CHAPTER - 1

INTRODUCTION

Amid the galleries of the ancient world there is one whose female characters are unique: it is that of the Bible. (Matheson)

Of all the character portrayals of literature, the Bible as literary text stands foremost in portraying female characters. It begins with the creation of woman in its first book, Genesis, and the symbolic presentation of woman at the end in its last book, Revelation, thereby highlighting the importance attributed to woman, the fairest and finest of God's creation. George Matheson, the Scottish Theologian and Preacher views that:

At its opening and at its close the hand of the artist has been strikingly at work, and in each case on a female portraiture. The hall of entrance and the hall of exit are each occupied by a picture of Woman....but in each the idea is the same- the enfranchisement of feminine soul. (P7)

The special account of woman's creation in the beginning asserts woman's prominence as the prospective possessor and future mistress of home, as well as remarkable cameo of society. Thus the Bible traces the emergence of woman with the creation of Eve, the first woman in the Garden of Eden. God, the protagonist of the Bible deliberately shaped woman with His own hands and bestowed strength of her own with individuality and independent thinking. In the comprehensive story of creation, seven times it is stated that 'God saw it was good'. In spite of creating
everything in the universe, God, for the first time feels 'it was not good' in the absence of woman. It is evident in the following lines of the Bible: The Lord God said, *It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him* (Genesis 2:18 P7).

Women are afforded a higher place in the Bible. In the New Testament woman is pictured as the glory of man. *A man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of man* (Corinthians 11:7 P 1889). In the last book of the Bible, Woman is presented symbolically as proclaiming to all the earth the tidings of her emancipation. It depicts metaphorical image of womanhood rejoicing in the lifting of her chain, the prediction of morning that the female spirit should bruise the serpent's head. Nevertheless women play major and critical roles in the stories of the Bible as the shapers of destiny. The importance attributed to women is pictured by Rev John Trigilo, and Rev. Dr. Kenneth Brighenti as:

The Bible shows from the very beginning of creation that women are not incidental but instead essential to the main stories being told- in spite of the patriarchal system in which they lived. The Bible explains how humans were created with the same rights, and its tales describe many women who, united with their men, made quite a difference in the history of the world. (P 26)

The candid snapshot of woman in the Bible envisages her importance as part of God's plan to enrich and replenish on the face of the earth with strength of her own. In Jesus time her status is made equal. *There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor
free, male nor female, for you all one in Christ Jesus. (Galatians 3:28 p. 1922) Thus both the Testaments offer a glimpse into the treatment given to women in their times in the Hebrew and Christian traditions. The Bible exalts the role of woman through its presentation of nearly 155 women characters with different profiles and personalities.

In tune with the theme of the study on Women of the Bible, the chapter delves to deal with the primary source, the Bible as literature and its influence on English literature. The Bible is the collection of books of different authors. It is recognized and acknowledged by the Christian Church as the inspired record of God's revelation of Himself and of His will to mankind. The biblical text says, All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness. (II Timothy 3:16, P 1979). The Bible asserts that God himself is its source of inspiration and not merely an act of human will. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from god as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit (II Peter 1:21 P 2033). Rev. W.Trail, author of the 'Christian Graces and Unseen Realities' envisages its importance, in his book entitled Literary Characteristics and Achievements of the Bible as:

On every line,
Marked with the seal of high Divinity;
On every leaf, bedewed with drops of love
Divine, and with the eternal heraldry
And signature of God Almighty stamped,
From first to last. (P 3)

The stories of the Bible exist with all their literary elements, millennia before the secular literature studied today. Even before the literary devices came into being,
it is created with all its distinctive literary features since ages past. Because of the intense sacredness and highly admired literary characteristics of the Bible, Christianity is considered to be the literary religious conviction:

Christianity is the most literary religion in the world, the best evidence being the Bible. (Ryken The Literature of the Bible P 9)

An appreciation for the literary artistry of the Bible began early in the history of interpretation. It reached a high water mark during the era of the Renaissance and Protestant Reformation. The idea of the Bible as literature received sporadic attention throughout the twentieth century but its most notable revival began in the late 1960s, when high school and College courses in the literature of the Bible became popular. Shedding light on the literary qualities of the Bible Leland Ryken, a literary scholar says:

To view the Bible as literature does not undermine its factuality....God trusted literature to teach truth....The Bible is a beautiful work of literature, and our understanding and enjoyment of it is enhanced when we see it as such. (Literary scholar expounds upon basis that Bible is Literature Web. 14 March. 2009)

Three impulses and three corresponding types exist side by side in the Bible: the didactic or the logical impulse to teach religious truth, the historical impulse to record and interpret historical events, and the literary or aesthetic impulse to recreate experiences and be artistically beautiful. The literary qualities of the Bible are
accounted for, partly by the prevalence of literary genres, partly by the themes, partly by the subject matter, partly by the archetypes and motifs, and partly by the character of the language used and partly by the literary dexterity displayed by the writers. According to Ryken:

Three primary modes of writing converge in the Bible: theological, historical and literary. Overwhelmingly, theology and history are embodied in literary form. (Literature of the Bible P 123)

It is said that literature is itself a genre with identifying traits. These include the impulse to image reality and human experience instead of conveying abstract information. Moreover it has the presence of literary genres, reliance on figurative language and rhetorical devices, and interest in artistry as something intrinsically valuable and stylistic excellence. A literary approach to the Bible begins with these features as its agenda of concerns and proceeds to apply familiar tools of literary analysis to the parts of the Bible that are most thoroughly literary in nature.

Literature portrays universal human experience and as a result does not go out of date. A literary approach to the Bible is therefore interested in the Universal, always recognizable human experiences that are portrayed. The Bible presents not only characters and events from the past, but also paradigms of the human condition as figures in historical narrative. As a historical narrative it records history and has proved itself an accurate and reliable record of people, events, and places. Independent historical accounts verify the Bible's descriptions and details of many famous lives like Herod, Caesar, King David, Solomon, Pontius Pilot, Jesus, St. Paul, Sarah, Rebecca, Jechobad, Queen Esther, Ruth, Rebecca, Mary, the mother of Jesus.
Much of the Old Testament is written in historical narrative of the patriarchs, and Jews there by building the Israelite nation. The New Testament deals with the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. As narrative, it has point of view, ideology, story time, plot, characterization, setting, implicit commentary, and real/ IMPLIED reader—all the ingredients of a literary work.

