CHAPTER-I

AWAKENING CONCIousnesss:
INTRODUCTION
Patriarchy is the prime obstacle to women’s advancement and development. Men are in control of cultural, political, social, economical conditions of the society though the nature of control may differ. Patriarchy refers to the male domination both in public and private spheres. Women have to loose free from their control. Feminists use the term ‘patriarchy’ to describe the power relationship between men and women. They tried to find the cause for women’s subordination in the society. Modern civilization is the result of joint action of men and women. No nation can progress without the help of women. Thus, to raise women’s portion both in public and private sphere, reassignment of different roles, rights and responsibilities to women has to be done.

Women lived in perpetual bondage according to the old tradition thinking that, that would keep them in their right place and ensure everything would be done as it ought to be done in a patriarchal society, that women should be docile, and have limited rights to express their feelings. And also that women without education and owning any property themselves make their survival difficult so they depend on their marriage, to a good prospective bridegroom who has money and property. This concept has to be wiped out by bringing new concept of the marriage. This new concept of the marriage, the necessity of women’s education, women’s role inside and outside of the world, showing women as equal beings of men became predominant themes in the writings of new generation women writers. It is with the idea that at least these writings can change the scenario of the male dominated society.
Feminism is one of the revolutionary movements of the late 18th century. Mary Wollstonecraft, the wife of the radical philosopher William Godwin and the mother of the novelist Mary Shelley, is generally regarded as the first English feminist author. In her *A Vindication of Rights of Woman* (1792) believes that education can make women not only better wives and mothers but also the social equals of men. Olive Schreiner *Woman and Labour (1911)* is a plea for women’s emancipation.

In the 19th century there was strong belief that women were under innate hardships of both mind and body. Men dominated the world while women were kept in the subordinate position. Women writers of the age advocated women’s rights on the grounds of sexual equality. They have shown that women are equals to men and to be treated equally. So they are fighting for their independence and equality. The stigma that women are born lower than men has to go and that they should have the equal rights with man in everyday life has to set in.

The beginning of the 19th century created the new page of women literature with outstanding authoresses, such as Jane Austen Charlotte Bronte and George Eliot. Jane Austen expresses her consciousness of women in the novels. She writes from a keen feminine visual angle. Her novels are mainly concerned of women’s lives and their unfair conditions in society, especially in education, marriage etc. Feminine consciousness reflects in her novels. Charlotte Bronte and George Eliot come with their novels that reflect the women. As the 19th century progressed, women writers often viewed their gender’s subordinate position as an index of other problems confronted by society, including poverty and labour unrest. Beginning in
the 1830s, women novelists began to address these issues, and women ventured into
other types of writing to achieve this.

In the middle of the 19th century there was the rise of an organized feminist
movement. Novelists came out on various points of the feminist spectrum. Virginia
Woolf in *A Room of One’s Own* (1929), stresses that a woman needs her own
income and her own room to make her writing comfortable. In this essay Woolf
shows her belief that the contemporary female writers have the feelings of anger
and insecurity but once these feelings are erased by providing money and privacy
their writings will be blossomed with new fragrances. Simone de Beauvoir puts her
effort to raise consciousness of women through her book *The Second Sex* (1949).
This book has helped women to recognize their status as the ‘other’ in the society.
Once they become conscious of their situation consequently they try to find
solutions to overcome their difficulties. Kate Millett in her *sexual politics* (1969)
identifies patriarchy as a socially conditioned belief system. She further
demonstrates how patriarchal attitudes and systems penetrate literature, philosophy,
psychology, and politics. Elaine Showalter, in her *Towards A Feminist Poetics*
(1979) described the change in the late 1970s as a shift of attention from ‘andro-
texts’ (books by men) to ‘gynotexts’ (books by women). She coined the term
'gynocritics', meaning the study of gynotexts. The concept of her gynocriticism is
the study of not only the female as a gender status but also the internalized
consciousness of the female. Thus the women writers have started their venture in
the literary scene. These women writings are not limited to certain area, region,
state or country but prevail in the entire world.
The number of women writers increased in the nineteenth century. It is chiefly because women’s access to higher education during the century, and they are also provided with skills that are necessary to develop their art. The growth of market economies, cities, and life expectancies changed the lives of women. Women are conformed to new societal pressures, and made many women more conscious of their imposed social, legal and political inequality. Finally, many social reform movements led by nineteenth-century women, such as religious revivalism, abolitionism, temperance and suffrage, provide a context to women writers. Literature has become a forum in which these women writers have expressed their views. Women writers have accepted the separate sphere of domesticity that the age assumed of them. As the century progressed, an increasing number of women have started to express their dissatisfaction with gender relations and the plight of women in general through their writings.

Nineteenth century witnessed the raise of women authors and women novelists who have become more prevalent and more popular than male writers. Some scholars have focused on representations of women in literature written both by men and women to illuminate the full spectrum of expectations of and perspectives on women and their perceived roles in society. But many scholars compared the thematic concerns of women writers in England, France and the United States, Africa, since they felt that these cultures are intersecting movements towards creative and feminist literary expression. Instead, they increasingly expressed their individualism and demanded more equal partner-ships in marriage. Towards the end of the nineteenth-century women writers have expanded their subject matter. They have focused on the equal status with men in the public
streams such as law, politics, education and employment, rather than highlighting the lives and hardships endured by women locked in domestic prisons.

