Chapter III DIEEEFEENT FACETS OF PREDICAMENT  The women
predicament emphasized by the writers of Indo-Anglian and Hindi writers. Due
to social injustice the traditional predicament of woman which marked by her
struggle for identity. Indo-Anglian and Hindi fiction deals with the
predicament of women as they have to face conflicts and adversities. In
these novels there is clash between flesh and spirit. Apparently, in the
novels of these writers we perceive some basic similarities with reference
to an unknown force that governs the human life. These novels deals with
mankind predicament in the universe. This study has several dimensions. It
has its own significance as a study of these writer’s vision of the life in
terms of the predicament of their women characters in the selected
novels. The image of new woman and her quest and struggle for identity
of her own is emerging in the Indo-Anglian and Hindi fiction. There are
two facets to this duality. Firstly there is powerful character who called as
Shakti. She is also prakriti that is nature the undifferentiated matter of the
universe. Shakti is the creative principle and is female. In Hindu thought, all
creation and all power is based on femaleness- there would be no being without
energy or power. Too much of stress is laid on the concept of pativrat that one
who fasts for her husband. A woman by being true and devoted can increase her
Shakti. A common analogy used is that of woman as field or earth into which
man puts his seed. This image denotes the other aspect of femaleness-woman is
prakriti that is nature. Susan Wadley at length explains the relationship between
Nature and the cosmic person. Nature is the matter, the cosmic person is spirit.
The cosmic person represents the differentiated spirit, whereas prakriti that is
nature represents the undifferentiated matter. But this nature is considered to be
nonstructural and uncultured. And uncultured power is dangerous. Susan
Wadley has represented this through the equation that Woman = Power + Nature
= Danger. This equation explains the notion of woman as the aggressive,
malevolent destroyer. The male by controlling the dangerous female power,
transforms it into power that is positive and benevolent. In the Hindu pantheon,
those goddesses are considered as benevolent. The Hindu ideology considers
woman as a ‘part’ of her husband, his half –body- ardhangi. This view of the
Hindus is not very different from the Biblical myth of creation of woman. God
is supposed to have created Eve from Adam’s rib. A woman who controls her
own sexuality is considered to be dangerous as she represents both death and
fertility. However, if she forfeits the control of her sexuality by transferring it to
a man she becomes benevolent. As power and nature, and controlling her
sexuality she becomes Kali. But by transferring control of her sexuality she
becomes fertile and benevolent like Lakshmi. The Hindu perceptions with
regard to women are powerful and pervasive. On the one hand, they are
perceived as threatening since their sexuality is destructive to man. Yet, on the
other hand their fertility is needed for bearing their sons. On the whole, there is a
deep-seated fear of woman, since they possesses power that can be constructive
and destructive. By stressing the importance of concepts of purity and chastity,
men exercise control over woman. Among the Hindus, arranged marriage is the
norm. Marriage is considered to sacrilize and sanctify female sexuality--it is the
only “honorable means” of managing female sexuality. Both the future roles of a
woman--those of wife and mother are tied to this. Marriage, especially for
woman, therefore comes to be counted as a necessary part of life. All the six
heroines under study have arranged marriages. The roles played by woman in
society and images we have of them are not only based on biological models
and social situations but are also deeply rooted in the myths, legends and
religions of the culture. This is especially true of Indian culture. The lives of
Indian woman are governed by tradition. In the Indian context, a woman does
not stand alone. She is identified and defined by her relationships with others
both inside and outside her family. Apart from this, a woman is also expected to
conform to this multi-layered pattern of societal kinships. Irrespective of the
community to which she belongs, she carries out the functions of the triple role
of daughter-in-law, wife, and mother. From a very young age, an Indian girl
prepares herself to the ultimate goal of her life. Sudhir Kakar has pointed out
that “every female is born into a well-defined community of within her
particular family. As a result, very early in a girl’s life, there begins inculcation
of culturally designed feminine roles. The expectation of being an exemplary
daughter-in-law becomes a tremendous burden on the Indian woman. In her
husband’s family, a bride is normally accorded the lowest position in the family
hierarchy. She is expected to show obedience and compliance to the wishes of
the elder woman of family. An Indian woman’s position becomes consolidated
in terms of family acceptance once she becomes pregnant. The prospect of
motherhood provides solutions to many of her difficulties. Pregnancy becomes to quote Sudhir Kakar, ‘a deliverance from the insecurity, doubt and shame of infertility. Pregnancy and imminent motherhood for an Indian woman thus becomes an event in which the culture grants her status as a renewer of the race. The institution of family, while extending emotional support, love and care to the Indian woman, also exercises much control over her sexuality. In the traditional patriarchal Hindu family, the father holds absolute power over all members of the household. In exchange of this subordinate position of the members, he extends economic support and protection. But this control is not uniform over all individuals. The subordination of male children temporary as it end once they becomes heads of households, whereas the subservient position of females- women belonging to all age categories is life- long. Daughters can escape this authority only if they place themselves as wives under the dominance of another man. When the main character of the family has the capacity to maintain his economical condition better then there are fewer problems to the family. This ultimately leads to the control of female sexuality-where the movements and actions of women are kept under strict vigilance. Both men and women are victims of the rigid social and moral codes, but rules concerning female behavior are stricter. Adolescence is the period when both men and women become aware of their sexual selves. Especially with reference to women, the onset of puberty is considered to be an important event in the girls’ lives. It marks the entry of a girl into adult womanhood, and the beginning of the concern of parents over the daughter’s marriage. Virginity at the time of marriage is often a cherished value among all communities in India. These two aspects are closely linked with each other as they enable us to perceive how female sexuality is managed. Sexual desire is believed to awaken at puberty and needs to be controlled and harnessed. Even after marriage, a woman has to be guarded. Due to the potential character of motherhood, which becomes an important factor for group membership among males, woman’s sexuality gets equated with their reproductive power. As stated by Leela Dube, “the principle of protection is basic to considerations regarding female sexuality.” The father and the brothers are responsible for protecting an unmarried girl, as the “honour” of men and of the family at large depends on their woman. This responsibility for protection gives men the prerogative to exercise power and
authority over the women under their charge and dictate every facet of their behavior. The reasons behind the imposition of controls over the physical movement of women and the strict restrictions with regards to their association with males are the perpetual fear of women’s “misbehavior” and the fear of assault. This fear leads to sexual segregation in the family. A lot of pressure is exerted on both men and women to follow the rules and norms framed by the older members of the family. In a society where young people choosing their partners is considered scandalizing, pre-marital affairs are not looked at approvingly, though they are not a rarity anymore. Thus both men and women operate within strict parameters of social codes and taboos. Love in the relationship between man and women inside marriage is not spelt out in clear terms. Due to social conditioning, both man and women do not resort to overt expression of love. The spouses are supposed to express their love towards each other only during their involvement in the procreation activity. Otherwise, man considers the performance of the womanly activities of cooking, house – keeping, rearing children as signs of women’s affection and love, which is evident in the attitude of characters like Panchi, Mahesh and Nandalal. For the woman, sex is the only means to gain her husband’s affection which is understandable by the attitude of females. But they do not want to be treated as sex objects or become just a means for satisfying the sexual-hunger of their husbands. These women want to speak out their minds, their responses and feelings. Some females achieve this through their extra-marital relationships. It is a self-exploratory process for the various females. Many females caught up in a situation where she cannot escape the censure and vigilance of her family members. They crave for freedom and privacy which become impossibility in the joint-family. All these women want to break away from the observant eye and control of the various authorities of power. All of them strive to live a life according to their liking. At the same time, there are some compelling forces which force women to accept their situations. How do these women then come to terms with their situations? Are women like Gauri, Mannu and Suman radical in their attitudes? Does the decision of Mannu and Alma indicate the perpetration of sexism? The problems to the evil happenings will be happen in the society. The people of each sections of the society must pay attention to such type of bad activities. There are some rules and regulations have been created by
the members of that society. Women in modern times do not like to be compared with others. They feel satisfied when they are recognized for their worth and abilities. The subordinate position of women in a phallocentric culture forms an important aspect of analysis in feminist theory. Distinctions and differentiations are made between biological sex on the one hand and socially constructed genders on the other. This concept gains ground from the fact that while the sex of the individual depends on anatomy, gender is culturally constructed. There were the differences focused by every writer in between male and female. They try to maintain their liking and disliking with their own views. If they cross the limitations while achieving the pleasure then it is the shameful thing on the side of female. Sexuality is built upon this assumption of the basic differences between men and women which ultimately leads to male dominance over women. Society organizes a sexual division of labor to fulfill its demands in reproducing, nurturance, employment, household activities and sex. Feminists have argued that this concept of the body gives a one-dimensional account of identity. By reducing the individuals may act autonomously despite social restrictions. There are so many barriers to know the real situation of the women. The body holds a special significance for feminists. The sexual body is both the principal instrument and effect of modern disciplinary power. The feminists have used this idea to show the different methods of oppression related to the female body. The ideological representations of femininity and the strategies of confinement and control of the female body have been instrumental in the continued hierarchy of social relations. Feminist theorists such as Kate Millet pointed out that the oppressive effects of the stereotypical representation of women as sex object, wife and mother. He argued that these roles had the potential of relegating women to the private sphere of sexual relations and family life. The ultimate aim the exercise was to achieve discipline and control of family populations. Woman who is impassionate and devoid of sexual desires termed as good woman. Such woman found fulfillment through her reproductive capacities and nurturing of children. Women are simply victims of the patriarchal domination. Though women have resisted this domination, it has always failed. This failure has led to the patriarchal control over the female body. The disciplined female body controlled by the various schemes of patriarchy. Though women have been passive victims of male oppression, too
much emphasis has been laid on the universal nature of oppression, and the common enemy, patriarchy. Theorists have failed to take into account various cultural and historical contexts. This leaves many gaps in the understanding of female experiences in their full intricacies. As a result, these unaccounted and left-out experiences are devalued or remain obscured. This point was highlighted by black feminists who argued that though the oppression of woman by man was crucial to the understanding of the female experience, this was not the only kind of existing oppression. Sexism is the main form of oppression only for a few privileged white women. The dominant trend of feminism legitimizes the white women’s experiences as the norm. It is assumed that female experiences are universal and that woman share common type of oppression. But the histories and experiences of black woman and other woman of the world differ from those of the privileged few. They face oppressions in relation to slavery forced labour enforced migration colonialism imperialism etc. Gender intersects with race class ethnicity etc. to produce different experiences of what it is to be a woman or man. An understanding of various cultures will show that are variations in the way gender is experienced through social and historical processes e.g., class race colonialism and neo-imperialism. It is vary essential to know what woman do in a particular society their access to resources the amount f economic and political autonomy they have which help in articulating the definitions of femininity. Foucault states that his idea that power is everywhere in modern society does not mean that domination is universal. He rather emphasizes that power relations are the necessary precondition for the establishment of social relations. It becomes difficult for individual to mould their identities freely in the sphere of sexuality due to the strong taboos operating around masculinity and femininity. Foucault makes various investigations relates to the predicament of women. He put forward the thesis that power relation are the necessary components of society and that they operate through the body. Feminists have used this as a basic to show how gender inequality gets constructed based on anatomical differences and the subsequent subordination of woman. He maintains the experiences which are given in his writings and more importance to female characters. He does not explain many experiences of women in modern society, but it diverges from the notion of individuality and experience. Appropriate behavior and execution of
role function pertaining to the sexes have been emphasized by him. Gerda Lerner has pointed out that the sexuality of women comprising their sexual and reproductive activities was commodified much before the birth of Western Civilization. She puts forwards two examples of primitive societies --- one comprising the Neolithic period, and the other, ancient Mesopotamian societies. In the Neolithic period there existed a practice of inter-tribal “exchange of woman”, wherein women were exchanged or bough in marriage for the benefit of their families. The girl child who belongs to rural areas has to do hard work. They have to pay attention to the economical conditions of family so that some female turns towards the evil activities. Strauss says that this commoditization led to the reification of women. She makes a clear distinction between the two ideas. Though women have been exploited and suppressed, they have always retained their power to act and choose, though in a limited way, like the men of their group. Lerner rightly points out that women enjoy less freedom as compared to men because the sexuality of women is controlled by others. Women are at disadvantages in the real sense and they are also subject to psychological restraints. They have to make the good path for their bright future as well as the good status in the society. A serious drawback is the lack of and unawareness of their history of struggle and achievement. This has contributed in a major way to the subordinate position of women. Sexual control of women is connected with the concept of paternalistic protection. Women at various stages of their life are placed under male authority and control. Due to the absence of recorded history of women’s lives, women have not been able to reassert their independence and autonomy. As far as most women are concerned, they know of no woman who has lived without male protection. This idea is correctly stated by Bell Hooks when she says that the fear of being alone or of being unloved had caused women of all races to passively accept sexism and sexist oppression. As Paulina Palmer says that some female characters feared about the trap which creates by male of the society. The men who are considered to be the protectors of women fail to do so, contrary to expectations. They team up with the older men in exercising control. Women also fail to extend help and support to one another. In the Hindu way of life, the body is inextricably linked to the soul and spirit, and is also seen as a microcosm of the social. The body is considered to be shameful but it still remains the primary mode of contact with
the external world. A woman is treated with respect and thoughtfulness due to her potential motherhood, which are not accorded to her in the status as a mere wife. Alladi Uma has pointed out that every Indian woman “turns towards motherhood with an overpowering zest.” She looks towards her children both for companionship as well as for the satisfaction of her emotional needs. “Being a mother thus becomes synonymous with being a woman”, opines Alladi Uma. It is in the role of a mother that woman can be her real self. A woman achieves a sense of power and freedom in the company of her children. Thus she perceives the role of the mother as more important than that of a wife. In India, which is basically an agrarian society, the image of a woman is glorified and deified and is raised to divine proportions. On the one hand, she is “the source of energy, power and fertility”; on the other hand, she is also considered as a “potentially powerful and even dangerous” being. What we have therefore is a dichotomy in the perception of the mother. In the agricultural societies, there exist a “symbiotic relationship with nature”, which emphasizes the central position of woman in society and culture. These societies also emphasize the feminine principle in nature, and consider nature as a mother. Folklore and religious texts use themes of fertility and bounty as well as denial of substance by Mother Nature to her dependents. This is particularly true in the Indian context. This feminine principle is active and powerful when compared to the male principle purusha which is passive, weak and thus, has a secondary status. Ashis Nandy has stated that certain natural happenings in some crucial sectors of life, which are beyond one’s control, are denoted by deities who are mother figures. Here again we have the benevolent or good mother and the malevolent or bad mother. The benevolent mother is concerned with the nurturing and breeding aspects, which provides food to her subjects protects them from diseases and helps the perpetuation of the human race. At the same time, we have the malevolent mother, who is aggressive, treacherous and annihilating. In short, whether good or bad the ultimate authority in the Indian mind has always been feminine. The traditional Hindu male finds it essential to propitiate this authority. Thus the worship of the mother has become an integral part of the Hindu psyche. This deification has become so ingrained that the Hindu male fails to make a differentiation between the human mother and the divine mother. The Hindu male feels that the human mother, the mother in reality, is no other than an
incarnation of the mother Goddess, and as such idolizes her. As rightly pointed out by Vrinda Nabar, in India, a woman is made to feel morally obliged to bear a son. An Indian woman is aware that motherhood bestows upon her a purpose and identity that nothing else in the culture can. More so, a woman who bears a son is hailed as someone who has fulfilled her task as a female. In all world cultures, the mother-child relationship has been important aspect of societal kinship. There are some sections of the society that gives the status to female character for all types. Her motherhood, especially as the mother of a son, is valued and respected, when compared to her status as a wife and daughter. This does not mean that Indian mothers dislike girls. There is a certain amount of aloofness in the relationship between the mother and daughter. As the girl-child carries the potentiality of motherhood, she is seen as an extension of the mother. Along with the mother, the girl-child becomes a co-sufferer and co-traveler in the journey of life. Both the mother and daughter are victims of social injustices. That is the reason why the Indian mother looks towards her son for hope and recompense. Sudhir Kakar has pointed out those mothers have a special maternal affection reserved for daughters. The mother unconsciously identifies with her daughter, and this bond is stronger than the one between the mother and son. Through her daughter, she relives her experience as a cared for girl. Chodorow has pointed out that though the mother considers the son as an autonomous individual from a very early age, she tends to cultivate a symbolic bond with her daughter as she unconsciously tries to re-create the familiar bond she enjoyed with her own mother. This is especially true in the Indian context where the girl is considered as a guest in her natal home once she is married. The mother re-experiences the emotional turmoil which her separation had caused and hence she becomes affectionate towards her daughter. But all this is at a sub-conscious level. In practically, the mother gives more importance to the son. As a daughter and then as a wife, a woman is treated as a second class citizen. In the role of a daughter, she is made to feel inferior to the brothers who are given preferential treatment. As a wife, she is subject to the humiliations of the in-laws and the insecurity of being accepted by the members of her husband’s family. It is only her motherhood that too the desire to bear a son which brings about a reversal in her situation. As the mother of a son, she gains recognition and is granted a prominent position in the family. For the Indian
mother, the son is a social redeemer. In this way, the mother perpetrates male
dominance and patriarchy. The representation of the mother in literature
depends upon the theme of a work and also whether the writer is male or female.
A male writer may give an idealized portrayal of mother whereas a woman write
may refute and challenge the traditional image of the mother. For the woman
writer, the mother may not be the role model to be emulated. There can be
jealously or rivalry in the relationships between the mother and daughter. But in
the relationship between the mother and son, it is different- the mother is adored
and idolized. A change is perceivable in the image of the mother as against the
conventional notions of motherhood. In real life as well as in literature, the
mother does not appear in the form of a benevolent mother goddess with
superhuman strength and wisdom. As Usha Bande has observed, the mother is
presented as a real human being, a multi-dimensional personality with her
inherent strengths and weaknesses. Like all humans, she is at times
magnanimous and at times greedy. Talking about the image of the mother in
Indian literature, Sisir Kumar Das observes that it has remained unchanged.
Mother represents the ideals and concepts sanctified by time and enforced by the
society. The former aspect represents the deified image of mythical characters
such as Sita, as a mother. The latter aspect concerns contemporary experience,
where the mother is portrayed not only as the sufferer, but is also the ever
protective and ever-forgiving refuge. Women experience the harsh realities in
their day to day existence and yet show a lot of courage and strength to survive.
The strength and force of will of Indian women lies in their great capacity to live
with contradictions and to strike a balance with conflicting preferences. In Mulk
Raj Anand’s Gauri, Laxmi the mother of Gauri is a greedy woman. She dislikes
her daughter and calls her ill-starred and ill-fated. As Gauri’s father dies soon
after her birth, the mother blames the daughter for the loss of her husband.
According to the Hindu tradition, after the death of her husband, a wife id
denied the use of all the auspicious signs denoting her married status. Also the
life of a widow in Indian society is replete with hardships, suspicion and
humiliation. So Laxmi’s agony and subsequent dislike towards Gauri seems
quite plausible. Another point is to be noted that Laxmi has very little economic
resources. The Task of finding a husband for Gauri is entirely Laxmi’s
responsibility. Laxmi finds the job quite burdensome, due to her poor status and
also because Gauri is fatherless. As soon as Gauri reaches the marriageable age, she is wedded to Panchi. For Gauri’s mother, it is like getting rid of the burden and also the ill-fate which had befallen her. Gauri knows that her mother is a wicked and scheming lady. When negotiations for her marriage are on, she does not question her mother. Though she is not sure about her fate after marriage, she finds it as an escape from the taunting of her mother and of being called ill-luckeed and ill-fortunate. Mulk Raj Anand’s Gauri has the reputation of being as gentle as the cow. (p.41). In her mother’s house she has very little to rejoice for. She is fatherless and this adds to her woe. Though she has never seen her father, at the very memory, “tears came to her eyes and she was filled with a sense of belonging to her family.”(p.131). Her role in her mother’s house is very limited. She is the meek and obedient daughter who acts according to the wishes and orders of the elders. Years of tradition has conditioned her to show undue respect to the elders. Her thoughts and actions have been enriched with examples from religious scriptures:

