

Chapter I

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Introduction

The record of creation claims that God created the forms of nature first and then man. Woman was created finally from the rib of the man. Man was the center of creation. Mankind became a great force on the surface of Earth. Man was the bridge between nature and woman. But as civilization evolved man forgot his role and started burdening both nature and women physically through work, thus connecting women and nature. Civilization made man to isolate himself from nature. Her position being raised, woman became the bridge between man and nature. Walt Whitman in his poem says that greatness of man is unfolded through woman and he is reshaped in the hands of woman. Later he attains his selfhood. When man dwells close to woman he recognizes himself as part of nature, but when he starts acting individually he considers himself superior to nature. He also looks down on woman who shaped and lifted him to greatness. Thus he starts treating both woman and nature as his subjects.

“A man is a great thing upon the earth, and
through eternity—but every jot of the
Greatness of man is unfolded out of woman,
First the man is shaped in the woman; he can
then be shaped in himself.”

- Walt Whitman (Leaves of Grass)

In the early seventeenth century, Francis Bacon encouraged scientific efforts by declaring that nature, like a woman, locked her secrets away in her womb. In America, leaders of the feminist movement campaigned for the abolition of slavery and temperance

movement prior to championing women's rights. The first-wave feminism of American involved a wide type of women belonging to traditional Christian groups like Frances Willard and the Woman's Christian Temperance Union. Others like the diversity and extremism of second-wave feminism like Stanton, Anthony, and Matilda Joslyn Gage. In the United States first-wave feminism is measured to have ended with the route of the Nineteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution (1919), granting women the right to vote.

The antislavery campaign of the 1830s provided a perfect cause for women to take up, identify with and learn political skills from. Attempts to exclude women only fuelled their convictions further. Sarah and Angelina Grimké moved rapidly from the emancipation of slaves to the emancipation of women. The most influential feminist writer of the time was Margaret Fuller whose *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* was published in 1845. Her dispatches from Europe for the *New York Tribune* helped create universality in the women's rights movement.

Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott met in 1840 while they were travelling to London where they were shunned because they were women by the male leadership of the first World's Anti-Slavery Convention. During 1848, Mott and Stanton apprehended a woman's rights convention in Seneca Falls, New York and it was the same place where a declaration of independence for women was enlisted. Lucy Stone helped to form the first National Women's Rights Convention in 1850. After this event Sojourner Truth, Abby Kelley Foster and others spoke, and that urged Susan B. Anthony to take up the source of women's rights. Barbara Leigh Smith met with Mott in 1858, establishing the link between the feminist movements on each side of the Atlantic.

Matilda Joslyn Gage and Stanton saw the Church as a major hindrance to women's rights. They consequently welcomed the emerging literature on matriarchy. Gage and Stanton produced works on the topics of *The Woman's Bible*. Stanton wrote "*The Matriarchate or Mother-Age (1891)*" and Gage wrote "*Woman, Church and State (1893)*", neatly retreating Bachofen's thesis and adding a unique epistemological standpoint, the analysis of objectivity and the perception of the subjective.

Stanton made a wise observation regarding conventions of female subordination. The worst feature of these assumptions is that women themselves believe in them. However this attempt to replace 'androcentric' theological tradition with a 'geocentric' view made little headway in the women's movement which was dominated by spiritual elements, and she and Gage were largely overlooked by subsequent generations.

By 1913, Feminism became widely known in America. Major issues in the 1910s and 1920 have included suffrage, economics and employment, gender bias and families, war and peace, and a constitutional amendment for equality. Both equality and change were seen as routes to women's empowerment. Organizations at the time involved the National Woman's Party, suffrage advocacy groups such as the National American Woman Suffrage Association and the National League of Women Voters, career associations such as the American Association of University Women, the National Federation of Business Professional Women's Clubs, the National Women's Trade Union League, war and peace groups such as the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom the International Council of Women, alcohol-focused groups like the Woman's Christian Temperance Union and the Women's Organization for National Prohibition Reform, and amongst the organizations focused on race and gender the National Association of Colored Women.

Leaders and theoreticians then included Jane Addams, Ida B. Wells-Barnett, Alice Paul, Carrie Chapman Catt, Margaret Sanger, and Charlotte Perkins Gilman.

The second-wave feminism refers to a period of feminist movement beginning in the early '60s and over the late 1980s. Second Wave Feminism has occurred continuously since then, and continues to exist with the Third Wave Feminism. Second wave feminism saw cultural and political inequalities as inseparably linked. The movement refreshed women to understand aspects of their personal lives as extremely discussed, and reflective of a sexist structure of power. If first-wavers focused on complete rights such as suffrage, second-wavers were largely concerned with other issues of equivalence, such as the end to discrimination.

Betty Friedan published her exposé *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), giving a voice to the unhappy and bewildered women who felt sidelined into homemaking positions even after graduating from college. Friedan has explored the roots of the change in women's roles from vital workforce during World War II to homebound housewife and mother after the war, and evaluated the forces that drove this change in awareness of women's roles. Over the following decade, the phrase and idea of Women's Liberation became a popular topic to be pondered on.

Though people have been using the expression 'Women's Liberation' to refer to feminism all through history, the term is relatively modern. Liberation has been connected with women's goals since 1895. The phrase 'Women's Liberation' was first used in 1964, and appeared in print in 1966. It was in use at the 1967 American Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) resolution, which held a board debate on it. By 1968, although the term Women's Liberation Front appeared in 'Ramparts' it was starting to

refer to the whole women's movement. In Chicago, women were disappointed with the New Left meeting that held separately in 1967, and published Voice of the Women's Liberation Movement by March 1968. When the Miss America Pageant was held in September, the media referred to the demonstrations as Women's Liberation. The Chicago Women's Liberation Union was formed in 1969. Similar groups with similar titles appeared in many parts of the United States. Bra-burning, a fiction became associated with the movement, and the media created other terms such as 'libber.' Women's Liberation, compared to various challenging terms for the new feminism which co-existed for a while, captured the popular imagination and has persevered, although today the older term Women's Movement is used just commonly.

The theory of feminism was powered by the social, cultural, and political situation of the 1960s. This was a time when there was an increasing record of women into higher education, the establishment of academic women's studies courses and departments. Feminist thinking extended the territories of politics, sociology, history and literature and there was increasing questioning of accepted standards and authority. Ecofeminism is a relatively new part of the feminist movement, evolving out of political activism over the past three decades. Ecofeminism is the union of the sciences and philosophies of ecology and green politics that emerged in the late sixties with feminist discourse. Peace marches, anti-nuclear protests, eco-friendly and animal liberation movements, and world hunger activism have risen up the consciousness of many.

Rachel Carson, a marine biologist and naturalist brought out her studies of birds and lakes and that became a significant foundation of ecofeminism. 'Chemicals are the sinister and little-recognized partners of radiation in changing the very nature of the world

and the very nature of life,' (52) she said in her 1962 book, *Silent Spring*. That book rocked all of North America and much of the world, resulting in a reaction from the chemical industry and the scientific community. Accusations of emotionality, unsupported scientific data and parodies of her work by the likes of Monsanto assisted only to fuel the cause.