The basic difference that exists between the terms ‘feminist’, ‘female’, and ‘feminine’ is that the first term represents a political meaning, the second term being the biological term and the third one represents the set of culturally defined characteristics. The affinity of feminism between these terms exist particularly between the second and the third terms ‘female’ and ‘feminine’. One of the main forms of the ‘socialization’ is seen in the portrayal of women characters in literature which includes characters of role models accepted feminine consciousness and the legitimate ambitions of the women in their lives. In the nineteenth century fiction, feminists pointed out women characters indulged in the process of employment either by their need or for their survival. Apart from this a special focus is made upon the heroines who make their own selection to get married, very crucial decision describing the social status of women and in the fulfilment of her dreams with her better half.

Feminism is fight for equality in political, economic, and also for social rights for women. 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.

The concept of Feminine consciousness can be considered as a renewed call for women to empower themselves by noticing their necessary role in the society. It
can also be hailed as a welcome for women to awaken more fully to get identity as humans (women). First, personally within themselves and then psychologically and spiritually; and finally to bring this transformational consciousness into action to address the environmental, social, political, and spiritual issues and challenges that are presented to them on the screen of human life. These themes reflect in all the five novels chosen for study. Feminine consciousness is not a women’s movement, but rather a change in their thinking. According to Jean Houston “The scope of change is calling forth patterns and potentials in the human brain/mind system that, as far as we know, were never needed before. Knowings that were relegated to the unconscious are becoming conscious” (9)

Wehr explains the reason for woman’s suppressive situation, “She did not have the power, or perhaps even the necessary knowledge or awareness, to challenge the standards of patriarchy that excluded her womanhood.” (192) It remains as a question whether or not women still find it necessary to overtly accept the male-dominant perspectives in order to participate in the culture; however, “we live with and in the world as it is now structured . . . and some women, in order to follow their own interests or just to survive, have chosen to be better at it than their male judges and competitors” (Starrett 188). So woman should not hesitate to voice her problems in a patriarchal society. As professor and historian Gerda Lerner (1986) stated,

Seeing as we have seen, in patriarchal terms, is two-dimensional.

“Adding women” to the patriarchal framework makes it three-dimensional. But only when the third dimension is fully integrated
and moves with the whole, only when women’s vision is equal with men’s vision, do we perceive the true relations of the whole and the inner connectedness of the parts. (p. 12)

The women novelists address some of the same issues of the societal repositioning of women with regard to power relations and equality; yet they also appear to be directing more attention and awareness towards what it means to be a woman, the fullness of their identity, and the aspects of the identity that is needed to empower the women of their concern societies. Some women protagonists are shown as awakening to the realization that they have accepted the male-dominant norms of patriarchy in order to participate and to be identified, and they are actively seeking, inviting, and reclaiming their female nature as a necessary balance. The best example for this is Geeta, the protagonist of the novel Inside the Haveli (ITH).

As feminist philosopher Elizabeth Spelman (1988) says that all the women’s situation is not alike,

On the one hand, what unifies women and justifies us in talking about the oppression of is the overwhelming women evidence of the worldwide and historical subordination of women to men. On the other, while it may be possible for us to speak about women in a general way, it also is inevitable that any statement we make about women in some particular place at some particular time is bound to suffer from ethnocentrism if we try to claim for it more generality than it has. (131)
Feminine Consciousness is an evolving concept. It examines how the women are awakening and transforming their conscious awareness and the way they have brought this expanded awareness into action. So the new levels of awareness are bought by women novelists of this study, and the solution that is provided differs from one novelist to another novelist depending upon their social conditions.

In the novel chosen for study, the protagonists Lily, Aku-nna, Geeta, Celile and Ayah are shown as awakening to an expanded awareness of their female nature. The study is an exploration into how this feminine consciousness is brought into light, the way it happens, the way it is experienced, the motivating factors of it, and how it works as a necessary step for women’s evolutionary potential. It shows Feminine Consciousness as an expanded level of awareness that helps to transform their situations into better. The sense that arises with the word “Feminine Consciousness” may be different for different women of the novels. It invokes an energetic rise from within the core of protagonists being where they most strongly, identify with being women. The feminine consciousness rises and breaks through the veils imposed by oppressive patriarchal norms and values. This study is the experience of a transformation of consciousness as reflected by changes to ideas, beliefs, and values that protagonists experience a deeper relationship of living form. This study is an exploration into how women’s individual and collective consciousness is expanded and changed, as well as the working way of feminine consciousness as a transformational presence and awareness.
The challenges that women have to face within their patriarchal culture make them to depend upon their consciousness that comes through subtle levels of self-knowledge. Feminine consciousness is essential for women community since it leads to development of women. Judith Duerk (1989) stated of women’s development as follows:

To discover who she is, a woman must descend into her own depths . . . leave the safe role of remaining a faithful daughter of the collectives around her and descend to her individual feeling values . . . to experience . . . the pain of her own unique feeling values calling to her, pressing to emerge . . . a woman must trust the places of darkness where she can meet her own deepest nature and give it voice . . . weaving the threads of her life into a fabric to be named and given . . . sharing it with the women around her as she comes to a true and certain sense of herself. (p. 53)

Donlevy speaks of woman’s journey towards consciousness as:

If indeed feminine nature has been oppressed into the unconscious, this is a critical aspect of a woman’s journey. The confrontation that takes place deeply within one’s psyche can be a test of courage, but one must be able to see her own shadow and come to know it, since it is in this dialectical process where her unique characteristics are discovered and can only then be brought forward” (92)
Despite the success of the women’s movement to secure equal rights, in the entire history it is identified that rather than the culture having changed to meet the needs of women, women have changed to meet the needs of the dominant culture. It is necessary to bring consciousness of women in order to change this deep rooted situation of human society.