The Bible contains a huge collection of all the main species of literature—expository, narrative and lyrical. The writers of the Bible refer to a whole range of literary genres in which they write: narrative/history (Genesis, Exodus, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 and 2 Samuel), poetry (psalms, Song of Solomon, Lamentations), wisdom literature (Job, Proverbs), law (Leviticus and Deuteronomy), prophecy (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah), apocalyptic (Revelation, Daniel), short stories (Abraham, Noah, Isaac, Joseph, Ruth, Esther) gospel (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John), doctrinal books (Romans, 1 Corinthians and 2 Corinthians, Galatians). It also includes saying, chronic, lament, psalm, apocalypse, parable, song, epistle gospel, hero story, epic, tragedy, comedy (plots with happy ending), lyric, praise psalm, love poem, nature poem, epithalamion, prophecy, pastoral, encomium, oratory, drama (the book of Job), satire and many others. Thus the Bible is interpreted as literature by its repository of genres where the number “readily exceeds one hundred”. (Ryken, and Graham Ryken P 65).

The content and meaning is conveyed effectively through the form of the text. These forms correspond to the literary forms current in the author’s surrounding cultures. For example, the Ten Commandments are cast in the form of the Suzerainty treaties that ancient Near Eastern kings imposed on their subjects, and the New
Testament Epistles show many affinities to the structure of Greek and Roman letters of the same era.

The Old Testament of the Jews is rhythmic like Old English poetry. It has irregularly distributed beats or accents. Their emotions are mystically and rapturously expressed and convey the impression of much earnestness. The following extract is fairly typical of its kind:

*My Soul thirsteth for God, for the living God; when shall I come and appear before God?*

*Why art thou cast down, O my soul? And why art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance.* (Psalms 43:5 P 902).

Doxology is a hymn or verse of praise to God. Psalm 113 is a general doxology; Psalm 115 is a doxology of Israel; and Psalm 117 is a doxology of nations. All give praise to God.

*Praise the Lord, all you nations;*

*Extol him, all you peoples*

*For great is his love toward us,*

*And the faithfulness of the Lord endures forever.*

*Praise the Lord.* (Psalms 117 P 525)

The whole realm of figurative language looms large in any consideration of the Bible as literature. Figurative Language in the Bible includes metaphor, simile, symbol, hyperbole, apostrophe, personification, paradox, pun, irony and word play. These resources of language not only limited to poetry but pervade the entire Bible-
narrative, in the prophecy, in the gospels, in the New Testament epistles and in apocalypse.

The central protagonist in the overall story of the Bible is God. The characterization of God is the central literary concern of the Bible, and it is pursued from beginning to end. The Bible is also unified by its religious orientation. It is pervaded by a consciousness of the presence of God. Human experience is constantly viewed in a religious and moral light. A vivid consciousness of values pervades Biblical literature with literary archetypes. Archetypes are master images that recur throughout the Bible and throughout literature they are images (light, water, and hill), character types (hero, villain, king) or plot motifs (Journey, rescue, temptation).

There is no other book in the world quite like the Bible. It is an exceptional piece of literature. One can read it to enjoy the artistic beauty of its poetry, the exciting action of its books of history, and the drama of its prophets. One can look into the Bible for comfort or guidance, inspiration or entertainment. Finally, a literary approach can also enhance the enjoyment of the Bible.

Having discussed the Bible as literature, the chapter proceeds to deal with the importance of the Bible and its influence on English literature. The first fact about the Bible is that it is a translation and not the original. An overwhelming unconscious testimony is implied to the supreme quality of the work as the translation is made in the golden period of English language:
The greatest of all translations is the English Bible. It is even more than that: It is the greatest English book, the first of the English classics, the source of the greatest influences upon English Character and speech.....It is in a singular degree, the voice of a people.

(Ardhendu De English Literature Web. 3 September 2010)

The Bible has a great influence on all Westerners, as well as English speaking world as it has the most popularity, the deepest influence, the biggest circulation and the most readers. Matthew Henry, an English Commentator and Presbyterian Minister regards on the importance of Bible as,

We have now before us the Holy Bible, or Book, for so Bible signifies. We call it the book, by way of eminency; for it is incomparably the best book that ever was written, the book of books, shining like the sun in the firmament of learning, other valuable and useful books, like the moon and stars, borrowing their light from it. (Volume I Genesis P1)

It offers an eternal theme of their literary creation. Ever since the publication of the first translation of the Bible by Wycliffe to the publication of the Authorized Version in 1611, its influence on English literature and language has been constant and steady. The biblical influence on Modern English is as follows: Many proverbs and phrases, which are common in modern English, are the gifts of the Bible. Quotations from the Bible are used profusely. English language has been enriched by the Bible and illustrations of Biblical phrases such as ‘arose as one man’, ‘broken reed’, ‘a law unto themselves’, ‘the man of sin’, ‘clear as crystal’, ‘the eleventh hour’, ‘whited sepulcher’, ‘wash one’s hands off’ and many other familiar scriptural phrases
and allusions. From Tyndale's translation modern English owes 'long-suffering', 'peacemaker', 'stumbling block', 'the fatted calf', 'filthy lucre', 'mercy seat', 'day spring' and scapegoat. From Coverdale's translation, 'tender mercy', 'loving-kindness', 'valley of the shadow of death', 'avenges of blood' etc. Biblical usage has revived some of the lost words into full life. Such words are like 'damsel' for young women, 'raiment and apparel' for dress, 'firmament', a poetical synonym for sky'.

