2.0 Preliminaries

Right from the beginning of the human civilization, ‘woman’ has never been considered and treated as a full-fledged human-being. She has always been marginalized, exploited and subjugated. Though, like ‘man’, she too is rational and intellectual, yet considered as secondary and supporting to man. From the times immemorial, woman has been taught and molded in such a way that without any complaint or protest she has been playing the roles assigned to her, just as a puppet in the hands of patriarchal society. As Rita Felski rightly puts:

The internalization of ... female identity as supplementary to and supporting of a male figure by women themselves is registered as the most disturbing indication of the deep-seated influence of patriarchal ideology... [1989: 129].

The contemporary feminist Adrienne Rich has expressed the same view while defining patriarchy:

Patriarchy is the power of the fathers: a familial-social, ideological, political system in which men-by force, direct pressure, or through ritual, tradition, law and language, customs, etiquette, education, and the division of labor, determine what part women shall or shall not play, and in which the female is everywhere subsumed under the male [1986:57].

The woman has to play some stereo-type roles--daughter, sister, wife and mother. In each phase of her life, man is her master. The tragedy is that her birth in the family has been considered as a bad luck or unhappy occasion. From the childhood, the lessons of the patriarchy start to take place in her life. She is taught that how to endure mutely all types of discrimination and injustice, and how to remain silent particularly in the presence of her master. Gradually, the girl masters these and all the essential lessons very cleverly and becomes fit in the society. In daily
life, she witnesses how she is discriminated at every stage of her life – the great or the extra share of everything is given to her brother, the opportunity of taking good education by going to district place, is wholeheartedly given to her brother. She is denied and confined in the four walls of the house.

And when such a girl becomes marriageable, the searching of another suitable master for her takes place in the family. The new boss has his own expectations from her; to gratify his sexual desires whenever he asks, and to take care of his house and his parents. The patriarchal lessons continuously remind her to make her husband happy as well as her in-laws at any cost. This will ultimately make her own parents happy. In her married life, the new master whether loves or tortures her, it completely depends upon his mental set-up or her lot. If he is Othello, every time he doubts her character, occasionally beats her, sometimes kills too. In daily busy schedule of life, no proper medical treatment is given to her. In isolation, she cries and blames God for making her a woman. One thing is more important in her married life, if she fails to produce minimum one male-child, or proves to be barren; she then gets thrown out of the house or divorced.

In her third phase of life, when she gives birth to her new master, that is when she becomes mother. Her son decides whatever he wants to decide about his mother. Adrienne Rich rightly throws light at motherhood in which the woman takes pride:

The one aspect in which most women have felt their own power in the patriarchal sense—authority over and control of another—has been motherhood; and even this aspect, as we shall see, has been wrenched and manipulated to male control [Ibid:67].
In short, the life of a woman is thoroughly powerless, helpless and depending. Tillie Olsen very aptly captures the status of woman in the following words:

Isolated. Cabin’d, cribb’d, confined; the private sphere. Bound feet: corseted, bedecked; denied one’s body. Powerlessness. Fear of rape, male strength. Fear of aging. Subject to. Fear of expressing capacities. Soft attractive ... For twentieth century woman; roles, discontinuities, part-self, part-time; conflict; imposed guilt; a man can give full energy to his profession, a woman cannot [Quoted in Sengupta 2006:05].

2.1 Women Depicted in Mainstream Literature and Culture

This part of the chapter is partly based on the views of the co-editors Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar expressed in their various introductions for each phase of the mainstream literature in The Norton Anthology of Literature By Women (1985)

2.1.1 Women in the Middle Ages (1100 to 1450)

Before the Middle Ages, there was the earliest phase of English language that was called as the Old English Period (ca 450-1066). In this early period, many English poems were composed, but very few of them have been survived including the great Anglo-Saxon epic Beowulf (ca 700). Cole’s editorial board of Dictionary of Literary Terms (1996) writes that literature first flourished in Northumbria, but in the reign of Alfred the Great (871-901), West Saxon became the literary dialect. Under his rule, much Latin literature was translated into English prose. But the second prose revival took place under Aelfric and Wulfstan. Late examples of Anglo-Saxon verse are The Battle of Maldon and The Battle of Brunanburh.
Gilbert and Gubar, in their book *The Norton Anthology of Literature By Women* rightly put, “Anglo-Saxon Culture, which pre-dated Christianity in England, was oblivious of or hostile to women” [1985a: 06]. For the purpose, both have quoted misogynistic views of the great persons of the period. Tertullian, the third-century philosopher of asceticism, publically announced that woman is a “temple built over a sewer” [Ibid: 06]. Another scholar from Rome named Pliny the Elder persisted:

Contact with (menstrual fluid) turns new wine sour, crops touched by it become barren … the edge of steel and gleam of ivory are dulled, hives of bees die, even bronze and iron are at once seized by rust and a horrible smell fills the air [Ibid:06].

The Roman scholar seems to be ignorant of the fact that each and every man or woman is made of that menstrual blood of mother.

Not only this, but in literary pieces, one finds the same misogynistic views or ideas. In the opening lines of *The Wife’s Lament* (ca 900), the speaker-woman complaints:

I make this song sadly about myself,
About my life, I a woman say
I’ve been unhappy since I grew up [Ibid].

It is quite clear that the treatment given to women was definitely unfair and bad. Even the reading of *Beowulf*, brings to notice that women were objects of exchange and mothers of monsters.

There was not any great difference between the life of woman in the Middle Ages and that of Old English Period. According to the historian Doris Stenton, women generally passed from father to husband, with the age of marital consent for girls usually defined as twelve. The church permitted the wife-beating but denied divorce. The maiden or
unmarried girls had no rights over the property. The women were not allowed to be judges, on the panel of juries or in government councils. A widow could only claim the third part of her husband’s estate. The manorial court records tell that many widows independently farmed the holdings of their husbands and engaged in litigation on their own behalf. Along with the child-bearing, there was one more danger that was to be faced by women—it was witch-craft. Gilbert and Gubar explain in detail that the peace of women’s mind was frequently threatened by witch hunting, an activity that became increasingly ferocious. The ratio of women to men accused of witch-craft ranged from twenty to one. Witch was believed to worship strange gods, whose ways would undermine the authority of the established church. It was considered as a social ill. In this context, the scholars Barbara Ehrenrich and Deirdre English have estimated that the total number of women tortured and executed during the period might have climbed into millions.

Two opposite and contrasting pictures of women, one can find, in the literature of the Middle Ages. On one hand, women have been worshipped, praised and loved as Mothers of Christ and at the same time, have been hated, exploited and killed as mothers of monsters and witches. Gilbert and Gubar have rightly stated:

Ennobling and empowering as the rhetoric of Mariolatry, the rhymes of courtly love, the sonnets of Petrarcanism, the allegorical figures of Spenser, and the concept of female muses might seem to have been for women, however, they still retained traces of the very misogyny ....[Ibid: 08].

Mariolatry means the Cult of the Virgin, which started in the twelfth century. It is not possible to tell the exact origin or source of it, but in sermons, songs, plays and poems, the people started to worship the Blessed Mother. This celebration of Christ’s mother gave the importance
and value to the common woman’s body and the soul. The historical sources make clear that even the prostitute named Mary Magdalene was sanctified and sheltered in the queendom of Virgin Mary. There is a poem which celebrates the motherhood of maiden Mary:

I sing of a maiden
That is makelees (matchless)

............
moder (mother) and maiden
Was nevere (never) noon (none) but she:
Wel may swich a lady
Godes moder be [Ibid: 07].

In this way, by forgetting her responsibility for the ‘fall of mankind,’ has been worshipped and praised.