The study reflects not only the transformation that has been experienced within the individual’s awareness, but is also an exploration of that how women as a collective force of reflection upon women’s issues and social conditions. The best example for this among the chosen novels is The Color Purple (TCP). As per Jean Shinoda Bolen tells “It is the nature of the psyche that anything suppressed, denied, and cut off from consciousness can later be remembered and brought back into conscious life,” is true in the life of Celie, the protagonist of the novel TCP.

Empowerment comes through the awareness of unexamined assumptions and personal experiences. Michael Garko (1999) stated,

Feminist researchers believe that, if they are to challenge the taken-for-granted male oriented values of society and transform societies’ institutions, themselves, and other women, they must suspend their own taken-for granted belief and presupposition about the world as they attempt to explore and expose the meaning of women’s lived experiences. (p. 171)

This study deals with the inner development through the lens of consciousness; as well as how an individual’s consciousness may expand to become more aware of and in connection to the world around her. It explores Feminine
Consciousness: how women protagonists are raising their conscious awareness with regard to what it means to be and identify as women, and how women are bringing this consciousness into action. Feminine Consciousness is not the same as feminist consciousness, but undoubtedly one informs the other.

Feminine Consciousness provides women the primary source of power to live in alignment with the greater awareness, and to be progressively more of service, and to allow their social outlooks that continues to support the fair repositioning of women in the secular world to have greater voice. It makes them to as themselves the questions of how to live more fully, and hear more clearly, the call from Feminine Consciousness rather than to just modify the male-dominant ways that this society has learned to do things. They are looking to live fully into what it means to be woman in the society, and not to acceptance the female using male-dominant patriarchal behaviors. The best examples for this concept are the protagonists of the novels Lily Aku-nna, Ayah and Lily in The House of Mirth (THM), The Bride Price (TBP), Ice-Candy-Man (ICM) respectively. These women’s journeys reflected present moment awareness and a constant openness to spirit. All of these things that the women protagonists of the study, as well as how they are living their lives, define the concept of Feminine Consciousness.

This study is an exploration of feminine consciousness that is expanded and lead to the changes in the lives of the protagonists to be identified as humans (women) in the male dominated patriarchal society by choosing five novels written by five women novelists of five different countries. Feminine Consciousness is an emergent theory that portrays the expansion of women’s awareness as a call from an evolutionary transformational consciousness that is breaking through the
oppressive veil of patriarchal norms and values. This study is about the women characters who are formed by the women writers. The novelists even have made women as co participants who gather women for the purpose of bringing feminine consciousness that leads to the protagonists personal growth as well as community and even societal growth. It is an exploration of women’s individual and collective consciousness that brings reformation in the lives of women. It also shows the importance of bringing this expanded awareness into action to address their problems and issues. Feminine Consciousness portrays this expansion of women’s awareness as a call from an evolutionary transformational consciousness that origins from the oppressive situations and oppressive veil of patriarchal norms and values. In this study Feminine Consciousness is analyzed with women of different countries, races, religions, and cultures. Feminine Consciousness is identified as the most important concept of women’s empowerment of all the situations.

It shows how women protagonists are bringing a new consciousness into action. This new consciousness is not about replacing women and matriarchy for the societal norms of men and patriarchy but for to come over the suppressed situation of women. Women’s wisdom needs to be gathered and grown, so that it can be integrated at the level of society. As Bolen stated, “until maternal concern has a strong voice—that is heeded—on matters of peace and security, the agenda for the world will not change: it is currently about control and acquisition of power, which are the basic patriarchal goals.” (16)

In the year 1960 the feminist literary criticism is the main product of the women movement. The movement plays a vital role and it explores the significance
of women advertised by literature and provides the scope for the women as an important battle to question the authority of men. Mainly, the term “post modernity” is distinguished by smaller and multiple narratives, which question metanarratives like patriarchy, Capitalism, Liberal Humanism and Marxism. Both feminism and postmodernism gives a complete scenario of the dominant modes of representation in contemporary society. Feminism is against traditional representation of women. Feminism has reconsidered both the context of historical narrative and the politics of representation.

Postmodernism can be referred as a sustainable force evolved from feminist theory. Apart from the complimentary function, the postmodernists propose a system of discourses that are historical and contextual in nature. Such a theory demands a new way of conceptualizing truth and political action that breaks down dualistic categorizations. Today feminism questions the concept of rationality and unitary difference of truth. Decanonicalizing the institutions of conventional truths can be asserted as the major components of postmodernism.

Decentring of woman is almost akin to the decentring of man in the postmodernist arena episteme in which there are no essential subjects or objects but only individuals caught in a network of historical and psychological power relationships. The dominant theme of contemporary women's fiction is the reconstruction of a new history and a private space as a way of grappling with patriarchy. Feminist writing is characterized by the singularity and clarity of its resistance to the gender rooted aspects of any tradition that possessed it once or is now possessing it. This, in turn, leads to the construction of a private kingdom of
subjective powers. It challenges authority, stereotypes, icons and sexist values. No expression or cultural value is privileged over the other. It is a desperate act of self definition and finding a “room of one’s own”. In *Gynesis*, Alice Jardine has made the connection between the postmodernist "crises of legitimation” of the “master (European) narratives” and the feminist critique.