In spite of its influence on English language, the Bible is a great source of inspiration for many writers and reveals the strong impact of Holy Scripture. Alter and Kermode advocates this fact and states,

And in recent years 'a revival of interest in the literary qualities' of the Bible has occurred; the general reader can now be offered a new view of the Bible as 'a work of great literary force and authority' that has shaped 'the minds and lives of intelligent men and women' for two millennia and more. (pp 1-2)

The first epic in English literature, 'Beowulf', talks about God and says that the monster half-human Grendel is one of Cain's descendants. Cain is the first murderer mentioned in the Bible. Right from Chaucer to the present day the influence of the Bible is clearly discernible in poetry. Chaucer's 'Canterbury Tales' quotes some stories from the Bible. Milton's 'Paradise Lost' is Biblical while the metaphysical poets are interested in biblical allusion. In twentieth century the poetry of T.S.Eliot, Yeats and Dylan Thomas is full of the biblical references.
In the progress of the cultural development in the west, the influence of Bible is unique. Its ideas and philosophy has become important components of human's mind. Its language has deeply permeated into the human's common language. It has become the basic material treasure of western literature. The inventory of works with biblical influence is never-ending and all-inclusive. It is the most significant book in the history of civilization exerting a profound and lasting influence on all areas of life and culture. Professor Moulton:

The first and most notable fact regarding the influence of Bible on literature is the remarkable extent of that influence. It is literally everywhere. If every Bible in any considerable city were destroyed, the Book could be restored in all its essential parts from the quotations on the shelves of the city public library. There are works, covering almost all the great literary writers, devoted especially to showing how much the Bible has influenced them. (The Influence of the King James Version on English Literature Web. 10 February 2010)

The chapter further proceeds to deal with the historical panorama of women of the Bible with special reference to their patriarchal culture. The cast of women characters in the Bible is long and colorful representing varied ages ranging from the Young (Mary, the mother of Jesus at 15, Jephtha's daughter at about the same age) to the very old (Sarah giving birth at the age of 90). There are virgins (Tamar, Absalom's sister), married (Rebecca, Rachel, Leah, Elizabeth) widows (Tamar, widow of Er and Onan), orphans (Mahlah and her four sisters), and single women (Martha and Mary of Bethany). Marriage and mothering is seen as a woman's proper
destiny. The barren like Hannah, Elizabeth aspire to become mothers. The women of the Bible also led effective lives outside their homes. They are queens (Athaliah, Esther, Jezebel), Judge and eminent leader (Deborah), Prophetesses (Miriam, Huldah, Anna). Heroic women who contributed actively to the destruction of Israel’s enemies (Jael, the quick-witted woman of Abel and the patriot woman of Thebaz) and woman like Jehosheba, a career woman who is instrumental in the overthrow of a tyrant and the restoration of the true heir to the throne of Judah. Fellow workers in Paul’s ministry (Phoebe, Mary, Tryphena, Tryphosa and Persis).

Women in the New Testament are brief but play a vital role. Jesus has honored women by his courteous understanding and sympathetic ministry. Women in the early church serve as prophetesses (Philip’s daughters), deacon and teacher (Phoebe), fellow workers (Joanna, Susanna) with the Apostles, foremost in service (Priscilla) and business women (Lydia). Women are among Jesus earlier followers (Mary Magdalene, Martha, Mary of Bethany). The Bible records that the women who has dedicated themselves to Jesus during His earthly ministry are last at the cross. Throughout the broad canvas of the Bible, women have a mission. In the New Testament women follow Jesus and support Him financially (Luke 8:1-3) help and care for His needs (Mark 15:41). Jesus specifically ministers to women on several occasions. Women remain true and stay with Him to the cross and they are the first to witness resurrection of the Christ. New Testament records a relatively high number of references to women.

Jesus is instructive for inferring His attitudes towards women and he treats with respect and dignity. He liberates and affirms women. He is called ‘woman’s best
friend.' (Scanzoni and Hardesty P 71). For instance in the Gospel of John, a sinful woman is saved by Jesus against the culture and order of the day. The text says, Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. At dawn he appeared again in the temple courts, where all the people gathered around him, and he sat down to teach them. The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group and said to Jesus, “Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?” They were using this question as a trap in order to have a basis for accusing him. But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, “If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her. Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground. At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. Jesus straightened up and asked her, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned You?” “No one, sir,” she said. “Then neither do I condemn you.” Jesus declared, “Go now and leave your life of sin.” (John 8:1-11 P1758-1759)

The Biblical profile of women throws light on their role as a woman of different perspectives. They work in the fields (Ruth), fetching water (Rebecca, Woman of Samaria), midwives (Shiphrah and Puah), nurses (Deborah, Naomi), Perfumers, bakers, cooks (1 Samuel 8:13). Spinning performed by wise-hearted women (Exodus 35:25), making cloth (Proverbs 31:13,19) Tending sheep (Gen 29:6), Caring for the household (1 Timothy 5:14). There are references to enslaved women as debt-slaves (Deuteronomy 15:12) or war-captives (Deuteronomy 20:14). Wives of the rulers, queens and women of the nobility are able to act with a relative degree of
autonomy (I Kings 21:1-16). The queen of Sheba who belongs to the dynasty of Arabian queens negotiated with King Solomon (I Kings 10). Biblical accession formulas in I and II Kings are careful to note the name of each new Judahite king’s mother (I Kings 15: 2, 10), and the queen mother has quasi official status.

Distinctions are usually made between men and women during the Old Testament period. Only men are required to attend the annual festivals (Exodus 23:17, Lev. 23). Women are also permitted to attend if they are willing to do so (I Samuel 1:9, Samuel 1:21). The Mosaic Law recognizes women’s responsibilities at home as wives and mothers. In ancient Israel, the Mosaic Law provided a woman a way out of an unfulfilling, disastrous marriage. The woman has a choice. She does not have to stay and tolerate neglect or abuse. To illustrate, suppose an Israelite woman is the second or third wife of an Israelite man and subsequently finds that she is overlooked and neglected, she has a choice to get away from that marriage. According to Exodus 21:10, 11: If he should take another wife for himself, her sustenance, her clothing and her marriage due are not to be diminished. If he will not render these three things to her, then she must go out for nothing, without money (P 120). Although the departing woman could not take with her any of the man's real or personal property, she is, at least, freed of an impossible relationship. She has a substantive choice. The interesting twist on this fact is that although the husband is called her 'owner' [from the Hebrew word ‘baal’], the wife has the legal right to free herself from his relative authority pursuant to the terms expressed in Exodus 21:10, 11.
During the Early Christian era, the Apostle Paul points out that a Christian woman's husband dies, she could select a succeeding husband of her choice, as long as the next husband chosen is a Christian. To restate the fact, she made the choice. (1 Corinthians 7:39). Jehovah's laws to Israel mandated that fathers and mothers be honored - not just fathers: *Honour your father and your mother, as the Lord your God has commanded you, so that you may live long and that it may go well you in the land the Lord your God is giving you* (Deuteronomy 5:16 P284).