This glorification of Virgin Mary greatly influenced the writers of the late medieval period, but they shifted the object of glorification from Immortal Mary to mortal lady. The poets started to praise the elegance and excellence of the aristocratic ladies in courtly love poems; they swore fealty and dedicated lives and art to them. Gottfried de Loris’ *Roman de La Rose* (The Romance of Rose) can be termed as a good example. At the same time, the great Italian sonneteer Petrarch also followed the same rhythm and praised the elegance and the beauty of his beloved named Laura. His contemporaries too continued to write sonnets and songs with the same themes. Another famous poet Dante, in his *La Vita Nuova* (The New Life) sang about the spiritual love.

The exact opposite and contrasting picture of women is abundant in the early Middle English poetry. It is always classified into three heads, according to its subject: historical, romantic and religious. The romantic poetry was written on the romantic tales of the past. These simple stories often contained the supernatural element. Dwarfs and magicians, errant knights and distressed damsels were the common
themes of the romance. In the early nineteenth-century, the Romantic poets like John Keats and S.T. Coleridge attempted to write poems dealing with the theme of medieval romance. John Keats’ *La Belle Dame Sans Mercy* is the finest example. But in the Middle Ages, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* is the most charming poem among the Arthurian romances. Because, in it, the great hero Sir Gawain gets tempted and wounded by the lady, who is Green Knight’s wife. There one finds plenty of poems that depicted women as witches or tempters or monsters. Malory’s Arthurian romances can also be cited as best examples, in which, the women characters are responsible for the death of the heroes. Chaucer’s poetry too reflects the chivalric spirit of the medieval times. The fourteenth century was still in the fascinating hold of chivalry and knighthood. In *The Prologue to the Canterbury Tales*, Chaucer reflects the fading chivalry represented in the person of the Knight and the rising chivalry of his own times reflected in his son named Young Squire. The old Knight was a brave warrior, and like many other chivalrous knights of the Middle Ages had all for the defense of religion. In addition, Chaucer throws light on the condition of women of his times in *The Prologue* as well as *The Canterbury Tales*. Chaucer’s tales with the exception of one or two, contain the bitter attacks on women in keeping with the conventional attitude of men towards the second sex. In *Nun’s Priest’s Tale*, Chaucer points out that a husband who follows the advice of his wife definitely becomes unhappy.

2.1.2 **Women in the Renaissance Period**

Even in the Renaissance period, there seemed to be no development in the condition of women. The women were broadly divided into two groups—femes sole (unmarried or widowed women) and femes covert (married women). The unmarried or widowed women,
though, had considerable freedom, but, especially, wealthy unmarried girls were forced to marry either of their own choice (not always) or of their parents’ choice. If they were not ready to marry, they were sometimes abducted or tortured by the persons, who wanted to marry them mainly for their estates. There was no law to protect them from such type of socially sanctioned tortures. The widowed women, on the other hand, were allowed to supervise the estates of their dead husbands or were allowed to remarry for second, third or more times. The married women were solely depended upon the whims of their respective husbands. In short, as it was in the Middle Ages, in this period also, the women had no personalities of their own. They were considered good and chaste, if they did follow the traditional rules of the patriarchy. But one pleasant thing happened in the sixteenth-century was that the girls were allowed to take education.

The picture of women presented by the Renaissance writers is, as usual, an unpleasant one. William Shakespeare was the only dominant writer of this period. In his sonnets and plays, he blindly followed his predecessors’ attack on women. In his sonnets, particularly sonnets 127 to 152, he portrays his beloved named Dark Lady. The lady is presented as a woman of loose morals, that she falls in love with the poet’s friend, and that she is most unreliable where sexual relations are concerned. On one hand, the poet describes his infatuation for her, on the other, badly criticizes her as darker than the darkest. In the sonnets (136-137), Shakespeare ridicules her excessive sexual desire and her indiscriminate love affairs. These two poems are a calculated attack on the lady concerned. She is depicted as a nymphomaniac. The following two lines clearly indicate the obscene manner in which the poet points out the lady’s harlot-like conduct:
Not once vouchsafe to hide my will in thine?
Wilt thou, whose will is large and spacious,
[Quoted in Craig 1985: 323].

In another sonnet no. 130, though he calls his lady as an extraordinary woman walking on the earth, yet he compares her physical features such as – breasts are dun, hair is black wires etc. In his plays, particularly, in his zenith tragedies, he depicts women as villains and witches. In *Macbeth* (1606), Lady Macbeth is a highly unnatural villainous woman. Malcolm, one of the characters, calls her, ‘the fiend-like queen’, for it is she who chastises Macbeth by the valour of her tongue, overcomes his hesitation and drives him to commit the murder and so get the crown of Scotland. She calls upon the powers that rule human destiny to unsex her, “come … unsex me here” [Ibid: 849], to take away from her all womanly charity and kindness, and to fill her from top to bottom with the direst cruelty. Thus, she is presented as a ruthless monster. In *King Lear* (1606) there are two more women who have been criticized as witches and fiends. It does not mean that Shakespeare only presents women as witches but there is Cordelia of *King Lear*, Rosalind of *As You Like It* (1600) and others who are presented as life-like women characters.

2.1.3 **Women in the Seventeenth Century**

In the seventeenth-century, the life of a woman, as usual, was confined in four walls of the house. Every girl was expected to marry with the person, mostly of her parents’ choice. After marriage, her life was totally dependent upon her husband’s and in-laws’ behavior. If one became widow, she was entitled to a portion of her deceased husband’s estate. Married woman was more cabined than the unmarried or a widow. The seventeenth century woman had no legal right on her husband, on his property, on her children, even on her own body. The middle class or working women’s condition was worse than the
aristocratic or rich women. The woman of this period was judicially outcast. Gilbert and Gubar have rightly focused:

Within the legal system throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, women were held to different standards of behavior than men and were punished more severely for departing from those standards. For example, mothers of stillborn babies could be charged with infanticide (if they could not produce witness to prove the child had been born dead) until 1803. So-called scolding women were punished with the “brank” (an iron framework caging the head) or the “ducking stool” (a chair with straps that was let down into a river) before 1809 [1985a: 138].

The statute passed in 1770 by the Parliament was very misogynistic. The statute contended:

All women of whatever age, rank, profession, or degree, whether virgin maid or widow, that shall from and after such Act impose upon, seduce, and betray into matrimony any of His Majesty’s subjects by means of scent, paints, cosmetics, washes, artificial teeth, false hair, Spanish wool, iron stays, hoops, high-heeled shoes, or bolstered hips, shall incur the penalty of the law now in force against witchcraft and like misdemeanours, and that the marriage upon conviction shall stand null and void [Ibid:138].

The seventeenth-century has been called as the Puritan age or the age of John Donne and John Milton. It has also been called as the age of Transition. The general literary features of this age are decline of Elizabethan tradition, beginnings of classical methods, decline of drama, development of prose and the metaphysical poetry. The picture of women presented by almost all the male-writers is undoubtedly anti-woman. But there were some writers like Andrew Marvell, John Donne, and Robert Herrick who never attacked on women mercilessly. Though, according
to Gilbert and Gubar, some writers applied ‘double standards’ while portraying women:

During the period before the English civil war, conniving, ambitious ladies were frequently portrayed by Swetnam and his ilk, but patronesses and mistresses were also idealized in courtly poetry. Yet even in many erotic and romantic verses of seventeenth-century lyricists, the visions of women that such works recorded were often projections of, on the one hand, male anxieties and, on the other hand, male desire [Ibid:135].

John Donne, the main literary figure of the time, praises the elegance and delicacy of his beloved in his poems. In his widely-read poem *The Extasie* (1633), Donne introduces the platonic concept of love and balances it with the physical love:

> The Extasie doth unperplex  
> (Wee said) and tell us what wee love,  
> Wee see by this, it was not sexe,  
> Wee see, we saw not what did move [1896:54].