“The teachings of religion had bred in her reverence,

For many of the things she knew to be lies”. (p.131)

Like a dutiful daughter, she helps her mother in performing the various rituals. This is done in the implicit faith and trust that Goddess Gauri, her namesake, would protect her during difficult times. The significance of the rituals does not bother her. She knew that by not observing the rituals she would bring the Devi’s anger upon herself. The goddess is the only source of solace and protection for Gauri. Laxmi, Gauri’s mother, is not always kind towards the daughter. Though she loves her daughter she does not exhibit it. Gauri on her part remains the dutiful daughter despite lack of love and affection from her mother. Gauri hopes to find this love and affection in her husband’s home. But here, her situation is none the better. Given her rural background and upbringing, Gauri serves both her husband and her mother-in-laws whole-heartedly. Initially, Panchi is also loving and considerate towards Gauri. At the same time, he does not hesitate to beat her up at the mother-in-laws’s instigation, without any fault on Gauri’s side. Gauri fails to understand this behavior of her husband. Panchi is also caught up in a situation where he has to show undue respect towards the elders. Added to this, he has his own
frustrations to cope with. The Indian social system does not allow freedom to the individuals even after marriage. Both men and women are under the control of elders in the family. Even where the married couple stays away from the joint family, they cannot escape the pressures exerted by other family members. The mother-in-law becomes aggressive in her attitude towards the daughter-in-law due to a felling of insecurity and fear of being overthrown from her superior position. Prior to marriage, a mother exercises power and control over her son. The son reciprocates by being obedient and fulfilling her wishes. This control of the mother over the son extends even after the son is married. The inherent fear makes her hostile towards the daughter-in-law. The only way she can continue her hold over the son and ultimately the daughter-in-law is by exercising authority. The whole system becomes burdensome and does not give any scope to individuals to function normally. Gauri in her position as daughter-in-law puts up silently with the ill-treatment meted out to her and the indignities heaped upon her. She craves for love and attention from Panchi. What she wants is a little understanding from her husband. But Panchi fails to show any sign of concern; on the other hand, he advises her to be patient. Panchi’s failure to respond to Gauri’s needs breaks her patience-barrier. She could no longer suffer in silence. When Panchi beats her up at the provocation of the mother-in-law, she retorts:

“Patience-how long can I go on being patient against the nagging,

Of that woman and your shoe beatings on her behalf! (p.44)