Years before the term eco-feminism even existed, Rachel Carson embodied the movement through her work and writings. At the heart of Carson's writing was the notion that while humans are a small part of nature, they have an enormous ability to alter it. Carson was deeply troubled by the use of synthetic pesticides (namely DDT) and their possible long-term negative effects. Her book *Silent Spring* asserted the harmful physiological and environmental effects of the pesticides, challenged the practices of the government and called for a change in the treatment of nature. Her scientific questioning of the indiscriminate use of man-made chemicals, as well as her early death from breast cancer, opened a path that allowed feminist thought, theory and practice to examine the interconnected oppressions of gender, race, class and nature. Mary Mellor in her book, "*Feminism and Ecology*" explains on ecofeminism as,

"Ecofeminism is a movement that sees a connection between the exploitation and degradation of the natural world and the subordination and oppression of women. It emerged in the mid-1970s alongside second-wave feminism and the green movement. Ecofeminism brings together elements of the feminist and green movements, while at the same time offering a challenge to both. It takes from the green movement a concern about the impact of human activities on the non-human world and from feminism the view of humanity as gendered in ways that subordinate, exploit and oppress women." (1)

It also became increasingly evident, almost from the beginning that the Women's Liberation movement consisted of multiple 'feminisms' due to the various origins from which groups had merged and interconnected, and the difficulty and contentiousness of the issues involved. Starting in the 1980s, one of the most vocal critics of the whole movement has been Bell Hooks, who comments on absence of voice by the most oppressed women, interpreting over of race and class as inequalities, and failure to address the issues that separated women. Second-wave feminism moves away from the position that women are capable of being just like men, and accepts that there are differences between the two genders.

The changes in women's consciousness were motivated by Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), in the 1970's new feminist activists took on more political and sexual issues in their writings. In the field of literature, feminist writing started in the early 1970's with Gloria Steinem who started *Ms. Magazine* in 1970. Kate Millett published *Sexual Politics* (1970). Millett uses her depressing study of male writers and their attitudes and prejudices to prove her thesis that sex is politics, and politics is power difference in relationships. Her pessimism is reflected in her description of '*the desert we inhabit*'. Soon many books followed, Shulamith Firestone's *The Dialectic of Sex*, Germaine Greer's *The Female Eunuch*, Sheila Rowbotham's *Women's Liberation and the New Politics* and Juliet Mitchell's *Woman's Estate*. Firestone based her concept of revolution on Marxism, referred to the 'sex war', and fascinatingly, in view of the debates over patriarchy, claimed that male domination dated back beyond recorded history to the animal kingdom itself. Co-founder of Red stockings, Firestone, considered a radical, put 'feminism' back in the vocabulary.

Greer, Rowbotham and Mitchell represent an English perspective on the growing revolution, but as Mitchell argues, this should be seen as an international spectacle, taking on different indicators relating to local culture. British women too, represented on left political backgrounds, and organized small local discussion groups. Much of this took place through the London Women's Liberation Workshop and its publications *Shrew* and *the LWLW Newsletter*. Although there were marches, the focus was on what Kathie Sarachild of Redstockings had called 'consciousness-raising'. One of the tasks of this was, as Mitchell describes it that women would 'find what they thought was an individual problem is social predicament'. Women realized that they verbalize political analyses based on their personal experiences.

Meanwhile in the U.S., women's hindrances preserved around the failure to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment during the 1970s. Against this background it is that Susan Brownmiller's *Against Our Will* in 1975, introduced a more explicit agenda directed against male violence, specifically male sexual violence, in a treatise on rape. Perhaps her most memorable phrase was 'pornography is the concept and rapes the practice', 'creating a link that would cause deep fault lines to develop, largely around the concepts of objectification and commodification'. Brownmiller's other major contribution is *In our Time* (2000), a history of women's liberation. Less well known is *Femininity* (1984) a gentler deconstruction of a theory that has had a troubled relationship with feminism.

Susan Griffin's *Women and Nature* and Mary Daly's *Gyn/Ecology: The Meta Ethics of Radical Feminism*, both published in 1978, can be cited as groundwork for ecofeminism, even though neither woman used the term in those works. Some suggest that it could have been used by indigenous peoples or Black Americans working in their communities.

One of the first women to highlight the implications of pornography was Susan Griffin's in *Pornography and Silence* (1981). Moving beyond Brownmiller and Griffin's positions are Catharine MacKinnon, and Andrea Dworkin with whom she collaborated. They did not receive much support since they appeared to be too extreme in their views. However, their influence in debates and activism on pornography and prostitution has been striking, in particular at the Supreme Court of Canada. Their position has been characterized as an extreme politicization of sex, in which an individual woman's experience is generalized, so that women as a class were seen always to be victims. This is a position that many feminists, civil libertarians and jurists find uncomfortable and alienating. MacKinnon, is a lawyer used an angry and acerbic style. To some radical feminists, she is a hero, since she truly expressed the pain of being woman in an imbalanced society, and succeeded in depicting reality through the experiences of the abused and dishonored, which she claims to be the standard. A useful evolution of this approach has been to transform the research and view on rape from an individual experience to a social problem.

Traditionally, in the West, women have been symbolically and mythologically linked with nature. Historian of environmental science Carolyn Merchant published her highly influential book *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology and the Scientific Revolution* in 1980. In it she argues that prior to the seventeenth century; nature was conceived an organic model as a benevolent female and a nurturing mother; after the scientific revolution, nature was conceived on a mechanistic model as 'mere' machine, inert, dead. On both models, nature was female.

In 1989 '*Working with Nature: Reciprocity or Control?*' Ariel Salleh documents empirically women's contribution to the environmental movement and argues that it is a

‘patriarchal belief system’ that maintains and justifies both the hiddenness of both what women do and the continued demolition of the natural environment. According to Salleh, the rationale of the exploitation of women and of nature ‘has been uncovered by the ecofeminist analysis of patriarchy.’(11)

The Third-wave of feminism began in the early 1990’s. The movement arose as responses to what young women thought of as perceived failures of the second-wave. It was also a response to the backlash against edges and movements created by the second-wave. Third-wave feminism seeks to challenge or avoid what it deems the second wave's ‘*essentialist*’ definitions of femininity, which according to them over-emphasized the experiences of upper middle class white women. A post-structuralist explanation of gender and sexuality is central to much of the third wave's ideology. Third wave feminists often focus on ‘micropolitics’, and challenged the second wave's pattern as to what is, or is not, good for females.

In 1991, Anita Hill accused Clarence Thomas, for nominating an African-American to the Supreme Court, accused of sexual harassment that had allegedly occurred a decade earlier while Hill worked as his assistant at the U.S. Department of Education. Thomas denied the charges and after wide-ranging debate, the Senate voted 52-48 in favor of Thomas. In response to this case, Rebecca Walker published an article in a 1992 issue of Ms. titled ‘Becoming the Third Wave’ in which she stated, ‘I am not a post-feminism feminist. I am the third wave.’ Hill and Thomas’ case brought attention to the ongoing presence of sexual harassment in the workplace and returned a sense of concern and awareness in many people who assumed that sexual harassment and other second wave issues had been fixed.

