

I. Introduction

The qualities of Henry James have brought forth a large body of criticism, and one may reasonably say that no generation will let him alone. His family environment was one of the cultures amidst a wealth which, under proper restraints, was adequate to free the members from the necessity of earning a livelihood. Beyond his home, his environment was international. His education was unique in the presence of a constant insistence on the discipline of responsible personal thinking. These conditioning factors are basic in any portrait of the human being, and they modeled his social, political, religious, ethical, literary and aesthetic habits of thought into patterns which will continue to activate the pens of many critics in the field of criticism.

Born in New York city on 15th April 1843, Henry James was educated principally in Europe. By 1876 he had published promising pieces of fiction and criticism in the United States, and had decided to devote himself wholly to literature. In December of that year he began living in London and visited America only occasionally. He was fascinated by the differences between the European or English scene and the American, and between his compatriots and their transatlantic neighbours. As an artist he saw the possibilities of the international theme for fiction. For James, Europe was like a stage, dexterously arranged and lighted, which revealed with especial vividness the Americans who played their roles upon it. In fact, he was the architect of the modern English novel. His long list of novels and short stories marks the point at which a study of modern literature began. It was he who brought the novel and the novelist out of the market and placed into the temple of art. His concern for the real value of the novel marks him as one of the titans of the 19th and

20th centuries. Therefore no history of English or American literature would be complete without including Henry James.

James's critics have been specific. He has been called a literary snob; the most delightful literary snob of the period. He was superlatively patronizing in his attitude toward literary methods not consonant with his own and so blind as to consider Hawthorne provincial while failing to see the incorrigible provinciality of the English. James had the highest regard for his own literary work. His prefaces to the selective New York Edition of his works (1907-17) are convincing evidences James has been accused of writing in an ostentatious style, expressing ordinary, simple ideas in tortures sentences more involved than the burden of their contents warrants. Against this charge others have sprung to James' defense. Carl Jan Dorren, for instance, has observed that "even in the elaborate, maturer books the style is obscure only in the sense that it speaks of matters less blunt and tangible than those which most fiction deals with" (217). William Dean Howells has noted the "luminous and uncommon use of words, the originality of phrase, the whole clear and beautiful style of his early work" (25).

James began his literary career writing sketches, stories, and anonymous reviews for American magazines, especially 'The Atlantic Monthly' and 'The Galaxy'. His first long fiction, *Watch and Ward*, a love story published serially in 'The Atlantic Monthly' in 1871, was reproduced in a book form in 1878-consummation hardly justified by its amateurish treatment of both action and dialogue. His first volume, *A Passionate Pilgrim and Other Tales* (1875), appeared when James was thirty two years of age, and it was readily recognized by his contemporaries as the work of a skilled writer. William Dean Howells, his friend of nearly a decade and the editor of 'The Atlantic Monthly', was more than cordial when he wrote: "In richness of

expression and splendor of literary performance, we may compare him with the greatest, and find none greater than he" (490).

As an American who spent most of his life in Europe, James was in a unique position to observe the sensitive adjustments between individuals and classes. He enlarged the conception of the novel itself by his discrimination in sentiment, and by the presentiments of human relationships. His interest was human being, and especially human being in society—man pressed and pressured and complicated by social forces, traditions and aspirations beyond more food, shelter and the satisfaction of animal needs. It was he who heralded the approach of the modern psychological novel.

Leon Edel has tried to establish James as one of the pioneers of the modern psychological novel which captures the nuances of "the stream of consciousness" through a verbal reproductive of "the atmosphere of mind." Mr. Leavis in *The Great Tradition* notes that James as a 'poet-novelist' and says that he combines Jane Austin's skill of observing and dramatizing manner with Hawthorne's "profoundly moral and psychological . . . poetic art of fiction" (61). In all his work, James was concerned in keeping himself on a high plane of responsible thinking and artistic craftsmanship. His constant effort was to offer the reader continuous revelation; life experiences, in James' novel, are constantly being phrased by characters acquiring new realizations.

Philosophically, James belonged to the school of Realism; he was convinced that the novel was the best form of art to represent the whole truth in life. His criticism and his own fiction place him there. He observed that Flaubert stemmed from Balzac, and Zola from Flaubert, and he himself was touched by all three. Honestly, truth to fact, however unlovely, made Zola's works honorable fiction in James's mind. But though James defended Realism, he did not practice Realism in

any narrow sense. He drew away from the Naturalism of Zola. He did not even follow the path of Garland's "veritism". There was too little of the reporter in him, too little of the social critic, and too much of the creative artist and speculative philosopher for him to follow the ways of Realism to farthest limits. He accepted and used some of the liberties and services of Romanticism, though he never would have called himself a Romanticist. Perhaps he may be described as a psychological realist. Katharine Fullerton Gerould has recalled that James was once adored "chiefly because he seemed to us to be the only person who had ever recorded the changes that go on in the mind exactly as they go on in the mind" (233).

He was basically psychological in his approach. His aim was ever to dramatize, with all the objectivity and immediacy of painting a portrait in public view, important processes of characters in unstable situations. He gave to literature at least three of its finest heroines – Milly Theale, Isabel Archer, and Maggie Verver – and a score or more of its interesting feminine personalities. He analyzed carefully the gradual degeneration of certain characters; conversely, he traced forces and elements which developed and integrated human beings to conditions of sound and finished personality.

Six women in three of James's best novels – *The Portrait of a Lady*, *The Wings of the Dove*, and *The Golden Bowl* – are elaborately developed symbols of two of James' most characteristic and persistent themes, faithfulness and treachery. Isabel Archer, Milly Theale, and Maggie Verver, all of whom James drew in the image of his cousin, Mary Temple, represent faithfulness, goodness, loneliness, and sensitiveness. Each of these women, wholly innocent and pure of heart and purpose, is shamefully betrayed by a friend of long standing. All three of the betrayers – Madame Merle, Kate Croy and Charlotte Stant – have long been in love with the men

who become the husband of their friends, and in each case financial limitations had prevented marriage. Their situations and their treachery are nearly identical. None of the three reveals to her wealthy and trusting friend the fact of her love of the man, and both Madame Merle and Kate Croy actively urge the marriage of their lovers to their wealthy friends in the hope of attaining financial security. Neither Madame Merle nor Kate Croy yields her lover after his marriage to another; Charlotte Stant is at first more honorable, though only by force of circumstances, and later carries on a liaison with her married lover, the prince, even when she herself has become the wife a man of wealth.

When one considers these three of James's masterpieces are built on the structure of trust and deceit, with corresponding characters, it is evident that in them will be found many of the author's basic thoughts. These novels, as well as others, raise problems of renunciation to achieve a higher good, of the law of retribution, of qualities of mercy, of the relationship or identity of morality and beauty, of free will, of sin, of fate underserved.

In James's novels and tales, women play the major role. Edmund Wilson points out that not only are most of his female characters either emotionally prevented or emotionally apathetic but the men also seldom achieve normal passionate fulfillment. James's men are not precisely neurotic, but they are the masculine counterparts of his women. They have "a way of missing out an emotional experience, either through timidity or caution or through heroic renunciation" (Turner 33).

James's speciality is to delineate the sophisticated, usually beautiful, women of wealth and position. But, his American women characters are all innocents in his phrase, moral – in his sense – not vulgar, not naïve. All are set in a complex of

European immoralities - in both Henry James's and the public's sense of the world.

These Americans are to dominate the international scenes of the novels. Thus, James sees his woman characters with the eyes of American gentlemen i.e. he sees them as Americans. They are all expatriates, Europeanized American corrupted by Europe.

From the beginning to the end, as we know, Henry James's fiction is concerned with the unconsolidated man, the 'divided self', a soul so deeply split in its inclinations, so checked and inhibited by its "variety of imagination' that it finds itself at a profound disadvantage in dealing with the 'hard, functional people' of the world also know what they want and set out to achieve their ends without hesitation or compromise or loss of energy. The creation and handling of this divided self may be regarded by formalist criticism as a necessity of James's art – an inevitable structural implication of James' desire to dramatize the theme of freedom and engagement.

James, for his first period, is noted for his 'international theme'. This 'international phase' encompasses such work as *The American* (1877), *Daisy Miller* (1879), and *The Portrait of a Lady* (1881). *The Portrait of a Lady* puts great emphasis, as do the earlier ones, on the general atmosphere of Europe, on the age and beauty and tradition not found in America. But even in this emphasis the novel does not entirely fit the pattern of the earlier group, for James's interest now lies not in the definition of the contrast but in a more direct fictional exploitation of its affect upon the sensibilities of the heroine, Isabel Archer. It is the archetypal Jamesian fable on the theme of human betrayal. The earlier theme has become a means rather than an end in itself. His second period was experimental. He exploited new subject matters, Feminism and social reform, in *The Bostonians* (1886) and political intrigue in *The Princess of Casamassima* (1885). He also attempted to write for the theater but failed. In his third phase, James returned to international subjects, but treated theme

with increasing sophistication and psychological penetration. His complex and mythical writings of this period are *The Wings of the Dove* (1902), *The Ambassadors* (1903) and *The Golden Bowl* (1904). In this mature period, little by little, dramatic action almost disappears from his novels. Characters usually spend their time talking about the different aspects and possibilities of the situations they are in.