In the New Testament the same honour is given to parents: children obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honour you father and mother which is the first commandment with a promise--that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy life on the earth. (Ephesians 6:1-3 P1935).

Evidences of social equality are found in the Bible. Women also serve at the door of the Tabernacle (Exodus 38:8), both men and women contribute their valuables for use in the building of the Tabernacle (Exodus 35:22-26). Women have shared in the sacred meals and great annual feasts: *And rejoice before the Lord Your God at the place he will choose as a dwelling for his Name- You, your sons and daughters, your men servants and maid servants, the Levites in your towns, and the aliens, the fatherless and the widows living among you..* (Deuteronomy 16:11,P 300).

Women are also in the fellowship of the family meal (John 12:3 P). Hebrew women attend worship service and provide a ministry in music (Exodus 15:20-21, Chronicles 25:5). Israel’s first prophetess Miriam led the women in worship. Women can appear as Sarah has done in the court of Egypt, unveiled (Genesis 12:11, 14), Rebecca (Genesis 24:16, P 65), Rachel (Genesis 29:11), Hannah (1Samuel 1:13)
appeared in public and before suitors with uncovered faces. In the New Testament period women also helped Jesus in his ministry. After this, Jesus traveled about from one town and village to another, proclaiming the good news of the Kingdom of God. The Twelve were with him, and also some women who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases: Mary (called Magdalene) from whom seven demons had come out; Joanna the wife of Cuza, the manager of Herod’s household; Susanna; and many others. These women were helping to support them out of their own means. (Luke 8:1-3 P 1699)

Under pagan culture and heathen darkness woman is universally subject to inferior and degrading conditions. Every decline in her status in the Hebrew commonwealth is due to the incursion of foreign influence: King Solomon, however, loved many foreign women besides Pharaoh’s daughter-Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians and Hittites (1 Kings 11:1 P 545). The lapses of Hebrew morality especially in the court of Solomon and of subsequent kings, occurred through the borrowing of idolatrous and heathen customs from surrounding nations (1 Kings 11:1-8 P 545).

The lives of these Biblical women are frankly portrayed as trail blazers of larger freedom of thought and action. They have enjoyed greatest freedom and prestige. They are independent, strong and smart, displaying leadership and initiative. The women in the Old Testament are presented as multidimensional human beings—self reliant, resourceful, influential and courageous. At the same time they are capable of resorting to morally questionable means in order to accomplish their needs. The women in these stories almost always get their way when they want something. This
is because women are necessary for the survival of the generation. They have cultural tradition of their own. The stories deal with families, children, food, security, safety and home - places, all things related to women's lives. In the New Testament women played a greater role equal to men.

They form a feminine picture unmatched in the whole of literature.

Their history, their diversity of fate, and the influence which the story of their lives has exerted on the world, make them unique. (Morton P 78)

Fertility is of great importance to women in the Old Testament. Their greatest addition to their husband's wealth is a male heir. The status of these women is high as wife and mother of a successor. Abraham Cohen, editor of Soncino Books of the Bible propounds on the position of women in the Old Testament period as,

Although the primary role of the Jewish woman in the first century was that of wife and mother, this was considered a position of prestige and honor and in no way was she looked upon as being inferior to man. (P 159)

As the Old Testament is a God-centered literature, the role of woman is best stated as a doctrine. She is a co-worker with God in the creating and sustaining of the people of God. In her study the role of women in the Old Testament period, Rachel O. Levine writes that woman
was respected, her personhood was equivalent to that of a man, and she was considered to be a co-worker with the Lord in the creation of new life. (P18)

Though Old Testament is written from a patriarchal perspective, Women are full members of the covenant community. They have a significant role to play in the life of the nation, not only in their role as mothers and in the home, but also as individuals, and they are not barred from leadership when the circumstances required it. Gretchen Hull says,

The variety of women's functions included a single woman leader (Miriam), a resistance leader (Rahab), a good soldier (Jael), and a spiritual as well as judicial leader (Deborah) who was also a wife and mother. (P 113)

Women in the Old Testament are surrounded by patriarchal culture. The biographies of biblical women represent a patriarchal, (culture in which the male is considered normative) patrilineal (descent traced through the father) and patrilocal (the wife moving into the household of the husband's family) society where women were deemed or conjectured not as persons but as possession or property. The first meaning of patriarch is 'the parental leader of a family or tribe.' The secular definition of a patriarch is: the father and ruler of a family or tribe, a venerable old man, a bishop of highest rank in the early Christian church, and patriarchy is defined as: the form of socialization in which the father is the head of the family and in which descent is reckoned in the male line-belonging to father's clan.
The women of the Bible provide a glance of the reality of a women’s experience in a given period of history- their views, experiences, cultures and interpersonal relationships. The stories of the women portrayed in Genesis, the first book of the Bible reveals that the women in each story has not seen themselves as oppressed but rather they have lived the way women are intended to live. The women of this era are individuals. While beliefs and attitudes are shaped by immersion in culture, each individual plays traits of character and personalities that reminds that although environment may be significant, it does not alter human nature.

Women in the ancient-middle east are born into a man’s world. During childhood and early adolescence a woman belongs to her father and is under her authority. When a woman gets married, she belongs to her husband. They are purchased with a dowry. The women situation has to be described as ‘dependent.’ The father or brother or husband is legally and economically responsible for the woman in his family. The dependants of women as daughters are illustrated in a number of Laws whose codification ranges from before Abraham to some 500 years afterwards. The concern for women’s welfare in ancient near Eastern Laws and customs are seen. On the contrary a double standard existed. In the days of the Patriarchs, women simply are not viewed as equals, nor do they enjoy the same rights and freedom enjoyed by men. Women are acted upon rather than actors.