The history of Third Wave feminism predates this and begins in the mid 1980s. Feminist leaders rooted in the second wave like Gloria Anzaldúa, Bell Hooks, Chela Sandoval, Cherríe Moraga, Audre Lorde, Luisa Accati, Maxine Hong Kingston, and many other feminists of color, called for a new subjectivity in feminist voice. They sought to convey prominent space within feminist thought for reflection of race related subjectivities. This focus on the intersection between race and gender remained prominent through the Hill-Thomas hearings, but began to shift with the Freedom Ride 1992. This drive to register voters in poor minority communities was surrounded with rhetoric that focused on bullying young feminists. For many, the collecting of the young is the emphasis that has stuck within third wave feminism.

Simone de Beauvoir wrote about the association of men with culture and women with nature. She noted in *Jackson* published in 1993 that because men are unable to create through biological reproduction, theirs is an artificial creation - through human culture. She wrote "The support of life became for a man an activity and a project through the invention of the tool; but in maternity woman remained closely bound to her body, like an animal". According to Zimmerman, ecofeminists argue that women are not only different from men but are in some ways better (1994).

Ecofeminism, a 'new term for an ancient wisdom' grew out of various social movements - the feminist, peace and ecology movements - in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The term *ecofeminism* was first used by French radical feminist, Françoise d'Eaubonne in 1974 to synthesize two movements previously thought of as separate: ecology and feminism. D'Eaubonne saw clear interconnections between the domination of women and that of nature, and she hoped, by making these interconnections clear, to rescue the planet from the

destructive effects of "the male system" and restore it for the benefit of humanity's future. In putting this movement within its contemporary context, Val Plumwood in her work published in 1993 *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* states that, "Ecological feminism is essentially a response to a set of key problems thrown up by the two great social currents of the later part of (the last) century-feminism and the environmental movement." (10)

Plumwood in his work published 1993 mentions that, "Nature, as the excluded and devalued contrast of reason, includes the emotions, the body, the passions, animality, the primitive or uncivilised, the non-human world, matter, physicality and sense experience, as well as the sphere of faith, irrationality and madness". In patriarchal thought women are regarded as closer to nature and men closer to culture. To feminists the woman -nature linkage is regarded as an important supporting of the subordination of women. If nature is portrayed, as in the above quotation, as inferior to culture, and women are associated with nature then logically women are seen as inferior to men. Violence against Mother Earth came to be intertwined with an emerging urge to subdue and control women. These twin oppressions were created and perpetuated by the ideology called patriarchy.

One of the women writers who addressed these issues in the 1980s was Barbara Kingsolver a contemporary American author of best-selling novels, non-fiction and poetry, who focused on eco-feministic writing. Kingsolver is committed to political and social activism. Her purpose in writing is to bring about social change. She is committed to social and environmental causes, and her novels reflect this commitment. She continues to work as an environmental and human-rights activist. Kingsolver's evocations of animals and the varied landscapes of her novels are the focus of her wide-ranging of writing fictions. Kingsolver is

widely recognized for crafting strong, working-class female protagonists concerned with such social and political issues as poverty, environmental issues, and human rights violations.

Kingsolver was born on April 8 1955 in Annapolis, Maryland to Virginia Henry and Wendell Kingsolver, a physician. The family moved to eastern Kentucky in order to be close to family, and Kingsolver's father worked there as the only doctor in rural Nicholas County. There prevailed a contradiction in society with poor coal fields and the affluent owners of the horse farms and most people living there were not well off. They earned enough money to ensure their survival through tobacco farming, but were dependent on neighbors for everything else.

From an early age, Kingsolver enjoyed telling stories to her parents instead of listening to them. Television being forbidden by her parents Kingsolver spent her time reading and writing stories and essays that influenced her. Surrounded as she was by fields and woods, Kingsolver became fond of studying nature. Beyond her attraction with the large family vegetable garden, the many plants and animals in the locality fascinated her and often found their way into her parents' house but Kingsolver's snakes and mice were not allowed inside.

In 1962, Kingsolver's father chose to practice medicine because he felt he could make a significant difference in the lives of others, so he took his family to St. Lucia, where they lived in a convent hospital; later they moved to Central Africa. While living in Africa, Kingsolver experienced what it were like to be a minority and an outsider. She was the only white child in the village. Kingsolver's experiences in Africa opened her eyes to the ways of the world, provoked her curiosity about people from other cultures, and served as a background for the setting of *The Poisonwood Bible*.

By the time she was eight years old, back in the United States Kingsolver was adamant about keeping a daily journal and entering every essay contest for which she was eligible. One of her essays, entitled "Why We Need A New Elementary School," included a description about how her teacher had been wounded as a result of the school's ceiling falling on her. The piece, published in the local newspaper just before a school-bond election, was instrumental in the passage of a school bond.

After graduating from high school in 1973, Kingsolver attended DePauw University in Greencastle, Indiana, on a scholarship to study instrumental music. Once in college, however, Kingsolver changed her major to biology and worked to eliminate the rural Kentucky accent and expressions she had adopted from that particular region. While in college, she was exposed to the writing of feminist authors Betty Friedan and Gloria Steinem, studied Marx and Engels, German philosophers and socialists, and participated in anti-Vietnam War protests. She graduated from DePauw in 1977 with a Bachelor of Arts degree.

To satisfy her curiosity about the American Southwest, Kingsolver moved to Tucson, Arizona. She began her graduate studies in biology and ecology at the University of Arizona and worked as a research assistant in the physiology department until 1979. During her college years, and time spent in Europe, Kingsolver supported herself doing myriad small jobs, working as a typesetter, copyeditor, archeologist, X-ray technician, biological researcher, and translator of technical medical documents.

After receiving her Master of Science degree in 1981 from the University of Arizona, Kingsolver accepted a job at the university and began writing science articles. She also pursued additional graduate studies and took a writing class with author Francine Prose. It was then that Kingsolver realized she did not want a career in academics; she wanted to become a writer.

She began working as a freelance scientific writer and journalist, with articles appearing in *The Progressive*, *Smithsonian*, and *The Sonoran Review*. Kingsolver also began writing short stories that were published in *Redbook* and *Mademoiselle*, and anthologies such as *New Stories from the South: The Year's Best; 1988*; *Florilegia, an Anthology of Art and Literature by Women*; and *Rebirth of Power*.

Kingsolver began a nonfiction book in 1983 about the copper mine strike against the Phelps Dodge Corporation in Arizona. She spent hours interviewing Union wives about their experiences during and after the strike. However, a year later, the book remained half finished, and because her agent was having trouble selling it, Kingsolver stopped working on the project and returned to freelance writing.