It is also clear that James assumed evil often springs from psychological disturbances; in some cases it is strongly psychopathic in origin. Disintegration of character takes place in *Roderick Hudson*; Osmond's villainy is sadistic in *The Portrait of a Lady*; the thwarting of a primal urge over a period of time leads to the deception in *The Wings of the Dove*. In 'The liar' (1889) Mr. Capadose's inconsequential fictions arise from an aberration of mind, and by association his wife becomes similarly afflicted. Sex frustration moves Rose Armiger to murder Anthony Bream's little daughter in *The Other House*; a passionate love, broken by social pressures and later given a chance to renew itself clandestinely, impels the Prince and Charlotte Stant to deceit in *The Golden Bowl*. An obsession mounting to a mother's insane zealotry in 'The Author of Beltraffio' (1885) leads to the death of her son. The contaminations or abominations surrounding innocence in *What Maisie Knew* (1897) and 'The Turn of the Screw' graduate from simple arrested development of personality and lack of a mature sense of responsibility to grossest abnormalities of mind leading to horrors contingent on perversion. It is a general rule in James's works that when evil appears there is manifest also the sense of a disordered mind which tacitly explains but does not condone the sin.

The critical writings of James testify to his major interest in other than technical problems in the writing of fiction. One gathers that he admired George Eliot even more for her powers of thought, her broad sympathy, and her humor than for her

exquisite rhetoric. The simple greatness of Turgenev lacked the vanity which James found prevalent among French authors and heartily disliked. Indeed, Turgenev and George Eliot were in James' estimation the two foremost living writers of fiction by reason of their high intellectual and emotional powers, their "richness of inspiration." Insisting on emotional elevation, the young James found Anthony Trollope's novels essentially, organically, consistently stupid; and later, when age had given the critic an appreciation of Trollope's common sense, he still thought that the Englishman's imagination reflected only borrowed light, and that his attitude toward art was traitorous, for Trollope took "suicidal satisfaction" in reminding the reader that fiction was only fiction.

A preconceived, thoroughly devised plot, supported by a suitable structural method, was especially important to James, who could not depend, as did Scott and Cooper and Dickens on spontaneous invention at every turn. Moreover, unlike most novelist, James insisted more and more on the dramatic method for working out the problems he posed for his fiction. He was sensitive to plot for its expository service as well as for its service to logic, that is, to cause and effect.

James' plots generally culminate in some decision made by the characters, or in an improved appreciation of the nature of a situation. Some of the designs are quite simple. In "The Madonna of the Future", the whole force of the story is developed through a few scenes, progressive in time, leading to a final recognition by the artist that he will never fulfill his only sustaining ambition, to do a superb Madonna and child. 'Lady Barberina' (1884) is built on a simple international conflict in which the usual tables are turned. An English girl, marrying an American, becomes so dissatisfied with life in New York that she leaves for England, never to return. Thus

James reversed the general social law of international marriages: usually the stories tell of rich American girl given in wedlock to poor but titled Englishman.

The Portrait of a Lady exhibits a dazzling contrast by its finish and richness and power. This book represents the highest of his achievement – the first union of technical skill and emotional power. James himself thought highly of it, and he wrote in a playful boasting 'I can do better than that !' he retained his respect for it even after he had written the novels of his final period. The theme was a congenial one to James – The reactions of an attractive and intelligent girl with a finely developed sense of honor to an unfortunate marriage into which she entered of her own free will. *The Portrait of a Lady* shows Isabel Archer, an American girl, coping with the cold strategy of two extremely experienced representative of old world culture, Gilbert Osmond. The basic facts, though interesting enough, could have been reported adequately in a longish short story. But the gradual revelations of Isabel's plight, the steps by which she comes to realize that Osmond married her in order to provide for the illegitimate offspring of his liaison with Madame Merle, and her efforts to resolve her difficulties without sacrificing her integrity proved James's superb capability for treating situations calling for the most delicate perception of values.

It is true that the story as a whole is in many respects so like a biography or chronicle that it falls short of James's later conception of ideal technique, but it strikes a happy medium between the directness of his earliest manner and the tortuousness of his most difficult books. At all events, attention to structure did not prevent James from creating in Isabel Archer his most memorable heroine. Other heroines of James appear in situations as difficult, but to no other did James impart so much emotional warmth. Seldom does he give more loving care to setting than in his treatment of the Touchett estate on the Thames or provide richer detail than in the description of

Osmond's Florentine Villa. In this respects *The Portrait of a Lady* is even a finer work than *The American*, and indeed it exhibits all of James's most distinguished gifts except the faultless proportion of his later masterpieces.

The Portrait of a Lady is in a symbolic sense, the story of houses, its main problem being the choice of the right house by Isabel Archer. There are number of houses in the novel, each with its distinctive character, history and atmosphere. Each of these represents a way of life and conveys a sense of fate. Each of these metaphorically speaks for and about those who own it. There is a dramatic contrast of tone and quality; some houses breath freedom, fulfillment, and moral expansion; others confinement, frustration and withdrawal.

Literature Review

Henry James is not only a novelist but also a critic and often disputed man of genius with praise and abuse. His contribution to the English literature is not simple but his stand in the history of English literature is immense and indisputable. As a prolific writer, he has written many tales, essays and novels concerning various aspects of life and art. His masterpiece, *The Portrait of a Lady*, has been hailed by nearly all of his critics as one of the greatest novels of all times. So the novel since its publication has drawn attention of many critics. As many critics are pouring their critical sensibilities on it, the criticisms on the text are also varied owing to different perspectives.

James D. Hart mentions that *The Portrait of a Lady*, the first of James's mature masterpiece, is a triumph of his method of psychological realism, analyzing the relation of a young American woman with a group of European and expatriated Americans, who objectify her conscientious moral attitude, her sensitive appreciation, and her endurance under sufferings.

According to M.H. Abrams, the chief conflict in *The Portrait of a Lady* is between opposing desires or values in the protagonist's own temperament (225).

In 'The Ordeal of Consciousness in Henry James's', Dorothea Krook has pointed that suffering of Isabel is because of herself:

Isabel has to suffer because she had not the courage to be herself, completely and uncompromisingly, against all temptations. Because of for the sake of love she lapsed from truth, the love for which she lapsed failed her, and this is one truth about the human condition that the central story of *Portrait of a Lady* presses upon our attention. (57-58)

Another critic F.R. Leavis in his criticism 'The Great Tradition' comments upon the very novel in this way:

In Isabel Archer we have again the supremacy of the American girl, but in her we can recognize a real superiority, even if pondering it critically, we judge it to depend on a large measure of idealization. Her freedom in the face of English conventions appears and she is a firmly realized presence for us as a true emancipation of spirit. (147)

Walter F. Wright in his criticism 'The Madness of Art' has viewed Isabel from an existential angle that anyone is free to choose what to do or not without worrying the forthcoming consequence: "Her final choice to return to Osmond and to Pansy, who needs her – is free one. Yet the alternative is not really a life of comparative happiness with Goodwood, but the smashing of her ideal portrait of herself" (148).

But Andrea Roberts Beauchamp comparatively studies the very novel with Reverend Alden's story 'Isabel Archer':

Having too much confidence in her own judgement, James's Isabel refuses to listen to the counsel of her aunt and cousin just as Reverend

Alden's heroine dismisses the cautions of Mrs. Clayton. Both trust implicitly in their powers of assessment even though such powers have been totally untested. (270)

Likewise three critics Grenander, Rah and Valvo have commented the novel from the time-scheme point of view. They have got the mistakes committed by James in his novel while producing it, "He is guilty of only two discrepancies in the management of his complicated chronology. The remark that Isabel had not seen Ralph for upwards of a year when she had in fact, seen his eleven months earlier, and Warburthons age" (133).

Another critic Joseph Warren Beach comments, "The Portrait' is the development of an idea by the method of 'revelation' described in our first part. The adventures of Isabel Archer are more spiritual than material" (208).

But A.K. Chanda in his critical essay 'Art and Artists in *The Portrait of a Lady*' advocates that Osmond is the responsible person for the shattered dream of Isabel, "Osmond's urbanity and good nature after a certain acquaintance assume a sinister, even a diabolic cast. Isabel imagines herself living hell, in a world that led downward and earthward, into realm of restriction and depression" (118).

The Portrait of a Lady is widely acclaimed as a work of genius. It is novel where characters exist beyond the pages of the book, and where the heroine, represents condition of female in the then male dominated society. And none of these above cited critics have explored the situation of Isabel as the male-value dominated character where she tries to exist as an individual. So, I am going to explore this issue by the help of the theory of feminist discourse.

My research is basically concerned with Henry James's *The Portrait of a Lady*. I am applying the feminist discourse to go in the depth of the novel. My research text

consists four chapters. The first chapter includes introduction which I have completed mentioning about the writing style of Henry James, his literary texts and the literature review of the novel *The Portrait of a Lady*. In the second chapter I will present my research tool which I am applying in the text. And my research tool will be feminist discourse. Presenting my knowledge about the very tool in the second chapter, I will go for the textual analysis and that will be the third chapter of my research. And at last with the conclusion I will complete my research writing.

II. History of Feminist Literary Criticism

"Feminism is that part of the progress of democratic freedom which applies to women." Forbes (Robertson Hale 3)

Feminism may be defined as a movement seeking the recognition of the world upon a basis of sex equality in all human relation, a movement which rejects every differentiation between individuals upon the ground of sex. It tries to abolish all sex privileges and sex burdens. And it strives to set up the recognition of the common humanity of woman and man as the foundation of law and custom.