Such glorification of woman and her love is fully described in his poetry, but he knowingly or unknowingly wants to be the possessor of her body in his poem *Elegie: To His Mistris Going to Bed* (1669):

> Oh my America, my new found lande,  
> My Kingdome, safeliest when one man man’d.  
> [Ibid: 149].

Ben Jonson, another great lyricist, also dealing with the theme of *carpe diem*, tries to teach his beloved that do not waste time in coyness and shyness. He in his *To Celia* asks the same thing:

> Come my CELIA, let us prove,  
> While we may, the sports of love;  
> Time will not be ours, forever;  
> He, at length, our good will sever.  
> [Quoted in Hayward 1984:71].
But Jonson in his another poem entitled *That Women Are But Mens Shadows* calls women as mere shadows of men:

> Follow a shadow, it still flies you;  
> Seeme to flye it, it will pursue;  
> So court a mistris, shee denyes you;  
> Let her alone, shee will court you.  
> Say, are not women truely, then,  
> Stil’d but the shad\(^{owes}\) of us men?  

[Ibid: 73].

In one more poem entitled *To Fine Lady Would Be* (1616) severely attacks on his lady, who refuses to bear children:

> the world reputes you barren; but I know  
> you, pothecary, and his drug says no  
> ......................... 
> Write, then on thy womb,  
> Of the not born, yet buried, here’s the tomb.  

[Quoted in Gilbert and Gubar1985a:135].

The great epic-writer John Milton has also plenty of love and respect for women, but like Donne, he smells the difference between two sexes in his world-famous epic *Paradise Lost* (1660).

> Not equal, as their sex not equal seemed;  
> For contemplation he and valor formed,  
> For softness she and sweet attractive grace;  
> He for god only, she for god in him.  
> .............................................  
> And by her yielded, by him best received  
> Yielded with coy submission, modest pride,  
> And sweet reluctant amorous delay.[1968:91].  

The Restoration ‘comedy of manners’ is full of immorality and obscenity. Sir John Vanbrugh’s one of the characters named Sir John Brute of *The Provoked Wife* (1697) shamelessly utters:

> What cloying meat in love-when matrimony’s the sauce to it! Two years marriage has debauched my five senses … No boy was ever so weary of his tutor, on girl of her bib, no nun of doing penance or old maid of being chaste, as I am of being
married. Sure there’s a secret curse entailed upon
the very name of wife! The woman’s well enough;
she has no vice that I know of, but she’s a wife;
and damn a wife.[Quoted in Mundra and Mundra
2004: 431]

Thus, women have been presented as audacious and flippant in almost
every Restoration comedy.

2.1.4 Women in the Eighteenth Century

The eighteen-century women’s life was also no better or modified
than that of earlier women. But one great thing happened in America and
England that was the development in the fields of science and
technology. But the working-class women were greatly exploited in the
context of labor and wages. The mid-wives were denied medical
knowledge and the courses prescribed for the girl-students were only
related to home-science and cookery. Halifax in his book entitled The
Lady’s New Year’s Gift; or Advice to a Daughter (1688) provides the
reason, “there is inequality in the sexes, and that for the better economy
of the world, the men, who were to be the lawgivers, had the larger share
of reason bestowed upon them” [Quoted in Gilbert and Gubar
1985a:140].

The picture of women depicted in the literature is as usual
negative. Thomas Gray, one of the learned poets, in his widely read
poem The Bard (1757), makes a bitter prophecy, addressed by a Welsh
bard to Edward I, when his army entered in Wales. Though, he makes a
historical comment, his prophecy is misogynistic in one sense:

She-wolf of France, with unrelenting fangs
That tear’st the bowels of thy mangled mate
[http://www.thomasgray.org/text=bapo(1.2.2011)].
The mystic poet, William Blake, in his highly symbolized poem *The Sick Rose*, talks about the two images of ‘rose’ and ‘worm’ and that the whole poem evokes female sexuality:

O Rose, thou art sick!
The invisible worm
That flies in the night,
In the howling storm,
Has found out thy bed
Of crimson joy,
And his dark secret love
Does thy life destroy,

[Quoted in Hayward 1984:241].

Even Alexander Pope did not spare women, in his *Of the Characters of Women* (1732), he publically declared that “most women have no characters at all” [Ibid: 208].

In the same century, the novelists much tried to paint a good image of women in their writings. For example, Samuel Richardson presented Pamela of *Pamela* (1740) with high morality, but another novelist Henry Fielding made a parody of that novel in his *Joseph Andrews* (1742), portraying a woman, who was a foil to Pamela. In addition, in *Tom Jones* (1749) though he depicted realistic picture of eighteenth century society, a very ugly aspect of the status of English women is mentioned in it. Loss of chastity was considered to be a heinous crime and a woman with lost chastity was branded as a fallen woman, acceptable to none. Though, the person was held responsible for the rape and was compelled to marry with her, but he felt humiliated to accept her. In this context, Mrs Western, one of the characters from *Tom Jones*, tells her brother:

How often have I told that English women are not to be treated like ciraceous slaves. We have the protection of the world; we are to be won by gentle means only, and to be hectored and bullied and beat into compliance. [Fielding quoted in Paul 1992:174].
2.1.5 Women in the Nineteenth Century

Even in the nineteenth century, there was no great development in the status of women. No doubt, the girls were allowed to take education. “Qualified, to be sure, by class and (in the United States and the British colonies) by race, the female situation in England and America continued to be as problematic as ever for most of the century” [Gilbert and Gubar 1985a:417]. Gilbert and Gubar further quote the view of Blackstone in the context of marriage:

By Marriage, the very being or legal existence of a woman is suspended, or at least it is incorporated or consolidated into that of the husband, under whose wing, protection, and cover she performs everything, and she is therefore called in our law a feme covert [Ibid].

Such was the condition of married woman. She could not own property, even what she herself might have brought to the marriage or inherited after she was wed. In short, her whole married life was completely dependent on her husband’s whims. The woman if wanted to separate from her husband, it was hardly possible to get divorce. Not only that, she could not claim on her own children. And if she became a widow and if her husband fortunately made his will, then she could get only the minimal part of the estate. The report of a historian Eleanor Flexner provides the details:

.... a widow was allowed nothing but family Bible and a few other books, some cattle and household goods, and no matter how many children she had, one table, six chairs, six knives and forks, six tea-spoons.[Ibid: 418].

The married women were also denied good education of Law and Science. They were prohibited to participate in social functions. The
great feminist Florence Nightingale very bitterly describes the meaningless life of married women:

A married woman’s life consists in superintending what she does not know to do … (she) is to direct the servants, who are to provide conveniences and luxuries not thought of formerly. She has never learnt, and does not know how, but she must take care to provide them. She must superintend the nurse, and the governess of her children, though she knows nothing and has learnt nothing of the nurse’s work. And the governess … what is she to do? She must direct the characters of her pupils. How is she fit for it? … Over her, so little prepared, the mother so little prepared is to preside. [Quoted in Gilbert and Gubar 1985a: 419].

If the life of upper and middle class married women was so hard, then what hope remained for the working and lower-class women. The money or the income earned by the wife directly became the income of her husband. On the contrary, Ray Strachey writes of a provision in the Law that if the husband “… displeased with the way his wife worked for him- or with any other aspect of her conduct --- he had a perfect right to beat her with a stick, provided it was not thicker than his own thumb” [Ibid: 422].

Margaret Fuller has written a book *Women in the Nineteenth Century* (1845), and in one of the chapters entitled ‘Prejudice Against Women’, she talks about the same prejudices against women such as women have very little power of reason and if anybody wants to tell anything just to fool them . Fuller, first of all, justifies the importance of woman in the life of man:

All men are privately influenced by women; each has his wife, sister, or female friends, and is too much biased by these relations to fail of
representing their interests; and, if this is not enough, let them propose and enforce their wishes with the pen[ Ibid : 560].