It is widely recognized that legitimacy is part of that judicial domain which, historically, has determined the right to govern, the succession of kings, the link between father and son, the necessary paternal fiction, the ability to determine who is the father - in patriarchal culture. The crises experienced by the major western narratives have not, therefore, been gender neutral. They are crises in the narratives invented by men. (24)

Post modernism seemed to create new spaces for marginality, values of feminism by undermining the conventional metanarratives. Thus the three theories, post modernism, post colonialism and feminism share some affinity between them in which the common base of the three theories being the firm suspicion of the existing literary tendencies. Today women’s writing in particular has led the way in the-new explorations of (and against) borders and boundaries. Paterson sees this questioning as a central characteristic of the postmodern novel as she puts it:

The act of enunciation is not only characterized by the putting into place of a narrative “I” but by a plurality of narrative voices. These voices may be cut in half, doubled, fragmented.
These voices rarely produce a unified discourse. They refuse, on the contrary, to admit a single vision and a single authority and they subvert all notions of control, of domination and of truth ... (they) allow a putting into question at the level of saying - of notions of authority and a totalizing vision. (240)

Subjectivity in the Western liberal humanist tradition has been defined in terms of rationality, individuality and power; in other words, it is defined in terms of those domains. Traditionally, denied women who are relegated instead to the realms of intuition, familial collectivity and submission. If women have not been allowed access to male subjectivity, then it is very difficult for them to contest it. Women must define their subjectivity before they can question it, they must first assert the selfhood they have been denied by the dominant culture. Feminists doubled act of 'inscribing' and challenging subjectivity has been one of the major forces in making postmodernism a resolutely paradoxical enterprise.

The critical stances of Feminists and Postmodernists are similar because both underline and undermine received notions of the represented subject. The post modern feminists speaking on the discourses draw the post modern strategies. Women writers start to explore the multiplicities of their own nature in discourses which are open ended. Similarly, narratives of patriarchy are now open to question from the feminist voices, which speak from the periphery.

Writing as a woman inevitably makes one a postmodernist. Alienated from power structures, constitutional rights, social recognition and crippled in expression with a language of which meaning is predicated by the male, the woman writer,
consciously and unconsciously renders a militancy of resistance to her creations. Writing by women becomes a political and existential act which involves deconization; decolonization leading to the building up of alternative worlds of private power. Feminist fiction counters patriarchal assertiveness with inconclusiveness and multiple stances. Jameela Begum sums up the critical stance of feminist writers by saying that

Women writers in attempting to explore a deeper reality, are caught between two languages - the “father tongue- and” he language of the womb: Suspended between the two they end up with a split relationship to language. This split makes the writer a fractured female identity, making it difficult to either center or to know self. The doubleness of woman’s speech makes for a shattered identity that begins to write stories to express this. Language and genre consciousness become more obsessive for they are doubly marginalized. (147)

The writers chosen for study are from five different countries like America, Africa, India, Nigeria and Pakistan.

Edith Wharton was born on January 24, 1862 in New York City. Her parents, George and Lucretia Jones, had roots in aristocracy dating back three centuries. As a daughter of society, Edith was expected to learn the mannerisms and rituals that were appropriate to her social class. She later rebelled against this role when she became a celebrated author. In 1885, Edith married Teddy Wharton, who was twelve years older than her and hailed from a similar social background. They lived a relatively comfortable life with homes in New York, Rhode Island, and
Massachusetts. Slowly, Wharton grew dissatisfied with her limited role of wife and society matron, compounded by Teddy's inability to match her wit and creative spirit. Her restlessness and anxiety likely contributed to her depression. She was treated throughout the 1890s and her condition prevented her from publishing her work until she was 36. By 1908, Wharton had begun an affair with Morton Fullerton, a journalist for the *London Times* living in Paris. She recorded all the details of their deeply intellectual and passionate relationship in her personal diaries. She eventually divorced Teddy Wharton in 1913.

Wharton’s central themes were the conflict between social and individual fulfillment, repressed sexuality, and the manners of old families. Between 1900 and 1938, Wharton wrote over 40 books, both novels and short stories. Widespread public recognition of Wharton's talent began after *THM* was published in 1905. The fictional novel was based on an in-depth exploration of American society. She won the Pulitzer Prize for *The Age of Innocence*, which many scholars and critics consider to be her best work.

*THM* (1905), a story of a beautiful but poor woman, Lily Bart, trying to survive in the pitiless New York city overdoses herself with chloral and meets her end. This work was followed several other novels set in New York. *The Custom of the Country* (1913), first published in serial form in *Scribner’s*, told about a spoilt and selfish young woman, through whose character Wharton draws a revealing and ironic picture of social behavior inside the doors of upper-class America. Among Wharton’s most famous novels is *The Age of Innocence*. The story describes the frustrated love of a New York lawyer, Newland Archer, for unconventional, artistic Ellen Olenska, the separated wife of a dissolute Polish count. Wharton contrasts the
manners of New York’s social world with those of Old Europe. Wharton’s other major works include the long tale Ethan Frome (1911) which is set in impoverished rural New England. Another work The Reef was published in 1912. The novel Hudson River Bracketed (1929) and its sequel The Gods Arrive (1932) are comparisons of the cultures of Europe and the sections of the U.S. she knew. Wharton also wrote poems, essays, travel books, and her autobiography, A Backward Glance (1934). In her short stories Wharton wrote about women in turn-of-the-century America, their loveless marriages, social responsibilities, expensive tastes, and longing for freedom. Wharton’s last novel, The Buccaneers, is left unfinished. Wharton had her last breath in France, St.-Brice-sous-Forêt, on August 11, 1937.