Feminism represents one of the most important social, economic and aesthetic revolutions of modern times. So, it can be said that feminism is a struggle of women for the liberation of their way of lives. It affects the world politically, culturally, spiritually and economically. It rejects the patriarchal society and redefines women's activities, works and goals from female – centered perspective. It is concerned with against the marginalization of all women, that is, with against their relegated to a secondary position, a submissive 'other', a second sex. Women were made voiceless and alienated creatures by the society in the traditional way of understanding because they were supposed to be odds with the traditional male model of knowing. And it is the feminism which gives the female a sense of friendship to alienated and voice to the voiceless.

Feminism can also be understood as women's attainment of social, economic and political rights and opportunities equal to those possessed by men. Feminism is a model for a social state-an ideal, or a designed standard of perfection not yet attained in the world. Feminism is related to the feminist social movement that seeks equal rights for women, giving them equal status with men and freedom to decide their own careers and destinations.

When we trace the women's subjection by men, we find that they have been subjugated from the beginning of human existence and civilization. It was said that male was always superior to female. Male tried their best to keep female under their control. And the world was on their side. The myth, the religious belief, the writings, the norms and values were created in the favour of male. The cause of human sufferings has been credited to Eve not Adam. It is common knowledge that Aristotle, Kant, Hegel and many others wrote unfavourably or simply incorrectly about women. The world has been questioning in the ability and chastity of women time and again but always salutes to men for the concerned matters. It is enough ! More than enough suppression that has been practiced by so-called male ideology which is highly necessary to be challenged. Those people who can't help objecting such biased ideology are called feminists. Alice Dever Miller has defined the feminist via poem. She believes that feminist is the one who wants to liberate herself from the so-called false ideology of society about women. It goes like this:

"Mother, what is a feminist?"

A feminist, my daughter,

Is any woman now who cares

To think about her own affairs

As men don't think she oughter. (52)

Feminist is a person, female or male, whose world view places the female in the center of life and society and who is not prejudiced based on gender or sexual preference. Anyone in a male dominated or patriarchal society who works towards the political, economic, spiritual, sexual and social equality of women.

Feminists are always engaged in an explicitly political enterprises working to change existing power structures both inside and outside academia.

Feminists argue that masculinity and femininity are not predetermined by the body itself, but are constructed with culture. The female is a matter of sex, the feminine-a matter of culture. Some feminists depend upon this distinction as a key to combating 'essentialism' or a deterministic view that 'biology is destiny.'

Feminists, with their earned experience and learned knowledge, feel that they need to start revolting against male's created ideology via writing which is known as feminist literary criticism. Feminism and feminist literary criticism are often defined as a matter of what is absent rather than present.

Guerin, Labor, Morgan, Reesman and Willingham have elaborated feminist literary criticism as a kind of political attack in their text *A Handbook of Critical Approaches to Literature* (1992). "Feminist literary criticism is often a political attack upon other modes of criticism and theory, and its social orientation moves beyond traditional literary criticism" (196).

Feminist literary criticism tries to explain how power imbalances due to gender in a given culture are reflected in or challenged by literary texts. Feminist literary criticism is actually a part of discourse of the new feminists emerged in Europe and America in the late 1960s to revive political and social issues associated with women's actual participation in western culture. "Women's Liberation Movement" has its origin in the Eighteenth century and there has been a continuous agitation for women's rights – social, economical and cultural and the freedom and the equalities of sex in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth century. Mary Wollstonecraft may be the earliest agitator to advocate the women's liberty of will and fair sex.

A Vindication of the Rights of Women published in 1792, by Mary Wollstonecraft, is one of the trailblazing works of feminism. She advocates that mind does not know sex and blames that it is society that views women in the role of

domestic slaves and alluring mistress by denying their political and economic independence. She argues that the education system of her time deliberately trained women to be frivolous and incapable. According to her, due to the traditional education system, women are compelled to study the sentimental novels, which are not intellectual but are sentimental. Because of the impact of such novels women can't exercise their intellectuality but are trapped in the sentimentality. They are directly affected by the novels that they study where a boy is depicted as an active person and girl is presented as passive beauty:

Women subjected by ignorance to their sensations, and only taught to look for happiness in love, refine on sensual feelings, and adopt metaphysical notions respecting that passion, which lead them shamefully to neglect the duties of life, and frequently in the midst of these sublime refinements they plump into actual vice. (398)

The concept of feminism is further carried by an American feminist Margaret Fuller. In her well known book *Women in the Nineteenth Century* (1845), she has depicted how women have been marginalized in our society. The issues of more equality and greater freedom for women are raised by Jon Stuart Mill in her book *The Subjection of Women* (1869).

One of the major novelists of twentieth century, Virginia Woolf, contributes a lot for the explosive development of feminism. In her famous work *A Room of One's Own* (1929), she has explained that it is a patriarchal society that has hindered or prevented women from realizing their productive and creative possibilities. She has basically explored the situation of woman writers. Woolf addresses the question of why a sister of Shakespeare would not likely have been able to write anything. She would have had none of the material resources – breadth of human experience, money

and time-to do so. She would have been discouraged by everyone. But Woolf encourages the women writers with the view that sense of identity and freedom of mind can't be captured by male society. "Lock up your libraries if you like; but there is no gate, no lock, no bolt that you can set upon the freedom of my mind" (824). Virginia Woolf stands on the belief that male-dominated society has its bad impact not only in day to day life but also in literature.

The path which had already been drawn by earlier feminists is continued to its destination by the help of Simen de Beauvoir's text *The Second Sex* (1949). She advocates that one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman. It is civilization as a whole that produces this creature . . . which is described as a feminine. By this cultural process, the masculine in our culture has come to be widely identified as active, dominating, adventurous, rational, creative and the feminine, by systematic opposition, has been identified as passive, timid, emotional and other. She writes, "the pose woman is to pose the absolute other, without reciprocity, deying against all experience that she is a subject, a fellow human being" (286).

The Second Sex which deals with the great collective myths of women in the works of many male writers. Beauvoir says the patriarchal myths have projected woman as other. This notion of the otherness of woman has the effect of equating masculinity and humanity. Not only 'other' but woman is also counted as a second sex. Males claim that there are so many things which they don't understand about female. Females are vast, they are something reserved, they can't be understood. So they project females as mysterious in the myth. But this is biased mentality. Woman, too, does not always understand man but there is no such thing as a masculine mystery. The point is that the male is on the master side and that mystery belongs to the slave. Creating false myth, she blames, men are acting as master and dominating

women as their slaves. She vociferously refuses the notion of a female essence prior to individual existence, and attacks the patriarchal myths about woman that presume that false essence.

In America, modern feminist criticism was inaugurated by Mary Ellman's deft and witty discussion. Her work *Thinking about Women* (1968) advocates about the derogatory stereotypes of women in literature written by men, and also about alternative and subversive points of view in some writings by women. Another critic Kate Millet's *Sexual Politics* (1969) is the first widely read work of feminist literary criticism. She attacks the male bias in Freud's psychoanalytic theory and some famous writers who aggrandize their aggressive phallic selves and degrade women as submissive sexual objects. Distinguishing between sex as biological determined and gender as a psychological concept that refers to culturally acquired sexual identity, Millet writes that "the essence of politics is power" (25) and that the most fundamental and pervasive concept of power in our society is male dominance. She argues that the relations between men and women are power relations: that men tend to have the power and that sexuality enforces their power. She uses the techniques of close reading to explore the discourse of such gender relations. She demonstrates how destructively the so-called famous male writers wrote about women and their sexuality.

Elaine Showalters one of the leading feminist critics in the United States, has identified three historical phases of women's literary development: the "feminine" phase (1840-80), during which women writers imitated the dominant tradition. Women were silent experiencers and used to accept male's power. Women wrote with an effort to equal those intellectual achievements of male culture. The "feminist" phase (1880-1920), during which women advocated minority rights. Political and

social equality and protest against the dominant tradition, values and injustice of women were encouraged. It is the very phase where women realized their stereotypes of wronged women. And the "female" phase (1920-present), during which dependency on opposition – that is, on uncovering misogyny in male texts – is being replaced by a rediscovery of women's texts and women. This phase develops the idea of female writing and female experience. Women begin to work as activists and revolutionary as well. In her one of the most influential works, *A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists from Bronte to Lessing* (1977), she shows her consciousness from the danger universalism that would bury feminists critical activities in a patriarchally founded discourse.

Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar start an extensive study of women writers and set up a feminist literary theory. They argue that in the past and into the present the writer's creativity has been identified virtually completely with men. Their aim is to locate a place where women's writing is heard. They have tried to create canon of female's writings. They object and claim that the male chauvanism has not given any position for women. So, women have to struggle against male's oppressive reading of women. Gilbert and Gubar offer a literary of the results of women's socialized anxieties: a variety of physical and mental illnesses including anorexia, agoraphobia, and claustrophobia. It may also be that these problems are not in fact difficulties which the woman alone faces, but may be due to the unreal demands which society places on women as a whole. Societal demands for certain types of body shape and certain types of complaint behaviour form women may result in behaviour such as anorexia, bulimia, depression and outburst of anger, all of which may be classified by a therapist as aberrations on the part of patient. They argue:

Inevitably, as we shall see, the literature produced by women confronted with such anxiety-inducing choices has been strongly marked not only by an obsessive interest in these limited options but also by obsessive imagery of confinement that reveals that ways in which female artists feel trapped and sickened both by suffocating alternatives and by the culture that created them. (1244)

Gilbert and Gubar go on tracing the difficult paths by which nineteenth – century women overcome their anxiety of authorship. They observe that women do not fit into Bloom's patriarchal model. They conclude that the women writer has from the beginning of her life had to struggle against the effects of socialization, which becomes a struggle against men's oppressive reading of women.

