Chapter 1

Introduction
Introduction

Margaret Atwood, a Canadian novelist, poet, and critic, has been a complete phenomenon in the span of more than forty years. Beginning her career when Canadian literature held marginal place in the literary canon, she worked tirelessly for creating its distinguished place in the literature of the world. She is one of the prolific and eminent writers of Canada and has carved a niche for herself in the international literary circle also. Her works reflect humanitarian concerns and yearning for a peaceful world. The dystopia and apocalypse that differentiate some of her novels are a kind of shock therapies that create powerful impact on the readers and force them to ponder over the contemporary problems of the world. Her novels are inquisitive and thought-provoking and they probe into the dilemma and complexities of human life. The two most commonly found themes in her novels are women empowerment and environmental crisis. The novels that have been chosen for this doctoral thesis, namely Surfacing (1972), The Handmaid’s Tale (1985), Oryx and Crake (2003), and The Year of the Flood (2009), primarily focus on gender inequality and the effect of current global practices and technological advancements on nature. These novels have been taken up in this thesis for an analytical study of ecofeminist peace politics.

Ecofeminist peace politics deals with the contemporary problems related to modern practices and culture. Rise in uncontrolled scientific experiments, environmental degradation, marginalization of women, and violence threaten the peaceful existence of human beings and nature in the present world. Atwood has highlighted these issues in her novels in order to stress upon the gravity of the situation and also to provide a ground for the solutions. With the World War I, the
potential for great chaos and evil hidden behind modernity had become apparent. As Jesse Matz writes that ‘modernity was dangerous’ (Matz 22). D.H. Lawrence discovered that the fundamental modern mistake was ‘excess rationality’ that separated mind from body. He believed that modern novel should undo this dualism. The intellect and emotions should be treated at par in modern fiction. It should not detach people’s minds from their emotional motivations by giving preference to reason and intellect. The novels selected in this thesis also highlight these problems of modernity related to dualisms, mismanagement, and chaos.

Atwood’s futuristic novels like *Oryx and Crake* and *The Year of the Flood* belong to a different genre and deviate from the general style of writing such novels. The tradition of writing futuristic novels had split into two streams in twentieth century. The first one is called ‘futuristic fiction’ in which novelists turned utopian vision into dystopian vision, highlighting the bleak future of the world. These novels primarily focus on machines or scientific gadgets. The pioneering examples are Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World* (1932) and George Orwell’s *1984* (1948). The second type of futuristic novels can be related to Margaret Atwood’s dystopian fiction where instead of machines the novels like *The Handmaid’s Tale* and *Oryx and Crake* focus on the forms of imbalanced social organization that can be a possible outcome of present mechanistic trends.

### 1.1 The Theory of Ecofeminism

All feminists are committed to exposing and eliminating sexism and many feminists have critiqued that sexism is intimately connected to other “isms of domination,” e.g. racism, classism, and heterosexism. Ecological feminists have
extended this analysis to “naturism,” i.e. the unjustified exploitation of the natural environment. Val Plumwood, an ecofeminist, has critiqued that when the four pillars of liberation, those concerned with gender, race, class, and nature stand together, structure of oppression can be shaken. Feminism has undergone major transformation after its encounter with other forms of domination, like race and class. The domination of nature is another frontier that is deeply connected to feminism. The ecofeminists identify patriarchy as the main cause of ecological destruction and women’s oppression. The division of society into hierarchical dualisms like culture/nature, reason/nature, male/female, reason/emotion, human/nature, civilised/primitive, attributing more value to the former, also becomes a major factor in the domination of both women and nature.

According to ecological feminists, important connections exist between the treatment of women and other oppressed people on one hand and the treatment of nonhuman nature on the other. Ecofeminism is a theory grounded on the structure of domination that exists not only in relation to humans but also in relation to nature. Ynestra King defines that “Ecofeminism is potentially a global movement that is founded on common interests yet celebrates diversity and opposes all forms of domination and violence ...” (Lahar 1). Ecofeminists have argued that women’s movement and the ecology movement are mutually reinforcing and together they can develop practices and views which are not based on models of domination. One of the pioneering ecofeminists was Rosemary Radford Ruether and she wrote in New Woman/New Earth (1975) that there can be no liberation for women and no solution for ecological crisis if model of domination persists in society. Feminists and
environmentalists should unite their demands to envision a radical reshaping of the agenda of peace.

