

**THE RISING CONSCIOUSNESS : CHANGE IN PERCEPTION AND
PORTRAYAL OF WOMEN IN INDO-ENGLISH FICTION :
A STUDY OF THREE NOVELS**

Dissertation submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University
in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

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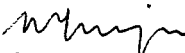
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C E R T I F I C A T E

This dissertation entitled THE RISING CONSCIOUSNESS : CHANGE IN PERCEPTION AND PORTRAYAL OF WOMAN IN INDO-ENGLISH FICTION : A STUDY OF THREE NOVELS, submitted by Padmaja Pattnaik, Centre of Linguistics and English, School of Languages, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, for the award of the degree of MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY, is an original work and has not been submitted so far, in part or full, for any other degree or diploma of any University. This may be placed before the examiners for evaluation for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy.


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INTRODUCTION

In India women are usually identified in terms of familial roles, namely, of mother, wife, sister and daughter etc. The role of a mother is credited with greater importance than the rest. Statements issued by two eminent Indians, at two different points of time on the subject testify^{to} this. In 1900, Swami Vivekananda in a lecture at California proclaimed :

... 'Woman', the term means motherhood for a Hindu. In India, the goddess is addressed at times as 'Mother'. In Western countries, woman means wife. This term, wife, is repository of all womanhood. In India, it symbolises motherhood. In the West, wife lords over one's house; in India, it is the mother who rules the family. 1

In 1940, Mahatma Gandhi declared :

... Who but woman, the mother of woman, shows this capacity (for Ahimsa, infinite love and infinite capacity for suffering) in the largest measure... who again, suffers daily so that her babe may wax from day to day. Let her transfer that to the whole humanity, let her forget, she ever was or can be the object of man's lust. And she will occupy her proud position by the side of man as his mother, maker and silent leader. It is given to her to teach the art of peace to the wavering world thirsting for that nectar. 2

A close look at the statements reveal the importance of motherhood in the cultural context of India. In the West, individuals marry out of choice, and both the partners share at least in principle, equal responsibilities of making the marriage a success. In India, individual choice is subordinated to family decision and other social obligations. Individual expression is restricted, so that even husband and wife are not encouraged to display their feelings towards each other in public. The only relationship between a woman and a man, which gets full sanction of society for open expression, is that of mother and son.

The relationship between a mother and a son is eulogised, not because of the superior role of the mother but because of the superior role that the son might play in the future, as a man. Of course, there are exceptional cases like that of Sri Ram Krishna Paramhansa, who worshipped his wife as an embodiment of the mother principle, namely, Goddess Durga or Kali. Although we find similar examples of bestowing divinity on motherhood in the West (Mary, mother of Christ), there is less fanaticism

in establishing this as the only acceptable norm in the Society. In the Indian society, glorification of motherhood may be seen as a camouflage for male hegemony in the Society. Such is the glorification, that every other relationship that an Indian woman has with men, e.g., as sister, wife and lover etc., are referred back to motherhood. Let us take as illustrations, two noted novels in Indo-English, which portray women in their traditional roles.

One such example is Raja Rao's The Serpent and the Rope (1960). The protagonist, Rama's step-mother, whom he calls Little-Mother, is an embodiment of traditional Indian motherhood. Though the latter possesses talents in singing and has knowledge of the scriptures, she refrains from showing it before her elders. She accepts her son as the male-head of the family in the absence of her husband and gives him the respect that should be given to a male-head of the family. Although she is capable of looking after her family, consisting of two daughters and a son, she looks upon Rama's presence as a unifying and strengthening force :

"And how shall I be of help - .."

"Simply by writing to us often; and coming to us every two or three years. So that they know there's a head of the household, an elder brother, so that the children feel they are protected and there's one whom they have to obey". 3

As stated earlier, the role of a daughter is often made to conform to that of a mother in the traditional Indian society. But some changes have taken place in the modern times; and the novel, being often an accurate medium of reflecting nuances of social change, we come across traces of an altered perception in certain texts. Bhabani Bhattacharya's He who rides a Tiger (1954) is one such book, where Kalo, the father tries to mould the life of his daughter Lekha. He wants her to be different from her mother; so he educates her. But Lekha's education and different upbringing do not help her when she is pitched against a larger force - a ruthless and exploitative society. Her helplessness and vulnerability put her in the category of traditional Indian woman, just like her mother. Nevertheless, Kalo rescues her and life starts anew for both. Kalo poses as an impersonator and deceives people in the name of God. Lekha tries to

check him, acts as a conscience - keeper for him. The only benefit she gathers from her education is her taste and power of discernment. She chooses her own partner for life - which would have been difficult but for her father's support. In action Lekha remains chained to the role - bound women of a previous generation, but in spirit she is rebellious. It may even be said that in spite of her apparent passivity, she gains moral victory.

Our chief concern in this study, is to trace the process of a woman's discovery of her role as an individual; and to analyse the portrayal of this process in Indo-English fiction of the present decade, written by women. This aim itself is not without problems. Some of the questions it poses are why should one choose books by women writers alone, do women write differently from men, are novels reliable sources for studying social change, etc. Before considering these issues, we must probe the background, as to how and when the feminist consciousness ^{began to be} reflected in literature. Since the texts we are discussing are written in English and have undoubtedly been influenced by English literature, a look at feminism and English literature may be helpful at this point. However, one must not forget the fact that Indian social conditions have also influenced these novels.

The earliest signs of feminist consciousness in English literature dates back to 1792, when Mary Wollstonecraft published A Vindication of the Rights of Women. The next important document is John Stuart Mill's On the Subjection of Woman (1869). Between these dates, we find the first ever Feminist Movement take place in America in 1848, named as the Seneca Falls Convention.⁴ Slowly, the movement spread to England, France and other Western countries. Although, in India, there has been no Women's movement as such, women's participation in India's Independence Movement may be regarded as one. Political involvement encouraged women to fight for education, political representation and Hindu-law reforms etc.⁵

This participation of women in the independence movement altered in some ways society's perception of women's roles, and this change gets reflected in the novels written in the forties and fifties, both in English and in the Indian languages.

That is the reason why we should examine the trends existing before 1960, in both regional and Indo-English literatures when the feminist consciousness started appearing in the writings of both men and women. Around late 1930's there began a movement called 'Pragatibad' in Hindi and Oriya, 'Taraqqi Pasand Tehrik' in Urdu and 'Kallol' in Bengali respectively, which **parallel a** simultaneous movement in Indo-English literature. **These writers** were interested in portraying 'social/political realism' (Marxism, Freudianism or Gandhism). Writers like Mulk Raj Anand, K.A. Abbas and Bhabani Bhattacharya illustrate this trend in English, as do Sachidananda Routray and Bhagavati Charan Panigrahi in Oriya and Manik Bandopadhyaya in Bengali. Similar trend can be located in Urdu. In and around 1960, a new movement entered literary circles which is popularly known as 'modernism' with the shift of interest to the individual and to introspective modes of perception. It is often noticed (especially in Bengali and Oriya) that some of these writers, who started as part of the 'Pragatibad' or 'Kallol' movement end up as modern (often existentialist) writers, i.e., Buddhadev Bose and Sachidananda Routray.

As the individual became the novel's focus of interest, slowly the novel form ^{began to} appeal more and more to women. The women in the meantime had been educated enough to become readers of novels and other such literature. In England also, the readership of the novel in the early days of its emergence included many women. The relationship between the individual and the novel could not have been more aptly put than in Ian Watt's words:

... literary traditionalism was first and most fully challenged by the novel, whose primary criterion was truth to individual experience — individualism, experience which is always unique and therefore new. 6

The linkage between women and the new literary form, novel, got established from the early days of English novel — not only in terms of readership, but also in the fact that many protagonists of novels tended to be women (for example Pamela, Clarissa, Moll Flanders, Roxana and Evelina in the eighteenth century and many more in the nineteenth century). The reason for this linkage can be seen in the fact that the novel in its early stages attempted to define the complex relationship between individuals and their society. This relationship could be studied in sharper focus when the individual's life was restricted within an enclosed space with very little

option - in other words, when she was a woman. In English novel at least, women were a central concern even before women novelists started writing.

Thus women can be seen as readers, as subjects and as writers of novels. In this dissertation, my focus will be on women as writers of Indian novels in the nineteen eighties, to see how their perception of women's roles differ, (a) from earlier male perceptions of feminine stereotypes and (b) from the perceptions of women of an earlier period. From the nineteen sixties till today, scores of novels have been written by Indian women in English.⁷ Looking at the number of books published by women writers, one would naturally expect to trace a continuous tradition behind them. But except for a few writers like Anita Desai and Nayanatara Sahgal, who have changed and developed over ^{the} three decades - there is hardly any continuity in this tradition.

The books chosen for our study were written in the present decade. The attempt will be to see, whether there are new possibilities or dimensions which could be attributed to the main struggle between the individual (woman) and the society. Elaine Showalter in A Literature of their Own (1974) traced three stages of development in the feminist consciousness which she calls feminine, feminist and female.⁸ It may not be possible to trace any such neat taxonomy in the Indian novels available to us in English. One can not ignore the fact that it was initially a male writer, namely, R.K. Narayan who felt the rumbling of feminist consciousness and expressed it in The Dark Room, as early as in 1938. Dissatisfied and angered by ^{her} husband's callous attitude, Savitri, an otherwise meek and mild Indian wife decides to run away from her husband's house. Without education (a quality her husband finds appealing in Shanta Bai) and natural physical/moral strength (exemplified by Ponni, a woman of a lower social stratum, who finds no situation strong enough to intimidate her), Savitri does not get very far in her quest for freedom. She finds a small job of washing the temple steps, but she cannot adjust herself to the idea of an independent, working life. She runs back; but with a hope and desire to equip her daughters for an independent living. The rebellion is abortive, but the awareness of the woman's predicament in a male writer, who is otherwise very traditional in his world view is very significant.