On April 15, 1985, Kingsolver married Joseph Hoffmann a chemistry professor, at the University of Arizona, from whom she later separated. She soon found herself pregnant and unable to sleep at night, and so she sat in a closet and started writing her first novel, *The Bean Trees*, which was published in 1988. With the advance from having sold *The Bean Trees*, Kingsolver finished her nonfiction account of the Arizona mining strike, entitled *Holding the Line: Women in the Great Arizona Mine Strike of 1983* which was published in 1989 by Cornell University Press. She also completed a collection of short stories called *Homeland and Other Stories*, also published in 1989, and then went on to write the novel *Animal Dreams* (1990); the sequel to *The Bean Trees*, *Pigs in Heaven* (1993); a best-selling collection of poems called *Another America* (1992); a collection of essays called *High Tide in Tucson: Essays From Now and Never* (1995); and another novel, *The Poisonwood Bible* (1998).

All of Kingsolver's writing has received much acclaim, including the American Library Association awards for *The Bean Trees* in 1988 and *Homeland* in 1990; the citation of accomplishment from the United Nations National Council of Women in 1989; the PEN fiction prize and Edward Abbey Ecofiction award, both in 1991, for *Animal Dreams*; the *Los Angeles Times* Book Award for Fiction in 1993 for *Pigs in Heaven*; and the feature-writing award from the Arizona Press Club (1996). *The Bean Trees* has been published in more than 65 countries throughout the world and was released in 1998 in a mass-market edition. In 1994, Kingsolver was awarded an Honorary Doctorate of Letters from her *alma mater*, DePauw University. She divorced Hoffman in 1993, the same year she published *Pigs in Heaven*. By 1994, she married Steven Hopp, an ornithologist, and their daughter, Lily, was born in 1996. In 2004, Kingsolver moved with her family to a farm in Washington County, Virginia, where they currently reside. Her husband, Steven Hopp, teaches environmental studies. Since June 2004, Kingsolver and her family have lived on a farm in southern Appalachia, where they raise an extensive vegetable garden and Icelandic sheep. In 2008, she received an Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters from Duke University, where she delivered a commencement address entitled "How to be Hopeful".

In the late 1990s, she was a founding member of the Rock Bottom Remainers, a rock and roll band made up of published writers. Other band members include Amy Tan, Matt Groening, Dave Barry and Stephen King, and together they play for one week during the year. Kingsolver, a keyboard player is no longer an active member of the band.

Kingsolver served as editor of Best American Short Stories 2001. Her books have been translated into more than twenty four languages. She has contributed to more than

fifty literary anthologies, and her reviews and articles have appeared in most major U.S. newspapers and magazines. Kingsolver was named one of the most important writers of the 20th Century by *Writers Digest*. In 2000 she received the National Humanities Medal, America's highest honor for service through the arts. Multiple awards from the American Booksellers Association and the American Library Association, among many others have made her an established writer. *The Poisonwood Bible* was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize and the Orange Prize, and won the national book award of South Africa, before being named an Oprah Book Club selection. *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle* won numerous prizes including the James Beard award. *The Lacuna* won Britain's prestigious Orange Prize for Fiction in 2010. In 2011, Kingsolver was awarded the Dayton Literary Peace Prize in recognition of her contribution to literature.

Kingsolver established the Bellwether Prize for Fiction, the nation's largest prize for an unpublished first novel, which since 1998 has helped to establish the careers of more than a half dozen new literary voices. Through a recent agreement, the prize has now become the PEN / Bellwether Prize for Socially Engaged Fiction. Kingsolver believes her best work is accomplished through writing and being an active citizen of her own community

Kingsolver's articles have appeared in a variety of publications, including *The Nation*, *The New York Times* and *Smithsonian*. She has also published a collection of poetry, *Another America/Otra America*, and nonfiction, *Holding the Line: Women in the Great Arizona Mine Strike of 1983*. In 1998, Kingsolver published *The Poisonwood Bible*, a story about an Evangelical Christian family on a mission in Africa. The novel has become a best-seller

and is Kingsolver's best-known work. It was short-listed for both the Pulitzer Prize and the PEN/Faulkner Award and was an Oprah's Book Club selection.

In 2000, President Bill Clinton awarded Kingsolver the National Humanities Medal. Her next novel, *Prodigal Summer*, set a southern Appalachia, was published in 2000. In 2004, Kingsolver and her family moved to Washington County in rural Virginia. From April 2005 to April 2006, the family recorded their experience in farming and local eating, which was published in the nonfiction book *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle: A Year of Food Life*. Another novel, *The Lacuna*, was published in 2009 and won the Orange Prize for Fiction.

Kingsolver cares deeply about the world in which she lives and the people in it, and her writing attempts to change the world and to make the world a better place in which to live. Thus, Kingsolver writes about current social issues such as the environment, human rights, and social injustice. Her protagonists tend to be resilient, sensitive females, who successfully survive the typical day-to-day struggles found in America. Although Kingsolver's characters tend to find themselves facing traumatic dilemmas, Kingsolver is able to interject humor, which lightens the tone and communicates the love, hope, and strength that is evident in the lives of people from all cultures and walks of life. Kingsolver's personal experiences and passions, as well as her love of the southwestern United States, deeply influence her writing.

Kingsolver's first novel, *The Bean Trees*, was published in 1988, and told the story of a young woman who leaves Kentucky for Arizona, adopting an abandoned child along the way. Her next work was published in 1990, *Homeland and Other Stories*, a collection of short stories on a variety of topics exploring various themes from the

evolution of cultural and ancestral lands to the struggles of marriage. The novel *Animal Dreams* was also published in 1990, followed by *Pigs in Heaven*, the sequel to *The Bean Trees*, in 1993. *The Poisonwood Bible*, published in 1998, is one of her best known works; it chronicles the lives of the wife and daughters of an Evangelical minister on a Christian mission in Africa. Although the setting of the novel is somewhat similar to Kingsolver's own childhood trip to the then Republic of Congo, the novel is not autobiographical. Her next novel, published in 2000, was *Prodigal Summer*, set in southern Appalachia and her most recent work, entitled *The Lacuna*, and was published in 2009.

Kingsolver is also a published poet and essayist. Two of her essay collections, *High Tide in Tucson* (1995) and *Small Wonder: Essays* (2003), have been published, and an anthology of her poetry was published in 1998 under the title *Another America*. Her prose poetry also accompanied photographs by Annie Griffiths Belt in a 2002 work titled *Last Stand: America's Virgin Lands*.

Kingsolver's major non-fiction works include her 1990 publication *Holding the Line: Women in the Great Arizona Mine Strike of 1983* and 2007's *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle*, a description of eating locally. She has also been published as a science journalist in periodicals such as *Economic Botany* on topics such as desert plants and bio-resources.

Her most notable awards include the James Beard Award, the Los Angeles Times Book Prize, the Edward Abbey Eco-Fiction Award, the Physicians for Social Responsibility National Award, and the Arizona Civil Liberties Union Award. Her novel, *The Lacuna*, won the 2010 Orange Prize for Fiction. Every book that Kingsolver has written since 1993's *Pigs in Heaven* has been on *The New York Times* Best Seller list, and her novel *The Poisonwood*

Bible was chosen as an Oprah's Book Club selection. Every book that Kingsolver has written since 1993's *Pigs in Heaven* has been on the *New York Times* Best Seller List, and her novel *The Poisonwood Bible* was chosen as an Oprah's Book Club selection.