Deborah Slicer, in her article “Wrongs of Passage: Three Challenges to the Maturing of Ecofeminism,” writes about the androcentric bias attitude of the writers of environmental philosophy who have omitted the issues that are of special concern to women and their subordination. Violence against women, rape, pornography, and environmental hazards damaging to women’s reproductive lives, are the issues not mentioned deliberately by the biased male writers. Slicer is of the opinion that environmental philosophy when collaborates with feminism, holds a better perspective of covering wide range of issues related to environment. She writes, “… in order to be feminist, an environmental philosophy must, at the very least, acknowledge, condemn, and expunge androcentrism from its own critical analyses and revisionary theories and incorporate analyses of other oppressed peoples into their analysis of oppressed nature” (Slicer 39).

The ‘ecofeminist framework’ includes development of liberation theory that is capable of addressing the interconnection of all forms of domination, focusing especially on race, class, gender, and environment issues. Val Plumwood argues that the hope for peace in the world lies in having a complete and connected understanding of the web of domination. She writes that “The formulation of a theoretical framework which takes account of the oppression of women in the context of a multiplicity of oppressions has been a major concern of many feminist theorists in the last decade” (Plumwood 72). This project has been undertaken by ecofeminists with the vision of a better, ecologically stable, and egalitarian society.
Francoise d’Eaubonne introduced the term *ecofeminisme* in 1974 to bring attention to women’s potential for bringing about an ecological revolution. She called upon women to replace patriarchy by egalitarianism. She raised many ecofeminist issues like the crisis of modernity, patriarchy as the main oppressor, and the ability of women for being the agents of change. She emphasized upon the woman-nature affinity as a source of strength needed to make the world peaceful and harmonious. She proposed the need for a new global movement of feminists that draws upon feminine power, to overcome the ecological crisis and to eradicate the systems of male dominance that gave rise to it. She argued that women are more aware regarding environmental destruction as they give birth to new generations.

Ecofeminism has gained international recognition in the last thirty years as a grassroots movement. Catriona Sandilands comments in her book *The Good-Natured Feminist* (1999), “… the core of an ecofeminist politics is a revelation, not a construction, of the inherently ecologically sound consciousness of at least some women” (Sandilands 59). Ecofeminist philosophers are of the view that there are important connections between the domination of women (and other human subordinates) and the domination of nature. Karen J. Warren, a leading ecofeminist, has identified eight sorts of connections between feminism and environment:

1. *Historical and causal.* Ecofeminists focus on the patriarchal changes that occurred during the scientific revolution and sanctioned the exploitation of nature as well as subordination of women.

2. *Conceptual.* The concept of ‘value-dualisms’ is one of the bases of the twin dominations of women and nature in which disjunctive pairs are formed and
the disjuncts are seen as oppositional. The pairs like culture/nature and male/female provide a platform for domination in which one dominates the other. The concept of ‘value-hierarchies’ attributes higher and lower values, forming the basis of domination. The ‘oppressive patriarchal conceptual framework’ also sanctions and maintains the twin dominations of women and nature.

3. **Empirical.** Many ecofeminists have analysed empirical evidence linking feminism and the environment. Various health risk factors associated with polluted environment are borne by women and children only.

4. **Epistemological.** An ecofeminist epistemology addresses the political aspects of human/nature dichotomy, challenging the dominant views of ‘reason’ and ‘rationality.’

5. **Symbolic.** Ecofeminists oppose the symbolic link between women and nature that devalues both of them. Women are described with animal terminology only to prove them weak. Nature is also given feminine terminology like ‘virgin timber’ to prove it vulnerable. Ecofeminists intend to reverse this symbolic link to connect women-nature affinity with strength and peace.

6. **Ethical.** Ethically, the twin dominations are connected to develop theories and practices that are not male-biased.

7. **Theoretical.** Besides ecofeminism, the theories of social ecology, deep ecology, and bioregionalism are also applied in special connection to women and nature in order to develop a non-biased society.
8. **Political.** Ecofeminism has grown out of practical and political concerns for the betterment of women and environment. The related pragmatic issues are women’s health, role of technology, pollution, animal rights, and peace.