THM chronicles the life of Lily Bart, a beautiful, twenty-nine year old unmarried woman who was raised to adorn the wealthy social circles of late nineteenth-century New York. Because she is aware of the societal rules that confine her, but convinced that she can only imagine and never really attain a different trajectory for her life because such opportunities do not exist for women. Lily transforms herself from an aimless victim into an individual with a growing awareness of material and spiritual needs that are fundamental to her survival as an adult woman.

In the novel THM Edith Wharton uses characters, setting and symbolism to bring the character of Lily Bart to life. These techniques are also used to convey how Lily, the protagonist, survives in an upper class society and dealing with the rich, in search of a husband. Wharton’s shift in the final chapter from omniscient narration to free indirect discourse. It is a technique that denies access to Lily’s
dying thoughts. It positions psychological realism at the brink of modernism. As a novelist of character she understands the tension between societal and personal desire. Wharton never separates her protagonist from her social and moral context. Wharton’s use of contrasting angles of vision gives the scope to narration to move away from the literary tradition towards modernism.

Edith Wharton’s novel can be categorized as a ‘novel of manners’. But it is more Americanized. She portrays American aristocracy in a time when they were very rich. She depicts every small detail that comprises a study of manners. THM consequently is a novel that stresses each aspect of a person’s social behaviour, because each detail can have implications. It is vividly seen in the portrayal of every character in the novel and their relationships. For example immediate reaction of the society is to expel Lily from the society as soon as they see Lily alone with George Dorset at the train station. In the world of manners, the past never dies, but comes back to haunt people like the ‘skeletons’ in Lily’s closet all of which Mrs Dorset uses to harm Lily as and when the occasion arises.

Similarly THM is written at the time when the realist movement was at its heights. There was enormous influence on the movement by the French novelist Emily Zola. Edith Wharton is influenced by Darwinism, best described as the survival of the fittest concept. Applied to literature concerning human society, this means an interest in creating portrayals of society and human relationships governed by the principle that only some people of the society see success and the others are doomed for failure. Lily, Selden, Nettie etc are the examples of both success and failure in their lives.
Black feminist consciousness in the primary English speaking diaspora assumes that it is the black woman’s lived experiences which produce a specific understanding of their raced, gendered and classed portions in a white society. Such consciousness is experienced in many ways like in symbols, traditions, norms, ideological forms that black women create to give meaning to their lives. They feel an “outsider within” condition that stimulates a special perspective that is different from the perspectives of those who are not both black and female. Black Feminine consciousness is identified in the context of the changing economic, social and political condition of black women. In USA recognition of black feminist consciousness is located historically within by the African American community. In Britan theory of it comes after the Second World War and relates to a political understanding of black as a recognition of common experiences rather than origins. Seen as empowering, as well as essential, the definition of black feminist consciousness has emerged in relation to and to differentiate from the two main ‘waves’ of feminism. They wanted to move away from the male centered 1960s American Black power movement. The first wave feminism (1860-1920) presents white women’s suffrage where as the second wave feminism (1960-80) is the main stream liberal feminism that doesn’t recognise black women’s understanding of patriarchy. Black feminine consciousness is different from these two as it is their consciousness which will be critical in leading them to action and bring social transformation.

Most African women writers such as Nwapa and Emecheta have expressed a reluctance to call themselves as feminists. Buchi Emecheta States;
I am first an ordinary writer who has to write. Being a woman and African born, I see things through an African woman’s eyes. I chronicle the little happenings in the lives of the African women I know. I did not know that by doing so I was going to be called feminists. But if I am now a feminist, then I am an African feminist with a small ‘f’. I do believe in African kind of feminism. They call it womanism. (qtd in Panduranga 118)

Emecheta’s characters rage from pre-colonial to diasporic citizens. They are representatives of African women. To quote Cynthia Ward on Emecheta’s feminist themes:

Her novels represent the experience of the African women struggling to assert herself against historically determined insignificance, a self constituted through the suffering of nearly every form of oppression… That human society has created, a self that must find its true voice in order to speak not only for itself but for all others similarly oppressed. (83)

Gender, Race and Class are the triple criteria on which post-colonial feminists works such as Buchi Emecheta can be studied. How the dominant power tries to exert its superiority can be understood by a close look at the literature of the period.

Buchi Emecheta was born on July 21, 1944 in Yaba near Lagos, Nigeria. Her parents are Jeremy Nwabudike and Alice Okwuekwu Emecheta. At a young age, Emecheta was orphaned and she spent her early childhood years being
educated at a missionary school. In 1960, at the age of sixteen, Emecheta was married to Sylvester Onwordi, a student to whom she had been engaged since she was eleven. After their marriage, Sylvester and Buchi moved to London. Over the course of her six year marriage, Emecheta gives birth to five children. As an African-American she faces double oppression as a black and as a woman. At the age of 22, Emecheta leaves her husband. While working to support her five children alone, she earns a BSc degree in Sociology at the University of London. She begins to write about her experiences of Black British life in a regular column in the *New Statesman*, and a collection of these pieces become her first published book in 1972. Her marriage as well as her childhood are reflected in her semi-autobiographical novel, *Second-Class Citizen*. She has published widely and received numerous awards for her work, including the *Order of the British Empire* in 2005.

