Chapter I

Introduction

Any feminism based study warrants an introduction to the global predicament of women down the centuries. A complex and controversial treatment has had been meted out to women for centuries. To begin with, many of the ancient societies were matriarchal; mythologies of many countries speak of goddesses of paramount importance; there were female warriors venerated in chivalric works of hoary past; there were female philosophers/rishis like Garki, Maitreyi, Lopamudra in the Indian context.

When hunting became the mode of living, there arose male supremacy and women were confined to domestic spheres and chores which include child bearing and rearing. Gradually, in many societies at global level, women were treated as commodities; the advent of dowry system, demanding riches from the girl’s side at the time of marriage, only encouraged female infanticide in the Indian context. As Tanu Gupta points out, “In a patriarchal society, the birth of a female child is traditionally less welcome than that of the male. Being born a boy is itself a privilege. Girls arrive in the world as undesirable creatures and the life-long battle against their formidable foe, i.e., their sex…” (Gupta 12-13). According to Helene Cixous, “From the beginning of time, oppression was the common lot of woman and the labourer. . . woman was the first human being that tasted bondage, woman was a slave before the slave existed.” (From Shukla Feminism v)
Even in the Hellenic world, noted for its advancements in science, philosophy and arts, there was widespread prejudice against women. The poetic works of celebrated poetess Sappho were publicly burnt.

Also, no women in Athens could own anything more than her own clothing, jewellery and personal slave. She could not sign a contract or purchase anything more expensive than a bushel of barley. She required a male guardian to look after her and to manage her financial interests, because she was not allowed to do so as she belonged to a weaker section.

Aristotle said, “man is by nature superior to the female and so the man should rule and the woman should be ruled”; Hyperide said “a woman who travels outside her house should be old enough that people ask whose mother she is, not whose wife she is” and Pericles said “a woman’s reputation is highest when man say little about her, whether it be good or evil” (Women in the ancient world.com).

In the Judeo-Christian version ‘Adam’ was the first human and god fashioned ‘Eve’ to be a companion. After the ‘Serpent’ successfully urged her to eat the forbidden fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, Eve tempted her husband to do the same. Later, when God caught them both were driven out of the Garden of Eden and into the world of sorrow and hard work. Thus, men and women sprang from the same source material, woman was the tempter man was a willing participant in the crime that led to their expulsion from Eden. Because of the weakness of Eve they lost the blessings of God.

In Greek mythology ‘Pandora’ was created as a form of punishment because men had learned from Prometheus the secret of making fire. Pandora was
fashioned out of the earth by Hephaestus on orders from Zeus with various gods and goddesses supplying the attributes of women. Anything visible was beautiful and designed to make her irresistible to men, but all of the hidden characteristics, the ones that made up her true personality, were deliberately intended to bring sorrow, harm and trouble to man.

In both Christian and Greek mythology women were pictured as weaker than men and because of their weakness they create hard and trouble to men. These creation stories tell a great deal about a society’s view of itself and the world around.

It is clear that Athenians and Greek saw women as beguiling creatures capable of causing considerable harm to themselves and others and weaker in mind and body than men.

As this was the condition of women on one side of the world, the Egyptians treated their women better than any of the other major civilizations of the ancient world. They believed that joy and happiness were legitimate goals of life and regarded home and family as the major source of delight. Marriage and offspring were always considered desirable, but in some societies wives were simply domestic servants and offspring acquired importance only when they grew up. Undoubtedly there were a number of very strong willed women who disregarded custom and ruled their families with the sheer force of their personalities, but they were the exception.

Egyptian women were fortunate in two important ways:

1) While women could become ‘Pharaoh’ only in very special circumstances, they were otherwise regarded as totally equal to men, as far as the law was concerned. They could own property, borrow money, sign contract, initiate
divorce, appear in court as witness etc. Of course they were also equally subject to whatever responsibilities normally accompanied those rights.

2) Love and emotional support were considered to be important parts of marriage. Egyptians loved children as people and not just as potential workers and care-takers (Women in ancient Egypt.htm).

In the Roman Republic when a young woman married, she left her childhood home and the authority of her father and entered not only the home of her husband but his power and control as well. This was the condition of women in the early years of Roman Empire. Later, things began to change. Any amendments to the Law probably seemed quite insignificant at the time they were made, but the reality of day to day life gradually began to transform the way society viewed women and the way they viewed themselves. By the end of the First Century, women had achieved a level of Freedom they would not see again in the western society until the last half of the Twentieth Century.

Generalizations on the status of women in the ancient world are always difficult and never more so than in the case of Rome, where theory and practice were often so far apart. Many Athenian men seemed to have regarded their wives as at best essential inconvenience, but Roman men placed a very high value on marriage, home and family and this made quite a difference to society’s treatment of women. At no time in Rome’s history were women allowed to hold public office or work in the government. In the early days of the Republic women were not even allowed to make suggestions, but by the beginning of the Empire many men were seeking and even following the advice of their wives. It was all right to do so, provided the advice was given in private and the husband did not make a big deal of
it. Respectable women were not supposed to be wandering around alone outside, but somehow they managed to have a life beyond the home.

Thus in the early days, women were treated as slaves and as objects for rearing children. As days passed and modernization entered into the world, men slowly changed their minds and began to treat women as human beings. Even at that time, men allowed women to take decision only at home as they were busy in the outside world they have no time to work after the household works and they did not allow the women to enter into the public life. This may be considered as the first steps of success for women to achieve freedom in all other sources.

As the status of ancient women living elsewhere was like this, women in ancient India enjoyed equal status with men in all aspects of life. They often became prominent in the fields of politics, literature, education and religion.

The Cankam Literature of the Tamil country boasted of many female poets like Avvaiyar, Ponmudiyaar, Velli Veethiyaar etc., Avvaiyar-the Cankam poet was considered to be a contemporary to poets Parinar, Kabilar and Thiruvalluvar. Apart from composing poems, She also served as ambassador to avert wars among neighbouring chieftains. Vallal Athiyaman Neduman Anji was the chieftain in whose court Avvaiyar served as a court poet.

The Avvaiyar of the medieval period was the court poet of the Chola monarch and was the contemporary of Kambar and Ottakoothhar. Her works, Aathichoodi and Konraiventhan, written for young children were generally enjoyed by them even now. Her two other works Moothurai and Nalvazhi were written for older children. All the four works were didactic in character – they explain the basic
wisdom that should govern mundane life. Annual Avvai Vizha is conducted by the
Government of Tamilnadu to commemorate Avvaiyar’s contribution to Tamil
Give, Eat and Live ”: Poems by Avvaiyar “ The poems were selected and translated
into English by Thomas Pruiksma, a poet and translator who discovered Avvaiyar’s
work while on a Fullbright scholarship at The American College in Madurai,
Tamilnadu.

In the political front, Razia Sultana became the only woman monarch to
have ever ruled Delhi. The Mughal princesses Jahanara and Zebunissa were well
known poets and also influenced the ruling powers. Shivaji’s mother Jijabai was
queen regent because of her ability as a warrior and as an administrator.

The Bhakthi movements tried to restore women’s status and questioned
certain forms of oppression. Mirabai, a female saint-poet, was one of the most
important Bhakthi movement figures. Other female poets from this period included
Akka Mahadevi, Rami Janabai and Andal. Bhakthi sects within Hinduism such as
the Mahanubhav, Varkari and many others were principled movements within the
Hindu fold openly advocating social justice and equality between men and women.