In the chapter, she provides the example of her friend named Miranda, who fortunately has been brought up by her father not as a daughter but as a son. Fuller wishes such fortunate treatment should be given to all women. In the chapter ‘The Future of Women’ of the same book, she advises women to become self-reliant and independent, and further writes:

I wish Woman to live, first for God’s sake. Then she will not make an imperfect man 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. Then, if she finds what she needs in Man embodied, she will know how to love, and be worthy of being loved [Ibid: 571].

But, throughout the nineteenth century, the ‘question of woman’ was widely discussed. “Historians have speculated that the egalitarian ideologies with which the era began, along with the impulses towards political reform that accompanied such ideologies, were essential to the battle for women’s rights and votes that marked this century” [Ibid:423].

Both the co-editors Gilbert and Gubar write that by the early 1830s, French socialist and utopian thinkers had started to convert people from one religious faith to another (to proselytize) in England for the emancipation of women. Even the middle-class people followed the same path and in 1831, the Westminster Review published articles dealing with women’s emancipation. In 1832, a petition was filed in House of Commons, asking that every unmarried female possessing the necessary pecuniary qualification will be allowed to vote. There was a woman named Lady Caroline Norton, who was divorced by her husband and was denied the claims on her children. She bluntly fought against this
injustice, started to write letters describing her agony as a woman and as a mother. It was her struggle that brought in Parliament passage of the Infants’ Custody Act of 1939. As already pointed out, in America, the feminist Margaret Fuller also published the book *Women in the Nineteenth Century*. The other feminists namely Eleanor Flexner, Susan B. Anthony, Frances E.W. Harper and others started to write eloquent articles, poems asking the emancipation of woman, particularly, for slave-women. In short, such movements started in England and America for both white and black women.

As a result, married woman got the right of controlling property and claiming the custody of children. Gilbert and Gubar summarize the divorce laws to show the misogyny:

> Divorce laws, however, continued to treat the two sexes differently. In England, the husband could sue solely by reason of his wife’s adultery, but the wife had to prove cruelty or desertion as well as adultery. In the United States, too, the laws were inequitable: in the state of Minnesota, for instance, a woman who was divorced by reason of her adultery had to forfeit real estate that had been her own property, while a man divorced did not. Still, changes in property, divorce and custody laws did imply that wives were no longer assumed to be the possessions of their husbands [Ibid: 1170].

Elementary Education Act 1870, though, gave a guarantee for compulsory elementary education to all the boys and girls in England, yet there was much controversy on the girls’ higher education. In 1913, M. Carey Thomas, the President of Bryn Mawr College, started the subjects like domestic science and home-economics in his college for the higher education of women. In this way, in both the countries, the girls started to take higher education with free will. But, fighting for right of vote continued to the middle of the twentieth-century.
Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar are of the opinion that there was a great impact of the philosophical views of Jean-Jacques Rousseau not only on the various political movements but also on the ideology of femininity. Whatever picture of model woman – a pure, submissive, decorative and even angelic creature carved in his *Emily* (1762), became the standard model of woman for both male and female writers of the nineteenth century. Rousseau’s ideal woman in *Emily* is thus described:

> The whole education of women ought to be relative to men. To please them, to be useful to them, to make themselves loved and honored by them, to educate them when young, to care for them when grown, to counsel them, to console them, and to make life sweet and agreeable to them- these are the duties of women at all times, and what should be taught them for their infancy [Ibid: 414].

Mary Wollstonecraft attacked Rousseau in her second version of *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792). She responds to Rousseau’s educational work *Emily*, in which he proposes that a girl’s education should aim at making her useful to and supportive of a rational man, “one that would train her to be submissive and malleable”. [Wollstonecraft quoted in Jain and Singh 2005:53]. The model of Rousseau was picked up by Coventry Patmore in her long poem *The Angel in the House* (1854):

> Man must be pleased; but him to please
> Is woman’s pleasure; down the gulf
> Of his condoled necessities
> She casts her best, she flings herself
> [Quoted in Gilbert and Gubar 1985a:414].

Gilbert and Gubar further state that the nineteenth century ideologists of femininity have divided Rousseau’s model women into two parts—subordinate working-class women and insubordinate middle or upper-class ladies. According to them, the ideologists did not say much about
the first group of women, just made the distinction between ‘woman’ and ‘lady’. But the moralists of this period expressed their fear about the single woman in the following way: “were she single, however, her situation was far more perilous, for whether she worked on a farm or in a factory, as a kitchen helper … she was constantly in danger of becoming a “fallen woman”, a prostitute” [Ibid:416]. The co-editors provide the example of D.G.Rossetti’s poem Jenny (1870), in which the middle-class speaker articulates his fear at the “poor flower” of, “lazy laughing, languid Jenny/Fond of a kiss and fond of a guinea” [Ibid]. The nineteenth century American and English writers have specially warned against such female insubordination in portraying the demonic mad-women and murderesses.

Robert Browning also painted the contrasting images of women in his poetry. In his To My Last Duchess (1842) he describes the idiotic-innocence of his first wife, whom he himself murders: “she had/A heart-how shall I say? – too soon made glad, / Too easily impressed, she lik’d whate’er/ she looked on, and her looks went everywhere” [Quoted in Hayward 1984:335]. In The Last Ride Together (1842), he portrays the beloved in whose company he feels that he is in heaven and more successful than anybody in the world. In Porphyria’s Lover (1842) he again presents a woman, who very happily submits her life to her lover, even if her lover kills her, she has no pain:

Three times her little throat around,
And strangled her. No pain felt she;
I am quite sure she felt no pain
[http://www.victorianweb.org(3.3.2011)]
The same poet also depicts the fallen woman with loose character in A Light Woman(1855):

When I saw him (the poet’s friend) in her toils,
A shame, said I, if she adds just him
To her nine-and-ninety other spoils,
The hundredth for a whim!
[http://classcit.about.com/rbrowning(3.3.2011)].

His another heroine of *The Inn Album* (1875) declares:
Womanliness means only motherhood:
All love begins and ends there, -- roams enough,
But, having run the circle, rests at home

Browning’s contemporary poet Lord Alfred Tennyson clearly states the confinement of woman to hearth and children in *The Princess* (1847):

Man for the field and woman for the hearth,
Man for the sword and for the needle she,
Man with the head and woman with the heart
Man to command and woman to obey,
All else confusion.
[Quoted in Gilbert and Gubar 1985a: 419].

In his widely read poem *Ulysses* (1842), his old hero Ulysses rejects the company of his old wife. The heroine of *The Lady of Shallot* (1833), is a cursed mysterious lady, and is not allowed even to see the men directly with her open eyes. This symbolizes the woman who is not allowed to go out of the house, if she does; she too gets punished as Shallot is punished with death-penalty. In another poem *Locksley Hall* (1842), the poet is very much frustrated at the faithlessness of Amy, his beloved. He, with deep indignation burning in his heart calls woman ‘the lesser man’, with weaker passions, guided more by irrational impulse than by reason.

The female characters of Charles Dickens have been regarded as feeble and artificial. He has badly painted the eccentric women characters like Betsy Trotwood and Miss. Pross. His women characters are flat caricatures. Dora of *David Copperfield* (1850) is silly and childish.
2.1.6 Women in the Twentieth Century

In the nineteenth century, particularly, at the end of the century, the woman was called ‘New Woman’, but in the twentieth-century, she became completely free and independent. She, for the first time in human history, became a full citizen, got all the essential rights. No doubt, for that she had to struggle hard. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar rightly point out:

…. both middle - and upper class women, no longer bound by the preceding century’s ideology of femininity, entered universities and professions in ever-increasing numbers while exulting in a new intellectual and sexual freedom. Finally, after nearly a century of struggle, women of all classes in both England and America at last gained the right to vote, a right that--at least in law--for the first time acknowledged their full citizenship in the human community [1985b:19].

