herself and move as an autonomous subject.

4.2.2.5 Balendran: Unconventional Third World Male and Support for Women

The Ceylon society in the 1920s was not quite conservative rather some men who were well educated promoted the social mobility of their wives in the society. Balendren (Annalukshmi's uncle), the son of Mudaliyar Navaratnam, an educated gentleman graduated from the university in England is an embodiment of such men in the Sri Lankan society of that time. Sonia, Balendren's wife, is an educated woman but keeps herself busy all the time in the household chores. Balendren thinks that being an educated and confident woman it is the responsibility of Sonia to divide her time and involve herself to take part in the political activities occurring in the society at that time. This depicts Balendren's positivity and difference from the other patriarchal men. Balendren dismantles the conception of the west that the men are tyrannical, and all subjugate women under their oppression as Balendran is the figure who becomes support for Sonia and her strong status in the social circle of Ceylon.

He does not restrain her nor oppresses her instead becomes her wings to fly high and achieve the goal of becoming an independent woman socially and economically. This is the reason that "Sonia volunteered a lot of her time and effort to the Girl's Friendly Society on Green Path" (CG 57). This society made for females provided shelter and employment opportunities to single working women. This club is the outcome of Sonia's day to day toil and contributes by teaching English and different skills to the girls residing there. This struggle of Sonia for other women in Sri Lanka was to make them learn variant skills, work in a comfortable environment and live independently by being stable economically. Balendran is not only a backbone to his wife rather provides equivalent strength and support to Annalukshmi. Moreover, he admires Annalukshmi for her reluctance to accept things as they are and her strong power of determination. He is a man of unconventional thought. Such portrayal condemns the claim of some western feminists about the third world women being victims of patriarchy. The illustration of Shyam Selvadurai breaks away the binary created between the western and non-western women and the negligence of the proposition that the third world colonized women are weak and inferior to any other women in the world.

At the resolution of the novel *Louisa and Aunt Philomela* plead Balendran to stop Annalukshmi for moving to Jaffna but it is Balendran who lets Annalukshmi follow her heart and what she decides rightful for herself. Even at the end of the novel despite of all difficulties and tragedies that Annalukshmi had to face and the struggles she made, she is still resolute and strong-minded to withstand whatever comes in the way of desires and her passion.

While taking of her decision to move to Jaffna or Malaya Annalukshmi expresses with her face shining with enthusiasm, “Everything is changing Bala mama, I don’t really know what I’m going to do”. Her face became stern. “But when I do decide, I will do it” (CG 383). This illustrates the staunch determination of Annalukshmi and her willingness not to give up in any situation. This character description by Shyam Selvadurai opens up wide ranging perceptions to the autonomous third world women who question the universal feminist approach of some western white women. Moreover, this character speaks out loud to the rejection of the so called monolithic universal image that pictures the brown Sri Lankan women as poor, weak, dependent and uneducated. This, in short, breaks away the stereotypes and the Eurocentric binaries that lead to biased division between western and third world women.

This assertion shows Annalukshmi’s excitement towards life and her longing to proceed new ways. Annalukshmi wants to take up a teaching appointment at a Hindu school in Jaffna, despite family resistance. This decision of her will empower her to move away from the stronghold of prosperity and social eminence that *Cinnamon Gardens* (1998) had become in provincial occasions, and she would pick to educate at a Hindu school, not a Christian school, as she, when all is said and done, had experienced the twofold guidelines of Christianity in her offer to go up the ladder of teaching. At the end of the story this is the Annalukshmi we discover, ready to dismiss the old world and go her own way that may turn out well for her. Through such instances of the representation of the indigenous Sri Lankan women, the writers of the selected novels try to give agency to women and challenge the monolithic universalizing notions of the west which are imposed on these indigenous women.

4.2.2.6 The Right to Vote and Resistance of the Third World Women

The women in Sri Lanka were deprived of the right to vote until 1920, the time when Ceylon was on the verge of becoming an autonomous country. During the Donoughmore Commission, some women from Congress stood together to ask for a Female Franchise which will give women the prospect to vote. One of the women, Siryani, from Congress, announces this news to Sonia and persuades her to join this Franchise as Lady Daisy Bandaranaike, a European woman, has been made the president of the Female Franchise. Sonia, an intelligent and quick-minded woman, at once understands the game being played in the name of the Franchise and immediately refers to Siryani by saying, "And they will ask limited or universal franchise?" (CG 74). She becomes quite critical of the western association with the Sri Lankan women franchise and feels it a strict discrimination to ask for limited seats. This instance can be traced to Mohanty's theory that western white women try to colonize and ghettoize the non-western non-white women and consider them the other. The European women had the right to vote but under the colonial rule, only a few Sri Lankan women were accepted to be given the right for the vote which reflects the discriminatory behavior of the colonial power considering the third world as the other. Though Siryani tries to pacify Sonia by indicating that limited seats are for the limited educated women at the present in Sri Lanka but the number will be enhanced once the Franchise strengthens its roots with the collaboration of the socially dynamic and autonomous women. Sonia is still resistant towards this thought but accepts to make Annalukshmi a part of it. Annalukshmi, for Sonia, is a figure of revolution. She has deep faith in her and believes that the franchise may blossom more under her ideas and she will not let down the dreams of Sri Lankan women because of her free and liberal thought along with her resistance towards the colonial and patriarchal rules that influenced the suppression of women in their society. Annalukshmi emerges as a model to Mohanty's stance taken up by her in her essay, "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourse" where she contends the western white feminist thought of considering the women of colonies to be subservient and passive towards patriarchy and set conditions. She presents a quite opposed image to this image and seconds Mohanty's idea of the brown women to be headstrong. The novel, *Cinnamon Gardens* (1998), brings forth certain traditions followed in the colonized Ceylon in the 1920s that objectified women but

represents such women who don't follow the set traditions rather stand apart from others to fight patriarchy and unbiased attitudes reflected towards them.

4.2.2.7 Marriage

Annalukshmi, the protagonist, emerges as an unorthodox and dismantles the limits set forth for the women under the colonial and patriarchal rule. She takes up teaching as her profession and pursues it because of her interest in it and a desire to help other Sri Lankan women in the vicinity to become educated and a learned individual. She does not pay heed to the idea of teaching as a hindrance in her marriage and sets it as an example among other people that no occupation is good or bad, the patriarchal thinking makes it so. Annalukshmi's image therefore, turns down the universalism set upon by the first world on the third world women. It speaks out to the condemnation of the monolithic universal image as she gives insight to the women of those times when Ceylon, Sri Lanka, was still under the colonial regime but fights away the conventions of that time to give way to the impression of an independent women belonging to a third world country. Also, her unconventional bent of thought can be witnessed from the incident where she narrates to her sisters that she will not let others to put her "through something like that. It's a completely barbaric way to meet someone" (CG 88). Here Annalukshmi critiques the way the women are objectified culturally. Being one of them she rejects this idea by claiming it to be a harsh and cruel act done on women as they are objectified to mere petty things. They are left at the mercy of others to judge them. Besides, when one day she returns from the meeting held in the vicinity she becomes aware that her mother has shared one of her pictures for the marriage proposal without her consent. She becomes furious on this and says, "What am I...a piece of furniture?" (CG 119). She condemns this suppression of women and their embodiment through the external forces. This stance of Annalukshmi shatters the claim of those first-world feminists regarding the third world women being docile and submissive. She takes authority over her individuality and does not let her mother demean her status. Therefore, she resists and fights instead of remaining passive and growls instead of being timid as a mouse. Annalukshmi, in short, reflects a liberal third world woman who is critical of the norms that set women apart from the rest of the world and thus through her character, the author Selvadurai, tries to evoke mindfulness and like Mohanty's argument this instance creates a debate against the western thought of

considering the third world as passive and docile. Her eccentric character breaks the pattern of the west defining the eastern women as poor, uneducated and weak whereas she is a socially independent and educated woman who is strong enough to fight against the established rules of colonial and patriarchal setup.

Annalukshmi being a teacher is quite dedicated to her job. When she is forced by her mother and aunt to marry, she refuses and lets her younger sister, who is willing to marry, take her place. She does not want to be bound as she was aware marriage would limit her in the traditional role of the women tagged upon by the patriarchy of those in power. So, she instead focuses on her job and works in the extra shifts to help other girls who are weak in learning to practice things more. She also volunteers and assists the girls in the extracurricular activities that would give them confidence and help them in different fields later on in their lives. Through this way she acts as a support and shield for other women in her country and provides them a pathway to follow her footsteps as she believes, this may transform them into the women of strength and self-possession. In addition to this, Annalukshmi also volunteers to teach in a school in Jaffna. Jaffna is a hindu community and due to the religious differences Louisa and Annalukshmi's other sisters do not approve of her to teach in a school situated in Jaffna but she does not pay heed to other people opinion because she is determined, strong willed and follow her desires therefore her decision is irrevocable. Despite all differences she is willing to teach because it is her passion and she is not biased in her attitude rather she wants to help other women of colour to achieve the autonomous peak where women are not looked down upon or are victimized or silenced by the tyrannical patriarchy along with the colonial rule that claws the woman breath in her throat.