Guru Nanak, the first Guru of Sikhs, preached equality between men and
women. He advocated that women be allowed to lead religious assemblies; to lead
congregational hymn signing called Kirtan or Bhajan; to become members of
religious management committees; to lead armies on the battlefield; to have equality
in marriage and to have equality in Amrit ( Baptism ).
Some traditional practices such as sati, Jauhar and Devadasi among some communities have been banned and are largely defunct in modern India. The practice of Sati was forbidden by the Hindu scriptures in Kaliyuga. It was abolished by the British in 1829. Devadasi system is often misunderstood as religious practice. It was practiced in southern India according to which women were married to a deity or temple. Later, the practice was outlawed in the country.

The European scholars observed in the 19th century that Hindu women were ‘naturally chaste’ and ‘more virtuous’ than other women. During the British Raj, many reformers such as Ram Mohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidhya Sagar and Jyotirao Phule, fought for the betterment of women. Peary Charan Sarkar, a former student of Hindu College, Calcutta and a member of ‘Young Bengal’ set up the first free school for girls in India, in 1849 in Borasa, a suburb of Calcutta. While Raj Ram Mohan Roy’s efforts led to the abolition of Sati by Governor General William Cavendish Bentinck in 1829, Ishwar Chandra Vidhya Sagar’s crusade for improvement in the situation of widows led to Widow Remarriage Act of 1856. Many women reformers such as Pandita Ramabai also helped the cause of women. In the South Indian State of Tamil Nadu, Periyar E.V.Ramasamy emerged as a radical activist espousing the cause of feminism and female liberation. His approach, ideologies and thoughts do not come under any of the acknowledged feminist school of thoughts and they carry a stamp of their own and hence it is inevitable to have a new classification as Periyar Feminism which is a revolution in the history of India(Thavamani 19) According to R.Shanthi, “Periyar’s concept of feminism is I holistic; he wanted the eradication of social discrimination and, like the socialist feminists, he believed in the
leadership of women; he, like the reformists, strongly advocated legislative and electoral reformation for eliminating gender inequalities. . . (Shanthi 113)

Kittur Chennamma, queen of the princely state of Kittur in Karnataka, led an armed rebellion against the British in response to the Doctrine of Lapse. Rani Lakshmi Bai, the queen of Jhansi, led the Indian Rebellion of 1857 against the British. She is now widely considered as a national hero. Women played an important part in India’s Independence struggle. Some famous freedom fighters include Dr. Anni Besant, Vijayalakshmi Pandit, Aruna Asaf Ali, Sucheta Kriplani and Kasturba Gandhi. The Rani of Jhansi Regiment of Subhas Chandra Bose’s Indian National Army consisted entirely of women, including Captain Lakshmi Sahgal. Sarojini Naidu, a poet and freedom fighter, was the first woman to become President of the Indian National Congress and the first woman to become the governor of a State in India.

Chandramuki Basu, Kadambini Ganguly and Anandi Gopal Joshi were some of the earliest Indian Women to obtain a degree. Dr. Muthulakshmi Reddy was the first woman of Tamilnadu to obtain M.B.B.S. Indira Gandhi, who served as Prime Minister of India, for an aggregate period off fifteen years, was one of the world’s longest serving women Prime Ministers.

According to Ritu Menon, In the late nineteen –sixties and seventies there was a revival of women’s activism in the country, in what has come to be known as the second wave of the women’s movement in India. A series of small and big struggles—in Uttarakhand with an anti-alcohol struggle led by Saralabehen and Mirabehen; in Naxalbari in West Bengal; in Maharashtra with
the anti-price rise agitation; in Gujarat with the Nav Nirman movement; in Hyderabad, with the Progressive Organization of Women; in Ahmedabad with the formation of the Self-Employed Women’s Association, the first women’s trade union in the country—triggered this resurgence. (Introdn., xi)

Feminist activism in India gained further momentum in the late 1970s. One of the first national-level issues that brought women’s groups together was the Mathura rape case. The protests widely covered by the national media, forced the Government to amend the Evidence Act, the Criminal Procedure Code and Indian Penal Code and created a new offence of custodial rape. Female activists also united over issues such as female infanticide, gender bias, women’s health, women’s safety and women’s literacy.

The Government of India declared 2001 as the year of Women’s Empowerment. In 2010 Rajya Sabha passed the Women’s Reservation Bill requiring that 33% of seats in India’s Parliament and state legislative bodies be reserved for women.

Though women were given equal status along with men in the ancient period in some places of the world, many other places treated them as inferior to men. Especially in the field of writing they were dominated by the male writers. Even talented women were not given place to shine in the field of Literature.

According to Elizabeth Jane Howard who penned the much-loved Cazala Tetralogy, female authors had suffered a hard time politically and sexually. Although Jane Austen was respectfulely received at that time, others like George Eliot had to disguise their female names to gain social acceptance. Almost two
centuries on, female writers such as J.K Rowling and A.S Byatt did the same possibly for similar reasons, she said. Howard said, “I feel because we started writing novels really before men on the whole, they don’t want us to even be good at that” Instead of allowing women to succeed on their own merits, the world of male critics and editors “scratch each other’s back” This is the status of women writers all over the world.

It is pertinent here to trace the evolution of Women’s Movement and Organizations worldwide.

In the United Kingdom, women challenged their subordinate social and political position and condemned prevailing sexual double standard during the course of the 19th century. With the advent of new theories like Darwinism, New Women found a way to rationalize their demands, apart from social and political arguments also with biological explanations. They voiced their concern over women’s reduction in a patriarchal state and selt education, marriage laws and social morality were on the top of their reform-list. Women’s rights movements have worked for at least two centuries, from the first feminist publication in 1792, entitled A vindication of the Rights of Woman, by Mary Wollstonecraft in Britain. This work is one of the earliest works of feminist philosophy. A Room of One’s Own (1929) by Virginia Woolf, is famous for its argument for both a literal and figural space for women writers, within a literary tradition dominated by patriarchy.

The first recognizable women’s suffrage pamphlet was published in 1847 by Anne Knight. Almost everywhere social feminism began to flourish. Under the influence of Josephine Butler, a big campaign was launched against prostitution. In
1857, the Divorce Act was passed. After 1903, various women’s organizations were launched. The British feminist movement by the 1900’s became not only large and vigorous, but also radical and successful. Suffrage to the British Women was granted in 1918 to those aged 30 or above and in 1928 to all adults.

In the USA, at the time of American Revolution, American women, just as their European sisters were clearly an oppressed group. They were generally uneducated and usually had no financial resources of their own. Married women were largely and legally dominated by their husbands and completely depend upon them. When France Fanny Wright visited America, she set fire with her speeches on women’s rights during 1828 – 1829. She scandalized the audience with her views on the rights of women to seek information regarding birth control and divorce.

The World Anti Slavery Convention was held in London in 1840. This convention was attended by an American delegation. The women in this delegation were forced to sit in the galleries as observers citing gender reason. Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton were a part of this delegation. They could not swallow the ill-treatment and decided to hold their own convention to discuss the social, civil and religious rights of women. Stanton used the Declaration of Independence as the basis for her Declaration of Sentiment. She presented this declaration in her hometown Chapel at Seneca Falls, in the uptown New York. Three hundred men and women attended the famous convention held at Seneca Falls in 1848. This was the first collective action for change in the position and rights of women. The Seneca Falls meeting was attended by Swan B. Anthony and it led to a long partnership between Stanton and Anthony, who became the movement’s most outspoken advocates.
Over the centuries, the world has progressed greatly. There is no stone left unturned by women in proving that they are equal to men. Yet, women are a minority in the most powerful political offices. Still, there is a ray of hope with the election of Barack Obama, as the President of the United States, that the day is not far when the country says “Yes Madam President.”