There are some more, according to Gilbert and Gubar, major factors behind the full liberation of women. Their non-stop struggle and the services rendered by them, especially, at the time of two world wars.

While talking about the struggle of British feminists, Gilbert and Gubar make clear that though in 1913, the suffragist militants started hunger strike, window smashing under the leadership of Pankhurst and the leader in America named Alice Paul led five thousand women to march on Washington, but as war broke up, they all stopped their protests and helped the governments. Gilbert and Gubar quote Prime Minister Asquith’s opinion, who taking back his opposition to women’s suffrage admitted that women, “have aided in the most effective way in prosecution of the war” [Ibid:21]. President Wilson announced that “the services of women--services rendered in every sphere … wherever men
have worked, and upon the very skirts and edges of the battle itself”, should be rewarded with the full rights of citizenship [Ibid].

The development in the fields of science and technology also helped women to be equal with men. Urbanization is the major consequence of this development, and this urbanization provided open space and time for the women. Employment in factories and offices opened the strictly closed doors of the conservative houses. Due to the two world wars, women got more opportunity of working in the factories. The liberal educational policies of both America and England too opened a new avenue of taking higher education, even in the prohibited fields of medical and law. In short, the entire atmosphere including their continuous struggle, finally, made women free and independent.

But, the women depicted in literature continued to be negative. “… the images of women produced by modernist men (and even some produced by their female contemporaries) where often negative” [Ibid: 16]. Gilbert and Gubar quote the anxiety of D.H. Lawrence, which he has expressed in his essay Matriarchy (1929). He writes, “The modern young man talks rather feebly about man being master again. He knows perfectly well that he will never be master again” [Ibid: 01].

T.S. Eliot, the great literary figure, has depicted women in a negative way. In his widely read poem Love Song of J.Alfred Prufrock (1917), he describes modern women just as decorated dolls who talk about art and painting just for fashion and know nothing about it. In his modern epic The Waste Land (1912), he again paints a picture of modern hollow sexual typist woman, who without any hesitation commits debauchery. Again he delineates the young but emotionally empty lady in his Portrait of a Lady (1917).
D.H. Lawrence, the great controversial novelist of his time, considered the modern civilized woman as a great enemy of man, trying to rob him of his greatest possession – his manhood. In almost all his novels, he resisted the threatened domination by women with hysterical violence. Miriam and Mrs. Gertrude Morel of *Sons and Lovers* (1913) are good examples.

Ernest Hemingway is not an exception to this misogynistic tradition. His women characters are of two types: deadly females; and the allegedly docile and submissive mistress-types. The protagonist Catherine Barkly of *A Farewell to Arms* (1929) belongs to the latter group. She has an unconvincing personality.

### 2.2 Black Women Depicted in African American Literature and Culture

In almost all the countries across the world, women do not enjoy equal status till today. And when the topic of black woman comes for discussion, particularly, Black enslaved woman, the answer automatically becomes negative. “Arguably, no group of women in America, social, religious or ethnic has confronted such a degree of dehumanization and exploitation as that of black woman” [Devika2008: 17]. In the previous chapter, an attempt was made to describe the history of black slavery. It makes the things crystal clear that not only to solve the problem of labor, the American traders and farmers, captured and brought the innocent African people to America, but also intended to batter them psychically, “…. That the oppressed be broken bodily and battered psychically” [Kulkarni 1999:55]. Undoubtedly, the enslaved life was deadly and killing, but the enslaved life of black woman was doubly worst. “Slavery is terrible for men, but it is far more terrible for women” [Jacob 1987:77].
Harihar Kulkarni in his seminal book *Black Feminist Fiction* (1999) has critically examined the socialization of black woman and discussed the consequences of negative socialization in terms of what Patricia Collins coined three interdependent dimensions--economy, polity and ideology. Child of six years of age has been compelled to take minimum elementary or primary education that can ultimately help him or her to read and to write. While taking education, the socialization of every person takes place. But if the person is enslaved, racially and socially inferior, penniless, humble, utterly helpless, then what would be the consequences of his or her socialization. Arthur Brittan and Mary Maynard explain the process:

Socialization centers on human passivity. Human beings are produced, moulded, shaped, and determined by totalitarian social forces which relentlessly grind them into acquiescence. Hidden behind the image of socialization … is powerful normative and ideological commitment to a vision of the ‘normal’. The normal is the status quo [1984:72-73].

The history books of American black slavery enact the tragedy of brutal socialization that makes the black people sub humans and chattel. Harihar Kulkarni discusses in detail the brutal socialization of black women on both the levels; that is physical and psychological level:

At physical level, the manifest ramifications of the socialization process are: brutalization, destruction of the victim’s family unit, rape, lynching, flogging, branding, assignment of menial jobs and traumatization of every sort. Socialization at physical level …which ultimately holds the victim in a psychological bondage. It indoctrinates his (her also) mind in a variety of ways and bombards him with innumerable degrading images, myths and stereotypes. [1999:55].
A similar observation is made by Bell Hooks, “No other group in America have so had their identity socialized out of existence as have black women” [1981:07]. The white traders and farmers did not make any distinction between the enslaved people--as man or woman, boy or girl, old or young and single or pregnant one. They just considered them as human live-stock, used for production and reproduction on the plantation farms.

The brutalization of enslaved people, particularly of black women, started right from their journey from Africa to America, and from one master to another. When Paul D in Toni Morrison’s Beloved (1987) was sold by the school-teacher, how brutally he was sent from Sweet Home to Virginia:

> When he (Paul D.) turned his head, aiming for a last look at Brother, turned it as much as the rope that connected his neck to the axle of a buckboard allowed, and, later on, when they fastened the iron around his ankles and clamped the wrists as well, there was no outward sign of trembling at all. Nor eighteen days after that when he saw the ditches; the one thousand feet of earth-five feet deep, five feet wide, into which wooden boxes had been fitted … And there were forty-five more. [B: 125].

A similar traumatic experience is narrated by Miss Lissie in Alice Walker’s The Temple of My Familiar (1989), when in one of her births, her uncle sold her family members, she narrated, “We were forced to jog for almost fifteen days without stopping, or so it felt, until we came to the big stone fort on the coast” [TMF: 63]. There are such thousands of heart-rending narrations in slave-narratives and novels written by African-American women writers. This brutalization at the very first stage of slavery gives the idea of hard life which the black slave women had to lead.
The disintegration of the family, which was the second most ramifications, proved more and more terrible and deadly to black women rather than black men. The white farmers purposefully did not buy all the family members together. The pangs of separation from family members are inexpressible in words. The account of Henson Josiah is already quoted in the previous chapter. She describes in her account that when all her brothers and sisters were sold off, her mother went to the master, who was going to buy her. Her mother requested him to buy her little daughter too, but the master cruelly refused and kicked her violently. In this way, the white people intentionally disintegrated the family units of the enslaved people, in order to break and batter the victims both physically and mentally. In addition, the masters too could get benefit of easy exploitation of black women, who were lonely and no one was there to protect them.

Rape was the worst ramification of black women’s socialization. Rape on black women always seemed profitable to whites--it could satisfy their physical cravings and shift blame on black women as highly sensual and sexy. It gave birth to mulattos, who later on became the sole property of the masters. The rape did not only batter the psychology of black women, but also crushed the mentality of all the black community. Angela Davis, in this context, expresses:

In confronting the black woman as adversary in sexual context, the master would be subjecting her to the most elemental form of terrorism distinctly suited for the female: rape. Given the already terroristic texture of plantation life, it would be as potential victim of rape that the slave woman would be most unguarded [1971:13].