In earlier times, women were fed with the idea of the dependence on men and it was carried by them over generations. With the change of trend culturally and socially most of the women in the world gave up this old conception and embraced independence socially and economically. Like the aforementioned impression of modernity and self-cognizance, the women of Ceylon, though belonging to a third world country reflects such transformation in their society even in the 1920s. Philomela, a cousin of Louisa, during her conversation on the Donoughmore Commission Meeting, says to Sonia and Annalukshmi that normal women are the ones who cater their children's needs and look after the

household chores while those women who take part in political activities are the manly women. Moreover, Philomela being dependent on her husband quotes herself as the happiest woman and according to her perspective; the women should spend their lives this way. Sonia who is an educated woman with a modern perspective responds to Philomela with an augmented prospect that the women must take part in politics as there are some rules related to children and women and needs their opinion for better formulation. Besides, Sonia also claims the importance of education for mothers to better train their children and make provisions for their best care. Sonia's stance gives insight into the images of the sovereign third world woman who is smart, active, sharp-minded and has a bold decisive sense.

4.2.2.8 White Colonial Agenda and Third World women

Annalukshmi has a dream to expand her profession as a teacher and become the headmistress through her extravagant efforts and toil throughout her career. In one of the incidents, she asks her friend Nancy, if she sees any chance of her becoming a headmistress. Nancy, very rationally, pondering over the present scenario of the colonized Ceylon replies to Annalukshmi that she never really sees herself nor Annalukshmi at the place of the headmistress under the colonial rule of the British in Ceylon. All the main positions in Ceylon were occupied by the British men and women at that time. This is the colonial agenda that suppresses the third world women and according to Mohanty it is the white woman who marginalizes the brown woman. In this light two characters, Miss Lawton and Annalukshmi, can be vividly analyzed. At the very start of the novel, she is impressed by the shimmering light of Miss Lawton's independence in general and her status as a headmistress but gradually when the story advances, she becomes aware of the colonial agenda followed by the Europeans towards the third world Sri Lankan people. Miss Lawton being a western woman has been appointed as the head of all other Sri Lankan women and they cannot progress under her. This is the way Miss Lawton occupies a strong superior place which Annalukshmi cannot achieve due to the colonial marginalization. Though Miss Lawton is aware of the problems many third world women encounter, and as a headmistress she tries to educate girls to raise voice and gain independence from the patriarchy but on the other side she juxtaposes the same idea by suppressing the third world women under her colonial control and cage from which the women can never be free.

Moreover, Nancy reminds Annalukshmi of another incident when Miss Blake, the assistant headmistress, had left the job and there was an urgent need of another one to replace Miss Blake and take upon her duties. Annalukshmi had volunteered then but Miss Lawton's response to her was not welcoming. Miss Lawton replies to her that she does not expect her to take up all responsibility for such a job. She adds up that this job was beyond Annalukshmi (CG 261). Miss Lawton had usually talked to her and other teachers about her service of helping women in Ceylon to improve their lives but it was now that Annalukshmi could view that Miss Lawton efforts were not up to mark and it did not truly "encompass the women of the colonies" (CG 287). It seemed to have created "something irrevocable" (CG 287) between them. This is the difference that the western white women have created among them and the third world women by depriving them of their freedom. Without looking upon the culture, geography, and religious sentiments, the western white women treat the third world women of color as being restrained to these aforementioned domains. According to Mohanty's stance for which she has raised her voice to look critically at the white women perspective of feminism that differentiates the western women from the eastern by looking down upon them. This incident of Miss Lawton to suppress and marginalize Annalukshmi in the words of Mohanty can be addressed as the biasness of some western women towards the brown women living in the colonies and shaping their identity according to their own perspective.

Annalukshmi realizes that the time she has spent with Miss Lawton was not purely happy and was "lined up with the hidden bars of her limitations" (CG 261). Despite all this colonial mentality empowering Ceylon and victimizing the Brown women, Annalukshmi seems hopeful and never lets herself down as she believes, "But surely the world is changing" (CG 260). She believes that the colonial rule will end and the women will be free from this suppression and she becomes hopeful to fulfill her dream of becoming a native headmistress working for the betterment of other Sri Lankan women.

4.2.2.9 Women as Sustenance for Family

Some women in our societies are the strength of their family and support them through thick and thin. In this novel, *Cinnamon Gardens* (1998), Selvadurai pictures the character of Sonia, wife of Balendran, as a strong active female who is not only independent and rational but also entertains him as a supporting hand in the time of decision

making. His father, Mudaliyar Navatram, confronts him for meeting his brother, who had left the family after being put in exile by his own father for sake of marrying a girl of his choice. Bala's brother Arul is suffering because of his bad health and is at the verge of his existence therefore, Bala goes to meet his brother on the arrival of a letter from his nephew. Mudaliyar Navatram considers it a sin on the part of Bala to go without the consultation of his father while on the other side he is aware of the actual reason of his father's abandoning Arul and this act is unjust and cruel on the part of their father. This is the stance where Sonia takes stand with Bala and gives her the confidence that he is on the right and must carry on with his decision. This sustenance of Sonia becomes a shield for Balendran and shows him a way through this difficult situation. This support and sustenance of Sonia towards Balendran subverts the claim of the brown women being irrational and weak. But Selvadurai, through a very small incident, depicts the dependence of Balendran, a patriarchal male, on Sonia, a female who is usually tagged in the world as fragile and pathetic.

We now move to the analysis of the second selected novel, which is almost a decade later than *Cinnamon Gardens* (1998).

CHAPTER 5

CONSTRUCTING A THIRD WORLD AUTONOMOUS SUBJECT: A TEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF *A DISOBEDIENT GIRL*

5.1 Introduction

The novel, *A Disobedient Girl* is written by Ru Freeman and was published in 2009. This novel lays out stories of two women in parallel describing out their struggles of motherhood, class differences, women oppression and a journey leading from suppression and slavery to independence and victory.

Ru Freeman's preliminary novel accounts the struggles of two Sri Lankan women and their quest for opportunity. This novel, *A Disobedient Girl* (2009) shares the experiences of Latha Kumari, a poor child servant, stranded as a worker into a wealthy Sri Lankan family where she befriends the wealthy parents' spoiled daughter, Thara. Nonetheless, Latha's uncertain background guarantees her a fate of unpaid subjugation in the Vithanages' family. Latha's act of indulging in a relationship with Ajith, Thara's boyfriend causes her misfortune and suffering. The character which shares the other half of the novel is Biso. She is a mother burdened under the heavy sack of her married life which is at the verge of falling apart. She gives up drunkard and a miserable man. The journey she starts with hope unravels over the paths of disaster and utmost struggles (Browse n.p.). Biso is escaping an inebriated harsh spouse along with her children to end the suffering that degrade their identity as an individual. Biso escapes aimlessly to the salvation and guarantee of inaccessible family members in the north, however her excursion with her three youngsters leads to a journey of hardships and struggles that a single mother follows. Freeman represents contemporary Sri Lankan life through the fights pursued between sweethearts, companions and outsiders along with the investigation of the characters' pride, resilience and steadiness (Weekly n.p.).

Following is the analysis of struggles and efforts of protagonist, Latha which appears to challenge the western feminists' eurocentric binarism and reveal her autonomous identity.

5.2 Latha

Some themes have been analyzed to highlight the third world Sri Lankan woman's struggles of defining and constructing themselves as free and independent subjects. Latha's character in *A Disobedient Girl* is likely to dismantle the western feminists' concept of othering the brown women.

5.2.1 Struggle for Rights and Quest for Identity

Latha, a young Sri Lankan girl belonging to a third world brings out the fate of many women residing in the eastern countries. Though she belongs to a poor servant class but never accepts it as her fate. She keeps up her struggles to improve her living standard. She does not let anyone demean her status. The novel, *A Disobedient Girl* (2009), opens up with the following line, "She loved fine things and she had no doubt that she deserved them" (ADG 3). She lacks the submissive attitude and never lets anything set her backward. She strives hard to get whatever she desires. As a servant girl working at the house of Vithanages, Latha is deprived of some basic necessities of her life. Therefore, she just takes some of the things without the notice of the Vithanages as she feels she deserves them and no one can snatch away the essentials from her that are the needs of every individual in their day to day life. All the luxuries and delicious food was kept for the masters and their guests whether it was eaten by them or was left to rot but the servants were not allowed near it. She feels it a quite discriminatory behavior on the part of Mrs. Vithanage so, she steals away some food and soap for cleaning herself up as she feels such necessities are her right as a human to have them. She has a strong sense of power that never lets her down therefore, she never silences herself against the tyranny and biased attitude of her masters. These masters may represent the patriarchal and colonial rule over Latha who is symbolic of weaker and poor class third world women in Sri Lanka. But Latha never lets herself down. She remains a figure of strength and snatches away her rights if are not given to her directly.

