

**A study of Mind, Body and Nature in the Selected**

**Works of Margaret Atwood**

**A Dissertation submitted**

**To**

**SIKKIM UNIVERSITY**



**In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for the degree of Master of Philosophy**

**Submitted By**

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# सिक्किम विश्वविद्यालय SIKKIM UNIVERSITY

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Date - 15.07.2021

## DECLARATION

I RICHA KHATI, hereby declare that the research work embodied in the dissertation titled "A study of Mind, Body and Nature in the Selected Works of Margaret Atwood" submitted to Sikkim University for the award degree of Master of Philosophy, is my original work and it has not been submitted earlier to this or any other University for any degree.

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### CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled "**study of Mind, Body and Nature in the Selected Works of Margaret Atwood**" submitted to Sikkim University for partial fulfilment of the requirement of the degree of Master of philosophy in the Language and Literature embodies the result bonafide research work carried out by **Richa Khati** under my guidance and supervision. No part of the dissertation has been submitted for any other degree, diploma, association and fellowship.

All the assistance and help received during the course of the investigation have been duly acknowledgement by her.

I recommend this dissertation to be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

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## CHAPTER – 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Introduction

*“I live in a society, I also put the society inside my books so that you get a box within a box itself”. (Atwood qtd in Kaminski 28)*

Margaret Eleanor Atwood is one of Canada’s prolific and versatile novelist, poet, literary critic and environmental activist. She was born in Ottawa, Ontario in 1939, her mother was a nutritionist and his father was entomologist who had a great love and attachment towards nature. She spent her childhood in the wilderness of northern Quebec this natural surroundings had a profound impact in her writings. She started writing at the age of five, and she resumed her skill and interest and became one of the greatest writer of her age. Her latest novel “The Testament” is a co-winner of the 2019 Booker Prize, this novel is the long awaited sequel to her 1985 novel “The Handmaid’s Tale”, which is now an award winning television series. Her other fictions Cat’s Eyes was the finalist of the 1989 Booker Prize, Alias Grace won the Giller Prize in Canada and the Premio Mondello in Italy. The Blind Assassin was the winner of the 2000 Booker Prize. She is also the recipient of numerous other awards, including the Peace Prize of the German Book Trade, the Franz Kafka International Literary Prize, the PEN Center USA Lifetime Achievement Award, and the Los Angeles Times Innovator’s Award.

Atwood’s literary career began in 1961 with the publication of her first poetry collection, Double Persephone, and has grown to include sixteen poetry collections, twelve novels, eight short fiction collections, six children books and five major non-fiction works. Along with such generic diversity Atwood’s work offers thematic



diversity which includes Canada National Identity, relation between Canada and United States, Canada's wilderness environmental issues, biotechnology, human rights issues, and feminist issues. Due to growing popularity of her works many of her novels have been adapted into film and television. Her works has been published in more that forty five countries, and has been translated into several languages. She is best known for her novels, where she creates a strong and enigmatic women figure and her stories are often open ended.

### **1.2 The Dystopian works of Margaret Atwood**

Like most of the dystopian fictions Atwood's dystopian novels are not just about the future prediction but is also about the author's concern regarding the contemporary society which has become corrupted by the ever increasing human greed. The dystopian writers look into the society, where the power has been centered in few hands and usually it is misused, the writers speculates such society and write about the possible outcome of such power structure, the writers by presenting a future tries to show the ultimate outcome of the corrupt practices. Margaret Atwood's first dystopian novel, "The Handmaid's Tale", was published in the year 1985. This novel is set in a future land of USA where the Christian theocrats takes over the United States, most of the women have lost the ability to conceive a child due to massive environmental pollutions, few women who are still fertile are forced to works as a handmaid and bear children for the rich infertile couples. When Atwood wrote this novel she took inspirations from the Rise of Christian right in America during the 1970s and 80s, the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979, it was also a response to the sexual revolution of the sixties and seventies.

Atwood once in an interview said that she prefers to call her dystopian fiction as “speculative fiction” instead of science fiction. She states that Gilead isn’t just a work of total imagination but there’s a precedence for that world. According to Atwood The Republic of Gilead may not reflect the United States in its present form, but it may mirror the 17<sup>th</sup> century New England Puritanism and its dictatorship. Therefore her novel satirizes the social, political, and religious trends of the United States in the 1980s

The sequel to The Handmaid’s Tale was published in 2019 “The Testament”, it could be perceived that Atwood decided to write this after the growing popularity of The Handmaid’s Tale and it’s adaptation into television series. But in fact atwood started writing The Testament in the early 2016, when she became aware that “we were going towards the world of The Handmaid’s Tale rather than away from it”(in Bethune 2019).

The Handmaid’s Tale though written several years ago is still relevant today. While this is in part due to the television series, which makes it clear that the novels and its themes still bring significance to the readers. It is because of this positive response from the readers and viewers prompted atwood to return to the Gileadverse. In the Acknowledgement section of “The Testament”, she writes: “The citizens of many countries, including the United States, are under more stress now than they were three decades ago” (Atwood 2019, 417).

The Handmaid’s Tale and The Testament are both similar in various styles and forms but there are differences as well which will make an interesting comparison between the two. While the former gives us details about the repression and domination of the most inferior part of the population that are the handmaids the latter gives us details

about the patriarchy who rules the Gilead. The former shows Atwood's perspective of the 80s society and its movements whereas in the latter Atwood tries to convey that how in many ways our present society resembles the world of 1985. While the former is narrated by a passive narrator Offred who is a powerless victim of the patriarchal society of Gilead, the latter is narrated by the three protagonist, aunt Lydia, Agnes and Daisy.

### **1.3 The Trio of Mind Body and Nature**

From the most remote times and for a very long period human mind and body were considered as a two distinct organs which performed different and independent functions. Human beings were divided into a dualist perspective: physical and mental, body and mind, material and substance. Importance was given to the reasoning capacity of mind as it was responsible for regulating all the other organs of humans. This view was common in several areas of knowledge such as medical, psychological, anthropological, philosophical and others. The functioning of mind was regarded as supreme over the rest as a result for a very long time emotions, the role of the body, spirituality was disdained. Only in the last two century the role of the body has been considered as a semantic field, it became a topos for studying a work through various new theoretical perspective. The working of mind and body runs parallel, in order to have a control over the one the other has to be manipulated. The nature or the environment where the individual is placed in have a great impact on the functioning of the mind and body.

## 1.4 Chapter Plan

This dissertation is organized into five chapters. The first chapter Introduction discusses about the contribution Margaret Atwood made towards the Canadian Literature. How her work offers thematic diversity ranging from human rights, feminist issues and environmental issues. It also deals with her dystopian fictions which reflects her frustration regarding the contemporary society of her time. This chapter focuses on the connection between mind and body and how nature serves as a catalyst in the functioning of mind and body. It also deals with the backdrop of her dystopian fictions “The Handmaid’s Tale” and “The Testament”. And the reason for its growing popularity even today. It also focuses on reason why Atwood came up with a sequel to The Handmaid’s Tale after 34 years.

The second chapter “Surveillance, Control and Resistance” explore what it means to live in a surveillance society and how it effects our species and our mind. This thesis will study how dystopian fiction can provide original ways of conceptualizing how the human body and mind and the society as a collective can be controlled and manipulated through surveillance method which collapse the boundaries between public and private sphere. This chapter also examines government’s intention to control human mind as well through the theories , ideologies and social functions formulated by Louis Althusser’s work “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatus”. Margaret Atwood’s novel “The Handmaid’s Tale” and “The Testament” has been discussed critically to show that in order to obtain a supreme control over human being, both body and mind has to be controlled. The study has examined how a human body can be converted to a “docile Body” by manipulating the mind.

The third chapter “The Nature Women Dualism in Margaret Atwood’s Novels”, deals with the structures of dualism that exists in our society and how this structure is rigidly maintained by the power holder to maintain its domination over the other. This chapter focus on how in the novel women are associated with nature which is both exploited by the male dominated Gilead. It also focus on the role played by women under the patriarchal mindset.

Chapter four “A Psychoanalytical Study of Margaret Atwood’s Novels”, presents the readers with a grim dystopian world where human lives are endangered. The chapter examines the two dystopian novels and reflects the devastation and despair especially of women’s in a totalitarian theocratic state called The Republic of Gilead. This chapter deals on how the novel ultimately conveys the message that the human ability to adapt in times of crises empowers humans to rise above dire situation. Psychoanalytical devices have been used like “psychological defense mechanism” to show how such overwhelming circumstances directly pertains to the struggle of inner will power versus outer helplessness. This study uses “Psychological Defense Mechanism” namely Denial, Repression, Identification and Altruism to understand the dystopian novel and the characters.

The “Conclusion” sums all the above chapters in a nutshell.

### **1.5 Aims and Objectives**

This research plan is an attempt to apply theoretical and critical approaches to the study of Margaret Atwood’s novels “The Handmaid’s Tale” and “The Testament”, which is based on a descriptive criticism. It will be analyzed or studied using various

psychoanalytical and ecological approaches. It is an inquiry which will necessarily involve library works extensively.

This study has a theoretical advantage, it allows for a close examination of subjectivity, the actual construction of identity and of the self. I aim not only to describe the characters roles and identities but also to explain how those very identities are constructed and assumed. This work tries to elaborate how the duality of mind and body responses in an extreme environment where all the trio are under surveillance. And the effect it leaves in the mind and body while trying to survive in the dystopian world. To explore the inner working of mind where the body is placed in an extraordinary environment. The objective of this work is to find the impact the crude environment have on body and mind and the resistance and responses taken by it for its survival.

## **1.6 Literature Review**

Joseph Dodds, “Psychoanalysis and Ecology at the End of Chaos” (2011). This is a revolutionary book by Dodds shifts our perspective thought widening the scope of psychoanalysis still further. Dodds here he not only take into account the cultural and social context in which our mind and body reside, but he also include the environmental context in which our bodies and other physical aspects of existence are housed. Dodds join the growing field of ecocriticism by pointing out how the very embeddedness of mind and society within nature is what makes it so difficult to see what we are doing, feel the consequences of our actions, and think more broadly in ecological terms. Dodds define the current crises not only as an ecological problem,

but also as a crises of theory, where the failure of thought leads to the system blindness.

Teisha Seaman, “ Humanity in Posthuman Literature: The Mind Body connection and the human Experience” Bridgewater State University 2015. This work shows the mind and body connection and deals with the understanding of human behavior in the context of its environment.

Agneta Helen Anderson, “ Everything is Connected to Everything else : An ecocritical and Psychological Approach to Jane Urquhart’s The Stone Carver” Halmstad University 2013. This work shows how nature effects the psychological development of the characters in the novel . In work his combined the theories of ecocriticism and psychoanalytical perspective through the concept of “abjection”.

### **Research Questions**

In the course of my research the following questions will be of major importance :

1. In which way the control of mind nature and body support Margaret Atwood’s novel as a dystopia genre.
2. My work will examine the connection between the trio of mind nature and body.
3. The work will question whether women’s relation to environment is ambivalent or does it have a dualism of nature/women on one side and male/culture on the other.

## **Hypothesis**

Though notable works have been done on Atwood's novel and the dystopian genre, by incorporating various theories, but most of those works have been limited to the issues of modern technology, women's questions, nature versus society. My research will bring together ecological thinking and psychoanalysis as a framework by inserting a psychoanalytical approach within ecology as a means to unite the three ecologies of mind, nature and body.

## **Limitation and Significance**

The research I propose will look on how both the body and nature are oppressed and the kind of power they possess and I will analyze how they will use their power. My work will try to unweave the psychologically complex characters. This study will demonstrate how psychological defense mechanism underpin their dependency upon one another as they struggle to survive.

## **Research Methods and Methodology**

In the course of my research I will rely on several psychoanalytical and ecocritical models. One being Sigmund Freud, the founder of psychoanalysis. Freud conceived of several subconscious psychological Defense Mechanism that corresponds to survival and how humans instinctively use these mechanism to defend themselves against certain threats. My thesis will use four of these psychological defense mechanism namely- Denial, Repression, Identification, and Altruism in dealing with the novel. I would further study Atwood's novels from Michel Foucault's view on the



relationship between Power, Body and Sexuality. And further consider the position of the trio mind body and nature following Foucault Panoptical theory where he talks about surveillance. I would also like to emphasis on the term “Enhancement” which gained acceptance as a collective term for diverse physiological, cognitive and emotional improvement of mankind. However I will focus on both the advantages, disadvantages and consequences of the techniques used in the dystopian Gilead from a psychoanalytical and ecocritical point o view.

## CHAPTER- II

### Surveillance, Control and Resistance

*“Under observation, we act less free which means we effectively are less free.”*

*- Edward Snowden*

#### 2.1. Introduction

Surveillance Studies has emerged as a major field of studies over the past few decades, scholars from various disciplines have come together to contribute towards this study. Surveillance study mainly explores the relationship between humans and the technology. Dystopian Literature which are mainly written in the twentieth century has become a major ground for the surveillance studies, as technology has become a major part of human existence. This particular study has become the current hour necessity as it has become crucial to examine the outcome surveillance has bought in the human psychology as well as their lifestyle. Margaret Atwood's novel "The Handmaid's Tale" and "The Testament" is inherently political and it concerns with issues such as autonomy, identity and power struggles thus a surveillance study can lay out the novels inner essence and the power play of the power holder.