The ecofeminist theorists critique that the principal connection that exists between women and nature lies in the similarity of their domination by patriarchal culture. Susan Griffin has opined that women associate themselves with nature because they find exploitation of nature similar to their own exploitation. Ecofeminists argue that women are more able to connect to nature because the conditions of their existence allow them to know nature in different ways than men. Men experience the world in terms of dualism and division while women experience it in terms of continuity and unity, a way of being in the world that transcends dualism. Women’s works such as child raising and creating home with life-affirming activities firmly root them in nature. Two key scholars, Mary Daly and Susan Griffin, believe in women’s unique connections to nature, owing to their moral goodness and non-hierarchical approach.

**1.2 The Analysis of Ecofeminism vis-a-vis Social Dysfunction**

An ecofeminist analysis includes the human exploitation of the nonhuman environment and the interwoven oppressions such as sexism, racism, heterosexism, and ethnocentrism. The underlying causes of exploitation and oppression exist in the form of conceptual dichotomies and hierarchies. Patriarchal conceptual frameworks are mainly responsible for dysfunctional social system. As Karen J. Warren and Duane L. Cady opine, “To say that patriarchy is a dysfunctional system is to say that the fundamental beliefs, values, attitudes and assumptions (conceptual framework) of
patriarchy give rise to impaired thinking, behaviours, and institutions which are unhealthy for humans, especially women, and the planet” (Warren & Cady 11).

One example of the direct oppression of rural women in India has been illustrated by Vandana Shiva – the oppression that is related to masculine development project of trees. Earlier the rural women planted trees of various types according to their different uses. They relied on their indigenous knowledge. The foreign experts replaced the traditional practice by planting only eucalyptus trees since eucalyptus is valuable as a cash crop. The new practice is an ecological disaster and its impact can be particularly felt by women. These trees have depleted the soil moisture and women have to now walk much farther to obtain drinking water.

The ecofeminists have studied the life-style of native people in remote areas and they argue that those people have an ability to live harmoniously with nature, without destroying its integrity and beauty. The modern life-style in cities is harming the environment and consequently, threatening the health of people. Atwood has highlighted this fact metaphorically in her novels like The Year of the Flood and Surfacing. Andy Smith opines that “Our individualist, capitalist society tends to destroy our sense of meaningful connectedness with nature, with all creatures and all people, and to replace these relationships with commodities” (Smith 31).

Ecofeminists argue that as long as men hold the majority of the social and economic power, women will be discriminated. For the progress to take place in real terms there is a need to destroy systems of male domination. There is also a need to restore balance and harmony between masculine and feminine values in society. Patriarchal culture has, through the acts of domination, brought environment
degradation, global warming, and suffering for women. Patriarchy is the common
cause that lies at the roots of oppression. Judith Plant comments upon these common
roots, “Perhaps the most essential feature of ecofeminist thought is that all
oppressions – whether men over women, First World over Third World, north over
south, white over black, adults over children, human beings over other species,
society over nature – have their roots in common” (Plant 121).

Carolyn Merchant published her book *The Death of Nature* in 1980 and held
scientific revolution of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries responsible for much
of nature’s destruction. Scientific rationality had brought with it the exploitation of
the natural world. The mechanistic worldview had replaced the concept of nature as a
revered life-giver mother. Andree Collard has analysed in her book *Rape of the Wild*
(1988) that the breakdown in the relationship between humanity and nature is the
hidden cause of all “isms” like sexism, racism, classism, ageism, and militarism.
Human beings need to connect themselves to nature and understand its true value in
their lives in order to eradicate all “isms” of domination and to create a harmonious
and peacefully co-existing world. The treatment of nature like a slave for fulfilling
man’s endless needs has brought the planet to a critical fate.

The destructive impact of scientific experiments has been analysed by many
theorists. One such destructive experiment was the ‘green revolution’ in India where
its earlier success soon gave way to its side effects. In the beginning there was a huge
increase in the productivity of the new varieties of rice and wheat. But soon it was
clear that the new varieties needed huge amounts of water, poisoned the soil with salt,
caused soil erosion, and were susceptible to pests. With the introduction of technology
in agriculture in the form of green revolution, women also felt marginalisation and exploitation. They were paid less wages in the fields for equal work done by them as men. Shiva argues, “Lower food entitlements, associated with increased work burdens, is only the first and most immediate impact of the commercialisation of agriculture on women” (Shiva 118). Violence against women related to dowry issues, civil unrest, and female foeticide has increased along with the mechanisation of agriculture.

