PREFACE
Feminism can be defined as a movement that seeks to enhance the quality of women's lives by defying the norms of society based on male dominance and subsequent female which implies the emancipation of women from the shackles, boundaries, norms and customs of society. It demands that women should be treated as autonomous subjects, and not as passive objects. It seeks to achieve equality between men and women in moral, social, economic and political fields. The objective of that movement is the creation of a new identity for women and making them aware of their rights.

In the beginning of 19\textsuperscript{th} century, women were considered weak intellectually and physically. Such concept was consolidated by social conventions. According to that concept, society was divided into two worlds: private and public world. The private world implied that women should stay at home. They were not allowed to work or learn. They were educated only in a way that suited their claimed weak nature such as sewing, nursing and painting. The sole vocation for women was marriage. According to that role, women couldn’t revolt because of fear, shame and rejection by Society. The public world implied that men are strong mentally and physically. They were allowed to work, and were given proper education such as mathematics and science etc. The sole vocation of men was to work and build the society.

The formula of dividing the world into two worlds was against human nature. Accordingly, it led to the emergence of several feminist groups which attempted to provide solutions to women’s question. The feminist groups could be classified into liberal, Marxist, radical, psychoanalytic, social, existentialist and
post-modernist. None of them have developed a comprehensive answer to the feminist question. But such coordination and understanding among them can make feminists achieve their goals, and help them eradicate women’s sufferings concretely.

According to the liberal feminists, the cause of women's oppression lies deep in traditions and false moral codes. They demand that women should be provided with proper education and economic equality with men. The existentialist feminist Simone De Beauvoir, in her book, ‘The Second Sex’ (1940), demanded that women should choose whether they become mothers or not. She called women to create a special world for themselves, and demanded that women should read books by great writers like Virginia Woolf and Catherine Mansfield. In her opinion, women should be independent financially and become autonomous professionally. For radical feminists, the oppression of women is rooted in the patriarchal system. Their demand is to purge the society from legal, social, Political and cultural principles of patriarchy. Psycho-analytic feminists found the source of women’s oppression hidden deep in women's psyche.

Feminism is to fight for equality in political, economic, and also for social rights for women. And the feminine consciousness is the process of awakening women voices and women aspirations for liberation which turns women from a passive female receiver, into an active executor. Though Feminism slightly varies from feminine consciousness, the aim of both the concepts is the empowerment of women which is shown in the novels chosen for study. This
forms the introductory chapter *Awakening Consciousness* along with introduction of the Authors taken for the study.

The Second chapter is Edith Wharton’s *The House of Mirth (1905)* entitled *Mirth Lost and Found: The House of Mirth*, explores with the social, cultural, and psychological conditions that lead Wharton’s woman protagonist Lily towards a new consciousness and scrutinizes the development of women psychology. Although Lily seems defeated in life, her power as a character comes from her inward resistance to her social role. Wharton makes it clear throughout *The House of Mirth* that Lily does not want a conventional notion of success, and it is her very “failure” in the social game that makes Lily a heroine. This chapter will seek to understand the unpopular but powerful truth Wharton uncovers, which is shown in Lily’s innate power of femininity and her quest for identity. In the beginning of the novel Lily is seen as a financially unstable, unwed twenty-nine year old woman, and her only hope for survival is to marry a man with great wealth and high social status. Lily has been raised to count on her beauty and charm and has never learned any marketable skills other than entertaining and pleasing her socially elite friends. Lily's acute awareness of her situation and limited options show her complete immersion in her own suffering. At the end of the novel Lily takes her chloral – more than the maximum allowed dosage – to help her to sleep. Whether or not Lily intentionally commits suicide or accidentally overdoses is unclear. Hours later Selden comes to propose to her, but finds her dead. Death brings him close to her in a way he never was able to when she was living and admits his true love for
her. Ultimately the novel depicts the story of Lily as a woman who remains graceful even at the times of adversity.

Buchi Emecheta’s *The Bride Price* (1976) entitled *Price Paid: The Bride Price* is the third chapter. It shows the confrontation of tradition and modernity in African society where the traditional tribes are looking for their own power and custom. The young heroine- Aku-nna- decides to go break free from all the set traditions in the deep rooted patriarchal Ibo society. She does not succeed because her rebellion is not accepted by the public. Progress in any society requires adapting, changing, and in some cases abandoning traditional ideas and behaviour. It also includes borrowing and adopting ideas from other cultural contexts. But, in a tribal society there is no such acceptance of changing and adapting new cultures and behaviour. Aku-nna goes against some traditions and customs but, finally, buys the curse for herself. It also displays that even education or modernity cannot resist the power of the tribal influence. Strongly, Aku-nna feels that if ‘the bride price’ is not paid, she will die, just as she feels the strength of the taboo about crossing the stream; her death is almost a self-fulfilling prophecy. Emecheta sees the African woman perpetually involved in a struggle for self within the context of tribal tradition. *The Bride Price* ends with failed rebellion. The novel demonstrates a failure of the rebel-protagonist, but it also demonstrates that modern life, even in a tribal setting cannot be lived alone, without a community or a belief system.

