

Chapter I: Introduction

Wharton's Concept on Marriage

This study analyzes Edith Wharton's novel *The Age of Innocence* from the perspective of feminism. Feminism is a multiple movement for woman rights which enhances women for equality, freedom and urges to respect female identity. Ellen Olenska is the main character of the novel that resists patriarchy by getting divorce with her husband.

The term "marriage" is defined in different ways. Mostly this term is clearly defined by sociologists. According to renowned sociologist Endrow Aalferd Hoebel, "Marriage is the complex of social norms that defines and controls the relations of male and female, pair to each other, their kinsmen, their offspring and society" (106). In the same way another sociologist E. S. Borgadus' view is that "marriage is an institution admitting men and women to family" (102). By these given definitions of marriage, we can easily presume that marriage is more social activity rather than individual concern. So these definitions clarify that marriage is a special kind of social bond as well as legal bond too. But it gives more priority towards social bonding. In common sense, marriage includes social and economic rights and objection which is based on traditional religion based ceremony. This concept is obeyed in New York. It is also believed that marriage is relatively permanent bond in New York of 1870s especially in high class society.

Wharton's *The Age of Innocence* is a Pulitzer Prize winning novel deals with New York society and its manners of 1870s. Dealing with the conflict between social and individual fulfillment, *The Age of Innocence* is brilliant, sharply ironic portrayal of the changing scene of fashionable American life in New York. In this novel, Wharton shows the protagonist Ellen Olenska, separating from her husband and

wanting to get divorce but her family and her society make it a big scandal where she is taken as a culprit. Ellen comes to New York after a long time from Europe and her coming is a matter of gossip around her family and her relatives because she is separating from her husband. New York society in that period is always opposing the divorce.

Edith Wharton was born as Edith New Bold Jones in 1862 in New York. She was from a wealthy, distinguished family and was educated by governesses and foreign travel. She came out into New York society at a very young age and in 1885 married a friend of her mothers, Edward Wharton, a man several years older than herself. A close friend of Henry James, she decided to follow literary pursuits and began writing poems and stories. In 1905, her novel named *The House of Mirth* gave her much popularity for the first time and made her leading novelist of her time. In 1907, she and her husband moved to France and Europe was thenceforth her permanent home. She returned to an American setting with her unusual novelette named *Ethan Frome* in 1911, a tragic story set in New England and poignantly indicative of the forlorn state of her own marriage. After her husband's nervous collapse, the Wharton separated and then divorced in 1913. Edith Wharton settled in Paris and around this time she wrote *The Reef* in 1912 and *The Custom of the Country* in 1913, which portrays the breakdown of traditional New York culture.

The time setting of the novel is 1870s, though this novel is written in 1920s. *The Age of Innocence* is a title both ironic and poignant: ironic because the "age" or period of the novel, the late nineteenth century, teems with intolerance, collusion, and cynicism and emotional. It is innocence because Newland Archer firms gentleman that insights into the machinations of aristocratic life of the time. The novel proceeds from a working assumption that is best summed up by Ralph Waldo Emerson in his

essay "Self-Reliance" as, "Society everywhere is in conspiracy against the manhood of every one of its members" (20). Edith Wharton advances this belief with a vengeance, and it gives tragic depth to the life of Newland Archer, a life that might otherwise seem pedestrian and unworthy of close examination.

To Wharton, Old New York imposed on its members set rules and expectations for practically everything: manners, fashions, behaviors, and even conversations. Those who breached the social code were punished, with exquisite politeness, by the other members. The differences between the fractured society following the First World War and the Old New York of *The Age of Innocence* are without a doubt dramatic. However, there is more of a connection between them than it may first appear. Edith Wharton herself was born into the claustrophobic world of Old New York. When she began, at the age of fifty-seven, to write what would become her Pulitzer-prize winning novel, she had already witnessed an astounding amount of social change. Both horrified and fascinated by the chaos and the freedom of the new century as it headed towards modernism and war, Wharton was prompted to compare this new age with that of her own past. *The Age of Innocence*, then, stands as both a personal recollection of the culture of Wharton's youth and an historical study of an old-fashioned world on the brink of profound and permanent change.

Wharton had access to all the privileges of an upper-class upbringing: education, travel, and the assurance of a good marriage. Yet for all the luxury of her youth, Wharton felt her individuality continually stifled by the rigid expectations and narrow perspectives of her class. Not surprisingly, these sentiments become central themes in *The Age of Innocence*. Unhappily married at an early age to a man thirteen years her senior, Wharton faced, like Ellen Olenska, the temptations of adultery and

the censure of divorce. As a writer, too, Wharton faced the criticisms of her class, who disdained and feared what they called the bohemian life of artists and writers.

Edith Wharton's *The Age of Innocence* delves considerably deeper into the motives of human behavior that presents the scenario of late 20th century. The novel portrays the gender relationship of upper class male dominated white society of New York. Patriarchal society behaves woman as an object belonging to man and they dislike giving freedom for women in love and marriage and scandal divorce as social crime. The novel portrays divorce as the marital and mortal sin. Patriarchal society teaches women to be devoted to the men even in difficult circumstances. During the time of late 19th century and early 20th century a new wave had come in America for enhancing woman rights especially in education and employment that bring the sense of freedom and equality. After being aware in freedom women resist patriarchal domination by doing divorce. The novel encircles around the issue of marriage, divorce and ongoing women right movement. During the time, novelists and poets, artists and advertisers used these older images of women with needle in hand to reinforce the idea that sewing had always been women's work. Others feminists and reformers, in the literature of social investigation and activism seized on women's work as needlework was generically termed, as a symbol of female oppression. Linking these ideas to this depiction of May illustrates Wharton's attempt to both identify May with the imposed social roles, and to depict her silent protest against some aspects of these roles.

The issue of divorce and remarriage portrays the situation that Wharton presents marriage as a means of advancing herself on the social ladder. At each level, she attains new potential though nothing happen. Ellen perceives that, "Mingott is not the woman Newland Archer believed he married, but he comes to accept the woman

that she is. Due to the continuation of traditional norms and values women could not get freedom in their life” (91). The society ignores one’s individual life and gives pressure to accept social respectable life.

The novel focuses on social prejudice against women, which has been influenced by the concept of women’s repression by a patriarchal culture. Edith Wharton appears as a feminist and scandals the issue on the preconception of feminism. Feminism’s premises included the ideas that women were consistently used for the sexual pleasure of men, forced into marriage, scandalized the divorce, pressured out of the professions, denied equal education, equal pay for equal work, and equal participation in politics. On these premises feminists build the concept of the social construction of sexual identity. They agree that female sexuality is suppressed by men, and also that women have internalized or reified men’s patriarchal idea of women as other. Women are forced to believe men’s lies that neglect sexual identity and biological factors and focus on social hegemony. Social hegemony is designed to deprive women of power by using various metaphors and cultural icon and creates horror on the preconception of women. Why men would wish to control in this way has been explained mainly in terms of their desire for sexual dominance.