In Mulk Raj Anand's The Old Woman and the Cow (1960), we find an idealistic way out of this predicament. In spite of casual beatings by the husband, Gauri does not leave home. Finally when she is driven out by her husband, Gauri proves herself strong enough to stay away from the greedy needs of Seth Jai Ram Das. Her devotion to her husband, Panchi, remains intact. But before Panchi can come to her rescue, she earns her living as a nurse at Colonel Mahindra's Nursing home and learns many other things beside mere nursing. When she returns home, she does not forget the ideas and concepts she has learnt during her exile. But neither Panchi nor the society around him can tolerate this. So, she is abandoned once again. But she takes up the challenge of living separately from her husband. If Gauri's exile is metaphorically linked to that of Sita, her rejection by society corresponds to the fate of Sita who was subjected by Rama to trial by fire. But instead of following the mythic parallel any further, Anand turns the myth inside out. Instead of being meek and submissive, Gauri strikes out on her own and decides to lead an independent life.

Did these ^{male} writers see the women's situation in a different way from the self perception of the women writers who began writing from the late fifties onwards? There is a controversy regarding the 'feminine mode' of writing and the following quotation ^{exemplifies} of one aspect of it :

Femininity is linked to unconsciousness, sexuality and the state of unity. Masculinity represents intellect, consciousness and a tendency to separateness, a alienation of subject from object. We have here the beginnings of a definition of femininity - albeit one clouded by a personal as well as a social bias". 9

Since we are dealing with only women writers, the question of the distinction between feminine and masculine literary mode may be postponed for the future. But looking at the four novels with prominent women characters written by men (Raja Rao's The Serpent and the Rope (1960), Bhabani Bhattacharya's He who rides a Tiger (1954) R.K. Narayan's The Dark Room (1938) and Mulk Raj Anand's The Old Woman and the Cow (1960)), one comes to ~~realise~~ that till 1960, atleast in the representative novels we have examined, the problem of women has been dealt with only from the outside. Besides, the novels written by women

before 1960, namely, Zohra by Zeenuth Futehally and Red Hibiscus by Padmini Sengupta, are written in a highly sentimental way that upholds the traditional passive role of women in family and society. This Alone is True (1952) by Mrinalini Sarabhai departs from the aforesaid books by women writers, in the portrayal of a woman called Parvati, who asserts her identity against the orthodox rigidity of the society and her own falsifying desires, i.e., her blind love for Chetan and her desire to marry him. Parvati's identity is inextricably linked with her love and fulfilment in dancing. Parvati's struggle to retain her freedom for dancing is aided by her mother and her friend Mukul. At the end, Parvati succeeds in overcoming her weakness for Chetan and her attitude of compromise with her ideals for the sake of marriage :

She was awaking to the reality of her own existence. Against the inextinguishable power of her desire to search for the lost beauty of her art, love itself was defeated and the intimate warmth of every other relationship broken. But there was no sense of loss within her heart. It was as though the serenity of a forgotten life had been regained.

.....
This was her evening. Her evening of freedom. She pushed her feet into the warm sand and trickled it through her toes.¹⁰

Even then, Parvati's conflict and struggle has been viewed mostly from outside.

The three novels chosen for discussion in this dissertation view the conflict from inside and provide a direct insight into the woman protagonist's consciousness and psyche. Shashi Deshpande's The Dark Holds No Terrors (1980), Anita Desai's Clear Light of Day (1980) and Nayantara Sahgal's Rich Like Us (1983) are all written in the present decade, and all of them explore the central character's painful journey towards individualism and self-sufficiency.

N O T E S

- 1 Padmaja Pattnaik (tr.), ^{from Oriya} Bharatara Nari Swami Vivekananda (Bhubaneswar : Shri Ram Krishna Mission, 1963), p. 371
- 2 Mohandas Karmachand Gandhi, Woman's Role in Society (Ahmedabad : Navajivan Publishing House, 1959), p.5
- 3 Raja Rao, The Serpent and the Rope (1960; rpt. New Delhi : Orient Paperbacks, 1968), p.46
- 4 Kate Millett, Sexual Politics (1969; rpt. Abacus edition, Sphere Books Limited, 1972), p. 80
- 5 Matson Jana Everett, Women and Social change in India (rpt. Delhi : Heritage Publishers, 1981)
- 6 Ian Watt, The Rise of the Novel (1957 ; rev. Great Britain : Penguin Books in Association with Watts and Windus, 1985), p.13-14
- 7 Some of these novels are listed below:
 Venu Chitale, In Transit (1950)
 Zeenuth Futehally, Zohra (Bombay : Hind Kitabs, 1951)
- Mrinalini Sarabhai, This Alone is True (London : Meridian Books, 1952)
- Shkuntala Shringesh, The Little Black Box (London : Secker and Warburg, 1955)
- Shanta Rama Rao, Remember the House (1956)
- Sally Athogias, Gold in the Dust (Bombay : Jaico Publications, 1960)
- Attia Hossain, Sunlight on a Broken Column (London : Chatto and Windus, 1961)
- Padmini Sengupta, Red Hibiscus (Bombay : Asia Publishing House, 1962)
- Vimal Raina, Ambapalli (Bombay : Asia Publishing House, 1962)
- Veena Paintal, Serenity Calm (Bombay : Allied Publishers, 1966)

- R.P. Jhabvala, To Whom She Will (1955)
The Nature of Passion (1956)
Esmond in India (1958)
The House holder (1960)
Get Ready for Battle (1962)
Like Birds, Like Fishes (1963)
A Backward Place (1965)
A Stronger Climate (1968)
- Kamala Markandaya, Nectar in a Sieve (1954)
Some Inner Fury (1957)
A Silence of Desire (1961)
Possession (1963)
A Handful of Rice (1966)
To Coffor Dams (1969)
The Nowhere Man (1973)
- Hilda Raj The House of Ramiah (1967)
- Muriel Wasi Too High for Rivalry (1967)
- Amrita Pritam, Doctor Dev (1968)
- Menakshi Puri, Pay on the First (1968)
- Nayantara Sahgal, A Time To be Happy (1957)
This Time of Morning (1965)
Storm in Chandigarh (1969)
The Day in Shadow (1971)
- Anita Desai, Cry, the Peacock (1968)
Voices in the City (1965)
Bye - Bye, Blackbird (1971)
- Bharati Mukherjee, Tiger's Daughter (1973)
_____, Wife (1975; rev. Canada :
Penguin Books, 1987)
- Namita Gokhale, Paro
- Veena Nagpal, Karmayogi (1974)
_____, Compulsion (1975)
- Raji Narsimhan, The Heart of Standing is you cannot Fly (1973)
_____, Forever Free (1979)

Shashi Deshpande, The Dark holds no Terrors (1980)

_____, Come Up and be Dead (1983)

_____, If I die Today (1982)

Kasthuri Sreenivasan, A Handful of Rice (1973)

_____, Service with a Smile (1978)

Uma Vasudev, The Song of Anasuya (1978 ; rpt.

New Delhi; Bell Books, 1979)

Jai Nimbkar, Temporary Answers (1974 ; rpt. Calcutta :

Sangam Books, 1986)

Kamala Das, Alphabet of Lust (1976 ; rpt. New Delhi :

Orient Paperbacks, 1980)

8 Elaine Showalter, A Literature of Their Own (1978 ; rpt.

London : Virago Press Limited, 1982), p. 13

9 Lisa Appinganesi, Feminityⁿⁱ and Creative Imagination

(New York : Barnes and Noble Books, 1973), p.6

10 Mrinalini Sarabhai, This Alone is True (1952; rpt; Delhi :

Hind Pocket Books (P) Ltd., 1977), p. 191-192

11 Millett, op. cit., p. 176

C H A P T E R - I

Shashi Deshpande.

The Dark Holds no Terrors is Shashi Deshpande's first published novel. Her two subsequent books If I die Today (1982) and Come Up and be Dead (1983) combine murder and its detection with psychological analysis of characters. Shashi Deshpande's publications include a book of short-stories for children and two more novels Roots and Shadows (1985) and That Long Silence (1988), both of which attempt to delineate a woman's struggle to come to terms with her individual self. The Roots and Shadows was written before any of the other books, but it was published much later.

The Dark Holds no Terrors is about a woman called Sarita, whose detailed impressions about a real or imagined physical assault, set the tone of the book and ^{provides} its refrain. Sarita is a doctor and is disturbed about this blurring of distinction between concrete experience and fantasy, and is further upset when she finds out that her assaulter is her husband. It is Sarita's own doubt and fear, which nullify all her attempts at gaining control over the situation. Instead she escapes. This escape is symbolic.

Sarita had escaped once earlier; from her mother. Her dislike for her mother arose out of two reasons; one, her mother's preference for her brother Dhruva, two, her mother's accusation of Sarita for Dhruva's death. At that time, education provided Sarita with an escape route.

Sarita's predicament cannot be grasped simply by narrating the bare outline of the plot. Thus, we must take into account the various ways in which the author renders the situation complex and interesting. Let us study the occasion when the first reference to Sarita's mother is made in the novel. Professor Kulkarni, an old acquaintance of Sarita passes on the news of her death to Sarita. Sarita's reaction at seeing Professor Kulkarni, her apprehension and reception of the sad news are presented in such a manner that the reader can get a glimpse into the character's mind and draw his conclusions. Although very much disturbed inside, Sarita acts out her role as a cool and competent doctor before Professor Kulkarni and his family very well. The intensity of her emotion is revealed once, when

it is mentioned that even at the time of her death, her mother was indifferent to Sarita.