Latha, in actual, wants to gain agency for which she struggles and takes pain by working day and night at the Vithanages. She does not like the Vithanages to treat her as a pathetic creature. Therefore, she desires that she should be paid for her job which she can use to buy her own things and she does not have to depend on Vithanages or any other person around her. Shoes being a main part of clothing attract Latha the most. In contrast to Thara, she feels that whatever efforts she has made to make her feet look beautiful “fragranced with lux, softened with cooking oil and polished with stone” (ADG 45) but still were no match to Thara’s feet when that “came clad in new shoes” (ADG 45). She does not care if anyone has to notice her or not, the only thing that mattered most to her was that she noticed herself as in the novel Freeman writes, “It didn’t matter that nobody else seemed to notice. What was important was that she did” (ADG 45). Latha here represents the brown woman who is independent and free from another’s opinion that may bind her. The only thing that matters is her own self, her identity that makes her what and who she is. This approach of Latha gives insight to those women in the third world who think above the norms and does not care about what others might think rather just put themselves at the center of their attention and live their lives according to their wishes.

Therefore, it is one day when Latha goes to Mrs. Vithanage to demand for a pair of shoes. As she has been working at the Vithanages for more than eleven years and has not been paid once, she feels that it is the Vithanages who need to look after her and fulfill her necessities. Mrs. Vithanage investigates Latha about her old shoes if they were broken? She describes to Mrs. Vithanage that her shoes were worn out and her feet were too big for them. Moreover, she claims that it is her right to demand for a new pair of shoes no matter what and should be allowed to buy things from her own money. Here, she tries to gain agency and equality which in actual is her right. Being a girl and a child of eleven years, she takes up the burden of her suppression and tries to over throw it by raising her voice against cruelty. She breaks away her silence to achieve freedom, equality and the right to own things which she deserved. It is Mrs. Vithanage who scolds Latha not to waste her money and shun the stupid ideas stuffed in her mind. She is not satisfied by this comment of Mrs. Vithanage and therefore stands in front of her still reflecting her stubbornness and taking off her submissiveness that may quieten her once more. At this Mr. Vithanage enters the room and Latha demands the same from him. In the entire household of the Vithanages,

it is only Mr. Vithanage who sides and supports her and believes that she has a lot of potential to do great things to change her fate. So, Mr. Vithanage once again becomes her support and asks his wife to let Latha have a pair of new shoes instead of making a deal out of it. Mrs. Vithanage acts as a cog in the wheel of patriarchy and with full swing attacks Latha because she is a woman and of a lower stratum. Mrs. Vithanage tries to take advantage of Latha by exerting power considering her weak. But Latha's determination and her will as a child makes her to take a revenge on Mrs. Vithanage. Being a servant woman, she should have obeyed her masters' will but Latha's character is representative of an unconventional thought. She believes that being a servant does not take away her identity and nor stops her from speaking for her rights. This rebellious and strong will power of Latha seems to challenge the monolithic assumptions associated with the third world Sri Lankan women. The eccentric behaviour of Latha thus, supports Mohanty's argument elevating the brown women of Sri Lanka from the falsifications imposed upon them.

5.2.2 Education

Mrs. Vithanage is against the education of Latha and depicts a discriminatory behavior on her part whereas Thara, Mrs. Vithanage's own daughter, goes to school and have further plans to go abroad for higher education. When it comes to Latha, according to Mrs. Vithanage it's enough for her to get education of ten years and it's unnecessary for a servant girl to seek education. Though Sri Lanka is categorized as a third world country but with increase in modernization and globalization Sri Lanka has managed to enhance the literacy rate among its people. This is the reason that the government of Sri Lanka has made the education a compulsion not only for men but for women and servants too. She may belong to a servant class but it never became a resistance in the success of her education. She is a hardworking girl and without taking any kind of extra tuition she scores better in majority of the subjects than Thara. Moreover, when Mrs. Vithanage stops sending Latha to school she steals Thara's books to study because it is Latha's urge to get education so that she can help others and become independent herself when she grows up. She, in actual, is not suffering under the patriarchy of men but under the patriarchy of other females trying to suppress her beneath the power of their status. The school principle comes to talk about Latha's education to Mrs. Vithanage. He tells her that "it's against the law to keep a

child under bondage like this without sending her to school” (ADG 49). The school principle is supportive of women education despite of their status. He strictly warns Mrs. Vithanage about her discriminatory behavior towards a girl of the working class. Moreover, he believes and has faith in Latha, thus, he tells her to keep reading and never give up the struggle of learning. This illustration portrays that the third world women are not necessarily under the patriarchy and suppression of men rather it can be some women too who may marginalize other women. The idea of western white feminists who entitle the women of color as uneducated are at stake when Freeman depicts this instance in her novel where the school principle along with Mr. Vithanage are supportive of Latha’s education without looking at her gender and status. They only focus on the truth that she being an individual has the right to it. This support from the male gender shatters the patriarchal chains and posits a new idea juxtaposing the western idea of brown women to be the victims of marginalization of patriarchy. In contrast to Latha, Thara is an educated, free and independent woman. She has the right to make her own decisions and is treated in a respectable manner in the society. This representation of a third world brown woman silences the claim of those western feminists who demean and look down upon the brown women for being weak and uneducated.

Latha’s education proves to be of great help in the times when she is in convent. One of her friend’s Leela is unable to read and write and when a letter arrives at the convent, she is unable to figure for whom it had come and from whom it had been sent. On the other hand, she could easily read and comes to know that the letter was for her and was sent by Thara. This is an advantage to her above other people in the convent who could not read and write. It is only because of her being educated that now she was able to read the letter of Thara independently and was not in need of any assistance to know anything about the letter. So, education had made Latha free of any other human assistance in comprehending the letter. she feels pity for Leela that she was not educated enough to read and write and was dependent on other people for it. Latha “heaved that last sigh” (ADG 88) having a considerate feeling towards Leela because she was like a sister to her and Latha wanted her to be an independent woman socially and economically where education can act as a tool to serve this purpose.

5.2.3 Rationality

Latha does not accept the facts which are told to her by her people. She is a rational woman and does not put her ears on ease until she is contended herself about the certainty of things. She, in the convent, had made friends with Leela who was very sisterly and dear to her. She figured that Leela “was quite lovely in her own, saintly way” (ADG 74). Latha felt her presence as soft and serene and to Latha, Leela appeared very much like the Virgin Mary. While in the convent with her friend Leela, she hears from her that Leela had been told by the other nuns that as a child she was not beautiful and blessed therefore she was not adopted and had to live her life at the convent and then as a servant. She finds it ridiculous and does not stand the discriminatory outflow of the nuns to call anyone as not beautiful and blessed and tagging her thus with the fate of a servant. She becomes quite rational and feels it a bias attitude on the part of nuns to demean anyone. Therefore, she protests towards this idea when told by Leela and assures her that she is quite beautiful as any other woman in the world. This discrimination done on the part of nuns may represent the western white feminists’ stance of considering third world women as the other. Othering reduces the image of the brown Sri Lankan women as demeaning thus pushing them away from the center to the margins. Latha being a woman of colour finds it stupid on the part of the nuns to think as such and considers them a fool for establishing such binaries which lack rationality.

5.2.4 Third World Women as Sustenance

Leela while narrating her story to Latha expresses her encounter with a woman who had four children and was alone with them on the train. Leela describes that she was a brave woman and when Leela had to wait for the nuns on the platform she was the one who takes stand and gets off “the train with me, leaving her children asleep in the booth where we had been sitting” (ADG 76). According to Leela that woman is strong and is the only one to show enough courage to come down on the platform and wait with her for so long that she was about to miss her train. The characterization of this woman, Biso, by Freeman seems to be a woman of strength, composure and a symbol of support for other women to help them and become a supporting power in the time of need. This instance portrays the third world woman as sustenance for other women who seem to lack some confidence.

This description gives agency to the brown woman in their societies where they seem to float with independence and resists the patriarchal forces clawing at them.

Thara has always been in love with Ajith but the circumstances never favored their love. So, Ajith moves abroad for higher studies while Thara decides to marry Gehan despite knowing that Gehan and Latha love each other. On her wedding day, Thara appears quite nervous and is doubtful whether she has made the right decision or not. During the wedding when everybody seems to chatter happily "... Thara sat quietly with a fan on low aimed at her midriff ..." (ADG 119). No one seems to notice Thara's disturbance except Latha who despite the entire quarrel that took place between them had always been a true friend to Thara. Latha, in order to elevate the mood of Thara, praises her that she looked quite beautiful and should shun off all the worry that concerned her on her special day. Though Latha is herself hurt because of Gehan's deceit nonetheless she becomes supportive towards Thara in the times of her stress. Latha provides courage to Thara reminding her that "everything will be alright" (ADG 119). She reflects sheer determination and positivity by letting Thara know that she is sure that everything will turn out better. She tries to pacify Thara by assuring that she will be by her side no matter what. Latha is torn on the inside but does not let others know about it. She remains a figure of strength and composure. She seeks out to help other women and be a source of guide to them. This makes Latha, a third world Sri Lankan woman as an example of bravery and self-control. Her character appears in opposition to those western remarks that demean the women of the colonies and supports Mohanty's stance where she uplifts and comes to the rescue of these brown women.

