CONCLUSION

Is she the Stillborn? Or The Crooked Line? Is she The Inheritance of Loss or just That Long Silence?

Make Small Remedies, look carefully;

She is a Lamp in the Whirlpool like Sunlight on a Broken Column;

Sometimes like The Two Faces of Eve, Sometimes like The Thousand Faces of Night;

See her Seven Steps in the Sky, When Dreams Travel.

Through the three texts surveyed i.e. Manju Kapur’s Home, Mahasweta Devi’s Mother of 1084 and Meena Alexander’s Manhattan Music, it has been widely recognized that women writers from India are intent upon speaking their identity through narrative. They have written a space for themselves either within or even on the margins of the postcolonial nation. By engaging with their condition as women through narrative, these writers have succeeded even so in addressing issues of home and belonging that have at times local resonance, at other trans-local and on occasion even cross-border affiliations.

With this in mind, I wish to convey two major observations: the first is about the difference of Indian women from their western counterparts, a category that is not homogenous but further invested with plurality and diversity. The second that despite diversity and difference there is a vision of equality and solidarity within and among various communities of women. Both the observations will be illustrated with the help of narrative marks used in these texts.

The construction of identity through writing of the narrative after all, in a large measure is dependent upon the contextualizing referential apparatus which contains and makes possible the text. In other words the production of a meaningful identity by a subject within language means that the understanding of
that reality is textually inscribed and therefore all knowledge, whether about
difference or about solidarity is textual in form.

The same idea has been expressed by Martin Mcquillan in The Narrative
Reader. He says:

In order for the narrative mark to be meaningful within its narrative
context, it must also be possible for this narrative mark to carry
different significances when used as part of a different narrative
context. A narrative mark must be able to tell different stories or
present different instances of inter-subjective experience. It must
mean something different and therefore be a different narrative. (11)

In addition all these narratives are also colored and conditioned by their
own circumstances and available resources. In fact the selves that have been
storied in these narratives resonate with the metaphor of the ‘bricoleur’ as
discussed by Claude Levi Strauss. As a bricoleur the authors here have been
involved in something like an interpretive salvage operation, crafting selves from
the vast array of available resources.

The first of these narrative marks that demonstrates the narrative and
historical specificity of Indian women is the image of house/home. The narrative
mark has been used in all three texts and seen in totality, it represents a different
experience and identity for the Indian women. The frequent employment of this
narrative mark and its questioning of the all too common conflation of experience
and identity is what are of interest here.

Now consider these lines: “Pull down their whole house, just because of a
few adjustment problems- what kind of drastic solution was this? Would that be
condoning separation or diffusing tension?” (Home 169) These lines as also many
others are evident of the fact that whenever house is spoken of , it is the
boundaries and lines that criss- cross its map that stand out.
The same unsettles the notion of a ‘home’ as an all encompassing space as also of any notion of women as an all encompassing category. A similar exposition of the feigned homogeneity within the walls of a home is undertaken by Mahasweta Devi when she says, “Now for the first time it was clear to Sujata why Brati, in the last few months of his life, had avoided seeing or talking to Dibyanath. And why Dibyanath had never uttered Brati’s name. He had never repeated the old joke: Your youngest son...does he too live in our house? ...For Brati and those like him, distrust begins at home’." (Mother of 1084 82) Distrust and betrayal also thrive within the seeming secure bastion of happiness and peace. In her narrative, as also the previous no two members have the same aspirations. What these homes reveal are not the comforts and pleasures of belonging but explore the layers of exclusions and repressions hidden underneath.

The narratives enact the contradictory relations between the members of a home and there is no attempt at marginalization of differences. In fact Meena Alexander’s exposition of home as a space that hides the differences than revealing them is evident from these lines where she remarks, “What was a house but a pivot of rock and tile and white washed wall, a barrier human hands put up, to keep the elements at bay.” (Manhattan Music 100) Clearly then, the narrative collectively challenge the notion of a totalizing discourse on women as also on home.