In spite of the cultural impositions of the patriarchal age about a woman’s role, some of the practical implications for women reveal in Dinah’s story, Genesis: The event that features Dinah has taken place after Jacob led his large family back to Canaan following 20 years in Haran. Dinah is the only daughter born to Jacob, the
grandson of Abraham. Now Dinah, the daughter Leah had borne to Jacob, went out to visit the women of the land. When Shechem son of Hamor the Hivite, the ruler of that area, saw her, he took her and violated her. His heart was drawn to Dinah, daughter of Jacob, and he loved the girl and spoke tenderly to her. And Shechem said to his father Hamor, "Get me this girl as my wife." (Genesis 34:1-4) P 56

This incident arouses a tension among the brothers of Dinah. When Shechem and his father requests marriage alliances, Dinah’s brothers agree and conduct the negotiations. They have hidden their anger, and falsely promise to permit the marriage, if the men of the city agree. But while they are incapacitated by the operation, Dinah’s two brothers enter the city and kill all the men and bring their sister home. This incident is significant for the insights it provides into the true situation of women of the era. Women are dependent on the family and certainly the men of the family feel a responsibility towards them. The report of Dinah’s rape conveys the clear impression that the two brothers’ strongest motive in plotting revenge is the belief that, in raping Dinah, Shechem has affronted them. Because she is in some sense ‘owned’ by her father and brothers, the rape is an insult to the family and hence they take revenge. What Dinah herself has experienced and what she feels is of little importance to them. She is left with no possibility of marriage, no identity, no social status- and probably much pain and anguish.

Widows are given special protection in Israelite society. Exodus 22:22 declares: You people must not afflict any widow or fatherless boy. James 1:27 states 'the form of worship that is clean and undefiled from the standpoint of our God and
Father is this: to look after orphans and widows in their tribulation. The laws reflect a kinder, more compassionate policy toward widows.

The treatment or attitude towards widows in different parts of the world is different where as the Bible is kind and favorable to them. Commenting on the treatment of widows in different parts of the world and at various times, William Graham Sumner, an American Academic and Sociologist observes,

The study of the status of widows is one of the saddest in the history of civilization. In uncivilized society, a widow is considered dangerous because the ghost of her husband is supposed to cleave to her. On the Fiji Islands, a wife was strangled on her husband's grave and buried with him. Mongol widows could find no second husbands, because they would have to serve their first husbands in the next world. It appears certain that the primitive Aryans practiced the burning of widows, perhaps by the choices of the widows, and that the custom declined in the Vedic period of India. (pp 330-331)

Old Testament law relating to men and women invariably function to strengthen and preserve family identity. Law relating to inheritance, marriage, divorce and other family matters are all structured to support a sense of unity with past and future generations as each generation becomes a strand in a single, unbroken line of descent from fathers to sons. Israelite Law is designed to protect woman's weakness, safeguard her rights, and preserve her freedom (Deuteronomy 21:10-14, 22:13; 22:28).
The manifold features of women of the Bible are marked through her relationships as wife, mother, daughter, sister and so on. Whatever culture may decree the interaction between a husband and a wife remains functions of the relationships and their personalities. A strong bond of love has existed between Abraham, the first patriarch and Sarah his wife. Sarah is free within that relationship to urge, to complain, to initiate, and even to insist that her husband take a specific course of action. The fact that a woman is legally dependent is less important in determining her status than her own personality and the character of the relationship that she developed with her husband. Sarah though barren for several years still enjoys the love and confidence of her husband and his recognition of her supremacy over a maid, even one who is to bear him a child. Your servant is in your hands, Do with her whatever you think best. (Genesis 16:6 P 25)

Genesis 24 describes the servant’s negotiation on Abraham’s behalf and records the response of Rebecca’s brother. As her father is dead, her brother Laban is responsible for her well-being. The fascinating point in this narrative account is the fact that, while the brothers conduct the marriage negotiations, they still consult their sister. It reminds that the nature of relationships existing within the family has a great impact on a woman’s experiences while law and custom gives a father or brother the right to marry off their daughter or sister. In reality a young women wishes are taken into account. Then they said, “Let’s call the girl and ask her about it.” So they called Rebekah and asked her, “Will you go with this man?” “I will go,” she said. So they sent their sister Rebekah on her way, along with her nurse and Abraham’s servant and his men. (P 39)
In another instance in Genesis 31: 4-14 (p.50-51) Jacob, the son of Abraham approaches his wives Rachel and Leah before he decides to go to his native land. The process Jacob has initiated is more in harmony with an egalitarian than a patriarchal family structure. Yet, it is seen, Jacob and his wives has lived in an era where Law and custom defined the family structure in strict hierarchical terms and made wives dependent and subservient. The conclusion is that, in reality the relationship between husband and wife/wives is more important in shaping the experience of women than is the cultural definition of their roles.

Similarly, in another incident, after Nabal's death, David sent a colleague to propose marriage to Nabal's widow, Abigail. Her response is noted at 1 Samuel 25:41, 42: She bows down with her face to the ground and said: 'Here is your maidservant, ready to serve you and wash the feet of my master's servants.". Abigail quickly got on a donkey and attended by her five maids, went with David's messengers and became his wife (P 462 )

As the stories of the Old Testament show the women of this period made their mark either directly influencing their husbands (Sarah, Gen. 16:5, 21:10) or by trickery (Rebecca, Gen 27; Rachel Gen 31; Tamar ). Although most women thrived the system of patriarchal disposition lent itself to such abuses as the offer of Lot's daughters to the men of Sodom (Gen 19:8) and of the women in Gibeah (Judges 19:24), and the sacrifice of the daughter of Jephthah (Judge 11).

The notion that the law and custom provide a totally accurate picture of women's experience in any culture could be driven to the conclusion that women in patriarchal times truly are oppressed, disregarded and treated unfairly. This is fairly
illustrated in the stories of Dinah's rape. But from the incidents from the lives of each of the wives of the three patriarchs- Sarah, Rebecca and Rachel and Leah, it is discovered evidence that softens the stark portrayal of women's lives seen in the era's law and custom. Women like Sarah has a powerful influence on choices made by her husband; Sisters like Rebecca has more choice in the selection of a mate than the laws would indicate; and that husbands like Jacob feels it is important to consult wives when making decisions that affects the future of the family. Each of these discoveries reminds that the quality of the relationships that develop in a woman's life is probably more determinative of the quality of her life than anything else. Where there is mutual love and concern, lives will be enriched and the well-being of women, as well as men will be strengthened.

There are two types of gifts mentioned in the story of Rebecca, both related to marriage customs of the time: the bride price, given by the family of the groom to the bride's family; in Rebecca's case, it is gold and silver jewelry and clothing, with additional gifts for members of her family: the dowry, which is money, servants/slaves and gifts taken with the bride to her new home; Rebecca has taken her nurse and maids with her as part of her dowry.

