CHAPTER TWO

FEMINIST LITERARY CRITICISM: A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Preliminaries

Throughout the history of human civilization the voice of women has been suppressed by the patriarchal society. Women are considered to be weak and inferior. Patriarchy has a long history and it has become a social system in which men dominate, exploit, oppress and subordinate women. The term “patriarchy” refers to the rule of the fathers in a male-dominated society where they hold authority over women, children and property. Patriarchy has rooted itself in all the nations of the world, socially, politically and economically. It allots primary position of male and secondary to female. As a social and ideological structure, patriarchy considers male to be superior to female. In this social system, economic, social, and cultural issues are controlled by males. Various factors, like social, religious, cultural traditions and mindset of males are responsible for female subjugation.

If someone reads the ancient history, it becomes clear that Patriarchy is an age-old ideology. For example, ancient Mesopotamian and Greek societies were patriarchal in nature. In Mesopotamian society, husbands were free to have extra coitus outside their marriage, but a wife committing adultery was pitched
into the river. *The Epic of Gilgamesh* from ancient Mesopotamia shows that patriarchy in Mesopotamian society existed. Gilgamesh, the Priest-King of the city of Uruk is a rapist. He uses women as objects and slaves to quench his lust. In an article on net entitled, *Patriarchy in the Ancient World: Early Mesopotamia to the Dark Ages* (2012) it is mentioned:

*The most implicit source of misogyny that came out of ancient Mesopotamia was the Hammurabi’s Code, which set the law and social order in Babylon. Among rules that dealt with theft and kidnapping, there were ones that ordered harsh and cruel punishments to women who disobeyed. For example, a man could divorce his wife anytime he wanted, but if a woman wanted to divorce her husband against his will she would have been made a slave.*

In ancient Greek society also women were exploited and oppressed. They were disallowed to go out freely alone. They were forced to be at home just performing their duties such as rearing children and looking after the household. Even a great philosopher like Plato (428/427-348/347 B.C.) also viewed women as weak and inferior to men. His student, Aristotle also followed his view. Aristotle (384-322 B.C.) in his book *Politics* (350 B.C.) says that by nature male is superior and female is inferior. Naturally, the male can
be a ruler and the female can be a ruled. It is stated in the same article on the net:

_Aristotle viewed women as subordinate. He felt that women were simply inferior – that they were merely deformed or “unfinished” men. He claimed that women were “receptacles” for men and they shouldn’t be educated or seen as rational beings - either he was a complete misogynist or just a totally clueless math geek. Either way his ideas formed the opinions of men for centuries after his death._2

The family is the main reason to bring patriarchy in the society because the head of the family is a father who is a decision maker in the family. Automatically, this makes the society patrilineal, meaning that property and the name of the family are inherited by the male descendants because the male child is considered to be the inheritor of the family but the female child is not considered so. In a patriarchal family, the birth of a son makes the family happy but the birth of a daughter is unwelcome. At the same time, if one traces the history, one sees that women had some opportunity to negotiate different forms of autonomy and decision making. However, these forms do not imply absolute liberty but have enabled them to show their needs and desires and to challenge the conditions that are given to them as their destiny. Simone De Beauvoir (2011) asserts:

_The woman herself recognizes that the universe as a whole is masculine; it is men who have shaped_
it, ruled it and who still today dominate it; as for her, she does not consider herself responsible for it; it is understood that she is inferior and dependent; she has not learned the lessons of violence, she has never emerged as a subject in front of other members of the group; enclosed in her flesh, in her home, she grasps herself as passive opposite to these human-faced gods who set goals and standards.  

During the nineteenth century, women mostly were at home to take care of the household, serve their husbands and look after their children. They were not allowed to speak in public and they were seen as weak. The environment always made them dependant on men. They were not happy because they had no civil rights and were disenfranchised. Betty Friedan (1921-2006), in her book *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) reveals that women in the 1950s were only at home to perform their duties as housewives and mothers. She states that women were not happy because they were evaluated according to their body and beauty. She criticizes women’s traditional duties as a wife and a mother. Lorraine Gates Schuyler (2006) asserts:

*In 1848, the pioneering women who gathered at Seneca Falls insisted that, like white men, they too were deserving of ballots. In the ensuing battle for woman suffrage, activists marched in the streets, picketed outside the White House, endured jail sentences, and staged hunger strikes to secure their full participation in the American polity.*
Their battle for suffrage rights lasted more than seventy years.⁴

There are many stories which refer to men’s resistance towards women to distance them from the right of voting. For example, a woman from South Carolina ‘heard a man say that if his wife registered and tried to vote, she should find another home!’⁵

However, ‘despite determined opposition from the region’s leading men, women in nearly every southern state cast their first ballots in November 1920’.⁶ The voting was only for the white men. So, even the black men did not have the right of voting. ‘For nearly a century, African Americans continued to fight for full access to the polls.’⁷

The 1890s were a transitional period for women’s writing and it was a great era for women writers. During the decade, the British women writers mostly presented their feminist views through short stories. After the emergence of feminist movements, women started asking and searching for their rights and identities. They demonstrated and fought for their freedom in order to be equal with men and participate in all spheres of life.

2.2 Emergence of Feminism

Human civilization reveals that women have always tried and struggled to obtain equality, respect and the same rights as men. This has been difficult, because of the traditional patriarchal social structures, as an ideology in which men are considered superior to women and have the right to rule women. From time to time, women
struggle for their legitimate rights. As mentioned earlier, in the nineteenth century, women were treated like slaves. They were fully dependent on their husbands. They were not allowed easily to get access to education and just used as objects in marriage and reproduction without the right to have any property except in a few cases and also they disallowed to be separated from their husbands and ask for a divorce. In marriage, there was no freedom to women, the meaning of marriage just meant obeying and being submissive to the husband and act as a slave. Therefore, in this situation, women’s movement comes up as a saviour for women to display their problems and find solutions for them. William L O’Neill (1969) writes:

The term woman movement appears in the late nineteenth century to describe all the public activities of women, whether directly related to feminist goals or not.\(^8\)

Feminism is a movement or a revolution that includes women and men who wish the world to be equal because they view the human world as being unequal and experience male superiority over female. Feminism, throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, developed itself as a great force to make women free. Feminism seeks a culture in which women are treated differently from men, and because of this discriminatory treatment women are losers in many respects. Such treatment is cultural and it is possible to modify it. Feminism started from the 1960s onwards to change such flexible
culture in order to respect women and value their role. Sudhir Kumar (2010) states:

The terms “feminism” and “feminist” did not gain widespread use until the 1970s, but the terms also “were already being used in the public parlance much earlier; for instance, Katherine Hepburn speaks of the “feminist movement” in the 1942 film woman of the year.9

A feminist can be anyone in the population of men and women having positive understanding and consideration towards women’s legitimate rights, and concerned about the status of women; acknowledging and admiring women’s contribution towards society and recognizing their noticeable roles in history. A feminist tries to free women from political, economic and cultural modes of oppression and longs to restore freedom and dignity to women. The term ‘feminist’ implies a political position but the term ‘female’ refers to gender difference. All female writings are not committed to the feminist position. Female writing is women’s writing about different issues of society; it is their perspective on life which can be explained in terms of gender. Therefore, a male writer can also be a feminist.

Feminists analyse the issues which are derived from patriarchy, male sexist bias and male chauvinism. There are different explanations from feminists for women’s issues, therefore, different feminist perspectives and theories came into existence to illustrate
women’s subordination, and to make them aware of their subjugation. All the theories and movements had an impact on each other, for example women’s movement in the west had an impact on African feminist thinking which together they realized women’s position as one of second-class status and that of “otherness” and tried to correct them.

The history of feminism is very complex; it unites and mixes different things into one. It is concerned with the rights of women on the basis of equality—women are human beings like men and therefore, they have to be granted equal rights. On the basis of differences—women are different from men and therefore, they have to be granted the rights to represent themselves. The history of feminism has undergone various phases and labels to shed light on women’s subordination and their struggle to get rid of patriarchy. The various phases and labels are like: women’s suffrage movement, Women’s Emancipation, socialist feminism, radical feminism, liberal feminism, Marxist feminism, cultural feminism, Black feminism, womanism, motherism, stiwanism, Anarchist feminism, Separatist feminism, eco-feminism, lesbian feminism, anti-racism and colonial theory, Chicana feminism, multiracial feminism, queer theory, post-colonial feminism, post-structural feminism, transnationalism, cyber-feminism, and post-modern feminism. Woman Suffrage was an important movement because it united women of very different backgrounds to resist patriarchy. It was during this phase that women
struggled to get the right to vote in political elections. According to Lorraine Gates (2006), woman Suffrage:

Transformed the look and feel of southern politics, and white men could no longer refer to the franchise as evidence of their superiority over white women or even African American women.\(^\text{10}\)

Feminist activists actively work in areas such as domestic violence, workplace issues, family medical leave, equal pay, equal treatment, judicious respect, harassment, discrimination and gender-based oppression. The various feminisms are often described in the context of “waves”—first-wave feminism, second-wave feminism and third-wave feminism. All three waves have a profound impact on women and gender studies as there were a number of women’s agitations for social change. Throughout history, the waves have undergone diverse labels and phases of feminism as mentioned earlier. Their objective was to interrogate gender inequalities and to bring about change in order to eliminate imbalance between men-women relationship. Margaret Walters (2005) states:

In the 20th century, ‘first-wave’ feminists had demanded civil and political equality. In the 1970s, ‘second-wave’ feminism concentrated on, and gave great prominence to, sexual and family rights for women.\(^\text{11}\)

The first-wave feminism emerged during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Peter Widdowson., et al. (2005) state, ‘the
women’s Rights and Women’s Suffrage movements were the crucial determinants in shaping this phase, with their emphasis on social, political and economic reform. The focus of first-wave feminism was on the legal rights, to bring women’s suffrage. First-wave feminism worked to remove all the obstacles in front of the girls to get an education and make them economically independent and have property rights. Further, it was during this wave that feminists and women asked to make changes in marriage laws. The first-wave feminism had an impact on feminism in both the western and eastern societies throughout the twentieth century. The first-wave feminism was considerably made of white middle, upper-class and well educated women. Socialist feminists such as Rosa Luxemburg (1871-1919), Alexandra Kollontai (1872-1952) and Emma Goldman (1869-1940), paved the way for the second-wave feminism.

The second-wave feminism was the women’s liberation movement during the late 1960s and early 1970s. The movement was blown out as a result of accumulation of women’s writings in the magazines for women. It was a widespread protest especially in the United States and France. The movement was run by the radical and liberal feminists. According to Gillian Howie., et al., eds. (2004), the symbolic beginning of the second-wave feminism ‘is assumed to be 1968 but a change in emphasis can be detected throughout the 1970s from the earlier liberal agenda of equal pay and opportunities to a broader set of political goals’.13
The second-wave feminism was concerned with equal pay, reproductive freedom, and protest against rape, domestic violence, pornography and sex discrimination and also it prolonged the first wave’s fight for women’s rights. It was during the second-wave feminism Women’s Aid Federation was formed for those women who faced domestic violence and also feminist criticism started as a part of the international women’s liberation movement.

In the second-wave feminism, Marxist feminism was a powerful strand. It was almost similar to the socialist and materialist feminism. Marxist feminists are feminists who are interested in the philosophical and economic theories of Karl Heinrich Marx (1818-1883). Marxist feminism focuses on the biological and capitalistic explanations of women and asserts that women workers are more exploited and oppressed than male workers because of gender discrimination. Marxist feminism is criticized by some feminists because they believe that Marxism ignores women's experience and activity.

Sex and gender dilemma was emphasized by second-wave feminism which was able to give a sociological and cultural explanation about the distinction between sex and gender, sameness and difference but it is clear that it could not entirely cover the issue and failed to embody the voices of women of colour and non-heterosexual women. The first and the second-wave of feminism struggled for the rights of white women. The two waves were
confined to industrialized nations and preferred middle class women to poor and working class ones.

Consequently, third-wave feminism came into existence and became a global wave, which is not confined to a particular class of women but to all the women around the world. The duty of the third-wave feminism is to deal with those issues which first and second-wave feminism failed to deal with. Third-wave feminism is pervasive and is able to make all women to actualize change, to attain power and reach equality, within their own cultures and their own communities and with their own voices. Third-wave feminism was the result of failures of second-wave feminism. Third-wave feminism emerged in the 1990s. The feminists of this wave are full of confidence to resist all the oppressions of women around the world. Third-wave feminism does not revolve around only limited issues of women such as the struggle for women’s suffrage and reproductive choice. Feminists of this wave struggle for all the issues of women without discrimination. They are dissatisfied with the changes of first and second-wave feminism. They want to bring more changes than the first and second wave-feminism. They also emphasize the need to change the definition of ‘woman’.