These women’s quarrel with patriarchy and imperialism gives a particular complexity to their appropriations of the home / house. At the same time they play upon its multiple significations –home and society margins, body, literary canon (narrative as a home)- and set them in shifting relations to the women.

‘Alone I must perish’- seems to be the fate for all these women whose homes do not feel like homes. Leading claustrophobic lives they fight battles of their own. By shifting attention away from unity of women to their alienation, these writers try to splinter the notion of common experience as also of the essential foundationalism of home as well as narratives. In both cases the
unsettlement serves a significant purpose. The same can be summed up in the
words of Judith Butler. She remarks in *Gender Trouble*:

> This kind of critique brings into question the foundationalist frame
> in which feminism as an identity politics has been articulated. The
> internal paradox of this foundationalism is that it presumes fixes
> and constraints the very "subjects" that it hopes to represent and
> liberate. The task here is not to celebrate each and every new
> possibility qua possibility but to re describe those possibilities that
> already exist, but which exist within cultural domains designated
> culturally unintelligible and impossible. (203)

In fact a further attempt at foregrounding strategic locations and space
within this home which constructs her identity is undertaken through another
narrative mark- kitchen. A part of home space it seems to define and inform the
experiences of these kitchen slaves. In *Home*, it is the culinary skills of a woman
that testify her worth. The displeasure of Sona at her daughter being weaned away
from the kitchen due to her sickness is noteworthy. She tells the doctor, “But
doctor, there is nothing wrong with her hands,” horrified at this attempt to wrest a
woman’s occupation away from her.”(Home 239).

Not just that, even Sandhya despite her marriage in United States, fails to
outgrow her kitchen centered training in womanhood. The narrative teems with
pictures of Sandhya working in the kitchen. Even when she is outside it, she
invariably thinks of the same. “So her mother’s voice calming her, led Sandhya
through the details of the meal she was to prepare; fish curry, dal, sambar, thorun,
rice, golden papad were all on the menu.”( Manhattan Music 61).

The kitchen defines women, constructs their identity. It also encloses,
encircles and constraints them. The relationship between home, kitchen and the
subsequent loss of self is crucial. It is lonely to rebel against this collapse of
identity and be separated from others because of injustice. What these textual
moves do is that they dismantle stagnant and static notions about an identity that pre-exists the text. Judith Butler remarks about the same in *Gender Trouble* saying:

> The foundationalist reasoning of identity politics tends to assume that an identity must first be in place in order for political interests to be elaborated, and, subsequently, political action to be taken. My argument is that there need not be a “doer behind the deed” but that the “doer” is variably constructed in and through the deed. (195)

Thus the perspectives in each home/narrative are multiple and shifting and therefore allow for an emphasis on the need for remapping the boundaries, for the coherence of the women situated in these positions is only illusory. So much so, the appearance of these homes as also the women implicated within them is basically the staging of a disappearance. The pleasure of these narratives is constituted primarily by such intermittence.

Roland Barthes has remarked about the same in *The Pleasure of the Text*. He says:

> Is not the most erotic portion of the body where the garment gapes? In perversion there are no erogenous zones; it is the intermittence that psychoanalysis has so rightly stated which is erotic, the intermittence of skin flashing between the two articles of clothing, between two edges, it is the flash itself which seduces or rather the staging of an appearance as disappearance. (7)

The above lines also serve to anticipate the distinctive narrative flavor of these narratives as also their construction of Indian women as a discrete, different category that is as much an appearance as a disappearance. The same idea has been quiet literally sewed across the three texts through a sartorial narrative mark – sari.
The allusions to this magical and delimited six yard fabric are varied and diverse. From “her mother dressing, winding the six yards of the sari round her overweight waist.” (Manhattan Music 102) to “Look at the Sari- one size for everybody- no stitching, no tailoring, no fitting, no complaints, everything beautiful and simple.” (Home 115)

Weaving of such image indubitably contributes to the construction of these Indian women’s identity as separate but what it also does is that it decomposes (like the fabric) the limit of her identity as also of these narratives written by Indian women. The decomposition of this limit produced symbolically by this deceptively simple fabric also folds the text back upon itself, calling attention to these narratives as a contingent continuity that tell one story of Indian women, any part of which can impose its own random limit and retain the shape and character simultaneously. Much the same is true of the flexible ego boundaries of the Indian women who is at once capable of sacrifice and suffering and at other of revenge and retaliation.