1.3 Ecofeminism as a Political Movement

Ecofeminism is a pragmatic and political movement that attempts to link feminist struggles with ecological struggles. It identifies globalisation as an outgrowth of capitalism that is patriarchal in nature. Institutions of patriarchal capitalism systematically dominate and exploit both women and nature. The book *Ecofeminism* written by Maria Mies and Vandana Shiva, deals with the feminist and ecological struggles against globalizing capitalist relations. Shiva and Mies place great emphasis on the role of the expanding international capitalism into the South and its interference with subsistence economies.

Catriona Sandilands comments, “… ecofeminism contains an inherently democratic political vision.... My interest is thus to further ecofeminism as a politics, specifically a democratic politics...” (Sandilands xvii). The global issues concerning the domination of women and the exploitation of nature along with other structures of domination are the main concerns of ecofeminism. Ecofeminism is founded on a democratic desire to expand the process of democratic questioning. This endeavour is one of the most promising aspects of ecofeminism.
In 1962, Rachel Carson, a marine biologist and scientific journalist, initiated her efforts to save the environment from the harmful effects of pesticides and herbicides. She published her warnings in her book *Silent Spring* (1962). She wrote about her utmost concern for birds and animals which were suffering due to the accumulation of harmful chemicals in the food chain. This was the beginning of an ecofeminist political movement that was to take its actual form later in criticism and activism. In the mid 1970s it emerged as a grassroots movement and as a major perspective on peace, in several parts of the world.

The ‘Chipko’ movement was a movement that gave worldwide publicity to the women of Garhwal Himalayas, belonging to the village of Reni. They hugged the trees in 1974 as a protest against the people who wanted to cut them. This particular action by those women inspired Vandana Shiva to set up a ‘Foundation for Science, Technology and Natural Resource Policy.’ Since then, she has promoted her ecofeminist concerns and she is of the firm opinion that the poor rural women are closely linked to the natural world for their daily needs. She emphasizes upon the importance of the political role of women in deciding the policies of environment.

Ecofeminism is a contemporary political movement based on the theory that the ideologies which authorize injustices based on gender, race, and class are related to the ideologies which sanction the exploitation and degradation of the environment. The ecofeminist movement arose in the United States primarily out of the movement against nuclear power and nuclear weapons. Its initiating event was the conference on “Women and Life on Earth: A Conference on Ecofeminism in the Eighties” at Amherst, Massachusetts in March 1980. This conference marked ecofeminism as a
political theory that aimed at combining feminism, environmentalism, antiracism, animal rights, anti-imperialism, and antimilitarism. Six hundred women who attended the conference were both hopeful and fearful about the future. They had gathered to raise their voices against violence upon women and violence upon earth, including other “isms of domination.”

In 1984, a group called DAWN (Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era), comprising of twenty-two activists, researchers, and policy makers from Africa, Asia, and Latin America met at Bangalore, India to prepare a report on the position of women in the South. They concluded after the survey that women’s position had worsened, their work burden had increased, and environmental degradation was affecting them badly. Women’s social and economic marginalization along with the environmental crisis was reducing the basic means of survival for poor women. Loss of fertile land and tree-felling were also the factors that were playing role in paralysing women.

James P. Sterba has highlighted some important aspects of society that need attention by the theorists and activists in order to radically restructure a gender-free society. The first fundamental change needed is regarding the education of children in a family. The children, irrespective of their sex, must be subjected to same type of upbringing. Secondly, to achieve global peace, violence against women must be put to an end. The inequalities suffered by women in their families and in the economic sphere become a major source of structural violence against them. The same traits that foster violence against women happen to be the cause of violence at other levels. The leaders who are aggressive and non-cooperative fail in maintaining peace, while those who are cooperative and nurturing are better suited for this purpose.
Understanding the origin of dualism brings a broader perspective to the analysis of social dysfunction and formation of political agenda. Val Plumwood sees the origin of dualism with the Greeks, particularly Plato. Women were not part of the world of ideas in Greek culture and they were separated by associating them with household activities only. The society gave more value to the life of fighting wars and dying gloriously in battle. Such a society conceptualized dualism as inseparable part of their basic ideologies. In present times, science and technology have extended the dualistic thinking by controlling the rhythm of nature. Many projects are accomplished at the cost of nature by giving less preference to the natural phenomena. This has been the cause of environmental imbalance and destruction. Women can play a positive and developmental role in the formation of policies and their implication. Instead of seeing them as weak and incapable, they are to be seen as the agents of environmental solutions. Women can prove to be active agents in fighting against the causes responsible for global ecological crisis.