New York society does not know what to do with Ellen. On the one hand, she is a member of one of the most powerful families. On the other hand, she is extremely eccentric and defies the rules of society in many ways. When Ellen's family decides to throw her a welcome party, almost no one attends - a sign of society's low opinion of her. When Ellen plans to get a divorce from her husband, it is too much for New York society to take. Archer's boss Mr. Letterblair asks him to talk to Ellen in private, and to convince her not to go through with the divorce. Archer, wanting to stay out of the

mess, reluctantly agrees. In Boston, Archer learns that Ellen's husband is trying to get her to return. They passionately talk about their love for each other, and Ellen agrees to remain in America as long as Archer continues to love her. She returns to Washington, and Archer returns to New York with the understanding that they will love each other from a distance. Archer picks her up from the train station, and they talk in the carriage about the impossibility of their love. Archer leaves feeling frustrated and hopeless. Although he is overjoyed when Ellen decides to stay in New York to take care of her grandmother, the situation is too difficult and complicated. Edith Wharton examines the role and status of women, the implications of marriage as seen through the eyes of a woman, the relationship between mother and child, and the rapidly changing views about divorce and about liaisons outside of marriage. She explores these subjects insistently, and approaches the issues from varying angles and arrives at contradictory conclusions. Wharton's concept of marriage is different from traditional one so he criticizes by writing this novel though he does not speak his logic on the marriage system and only criticizes the contemporary ongoing debate of marriage. If any consistent pattern of conviction emerges from the stories, which cover almost fifty years, it is that each woman must decide for herself what is best in her own situation. Certainly no American author before 1930 produced such penetrating studies of women who, instead of marrying, decide to risk social ostracism by contracting temporary alliances based on mutual trust and sexual desire.

The novel focuses on Wharton's short story fiction, which has undoubtedly received much less attention than her more famous works such as *The House of Mirth* and *The Age of Innocence*. Ellen depicts on Wharton as a struggling female, reacting against both the limitations placed upon her literature and the social forces that confined her to unhappiness for much of her life. During her career, critics' constant

comparison of Wharton to her close friend Henry James undermined the significance of her unique style and techniques, suggesting a weakness as a short story writer. However, it is precisely the special features of her writing that enable her to successfully depict the complexities of real life within such small pieces of literature. In the novel, she purposefully offers a great deal of external detail, attaching meaning to inanimate objects in order to creatively develop her characters. It avoids the slower, more gradual process used in writing novels. Marshall Scott analyzes the Wharton's prose style which enlightens the modern readers and aware about social problems.

Wharton's prose style is heavily immersed in symbolism. Flowers and colors are used everywhere to reflect the moods and atmosphere in the story. The novel is also enlightening to a modern reader since it describes in lush detail the trappings of the upper class New Yorkers, the clothes the houses the carriage and their social activities dinner parties, theatre visits, promenades and the like producing a vivid evocation of the time and location. (21)

Baym Nina writes on historical perspective of the novel:

It is through Newland's eyes that we view the society of 1870s New York. Ironically, Newland sees himself as cosmopolitan, but Wharton belies this sentiment by describing his acceptance of the German text of French operas sung by Swedish artists . . . translated into Italian for the clearer understanding of English-speaking audiences. This is Wharton's humor, but Newland sees this as perfectly understandable. He parts his hair with two-silver-backed brushes with his monogram in blue and he has a gardenia the socially acceptable flower in his buttonhole. (11)

The novel reflects the historical scenario of the time. Byam satires contemporary patriarchal life style of New York society and express her idea in the novel. She presents motion of power which creates the trajectory path of society. That scene creates a kind of powerful discourse on family relation. In this regard, Randy F. Nelson says:

The Age of Innocence reflects on the ironic undertones of the very title and how, if reading this novel for the first time, the reader would come to see that there is no innocence portrayed in the novel and how innocence is but part of the act that this society maintains. For a challenge, consider in a final paragraph what the functions of this duality between innocence and outright sin and the degradation of values might mean in the context of the society that so vehemently seems to desire to uphold a set of moral standards. (12)

Wharton is very accurate in her knowledge of the building, the seating order, and the patrons' behavior. Because members of New York society use the Academy of Music as a marriage market to reproduce their class and facilitate marriages within their ranks, they seat debutantes modestly near the rear of boxes. Married ladies sit near the front displaying valuable possessions.

Ellen Olenska is the main character of the novel that resists patriarchy by getting divorce with her husband. Her attempt is related to the freedom of women. Patriarchy provokes that women who get divorce is identified as characterless women though Ellen resists and declares for divorce. The study encircles the issue of marriage and divorces from feminist perspective and examines how patriarchy holds freedom of women in New York. Wharton's *The Age of Innocence* makes divorce as a social custom rather than it is a common legal process. From these lines by Newland

Archer “Our ideas about marriage and divorce are particularly old – fashioned. Our legislation favors divorce – Our social customs don’t” (109). In the novel, the male protagonist Newland Archer also suffers a lot due to his respected social life: he falls in love with a woman who is waiting to get divorced from her earlier husband, and he himself engages with another woman. Due to the social respectable life, he sacrifices his individual happiness.

This study explores ongoing feminist movement of New York society by portraying the issues of marriage and divorce. Traditional patriarchal society scandals divorce to humiliate women and try to dominate them. The study observes feminism on the basis of the textual evidence which describes third chapter in detail. It explores the new wave of thought on the novel *The Age of Innocence*. To analyze the issue of feminism, this study has been divided into four chapters. The first chapter presents the general introduction of this research including the background to the present study, views of the critics on the author, and his writing and an introductory outline of the present research. A theoretical guideline of the analysis has been mentioned in the second chapter. In the same way, presentation and analysis mentioned in the fourth chapter and conclusion has been mentioned.

Chapter II: Historical Background of Feminism

Feminism: Meaning

The term “feminism” was coined by the Utopian socialist Charles Fourier. The term was first used to denote the support for women’s equal legal and political rights with men. Now feminism also refers to any theory which sees the relationship between the sexes as one of inequality, subordination or oppression. Thus, the aim of feminism seems to identify and remedy the sources of all kinds of oppressions and subordination.

Feminism is related to the feminist social movement that seeks equal right for women giving them equal status with men and freedom to decide their careers and life pattern. Women are taken to be weak in terms of education, culture, body, religion and society, where males are considered as strong in every aspect of life. Because of this deep-rooted gender conception, men dominate women. Thus, the main target of the feminists has become to change or revolt against such misconceptions and the gender construction. The female writers have written for the emancipation of female from patriarchy as well as to establish women's position in the society.

The feminists think that femininity is their gift given by god. So, they take it as the weapon to fight against patriarchy. They put female in the supreme place and show that women are also bold enough to decide whatever is better for their life. Feminism is the quest for female autonomy.

Even though it is difficult to define feminist theory, it was thought that feminism could be divided into liberal, radical and revolutionary phases in the early feminist theorizing; that is into those who argued for equality as men, those who celebrate women's supposed difference from men and those who wished to deconstruct the system of gender difference. Feminist criticism is not a unified

subject. It covers media, literature and civilization as well. Taking feminism as a multidisciplinary field of knowledge Mark Hawkins Dady says:

Feminist critical theory has always been an interdisciplinary subject; for those who are primarily engaged in literary criticism, it has always been necessary to look beyond the boundaries of purely textual analysis in order to explore both the factors that contribute to the discriminatory treatment of women and those factors that enable women to resist and counter domination. (264)

There is no harmony between men and women in relation to their status in the society. Women are silenced in the patriarchal ideology. Thus, feminists try to break the silence of women. There is inequality shown in the norms created by males where women are taking plights to follow shown in the norms created by males of their work Maria Mies says, "feminists are those who dare to break the conspiracy of silence about the oppressive, unequal man-woman relationship and who want to change it"(6). She talks in favors of women's autonomy. For her autonomy is the feminist effort to maintain and recreate the innermost subjective human essence in women. The feminist claim to autonomy means a rejection of all tendencies to subsume the women's question and the women's movement under some other apparently more general theme or movement. Feminists are in search of a situational leadership. There should be dynamism, diversity, as well as the truly humanistic environment.