Buchi Emecheta’s works deal primarily with the portrayal of the African woman. The main characters of her novels show what it means to be a woman and a mother in Nigerian society. Emecheta looks at how sexuality and the ability to bear children can sometimes be the terms only used to define femininity and womanhood. She is interested in how gender intersects and engages with education, poverty and enslavement. Emecheta’s central themes of child slavery, motherhood, female independence and freedom through education have won her considerable critical acclaim and honours, including an Order of the British Empire in 2005. She has published over 20 books, including *Second-Class Citizen* (1974), *TBP* (1976), *The Slave Girl* (1977) and *The Joys of Motherhood* (1979).
Emecheta’s third novel **TBP** (1976) is a tribal folklore. It is the story Akuonna, a modern, educated woman, who rails against the hypocrisy and injustice to women inherent in tradition, but she cannot fight against the strength of her Ibo customs. She cannot root them out from her own heart and mind nor from the hearts and minds of her people. Emecheta, *In the Ditch*, the semi-autobiographical book chronicles the struggles of a main character named Adah, who is forced to live in a housing estate while working as a librarian to support her five children. Her second novel published two years later, *Second-Class Citizen*, also drew on Emecheta's own experiences, and both books were eventually published in one volume as Adah’s Story. Adah is being denied a Western education because she is a girl. This novel again characterizes Adah as having the initiative and determination to get what she wants — the Western education being denied to her. The basic theme of *Second-Class Citizen* is one of vehement animosity at the gender discrimination that is often found in the culture of her people.

Emecheta’s 1986 novel, *Head Above Water*, continues to describe her struggle to raise her family all alone. Adah finds jobs to support her family, gains a degree in sociology, and still manages to find time to write. *Head Above Water* looks at the social conditions of blacks in London and it shows Emecheta’s progression as a novelist. The novel ends with two monumental accomplishments — the purchase of her own house and her becoming a full-time writer. One of Emecheta’s finest novels, *The Joys of Motherhood*, is set in a time of great political and economic change for Nigeria. It is in this novel that Emecheta’s main character defines validity of her womanhood solely by the success of her children. Nnu Ego places all her hope for happiness and prosperity in her children, yet she is
constantly disappointed. As a result, Nnu Ego finds no joy in her grown children. *Gwendolyn* (1990) chronicles the difficult life of the title character, a young Jamaican immigrant who endures rape, incest, and racism on the way to independence. *Kehinde* (1994) involves a middle-aged Nigerian woman who relinquishes a professional career in England to return to her native land with her husband and finds that he has a second wife. So eventually leaves her polygamous marriage, returning to England where she gains new perspective on her life. In *The Rape of Shavi* Emecheta presents an allegorical interpretation of European imperialism in Africa. In *Double Yoke* Emecheta relates the disillusioning experiences of a female college student, Nko, whose personal relationships and educational goals are compromised by sexual politics on a Nigerian campus. *Destination Biafra* (1982) is a sweeping historical novel about civil unrest in Nigeria during the Biafran secessionist movement of the late 1960s.

Emecheta uses the plain narrative that creates authenticating and a feeling for the character. It can be considered as plain enjoying style. She uses trite and figurative expressions to tell African woman’s fate. Imagery, figurative language, omniscient commentary and irony are added advantages to her writings.

*TBP*, points to the resilience of certain taboos that have existed and still exist in modern day Nigeria. Individuals who ignore these ancient traditions do not survive the condemnation and ostracization their communities often inflict upon them. Emecheta sympathizes with victimized women. She illustrates how Aku-nna, the main character, is subjected to many injustices by the male members of her community. In the novel *TBP*, Aku-nna’s belief that marriage is a personal affair is from the Christian idea that individuals are free to choose a spouse. In depicting
Aku-nna standing against the Osu custom, Emecheta is describing a woman who has been influenced by another culture. Hence she maintains that traditional Igbo society denies Igbo women freedom in some spheres of communal life.

Rama Mehta (1923-1978) is a scholarly and a prolific writer. She has the credit of being one of the first women to qualify for the prestigious Indian Foreign Services. She opted out of IFS to marry Mohan Mehta from the diplomatic cadre. A sociologist by training, she wrote in variety of genres like children’s stories, novels, academic essays, sociological tracts and journalistic pieces. Her two sociological works *The Western Educated Hindu Woman* (1970) and *The Divorced Hindu Woman* (1975) are her profoundly researched and documented studies about the western and modern influences that have seeped deep into the matrix of Indian society and their impact as such on the traditional life and the psyche of its people, particularly on women. Traditional values and social change seem to be her passionate concerns. Being sociologist, Mehta has taken sociological approach, “the approach which starts with conviction that the relation of literature to society is vitally important” in writing her novel ITH (Wilber Scott 125)

In the early 19th century the position of women in India is so pathetic. They are surrounded by the unmeaningful societal norms such as Child-marriages, Kanyasulkam, Sathi Sahagamana, Puradha system etc. In order to reform these women’s situations, women writers have occupied the literary scene as revolution on their part. Their writings reflect the outburst of suppressed feelings which has never been taken care from the beginning of the human life. The thirst for liberation has become common theme of these writers. They try to voice the problems,
desires, frustrations, and emotions that have been suppressed centuries. These Indian women writers are Anitha Desai, Shasi Desponde, Shoba De, Bharathi Mukarjee, Nayanatara Sahagal and Rama Mehta. They dealt with the themes of gender discrimination, stereotyping, objectification, commodification, oppression and patriarchy. In the novel ITH Rama Mehta has voiced the suffocated feelings of women under puradha in the Rajput’s families. The writer herself is one among the women under the veil.

