CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION
Plato said, "A bad man reincarnates as a woman." According to Aristotle, "A woman is a mutilated man, born by accident, or due to inadequacy of husband." The place of woman even in the twentieth century is more or less the same as before. She is still considered a plaything, a possession. Whatever may be her status in the present society, her status is equal to that of man in the Holy Bible. As mentioned in the New Bible Dictionary, 2nd edition, "There are many examples of women of stature playing their part in the life of the people, eg. Miriam, Deborah, Huldah, and being in a direct personal relationship with Yahweh. On the other hand, one sees the tremendous influence wielded against Yahweh by women such as Jezebel and Maacah; and "Jesus included them in his teaching illustration, making it clear that his message involved them. By thus honouring them, he put woman on an equality with man, demanding the same standard from both the sexes and offering the same way of salvation." Her blessings and curses are equally given as that of man.

Many scholars are of the view that though man and woman are created with some physical differences, they are treated equally by the God. The Almighty God punished them equally when they deserved punishment. He created woman as a companion to man in all walks of life. God created Eve
taking a rib from Adam's side so that she would be his equal. He did not make her from his foot to be ruled nor from his head to rule. But He made her from his side to indicate her place on the same line as that of man. God blessed all those women who had faith in Him. And cursed them who did wrong, lacking faith in His wonderful word. The present dissertation presents women characters of the Holy Bible. "Faith" plays an important role in this. Women like Sarah, Rahab, Ruth, and Mary are the blessed characters, and Sappirah, Jezebel, and Lot's wife are the cursed characters. Their blessings and curses are only according their faith or lack of faith. The Lord God judged them depending on the degree of their faith:

Doubt sees the obstacles -
Faith sees the way.

Doubt sees the darkest night -
Faith sees the day.

Doubt dreads to take a step -
Faith soars on high.

Faith questions, "Who believes?"
Faith answers, "I".

(author unknown)

Eve is perhaps the only woman who experienced both God's blessings and His curse. Genesis is the first and foremost book of The Holy Bible. The English title, Genesis, is Greek in origin and comes from the word "geneseos." Depending on its context, the word can mean "birth,"
"genealogy," or "history of origin." In the introduction to Genesis in the NTV Study Bible, the editors observe,

Genesis speaks of beginnings - of the heavens and the earth, of light and darkness, of seas and skies, of land and vegetation, of sun and moon and stars, of sea and air and land animals, of human beings (made in God's own image, the climax of his creative activity), of sin and redemption, of blessing and cursing, of society and civilization, of marriage and family, of art and craft and industry.¹

The first woman, Eve, the mother of all nations is introduced in Genesis. Her failure in being faithful to God, who created her, and the consequences of that failure are depicted in this book. God had no beginning. He always was, and there was nothing but God. But God freely wished to create. So without using anything, simply by willing it, He made the Heavens and the earth, the sun, the moon and the stars, plants, and all creatures. But there was no one to look after all His creation. So He decided to create man in His image:
And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. (Gen 1:26)

God formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and man became a living being. He planted a garden in Eden, and made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground. The garden was full of trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The Lord God placed the man in this garden to work it and take care of it. And He commanded the man,

Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat:

But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die. (Gen. 2:16-17)
The God felt that it is not good for man to be alone:

And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him. (Gen. 2:18)

So created a companion for him, woman:

And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof;

And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. (Gen. 2:21-22)

And the man accepted Eve as his companion and began to live with her in that Paradise as God ordered him. They were too innocent to realise their nudity: "Innocence knows no shame, which comes from consciousness of sin...."?

The most cunning creature of all, the snake tempted Eve. It encouraged her to eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil which God had forbidden. The snake said to Eve,
"Eve, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" (Gen. 3:1)

When Eve told the tempter about God's command, she changed it slightly because she had not heard the command directly from God but had been told by Adam. But this slight change in her words changed the whole position.