The sense of alienation, powerlessness and dependency felt by women in their everyday life has encouraged the emergence of the study of women. The sense of difference has been felt by the female because of increasing self-awareness among women, changes in their relations with men, and desires to extend their social roles. Thus, these changes in consciousness led women to search their selfhood. Troil Moi

defines feminism as, "The word feminist or feminism are political level indicating support for the aims of the new women's movement" (135). Moi's concept about feminism focuses it as a political movement which aims at breaking the patriarchal boundary and hierarchy between men and women.

In the same way, a prominent critic, M.H. Abrams has given his view in his own way. He says, "Feminist literary criticism continues in our time to be closely inter-related with the movement by political feminists for social, economic and cultural freedom and equality" (234). Abrams view about feminism states it as women's fight for freedom. It is the search for equality in social, political, educational and cultural aspects. Or in short, feminism is the quest for autonomous existence required by women.

Domination, suppression and inequality in every field cannot continue for long. Feminist criticism has demanded not just the recognition of women's writing but a radical rethinking of the concept of literary writing. Feminist criticism is international in its resources, and the feminist critics cross the national boundaries. They collectively demand to change the attitude of looking at women as inferior people and request to rethink the concept of literary studies.

History of Feminism

Feminist critical theory can be said to have begun in the 1960s and 1970s with the work that questioned the representation of female characters in the male authored texts and also questioned the exclusion of the women writers from the canvas. Kate Millet favors power as an inevitable matter to change the society. In her *Sexual Politics* (1969), she has cited the fact that power is exercised in the society by subjugating women. She emphasizes that women should be given power to develop their status and career. She says, "Patriarchy dominates and subordinates the female to

the male or treats the female as an inferior male. Power is exercised directly or indirectly in the civil and domestic life, to constrain women" (137). In the large canvas of male literary works, women are presented just as sexual objects, whose roles are subservient to those of the central male protagonist. Violence and domination seemed to be the main idea by which the unequal power relations in the area of sexual politics are maintained. Women began to understand that patriarchy had its origin not in the realm of public politics but only in men's control over women's bodies, particularly their sexuality and their generative capacities. Millet analyzed the sexual politics of literature in her work. She considers politics an institution through which power is exercised in the society. Her work paved way for the readers to reconsider their evaluations fundamentally about some male writers. After that "Sexual politics" became the catch term of many writers. She says: "The essence of politics is power"(205). Violence and suppression upon women by patriarchy is the main issue raised by Millet. She considers that patriarchy is the main cause which suppressed and dominated women from freedom. Patriarchy doesn't give the equal status for women. It always keeps women in the marginalized space. Women's place in patriarchal society is deplorable and pathetic.

One of the major feminist writers of the twentieth century, Virginia Woolf had made a great contribution in the field of feminist theories. Woolf in her *A Room of Our Own* (1928) focuses on the women's rights that a woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction. It is taken as the first blow on patriarchal structure. Here, she is not raising the issue of women in general she is specially talking about the plight of women writers. Woolf imagines a society where man and woman would come together in purpose and desire. So, she recurrently exposes about equality between man and woman. She is the first critic to include the socio-

economic dimension as the inevitable part of the females writing. She says that right from the history women writers have been discouraged. Woolf says; "She must have shut herself up in a room in the country to write and been torn a sunder by bitterness and scruples perhaps, though her husband was of the kindest and their married life-perfection" (819).

An American feminist, Elaine Showalter published one influential work of feminist criticism, *Towards the Feminist Poetics* (1977). In this work, Showalter provides a survey of the literatures written by the famous female writers of eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Through this work Showalter raised a question about the problems of not including the books written by female writers in the literary course and to be printed. Further than this, she argued for the separate canon building of the female's literary texts. She says; ". . . women's literature must go beyond these scenarios of compromise, madness, and death . . . its purpose is to discover the new world" (1229). It is called "Gynocriticism". She says that women are different in terms of nature, race, culture and nation so they cannot be studied universally. Women's texts should have specific style of reading. The text written by the female writers should be read from the gynocritical point of view to justify the woman ness in the text. Gynocriticism is an attempt to establish feminist tradition.

Elaine Showalter categorizes feminist criticism into two types, 'women as a writer' and 'women as a reader'. Women as a writer consider "women as a producer of textual meaning, with his history, themes, genres, and structures of literature by women" (1226). Women are the producer of the text, language, themes, images and so forth. She gives space to her own experience, where women as reader read the text from the women's point of view. She is a feminist critic as reader. She adds: ". . . it is historically grounded inquiry which probes the ideological assumptions of literary

phenomena. The omissions of and misconceptions about women in criticism, and the fissures in male constructed literary history" (1226). Here she studies male's experiences and women's manipulations and exploitation by males and the stereotyped image given by male. It rejects the misconception about women in criticism and attacks the male-made literary history.

Showalter has drawn the history of feminist tradition within three phases. The first phase, feminine, is the period from 1840 to 80. In this phase, women were silent experiences and used to accept male domination. They internalized male values and wanted to reach the male standard. George Eliot belongs to this phase. The second phase, feminist phase, is the period between 1880 to 1920. This phase is a more challenging period for women who required protecting against male cruelty. They oppose male tradition of writing. They tried to condemn male styles. Virginia Woolf, Elizabeth Gaskell, Frances Trollope, Olive Schreiner belong to this phase. This phase is better known as protest stage. They began to create their own style of writing. The third phase is dated from 1920 to present, the female phase. This phase is the period of women's awakening. Women began to develop the idea of female writing. Writers showed more revolutionary as well. It includes the writers like Dorothy Richardson, Katherine Mansfield. This phase is devoted to the search for 'female language', freedom, selfhood and individuality by women.

Michele Barrett is another feminist who began joint venture with Kate Millet to advocate against women's oppression. She not only blames patriarchy to be the root cause of women's oppression, she thinks there are many other issues to be raised together. Barrett steps further giving an interesting view that any text lacks the 'meaning'. Meaning is formed because of ideologies, circumstances, values and space of the reader in the society. Giving common view against women's suppression Millet

and Barrett say: "The oppressor is seen as consciously endeavoring to sustain the oppression indefinitely through ideology . . . literary values and convention have themselves been shaped by men and women have often struggled to express their own concerns . . ." (qtd. in Selden 138-139). They view that women don't have their own ideologies. They are in problems to express their view in male ideology. Women are suppressed by males forcing to obey their rules.

Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949) raises the voice against man-woman dichotomy as the male ideology makes woman the second sex. Women are made inferior which is just artificially made. Beauvoir further says that women are not born, but made. The human culture has given supremacy to the sex that hunts and kill, and not the one that gives birth, to masters of nature and not to the natural functions. The book *The Second Sex* is an overall account of women and tags given to women. Giving her notion about the book, *The Second Sex* M. H. Abrams notes, "*The Second Sex* is a wide- ranging criticism of identification of women as merely the negative object or 'other' to man as defining and dominating subject who is assumed to represent humanity in general" (234).

Women are mystic that they are vast, something reversed and they undergo those processes, but Beauvoir condemns these myths saying that they are natural process and male-made myths are false. She further says males too are mysterious. She claims:

The myth of a woman is a luxury which can appear only if man escapes from urgent demands of his needs, the more relationships are concretely lived the less they are idealized . . . but along with luxury there is utility; their dreams where irresistibly guided by interest. Surely most he myths had roots in the spontaneous attitude of man

toward his own existence and toward the world around him. But going beyond experience toward the transcendent idea was deliberately used by patriarchal society for purpose of self justification; through the myths this society imposed its laws and customs upon individuals in a picturesque, effective manner it is under a mythical form that group imperative is indoctrinated into each conscience. (999)

Beauvoir criticizes the male-made myths about women that myth is just a mirage which is not related with reality at all.