The main purpose of third-wave feminism is to direct all the women of the world together hand in hand to fight for their rights and make them able to define themselves in their own language as they
are. Gillian Howie., et al., eds. (2004) have written that Pam Alldred and Sarah Dennison argue that:

*The first wave of feminism represented the ‘struggle for equality and integration,’ the second wave criticized ‘dominant values and sometimes inverted value-hierarchies to revalue qualities associated with the feminine.’ While feminism in its third wave transgresses boundaries through ‘deconstructing the presumption of a gender binary or the conventional ways of doing politics’.*

2.3 Black Feminism (African Feminism)

Arlene R. Keizer asserts that ‘black feminist criticism is a body of critical and creative work written by women of African descent in the United States.’ Keizer further says that ‘while black feminisms have arisen in other sites of the African Diaspora, for example, in Europe and Latin America, the United States has been the site of the most sustained black feminist critical discourse.’ Black feminism struggles for the end of racism, sexism, and class oppression for all women, irrespective of their colour. Mezu in her text *Women in Achebe’s World* (1995) has opined:

*For white European and American women, feminism has predicated itself on ending gender discrimination and demanding equal job opportunities and voting and property rights. For African and African-American women, feminist*
ideology reflects specificities of race, class, and culture.  

Alice Malsenior Walker (1944- ) coined the term “womanism” in her short story, *Coming Apart* (1980) in order to distinguish black feminism from white feminism. Womanism has been used by Walker as a universal term, means defending all women, not only women of colour. Walker got the idea to coin the term “womanism” from black feminist movement and then it became an ideology for all women. Walker is an important Womanist in black feminist literary criticism. Her contributions such as, *In Search of Our Mothers’ Gardens: Womenist Prose* (1983), *Coming Apart* (1980), *Looking for Zora* (1975), and *Saving the Life That is Your Own: The Importance of Models in the Artist’s Life* (2005), had a great influence on black feminism.

Not all women are subject to common forms of oppression. Women of colour are more vulnerable to oppression and subjugation. Black feminists criticize the liberal, Marxist, socialist and radical feminists for their ignoring “race” as a category of oppression and exploitation. Walker believes that due to their race, black women face more oppression and exploitation than the white women. According to Wikipedia on net:

*Black feminist theory has argued that black women are positioned within structures of power in fundamentally different ways than white women. Black feminist organizations emerged during the*
1970s and face many difficulties from both the white feminist and black nationalist political organizations they were confronting.\footnote{17}

African feminism came into existence in the early twentieth century with the feminists like Adelaide Smith Casely Hayford (1868-1960), Charlotte Makgomo Maxeke (1871-1939) and Huda Shaarawi (1879-1947). Each of them has her own contribution towards African feminism. According to Gill Plain., et at., eds. (2007):

\begin{quote}
Contemporary black feminist criticism came into being in the late 1960s and early 1970s, fostered by the Civil Rights Movement and developed in conjunction with the Second Wave of American feminism.\footnote{18}
\end{quote}

African feminism results from ‘the liberation struggles especially those in Algeria, Mozambique, Guinea, Angola and Kenya where women fighters fought alongside their male counterparts for state autonomy and women’s rights.’\footnote{19} The African women feminists in these countries were ‘the Mau-Mau rebel, Wambui Otieno, the freedom-fighters Lilian Ngoyi, Albertina Sisulu, Margaret Ekpo and Funmilayo Anikulapo-Kuti\footnote{20} who fought against British colonialism as well as patriarchy. There are also black feminist critics who are not black women like Barbara Johnson (1947-2009), Michael Awkward, Kevin Everod Quashie and Madhu Dubey who made a contribution towards black feminism and had an influence on it. Black feminism is
different from western feminism. Bruno (2006) says that third world feminism believes:

\[
\text{{Women}} \text{ should attain freedom not only from gender related inequalities, but also from those related to race, class and national asymmetries.}^{21}
\]

Hayford had a great impact on African feminism. Savages, is one of her short stories in which she describes one of her diaries in a sea-voyage to Africa. She says that the Captain did not dare to land in Africa because he thought that Africa was the land of savages. Rina Okonkwo (1960) writes:

\[
\text{An African shiphand (helped) his young wife board the ship. The African treated his wife with such kindness and love (then) the captain was forced to admit that the “savage” was more of a gentle man than many European men.}^{22}
\]

Mista Courifer is another short story of Hayford which she combined feminism and cultural nationalism through the character of Tomas who wears an African dress while he adopts the English family structure. Tomas is the son of the main character Mista Courifer, a solid citizen of Sierra Leone. He is a coffin maker who is always in black dress. He has great expectations towards Tomas and he wants to make him a proper Englishman but Tomas, as a government clerk suffers of discrimination. Adelaide M. Cromwell
(1986) writes about Hayford and says:

(Hayford’s) long life covering the period from Queen Victoria to Queen Elizabeth, Mrs. Casely Hayford experienced the stimulation and frustrations of change which affected her as a woman and as an African.²³

Hayford ‘understood the feminist precept that a woman must be economically independent to retain herself respect.’²⁴ Hayford was unhappy with her married life and separated from her husband in 1914. One of the reasons to increase and encourage her feminism was her unhappy marriage. Therefore, after separation from her husband, she established a school for girls in 1923 in West Africa, Freetown, the capital of Sierra Leone. The reason behind establishing the school was ‘to improve the opportunities for women’s education in Africa.’²⁵

In order to understand feminist literary criticism in general, being familiar with different feminists and critics and their achievements and contributions towards women’s liberation movement is necessary. Feminists have tried to demonstrate the specific choices that women often make, and the historical and cultural constraints within which women function. Feminist critics draw attention to the undesirable stereotypes and other limitations in the portrayal of women in literature. Critics like Virginia Woolf (1882-1941), Simone de Beauvoir (1908-1986), Mary Ellmann (1921-1989) and Kate Millett (1934- ) are the first critics to write about the literary history
of women's images and reveal women’s issues and the dominant stereotypes of women. So, the chapter is an attempt to give a glimpse of feminist literary criticism, which provides a theoretical framework by describing the various feminists and their achievements and contributions towards women’s liberation movement.