The hope which was still lying in her heart, that she might be forgiven once, turns into despair when her mother dies unreconciled. The play of emotion between reason, hope and despair is clearly shown in the book. The distinction between reality and illusion, the intermeshing of the past (indicated by italicised typeface) and present is portrayed so well that the reader gets a vivid impression about the situations and the characters involved. First person narration lends support to the credibility of the narrative structure. Delineation of different activities like thinking aloud, questioning, judging, reflecting, imagining, doubting etc. add variety to the narrative pattern :

"Unhappy. Destroyed."

How often had she thought the words ? But she had sworn she would never say them aloud, never admit the fact, not as long as her mother was alive. And I didn't, she thought. Yet, she had a fanciful idea that somewhere a vengeful ghost signed a sigh of satisfaction. But she was too tired to care any more. There was only the relief that comes from surrender. Not to pretend anymore, not to struggle - it brought nothing but solace. Her whole body went slack. 1

The shift of emotion from disbelief, realisation, sorrow, internal questioning, assessment, tiredness and relief exemplified in the paragraph above, bear proof of the subtle coordination between thought and external action at a difficult point of time. The conflict between older values and new ones, - ~~the~~ mother representing the former and ^{the} daughter representing the latter - the resolution, either escape or confrontation, are part of the study of a new change in society and the consciousness that accompanies it.

Thus, Sarita's mother's preference for son Dhruva, Sarita's hatred and escape from her mother, her taking up of education as a means of escape may all be interpreted in Freudian terms as described by Kate Millett :

As we learn from psycho-analytic work, women regard themselves as wronged from infancy, as undeservedly cut short and set back; and the embitterment of so many daughters against their mothers derives, in the last analysis, from the reproach against her of having brought them into the world as women instead of as men. 2

And so it is that while the regenerate female seeks fulfilment in a life devoted to reproduction, others persist in the error of aspiring to an existence beyond the biological level of confinement to maternity and reproduction falling into the error Freud calls 'the masculine complex'. 3

(Which is) ... Desire to enter universities, pursue an autonomous or independent course in life, take up with feminism, or grow restless and require treatment as 'neurotics', 4

Freud's version of mother - hatred means hatred for the role or image of motherhood. In case of Sarita, it is difficult to say if her hatred of her mother was image-based or directed at her person or a mixture of both. As will be found from later evidences, Sarita does not like to be cast in her mother's image (p.97, p-29); nevertheless, she herself chooses the role of a mother at one point of time. Once she is back at home, she forgets her professional life and is content in the role of ^a woman busy in domesticity.

The distinction between the role and the image of mother is highlighted in Raji Narsimhan's Forever Free (1979). In spite of the protagonist Shree's desire for independence, her mother's wish for traditional marriage prevails. Even her mother, Dhanalakshmi's disappointment in marriage does not prevent ^{her from arranging one for her daughter.} The only relief which Shree gets out of the situation is her education, which is otherwise held in high esteem by her mother (" It's the best weapon I'm giving you ! What I never had-know its value ? Sillyhead ?" p-10). After marriage Shree discovers herself in ~~the same~~ position as her mother was some years ago. She comes out of marriage because she has the means, namely, education. And it takes half the course of the book to convince her mother that :

"Have you ever observed here, mother ? " I traced with my free hand the hollows of my temples into which my eyes abutted. "They are like yours. This whole area. " I ran my fingers over her brow, lids, temples, the seat of destiny. Then I ran my fingers over my brow, lids, temples and the seat of destiny. "We're the same, mother". 5

Here, the situation is opposite to that of Sarita and her mother in The Dark Holds no Terrors. In the latter book, Sarita wavers between her perception of the role and image of her mother. In Forever Free, Shree's mother wavers between reality (her need to escape marriage) and idealism (her sticking to marriage in spite of her desire otherwise and to put Shree in the traditional image of a woman, ~~through~~ marriage). Thus, in Forever Free the feminist consciousness starts in an earlier generation, ~~... with that~~ of the mother. In The Dark Holds no Terrors, Sarita's conflict is highlighted,

whereas in the other book everything seems to have been predetermined, e.g., Shree's unjustified stress on not seeing the Arundhati star on her wedding day (p. 30, p. 31, p. 32), Swami's premature predictions about Shree's adultery (p. 30, p. 45, p. 63) as though Shree was doing everything in order to convince herself and her mother of her independence.

Sarita's characterisation is much more convincing. We find the contradictions, ... (while she is training to become an independent individual in her own rights, she dreams " the eternal female dream of finding happiness through a man" p.112, ... the woman who " at the day time wore a white coat and an air of confidence and knowing, and at night became a terrified, trapped animal" p.121), lending strength to the main plot of portraying a woman at conflict.

What does this conflict signify ? As stated earlier, the conflict most certainly signifies the change in society at a certain point of time, which drives a woman to a new vocation and yet does not provide her with the confidence to go through the whole process. Whether it is insecurity or hatred of mother, Sarita is driven to a point when she feels she must take up the challenge of proving herself. She steps into ~~the~~ role of ~~a~~ professional woman without precedence and much knowledge. She becomes suspicious of her colleagues at work, namely, Boozie and Padma. And she expects her husband Manohar to react against her career. This betrays her unconscious siding with older values of the society, which no longer fit the occasion.

Let us consider the predicament in which Manohar finds himself. In spite of his earlier promise in life he fails to achieve success and has to depend on Sarita's work for his own survival and maintenance of the family. He does not stop his wife from working, yet his reactions show his discomfort in being relegated to a secondary position in the family. Thus, Manohar becomes the victim of a clash between ^{the} existing role model of a husband as perpetrated by a patriarchal society (dominant, protective, strong, economically superior) and his present situation as an economically dependent partner. The emotional disturbance caused by this clash manifests itself in the strained sexual relationship between the couple.

Sarita is also the victim of a similar clash between existing role models and emerging new ones. Although Sarita is intellectually aware of

the anomalies in the power-relationship in a marriage, ("Does the sword of domination become lethal only when a woman holds it over a man ? " p. 77)) emotionally she cannot get out of the self-effacing, subordinate role that she has been conditioned by society and upbringing to accept.

Sarita blames herself for dominating her younger brother Dhruva and being careless at the time of his drowning. This sense of childhood guilt continues throughout her adult life. She takes the blame for deserting her mother, and for ^{the} failure of her marriage. Her repeated utterance is proof of this guilt complex :

... My brother died because I heedlessly turned my back on him. My mother died alone because I deserted her. My husband is a failure because I destroyed his manhood. 6

Sarita's dominating attitude springs from fear and insecurity. She tries to dominate Dhruva in order to nullify her mother's unwarranted love for him; tries to dominate her husband for fear that he might not in fact turn out to be the 'almighty hero' she had fallen in love with. Anyway, her obsession with 'self' and a basic insecurity is reflected in the following lines :

"Nobody likes me. Nobody cares for me. Nobody wants me..."
 ... she had written them, not in English, which she scarcely knew then, but in Marathi. So that it had come out as ...
 " I am not liked by anyone. I am not cared for by anyone. I am not wanted by anyone." With the stress on the " I ".
 Which was how it was then, the whole world related to the " I ".7

The obsession continued through her adult life. It is not necessarily selfishness, but something more complex as can be seen in her concern with others and the sense of guilt that persists all her life. This is a malady specific to Sarita's generation, the first generation to be educated and employed in work outside home. One does not see this complication and ambivalence in the women of the previous generation, who categorically subscribed to the view that a woman's position in society is secondary and is limited to the enclosed domestic space.

Her view regarding woman's suffering is very strong. She detests Gautama Buddha's advice to the woman who was grieving for her dead child, "Learn the truth and be comforted" (p. 69). She notes how women gather in the temple to share their sorrows (p.92). She realises how many women suffer from a desire to suppress rather than show their agony before anyone

or get any relief (p.98). Finally, she quotes Betty Friedan, eminent feminist writer, " it was easier for her to start the women's lib movement than to change her own personal life" (p.98). This marks the shift from personal life to a general condition existing in the society for women.

Such a broad mental horizon starting from a obsession with "I" and extending to a deep concern for others in similar predicaments and conflicts make Sarita a character worthy of detailed study. Let us select only that aspect of the novel which belongs to our main concern; the emergence of feminist consciousness and to see how well the writer manages to trace this tortuous process.

A novelist is not a pamphleteer. He/she has to concretize an idea or ideal and depict it through a particular case. Sarita is one such case. The novel opens with her physical assault, her escape and after giving us a flash-back about her childhood and past life, it ends with her emotional preparation to face her complex fate. In her confrontation with reality, she is even prepared to indict herself through self-flagellation.

The book would have gained if more points of view were presented to us to provide counter - points to Sarita's intense self-absorbed introspection. Her father and Madhav, his son-substitute who inhabit a different world, simple and conflict-free, are seen only from the outside. Yet the final resolution of Sarita's problem emerges out of the experience of her stay with them.

Sarita's conflict is presented through an interposition of the past and present. The past is not confined merely to the description of the childhood of one character; the past or the present in the book relate to the difference and change in the social circumstances and attitudes. The suffering of Sarita, her mother and her aunt are related to the suffering of women of all ages by cultural archetypes like Goddess Kali and links like Betty Friedan.

Sarita's individual weaknesses and fights are related to those of other women. Yet, by subtle differences, the individual is separated from her species, e.g.,

But to her, I would be a woman, my problems a part of women's problems. But this is mine, Saru's and has as much to do with what I am, apart from my being a woman. It's not only I, it's Manu and I, and how we react against each other. 8

This subtle meshing of individual problem with the gender problem of women gives The Dark Holds no Terrors its specific authenticity.

Shashi Deshpande is able to diagnose Sarita's malady by tracing how the emotional stresses impinge upon physical relationships. That she can do this without inhibition marks a certain maturity in the woman writer's attitude to her theme. Apart from the description of Manohar's sadistic assaults on Sarita, there is an abundance of sexual images in the book, i.e., the woman in trance (p.93), the pony jumping and running with an awkward energy of overenthusiasm (p. 103), terrified animals (p.90), the large rain drops, the drowning in muddy water (p.170) etc.