A lot of people are of the opinion that the Bible minimizes or discounts women, but it is not true. 'The Bible has preserved the memory of women whose wisdom, skilled and dignity it willingly acknowledged.' (Lockyer P 14). There are places here and there where women are not named (such as the wife of Noah) but there are plenty of places where men are also nameless (the Good Samaritan, for instance, never is named). Some women in the Bible are highly remarkable for their
positions and some of the books which bear their names highlight their prominence. The way the Bible talks about women is actually progressive and rather out of step with the patriarchal times in which the stories are written.

The women portrayed are mostly typical Israelite women who enjoyed status within the home but occasionally they asserted themselves by playing prominent roles even outside the home. For instance, the five daughters of Zelophehad asks Moses, the head of Israelites to give them share in their father’s property. ‘Should the name of our father be taken away from the midst of his family because he had no son? 0 give us a possession in the midst of our father’s brothers. At that Moses presented their case before Jehovah. Jehovah then said this to Moses: ‘The daughters-of Zelophehad are speaking right. By all means you should give them the possession of an inheritance in the midst of their father’s brothers, and you must cause their father’s inheritance to pass to them.’ The account speaks for itself with regard to female relevance in ancient Israelite society. (Numbers 27:1-11; 36:1-12)

In another instance Job, the just man in the sight of the Lord after undergoing severe afflictions by Satan, he is blessed again by God in double measure. With his second set of children, he has seven sons and three daughters. Interestingly, the sons are not mentioned by name but the daughters are named. Job 42:13-15 reads: And he also had seven sons and three daughters. The first daughter he named Jemimah the second Keziah and the third Keren-happuch. Nowhere in all the land were there found women as beautiful as Job’s daughters and their father granted them an inheritance along with their brothers.
Hebrew society is a male-oriented society and for the most part women are not entered in the tribal or family records. But four women appear in Jesus' lineage (Rahab, Ruth, Bathsheba and Mary), which means they are out of the norm. The reason these women has won recognition is precisely because of their strength and independence, their unwavering characters and aspirations.

In the beginning of the Bible monogamy is existed (Adam and Eve's union). It is ordained by God, the protagonist of the Bible. The purpose of their union is to share and perpetuate their happiness in the creation of a family within the sphere of their own love. Later polygamy is seen in Genesis 4:23, Lamech, of the family of Cain, the world's first murderer, appears to be the first to violate the original ordinance, for he is spoken of as having two wives, Adah and Zillah. By the time Moses came to write the Law, polygamy has apparently become general, and although accepted as a prevailing custom, is never approved. The Mosaic Law tries to restrict and limit such a departure from God's original purpose by wise and humane regulations. Elkanah's home life with his two wives, Hannah and Peninnah (1 Samuel 1:6 p.421); duel mothers Sarah and Hagar in Abraham's household; (Genesis 21:8); failures, rift and calamities in the reigns of David and Solomon are attributed to the numerous wives each has (II Samuel 5:13; I kings 2:9; 15:13; Deuteronomy 17:7). The New Testament states: A woman is bound to her husband as long as he lives. But if her husband dies, she is free to marry anyone she wishes, but he must belong the Lord. (I Corinthians 7: 39 P 1885)

The Bible also traces some information of women dress and ornaments. Numerous references are made with regard to the dress and ornaments. The first
woman, Eve dresses herself with the use of leaves for clothing. Andrew Johnson, the president of the U.S.A, said-

Adam, our great father and head, the lord of the world, was a tailor by trade. Adam and Eve 'sewed fig leaves together, and made them aprons.' —any one need be ashamed to be called a tailor, nor any young lady need be ashamed to be a seamstress, for her mother Eve, it seems, handled a needle with some skill. (Lockyer P 58)

The Bible covers a time span of several thousand years, but the type of clothing wear by most Jewish people during that time did not change much. Jewish styles seem to have been influenced by both the simplicity of the Egyptians and the flamboyance of the Mesopotamians. Widows are apparently set apart by wearing special clothing, such as in Gen- 38.14, where Tamar '... put off her widow's garments, put on a veil, wrapped herself up, and sat down at the entrance to Enaim ... .' in an effort to appear like a prostitute when she seduced her father-in-law Judah. Upon leaving Judah, she took off her veil and put on her widow's clothes once more (Gen. 38.19). These may be similar to garments wear by women who are in mourning for other reasons; 2 Sam. 21.10 records that Rizpah, Saul's concubine, prepares sackcloth for herself to wear in mourning after her sons are handed over to the Gibeonites. The turbans are made of deep bands of folded cloth, sometimes of ornamental silk, but usually of white cotton (Isa. 3:23). The face veil is made of flowered gauze muslin (Isa. 3:19)

Jewels are varied and abundant. In her book, All the Women of the Bible Herbert Lockyer states,
There were- Anklets, cauls, crescents, pendants, bracelets, mufflers, headtires, ankle chains, sashes, perfume balm, amulets, rings, nose jewels, festival robes, mantles, shawls, satchels, hand-mirrors, fine linen, turbans and veils. (P 18)

References are made to the ornaments worn by women. The treacherous Jezebel painted her eyes (II Kings 9:30). Wives, and also their sons and daughters, wear golden earrings (Genesis 35:4, Exodus 32:2, Numbers 31:50). There are likewise signet rings, wear by the Israelites around the neck (Genesis 38:18), and by the Egyptians upon the finger, and in later days by the Israelites too (Genesis 41:42, Jeremiah 22:24). Gold bracelets are added to help out female beauty (Genesis 24:22, Ezekiel 16; 11, 12). Nose rings or Jewels made necessary the piercing of the nostrils, and rings are often wear on the toes and anklets or spangles on the ankles. For instance: So we have brought as an offering to the Lord the gold articles each of us acquired- armlets, bracelets, signet rings, earrings and necklace-to make atonement for ourselves before the Lord. (Isaiah 3:18 P 262).