2.4 Distinguished Feminists’ Contribution towards Women’s Liberation Movement

2.4.1 Simon De Beauvoir

Simone de Beauvoir (1908-1986) was a French feminist. In an interview in 1972 with Alice Schwarzer (1942- ), she reiterated that she was a feminist. She was interested in reading the writings of Shulamith Firestone (1945-2012) and Kate Millett. Her famous book, *The Second Sex* (1949) ‘had a profound influence on the development of twentieth-century feminism.’ It is one of her best books and a major work of feminist philosophy and the starting point of second wave-feminism. *The Second Sex* displays how women have been treated throughout the history. De Beauvoir argues that the majority of women do not have choices and they are treated as the second sex by male-oriented society. She says that women can bring change to their lives through two steps— the first is to become aware of their subordinated plights and the second is to believe in their strength. De Beauvoir believes that equality of the sexes is impossible in a capitalist society. In an interview which is recorded in 1975, she
explains her most famous and often quoted line in *The Second Sex*, ‘One is not born but becomes a woman’.

...being a woman is not a natural fact. It’s the result of a certain history. There is no biological or psychological destiny that defines a woman as such. She’s a product of a history of civilization, first of all, which has resulted in her current status, and secondly for each individual woman, of her personal history, in particular, that of her childhood. This determines her as a woman, creates in her something which is not at all innate, or an essence, something which has been called the ‘eternal feminine,’ or femininity. The more we study the psychology of children, the deeper we delve, the more evident it becomes that baby girls are manufactured to become women.²⁷

De Beauvoir describes the separatism of women and wants to know why feminists insist on being separatists. She believes that women had no past, no history and no religion of their own. Therefore, she insists that women should understand themselves as women. They can tell each other, things which they could never dare say in front of their husbands, fathers, brothers or any male figures. She holds that women look at each other as rivals, enemies or competitors and never want to be friends with other women. She makes women conscious of that fact and tries to make them learn to be true friends and develop warmth and affinity towards each other. De Beauvoir encourages women to start revolution and liberate
themselves. She believes in the ability of women to do that. The social injustice makes most of the women live in poverty and delimit their access to education, employment, health service and ownership of the land, but enables men to possess power by monopolizing high positions in important social, economic, legal and religious institutions.

De Beauvoir is disappointed with traditional, biological, physiological and Marxist explanations of women’s oppression. She is not in favour with the liberal and Marxist solutions for women's situation and she views them as inadequate. She advocates the idea that men as well as women should be regarded as human beings. In *the Second Sex*, De Beauvoir reveals that the traditions make a baffled world to justify patriarchal domination and make inferiority natural to all women. She agrees to the reality of the sexual difference but says that it is not fair to exploit women because of sexual difference. She further opines that having the right to vote and only a ballot paper in hands is not everything for women and does not mean that women got freedom from the male. Therefore, due to her ‘radical attack on the social institutions of motherhood and the family together with her frank discussion of female sexuality led to a public furore on the book’s publication in France,’ and the book was put in the forbidden list of books.

Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831) has the idea of the master-slave dialectic; similarly, de Beauvoir bases her idea of the
‗One’ and the ‘Other’ on Hegel’s. ‘Working with the idea that women
are the "other," and another statement: "that women is not born, but
made," De Beauvoir delves deep into the history of women's
oppression.’29 The ‘One’ or ‘Self’ or the ‘Subject’ all the same are
used by De Beauvoir and refer to standard, essential and the absolute,
but the ‘Other’ is inessential, i.e. object. She maintains that at the
beginning, man declares himself as the ‘One’ or ‘Self’. ‘Self’ needs
the ‘Other’ to make an identity for itself and the ‘Other’ gets its
identity from the ‘Self’. Therefore, ‘Self’ is a man and the ‘Other’ is a
woman. Hegel used master-slave dialectic as a universal dialectic but
De Beauvoir distinguishes the ‘Subjects’ and the ‘Others’ from the
‘Subject’ and the ‘Other’ when she means man and woman. As a
universal term, the ‘Other’ means anyone who is oppressed and it is a
communal reality. To get rid of this problem, unlike Hegel and Jean
Paul Sartre, De Beauvoir ‘argues that there is a way out of this
dilemma, if each party offers full recognition of the other’s
subjectivity and a common agreement is made not to try to enslave
the other.’30

2.4.2 Margaret Fuller

Margaret Fuller (1810-1850) was an American journalist, editor
and advocate of women’s rights. Women in the Nineteenth Century
(1845) is her very famous book. The book is considered to be the first
major feminist work in the United States. Originally it was an article
published in The Dial magazine, entitled The Great Lawsuit. Man
versus Men. Woman versus Women in July 1843 but later on in 1845 the article was expanded and published in a book form entitled, Women in the Nineteenth Century. Throughout the book, Fuller brings out that men look at women as slaves. Fuller goes back to the past, says that man always was a hunter and called out for the woman. She says that it is due to inequality between men and women that men always call out for women like Orpheus for Eurydice (a tale from Greek legend). Fuller believes that if they are equal, share equal rights and divine love, then the time will come to make women call for men. She believes that women should get an education and they should not be constrained to the stereotypical "feminine" roles. Fuller further states women can seek any employment which they desire. She advises women not to be satisfied only with domestic works and adds that women can be in any office and do any work as they wish and like. Fuller (1999) opines:

If you ask me what offices they may fill; I reply—any ... let them be sea captains, if you will. I do not doubt that there are women well fitted for such an office.  

According to Fuller the problems of society result of inequality between men and women. She believes that if a man wants to prove his own freedom, he should make woman free, give her liberty to speak in public and trust her entirely. She encourages women to find themselves and be independent. She states that women and men are the same as their souls are the same. She demands every woman be an
individual and self-dependent. Fuller (1999) denounces dependency on husband and maintains:

I wish woman to live, first for God's sake. Then she will not make an imperfect man for her god, and thus sink to idolatry. Then she will not take what is not fit for her from a sense of weakness and poverty.  