While describing Sarita's gradual sexual awareness, we find a reference to "the painful middle class inhibitions" (p.34) which makes the situation more generic than specific. Yet, it explains her interest in and fear of sex, alternatively within marriage and outside it. Within marriage, she feels "I was insatiable, not for sex -." (p. 35); which is merely a cover for her naked desire. Outside marriage, she is afraid of any sort of emotional or physical involvement, like her fear of destroying Madhav's innocence (p.135), and her fear of her male colleague Padma's proximity (p. 80).

Thus, Sarita is a mixture of the old and the new values, capable of conflicting emotions and passions. But her composite self-image is very different from that of the traditional pattern, of being a daughter who rebelled against her mother; a wife who ran away from her family; a mother who put her interests before her children's interests etc. The image of a variant modern woman becomes more credible ^{through} her conflicting emotions; her hatred and love for mother, a wish to subjugate and be dominated by husband, a desire to become a perfect mother and her inability to be so; and a conscious effort towards establishing an identity before anything else.

Thus, Shashi Deshpande's contribution to the genre of feminist writing in India by women, can be seen from three perspectives : thematic : she reflects the social change that enables women to take on new functions; psychological : she delineates how the broader social changes impinge on individual human consciousness creating tension and neuroses; and textual : the changed tone and imagery of her novel, touching upon areas hitherto tabooed for women.

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CHAPTER - II.

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Clear light of Day (1980)

Anita Desai

Anita Desai is one of the most well-known writers of Indo-English fiction today. She started writing more than two decades ago. Her first book Cry, the Peacock (1963) portrays a sensitive young woman, Maya, who is obsessed by a childhood prophecy of disaster, which cannot be averted. Her anxiety and despair at facing the reality, her approaching madness forms the bulk of the book. Anita Desai's second book Voices in the City (1965) deals with the story of two brothers and two sisters, whose effort to find meaningful existence lands them in despair. One of the sisters commits suicide out of a need to experience desire and feeling, one brother leaves the country with a scholarship to study abroad, the other brother runs away from success, the last one manages to remain detached from either extremes of life.

The third book Bye, Bye Blackbird (1971) deviates from the previous novels. It depicts the sense of alienation which the two young Indians Dev and Aditi feel while living in London. Dev's English friend Emma Moffit and Aditi's English wife Sarah, associate India with magic and wonder. The couples' imaginative experience in exile, as contrasted with real life existence is the theme of this novel. With the fourth book, Where shall we go this summer ? (1975) Anita Desai returns to her old theme of the problem of the sensitive individual's survival in an insensitive world. Sita refuses to bring forth her child into a world where she struggles for meaningful existence. She goes back to a world of magic, the Manori island. But, once she lands on the island, she realises the distinction between the world of magic and reality.

Anita Desai's fifth book Fire on the Mountain (1977) received the Sahitya Akademi Award and won nominations for the Booker Prize also. The story revolves around a woman named Nanda Kaul, who retires to Carignano, a desolate and haunted house in Kasauli. Her desire to be alone is disturbed by the arrival of her grandchild Raka. Nanda is drawn by Raka's self-contained and reserved nature. She tries to befriend her. Meanwhile, Ila Das, Nanda's childhood friend and a Social worker in the area, gets murdered. The grim reality shatters the dreamy, fragile world of both Nanda and Raka. Through a spurt of violence, Raka destroys Carignano and the unreality associated with it.

The theme of woman wavering between the world of dreams and reality, the sharp movement which frees woman from role-bound, categorical personalities to freedom is continued in Desai's sixth novel Clear light of Day (1980). Out of the two woman characters in the book, one is Tara, who escapes from the grim reality of the world around her, through marriage. Her reflections on the past are tinged with romanticism and a dreamy quality. In contrast, we find her sister Bimla working steadfastly on. Unlike traditional heroines, Bimla does not cry over the past, she acts and achieves her desire of becoming a 'heroine' :

. . . 'What will you be when you grow up ? ' Raja said promptly and proudly : 'A hero'

.....
Then Bimla declared, with glistening eyes, that she would be a heroine, although she would secretly have preferred to be a gipsy or trapeze artist in a Circus.¹

The pressure on Bimla to emulate her brother is clear, when Bimla declares that she would be a heroine only in order to equal her brother's ambition; although she would have secretly desired to become a gipsy or a trapeze artist. 'Heroine' also presupposes the existence of a hero while a gipsy or a trapeze artist is a self-sufficient creature. Thus, inferiority complex and the underlying role-ambiguity leads Bimla to declare her ambition of becoming a heroine. Maybe this desire spurs her to action. Like Sarita in The Dark holds no Terrors, Bimla tries to overcome the deficiencies of both her family and the confining boundaries of her own sex. Unlike Sarita, who was driven to education and the medical profession, Bimla's prime desire to become a heroine gets translated into a genuine desire to prove herself. She is very clear about this, as we find in her speech to Tara :

'What else'? asked Bim, Can't you think? I can think of hundreds of things to do instead. I won't marry, ' she added, very firmly. Tara glanced at her sideways with a slightly sceptical smile. 'I won't' repeated Bim, adding 'I shall never leave Baba and Raja and Mira - masi, '

.....
' I shall work - I shall do things, ' she went on,
' I shall earn my own living - and look after Mira - masi and Baba and - and be independent. 2

Bimla looks after Raja, Baba and Mira - masi not because she is forced to do^s but because she feels for them. Yet on the other hand, one can detect a touch of loneliness and despair when she declares : " I was not frozen or hungry or mad. Or even quite alone. I had Baba " (p. 42). At one point, the description of the past gives us a glimpse of the forces at work in Bimla's mind :

. . . It made Bim more ambitious at school, working consciously and deliberately at coming first in the examinations and winning honours. She was not quite sure where this would lead but she seemed to realize it was a way out. 3

This is not much different from Sarita's predicament in The Dark holds no Terrors . Both Sarita and Bimla, disgusted with family life, set out to make a career out of education. Sarita marries. Bimla does not marry. Regardless of Bimla's attitude to Dr. Biswas (about whom Bimla is not in the least romantically inclined), Bimla's family burdens make marriage a remote possibility for Bimla. Bimla's early ambition of equalling her brother, her taking care of the family, taking up nursing at Kingsway Camp, her managing of father's business, her forgiving gesture towards Raja and Tara etc., make her out to be a little larger than life size. Thus, inspite of Anita Desai's ideological build up, Bimla cannot be seen as a woman who has opted for independence and autonomy.

In her novels, Anita Desai seems to involve characters in plots where a conflict is highlighted and often resolved by a violent ending, e.g., Cry, the Peacock,, Voices in the City and Fire on the Mountain. In Clear light of Day, a conflict comes towards the end and is resolved without much complication. A conflict which was brewing in Bimla's mind since Raja's departure regarding his father's business, suddenly assumes a greater dimension due to Tara's constant references to the past. Bimla realises that she ought to be able to lessen Raja's importance and claim on her life than before, and achieve autonomy. She takes refuge^{in the study of} history and concentrates in analysing Aurangzeb's life. Deciding to unload her mind of Raja's memories, she cuts his claim and releases her heart of^{an} extra burden of emotion (p.169). This enables her to accept her father's legacy more easily than before.

This also marks her progress towards objectivity, and a release from dependency. We get instances of her cool practical sense more than once. Her love of history, insistence on facts, precision and chronology can be contrasted to Tara's romanticism, her dream of finding pearl in a snail, of suddenly discovering herself to be the princess (p. 102) etc. Tara serves a special purpose of emphasizing a contrast to Bimla in the plot.

Bimla's hatred for ~~her mother~~ seems evident. The mother's failure to cope with her responsibilities, either physically or mentally arouses Bimla's hatred. Gradually, she is succeeded by Aunt Mira. Yet, Bimla's hatred for mother or the mother-image is not transferred to Aunt Mira. In fact, she comes closest to Aunt Mira in her supportive role to Baba, Raja and Tara etc. Like Sarita in The Dark holds no Terrors, Bimla unknowingly becomes the mother (or mother-equivalent) whose image she hates. The conflict between past and present, dream and reality, the mother-image and the role of a mother is depicted well in The Dark holds no Terrors. In Clear light of Day, the conflict is not between traditional sides; namely, the man and woman. Although, the conflict takes place in Bimla's mind, regarding Raja and his relationship with herself, even Baba contributes to the conflict; neither of them can be described in terms of a man - woman relationship. In fact, the only viable man-woman relationship-between Bimla and Dr. Biswas-does not develop. In Anita Desai's novel, sibling relationship is often more important than the relationship between the sexes. Anita Desai's reply to Jasbir Jain's query regarding the man-woman relationship in her novels is interesting :

JJ : And when your picture comes through of the man-woman relationship it is an unsatisfying one. As the heroines are protagonists, you see it from the women's point of view. Do you feel the man-woman relationship doesn't have the capacity to be a satisfying one, is it inadequate in every respect ?

AD:I think all human relationships are inadequate, I have never worked this out. Basically everyone is solitary. I think involvement in human relationships in this world invariably leads to disaster. 4

May be that is one of the reasons why Anita Desai's earlier work, Voices in the City, has separate sections on each member of the family. Each has a separate destiny and each one is curiously independent of the other. Or may be, each one consciously tries to keep away from an overbearing mother and restrictive family. Yet, if one reads between the lines, he would discover the underlying net which meshes them all (p.175).

Clear light of Day, being a later work improves upon the Mother-Aunt-Two brothers - two sisters structure, so that each is distinct and develops of its own accord, nevertheless sharing the same family background. Unlike the powerful and overbearing mother in Voices in the City who becomes the chief factor of disintegration in the family, the vacuum caused by mother in Clear light of Day brings others close to the family, or at least makes them feel obliged to feel for the family and Bimla, who fills the gap caused by Mother and Aunt Mira. Thus, Bimla becomes the centre around which others in their own distinctive elements revolve.