ITH is the story of Geeta, an young educated women who is married into the aristocratic family of Udaipur. Geeta negotiates with the circumstances in her quest for identity who sustains her identity as a daughter-in-law of the haveli at the same time she brings reforms in some of the meaningless traditions of the haveli. Rama Mehta presents a new kind of feminism with a mixture of both tradition and modernity. In her novel women neither lose their honour nor are they prepared to compromise with their self-respect and social rights. The novel presents a new road for women to lead a happy life and enjoy equal rights. It can be called Indian feminism or the feminine consciousness in an Indian context. It is different from western feminism and also from much radical Indian feminism presented by other women writers of India like Shobha day. She blends harmoniously tradition and modernity in ITH which bring a change in the world of both men and women.

Black Feminism was a term under dispute considering the fact that feminism as a movement ignored the prominent issues of the black sisterhood. Since then ‘womanism’ as concept has developed into an encompassing version of feminism that crossed boundary lines of race and class.
The theory of womanism created a space for black women and other women of colour who found themselves unable to identify with both white feminism and black feminism. Thus womanism allowed them space for dialogue and an opportunity to present their grievances and create their own movement. This theory evolved out of the broad definition, Alice Walker gave in the essay in “In search of our Mother’s Gardens.” Walker explained the term ‘womanish’ opposed to ‘girlish’ (a quality attributed to the female by male.) She says that womanist is a black feminist or a feminist of colour. She often opted courageous crossing the limitations of a white woman. Womanism is a concept that encompasses women of all races – whatever the nationality. They represent energy, strength, stamina to reinforce their capacities. It doesn’t ask for separation from the other sex, rather it calls for an integrated outlook.

Alice Malsenior Walker was born on February 9, 1944, to Willie Lee and Minnie Tullulah ‘Lou’ Grant Walker in the farming community of Eatonton Georgia as their eighth and last child. In 1952, Walker was accidentally wounded in the right eye by a shot from a BB gun fired by one of her brothers. After high school, Walker went to Spellman College in Atlanta later transferred to Sarah Lawrence College, graduating in 1965. Walker became interested in the U.S. civil rights movement. Walker returned to the South where she became involved with voter registration drives, campaigns for welfare rights, and children's programs in Mississippi. She married Melvyn Roseman Leventhal in 1967. She worked as writer in residence at Jackson State College and Tougaloo College. After their divorce in 1976, Walker's literary output is increased.
Alice Walker became an internationally celebrated author, poet and activist whose works include seven novels, four collections of short stories, four children’s books, and volumes of essays and poetry. She is best known and Pulitzer Prize, and the National Book Award for the novel **TCP**.

Alice Walker’s early poems, novels and short stories deal with, violence, isolation, rape troubled relationships, multi-generational perspectives, sexism and racism. Her works are known for their portrayals of the African American woman's life. She depicts vividly the racism, sexism and poverty that make that life often a struggle. But she also portrays as part of that life, the strengths of family, community, self-worth, and spirituality. In addition Alice Walker deals with many issues, most of which concern historical and modern race problems in America. Through this she brings to national attention the cruelty and inhumane abuse that African Americans have endured. One of these issues is her seemingly contrasting treatment of men and women.

genital mutilation. The next novel *By the Light of My Father’s Smile* (1998) is a story of a family of anthropologists posing as missionaries in order to gain access to a Mexican tribe and the seventh novel *Now Is the Time to Open Your Heart* (2005), is a story older woman’s quest for identity. Reviewers complained that these novels employed new age abstractions and poorly conceived characters, though Walker continued to draw praise for championing racial and gender equality in her work. She also released the volume of short stories and several other volumes of poetry.

Walker has chosen epistolary from as a technique to narrate the story. The novel’s epistolary form enables Celie to develop a sense of self. The novel’s structure begins with Celie writing letters to God out of fear while unknowingly beginning the process of self-discovery. Then Nettie’s letters function to aide in Celie’s journey and Celie stops writing to God and writes to the more tangible Nettie. Walker uses this form to show how passionately the world is connected on all levels. The technique provides an awesome take on character development, not to mention a huge statement about how her consciousness evolves. Celie’s letters mirror her internal conflict, her silent sufferings. It also reflects the impact of oppression on her will, results in acquiring internal strength and victory.

**TCP** portrays not only the black womanhood, but also the world view of women and their feminine roles, as mother, sister, daughter, wife and beloved. She leaves the message that the valuable bond between men and women is possible only through the choice of freedom, desire and respect for each other’s individuality. **TCP** is a novel that widens the scope of literary discourse, emphasizing its priority in the sphere of academic thought and also reflects consciousness of women’s world. It is novel which can be read across race, class, gender, and cultural
boundaries, bell hooks applauds “it is truly popular work—a book of people—a work that has many different meanings for many different readers.” (hooks bell 454)

Bapsi Sidhwa was born on August 11, 1938 into an eminent family in Karachi, now it is in Pakistan then she is migrated to Lahore. Her parents Peshotan and Tehmina Bhandara belong to the Parsee community. Bapsi Sidhwa witnessed the bloody Partition of the Indian Subcontinent as a young child in 1947. Growing up with polio, she was educated at home until age 15, reading extensively. She then went on to receive a BA from Kinnaird College for Women in Lahore. At nineteen, Sidhwa was married and lived in Bombay for five years and then she was divorced. She has three children in Pakistan before beginning her career as an author. She remarries in Lahore and now lives with her present husband Noshir who is also a Zoroastrian. She is an active social worker and shows concern for the women around. She has been a part of a women’s delegation of Iran and Turkey in 1970.