Thus when we analyze the development of whole feminist literary criticism, what we find is that voice in favour of feminism and a sense of searching identity were there in the very earlier literary writings and criticisms. The modern feminists, via their writings, have helped the women to raise the voice against the male suppression in day to day life and biased mentality in the literature. And now it is high time to start the debate over women's right.

Gender, Just a Created Discourse

One of the defining features of feminists work has been its attention to the issue of sex and gender. Challenging the formulation that "biology is destiny", feminists proposed the alternative view that sex is natural, grounded in the biological body, whereas gender is cultural. It relates, that is, to the various attitudes, behaviours, styles of dresses and social norms that determined whether one is masculine or feminine. Since gender is cultural, it also varies across time and across societies and is cut across by considerations of class, race, age and so forth. As such,

there is thus no direct link to the sexed body. Although contesting the idea that sex pre-determines gender identity, sexual difference feminists, Butler argues, nevertheless hold onto the idea of a binary gender system. Actually one never 'is' one's gender, only in perpetual and uncertain, though inescapable, condition of 'doing' gender, of repeating the acts and gestures that produce and sustain the notion of gender identity.

Butler argues that gender is performative. As she defines it, this means that "what we take to be an internal essence of gender is manufactured through a sustained set of acts, posited through the gendered stylization of the body" (xv). Butler contends that gender is not an expression of what one is; it is something that one does.

The beginning of feminism asserted the difference and anatomy of female as a person. As feminist theory developed, it got influenced by other critical theories; the structuralism and post structuralism invaded into it and the concept of female subject came to the question. The poststructuralists say that woman is a textual product, a linguistic construct, a particular position. It is not the biological difference of man and woman but the cultural difference.

Interrogating the politics of knowledge is a central project of postmodern thought. Since the Enlightenment, tradition has held that knowledge is a means of liberation and a source of power. In the postmodern account the connection between knowledge and power is more sinister; knowledge is not a means of liberation but, instead, a technology of social control. What is promulgated as the truth serves to legitimate and perpetuate existing hierarchies of power.

At one level the idea that knowledge can be used to control women is not new to feminist discourse. From early on feminists have taken issue with received truths that pathologized women, that limited women's sphere of activity and influence, that

valorized difference to men, and that excused male violence and sexual coercion. Postmodern thought takes a further step to ask what inserts are served by competing ways of giving meaning to the world and by the very projects of western thought, such as psychology itself. Human psychology is always controlled by human knowledge which is often product of the subjection of objects.

In his text *History of Sexuality*, Foucault talks about a newly productive discourse of sexuality by clarifying the extent to which modern sexuality is already produced through discourse. He believes that power, discourse, truth and knowledge are interrelated with each other. Power is immanent which is not outside but within the subjects of human discourse like sex, family, politics and other institutions or power is spread over all aspect of social life. And truth is product of relations of power and of the system in which it flows and changes as systems change. So truths produced within discourses are in the themselves neither true nor false. Discourse is created by those who are in power in their own favour and to exercise the power forever. But power is not anyone's private property; it goes on moving form one hand to another. Once already established discourse starts exercising power over community which is later challenged by next power holders. Foucault puts his idea in his essay 'Truth and Power':

If power were never anything but repressive, if it never did anything but to say no, do you really think one would be brought to obey it?

What makes power hold good, what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it doesn't only weigh on us as a force that says no, but that it traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, form knowledge, produces discourse. (1139)

But it might seem paradoxical to use Foucault's work within feminist theory.

Foucault's work is not always easily translatable into feminist concerns: his work on sexuality only touches marginally on the question of female hysteria and he is certainly not a theorist who addresses gender issues as they relate to women. Because of the perceived difficulty of formulating a clear political agenda within Foucault's view of discourse, it may also seem paradoxical that his work has been so widely used in feminist theory. However, discourse theory has been particularly productive because of its concern with theorizing power.

Resistance to power is to resistance to specific strategies by which power relations are patterned. Gendered power relations are specifically organized according to the interplay among the traditional discourses which have controlled women's bodies. Not always sure whether to castigate it or desire it, feminism's attitude towards power has been an ambivalent one. Liberal feminists keen to acquire equality with men argued for a share of men's power, seeing this as the route out of sex discrimination. Radical feminists and some materialist feminists, by contrast, saw male power as domination, the power over things or other human beings that had resulted historically in the subordination of women. They argued for its repudiation and overthrow. Rejecting a virile, masculinist form of power in favour of a specifically female conception. Some of these feminists reconceptualized power as the ability to do things, to create, and to generate. Power as a capacity betokened to create, and to generate. Power as a capacity betokened freedom from exploitation, and the promise of a new ethically oriented society. Others reacted critically to the idea that there could be a specifically feminine or feminist conception of power that arose from women's experiences, challenging the essentialist imperative that underwrote this claim. For many of these authors, power was seen as generative of both

liberating and constraining aspects of human life and identity. Reconfiguring the field of power would bring change, but a world in which power relations were non-existent was a utopian fantasy.

Considering Foucault's idea, what we can say is that the gender is also social construct. Male were physically powerful, so they first of all controlled the power and started exercising power to create the truths or knowledge for their comfort. Slowly and gradually that established discourse got its existence in the society. Society, without questioning, supported that created false notion about women. Now, power is not only in the court of male side. Women are also as powerful as men. The world has been carrying and practicing the male-created discourse which has no any function in the present world. This kind of established discourse has been attacked and distorted by the radical thinkers time and again. They believe that human civilization constructed discourse of gender over sex to empire one group by another group. The truth created by the discourse changes when the power changes. The women of the present world are very much conscious of their plight and domestic lives. They have also acquired the so-called power. So, with their power, they want to write new history, the history of equality, non-violence and indiscrimination on the basis of sex. And it is the feminism which represents one of the most important social, economic and aesthetic revolution of modern time.

Feminist theorists are generally concerned to analyse power relations and the way that women as individuals and as members of groups negotiate relations of power. Recent feminist work has moved away from viewing women as simply an oppressed group, a victim of male dominated, and has tried to formulate ways of analyzing power as it manifests itself and it is resisted in the relations of everyday life.

Foucault's revising of the model of power relations is very useful for feminist theorists trying to reinscribe the political into private sphere and attempting to map out possible strategies for bringing about change within increasing complex system of power. This notion of the web-like structure of power relations is one that feminist theorists have found to be of use particularly since it enables women to resist oppressive practices in their everyday practice and to see that resistance as a political act.

The notion of femininity as a social construct is so rigid that it does not allow for the possibility of change, and, it, instead, portrays women as passive recipients. It is assumed in this type of theorizing that stereotypes of femininity are constructs created by men. In some sense women as well as men are actively engaged in maintaining these discourses in place as well as trying to dismantle elements of them and replacing them with other more productive elements. Femininity is handled in ideological analysis as only having one clear meaning, that is a woman acting in a feminine way can only be interpreted as displaying weakness or difference.

Since discourse is something that you do, engaging with discourses of femininity constitutes an interactional relation of power rather than an imposition of power. Femininity does not have a single meaning, but depends on a wide range of contextual features, such as perceived power relations, for its interpretation and effect. Discourse theory sees power as enacted within relationship and thus as something which can be contested at every moment and in every interaction. Dorothy Smith has used the notion of a discourse of femininity in order to move away from this view of social constructs being imposed on passive female subjects. She stresses the fact that discourse structures are discontinuous; that is, they change over time because of women's resistance to them and because of changes in social structures.

Discourse is not only an abstract set of textual practices but it is the ground on which social relations are organized. Smith argues that discourse is the means through which social relations between individuals are negotiated. Where femininity as a discourse becomes most crucial is where it forms the focus of group activity by individuals where women are not portrayed as simple dupes of an ideology but rather as actively constructing positions for themselves, engaging with discursive constructs:

When the codes and images and viewed as women use, play with, break with and oppose them, the discourse of femininity appears not as a managed construct of the fashion industry manipulating people as puppets, but as an ongoing, unfolding, historically evolving, social organization with which women and sometimes men are actively at work. (204)

Thus women who seem to be displaying their femininity can be viewed as agents rather than simply as the passive victims of oppressive ideologies.

There are discursive and institutional structures which oppress women and which women in turn are either compliant with or resistant to. Thus, feminist analysis focuses on discourses rather than a single discursive as the cause or one of the determining factors in women's subjection.

In discourse, feminists do not deny the importance of institutional power, since it is clear that roles are carved out for individuals by these institutions. But perhaps they are more concerned with mapping out the multiple sites where power is enacted and negotiated. Discourse theorists find it more difficult to describe patriarchy, that is not to say that they don't believe in a system of discrimination which largely works in the interests of males at the expense of females.

In attempting to theorize femininity, Sandra Bartky has addressed the question of the origins of women's oppression and patriarchal power. She has used discourse theory to analyse anorexia, which she sees as simply the logical conclusion of the discursive structures of femininity. She sees anorexia as a discursive pressure on the female body.