It is essential to trace here, the origin and development of Feminism. Feminism is a many sided movement aimed to emancipate women. Charles Fourier, a Utopian Socialist and French Philosopher, is credited with having coined the word “feminism” in 1837. The words ‘feminism’ and ‘feminist’ first appeared in France and Netherlands in 1872, Great Britain in the 1890’s and the United States in 1910 and the Oxford English Dictionary lists 1894 as the year of the first appearance of “feminist” and 1895 for “feminism.” According to Dictionary of Philosophy, Feminism means “commitment to the abolition of male domination in human society. Feminists differ widely in their accounts of the origins of patriarchy, . . . but all share in the recognition that the subordination of women to men in our culture is indefensible and eliminable. Many feminist philosophers oppose Cartesian dualism, scientific objectivity and traditional theories of moral obligation, as instances of masculine over-reliance on reason”(78) The word ‘feminism’ was not accepted easily. According to Virginia Woolf we must destroy an old word, a vicious and corrupt word that has done much harm in its day. The word ‘feminist’ is the word indicated. That word, according to the dictionary, means ‘one who champions the rights of women.’ since the only right, the right to earn a living has been won, the word no longer has a meaning. And a word without a meaning is a dead word, a
corrupt word (Walters 2). Feminism describes the campaigns, activities, and texts concerned with challenging and transforming how women are treated and represented in society (Gardner 595).

Depending on historical moment, culture and country, feminists around the world have had different causes and goals. Most western feminist historians assert that all the movements that work to obtain women’s rights should be considered feminist movements.

The history of the modern western feminist movements were divided into three "waves." Each wave dealt with different feminist issues. The first wave comprised women’s suffrage movements of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, promoting women’s right to vote. The second wave, associated with the ideas and actions of the women’s liberation movement began in 1960’s. This wave campaigned for legal and social equality for women. The third wave which was the continuation of and a reaction to the perceived failures of second wave feminism began in the 1990’s.

As the result of the first wave feminism, many countries such as New Zealand, South Africa, Britain and Australia, granted women, the right to vote by the end of 19th century. In US, notable leaders such as Lucretia Mot, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony of the Suffragettis campaigned for the abolition of slavery prior to championing women’s right to vote. These women were influenced by the Quaker theology of Spiritual equality, which asserts that “men and women are equal under God.”
The Arab feminism was closely connected with Arab Nationalism. In 1899, Qasim Amin considered the father of Arab feminism, wrote “the Liberation of Women” which argued for legal and social reforms for women. He drew links between women’s position in Egyptian society and nationalism, leading to the development of Cairo University and National Movement. The Iranian Constitutional Revolution in 1905 triggered the Iranian Women’s Movement, which aimed to achieve women’s equality in education, marriage, careers and legal rights. However during the Iranian Revolution in 1979 many of the rights that women had gained from the women’s movement were systematically abolished such as the Family Protection Law.

According to Margaret Walters, “there is also an increasing recognition that, whereas Western feminists have struggled against sexism, and against social and political inequalities, women in the “Third World” have had to confront additional, and even more intractable, problems. They often have to combat sexism in the form of deep-rooted local beliefs and practices, to do with class, caste, religion, and ethnic biases. In some countries, their battle with these issues has been combined with, and sometimes complicated by, a struggle for the establishment of democratic government and for the most basic freedoms” (Walters 118). She goes on to point out that “Feminism in Africa is heterosexual, pronatal, and concerned with ‘bread, butter and power’ issues. Genital mutilation, as a way of suppressing unruly female sexuality, is still carried out in some African countries “(125).
By the mid 20th century, feminists continued to campaign for the reform of family laws which gave husbands control over their wives. Although by the 20th century covertures had been abolished in the UK and the US, in many continental European countries married women still had very few rights. In France married women received the right to work without their husbands’ permission in 1965. Feminists have also worked to abolish the “marital exemption” in rape laws which precluded the prosecution of husbands for the rape of their wives.

There are quite a few variants of feminism. Liberal feminism is the variety of feminism that works within the structure of mainstream society to integrate women into that structure. Its root stretches back to the social control theory of government instituted by the American Revolution. Abigail Adams and Mary Wollstonecraft were there from the start, proposing equality for women. As is often the case with liberals, they slog along inside the system, getting little done amongst the compromises until some radical movement shows up and pulls those compromises left of center. This is how it operated in the days of the suffragist movement and again with the emergence of the radical feminists.

Radical feminism provides an important foundation for the rest of “feminist flavors.” This is actually the breeding ground for many of the ideas arising from feminism; ideas which get shaped and pounded out in various ways by other branches of feminism. This term refers to the feminist movement that sprung out of the civil rights and peace movements in 1967 – 1968. The reason this group gets the “radical” label is that they view the oppression of women as the most fundamental form of oppression, one that cuts across boundaries of race, culture and economic class. The best history of this movement is a book called “Daring to be
Bad” by Alice Echols (1989) Another excellent book is “Radical Feminism,” an anthology by Anne Koedt, a well known radical Feminist.

Marxist/socialist feminism recognizes that women are oppressed and attributes the oppression to the capitalist/private property system. Thus they insist that the only way to end the oppression of women is to overthrow the capital system. Socialist feminism is the result of Marxism meeting radical feminism. Echols offer a description of social feminism as a marriage between Marxism and radical feminism, with Marxism the dominant partner. Marxists and Socialists often call themselves ‘radical’ but they use the terms to refer to a completely different “root” of society: the economic system.

As radical feminism died out as a movement, Cultural feminism got rolling. In fact the difference between the two is quite striking: where as radical feminism was a movement to transform society, cultural feminism retreated to vanguardism, working instead to build a women’s culture. Notions that women are “inherently kinder and gentler” are one of the foundations of cultural feminism and remain a major part of it.

Eco-feminism is a Belief that human violation of the natural world is an extension of the prevalent patriarchy of Western culture. On this view, efforts to protect the environment at large are feminist in spirit, since they challenge systemic male domination of the other (Dict. Phil 66). This branch of feminism is much more spiritual than political in nature. It may or may not be wrapped up with Goddess worship and vegetarianism. Its basic tenet is that a patriarchal society will exploit its resources without regard to long term consequences as a direct result of
the attitudes fostered in a patriarchal society. Parallels are often drawn between society treatment of the environment, animals or resources and its treatment of women. In resisting patriarchal culture, eco-feminists feel that they are also resisting plundering and destroying the Earth and vice versa.

Feminists all over the world are working on the cultural setbacks that determine the compulsory ghettos of women’s lives. In fact, French feminist critics like Julia Kristeva and Luce Irigary voice their protest in celebrating, rather than hiding the functions of the female body like the womb, conception, the relationship between the foetus and the mother etc. these they feel are specific, private, female experiences that women have to be proud of.(Marshal 94)

Along with the onslaught of the multiple waves of feminism, efforts were made by quite a few feminist writers to express the sufferings of women; also, these writers offered solutions to put an end to the perennial victimhood of women in the society. Feminism was involved right from the beginning of literary studies, and for good reasons. Kate Millet’s trailblazing Sexual Politics shows that most of the male characters in D.H.Lawrence’s and Henry Miller’s novels are denigrating, exploitative and repressive in their relations with women. Feminism saw very clearly that the widespread negative stereotyping of women in literature and films constituted a formidable obstacle on the road to true equality(Raghupathi 62)

Mary Wollstonecraft (1759 – 1797) was an 18th century English writer, philosopher and advocate of women’s rights. She has been called the “first feminist” or “mother of Feminism.” Her book-length essay on women’s rights,
and especially on women’s education, A Vindication of the Rights of Women, is a classic of feminist thought, and a must-read for anyone who wants to understand the history of feminism (Feminism 3) Mary is usually considered a liberal feminist because her approach is primarily concerned with the individual woman and about rights. She could be considered as a difference feminist in her honoring of women’s natural talents and her insistence that women not be measured by men’s standards (Shukla Feminism 3).