Baby Suggs, Vashti in Morrison’s Beloved, can be cited as examples. Baby Suggs while talking with her daughter-in-law, confesses that she
has always been misused and raped, because her, “eight children had six fathers” [B: 28]. Another woman named Vashti has been kidnapped and raped by her master for a whole year.

Lynching, flogging and branding also helped to break the black women physically. If the black woman tried to run away, if a little mistake or fault was committed by her, and if she was not ready to keep extra-marital physical relations with her master; it was sure that she might either be lynched or flogged or branded. The slave narratives and novels dealing with the plight of black slaves, vividly describe the punishment awarded to slaves, either man or woman, in the form of burning alive or flogged to be death. In Beloved, the slave named Sixo, tries to run away but is caught on the way. Sixo fights with the slave-catcher but finally he is burnt alive. It is reported that Sethe’s mother is also killed because she too tried to run away from the master’s big house. Moses Grandy narrates the similar incident, “I have seen the overseer beat them (black women who tried to run away) with a raw hide so that the blood and the milk mingled from their breasts” [Quoted in Davis 1971:08]. The same type of brutal incident of lynching and raping is narrated in Alice Walker’s Meridian (1976), when the daughter of Truman gets killed. Sethe’s own example is enough to understand the cruel pangs of slavery. Sethe tells Paul D.:

….those boys (the nephews of the school-teacher) came in there and took my (Sethe’s) milk. That’s what they came in there for. Held me down and took it. I told Mrs. Garner (Her mistress) on em. She had that lump and couldn’t speak about her eyes rolled out tears. Them boys found out I told on em. Schoolteacher made one open my back, and when it closed it made a tree [B: 19-20].

The white masters, as already pointed out, made no distinction between man and woman, boy or girl. They mercilessly compelled the
slaves to do hard work. Though, the black woman had to work in the
master’s big house, she also had to work with her man in the field.
Jacqueline Jones writes:

         Men and women promiscuously run their ploughs
         side by side and day after day ... the part of the
         woman sustained in this masculine employment,
         was quite as efficient as that of the more athletic
         sex [1985:16].

The black woman was destined to work hard. She worked so hard
throughout the day that when she slept at night, she slept like a stick,
completely tired and fatigued. Brownfield’s mother Margaret in Alice
Walker’s The Third Life of Grange Copeland (1970), had to work hard.
“His mother left him each morning with a hasty hug and a sugartit… she
worked all day pulling baits for ready money” [TLGC: 06]. Harihar
Kulkarni is of the opinion that the black women spent up fourteen hours a
day toiling away under the blazing sun and under the lash of the planter.
He further writes, “In the cotton belt, they (black women) plowed fields,
dropped seeds; and hoed, picked, ginned, sorted, and dotted cotton” [1999:57].

The black women were undoubtedly highly exploited, humiliated,
brutalized, raped, by white planters but the sexist culture of black men,
too equally tormented and battered the black women physically and
psychologically as well. In other words, racism and sexism of both white
and black men is equally responsible for the tragedy of black women.
Like whites, blacks also brutalized, raped, lynched and flogged them.
Calvin Hernton observes:

         Just as white people have created and maintained a
         racist culture, so have (black) men created and
         maintained a sexist culture. Racist culture teaches
         all whites to be racist in some manner or the other.
         In and through an elaborate system of masculine
versus feminine gender imperatives sexist culture socializes all men to be sexist [1990:10].

In this context, the following observation of Gloria Wade-Gayles is noteworthy:

There are three major circles of reality in American society, which reflect degrees of power and powerlessness. There is a large circle in which white people, most of them men, experience influence and power. Far away from it there is a smaller circle … of sex, experience … exploitation and powerlessness. Hidden in this second circle is a third … in which black women experience pain, isolation and vulnerability [1984: 07].

Janie in Zora Neale Hurston’s *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937) is a beautiful mulatto. Marriage jeopardizes her self-identity all the more and abandons her to anonymity. She marries Logan, who only compels her to work hard. Her second husband Jody considers her as his sexual object. But her third husband named Teacake loves her and his unnatural death makes her sad. Lutie Johnson in Ann Petry’s *The Street* (1946) is abandoned by her husband. She starts her life along with a small child in a big city. Her urban lonely life becomes very troublesome when each and everyman tries to exploit her. Pecola Breedlove in Morrison’s *The Bluest Eye*, becomes the victim of American standards of beauty. She has been hated, and exploited at every stage of her life. Even her own father rapes on her and makes her life highly tragic and woeful. In Walker’s *The Color Purple*, the protagonist Celie also gets raped by her own step-father. Her husband always beats her and expects mule like work from her. In Morrison’s *Sula* (1973), Eva Peace, like Lutie Johnson, gets abandoned by her husband. Eva makes a sacrifice of her one leg and whatever insurance-money she gets, starts her life. In Walker’s *The Third Life of Grange Copeland* (1970) Margaret and Mem too are the victims of the sexist culture of black men. Margaret has to commit
suicide; Mem is shot dead by her own husband. Josie, another character yearns for the love of her man named Grange Copeland.

Harihar Kulkarni, while describing the psychological socialization of black women, quotes Mikhail Bakhtin’s phrase—“ideological environment”, which ultimately holds the victim in a psychological bondage. This utterly damaged psychology creates inferiority complex in them. The victims automatically hate and doubt themselves and want to follow the ways of their superiors. In short, they want to be like their own masters. This “ideological environment” bombards their psychology in such a way that they themselves create degrading images out of them. Eldridge Cleaver’s opinion is worth noticing:

I love white women and hate black women. I’d jump over ten nigger bitches just to get one white woman … A white woman is beautiful even if she is bald-headed and only has one tooth … There is softness about white woman, something delicate and soft inside. But a nigger bitch seems to be full of steel granite hard and resisting, not soft and submissive like a white woman [1968:159].

This type of self-hatred and love for the American standards of beauty is abundant in African-American literature. It also makes clear that every black girl or boy, woman or man wants to be beautiful and attractive. In the fictional world of Toni Morison, there are characters like Miss Pecola Breedlove in The Bluest Eye, Nel in Sula, Hagger in Song of Soloman (1977) who want to be beautiful and fair. Olive in Jessie Fauset’s Comedy, American Style (1933) and Cleo Jericho Judson in The Living is Easy (1912) hate their own daughters because they are black and ugly. Thus, it shows the gravity of psychological damage of the black women in the process of socialization.
But the real damage, one witnesses when the black women convert themselves into degrading images, myths and stereotypes. According to Harihar Kulkarni, stereotypes, myths and images are never static and divinely determined or closed order but a socially given reality. In a colonizing social order, they often function as an ideological weapon with which the oppressor imposes his own choices upon the oppressed and transforms the consciousness of the oppressed into one that conforms with his own thought system so that the desired goals are successfully achieved. Kulkarni further writes that the members of the oppressed group like black women, being thrown at the lowest rung of the societal ladder and constantly bombard from all corners, become easily susceptible to such ideological pressures.

Harihar Kulkarni, in his chapter entitled “The Mystified Self: Myths, Images and Stereotypes”, elaborately talks about various images of black women such as subhuman, mammy with its two variations-sapphire and matriarch, lewd and impure woman, and mulatto. These images sometimes become myths and stereotypes, as time progresses and passes. According to him, the first image – subhuman emerged during slavery and plantation era. As already pointed out, the black woman in this era was treated as chattel, human-live-stock. In the very stage of slavery, the black woman was easily sold, was compelled to work hard and was also mercilessly either beaten or killed. Toni Morrison in her epic novel *Beloved* depicts Baby Suggs, Sethe Suggs, Vashti, Sethe’s mother-- who were easily sold, beat, raped and killed. Alice Walker also in her novel *The Temple of My Familiar* (1982) portrays Miss. Lissie, who almost in her each life gets sold, raped and murdered. In this context, Alice Walker in her book *You Can’t Keep a Good Woman Down* (1982) talks very vehemently, “Where the white women are depicted at
least as human bodies if not beings, black women were depicted as shit” [1982:52].