Plumwood’s political vision is to dismantle the processes that create dualisms. Women, men, and nature are socially structured through dualisms. Catriona Sandilands argues, “It is only through deconstructing the dualisms themselves that a future harmony can be reached...” (Sandilands 145). Ecofeminists are trying to find the ways that would bring humanity back to equality based paradigms and to the path of ecological balance. Due to less importance given to nature by humans, earth is rapidly on the path of destruction. Forests, soils, water, and air have been subjected to polluting elements. The forests are disappearing at a fast rate and along with them is disappearing the diversity of life they support. Vandana Shiva claims, “The violence
to nature, which seems intrinsic to the dominant development model, is also associated with violence to women who depend on nature for drawing sustenance for themselves, their families, their societies” (Shiva xvi). The need of the hour is to nurture and actively participate in the formation of egalitarian and ecologically balanced global policies.

Dr. Wangari Muta Maathai was the first African woman and the first environmentalist to win the Nobel Peace Prize in 2004. While working for the National Council of Women in 1976, she introduced the practice of planting trees to conserve the environment. She has helped women plant more than 30 million trees and runs an organization named Green Belt Movement. In another case, a woman called Lois Gibbs became concerned for her children in 1978 when, while living at Love Canal in America, her children caught unexplained diseases. It was discovered that they were residing in the neighbourhood of tons of chemical waste. Gibbs founded ‘Centre for Health, Environment, and Justice’ and took an initiative towards creating awareness for healthy environment. These women have shown their utmost concern for the improvement in living conditions and have taken the lead role in achieving their goal.

1.4 Globalisation and Environment

Mankind has influenced the earth and is responsible for changes in the environment. Many visionaries issued early warnings about the limits and consequences of industrial progress. In 1960, Rachel Carson published *Silent Spring* and in 1972, the Club of Rome published *The Limits to Growth*. The undesirable phenomena that have been taking place as a result of this unprecedented growth are
environmental degeneration due to industrial agriculture and long-term ecological contamination in the vicinity of industrial sites. Land which earlier supported local population has been used to produce export crops for the First World countries. Much of the land produces export crops and the local people have to rely upon imports for meeting their needs. The money they have to spend on imports is much more than they would have spent upon local production. Andy Smith comments, “To maintain these systems of economic inequality, the United States and other colonial powers provide covert and overt support to military regimes to crush popular uprisings” (Smith 27).

In recent years, ‘people of color’ have brought the issues of environmental equity and justice to the forefront of the ecological debate. Earlier they were given only marginal consideration by environmentalists. ‘Women of color’ have particularly brought attention to these issues such as exposure to toxins, cancers, and hazardous waste disposal. The waste products of the capitalist production find their way into the areas where minority and backward communities live. The anti-pollution methods do not reach poor inner-city communities.

The most dramatic change in the levels of participation by ‘people of color’ occurred during the late 1980s with the emergence of ‘Environmental Justice Movement.’ It is a radical, multiracial, grassroots environmental movement consisting of thousands of environmental groups. African, Asian, and other activists from various social and racial class backgrounds are participating in this movement. They challenge the efficiency of already existing environmental organizations that primarily concern white and middle class people. They raise their concern over the increased exposure to toxins and other environmental hazards.
The environmental justice movement fights the most vicious and pervasive inequalities including those based on race, gender, and class. The movement aims at identifying past injustices and working for remedial action. The deliberate disposal of wastes in communities having lower socio-economic status is an issue taken up actively by this movement. The principles of environmental justice, upon which this movement is based, were articulated on October 27, 1991, by delegates attending the ‘First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit.’ The demands of environmental justice stated that public policy should be based on mutual respect and justice for all peoples, free from any kind of discrimination. It opposed the destructive operations of multinational corporations. It also urged for the education of present and future generations regarding environmental issues.