We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden:

But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. (Gen. 3:2-3)

Eve could not measure the seriousness of God's command. Hence she gave place to temptation in her heart. She became weak in her faith when she heard the tempter's words:

And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die:

For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. (Gen. 3:4-5)
She was attracted by the pleasant sight of the fruit. She became so weak that she could not recall her duty, to be faithful to God, to obey Him. As a result, she took the fruit and tasted it. She alone did not disobey the Lord's command, but made her husband also disobey:

And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat. (Gen. 3:6)

Eve wanted to become like God, knowing everything. She ate of the fruit and gave some to Adam. He also ate. Thus they wilfully disobeyed God and committed a big sin. In his Paradise Lost, Milton makes it plain that Eve was seduced so easily because of her triviality of mind. First, she was susceptible to flattery, secondly, she was 'unwary,' and thirdly, she hoped that God would not be angry at 'such a small Trespass,' and fourthly, she foolishly imagined that perhaps her transgression would remain hidden from God. It is because of this triviality of mind that she fell an easy prey to the seductions of satan; her resistance was extremely trivial.
As an example of Eve's greed, Milton writes about her desire for delicious food, as follows:

Meanwhile the hour of Noon drew on, and wak'd
An eager appetite, rais'd by the smell
So savorie of that fruit, which with desire
Inclinable now grown to touch or taste,
Solicited her longing eye.... (739-743)

Another underlying theme of Milton's poem, besides freedom and independence, is the frailty of woman and the infinite harm she can cause to man. The most passionate outburst against woman occurs in Book X, during the quarrel between Adam and Eve:

Oh, why did God,
Creator wise, that peopled highest Heaven
With spirits masculine, create at last
This novelty on Earth, this fair defect
Of Nature, and not fill the World at once
With men or Angels, without feminine;
Or find some other way to generate
Mankind? (888-895)
As soon as Adam and Eve had eaten the fruit, they felt how ugly their sin was. Peace left their hearts and they dreaded to meet God. They were filled with shame and they ran to hide themselves among the trees:

And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons.

And they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord amongst the trees of the garden. (Gen. 3: 7-8)

The fear of nakedness in God's presence was hardly a bodily matter; they knew that what they had done could not be hidden from Him. As H.L. Ellison observes, "Here the feeling of nakedness takes on an even deeper symbolic meaning. Both sought independence, but individuals can enjoy it fully, only if they are subordinate to a common centre of authority, which is ultimately God. As they 'liberated' themselves from God, they came into conflict with each other. The closer the relationship the more damaging the sin."
Had Eve obeyed the commandment of God, she would have owned the Paradise for ever. The snake which was inferior to her in creation tempted her. And Eve though superior to all the creatures could not resist its temptation: "The temptation is pictured as coming not from a superior being, but from an inferior, over whom the woman should have exercised dominion.... It seems clear that the voice was the expression of her inmost thoughts and desires."4

When God asked Adam the reason for hiding from him, he blamed it on Eve. He said that the woman whom God gave him as his wife made him eat the fruit. And Eve blamed the snake for the sin she committed:

The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.

And the Lord God said unto the woman, what is this that thou last done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat. (Gen. 3:13-14)

The Lord created first man and woman in His image to be faithful and to be obedient. But they failed in performing their duty. They could not recognise the
superiority of God over all creation. This disobedience caused disastrous change in their lives. The Lord God not only cursed them but also expelled them from the Garden. They lost their immortality:

Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be thy husband, and he shall rule over thee. (Gen. 3:16)

Eve, who was blessed by God as the first woman, the mother of all nations, became a curse to all the generations. She became a cause for her husband's sweat. Her disobedience made her husband receive the hardest curse from God:

Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it; cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life;

Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field;
In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it was thou taken; for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.

(Gen. 3:17-19)

Eve was then blessed with two sons, Cain, a tiller of the ground, Abel, a keeper of sheep. The murder of Abel proved that the curse of God entered Eve's family. When God accepted Abel's offer but refused Cain's, Cain in anger killed his own blood Abel. And Cain was cursed by God and he became a wanderer. Thus Eve lost her two sons just because of her earlier disobedience and unfaithfulness.

The rebellion of Adam and Eve against God meant horrible consequences for the human race. Eve, the mother of all living, brought curse into the lives of further generations. She, created by God, could not stand in the path of God. She could not restrain the faith and obedience which were essential for a child of God. She could not believe that the God who created her is the real God and His words are the real ones. As a result of her weakness in faith, she brought forth unbearable curse which keeps each and every individual away from the real God. Her character always reminds us of Jeremiah 7:23:
Walk in all the ways I command you that it may go well with you.

Thus Eve experiences both God's blessings and His curse, and thus is different from other women in the Bible, who received either God's blessings or His curses.
REFERENCES


4. H.L. Ellison 117.