In Isaiah 3:16-23, prophet Isaiah condemns the extravagance attitude of woman in dressing. In Deuteronomy 22:5, Moses warns A woman must not wear men's clothing, nor a man wear women's clothing, for the LORD your God detests anyone who does this (P 307). In 1 Peter 3: 3 Peter instructs woman to show a gentle and quiet spirit and forbids them to show outward adornment such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes. Her apparel will be appropriate for the occasion and stylish if affordable, while remaining modest and proper. The heart of such a woman will be pleasing to God.
The study further endeavors to trace in brief, Proverbs 31 chapter, the finer tribute to the domestic virtues and spiritual qualities of woman. The book of Proverbs is designed to be ‘striking’, ‘pointed’, and very much ‘practical’. Basing on the real lives of many Israelite women in his jurisdiction, King Solomon gives a priestly teaching on the virtuous woman, who incidentally named as ‘The Virtuous Woman’ and referred to as ‘Proverb 31 Woman’. She is obviously not an imaginary character.

The Virtuous Woman, “literature’s most perfect picture of the ideal woman” (Deen P 55) rises up as a timeless example of excellence, discipline, virtue, self-control, responsibility, etc. Nothing can be added to the supreme beauty of the Bible caricature of the virtuous woman. The verses 10-31 are in Hebrew alphabetic acrostic from because of which these twenty-two verses have been called ‘the ABC of the Perfect Wife’ (Deen P 155)

Her chastity, her meticulousness, her efficiency, her charity, her care, concern and love for her husband and children and her business foresight are radiantly elucidated in verbal skill that rises up majestically in the Holy Writ. But it is the source of her godliness, which throws light on her feminine efficacies and which is the guiding principle directing her life with a purpose and meaning. She stands as an ultimate example of how a woman should lead her life today as a noble wife and a model mother.

This devoted wife, who is compared to a priceless pearl, is God fearing: as a result she is faithful to her husband, instilling confidence and trust in him. She respects her husband and does him only good all the days of her life and thus fulfilling her responsibility as a wife with excellence and proven to be a trustworthy helpmeet.
The Virtuous Woman is not a shirker, but a worker who is pleased to work willingly with her hands, not of compulsion bit of compassion. Thus she is a delighted worker, who never complains and works readily and enthusiastically, to carry on with her household duties with contentment. She is “no prima donna!” She is “not above manual work” (Feeny P 155)

She gets up early to be alone with God to get strength and vigour for the day before the hustle and bustle of the day begins. She rationally analyses financial transactions and wisely involves herself in making decision in family finances which will yield long-term benefits but not without the knowledge of her husband. This diligent labourer is girded to act readily with her household tasks to reap the harvest. She also burns the midnight oil. She is ever munificent to extend her hands to the poor and the needy and thus share her blessing with them.

She is dedicated to godly speech and so capable to express herself sensitively and also wisely. Her words reveal that she is governed by the rules of wisdom. Her dependable instruction and her consistent teaching to her children have made her home a place of love and learning and have given an elevated position in the society. “She speaks that honours God and benefits the hearers” (Peggi, Klubnik 2009)

She is dressed with care, the ornament of a meek and gentle spirit. This pertains to her inner beauty or beauty of character. She looks at future with much confidence because she does not know what the future holds, but she knows, “WHO holds the future”. Being virtuous she weighs down the responsibility of looking well the moral habits of her children, motivating them for good manners, healthy relations and fine habits.
Beauty is not considered to be beauty if it encompasses vileness. Beauty without prudence is useless. External beauty is evanescent and fleeting like a bubble or vapour and so not long lasting. She does not rely upon her charm or beauty but her confidence is in God which earns her genuine extol and commendable living. As a result of her dependence on God she wrought blessings to her household. The ultimate result of all her tangible traits is that she delivered blessings for her children and her husband who is given an honour of sitting with the elders of the land.

Her triumph and success is acknowledged and applauded by her children and husband. What more is required of her? She, as an incomparable wife, with her moral strength and virtuous character could emanate a sentimental feeling in the heart of her husband. This godly woman is described by Rev. Charles Bridges as a wife who makes her husband think that she is

the soother of his cares, the counselor of his perplexities, the comforter of his sorrows, the sunshine of his earthly joys. (P 21)

Thus with her sensitivity, service and submissiveness she wins the heart of her husband. Her grit and determination, loving discipline, wise counsel and tender guidance and direction, makes her stand as a blessed and ideal model for the women of the present day society perceived from such facets as a loyal wife and a noble mother. Matthew Henry, a great theologian aptly describes the suitability of the Virtuous Woman:

This is the description of a virtuous woman of those days, but the general outlines equally suit every age and nation (P 87)
The 'Proverbs 31 Woman' shines as a bright beacon in the Old Testament of precepts and warnings. She is a timeless example of virtue, responsibility and good sense. Her tender guidance, her wise counsels, her loving discipline, her holy example are vividly kept in remembrance. Her husband praises her for he finds the sweetener of all his cares, his faithful advisor in perplexities, his comforter in every distress, the instrument of a great part of his earthly felicity, his best friend, his unceasing joy, and his bright crown.

The last chapter of Proverbs is designed to show what wives the women should make and what wives the men should choose. This exquisite picture of a truly lovely wife is conceived and drawn in accordance with the customs of Eastern nations, but its moral teachings are suitable for all times. “Virtuous woman of Proverbs 31 stands as an ideal example of God’s woman today viewed from such facets as wife, mother, and member of society, manufacturer, merchant, and landowner”.

Strong warnings are also given against the ‘foolish woman’ depicted as ‘clamorous, simple, and knowing nothing’, against the ‘contentious and angry woman’, also the ‘adulterous woman, the ‘brawling woman’ and the ‘whorish woman’. Then finally comes to a brilliant climax like the overpowering finale in a symphony; the praise of a good wife: A wife of noble character who can find? She is worth far more than rubies. Her husband has full confidence in her and lacks nothing of value. (P 1070)

In the New Testament Peter, one of the twelve disciples of Jesus Christ instructs women in the role of a wife as: Wives, in the same way be submissive to your
husbands. So that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives, when they see the purity and reverence of your lives (1 Peter 3:1-2 P 2026).

According to the Bible, submission doesn’t mean women to be dormant. It requires an inner strength to obey God and willingly submit to one’s husband. It means finding fulfillment and esteem in the good role of a wife. It reminds the modern hierarchy of positions each with different capabilities and responsibilities. Husbands are also instructed: Husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself (Ephesians 5:28 P 1935).