During her brief career, she wrote novels, treatises, a travel narrative, a history of French Revolution and Children’s book. She is best known for A Vindication of the Rights of Women (1792) in which she argues that women are not naturally inferior to men, but appears to be only because they lack education. She suggests that both men and women should be treated as rational beings and imagines a social order found on reason. Wollstonecraft’s advocacy of women’s equality and critiques of conventional femininity has become increasingly important.

A Vindication of the Rights of Women, is one of the earliest works of feminist philosophy. In it, Wollstonecraft argues that women ought to have an education commensurate with their position in society and then proceeds to redefine that position, claiming that women are essential to the nation because they educate its children and because they could be “companions” to their husbands rather than mere wives. She admits: “I lament that women are systematically degraded by receiving the trivial attentions, which men think it manly to pay to the sex, when, in fact, they are insultingly supporting their own superiority” (Wollstonecraft 14). Instead of viewing women as ornaments to society or property to be traded in marriage, she maintains that they are human beings deserving the same fundamental
rights as men. Large sections of the *Right of Women* respond vitriocially to conduct-
book writers such as James Fordyce and John Gregory and educational philosophers
such as Jean Jacques Rousseau, who wanted to deny women an education. In
addition to her larger philosophical arguments, Wollstonecraft also lays out a
specific educational plan, that all children should be sent to a country day school as
well as given some education at home to inspire a love of home and domestic
pleasure.

Wollstonecraft addresses her text to the middle class, which she describes as
the “most natural state” and in many ways the Rights of Women is inflicted by a
bourgeois view of the world. It encourages modesty and industry in its readers and
attack the uselessness of the aristocracy. Today Wollstonecraft is regarded as one
the founding feminist philosophers and feminists often cite both her life and work as
important influences.

John Stuart Mill’s sympathetic attitude towards feminism was one aspect
of his belief that the liberty of the individual is absolutely necessary for the
development of the society. In his, “The Subjection of Women” he says: that the
principle which regulates the existing social relation between the two sexes—
the legal subordinations of one sex to the other—is wrong in itself, and now
one of the chief hindrances to human improvement; and that it ought to be
replaced by a principle of perfect equality, admitting no power of privilege on
the one side, nor disability on the other. (Phomrong 23-4)

The statement of his case—that women’s position is not natural but the
result of political oppression by men—is one of the more brilliant of its kind, and
his analysis of the effects this use of power has had on both men and women is exceptionally persuasive (Mill 33).

The role of man and woman and their mutual adjustments to life’s variegated situations is summed up by Rousseau thus: A man speaks of what he knows, a woman of what pleases her; the one requires knowledge, the other taste: the principal object of man’s discourse should be what is useful, that of woman’s what is agreeable (Natanam, 107).

Virginia Woolf was a late-Victorian critic, philosopher, biographer and scholar. She grew up in a large talented family, educating herself in her father’s magnificent library, meeting many Victorian scholars, learning Greek and Latin. Woolf came naturally into the profession of writing developing her own style which handled the “stream of consciousness” with a carefully modulated poetic flow. More than anything else, she was very concerned with the position of women, especially professional women and the constrictions they suffered from. She wrote several essays on the subject among which the notable are, A Room of One’s Own (1929) & Three Guineas (1938).

A room of One’s Own is considered the first major work in feminist criticism. Woolf deploys a number of methodologies – historical and sociological analysis, fictional hypothesis, philosophy to answer her question of why there have been so few female writers. She ties their minority status largely to the socio economic factors, specifically their poverty and lack of privacy. Her mantra throughout the essay is that a woman must have 500 pounds a year and a room of her own if she is to write creatively. Without money, women are slavishly
dependant on men without privacy, constant interruptions block their creativity. Freedom of thought is hampered as women consume themselves with thoughts of gender. They write out of anger or insecurity and such emotions make them think about themselves rather than about their subjects. In her writings, Woolf examined the obstacles and prejudices that have hindered women writers. She separated women as objects of representation and women as authors of representation, and argued that a change in the forms of literature was necessary because most literature had been “made by men out of their own needs for their own uses.”(Shukla Feminism 58) Commenting on Virginia Woolf’s contribution to literature and feminism, David Garnet says: Virginia Woolf’s work resembles that a woman is mending clothes in the kitchen while she watches the pots simmering on the stove and tells a story to the children around her knee without forgetting that there is a homemade cake in the oven which, judging from the smell, will soon be ready to come out(Quoted in Pourgharib 57)

Aphra Ben is the first female writer to earn her own money from writing. She paved the way for 19th century novelists like Jane Austen who were able to write despite the lack of privacy in their family sitting-rooms. Woolf believes that contemporary female writers still generally operate out of anger or insecurity, but that in the future with money and privacy, their minds will be freed and their genius will blossom.

Thus, Virginia Woolf insists the importance of privacy and money for the female writers to express their view and the treatment of women in the society. Through their writings they can create an awareness among the people about the
domination of men and also how they can rescue themselves from the male dominated society.

*The Second Sex* is a 1949 book by the French existentialist Simone de Beauvoir. It deals with the treatment of women throughout history and often regarded as a major work of feminist philosophy and the starting point of second wave feminism. She says: “Woman? Very simple, say the fanciers of simple formulas: she is a womb, an ovary; she is a female—this word is sufficient to define her. . . . . .The term ‘female’ is derogatory not because it emphasizes woman’s animality, but because it imprisons her in her sex; and if this sex seems to man to be contemptible and inimical even in harmless dump animals, it is evidently because of the uneasy hostility stirred up in him by woman” (from Second Sex quoted by Shukla, WOW 19)

In the two volumes of the book, Beauvoir explained the status of women in the past and man’s gradual domination of women, with the opinion of Greeks like Pythagoras who wrote “There is a good principle that created orders, light and man and bad principle that created chaos, darkness and woman” She also wrote a comparison of women’s situation in ancient Greece with Rome. In Greece women were treated almost like slaves. Menander wrote “women is a pain that never goes away” In Rome though women enjoyed more rights, they were still discriminated against on the basis of their genders and had only empty freedom.

Beauvoir says that with the exception of German tradition, Christianity and its clergy served to subordinate women, quoting Paul the Apostle, Ambrose and John Chrysostom who wrote “of all the wild animals, none can be found as harmful
as women”. She also describes prostitution and the changes in dynamics brought about by courtly love that occurred about the twelfth century. The industrial Revolution of the 19th century gave women an escape from their homes but they were paid little for their work. The spread of birth control methods from ancient Egypt to the 20th century touches on the history of abortion.

Beauvoir points out the brilliant demonstration of Rosa Luxemburg and Marie Curie that “it is not women’s inferiority that has determined their historical insignificance; it is their historical insignificance that has doomed them to inferiority.” Beauvoir thought and wrote that the slavery of women disappeared during the 18th century when men briefly considered women to be peers. She quote Author Rimbaud who wrote hopefully one day women can become fully human beings when man gives her, her freedom.

Beauvoir also states the same concept as Virginia Woolf that women should be given their freedom to act freely according to their wish. In the past they were treated as slaves and were not given freedom even to lead their family. Women are more intelligent than men. But this truth was not accepted by men and they oppose them by their domination. Men did not accept the writings of women and their suggestions. Hence many women stayed back without expressing their ideas. Only because of the writings of some feminist writers, women were given freedom and are now treated as equal to men.