2.4.3 Kate Millett

Kate Millett (1934- ) was an American feminist and ‘she was actively implicated in feminist politics in the 1960s-1970s’. She had great influence on the second wave feminism. Peter Widdowson., et al. (2005) state:

Second-wave of feminism in the United States of America got its impetus and stimulus from the civil rights, peace and other protest movements, and Kate Millett’s radical feminism is of this order.

Millett became famous due to her most influential book, Sexual Politics (1969) which was based on her Ph.D. dissertation. The book got great significance among the feminist critics and considerable significance in feminist literary studies. Sexual Politics is a book about patriarchy in the western society which paved the way for the 1970s feminism. Millett opines that if patriarchy is a political and cultural issue, then man does whatever he wants and woman never objects. In an article, Katherine M Roger, Marry Ellmann (2005) which is published on the net it is mentioned:
In Sexual Politics, there’s a nice illustration of how we accord male voices more importance than female voices. Pil Dahlerup was writing about a critic reviewing Cecil Bodker’s poetry, and he used words like “charming” and “sweet” for women’s poetry, and “serious” and “significant” for men’s.\textsuperscript{35}

Millet argues that the western institutions work in favour of men and try to make women subordinate to men. In Sexual Politics Millet describes different reasons to make women oppressed and inferior; one of them is rape which is used as a weapon by men to show their power and superiority to women. She criticizes the Sigmund Freud’s psychoanalytic theory for its male bias. Millet is not in the line with Freudians and Parsonians, because she says that Parsonians assert that the inferiority of women to men is natural, and Freudians ratified the traditional gender roles. Millett’s argument ranged over history, literature, psychoanalysis, sociology and other areas. Millet argues that economic inequality is the cause of women’s oppression. Millett was able to originate the first modern principles of feminist criticism through her book Sexual Politics by criticizing sexist assumptions in the texts of the male writers. Peter Widdowson., et al. (2005) claim that Sexual Politics:

\begin{quote}
At once marks the moment when second-wave feminism becomes a highly visible, self-aware and activist movement, and when it itself became the cause-célèbre text of that moment.\textsuperscript{36}
\end{quote}
Millett writes that man in the past was the owner of the land and claimed ownership of the woman. The man demanded for himself a woman and posterity. He wanted the work of the family to be totally his, and this meant that the family members and workers belonged to him. He enslaved his wife and children. He needed heirs, in whom his earthly life would be prolonged because he would hand over his property to them. Millett mentions that even today men wish to exhaust the possibilities opened up by the new techniques. She writes that some women do not want equality with men, because they accept their oppressed condition. They do not have enough self-confidence to move within a competitive society as equal human beings. It is quoted on net that how a man wants woman to be:

_The image that man has succeeded in evolving for woman is just as he would like her to be--as his helper, dependent and slave, leading a vicarious existence for promoting his welfare and happiness, denying her own self. Male writers have provided role models in profusion for men and women to copy in their lives. Actions which are considered assertive in a man are judged aggressive and unseemly in a woman._

### 2.4.4 Mary Ellmann

Mary Ellmann (1921-89) was an American writer and ‘a freelance writer and book critic. She is the author of *Thinking About Women*, an early work of feminist literary criticism published in 1968 by
It was with Ellmann that modern feminist criticism was initiated in the United States. Her somewhat humorous treatment of the stereotypes of women in literature written by men makes Ellmann one of the pioneers in the development of contemporary feminist criticism.

Thinking About Women (1968) is an important book for which Ellmann is famous. It portrays the images of women in literary criticism. Ellmann asserts that western culture in general is affected by sexual analogy and has a desire to measure and classify everything by means of sexual analogy. In Thinking About Women, the author explains that there are some certain characteristics associated with women that delimit the role of women and reduce the development of the female character. For example, women are seen as formless—soft body and soft mind. In Thinking About Women, she writes about the evolution of femininity—displaying sexual analogies and disclosing different views of female and male writers. Ellmann discusses the patriarchal society and stereotypes of women. In an article entitled, Feminist Literary Criticism: Expanding the Canon as Regards the Novel- Serpil Tunç Oppermann (1994) is written that Ellmann opines that ‘formlessness, passivity, instability, confinement, piety, materiality, spirituality, irrationality, compliance, the Witch, the
Shrew\textsuperscript{40} are all femininity stereotypes which are made by male writers and critics.

*Thinking About Women* deals with a sexual analogy which refers to women who are reduced and constrained to their limited and traditional functions. Ellmann views women as trampled, abused and passive without being able to take any action against their male dominated societies and man’s aggression. Women have always to depend on men. Men and women always have been in a great struggle and never shared and experienced the world in equality. Consequently, women lagged back in many fields—economically, socially, politically and culturally. Financially, women became handicapped as men were able to hold better jobs, get higher wages and have more opportunities for success than women have. Ellmann pointed out in a chapter entitled “Phallic Criticism” in *Feminist Scholarship: Kindling in the Groves of Academe* (1985):

\begin{quote}
Male critics treat a book by a woman as if it were itself a woman. She went on to explore a subtle range of often contradictory literary and critical stereotypes that equally describe what male authors say about the females they create and what male critics say about the creations of female authors.\textsuperscript{41}
\end{quote}

\section*{2.4.5 Betty Friedan}

Betty Friedan (1921-2006) was an American feminist writer. In the 1950s, she started writing for Women’s Magazines. She
established herself as a feminist classic through her well-known book, *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) which is one of the most important nonfiction books in the twentieth century. It recorded the beginning of second-wave feminism in the United States and also contributed to the emergence of the new women’s movement. In an article entitled, *Betty Friedan, who Ignited Cause in ‘Feminine Mystique,’ Dies at 85* (2006) it is stated that *The Feminine Mystique*:

> Ignited the contemporary women's movement in 1963 and as a result permanently transformed the social fabric of the United States and countries around the world” and “is widely regarded as one of the most influential nonfiction books of the 20th century.42

In *The Feminine Mystique*, Friedan is more concerned with the educated middle class women of America than poor class. These women apparently had everything that was supposed to make them happy and comfortable. Their husbands held good jobs, they lived in their own apartments, their children went to good schools and they had almost all appliances needed to make their lives comfortable but they complained and were not happy. Friedan (2001) describes how women are depressed and writes:

> I’ve tried everything women are supposed to do—hobbies, gardening, pickling, canning, being very social with my neighbours, ..... I can do it all, and I like it, but it doesn’t leave you anything to think about—any feeling of who you are. I never had
any career ambitions. All I wanted was to get married and have four children. I love the kids and Bob and my home. There’s no problem you can even put a name to. But I am desperate. I begin to feel I have no personality. I am a server of food and a putter-on of pants and a bedmaker, somebody who can be called on when you want something. But who am I? 43

Friedan observed that in such seemingly perfect conditions, women were not satisfied because they realized that something was missing, but they were not able to understand what was missing. After listening to women’s complaints, pains and their secret dissatisfactions, Friedan understood that the basis of all the women’s dissatisfaction was the problem of identity. Friedan states that though women live in a modern world of material progress and progressive ideas, men treat them like Victorians who did not care about the needs of their women and did not let them fulfil their desires as human beings.