French philosopher Michael Foucault's interpretation of English philosopher Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon will contribute to an understanding of surveillance and disciplinary measures, and how they combined executive power. Foucault is best known for his revolutionary idea of power and the relationship between power and knowledge. He further elaborates on the power struggle dynamics which have influenced the modern subjects like the dystopian genre. Foucault argues that discourse of knowledge throughout history is manifested as embodiments of power

relations (Edgar et al.265). Surveillance is arguably a political and morally loaded activity which influences every aspect of the everyday lives of the people. Jeremy Bentham devised in the 18<sup>th</sup> century a unique penitentiary model known as the Panopticon that aimed to achieve a one way communication with the hopes of preventing or limiting violence and opposition to power (Bentham 1, 35).

Thus the citizens living in dystopian world are highly controlled and under surveillance, the citizen are highly restricted to create any personal relationships, sex and marriages are also controlled and it is used as a medium only to procreate. Governmental control is a central focus in the dystopian literature and technology has been a common medium to enforce such control. Gorman Beauchamp states that the state is “dependent upon a massive technological apparatus”, or primitive to keep its citizen in a constant state of “depressed deprivation”-, either ways, the state utilizes technology or lack of it to govern and manipulate human lives (55-56). The state imposes various and rigorous measures of control towards its citizen with the intention to tame the free spirited humans and convert them into mindless robots. Samuel Macey, writes that the clocks dominate the dystopian world and “eventually the people themselves take on the nature of clocks”(30). Critics like Michael Amey, analyzes the suppression of human emotions and freedom to the control of the states and underscores how it reduces individual “originality” and increases “uniformity” shaping dystopian society into one organism where individual think and act alike, providing perfect conditions for the state’s exploitation (29). Beside technology “language” is another medium through which the state maintains its control, it is used to manipulate humans. According to Courtine since “language is the living memory of the man and offers him space for inner resistance,” power must become thus become the master of language, “which can not only manipulate the past of the humankind

through language, but also eradicate certain words and definition associated with “heresy” so that nobody can interfere with the supreme power of the state. (70). Despite the surveillance and control in the dystopian fictions resistance too is expressed through body, sexuality and writing or narration. Human desires love, emotions and passion surpasses the rationality and dominations of the state that leads the citizens to resist against the state power. Writing and narration is also another medium of resistance , writing gives a sense of empowerment and a source of voice to the deprived citizens, it too gives a sense of identity to those who have remained faceless in the authoritarian regime.

## **2.2 From Utopia to Dystopia**

Utopias is a genre which was very popular during the nineteenth century. The word utopia comes from the Greek word “ou” meaning “no” or “not”, and “topos” meaning “place”. Thus it means creating a place that exists only in our fantasy, where a true paradise is created where everything is perfect. Martin G Platte, for instance suggested that “ the utopian search for happiness dream of a new earthly paradise in which the authentic happiness reigns and happiness is sought in unbridled sensuous delight” (47). Dystopia is a complete opposite of utopia, it portrait a society where everything is in a verge to destruction, a utopian gone wrong. In both the utopia and dystopia technology plays a key role, a society created in a fantasy land in future trying to create a perfect living condition for human being. But gradually the readers become aware that in the process of the novels it is not the technology and the fantasy land that is important, but rather the character’s psychological and emotional situation is more important.

The word Utopia was coined in 1516 by Sir Thomas More when he wrote “Utopia”. More’s Utopia protested against contemporary English life by describing an ideal political state in a land called utopia. But such writings about utopia was written since centuries, such as the biblical garden of Eden in Genesis, Plato’s Republic about a perfect state ruled by Philosopher-kings, Jonathan Swift’s “Gulliver’s Travels” 1726 which includes fantasy communities also comes under early fictional utopias. There are other utopian works, for example Samuel Butler’s “Erewhon (1872), and “Erewhon Revisited” (1901), William Morris’s “News from Nowhere” (1891). George Kateb offers a more detailed description of a utopian society,

In which all conflicts of conscience and conflicts of interest are abolished....

All the obstacle to a descent life for all men have been removed... the resourcefulness of modern technology is put in the unfettered service of lessening labor and increasing and enriching labor with peace abundance and virtue permanently and universally obtained. (17)

Secondly, the collapse of the socialism in the soviet union contributed to the Dystopian dystopian shift as well. According to Peter Ruppert, human hope in the flawlessness o socialism that permeates most utopian writing vanished when the October Revolution of 1917, which promised a radical transformation of Soviet society in some kind of a utopia, failed. He states that “ the failure od socialism in Soviet Union, once thought to be a model utopian experiment... is sufficient evidence that utopianism is not only ineffective but untenable”.

There were series of events that lead to the creation of dystopian novels, the deterioration of the human living condition and the sudden changes in the working of the state has usually lead the writers to create a dystopian fiction. It was during the

soviet union that the earliest twentieth century dystopian fiction was written. Yevgeny Zamyatin's "We", Yevgeny was a strong supporter of the revolution. His work shows the anxieties, fear of the regime. "We" was the first genuine dystopian fiction which further inspired many dystopian fictions of the twentieth century. Other important dystopian writers who were influenced by Yevgeny Zamyatin were Aldous Huxley, George Orwell, Ayn Rand, Margaret Atwood and Karen Boye. Aldous Huxley is famous for his work "Brave New World" (1931). Huxley wrote this work after experiencing the horrific result of the Industrial revolution in Europe in the Early Twentieth Century. Huxley was concerned about the negative impact the technology and the rapid industrialization will have on human being. His dystopian fiction focuses on the fear of commercialization, materialism etc.

George Orwell's "1984" is considered dystopian classic. Orwell wrote this work as a critique of the aristocratic rule of Stalin his brutality and unjust control over people. This work is written as a warning to the future generation if the absolute power is not checked. Ayn Rand's "Anthem" (1937) this work warns the future about the collectivism, and shows us what happens to human being under totalitarian regime.

Thus in the twentieth century utopian vision of the world faded and the dystopian tradition emerged and achieved such popularity. First of all Patrik Reddy and Tom Moylan suggests that the key historical events of the twentieth century – the first and the second world war gave little encouraging for the utopian thinking. In fact as Moylan asserts,

Dystopian narrative is largely the product of the terror of the twentieth century. A hundred years of exploitations, repression state violence, war,

genocide, disease, famine, ecocide, depression, debt, and the steady depletion of humanity through the buying and selling of the everyday life provided more than enough fertile land for this fictive underside of the utopian imagination (xi)

Finally “The Handmaid’s Tale” written in 1985, Atwood shows how a dictatorial regime can physically and mentally manipulate human beings, and how technology can manipulate human body. Thus the dystopian genre is constantly warning us that utopian can turn into a dystopian world if the power is unchecked, or it may sooner or later turn into a dystopian world.

### **2.3 Surveillance and control of body in Margaret Atwood’s work**

In most of a dystopian novel there is a rule of a supreme dictatorial power, and it is always in a desperate need to exercise its ultimate power over its citizen and control its subject’s lives, thoughts and actions. Discipline is a major tool employed by the state to exercise its power. This idea that discipline is the major tool of political power is the main point of Michael Foucault’s book “Discipline and Punish”, where he writes how discipline is used in a several ways by the society. Foucault here writes how discipline is used by the state to govern people’s lives “to produce subjected and docile bodies” that can be “manipulated, shaped” and “trained” for the benefit of the state (136-138). Docile bodies is a term Foucault came up with where the individual is under constant surveillance and regulation in ways that are often subtle and thereby seemingly invisible, leading to normalization and acceptance of such system, where ultimately body becomes a manipulated bodies. In Atwood’s novel “The Handmaid’s Tale” the Republic of Gilead exercise full control over human bodies especially the

female bodies, where women's are treated as a reproducing objects, they are treated as a set of ovaries and womb, they are treated as subhuman, like the property of the state. Female bodies are divided into various hierarchy, and accordingly given particular sets of uniform. In one of the scene Offred is seen lying in a bathtub and thinking of the pre-Gilead days when she considered her body as an object of desire, and now she is just a mound of flesh, and her body only has a utility purpose to reproduce. In such a way Gilead deprive women of their identity and are made a docile bodies controlled by the state. Offred is bought to the house of the Commander to bear a child or him and his wife. She is kept in a complete surveillance, she is always accompanied by a Martha wherever she goes, her room does not have an object made of glass, her window does not open completely, her room does not have any hook from where she can tie a rope and hang herself, her door does not lock and does not shut completely. Likewise in the novel "The Testament" Atwood shows how women's body has been politicized and how young girl's mind are manipulated to believe that their body is a " precious flowers" which needs protection., girls must always cover themselves with pure white cloth, they are taught to inspire uncontrollable urges in men, girls must never speak unless spoken to. Girls are considered only for embroidering flowers and removing blood stains from cloth, as in the novel the Aunts tell Agnes :

“That was a talent women had because of their special brain,

Which were not hard and focused like the brains of men but

Sot and damp and warm and enveloping, like....like what ?

She didn't finish the sentence..Like mud in the sun, I thought.



That's what was inside my head; warmed-up mud"

Michael Foucault in his work "Discipline and Punish" refers to the "body of the concept". In chapter one Foucault calls "Punishment Body Relationship" here he states that the authority who is punishing the one who did the crime is responsible for causing worse form of violence than the criminal himself, the authority performs torture to the victim's body. Where the system adjusts the way it works on the body where justice becomes an economy of suspended rights that means we take away things, personal freedom or we are confined somewhere or we are forced to do labor etc. Considering Foucault's statement The Republic of Gilead carries out worse form of punishment to those they consider criminals. In the Gilead all the activities of the people are controlled by the state. Women who disobey to practice the role they are assigned to, are considered an "outcast" or "unwomen" and are placed behind the bars. Questioning the authority is considered as a crime, performing a task that is not assigned to you is also considered as a crime, and for such crimes they are hung by their neck and are placed in the public for display, so that everyone is able to see them. In such forms of torture the state performs more severe punishment to the victim's body than the actual crime done by the criminal, in such scenario of the "Punishment Body Relationship" the criminal becomes the victim of the torture performed by the state.

In such scenario where the state holds the omnipotent power over human, the human bodies are reduced to be very powerless and feeble. Foucault describes, discipline is a tool that made "possible the meticulous control of the operation of the body" materialized in a different ways (137). Humans are made to function as a robot, they are directed to perform tasks that are beneficiary to the state. Foucault elaborates on this in his work and writes that "discipline increases the forces of the body (in

economic term of utility) and diminishes these same forces (in political term of obedience)” (138). Considering this In The Republic Of Gilead, the state benefit economically when they convert human body into a disciplined docile body. The Gilead which is a totalitarian, theonomic and neo- puritanical regime categorize every individual to a particular group, a hierarchy of social class is created where everyone who is assigned to their group are expected to perform their own duties. Linda Myrsiades addresses female new social function in Gilead society in her Essay “Law Medicine The Sex Slave in Margaret Atwood’s The Handmaid’s Tale” and compares Handmaids to slaves, “reproductive slaves who are “forced by the state to bear children and not entitled to full human status”(228). She asserts that women are stripped of their humanity and, instead of fulfilling their traditional role of mothers, introduced into their new roles the role of “surrogate, carrying on societies genes as a vessel through which they pass” (228). Gilead divided its citizens into following groups :

**Wives :** they were the highest ranking women, they were married to the wealthy officers, Commanders, Angels and Eyes, and had the power to rule over other women, but were still controlled by their husband. Wives had the privilege to wear any shades of color, however it is considered that darker the shade of the attire the more powerful they were considered. Women who were considered “pure” were given the honor of being a wife.

**Aunts :** They were assigned to go abroad and recruit more women for the Gilead. They wore brown clothing with a belt and cattle prods attached. They were assigned the task of seeing and guiding the handmaids, overseeing births and presiding over women’s executions. They were the strict women also responsible for monitoring prisoners in Colonies.

Handmaids : They were the child bearers for the wives, and were valued for their ability to produce healthy child or the wives. They wore red dress which symbolizes blood and life, they are not supposed to expose any part of their body. They also wear a white colored “wing” which they use to cover their head and hide their faces. Through this wing they can have only the front vision and cannot see the side vision. This idea is to “prevent us seeing, but also from being seen”.

Marthas: They served as a domestic servant in the house of the commanders, they served as servants, cooks and housekeepers. They wore green outfits with an apron on the top and they used scarves to cover their head. Marthas were lower in rank as compared to the handmaids as most of their’s body were infertile or “Unwomen” , and they were put to use for the domestic works.

Unwomen: They are the women whose body does not serve any function to the state. They are considered the lowest social class of women in Gilead. Such women include widows, divorced women, sterilized women, adulteress, nuns, failed handmaids, unmarried women, feminists, female activists, women who have lost fertility, foreigners, female those who protest.

Commanders ; they are the men who governs the Gilead, and are the most powerful men, the Angels are the soldiers who keep an eye on others, Guardians are the bodyguards security officers and drivers to the Commanders.