Kingsolver has written novels in both the first person and third person narrative styles, and she frequently employs overlapping narratives. Many of her works display her thorough knowledge of biology and ecology; for example, the novel *Prodigal Summer* has extensive commentary on the value of higher predators in ecosystems, and many of her essays in the book *Small Wonder* are based upon the lessons of biodiversity. Her books are often characterized as having distinct female voices.

Kingsolver's literary subjects are varied, but she often writes about places and situations which she is familiar with many of her stories are based in places she has lived in, such as central Africa and Arizona. She has stated emphatically that her novels are not autobiographical, although there are often commonalities between her life and her work. Her work is often strongly idealistic and her writing has been called a form of activism. Kingsolver's characters are frequently written around struggles for social equality, such as the hardships faced by illegal immigrants, the working poor and single mothers. Other common themes in her work include the balancing of individuality with the desire to live in a community, and the interaction and conflict between humans and the ecosystems in which they live. Kingsolver has been said to use prose and engaging narratives to make historical events, such as the Congo's struggles for independence, appealing to the average reader.

Kingsolver's dedication to literature with a social conscience found the Bellwether Prize for Fiction, which was awarded for the first time in 2000. Named after the bellwether, the literary prize is intended to support writers whose unpublished works support positive

social change. The Bellwether is awarded once in two years, and includes guaranteed major publication and a cash prize of US\$25,000, fully funded by Kingsolver. She has stated that she wanted to create a literary prize to "encourage writers, publishers, and readers to consider how fiction engages visions of social change and human justice".

Barbara Kingsolver's style is poetic. She blends realism with lyricism, interspersed with humor, to create what critics have called a "southern novel taken west." Kingsolver is authentic, in her depiction of lives of common, everyday people, creating vivid images that provoke thoughts, feelings, and moods. Mostly women writers create women characters who, relate to each other, struggle to survive, and have a commitment to motherhood. In these creations the influence of her model writers like Friedan and Steinem is evident.

The thesis entitled *Nurturing Bonds: An Eco-Feministic reading of the select novels of Barbara Kingsolver* aims

- to bring out the importance and the interconnection between society, man and nature
- to evaluate the exploitation in nature that has caused severe environmental damages
- to study the oppression and exploitation of women in Kingsolver's works
- to describe the movements and philosophies of eco-feminism that link feminism with ecology
- to trace out the deep link of women with nature throughout their lives, with the help of the characters in the novels chosen for study

- to finally find a solution to overcome oppression and exploitation by the patriarchal society
- to enumerate all the possible advantages to the world as a result of leading a happy and interconnected life with Nature.

It also focuses on race, class and gender issues. A Strong parallel exists between woman and nature, the oppression and subordination of women in families and society. The degradation of nature domination by subjects classed into higher ranking categories over objects classed into lower ranking categories, such as man over women, culture over nature and white over black.

The hypothesis of the thesis is that if the women characters in the novels of Barbara Kingsolver are able to form a community among themselves and are bold enough to face the rough future hoping for goodness, amidst all the discriminations and oppressions faced by them, then it is obvious that there is some hope that could help the others too. The research attempts to revive the scope of women to succeed in life. Kingsolver's women characters are able to face the problems in unity and also save nature from being exploited. If the exploitation and the suppression of women and nature can be avoided by knowing and understanding these inter-connections between man, woman and nature, then it will provide a panacea for the imminent problems of eco-feministic nature in the world today.

The Bean Trees concerns Taylor Greer, a young woman who leaves her small hometown in Kentucky in search of a more fulfilling life. While driving west across the United States, Taylor becomes the guardian of an abused child whom she names Turtle. Taylor and the child eventually settle in Tucson, Arizona, where they share the home of Lou Ann Ruiz, an abandoned young mother. In *The Bean Trees*, the protagonist and the

other central characters are women. The women who have children (Taylor and Lou Ann) are either not married or separated from their husbands. Through her relationship with Turtle, Lou Ann and Mattie, an energetic woman who runs an auto repair shop and houses central American political refugees, Taylor gains a greater sense of Self-identity, community, political conscience, and responsibility. They manage to survive by forming a community in which they can depend on each other. Throughout the novel, Kingsolver introduces feminist issues that she feels strongly about, such as childcare, sexual harassment, and the capabilities of women in typically male-dominated workplaces. Although some critics described *The Bean Trees* as “a story propelled by a marvelous ear, a fast-moving humor and the powerful undercurrent of human struggle”. Kingsolver’s background in ecology and commitment to activism are evident in *The Bean Trees*.

Pigs in Heaven is the sequel to *The Bean Trees*, centers on Taylor’s discovery that she has no legal claim to Turtle because she did not obtain approval from the Cherokee nation before initiating the adoption process. Asking that the girl be returned to her reservation, Cherokee lawyer Annawake Fourkiller argues that only the tribe, a dwindling minority group and a tight-knit cultural community, can properly provide for Turtle and instill in her an understanding of her heritage and identity. Relating Taylor's attempts to retain custody of turtle, initially by fleeing their home, the novel chronicles Taylor's search for a solution for the best interests of all three parties. Although faulted for its sentimental predictability, eccentric characters, and focus on popular social issues, *Pigs in Heaven* has been praised for its insightful examination of the bond between parent and child and of the rights of Native American children, the working class, and single mothers-group that have traditionally lacked political power.

Animal Dreams establishes a double narrative voice, which switches between dreams and memories of the past and events of the present. Doctor Homer remembers his daughters, Codi and Hallie, when they were young. Their mother is dead. Hallie leaves Tucson, Arizona, where she was living with Codi and Carlo and goes to Nicaragua. She plans to assist the newly established communist regime with their crop cultivation. Codi also leaves Tucson, returning to her small rural hometown, Grace, to care for her ailing father and to teach biology at the high school. The return to Grace is not easy for Codi, as she has always felt herself an outsider in the town and has no close relationship with her father. Her return home raises the questions regarding several mysteries surrounding Codi and her family's past; her failure to hold a medical license despite her attendance at medical school, the deaths of her mother and of her child, and the relationship of her family to the rest of the community.

In the past, Codi had a relationship with Loyd Peregrina during her high school period at Grace. At the age of fifteen, Codi became pregnant with Loyd's child and there was a miscarriage. She never told anyone. Her father, the town doctor, was aware of the situation, but Codi still did not know that. On her return to Grace, Codi stays with Emelina Domingos. Loyd is presently the friend of Emelina's husband who lives and works in the town. Re-visiting Grace, Codi had a feeling of being alienated.

Codi and Loyd meet again and begin a new relationship. Loyd, a Native American who grew up on the nearby Reservation, is ready to establish a serious and committed relationship, but Codi is not ready to imagine herself as staying in one place or loving any person. Loyd accepts her ambivalence. They continue to see each other, and he educates her about Native American Cultures.