Friedan advises the suburban housewives to step out for work. She argues that so long as women do not get a college education and work in public, they are sentenced to deep depressions. Of course, she advised women to be aware of their family relations—to love and be loved by her husband and children. Friedan wants fully active, participant love between women and men. She further advises women to decide what their lives and personality have to be. She does not want the term “feminine” to be defined by men, because men look at
women as sex objects. She expects women to overcome their diversity of varied political beliefs. She believes that political power is urgent for changing the situations of oppressed women.

Gloria Marie Steinem (1934- ), who is an American feminist, has repeated all Friedan’s views about women’s issue but in an extremist way. In her essay *After Black Power, Women's Liberation* (1969), Steinem describes sexual promiscuity and divorce as a positive social development. She asserts that women are free to live according to their will but those women who want to live in a traditional lifestyle; they have to be attacked and terrorized because they are “Uncle Toms”. Despite having the laws and social reforms that promoted equality between men and women, she claims for the Equal Rights Amendment, because she thinks that by the amendment sex discrimination will be decreased.

**2.4.6 Luce Irigaray**

Luce Irigaray (1930- ) is a French feminist. *Speculum of the Other Woman* (1974) and *This Sex Which Is Not One* (1977) are among her famous works. *This Sex Which Is Not One* shows the absence of female subject position in western culture. The title refers to women’s sex as “lacking,” which Irigaray doesn’t believe it, and the title also indicates that women do not have one sex; but multiple sex organs all over their bodies. Irigaray criticizes Freud for using the term “penis envy” and saying that due to lack of penis women are inferior, and
have less power, as it is written by Peter Widdowson., et al. (2005) that:

According to Freud, penis envy is universal in women and is responsible for their ‘castration complex’, which results in their regarding themselves as ‘hommes manqués’ rather than a positive sex in their own right.\textsuperscript{44}

Irigaray denies Freud’s view and believes that Freud’s view on women has been made by masculine framework. Irigaray claims that women have to show themselves as they are, using their potential ability without resorting to men’s perspectives. In the same source which is mentioned above, it is stated that Irigaray makes clear in her \textit{Speculum de l’autre femme} (1974) that:

\textit{Patriarchal oppression of women is founded on the type of negative constructions associated with Freud’s theory of female sexuality.}\textsuperscript{45}

Irigaray criticizes the exclusion of women from the history of philosophy, psychoanalytic theory and structural linguistics. She states that women have been traditionally linked with matter and nature at the expense of the female subject position. Women can be subjected only by being assimilated to a male subject. Consequently, a distinct subject position does not exist for women. Irigaray believes that historically, a woman has been linked to the role of mother irrespective of being a mother or not. A woman’s identity which is linked with nature and the identity of man is associated with culture.
and subjectivity. Irigaray argues that if women are excluded from society and if they are not considered to be full subject, society itself cannot fulfil its function. Women were supposed to be illogical, therefore Irigaray advises women to speak logically. She argues that in western culture people live depending on masculine nature and a masculine morphology. She advises everyone to examine the nature of women’s morphology because women’s vision of the world and their manner of creating is not the same as that of men.

Jacques Lacan (1901-1981) and Irigaray believe that sexual difference is a product of language and linguistics, not anatomy. Both of them have a common view of language. They believe that art has to enter language to become subject. In order to make this happen, language has to be changed at the cultural level. Irigaray believes that the language typically excludes women from taking an active subject position. She further argues that whatever is valuable refers to masculine gender, and what occupies a less important position refers to the feminine. She believes that men and women do not form the same sentences when they are given similar clues. The way they use prepositions in the sentences are different. In other words, they use language differently. She wants men and women to look at each other as “irreducible others”.

2.4.7 Elaine Showalter

Elaine Showalter (1941- ) ‘is one of the founders of feminist literary criticism in United States academia, developing the concept
and practice of gynocritics’. Gynocritics dealt with feminist research in history, anthropology, psychology and sociology which introduced hypothesis of a female sub-culture including the ascribed status, and the internalized structures of femininity, the occupations, interactions and consciousness of women. Showalter expected gynocritics to pay attention to the different velocities and curves of political, social and personal histories in discovering women’s literary choice and careers.

Gynocriticism was the study of women's writing in 1979 by Showalter and it was coined by Showalter in her essay *Towards a Feminist Poetics* (1979) to offer a coherent narrative of women's literary history. It ‘became the leading feminist literary mode in the Anglophone academy’. Therefore, Showalter became the ‘founder of gynocritics, a school of feminist criticism concerned with “woman as writer...with the history, themes, genres, and structures of literature by women”’. Janet Witalec (2003) mentions that Showalter in her seminal essay, *Towards a Feminist Poetics:*

*Introduced the term “gynocritics” and demonstrated its efficacy with a feminist critique of Thomas Hardy's *The Mayor of Casterbridge* and its male-centred critical interpretations.*

*A Literature of Their Own* (1977) is Showalter’s renowned book which had great impact on feminist literary criticism because it ‘appeared during the first wave of feminist literary criticism which focused on re-discovery’. Showalter argued that ‘If there was a
female literary tradition, I was sure it came from imitation, literary
convention, the marketplace, and critical reception, not from biology
or psychology’.\textsuperscript{51} Witalec (2003) states:

\begin{quote}
Showalter is renowned for her pioneering feminist studies of nineteenth- and twentieth-century female authors and her provocative cultural analysis of women's oppression in the history of psychiatry. In her influential book \textit{A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists from Brontë to Lessing} (1977), Showalter advanced a new form of feminist literary theory under the term “gynocriticism,” offering an alternative framework for the interpretation of women's literary history.\textsuperscript{52}
\end{quote}