Feminist discourse provides a set of beliefs and explanations that enable woman to understand and deal with her position within the dominant social formation. It makes sense of the category of woman. There is, however, no single discourse that produces woman. As Mouffe observes, woman as subject is produced in multiple, sometimes intersecting, sometimes conflicted, ways. Sexual difference is generated, for instance, at the level of family, law, social policy, and culture not through one single mechanism of patriarchy. This does not mean simply that there are multiple subject positions that are all different or dispersed. Rather the ensemble of practices, institutions and discourses that produce the social category women, reinforce and work on one another in a crucial way. At its most general, this means that woman is always over-determined as inferior or subordinate to man.

The Debate Over Women's Rights

The original contributions to women's rights were those who first taught women to read and thus to explore the world outside the home and immediate community. The idea of women's human rights is often cited as beginning in 1792 with the publication of *Vindication of the Rights of Women* by Woolstroncraft. Historical research further shows that the publication of *Lelivre de la cite des demes* (1405) by Christine de Pizan stimulated what French feminists call the debate about women which continues to the present.

Much of the debate has involved the traditional demeaning of women. This kind of debate has carried a long historical movement which has been broad and wide-ranging. In this debatable issue, a kind of discrimination was created, women were supposed to be less powerful group and were deprived of their history, their self confidence and eventually their legal ability to function as full citizens. Because of this reason the powerful group started institutionalizing the discrimination against the females through the education and socialization of children.

To break custom, to defy tradition and to overcome discrimination, there requires courage and leadership. Women were cultured to maintain the domestic affairs, to get married, to be good wives and mothers. Family was their means of economic survival and social institution. Girls were groomed for marriage, for reproduction and nurturance of human species. So, from the ancient time, women were domesticated by marriage. As Menander said around three centuries before the birth of Christ, "Marriage, if one will face the truth, is an evil but a necessary evil." So it is frequently said that females are born with disease and die when they get married.

Human beings do have a certain unalienable right that is to get education. And it took centuries for women to gain right to education and opportunity to find the place outside the home. The beginning of women's education began with literacy. As literary rates increased, women began to articulate their view of the world. The industrial revolution and the advances in science and technology contributed immensely to women's emancipation.

By the time the United Nations was organized in the mid 20th century, internationally, a critical mass of women had been educated, were employed outside the home. They gained enough legal and social freedom to participate in public life. Numerous international women's organizations had more than 50 years of experience

behind them. As a result of lobbying by these organizations and with support from female delegates the phrases "equal rights of men and women" was inserted in the UN charter.

The commission of Human Rights failed to recognize women's aspirations adequately. So, women delegates and non-governmental organization supporting them were politically powerful and astute enough to obtain a Commission on the Status of Women. This CSW helped to draft and successfully lobby the adaptation of the convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women.

At the 1993 world conference on human right, NGOs focused on women's human rights and brought the previously hidden issue of violence and oppression against women in international attention. "Women's rights are human right" became the slogan. Thus the debate begun in 1405 got continuity to the present world.

III. Revolutionary Character of Isabel Archer: A Textual Analysis

The Portrait of a Lady is the story of Isabel Archer, a very beautiful and intelligent girl, who has to surrender her freedom in the male dominated society. In the novel we find her as an independent, studious and expressive one. She is endowed with so many merits that a simple person hardly meets. She dreams of being capable of everything and wants to enjoy the liberty in the state of freedom. She does not undervalue herself but always equalizes with males. Such qualified, young and energetic girl has to face the tragic situation in the later part of her life. The question 'why?' always haunts the readers.

Isabel is not judged by the male characters of the novel for her intelligent her creative mind and studious behaviour but she is always taken as a beautiful girl with whom Casper Goodwood, Ralph, Lord Warburton and Mr. Osmond always want to engage. She is from the beginning to the end of the novel, proposed by the above mentioned characters. She does not get chance to flourish her creative mind. Her virtue for knowledge is, time and again, shattered by the marriage proposals. She is destined to face tragic situation because of her sex. She is the epitome for the world that a female can never be free from the constructed unseen chain. The more she tries to escape form the constructed ideology, the nearer she comes to it. The male characters of the novel knowingly and unknowingly are practicing the discourse which the human civilization from the beginning has been utilizing in the society. The male characters show their maleness and female characters also add the fuel to it unknowingly.

Ralph, Isabel's cousin, is not that much traditional one as Mr. Osmond is. He loves his cousin's freedom. He is not selfish but generous. He cannot marry her because he is sick of malady. He knows her inner wish of traveling the whole Europe.

So her requests his father to leave bequest for her to put a little wind in her sails. He likes her practicing her full potentiality of freedom. So when he knows that Isabel is going to get married with Osmond, he becomes very sad and warns her that she is preparing the cage for herself. He believes that marriage is the stage where the unseen chains woven by the society are ready to fasten the female.

But Isabel is not ready to accept the caution given by her cousin. She has already been manipulated by Osmond's so-called false notion about life, love and freedom. He creates a kind of belief in the mind of Isabel and is able to persuade her easily. Now Osmond is all in all for Isabel. His sweet saying, "you can do exactly what you choose. You can roam through the space" (266) – makes Isabel believe that her the would-be-husband, Osmond, is the least sordid person in the world. She evaluates Osmond as the suitable person a girl needs to marry. She imagines of her dream being fulfilled by the support of a very good man. And it is Osmond with whom she, within herself, builds the world of dream where she can be happy. She can be independent and she is free to do whatever she likes, Osmond is in her every step to help her. So, she does not delay to get married with Osmond though all of her relatives are against this relation. She challenges them and uses her freedom in selecting her life partner to get her dream and her imagination. But when she gets married, then she knows the truth that man's appearance and their inner reality do not always match. What they appear may not what they are. They are mysterious to females. The females cannot know the hidden truth in man's soul just by evaluating their sweet language and mesmerizing opinions. They take women as a play thing with what they want to play with a trick and enjoy in their success.

Osmond, who says before marriage that he feels very happy in her freedom, in her ideas of getting experiences of the so many places, tries to stop her and threatens her

after his marriage when she has to go to meet her dying cousin in Gardencourt. He tries to cut Isabel's wings of imagination simply because she is now his wife. He believes that his wife has to think what he thinks, she has to act what he directs, she has to play when he orders and she has to do what he likes. Osmond represents the state of man and their ideas toward women before marriage and after marriage.

Osmond seems very polite, very somber and idealistic before marriage but immediately after marriage he turns to be different one, his reverence towards Isabel has flown away and he changes himself as a selfish creature and as a kind of cage for Isabel to trap.

Osmond has very rigid mentality for his daughter, too. Rosier wants his daughter but Osmond does not like his daughter willing to marry him. Osmond believes that Pansy cannot be happy with Rosier because he does not have enough property. Osmond thinks that wealth can buy everything – happiness, success and prosperous life. He marries Isabel first for her money and second for her beauty. So, now he wants to handover his daughter's hand to a wealthy person instead of the one who loves his daughter. Pansy, his daughter, has been manipulated by the male – created discourse. She cannot object her father. She believes that her father is always right because he is her father. Osmond has created a boundary for Pansy which she cannot cross. She is afraid of going against her father's decision. She unwillingly has to obey him. Her inner desire to marry with Rosier does not materialize. She even refuses to dance with Rosier because of her father's order though she loves him from the depth of her heart. She is again taken to convent for her further education and morality which is traditional one and is sure to push her in the depth of the male created discourse in the society. She will come back her father's house being more submissive and puppet which he likes to change her in. His daughter cannot oppose

any decision which he puts upon her, she admits the heartbroken decision which he makes against her. She feels that her father is always right. She cannot deny because she is not as perfect as Isabel.

Though Isabel seems to be brave, she is afraid of her husband. Isabel very clearly knows that her husband hates her, he hates her love for freedom, he hates her too many ideas, and he hates her because she is a female and takes her as a second sex. She cannot oppose it when she first knows her husband's reality. He has deceived her, he has lied her and has never respected her after marriage. He goes without being questioned for his deeds because he is male. He is free to do anything he likes. He interferes Pansy's life, and had a bad relation with Madame Merle. He shatters Isabel's freedom. He can do all these things because he is superior to them in the male created discourse.

Osmond even objects Isabel to go to meet her sick cousin Ralph because he does not like that. It is her moral duty to see her dying cousin who tries his best to make her independent by the financial support. So, Isabel, crossing the boundary which Osmond has drawn, challenges Osmond's patriarchal belief. She goes to Garden court to meet Ralph ignoring the threats given by her husband. There, she shows her bravery, her love for freedom. She proves that she is independent one who cannot live being submissive forever.

She protests against her husband who symbolically stands for male dominated society. But unlike her, Pansy cannot do anything to be herself, she keeps on being suppressed by her father. She accepts her father's opinion thinking that he is always right. She is being educated the way he wants. He wants to seed the traditional kind of belief in his daughter's mind so that she cannot be revolutionary one.

In the novel, Isabel stands for the liberty, equality and knowledge whereas Osmond stands for rigidity that helps the norms and beliefs made for women to get continued in the society. In the end section of novel, we find Isabel being confused about her destination where Goodwood once again proposes her. He again talks of love, tries to persuade her with beautiful words. He promises that he will not leave a stone unturned for her happiness and liberty. He tries to get benefit of her dilemma and says, "you don't know where to turn. Turn straight to me. I want to persuade you to turn me" (498). He further says, "Why should you go back—why should you go through that ghostly form?" (498). Goodwood may not be like Mr. Osmond, he may love her from his heart but he also appears to be carrying the superior feeling because he kisses her without her permission and leaves her in melancholic condition instead of helping and suggesting her.