Meanwhile, the town of Grace faces a terrible threat to its very existence. The local Black Mountain Mine has been dumping sulfuric acid and other chemicals into the source of the water supply for years. This water is necessary for the irrigation of the pecan and fruit trees that are integral to the community's survival. While the men of town notified the Environmental Protection Agency of the problem, the only solution the EPA provides is to dam the river which made the problem worse.

The older women of the town, who meet every week at the Stitch and Bitch Club, take their own initiative. They make piñatas, decorated with the feathers of local peacocks and accompanied by a note detailing Grace's problem, which they sell in Tucson. Emelina's mother-in-law Viola is one of the main organizers of the Club. Codi's education is also of great help to their cause, and so Codi joins with the women. She involves her classes as well. As she becomes a part of the community effort to save the town, Codi also begins to learn more about her own family's past. It turns out that the story her father had always told her about their family, that they were outsiders in Grace; while almost everyone else is related to one another may not be exactly true.

All this time, Codi and Hallie, who have always been extremely close, exchange letters. On Christmas Day, Doc Homer receives a call from Nicaragua informing him that Hallie has been abducted by the US-backed Contras. Codi is extremely worried about her sister. She spends the next few months between deep depression and hectic attempts to find Hallie. During this period, the efforts of the Club gain an enormous amount of publicity, and finally an art dealer arrives in Grace who offers them a solution to their problems. They can apply to have Grace named a Historic Place and gain federal protection for their orchards and their water supply.

In helping to document Grace's historic status, Codi learns more about her own family history. It turns out that both her mother and her father are natives of Grace and are related to everyone else in the community. Her father is descended from the black sheep of the founding Gracela sisters, and therefore he tried to change his name to pretend that both he and her mother were outsiders. Although everyone went along with his disguise, the whole community was aware of the truth. This discovery combined with her involvement in Grace's present struggles allow Codi to slowly feel that she is less of an outsider, although she still does not plan to stay in Grace beyond the one-year teaching contract.

Towards the end of the school year, Hallie's body is found in Nicaragua. The Club files the Historic Place petition and the Black Mountain Mine also declares that it will shut down the mine and clean up the river. Codi leaves Grace to rejoin Carlo, not because she loves him but because he is moving on and she still feels a need to do the same. However, the plane she takes to join him has engine trouble and is forced to turn around. When they land safely back in Tucson, Codi immediately gets on a train and returns to Grace. She holds a memorial ceremony for Hallie, which all of Grace attends. As she buries the symbolic bundle in Doc Homer's garden plot, the two of them finally clear up the last of their secrets. Codi also tells Loyd about his child that she lost. A year later, Doc Homer is dead, and Codi, still teaching at the high school, is again pregnant by Loyd.

Prodigal Summer (2000) focuses on the three inter-connected stories of three woman's life- Deanna, Lusa, and Nanny. These three main characters are introverted and solitary individuals who have unique and strong views about their natural surroundings. Through the course of a spring and a summer, their lives change drastically and they realize that they, like other creatures, are not solitary. They are a part of a complex web

that connects all living beings together. This novel is presenting a bio-centric view where all life is interconnected, a view held by both ecologists and eco-feminists. These three women's lives woven in three distinct narratives are marked by the chapter titles 'Predator', 'Moth Love' and 'Old Chestnut'. The novel records the relationships between the protagonists and their local environments, the theme of interrelatedness in ecosystem and the relationship between people and their environments. The novel is set in the fictional mountain tobacco community of Egg Fork, Zebulon Valley in the rural Kentucky Appalachian region. Deanna Wolfe is a reclusive wildlife biologist, also a Forest Service employee serving as a resident ranger overseeing a section of the Zebulon National Forest. Her job is to check the population of coyote family as they are an endangered species on the earth. She reflects on harmful effects of species getting extinct. 'Plenty of people had watched and recorded the disaster of eliminating a predator from a system' (*PS* 63). Coyote is one of the 'keystone species' and their absence in wildlife can drastically change the ecosystem. Every living being is interdependent with each other and ecological disharmony can drastically change biological diversity on earth. Deanna wants to protect and preserve the biodiversity in that valley. According to Norwegian philosopher Arne Næss, every being, whether human, animal, or vegetable has an equal right to live and to blossom (Næss19). And each living thing is dependent on the existence of other creatures in the complex web of interrelationship inherent in the natural world.

Bio-centrists believe that all species have inherent value, and that humans are not 'superior' in a moral or ethical sense. Paul Taylor, one of the major early proponents of biocentrism, states that biocentrism is an 'attitude of respect for nature'. According to his bio-centric outlook, every organism is a 'teleological centre of life', that is, each organism

has a purpose and a reason for being, which is inherently good or valuable and humans are not inherently superior to other species (100). In the novel, coyotes also play a significant role in maintaining the interconnection with ecological system. According to Dilia Narduzzi, 'Deanna Wolfe is figured as the human representation of the alpha female coyote'. She explained that her character is paralleled with the alpha female coyote as they are both strong female predators as she and the female coyote both have some interconnections in the novel. Deanna 'initially needs no man -until Eddie Bondo arrives' in her life. Narduzzi observed that the male coyote impregnates the alpha female coyote and then leaves her to her sister's care, the beta female, to raise the pups. A link can be made between Eddie, the man who impregnates Deanna, and the male coyote. Here in both cases children and pups are looked after by more than one female and the 'male species play a secondary or non-existent role' in rearing them. Deanna is a strong individual woman, who took the decision to leave that place and joined the rural community.

Narduzzi sees this connection between the female coyote and Deanna. She also decides to raise her child with the help of her aunt so she 'returns to the farm of her surrogate mother, Nannie Rawley, for support and companionship during her pregnancy and after the child birth. Nannie occupies the position of the beta female, the helper to the alpha female coyote, and Deanna's child can be related to a pup being brought up by two female caregivers.' Here in eco-feministic point of view both Deanna and coyote are oppressed and Kingsolver shows the interconnections of non-human world to the human world. The theme of interconnections is running all over the novel.

The novel starts with Deanna's description of her body, solitariness and her being part of the natural world 'Her body moved with the frankness that comes from solitary

habits. But solitude is a human presumption. Every quiet step is thunder to beetle life underfoot' (*PS 1*) and the same view have been repeated in the last page of the novel. The interconnected web of life where every living being is connected with each other in their natural environment has been expressed in this beautiful line about the continuous cycles of life: Solitude is a human presumption. Every quiet step is thunder to beetle life underfoot, a tug of impalpable thread on the web pulling mate to mate and predator to prey, a beginning or an end. (*PS 444*)

The story of Lusa as a confident, independent woman is one which brings out her transformation from a city scientist to a farmer's wife. After her husband's death she takes over the role of landowner and struggles to stay at the farm. Her embracing the natural surroundings of the farm and experimenting with new business despite faces challenges from the male members of the family, she makes her strong presence in the new place. Her closeness to nature and her unique sense of love of moths and insects makes her environment friendly. She began to love "The trees, the moths, the foxes, all the wild things that live up there". (*PS 123*). She is attracted to this new place in the lap of natural surrounding just like a moth locates her lover through scent. Her sense of self can be identified when she was protesting against cutting trees as she said "I will not cut down those trees. I don't care if there's a hundred thousand dollars' worth of lumber on the back of this farm, I'm not selling it. It's what I love best about this place." (*PS 123*). Her bond with nature makes her environmental conscious about her natural surroundings as she believes she is a part of this nature.