As Latha had been through a lot of difficulties and had lost her child at the convent yet she is here again fighting the patriarchal world with hope and audacity. Latha's bravery to help out Thara represents the sisterhood bond of the third world Sri Lankan women to reach out and assist their sisters to overcome the patriarchal and western forces that demean them. Latha, after passing through the grim time has risen again giving insight to the struggles of the Sri Lankan brown women to rise from the times of their fall. As she says:

Think about that happened to me, and yet here I am. I'm back and I'm fine. We'll be together, that's what matters. I will help you to cope with whatever comes our way (ADG 119).

This instance brings out the brown women's strength and unity to help other brown women in the times of need. Latha becomes the embodiment of valor thus rejecting the western notions of third world women being weak and dependent. HER characterization as done by Ru freeman brings forward the image of a brown woman who demolishes the binary of other created by the west against the third world women.

Latha has nearly lost all the relations she had in life. When Thara and the rest of girls leave the bustling room, she is left alone to ponder on herself in the surrounding mirrors. Latha looks at each mirror which reflects back on her to expose her weakness. The first reveals her figure as a mother with the absence of her daughter. The second reminds her of being a daughter without a mother. The third mirror redirects upon her as a woman without a man. Latha knows she was not left with many relations in her life and she remembers that she has one sister like friend Leela who gave her the reason to thrive in her life. She draws strength from the earrings given to her by Leela. A third world Sri Lankan woman, Latha, finds support and strength from another woman and not a man. Therefore, she feels independent and the feeling of Leela's presence in her life completes the hollowness that tries to weaken Latha. She is an empowered woman who does not need any man to complete her life, to support her or be there for assistance.

5.2.5 Convent: A False Alarm

Latha's life at the convent seems serene and calm under the shelter of the holy trinity and the nuns. Every other woman in the convent feels it a safe haven from the cruelty of the world. The convent provides women a place to live, eat, perform and learn different skills and pray to their Lord for forgiveness and virtue. At one point, Freeman describes it as a quiet place which is "peaceful and wholesome" (ADG 73). The one thing that Latha does not feel right about convent is that she could not grow and transform her identity within that confined institution. According to her, she needed to face the real world in order to attain the goal of achieving an independent identity. She has suffered quite injustice living at the house of Vithanages before she came to Convent still, she feels a ray of hope while moving away from the Convent though she knows that she has to work at the same house and for the same cruel oppressors. The western feminists' notion about the third world woman as being passive, docile, and uneducated is demolished by Freeman through

the character of Latha. She feels herself safe and dependent in the Convent. Convent may represent the British colonial power that keeps the women dependent on them and do not give way to the native women for development and maintenance of an independent identity. But she does not stay passive rather she wants to move out of the convent to become independent. She rejects the dominating power and leaves the Convent with a strong hope and positivity of living a happy and independent life outside it and believes that “life was going to change for the better again” (ADG 95). Latha condemns the monolithic biased ideas of some western feminists that the third world woman is not uneducated, passive or docile rather she is rational, educated and have all the right to make her own decision in accordance to what suits her best.

5.2.6 Sisterly Love as Strength

Gehan has always been the love of Latha. Love is a feeling which could make a person (the lover) weak and miserable in front of the beloved. Similarly, in Latha’s case she has always loved Gehan more than anything but after the quarrel between Thara’s family, Latha’s masters, and Latha her life has turned topsy turvy. Gehan is a man who runs after power and money. After Latha leaves Thara’s house and moves to Convent, Gehan takes the place into Thara’s heart and decides to marry her. When Latha comes back she feels betrayed by him. Still Latha does not let this deceit weaken her. Gehan under the cloud of a patriarchal man crushes all the love, hope, and vows between him and Latha and prefers Thara over her for economic gains. Despite all this Latha remains brave and courageous and feels she can be better alone rather than be with a man who is dual faced and a hypocrite.

Therefore, when Gehan comes over dinner to meet Thara and both sit together on the dining table while Latha served them meal, Gehan looked at her only once and “with a business-like approval (ADG 114). Latha in the meanwhile thinking about the conceit of Gehan, lifts her hands towards her ears and touch the gold earrings which once Leela gave her. At the very moment She felt the strength of Leela to be flowing through her veins, as Freeman writes that she “felt Leela’s own immutable strength flow out of the gold and in through her fingers and up along her arms, straightening her shoulders, emboldening her heart and centering her body over her stubborn feet. She felt dignified” (ADG 115).

Freeman's uses earrings as a metaphor of an essential part of women dressing without which they may not want to leave the home. They not only beautify rather are considered of great significance when are transferred from one generation to the other especially in the form of a mother's love to a daughter. This love transfers the strength of a woman to another. In the same manner the power and bond of her sister like friend Leela seemed to emit out from the earrings and made her powerful to fight against the situation she was put in. Hence, she served them meal "with an air of indifference" (*ADG* 115) and audacity. It did not matter to her anymore whether Gehan was by her side or not. She felt complete in her very own sense and did not feel the assistance of any male to help her live her life. This confident and composed personality of Latha brings forward a new dimension of the third world woman in front of the western feminists that the Sri Lankan third world women are strong and courageous enough to live independently free of the patriarchal strains that bind them. Therefore, Latha had now become unconcerned regarding the wedding of Gehan and Thara because she would not tie a bond with a man who could not even respect a woman's emotions.

5.2.7 Latha's Role as a Guide and Mother

Latha while living at the house of Thara and Gehan has to take charge of the entire household. Along with Latha, Mr. and Mrs. Gehan have also appointed a young houseboy to look after the day-to-day activities that took place outside the house. She cares for the boy as her son and utilizes her educational skills to teach the boy. If viewed critically, she being a woman is taking responsibility of educating a boy. It is because she knows the worth of education and how can it help an individual to prosper in the world. She is not biased like Mrs. Vithanage who would not let her go to school when she was young. She takes it up as a duty of being an individual to educate the houseboy. Moreover, Latha sympathizes with the houseboy because once, she herself had gone through this stage. Therefore, she feels that education is quite necessary to gain independence and stand on one's foot. She does not want the little houseboy to stay dependent on Gehan's family rather get educated and work self-reliantly. She being a third world Sri Lankan woman reflects a complete differing attitude from the patriarchal mentality and with open arms welcomes the houseboy to get education from her treasure of knowledge which she had

gained with quite an effort in her childhood. This instance represents the strength of a brown woman who does not sit passive rather utilizes her skill to benefit others. In addition, this act of Latha also recognizes her role as a preacher and highlights her courage to stand against her masters and patriarchal forces that bind her to obey to their demands only.

Latha sympathizes with the house boy Podian and wants to help him by educating him and providing him with a tool that can make him independent. Here Latha can be viewed as an authoritative figure who is helping out an agent of patriarchy, Podian. Her efforts may be critically observed in the light of feminism where she is trying to raise a supposedly patriarchal entity for future, who, with this upbringing, is not going to be tyrannical in nature. Latha helps out the boy and wants to raise him as a family so that he can understand the value of a woman who is strong and self-sufficient and should respect her rather than constructing the image of a woman as being weak and docile. Without any kind of gender bias or hinting Podian as a future patriarchal man Latha teaches him because she herself knows the worth and value of education in the life of an individual. She does not want Podian to serve Thara for the rest of his life, and stay dependent on Gehan's family. She, rather wants him to become independent like her. This feature and thinking of Latha described by Freeman in her novel shows that the third world woman does not look down upon the other gender nor this independent woman disdains the other women. She stands strong to help out others and to promote them in the times of struggle and need. While Latha teaches the boy, she plays with her earrings. This gesture is symbolic of a woman providing strength and courage to herself and staying strong and determined on her task of educating Podian. Freeman writes this instance in her novel as:

When that happened Latha sat in the pilikanna at the back of the house with the houseboy and taught him to read fiddling and fiddling with her earrings longing for something to happen and take her far away from Thara. (ADG 137)

These earrings, depicting femininity are a bond of sisterhood among Latha and Leela, two third world Sri Lankan women. Thus, indicating the strength and composure that one woman induces in the other. Latha gets her determination from Leela's thought, presence, and the idea of Leela being in her life as a family. Thus, a third world Sri Lankan woman gathers up her courage from her bond with other women who influence and inspire

her rather than any man or other western feminists. It is Leela whose earrings seem to give strength to Latha to survive in the unjust circumstances she does not recommend of.

Latha looks at Podian as her son and does not want him to long for things she had once wished for in her childhood. In a similar manner of educating Podian Latha brings a pair of new shoes for him. Shoes are a symbol of freedom and independence to Latha which could take her to any destination she would desire but in her childhood she had miserably longed for a pair of new shoes which Mrs. Vithanage had never wanted her to waste money on. Latha therefore, feels Podian to be in her position and therefore brings for him a new pair of shoes which would bring him freedom and strength and would lead him out of the servitude and dependency of Gehan's family. Latha, being a headstrong Sri Lankan woman, is breaking the stereotypical image of a third world woman and goes out to help every individual in need of courage. Thus, she tries to reach out and save Podian from the shackles of tyranny that may hinder his progress towards autonomy and continue to make him submissive. For Latha being submissive is a crime as she herself had ever remained docile nor wants others to spend their life like one. These instances of Latha showering her motherhood over Podian describes the importance of motherhood for a third world Sri Lankan woman and a pivotal element of her femininity that completes her and inculcates the strength to strive, struggle and become resistant to any power that tries to marginalize them.