1.5 Need for Sustainable Development

The deterioration of the world’s environment is the result of human activities that are carried out in the name of progress but their consequences are dangerous. ‘Sustainable development’ is the revised paradigm to replace unchecked development programs. This kind of development seeks a balance between the use of resources and the satisfaction of human needs so that the needs of the future generations are also taken care of. Ecofeminism also favours the appropriate application of science and technology and proposes measures for the balance between technology and ecology. International development needs ‘remediation’ which means that the consequences of the past abuse must be corrected wherever oppression has caused them. Remediation is to go back to pre-damaged conditions through continuous efforts. The activities benefitting the global ecosystems include protecting biodiversity, storing floodwaters, cleaning polluted water etc.
1.6 Patriarchy and Oppression

Patriarchy is the systematic, structural unjustified domination of women by men. In patriarchal societies, culture and reason are the traits attributed to males, and nature and emotion are the traits attributed to women. Patriarchy characterizes ‘power-over’ relationships of domination of women by men. The traits associated with men are given higher value than those associated with women. This type of ideology promotes the impaired thinking that men can control women’s lives. Similar domination is then extended to nature and the superiority over nature is claimed. The principal aim of ecofeminists is to build a consciousness in which instead of patriarchal dualisms like culture/nature or male/female, there is a feeling of co-existence and equality valuing biological and cultural diversity. Karen J. Warren opposes hierarchical thinking based on class, race, age, sexual preference or any kind of power-over relationship. She has highlighted five inter-related characteristics of an ‘oppressive patriarchal conceptual framework’: 1) value-hierarchical thinking (Up-Down relationship); 2) value dualisms (either-or thinking); 3) power-over relationship; 4) conceptions of privilege; 5) logic of domination (superiority justifies subordination).

Ecofeminists critique that the domination of nature by human beings is guided by patriarchal world view, the same world view that justifies the domination of women. Rape, sexual harassment, spouse-beating, and pornography are practices that are the outcome of patriarchy. Vandana Shiva has opposed the concept of development from the perspective of patriarchy, in her article “Development as a New Project of Western Patriarchy” (1990). Nature and women’s work are not given
importance in the Western development model. This has resulted in disharmony between men and women and has given rise to environmental problems also.

Women have been denied equal rights in the ‘New World Order.’ They receive only one-tenth of the world income despite working for equal hours as men. In such a scenario, ecological feminism is a world view having the potential to positively influence women’s lives with their development process that repudiates patriarchy. Ecofeminist theory is grounded on people’s different experiences and observations. The voices of ecofeminism are diverse, but their common thread is the recognition of the relationship between the domination of nature and the domination of women.

More people are embracing ecofeminism because they understand and realize that there is an urgent need to create equal rights for all and this effort can save the earth and its resources. Judith Plant opines, “Our origins are in the earth beneath our feet, in the living and dying that is our organic reality. This arrogant smokescreen of patriarchy – where some are deemed better than, or more deserving than, others – allow us to deny this most basic fact of life” (Plant 131). It is this ‘separating’ attitude of patriarchy that promotes rapes, violence, and exploitation. Ecofeminism rejects the development model based on uncontrolled technological advancements, mass consumerism, and unrestrained economic growth at the cost of democracy and human values.

1.7 Deep Ecology

In 1972 the Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess founded a movement called ‘deep ecology.’ He argued that revolutionary reform methods and assumptions can
bring ecological insight in every sphere of human life. Modern people treat nature with cruelty because they view humanity as separate from and superior to nature. Deep ecology affirms the perspective of life in which people identify all other organisms and the surrounding environment with their own existence. In 1984, Naess and George Sessions offered a ‘Platform for Deep Ecology,’ affirming eight basic principles for a revolution in human attitudes. Respect for the inherent value of all life is the basic norm of this ideology. The interference of humans in the diversity of nature except for vital needs must be considered unethical. The social and economic structures based on capital accumulation and materialistic conceptions need to be changed. The ideology of deep ecology demands reduction of human population for the betterment of environment.

1.8 Ecofeminism as Peace Politics

William Andrew Myers has in his article, “Severed Heads: Susan Griffin’s Account of War, Detachment, and Denial,” analysed the various psychological aspects of human beings that ultimately lead to violence, detachment, and cruelty. He comments that “Once the concept of dropping bombs on cities is accepted, that is, once strategists and their governments and their publics agree that blowing up civilian populations is morally acceptable, or perhaps even necessary, incremental increases in violence become mere technical improvements” (Myers 108). To respond empathetically to a given situation, human beings require deep awareness as physical and emotional beings. Individual self-recognition should pave way for cultural reconstruction so that the consciousness that makes wars and violence possible can be transcended.
Karen J. Warren argues in her article “Toward an Ecofeminist Peace Politics” that the connections of violence lie ultimately in patriarchy. She proposes ‘ecofeminist peace politics’ for uprooting patriarchal practices and to envision peace in the world. She suggests that this theory of peace politics should be built like sewing a quilt to get a multilayered theory with various patches. This theory proposes various guidelines and primarily aims at the development of anti-patriarchal philosophies and practices. Warren writes, “... an ecofeminist peace politics quilt collectively represents and records the stories of people of different ages, ethnicities, affectional orientations, race and gender identities, and class backgrounds committed to nonviolence...” (Warren 186).