Kingsolver criticizes the use of insecticides through the story of Garnett Walker, an old man who attempts to revive the American chestnut. Garnett uses pesticides and

herbicides to keep his land tidy and protect his saplings. But Nannie Rawley is an organic farmer. She cultivates organic apples on the nearby orchard. She believes doing gardening in organic way for a healthy life style. She strives to protect the nature and its living creatures. She dedicates herself to remake modern farming practices and creates sustainability for the land and health for humans and the larger ecosystems that surround them.

The novel *Flight Behaviour* deals with the possible effects of global warming on the Monarch butterflies and the significance of growing awareness of climate change impact on people's life. In this novel Kingsolver shows how environmental awareness significantly changed protagonist's life positively. Dellarobia Turnbow is the central character. She is a well observant but poorly educated young mother living in the rural community of Feather Town, Tennessee. Just like Kingsolver's *Prodigal Summer*, *Flight Behaviour* is also set in Appalachia in America. She is a sheep farmer's wife. She has a tough time staying on the sheep farm looking after the children and the household. Dellarobia's transformation came when she encountered the view of millions of butterflies hanging on tree leaves or branches. In reality, their usual migratory route has been disrupted, and what looks to be a stunningly beautiful view is really an ominous sign or ecological disaster. The sudden rain and cold of Appalachian winter could be the demise of this delicate species. They have to move away from that mountain looking for a warmer place. She was able to relate the environmental disaster of landslide and flood which occurred in Mexico which is the habitat of these butterflies. Because of the natural disaster ruined their habitat, butterflies fly to their farm land. Dellarobia realised the fact that "when you clear-cut a mountain it can cause a landslide" (FB 234). And due to climate change age-old migration patterns of

monarch butterflies' have been disrupted. The direct criticism of hazardous effect of logging industry on climate change can be traced in the novel.

Dr. Byron, professor at Devary University in New Mexico, an entomologist, arrives at the valley to study the monarch butterflies and tries to find out the reason behind their sudden and unexpected visit to Southern Appalachian mountain. Their habitat in Mexico is threatened, but in Appalachia also they are threatened because of unrelenting rains and freezing temperatures. He unfolds the mystery of mass extinction of these colourful species because of drastic climate change. He explains that the only thing scientists disagree over is "how to express our shock" about climate change. Byron hires Dellarobia to help him to make sense of the strange apparition on her land. And in the process of learning how to help him, she acquires self-confidence.

This novel is about Dellarobia's journey to self realisation. Dellarobia's environmental consciousness makes her save those dying butterflies by shipping them to a warmer place. "That is a concern of conscience," he tells her. "Not of biology. Science doesn't tell us what we should do. It only tells us what is." (FB 442). Dellarobia wonders when he explains to her about diminishing coral reefs and dying insects and he expresses his sadness "What was the use of saving a world that has no soul left in it. Continents without butterflies and sea without coral reefs" (FB 438). These lines highlight the people's anthropocentric attitude towards nature. Extinction of natural species from the earth can drastically change the biodiversity of the ecosystem. In deep ecological principle richness and biodiversity are valuable in themselves and human have no right to reduce this diversity.

Prof. Ovid enlarges Dellarobia's vision of the world. She sympathises with those dying butterflies and is willing to protect these endangered species. Monarch butterflies,

distracted from their migratory route for unknown reasons have settled for some time over the farm. Dr. Ovid sets up a lab to discover clues that might tell them why they came to that place. And Dellarobia's participation in that research team of scientists led by him is an act of self-awareness and responsibility towards natural surroundings. When Ovid comes to the realization that the majority of monarch butterflies in North America are on the Turn bow farm and at great risk, he feels disheartened about local people's reaction. Here Dellarobia also can relate to herself with the predicament of these vulnerable creatures and she undergoes the journey of grief of a mother becoming more aware of the impact of climate change and its consequences in future.

The view of million butterflies clung on a tree branch makes Dellarobia believe in great things. This forest vision can be interpreted as an act of eco-spirituality. Eco-spirituality is one of the environmental philosophies which claim "a spiritual dimension to our present ecological crisis." Dellarobia expresses with wonder "It was a lake of fire, something far from fierce and wondrous than either of those elements alone. The impossible." (FB 22). That extraordinary view of that hillside is also an indication of an apocalypse in nature, as it is a deceptive beauty in nature which gives a sign of end of the world.

This novel shows the environmental awareness, especially the female protagonist Dellarobia's environmental consciousness and her personal growth as an independent woman. She participated in contemporary environmental protection and preservation act. Her personal development results in her transformation into an environmentally aware individual. In this novel, environmental awareness and global responsibility play a vital role in Dellarobia's life. She realised she did not want to live with her husband anymore. For her "being a stay-at-home mom was the loneliest kind of lonely, in which she was

always and never by herself.” (FB 81) She decides to live with her two children in the urbane town in Cleary. Eventually she applies for college study and Dr. Byron also helped her to get a job to work in a lab. She realises that “Educated people had powers” (FB 172) and was fascinated about “young urban people with advanced degrees. They could fend for themselves.” (FB 173). She desires to earn money to continue her college besides her lab work. Dellarobia’s journey from a distracted, unhappy farm land to become an environment conscious person tells the story of self-consciousness towards natural environment. Her accidental encounter with the million misguided monarch butterflies set her on a flight to freedom. As the butterflies take flight at the end of the novel, she also is free to choose her way of life with plans for attending college and earning money to become financially independent. Like the monarch butterflies flying away to begin a new life at the end of the novel, Dellarobia, too, faces a new beginning, transformed by their visit “The sky was too bright and the ground so unreliable, she couldn’t look up for very long. Instead her eyes held steady on the fire bursts of wings reflected across the water, a merging of flame and flood. Above the lake of the world, flanked by White Mountains, they flew out to a new earth” (FB 432).

To reclaim one’s place in the natural world, one must understand one’s vital role in the ecosystem. At the end she comes to know about the real problem of the world is lack of proper respect or concern towards natural surroundings. She consciously chose to face the challenges and stood by her decision to continue further studies and continue her lab work. Thus her environmental consciousness brings a positive change in her life. Dellarobia’s personal development creates a self-identity within her which freed her from the clutches of the patriarchal system in society.

The thesis is divided into five chapters, where Chapter I - Introduction, which shares the origin and development of American Literature with respect to Feminism. Tracing down the fictional writers of feminism and ecology, Barbara Kingsolver is given her place as an eco-feminist writer.