Mishra (2013) while talking about the brown women say that, "they do not take motherhood/ womanhood constrictive. The matter of fact is that they want to remove age-old constrictions laid on women's lives, and live on par with men". (133) Mishra believes that the third world women do not consider motherhood to be a burden nor incorporate it as an element of submissiveness and marginalization. Mishra, in the article, "Postcolonial feminism: Looking into within-beyond-to difference" (2013) considers such choices made by third world women as emancipatory. Characters like Latha strive and demand to stand in line with men. In a similar manner, she does not consider her love and struggle for uniting in a family as burdensome rather draws power and courage from them. For her, being a third world woman, though she was denied any say in her child's birth in the convent, having a family seems quite important as a cultural factor and Latha herself thrives

to have one. She does not consider them as some hindrance in her autonomy rather she looks upon Leela and Podian as giving meaning to her independence and inducing a purpose for her to struggle more in life.

5.2.8 Latha's Freedom

In her childhood Latha has longed for freedom in trivial things like taking a bath, bathing with lux soap that would leave her in the heavenly clouds of fragrance and a pair of new shoes that would make her feet look beautiful. Now, she is all grown up and the struggling life has turned her soul into a strong and a confident woman. Now, she feels herself free and autonomous because she lives in accordance to her wishes and is able to breathe in the air that was full of her dreams. She has a habit of taking Madhavi, daughter of Thara, on a walk with herself and now Latha finds herself free to wear the dress of her choice after she has taken bath with the fragrant body wash and wore the matching pair of shoes. Latha feels independent because she has everything that she has bought from her own money. This economic independence gives Latha all the happiness and the status she has longed since her childhood when Mrs. Vithanage would never pay her for her hard work, nor would let her buy anything and she would have to wear the torn clothes and worn out shoes of Thara. Latha now could wear and buy anything she likes and from her own money. She believed that this independence starting from the trivial things would lead to freedom of greater things thus indicating her sovereignty from the patriarchal and dominating strains that may hold her under oppression.

One evening Thara has invited Mrs. Vithanage, her mother, and Mrs. Pareera, her mother-in-law, over dinner. Mrs. Vithanage and Mrs. Pareera are not on good terms with each other nor can stand each other's sight. Both ladies sit quietly on the dining table while Latha appears from the kitchen and begins to serve them. At her appearance Mrs. Pareera, Gehan's mother, starts to abuse her and calls her "vesi" (ADG 164) meaning whore. Mrs. Pareera here finds a chance to insult Mrs. Vithanage and her family because of Latha's former affair with Thara's boyfriend. She screams at the top of her voice and makes false allegations about Mr. Vithanage and Latha just to disrespect the Vithanage family. Mr. Vithanage is an honourable man and is like a fatherly figure and a guardian to Latha. She feels indebted to him for being kind and nice towards her. She could not listen to every

gibberish talk that Mrs. Pareera was uttering out of her mouth. She could not tolerate her behavior and the ill talk that Mrs. Pareera was blurting out. For her the accusations and lies of Mrs. Pareera are heart breaking but she could not sit back and listen to all the abuses and fabricated talk that Mrs. Pareera seems to be weaving in front of all the family about Mr. Vithanage.

Latha remembers when she was young and everybody would call her an orphan it was only Mr. Vithanage who considered her as a daughter. Latha remembers "...a woman telling her that she was an orphan, and then Mr. Vithanage's voice saying, Come daughter, come;..." (ADG 164). Therefore, she comes straight out of kitchen and out of anger spits and she slaps hard on Mrs. Pareera's face "just because it felt so perfect" (ADG 164). Latha feels a relief and pleasure in doing so. She could not stay submissive on listening to her insult rather reacts to it at once. Though Latha works at the house of Thara and is a servant but she does not let anyone dishonor and ill-treat her by imposing deceitful lies. This instance, hence, puts forward an idea that despite lower economic status the third world Sri Lankan women do not sit back and act submissive to the power and authority that acts to demean them rather these women take strong charge against such forces and do not let such power to take away their agency of individuality and voice.

Madhavi, when comes of age, has to observe isolation for some days as a ritual to the Sri Lankan custom. She chooses to observe the ritual in Latha's room which was at one side of the house and only the little house boy would come and visit Latha there. One day the house boy is cleaning and sweeping the house when he sees Madhavi through the bars of the window. One window of Latha's room opens inside the house and gives view to the corridor and through this window the little house boy catches the glimpse of Madhavi. On breaking the ritual of Madhavi, Gehan scolds the houseboy and starts to beat him brutally. No one comes forward to save the boy until Latha hears the screams of the boy and comes forward stopping Gehan from beating the boy. She knows that the houseboy has not intentionally done this act and raises voice against the patriarchal Gehan's violence over a young boy.

Latha could not bear to see such injustice and cruel behavior done to anyone thus she advances ahead becoming a resistance against the power and cruelty of Gehan. Though

Podian is brought to Thara's house as an orphan but Latha treats him as a son. No one in the house has the courage to stand against Gehan but only Latha speaks up against his prejudice towards the boy fearlessly. When She steps forward to save Podian from the beating of Gehan she has to suffer from the strike of the belt with which Gehan was beating Podian. But this does not weak Latha's determination and she carries on to save the boy and takes him away. She remains indifferent and does not show any sign of pain or sadness when Gehan strikes her. She acts strong and without any hesitation saves Podian from Gehan's patriarchal tyranny. Beyond everything she feels herself bound to the house boy and the little girls of Thara as a mother. Though, Latha has lost her own child at the Convent but she can feel a sense of attachment of motherhood to these children for whom she cares and looks after the whole day. When Gehan beats Podian, the house boy, Latha raises voice for him and saves him from the beating of Gehan. Here, her motherhood is of utmost importance that leads her to stop Gehan and raise her voice in front of him and gives her the strength to speak up against the despotic patriarchy.

Latha being a Sri Lankan woman has a strong sense of urge for a family based on love and care for each other. She does not feel herself independent on the basis of the idea that she is alone and has no burden of any individual on herself. In the eastern countries familial bonds are considered dear and important. Similarly, as Latha has no family she thrives to make one for herself. At the convent, she has made an elder sister, Leelakka and now at the house of Thara, she has found the little houseboy in the disguise of a son. Three of these characters are alone therefore Latha combines the three of them to form a family that would give them a purpose to smile, love and care for each other. Moreover, family acts as a backbone and a source of strength and support in the third world countries where most of people live and work together in harmony to provide sustenance to one another. For Latha the real independence comes when she leaves the house of Gehan and Thara and accompanies Podian to travel to convent to get Leelakka. But Latha never decides to live at the convent rather tells him that they will come back to live in the city once they get Leelakka from the convent. The strength that this new family has ignited in Latha appears from her dialog when she says, "we will be a proper family. I will see to that" (ADG 372). This determination and strong will power represents a fully independent third world woman who has every rational sense of what steps to take in her life. This demonstration

of new Latha is the one who is free from any kind of class difference that is earlier imposed on her and the patriarchal chains that binds her to the slightest and any foreign force that demeans or suppresses her due to her feminine nature.

The struggle of Latha for independence and freedom in her life can be extended metaphorically to her memory of the sound of water rushing again and again on the land about which Latha thinks that “was trying to claim a piece of land for itself, as if it was grasping for something it had once owned.” (ADG 33). The water may symbolize Latha who had been rushing and struggling hard throughout her life to achieve her identity and individuality cut off from the fold of slavery and being a woman. In a typical postcolonial perspective, this memory of Latha may be representative of the whole Sri Lankan nation who had toiled to get free their land from the colonial powers and once again achieve the freedom which they were enjoying before the invasion of the colonial powers. In the same manner this memory can also be interpreted in the postcolonial feminist sense which this dissertation writing seeks to follow. On one hand the rushing water which seems to be raging to get power and take control of its land defines the character of Latha but on the other it may be symbolic of the third world Sri Lankan women who collectively are like the rushing water that is rising to contest and confront against those western white feminists who have set specific monolithic assumptions and binaries regarding the brown women which demean their existence. Through the description of the rushing water grasping the land again and again Ru Freeman has tried to encapsulate the strength and freedom of the Sri Lankan women and their autonomous individuality which is way different from the western white women.