Showalter writes about the history of feminist criticism. She asserts that literary study has always considered the representative reader, writer and critic of western literature to be male, but since the 1960s, feminist criticism has argued that women readers and critics bring different perceptions and expectations to their literary experience and has claimed that women have also written important stories of their culture. According to Gill Plain., et al., eds, (2007):

\begin{quote}
When feminist literary criticism began to emerge in the late sixties and early seventies, bursting into prominence with the publication of such provocative and influential texts as Kate Millett’s \textit{Sexual Politics} (1971), Germaine Greer’s \textit{The Female Eunuch} (1970) and Eva Figes’
\end{quote}
Patriarchal Attitudes (1970), these pioneering polemics gave surprisingly little attention to women’s writing.53

The sixties were an impressive wave of imaginative writing by women to question women’s roles and the relationship between men and women. During this period, the writers like, Doris Lessing (1919-2013), Sylvia Plath (1932-1963), Jean Rhys (1890-1979) and Angela Carter (1940-1992) ‘also explored issues such as colonialism, race, class, political oppression and mental illness.’54 To show the significance of Showalter, Witalec (2003) states:

Among the founding scholars of feminist literary criticism and women’s studies in America, Showalter broke new ground in the 1970s by creating a progressive literary theory known as “gynocriticism.” Unlike traditional literary criticism, gynocriticism focused on the “history, themes, genres, and structures of literature by women,” seeking to create a method of analysing literature written by women and to develop models of interpretation based on female experience, rather than adapting male interpretive theories and models.55

In the eighties, the feminist literary criticism ‘became more diverse, more sophisticated and more wide-ranging, but also more divided’.56 It has introduced gender as a fundamental category of literary analysis concerning the literary representations of sexual difference, the ways that literary genres have been shaped by
masculine or feminine values, and the exclusion of the female voice from the institutions of literature, criticism and theory. Feminist criticism differs from other contemporary schools of critical theory because it does not take its literary principles from a single theory or from a body of sacred texts.

Through A Literature of Their Own (1977), Showalter presents the evolution of women’s literature from the Victorian period to modern writing into three phases, “feminine,” from 1840 to the death of George Eliot in 1880; “feminist,” from 1880 to 1920, the date of female suffrage in America; and “female,” from 1920 to the present’. The feminine period includes women writers like the Bronte Sisters (Charlotte (1816-1855), Emily (1818-1848) and Anne Bronte (1820-1849) ), Elizabeth Cleghorn Gaskell (1810-1865), Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1806-1861), Florence Nightingale (1820-1910) and Elizabeth Lynn Linton (1822-1898). Showalter opines that these women writers accepted certain limitations in expressions such as avoiding coarseness and sexuality and crudity in their writing. Witalec (2003) states that Showalter:

Rebukes the unfair critical standards applied to the work of English women writers in the nineteenth century and contends that, as a result, female artists paid a terrible price for their creative work in terms of guilt, self-loathing, and frustrated effort. 

93
Showalter, in her essay, *Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness* (1981) mentions four theories of sexual differences to evaluate women’s writing which are biological, linguistic, psychological and cultural theories. By bringing female body images, using women’s language, and describing the female psyche, she shows the complexity of women’s cultural position, and the uniqueness of the character of women’s writings. The study of biological imagery in women’s writing is useful if at the same time the other factors are also considered. In the area of linguistics and textual theories of women’s writing, some questions like whether there is any difference in the use of language between men and women, and whether there is any possibility of creating a new language for them are considered by her. Showalter has another view about language. She thinks if women start speaking and writing like men do, then the door for their entry to history can be opened. She suggests that feminist critics have to focus on women’s access to language. In Showalter’s point of view, language is sufficient to express women’s consciousness. But the problem is that women cannot access all sources of language, therefore they are forced to be silent.

Showalter asks women to express their mind and body through language. The hypotheses of women’s culture have been developed by anthropologists, sociologists and social historians. The aim has been to get away from masculine system, hierarchies and values and to achieve a self-defined nature of female cultural experience. If feminist criticism wants to generate new analytical methods in its
readings of literary texts, it can only achieve its aim by challenging and disrupting the patriarchal tradition within its dominant discourses, that is, by working from within that tradition. Women have been left out of history not because of the evil conspiracies of men in general or male historians in particular, but because we have considered history only to be in male-centred terms. Showalter suggests that we have to focus on a woman-centred inquiry and thinking that a female culture can exist within the general culture shared by men and women. History has to portray the female experiences through time and has to show the development of feminist consciousness. Witalec (2003) asserts that Showalter gives her feminist point of view to Thomas Hardy’s *The Mayor of Casterbridge*:

*If we study the stereotypes of women, the sexism of male critics, and the limited roles women play in literary history, we are not learning what women have felt and experienced, but only what men have thought women should be.”* (Showalter, 1979: 27)\(^9\)

Virginia Woolf (1882-1941) in her essay *Women and Fiction* (1929) deals with women as writers and states that women’s work has been influenced by conditions that have nothing to do with art so that they need plenty of room to deal with other things than work. She objected to the censorship that put limitations on women, because these limitations do not allow women to use language freely. Showalter states that the process of studying women’s writing
directed them to challenge the basic theoretical assumptions of traditional literary history and criticism.

2.4.8 Virginia Woolf

Virginia Woolf (1882-1941) is rightly considered the founder of modern feminist literary criticism. She has numerous writings on patriarchy and women’s issues. ‘Woolf’s feminist literary criticism is not, then, *sui generis,* and knowing her ‘contribution to feminist literary criticism and theory, however, is difficult partly because it is so enormous and so multi-faceted, and partly because of her own suspicion of the term feminism itself.’ A *Room of One's Own* (1929) is her book which is her experience about patriarchy and male discrimination. In the article *The Beginning of Feminist Writing* (2005) is written that:

\[\text{A Room of One's Own} \text{ was before any “feminist” movement had started. It makes the mind boggle when we think about the quality of a mind to be able to see through social conditioning to create so timeless a work, in such a repressive era, when there wasn’t even a group of people to support her.}\]

In the text, she mentions woman as the most discussed animal in the world. It was a major contribution to feminist theory. The text deals with women’s literary production in particular. It ‘is a landmark of twentieth-century feminist thought. It explores the history of women in literature through an unconventional and highly
provocative investigation of the social and material conditions required for the writing of literature.’ Woolf says that ‘women’s writing should explore the female experience in its own right and not form a comparative assessment of women’s experience in relation to men’s.’ She further says that women should not be limited and censored because the limitations and censorship make women not to be able to use language freely. Therefore, in the book she mentions that ‘a woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction.’ In A History of Feminist Literary Criticism (2007) is stated:

In seeking to distance women from imperialist and colonial practices, Woolf disturbingly excludes black women here from the very category of women. One of the most controversial and contradictory passages in A Room of One's Own concerns Woolf’s positioning of black women. Both unites and divides feminists and makes the white middle-class feminists, not be able to speak for the experience of all women; and reconciliation of universalism and difference remains a key issue.