She further criticizes the cultural identification of women as merely negative objective or 'other' to man. The notion of otherness of 'she' effects in the social ideology. Thus, Beauvoir requests the feminists to break the patriarchal norms and values and establish female's distinct ideology which is necessary for women's self identity and autonomy.

Sex and Gender

Human beings are differentiated as male and female according to biological characteristics; the differentiation of male and female, is called sex. They have fundamental biological characteristics. According to their body's organs they are known as male and female. Sex is a biological difference between men and women. It is unchangeable and natural process. So, it is also called natural sex. Gender is created by society. It is also called social gender. It is formed according to the concept of society and culture. The society and culture introduce the status and role of male and female. So gender is not fundamentally biology, it is based social and cultural. According to social and cultural norms and values, the community creates the boundaries, rules and regulations for male and female.

In the discussion of sex and gender in human social life, one term emerges as particularly, and that term is natural; in public debates concerning the origins of so-called sex differences and the nature of relations between women and men. Every society has different roles and status of male and female, the cause of difference is their own culture and society. So, from primitive age to recent period males are supreme in the society. So, they create the rules and regulations for their own benefit. They create many boundaries and tags for female, not for male. Females are marginalized in social sector, economic sector, and political sector. Academically also females are back warded. The society gave roles and regulations to male and female. They saw differently to female as daughters are not send to school, and deprived from rights for property, political and others. Traditional gender roles cast men as strong, rational, protective, and decisive; they cast women as emotional, weak, nurturing, and submissive. These gender roles have been used very successfully to justify the act of excluding women from equal access to leadership and decision- making positions in every field as in the family, political, academic and economic areas. The main cause of difference is patriarchal society. Patriarchy is thus, by definition, sexist, which means it promotes the belief that women are innately inferior to men.

But feminists do not deny the biological differences between men and women; in fact, many feminists celebrate those differences. But they do not agree that such differences as physical size, shape, and body chemistry make men naturally superior to women; for example, more intelligent, more logical, more courageous, or better leaders. Feminism therefore distinguishes between the word sex, which refers to our biological constitution as female or male, and the word gender, which refers to cultural programming as feminine or masculine, which are categories created by society rather than by nature.

Feminism is a necessary movement to deliver the view of society which gives women the subordinate position. Women from the beginning of human civilization are being treated with worth ambivalence and misogyny. Women had to live in the discriminatory male-made culture on the basis of sex, race, age, class. Such culture was the main boundary for women for the freedom of expression of their experience. Jane Freedman says that the "distinction between biological sex and the social creation of the 'eternal feminine' is a precursor of the distinction between sex and gender that is common in much feminist theory" (14). The concept of patriarchy or sexism is the major ideological value which all feminist criticism share as their motto. All the feminists agree that the entire cultural phenomena are dominated by a patriarchal value. Patriarchy plays role not only in political system but also in literary and philosophical system. There is hierarchy made between male and female where male is the standard and female is subordinate. The woman is made to be subjugated by male. Simone de Beauvoir mentioned her view in this context in her famous work *The Second Sex* (1949). In her work, Beauvoir has demonstrated how women are marginalized, subordinated and hegemonized by patriarchal ideology. All the feminists are concerned with destroying the patriarchal ideology. In the literary texts women are always in secondary role. They are ordinary, unimportant and marginal. Feminism criticizes the one sided evaluation of literature. Beauvoir says; "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman . . . It is civilization as a whole that produces this creature . . . which described as feminine"(89).

According to Maria Mies, patriarchal ideology suggests that there are only two identities of a woman, if she accepts her traditional gender role and obeys the patriarchal rules, she is a "good woman"; if she does not, she is a "bad woman". These two roles also identified woman as "Madonna" and "whore" or "angel" and

“bitch”. These two identities are defined according to the place and the time in which they live. According to a patriarchal ideology, ‘bad woman’ violates patriarchal sexual norms in some ways: they are sexually forward in appearance of behavior, or they have multiple sexual partners. Men sleep with “bad women”, but they do not marry them. In this regard, Maria Mies states:

The “good women” is rewarded for her “good” behavior by being placed on a pedestal by patriarchal culture. She has no needs of her own, for she is completely satisfied by serving her family. For Victorian culture in England she was the “angel in the house”. She made the home a safe heaven for her husband, where he could spiritually fortify himself before resuming the daily struggles of the workplace, and for her children, where they could receive the moral guidance needed to eventually assume their own traditional roles in the adult World. (91)

The good woman does not want her own self identity in the society. She only knows about the traditional rules. But the “bad women” who are power seeking always want newness in the society. They are courageous that they can do what male can. So, they want their self identity.

Feminists write for freedom, autonomy and self identity of the women. They think that men should take females as their necessary counterparts and help them to come in the independent arena. Women must be regarded as important human beings. Accepting such reality some male writers began to write giving the autonomous power to women character in their literary writing. Women protagonists have individuality in their texts. Consciousness about female as equal human being is somehow the contribution of feminist movements. Feminists view that only a feminist

struggle will particularly change relations between man and woman that concerns issues such as sexuality, violence, gender discrimination, emancipation, freedom and equality for women.

Self- identity and Freedom of Women

The concepts of self-identity and autonomy are closely related and inseparable. The concept 'autonomy' expresses the positive goal for the feminist movement. It is the freedom from domination regarding the bodies and lives, Maria Mies says, "The feminist claim to autonomy . . . means a rejection of all tendencies to subsume the women's question and the women's movement under some other apparently more general theme or movement"(41). Self- identity and autonomy are associated with persons. We are autonomous to social processes which bring us into being as self for ourselves and others.

There are so many concepts about selfhood and autonomy in the feminist movements. But the most common concept among feminists is 'individual independence', self determination of the individual woman', or 'the right to individual choice'. The emphasis on individualism refers to the autonomous existence. Women in the patriarchy fight for their individuality. Women have united for their self-identity which is taken as the essential thing for women's development. If the person is independent she/he can live her/his life well. Feminists think that woman is a biological person or subject. This is the main feature of women which characterizes the feminist writing. In Louis Marin's view, ". . . writing of the self gives rise to a theoretical and methodological occasion allowing us to grasp with greater rigor and precision the manner in which these two sets of signifiers function" (199).

The individualistic sense of uniqueness and self consciousness is wide spread which is not shared to the same extent by people. Self is inseparable from to the

network of kinship relation and nation use the pronouns 'I'. Every person has feelings of self-identity and need their own autonomous. Identity is the social construction. Looking at the western female self, Alison prentice and Ruth Pierson say; "Women have a human should not have to make a greater sacrifice of autonomy than men" (164). Women in the patriarchal society had false identity. They were restricted to go outside from the house. Feminism is the movement which demands autonomous existence and true identity of female. The identity of person is the cultural representation. For true identity and autonomous are the necessary components.

Writing for self is for visual portrait and signification. All the markers of possession and of the appropriation of the written object emerge from the tensions inscribed within 'I'. Self is the representation of 'I'. Women are in search of 'I' or subjectivity Simone de Beauvoir says; "In sexuality and maternity woman as subject can claim autonomy; but to be a 'true woman' she must accept herself as the other" (1000). The feminist ambition to maintain and recreate this innermost subjective human essence in women is expressed and preserved in the concept of autonomy. Everyone is free to fulfill all her/his desires and needs that individual freedom is identical with the choice of the self- activity and subjectivity of the person Maria Mies focuses her view on autonomy and says:

. . . autonomy means the preservation of human essence in women . . .