Thus the citizens of such regimes becomes a body that serves its set of functions assigned by the authority. Foucault in “Discipline and Punishment” quotes a line by Leon Faucher referring to the implementing of discipline in penitentiary institution:

The prisoners' day will begin at six in the morning in winter and at five in summer. They will for nine hours a day throughout the year. Two hours a day will be devoted to instruction...at the first drum-roll the prisoners must rise and dress in silence, as the supervisor opens the cell door. At the second drum-roll they must be dressed and make their beds. At the third bell they must line up and proceed to the chapel for morning prayer. Work and their day will end at nine o'clock in winter and eight in summer...(qtd in Foucault 6).

The citizens of Gilead are trained to live such a routine life. They think alike and behave alike making them identical to one another. They do not have control over their bodies and they accept the dominating regime and willingly accept it as a part of their lives, refusing to see the bars that cage them.

Lois McNay posits that "female bodies are worked upon in socially and historically specific ways rather in terms of an external, undifferentiated difference between the sexes" (133).

Sandra Lee Bartky writes that "we women cannot begin a revision of our own bodies until we begin to read the cultural message we inspire upon them daily and until we come to see that even the mastery of the disciplines of femininity produces a triumphant result, we are still only women". (151).

## **2.4 The social psychology of Body, Clothes and Culture**

The relationship between body, clothes and culture is intrinsic and dynamic. Clothes is a symbol that is used to make statements on the nature of the power relationship, the hierarchy within the society. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century the social scientist studied

clothes a symbol to identify the culture of the individual but it was during the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century that the economist started to give a scholarly interest in the study of the dress and its social impact. Dress is defined as “an assemblage of modification of the body and/or supplements to the body” (Roach-Higgins & Eicher 1992 p. 1). By the 1950s scholars started studying cloths in relation to the human behavior, and how a dress can effect the behavior of the body as well as the behavior of the others towards the self. Dress has a profound impact on oneself as well as the behavior of others. Provocative dress has a variation of impact over people, research shows that the women wearing provocative dress receives more negative review from the people as compared to women wearing non provocative dress. Whereas a model wearing a provocative dress was considered more attractive and modern but a women wearing a conservative cloth is considered as an easy women who is less faithfull in marriage, likely to be sexually experienced, and an easy prey to get raped. Research and investigations are being carried out between the most debatable question Is provocative dress responsible for sexual attack in women ? Many theories shows that a women wearing short exposing dress with heavy makeup is a symbol of sex appeal, and are responsible for sexual harassment.

Color of the cloth one is wearing also has a great psychological impact. The color conveys several message, it affects the body as well as the perceiver. Traditionally the color white is associated with purity and peace, red is associated with danger or sexual appeal, and black with boldness and dark. And the color too creates a great impact on the psychological behavior of the body. Cloths as well as a human body has a power to speak. The way one is dressed and the body language speaks a lot about them. A particular item of dress influences people rating of their skill. Every set of cloth has its own symbol.

In the novel “the Handmaid’s Tale” specially the women are given a particular set of cloths to fit their role and identity in the system. It shows how their identity has been imposed by the state and is very rigid in nature. By assigning every group of women a particular set a cloths the state ensures that the identity of the women s fixed. The protagonist Offred a Handmaid has to wear a long red dress with red shoe and red gloves, everything is red except her white wings which is used to cover her head and face. Handmaids are not suppose to expose any part of their body and the red dress symbolizes blood, passion, fertility or lust. J. E Cirlot writes “ red is the color of the pulsing blood and of fire, for the surging and tearing emotion”. Red was also symbolic of divine light and in favor in ancient Roman and Arabian society, but “ throughout much of the world, red represents events and emotions at the core of the human condition, danger and courage, revolution and war, violence and sin, desire and passion, even life itself”. (Greenfield 2). Handmaids are fully clothed in red dress so that no men desires her, their wings is meant to hide their face, and they can have only limited vision from the wings shows how their cloths restrains them and how they are completely controlled. Offred describes herself as “distorted shadow”, how her identity has been manipulated and is forced to accept the role she is in. Ofred’s friend Ofglen is described as “ a shape, red with white wings around the face, a shape like mine, a nondescript woman...looking down the white tunnel of cloth that enclose us..” (Handmaid’s pp. 28-29). In the novel cloth is also seen as a symbol of a subverted freedom, in the episode where the commander takes Offred to the Jezebel, women are seen wearing colorful and exposing cloths to excite and seduce the wealthy men. This shows that cloths itself speak, the provocative cloths is related to sexual advances. On seeing them Offred remarks “ What is the significance of it here, why are rabbits suppose to e sexually active to men”. Unlike the women in Gilead the

women in Jezebel had the liberty to choose their own clothing but still it had a limitation as the women here was clothed in colorful and fancy cloth only to appeal the men. Offred remarks:

“At first glance there’s a cheerfulness to this scene. It’s like a masquerade party; they are like oversized children, dressed up in togs they’ve rummaged from trunks. Is there joy in this? There could be, But have they chosen it ? you can’t tell by looking.’ (The Handmaid’s Tale, p. 247)

In the novel “The Testament” young girls are made to wear white cloth as a symbol of purity. In the novel the lower the status in the social hierarchy the more rigid was the dress code.

## **2.5 Surveillance and Control of Mindin Margaret Atwood’s Novel**

In human civilization the society which is divided into various status and hierarchy, there is always a power play where the one higher in status always wants to control and manipulate the one below. Likewise the one who is in the lower status is always struggling to survive or revolt. The people in power are constantly trying to maintain its control over its people. Human mind in such stage is controlled without the individual knowledge or consent where the individual’s thoughts, beliefs and attitude is manipulated. By controlling the mind of its subject the state gains both politically and economically. Mind is manipulated in various techniques by gradually controlling the mind example when the individual is repeatedly asked to do the same task excessively, or the individual is brainwashed to believe a lie by hiding the truth.

Jeremy Bentham a European philosopher of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, he came up with the concept of “Panopticon”, a Greek term which means “all-seeing eyes”. Bentham was visiting his brother’s workshop in Belarus in 1786. In the workshop the workers were seated in a circle formation and the manager’s office was in the center from where he could keep an eye on all his workers. This is how Bentham came up with his idea of Panopticon. Bentham wanted to employ this technique for the construction of a prison, where a high tower would be constructed in the middle of the prison where the prison guard will watch over the prisoners, and around the tower the prison cell would be constructed in a circular row, in this way all the prisoners would be in a strict surveillance from the tower. Bentham’s main motive was to keep a watch over the prisoners both physically as well as mentally. By creating such prison it would be easy for the guard to keep an eye over huge number of prisoners at one time, along with this the prisoners are always in a fear that they are being watched from the tower, in this way they tend to behave docile. However Bentham’s idea of Panopticon was not an architectural idea but it was rather a transparent utopian idea which Bentham wanted to adopt in all the social institutions like schools, hospitals etc. It was the social theorist Michael Foucault who borrowed Bentham’s idea of Panopticon in his work “Discipline and Punish” (1975). Through this Foucault explains the power dynamic that exists in every society, where people are always under surveillance. In every institution observation is the prime action for maintaining power, where the watched subjects are always under surveillance. According to Foucault the major effect of Panopticon is that it makes the individual’s mind who is under observation very conscious as it always feels the presence of the unseen observer around, in this way there is the “automatic functioning of power” (202). In such condition the watcher becomes omnipresent as he is not seen but his presence is always felt. To



maintain its control the very sense of being watched is enough, instead of the presence of the real watcher. In the Republic of Gilead several towers are constructed throughout the town, high walls are created around the town where armed guards with floodlights are assigned to observe the citizens. Thus every citizens are always alert that their actions are constantly being observed.

Foucault in his book “Discipline and Punish”, in its second chapter “The Spectacle of the Scaffold” writes that “Public torture was meant to be a ceremonial act of justice”, this is also used as a means to justify the torture performed by the state. According to Foucault torture was used by the sovereign in order to show its supreme power, to threaten the public and establish its power. Torture was displayed to the public so that the people could see the power of the state. In such way the people’s mind was controlled by the state it was manipulated to such an extent that people believed even in the wrong doings and dictator power of the state. In the novel the tortures done by the Republic of Gilead was made on public display, doctors were hanged for doing abortion, homosexuality was considered crime and they were punished in public, peoples were mercilessly hanged in public. And the main motive to punish them in public was to manipulate the minds of the viewer, to make them see the supreme power the Gilead possess.

Louis Althusser in his work “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses” proposes a division that exists between mind and body. Where mind is presented as a conscious being and the body performs like a machine. He states that in order to have a full control over human being both body and mind has to be controlled. The control of the body is done through the control of the mind and it is possible through ideological indoctrination. Althusser argues that in order to convert a human being into a docile subject, first the body has to believe in the motives set up in the mind. .

Althusser explains that once a “subject” possesses appropriate “consciousness” and truly believes in “the ideas that his consciousness inspires in him” he will begin to “act according to his ideas” completely submitting himself to the ideology and the social function, thus boosting to the productivity of the body that Foucault talks about. In such situation an individual’s belief, and outlook is actually the state’s belief. Thus an “imaginary relationship “ is created where the individual take the role it is assigned to play. Therefore the state ensures that every individual is converted to a “subject”, by giving up their individual identity and merging into the ideological framework, where they think, talk and perform alike according to the rules of the state. Thus making it easier for the State to control its vast subject, but the people by giving up their identity and merging in the group, are forced to loose their identity, emotion and voice. In the novel *The Handmaid’s Tale* the Gilead have been successful in creating a dichotomy between the body and the mind, the state inorder to control the body has managed to manipulate the mind. In the Gilead due to nuclear radiation and chemical pollution most of the women has lost the ability to conceive child, only few women can procreate therefore women are valued as long as their body has a utility, and provide a child to the state. Women whose womb is fertile are called the handmaid and are assigned by the state to bear child for the wealthy commander and his wife. For this purpose handmaids are trained and made to believe that their purpose is to serve the State and help in maintaining the system. In this process the handmaids loose their own identity and their only role is to produce child as a “two legged womb”, they even lose their name in the novel the protagonist real name is never mentioned she is called “Offred” which means she belongs to the commander Red. The State in order to exploit the body has managed to manipulate the mind, as the handmaids have been trained by Aunts that they are engaged in a noble motive to bear

children to those infertile couples. The government has successfully managed to manipulate people's mind in believing that all the actions taken by the government are for the common benefit of the state. Despite all the tortures, injustice and forceful regulations the people are made to believe that this is the only proper way to lead life. Women in Gilead are not allowed to wear colorful and fancy clothes, they are not allowed to expose any part of the body, while in the training session Offred is told that in the pre Gilead days the main reason why women were raped was because of their provocative clothes. The state assures that it is for the common benefit to regulate such rules. In the Gilead women are not allowed to touch in public, no men can directly talk with women, State has managed to fully control the mind of the people and have converted them into a "subject" or a "docile body".

## **2.6 Surveillance and Control of Nature in Margaret Atwood Novels**

Global climate change is one of the major issues faced in the twenty first century. Dystopian fiction primarily focus on the political and social degradation, but considering the major necessity of the world today environmental issues have become a major concern of the dystopian genre. A new sub- genre for dystopian fiction known as "Ecodystopian fiction". Dystopian genre traditionally was anthropocentric the inclusion of environmental factors was itself a great challenge to the genre. Instead of focusing only on the economical and political factors of the society an ecological issues such as global climatic changes, environmental pollutions and its hazardous effects is discussed in ecodystopia. Ecodystopian novels not only use post apocalyptic setting but also reflects the consequences of the exploitation of the environment. Fictions has the power to reflect the society as well as influence and

instruct it. It can change people's perspective, values and culture and create environmental awareness. Atwood's novel *The Handmaid's Tale* is set in the Republic of Gilead in the future, it is set in a place which is now the United States of America. It is ruled by the autocratic power known as Gilead. Due to environmental degradation the land has been a waste and most women have lost the ability to conceive. Women who cannot reproduce are sent to the Colonies where they have to clean the radioactive dumps, toxic and radiation spills. Atwood refers in the novel about the current environmental degradation :

Need I remind you that this is the age of the R- strain syphilis and also the infamous AIDS epidemic....? Stillbirths, miscarriages, and genetic deformities were widespread and on the increase, and this trend has been linked to the various nuclear-plant accidents, shutdowns,...as well as leakages from chemical and biological warfare stockpiles and toxic waste disposal sites... and to the uncontrolled use of chemical insecticides, herbicides and other sprays. (378-9)

It was due to the exploitation and imbalance of the nature that made the women barren, and it was because of this the handmaids had to suffer the consequences and tortures of the autocratic Gilead.