5.2.9 Third World Difference

Thara is the daughter of Mrs. Vithanage and is quite under her influence. She seems to enjoy her high status and maintain her lady like allurements along with pretentiousness. She seems to run away from her married life and her duties of nursing her children, giving her family time while spending most of it in enjoying parties, going out in society’s women meeting and catching up with her friends. She seems to enjoy such mode of life rather than following her traditional familial relations and customs. In contrast to Latha, Thara had always spent life more lavishly but still does not reflect enough courage to speak up for

herself. She is a brown woman but seems to follow the liberal values to a higher extent which appears far removed from her cultural values thus, she is unable to embark the journey of freedom and independence like Latha. She is well informed with the cultural values and what significance it has associated with the married and familial life of an individual. Ru Freeman has carved the character of Latha in order to give a reflection of a true depiction of third world woman who has the sense of leading an independent life while observing the religio-cultural values involving her status as a wife, mother and a woman. Latha may be a servant to Thara but has the status of a mother to her children and Podian because Latha knows that being a woman she must develop the sense of affection with these children for their better upbringing. She does not find this as a burden rather feels it to be a part of her duty to her customs and her role as a woman. This instance paves insight to the cultural difference of the brown Sri Lankan women to the western white women. The Sri Lankan women seem to be fully aware of their customs and religious values and seek independence in accordance to these principles. Mohanty thus, tries to evoke this consciousness through her essay “Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourse” among the people of the world that brown women are different from the white women on the basis of their geography, religion, and customs. The freedom for the white women has a different definition while the women in the third world countries like Sri Lanka have a different and unique level of freedom depending upon their difference from the western white feminists. Therefore, the freedom that these, who seem poles apart, enjoy is also dissimilar and is of different level and should not be compared.

The other character which is analyzed in this novel is Biso. She signifies the Sri Lanka’s indigenous identity and appears to defy the monolithic assumptions that universalize the Sri Lankan women.

5.3 Biso

Some of the themes discussed below describe Biso’s efforts and the challenge that a Sri Lankan woman undertakes to subvert the western feminists’ universalism.

5.3.1 Third World Difference

Another woman who becomes a symbol of strength and composure is Biso, Latha’s mother. In fact, Biso’s strength has been transferred to Latha through her genes. The

independent and free will of a mother who gives sacrifice for the lives of her children is the real bravery that Bisu reflects through her character. Bisu is a young mother of three children. She is beaten by her husband and is called a “vesi”. She tolerates such ill treatment done on the part of her husband for the sake of her children so that they are not deprived of a father’s support and protection. In most of the third world countries, familial bond is considered as a center to their culture and traditions, especially for a woman when she bears children, her all love and desires are associated with them. The third world Sri Lankan woman seems to be unlike the western model of liberalism i.e; Nora.

The earlier western feminist movements do not favor the fact that a man is the supplier, and woman is the homemaker. It follows the idea that the homemaker is more needy and is dependent on the supplier. It is the reliance of the housewife on her better half, and not her sex, that is answerable for the sexual division of work. The consequences of this teaching are that once women accomplish monetary autonomy then equity in the home will follow naturally. Nora’s activities are seen as motivating to a twenty-first-century crowd. Leaving her family, Nora gets away from a controlling existence of parenthood and oppressive marriage. In doing so, she battles for her basic liberties, thus adjusting herself to the women’s activist development that seeks equality for women. All through the play, it is shown that Nora knows about business and the ability to make bargains including funds. She is an independent and rational western white woman. In comparison to Nora, Bisu, a Sri Lankan woman does not run away from her familial household unit nor does abandon her children rather in order to leave the oppression of her husband she runs along with her children and escapes the materialistic house of four walls of her husband that chained them under patriarchy. She does not abandon her children for her freedom because Bisu believes as Mishra (2013) mentions that motherhood is not a burden. She therefore, also brings autonomy to her children by making them free from the strains and abusive nature of their patriarchal father.

5.3.2 Freedom and Self-empowerment

The first instance of Bisu’s strength can be related from the starting chapters of the novel, *A Disobedient Girl* (2009). She plans of her escape along with her children during the night when her husband is asleep. She thinks that “when he wakes up, stinking drunk,

we will be gone... gone.. gone..” (ADG 16). This line depicts the breaking away and unchaining of Biso from the male chauvinism that restricts her from soaring high in the wide sky. She feels as her dream is about to come true when she can live according to her desire with her children and bring them up without abuse and violence that may lead to construct their personality as a gentleman and woman. The emphasis on the word “gone” which is repeated three times by her shows the chaos and violence that haunts her so much that she wants her escape at any cost. She no longer can bear oppression nor can let her children grow in such ugly environment that may ruin their minds. She knows that her children are obedient of her. She plans that when night comes “I will go to them. Instantly awake at my touch, rising with practiced stealth they will follow me” (ADG 16). Her utmost devotion towards her children has led them to be compliant to her. Biso’s triumph is in her hands that her children are devoted to her and trust her blindly and not her husband.

Freeman in her novel, *A Disobedient Girl* (2009), while narrating the life and instances of Biso presents such imagery that may be critically viewed as hinting her and her children’s freedom from the patriarchal strains that had held them in dark. The journey on the train is significant of Biso’s journey of moving away from her husband and heading closer to a life where she can provide her children a better future. The landscape and imagery also act as a part and parcel of highlighting her triumph as Freeman elaborates the scenery as:

outside the darkness has finally lost and daybreak reaches us through the trees. Everything is visible again. The mountains and plantations still dominating the landscape, but more than that, the smaller, more intimate details of life closer at hand; ... Spaces where men are entirely absent or are only now stumbling out of thatched homes...(ADG 100)

These lines give insight to the idea of Biso coming out of the darkness of her husband’s tyranny. Therefore, the darkness that was prevailing earlier in her life had now lost and gone away as the daybreak has reached and the image of light entering into Biso’s life through the trees presents a calm image of serene beauty where things seem to be at peace. Biso’s escape along with her children is a source of contentment for her and she is able to see a bright future for them as the daylight has brought to them a clear and vivid image of

everything that had seemed indistinct and vague earlier. Outside the window, she can view the big things like the mountains and plantations but also takes into notice the trivial things like people living their lives among these huge mountainous regions. She could now look at things more critically and could look at the trivial things more closely as she found them much closer to her than the big things that were easily available to the eyes. This is because she felt free not only physically from her husband but also free to view things according to her perspective that came with the freedom of her mind.

Biso being a woman knows that there may be many others like her chained under the patriarchy and the biased tyrannical rule employed on them by the westerners. Therefore, she wants all those women to be free like her, to have courage to stand against the society and to fight for themselves and their children who suffer along with them. This representation of a Sri Lankan woman brings into light a woman of composure, strength and confidence who feels a sense of unity for all other women like her and calls out to help them. Biso freedom and state of mind is represented by Freeman in the following lines:

I feel free as I am carried away, and I want to call out to them to join me; as if this compartment, which now contains only me and my children and a young mother to be, is travelling toward a true heaven. As if there is room there for all the others like us. (ADG 101)

Biso considers her compartment as a world where only women like her could reside that are brave enough to face the world alone and can look after their children in a way they want without any fear of violence and suppression that could cause them harm. Biso has a strong sense of intuition that this journey which she has started with her children would ultimately lead to a safe haven where her children can live in freedom and have no fear of the tyrannical forces marginalizing them. All efforts that Biso being a Sri Lankan woman makes are not only for her but being a mother in Sri Lankan context her utmost valuable asset is her children and she does all for her children. Moreover, Biso does not want her freedom alone rather she feels the need that all other Sri Lankan women like her should become autonomous subjects of power and authority in them and lead their family to live happily and peacefully in harmony. So, she considers her little compartment in the train as a place to gather all women where they can join hands for this cause.

5.3.3 Third World Women as Sustenance

There is another girl in Biso's compartment who seems young and is alone as there is no passenger accompanying her. It is Biso who accompanies this young girl throughout her journey. As the girl shares her compartment, thus Biso feels herself to be her guardian. Biso being a woman recognizes the other girl as younger to her thus have a sense of responsibility towards her. This help and concern of one Sri Lankan woman towards another depicts the women unity to stand for one another in the times of need. Biso finds herself responsible for the girl as a guardian and thinks that "I want to give her something, my first friend in our new life... But I have nothing to give her..." (ADG 101). Biso feels herself to be a guide and influence for the young girl as it is only Biso who's next to her in the compartment. Being elder she considers it her duty to take care of the young girl who seems lonely in the huge world.

Biso considers herself as a guardian towards the young girl. Usually men are considered guardians and caretakers of women and their children but Ru Freeman through her novel tries to awaken a new emerging concept present within the Sri Lankan women that they can themselves be their own or other women's guardian and can take care of their children independently. Biso considering herself as someone responsible for the girl thinks of giving her something as a token of affection and use for the girl which she can use in the time of need. This depicts the character of Biso as a symbol of strength and power as she acts as accountable to the girl. She takes the role of a protector and a subject where she wants to be a source of guide and help to the young girl and impart some courage in her to walk self-reliantly in the world. While the girl is departing Biso holds out her earrings and gives them to the girl. This incident highlights her role as a mother who is passing on her inherited power and courage from her own mother to the young girl who needs it most at the present time to fight and live autonomously in the world of patriarchy and tyranny. Freeman narrates the instance of Biso acting as a mother towards the young girl in the following words.