It is also a struggle concept which was developed to demonstrate the women wanted to separate from mixed, male domination organizations and to from their autonomous organization, with their own analysis, programs and methods. (40-41)

The feminist approaches mentioned above are useful to find out the main causes how the protagonist of Edith Wharton's novel *The Age of Innocence* searches

the self identity and autonomy by challenging the deep-rooted patriarchal norms and values. The feminist discourse has provided chances to understand the text better. It has shown the way to know the female problems, identity and existence and their search for self identity and autonomy in terms of marriage, love, social and political status.

Chapter III: Divorce as Social Scandal for New Yorkers in Wharton's *The Age of Innocence*

Issues of Divorce and Marriage

The Age of Innocence highlights divorce and marriage as the controlling means of patriarchy against women. New Yorkers raise questions on women though women have right to separate with husbands. Both men and women are equally responsible for being divorced though the society only criticizes women. The novel portrays patriarchal ideology of aristocratic society of New York. The following lines describe the background of the novel as:

Though there was already talk of the erection, in remote metropolitan distances above the Forties of a new Opera House which should compute in costliness and splendor with those of the great European capitals, the world of fashion was still content to reassemble every winter in the shabby red and gold boxes of the sociable old Academy.

(1)

Patriarchal notion of society minimizes the role of women in social arena. Society raises the question on the character of women who separate with their husbands. In this context, Mr. Archer says, "Mrs. Lovell Mingott, and her daughter, Mrs. Welland; and slightly withdrawn behind these brocaded matrons sat a young girl in white with eyes ecstatically fixed on the stage-lovers" (3). Love relationship shows ongoing domestic situation and the role of stage lover in society is miracle and interesting.

How this miracle of fire and ice was to be created, and to sustain itself in a harsh world, he had never taken the time to think out; but he was content to hold his view without analyzing it, since he knew it was that

of all the carefully-brushed, white-waist coated, buttonhole flowered gentlemen who successively each other in the club box, exchanged friendly greeting with him, and turned their opera-glasses critically on the circle of ladies who were the product of the system. (6)

The ongoing system of cosmopolitan city and the perception of youth which is different from the traditional notion of love, marriage and family life which Mrs. Mingott says, “Archer entirely approved of family solidarity, and one of the qualities he most admired in the Mingotts was their resolute championship of the few black sheep that their blameless stock had produced” (9). In the modern time love and beauty are determined by cosmetics and clothes which Mrs Mingott further describes as, “Madame Olenska’s pale and serious face appealed to his fancy as suited to the occasion and to her unhappy situation; but the way her dress (which had no tucker) sloped away from her thin shoulders shocked and troubled him” (12).

Edith Wharton projects male dominated household environment where the women’s role is minimized. Mrs. Manson describes the situation, “She was indolent, passive, the caustic even called her dull; but dressed like an idol, hung with pearls, growing younger and blonder and more beautiful each year, and she thrones. In Mr. Beaufort’s heavy brown-stone place, and drew all the world there without lifting her jeweled little finger” (17). It shows the glimpse of patriarchy in Mr. and Mrs. Beaufort’s family.

She made no answer. Her lips trembled into a smile, but the eyes remained distant and serious, as if bent on some ineffable vision. Dear Archer whispered, pressing her to him: it was borne in on him that the first hours of being engaged even if spent in a ball-room, had in them something grave and sacramental. (21)

This novel shows the ill part of love, beauty and marital relationship that is covered by fashions and money. The situation forces women into the crisis and hit on the natural beauty, spontaneous spiritual love relationship between men and women. In this regard, Mrs. Mason says, “Her visitors were startled and fascinated by the foreignness of this arrangement, which recalled scenes in French fiction, and architectural incentives to immortality such as the simple American had never dreamed of” (26). Such tradition creates problem on love relationship and makes confused on the definition of love and beauty.

Welland was thinking I’s mistake for Ellen to be seen, the very day after her arrival, parading up fifth Avenue at the crowded hour with Julius Beaufort and the young man himself mentally added: “and she ought to know that a man who’s just engaged doesn’t spend his time calling on married women. (29)

The situation of women and men perception toward women is not justifiable for women empowerment and healthy love relationship between men and women. Newland highlights the situation, “Mother and daughter adored each other and revered their son and brother; and Archer loved them with a tenderness made compunctious and uncritical by the sense of their exaggerated admiration, and by his secret satisfaction in it” (32). The notion of patriarchy teems the unequal relationship between males and females. Newland further says, “He stopped and turned away angrily to light his cigar women ought to be freed” (39). Male instinct appears as instrument of dominating force and eager to control over women in the periphery of patriarchal notion of life. In this regard, Newland speaks, “Untrained human nature was not frank and innocent; it was full of the twists and defenses of an instinctive guile. And he felt himself oppressed by this creation of factitious purity, so cunningly

manufactured by a conspiracy of mothers and aunts and . . .” (43). In the course of love and family relationship innocent females are unknowing dominated by males as projects them as an object and compares their characters like the quality of goods.

Undermined Women in Old New York Society

Through the influences of patriarchy Mr. Henry households is not suitable for women. The situation is contradictory for the women contradictory which portrays the Mrs. and Mr. Henry household environment and shows the discriminative role of women. In this context, it is relevant to quote Edith idea as, “Mrs. Henry Van Der Luyden had been Louisa Dagonet, and her mother had been the granddaughter of Colonel Du Lac, of an old Channel Island family, who had fought under Cornwallis and had settled in Maryland, after the war . . .”(47). Due to the male legacy, there is no space for women which she further clarifies, “Mrs. Van Der Luyden looked more than ever looked a Cabanel, and Mrs. Archer, in her grandmother’s seed-pearls and emeralds, remained her son of an Isabey miniature” (59). Female voice suppressed by Patriarchal notion and attempts to make it thinner in public places as well as household which are clear in the following lines:

Madame Olenska’s own dwelling was redeemed from the same appearance only by a little more paint about the window-frames; and as Archer mustered its modest front he said to himself that the Polish Count must have robbed her of her fortune as well as of her illusions.
(65)

The female existence in the society by comparing with fortune and fate is output of patriarchy and male formula to control over female. In this regard, Edith writes, “At length she returned with a lamp; and Archer, having meanwhile put together a phrase out of Dante and Petrarch, evoked the answer: “*La signora e fuori*;

ma verrd subito”; which he took to mean” (67). The descriptions of household environment show the space of women in modern society. Newland further clarifies the situation as, “She sat down near the fire, said: “Nastasia will bring the tea presently,” and signed to him to return to his armchair, adding: “I see you’ve already chosen your corner” (71). Granny and her situation show the ongoing attitude of male toward females and female toward males which play vital role to establish relationship.

Newland Archer states, “She wanted to keep me with her; but I had to be free-” he was impressed by this light way of speaking of the formidable Catherine, and moved” (74). Joadiam attitude is similar to Newland Archer arguments and says, “He had never seen any as sun golden before, and his first impulse was to send them to May instead of the lilies. But they did not look like her there was something too rich, too strong, in their fiery beauty” (77). Henry describes the situation of modern city and says, “I’ve heard you often enough, mother, grumble at the England Sunday when we’ve been in London. New York is neither Paris nor London” (86). Modern city and modern cultural practices also create hindrances on the upliftment of women in social level because that minimizes the natural beauty and love of women and emphasizes on artificiality. In this regard, Edith says, “Mrs. Archer shook her head with a sigh. Provided it all turns out for the best, she said, in the tone of one who knows how surely it will not. Newland, you must stay and see Sillerton Jackson when he comes this evening: I really shan’t know what to say to him” (89). Miss Laning describes the old fashion party of New York as, “It was not an Open night, and no one was giving a party, so that Beaufort’s outing was undoubtedly of a clandestine nature” (99).