Isabel has once been deceived by the sweet but false promises. She has clearly known the male intention towards females. What males think about females and how they act in the real life are totally different things. So, even if she believes Goodwoods's promise because he keeps on loving her form the beginning to the end of novel but she cannot let her be played like a puppet in the hand of one male to another. Though she does not like her husband's mentality, his behaviours to her and his way of life, she decides to go back to Rome in her husband's house. Though she does not get any information from Osmond, and no any letter from Pansy, she finally goes back to Rome. But as a critical reader, we should not understand her returning to Rome as a normal one. She is back to Rome to oppose her husband's hegemony, and rescues his daughter from the cage which Osmond with the help of society have weaved. She once has promised her step-daughter, "I don not desert you" (472).

She could perhaps live the happy life being submissive in Goodwood's paw or she could get more freedom divorcing with her husband and utilizing her sufficient amount of money for her desires. She does not do any of them and returns to her husband. We know that Isabel hates her husband, we know that their ideas do not match and again we know that Osmond always remains hard for Isabel to understand. Then the question comes – why is she returning to her husband? There may have various answers. And among them one is most probable that she is back to challenge male society which from human civilization has been creating many kinds of discourses and using them to undervalue the female as second sex. She has to challenge her husband who is one element created from that discourse and always carries the discourse to use. We assume that she will not live a happy life but a difficult life where she will have to struggle from step to step. But she chooses it. So, she can be taken as a female character who has determined to spend her life in difficulties for the liberation and equality of female.

Too Many Ideas of Isabel Archer

It is typical of James's conscience as an artist that he should have insisted at this point on presenting Osmond so directly. The technical difficulty of getting the speeches just 'right' must have been enormous to show Osmond's feeling as genuine and attractive enough to make psychological and dramatic sense of his irresistible charm for Isabel at this critical stage of their relationship, yet at the same time to make it only the kind and degree of genuineness and attractiveness that would be consistent with the character he is to disclose after the marriage. Osmond really does like Isabel, he really does look forward to finding in his marriage with her the perfection of personal happiness; he really does have the highest expectations of their life together-expectations, their way, quite as high as Isabel's own. Consequently his

disappointment of his expectations, though not morally justifiable and never justified, is yet as genuine as Isabel's, his sense of betrayal as strong as we shall see, Isabel herself comes to recognize - is an important aspect of the tragedy which may be ignored only on pain of losing half its truth and power. There is, however, one thing that Gilbert Osmond does not like in Isabel Archer; and upon this hangs the greater part of the tragedy.

Lord Warburton had called it her mind, her remarkable mind', and Osmond calls it her ideas. It is her ideas that Osmond does not like, and in particular the moral emphasis of her ideas. These he sees as the regrettable product of her provincial upbringing in her native town of Albany; and to a man of developed aesthetic sensibility there is nothing more distasteful than moral ideas in a charming woman, especially when she happens to take them really seriously. He is confident, however, that he can cope with this flow—serious indeed but not irremediable – in an otherwise delightful nature. To cope with it means of course, for Osmond, not to accept it or accommodate himself to it but to master it: to suppress it if necessary; if it proves stubborn, to eradicate it – destroy it root and branch. He intimates this intention to Mandame Marle early in the story, in a brief exchange with her:

'She is really very charming. I've scarcely known more graceful.'

'I like her very much. She's all you described her, and into the bargain capable, I feel, of great devotion. She has only one fault'

'What's that?'

'too many ideas.'

'I warned you she was clever.'

'Fortunately they're very bad ones', said Osmond.

'Why is that fortunate?'

'Dame, if they must be sacrificed !' (249)

From this it is clear just how intensely Gilbert Osmond dislikes Isabel Archer's ideas, how ruthlessly determined he is to get rid of them and how assured of his competence to accomplish this desirable end without undue inconvenience to himself.

But in this last supposition he is fatally mistaken. Isabel's ideas, it turns out, are not so easily suppressed. Though she desires above everything to be a loyal and loving wife to Gilbert Osmond, is impossible for her, being what she is, not to voice her ideas – her moral ideas – about many things in the life of her husband and the life of the society into which she has been drawn by her marriage. In particular, it is impossible for her not to express her opinion about the degenerate morals of the fashionable Roman society in which her husband chooses to live. And since he identifies himself with the values of the society, it is unavoidable that her criticisms should by implication be directed also against him personally.

And this is what Gilbert Osmond cannot bear: that her criticism should be directed against him – against his standards, his attitudes, his assumptions. This is an assault upon his vanity and egotism for which nothing can compensate, and it is perhaps not surprising that it should lead him in the end to hate his wife with a cold, implacable hatred. This is how Isabel comes to see it:

He had plenty of contempt, and it was proper his wife should be as well furnished; but that she should turn the hot light of her disdain upon his own conception of things this was a danger he had not allowed for. He believed he should have regulated her emotions before she came to it; and Isabel could easily imagine how his ears had scorched on his discovering he had been too confident. When one had

a wife who gave one that sensation there was nothing left but to hate her. (369)

This expression the final tragic horror of Isabel Archer's situation: that she should be hated not for what is worst but for what is best in her—for free enquiring mind, for her moral purity, for her desire to uphold, to her capacity, what she believes to be right and good. And this, we are meant to see, is indeed one of the profoundest of the tragic ironies of life: to be rejected and despised – hated, as Osmond comes to hate Isabel - for what is best in one, and by those in whom one had placed one's most loving trust.

Osmond wants Isabel to forsake all her ideas. She is burden for him because of her ideas. One can ask the question why Osmond is that much irritated with the ideas of his wife. The answer is that her ideas bring the obstacle to use his masculine dictatorship and his wrong evaluation towards her is always challenged. So, he wants her to get rid of her ideas:

He said to her one day that she had too many ideas and she must get rid of them. He had told her that already, before their marriage; but then she had not noticed it: it had come back to her only afterwards [. . .]. He had really meant it – he would have liked her to have nothing to her own but her pretty appearance. (366)

She has too many ideas for herself; but that is just what one gets married for, to share them with someone else. One cannot pluck them by the roots, though of course one might suppress them, be careful not to utter them. Osmond, too, thinks at first that he can change her, and she tries her best to do what he likes. But she is, after all, herself – she cannot help that, and now there is no use of pretending, wearing a mask or a dress, for he has known and has made no apprehension that he will hurt her. Her

ideas keep on leading her towards her destination, which direct her to oppose Osmond and go to Gardencourt and later once again manipulate her to return to Rome to her husband. Her act of opposing her husband suggests us that she is no more submissive and docile but a revolutionary one. Her too many ideas help Isabel to construct her own room and stand being independent.

Marriage, a Problem for Isabel

Isabel Archer is young, intelligent and charming American girl of modest means. She has been born and brought up in Albany. She is rescued from this provincial backwater by her aunt Mrs. Touchett, an energetic, outspoken, commonsensical expatriate American. Mrs. Touchett carries Isabel straight to Gardencourt. Isabel finds everything and everybody at Garden court enchanting; and she herself in turn enchants them all. Ralph is an immensely clever, imaginative, passionate young man, who instantly falls in love with Isabel. But being consumptive, he cannot propose to her, chooses instead to conceal his passion behind a smokes – screen of witty disenchanting levity, and contends himself with making Isabel's career the object of his detached and amused contamination. Ralph's attitudes to Isabel plays an important part in the story.

Besides Ralph, however, Lord Warburton, a young nobleman living in the neighbourhood and a frequent visitor to Gardencourt, also falls in love with Isabel; and refusing Warburton's proposal of marriage, Isabel's engaging young woman receives the first important extension of her life experience. Lord Warburton is seen to be not only touching simple-hearted, but also simple-minded. This comes out most clearly in the delightful scene in which he asks Isabel to marry him. Lord Warburton there shows himself to be totally incapable of understanding Isabel's reasons for refusing him. He finds Isabel Archer enchanting in every respect except that in which

she is disposed to value herself-the quantity designated, with deliberate vagueness, her mind, her 'remarkable mind'. The thought of her mind fills Lord Warburton with nervous apprehension: yet what is it but her mind that sets Isabel Archer apart from all the other enchanting young women with whom Lord Warburton might have fallen in love?

More exactly, it is her desire to use her mind, in ways as yet not fully specified or specifiable; to enlarge it, develop it, so that it may become the instrument for satisfying her passion for knowledge and experience, and her desire for the fullest self-realization: it is this that makes Isabel Archer 'remarkable' – so much more remarkable, it seems, than Lord Warburton can find altogether comfortable. And it is because Isabel knows this about herself, though so dimly and confusedly, and knows also that to marry Lord Warburton would mean the end of her aspiration after this self-development, that she refuses his offer of marriage.

In the meantime, our attention is invited to the next important situation designed to bring out Jane's engaging young woman. This is Isabel's relationship with Casper Goodwood, her American suitor, who comes to Gardencourt soon after Isabel's refusal of Warburton, to press his suit. In Casper Goodwood, James desires to give us a type standing as nearly as possible at the opposite pole to Lord Warburton. A Bostonian, the son of a prosperous cotton industrialist, he has, though still young, been running the family business for some years; and he is offered to us as the late nineteenth century variant of the modern American tycoon. He has all the gifts and energies required for concerning and executing large practical projects of the kind that change the face of an industry overnight and he is liberally endowed also with the gift of what is called leadership – the power to master men, to kindle their interests and

direct their wills to accomplishment of large practical enterprises. He is distinctly manly man or (as Isabel puts it to herself) a stubborn fact.