As the head of the family, Bimla behaves gracefully towards others. When Bakul approaches her for consent to marry Tara, Bimla accepts her position by implication and gives him the requisite permission (p.81). But there is very little honour or pride left in the position as head of the family. Bimla feels herself sucked dry by Tara, Raja and others (p.153). Tara feels Bimla reminds her of a family heirloom, precious for its inheritance and memory (p.153). Like Aunt Mira, Bimla feels all her ambitions will end up in the well (p. 157).

Yet Aunt Mira as a woman who faced life simply provides a contrast and sharpens the edges of Bimla's characterization. Bimla has the strength and dignity not to ask for Raja's help, whereas Aunt Mira merely resigns herself to her fate. Even in the emotional arena, Bimla fights her dependence on Raja and part of this pride is aided by her economic self-sufficiency. When Baba refuses his help by a stubborn silence, she tries to accept this rejection stoically.

Tara merely disturbs the outward calm and puts Bimla in troubled waters. She tries to find fault with her (p.148), sometimes out of jealousy and at other times out of sympathy. Nevertheless, she acknowledges that in spite of the difference in nature and circumstances, both are bound by their childhood :

... They were not so unlike. They were more alike than any other two people would be. They had to be, their hands were so deep in the same water, their faces reflected it together. 5

Thus through contrasts and similarities with her family members, we find Bimla's portrait emerging. It is further sharpened through her own dreams and reality.

Imagery is a device employed by Anita Desai to integrate the plot. Some of the images employed in the book are echoes of previous books, i.e., the insistent koel, sounds of other birds, trees and plants in the neglected garden, the snail, the haunting memory of the dead cow in the well, the resounding clatter of Hyder Ali's white horse - these constitute the evocative background of the novel. Moreover, there are quotations from Ghalib, Iqbal and some other Urdu poets, also from Byron, Tennyson, Swinburne, Eliot and Dickinson, which are sometimes used as a evocative background and as symbols at othertimes.

A few images stand out in the book. The image of the 'invisible other' or 'the third person' is adapted from T.S Eliot's The Waste Land :

Who is the third who walks always beside you?
 When I count, there are only you and I together
 But when I look ahead up the white road
 There is always another one walking beside you
 Gliding wrapt in a brown mantle, hooded
 I do not know whether a man or a woman
 - But who is that on the other side of you ? ⁶

Eliot explains in a note :

The following lines were stimulated by the account of one of the Antarctic expeditions (I forget which, but, I think one of Shackleton's) : it was related that the party of explorers, at the extremity of their strength, had the constant delusion that there was one more member than could actually be counted. ⁷

In Clear light of Day, the image of a shrouded ghost or 'a invisible other' has been created in order to stress the subconscious fear of Bimla towards Aunt Mira's suggested threat of drowning at the well and Bimla's own fear of getting drowned in the well of loneliness and despair (p. 157). There is yet another dimension to the image; Grover Smith associates the lines from The Waste Land with the journey of the two disciples to Emmaus, who hardly experience Christ walking beside them after crucification.⁸ The 'invisible other' or 'the third person', whose presence affects Bimla to a great extent (i.e., its first reference to Eliot's lines on page 41 and second reference to the same lines on page 100 of the book, Clear light of Day) is no doubt, that of Aunt Mira, whose spirit and message is carried on by Bimla, unlike the two disciples who could not apprehend Christ walking beside them. Thus, the image is turned inside out by Anita Desai in Clear light of Day and it symbolises knowledge; Bimla's awareness of the past, the predecessor, the dangers of the present and her mission.

Aunt Mira's death-wish, that of drowning in the well at the back of the garden, is associated with the second significant image of the book : that of a white cow drowning in a well at the back of the garden. It seems that the loneliness and fear of Bimla's existence, otherwise suppressed throughout the book, have been concretised in the image which has little validity, except conveying a sense of fear and alarm.

The image of the submerged cow has already appeared once in Where shall we go this summer ? . In this earlier book, the natives discuss a cow drowning in the well sweetened by Sita's father by magical powers :

"How fortunate the cow that drowned in it the other day. How sweet must have been her death" sang Jamila, moving about them, refilling their glasses, touching them on the shoulders, reminding.

"Fortunate, fortunate", they hummed and swayed and rocked. Then one harsh voice, invisible, cried, "But he died penniless - he left nothing", and the twilight became rigid with a strange sense of disappointment - bitterness even. 9

The irony and scepticism behind the sweet death of the cow has been repeated later in the book, e.g., "Gold and pearls, Jivan, rubies and diamonds!

He just crushes them up - like sand. Where does he get them from ?

I thought we were poor. We're supposed to be poor " (p.83). Similarly, the death of the milch - cow in Clear light of Day spells disaster for the Das family. But Aunt Mira is so fascinated by it that she wants to follow the same action. The irony and scepticism is noteworthy. Further, the idea of the submerged cow seems as a metaphor for the dark memories that lie deep in the unconscious of the family; and thus relevant to the plot.

The third significant image is that of a swarm of bees attacking Bimla at a picnic at Lodi Gardens. Tara escapes but Bimla survives the attack. The incident proves Bimla's strength and Tara's tendency to escape from a difficult situation. The incident weighs heavily on Tara's conscience (p. 136, p. 150, p. 174). It becomes a metaphor for their subsequent lives.

Music is a strong symbol in the book. It binds many strains produced by different species at different places, i.e., the koel's call in the morning (p. 1), the humming of bees (p. 178), the raucous music from Baba's old gramophone (p. 8), Mulk and his guru's song (p. 179). Young Mulk can produce resonant, pleasant music but only a guru, a maestro can produce that distinctive note of conflict, failure and disappointment in his voice, which appeals to Bimla. Both Mulk and his guru belong to the same school, same style of singing, yet the difference is apparent for everyone to see. The distinction and unification of the different strains become a metaphor for Bimla :

... With her inner eye she saw how her own house and its particular history linked and contained her as well as her whole family with all their separate histories and experiences..10

Music helps her to identify herself with her family, yet it provides scope for development in her own way.

Poetry (both English and Urdu) is used as background music is used in films, to evoke moods, to create atmosphere. Bimla's sensitive perception and appraisal of reality is often marked by poetry (p. 2, p. 98, p.100). Raja's romantic spirit finds easy expression in different poets and borrowed fervour. On the whole poetry like music is one of the unifying, symbolic components of the novel.

Unlike Shashi Deshpande's The Dark holds no terrors and Anita Desai's Voices in the City, Clear light of Day is marked for its unique feature of connecting the theme of struggle of an independent woman to history. Although the basic situation of the novel arises out of a social reality conditioned by history (a once rich family disintegrating at the time of India's partition) the strength of the novel lies in the subtle delineation of individual characters against an evocative and appropriate setting of brooding decay.

In this regard, Clear light of Day can be compared with W. Faulkner's The Sound and Fury (1929). Both the novels centre around a group of ^{four} brothers and sisters each, one of them mentally retarded. Both are set in transitional phases where the girls play key roles in either bringing about the fall or rise of the family and tradition. In The Sound and Fury Caddy's sin adversely affects the rest of the family members, e.g., Benjy, Quentin and Jason, at the same time reflects the disintegration of values and social forces in the new age.

On the other hand Bimla saves her family from disintegration and thus reflects the rise of 'modern woman' who is educated, intelligent and gets into conflict with the traditional social forces in order to fend for herself and her honour. The specific period between 1946-47 also helps in defining the social role and position of the characters involved, i.e., Bimla's ambition to equal her brother and to lead an independent life might be in the wake of the struggle for India's Independence; Raja's vitality and sense of adventure as contrasted with his sisters' passivity is an indicator to the distinction in role between a boy and a girl or a man and a woman. The change in time from 1946-47 to 1965 - onwards also points to the change of values, i.e., Bimla can smoke publicly, which she could not do earlier; the Misra girls can take up a vocation after separation, a woman ^{can take} charge of the family business and property etc.,

Thus Anita Desai's concern is twofold : thematic; she reflects the conflict which a woman undergoes in the process of functioning independently in the society, particularly when she is single, and stylistic; she employs an individual style full of images, symbols, ^{and} metaphors to delineate a problem that is both individual and social.

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- 8 Grover Smith, T.S. Eliot's Poetry and Plays :
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C H A P T E R - I I I .

Nayantara Sahgal.

Nayantara Sahgal is a serious novelist in English whose works are noted both for their political concern and their depiction of the predicament of sensitive individuals in an insensitive society; of the "authentic individual in an inauthentic world" - to use Georg Lukacs' phrase. On one hand, critics like Shyam Asnani and R.S. Sharma label her as a "political novelist",¹ while on the other Jasbir Jain in her monograph on Sahgal notes her primary "concern with humanistic values". Jain holds that Nayantara Sahgal's concern with politics "is a humanistic concern for her work, both inter-related and equated".²

Politics, religion and other social forces merely delineate the boundaries within which an individual acts. For instance, in Storm in Chandigarh (1969), Vishal Dubey is not only the centre's emissary to Haryana and Punjab but also the protagonist of a personal drama which runs parallel to and is influenced by the political theme. The relation between individual happiness and socio-political interference can be seen in specific and concrete terms in This Time of Morning (1965) :

... **Foreign relations, because to the extent that another country influences your foreign policy or tells you what to do...** In fact there can be no basis for external affairs if internal affairs go wrong.³

These instances are mere pointers to Nayantara Sahgal's dominant theme of individual freedom.⁴ Her concern for woman is part of her concern for individual freedom in a restrictive society.