Laxmi, the real mother of Gauri does not give any support or help to her daughter. But Gauri constantly draws strength from the mother Goddess, Gauri, her namesake, to tide over her troubles. This source of strength enables her to face the odds of the life and emerge bold. Gauri’s experience of mother is bitter and one involving dislikes and fears of the evil part of the mother. Unlike the traditional picture of an affectionate and loving mother, Laxmi represents the destructive aspects of motherhood. Gauri’s mother is caught up in a situation where due to her poor economic conditions she has to make the hard choice between her cow and daughter. The fact that she chooses the former is not surprising. In India, daughters are often treated as dispensable objects. Gauri has never known her mother’s affection and she becomes
determined not to do injustice to her unborn child. She decides to give her child all the love and caring that she has missed out as a child. Her situations in life did not give her the opportunity to show affection towards anybody. This she wants to fulfill through her child. Motherhood would provide her with the chance to love and be loved. Mulk Raj Anand does not dwell too much on the character of Laxmi as she is contrary to the traditional image of the mother. Even Kesaro, Panchi’s aunt does not get a fair treatment. Panchi is under complete control of Kesaro, his mother which becomes a problem for Gauri. Knowing full well that his wife is innocent, Panchi resorts to beating up Gauri at the mother-in-law’s instigation. In India, it is a proven fact that even after marriage, sons take the side of the mother rather than supporting the wife. Both psychologically and physically, the Indian man finds himself closer to his mother than to his wife. The mother-in-law feels insecure once Gauri enters the household. She has a fear that Gauri might usurp her position and as a result begins to trouble Gauri. Also she is apprehensive of losing her control over Panchi; Kesaro is not the real mother of Panchi. But as Sisir Kumar Das has pointed out, in India, the mother image forms a simple but large complex consisting of sisters, and sister-in-law, as well as aunts. The Indian languages provide terms for each of the possible kinships but the social codes stipulate different behavior patterns, all within the umbrage of the mother. Kesaro is a mother figure in the novel but this does not diminish her power and authority. She is the typical Indian mother-in-law who troubles her daughter-in-law Gauri, and also instigates Panchi to beat up his wife. On the whole, Laxmi as the mother of Gauri, and Kesaro as the mother-figure not developed fully. These two characters are discarded by Anand as they do not conform to the conventional image. Laxmi symbolizes the cruel, selfish and greedy mother. Kesaro is a perfect picture of the torturing, demanding and unkind mother-in-law. The traditional Indian society has been patriarchal resulting into the subordination, marginalization and commoditization of women. Even the Indian epics bear it out. Woman is enjoined by the Indian scriptures to play a certain role and not to transcend it. Woman has always been supposed to be subordinate to man. This predicament of the Indian woman is best represented in Hindi by Munshi Premchand, as illustrated in his excellent short story kafan wherein Ghisu and Madhav do not think it appropriate even to buy a shroud
for the latter’s dead wife. A similar kind of delineation of women in India is displayed by Mulk Raj Anand, one of the heavy weights in the Indo-Anglican fiction and short story writing. The prime concern, however, in his novels and short stories has been the plight and predicament of the untouchables, the oppressed who were treated almost like sub-humans for ages. But, be it as it may, some of his short stories expose the exploitation of women by the male chauvinistic Indian society, wherein women are subjected to inhuman injunctions. Women in the society are assigned only two jobs: baking bread
and begetting progeny. Maithilsharan Gupt, the National Poet in Hindi, also propounds the same:

=बला जीवन हाय लुभारी यही कहानी,
=5, ध, =रू =पेन में पानी।

Mulk Raj Anand also tries to expose the same thing in English. Many of his short stories are devoted to the theme of the suppression of women in the Indian society. The women he depicts are characteristic of the Indian milieu and ethos. Anand very realistically and efficaciously utilizes the image of a caged bird in some of his short stories to bring out an analogy between the detained bird and the symbolically enslaved Indian woman, who is helpless and unable to undertake anything on her own. Raja Rao’s Ratna in Kanthapura, is a young educated woman of progressive views. In appearance she is deceptive because of her hair-style which is that of a concubine. She is in fact has been shown virtuous. She is a source of inspiration and help to Moorthy. When Jayaramachar, the Harikatha man, is arrested, she conducts the Harikathas. After Rangamma’s death, she reads out newspapers and other publicity material of the congress for the benefit of the Kanthapurians. When Moorthy is arrested, she carries on his work and serves as the leader. She organizes the women volunteer corps and imparts to the Sevikas the necessary training. She displays great courage and resourcefulness in the face of government repression and police action. She is dishonored, beaten up and sent to jail as a consequence and suffers all patiently and unflinchingly. Though a widow she keeps her bangles which are looked down upon by the orthodox section of Hindu society. But she is defiant and on this ground she does not consider herself actually married. Her case poses social obligations. Raja Rao’s Kanthapura is easily the finest evocation of the Gandhian age in Indian English fiction. This story of a small south Indian village caught in the maelstrom of the Gandhian movement successfully probes the depths to which the nationalistic urge penetrated, and getting fused with traditional religious faith helped rediscover the Indian soul. K.S.Ramamurti, similarly, considers Kanthapura a “miniature version of resurgent Bharath in which we see the pilgrim’s progress of a great nation marching towards the promised land of
freedom carrying on its shoulders the burden of poverty and hunger". While these "standard" approaches are significant to the study of Rao's oeuvre, they often fail to recognize that the novel could be read also a process which led these women to re-examine archaic institutions that they had unquestioningly accepted for so long, to abandon many of their prejudices, and to control their destiny in a way they were not able to do before. The level of emancipation achieved, of course, is very limited; what is patent, however, is that these women who initially banded themselves together to battle the Raj succeed in initiating a movement which is imbued with its own dynamic and rationale—a movement that could be thwarted but not destroyed. It is now commonplace to draw parallels between colonialism and the position of women in society. The novelists project woman's nature in desperate situation and her predicament. The protagonists demonstrate the changing facets of Indian womanhood. Each faces a conflict between personal desires and societal expectations and their condition is further aggravated by the sense of predicament.

Feminist commentators take above argument a step further. To Susan Sontag, all women live in an "imperialist" situation in which men are colonialists and women are natives. In so-called Third World countries, the situation of women with respect to men is tyrannically, brutally colonialist. In economically advanced countries the situation of women is neocolonialist: the segregation of women has been liberalized; the use of physical force against women has declined; men delegate some of their authority, their rule is less overly institutionalized. But the same basic relations of inferiority and superiority, of powerlessness and power, of cultural underdevelopment and cultural privilege, prevail between women and men in all countries. Kanthapura, of course, was written long before the upsurge of interest in Women's Studies; still, it is apparent that the claims made by these commentators are to some degree valid for this novel. Soon after the women establish a Sevika Sangha in Kanthapura, Nanjamma experiences this nightmare: I dreamt my husband was beating me and beating me, and I was crying and my bangles broke and I was saying, "Oh, why does he beat men with a stick and not with his hands?" and when I saw him again, it was no more my husband, it was Bade Khan, the most odious representative of the Raj in Kanthapura, merges with Najamma's
husband in this dream. Clearly, the two forms of authority are not always separable, and Rao, here, anticipates the observations of later critics. Because Rao privileges the struggle against British rule, however, these other concerns are often buried in the text. Krishnaswamy is surely wrong to insist that gender is not a determining factor in Kanthapura. The tide of the novel is sufficient indication that women are the major players, and as Meena Shirwadkar—another critic who focuses on the issue of women in Indian fiction in English—so rightly observes, the narrator's constant invocation of the goddess Kenchamma ensures that a female principle pervades the novel. Krishnaswamy second point is challenging, however, and must be addressed. There can be no doubt that the women follow the directives of their men, initially. They venerate leaders, like Moorthy, and are subservient to their husbands in their own homes. Indeed, the transformations would not have taken place in Kanthapura without the inspiration of Gandhi's message and Moorthy's leadership. At crucial moments during the struggle these women look to their men for protection. After one of the first attacks on the satyagrahis in Kanthapura, the women rest: "And when the beds were laid and the eyelids wanted to shut, we said, 'Let them shut,' for we knew our men were not far and their eyelids did not shut". As the novel progresses, the women begin to have doubts about the movement not only because of the lathi charges, but also because they are on the verge of being evicted from their lands. Still, they shake off their doubts, and decide to continue with the struggle, secure in the knowledge that "Men will come from the city, after all, to protect us!" Patent in these statements is the recognition that women need men as their protectors and as their spiritual and political guides because they are incapable of fending for themselves. This subservience, this dependence is particularly evident in marital relationships. Kumari Jayewardene states that ideal woman has to face many problems like Sita who wants to clear her chastity. She was the one of the most important example before the society. Such women are not uncommon in Kanthapura. The Brahmmins, for instance, talk highly of Sankar's late wife, Usha, who was "such a godlike woman. She would never utter a word loud, and never say 'nay' to anything. And when she walked the streets, they always say what a holy wife she was and beaming with her wifehood". Significantly, these sentiments are expressed by the
female narrator who implies that this "Sita model" is a goal to which all women should aspire. Such behavior would be regarded very highly in the kind of society Usha lived in, but recent criticism claims that these ideals were propagated to ensure that women remain subservient. When the women fail to live up to these "norms," or begin to organize their lives according to their own needs, the men use their physical strength to bring them "back into line." This phenomenon is most apparent when the women start the Sevika movement in Kanthapura once Moorthy and the others are imprisoned. That time the main people says that women returned with empty handed. And every time the milk curdled or a dhoti was not dry, they would say, "And this is all because of this Seva business," and Radhamma husband beat her on that day he returned from village inspection, though she was seven months pregnant. Clearly, the women in Kanthapura are exploited, and during the early part of the novel they are denied the freedom, to control their own affairs; still, the issue is somewhat complicated because Gandhi regarded a woman's ability to endure suffering as a key to the success of his non-violent protest movement. He says, "Woman is more fitted than man to make ahimsa, non-violence. For the courage of self-sacrifice woman is anyway superior to man". It could be argued, of course, that this is yet another surreptitious move on the part of men to ensure that women remain subservient; in other words, by impressing upon women that this ability to endure suffering is a plosive, the men succeed in perpetuating the status quo. Yet the true satyagrahis is supposed to employ these traits for peaceful non-cooperation. When there is such type of movements it is very dangerous activity on the side of society. The virtuous people always pay attention to the non-violence activity. The women as great in suffering but they are represented in a various forms of Shakti. There was too much suffering happen to participants of the movements. The significance of the relationship between men and women is neither fully explored not resolved because the men are eventually taken away by the forces of the Raj; consequently, there is very little interaction between the sexes towards the end of Kanthapura. The novel focuses on the freedom struggle that in one village at least is now organized by women. The women not only use their fortitude and their ability to perform ahimsa to combat colonial aggression, but in the process some of their number takes significant
strides towards their emancipation. Ratna is one individual in the novel to defy both the oppressors of the Raj and the conservative traditions of the village and to achieve some measure of success. To be a Brahmin widow in a rural environment during this period was to be placed in an unenviable position. Widows were either required to perform sati or to shave their hair and to lead a very secluded life. Ratna challenges the constraints imposed by widowhood, although the first Brahmin, Bhatta, and the spiteful Venkamma challenge her at every turn. Her rebelliousness is best captured here: Bhatta rose up to go, for he could never utter a kind word to that young widow. Such woman also fears to use the materials like the married women. What is noteworthy, however, is that Ratna gradually wins the respect of the others to the extent that, when Moorothy and Rangamma are imprisoned and their land is on the verge of being auctioned to the "sahib-looking people" from the town, some of the women confidently declare, "come, we will go to Ratna; for Ratna is our chief now and she will lead us out of it". The women, of course, demand too much of Ratna. Ratna began to pray, “God, God keep him strong and virtuous, and may he rise out of this holier and greater; God, I shall offer ten coconut and a kumkum worship. God, keep him alive for me.”(p.71) Ratna, similarly, does not prevail over the stooges of the Raj who have bayonets, bullets, and the full force of the law on their side. Her transformation from a despised widow to a leader of the satyagrahis, however, is remarkable. Even more influential than Ratna is her aunt, Rangamma. Rangamma, as the narrator declares, is "no village kid". Rangamma proves that this confidence is not misplaced when, after Moorothy's incarceration, and the death of the local interpreter of Hindu texts, Ramakrishna, she takes on both roles. One of the strategies adopted by the Harikatha man, and later, Ramakrishna, to educate the villagers on the iniquitous rule of the Raj is to draw parallels between the ancient Hindu texts and the struggle for Swaraj in India. Rangamma, too, utilizes this strategy to convince the villagers: "Sister, if for the thorny pit the illusion fall into, you put the foreign Government, and for the soul that searches for liberation, you put our India, everything is clear", she says at the beginning of one meeting. The narrator concludes: "and the more we listened the more she impressed us, and we felt there was a new strength come in Rangamma". Rangamma exhorts the satyagrahis by reminding them of the
contributions made by women in India's past: And the worthiest of them was Rani Lakshmi Bai of Jhansi. Why, she rode the horse like a Raj put, and held her army against the British, beating them on the left and on the right, and the British went back and back, but one day they defeated her and she died upon her horse fighting to the last, fighting for her enslaved Mother India.