Bapsi Sidhwa’s interests are vast and she cannot be easily categorized as just a Parsi novelist. Her novels are remarkably different from one another in both subject and treatment. A variety of themes can be found in her fiction such as the partition crisis, expatriate experience, the Parsi setting, women’s problems, patterns of migration. Her treatment of such wide ranging themes is a testimony to her growth as a powerful and dramatic novelist who is both an affectionate and shrewd observer of human society and a keen teller of stories. She is perhaps Pakistan’s finest English language novelist. All of her works have some degree of autobiographical elements. Her characters, often women, are trapped up in the historical events surrounding the partition of India and Pakistan. Bapsi Sidhwa’s recurring themes include human relationships and betrayals, the coming of age and
its attendant disillusionments, immigration, and cultural hybridity, as well as social and political upheavals. Sidhwa skillfully links gender to community, nationality, religion, and class, demonstrating the ways in which these various aspects of cultural identity and social structure do not merely affect or reflect one another, but instead are inextricably intertwined. She has written both fiction and non fiction. ICM (1988), the present novel chosen for study deals with awakening consciousness of Lenny. It is the story of Hindu Ayah who is abducted and gets the status of ‘fallen woman’ and her eventual departure to India during partition.

*The Bride* and *The Crow Eater* are her first two novels. She has received numerous awards and honorary professorships for her two most recent novels, *Cracking India* and *An American Brat*. These include the Pakistan National honors of the Patras Bokhri award for *The Bride* in 1985 and the highest honor in the arts, the Sitari-I-Imtiazin in 1991. Her third novel, *Ice-Candy-Man* was awarded the German *Literaturepreis* and is nominated for Notable Book of the Year from the American Library Association, and was mentioned as a *New York Times* “Notable Book of the Year,” all in 1991. A Bunting Fellowship from Harvard and a National Endowment of the Arts grant in 1986 and 1987 supported the completion of *Cracking India*. She was awarded a $100,000 grant as the recipient of the Lila Wallace-Reader’s Digest Award in 1993. Her works have now been translated into Russian, French and German.

Sidhwa’s first novel *The Crow-Eaters (1978)* is a humourous novel which tells of the achievements of a tiny community which has survived cultural invasions. This community succeeds in retaining its cultural identity. The novel describes the social mobility of a Parsi family, the Jungle wallas during the first part
of the twentieth century. Her second novel The Bride (1982) is story of a young girl who is brought to one of the area's tribes as a bride. After being there for a short time, the girl ran away from her husband’s home. The tribals considered this a highly dishonorable act. Some of the men hunt her down and murder her. It deals with the repression of women in the patriarchal Pakistani society. The American Brat (1983) is a story about the young woman who comes to US from Pakistan to study. Earlier this year, Sidhwa traveled to London for production of a stage play, Sock ‘em With Honey which was based on parts of her most recent novel, The American Brat (1983) is a story about the young woman who comes to US from Pakistan to study. Her another novel Water (2006) is set in 1938, against the backdrop of Gandhi’s rise to power, Water follows the life of eight-year-old Chuyia, abandoned at a widow’s ashram after the death of her elderly husband. There, she is made to live in penitence until her death. Unwilling to accept her fate, she becomes a catalyst for change in the widows’s lives.

The use of the first person narration in present-tense is Sidhwa’s narrative technique in the novel ICM. Choosing the partition history is another techniques of her novels. In many ways, Sidhwa’s revisionary novel can be seen as part of a larger project that has come to re-evaluate colonial and postcolonial history in the sub-continent. Kumkum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid have termed feminist historiography as the editors of Recasting Women, writes in their introduction:

Such a historiography acknowledges that each aspect of reality is gendered, and is thus involved in questioning all we think we know, in a sustained examination of analytical and epistemological apparatus, and in a dismantling of ideological
presuppositions of so called gender-neutral methodologies. A feminist historiography rethinks historiography as a whole and discards the idea of women as something to be framed by a context, in order to be able to think of gender difference as both structuring and structured by the wide set of social relations. (2-3)

This novel ICM based upon the child-narrator, Lenny Sethi’s awakening consciousness that comes Lenny’s Hindu Ayah, her abduction by a mob led by one of her Muslim suitors, Ice-candy-man, and her eventual escape from his clutches. Ayah’s story is typical: like her, thousands of women were abducted and raped by men of the other religion during the crisis months before and after Partition. The study on the novel has repeatedly, and justifiably, focused on the figure of the Ayah, analyzing the ways she inhabits the subaltern subject position and how her abduction and recovery participate in the contested ideologies of Partition history. While the centrality and symbolic power of Ayah’s story is indubitable, it is also worthy since it deals with feminine consciousness. It also affords multi layered view of Lahore society.

The succeeding chapters study in detail the feminine consciousness of all the women in the selected five novels. By choosing five novels from different countries, Edith Wharton an American, Buchi Emecheta an African American, Rama Mehta an Indian, Alice Walker a Nigerian and Bapsi Sidhwa a Pakistani, gives a scope to make a study of the social, political, moral, traditional conditions that define the consciousness of the women.