From the time the English novel matured in the nineteenth century till today, fiction has often dealt with the conflict between the individual and society. The theme gains an added poignance when the protagonist is a woman because the society's restrictions are more rigid for her. And Sahgal's sympathy and concern for such women who are unhappy within the social institutions like marriage, make them feature prominently in early novels like A Time to be Happy (1958) and This Time of Morning (1965). But the conflicts portrayed in these novels are not as intense as that of either The Dark holds no Terrors by Shashi Deshpande or Clear light of Day by Anita Desai, because Nayantara Sahgal's concern for woman and her

freedom is only part of her preoccupation with an individual's freedom in society. Her other interests, e.g., in the Independence struggle, Gandhian Philosophy, Hinduism, human rights and the present political situation in India diffuse her focus on the theme of woman and makes this part of a larger concern. Moreover, Nayantara ^aSahgal's handling of the conflict between woman and society is different from that of the other two writers. Unlike the interiorisation of the conflict in the earlier two books, we find in Nayantara Sahgal's novels a tackling of this in a pragmatic manner.

Unlike Sarita in The Dark holds no Terrors and Bimla in Clear light of Day, women characters in Nayantara Sahgal's novels do not think or act independently; at least upto a point. In earlier novels, we find different ideas and realities ^{being} represented through the male characters. Men are the coordinating factor between women and society. Slowly, women become disentangled from ~~men~~ only by degrees. Moreover, struggle and realisation occurs in case of both men and women.

In A Time to be Happy, Sanad belongs to an anglicized and ambitious family which gives priority to material ambitions while his marriage to Kusum, who comes from a nationalist family with idealism leads to the former's awareness of values other than purely material. Their marriage contains seeds of a potential conflict - a conflict which eventually tears apart not only Sanad but also Kusum. Thus, participation and awareness of both the parties are necessary in a social change, i.e., change in the preception of identity and role of woman in a society.

Both the parties (man and woman) carry the seed of conflict to a degree when it is resolved in radical action like separation, divorce, murder or positive action like social or political act. In This Time of Morning we find Rashmi getting a divorce from Kailash and carrying on an ~~aff~~ affair with Neil Berensen; Saroj confessing her prematerial sex-affair before husband and seeking emotional sustenance of Vishal in Storm in Chandigarh; Simrit getting divorced from Som and deciding to settle down with Raj in The Day in Shadow (1972) and Devi managing to get notoriously involved with Michael and Usman, inspite of her position in the parliament, in A Situation in New Delhi (1977).

In all these books, one of the persistent concerns of Nayantara

Sahgal happens to be the deteriorating political situation in India. Taking account of the radical action by the women characters in Nayantara Sahgal's books would naturally leave one wondering, whether her concern for deterioration does not extend to moral values in the Indian society as well. But then the writer proves her point in the following lines :

My women are strivers, and aspirers, toward freedom, toward goodness, toward a compassionate world. Their virtue is a quality of heart and mind and spirit, a kind of untouched innocence and integrity. 5

Jasbir Jain, in her chapter on 'The Emergence of the New Woman', reiterates the same observation with specific reference to Skinny in

A Situation in New Delhi :

Skinny is the new woman whose awareness of herself is not at all selfconscious. She has a passion for the act of living and involves herself fully in whatever she undertakes - in her study of history as a subject, in her learning of the art of dancing and also in destroying her own and her mother's possessions. She is supremely confident and superior on the stage and equally natural in her behaviour when she accompanies Rishad to Pinky's party. She has the audacity of innocence with which she combines a certain conventionality of behaviour when it comes to taking a lift with Rishad. 6

In Rich Like Us, we find this lack of self-consciousness and a combination of confidence and innocence in Rose. The other part of Nayantara Sahgal's conception of woman is embodied in Sonali, "the striver and aspirer, toward freedom...". So, these are the two focal points of the novel. Unlike the early novels, where the protagonist was the narrator, in Rich Like Us, we have ^{an} omniscient point of view and thus there is more objective presentation of different perspectives.

Rose, an English woman from a humble origin marries Ram, an Indian, against her father's wishes. She is aware of Ram's previous marriage and family. Yet, her romantic aspirations carry her across oceans to a foreign land, about which she is curious and interested. Her interest in Indian myths, Hindu religion and Hindu - Muslim relationship, eventually make her more an insider in India than a Westernized native. She does not play the part of the superior colonial memsahib. Even though she is not highly educated, her intelligence and enterprise can be seen in her efforts to acclimatise herself in India in the face of hostility and opposition. Her acceptance of Ram's first wife Mona, her father-in-law's joint establishment, her recognition of Ram's promiscuity mature her more than her years. Her courage is displayed when she passes through a riot in Lahore, unaided. Finally, her saving of Mona from suicide, her love for Mona's son Dev and her consistency in her relationship with Ram testify to ^{her} adjustment in the role of an Indian wife.

Sonali's father thinks of Rose "as soft as an English Rose", but Sonali appreciates Rose's strength and her clarity of vision :

I got into bed and thought about Rose and her jungles and nursery rhymes. And along with them, or because of them, her unerring clarity regardless of gin and lime. 7

This clarity of vision and boldness make Rose see through Dev's Happyola project, a corrupt and underhand business venture, and pass the secret on to Sonali. This combination of innocence (associated with freshness of a rose) and exuberance (her bubbling interest in life) makes Rose retain that youthful charm, which stands the test of time. Rose's concerns in life are not selfish. She sympathises with a beggar and tries to procure artificial limbs for him, saves an old servant from being dragged to the sterilization camp. She is appalled by the doctors' casual talk of limbs as mere commodities. Her concern for the people who were being uprooted by Dev for his factory, stands in sharp contrast to the apathy of the officials and affluent Indians around her.

It may be seen now that Rose's goodness, strength, sensitivity and candour are related to our concern of studying Nayantara Sahgal's perception of woman's consciousness. It is customary in woman - centred novels to depict Indian woman with typical Indian attitude of adjustment, passivity and reconciliation. Nayantara Sahgal's portrayal of Rose, in her forthrightness and strength, fighting with Indian customs and conventions add a new dimension to the discourse on woman. Upto a point, Rose goes on adjusting to her surrounding by accepting her husband's first wife, the birth of Dev, Ram's subsequent jealousy and promiscuity etc. The moment she decides to be frank and raises her voice, she meets with opposition. Unable to bear her insistence on truth, Dev plans her murder.

In a way, Rose's death amounts to nothing less than sati. In order to achieve her romantic ambitions of marrying into an orthodox, traditional Hindu institution (when Hindu women were themselves trying to get out of such an institution, as we see in Nayantara Sahgal's early novels), Rose sacrifices her life. On the other hand, Sonali, a Hindu woman, trained in Western ideas and thoughts, resists the subjugation that marriage imposes on women by not marrying. In fact, this is the first novel by Nayantara Sahgal, which has a woman protagonist who avoids marriage. Yet, both Rose and Sonali have something in common, namely the non-conformist, striving, aspiring spirit which seeks freedom. This freedom relates to freedom of choice, both in personal life and in political and ideological arenas. In

the case of Rose the domestic and personal world is important, but for Sonali, the private and the public^{world} merge together.

Sonali is in the administrative service, a woman who refused to marry her classmate and colleague Ravi Kachru, because he could not stick to his ideals. Yet, Kachru prospers in his professional life due to his exploitation of family connections, while Sonali is shunted off from her earlier position, for being true to her convictions. Kachru toes the line of his superiors and indulges in opportunistic slogan-mongering, as when he likens the Prime Minister to a Goddess with unlimited powers at a taxi - drivers conference (p.168 - 169). On the other hand, Sonali dares to defy the dictatorial Government. For the first time we find a woman protagonist within the bureaucratic circle engaged in rebellion.

Also for the first time we find a woman replacing men like Kailash, Vishal, Raj of the earlier novels, who fought against corruption of ideals and values in both social and political circles. In Rich Like Us, there is not a ~~s~~ingle male character who can replace the idealistic heroes of the earlier books. Thus, the relationship between individual (woman) and society gets straightened and cleared of intermediary forces. It can now safely be granted that woman can be her own saviour. The process starts with Sonali.

During an emergency, individual freedom is at stake. Thus, Sonali gets demoted at the slightest pretext for being unfaithful to government policies. She is prosecuted because she does not actively support the repressive regime. She falls sick after being demoted and transferred from her earlier post. The sickness is symbolic. It represents how she is out of tune with the values of the new regime. She gets no support from those around her. The doctor who treats her gives an account of his mother's miseries of being a Hindu married woman. Sonali turns to Rose, thinking she can rely on the latter's strength and maturity. But Rose's plight is even worse. She cannot secure her own position in the family. She cannot stop Dev's curtailment of her own financial rights. The harassment spreads to the press and public. Mass sterilization is another symbol of the passivity and castration of spirit of the Indian mass during the emergency.

By an intelligent juxtaposition of memories and reminiscences with the description of the present, Nayantara Sahgal makes available such

details and informations which might help the reader's understanding of the situation. Sonali goes back to the past and tries to analyse issues like Sati, child-marriage, Hindu-widowhood etc. She realises :

By the end of my illness I had sloughed off my upbringing, the orgy of idealism I had been fed, the second skin of it I wore. 8

Rose discovers layers of meaning within Hindu customs, myths, anomalies and hypocrisies like the relationship of Radha-Krishna-Gopis and Sita's entering the fire as a proof of chastity. It may be argued that Rose, being a foreigner is able to bring an objective point of view.

As against the non-conformism of Sonali, her sister's easy married life, her support of Ravi Kachru, her disapproval of Rose, all point to the latter's alignment with conventional attitude in the society. Other women characters like Mona, Nishi, Sonali's mother, Ravi's mother form the choric voice or provide a secondary platform where each one conforms, though in different degrees to the prevalent social pattern. Mona's austere penance, attempt at suicide and final reconciliation are reflections of passive and repressed womanhood. The outbursts of defiance are occasional letting out of repressed desires and emotions (p.249). Nishi is a more sophisticated and subdued version of her mother-in-law. She skilfully manages her egoistic, vain husband, idealistic but impoverished father, ailing father-in-law and an observant mother-in-law. She is an accomplice in Dev's corrupt world; is good at establishing desired contact, is convincing and persuasive enough to cover up her husband's lack. She might be a match to her intelligent and smart step mother-in-law, but she lacks the latter's ideology. Nishi is a perfect representative of the rich Indian, who is wealthy in material goods but poor in ideals.