Isabel can respect and admire him; but she cannot, she finds, like him. He is too stiff, too sober, too inflexible; too much lacking in the qualities of unnaturalness, easiness, grace-she can admire his integrity, his solidity, his seriousness, but she cannot help feeling just a little irritated by his manners. What it all in the end amounts to is that Casper Goodwood, and having taken it in, decides that she cannot live at close quarters with it. So she turns him down when he comes to Gardencourt to ask her to marry him, leaving the stage clear for the central relationship with the book, her meeting with and final marriage to Gilbert Osmond. For Isabel Archer, Osmond is more than a merely a man of cultivated taste. He is poor, he is solitary, he is handsome, in the finest, least obtrusive way. He is grave and somewhat somber, yet with an effect not at all depressing but only intriguing. And, above everything, he has personal destination of a kind and in a degree overwhelming to her. His manners, his conversation, his activities make him for Isabel the first really interesting man she has known.

Isabel has ardent desire to enlarge and enrich her experience of life, to grow in wisdom and virtue under in the help of the most liberal of men. And she wants to use her money in the service of someone she loves. These are the two fundamental needs of her nature; and in Gilbert Osmond she believes she has found someone who will satisfy both. She believes that he is a man who in turn will share her desire for self-development and by virtue of his superior gifts and accomplishments will contribute everything in the world to the enlargement of her mind, the refinement of her sensibilities, indeed to the extension of her life's experience. Thus by adding to the attraction of Osmond's great personal distinction these two conditions of her own

nature, her desire for self development and her desire to be served, and to these again her certainty that Osmond, supremely, will meet these needs of her nature, I arrive at a reasonably complete view of Isabel Archer's motives for marrying Gilbert Osmond.

But after marriage with Isabel, Osmond is totally changed. He, astonishingly, now gives the impression of being coarse, and brutal, or at least brutalised; and cold and ruthless: in every way, in short, not a delightful person. And if he is all this, he is appallingly unlike the man Isabel Archer had thought she was marrying; and if he is not what Isabel thought he was, what is he; and what has happened – to him to her, to the marriage? What first emerges from Isabel's analysis of the failure of her marriage is the real character of Gilbert Osmond. He has indeed turned out to be a man very different from Isabel's first conception of him. He has indeed turned out to be a brute: morally coarse, and cold hearted. He is now appallingly egotistical, and capable of acts of calculated violence mental cruelty. This is the man in whom Isabel Archer had believed herself to see the perfection of delicate feeling and moral refinement. What makes the disclosure of his real character so terrible is of course, the betrayal it implies of Isabel's trust and love; of her trust in his goodness upon which her love had been founded; and of all her dearest hopes of self-fulfillment through love and service of the man who had thus betrayed her.

Her belief about Osmond proves to be wrong. She thinks that Osmond will play a very important role to make her wisdom flourish. He will nurture her desires and help her to fly in the sky of freedom. She selects him for his good nature which he shows before marriage. But suddenly after marriage, he starts treating her like his private property. She is surprised with his suddenly changed behaviour but does not dare to go against of him directly. She keeps on tolerating his unmatched behaviours. But how long can it go? Osmond tries to show male suppressive power to

his wife. He has based mentality about sex. He is with the discourse which has been created by society to count female as other. He tries to practice it and continue it. But he cannot do it before marriage because at that time, he believes, she is not his possession. He thinks that marriage is that culture which makes female servant and male, a master. He wants to be master of her wills, of her dreams and of her imagination. So, from the novel what we come to realize is that male always tries to get victory upon the female after marriage. Marriage is a nature supported culture, about what society has constructed a false discourse to empower the male against female. But we can see Isabel, the protagonist, trying to adjust herself in the culture not breaking it but reforming it. So, she does not divorce with her husband and comes back to her husband's house to get respectful identity in their conjugal life, to struggle with being his wife.

Challenge of Isabel Archer in Male-Dominated Society

In *The Portrait of a Lady*, where portraiture is the primary aim, James seemingly exhausted every resource at his command. There are introductory paragraphs which account for the background and environment of Isabel Archer. The reader has been given dozens of hints about Isabel's personality mainly by indirection. For example, we learn that Isabel is the intellectual superior among the sisters. The description of the heroine in her immature days, with her restless curiosity, her idealistic view of the world as a place of brightness, of free expansion, of irresistible action, her warm generous feeling for life and all its possibilities are very explicitly stated. She never describes her own struggle towards consciousness and conscience. Her struggle is intensely moving personal and is clearly circumscribed by the limits of an individual and distinctly individualized self. The novel seems to be the biography of Isabel Archer and has the general character of a chronicle. Essentially the portrait

is the development of an idea by the method of revelation described in the early part of the novel.

Isabel considers life an inexhaustible source of knowledge and happiness. She is fresh and natural and quick to understand, to speak. She confidently expresses her independence, institution and opinion about what she has seen. She feels that she is not stupidly conventional. Isabel Archer expects to find in Europe a kind of freedom and happiness which she has missed at home. Isabel has lived much in her imagination, shaping her image of the world from her reading, she has even preferred to keep a door closed in order to imagine what lies beyond. At first Isabel's life has been free from sorrow and unpleasantness. Indeed, she tells Ralph Touchett that it's not absolutely necessary to suffers, we are not made for that. But the more she grows up her mind in the real world, the more she starts realizing that the society is not in favour of female. There are so many norms and values, created by society, waiting to make lame to the capable person who belongs to the female group.

In the novel, there are so many paragraphs and conversations which show us how the discourses, created against female, are working in the society. Not only that, but the novel also depicts the protagonist, Isabel, as a conscious, critical and imaginative lady who can search her self identity via her knowledge:

Isabel Archer was a young person of many theories; her imagination was remarkably active. It had been for her fortune to possess a finer mind than most of the persons among whom her lot was cast; to have a larger perception of surrounding facts and to care for knowledge that was tinged with the unfamiliar . . . Isabel as a prodigy of learning, a creature reported to have read the classic authors – in translation. (54)

A person, who is studious, is likely to have more consciousness in her mind. Isabel spends most of her time in thinking of beauty and bravery and magnanimity, she has a fixed determination to regard the world as a place of brightness, of free expansion, of irresistible action: she holds it must be detestable to be afraid or ashamed. She has an infinite hope that she should never do anything wrong. More than that it is her theories that Isabel is very fortunate in her being independent, and that she ought to make some very enlightened use of that state. She puts herself in intellectual category and proclaims to Ralph, "I think I've; most girls are horridly ignorant" (51), when Ralph tells her that she apparently has a great passion for knowledge.

Isabel Archer's aunt Mrs. Touchett, also seems to be independent. She does not care of her husband; and keeps on traveling from one place to another place. She is not under the control of her husband and lives a free life. She takes her responsibilities herself and detaches form the domestic affairs. But she, too, sometime appears to be supporting the traditional belief that teaches a girl should do this and should not do that. When Isabel is sitting with Ralph and Lord Warburton late at night, she comes and says to Isabel:

"Not at the least. Young girl here –in decent houses – don't sit alone with the gentlemen late at night."

'You were very right to tell me then', said Isabel. 'I don't understand it, but I'm very glad to know it.'

'I shall always tell you', her aunt answered,' whenever I see you taking what seems to me too much liberty.' (69)

These above mentioned lines prove that though aunt – Mrs. Touchett fells herself independent and believes the equal position between male and female, she unconsciously believes that females are after all females – they have to be conscious

to the society. The question comes if females have to be conscious with the rules of society, why not male? Why are males not asked with suspicious questions when they sit with females for the late night? This is how the constructed discourse is ruling over the mind of people in the society.

Isabel wants to do many things in her life. She says, "I want to see as many countries as I can" (79). She wants to accumulate the knowledge with her experience. But she is time and again proposed and made weak by the marriage proposal. When it is the time that she has to walk her path for her destination successfully, her mind is forcefully occupied by the concept of marriage. She is not let free to work with her creative theories. She denies the marriage proposals. She once says to Lord Warburton, "I should try to escape fate if I were to marry you" (122). She does not want to escape from her fate by marrying with somebody but wants to struggle with it. She has the desire to know everything, every place and every theory, even if it is not possible. She has to clarify everybody that why she is not getting married. Why is the question of marriage only asked to the female and not to male? She does not understand it but only can realize. Isabel does not want to begin her life by marrying. She believes that there are other things a woman can do. She again has to answer to Goodwood why she is not ready to marry, ". . . But I really do not want to marry or talk about it at all now. I shall probably never do it – no never. I've a perfect right to feel that way, and it's no kindness to a woman to press her so hard, to urge her against her will . . ." (142).

Isabel has to be free from any kind of pressure, like Ralph, Warburton and Goodwood. She should also have the right to choose life, liberty and pursuit of happiness. But why is she questioned for her decision, for her private will? Why does she necessarily have to answer them? The answer is that she is female and female

does not have private life in male-dominated society. They should be public matter. Isabel wants to enjoy with her liberty. She is always disturbed from doing that. If there is a thing in the world that she is fond of is her personal freedom. But Casper Goodwood, a male character of the novel, carries different notions. An unmarried woman, for him, is not independent; there are all sorts of things she cannot do: she is hampered at every step. So he believes that a woman always needs a support from somebody which she get after she marries. And he is ready to be her guide.