Rangamma not only has the ability to inspire the other women with her original interpretations of Hindu texts and her recuperation of heroic deeds, but she also acts as a practical organizer, rivaling Moorthy. When Moorthy is imprisoned, she organizes a Sevika Sangha in the village, and when she meets with resistance from the men, she displays tact and the ability to compromise. Once again, like Moorthy, she persuades the women to "stand without moving a hair", when confronted by the lathi charges. But even more impressive is the manner in which she urges the men to continue with the struggle and to establish associations of their own, when after Moorthy's confinement, the men choosing to be lukewarm towards the cause because they do not want "to sit behind the cage-bars like kraaled elephants". This brief examination of Rangamma and Ratna demonstrates that the women in Kanthapura did possess the propensity to go beyond the confines they were placed in. Unfortunately, except for Moorthy, the characters in the novel are generally drawn "like figures in a tapestry"; as a consequence, Rao is not always able to portray all these women in depth. Rangamma and Ratna are two exceptions, but given the large number of characters in a relatively short novel, he is forced to make compromises in portraiture even with these women. Jayewardene speaks of the important role played by education in changing the position of women in India. Rao recognizes this importance, too. He creates the characters who acquire that position in the society even though they are illiterate. The women characters have been skilfully created by Raja Rao. Ratna is a child widow who has been powerfully influenced by modern ideas and who does not regard being a woman as a matter of shame and inferiority. Achakka is revealed by her manner of narration and her comments on persons and events. Her function is representative and her strength lies in being anonymous. And she told us so many marvelous things about that country; and mind you, she said that there all men are equal and there were neither the rich nor the poor. Even though there is some irony in this passage, Rao regards the
woman's conclusions with approval. What is unfortunate is that Rao is guilty, here, of giving Rangamma extensive knowledge of politics and the scriptures without informing the reader how she came by this knowledge problem that has also been identified in Ngugi's portrayal of Kihika in A Grain of Wheat. Consequently, Rangamma is not totally convincing as a character. Maria Mies offers this assessment of the role played by women in the struggle for Swaraj: To draw women into the political struggle is a tactical necessity of any anti colonial or national liberation struggle. But it depends on the strategic goals of such a movement whether the patriarchal family is protected as the basic social unit or not. The fact that women themselves accepted their limited tactical function within the independence movement made them excellent instruments in the struggle. Vasudev's mother shouts, "You always want to pollute the food of Brahmans with your evil tongues." (p.61) But they did not work out a strategy for their own liberation struggle for their own interests. By subordinating these goals to the national cause they conformed to the traditional pativrata or saiti ideal of the self-sacrificing woman. If Kanthapura is an accurate novelistic account of what took place in rural India during the struggles, it certainly reinforces some of Mie's assertions; the issue could be viewed from yet another angle, however. Susan Sontag argues that the priorities of struggle vary from nation to nation, from historical moment to historical moment and depend, within a given nation, on one's race and one's social class. It seems beyond question that the liberation of women in Vietnam has to be subordinated at the present time to the struggle for national liberation. Such an approach could parody explain and parody justify the subordination of the women's struggle in this novel. More to the point is that the national struggle has undoubtedly contributed to the women's struggle here. If it is true that "without the force of the women, there would not have been a revolution in Kanthapura", equally valid is the assertion that the women would have remained hidebound by tradition and totally dependent on men, if the Gandhian movement had not given them the opportunity to exercise their independence. To those who equate achievement with power and material possessions, a perusal of Kanthapura brings few rewards. Waterfall Venkamma loudly says, "Ah, the cat has begun to take to asceticism only to commit more sins." (p.66) At the end of the novel, we have the suggestion of a
new village being built on the broken debris, thus symbolizing the unbroken continuity of the Indian tradition. After all, the novel ends with Kanthapura destroyed, some of the villagers in exile in Kashipur, others imprisoned or scattered in various parts of India, and still others killed by the police. The success of the movement, as a consequence, must be measured by what the women have gained spiritually. Certainly, the narrator projects towards the end of the novel serenity and an equanimity that she had never displayed before: You will say we have lost this, you will say we have lost that. Kenchamamma forgive us, but there is something that has entered our hearts, an abundance like the Himavathy on Gauri's night, when lights come floating down the Rampur comer, lights come floating down from Rampur and Maddur and Tippur, lights lit on the betel leaves, and with flower and kumkum and song we let them go, and they will go down the Ghats to the morning of the sea, the lights on the betel leaves, and the Mahatma will gather it all, he will gather it by the sea, and he will bless us. To Nihal Fernando, "the reference to the Himavathy, the daughter of the goddess Kenchamma, and a river with associations of purity, fertility, and primordial vitality" captures the "emotional and spiritual revitalization" which is a pleasing consequence of the women's "traumatic political experience". This equipoise is achieved primarily because of their involvement with Mahatma Gandhi's movement. Yet the women secure another goal in the novel, and here Gandhi's contribution is tangential. When he leaves Kanthapura at the end is Rangé Gowda, who was once described as a veritable tiger. To Ranga Gowda the women would turn when they needed reassurance; however, his poignant response to Kanthapura in which there is now "neither man nor mosquito" can be contrasted with the reactions of the women, when confronted with the same village in its death throes: And old Rachanna's wife, Rachi, can bear the sight no more, and she says, "In the name of the goddess, I'll burn this village." She rushes towards the Pariah lines and Lingamma and Madamma and Boramma and Siddama follow her, crying, "To the ashes, you wretch of a village!" And they throw their bodices and their sari-fringes on the earth and they raise a bonfire beneath the tamarind tree. At one level, these women set the village ablaze because they do not want the fruits of their toil to fall into "enemy" hands." Even though the full significance of their action is lost on the women who
perpetrate the deed and perhaps on the author himself the modern reader can recognize other layers of meaning by adopting a Barthesian approach. This "bonfire," then, symbolizes that these women are no longer totally circumscribed by the demands of hearth and home, have successfully discarded outmoded traditions that had only served to reinforce the servitude placed upon them, and have challenged, if not totally overcome, the twin forms of patriarchy that had oppressed them for so long. By reducing Kanthapura to ashes, and by leaving the village, the women make a statement to the effect that their subjugation is a phenomenon of the past. The women are now equal partners with men in the next step towards liberation. P. C. Bhattacharya observes that to the "Kanthapurians there was no final defeat, no farewell but only fare forward, no ending but always a new beginning". This assertion is particularly applicable to the women in the novel. There is, of course, much that is unacceptable and much that remains to be achieved—the female laborers’ in the Skeffington coffee estate no doubt continue to be harassed by their masters, and one of the final images of the novel is that of Concubine China who remains in the burnt village "to lift her leg to the new customers". Yet by portraying the plight of the women the way he has, Rao makes the reader aware of the necessity for change, and in his depiction of Rangamma and Ratna he demonstrates the way in which some changes could be achieved. Nanjamma has so internalized the "logic" of this patriarchal system that her quarrel is not with the beating per se but with the manner in which it is carried out. The character of Maya created by Anita Desai has the poetic vision. The plot moves with the modulations of memory. The scenes from Maya's childhood alternate with her present condition and her concern for the future, tattooed with the albino astrologer's predictions. Maya is a passive purveyor of visions whose awareness of self is merged with objects surrounding her. The novel has hardly any action, and the reader gets the feeling of movement in the plot due to the progression of images, one after the other. The novel begins with an image scene, in which the names of the characters are not revealed right till the end of the chapter and the reader is unconsciously drawn to the inner world of Maya's psyche. The symbolic self-portrait of Maya is painted step by step by the juxtaposition of other characters and scenes like Gautam, Lila, Pom, Maya's father, Gautama’s mother, sister,
the image scenes *viz.*, the scene of the meeting with the albino astrologer, Cabaret dancers, the dinner parties and storm scene in the end, which intensify Maya's inner state of turmoil. Maya as the symbolic hero absorbs the animate and the inanimate world around her. She, as the mask of the author deforms these experiences, in order to mirror an aesthetic image. She is always in remembrance of him and she try to find him in her husband. She never thinks of the possibility of averting the calamity by accepting the advice of the albino and seeking the grace of the all merciful God. Her love affair was the main reason behind her downfall. The antithetical technique adopted, is clearly visible in the two different worlds, in which the consciousness of Maya vacillates the dream world of her childhood and the world of solid reality of Gautama’s house and family. Maya describes her childhood days:

"The world is like a toy specially made for me,

Painted in my favorite colors, set moving to my favorite tune." (p.36)

A doting father, who looked after this dream-child Maya, is remembered with special tenderness. He has looked after me alone and his beam is especially tender, his attention especially loving. I think that he is like a silver oak himself, with his fine silver white hair brushed smoothly across his bronzed scalp. Maya's after-marriage life is a complete change. Her husband Gautam says that reality and idealism is one and the same thing. Life is not a matter of distinguishing between the two but of reconciling them. Gautama’s mother is entirely different from Maya's father. Like some busy rhinoceros charging through the forest, to her dispensary, or her workshop for the blind, the disabled, the unemployed. Maya's married life is juxtaposed with that of Lila and Pom, the self contented beings, representing compromise in life.

"....what hated me was not a remembrance of Leila bitter,

but a memory of Leila resigned. Had she raged, revolted,

I should have rushed to her now." (p. 59)

It was natural, afterthoughts of Leila, to turn down a line of friends, sift them through my mind and come to Pom, the pink, plump, pretty Pom who did not speak of fate, who had never been ill, or overworked or bitter. Maya is searching

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for the right colored sari for that day in her cupboard, while thinking about her friends. In this symbolic scene, in the end, she gives up the search, torn by her internal conflict and quest for peace and solace. She says, “I ceased to hunt then, ceased to plan, and merely laid my face into those cool cloths, odorous with camphor and lavender, that recalled mountain waters to me, ferns, and nights full of stars, for I found myself alone with them after all. There was not one of my friends who could act as an anchor any more, and to whomsoever I turned for reassurance, betrayed me now.” (p. 64). The very delicate vibrations of Maya's thought dominate the novel that values were distorted in that macabre half light with its altering tints at an hour when those values could have been all important. Maya has been shown as the aesthetic abstraction of the universal self. Maya reflects a spiritual image of man's relation to his universe. It was not only for his presence, his love that she longed for but mainly for the life that would permit me to touch him, feel his flesh and hair, hold and then tighten my hold on him. And not on Gautam alone, but on all the pulsating world around him, from the frieze of stars silently exploding in the summer sky to the faintly fluttering owls making covert hidden love in the crotch of the fig tree. All that suggested life, and the great enthrancing world to me who was doomed not to live. Just before she carries out her unspoken decision, Maya has the experience of oneness with nature almost transcendental in nature. She continued to mount, step by step, to the roof, looking up to see the evening sky lowering itself to descend upon him. This spiritual experience is the natural outcome of an inner conflict, which resolves itself gradually, through a series of probes and questionings and recognition of truth from time to time. She says, “I entered a new vista of knowledge. I forced myself into believing that I could see now what must be the reason for my hating it so, for my hating it so, for Gautama's spurning it — visible to our subconscious only.” (p. 106)

Maya detaches herself in order to reach this knowledge.

"Murder shocked as though I had truly found a blemish in my unscarred skin.