## **2.7 Writing as a Resistance**

In an autocratic rule where the citizen's life is completely controlled by the state, where they are not given the liberty to revolt as well as speak for their rights, writing becomes a major tool for resistance. Besides resistance writing serves as a means to reclaim one's identity as well as voice. In a dystopian world where individual lives are

fully controlled by the state, writing can serve as a major threat to the State as it empowers the individual and encourage them to question the state's autocracies. Thus writing can be a major obstacle for the government's stability. For such reasons writing as well as any other forms of media and communication is banned in dystopian fiction. It is considered as a crime and is a punishable offence to write as well as raise a voice against the authority. As Gloria Anzaldua avers in her feminist manifestation "Speaking in tongues" writing helps one to "become more intimate to oneself, to discover oneself, to preserve oneself, to make oneself, to achieve self autonomy" (319). She sees writing as an act of women liberation from the domineering male culture and the prejudices, associated with it. This idea can be applied to the dystopian society as well , where not just women but everyone is oppressed by the dominant ideology. In this way writing becomes a way to freedom not just for women as suggested by Anzaldua but for everyone who has the courage to oppose the subjugation.

In Atwood's novel *The Hand Maid's Tale* all forms of reading and writings, media are banned. In Gilead the only purpose of women is to reproduce and they should be strictly kept away from reading and writings. The state wants to make women incapable of reading and writing and make women capable only for the task of reproduction. When Offred narrates her story she takes a great risk of breaking the rules of Gilead. Though she cannot protest, and disobey her role as a handmaid but her writing is an act of resistance against the Gilead. In Gilead writings and alphabet are erased, and when Offread creates a language to narrate her story it is a brave act of resistance. In Gilead any forms of writings are not available, pens and pencils are banned in such situation she records her narration in a tape recorder which is later discovered by future generations, "It's also a story I'm telling, in my head, as I go

along, tell rather than write, because I have nothing to write with, and writing is in any case forbidden” (52). In the Gilead when Offred visits the town she notices how everything that was written in the boards and shops were erased and it was replaced by paintings, the state thought that the every name in the shops would excite and tempt the women. Women were trained to be tempted only by the bearing children and doing household duties. In the Gilead all forms of newspaper, magazines movies were destroyed. Reading were considered as Sins so even the prayers were not read by the Aunts rather it was listened on a tape. Television was the only source of information that too was controlled and restricted. Even the Bible that was considered readable, was locked away, and was read only by the Commander in the night of the Ceremony.

Later when Ofred visits the Commander’s Chamber she sees vast numbers of books in his shelf an “oasis of the Forbidden”(177). Books here becomes a symbol of power which the Commander possess and the Handmaids are deprived of it. And later when Offred creates her own narration she is able to regain her power. Later when Offred plays scrabble with the Commander she feels empowered by being in contact with the words and writings she felt as if she was given a drugs. When the commander gives her a Vogue magazine she feels a sense of freedom and empowerment, as she was holding something that was ordered to be burned and was forbidden. She explains:

“What was in them was promise. They dealt in transformation, they suggested an endless series of possibilities. They suggested one adventure after another. They suggested rejuvenation, pain overcome and transcended, endless love”. (201)

Magazine opened a door of emotions, passion and inspiration which was forbidden to the Handmaids. When Offred is bought into the house of the Commander she

discovers some words scribbled in her closet wall. She assumed that it was written by the previous Handmaid. As it was written in foreign language she could not understand “nolite te bastards carborundorum” but this words filled her with curiosity. When alone in the room Offred is constantly thinking about the Handmaid who stayed in her room before her, and it gives her a small joy with the thought that the words written in the closet wall though she cannot understand it but she has read it, this little secret of hers give her joy. She knows that this writing has some important message but she cannot decode it. The very writing has a power Offred is constantly trying to attain it but is unable to decode it. It can be said that this message represents the message or the voice of the women in general, whose voice cannot be heard and are oppressed, though they try to voice out their situation but cannot be heard.

Ofred when she records her story in such a regime where reading and writing is prohibited she becomes successful in giving a voice to those women who were not heard. She challenged the authority by speaking up about the silenced victims, her narrating itself became an act of revolt. Thus now it is Offred’s duty to continue the message, to let it reach the unknown audience:

You don’t tell a story to yourself. There is always someone else. Even when there is no one. A story is like a letter Dear you, I’ll say. Just you, without a name...you can mean more than one . you can mean thousands. I’ll pretend you can hear me. (53).

By composing and recording her story in a society where reading, writing or speaking is prohibited, Offred presents the voice of the oppressed and the act of the narration defies the rule of the domineering regime. Writing subsequently become the avenue or the reconstruction and liberation for the women’s body, which has been taken away from her, rendering her voiceless and powerless. As Cixous underlines in her essay

“The Laughing of Medusa” writing enables women to “return to the body which has been more than confiscated from her, which has been turned into the uncanny stranger on display” (395). Since the women “is reduced to be the servant of the militant male, his shadow,” she has to rebel and let her body be heard through writing, “an act which will not only realize the decensored relation of women to her sexuality, to her womanly being,” but also to “give her back her goods, her pleasures, her organ, her immensely bodily territories which have been kept under seal”.

In the novel *The Testament* too the story is narrated in a recorded form the story of three women. Aunt Lydia who is keeping a record of the autocracies of the regime, she records all her memories and thoughts in her diary.

## **2.8 Language as a means of control in Atwood’s Novels**

Language is another tool that can be used as a vital tool to manipulate the mind. In the republic of Gilead language is used by the authority to control its citizens. We realize while going through Atwood’s novels that language cannot be separated from power, as it is language which is used by the power holder to oppress and silence the citizens, and at the same time language can be used by the citizens to voice out the injustice. In *The Handmaid’s Tale* language has been completely controlled by the state in order to secure its dictatorial reign. All the words in the shops and the billboards has been erased and is replaced by paintings, icons and signs. For example a huge golden lily is a sign for the lilies of the field shop, an image of a bee and cow indicate honey and milk store, fish and pork shop has the image of the animal in the board.

Language is also used by the Gilead to impose its policies upon the citizens. Banners are set up in the town displaying “ God is a National Resource”. In *Offred* there is a pillow with the word “faith” written in it, which suggest that they should



have faith in the Gilead. Once the Handmaids are shown a movie with no soundtrack, but only a sign “TAKE BACK THE NIGHT, FREEDOM TO CHOOSE, EVERY BABY A WANTED BABY, RECAPTURE OUR BODIES AND DO YOU BELIEVE A WOMEN’S PLACE IS ON THE KITCHEN TABLE” , such was the propaganda adopted by the state to impose its policies, as no other forms of writings was available they used such measures to spread its message.

The State has also made regulations regarding limiting the conversation between the people. The handmaids are not suppose to speak directly to the Commander or his wife. She is only suppose to answer what is being asked. Even in public they are not allowed to talk unnecessarily, and use minimum words even when questioned. Certain words are forbidden, when Offred goes to visit a doctor and he uses the word “sterile” offred almost gasps because such words were not to be uttered.

Beside controlling state has also used language to dehumanize. The state use language that favors them to maintain its supremacy but at the same time it is used to rob even the limited power the citizen has. Handmaid’s are not called by their name. The protagonist of the novel is never called by her real name she is named as “Offred”, which indicate that she belongs to her Commander named Fred, other handmaid’s name include “Ofglen, Ofwarren”, it degrades a human being into a mere object which is easily owned by others.

## **CHAPTER-III**

### **THE NATURE WOMEN DUALISM IN MARGARET ATWOOD**

#### **NOVELS**

##### **3.1 Introduction**

Environmental issues is one of the major global problem faced by our generation. Environmental threats caused by human activities have led to several problems such as Global warming, air and water pollutions, species of floras and faunas have been extinct due to the the massive exploitation of the natural resources. The consumption rate of human beings are ever increasing due to the rapid population growth, and in order to fulfill the ever increasing demands of the rising population the natural resources is exploited. When the environment is exploited by humans, the nature loose its ability to sustain its flora and fauna

Environmental and ecological crisis has become the major discussion in current situation. Several environmental activist have taken initiative to spread the concern regarding the ecological imbalance, novelists and scholars too have recognized that environmental concerns should be made a part of the Literature, as the correct balance of ecology is necessary to maintain the balance in the ecosystem. Writers have been writing about nature and its destruction due to human activities, some writers who are environmental activist are Margaret Atwood , Barbara Kingslover, Edward Abbey and Nathaniel Rich and Ursula K Le Guin, in their writings they depict how the environment have been polluted due to human ever increasing destruction of nature. Literature can play a great role in informing the people the major environmental crises we humans are facing, literary text have proved

to be a great means to convey the message of the environmental problems. In such texts the work should not be “Anthropocentric”, but it should be “Eco-centric”. It means that the work should focus on the nature first, and the human concern should be of secondary importance. It should pay attention to the exploitation of nature in the hands of human activity, and show concern on how the nature can be preserved and maintain the balance of ecosystem. At the same time such works should not portray nature which is always a “Giver”, which is meant to be utilized to meet the human demands.

When one looks back into human history, language and its culture women and nature have always been closely associated with one another, this connection can also be revealed within their etymologies of western and nonwestern cultures. Carolyn Merchant traces the root of “nature” she analyzed that the “nature has traditionally been noted as feminine since the ancient times”( Merchant, 1980 p. xxiii). In the medieval Latin language Nature was identified as a feminine noun. In all the western languages Nature was associated with a feminine essence : in Latin *natura ae*; German: *die Natur*, French: *la nature*: Spanish; *la natura* (p. xxiii).

It was during the late 1970s and early 1980s the modern ecofeminist movement was born out, this movement was born after a series of conferences and workshops in United States. The discussion was about how feminism and the ecological studies can be combined, and how this combination can promote a respect for both nature and women. The establishment of Ecofeminism as an official school was on the year 1987, though the endeavor of critics and scholars started almost forty years ago. During the year 1950s and 60s female writers started writing about the degradation of environment and the need to conserve the ecosystem such writers were Isabella Bird, Mary Austin, Rachel Carson and Annie Dillard. . it was in the year 1974 a French Feminist, Françoise

d' Eaubonne coined the term "ecofeminism" in her book *Le Feminisme ou la Mort*(Feminism or Death). In her book she states that:

"Women have been reduced to the status of a minority by a male dominated society, although their importance in terms of numbers, and even more significantly in terms of reproduction, should have permitted them a dominant role... women must act to save themselves and earth simultaneously. The two needs are intimately linked"(Gates p. 15-22).

### **3.1 Re-locating women and nature in Margaret Atwood Novel**

Margaret Atwood's novel reflects the environmental issues and how environmental factors can effects the male dominated world. Most of Atwood's profound ecological fictions point out to "a demonstrable relationship between the ways in which men treat and destroy women and the way in which men treat and destroy nature"(Rueckert, 1996, p. 117) The female characters in *The Handmaid's Tale* and *The Testament* are portrayed as a victims where their bodies are oppressed and exploited by the patriarchy, and they are in a continuous struggle to gain their freedom and rights. In her dystopian work Atwood reflects how both nature and women are exploited by the patriarchy. In her novels women's body are shown as a victimized bodies, females are constantly looking for freedom and liberty under the patriarchal rule. Her novels show that how women and nature are constantly exploited by the patriarchy. According to Atwood a true piece of literature has the power to reflect the society and its issues in the way it is. For her, her fictions are the mirrors that reflect the society of her time. She writes, "I live in the society, I also put the society inside my book so that you get a box within a box effect" (qtd. in Kaminski, 1990, p. 28). Therefore in her works *The Handmaid's Tale* we can find the women

questions and the concerns of the environmental damages which was the main topic of discussion during the 1970s and 80s, thus she puts the society inside her book. Patrick Murphy maintains that the fiction of Atwood reveals feminist and ecological leanings :

Atwood has come to be known as a writer of fantastic or speculative rather than realistic prose. And it seems to be the case that the majority of the most daring ecological and the feminist novel have been written in some other mode than realism, with almost all of the feminist utopians and dystopian created in the past two decades predicated upon ecological disaster. (1995, p. 26)

Margaret Atwood in her work *The Handmaid's Tale* focuses that the ecological imbalances in nature is caused by human unending exploitation of nature and this further causes the suppression of women. In the novel the disruption and manipulation of the ecosystem have brought a negative impact on women body, they have lost the ability to procreate. The polluted environment have made the female infertile. A character in the novel Professor Piexoto states that there were several reasons for the infertility and the decline in the birth rates. Firstly in the Pre Gilead days there was massive use of birth control measures and abortions which ultimately led to the decline of the birth rates. And the main reason for infertility in women was because of the massive environment pollution, which was caused by the androcentric mindset.;

Stillbirths, miscarriages and genetic deformities were widespread and on the increase, and this trend has been linked to the various nuclear power plant accidents, shutdowns, and incidents of sabotage that characterized the period, as well as to the leakages from chemical and biological warfare stockpiles and toxic waste disposal sites, of which there were many thousands, both legal and illegal in some instances

these materials were simply dumped into the sewage system and to the uncontrolled use of chemical insecticides, herbicides, and other sprays. (p. 304)

Such degradable state of nature in the Gilead reminds of Rachel Carson's notable work "Silent Spring" where she states that nature has been silenced and oppressed in order to fulfill the never ending egocentricity of humans. She writes : " No witchcraft, no enemy action had silenced the rebirth of new life in this stricken world. The people had done it themselves" (qtd. in Garrard, 2004, p. 2) In the Gilead it is the human mindless activities that has led to the catastrophe and have silenced the nature and in return nature has taken its revenge towards humankind by making the women unable to procreate, the way the male centered society has made nature infertile. However the Gilead men is not ready to accept that it was their activities that has cause the imbalance in nature which has resulted in women's infertility, but instead they blame women for their lack of potency. Women in Gilead were valued on their ability to conceive, in this patriarchal society women were categorized as "fruitful" or "unfruitful". Offred the protagonist speaks about how her womb is effected by the polluted environment around her:

I'm a cloud, congealed around a central object, the shape of pear, which is hard and more real than I am and glow red within its translucent wrapping. Inside it is a space, huge as the sky at night , and darkened and curved like that, through black red rather than black" (p. 73)

Here Offred identifies herself with nature as she states that her womb which is her "central object", that is in the shape of a pear, but now her womb is no more real, it has lost its capacity to conceive due to the imbalance of ecosystem caused by the eco-

centric activities of mankind. The mindless interference to nature by the male dominated society resulted in the changes in women bodies.