The present study which is concerned with the theme of women in the Bible and their nature, role and relationships will examine the extent to which the theme is perceived creatively in gynocentric interpretations. The women in the Bible have championed the cause of women with their free will, daring and decisive actions and adroitly presented the successes and failures in the family and in society. To get a broader perspective of the woman in biblical dress, the research purports to study the woman characters, cultural insights from the world of the Bible, including the laws, beliefs and customs concerning women and to explore the unexplained silences of the text on woman of the Bible.

The study has been very fruitful and seems to be very relevant to the present day predicament of women with gynocentric interpretations and the traditional struggles at conflict. The researcher feels that the story of the women of the Bible will encourage the readers who are disillusioned and desolate as it gives first of the characteristics faced by women in the Biblical times. The women of the Bible are
chosen for the present research are furnished with inner lives, attitudes, problems and solutions that more closely reflect on the present day woman's concern than those of the character's time and place. They involve projections of twenty first century issues. They uncover tensions and difficulties encountered in this contemporizing effort, resulting in intriguing portraits of present women in Biblical dress. This process of contemporizing the narratives and their principals is necessitated by the attempt to make these tales relevant to the present intended audiences.

Women of the Bible communicates a powerful message of women pooling their resources, sharing power, forging alliances, building bridges among themselves for the purpose of enriching life for all. The research on women of the Bible is of utmost significance to the present world as they are 'Stories from the past' they carry 'Lessons for the present' and enhance 'Hope for the future'. Historically women have played an important part in the history of Israel and God's plan. This importance is accentuated by Anita Gutschick, a skillful dramatist who weaves the true-life portrayals of Women of the Bible:

Long before it was ever written, the Bible was lived and experienced by real people, with real lives. The stories not only capture a particular time and place, they deliver strong messages that reverberate across the generations to challenge and empower us in our daily lives....But whatever the circumstances, and however long ago they lived, these women carry messages of love, hope and redemption that resonate in today's hearts and minds. (P 4)
The Bible is a patriarchal text, focuses almost exclusively on men. Feminist biblical exegesis claims to reverse this men perspective and tried to uncover, discover and recover the hidden truth about women in feminine perspective. When Pontius Pilate asked Jesus, 'what is truth?' (John 18:38 P 1782), he had no idea that his question would be at the heart of feminist scholarship and biblical interpretation more than two millennia later. Feminist theologians in particular search for the idea of truth in their consideration of male-authored, male-narrated and male-centered biblical narratives. Since the ‘truth’ that is narrated in the Bible tends to exclude female experiences and histories, these feminists suggest that multiple ‘truths’ co-exist in the Bible; while male histories exist visibly on the surface of the text, female histories are the sub-layers, histories that are ‘not destroyed but hidden’. The Bible overwhelmingly emphasizes on male histories, the experiences that ‘hit the cutting room floor’, appear to be predominantly female centered.

Feminists are continually searching, examining, reinterpreting, and turning and turning the top layer of the Bible to resurface and revalue those hidden stories of women’s lives, which, when revealed establish and empower those who seek within it validation and recognition of female experiences. The contemporary society has the evidence of patriarchal system as its heritage, which permeates all facets of the present lives. The struggles to uncover biblical women form part of the feminist struggle in the contemporary world for finding a place in the society. According to feminist Scholar, there is an intrinsic link between the Bible’s treatment of women and their experiences and the social positioning of concerning women.
"Until the early 19th century" relates feminist biblical critic Barbara Brown Zikmund "there was no conscious awareness that women's experience, as women's experience was relevant to intellectual work. It was a man's world." (P 21)

The source of this 'unconsciousness' and the historical subordination of women as articulated by women's rights activists since the early 1800s, was grounded explicitly in biblical text gave special authority to male experiences denouncing the female. Questions about historical truths, silenced voices and hidden stories are at the centre of feminist consideration of the Bible.

The present study examines women of the Bible in view of Re-interpretation of feminism. The 'reinterpretationist' feminists refuse to give up on the authoritarian, "liberating power of the Scriptures" (Zikmund 28) and focus not on a complete rejection of the text, but rather on a new interpretation of the text, a feminist reading of biblical accounts, to locate examples of women's agency, power, and autonomy. Rather than maintaining the either/or approach, rewriting biblical histories in novel form bridges the gap between the two dichotomous bodies of scholarship by proposing a synthesis of both theoretical paradigms. The development of this popular aspect is viewed as part of the tradition of feminist biblical scholarship that reinterprets the identities of biblical women, along with their experiences, to figure women as a locus of power and importance; however, in that they create entirely new experience. There by finding and reasserting the place of women already given by God at the beginning. The paradise or prominence which is given to women, over the
years the truth is lost and hence women fight to get back their lost paradise or prominence.

Finally, this feminist aim also seeks to reinterpret familiar women of Bible, who are perhaps unfairly characterized in patriarchal ways. PhyllisTrible, North America feminist Biblical scholar describes this concept, which feminists have set about identifying and reclaiming, as a ‘remnant theology’ and a ‘counter-liturgy’ to the dominant male bias identified by the first set of studies. She then goes on to identify the third approach of feminist criticism, which ‘retells biblical stories of terror in memoriam, offering sympathetic readings of abused women’. She observes that the Bible is ‘born and bred in a land of patriarchy, and abounds in male images and language.’

In the Bible women are portrayed as archetypes, stereotypes and prototypes. Archetypes are fundamental ‘building blocks’ of storytelling. Most of the biblical women characters show up over and over in stories from all over the world and in all time periods. The five characteristics of a biblical women archetype are: helper or influencer, nurturer, life giver, lady of wisdom and glory of man. The essence of biblical womanhood is seen in prototypes all through the Bible. The most popular are proverbs 31 and Titus 2 which give the principles to follow according to each one’s personality and spiritual gifts. Stereotypes define the role of a woman like what kind of a wife or mother one should be and the Bible presents certain characteristics.

With literary parameters and yardsticks the women characters of the Bible are researched and presented in the succeeding chapters bringing out their traits, talents,
and temperaments. The study is also an effort to explore a fresh and thoughtful perspective on the character, circumstances and choices of woman in the Bible.

Having brought into discussion on the women in biblical times, a rationale behind the choice of the study, an analysis of the portrayal of selected women from different sections of the society as Matriarchs, Career women, Nefarious Femmae fatales, Women relationships, and Women imagery will be undertaken in the subsequent chapters.