I drew away from the mirror with a shudder I could no longer bear to see

that Ignorant and insane face, and looked away." (p. 106)
Anita Desai not only follows the trends of lyrical novel but even makes the protagonist use the very words which express this lyrical process. Freedman says, "This process of telescoping self and world is based in the main on the idealistic epistemology of the time." Maya revere berates the idea: "My suddenly sobered mind affirmed it a certainty, as the telescope affirms the certainty of the physical substance of these mysterious lights in the night sky, the planets." (p. 20). In the words of Freedman again, "The hero as an aesthetic image of nature leads to the technique of mirroring. Since the self is the point at which inner and outer worlds are joined, the hero's mental picture reflects the universe of sensible encounters as an image." This very subjective process is described by Maya objectively. She saw her body detach itself from it and float away, to rest upon the dim mirror where she could gaze upon it from a cool distance she studied it absorbed. Maya moves in worlds transformed by her own hallucinations; her temperament, in her deformations lays the unique reality. She says, "Swiftly I turn, swiftly I ran. I feel my heart throbbing madly. Why? The heights, the dizzying heights of my mountains, towering, tapering, and edged with cliff-edges founded on rock. Storm-storm at sea, at land! Fury. Whip lash, Fly furiously. Danger! Danger! Run and hide, run and hide if you can miserable fool! Ha, ha, fool, fool, fool." (pp. 180-81) Maya redefines love and life in her own way. Till the very end, she wished to be loved and understood. She was overcome with a desperate timidity, begging him once more to answer to come and meet her half-way, in her own world, not merely demand of her, brusquely to join her in his, which, however safe, was so very drab and no longer offered her security. Had he done so, all might have been quite different. But he did not. Less than that, he retreated to the outposts of his flat civilization and asked vaguely, half-interestedly, Toto? Who was that?" The words were as grim as any death sentence absolute and unredeemable. The poet narrator successfully justifies the emanations of Maya's consciousness. Because of Gautama's half-deadness to the living world, which his dry brain was incapable of sensing; Maya feels justified in her decision. The objects, scenes, characters, all exist in the novel as image figures to objectify and dramatize the protagonists' point of view. The atmosphere of subjective objectivity so skillfully created makes the novel a work of art. Anita Desai is a good blend of Indian and European sensibilities. A vivid reflection of this unique blend finds spontaneous
expression in her novels. She is an instinctive writer. She herself stated that writing is almost a compulsive need to realize and express her through language. Maya has a determination to reach nearer to her goal. She is a self-conscious artist, forging a different world out of the mundane things of the day-to-day existence of an Indian woman. It is very difficult to categorize her novels, for; they do not fall into any category. Her novels seem to suggest what she has attributed to most woman writers in India, writing without a tradition. An effect obvious in all that is written today, of wandering aimlessly through wild, uncharted tracks, unsure of where one began, unsure of where one may end. She does not find any school of Indian novel writing in English. To her, novel writing is a highly flexible literary genre that can include all kinds of things such as psychology, philosophy, comedy, tragedy, criticism etc. There is hardly an aspect of the complex model life, which does not find expression in her writing. According to Anita Desai writing is not an act of deliberation, reason and choice. It is a matter of instinct, silence and waiting. Thus she creates an existential framework where a man’s work is measured not by all the incidents of his life, but by the determined action and creation. Her novels have simple plot elements, leading to complex situation. For her, reality consists of the raw material of existence. Hence she does not apply herself to social problems. She creates a private world of her own which has no direction as well as no shape. Anita Desai, within the limited milieu creates, is able to achieve remarkable depth and intensity her characters have a near neurotic quality about them. Her narrative focus is limited. Her novels normally employ the protagonist to narrate the story. The main character while telling the story presents her viewpoint. Since she creates a small world and a small milieu, her narrative focus is restricted. It however provides her with an opportunity to observe what is around her. She has an extraordinary sense of detail, of graphic observation, of noticing things that mostly go unnoticed. She writes almost with the skill of a painter. Things and objects however small and insignificant, acquire large importance in her novels. When not observing these mundane realities Anita Desai turns reflective, going deep in to psyche, going to those places in the heart and mind where things acquire a different character. She then dwells on moods on feelings, on emotions, on all those things that impress the mind and leave their imprint there. In these moments her prose acquires the nature of lyric
poetry for in these moments of heightened awareness Anita Desai reveals her
delicate sensibility, her sense of sounds, of colors, of smells, of beauty, of lyric
intensity, exquisite in form and evocativeness render her fiction a peculiar poetic
quality, though they do not always serve her fictional ends. There is a sustained
effort in her writing to evolve a set of symbols, images or myths but they really
do not have the power and the intensity we generally associate with them. The
symbolism of dance, for example, which appears in all her novels in some form
or the other, does not have the same intensity in all its appeal. The use of
iterative images and symbols, however, lends density to her fictional world and
compensates for the absence of action or variety of character. Her fictional
canvas is narrow but it has tremendous depth and intensity. It does not extend,
instead it sinks deep into the complexity of human experience. Her symbols and
her private mythology bring her closer to the existential philosophy. The writer
says that there is no creativity whiles the novel written by her. It does not
observe under the set of theories. There are so many visions that develop the
plot of the novel. The poetic quality of Anita Desai’s fiction has now being
acknowledged and it is apparent that her reading of novelists likes D.H.Lawrens,
Virginia Woolf, E.M.Forster, Henry. James, Raja Rao, Proust, Dostoevsky and
Kawabata have had a great impact on her technique and style. Her desire of
innovation and experimentation is apparent in all her novels and this lends her
work a touch not to be found in other Indian writers. Anita Desai’s views on
English as a medium of creative writing for Indians are neither apologetic nor
defensive for she regards the choice of English language a personal matter. To
put in her own words: “It is not my intention to either apologies or defends my
position is after all a personal matter. It may have some historical reasons but
chiefly they are personal. According to the rules laid down by the critics, I ought
to be writing half my work in Bengali, the other half in German, as it happens I
have never written a word in either language. Possibly I found English a suitable
link language, a compromise. But I can state definitely that I did not choose
English in a deliberate and conscious act. If it did not sound like a piece of
arrogance I’d say perhaps it was the language that chose me but I am not aware
of any act of choice. I started writing stories at the age of 7 and have been doing
so for thirty years for now without stopping to think why.” The novels of Anita
Desai reveal her unique world view, but at the same time confirm to the existing
tendencies in modern fiction. Her novels are technical innovations which "combine features of both novel and lyrical poetry and shift the reader's attention from men and events to a formal design. The novel *Cry the Peacock begins* and ends with a third voice which may be termed neutral, but the major writing registers two distinct voices supporting arguments in two different directions. While Maya’s voice gains in strength as the novel progresses, Gautama’s becomes feeble and feeble, till in the end we hear the triumphant call of Maya after she accomplishes the deed. The voices of minor characters serve as contrast to the dominant voice of Maya, resulting in added justification of her line of thinking. The feeling evoked by the novel is not univalent but multivalent. The reader is left with a sense of ambiguity. There is a clash between intellectual and aesthetic interests. Even though the reader sympathizes with Maya, her final act of impulse is justifiable to a sane mind. Aesthetically, the minute recording of Maya’s sub-conscious and its description in palpable terms is a marvel by itself. The reader is captivated by the beauty of the vivid picture and yet at the same time he does not stop sympathizing with Gautam altogether. As a result the feelings evoked are ambiguous. Anita Desai’s first novel is also perhaps the first step in the direction of psychological fiction in Indian writing in English. Initially the novel shocks us with its neurotic and near morbid obsession with death but on a closer study, we admire the writer’s skill in capturing the psychic states a woman haunted by an awareness of death. The novel is a fictional rendering of a fear and anxiety neurosis that grips young and sensitive women on the threshold of her marriage and leads finally to the death of her husband and her own suicide. In tracing the neurosis and death anxiety of Maya, the psychologically disturbed heroine of this novel, Anita Desai employs the technique of a fugue in a specific psychiatric sense. In the process, the novel becomes a fascinating psychological study of neurotic fears and anxieties caused by marital incompatibility and disharmony, and compounded by age-old superstitions. The various psychic states of Maya, chaotic and disordered as they are, have being unified into a pattern through a series of iterative motifs and symbols, which while externalizing Maya’s inner crisis lend the narrative qualities of a tragic poem. Maya’s muted and muffled cries for love is in a loveless marriage are articulated in the cry of the peacock, which is symbolic of life- in death and death-in life. This novel is divided into three parts each dealing
with the origin development and culmination of Maya's neurosis. By connecting Maya's neurosis to her marriage, Anita Desai transforms the conventional story of a marital disharmony into a moving study of the psychic of a woman. The former part of the novel indicates Maya's unconscious father fixation. Anita Desai makes use of the technique of contrast. First there is a contrast between the worlds of the father- a world of love, tenderness, flowers and Urdu poetry, and the world of Gautama- her husband is a world of absolute detachment where even love is not love, where everything is reduced to the dictums of Bhagwat-Gita. Next there is contrast between a life of freedom and a life of loveless enchainment. Every day the body lay rotting in the sun which could not be moved on to the verandah for; in that April heat the reek of dead flesh was overpowering. So she moved the little string bed on which it lay under the lime trees, where there was a cool, aqueous shade saw its eyes open and staring still, screamed and continued to cry and ran, defeated in to the house. The gardener came and drew its eyelids down with two horny thumbs reflectively sad as when he laid had laid a dead branch that he had to cut off, on the compost heap. But he would not bury it, as she begged him to do. Often in the course of that day he said to her, patient, the sweeper will do it. He has gone to visit his brother, but when he returns he will do it. It was afternoon now, and the sweeper had not returned. Flies began to hum amidst the limes, driving away the gentle bees and the unthinking butterflies. She thought she saw the evil glint of a blue bottle and grew hysterical. The gardener sent his wife to take her into the house and keep her there. She sat there sobbing, and waiting on to the verandah and looked to see if he were coming up the drive which lay shriveling, melting and the shivering again, like the molten lead in a groove cut into the earth, and out of the corner of her eye, could not help glancing, as one cannot help a tic, at the small white corps laying at one end of the lawn, under a sheet under the limes Later in the evening, when the Sun hung pendent from the top most branches of the trees, swelling visibly like- she thought- a purulent boil, until it was ripe to drop, her husband came home. He was very late. But as soon as he came, he did all that was to be done, quickly and quietly like a surgeon's knife at work. He telephoned the public works department; he had them send their scavenging truck to take the corpse away and saw it to himself that they lifted it in with care. Yes, yes the bed two he said. By all means burn it too. When the truck had
left he came to her wiping his fingers on a handkerchief much used and soiled during the day yet still in neat folds. He said that there is nothing remains in his life. But she would not lift her face from a cushion, for fear the stench of decaying flesh still hung in the bougainvillea colored evening air. All that it had come in with the slow breeze that sucked the curtains in, then slowly drew them out. A woman is seen lamenting over a dead body, which has been shifted to the shade of lime trees, where it is cool and damp. The dead body's eyes were open the sight of which scares the woman and she screams and rushes to the garden tap to wash her eyes. She continues crying and runs inside the house.

The gardener closes the eyes of the dead body with his horny thumbs. The woman urges him to bury the body but he waits for the sweeper crows and even blue bottles circle around the corps. The woman waits for her husband, watches the dry intently for his arrival, at the same time steals a glance at the dead body covered with a sheet. The hot sun aggravates the reek of dead flesh and with it the pain of the suffering woman, for whom the sun is like discharging boil by now. Her husband comes home very late, but disposes the body in a professional manner. He is confidant, unmoved and advises her in a matter of fact tone. She, is still disconsolate, fears the stench of the decaying flesh, which had being blown in and out the whole day. For the women, seeing and thinking go hand in hand. She sees, she thinks, she reacts, cannot help seeing, but this seeing is distorted, illusory. She is helpless in controlling her seeing. Her husband not only sees but acts with responsibility and his confidence. He tells her not to cry, implying, stop troubling your eyes and heart about it. He insists on it. For him the end of crying is the end of sorrow. The gardener considers the body, a dead branch, closes the eye lids with his horny thumbs, and considers the situation, as a dead branch on a compost heap. Compost heap implies something, which generates fertility, although made of death and decay. The gardener takes the event as an integral phase of the cycle of life. The writer studied very well the psychology of the main character Maya. Maya thinks, “It had to be one of us, you see, and it was so clear that it was I who was meant to live, you see”. (p.16) Premchand created such main character Suman who is going to repent till the end of her life. Suman is still extremely grateful to Subadhra but she herself also recognizes Suman as a worthy human being. In this version Premchand is giving Suman far more respect. Gajadhar has previously expressed virtually identical
sentiments about Suman. She is confident that one day she will be a jewel of the women’s community. This raises certain questions. Did Premchand not notice this difference? Or did he not feel that Suman would be thought worthy of such praise by Hindi readers? It is impossible to answer this, but it is clear from the next example that, in compiling the two versions, some mistakes were very definitely made. In the chapter where Padam Singh’s resolution regarding the removal of the courtesans is debated there is a paragraph which makes perfect sense. Sevasadan create a fascinating picture of the position of women in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century India. They show the evils of the dowry system, the caste system, and criticize the selling of women into marriage to unsuitable men by unscrupulous or desperate male relatives. Against the background picture of the perfect, chaste, pious, self-sacrificing wife idealized by men and yet neglected by them, they depict the life of the courtesan over a period of approximately eighty years and trace the decline of her status in society. A comment on the plight of women forced for various reasons into prostitution, dancing, singing and portrays the hypocrisy of a society where courtesans are given status in public life but are considered to be beyond the pale of respectable society. They also both draw attention to the discrepancy, and again hypocrisy, in society’s attitudes toward men and women who stray from the respectable path. In Sevasadan, Sadan is welcomed back into the arms of his family whereas Suman is condemned to a life of loneliness outside respectable society. She experiences a great deal in her eventful life—some good as well as bad incidences. But fundamentally she remains the same generous, humorous, warm-hearted and pragmatic.