Unlike that Ralph, Isabel's cousin, believes that one needs to have enough money to get independent. He clearly knows that Isabel wants to travel whole Europe. He likes to put a little wind in her sails. He calls people rich when they are able to meet the requirements of their imagination. Isabel has a great deal of imagination. But to fulfill her imagination she requires financial support. He thinks Isabel has to marry to get financial support. He does not want that she should get married. If she has an easy income, she will never have to marry for a support. So he requests his father to leave bequest for her. Ralph appears to be an encouraging source for Isabel. He tells to Isabel:

Live as you like best, and your character will take care of itself. Most things are good for you You have too much power of thought – above all too much conscience. It's out of all reason, the number of things you think wrong. Put back your watch. Diet your fever.

Spread your wings; rise above the ground. It's never wrong to do that.

(196)

But the thing does not happen as Ralph wishes. The meeting of Isabel with Madame Merle turns the life of Isabel from one side to next corner. Isabel feels Madame Merle is active and intellectual person. When Merle knows that Isabel is not only

beautiful and talent but also is rich, she tries to be more close to Isabel. She pretends to be advocating the inequality of sex in society; she acts as if she loved female's independent and liberty. She says to Isabel:

A woman perhaps can get on; a woman, it seems to me, has no natural place anywhere; whenever she finds herself she has to remain on the surface and more or less, to crawl. It is very true that I do not see you crawling: you stand more upright than a good many poor creatures. (175)

Being close to Isabel, Madame Merle is slowly pushing her near to Mr. Osmond. And Mr. Osmond baffles Isabel with polite manner. He shows her that he has great reverence towards women. He is able to hoodwink Isabel with his false activities. He says Isabel, "Go everywhere, do everything; get everything out of life. Be happy – be triumphant" (267). Isabel then blindly starts believing him and thinks that he is the one with whom she can get married and blossom her knowledge.

But the greatest irony about Osmond is that despite his immaculate taste, his dread of vulgarity and ugliness, his beautiful and intricate mind, his perfect urbanity, his spotless character and the dignified and romantic seclusion in which he lives, he is vulgar, if not more so than the rabble he despises. Isabel reflects after her marriage that there had been an indefinable beauty about him – in his situation, in his mind, in his face. But now she finds herself living in "the house of darkness, the house of dumbness, the house of suffocation. Osmond's beautiful mind gave it neither light nor air" (367). Osmond's beautiful mind indeed seems to peep down from a small high window and mock at her.

Osmond's urbanity and good nature after a certain acquaintance assume a sinister, even a diabolic cast. Isabel imagines herself living in hell, in a world that

leads downward and earthward, into the realms of restriction and depression. There is a menacing inscrutability about the front of his house, which is matched by the way he has of looking at Isabel through half closed eyelids, as if he were thinking of her but scarcely sees her, which seem to have a wonderfully cruel intention.

It is Isabel's own choice that introduces her unwillingly to sorrow and curtail the range in which choice can therefore be made. Her decision to marry Osmond, she perceives, has brought sadness for Ralph. From this time onward her experience in suffering widens rapidly, and though she has erred through ignorance, she insists on enduring the consequences. All sorts of choices have now been closed to her, but she holds to her freedom to choose. Even after she has suffered humiliation and disillusionment she is still determined to seek to escape from responsibility, and though she cannot believe that it will be her fate to experience only suffering, she is resigned. That the price she pays is heavy is revealed in the last scenes. She must admit her love for the dying Ralph, and the admission reveals the bleak contrast between his world and her present married life.

Mr. Osmond's daughter Pansy is always afraid of her father. Osmond uses Pansy as his private property. He has a concept in his mind that a daughter should always be under the control of her father. Her father does not care whom she loves. She says, "Oh yes, I must indeed. I cannot disobey papa" (331). Pansy cannot love Rosier because her father does not want that relation. Pansy is supposed that she does not have her own soul, her own desire and self decision of her life. She is her father's property and Mr. Osmond has educated her for his service. He says to Madame Merle, "It's what I educated her for. It was all for this that when such a case should come up she should do what I prefer" (321). Osmond thinks that one's daughter should be fresh and fair; she should be innocent and gentle. With the manners of the

present time she is liable to become so dusty and crumpled. Pansy's little dusty, a little dishevelled, she has knocked about too much. This bustling, pushing rable that calls itself society-one should take her out of it occasionally. He believes convents are very quiet, very convenient, very salutary. He likes to think of her there, in the old garden, under the arcade, among those tranquil virtuous women. So, he is going to take his daughter to the convent. Pansy also blindly follows what her father tells her to do. When Isabel asks her, "Why are you going to convent?", she replies, "Because Papa think it best" (448). Pansy has been cultured by her papa to be submissive, docile and ignorant. She is chained and captured by the male created discourse that a girl should never oppose her father rather she has to sacrifice herself for her father's will. Isabel cannot digest Pansy being treated as a slave but she is unable to do anything because she is herself trapped in it.

But Isabel's revolt begins when her husband does not allow her to go to see her sick cousin in Gardencourt. Her endurance capacity cannot tolerate more than that. She forgives his past, forgives his bad character and keeps on forgiving his acts against her will. But when Osmond rejects Isabel for her duty to fulfill, she feels his masculinity has done more than enough, has shattered her dreams and has crossed its boundary. She, then, does not care what he says but does what she wants. It is her great step for the suppression that male dominated society practices. She uses her creative and critical thinking when she necessarily has to use. She proves that the capable person can easily break the discourse which is biased one. She meets Ralph in Gordencourt and shares her opinion about her husband with Ralph. We see that she is not appreciating her husband but criticizing for his bad deeds. She, who was not even ready to listen anything bad of her husband from any characters of novel, is now frankly talking of his bad characters. This shows that she is now no more in trap of

the created discourse. She is already out of it when she first decides to go Gardencourt. She has realized how males are using discourse to make themselves superior to females and how females are unknowingly supporting them. She is once again proposed by Casper Goodwood but she neglects him. Though she does not get any letter or information from Rome, she returns to her house. Her finale choice-to return to Osmond and to Pansy-in free one. Because of her opinions, attitudes and conversation with the characters in the end of the novel, we can predict about her that she is returning to Osmond not being a submissive, dumb and docile one but being a revolutionary one to challenge him and his society.

IV. Conclusion

Henry James is an apostle individual's liberty and ideals, condemning in restrictive conventions and material interests. His characters live in a heroic level of self realization possessing a fuller responsibility and consciousness although at times their moral grandeur seems to spring from their unfitness to face real commitments. He portrays not only human's relation to society and destiny but proposes a set of guiding principle, an ethics for the individual's role in existence that turns upon sublimation of the self.

In the novel, *The Portrait of a Lady*, we meet with the poor American girl, who has dreamed of freedom and nobleness, who has done as she believes, a generous, natural, clear-sighted thing, finds herself in reality being deceived and trapped in the false ideology. After a year or two of marriage, the antagonism between her nature and Osmond's comes out – the open opposition of a noble character and a narrow one.

Isabel has an immense curiosity about life and is constantly staring and wondering. She has an ardent desire to enlarge and enrich her experience of life to grow in wisdom and virtue but she is enclosed in the so-called cage which has been made by the society. Her most characteristic response in the real world is one of refusal and rejection. Her belief, her imagination of life and freedom shatter when she comes to the real world. She is put in the difficult circumstances by her husband with his superior feeling. Her husband, Mr. Osmond, possesses the mentality of gender discrimination that he has been gifted by the society. Society has been practicing a kind of discourse which always dominates the female sex. Osmond is living in that society, so he knowingly and unknowingly carries that notion and tries to act accordingly. Not only Isabel but he also treats his daughter as his play thing. He

makes her do what satisfies him. As his wish, his daughter, Pansy moves; she cannot oppose her father. Her feeling, imagination and love are trapped in her father's desires. She cannot marry with the person she likes but she is sent to the convent for the moral education which teaches the traditional values of the society and is sure to make her emotional one. She believes her father is always right. She is not sensitive, critical and revolutionary one but a docile and submissive. This is how the society is manipulating the female group and always rules over them.

Unlike Pansy, Isabel stands as an independent character. She cannot keep on tolerating Osmond's masculine activities towards her. She revolts against his threats and goes to meet her sick cousin in Gardencourt. It is her great step against the suppression. If she were not able to challenge her husband and would be living the way Osmond wanted, the novel would be understood in different way. But she crosses the boundary that Osmond has drawn and shows us that a person must not endure the suppression and hegemony. Actually Osmond believes that after marriage, a female belongs to her husband and is like a kind of property for her husband. So, he treats Isabel as per his mind orders. But he has forgotten the fact that female is only female, she does not belong to anyone. And it is the society that has given a psychological impact in the mind of the people that after marriage female has to decorate her husband's house and fulfill his desires. Isabel also acts as per the rules of the society but later she feels the unequal power relation between male and female is undigestable.

Isabel Archer, in the beginning of the novel, appears to be independent and very studious. But she is hunted by the marriage proposals. Her creativity has been nipped in the bud by such kind of proposals. The situation of Isabel archer is the epitome about how the creativity of a girl is destroyed in the society. The society has

created various kind of discourses which do not let the female live a free life, she is compelled to move as the indication of the society. In the novel even if Pansy does not protest her father, Isabel does it. She also does not dare to go against her husband at first but later her conscious mind does not let her be docile. She revolts against her husband's decision and frees herself from the cage of the male created discouragement. She cannot remain only looking at her situation, but tries to empower her position in the society. So we can say that Isabel seems to be a radical female who challenges the discrimination in sex and the psychology of the male superiority.

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