The position of female is not so clear in the modern society which she says, “She herself had no fears of it, and the books scattered about her drawing-room a part of the house in which books were usually supposed to be “out of place” (102). In the same way, she further clarifies, “She raised her straight eyebrows a little. “Ah, don’t say that. If you knew how I hate to be different!” Her face had grown as somber as a tragic mask” (106). Social system and practices humiliates women in contemporary urban society which Lanning says, “She said nothing, and he continued: “Our ideas about marriage and divorce are particularly old fashioned our legislation favors divorce our social customs don’t” (109). Male-made myths make the position of female mysterious in society that gives males have full right politicize toward as females.

Women always exaggerated; and moreover she (Olensaka) was not wholly at her ease in English, which she often spoke as if she were translating from the French. “Je Me Suis evade put in that way, the opening sentence immediately suggested that she might merely have wanted to escape from a boring round of engagements; which was very likely true, for the judged her to be capricious, and easily wearied of the pleasure of the moment. (126)

In fact there found certain weakness in both gender ,generally male dominated society identifies women with the weakness of human being and separate male from such weakness. Mr. Van Der Luyden and his wife love relationship also guided by the same formula. In this regard, Edith says, “The house had been built by Mr. Van Der Luyden in this youth, on his return from the “grand tour,” and in anticipation of his approaching marriage with Miss Louisa Dagonet” (128). Van Der Luyden’s male behavior projects in this way, “His way if ignoring peoples whose presence

inconvenienced him actually gave them, if they were sensitive to it, a feeling of invisibility, of nonexistence” (134). Generally, male figures neglect everything because they think them as power holders. Madam Olenseka criticizes the behaviors of Van Der as, “Madame Olenska, in a burst of irritation, had said to Archer that he and she did not talk the same language; and the young man knows that in some respects this was true” (137). It is showed that woman is a luxury which can appear only if man escapes from urgent demands of his needs; the more relationships.

Mr. Letterblair had let Mrs. Welland know that Mr. Archer had “rendered an invaluable service” to the whole family, and that old Mrs. Manson Mingott had been particularly pleased; and one day when May had gone for a drive with her father in the only vehicle the place produced. (143)

The male-made myths about women that myth is just a mirage which is not related with reality and Edith mentions in the novel by giving references of Mr. Letterblair. In this way, it is relevant to quote the following lines, “She dropped back into her seat and went on. You mustn’t think that a girl knows as little as her parents imagine. One hears and one notices—one has one’s feeling and ideas” (148). In the same line Edith says, “She flushed with joy and lifted her face to his; as he bent to it he saw that her eyes were full of happy tears. But in another moment she seemed to have descended from her womanly eminence to helpless and timorous” (149). Patriarchal notion of life scandalizes human weakness by attaching with female and tires to control over on female body. She further says, “She came alone, early on Sunday afternoon; luckily the fire was lit in the drawing-room. She had one of those new card-cases” (151). It shows the cultural identification of women as merely negative objective or 'other' to man. In this context Jeny argues, “This lady, who is

long. Lean and loosely put together, was clad in raiment intricately looped and fringed, with plaids and stripes and bands of plain color disposed in a design to which the clue seemed missing” (156).

There are different roles and status of male and female in the society which are based on desire attitude and socio economic status of the society though patriarchal notion always tries to distort the fact that describes by using various narratives. Mr. Archer behaves with Olenska which as, “The young man listened with considerable embarrassment. Was there any one, he wondered, to whom Madame Olenska had not proclaimed his intervention in her private affairs?” (159). Olenska suspects on patriarchy and resists by sing her purple figure as, “Mrs. Manson laid a purple finger on her lips. “Nothing directly but does she suspect? Who can tell? The truth is, Mr. Archer, I have been waiting to see you” (161). Male dominated society creates many boundaries and tags for female which found in this novel too. In this regard, Olenska says, “Oh, Ellen forgive me; I’m a fool and a brute!” She smiled a little. “You are horribly nervous; you have your troubles. I know you think the Wellands are unreasonable about your marriage, and of course I agree with you” (167). In the same way male voice has been projected like this:

How one must sacrifice one’s self to preserve the dignity of marriage . . . and to spare one’s family the publicity, the scandal? And because by family was going to be your family for May’s sake and for yours I did what you told me, what you proved to me that I ought to do. (169)

The male urges toward female which is legacy of the primitive male dominated society and force women to remain on the hold of male through the institution of marriage. Mrs. Manson says, “She forced a pitiful smile that pinched her face instead of smoothing it. “You don’t understand because you haven’t yet guessed

how you've changed things for me: oh, from the first—long before I knew all you'd done" (171). She further clarifies the situation of women which culturally restricted female to do everything and says:

The idea of doing away with this awning, and revealing the bride to the mob of dressmakers and newspaper reporters who stood outside fighting to get near the joints of the canvas, exceeded even old Catherine's courage, though for a moment she had weighed the possibility. (183)

Male dominated society creates the rules and regulations for their own benefit. They create many boundaries and tags for female, not for male. Females are marginalized in social sector, economic sector, and political sector. The society gives roles and regulations to male and female.

Mrs. Lovell Mingott had the high colour and glassy state induced in ladies of her age and habit by the effort of getting into a new dress; but once the disappointment occasioned by her mother-in-law's non-appearance had subsided, it was agreed that her black Chantilly over lilac satin, with a bonnet of Parma violets, formed the happiest contrast to Mrs. (184)

The patriarchal domination on females creates problem on the women empowerments. Women are compared with culturally made objects of the society. Later they get some opportunity on behalf of the female which Newland Archer mentions, "She regarded it (once her clothes were ordered as merely an enlarged opportunity for walking, riding, swimming, and trying her hand at the fascinating new game of lawn tennis; and when they finally got back to London (where they were to spend a fortnight . . ." (196). He describes situation of Welland and says, "She

reminded him that he had always liked Newport in his bachelor days, and as this was indisputable he could only profess that he was sure he was going to like it better than ever now that they were together” (207). The male ego creates problem to maintain harmonious relationship between men and women. When, Welland is going to choose man for life partner, she is influenced by showing male power and money. Newland Archer clarifies, “The idea that he could ever, in his senses, have dreamed of marrying the Countess Olenska had become almost unthinkable, and she remained in his memory simply as the most plaintive and poignant of a line of ghosts” (208).

There is hierarchy made between male and female where male is the standard and female is subordinate. The woman is made to be subjugated by male in both outside household and inside household. Welland struggles with patriarchy and she imagines of taking bow and arrow for resisting male domination and says, “She had bow and arrow in her hand, placing herself of the chalk-mark traced on the turf she lifted the bow to her shoulder and took aim” (211). Newland describes the situation as, “A winding drive led up between iron stage and blue glass embedded in mounds of geraniums to a front door of highly-varnished walnut under a striped verandah-roof; and behind it ran a narrow hall with a black and yellow star-patterned parquet floor” (213). It highlights males’ space which symbolically urges female to follow male and performs social duties. Newland mentions the situation as, “She doesn’t know—she hasn’t guessed. Shouldn’t I know if she came up behind me, I wonder?” he mused; and suddenly he said to himself: “If she doesn’t turn before that sail crosses the Lime Rock light I’ll go back” (217). Patriarchal ideology suggests that there are only two identities of a woman, if she accepts her traditional gender role and obeys the patriarchal rules, she is a good woman otherwise she is introduced as bad. The night performance of Olenska reflects the same philosophy which Newland describes, “All

night he lay awake in the big chintz bedroom at May's side, watching the moonlight slant along the carpet, and thinking of Ellen Olenska driving home across the gleaming behind Beaufort's" (219). Patriarchal notion of society performs in the love stage where role of female confines in limited social sphere.