The ecological crises in Gilead not only effected the women's fertility but it also affected the child's birth. Sometimes the handmaids unexpectedly get pregnant, but they failed the normal process of labor and gave birth to "Unbaby". The unbaby is described as " with a pinhead or snout like a dog's, or two babies, or a hole in it's heart, or no arms, or webbed hands or feet" (Atwood, 1986, p 112). Unbaby was an unsuccessful birth which was the effect of the polluted environment which led to the birth of such unhealthy baby. Offred related how in the past humans massively polluted nature and that led not only to the destruction of the ecosystem but also negatively affected all forms of life connected with nature.

"Women took medicines, pills, men sprayed trees, cows ate grass, all that souped up pissflowed into the river. Not to mention the exploding atomic power plant, along the San Andreas fault, during the earthquakes" (p. 112)"

The unmeasured use of birth control pills by women was also the reason that affected their biological order, men continued to use pesticides and insecticides and cutting down the trees to meet their unending demand, rivers and oceans were polluted by the factories wastes, the atomic power plant exploded which further lead to massive environmental pollution in this situation disease like syphilis spread out in the Gilead. In this way nature had its own way to take out its revenge upon humankind. Such manipulation with nature not only led to the pollution of nature and biological complication but it also led to the extinction of species creating the imbalance in nature. Fish was a staple food in the pre Gilead days but with the contamination of rivers and oceans with the toxic and the nuclear waste the fish is in the verge of

extinction. When Offred is in the market she observes that the fish stores are most often closed, “Loaves and Fishes is hardly ever open. Why bother opening when there’s nothing to sell? The sea fisheries were defunct several years ago: the few fish they were now are from sea farms, and taste muddy. The news says the coastal areas are being “rested” (p.164). The pre Gilead men have realized the necessity to preserve the species and had taken measures of forbidding fishing so that the species do not get extinct. It is only after this hazardous consequences that the male dominated society have started taking actions to preserve its nature like the way Gilead men have are trying to prevent the infertility in women. With the establishment of the Republic Gilead the patriarchal run government continues to practice its exploitative approach towards nature. There is a war between the Angels of the Faith and the Baptist guerrillas and the Quakers, during the war bombs are used in the forest which burns down the trees. Even after such consequences of the environment pollution the men in Gilead continues to damage the nature as well as the female body.

The Republic of Gilead is ruled by a patriarchal mindset, the Gilead men believes they have the sole authority of women and nature, and exploits them to meet their own benefits. In the novel anything associated with nature is linked with feminine, where both nature and women have an intimate connection as they share common experience of exploitation, destruction and domination in the hands of an androcentric world. Vandana Shiva an Indian environmentalist defines Prakriti as “the feminine principle as the basis or development which conserves and is ecological. Feminism as ecology and ecology as the revival of Prakriti- the source of all life”, Shiva here claims that men and women have a different essence and as such a dualism is created between women/nature and men/culture. In the novel there are several symbols that suggest that women are associated with nature and that male is



associated with culture, that rules over women and nature. . In the novel plants, flowers and fruits are symbolically linked with confinement, sexuality. In the novel the Aunts tell the handmaids that they should think of themselves as seeds. Which are suppose to live hidden, quite and confined and should have the power to reproduce. Whereas throughout the novel men are associated with symbols that are associated with civilization or the culture like cars, guns and books. Both women and nature are under the patriarchal control. In the novel “The Testament” the color green has a great significance, green which is associated with nature symbolizes life and purity. The novel’s cover displays an art in green color, in the novel green is the color of the outfit worn by young girls who have reached a marriageable age. Green however reminds of fertility youth, renewal but at the same time it also reminds of the ate of the young girls that symbolizes jealousy, hatred envy that is prevalent in the Republic of Gilead. Thus a clear dualism is created between women/nature and culture/male. Where the women and nature are exploited by the scientific and technological approached by the patriarchy. In both of the novels nature has been described and presented in its damaged and destroyed form, nowhere in the novel nature has been described in its natural form about wilderness or pastoral, nature has been silenced and subjugated like the women in the novel.

Radical Ecofeminism which was a branch of ecofeminism which began in 1980s, radical ecofeminist contends that the dominant male centered society creates a parallel between women and nature in order to exploit them both. They further contend that both women and nature has been associated with negative attributes whereas men have been seen as the one controlling nature and women. Such perception of radical ecofeminism can be seen in *The Handmaid’s Tale*, where the women have limited freedom with their association with nature. For instance Offred says several time that

she feels alive when she is around nature. When Offred is held in the Commander's house she was kept locked in a dark room and whenever a ray of light fell upon her from the partial opening of the window of her room, she felt alive and refreshing for a while : "sun comes through the fanlight, falling in colors across the floor, red and blue and purple, I step into it briefly, stretch out my hands, they fill with the flowers of life"( Atwood p. 49)

In the novel Gardens have been portrayed as an environmental space. However according to several ecofeminist garden cannot be regarded as a natural ecological space as they are arranged, rehabilitated space created by humankind and its androcentric mentality. According to the ecofeminist critic Vera Norwood garden is a space that can be termed as "civilized", and claims that "women are thought to be more comfortable in rural and cultivated nature" (1996 p. 324). In the Gilead garden is a space created by the patriarchy for the women, where the women can enjoy limited freedom. In this circumstances both the women and the garden are controlled by men. In this green space which is itself controlled by the patriarchy the handmaids and the wives are restricted to interact. An aunt remarks that " each women is a garden that is to be seeded by men, so that they can produce new flowers, plants, fruits, seeds and evenly babies"(p. 163).

In the Gilead the Handmaids use a common greeting phrase "Blessed be the Fruit" and the general response to this greeting is "May the Lord Open", this phrase has a irony which suggest women's fertility and reproduction. This has been set by the patriarchy to constantly remind the handmaids that their main aim in life is to reproduce. Patriarchy in Gilead are obsessed with fertility:

I walk to the corner and wait. I used to be bad at waiting. They also serve who only stand and wait, said Aunt Lydia. She made us memorize it. She also said No all of you will make it through. Some of you will fall on dry ground or thorns. Some of you are shallow rooted. Think of yourself as seeds, .... Let's pretend that we're trees. I stand on the corner, pretending I am a tree. (Atwood, 1986, p. 18-19)

This lines by Offred helps us understand the position of women and nature n a patriarchal society of Gilead. Women are compared to trees who are expected to stand still without any movement, and should act on the orders of men. Women like trees have the power to reproduce and are menstrual. The Handmaids are compared to a “seed” that has the power to to start a new generation. However in Gilead due to environmental factors most of the women cannot function as a seed and grow into a tree as they are infertile. In this situation the narrator pretends to be a tree so she can feel the sense of peace and satisfaction.

### **3.4The Position of Women under Capitalism, Technology with reference to the Women in Gilead.**

Capitalism is an economic system in which private individuals or businesses own capital goods. The production of goods and services is based on supply and demand in the general market known as a market economy rather than through central planning known as a planned economy or command economy. The main motive of capitalism is to make a profit. Adam Smith, the eighteen century philosopher and the father of the modern economy said ““It is not from the benevolent of the butcher, the brewer, and the banker that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest”.

In a capitalist society there is a shift of values into non-values, labor is shifted into non-labor, creativity is turned into passivity. According to Marx in such society the peasants who is the producer and the labor of all the material he becomes more poorer as he produces and increases his production through technology. According to Marx, the reduction in the value of the man power is directly proportional to the increase in the value of the world of things. So when the farmer produces more commodities he himself becomes a cheap-commodity thus it leads to the creation of the vicious circle of poverty.

In the Gilead the state follows a capitalist policies where their only motive is profit. Each section of the society is instructed to follow their own duties. The handmaids are considered as an object that is used for the production of humans, which will benefit the Gilead to secure its generation. Humans are converted into commodities, where the people who serve the Gilead becomes a labor who sell their labor-power to the State. It shows that capitalism is working and the people are exploited for the benefit of the capital. Althusser believes that "To produce the maximum of the commodities in the lowest price in order to get the highest profit, such is the irresistible tendency of capitalism. Naturally it goes hand in hand with the increasing exploitation of labor power". (83).

Marx states that in an economy workers are alienated from their labor, and the work a worker did was less valuable than the product being produced. Marx explains:

"The worker feels himself only when he is not working, when he is working he does not feel himself. He is at home when he is not working, and not at home when he is working. His labor, is therefore, not voluntary but forced, it is forced

labor. It is therefore, not a satisfaction of a need but a mere means to satisfy needs outside itself’.

In the novel *Offred* and other Handmaids are the “alienated Labor”, their labor is conceiving child for the commanders and the product is the children. The handmaids are not suppose to make any attachment with their children, when Janine gives birth to a child she does not have the right to name the child, and right after the birth she will be further sent to test if “she can do it again, with someone else who need a turn”. (163) Women are treated by their ability to reproduce as many children as they can.

Vandana Shiva in one of her book states that “ Ecological and ethnic fragmentation and breakdown are intimately connected and are an intrinsic part of a policy of planned destruction of diversity in nature and culture to create the uniformity demanded by centralized management system”. (Shiva 2010). This means that the capitalist in the name of development and also to propagate its power destroy both the nature and culture for its own benefit. Development thus becomes a strategy used by the capitalist to dominate over and gain material from its subject and the environment. In the Republic of Gilead the environment is severely damaged due to unchecked technology practices, in the name of development nuclear power plant, chemical factories has been set up and the waste and the emission of these plants have led to severe environmental damages. In order to control its citizen specially the women the state in the name of providing security and safety to women have completely exploited the women. Women are deprived of their identity, name as well as voice. The Gilead claims to create a balanced society with proper division of labor, and a society which is safe for women, has imposed a rule which ruthlessly rips off the liberty and freedom of the citizen. The citizens are divided into hierarchy according to their task and if anyone fails to perform their task are mercilessly punished. Women

in the name of protection are instructed to wear cloths that do not expose their body, they are not allowed to speak with men, are not allowed to walk alone in street. Thus both women and nature are controlled under a system which follows a capitalist policy to benefit from its resource.

### **3.5 The Structure of Dualism and moving Beyond Dualism in Margaret Atwood's Work**

The term dualism has been evolving due to the changing dynamic of human civilization. According to a Western philosopher Plumwood, hierarchy and radical separation are architectonic to dualism. Plumwood states :

“Dualism is a relation of separation and domination inscribed and naturalized in culture and characterized by radical exclusion, distancing and opposition between orders constructed as systematically higher and lower, and inferior and superior, as ruler and ruled, which treats division as part of the natures as beings constructed not merely as different but as belonging to radically different orders or kinds, and hence not open to change” (Plumwood, 1993: 47).

Dualism is maintained in order to have a hierarchy in the system and also to exercise the relation of domination. Dualism is structured in the sets of oppositional pairs like below:

Male	Female
Nature	culture
Self	Other
Mind	Body

Subject	Object
Reason	Emotion
Master	Slave
Civilized	Primitive

According to Plumwood there are three main characteristic that can illuminate the logical structure of Dualism. The first feature is the element of “radical exclusion”, this ensures that an oppositional relation is created between the two forces, the self and the other. Emphasize is made on creating a difference between the two, the other is portrayed as a completely different being from the self, such differences is focused in order to create a maximum difference between the self and the other. Once this differences is recognized the other is radically excluded from the self. Plumwood remarks that such construction serves to “naturalize domination, making it appear to be part of the nature of each and in the nature of things, and yields two hyper-separated orders of being”. (Plumwood 1993 : 51)

In Atwood’s novel such dualism is created between women/male, culture/nature. Women in the Gilead are treated as second class citizen, they are only meant to serve the state and the patriarchy. The state applies strategies such as women are deprived to read and write, to speak in public, to travel alone, by doing this the state creates a difference between women and men. The men becomes the “self” in the power play and women becomes the “other”. Thus women are regarded as subordinate to men and hence the state normalize the domination of women. By creating this differences it becomes easy for the state to exercise its autocratic power. Between Nature and Culture, culture becomes the self and nature the other. Nature is regarded as an

element in Gilead that meets human demand. Whereas humans with their inventions, science, technology is superior to nature and is born to control nature.