Her essay Women and Writing (1979) is also an important contribution to feminist criticism. In the essay, she describes the obstacles and phallo-centric world that hamper access to education to women. Professions for Women is also her essay about women writers. In the essay, she describes herself as a woman writer who has faced problems in writing. For example she describes her situation
when she was in prison and delimited by the dominant ideologies of womanhood. Then, she describes ‘the taboo about expressing female passion prevented her from ‘telling the truth about {her} own experiences as a body’.’ These facts affected her and made her unable to display and tell the truth. But androgyny could help Woolf to ‘evade confrontation with her own painful femaleness and enabled her to choke and repress her anger and ambition.’ She believes that if women free themselves from men and be independent and achieve social and economic equality with men, then they can develop their artistic talents and nothing would be able to prevent them. The androgynous term by Woolf ‘is a response to the dilemma of a woman writer embarrassed and alarmed by feelings too hot to handle without risking real rejection by her family, her audience, and her class.’ And she was ‘aware that androgyny is another form of repression or, at best, self-discipline.’

2.4.9 Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak

Professor Gayatri Spivak (1942- ) was born in India. She is an expert in deconstructive approaches to verbal, visual and social texts. Spivak translated Jacques Derrida’s De lagrammatologie (1967) into English, Of Grammatology (1976). Through this translation, she could initiate a debate on deconstruction in the Anglo-American academy. She is considered to be the representative voice of ‘Third World’ feminism. Her books, Myself I Must Remake: The Life and Poetry of W.B. Yeats (1974), In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural
Politics (1988), The Postcolonial Critic: Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues (1990), Outside in Teaching Machine and Death of Discipline (2003) are her famous contributions to the development of feminism. She also works with the subaltern studies history group in India. She argues that this subordination happens in terms of class, caste, age, gender and office. She applies this term in her essay, “Can the Subaltern Speak”. She asks if the subaltern can have a voice and affect the dominant culture. In "Can The Subaltern Speak?" Spivak talks about the race and power dynamics which had a role to prevent sati which is an ancient Indian tradition of the immolation of a widow on her husband’s pyre. It was Spivak who coined the term "strategic essentialism," which means a sort of temporary solidarity for the purpose of social action.

According to Spivak, the term ‘gendered subaltern’ covers a wide area. She asks feminists to create a situation for the gendered subaltern in order to find her voice and speak. As a result, there is no uniform category that can identify the gender subaltern, because even in a particular social class, men might enjoy the advantages of their political power, at the same time women in that class are in a subordinate position.

In order to show the socioeconomic lives of disempowered subaltern groups, Spivak focuses on literary, historical, cultural and economic texts rather than restricting herself to a particular national literature. She notices the fact that representation is a kind of speech
act, with a speaker and a listener. The subaltern often makes an attempt at self-representation, but such a representation is not heard. It is not recognized by the listeners, perhaps because of not filling in with what is expected of the representation. Consequently, representation by subaltern individuals seems almost impossible. The subaltern is incapable of knowing her condition and speaking out. She is unable to use the means of communication to speak out and protest, because she has no control over these means.

Spivak is interested in feminist issues. She uses the tools of deconstruction and Marxist analysis to support her views. Combining both deconstruction and Marxist analysis, she builds the concept of woman. She is also concerned with deconstructing the centre. Through her debate, she tries to enrich women’s consciousness. She points out how the centre creates division by inviting selected members from margin to join it resulting in the further marginalization of those who join the centre. They are further marginalized because their joining the centre is not really accepted, meaning they carry the label of belonging to the margin. Spivak advises women to enter the centre, as by doing so, they will be able to find out how politics marginalizes.

2.5 Conclusion

In the beginning of the chapter, an effort is made to highlight the patriarchal structure of the society from ancient Greece to the early nineteenth century. The Mesopotamia civilization also supported
patriarchy and used women as slaves and sex objects. It also states the views of Plato and Aristotle on women. They considered women inferior to men. Then, the chapter focuses on the emergence of feminism which arrived on the scene of women’s movement. Feminism as a literary movement appeared in the late nineteenth century. The chapter highlights the history of feminism in detail so as to know the nature and canvas of feminism. The first wave, the second wave and the third wave of feminism are also discussed at length in this chapter. The term ‘black feminism’ is discussed with the help of contributions made by Alice Walker and others. Towards the end of the chapter an effort is made to critically study the distinguished feminists’ contribution towards women’s liberation movement. Thus, this chapter serves as a backbone to the upcoming chapters.
REFERENCES


2. Ibid.


5. Ibid., Chapter One, P. 28.

6. Ibid., Chapter One, P. 16.

7. Ibid., Introduction, P. 1.


20. Ibid.


25. Ibid.


27. An exceptional interview with Simone de Beauvoir, from the French TV program *Questionnaire*, in which the great writer discussed her views on Feminism with Jean-Louis Servan-Schreiber.  
<http://dangerousminds.net/comments/simone_de_beauvoir_i_am_a_feminist> (accessed September 25, 2013).


32. Ibid., P.96.


45. Ibid., P.136.

46. Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia. En.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elaine-Showalter

48. www.britannica.com/.../ Elaine-Showalter


51. Ibid., P. 402.


54. Ibid., P. 123


58. Ibid.


60. Ibid., Chapter 4, P. 66

61. Ibid., P.67.

62. Ibid., P.69.


67. Ibid., P.77.

69. A Literature of Their Own (Elaine Showalter, 1941--) {DOC}
    ecmd.nju.edu.cn/UploadFile/17/8084/theirrown.doc

70. Ibid.

71. Ibid.