There's no reason why you should go at all, my dear, his wife answered with a cheerfulness that had become automatic. I have some cards to leave at the other end of Bellevue Avenue, and I'll drop in at about half-past three and stay long enough to make poor Amy feel that she hasn't been slighted. (221-222)

Male virility humiliates femininity and colonizes the female identities on behalf of patriarchy. Description of Box Garden clarifies, "As he entered it he caught sight of something bright colored in the summer—house, and presently made it out to be a pink parasol. The parasol drew him like a magnet: he was sure it was hers" (226). In the same line Newland highlights the situation and says, "There he wrote a few lines, and ordered a messenger to take a cab to the Parker House and wait for the answer. He then sat down behind another newspaper and tried to calculate how long it would take a cub to get to the Parker House" (231). The description of love stage satires the so called liberal society and its role on controlling female in the stage. The stage symbolizes the life of New York where women are being discriminated by using patriarchal notion of production and consumption. Newland further says the situation of women, "She stood up and reopened her sunshade, glancing about her as if to take counsel of the scene, and assure her of the impossibility of remaining in it. Then her eyes returned to his face" (235).

Violation of Patriarchy in *The Age of Innocence*

According to a patriarchal ideology, 'bad woman' violates patriarchal sexual norms in some ways: they are sexually forward in appearance or behavior, or they have multiple sexual partners. Newland says, "She had grown tired of what people called society; New York was kind, it was almost oppressively hospitable; she should never forget the way in which it had welcomed her back; but after the first flush of novelty she had found herself" (241). Manifestation of desire of youth in modern time shows the virility of male in comparison to female as, "Mr. Riviere has succeeded in imposing himself: Archer, reddening slightly, dropped into his chair again, and signed to the young man to be seated" (253). Mr. Riviere further says, "I am at this moment: I returned to him, a few months ago, for reasons of private necessity such as many happen to anyone who has persons, ill and older persons, dependent on him" (257). Notion of patriarchy comes out through descriptions of socio economic power of men which Newland clarifies, "It was a long time since any well-known banker had failed discredibly; but everyone remembered the social extinction visited on the heads of the form when the last event of the kind had happened" (261).

It was thus, Archer reflected, that New York managed its transitions: conspiring to ignore them till they were well over, and then, in all good faith, imagining that they had taken place in a preceding age. There was always a traitor in the citadel; and after he (or generally she) had surrendered the keys, what was the use of pretending that it was impregnable? (262)

Patriarchal ideology appears in the novel on the basis of male instinct which is related to the concept of ongoing consumer culture of new society which behaves a woman as objects whose beauty and love is determined by male perception.

I also know that, for some reason you have not chosen to tell me, you have advised her against this course, which all the older men of the family, as well as our grandmother, agree in approving; and that it is owing to your encouragement that Ellen defies us all, and exposes herself to the kind of criticism of which Mr. Sillerton Jackson probably gave you, this evening, the hint that has made you so irritable. (269)

Freedom, autonomy and self identity of the women have been based on the perception of society which Edith mentions on the periphery of early the 20th. A character expresses various ideas on femininity and masculinity which reflects ongoing debate women of right in early the 20th century. Newland describes the role of Lovell as:

Mr. Lovell Mingott had been telegraphed for, and messages were being dispatched by hand to the members of the family living in New York; and meanwhile there was nothing to do but to discuss in husband tones the consequences of Beaufort's dishonor and of his wife's unjustifiable action. (175-76)

The male dominated life style of New York humiliates female by patriarchal notion of life. Ellen Olenska highlights the situation of female and says, "I'm to telegraph to her immediately, had to tell her that she's to come alone. The announcement was received in silence. Images of New York life projects the social status of female on huge city where patriarchy tries to dominate women by using material culture although male figures of the society fall on crisis which portrays the falling process of masculinity as, "The whole of New York was darkened by the tale of Beaufort's dishonor. There had never, as Mr. Letterblair said, been a worse case in his memory nor, for that matter, in the memory of the far-off Letterblair who had given his name to the form" (280).

It's always one thing after another," the poor lady grieved, in one of her rare revolts against fate; "the only thing that makes me think Mamma must be less well than Dr. Bencomb will admit is this morbid desire to have Ellen come at once, however inconvenient it is to meet her. (283)

Patriarchal image of New York has been fallen in the crisis due to the unstable socio economic situation of the city as well as ongoing process of women empowerment though minor issues and human fault projects to humiliate women which Newland says, "As he paced the platform, waiting for the Washington express, he remembered that there were people who thought there would one day be a tunnel under the Hudson through which the trains of the Pennsylvania railway would run straight into New York" (187). He says, "She made no answer, and he sat in silence, watching her profile grow indistinct against the snow-streaked dusk beyond the window. What had she been doing in all those four long months, he wondered?" (289). Ellen resists patriarchy by using her long experiences and shows equal ability as, "She doesn't blind one; but she dries up one's tears." The answer checked the pleading on Archer's lips: it seemed to come from depths of experience beyond his reach" (291). Ellen behaves, "She met the words with a long silence, during which the carriage rolled down an obscure side-street and then turned into the searching illumination of Fifth Avenue" (292). Her activities and perception also resists ongoing patriarchy as, "She drew a deep is that ended in another laugh. "Oh, my dear—where is that country? Have you never been there?" she asked; and as he remained sullenly dumb she went on" (293). Ellen resists patriarchal notion of life by using her female body and performances although male perception of society tries to hit her by raising the questions of morality.

She was so placed that Archer, by merely raising his eyes, could see her bent above her work-frame, her ruffled elbow-sleeves slipping back from her firm round arms, the betrothal sapping shining on her left hand above her broad gold wedding-ring, and the right hand slowly and laboriously stabbing the canvas. (297-298)

Ellen portrays autonomy that rejects all tendencies to subsume the women's question and hits patriarchy. Her activities are guided by the Victorian notion of femininity which follows the male activities and resists patriarchy as, "She had spent her poetry and romance on their short courting: the function was exhausted because the need was past. Now she was simply ripening into a copy of her mother, and mysteriously, by the very process, trying to turn him into a Mr. Welland" (298). In the same way she says, "She merely looked paler, with darker shadows in the folds and recesses of her obesity; and, in the fluted mob-cap tied by a starched bow between her first two chins, and the muslin kerchief crossed over her billowing purple dressing-gown" (301). Female identity and autonomy are associated with activities and behaviors done by female that resist patriarchal notion of social life which Welland says, "She paused for this announcement to produce its effect. "That's what she's reduced me to already. The day after she got here she put on her best bonnet, and told me, as cool as a cucumber, that she was going to call on Regina Beaufort" (304-305). Society scandalizes women activities and tries to identify them as bad figures of society which Beaufort also follows and says, "She had the heedless generosity and the spasmodic extravagance of person used to large fortunes, and indifferent to money; but she could go without many things which her relation considered indispensable" (306).

In the novel, patriarchal notion of life appears as the means of domination of female mainly by mentions the issues of love, marriage and divorce. Granny activities is scandal by Newland as, “She turned away without answering and got quickly into the carriage. As it drove off she leaned forward, and he thought she waved her hand in the obscurity. He stared after her in turmoil of contradictory feelings” (311). He says, “She looked at him thoughtfully, and turned back to the divan. He sat down beside her and waited; but suddenly he heard a step echoing far off down the empty rooms, and felt the pressure of the minutes” (313).