Suman Says:

लेकिन सदन को कैसे पूलाउँ?
क्या उसके प्रेम के लिये जीवन-सुधारक ईस दुर्लभ =वसर को हात से
जाने दुः (p.42)

In addition to these social issues, the novels deal with the universal themes of good and evil and sin. Premchand, however, is constrained by the historical and social context and his desire for reform. His views on women, as we have seen,
at pains to point out that it was not her choice. Suman appreciates the education because of buva Husain paid special attention to her and taught her with love and care. She seizes the chance to develop her skills in dancing, singing and poetry. The description of her singing lessons in particular reveals that she is not only someone who has a good voice, but who also loves classical music and has a real desire to learn to sing well. This is particularly evident in her questioning of her ustad and in her pester to sing scales for her. As many young girls would be entranced by the beautiful clothes, the jewelry and lifestyle. She also enjoys the company of the other girls whom she develops a special relationship. Suman becomes a fully-fledged courtesan she is able to adopt a practical approach to the profession and to tread a middle path. She is neither heartless nor ruins her lovers or sentimental who just wants to be loved and is therefore unhappy and unsuccessful. She treats people with courtesy and compassion whilst retaining a necessary emotional detachment from her various lovers. Our tastes were so similar that if we had had to spend the rest of our lives together, neither would have had any cause for regret. She contradicts. As she matures, she develops independence which leads her to break away relationships. She experiences a great deal in her eventful life-some good, some bad incidences. But fundamentally she remains the same generous, humorous, warm-hearted and pragmatic. She realizes, of course, that there is a price to pay for her lifestyle, in terms of her personal relationships with men. She gives advice to other women, never be under the delusion that anyone will love you truly. Lovers will never remain constant because you do not deserve constancy. Certainly the philosophic reflections about sin and good do belong to her middle age. But she makes it very clear that she considers the things she did to be of an evil nature. So that Suman says to Gajdhar,

“चेखा होता तो मैं बिना देखे-मुने गया चैसे पहुंच जाती?
मैं नदी किसने—केवल सोच रही थी कि मेरा उधार कैसे होगा। (P.100)

Not a single event happened relates to the morality in this novel. Suman always have the nature to praise the woman who has the virtuous quality. She also wants such type of quality within herself. She thinks to acquire respectability in the society. But she knows that now she commits a lot of sins and nobody gives respect to her. She hurts many hearts so that the writer tries to punish the main
proximity. There should be the private space of the houses of respectable women and the public space of the chouk had been worlds apart, in Sevasadan they literally collide. First education had led to increased employment in government administration and other professions, and to rapid urban growth. The wealthy elite could still afford to keep their distance from the chouk, whilst frequenting brothels if they so chose, but poorer middle-class Indians such as Gajadhar Prasad were forced to live in areas of cities where prostitutes openly conducted their business. Suman thus lives opposite Bholibai exposed to her immoral influence and seduced by her lavish lifestyle something. Premchand repeated description of the stench of the sewers outside Sunman’s house intended as a physical one, but the metaphorical meaning cannot have escaped him. Suman come from high-caste Hindu Community. She also has little in common in character or in the manner of her downfall. Suman, a married woman, chose of her own volition, albeit in difficult circumstances, to become a courtesan. She Says:

मेरे हिसे सबसे = मुल्य कस = एकी कुरप है। बही मेरे उपर बनी रहे,
इस क्रीम को =ने मेरी तरफ से =पनी न रानी साहिबा को दे दीजियेगा।(p.41)

The person of every society does not pay attention towards the members who indulged in prostitution. It is like degradation of that family. Such event does not happen on the side of the main character Suman. Her parent gets respect in the society. Every parents pay attention to the chastity of their family. They try to develop good relationship with other family. Without the permission of parenis, if the girl married then it will be shameful event in the society. Parents always have the desire to give their daughters hand in respectable as well as good character. If the girl does not like the behavior of that character, she can immediately try to leave him. It happens relates to the main character of this novel. Parents do not give thought to matters like the disparity of age, looks or temperament and throw their daughters into the arms of any man they can find. As soon as the girl finds that she cannot get on with her husband, she leaves him. Of her own entry into the profession of courtesan she says, ‘I was just born unlucky. The buffetings of fate and chance left me stranded in a wilderness.’

This is crucial to an understanding of Suman. She never shies away from what she has done and completely accepts the position this gives her in society, she is
are firmly rooted in the nationalist ideal of the woman of the time, and Suman must be judged against that ideal. In *Sevasadan*, this is reflected in Padam Singh’s conversation with Baja Nath, regarding the dancing girls for Sadan’s wedding. Padam Singh likens the fact that if people did not eat meat, there would be no need to slaughter goats to the demand for prostitutes. Interestingly, this sentence has been omitted from the novel, indicating that Premchand was fully aware of the Hindu bias in this regard. By this time the attitude of the Hindu urban middle classes toward courtesans was also completely different from that of the nineteenth century elite. The emphasis was on the ideal of the Hindu woman propagated by the Arya Samaj and the nationalists. The prostitute began to be viewed as a source of disease and corruption rather than refinement and artistic skill. In the presence of prostitutes in the most frequented and populous quarters of cities was seen as among the principal causes for the ruin and demoralization among innocent, affluent young men. Eye contact with prostitutes was regarded as the reason for a decline in the virtues of respectable, homely women. *Sevasadan* of Premchand depicts both of these problems in his portrayal of Suman and Sadan. Toward the end of the nineteenth century, the Arya Samaj and various caste associations adopted resolutions against dances by prostitutes during marriages and social ceremonies. Arguments and values of modernity, civilization, cleanliness and purity were selectively appropriated by the dominant Hindu castes and classes to put pressure on local governments and municipal corporations. The prostitute was displaced in terms of moral ethics and also from the Municipal city and confined to a zone. All these issues form part of the narrative of *Sevasadan*. The novel revolves round one question: Where should we keep prostitutes?

Suman says to Vithaldas:

महाराजी, यह =ए =प क क कहते हैं?

मेरा तो यह =नु हथ है कि जिजिना =एर ने =ब हो रहा है उसका शलाश भी तब नहीं होता था । (p.36)