Chapter II entitled, Re-grounding delineates on Eco-feminism in Kingsolver's novels helps to understand how issues of nature and women are interwoven, and it can give a new perspective on reading literature, Life, birth, and passion that are all prominent themes explored through female characters, the male characters who try to control them and the children both literally and figuratively. There is an intrinsic relationship between the way in which the natural world and the one another are treated. All the novels of Kingsolver bring out the strong, resilient women living in an imperfect world in late twentieth-century America. They are the heroes of the novels who discover resources in unexpected ways.

Chapter III entitled Self-discovery attempts to elaborate on the eco-feministic views on Kingsolver's novels as how nature is exploited and over-ruled by the mankind. It also discusses how men and women take part in Nature and society. It also speaks about the nature and culture conflict.

Chapter IV entitled Space, Place and Ecology attempts to bring out the essential space that man should provide for women and for eco-system as expressed through her novels. The interconnections of Nature, Women, Men and Society are also explored.

Chapter V is a Summation of Eco-feminism or ecological feminism with its writers who all helped to develop this theory and its approach of symbolical connections throughout the select novels of Kingsolver related to the study of Eco-feminism. It brings

the struggle for survival of both, the women and nature together. Eco-feminism is analyzed and focused in Barbara Kingsolver's novels highlighting her symbols, style, themes, and vision for a better future. This shows Kingsolver's commitment to writing for the welfare of the society and the greatness as a contemporary American novelist who as an eco-feminist writer not only cares for human beings but also for the life of nature.

Eco-feminism is an important part of eco-literature with its focus on domination of women and nature. These novels focus on environmental challenges like climate change, animal/species extinction and loss of biodiversity, use of pesticides and the struggle of female protagonists against patriarchal system in society. Here they are resilient and resourceful women who are environmentally responsive and they make their living choices in favour of the natural surroundings. These female protagonists have shown their respect towards intrinsic values in nature and overcome oppression in society. They not only show resistance to such a control but are able to emerge as independent women. They are aware of the importance of non-human beings in natural surroundings and their inherent values in ecosystem. The female protagonists question the patriarchal oppression, assert their identity and also take active involvement in the preservation of natural environment.

Eco-feminism is a social and political movement which points to the low existence of considerable common ground between environmentalism and feminism with some current linking deep ecology and feminism. Eco-feminists argue that a strong parallel exists between the oppression and subordination of women in families and society and the degradation of nature through the construction of differences into conceptual binaries and ideological hierarchies. This allow a systematic justification of

domination by subjects classed into higher ranking categories over objects classed into lower ranking categories (man over women, culture over nature, white over black). They also explore the intersectionality between sexism, the domination of nature, racism, species-ism, and other characteristics of social inequality.

The core premise of Ecofeminism is that the domination of women and the domination of nature are fundamentally connected. Ecofeminism is based on the theory that the oppression of women and the oppression of nature are fundamentally linked. In ecofeminist literature, ecofeminism is often described as the belief that environmentalism and feminism are intrinsically connected. Another definition suggests that discrimination and oppression based on gender, race and class are directly related to the exploitation and environment. Winnie Tomm in her criticism on Kingsolver's works notes that, "The view of both women and nature as raw material to be used according to the desires of others underpins exploitation of both."⁽¹⁾

Ecofeminism offers a range of theoretical positions in which the prefix *eco* signifies the whole household of life. These positions include stringent critiques of reductionist ecological science because of its destructive effects on the whole. Ecofeminism is defined, however, by politically and socially multivalent feminist analyses that seek a positive understanding of the dialectic between nature and humanity in order to move beyond masculine domination of both women and nature.

The relationship between nature and human culture remains problematic for ecofeminists because the feminization of nature has contributed conceptually to downgrading women's cultural role and status. Eco feminists reject a male elite model of human culture that creates inferiority complexes and excludes groups of people, as well as nature. Within industrially developed societies, ecofeminists debate the issue of gender difference within

cultures in dialogue with movements such as deep ecology, antimilitarism, animal liberation, antiracism, and environmental justice. Globally, ecofeminists consistently critique the environmental effects of gendered science and resource management, together with economic development models that have a disproportionate and often disastrous impact on women.

Ecofeminism also offers a potentially transformative philosophy of the self and of society. Influenced by process thought and Gaia science, every entity is seen as internally related to all aspects of its environment, with that relationship as part of what the entity is in itself. This awareness of ecological interdependence calls for an essentially nonviolent ethic of care within societies. It includes care for the fundamental elements of life in recognition of their limits, as well as attention to their present and future ecological and social costs.

Worldwide, ecofeminism focuses on relationships between global economic policies and global ecological crises, arguing that addressing the first in the form of a radical transformation of capitalist production, from an overwhelmingly competitive system to a cooperative one, benefits the global environment. Eco-feminists unite with social justice organizations in order to reach out and care for those who are victims of environmental degradation: the poor, women, children, and indigenous people.

Symbols in her novels enrich the themes found in the novel and, oftentimes, suggest Kingsolver's extensive background in biology. Much of the symbolism found in the novel is biological in nature, as Kingsolver repeatedly employs birds, plants, and animals. Major themes include the importance of family and the need for community as emotional support systems for individuals facing hardships. Kingsolver uses her feminist beliefs, her interest in political issues, and her background in biology as vehicles to relate her thematic messages.

Vandana Shiva says ecofeminism seeks to create ‘a democracy of all life.’

Ecofeminism in Kingsolver’s novels helps to understand how issues of nature and women are interwoven, and it can give a new perspective on reading literature, life, birth, death and passion that are all prominent themes explored through female characters and their lives.

There is a fundamental relationship between the way in which the natural world and mankind is treated. Dualism and hierarchy are traits of patriarchy, which underlie the oppression of women and destruction of natural systems. Feminist and ecological perspectives are interdependent. One cannot ensure the liberation of women without re-valuing the natural world, which tradition has connected with the ‘feminine. In turn, the destruction of the natural world has gone hand in hand with the oppression of women, and only the liberation of women can honor, protect and affirm the live-giving qualities of our world. All systems of domination, including racism, classism, and heterosexism amongst others must also be overcome as they stem from the same logic of domination.

There is a systematic domination, they claim, over both women and nature, underpinned by a conceptual set of dualisms. These dualisms would be familiar as man/woman, mind/body, reason/emotion, human/nature, active/passive, and so forth. Focusing on these themes Kingsolver’s select novels are critically studied and analyzed in forth coming chapters, as how women quickly learn the benefits of knowing their neighbors and developing a community. Because American society is a mobile society, traditional communities, in which everyone knows and cares about everyone else, are disappearing. By creating a community for her women in the novel, Kingsolver is able to alert her readers to the importance of community and the contribution that it makes to the life of each and every member.

The women portray feminist views shared by Kingsolver. They are strong, resilient women living in an imperfect world in late twentieth-century America. Their endurance, strong relationships, and commitment to their nontraditional families are paramount to their survival within the confines of society. Kingsolver considers these women 'heroes'. They persevere in spite of the trials and tribulations they face, and discover resources in totally unexpected places.