Warren defines that the agenda of ecofeminist peace politics makes a central place for values of care, love, friendship, and trust in human relationships and human-nature relationship. By repudiating dualisms and hierarchy, it aims at promoting anti-domination practices. Working against various activities connected to sexual assault, racism, toxic dumping etc. becomes a part of ecofeminist peace agenda. Warren argues that the creation of hierarchies and violence are inter-connected. Hence, ecofeminist peace politics opposes unjustified systems of dominance and subordination related to ‘value-hierarchies.’ It also stresses upon valuing the perspectives of local and indigenous people.

Karen Warren proposes to develop analyses of violence and nonviolence. She refers to various kinds of violence like violence against self, violence against others, violence against earth, and systemic or economic violence. Warren argues that patriarchy underlies all such kinds of violence. Pam McAllister’s comment on non-
violence clarifies the agenda of peace. She writes that “... nonviolence is the merging of our uncompromising rage at the patriarchy’s brutal destructiveness with a refusal to adopt its ways...” (McAllister iii).

Ecofeminists envision the kind of society that complies with the agenda of ecofeminist peace politics. “An ecofeminist society would be egalitarian and ecologically sustainable. There would be no sexual/gender division of labour, and any necessary work would be integrated with all aspects of communal life” (Mellor 69). The aim of this politics is to break apart the dualisms and hierarchical structures in order to bring balance in human relationships. Murray Bookchin, a social ecologist, has also given his viewpoints regarding ways to maintain balance in society. He is of the opinion that domination of nature by man stems from the domination of human by human. The solution lies in having an egalitarian and eco-friendly society. Bookchin proposes to create a harmonious society in which people do not cross ecological boundaries and repudiate the domination of humans by humans. His basic assumption is that if human communities, individual species, and smaller ecosystems are left to evolve without interference, it will lead to harmony and peace.

The ecological struggles fought by women are attempts to maintain nature’s essential ecological processes in their natural order. Vandana Shiva, who received ‘Calgary Peace Prize’ (2011), devotes all her research and activism to promoting peace with the planet Earth. She comments, “Ecology movements are political movements for a non-violent world order in which nature is conserved for conserving the options for survival” (Shiva 37). Shiva stresses upon ‘feminine principle’ that should serve as the principle of activity and creativity in both women and men. This
principle is based on inclusiveness and includes nature as a living entity, women as productive, and men as relocating their activities to create life-enhancing societies. The recovery of this principle is needed for a non-patriarchal, non-gendered, and non-violent society. Shiva argues:

The death of the feminine principle in women and nature takes place through the association of the category of passivity with the feminine.

The death of the feminine principle in men takes place by a shift in the concept of activity from creation to destruction, and the concept of power from empowerment to domination. (Shiva 53)

1.9 Margaret Atwood’s Fiction in Ecofeminist Context:

Atwood is a well known Canadian writer, famous for her intricate poetry, powerfully schematised fiction, and illuminating literary criticism. Born in the city of Ottawa, Canada’s capital, on 18 November, 1939, she began to write at the age of five. She got enrolled in the honors English Language and Literature program at Victoria College in the University of Toronto in 1957. She began her Master’s program in English Literature at Radcliffe College in Harvard University. As Atwood became renowned as a Canadian writer of poetry, fiction, and criticism, she also interpreted Canada for the world at large. “Her quest for Canada’s and Canadian literature’s visibility started in the 1970s, and now fully realized, has provided room for a whole set of different themes and concerns: the possibilities and risks involved in the fast-paced discoveries of new technologies, as well as the second wave of xenophobia and intolerance for cultural, class, and racial diversity” (Rao 112).
Feminism and environmentalism are the two major concerns in Atwood’s fiction. She presents women in different situations where they are trying to identify themselves or they are trying to cope with the patriarchal world. The strength that women accumulate in order to fight against oppression, and their association with nature both emerge as ecofeminist solutions in Atwood’s novels. The effects of degenerating environment have been shown in her fiction as leading to a major catastrophe. Atwood relates feminism, ecology, and peace in various ways and the connection among them arises as a solution for violence and mismanagement present in the world. Ecofeminist peace politics has been related to her fiction in order to highlight Atwood’s vision of peace in this world.