In such relationship the “self” is always in dependent with the “other”, in order to stay in harmony and maintain its position. This element as termed by Plumwood is known as “backgrounding”, which deals with the relationship between the dependence. Back-grounding also entails that the perspective of the “other” does not hold much value, whereas the view of the self is believed to have a universal significance. And all through this it never occurs to the self that the “other” might have a perspective in which the self is regarded as a background. This inessentialness of the other and the essentialness of the self, is however an illusion, as it is the self who requires the other to define its identity as it is defined essentially in opposition to the other. Thus according to Plumwood, paradoxically, it is the other the self is indebted to. In the novel the self that is represented by the patriarchy and technology though holds the power over the Other, but it is always unconsciously in dependent with the Other. The Gilead that is run by the patriarch is dependent upon the women for tasks like conceiving and maintaining its generation. The Gilead is well aware of the value of a healthy environment therefore they have taken steps to reclaim the environment hazards by cleaning the Colonies that is a waste land polluted by power plant. As in “backgrounding” the perspective and opinions of the “other” i.e the women are not considered, they are ruthlessly punished if they try to question the Gilead. Whereas the views and opinions of Gilead i.e the “self” is considered as having a universal significance. However this structure is just an illusion because the identity of the ruler is recognized only through the recognition of the ruled. The Gilead requires its subject in order to claim its identity.



Plumwood's third characteristic of dualism is called "incorporation", according to which the identity of the other is constructed always in relation and with references to the self. That means the identity of the other is constructed opposite to the identity of the self, where the self is taken as having the social values while the other is defined as negative or lacking. In this way the self takes the superior power over the other. Though the self is dependent upon the other, but the other is not an independent other. As Plumwood writes " the other is only recognized to the extent that it is assimilated to the self, or incorporated to the self and its system of desire and needs, only as colonized by the self" (Plumwood, 1993 ;52)

In the novel the character of the women is created as an interior to men. The Wives who is considered to have more power among the women is still subordinate to their husband The Commander. The self i.e the men are considered to have all the social values whereas women i.e the other are portrayed as lacking several values. In the Republic of Gilead where most of the humans have lost the ability to procreate, the State never alleges the Men being a sterile, it is always the women who is considered as "Unwomen", the one who has lost the ability to conceive. Thus the other is not an independent being, the women too requires the recognition of the male in order to be included by the structure.

### **3.6 A Patriarchal Viewpoint on Women and Nature of Margaret Atwood novel**

Patriarchy is the power relation that exists between men and women, where men have the greater power, and are allowed to control and dominate the female. According to Walby "patriarchy is a system creating structure of social and practice, which allows men to dominate, exploit and subjugate women". Most communities follow and repeat the subjugation of women. In a patriarchy it is common that women

are dominated and controlled, their voice and opinions are not considered neither are they allowed to make any decision. Patriarchy strictly adhere to the notion of masculine and feminine. Where masculine is associated with power, rationalism, domination and feminine is associated with submissive and nurturing. Goldberg writes that “men’s tendency to dominate is caused by women’s willingness to sacrifice that which is necessary to maintain the dominance and control. Women can do sacrifice for a different reason, which is to care and nurture. Their sacrifice is out of love, as for the sake of the children”.

In “The Handmaids Tale” women is associated with qualities like nurturing, submissive, silent, obedient whereas the male are the one who rule the Gilead and controls the women. In the novel the women themselves are willing to accept their role, the Aunts voluntarily have taken the responsibility to train and guide the handmaids. And most of the women are happy with the role they play as a handmaid as long as the State provide them a safe place to live.

Such gender construct was maintained in order to make a distinction between the biological sexes. This division is done to maintain the power in the patriarchal system. The gilead women are repeatedly taught the value to nurturing, and the domestic works so that the patriarchy gets the power to rule over them. Simone de Beauvoir emphasis the dualism of masculine and feminine that is not in balance and reciprocal :

“The term masculine and feminine are used symmetrically only as a matter of form, as on legal papers. In actuality the relation between the two sexes is not quite like that of a two electrical poles, or man represents both the positive and the neutral, as is indicated by the common use man to designate human being in general whereas

woman represent only the negative, as defined by limiting criteria, without reciprocity".(15)

In the novel the very concept of masculine and feminine is constructed in order to legitimize the domination of the Gilead over the women. Maria Mies states that "the patriarchal viewpoint also assist men to have a role as a hunter, and that the hunter is basically a parasite and not a producer". In the Republic of Gilead the patriarchy basically uses the womb of the women for reproduction.

Humans have always considered themselves superior than the environment around, they have considered environment as an element that servers human needs and has to be tamed with the help of modern science and technology. This mindset to mankind has led to the destruction of environment which has been perfectly pictured in the State of Gilead. With the rapid development of science, technology humans consider themselves the creator and savior off all, whereas the environment around seems to them as submissive and passive, meant to be dominated by men. Thus men becomes a hunter, a parasite that feed on the environment until it is completely torn down as portrayed in the state of Gilead.

### **3.7 Re-locating the role of women through the Patriarchal Mindset in Atwood's novel**

In every society conventions have been set as a unspoken rules that is followed by the society mainly due to the mindset that has been practiced by the people for a long period of time. In a society which is ruled by men there exists a hierarchy which is created mainly by patriarchal mindset, in this way they normalize the domination of

the interior. It is because of this mindset there has been a strict division of the masculine and feminine roles in the society, where one dominates the other. It is the mindset that creates the behavior and attitude. Therefore the attitude of the masculine towards feminine is rooted by the patriarchal mindset. Due to the division of the hierarchy, the masculine are valued and are considered more privilege than the feminine. Thus only the form of oppression has changed, as people has subconsciously accepted this mindset in their mind.

Walby acknowledges that the patriarchy changes in different form and degree yet it does not diminish. It only shifts to different form of exclusion and discrimination to feminine”. Beside this mindset has also utilized to maintain the patriarchal ideology related to hierarchal dualism in which there should be the oppressor and the oppressed, the masculine and the feminine, the more privileged and the less privileged.

In Atwood’s novel *The Handmaid’s Tale* and *the Testament*, the woman characters show inferiority to the power of masculine embodied in several form. They show the necessity of men’s power and superiority for giving them protection, safety and security even though they have the resource to provide it for themselves. In Gilead the women ranking from Wives to aunts Marthas and Handmaids believe that even though they have to sacrifice their rights and freedom they are granted safety and security in return. The character Moira who was a rebel from the very beginning she tried her best to revoke the Gilead and made two attempts to escape gilead, and was successful. But when we meet her later she is shown working as a prostitute in Jizebel, she has become very submissive and has accepted her fate, and envies Offred that though she is deprived of freedom but is given a safe home. In “*The Testament*”, young girls are taught that their body is a source of sin and any attention to their body

would reflect negativity on her and not the men. This patriarchal mindset was followed by the women subconsciously accepting their own domination and exploitation. In the novel when Agnes was raped by the doctor, she decided to stay silent because she believed she feared that society would blame her as it is her body which attracted the doctor to rape her. Agnes staying silent is her subconsciously accepting the patriarchal mindset that women is responsible in provoking men's attention.

In "The Handmaid's Tale" the Wives are insecure about themselves. Her insecurity is caused by her incapability to have a child. The commandar's wife is very cruel toward Offred, and this is mainly because she envies Offred ability to conceive. The handmaids too are very insecure regarding their pregnancy when Offred visits the doctor for her routine checkup, she becomes very nervous because she does not want any complication in her pregnancy. In one of the scene when Janine one of the handmaid is pregnant, she takes pride in her enlarged stomach and tries to show off her pregnancy to the other handmaids, and she becomes the object of envy to the other handmaids. When this kind of impact effects women and their nature to care, nurture and reproduce they become victim because of the standard, which is imposed by the patriarchal mindset.

In the novel Offred her insecurity of being infertile relates to the nature of being a women. A woman is suppose to be able to get pregnant and give birth. Inability to do this is considered as a failure as a woman. The nature to care and nurture is doubtful if they cannot deliver a baby from their own womb. This is a patriarchal mindset. The standard of being a real woman is by completing the nature of being woman. If a woman has a flaw she is liable to be judged and undervalued. The Wives they hold the power over all the women but is dominated and controlled

by their husbands and the patriarch, mainly because of their inability to procreate. In chapter 8 The Aunts while instructing the handmaids says about the wife that “ You must realize that they are defeated women” because they have been unable to bear children. In the Gilead all those women who have lost their ability to conceive has been termed as “Unwoman”, which means that they have lost the values which actually made them a woman.

In a patriarchal society that follows the patriarchal mindset, the people’s mind is rooted with the concept that if a woman is infertile it reduces her value as a woman. This shows that oppression does not just exist in physical form but oppression exists in several different forms. The insecurity and inferiority show that the patriarchal domination has enriched not only for the masculine but also without realization the feminine has accepted the domination subconsciously. By terming the women as Unwoman, it demonstrates the way of thinking as formed by patriarchal mindset. He thinks that an infertile woman is not completely a woman and it is the judgement that shows the superiority of the Gilead i.e the patriarchy. Superiority of men has an important role in a patriarchal society. Not only in giving protection but also in the attitude of giving judgement and values to women can effect the way of thinking. Women need men more than they can imagine because they accept the superiority of men and subconsciously they undervalue their own ability and capacity to live and get rights equally with men. Meanwhile women subconsciously accept their domination. In the novel the women voluntarily accept their gender role and shape themselves according to the society’s convention that makes them submissive and easier for the patriarchy to rule over them.

## CHAPTER-IV

### A PSYCHOANALYTICAL STUDY OF MARGARET ATWOOD'S NOVELS

#### 4.1 Introduction

The Modern Psychology as a study marks its beginning during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and with the development of this psychology it also made a profound effect on literary texts, as the literary texts began to be analyzed through psychoanalysis. This method of analysis used the concepts developed by noted sociologist including Carl Jung, Alfred Adler, Otto Rank and above all Sigmund Freud. This study was first used by Freud as a method of therapy for neuroses, but soon it developed and expanded as it began to contribute to various others practices of human civilizations including warfare, mythology, religion, literature and other arts.

If we trace the origin of psychoanalysis, it will lead us to its emergence from the medical profession. As it entered into the Literary field it gave a different perspective to the study of literature. Psychoanalysis focus on how a person's behavior and his mindset is determined by the pre stored idea of his or her recurring events. According to Monte (1977), "Psychoanalytic theories assumed the existence of the unconscious internal states that motivate in individual's overt actions." (Beneath the Mask,). The psychoanalysis movement is therefore championed by Sigmund Freud (1859-1939).

Carl Gustav Jung (1875- 1961) who was a fellow student of the Freudian psychology he in many ways contributed to the field of psychoanalysis. According to Jung the basic human behavior is myth and legends. Alfred Adler (1870-1937) gave a

new dimension to the field as he believed that humans are social being, all human activities and behavior are motivated by social needs, “we are self-conscious and capable of improving ourselves and the world around us”. (McConnell, 250). Thus we can assume that psychoanalysis can be a major tool or a mediator to unveil the literary texts.

A psychoanalytical therapy re narrates a person’s life, it studies the inner working of the person’s mind. It focuses on the study and the working of the unconscious and the subconscious mind and its effect on the thought process. It believes that a stable mind keeps an awareness of the play of the mind. Psychoanalysis focus on the hidden motive. It aims to unveil them in order to bring clarity to the text. It helps to bring clarity in two level firstly it clarifies the texts and its motives, secondly it clarifies the text’s characters motives and its behavior by studying its subconscious mind. Psychoanalysis has a great contribution towards modern study of the relationship between individual literature and the culture.

#### **4.2 Psychoanalysis and Literature**

There is a close relationship between psychology and literature. According to Hilgard (1983) “psychology may be defined as science that studies behavior of man”. As human psyche is an abstract concept which cannot be studied, psychology is used to approach the study of human behavior which represents the identity of an individual. Literature as a whole is a representation of life, writers through their work of novels, poems, prose and drama communicate with the readers, these works represents the different facet of human lives. And psychoanalysis is used as a literary theory to study the essence of the texts.



Psychoanalysis is not just the branch of medicine or a therapy but it is a theory or a philosophy which brings a better understanding of religion, culture and literature. Sigmund Freud who was the pioneer of the psychoanalytical theory, while developing it he particularly related it to art in general and literature in particular. There are several works of Freud where he has analyzed the literary text through the psychoanalytic perspective. In his "Interpretation of Dreams" Freud has studied the Oedipal elements in the Shakespearean text "Hamlet" and Sophocles's "Oedipus Rex", he also analyzed the effect of these play on the audience. In his "Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming", Freud further supports the connection that exists between Literature and Psychoanalysis. In this work he focuses on daydreams, fantasy and play which contributes to the understanding of creativity. According to Freud a literary work is similar to a daydream. Like a daydream which is the manifestation of wish and desires the literary works are built upon the fantasy of many achievement of unfulfilled desires which in turn gives a satisfying reality. Psychoanalysis criticism focuses on the following issues.

**The Author:** this theory is used to study the author's life his memory, experiences and its effect and impact on his/her work. It analyzes how the author's unconscious mind has its traces on their work they created.

**The Characters:** This theory is used to analyze one or more character, the psychological theory becomes a tool to explain the character's behavior and motivation. This theory unveils the hidden subconscious motives and agenda of the characters.