This question sees as both literal and metaphorical. The desire to move the courtesans out of the city results from the disappearance of the traditional distance between the courtesan and the respectable woman in terms of physical
character. Her family members have the nature of religious attitude but she indulged in such type of activity. After some days there are some changes finds in this character. She tried her level best to remain aloof from the bad activity and prays regularly. Purposely she tries to make satirical comments on each and every virtuous people in the society. But later on she pays attention to maintain the relationship with friends and other people in the society. She gone through the books and tried to remain away from the cynicism. Suman already have a good and respectable family background where she get education. But she always called as arrogant and flighty. Her younger sister Shanta was polite and innocent. Always Suman want better than each family member. If her father brought any type of material, she firstly has the right to choose and later the remaining members of the family. This nature of Suman becomes a big hurdle for her after marriage. The uncle, Umanath, unable to pay the dowry required for a suitable husband for her, becomes desperate in his desire to rid himself of this burden. In year later Umanath hadn’t found a husband for Suman. He had begun to overlook prestige, education, looks, and moral qualities and was holding out only for someone of a high caste. That was one requirement he would not give up one in an action. Umanath marries Suman to an older man who lives in poverty in the city. Umanath now retained only one condition that of good breeding. For him good breeding was the most desirable attribute of all. After her marriage, Suman understandably feels sorry for herself and at this point the reader begins to sympathize with her to some extent. Even Sadiq is unusually charitable towards her saying; her only failings are vanity and love of display. She tries for a short time to cook and even began to find some joy in it but when her husband Gajadhar criticizes her for spending too much money she gives up. Nevertheless she retains her arrogance and sense of superiority and cannot accept her lot in life. Premchand describes her attitude towards the women who are her neighbors. Suman would look down on them and try to avoid meeting them. She Thought of these women buy new ornaments and new clothes, and in my house we can barely afford roti. Am I the most unfortunate person in the world? As a child, she had been taught only to please herself and enjoy life. She had not learnt the moral lesson nor acquired the religious education that plants the seeds of contentment in one’s mind. Her discontentment leads her to flirt with the young men who pass her house on their
way home. Even if Suman was busy, glimpses of her could be caught through the curtain. Her innocent heart received endless pleasure from this kind of flirting. She played these games not out of wickedness, but to show off the luster of her beauty, to win over the hearts of others. But her naives are shown in her attitude towards the courtesan Bholibai who lives in great style opposite her humble dwelling. Woman feels lonely in the face of vast external world. Her loneliness is intensified when she feels the sense of belonging nowhere. The cruelty of time can also be a cause of frustration. Frustration has been highlighted in modern literature on account of certain factors like urbanization, the dehumanization etc. that changed woman’s attitude. Indo-Anglian and Hindi writers emphasis the frustration of major characters and the grief resulting from their frustration. The woman in their novels was frustrated before universe. The grave problem is that the conditions of practical life arouse in woman a sense of frustration. She has always opinion that women were wicked as well as these women does not respected by men. She comes to know that bholi was much better off. Then she tries her level best to develop a conflict in her attitudes. She is superior to Bholibai as a chaste woman. She is envious of Bholi’s status and lifestyle. She tries her hand at piety, but it is not a genuine religious feeling, but rather, a desire for recognition and respect. It becomes apparent that Bholibai is accorded a respect both in religious circles and in public life which Suman herself can never hope to receive. She becomes even more resentful. Her meeting and subsequent friendship with Subadhra and Padam Singh provides her with a model of respectable society, but Suman is eaten up by her desire for nice things and her envy of people who have a higher status than she does. For Suman life simply isn’t fair! At Padam Singh’s holy party we again see the vanity and envy in Suman when she compares herself with Bholibai. Suman says, “She is dark; I am fair. She is plump; I am slender.” After examining herself in the full-length mirrors she comes to the conclusion that if she had the same clothes and jewelry. She would be far more attractive than Bholibai and her voice is better too. Fetching the way men are bewitched by Bholibai she is extremely envious, not just of this, but of Bholibai’s freedom as well. It would appear, therefore, that at some level. She is already considering the idea of becoming a courtesan. Firstly she is thrown out by her husband and
turned away by Padam Singh. She is presented with little other choice. The
moment of truth arrives; however, she again finds it difficult to decide what is
most important to her. She genuinely prides herself on her chastity and has
severe misgivings when she approaches Bholi’s door. Even as Bholi persuades
Suman to stay with her, she is reluctant because she possessed the natural
human aversion to wrong-doing, but as soon as she sees herself in the mirror
dressed in a new sari her old vanity reemerges and triumphs over her doubts.
Suman stood in front of the mirror. It seemed as if the idol of some beauty stood
before her. Suman had never realized she was so beautiful. Shame-free pride
had made her lotus-blossom face bloom and there was something absolutely
intoxicating about her eyes. From the beginning woman are frustrated in the
society. It has spread almost all over the spheres of human life in our age. As far
as Indo-Anglian and Hindi fiction is concerned the women predicament refers to
the frustration has a special significance. The women feels totally frustrated in
social, practical, economic and religious fields which have developed a highly
destructive tendency. The rapid growth in industry, science, technology
accompanies an increasing awareness of alienation in human life. Woman feels
lonely in the face of vast external world. Her loneliness is intensified when she
feels the sense of belonging nowhere. Frustration, isolation, alienation,
loneliness are the different types of predicament of women. The cruelty of time
can also be a cause of frustration. Frustration has been highlighted in modern
literature on account of certain factors like urbanization, the dehumanization etc.
that changed woman’s attitude. Suman as a courtesan finds the comfort she was
seeking, but discovers that the respect she thought went with it is really only an
illusion. Consolation comes in the form of Sadan, Padam Singh’s nephew, who
falls under her spell. It is here, for the first time, that Suman shows herself in a
different light. Although in love with Sadan, she now considers other people
before herself. Out of respect for Subadhra and Padam Singh, she denies herself
the happiness of a relationship with him, and we subsequently see her behave
with considerable courage and dignity when she returns the bracelet that Sadan
has stolen for her to Padam Singh. In her conversations with her would-be
rescuer Alladas we see that she is intelligent and articulate and quick to see
through the hypocrisy. Often he accuses her of having shamed the whole race
she points out how many respectable gentlemen have come to hear her sing. Alladas is nothing if not persistent however, and he manages to make her see things differently. She had thought of pleasure and respect were the prime objectives in life. She realized for the first time that happiness was born out of contentment, and respect out of service. When Suman is about to leave for the widows’ ashram, we see another side of her as she gets back at her clients by playing a series of tricks on them. Sadiq is critical of this scene saying, “The author’s psychology is at fault in the scene where the heroine, immediately after her repentance, plays wild pranks on her lovers. That a woman with shaman’s charity should succumb to horseplay, at a moment when she is feeling most humble, is entirely out of character.” This is interesting when considered in the light of Suhrawardy general comments on Premchand characterization. He cannot develop his characters consistently over any length of time. His touch becomes uncertain and the action and reaction of characters cease to be in keeping with their personality as depicted in the early part of the story. This feistier mischievous Suman disappears as quickly as she has come. After entering the widow’s ashram she undergoes a complete character transplant. Gone is the arrogant, vain, shallow Suman and in her place a paragon of virtue. Alladas describes the transformation thus: It seems as if she is trying to repent for all of her sins. She is ready and willing to do any work. Most of the women sleep all day, but Suman cleans out their rooms for them. She has been teaching a few of the widows to sew, and some have been learning how to sing from her. She has also started reading and well, only god knows what she feels, but she seems a completely changed woman. When Sadan sees her at the river, however, it is apparent that she is far from happy. So Sadan says, “No laughing rosy lips, no sparkling eyes.” He could see the heaviness in her gait and the lines of despair on her face. When later she moves in with Sadan and Shanta, she fears little better. Although now happy to work and serve them, she still craves recognition for her efforts, and the lack of it makes her life unbearable. The woman in the novels of Prem Chand was frustrated before universe. The grave problem is that the conditions of practical life arouse in woman a sense of frustration. Hence frustration is a predicament element of his novels.. Psychologists refer to an extraordinary variety of psycho-social disorders, including frustration, loss of self status, despair rootlessness, loss of beliefs or
values. In short, frustration is a feeling of being alienated from others. Isolation is outcome of being lonely which has been a permanent feature of entire humanity. The race of woman has always desired the company but frustrated from it. Frustration has a certain place in Hindi fiction. It can be seen as a significant aspect. Premchand makes it clear that she still craves the respect and recognition that led to her downfall. Suman was, by nature, a naughty and proud woman. All her life she had lived like a queen. In her husband’s home, even when she endured hardships, she was still queen. In the brothel, everyone listened to her. In the ashram, her piety and service had made her most respected. Therefore it distressed her extremely to live as a non-entity in this household. Her solution to this, just as when she was put in the position of having to face her sister Shanta, is to attempt to drown herself. When Gajadhar saves her for the second time and offers her the chance to work in the orphanage she undergoes yet another transformation that wonderful feelings of faith and devotion dawnd in her heart and she hadn’t in her wildest dreams believed that she would be given such a great opportunity to serve. Suman has many incarnations and by the end, notwithstanding certain contradictions, becomes an almost totally different character. Suman sees it as a glass half empty. She regretting that she could not have lived as a respectable woman. She is able to look back at her life with some degree of fulfillment and satisfaction. She manages to achieve independence, self reliance, self-respect and an inner composure. Suman, although she has escaped the worst degradation that could have been her lot, is still a sad and pathetic character who is never destined to be happy. Her need of satisfaction connects to the real world. She has, in fact, found the respect born out of service even to the point of glowing articles about her in the newspaper, but she has not found the happiness born out of contentment. She achieves this contentment because she is someone who has the courage to change the things. She can change the serenity to bear the things she cannot change and the wisdom to know the difference. Being more rooted in the Indian tradition the importance of the social institutions is accentuated again and again. In reality, women lead a life of conformity either out of personal choice or out of compulsion. Women want libration from the glossy and attractive trapping of womanhood, since they have experienced the limited space within the trap. This is not peculiar to the Indian woman. It is a condition
prevalent all over the globe. In spite of much struggle, women even in the West can hardly claim to be liberated. Woman is confused between idea and action. For the majority of Indian women, it is a question of sheer survival. The patriarchal system affects both urban and rural women in different ways. Both women are victims of feudal and patriarchal structures and norms. Her attitude for status as well as pleasure throws her into adverse action. She revolted and struggled for acquiring status in the society. Premchand made his views on didacticism very clear. It is the practice of some contemporary writers to frame a plot in order to prove a particular point and then fill in the details accordingly. Premchand has given the political and social circumstances which needed to serve a social and political purpose. Premchand enjoyed writing this novel, as he mentioned to nigam. In it he is able to express, through various characters, all his own criticisms of society’s ills. In reality, women lead a life of conformity either out of personal choice or out of compulsion. Women want liberation from the glossy and attractive trapping of womanhood, since they have experienced the limited space within the trap. This is not peculiar to the Indian woman. It is a condition prevalent all over the globe. In spite of much struggle, women even in the West can hardly claim to be liberated. Woman is confused between idea and action. For the majority of Indian women, it is a question of sheer survival. The patriarchal system affects both urban and rural women in different ways. Both women are victims of feudal and patriarchal structures and norms. Her attitude for status as well as pleasure throws her into adverse action. She revolted and struggled for acquiring status in the society. Suman does not retain her chastity and she operates within a code of honor which understands and respects. It sympathies are very much with the individual who has suffered misfortune and risen above it rather than with efforts to reform the ills of society in general. The social system allows the buying and selling of girls. Premchand is full of sympathy for the plight of individual victims. He did not, however, sympathize indiscriminately with fallen women. For him she was not only a whore but also depraved. She conducts herself inappropriately with own clients. Similarly, the writer sees the distinction between respectable women and prostitutes, as confirming the division of space into public and private, that the social structure of his time rested upon, and that he did not question. Although the assigning of men purely to the public space is not entirely correct, as men were able to
inhabit the public space and the private space. She is able to participate in the social life of men as well as she will be recognized and esteemed on the practical one. After so many struggles, she gets anything like man. For these expectations she went through many predicaments in her life. Woman’s predicament arises when she runs after liberty, status as well as desires and thus frustration by society, family and fellow beings. As they don’t gain what they expect, they became failures and frustrated being and they meet the end. They are victims as well as devoted themselves to the obedience and self-sacrifice. She says that there is a lot of change of heart in the sinners. This is very much the stance Premchand himself seems to take in his fiction. The values of Indian womanhood modesty, sexual chastity, and moral purity; steadfast self-sacrifice and nurturing were conspicuously present in the work of male and female writers. Premchand is clearly one of these writers. There has, however, been some disagreement among critics of Premchand’s work as to his stance on women. Premchand showed an abiding and sensitive interest in the plight of women he nevertheless cherished the ideal of the traditional woman. His fiction always created as supreme the idealized self effecting woman. If his heroines are led astray initially, they reform themselves by the end of the narrative and do nothing to disturb the image of the ideal woman. This ideal is clearly reflected in the views expressed by Vitthaldas in Sevasadan. Even in his most radical moments, Premchand remained basically attached to the traditional ideal of the woman. In the final analysis, it is clearly a conservative ideal that Premchand upholds for women. They are the perpetual givers. The takers among them remain the counter-ideal. One of these counter-models of womanhood was the so-called apparently modern woman against whom Premchand betrays a particular prejudice. Even though educated, a woman could get recognition only when she was good and adept at house work. The woman could venture into the outside world without losing out on her essential feminine virtues. The spiritual nature of the woman was emphasized in contrast to the pressures of the material world to which men had to surrender. Due to the adjustment with the outside world, men could not look into the affairs of the home. This loss had to be compensated by women and this was done by asserting the concept of spiritual purity. Women assumed leadership roles. Premchand woman is the visible image of service, self denial, self-sacrifice, purity, love, affection, self-control,
courtesy, forgiveness, firmness, forbearance, modesty, pride, and other beautiful and generous emotions. Premchand did portray women who were not the ideal they offered him in new subject matter from which to hang an old attitude. It is with women who have gentleness, are long-suffering. He takes them through many sufferings as wives, widows, prostitutes. They are generally put there to draw the reader’s pity and to plead for a reform. Premchand’s heroines are often hemmed in by social circumstances that are weighted against them. They become literary pawns and wins respect and be idealized, women in Premchand’s fiction have to pay a heavy price. They are deprived of their individual faces. Thus for women service is ideal, pleasure for oneself the counter-ideal; the image of woman as a selfless giver the ideal and the one who demands or takes is a shallow character and the counter-ideal. And she acknowledges that whilst he has a good grasp of the social problems concerning women, the solutions and reforms advocated by him are relatively mild and are not a shock to prevailing attitudes. Subadhra is clearly one of these women, but one who has not quite fulfilled her role since she is unable to have children. That this is viewed as a failure on her part is evident when Premchand says of Padam Singh, he didn’t have the same love for Subadhra anymore. Although Premchand acknowledges that Subadhra was hurt by her husband changed feelings towards her, he makes no attempt to understand, from her point of view, what it would be like not to be able to have children. He merely puts it down to sins committed in a past life. Later, after she has shown an unexpected level of understanding and support for her husband, he says that Padam Singh realized that even a childless woman can be a strong source of peace and happiness for her husband. Prem Chand pointed out minutely the situations in the system. The main character Suman who is going to blame the dual standards of the society where she finds the people has dual nature. Mannu, the protagonist of Mrudula Garg’s novel, Chittkobra, questions the institutions of the society such as marriage, motherhood. She wants to break all the barriers of her structured existence but fails to do so. She is so deeply entangled in the humdrum of everyday life that despite constant efforts to free herself, she succumbs to its demands. Mannu is a mother of two children. From the very beginning, she knows that children are entirely her responsibility. She also understands that all the activities pertaining to the family have to be shouldered by her. For her
Mannu, though desperately wanting to break free fails to reject her responsibilities and also fails to sustain her interests. She feels that her husband, Mahesh, does not persuade her to do something, nor is he interested to know what his wife does with her free time. It should be noted that Mahesh is a person with a modern sensibility and belongs to the modern generation, where individualism is the code of conduct. In spite of being a modern man, he still retains traditional notions regarding women’s role. As Mannu says:

हिन्दुस्तानी स्त्री मान्त्र्य की साक्षात प्रतिमा होती है।

हिन्दुस्तानी पुरुष की दृष्टि में।

वह सोच भी नहीं सकता।

वह मां के =लावा कुदद के बनना चाह सकती है। (p.148)