These women characters are surrounded by men, emphasizing the fact that the external world of politics and business is even now basically male-dominated. Looking at the male characters in Rich Like Us we find fewer examples of sincere and straight-forward human beings. Rich Like Us has more than its share of cunning and manoeuvring characters like Dev, who takes advantage of the State Emergency and succeeds in forging his father's bank account, inventing and establishing a sham industry and manages to head the group of New Enterprises. His contact in both the Ministry and bureaucratic circle makes all this possible. All the opposition in form of threats from step-mother Rose and from Sonali does not hinder his progress.

Ravi Kachru is a symbol of servility, opportunism, bureaucratic corruption and erosion of values. Even after he realises his mistakes, with prodding from Sonali, he feels helpless ^{in the} corrupt environment of which ^{once} he was a part. The paucity of values and corruption in the society is cloaked under veils of hypocrisy, which is unravelled by a virtual outsider, Rose :

... his neighbour said he had seen five women fleeing together towards Bakkadda. He found them, with eight policemen. Two of them lay on the sides chewing blades of grass. The rest were ^{in a circle} in a circle with one woman in the centre. Through the shrubbery he saw the tip of lathi raise the woman's sari above her waist, poke and prod her and turn her round and round like a marionette... ' I can't see any of it 'appening to you and me, can you: ' she ended. 'So wot's the 'arm if they see a bit of kissing on the screen ? Less embarrassing than wot they see in real life, I'd say'. 9

Various other casual references to socio-cultural basis of corruption and distortion of reality in India are ^{by} by Rose (p. 238, p.61). Even while dissecting past history, Sonali's father acknowledges debt to Rose's clarity of vision, which seems to have inspired him :

It means I have repented of repenting, of apologizing for being what I am, doing the job I do. If a seesaw is what I've chosen to live on ... it was you, Rose, who came along and made me see it was a seesaw I was on and that I was neither doomed not dying! 10

But his optimism cannot be compared with the solid idealism and austerity of Nishi's father, Kishorilal. Gandhian figures like the Home Minister in Storm in Chandigarh, Sardar Sahib in The Day in Shadow or Usman in A Situation in New Delhi have disappeared. What we find in Kishorilal is a mere shadow of its counterparts in previous novels. Both the strength and power have diminished; Kishorilal fights a losing battle in modern India.

Compared to the positive and negative characters in the book, Ram can be termed as a non-partisan, neutral man who is ineffective and nullified at a time like the Emergency. He is a typical Indian male who has bits of romanticism, nationalism and ideology in moderate measure and who believes in the traditional rights and privileges of an Indian or at least a Hindu husband. He manages to make an Indian wife out of Rose. His characterisation is not exceptional in any way. His personality traits merely help highlight Rose's character.

Let us discuss the new thematic interests which become evident in Rich Like Us. Prominent among these is Nayantara Sahgal's interest and research into history. She unearths many facts and instances of cruelty and sadism with regard to women in the past. One of such themes is sati, which is portrayed both generally and symbolically in the book. It should be mentioned in passing that the book was published in 1983 and precedes the renewed debate on the topic of sati that began in India in 1987 after an incident at Deorala in Rajasthan.

The description of sati takes up a complete chapter in the book. Sonali first comes across her father's diary which notes the phenomenon, its various instances, implications and a particular case of her grandmother committing sati. Not only Sonali's father and Sonali, but Rose and Keshav raise questions about the legitimacy of this particular custom in India :

... how voluntary are voluntary deaths, and was it hereafter or earthly hell that drove satis to climb their husband's funeral pyres and be burned alive ? 11

Considering the circumstances of the death of Rose, can it not be said that, it was one type of sati for Rose, who happened to raise her voice against the male hegemony, and the corruption in the society? Sonali's professional setback is a type of sati, a punishment meted out to one who dared to go out of the conventional mode. And it is one of those unifying themes and symbols which bind Rose and Sonali with other Indian women.

Subthemes of similar variety are incidents of exploitation of woman in brick-kiln-pig-holes, rape and murder of women by police, forced satis and murders, all noted by the perceptive eye of Rose (p. 246-247). Glimpses into childhood reveal Sonali's attitude to child - marriages, widows, fate, karma etc. In fact, Rich Like Us takes up the woman's problems from different sources, both in a general and a specific manner, more than any other novel of Nayantara Sahgal.

Symbolism is another strong and unifying factor of the book. Cythera is one such symbol. Cythera, as defined in the book is a " a Greek island associated with Aphrodite ... a votary of Aphrodite. It was an island, a real place, but it was unreal too, an island for believers in love" (p. 74). A pamphlet adds a new dimension to it : " the voyage was a

quest, it said, and Cythera a paradise, an impossible dream towards which pilgrims journey but never arrive " (p.203). Rose at once approves of the idea and Sonali shudders at it saying 'ugh'. Symbolically, Rose quests after a romantic dream, of being faithful to her love in life, Ram, and gives her life in the process. Sonali, on the other hand refuses to compromise with Ravi and her ideals. For some parts of their lives, both are in exile, Rose in India and Sonali in England, respectively. The symbol of Cythera inversely connects them both.

Beside characterization, thematic complexity and symbolism, Rich Like Us is marked for archival and documentary references; a phenomenon unprecedented in Nayantara Sahgal. There are quotations from government documents and history. She also plays upon the regional differences and mutual prejudices of Indians particularly those of the Kashmiri's in relation to Maharastrians and Punjabis. Although the central figures in Rich Like Us are women, and although all the men seem dwarfed in some way or another, basically it is not merely a feminist novel. The larger world of history, ideology and politics impinge upon the worlds of these women. Perhaps Nayantara Sahgal has achieved here that "androgynous art", which Virginia Woolf has defined as follows :

... this organism that has been under the shadow of the rock these million years - feels the light fall on it and sees coming her way a piece of strange food - knowledge, adventure and art. And she reaches out for it, I thought, again raising my eyes from the page, and has to devise some entirely, new combination of her resources, so highly developed for other purposes, so as to absorb the new into the old without disturbing the infinitely intricate and elaborate balance of the whole. 12

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1. Jasbir Jain, Nayantara Sahgal (New Delhi : Arnold - Heinemann, 1978), p. 140
2. Jain, op. cit., p. 141
3. Nayantara Sahgal, This Time of Morning (1965) as cited in Jasbir Jain, p. 142
4. Appendix - A copy of Nayantara Sahgal's address at the Writer's Meet, dated 24.2.1987
5. Letter to Jasbir Jain, November 19, 1976 as cited in Jasbir Jain, p. 145
6. Jain, op. cit., p. 61
7. Nayantara Sahgal, Rich Like Us (1983; rpt. Great Britain : Sceptre edition of Hodder and Stoughton Paperbacks, 1987), p.95
8. Sahgal, Rich Like Us. p. 35
9. Sahgal, op. cit., p. 246-247
10. Sahgal, op. cit., p. 255
11. Sahgal, op. cit., p. 75
12. Virginia Woolf, A Room of One's Own 15th end. (London : The Hogarth Press Ltd., 1974), p. 128

C O N C L U S I O N

All the three novels discussed in this dissertation deal with conflicts in women's lives, either within the protagonist's self or with the outside world. The writers have employed diverse strategies to focus on different aspects of the conflict. Shashi Deshpande has resorted to internal dialogue - juxtaposing the past with the present, the palpably real with the guilt-ridden murky realm of an area bordering on nightmare. Anita Desai also weaves a texture in which memory and perception blend in a pattern, and the present is seen in relation to experiences of childhood and adolescence. History, that is, the events of the larger public world, is also shown to impinge upon the private lives of individuals, making indelible marks upon their consciousness. This interlocking of the public and the private worlds is even more important in Nayantara Sahgal's novel. While in Anita Desai's Clear light of Day the focus is on the private, and the public realm is seen as the background, in Nayantara Sahgal's Rich Like Us the public arena of professions, politics and social manouvering forms the foreground. The personal predicaments of Rose and Sonali are primarily shaped by the forces of history.

Thus although the three writers are roughly contemporary and belong to the same socio-economic stratum partaking of similar experiences in life, they perceive life differently, their constructions of reality inevitably conditioned by their preoccupations --- psycho-analytical in the case of Shashi Deshpande, sensory and subjective in the case of Anita Desai, and political in the case of Nayantara Sahgal.

Let us consider the novels once again and probe into the scope of further research in this field. Sarita in The Dark holds no Terrors may be dealt as a type of 'monster woman', who according to Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar is : "the obverse of the male idealization of women the male fear of femininity. The monster woman is the woman who refuses to be selfless, acts on her own initiative, who has a story to tell - in short, a woman who rejects the submissive role patriarchy has reserved for her." ¹ Further, Gilbert and Gubar mention characters like Shakespeare's Goneril and Regan and Thackeray's Becky Sharp, as well as the traditional array of such "terrible sorceress - goddesses" as the Sphinx, Medusa, Circe, Kali, Delilah, and Salome, all of whom possess ^s duplicitous arts that allow them both to reduce and to steal male generative energy".²

Sarita in The Dark holds no Terrors does not possess any such supernatural powers, but it is evident that she has a destructive quality, i.e. she is indirectly responsible for her brother's death, mother's agony and her husband's failure and antipathy. The prototype of sorceress-goddess figure in The Dark holds no Terrors is Devi, with a 'brass head and staring, frightful brassy eyes', who evokes more fear than love and reverence in her disciples. What is more relevant here is the fact that Devi's supernatural powers can be momentarily transferred to a common woman, who can be equally frightening and powerful enough to evoke devotion in others ("... I fled ... staring at that other woman who had become as terribly inhuman as the Devi herself" (p.93)).