**The Audience:** This theory is used to explain the effect of the work on the readers.

**The Text:** this theory further uses the role of the language and symbolism in the work.

The authors and writers are influenced by the psychoanalytic concept which are reflected in the characters of their works and also in their mind. The psychoanalytic concept which were propounded by Sigmund Freud influenced the psychoanalysis of authors are:

The Primacy of the Unconscious

The Iceberg theory of the Psyche

Dreams are an expression of our Conscious

Infantile Behavior is essentially sexual and

The relationship between Neurosis and Creativity

#### **4.3 Defense Mechanism in Margaret Atwood's Novel**

When a person faces threats and challenges in life like anxieties, frustration, conflicts, that goes beyond their control, the person automatically adopt defense mechanism in order to cope up with the situation. Defense mechanisms appear to be common phenomena in everyday life. The definitions of defense mechanisms are as follows. Defense mechanisms, according to Encyclopedia of Psychology, are psychological strategies employed by a person in order to reduce or avoid negative states such as conflicts, frustration, anxiety and stress. A wide variety of mechanisms have been suggested and accepted. However, the acceptance is based on case studies or anecdotal reports rather than on control scientific research (390). According to Sigmund Freud, defense mechanisms are the devices that ego defends itself against conflicts and anxieties by forcing unpleasant thoughts and impulses to the

unconscious level (qtd. in Kalat. 541-542). Ernest R Hilgard claims that defense mechanisms are the immediate reactions to frustrations. They are employed in order to solve the problems. They help protect the individual's self-esteem, and they defend a person against anxiety when facing continuing frustrations (511)

According to the definitions, it is clear that defense mechanism is a psychological device which helps the individual to tackle the stressful emotions. People adopt defense mechanism at the unconscious level, the unconscious part of human mind automatically resort to defense mechanism that helps them survive the stress. Appropriate use of defense mechanism helps the individual live happily and stress free in the society.

In Margaret Atwood's novel *Handmaid's Tale* and *The Testament* there are abundant incidents where the characters under the autocratic Gilead rule feel frustrated and threatened and in order to cope up with these feelings they automatically resort to defense mechanism. There are several types of defense mechanism which will be discussed in relation to Atwood's novel.

1. Denial: denial is one of the most common forms of Defense Mechanism. It is a state when the individual refuses to accept the reality and facts that surround them. In order to stay away from the extreme emotional impact, one decides to block out all the external events. In this way the individual is able to avoid all the painful events of life. Defense Mechanism can not always have a positive effect, it can also lead to extreme or unhealthy consequences, everything depends on the way of using it. It is all the working of the unconscious mind trying to protect the self from the painful situation. *The Handmaid's Tale* is a story of a woman Offred who has been stuck in a miserable fate but she is not alone in this, almost every

woman is facing same cruelty in the dystopian Republic of Gilead, which was once called United States. Gilead has a totalitarian government where the state rules over everything, even people's thoughts. There has been a dire dearth of children possibly due to constant wars; ". . . there are no children . . . doctors lived here once, lawyers, university professors . . . such freedom now seems almost weightless" (33). The government now wants all the women to be hired as Handmaids in the officials' houses just for the purpose of procreation of children and Offred is one of them. No one is spared from the indoctrination of government's orders and Offred comes to know this while being prepared at Red Center for would-be Handmaids; "the republic of Gilead knows no bounds. . . Gilead is within you" (33). The place where Offred is sent to live i.e. the Commander's house, like all others, is more like a prison where the only thing that is not controllable is Offred's mind. Her surroundings are set in such a way that they keep on reminding her psychologically that she is nothing but a womb; ". . . everything except the wings around my face is red: the color of blood, which defines us" (18). The physical and psychological confinement is enough to create severe anxiety in Offred and since she is not even allowed to express that, she uses certain defense mechanisms in order to preserve her outer posture and inner integrity; her identity. In Offred's case, denial, selective memory, selective perception and avoidance provide the basis for survival in a world of few options. Offred's denial is visible in the dreams of her past; her happy life, before the world turned into a dystopia. Instead of admitting that that life is no more possible since she has lost her husband Luke and her daughter whose name is not mentioned, she keeps denying that her present misery is real; "I feel drugged. I consider this: maybe they're drugging me. Maybe the life I think I'm living is a

paranoid delusion” (119). But by denying her miseries, she thinks that she is the only one who is keeping her sanity intact; “Sanity is a valuable possession; I hoard it the way people once hoarded money. I save it, so I will have enough when the time comes” (119). Offred’s denial of harsh reality is also visible when she consoles herself by this reminder that “all of it is a reconstruction. It is a reconstruction now in my head . . . let’s stop there. I intend to get out of here. It can’t last forever” (144). She further imagines getting out of that place and forgiving all her aggressors; “But remember that forgiveness too is a power . . . maybe none of this is about control. Maybe it isn’t really about who can own whom . . . maybe it’s about who can do what to whom and be forgiven for it” (144-5). Offred keeps fighting back the unpleasant truth of her life so that her mind and identity could not be lost; “what I need is perspective. The illusion of depth . . . perspective is necessary . . . otherwise you live in the moment. Which is not where I want to be” (153). Offred’s piercing denial of the present and hope of the future is vividly seen when she says; “Every night when I go to bed I think, In the morning I will wake up in my own house and things will be back the way they were” (209).

Denial as a means to escape the harsh reality can be seen in “The Testament”, Agnes Jemima who grew up in a prominent household of Commander Kyle. Though she benefited from the loving care of her adoptive mother, Tabitha from a young age. Agnes secretly harbored doubts about the Gilead’s treatment of women. Agnes had a doll house, and she had a very unconventional way of playing the doll house. She kept the Commander doll quite and far, kept the handmaid doll in the box as it made her nervous though she did not know what exactly the handmaids did but doubted in their activities “did something damaging or something damaged”(36). Agnes’ doll was

locked up in the cellar and the Martha doll pretended not to here when the Aunt doll cried for help. This is a means created by Agnes herself to escape and deny the harsh reality around. By creating a doll house where she has a power to control and manipulate the activities of the doll, she is denying the actual reality around in order to protect herself from the traumatic environment. She keeps the commander doll quiet and far away because the commanders are the ruthless and aggressive power holder of every household. And by keeping his doll far away her mind is denying the violence she has to face everyday. By keeping the handmaid in the box she is denying the role played by the handmaids in the Gilead, her conscious mind is well aware that handmaids are engaged in a work that is “something damaged”, hence her unconscious mind refuses to accept the reality and wants to deny the suspicious working of the handmaids so she locks the handmaid doll in a box.

Repression: repression is a Defense Mechanism where the individual’s conscious mind tries to keep certain thoughts, feelings out of their thought so as to avoid certain emotions. This aim of this form of Defense Mechanism is to keep certain unaccepted desires or thoughts out of the conscious mind so the individual do not have to face anxiety. Many times guilty memories, unsocial activities can mentally disturb an individual. In this situation the person instead of facing the situation they may opt to escape from them by unconsciously hiding them i.e by repressing such memories in the hope to completely forget them. However such memories does not disappear completely, they come out in other ways. Such repression may affect the individual’s behavior and their future relationship. In “The Testament” characters though they try to hide and deny their deepest painful memories but eventually they influence their behavior. In the novel Becca a young girl and Agnes friend, has a traumatic past she has been sexually molested by her father since her childhood. She has tried to hide

this memories and experience from the world, because the Gilead society has taught the girls that men are never responsible for their cruelty, and for any of their cruelty the women were regarded responsible for provoking men. Thus Becca out of fear of society as well as to safe herself from disturbing memories she chooses to hide them in hope of forgetting them completely. Though she hides her traumatic memories from the society, the memories does not disappear entirely. This influences her behavior and her future relationship. Later when she gets a marriage prospect she gets afraid to get married and even attempts suicide because she has built a concept that marriage once again means getting molested, she says “I am afraid of penis” (78). Thus her traumatic memories though she tries to repress it has effected her behavior and her future relationship. Aunt Lydia who has now become a powerful women in Gilead, she holds power over all the section of women and is in equal power with the commander too has a traumatic past, nine years ago when she was caught by the Gilead and held as a prisoner she was given an option by commander Judd to save herself by executing one of the women. Then she had executed one of the women by shooting in order to prove her loyalty towards Gilead. Through years she have become a powerful Aunt, and have tried to hide this guilt. Instead of facing this guilt she has tried to hide this memories in a hope to forget them completely. But this memories effect her behavior and her future relationships. Aunt Lydia after this incident though has been supporting the Gilead regime has unconsciously been desiring for its downfall.

Displacement: displacement is a defense mechanism where the individual transfers a negative emotions from its original source to a less threatening recipient. Agression is a way a person exercise this form of mechanism. When a person is angry but cannot express his anger towards the source, as the source is comparably more powerful than

then individual, in this situation he redirects his anger towards other source or person which poses less risk.

In “The Handmaid’s Tale” Offred is brought into the house of the Comander and his wife to conceive his child for them. The wife who does not have the capacity to conceive receives Offred and provide her food and shelter in return of a child. The wife’s attitude toward Offred is very bitter, it is mainly out of jealousy as she has to share her husband. The wife though she enjoys power over all the women are themselves under the patriarchal domination. The Commander can any time leave their wife and marry another women, she is mistreated by the commander. Thus the wife redirects this negative emotions from the patriarchy towards the less threatening recipient that is their handmaids. The wives are very rude and bitter towards their handmaids. Offred is instructed “not to question, look directly “ to the wife. The wife had always knew about Offred’s daughter whom she was always in search of, later the wife agrees to show the photo of Offred’s daughter if Offred agrees to sleep with Mike the driver. Such bitterness of the wife towards Ofred is the defense mechanism of the wife where she redirects her anger and frustration of the patriarchy towards Offred who is a less threatening recipient.

Sublimation: Mental Sublimation is a process in which an individual converts their negative energy or a situation into a positive are a creative outcome. Many a time in a turbulent situation when one has no control over the situation the individual in order to maintain its sanity and to adapt into the situation they undergo sublimation to overcome the unending drama of pain. Sublimation urges the individual to behave socially and positive by taking control of the negative energy around. Sublimation is also a medium which helps the individual to maintain sanity out of the insane surrounding. And leads people to create something productive, positive and creative.



In the novel “The Handmaid’s Tale” where the citizens specially the women are under the autocratic control of the state and Offred who is separated from her husband and her daughter , deprived of any rights and freedom and who is terribly exploited as a handmaiden is able to channelize all this negative energy into a positive form of reinforcement by recording her story as a handmaid in a tape recorded, which is discovered many years later after the fall of Gilead, and this record of Offred serves as a great information for the study and research of the Gilead rule. In this way Offred adopts mental sublimation as a defense mechanism in order to maintain her sanity.

In “The Testament”, aunt Lydia holds a powerful position under the Gilead rule which has become very corrupt. The Commanders are raping and exploiting young girls, women are poisoned to death and are executed publicly for disobeying the State. In this situation Aunt Lydia secretly plots against the Gilead rule, and creates a foil against the Aunts in order to weaken them. She channelize all the negative aspects around her into a positive form of reinforcement.

#### **4.4 The Uncanny Effect in Margaret Atwood Works**

Psychology as a branch of science has a dual nature, it can serve as a boon to human race as it has the capacity to understand human mind and its unconsciousness, but at the same time it can also wholly destabilizes us. Psychoanalysis has proved to bring out those part of ourselves which we ourselves are not ready to face it, it unapologetically bring out the most uncomfortable part of ourselves. According to Freud “Uncanny”, is a very difficult and sophisticate term to explain, because it is the emotional impact which is created upon an individual when they come across certain sight, sound or feelings, such uncanny experience may be different for each

individual. It is a feeling that a person experience which makes him feel uncertain or disturbed which will further make him feel uncomfortable for the reason he cannot understand or decipher. This emotional turmoil has been linked to the German word “unheimlich”, Freud took much interest in this concept he states “...uncanny(that) that is in reality nothing new or foreign, but something familiar and old-established in the mind that has been estranged only by the process of repression... the factors of repression enables us, therefore to understand..the uncanny or something which ought to have been kept concealed but which nevertheless comes to light” (Rivkin 492). It is for this that we feel agitated when certain unexpected emotions come before us, and we constantly try to suppress or deny it. However these things which comes before us which disturbs us has other greater significance and has messages to convey us. This dual nature of having a familiar effect as well as an unexpectedness is something Freud termed as “Uncanny”. Therefore what we term as Uncanny is something which is very familiar to us but as well as something that we wish to submerge in our unconscious mind. Freud further states that when this phenomenon is presented in a work of fiction it acquires a great quality. He states that incidents which appear to be uncanny in real life would appear to be less uncanny in the work of art, mainly because we as an observer are ready to accept strangeness in a work of fiction.

In Margaret Atwood’s work we can find abundant of such instances. Uncanny is a fascinating concept, but at the same time it raises questions as to why it creates such responses. The answer to it lies in the nature of Uncanny itself. Atwood in her work successfully has created a world which makes full use of the world of uncanny where the familiar turns unfamiliar. Her work which is based on a fictional world of Gilead which appears to be far removed from the world we are familiar with, is not so

far removed from our reality we are in today. Thus when we question to the nature of uncanny in Atwood's work, we are actually questioning to our own perspective of reality. When going through this process uncanny has the capacity to reveal the readers personal biases about reality. When one reads Atwood's work it has the capacity to create a parallel between the reader's view on what we subconsciously accept and agree and what we ignore or deny about our society but when they appear on the work of fiction we react quite viscerally.