In the Reconstruction period, the writers started to create ‘mammy image’. Mammy was the culmination of black women’s self-hatred, self-abnegation and attraction for the settled and peaceful life of their white masters. While depicting these women in literature, the male writers attributed some special features such as – fat, big-breasted, strong, sexual, and religious minded, wearing a greasy, dirty rag on her head, high shoes etc. Mrs. Pauline Breedlove in Morrison’s *The Bluest Eye* is such a woman. She hates herself, hates her husband and children as well. She is completely tired of daily drinking and beatings of her husband. The poverty, instability, insecurity, boredom of married life takes her to the white-master’s house, where she is considered to be a good woman. Mammy Jane in Chestnutt’s *The Marrow Tradition* (1901), Granny Huggs in Kristin Hunter’s *God Bless the Child* (1970) etc are some examples. Harihar Kulkarni, while discussing the two variations of Mammy image, writes that in 50s and 60s, both the variations- ‘sapphire’ and ‘matriarch’, continued to have currency. He further writes that the ‘sapphire image’ was popularized by the radio and the television show “Amos ‘n’ Andy” in which the black woman was presented as loud-mouthed, strong-willed person, who had the ability to make black men look like fools, partly because she is, by nature, emasculating.

The report entitled “The Negro Family: The Case for National Action” (1962) played a great havoc in the life of black men and women. It was the report that inspired the writers to depict black women as ‘matriarch’. In fact, the poverty, insecurity, instability of married life compelled black women to become the head of the family. It was also racism, capitalism and sexism that made them unwillingly the matriarch.
The report was completely false, because the reporter Daniel Patrick Moynihan prejudiciously surveyed the black families and alleged black women as emasculators of black men. Adrienne Rich says:

> To be a Black and female head of the household does not mean possessing wider social and political power, though it can often imply leadership and responsibility within the community. It involves the diverse tasks of providing, projecting, teaching, setting goals, always in the antagonistic and often violent context of racism [1986: xxvii].

But the view of Joyce Ladner holds responsible the role of capitalism, racism and sexism in making the black woman a matriarch. He writes:

> Black females are socialized … in early life to become strong, independent women who because of precarious circumstances growing out of poverty and racism, might have to eventually become heads of their own households [Quoted in Rich 1986:xxvi].

It means that the black woman was compelled to become the head of the family. The ‘absence of the male’ was the major factor. Missing, elopement with another woman, murder, natural death – were the reasons behind the absence of the male in the family. Eva Peace and Nel in Morrison’s *Sula*, have been abandoned by their husbands. When Eva’s husband named Boy-Boy leaves her with three children, she has only $1.65, five eggs, three beets and no idea of what or how to feel. But she, without any complaint, accepts the responsibility. She sells her one leg to the insurance company and starts her life with new zeal. Contrary to her, Nel cries loudly and weeps for the husband. Margaret in Alice Walker’s *The Third Life of Grange Copeland*, fails to continue her life and commits suicide. Thus, such were the circumstances in which black women reluctantly became the matriarch. But, at the same time, one has
to see that there were a number of black women, who wanted to accept
the role. Bell Hooks points out:

They (Black women) were eager to identify
themselves as matriarchs because it seemed to
them that black women were finally receiving
acknowledgement of their contribution to the
black family… In general many black women
were proud to be labeled matriarchs because the
term had many more positive implications than
other labels (mammy, sapphire, etc) used to
classify black womanhood [1981:80-81].

The image – “Lewd or impure” of black woman was purposefully
created by the male writers just in contrast to “lady image” of white
woman. It definitely damaged her psychology, because she could not
present herself as beautiful as white lady. She was also labeled as sexy
and impure. Being lonely, unprotected in the midst of her oppressors, she
could not manage her purity and virginity. It was really her misfortune
that she had to bear such type of brutalization throughout her life as slave
or human live-stock.

The most tragic image of black woman was “mulatto”, the term
coined from the word ‘mule’, the creation of black woman and the white
man. The birth of mulatto was either mostly through rape or through her
helplessness as a victim of white racism and sexism. Longston Hughes
very accurately defines the term mulatto in his poem *Cross* (1926):

My old man died in a fine big house
My ma died in a shack
I wonder where I’m gonna die
Being neither white nor black? [1926b: 52].

The dilemma of the mulattos was that they hated the black people, who
wanted to accept them, but the white people hated them and the mulattos
loved them. Iola in Frances E.W.Harper’s *Iola Leroy or Shadow Uplifted*
(1892) is a mulatto. Though, she seems to be fair and beautiful, yet she is completely unaware of the Negro blood in her veins, and thinks herself white. Barbara Christian writes about her “Iola an educated octoroon, who but for the devilry of her white father’s friend, would have lived as a white woman in the South, not even knowing herself that she possessed a few drops of black blood….? [1985:04]. Illumined by her apparent white color, she justifies slavery as an important institution. When she realizes of her originality, she does much penance but in vain. Helga in Nella Larsen’s *Quicksand* (1971) is also a mulatto. Unlike Iola, she is aware of her true identity. She knows that to embrace such values would simply mean falling into the white trap. She, therefore, marries with a travelling minister.

In short, the black women have been depicted as human-live-stock, sub humans, chattels by male white writers, the same negative and horrifying image of black women, is continued even by black male writers. The great black literary figures like Richard Wright, James Baldwin, Amiri Baraka and others even have not tried to give minimum a human personality to black women in their fictional worlds. Harihar Kulkarni criticizes Wright for his creation of female characters. He writes:

The image Wright projects of black female characters in *Native Son* (1940), *Black Boy* (1945), *The Outsider* (1953), and *The Long Dream* (1958) is stereotypically debasing and degrading because his black women are never allowed to seek semblance with human dimensions of life. They are the ones who are thwarted intellectually, and crippled psychologically and depraved morally. They are totally desexualized creatures [1999:104].
In this way, almost all the black male writers right from Charles Chestnut to the mid twentieth century writers painted black women as their property, a piece of furniture in their patriarchal homes. Kate Millett sheds more light, “patriarchal force also relies on a form of violence, particularly sexual in character and realized most completely in the act of rape” [1978:61].

2.3 Woman as a Source of Mother Figure

A woman can only become a mother. It is for this reason; she has been respected and honored. “At certain points in history, and in certain cultures, the idea of woman-as-mother has worked to endow all women with respect, even with awe, and to give women some say in the life of a people or a clan” [Rich 1986:13]. Even in pre-conquered Africa, woman was considered superior to man only because of her motherhood. She was worshipped for her magic of producing children. Alice Walker in her novel The Temple of My Familiar describes the tribe of mother-worshippers. According to her, men themselves made the women priests. They had both a great fear and jealousy of them. She further writes:

And then one day, there was a rebellion. The men grew sick of the women they worshiped. And by now they had made an important discovery about woman’s ability to produce life. That discovery was- and it had been kept well hidden by woman for a long time – that the life that woman produced came out of a hole at her bottom [TMF: 50].

A woman has to undergo the most difficult stages- menstruation, pregnancy and delivery. Delivery is considered to be more dangerous and killing stage in the life of woman, and she has to face this stage minimum one or more than one times. The records of maternity hospitals disclose that thousands of women die while delivering the child. “Most women in history have become mothers without choice, and even greater number
have lost their lives bringing life into the world” [Rich 1986:13]. It is also called the rebirth of a woman. Thus, motherhood is a hard-earned title. But, fatherhood is comparably easy. Rich examines both the terms in her seminal book *Of Woman Born* (1986) – motherhood and fatherhood:

To “father” a child suggests above all to beget, to provide the sperm which fertilizes the ovum. To “mother” a child implies a continuing presence, lasting at least nine months, more often for years. Motherhood is earned, first through an intense physical and psychic rite of passage – pregnancy and child-birth – then through learning to nurture, which does not come by instinct [Ibid:12].