I take off my earrings not caring that they are gold, or that they are only things I now have from my mother. I press them into her palms. "Keep these.... The

blessings of the triple gem upon you, duwa”, I say, touching her head with my palms. “Do not be afraid”. (ADG 105)

Biso in this instance is representative of a Sri Lankan mother who is imparting and transferring all the courage and strength she has in herself to her daughter. It is significant so that her daughter who is young enough should have the courage to live and struggle on her own in the tyrannical world. This illustration of Biso breaks off the monolithic binary created by the western feminists that the third world women are passive, docile and submissive. Biso, a Sri Lankan woman comes forward with a novel idea of the third world women to be strong, powerful, self-reliant and are educating their daughters to be the same. This is why Biso very confidently tells the girl she needs not to be afraid to live and travel alone in the big world full of struggles. She herself is an example of such bravery and toil which she had done to provide her children a better future.

The young girl, though, is alone and a little afraid but is hopeful that she will reach her destination safely which Ru Freeman mentioned as “sanctuary” (ADG 102). This destination can be represented as the new world that the third world women are creating by voicing themselves rather than being staying unheard. Biso is not hopeless as Freeman writes in the novel that “she has not lost hope in the bright light of the sun, when everything is only as it is. She is still travelling towards a sanctuary” (ADG 102). The bright sunlight shining and enlightening the path of the young girl may be the leading third world Sri Lankan women including Biso who have changed themselves and subverted the concepts associated to them by the western feminists. These third world women are a source of light and illumination for the young girls who are learning to struggle and live autonomously and lead a liberal lifestyle escaping from the imperial and indigenous tyranny that forces them to become submissive.

This young girl whom Biso helps and imparts courage is in fact Leela who meets Latha at the convent. Though Leela is unaware of whom Latha is, she helps her out and provides her the courage to strive and struggle for her own self and her family who is Leela herself. Leela transfers the earrings gifted to her by Biso, Latha’s mother, to Latha as a symbol of inheritance and transference of power, femininity, struggle, bravery and resistance that the modern third world Sri Lankan woman needs to survive in the world.

This transference of assistance and influence from one Sri Lankan woman to another describes a sense of unity and struggle among these third world women who in this way seem to be educating others to be a source of enlightenment for other women like them and impart in them the skill of surviving independently in this tyrannical world. This instance thus breaks away the binary created by the western feminists of considering the third world women as weak, docile, backward and uninformative. The unified struggle of these third world women act as a strong third world feminist movement which seeks to show the world that these women are not docile or passive rather are educated morally and socially, are informative, active and strong enough to take charge of themselves.

5.3.4 Strength and Will Power

Ru Freeman seems to have carved the character of Biso as an older generation while Latha is representative of the contemporary modern times where idea of third world women has become much popular. But Biso still depicts the vibes and aura of the concern of a third world Sri Lankan woman who needs to stay independent and struggle herself to survive in the world. While she is on a train travelling with her children, she encounters a man in her cabinet who seems to be kind towards her. This kindness does not melt Biso into a dependent submissive object rather she keeps her composure of an autonomous resilient subject. The man seems to question her about her whereabouts as she appears to be alone and no man accompanies her. She very clearly tells the man that her husband had died and she is going to visit her family but does not intend to stay there permanently as Biso describes, “I am determined to be self-sufficient, to look after my children on my own” (ADG 129). Through these lines Biso’s stance of supporting herself and her children independently can be viewed. She vividly shows her stance to the man and does not hesitate at all telling him that she is alone. She does not need the feel of any man’s protection rather she finds herself self-sufficient to protect herself and her children. Her character thus becomes a beam to the idea of Mohanty that third world women are neither weak nor submissive and hence subverts the monolithic concept associated by some western feminists to the indigenous third world women in general. Looking at Biso’s remarkable strength the man could not resist but praises her and wants to help her out as he says “I have friends there, who would be willing to help out, especially an intelligent mother like you with some convent background and a pleasing manner” (ADG 130). This

instance shows the patriarchy to demolish its own rules and praise a woman who is self-reliant and is surviving without a man beside her. This attitude of a patriarchal man being accept full of a woman independent from any kind of dependency on a male figure condemns the idealistic male chauvinism considered to be present in the third world under which the women are suppressed, marginalized and considered as victims of male abuse. So, through this instance Ru freeman tries to present a changed scenario where all the monolith subjects associated to the third world Sri Lankan country are condemned and shattered.

While Biso is on the train she encounters an accident of family and is terrified as her children are with her and she is their only support. She acts as a sole supporter of her family and is their only hope. Unlike a typical household where a man is the strength and provider of food for the whole family, in this case it is Biso who transforms herself and shapes into the role of a man by providing her children the strength, courage, protection and food. While She and her children encounter the death of another family on the railway track, they appear scared and devastated by the scene but it is she who gathers up courage and stands up for her children. Freeman describes this instance in the words of Biso as, "I get up. I feel energetic and determined. I will go and find something for you to eat" (ADG 167). She collects all her strength just for her children and in order to divert their attention she gets up and tells that she is going in search of food to bring for them. The children have all their hope associated with their mother who appears to them their only sustenance and sole provider. When She is about to leave, she looks back at her children and they are all staring after me, their faces curious and worried. I smile and send them an eyes-squeezed-shut-puckered-mouth-embrace, and the girls giggle. Even my boy smiles a little" (ADG 167). This smile gives her the utmost power to fight the world alone and stay independent and headstrong for her children.

Even Biso's mother is a character of strong will power and authority. Her mother was a symbol of peace and quietness. For the whole village she was a unique lady and her "qualities set her apart" (ADG 168). Despite of her soft voice, she seemed to have a convincing power in her personality. Biso narrates that what she reminded from her childhood is her father being obedient to her mother and he would also let her govern the

whole household, would hand his all earnings to Biso's mother who would spend them according to the needs. This act of Biso's father depicts a man removed from the patriarchal mentality and strains where a marriage is led by the bond of love and not by dominance over the other. Biso's mother had an authority in her household, "she made all the decisions" (ADG 168) and would persuade others not to do tasks that were not necessary and were spend worthy. The family that Biso grew in thus provided her with an image of "providing and obedience on the part of the husband, good conduct and power on the part of the wife" (ADG 169). Such a reflection of a familial system breaks away the binary that some western white feminists cook about the third world women. The personality of Biso's mother sheds off the restraints of docile, submissive and poorly educated rather she brings with herself a strong third world woman who has the power to control and govern not only her family but also the patriarchal mind and to convince it accordingly. Chandra Talpade Mohanty thus, through her essay "Under Western Eyes" tries to arouse this consciousness among the western feminists who try to other the third world women considering them inferior and passive that the third world women are neither weak nor submissive rather they authorize their own selves and their households and enjoy freedom in their society in accordance to their customs, traditions and religion that makes them different from the western women.

Biso's mother therefore, acts as a role model for her and other women living in the Sri Lankan society. She provides them space and an influence which the other women can adopt to become autonomous and enjoy the liberty of life to its fullest. She, following her mother's footprints, acts steadfast and courageous at every step she has to take for children's future, betterment and protection. She is the only female who goes and witnesses the accident. There is a crowd of people in which a man is telling the story of what happened to the family. He puts the whole blame on the mother that she had tried to poison her children and also killed her husband. He shows his utter disgust for that woman through his usage of words for her. Biso neither listens to his false lies nor trusts him for his words. She acts rational at the scene and does not put her ears on the talk of a man who has witnessed the accident just beside her. She, therefore, speaks up against the man and tells him it is not necessarily the woman who would have done such a deed as she herself being a mother believes "a mother would never do such a thing to her children" (ADG 171). She

is the only woman in that crowd but takes up the courage to falsify a man talking against a woman. She tells the whole crowd that she had been to the accident and had witnessed the scene. She clarifies that the woman was herself tied with ropes to the railway track as her own children so, how could she kill them. She claims in front of the gathered group of people that it is the man who is guilty and criminal of doing such ill deed to her family. She is not afraid of the reaction of other men in the crowd. She is determined to tell the truth even if she has to go against the men and talk bad about them. She does not care what consequences she may had to face as a result of sticking to the truth. On listening this, the man who was earlier lying becomes quite alarmed that who would have let a woman go near such accident and view it. He says, “Madam saw? Madam saw the accident? ... They let you see the bodies?” (ADG 171). The man seemed in quite bewilderedness that how can a woman be so brave enough to go alone to such a site and view such happening. He is shocked but Biso remains calm and steadfast on her answer rather she thinks of the man as “a fool, ignorant and stupid man who would believe the worst a person can say about a woman they don’t know” (ADG 171). Her statement depicts her vision about the man she encounters in the above conversation as stupid and foolish. These traits are usually attached by men towards women in a patriarchal society. But here it is Biso, a woman, who associates such words to a man who is not rational like her but only says whatever he hears without any proof. Moreover, she does not rely on another’s man opinion rather interprets and observes the circumstances herself to rationally construct her view about the things.

Biso and Latha in the novel, *A Disobedient Girl* (2009) present such instances on the front line which when critically observed break away the stereotypical associations imposed on the third world Sri Lankan women by some western feminists who in the task of othering third world women misrepresent them. Though Biso may not be as determined and courageous as Latha but it is because of her efforts that Latha survives and thus helps to prove to the world that the Sri Lankan women are no less than the western women in their bravery, courage, independence and familial life. The only difference lies in their cultural and religious setups because of which all women in the world cannot be measured equally using one scale as the earlier western feminists used to do.