Another feminist leader Gloria Marie Steinem (born March 25, 1934) is an American feminist, journalist and social and political activist who became nationally recognized as a leader of and media spokesperson for the Women’s Liberation
Movement in the late 1960’s and 1970’s. A Prominent writer and key counter culture-era political figure, Steinem has founded many organizations and projects and has been the recipient of many awards and honors. She was a columnist for New York magazine and co-founded MS Magazine. In 1969, she published an article “After Black Power Women’s Liberation” which along with her early support of abortion rights, catapulted her to national fame as a feminist leader.

Steinem’s social and political views overlap into multiple schools of feminism. Although most frequently considered as a liberal feminist, she has repeatedly characterized herself as a radical feminist. Steinem is a staunch advocate of reproduction freedom, a term she herself coined and helped popularize. In 2005 Steinem appeared in the documentary film “I had an abortion” by Jennifer Baumgartner and Gillian Aldeich. In the film, Steinem described the abortion she had as a young woman in London, where she lived briefly before studying in India. In the documentary “My Feminism”, Steinem characterized her abortion as a pivotal and constructive experience.

Along with Susan Brown Miller and Catherine MacKinnon, Steinem has been a vehement critic of pornography, which she distinguishes from erotica. Erotica is as different from pornography as love is from rape, as dignity is from humiliation, as partnership is from slavery, as pleasure is from pain. Steinem’s argument hinges on the distinction between reciprocity versus domination. In fact, much of the tension and drama comes from the clear idea that one person is dominating the other.
In 1979, Steinem wrote the article on female genital mutilation which reported on the 75 million women suffering with the results of genital mutilation. According to Steinem, the real reason for genital mutilation can only be understood in the context of patriarchy: men must control women’s bodies as the means of production and thus repress the independent power of women’s sexuality. Steinem also wrote about Same Sex Marriage and about Transsexualism. She is also a signatory of 2008 manifesto, “Beyond Same-Sex Marriage: A New Strategic Vision For All Our Families and Relationships” which advocates extending legal rights and privileges to a wide range of relationships, households and families. In her article regarding Transsexualism, she quotes: “If the shoe does not fit, must we change the foot?” Although clearly meant in the contest of trans-sexuality, the quote is frequently mistaken as a general statement about feminism.

Steinem later singled out deconstructionists like Judith Butler for criticism: “I always wanted to put a sign up on the road to Yale saying Beware: Deconstruction Ahead. Academics are forced to write in language no one can understand so that they get tenure. They have to say ‘discourse’ not ‘talk’. Knowledge that is not accessible is not helpful. It becomes aerialised” (Wikipedia). Thus Steinem fights for the rights and freedom of women in her own way. She is not afraid to face the world for her modern altitude.

Germaine Greer (born 29 January 1939) is an Australian theorist, academic and journalist and is regarded as having been a major feminist voice of the mid-20th century. She is currently emeritus professor in English Literature and Comparative Studies at the University of Warwick.
Greer’s ideas have created controversy even since her book *The Female Eunuch* became an international best-seller in 1970, bringing her both adulation and opposition. Greer has defined her goal as ‘women’s liberation’ as distinct from ‘equality with men.’ She asserts that women’s liberation meant embracing gender differences in a positive fashion – a struggle for the freedom of women to define their own values, order their own priorities and determine their own fates. In contrast, Greer sees equality as mere assimilation and “settling” to live the lives of “unfree men.”

Greer argued in her book, *The Female Eunuch* that women do not realize how much men hate them and how much they are taught to hate themselves. Christine Wallace writes that, when *The Female Eunuch* was first published, one woman had to keep it wrapped in brown paper because her husband wouldn’t let her read it. Even in this situation it arrived in the shops in London in October 1970 and by March 1971, it had nearly sold out its second print and had been translated into eight languages.

*Sex and Destiny: The Politics of Human Fertility* published in 1984, continued Greer’s critique of western attitudes towards sexuality, fertility and family and the imposition of those attitudes on the rest of the world. Greer’s targets again include the nuclear family, government intervention in sexual behavior and the commercialization of sexuality and women’s bodies. Greer argued that the western promotion of birth control in the Third World was in large part driven not by concern for human welfare but by the traditional fear and envy of the rich towards the fertility of the poor. She cautioned against condemning life styles and family value in the developing world. She also argued that the nuclear family is a bad
environment for women and for the raising of children; and that the manufacture of women’s sexuality by western society was demeaning and confining. Girls are feminized from childhood by being taught rules that subjugate them, she argued. Later, when women embrace the stereotypical version of adult feminity, they develop a sense of shame about their own bodies and lose their natural and political autonomy. The result is powerlessness, isolation, admonished sexuality and a lack of joy. In 1999, the book *The Whole Women*, a sequel to *The Female Eunuch*, discussed what she saw as the lack of fundamental progress in the feminist movement and criticized some sections of the women’s movement for illusion on that score. “Even it had been a poor substitute for liberation; fake equality is leading women into double jeopardy. The rhetoric of equality is being used in the name of political correctness to mask the hammering that women are taking. On every side speechless women endure endless hardship, grief and pain, in a world system that creates billions of losers for every handful of winners. It’s time to get angry again”

Thus, Greer expressed her disappointment through her books that how women were cheated and hated in the society.

Kate Millet is an American feminist and activist, born in Minnesota in September 1934. Millet was politically active in the antiwar and civil rights movements and then she was actively implicated in feminist politics in the 1960’s – 1970’s. In 1966, she became a committee member of The National Organization for Women. Her doctorate thesis completed in September 1969 was published as *Sexual Politics* in August 1970. Millet is vehement on the patriarchal social order. According to her, “What goes largely unexamined, often even
acknowledged (yet is institutionalized nonetheless) in our social order, is the birght right priority whereby males rule females. Through this system a most ingenious form of “interior colonization” has been achieved”(Millet quoted in Shukla WOW 39)

This book is divided into two parts (i) Instances of Sexual Politics and (ii) Theory of Sexual Politics. Important to be noted in this is the word ‘Politics’ is used in the sense to refer “ to power-structured relationship, arrangements whereby one group of people is controlled by another ” which shows the power men have over women, over society and the family. She explained how a man likes his own pleasure and the pain and humiliation he imposes on this partner, “ who is nothing but an object to him in the most literal sense ” She explodes that according to men, women are only an object and are not treated as human beings. This was the situation of women in many countries, she grieved.

Millet also quoted from the extracts of Norman Mailer’s *An American Dream*, that the hero killed his wife because she was impertinent but at the end we understood that it is the satire of the “ American Dream ” The protagonist killed his wife, but he still gets respect from people, the police and nobody wants conflict with him. He is powerful because nothing happens to him. There is no one to raise voice against him, for the crime he has done. The patriarchy went on for centuries and is still well-integrated in our society. Men dominate the world since their childhood because they are taught to be dominant. Women and men have a relationship of dominant / dominated. According to Millet, male and female are considered as being parts of two different cultures that are constructed from childhood.
Furthermore, men have been in charge of the whole family for centuries. Power was transmitted from father to son. Mother and daughter only have to take care of the house and children. Women are part of a “minority group.” They are treated like slaves because they do not have a lot of rights and they are not equal to men. They live far differential and receive unequal treatment. They could neither own nor earn in their own rights and they are treated as non-persons without legal status.

Finally, the domination of man over woman is mostly sexual. Sexuality is power by which man reduces woman to nothing, to pain and humiliation. Men have power, women do not have the right to object because they cannot oppose men. It is the “battle of sexes.” The relationship between a man and a woman has changed in the West, but in many other countries, women remain slaves, with their lives conditioned by a rigid patriarchal code.