Atwood creates a world in her fiction which has an Uncanny effect, the rules policies of the Gilead itself demonstrates that Atwood's new civilization has an unnatural effect. She creates a dystopian fiction where an autocratic state has been established after the President of United Kingdom and most of the Congressmen has been killed by a staged attack. After this the state is taken over by a group called "Sons of Jacob" they are a radical political group which follow a theonomic ideology. After the takeover of the government the United Nation Constitution is suspended, newspaper and media are censored, any form of writing is banned to the women, women are deprived of right to property, religion is banned, and a new form of regime known as Republic of Gilead is set up. All the other sectors are ripped of any form of power, the Gilead consolidates the power, it controls all the other sector as well as religion groups, including the traditional Christian denomination. This regime sets a new regulations for the society by using and manipulating the interpretation of The Old Testament, thus they create a new society with rules that favor their rule. It was an autocratic rule where the general people wer deprived of many rights and freedom, especially for women where they were not allowed to read, write, travel freely or own any property. Most severely women were deprived over the control of their body, their reproductive process was controlled by the Gilead rule. This is an era of

environmental pollution and most of the women have lost the ability to conceive a child and only few are left fertile. Those women who are fertile are forcibly assigned to produce children for the commander who are the ruling class of men. These women are called Handmaids based on the biblical story of Rachel and her Handmaid Bilhah. Through a process known as “The Ceremony” which is a reproductive ritual which every handmaid go through, the commander and his wife participate in a sexual act where the Handmaid are intended to conception in the presence of the wife.

Atwood’s novel “The Testament” is the sequel to the Handmaid’s Tale. The novel is set 15 years after the events of The Handmaid’s Tale. Like the prequel The Testament was written as a reaction to contemporary trends of Atwood’s time. “Instead of moving away from Gilead, we started moving towards it, especially in the United States” exclaimed Atwood in the interview with the Vatiety. (Chu 2019). This novel too reflects the domination of the patriarchy towards the women, and how the Commanders in power sexually exploited young minor girls. And the girls were trained to believe that the sole purpose of their body and youth is to serve the men sexually.

Such description of the world Atwood has created presents the entire affair to be a fantasy which is quite unfamiliar to the readers. Atwood has made use of Freud’s theory that the instances of the uncanny are often less effective in the work of fiction than their physical counterpart would be in reality. In the novel **The Ceremony** is a highly ritualized sexual act that high-ranking men (such as Commanders or Angels, their Wives and Handmaids undergo to conceive children. Prior to the Ceremony, the Handmaid is required to bathe; June derisively describes this as being “washed and brushed like a prize pig.” [2] Afterwards, the household gathers together for a reading of the Bible and prayer, led by the patriarch of the house. During the Ceremony itself,

everyone remains mostly clothed. It is designed to be as clinical and non-sensual as possible, as the purpose of the Ceremony is not sexual pleasure or intimacy, but the conceiving of children. The Wife and Handmaid must lie on their backs on the edge of a bed, with the Handmaid lying between the Wife's legs, her head against her abdomen, and her arms raised above her head to hold hands with the Wife whilst the man involved has intercourse with the Handmaid. This is to symbolize that they are "of one flesh" and alluding to the Biblical story of Rachel, Jacob and their handmaid Billah, who bore children for the barren Rachel "upon [Rachel's] knees". The man is not permitted to touch the Handmaid in any other way; Offred mentions that when Commander Fred tries to touch her face, it is considered improper.

In Chapter VI of the novel, Offred describes the ceremony:

My red skirt is hitched up to my waist, though no higher. Below it the Commander is fucking. What he is fucking is the lower part of my body. I do not say making love, because this is not what he's doing. Copulating too would be inaccurate, because it would imply two people and only one is involved. Nor does rape cover it: nothing is going on here that I haven't signed up for.[3]

Afterwards, the Handmaid is meant to rest on the bed, with her feet propped up on a pillow to "increase the chances" of conceiving, whilst the Wife uses it as a time to reflect and pray in silence (although in the novel, as soon as the Commander has left, the humiliated and frustrated Serena Joy instead orders Offred to "Get up and get out"). The Ceremony is intended to be the only time that the man of the household may have sexual contact with a Handmaid, although some men, such as Commander Waterford, break this rule. The Ceremony is also the only sexual contact Handmaids

are permitted as well; sexual relations at any other time, or with anyone other than the man they are assigned to, is considered 'fornication' and is sinful.

By creating such an unconventional society Atwood succeeds in setting up an entirely new sense of life without raising much alarm to the readers. This can be attributed to the nature of the uncanny in the novel. As Freud writes "In fairy - tales, for instance the world of reality is left behind from the very start" (7). While Atwood's world is not fantastical in the sense of magic and monster, it does set up a particular set of belief, that there can exist a several form of exploitation both in a fictional world and in our world.

In his consideration of the literary uncanny, Freud further asserts that, "The situation is altered as soon as the writer pretends to move in the world of common reality." Thus as the world created by the author begins to align more and more towards our own, the truly uncanny nature of the work is disclosed. In Atwood's novel the discussion shifts from the autocratic and degraded state of Gilead to the pre Gilead days when Offred recalls her happy days with her husband and daughter. Those days when she could freely roam around in the street, women could wear cloths of their own likings, books and magazines were available for the people around, and when women had the right to property and when women were fertile and conceive a healthy baby. When Atwood shifts towards this discussion elements of reality is introduced. All at once everything is alive in a manner which is familiarly evocative. A pre Gilead days is presented where women can conceive, peoples are not forced to live a robotic life with every social class wears a colored uniform, where books and television is available. These are all associated with which the readers is previously acquainted. Thus the world of the text shifts into position alongside our own, a world where every women reproduce. This parallel makes Atwood's next move more shocking. In the

Gilead those women who do not prove useful to the service of the state were termed as “Unwomen”, they were the former feminists, homosexuals and other non-conformists who did not ensue to the regime of Gilead they were sent to the Colonony a waste land to clean up the nuclear waste. Although this scene is understandably disturbing, the depth of the horror lies in its proximity to reality. It is not a juxtaposition of one way of living versus another; it is not a demonstration of that designation of the ‘other’ with which we frequently comfort ourselves. Rather, it makes use of the same ideas, the same beliefs which our reality does. Try as one might, it is hard to completely compartmentalize Atwood’s scenario as discreet from our own lives. Those horrors presented in Atwood’s dystopian has a connection to our present civilization, where even in many places homosexuality is a punishable offence, society still considers that a women’s purpose is fulfilled only when she mothers a child. Freud would characterize our horror as one built upon the nature of the “double” in instances of the uncanny. As he writes, "There are also all those unfulfilled but possible futures to which we still like to cling to in phantasy...and all of our suppressed acts of volition.”<sup>10</sup> While Freud may have been referring to more mystical and metaphorical expressions of the double, the basis of the theory is that instances in which the alternate, parallel, or hidden counterpart is revealed, there is a presiding sense of uncanniness .

*The Handmaid’s Tale* blurs ‘the boundary between fantasy and reality’ not only to show how to ‘overcome oppressive designs imposed on human beings’, as Jeanne Campbell Reesman argues, but to also create an uncanny discomfort. In a moment of meta-narrative within the novel, the protagonist, Offred, states, ‘those who can believe that such stories [her own story that she’s telling] are just stories stand a better chance’ and that ‘attaching [something] to the world of fact [reality] is riskier, more

hazardous'. This is one example in the novel where 'hazardous' reality and haven-like fantasy are separated, rather than obscurely merged. Offred distances her story from the danger of reality and instead distorts it into a fantasy world, which suggests, perhaps, that in light of stark realities of oppression, such as Offred being subject to the authoritarian and theocratic Gilead regime, fantasy offers some solace, a 'better chance'.

However, the uncanny effect within the novel is not when fantasy and reality are distinguished, but rather when they are blurred. In certain parts of the novel, Atwood offers us flashbacks into Offred's pre-Gilead life. In one such instance, Offred tells of the initial stages of the overthrow of the government which coincides with the loss of her own job.

The uncanny effect does not occur for the same thing for everybody. One may have a deep fear of something while the other person may not feel the fear for that thing. For instance, in "The Testament" Becka a young is sexually harassed by her father Doctor Grovesince her childhood. She grew up to be a depressed girl and started fearing all the men she is acquainted with. Later when she gets the prospect for marriage she is traumatized because she fears getting sexually intimate with her husband. Out of fear she tries to end her life by committing suicide. But her friend Shunammite, she is a social climber and have always dreamt of living a luxurious life by selling herself to a rich commander.

The question of our repressed societal impulses has become particularly poignant given the high speed technological advances our world seems to be constantly engaged in. The capacity of both texts, Freud's "Uncanny" and Huxley's Brave New World, (and the interplay between the two) to uncover the elements of society and of ourselves that we repress through various means of sublimation and ignorance is



becoming increasingly essential. Unlike Huxley's society, there is much left to be decided about life and human rights, but our continuing capability to distinguish that which we disdain through our affective responses to their uncanny natures is one which is a simple yet powerful indicator of our true inclinations. When coupled with the psychoanalytical power of Freud's theory, a serious investigation of our proclivities as a society is revealed. It is that which we accept unthinkingly, or react to instinctively, which reveals to us those long-held preconceptions our world is built upon. As demonstrated by Huxley, such notions can be immensely powerful, "that is the secret of happiness and virtue-liking what you've got to do. All conditioning aims at that: making people like their unescapable social destiny"(12) Although Huxley's entire civilization is built upon an unconscious and unwilling acceptance of this idea, the affective responses that we as the readers exhibit upon exposure to the Huxley's uncanny text represents the capacity for our preconceptions to still be challenged. We are not the babies of Huxley's New World, we have not been predestined and conditioned to unthinkingly accept what is presented to us. It is the duty of the readers to make ourselves fully susceptible to the influence of the uncanny, and the myriad of discoveries that can be made should we search beyond our initial discomfort. For all we know, the very structure of our reality depends on it.

## CHAPTER – V

### FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

Margaret Atwood in her 1985 dystopian novel *The Handmaid's Tale* have fascinated and haunted the readers for years, in 2019 when she came up back with the sequel *The Testament*, the readers cherished this novel. Many readers including myself found that her 2019 dystopian fiction had a relatively optimistic tone. Atwood discloses complex characters placed under unnatural situations. Characters in the novels are placed under extreme situations which has a profound influence in their functioning of mind and body. This has led to the understanding that this emerging dystopian genre progressively reflects how humans adapt themselves to survive in such extreme environment. Atwood's dystopian work demonstrate an awareness and a warning for human society where she illustrates through the Gilead society that destruction of nature can lead to human catastrophe. Atwood's novel has further led to the understanding that humans are converted into machines or docile objects when placed under the surveillance and controlling environment. Her work demonstrates that environment can be a major factor that can impact the mind and body of a human, and likewise the characters take the resistance as a response for their survival.

Atwood's work reflects how the trio of mind body and nature are connected, and in order to have a control over one the other two needs to be manipulated. In Atwood's novel the Gilead has converted women's into "docile bodies" by manipulating the mind. Her novel rightfully demonstrates the consequences of the exploitation of nature, which creates ecological imbalances and has a direct impact on women's body. As in Gilead most of the women have lost the ability to conceive. Atwood's novel looks for the way that would help increase ecology and female oriented

consciousness and awareness in the readers regarding the interrelated environmental and gender based problem mainly caused by patriarchy. Through examining the interaction between nature, women, men, culture, science study this study has mainly concentrated on the representation of women and nature and the masculine attitude towards both entities. Atwood's novel demonstrates that by associating women closer to nature and furthering men away from it, the novel reveals the biological Essentialist position of ecofeminism. In her *Handmaid's Tale* we can find such Biological Essentialist Ecofeminist as the handmaids are associated and related to nature and the natural attributes rather than culture and cultural artifacts. It is however because of the nurturing and reproductional quality of both women and nature both are closely associated. Moreover the patriarchy of the Gilead society are mostly set aside from the nature as they are reflected as the chief of culture, civilization and reason.

This work has further led to the understanding of dualism which is always created between two forces women/men nature/culture in order to create a hierarchy. In Atwood's novel this dualism is created and maintained by the Gilead in order to secure its position. Atwood's work shows a concern with the inner working of the mind, characters under severe circumstances they resort to defense mechanism in order to cope up with the feeling of frustration.

Atwood has been labeled as a "Prophet" for her works of speculative fictions, however she disapprove of this label. She states that she does not predict the future so much as she sees present day warning signs and what it could lead if it is left unchecked. In her 2017 interview with Slaters she states that "All stories about the future are actually about the now", these kind of books are "blueprints of the possible futures that help us to decide whether that is where we want to go". Atwood

consequently is trying to warn us about the modern day mal practices which is heading towards misery, catastrophe and isolation.

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