Moreover, such transfer of power cannot be detected in case of a opposite sex; i.e. " only the black stone bull in the centre, looking blissfully disassociated from the feverish atmosphere ... coldly detached from any unnatural excitement ... People had applied kumkum to him too and there were offerings of flowers between his dainty feet however, could not make him anything but what he was ... a dear little bull carved out of black stone " (p.93). Is duplicity (" I didn't understand how a woman who could smile and look so pleasant, could also filling herself about with an ugly wild abandon like that ... that a person could be so divided in herself, into two entirely different beings, was something unknown to me then." (p.94)) necessarily a feminine characteristic, if so, is Sarita a part of it?

Anita Desai's Clear light of Day might also be interpreted by Gilbert and Gubar's theory of the 'mad woman'. The 'mad woman' here goes through a process of subversion and we have Baba representing this particular type. Baba is forced into subversion and passivity indirectly by the dominance of female characters in the set-up. The dominant role is played to the maximum by Bimla. An equivocal sorcer-god who might have helped Baba (one of his own sex) is Christ, described as a mere shadow, ~~who~~ fails to commune with his disciples :

46.

Who is the third who walks always beside you ?
When I count there are only you and I together
But when I look ahead up the white road
There is always another one walking beside you
Gliding wrapt in a brown mantle, hooded
I donot know whether a man or a woman
- But who is that on the other side of you ?³

Nevertheless, he succeeds in scaring Bimla through his association with the spirit of Aunt Mira (... her little drunken aunt, but she was sure now that she was that extra person, that small shadow thrown by a subliminal ghost that existed in the corner of the eye. She wondered if she were losing her mind but then she ceased to see this vision, it receded gradually and then went altogether (p. 100)). He cannot help Baba. Consolation comes to Baba only in the form of love and pity from Bimla. Even this is quite obverse of the real situation a 'mad woman' finds herself in. Since she dares to rebel, manages to express herself in ways not acceptable to the society, the feedback she gets in turn from the society is anger and fear. Thus, the creation of Baba as a meek and mild person, dependent and lacking in initiative is an excellent parody of both the patriarchal society and the subversive structure of the 'mad woman'.

Nayantara Sahgal's Rich Like Us may be viewed from the theoretical stand point of Julia Kristeva, a French feminist critic. Her theory of femininity as marginality follows like this : 'I therefore understand by "woman", that which cannot be represented, that which is not spoken, that which remains outside naming and ideologies'.⁴ Toril Moi interprets it 'as an attempt to locate the negativity and refusal pertaining to the marginal in "woman", in order to undermine the phallogocentric order that defines woman as marginal in the first place'.⁵ (It is necessary to mention here that Kristeva's theory of marginality deals mainly with the English language, whose exposition is beyond the scope of this paper. Even her notions on femininity are equally fraught with complexities and ambivalences. The application of the theory made here, is to merely highlight the probability and scope of such a practice).

Rose in Rich Like Us is a marginal figure pitted against a patriarchal order, who establishes her identity inspite of repression and lurking danger. She rebels against the hypocrisy, casteism and corruption of the patriarchal Indian society but accepts other tenets of the same order namely, unity, spirituality and endurance. Despite her foreign

origin she represents a breed of Hinduism which transcends the barriers of country and religion. In certain ways, she is more Indian, more Hindu in her attitude than Sonali, who believes in negation, i.e., in simple opposition and rejection of customs like marriage, family life in her passive endurance of ideological and professional set-backs etc. The role of Rose in the patriarchal set-up may be referred back to Kristeva's theory :

If patriarchy sees women as occupying a marginal position within the symbolic order, then it can construe them as the limit or borderline of that order ... In the first instance the borderline is seen as part of the chaotic wilderness outside, and in the second it is seen as an inherent part of the inside : the part that protects and shields the symbolic order from the imaginary chaos.

This is exactly how Rose functions in the book. She belongs partly to the intellectual chaos existing in the patriarchal Indian society and defines that which is the best and central to the order, i.e., her love of truth, realism, her concern for the poor and helpless and her dispassionate morality etc.

The potentiality of the novels with regard to application of feminist theories cannot be doubted. Moreover there are theoretical loose-ends within the novels, which need further research, namely, the ending or the resolution. Although the three novels begin with a conflict, they do not necessarily end with a resolution. Unlike real life situations, a novel has to come to an end, and therefore an arbitrary closure has to be effected at some point in the narrative. Thus the resolutions offered in the novels are merely functional. The problem of ending has always marked the novels written by women - and this can be seen very clearly in the English novels written in England in the nineteenth century - for example in those by George Eliot and Charlotte Bronte, where the grain of the radical narrative often goes against the neat finality of the conventional ending.

Literary convention as well as social norms of the time demanded that marriage should be the climactic event in a woman's life and the novelists, required to conform to this, often employed subtle strategies of reversal so that while the convention is followed it is also in a way subverted.

Jane Eyre is an excellent example of this. Throughout the novel we see Jane breaking out of limited mental space to a wider horizon,

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and out of cramped enclosures into an openness^s of confident autonomy. But at the end when she gets married to Rochester the process seems to be reversed, because, to refer to the persistent bird-metaphor of the book one can say Jane seems to be caught in her flight and caged into domesticity. The conventions of fiction are satisfied when Jane gets married; but looking closer we find that Charlotte Bronte has reversed the normal patriarchal power relationship in a marriage by making Jane a stronger partner. Earlier when Jane had almost married Rochester she was in every sense a subordinate and an inferior : she was the servant, he the employer; she was poor, he the rich landlord; he wanted to marry her, she only acceded. By the end of the novel the tables are turned. Rochester is blind; Jane has come into an inheritance and therefore marriage is not an economic necessity; she is the initiator in the move for marriage and Rochester happily acceds^e.

Subtle subversions of this kind only indicate that the woman writer has to contend with a problem because she has to struggle with a society whose norms are patriarchal. George Eliot's great novels invariably have a weak ending - reflecting in a way the dilemma of a woman at time of social change, where the woman's sensibility has altered, but the structures of family and society have not. This is the problem faced by the women writers of India today.

Unlike in the West marriage is often not the culmination but the beginning of man-woman relationship in India. Thus we find in Shashi Deshpande's novel the protagonist's problem continuing after marriage, or in fact intensifying because of marriage. Her childhood insecurity is aggravated because of the tension in her married life. She runs away from her nuclear family to take refuge in her natal home where the problem had begun. There in her father's clean passionless world of scrubbed and orderly detachment she can distance herself from the turbulent realm of her neurosis and take a clean look at herself. The resolution comes through a moment of self-realisation.

In Anita Desai's novel too, the resolution centres around an epiphanic moment Bimla experiences, while listening to music. Whether this will see her through a long lonely life we do not know, but it serves as a narrative closure for the time being. Sonali in Rich Like Us finds

her temporary answer in an involvement in Indian history. This gives her the strength to believe that the present situation will not last forever, and the patience to wait for a better time.

The concept of an individual identity for a woman outside familial roles seems to form the basis of the predicaments faced by all the protagonists. The expectations aroused by such a concept can not be easily realised in the material condition provided by the society at the moment. Nor are the women themselves entirely ready to conform to the new identity. Thus the gap between the idea and its fulfilment provides a space of outer confrontation and inner tension that offers rich fictional material to the novelist. Each of the three novelists have handled this space of ambivalence and anguish in ways that are uniquely their own.

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- 1 Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, The Madwoman in the Attic (1979) as cited in Toril Moi's Sexual/Textual Politics (1985; rpt. London : Methuen and Co. Ltd., 1986), p. 58
- 2 Gilbert and Gubar as cited in Moi, p. 58
- 3 Anita Desai, Clear light of Day (1980; rpt. Great Britain : Penguin books, 1986), p.100
- 4 Julia Kristeva, La femme ... (1974) as cited in Toril Moi's Sexual/Textual Politics, p. 163
- 5 _____, as cited in Toril Moi's Sexual/Textual Politics p. 163
- 6 _____, as cited in Moi, p. 167

A P P E N D I X

(A copy of Sahgal's address at the Writer's meet)

24th, Feb. 1987

I have two kinds of writing experience. I am a novelist and a political journalist, and this is a combination not calculated to promote sanity or peace of mind. These two disciplines pull one in opposite directions and require very different methods at work. As a journalist, I must keep in touch with the world of fact and data. As an artist I must lose touch with it in order to create a world of my own. I am not sure that I would have been able to cope with this contradiction were it not for the fact that my central concern both in fiction and journalism is the same. If I have a recurring theme, it is freedom-human, national, personal, and increasingly feminist.

Fiction is my abiding love, journalism my conscience, and there has never been any question in my mind of abandoning one for the other. A conscience is a troublesome thing. Mine has compelled me to comment forcefully on political trends and events. As citizen of a country that is still struggling to lay the firm foundations of its democratic institutions, and to establish a tradition of civil liberties, I have not been able to stand by in silence when I have seen these under attack. But I have in a sense been able to unite my love affair with my conscience through novels that function within a contemporary political framework, and deal with a glittering aspiration called 'Indian'. I can best express what both my worlds of writing mean to me by a quote from Sartre : " for a long time I took my pen for a sword; I know we are powerless. No matter, I write ..."

If there is any more to be said on the subject, it is this. I started out as a passive observer of what seemed to me a benign national environment, the best of all possible environments, where things could only get better and better. But as life, and writing, proceeded, I have watched that landscape darken and become beset by every kind of evil. I suppose what I am involved in fictionally is examining the layer upon layer of our social/cultural/political composition that has brought us to this pass. The journey takes me out of moulds, confines, frontiers, and I find I roam a wider world - of character, situation and language.

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