One of the pioneering ecofeminist novels is Atwood’s *Surfacing*. In this novel, the protagonist is trying to understand and analyse the patriarchal structure of society. She visits her ancestral home after a long time to search for her missing father. She identifies the environmental destruction of her childhood Canadian locale to her oppression as a woman. Her connectivity with nature gives her a chance to discover her new identity as a human being and as a woman. She discards the hollow identity that is full of artificiality and decides to follow her inner instinct in order to gain peace of mind. The transformation that she goes through is significant in context to the change that is required to be brought in society:

Metamorphosis is ongoing: the snake of life continues to move and shed its skins. And if our own metamorphosis, as individuals and in society, is to be positive, the critical issue for Atwood is that we must learn to reject domination: the devastation of our natural world, the oppression of women, and political tyranny.... (Gorjup 143)
Atwood’s novel *The Handmaid’s Tale* is set in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Her environmental and feminist concerns are clearly visible in the underlying theme of the novel. Due to extremely toxic chemical pollutants, people have become infertile and women generally give birth to deformed babies. It is an extreme situation under the fascist rule where women are deprived from having any power and have to bear the consequences of environment degradation. Women, who can contribute to the betterment of environment, are not allowed to participate in the policy making process. Both women and environment are in debilitating condition in the novel. Environmental imbalance is the reason behind the chaos and turbulence in women’s lives.

The effect of globalization is clearly visible in Atwood’s novel *Oryx and Crake* (2003). The techno-elite group of people want to spread their influence globally, while dominating and exploiting nature completely. The naturally existing plants and animals are disappearing and new genetically engineered species are taking their place. Can the artificial creation be as good as the original creation? The apocalypse that occurs in the novel answers this question. Hengen comments that “The adaptation and co-evolution that have characterized the naturally occurring environment, and so the very basis of survival among organisms, is being tampered with by current technologies” (Hengen 73). The scientific war that Crake begins against the whole planet in the novel is an outcome of uncontrolled and imbalanced scientific experiments. For Crake the global destruction is like a game and he does not take it seriously as a global threat. The global destruction in the form of mass killings
by a deadly disease coincides with the assumption that if humans will put excessive pressure on the planet and exploit its resources then the environment may strike back in the form of a deadly disease.

*The Year of the Flood* (2009) is a novel by Atwood that is contemporaneous with the previous novel *Oryx and Crake*. The two different and opposite worlds have been juxtaposed and many characters appear in both the novels. Whereas the earlier novel focuses on a technocratic elite society, the latter one concentrates on common people living outside the boundary wall of the elite. The exploitation suffered by the common people is clearly apparent in the novel. They are the disadvantaged people who have very few choices and are the victims of profit oriented capitalism. In such a demarcated society, a group of people called Gardeners have built for themselves a completely different world at the rooftop of a discarded building. They grow fresh vegetables, fruits, and herbs and lead a nature-led life without any interference of the artificial man made products. They are vegetarian and keep themselves busy in promoting various natural ways of life. The novel highlights the mismanagement of uncontrolled scientific experiments and the fatal consequences of the resulting catastrophe. Various feminist and environmentalist threads cross each other in the novel, giving it a scope for ecofeminist peace related study.

The above mentioned novels of Atwood provide the ground for analysing ecofeminist peace politics from various angles. *Surfacing*, written almost forty years back, is a pioneering work on the peace agenda of ecofeminism, although Karen Warren theorized it much later. The subject of ecofeminism has been and still is very close to Atwood’s heart. In *Surfacing*, she was successful in portraying complete
atonement between the female protagonist and nature in all peaceful manifestation. The protagonist in this novel is a metaphor for the universal identity of a woman. In her later works like *The Handmaid’s Tale*, *Oryx and Crake*, and *The Year of the Flood*, she was less hopeful and she created darker pictures of the world. Her presentation of dystopian civilization makes the reader ponder over the current problems of the world. The apocalypse in her two contemporaneous novels, *Oryx and Crake* and *The Year of the Flood* brings forward the need to contemplate on the devastating effects of technology. These works are a kind of forewarnings and emphasize upon the need to take corrective measures for the rejuvenation of peace, which is the main agenda of ecofeminist peace politics.
Works Cited