Shulamith Firestone’s feminist writings are significant. Written in 1970 in the middle of the second wave of the women’s movement, her The Dialectic of Sex was a battle call for women to combat societal norms of the relationships between men, women and children. Her purpose was to build a new dialectical materialism based upon sex, similar to what Karl Marx and Friederich Engels did for economics (Shukla WOW 57) According to Firestone, “the early Women’s Movement was radical. Remember that to attack the Family, the Church, and the Law was no small thing in the Victorian Era. Few people realize what a grass root movement it was, nor know of the tortuous journey’s made by dedicated women into the backwoods of the frontiers, and
door to door in the towns to speak about the issues or to collect signatures for endless petitions which were laughed right out of the assemblies (Firestone quoted in Shukla WOW 64-65)

Sarah Grimke wrote bitterly that men were attempting to “drive women from almost every sphere of moral action” and called on women “to rise from that degradation and bondage to which the faculties of our minds have been prevented from expanding to their full growth and are sometimes wholly crushed.”(Shukla Feminism 25)

Betty Friedan’s *The Feminine Mystique* depicted the roles of women in industrial societies, and in particular the full-time homemaker role, which Friedan saw as stifling. The book became a bestseller, which some people suggest was the impetus for the second wave of feminism, and significantly spurred the women’s movement(Shukla Feminism 110)

*The Feminine Mystique* is a modernized version of the old formula for domestic enslavement more bluntly expressed as “Woman’s place is in the home.” The new element is the poisoned bait of the Mystique by which women today are voluntarily lured back into the trap that their grandmothers fought to escape from (Shukla Feminism 120).

Luce Irigaray is a French feminist. Early receptions of Irigaray in the English speaking world often mistakenly labeled her an ‘essentialist.’ This view is now generally considered false, as a better understanding of the complex linguistic, philosophical and psychoanalytic precepts Irigaray writes from is gained.(Shukla WOW28)
The predicament of woman has always fuelled the imagination of creative writers. According to Elizabeth Hardwick, “Literature is the art in which women have had the greatest success. But a woman needs only to think of this activity to feel her bones rattling with violent distress”(Hardwick 209)

Samuel Kirubahar has identified certain patterns in the feminist writings:
Women in Feminist writings are presented as characters on three levels; viz.,
1. Character is derivative in which the writer uses it as a common model.
2. Character is a product of social conditioning to mirrorise the ideal or counter-ideal of the prevailing values of the society.
3. Character is a symbolic fulfillment of the writer’s needs.(Kirubahar 32).

Also, as Peter Barry has enumerated, the feminist critics involve themselves in the following tasks while analyzing literary texts:

1. Rethink the canon, aiming at the rediscovery of texts written by women
2. Revalue women’s experience.
3. Examine representations of women in literature by men and women
4. Challenge representations of women as ‘other’, as ‘lack’, as part of ‘nature.’
5. Examine power relations which obtain in texts in life, with a view to breaking them down, seeing reading as a political act, and showing the extent of patriarchy.
6. Recognize the role of language in making what is social and constructed seem transparent and ‘natural.’
7. Raise the question of whether men and women are ‘essentially’ different because of biology, or are socially constructed as different.

8. Explore the question of whether there is a female language, an écriture feminine, and whether this is also available to men.

9. ‘Re-read’ psychoanalysis to further explore the issue of female and male identity.

10. Question the popular notion of the death of the author, asking whether there are only ‘subject positions. . . constructed in discourse’, or whether, on the contrary, the experience (e.g. of a black or lesbian writer) is central.

11. Make clear the ideological base of supposedly ‘neutral’ or ‘mainstream’ literary interpretations. (Barry 128-9)

Countless women writers throughout the globe have articulated the agonies and ecstasies of women. Among Indian women writers in English, Anita Desai has offered near-clinical studies of the neurotic state of sensitive women; Kamala Markandaya is adept in exploring the female psyche which she has proved in her novels. Bharathi Mukherjee has specialized the portrayal of the immigrant women in her fiction. Shashi Deshpande offers fictional portraits of middle class women in her novels. Shobha De’s fiction portrays aggressive, urban women of 21st Century. In fact, her treatment of woman question is the most significant contribution made by her work. She once said:

“ I write with great deal of empathy towards women. without waving the feminist flag. I feel very strongly about woman’s situation (Shukla WOW 115)
In the American context, African-American greats like Tony Morrison and Alice Walker have described the plight of African-American women who have had to endure incest, rape, violence, poverty and divorce.

Canadian Literature is dominated by women writers. Margaret Laurence, Margaret Atwood and Alice Munroe are globally famous writers. While Laurence is a pioneer among modern Canadian women writers, Atwood is extraordinarily versatile. Alice Munro has won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2013 for her achievements in the genre of short fiction. Adele Wiseman, Marian Engel, Audrey Thomas, Uma Parameswaran, Anita Rao Badami and many other women writers have enriched Canadian Literature with their literary works.

Jean Margaret Lawrence (1926 – 1987) was a Canadian novelist and short story writer. She was one of the major figures in Canadian Literature. She was also a founder of the Writer’s Trust of Canada, a non-profit literary organization that seeks to encourage Canada’s writing community. In most of her works, her own fictional town Manawaka found an unavoidable place. Her Manawaka works include *The Stone Angel*, *A Jest of God*, *The Fire Dwellers and a Bird in the House*.

Her early novels were influenced by her experience as a member of the minority white community in Africa. They show a strong sense of Christian symbolism and ethical concern for being a white person in a colonial state. *The Loons* is one of the most important stories of Margaret which describes the alienation felt by the young Piquette Tonnerre who represent an ethnic group rejected by a
cruel society, because Tonnerres are different. Piquette the central character of the story was a half breed, “neither Cree nor French” and was forced to grow up in a cruel and cold society. Having been discarded by the society, She lived alone. Her life is compared to Loons – the large birds of North America which cry out at night with their sad songs and lose their natural habitat. Like that, Piquette lived her life as an outcaste and died alone and misunderstood. She hid her emotions like the Loons which are unable to adopt to the modern human invasion. Piquette too is unable to escape from the cultural stereotypes imposed on her.

Lawrence does a great job on conveying to the readers, her sad findings about our society. Her story is the story of life: most of us are alone, rejected, alienated and misunderstood. In the end, good or bad, young or old, we all die; sometime only the most tragic stories are remembered just like the song of the Loons.

*The Stone Angel*, the book for which she was best known, set in a fictional Manitoba small town called Manawaka. The Stone Angel is the story of Hagar who learns “mothering” at the age of ninety(Prabhavathy 64). It was Constance Rooke who coined the term, *vollendungsroman* which means a novel of ‘completion’ or ‘winding up’. This term can be applied to The Stone Angel(Prabhavathy 64)

The novel is narrated by Hagar Shipley, a 10 year old woman living in her eldest son’s home in Vancouver. Published in 1964, the novel is of the literary form that looks at the entire life of a person and the Canadian experience. The narrator married a rough mannered homesteader Bram Shipley against the wish of her
parents, who then disinherit her. In fact, disinheritance is a recurring theme in much of Lawrence’s fiction.

The couple struggle through economic hardships and climate challenges of Canadian frontier existence; Hagar becomes unhappy with the relationship, leaves Bram and moved with her son to Vancouver, where she worked as a domestic for many years, betraying her social upbringing. Lawrence’s published works after *The Stone Angel* express the changing role of women’s lives in the 1970’s. It is safe to say that Lawrence throughout her career was faithfully dedicated to presenting a female perspective on contemporary life, depicting the choices – and consequence of those choices – women must make to find meaning and purpose in life.