In the Fourth chapter *Veil Unveiled: Inside the Haveli* is Rama Mehta’s only novel which is published in 1977. This novel remarkably portrays
the agonized female psyche, problems, salutations, travails and the predicament of a woman in a man's world and finally her emancipation. It depicts the story of an independent young woman Geeta, who struggles to maintain her modern identity in a traditional world. Geeta is an educated, vivacious Bombay girl, who is married off into a conservative family. The haveli culture curbs her identity with ‘purdah’, which put her independence and progressive views at stake. Geeta is crammed between her modern values and the conservative culture of the haveli. Precisely, **Inside the Haveli** explores a journey of an individual in the cross-cultural context. Geetha expresses the psychological and emotional struggle of her search for self-identity. Geeta is seen moving slowly but surely from the position of subordination to empowerment, from silence to speech. This strategy is decisively chosen by Geeta herself. Through her self-examination she comes to the conclusion that she can never completely free herself from the unbreakable bonds of the haveli and the veil, as she has only limited resources to relocate herself. She also realizes that sitting silent and wasting one's education is not the answer. So, she works and changes her situation of despair to hope. Geeta is definitely a progressive woman with a vision of her own. In her journey for emancipation, Geeta exists as an independent woman, who through her inner strength, determination, education, and her potential, finds her voice and establishes her identity in the campaign for literacy. Thus, the victory and fulfillment of Geeta too lies in the fact, that she liberates herself from the strangulating traditions, and embarks triumphantly on her strides towards emancipation despite being caged in the haveli. As an amalgamation of tradition
and modernity, Geeta remains as an absolute role model for thousands of women who are caught in the complexity of tradition and patriarchal boundaries.

The Fifth chapter depicts Alice Walker’s *The Color Purple (1982)* which is entitled as *Silence Broken: The Color Purple* portrays the gradual forming of a new black woman, Celie, who evolves from patriarchal oppression to consciousness and independence. The protagonist’s emancipation process is shown in epistolary form. Celie, the protagonist, changes her status from a sexually abused slave woman into an economically, physically and spiritually free woman forms the main plot of the novel. Writing letters to her sister Nettie combined with a sisterhood relationship with her sister Nettie, stepdaughter-in-law Sofia and close friend Shug are the key elements in this emancipation process. Celie’s relationship with these women as well as writing helps Celie to assert her female body, achieve spiritual freedom and also gain economic freedom. She is a symbol of hope that impresses the readers by her strength, faith and courage. From exploring her process, it seems that female bonding is one of the main elements that women need in order to emancipate. Nettie, Sofia and Shug help Celie a lot in her emancipation. Referring to feminist theory, we notice that Walker, through Celie, is praising the concept of womanism. Celie has developed from being a young girl who was forced to act in an adult way, into a woman who displays signs of all the criteria for having achieved a womanist development: as a grown up, she is in charge of a business, a house and, in short, she gains a universal perception. Walker does not limit herself in describing the sufferings of African American women but shows all women a path to follow in order to free themselves from the evils of patriarchy and sexism.
The Sixth chapter is a representation of Bapsi Sidhwa’s Ice-Candy-Man (1991) which is entitled Ice Cracked: Ice-Candy-Man. It is a vivid description of feminine psyche, and experiences in which Sidhwa depicts events in their naked cruelty. The main character of the novel is a young girl, who is lame. Through this handicap child, it is presented that women can be creative even with disabilities. By making Lenny the narrator, Sidhwa lends weight to the feminine consciousness. Lenny, the child protagonist, recognizes the social patterns and exhibits the exuberance to transcend them. She also records the multi-faceted trauma that women faced during the unsettled and awesome days of Partition. This attitude of Lenny is developed through the character of Ayah who is a flame of sensuous pleasure and all her admirers move around her for the sexual warmth she radiates. Although she is flirtatious, she is aware and confident of herself. No one can take advantage of her. Later on in the novel she is abducted and raped and becomes the mistress of Ice Candy Man. He makes her a dancing girl and compels her to change her religion. But as soon as she gets the chance, she gets away from the man she does not love. She is firm and decisive. She wants to go back to her family. Despite Ice Candy Man’s love, she does not stay with him. The women of Ice-Candy-Man are not only conscious of their desires but are also eagerly assertive about their independent handling of situations.

In the summing up chapter Female Bonding, all the five novels are identified as the landmark of universal feminine consciousness through their woman protagonists. These novels as a disposal of Feminist writers protest against the inharmonious man-woman relationship in a society of binary opposition. It also establishes the fact that the unbalance and defects of patriarchal society are
absolutely obliterated with the instrument of feminine consciousness. All the
writers show that the development of feminine awareness and empowerment is
possible only through the covert resistance against the patriarchal society. Women
can establish their female self, and gain female identity by crossing patriarchal
boundaries though it is not conservative. A comparative study is made among the
five novels.

The chapters are organized in a chronological sequence according to the
publication date of the texts.