The relationship between Granny and May reflects the ongoing changing scenario of male and female relationship of modern time though the male ego tries to dominate the freewill of female as Newland says, “She rose also, but lingered near the health. As he walked past her she moved forward impulsively, as though to detain him: their eyes met, and he saw that hers were of the same swimming blue as when he had left her to drive to Jersey City” (318-319). Archer could not be freed from the male ego which as, “Archer turned to the stage, where, in, the familiar setting of giant roses and pen-wiper pansies, the same large blonde victim was succumbing to the same small brown seducer” (323). It shows the male ego is fallen in the crisis though it attempts to come out form of social issues as, “The fact seemed an additional appeal to his pity: such innocence was as moving as the trustful clasp of a child. Then he remembered the passionate generosity latent under that incurious calm” (324). Granny activities clarify, “She had dropped into an armchair, and raised her head as he spoke. “Yes, dear?”” she rejoined, so gently that he wondered at the lack of wonder with which she received this preamble” (326). It highlights female’s attempts against patriarchy and urges for female identity which is taken as the essential thing for women’s development. In the novel Granny’s inspires by inner source and says, “She

sat silent, without a movement or a tremor of her lashes. She was still extremely pale, but her face had a curious tranquility of expression that seemed drawn from some secret inner source” (327).

In the novel, the main feature of women characterizes through projecting love stage of New York City which portrays the overall attempts of flame for freedom. Newland says, “Is it really worth while, dear? I know I’ve been unfair to her at times perhaps we all have. You’ve understood her, no doubt, better than we did: you’ve always been kind to her. But what does it matter, now it’s over?” (327). Newland tries to humiliate her by comparing her activities with Mr. Letterblair and says, “Well, the lady can’t deny that it’s a handsome arrangement,” Mr. Letterblair had summed up, after mumbling over a summary of the settlement. “In fact I’m bound to say she’s been treated pretty handsomely all round” (333).

She was excessively pale, and her pallor made her dark hair seem denser and heavier than ever. Perhaps that, or the fact that she had wound several rows of amber beads about her neck, reminded him suddenly of the little Ellen Mingott he had danced with at children’s parties, when Medora Manson had first brought her to New York.
(336)

Women in the patriarchal society are living in false identity. They are restricted to go outside from the house. They demand autonomous existence and true identity of female. For true identity with autonomous, there is necessary to change traditional patriarchal cultural value of society. Newland speaks in the novel the *Age of Innocence* as:

It was the old New York way of taking life “without effusion of blood”
: the way of people who dreaded scandal more than disease, who

placed decency above courage, and who considered that nothing was more ill-bred than “scenes,” except the behavior of those who gave rise to them. (338)

The male politics of New York’s society tries to scandal small weakness of female and control over whole race as Newland argues, “Through all his confusion of mind he had held fast to the resolve to say nothing that might startle or disturb her. Convinced that no power could now turn him from his purpose he had found strength to let events shape themselves as they would” (343).

It was a modern building, without distinctive character, but many-windowed, and pleasantly balconied up its wide, cream-colored front. On one of the upper balconies, which hung well above the rounded tops of the horse-chestnuts in the square, the awnings were still lowered, as though the sun had just left it. (363)

It highlights against women's domination which is cause of patriarchy which scandal human weakness as propaganda of controlling women which May says, “When he thought of Ellen Olenska it was abstractly, serenely, as one might think of some imaginary beloved in a book or a picture: she had become the composite vision of all that he had missed” (350). The voice of femininity is growing with the changing socio economic situation as, “Still, change was change, and differences were differences, and much as he felt himself drawn toward his future daughter-in-law, it was tempting to seize this last chance of being alone with his boy” (353).

Only the older people remembered so obscure an incident in the business life of New York as Beaufort’s failure, or the fact that after his wife’s death he had been quietly married to the notorious Fanny

Ring, and had left the country with his new wife, and a little girl who inherited her beauty. (355)

Edith projects domestic life of New York which is crawling without knowing anything. Female characters of the novel resist patriarchal notion by appearing in the public place.

Chapter: IV Conclusion

Males: Makers of Social Norms

Edith Wharton's *The Age of Innocence* deals with the conflict between social and individual fulfillment. It is a brilliant, sharply ironic portrayal of the changing scene of fashionable American life in Old New York. Ellen Olenska, the main protagonist of this novel is somehow able to resist ongoing patriarchal values of New York society which is based on marriage and divorce. Marriage is the most oldest and cruel patriarchal institution that exploits women since ages. In modern time that cruel patriarchal institution is being weaker because of the ongoing women right movement. The concept of divorce brings positive changes in the relationship between men and women which male dominated New York society does not easily accept and use marriage and divorce as the main tools to mark the virtue of women. In New York society men think that they are culturally superior to the women and try to make women as inferior by scandalizing divorce and portray it as the parameter of virtue and vice. Patriarchy defines that separating with husband is virtue and the women who divorce with husband is socially inflected or not virtue.

In the novel, Edith Wharton projects the attitude of aristocratic people living in New York. Ellen Olenska one of the members of upper class family hears the pre-rumor of divorces and resists this rumor by disobeying aristocratic norms and values of the society. She is aware of equal right and opportunity of women given by law but the society denies and virtue of women is measured by her marriage and family relation. Both women and men are equally responsible to make sound of the marital relationship. But the aristocratic Old New York society blames women for being divorcee. While Ellen has returned to New York after scandalously separating herself from a bad marriage to a Polish Count she convinces bridegroom's family not

to disturb but he becomes intrigued by the worldly Ellen who flouts New York society's fastidious rules. As Newland's admiration for the countess grows, so does his doubt about marrying May, a perfect product of Old New York society; his match with May no longer seems the ideal fate he had imagined. This shows the old attitude of people on marriage. Ellen wants to erase the ill practices by resisting male domination.

In the novel, patriarchal notion has been reflected through marriage and divorce. Old New York society is strict in marriage system and gives emphasis on the welfare of male. The society never thinks the right and choice of the female and only emphasis on the socio economic and cultural status of the men. Society behaves woman as an object and behaves in the patriarchal manner which clearly find in this novel through the characterization of Newland Archer. Women individual freedom is undermined if they want to struggle by practicing divorce they are socially ranked as the vice lady. Society only compares women fate with beauty and allowed men to consume the beauty like other food and drink. The novel satirizes the male dominated aristocratic life style of old New York which is unreliable in the contemporary New York. Ellen resists patriarchy though she does not come out from the stand point of aristocratic women. By being the family member of upper class she neglects the overall problems of female and only raises the issue of individual freedom.

The novel projects ugly picture of Old New York in which the men dominates women in the name of morality. The male protagonist of the novel named Newland Archer is fearful from so called morality and could not able to resist towards society and lives an unhappy married life. He loves Ellen but due to the social respectable life he ignores his individual happiness and marries May Welland. At the end part of novel, Newland is afraid of meeting Ellen Olenska after twenty six years of May's

death because of social norms and values. This shows that how Old New York culture is guided by so called morality. In this difficult situation Ellen somehow resists patriarchal culture and lives her life on her own choice. The 1870s New York society is based on patriarchal norms and values. In patriarchal structure the males are superior and female are inferior in same time. So, males are makers of every social norm. As a good child female should follow such norms otherwise they will punish.

To conclude, because of the social respectable life, individual happiness has been sacrificed by Newland which is the cause of patriarchal notion of love and marriage. Male domination never allows women to get married on her personal choice. In the same way there is less option to men to bring other man's wife. Thus Newland faces the problem but he could not resist though Ellen resists that.

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