*The Fire-Dwellers*, at the surface level, deals with the problems encountered by a woman in provincial Canada. It sketches the physical landscape, geographical locales, social structures and familial relationship which set the background of the novel’s action added to the mapping of an interior mindscape of the narrator(Sophia 73-73)

According to K.Chellappan, “Margaret Laurence’s four Manawaka novels are sagas of spiritual quests for freedom. They enact journeys in time and place simultaneously; and unlike traditional male heroes, her heroines descend into the depths of their own being as well as the cultural past and return after discovering their own power. In that process, they seem to reject institutionalized religion and seek to find the god within who is the god of creativity and love—unlike the patriarchal God”(42). Margaret Laurence is
“known for her the typical feminine sensibility nourished on Canadian culture expressing itself in her delicate style. In all her novels, she has portrayed aspects of human life, which transcend the specificities of Canadian culture and attain the height of universality” (Naikar 41).

Margaret Elenor Atwood (1939 -) is another leading Canadian poet, novelist, literary critic, essayist and environmental activist. She is a winner of the Arthur C.Clarke Award, Prince of Astorias Award, Governor General Award (twice) and has been short listed for the prestigious Booker Prize 3 times. Atwood has published many volumes of poetry. Her first novel The Edible Woman and her second novel Surfacing brought her name and fame. She wrote many poems and her other novels include Lady Oracle (1976), Cat’s Eye (1988) and The Handmaid’s Tale (1985), The Robber Bride and Alias Grace were her two collection of short stories.

Margaret Atwood has in many of her novels, dealt with the issue of women and nature. Subjugation of woman in a patriarchal society and exploitation of nature in a capitalistic society are the themes which Atwood has quite often taken up for her writings (Reshmi 62). In the Canadian Scenario, Atwood had been preoccupied with fictionalization of history in some of her works. In the Journals of Susanna Moodie (1970), Atwood rewrites the local story of Susana Moodie. Alias Grace (1996) is based on a sensational double murder that occurred in Canada in 1843 and the protagonist Grace Marks is a historical figure, one of the most notorious Canadian women of the 1940s. The Assassin presents a gripping tale, which stretches across many decades from world war I, almost to the present moment covering crucial episodes in History
like the depression, the world wars, the Spanish Civil war etc. (Baskaran, 47). Atwood has attempted to create a prototype of Canadian existential experience in her *The Journals of Susanna Moodie*. The prototypical figure is Susanna Moodie, a British emigrant to Canada, situated at a given point of time when migration to Canada was a widespread phenomenon with various casual bases that ranged from economic necessity to visionary glory. (Balasubramanian 24) Atwood’s Lady Oracle, published in 1976 is a polymorphous text in which several strands are gathered together to give a pattern, the warp and woof being gender-politics. (Srinivasan 73)

The novel challenges the norms of fiction-writing and reworks or the older ones, such as the Gothic, the sentimental, the picaresque novel and the fairy-tales. The novel provides a locus where a plurality of styles and traditions visit. The protagonist Joan Foster, is also presented as a polymorphic one, by refracting her identity through a plethora of projected personae (Srinivasan 73). *The Edible Woman* indicts male supremacy which victimized women for centuries. Lady Oracle shows the writer as a woman, a survivor in the phallocentric culture. In Bodily harm, gender-politics are contextualized within “the brutal injustices of modern global politics” (White 57). The Handmaid’s Tale (1985) extends into future Atwood’s critique of female brutalization articulated in Bodily Harm. Surfacing reveals how gender politics have relegated women artists to a lower order and their history is subsumed into the dominant patriarchal discourse. Atwood’s Life Before Man examines the politics of power in interpersonal relationships between wife and husband. The Robber Bride challenges radical feminist thinking about gender relations. It
tells how female sexuality is as transgressive element as male sexuality to transform existing gender relations. In her novels, Atwood “pleads with all women to have a human capacity for survival. She goes ‘beyond gender’ thereby debating in her novels the issue of human dignity of women.(Prabakar92). According to M.K.Pandey, “In the English tradition, women are often criticized and punished for the sin of narcissism, for loving their own images and selves above all specially male others. Atwood in her fiction challenges this traditional image of women presented by patriarchy( 80).

Coomy Vevaina opines that Atwood is “neither a hard-core feminist nor an anti-feminist but a clearsighted humanist.”(Pandey 82) Using such devices as irony, symbolism and self-conscious narrators, she [Atwood] makes brilliant use of postmodern techniques in order to explore the relationship between humanity and nature, the dark side of human behavior and power as it pertains to gender and politics.(Kottiswari 11)

Atwood’s novels are governed by feminist consciousness which runs as an undercurrent and serves as the unifying principle. Each one of them is concerned with the politics of gender confronted by working women. In the process of struggle for change, the protagonists in Atwood’s novels are sought to be organized into a powerful force and invested with a streak of rebellion(Prabhakar 86) The heroines of Atwood, after initial innocence of their nature, finally awaken to the reality of their own self. Then they journey towards their true self and ultimately reconcile to their lot(Royappa 118)

Atwood often portrays female characters dominated by patriarchy in her novels. She believes that the feminist label can only be applied to writers who
consciously work within the framework of the feminist movement. Atwood’s contributions to the theorizing of Canadian identity have garnered attention both in Canada and internationally. Her principal work of literary criticism _Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature_, remains the standard introduction to Canadian Literature in Canadian studies programs internationally. The novel, _Surfacing_, tells the story of a woman who returns to her home town in Canada to find her missing father. Accompanied by her lover and another married couple, the unnamed protagonist meets her past in her childhood house, recalling events and feelings, while trying to find clues for her father’s mysterious disappearance. Little by little, the past overtakes her and drives her into the realm of wildness and madness. Atwood’s _Surfacing_ is an exhibition of the inner conflicts of a Canadian woman who falls a prey to the power politics of gender in a patriarchal society and to the impact of neo-colonialism of her land (Devi 112)

In _Survival_, Atwood postulates that Canadian Literature and by extension Canadian identity, is characterized by the symbol of survival. This symbol is expressed in the omnipresent use of “victim positions” in Canadian Literature. These positions represent a scale of self-consciousness and self-actualization for the victim in the “victor/victim” relationship. The “victor” in these scenario may be other humans, the nature, the wilderness or other external and internal factors which oppress the victim. In the novels _Surfacing_, _The Handmaid’s Tale_ and _Oryx and Crake_, one can sense Atwood’s prominent concerns about the already abysmal world and her ecological commitment that is fed by a strong biocentric understanding of how people’s survival links into the future of the planet at large (Joshua 103)
Ultimately, thanks to her theorizing in works such as survival and her exploration of similar themes in her fiction, Atwood considers Canadian literature as the expression of Canadian identity. The Canadian identity has been defined by a fear of nature, by settler history and by an unquestioned adherence to the community.

Gail Scott, a Canadian Feminist writer grew up in a bilingual community. She is treated as a ‘Quebec Expert’ due to her writings about Quebec culture and politics for many years. She is a co-founder of Spirale, a French language cultural magazine and Tessera, a bilingual periodical of feminist criticism and new writing. Her novel, ‘Heroine’ (1987) shows how a new, heterogeneous sensibility is forged together under the high pressures of different and often clashing English and French Cultural influences. As Sukhmani Roy points out, in the novel, the author “alternatively draws on both the feminist literary theories. As the result, a carnivalesque style emerges” (Roy 65).