Right from the pregnancy, a woman has to take care. She has to go to doctor for routine physical check-up. The older in the house compel her to read the scriptures of ideal stories of great heroes. She is also ordered to behave in this or that manner. The pains at the time of child-birth are inexpressible in words. Mr Hal in Alice Walker’s *The Temple of My Familiar*, has to deliver his own wife, by seeing the killing pains of her, he swears not to have sex again with his wife, in order to stop her from such dangerous situation of child-birth. He tells:

And Lissie (his wife) fainted. But then she came to, but just looked destroyed, and I could see in her eyes the hundreds of times she had suffered in giving birth, and I swore it would never happen again, and my desire for her, for sex with her or with any woman, died, and I became a eunuch myself [TMF: 108].

But the real ‘motherhood’ starts after the delivery. She has to take care of the child forgetting the day and night. She has to change her food habits for breast-feeding the infant. She is required to be alert and cautious minimum first three years after the delivery. She has to feel or
perceive the reasons why and for what the child is crying. Adrienne Rich’s own experience is very telling:

I remember being uprooted from already meager sleep to answer a childish nightmare, pull up a blanket, warm a consoling bottle, lead a half-asleep child to the toilet. I remember going back to bed starkly awake, brittle with anger, knowing that my broken sleep would make next day a hell, that there would be more nightmares.... [1986:31].

Mothering never ends, though, the son or daughter becomes an adult, the mother considers him or her as her little angel. The mother has always tensions--from the admission of her child into nursery to the settlement of her child in life. If her child is slow or mentally retarded, there seems to be no end to her troubles. Mother’s love is always unconditional and sacrificial. In addition, if her child is not legitimate, the mother then becomes symbol of adultery and a stigma on motherhood. Adrienne Rich is of the view that the children are also mothered either part-time or full-time by others such as sisters, aunts, nurses, teachers, foster-mothers and step-mothers. But Rich further warns the readers for not forgetting the role played by the father. She writes:

Even those of us whose fathers played an important part in our early childhood rarely remembered them for their patient attendance when we were ill, their doing the humble tasks of feeding and cleaning us; we remember scenes, expeditions, punishments, special occasions [Ibid: 12].

The mythological stories and literatures of the world deal with the theme of great motherly-love. The stories and poems on mothers bring tears in the eyes of readers. That is why; no comparison can be made with mother’s love, because she becomes the ‘second god’ for the child.
The study makes an attempt to describe the various manifestations of mother figure, not of white mothers, but of black mothers, depicted in the selected novels of Toni Morrison and Alice Walker. The role of a mother played by a black woman was definitely more difficult and challenging than that of a white woman. The real intention of the researcher is to describe the extra sufferings and troubles that the black mother has to face while becoming a mother. It has already been pointed out that the black woman was multifically jeopardized in white America. Suffering was her life, so, every mother is first of all, mother-sufferer. The study of African American literature reveals the wretched life of black woman as woman and mother as well. In the slavery period, black woman was compelled to give births to almost more than nine to ten children. It is also made clear that the white masters do not make any difference between single woman and pregnant one. They compel even a newly delivered woman to do hard-work without showing any love for her newly-born child. A certain time or period is given to her to nurture her child or children. “Black women often worked the fields with their children strapped to their backs. Historically, women have borne and raised children while doing their share of necessary productive labor, as a matter of course” [Ibid: 44]. But after the liberation of black people from the slavery, particularly, from the liberation movement of black women, one can see a difference in the attitude of a black woman that she does not want to be a mother. She considers motherhood as slavery. One finds such abundant feminist-mothers in the African-American novels written by black women writers in 60s and 70s. In other words, the researcher finds two main variations of black mother as the enslaved mother and free mother.
George Boeree in his paper entitled “Introduction to C.G.Jung” posted on website discusses both the archetypes – ‘anima’ and ‘animus’ in detail. According to him, a part of our persona is the role of male or female. The role is particularly determined by the person’s gender. But, Jung, like Freud and Alder and others, felt that the all human-beings are bisexual in nature. When one begins his or her life as fetuses, one has undifferentiated sex organ that only gradually, under the influence of hormones, becomes male or female. He further writes that when one begins his or her social life as infant, he or she is neither male nor female in the social sense. He writes:

The anima is the female aspect present in the collective unconsciousness of men, and the animus is the male aspect present in the collective unconscious of women. Together, they are referred to as syzygy. The anima may be personified as a young girl, very spontaneous and intuitive, or as a witch, or as the earth mother. It is likely to be associated with deep emotionality and the force of life itself. The animus may be personified as a wise old man, a sorcerer, or often a number of males, and tends to be logical, often rationalistic, even argumentative [http://www.studiocleo.com/librarie/Jung/boeree3main.htm (16.11.2010)].

There are three approaches-biological, cultural and symbolic- that have been used to study feminine psychology. Sigmund Freud is the originator of biological approach to feminine. He while, studying the psychology of female, lays emphasis on the body of the female. He talks about the syndrome ‘penis envy’ which makes the little girl unhappy and blames her mother for taking away her organ. According to Freud, the psychology of the female is completely dependent on the psychological and is a derivative of the physical. On the other hand, the psychologists Karen Horney and Margaret Mead hold responsible the unequal social
and cultural status of woman for her inferiority and weakness. The symbolic approach enunciated by Carl Jung is quite different from the above mentioned approaches. His symbolic approach studies the feminine as a psychic element, he himself writes:

Only half of the feminine psychology can be covered by biological and social concept. But... woman possesses also a peculiar spirituality very strange to man. Without knowledge of the unconscious, this new point of view, so essential to the psychology of women could never have been brought out in such completeness [Jung 1936: x/xi].

The researcher wants to apply the symbolic approach of C.G.Jung in order to describe the various manifestations of mother figure depicted in the selected novels of Toni Morrison and Alice Walker. Jung has discovered a number of archetypes. He defines an archetype as, “a universal and recurring image, pattern, or motif representing a typical human experience” [Jung 1967: 81]. Mother Archetype encompasses the personal mother, grandmother, step-mother, mother-in-law, nurses, surrogate mother, governess and even goddess. He further discusses ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ representations of mother Archetype that is also known as the ‘loving’ and ‘terrible’ mother. They are associated with things and places standing for fertility and fruitlessness. It has three forms: the good, the terrible and the good-bad mother. While discussing the positive qualities, he puts:

Maternal solicitude and sympathy; the magic authority of the female; the wisdom and spiritual exaltation that transcend reason; any helpful instinct or impulse; all that is benign, all that cherishes and sustains, that fosters growth and fertility. The place of magical transformation and rebirth...are presided over by the mother [Ibid: 82].
For the negative qualities, he provides the list: “anything secret, hidden, dark; the abyss, the world of the dead, anything that devours, seduces, and poisons, that is terrifying and inescapable similar like fate” [Ibid].

2.4 Conclusion

This chapter has three parts. The first part deals with the women’s condition as a second sex in white world. Right from the Old English period to the beginning of the twentieth century, the condition of woman was same, with some development as time progressed. It was in the twentieth century, that the women got full freedom, including the right to vote. It means that almost two thousand years long, the women had to wait for emancipation from the clutches of patriarchy. The second part of the chapter deals with the woeful history of black enslaved women. The troubles and sufferings of black women compared to white women were deadly and killing. The black women were denied the status of human beings; they were just treated as sub humans, human-live-stock and chattel. The final part of the chapter records the woeful lives of black women as mothers. It also deals with C.G.Jung’s symbolic approach to black mothers.