Both novels *Cinnamon Gardens* and *A Disobedient Girl* represent strong, rational and self-willed characters. The task of the Sri Lankan writers, to write back to the empire in efforts to make them aware that the brown women can voice their own opinions and do not need the western white feminists to speak for them, is vivid through the analysis of these novels. The protagonists Annalukshmi and Latha in the novels, *Cinnamon Gardens* (1998) and *A Disobedient Girl* (2009) can be related to the title of Joanna Russ's novel named as "*The Female Man*" (1975). The title "The Female Man" can be described as a female taking up all the tasks of a man in the society. Similarly, in these novels Shyam Selvadurai and Ru Freeman have carved their female characters in an unconventional manner where they take up all the manly tasks and remain determined to fulfill their goals. They are not fearful of others rather stay brave and courageous and speak up for themselves and other women in front of the world. Such depiction of the Sri Lankan women breaks down the binary of us and them constructed by some white feminists. Annalukshmi and Latha through their self-sufficient characters subvert the monolithic ideology that tends to demean and subjugate them through white colonial agenda.

CONCLUSION

To conclude my research, it would be useful to revisit the main argument of this research in order to examine the efficacy of the theoretical lens employed to analyze the selected texts. The two novels, *Cinnamon Gardens* (1998) and *A Disobedient Girl* (2009) have been examined through Mohanty's critical lens taken from her essay, "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourse." She, in this essay, seems to disclaim western feminism for universalizing women's experiences across the world together with the idea of universal sisterhood which fails to notice the distinctions of race, caste, and nationality that exists among women. While, Sri Lankan women, as well as other third world women, have been quiet victims for quite a long time, Shyam Selvadurai and Ru Freeman's narratives endorse that women need their privileges and autonomy of character. Through the selected texts, both writers explore the subject of the journey for their female characters. Their narratives give agency to the third world Sri Lankan woman who has been assuming the traditional roles of a spouse, mother, sister, and a daughter and who has always been considered unable to guarantee her own independence. The novels selected for this study investigate the issues of women who are considered as ignorant in male dominated cultural structures. The role taken up by the Sri Lankan women, along with their social and economic standing in the society, subverts these stereotypes. The protagonists Annalukshmi and Latha are representatives of such individuals who are educated, scholarly, autonomous, brave, and display ambition towards their goals in life.

The central concern related to the western women's activist researchers is that they deem the third world women as meek individuals who can neither speak for themselves nor can they speak about themselves. Therefore, they must be spoken of. Contrary to this thought, Mohanty contends the portrayal of the third world women as passive, poor, uninformed, convention bound, restrained, and dependent. The misconceptions tagged upon the Sri Lankan women (including third world women as general) led to the degradation of the status of these women in contrast to the western white women who tend to take a superior position through all their efforts of defining themselves and their counterparts. Therefore, Mohanty encourages the self-portrayal of the indigenous women.

This research makes use of Mohanty's theory to shed light on Annalukshmi, the protagonist, in the novel *Cinnamon Gardens* (1998) who brings forth a perspective of free, autonomous, brave, and educated third world woman. She is likely to fight the world of colonial and patriarchal tyranny. Twenty-two-year-old Annalukshmi appears as a new woman. With her level of education and her unconventional behavior, Annalukshmi tests her society's gender conventions. The novel explores her constraints and her choices and her decisions about career and marriage in the context of the role of Ceylonese women.

Annalukshmi displays tremendous strength of character in her struggles and determination to stave off a fate as a domesticated wife. Therefore, Annalukshmi presents an example of a Sri Lankan woman who is not only strong enough to face the world by breaking away the stereotypes associated with a Sri Lankan women but through her character elaborates that third world Sri Lankan women are not weak or passive rather are brave, rational and never step back out of fear from their goals due to their staunch determination. It contends the western feminists' idea that third world women are snubbed under patriarchy and this sex inequality victimizes them. However, Annalukshmi's character confronts those feminists and uplifts the Sri Lankan women's voice against such notions.

In the second novel, *A Disobedient Girl* (2009), published almost after a decade the protagonist, Latha, appears as a strong independent woman like Annalukshmi. This illustrates that even after a decade, the awareness about the Sri Lankan women has, not only, stayed strong enough but has emerged as a stronger reality. They cannot be easily suppressed by patriarchy and the imperial powers that tend to hold them back. Latha emerges as a woman who is self-willed and gets herself educated by staying at home and reading from Thara's books. Latha does not let the societal norms or patriarchy influence or empower her. She evolves as a Sri Lankan third world woman who directly contends the biasness explored by some western white feminists tagging the third world women as uneducated, weak, and marginalized. Through the characterization of Latha, Ru Freeman shatters away the clouds of monolithic associations regarding the Sri Lankan women. The novel, *A Disobedient Girl* (2009) shares the experiences and journey through which Latha embarks and revolutionizes herself in becoming an autonomous being. The efforts of the

Sri Lankan women depicted through the two novels, in order to gain autonomy and shun the western feminists' notions, seem to break away the passive stereotypes associated with the third world Sri Lankan women.

Postcolonial feminism, as an explorer of woman's rights, centers its attention around the issues of race and ethnicity which western feminists seem to have overlooked in their generalizing the identity of third world women. The toil and courage of the third world woman need no western woman as a model to follow around in order to gain an autonomous space. Therefore, the western feminist efforts to define the third world women of color in the guise of sisterhood is at stake. In the selected texts the western feminists' idea of global sisterhood is dismantled through the fake friendship between Miss Lawton and Annalukshmi. In the novel, *Cinnamon Gardens* (1998), it is Annalukshmi who earlier believed that Miss Lawton is a sincere and truest model of liberation for her. Miss Lawton belongs to the colonial country and is representative of the western feminist idol. Slowly and gradually through the passage of the novel Annalukshmi is revealed of the disillusionment she was fantasized with. In the beginning of the novel Miss Lawton appears to be a guide and an influential personality for Annalukshmi whom she follows with staunch admiration and dreams to become like her. With the construction of the further plot and the series of events that take place in the novel creates the realization of the biasness of the western model of feminism that considers a Sri Lankan woman not capable of taking high responsibility of the school duties. This act of Miss Lawton shatters away Annalukshmi's trust on the colonial powers that in the guise of helping others tend to demean women of the third world Sri Lankan women. Miss Lawton acts as an agency over the brown Sri Lankan women but Annalukshmi does not accept such agency to govern her rather she steps back and detaches her bond with Miss Lawton because she does not need any figure to exercise power on her and keep her in limits. Annalukshmi acts as a free and an autonomous person who needs not to be dependent on others. Miss Lawton serves as a cog in the wheel of that western feminist ideology which works on the principle of othering the women in the third world countries. Annalukshmi is bewildered on the conceit and treacherous attitude of Miss Lawton who had always been a friend to her. This instance thus reveals the hypocrisy of some western models of feminism whom Chandra Talpade Mohanty criticizes in her essay.

Similarly, in the novel, *A Disobedient Girl* (2009), though the convent seems a safe haven to the brown homeless girls but through the character of Latha it is revealed that the convent does not provide the girls a place to flourish, grow and be independent. For Latha, it becomes necessary to leave the convent to fulfill her dreams and become a free autonomous subject. Convent may be considered symbolic of the western feminist powers where the nuns preach and teach the brown girls in a limited manner and are confined in a limited space where they remain dependent on the church. In the disguise of presenting shelter and food to the girls many other tasks are required from the girls that may benefit the church economically. It highlights the western feminists struggle of making efforts to help the third world women in the guise of sisterhood which in actual is a trap of commonality. This effort of some western feminists is the effort to colonize the brown women and make them subservient. Latha, therefore, in the urge to become independent socially and financially leaves behind the conspiracy of the church and faces the world herself to fight the hardships of life to win her freedom and position in the society.

Apart from the protagonists, the minor characters, Sonia, Nancy, Louisa from *Cinnamon Gardens* and Leela and Biso from *A Disobedient Girl* seem to deconstruct the eurocentric binarism created by the west. These characters are representatives of those Sri Lankan women who are likely to defy the normative and monolithic conceptions of selfhood and signify the Sri Lanka's indigenous identity.

Both protagonists in the novels discussed above carve their identity with their will power by struggling against patriarchy and other western forces that tend to marginalize their status in the world. Annalukshmi and Latha emerge as significant personalities having their own respective characteristics and manners different from the western people. The authors of the selected texts negate the idea that Sri Lankan women, have been quiet victims for quite a long time. Through their characters, they put forward the idea that Sri Lankan women are by no means passive or subjugated to the western identity.

Recommendations for Future Research

There is a pressing need to discover and discuss the ever-growing body of scholarship on postcolonial feminist studies. It is recommended that critical attention solely on western feminism may now be shifted to postcolonial feminist literature which may be

tapped and explored for many other features like post-postcolonialism and post-postfeminism. If the future scholars prefer to work on and add up to the postcolonial feminist writings, my research could be useful research in exploring this field, especially from the lesser explored colonized regions.

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