Adele Wiseman was the daughter of Russian Jewish Immigrants who escaped the Russian pogroms and settled in Canada. Wiseman has written two novels: *The Sacrifice* and *Crackpot*. “Both novels deal with Jewish immigrant heritage, the struggle to survive the Depression and World War II, and the challenges the next generation faced in acculturating to Canadian society” *(Wiseman, Wikipedia)*

Audrey Thomas has written novels and short stories. So far, she has written eleven novels and many collections of short stories. She lived for
about two years (1964-66) in Ghana, Africa, an experience which has shaped her writings.

Uma Parameswaran was born in Madras and later settled in Manitoba, Canada. As a creative writer, she has written poetry, plays, short stories and novels. *Trishanku* is her poetry collection; *Sons Must Die and Other Plays* is her collection of plays. *What was Always Hers and Riding High With Krishna and a Baseball Bay & Other Stories* are her short story collections. *Mangoes on the Maple Tree and A cycle of the Moon* are her novels. Uma’s works deals with both diasporic and feminist issues.

Born in India, Anita Rao Badami migrated to Canada in 1991. She has written novels like *Tamarind Men, The Hero’s Walk, Can you Hear the Nightbird Call? and Tell it to the Trees*. Her novels deal with the complexities of Indian family life and with the cultural gap that emerges when Indians move to the west.

Marian Engel was born on May 24, 1933 in Toronto. Her parents were teachers. Engel, raised in several Ontario towns, had a happy childhood. She attended McMaster and McGill Universities. As a University student, she was highly creative. She was actively involved in the production of the University Newspaper and literary magazine, as well as in the dramatic society and debating society. One of the seminal influences that informed Engel’s concern with the power of words and channelized her approach to writing was her continuing friendships with the fellow students from her academic years. Many of her classmates went on to teach at Universities, became writers, or engaged in politics.
Her travels and residence outside Ontario, which include several years spent in France and Cyprus, also served as a rich source of inspiration. Engel worked as a lecturer, teacher and writer-in-residence at universities throughout Canada. She contributed stories and articles to journals and periodicals and won many awards for her writing. She died on February 16, 1985.

Engel was a committed activist for the national and international writer’s cause. She was the first chair of the Writer’s Union of Canada (1973-74). From 1975-1977, she served on the city of Toronto Book Award Committee and the Canadian Book and Periodical Development Council. In 1982, she was made an Officer of the Order of Canada. Engel was Metro Toronto YWCA’s Woman of Distinction in Arts and Letters in 1984. After her death, the Writers Development Trust of Canada instituted the $10,000 Marian Engel Award which was presented annually to a woman writer in mid-career.

Engel's writing illustrated contemporary life with a focus on the day to day experiences of women. The relationships between mothers and daughters, rooted in explorations of identify formation and subjective experiences, were a common theme. Doubled identities were also commonly used to illustrate the challenge off choosing between the push and pull of daily life - namely traditional gender roles and the imagined possibility of the 'other' (Wikipedia)

Engel’s novels are strongly concerned with the situation of women in society, with a woman in each case as the central character and often as the narrator. They are simply formed, deftly patterned, and clearly written, and with one exception they are short books. In these respects they resemble much modern French

Her novels could be seen as presenting a gallery of feminine roles in contemporary Western society. *No Clouds of Glory* presents the woman as academic, challenging men in the career world, but also challenging women who take a more traditionally feminine role. *The Honeyman Festival* presents a kind of quintessential earth-mother who has passed through a romantic period as actress and film director’s lover to settle for a life with her memories, maternity and marriage. *Monodromos* is Engel’s most elaborate novel in a structural sense, heavily decorated with background detail of life in Cyprus that satisfies sociological curiosity rather than one’s aesthetic feelings; for this reason, it is perhaps the least sharply drawn of all her works. Here, the woman is a divorced wife, suddenly caught in a spin of insecurity, and moving back-through a surrogate sisterhood with her former husband-towards a renewed individuality. There are no successful marriages in Engel’s fictional world.

*Bear*, which won a Governor General’s Award and gained popularity for its daring plot of a woman enamoured of a pet bear, is really a fable rather than a novel in the ordinary sense. The novel presents the woman as a personification of humanity recognizing and uniting with its animal nature. *The Glassy Sea* presents the woman as nun, re-entering the world and returning with new experience to the life of religious observance and service. If *Bear* shows humanity’s need to recognize oneness with the natural world, *The Glassy Sea* shows how the spiritual
life can give meaning to the brutal chaos of existence. It is perhaps Engel’s best novel, beautifully concise and exemplary in the way every word tells and adds. The compassion, lyricism and resonance of prose that underlie all Engel’s novels are here brought together in their most powerful expression. _Lunatic Villas_, however can best be described as an entertainment rather than a novel. The story of the adventures of a haphazardly united family led by a single parent, it is a vacation into force, where as Engel’s talent is for “la comedia humaine “. Engel has an unusual gift for imaginative and truthful characterization, and her prose style has excellent simplicity and perfect pitch. These are her prime virtues as a writer.

Marian Engel’s writings have elicited significant critical attention. Quite a few articles have been written on her works.

Christl Verduyn’s _Marian Engel’s Writings_ is a book-length study of the writings of Engel.

E.Brady’s _Marian Engel and her works_ is a monograph on the writer.

Gault, cinda’s “Thinking Themselves Halved When They Are atomized’ : Identity Contradictions in Marian Engel’s No Clouds of Glory and the Honeyman Festival brings out the identity crises faced by the protagonists of Engel.

Kavanagh’s “Ambivalence and Intertextuality in Marian Engel’s The Glassy Sea: What the Archives Reveal” discusses the ambivalence and inter-textuality displayed by Engel’s novel.
Linda Hutcheon assigns a very important role to the use of parody by women writers. She examines parody briefly in an essay on Marian Engel’s ironic parody of the picaresque in her novel Lunatic Villas. Hutcheon makes an interesting point about how the male wilderness novel has been domesticated by Canadian women novelists in the form they have invented namely, the cabin or cottage novel and cites examples from Margaret Atwood’s Surfacing, Margaret Laurence’s The Diviners, Marian Engel’s Bear and Audrey Thomas’ Intertidal Life. These writers use parody for social and cultural critique. . . (quoted in Gopalan 27)

Paul Barrett’s “Animal Tracks in the Margin: Tracing the Absent Referent in Marian Engel’s Bear and J.M. Coetzee’s the Lives of Animals” is a comparative study of the works of these two authors.

Howells, Coral Ann Howells’ “National and Female Identity in Canadian Literature, 1965-1980: The Fiction of Margaret Laurence, Margaret Atwood, and Marian Engel” discusses the fiction of Engel along with the works of Laurence and Atwood.

This Thesis has seven chapters. The Introductory chapter traces the worldwide predicament of women in the past and present—the ancient, glorious past of the women cutting across countries and cultures, the gradual sidelining and subjugation of women; then, the chapter traces the evolution of feminism as a many sided movement; the literary feminism is highlighted with an introduction of major feminist writers and critics at global level; next, prominent women
novelists of Canada are introduced; this is followed by an introduction to the works of Marian Engel. The chapter spells out the chapter scheme.

The second chapter makes a study of loneliness and alienation undergone by the protagonists in the chosen novels of Engel.

In the third chapter, Man-Woman relationship in the chosen novels of Marian Engel has been examined.

The fourth chapter deals with Female Bonding, exhibited by many characters in the novels of Engel.

The fifth chapter “Search for Identity” deals with the protagonists’ self-exploration and search for identity in the chosen novels of Engel.

The sixth chapter “Narrative Technique” deals with a variety of literary devices used by Engel to project her vision.

The final chapter sums up the research findings. Avenues for further research have been suggested.