This category of men includes fathers, brothers and husbands—all of them feel that the mother’s role is the most important one for a woman. Even if she is a successful career woman or a working woman, her worth is measured in terms of her being a good mother. Very few women have the privilege of opting out of this role voluntarily. Mannu tries, but does not succeed in coming out of the constraints of motherhood. Despite finding her duties as daughter-in-law, wife and mother repetitive and monotonous, she cannot altogether shun her responsibilities, especially her children. She takes utmost elution that the children do not suffer on any account. Leaving behind all her yearnings and ambitions, she settles down to her task of nurturing her children. From this analysis it becomes clear that none of the mother figures are strictly conventional or traditional. Gauri’s mother, Laxmi, is so greedy for money to the extent that she does not hesitate to sell her daughter. Otina deliberately distances herself away from her children. To keep herself preoccupied and to make herself happy are her objectives. She wants to lead a life according to her liking. This would not have been possible if she had continued to look after the
husband, Mahesh, marriage is nothing beyond fulfilling the formality laid down by society. He is not ready to shoulder any responsibility. Mannu wants an escape from the monotonous routine. Performing the roles of a good and obedient daughter-in-law, presentable wife and hostess to her husband’s friends, and finally acting out the role of a good mother to the children, tires her. She loses her personal identity and is identified by the many roles she acts out, which she greatly dislikes and detests. The typical Indian male attitude and in fact the general attitude the world over considers children as the mother’s responsibility. The father does his part of the duty by working for the family. Even if she is a working woman, the major part of the onus is borne by the mother. In the west, Dinner stein and Chodorow have advocated that in order to liberate women from the gender constructs and domestic domain, women should seek the help of men in childcare and child-rearing activities. This idea exists more at the theoretical level than at the level of actual practice. While observing this from the angle of the women, it becomes evident that if this idea becomes a possibility, many women would not favor it. As Paulina Palmer has rightly stated that many women would fear that the surrender of childcare practices to men will deprive them of the one area of power and authority which they do possess. Though Mannu finds her job of mothering stifling and suffocating, she does not leave her children. Mahesh exhibits a detached even during the illness of one of the children. The child is left completely to the care of the mother. Though very easily Mahesh sheds his fatherly responsibilities, Mannu cannot do the same. Out of her motherly affection and responsibility, she is left alone to take care of the sick child. When Mahesh plans to go on a vacation, Mannu also desires to go along with him. Mahesh refuses to take her along; instead he asks her to go to Delhi to her parents. Motherhood has robbed her of everything. Mannu finds her situation very oppressing and tries to look for consolation elsewhere. He is a very talented person and makes an attempt to divert her attention towards something that interests her. But she is unable to retain her focus on it for a long time. Everything she undertakes comes to an abrupt end. There is a vast emptiness in her which does not get filled up even after discharging all the wifely and motherly responsibilities:

इतना खाली-ख़ोखला वक्त है मेरे पास।
children, more so after the death of the father. But this distancing of the mother is not devoid of its effects on the children. In the relationship between Mannu and Mahesh, love exists only at the physical level. Mannu does not find any sexual gratification as she is not involved in the sexual encounters. It is Mahesh who derives pleasure from the act. Mannu becomes a passive entity surrendering her body to the husband. She records her experiences but does not talk about it. As Vrinda Nabar states, “Sex is an activity that is not supposed to give pleasure, arouse curiosity or the desire for experiences in a woman.” Talking about the deception of sex in novels written by men and women, Rosalind Coward says, “For men sexual encounters represent access to power, a series of encounters and experiences which build up a sense of the individual’s power in having control over women’s bodies. Sexual experience in women’s novels represents access to knowledge rather than power. Sexual experience becomes the way in which a woman finds out about herself.” Mannu tries to get rid of her loneliness and meaningless existence through her extra-marital relationship with Richard. Her affair with Richard is a process of knowing herself. She makes an attempt to understand her seeds and desires. It is a self exploratory exercise where she wants to find out whether she is capable of loving, since in her relationship with Mahesh, love is one sided. Mannu is successful in carrying out herself exploratory exercise as she is not obstructed in her movements. Mahesh does not interfere with her activities. He gives Mannu the freedom to do whatever she wants. Mannu’s involvement with the theatre group and her affair with Richard are ample proof of her liberty. Richard is the Western man who is aware of the articulate woman, and hence he allows Mannu to amuse through her questionings. Mannu succeeds in talking about her sexual experience with Richard even while she fails to do this with Mahesh. Though Richard listens patiently to her, Mannu finds that he is more interested in her body than her mind. Mannu finds the role of wife and mother very depressing and oppressing. She knows that her husband will never attempt to understand her. She constantly attempts to come out of these patriarchal constraints, but compelling forces pull her back. Not prepared to leave the security of home and marriage, she settles down to discharge her motherly duties. Maitreyi Pushpa’s novel, *Alma Kabutari*, gives the details of various suffering by creating the main character Alma. She was yearning for a sprig of sympathy, and here everyone was like a
beggar, begging only for his own self. Everybody is ready to lick soles or feet for saving his skin. Alma was surprised. These well bred ones and these cocky low castes both have come here for the sake of their stomachs. Tie them up, grind them under foot, they want money, nothing else. Nathu has left his village considering this life of dignity. Compared to hauling dirt this was respectable work, dignified work. Dheeraj babuji, educated and well read, is nursing the grand ideal of being a fully fledged, proper wage slave. He certainly has reaped the fruits of his ideals in full. But Alma will not give up her principles. As for Alma, wherever she went, her fate would be the same. Surajbhan was aggressive, so maybe he’d save her from the worst. Just as he was saving the fort! For the sake of the fort he had roamed from village to village. He had won over the Yadavs, the Kurmis, the Gujjars and the Lodhis. He had been weighed against silver and the same silver he has turned into precious stones to fill up the fort with. The people of Jhansi were singing paeans to him. In Dheeraj ears now, the hails to Surajbhan fell as sweet music. There was no doubt that people today were seeing Surajbhan as an avatar of Bhagirath Seth. The royal palaces are thriving. These mansions of pleasure of decadent kings have always been deadweight upon the people. Of the two states of pleasure has always snatched the banner of victory. Dheeraj trekked forward. In Lakshmibai’s inner quarters, kirtans was going on. To each his own belief, what was man compared to god? The metal idol of the glorious Devi was lost in darkness, at times flashing with light. He went farther and thought that Hari Singh would be in the same spot where they used to meet as students. That time Dheeraj could present many things with evidence, for he had the diary of his father which a lot of information in it. When Alma finished her tasks and came up to Rana, she sat next to him on the ground, on a plank. Alma’s calm manner irritated him. Her faint and set mouth roused him. He wanted to place his faith in Alma but wavered. Reluctantly, he stood under the banana tree where he’d come close to Alma for the first time. The memory of that day stung him today like a scorpion. Alma followed him there. It gave him a kind of comfort. Also hope, to see Ram Singh’s daughter coming to him despite the mood. She came up and stood facing him. Her face was red with anger and her heart was aflame in spite of the cold weather. Rana wanted to give her a tight slap but he moved away from there and began moving forward. Alma caught hold of his hand but he jerked his
Dheeraj wrote a letter to Alma which gives whole information to her. The kabutara basti is etched on the paper in front of her eyes. Rana, Kadam kaki, Bhajani, Bheekham, Gorota, Malia and Karan, Mansaram kaka is standing with them. All that she’d seen through the eyes of Rana, flood back to vision. In this universe, with so many millions of people couldn’t a single one of them take hold of Rana? He driving her to the limits of sorrow and running away. Alma sheds tears on the paper. It was only the farthest limits of sorrow. The world is small and she is becoming weak. The day Bappa died, all her weakness dissolved with the tears. A dry, dredged and solid weight descended on her shoulders. Things like love and liking burnt to ashes on the pyre of Bappa. Nothing was left after his death. All the relatives of life stood revealed before her. Pain gives her freedom and time laid out the roads. Wild tracks surrounded by stillness, she threw shame overboard and the modesties and got going or she would have got finished. Dheeraj letter has made it clear that he was not able to break ties with her. Rana left her ran away but he agonized over his rights over Alma. In the form of paper it is he who was touching Alma. She has found her lost companion so that she is crying. Alma’s sobs called out to god and she said:

बप्पा! तुमने जिन भावनाओं को घर मे सजाया था,
=किथे मुंदकर मैंने उन्ही को उंगली धमा दी,
मुसीबत से नही, =सत्तान्त्य से बचना चाहती हुँ,
क्योंकि लगता है, =ब निवधी का कोई मतलब नही। (p.341)

All the six heroines fight against and constructed existence. Even a traditional woman also proves that she can act independently and also live alone if the situation demands. Gauri’s trip to Hoshipur has shown her the way to freedom. She is not willing to compromise as she has understood the need for self-assertion. Ratna puts up a stiff resistance against conventionality but does not succeed in breaking free. She lacks the courage to take a bold decision to step out of fixed parameters. She has to choose between living a life of
hand away. The blood drained out of Alma. Her face turned pale like dark pits winding down. Then Rana caught hold of her hand. Alma raised her face and with full force she said:

देख लिया! क्या किया।
=रे क्या देखो तुम?
तुम्हारे पास आदमी को देखने की खींच नहीं। (p.198)

In the dark Alma mumbled. She felt a touch on her feet, fingers crawled up gradually. Sensation came to her feet. The ropes were there but Nathu was not to leave her loose. A man afraid and obedient from birth and his boss as well as owner had always ridden him. The touch filled her calves with strength and the odor said a lot. This was definitely not the tobacco-chewing Nathu. Her hands came free, hopes bloomed within her. She ran her freed hands a little and sensed, kneeling on the ground. The circle of light from the weak battery of his torch gave out an impalpable glow. The light rose higher over her and the ropes fell apart one by one. Alma sat up and Dheeraj held her hand. He looked at her in the light of the torch as a sculptor at the statue he had sculpted. And then Dheeraj murmured that run Alma run. The dark night stood ready with golden opportunities for runaways. And finally Alma ran but she thinks that somebody was chasing her. She wasn’t going to be caught by Nathu. He wouldn’t be able to seize her and her body was not light like a kubutara’s. Bappa hadn’t brought her up like a Kubutari. But he had put her through courses of running. She sent prayers of thanks to Bappa. From ahead a jeep was coming along. Two gleaming eyes came into view so she turned back. Now she stood out of sight and Nathu was standing erect as a pillar. She mumbled incoherently between her lips and fell at his feet. Then Alma says:

नाथु काका, तुम्हारे पाँव पकड़ती हूँ, लौट जा।
बह देना नहीं मिली। (p.348)
dependency or making an attempt to end all this. Manju too finds the jobs of house-keeping and looking after the children very demanding. She wants to have a life of her own with a distinct identity. Her affair with Richard gives her the scope to understand herself and gain confidence that she is capable of loving and worthy of love. Suman is the most successful of all the others as she renounces her sexuality. She needs unlimited freedom to live life according to her terms. Alma has no one to control her and impose restrictions. From the beginning, she keeps up her spirits to rise as a phoenix. Though women in real life are still making attempts to come out of the patriarchal constructs, women in fiction have exemplified that where there is a will, there is a way. Premchand knows for his traditional attitudes gives enough scope to Suman to function independently. Compared to Mulk Raj Anand’s Gauri is determined not to let anyone control or dictate her any further. Belonging to the lower class, Maitreyi Pushpa’s Alma is assertive and aggressive. She leads a contented independent life without any control or restrictions. Maya of Anita Desai is always obsessed with death and always tries to the future happenings in her life. She thinks that her married life will come to an end as well as death will come to one of them. There is communication gap in between them. Mrudula Garg’s Mannu does not find the necessity to leave her family as she has the freedom to live an independent life. Educated woman like Raja Rao’s Ratna deals with her situation in her own ways. Though she is a widow she does not dress and live in the conventional style of a widow. She takes keen interest in the Gandhian movement. She is much criticized for her unconventional ways. Women like Mannu and Suman have acquired a new sexual candor about themselves. They do not hesitate to get into extra-marital relationships to speak out their minds and know their responses. These women are all part of a non-permissive society, yet they find ways and means to express themselves and live life according to their liking. They are not prepared to be restricted by patriarchal control and authority. It is their life and they have every right to live it as they want. The conceptual tradition regarding the status of women needs to be clarified as this serves as a background against which or a foundation on which the later a large building have been built. The society recognized virtues, merit and talent wherever they existed and gender distinctions were
not taken into account. Women could besides fulfilling their distinctive roles, also participate in several other walks of life.