This image that cuts across all these texts making Indian women at once a presence and absence and at once a victim and rebel has been fore grounded further through another narrative mark- Draupadi. Though the mark has been literally used in just one of the texts cited above, yet there is a Draupadi in each of them. More importantly, as has just been asserted, what is of concern here is the construction of Indian women’s identity in a narrative matrix produced by the three texts.

Draupadi was one of the leading characters of Mahabharata, known for her great seductive beauty and her determined will. Her life is symbolic of sacrifice, strength, suffering, virtue and honor. The imparting of this symbol to the women protagonists in these texts renders to these women a distinct character of their own- fraught with ambivalences and with capacity for ruthless vengeance.
But the narrative mark is a myth. However these myths that have been evoked in at least two texts to be precise (Sita and Savitri in *Home* and Draupadi in *Manhattan Music*) raise questions not just of race or color but as already indicated create an Indian woman who has to fight power. Various forms of arbitrary power at times patriarchal, at times social and at times racial continually sniff life out for these Indian women. Nisha’s discussions with her father in a home that cannot own her (domestic exile), Sujata’s gesture of solidarity towards Nandini and Somu’s mother as fellow social outcasts (social exile) or Sandhya’s restless encounter with Rashid in America (cultural/nation exile) are all of one pattern or matrix. They are voices in the wilderness like Draupadi or Sita.

The concept of Indian women’s struggle against power structures was not alien to *Mahabharata* either. Draupadi remarks in Chaturvedi, Badrinath’s *The Mahabharata: An Enquiry In The Human Condition*:

> He who is always forgiving invites several defects. His relatives, his subordinates, his enemies, and even those who are neutral to him, behave towards him with disrespect; nor does anybody ever show him courtesy, because forgiveness is seen as weakness, and weakness invites disrespect. Therefore, to forgive always is unwise even for the wise. (147)

Not very different is the predicament of these women who try to assert their selfhood, to search for an identity but find it too difficult to “break through the bars she(they) herself had built” (*Mother of 1084*). Not unlike Draupadi they wish to create a Brave new world but crushed as they are by the oppressive weight of multiple forces surrounding them, they retreat again to their miseries and humiliation.

That is the mind of Indian women: inclined to suffer and built out of contradictions. Sujata can neither leave her family out of a feeling of guilt nor happily be a part of it (“She had wasted herself. Has she been any good to
anybody? Dibyanath? Neepa? Tuli? No one. ” Mother of 1084 104). Not very different is the self effacement that Nisha and Sandhya succumb to. Seen closely, it is a venomous mix of society, religion and patriarchy that shapes them so.

Another narrative mark that accentuates the status of Indian women as peculiar and distinctive is the religion. In all the three narratives, religion acts as a disabling principle for all women regardless of their differing positions in the society.

In texts like Home and Manhattan Music, religion once again relegates women to the position of suffering. Collectively it is painted like a “Theater of Cruelty” (Manhattan Music 198). So much so the women who seemingly follow religion, wear saffron and have gurus as messiahs of God are like Nargis in Mother of 1084. Mahasweta remarks, “Nargis was a devotee of the guru. She had resolved to preach the Swami’ teachings throughout India. She held a glass of lemon cordial in one hand. A confirmed dipsomaniac, she came out only on special occasions. But she never forgot to wear the holy color saffron.” (Mother of 1084 109).

Women fast, women must get married, women should not be widows, women are raped and eve teased- all happens in the name of religion. However, it is not be mistaken that the description of Indian women thus offered is reductionist in any sense.

While symbols like religion are used as materials for the construction of these women’s selfhood, it is not to say that the Indian women represent an unchanging essential. Such a fear has been expressed by Marnia Lazreg in Feminism and Difference. She says:

A ritual has been established whereby the writers appeal to religion as the cause of gender inequality just as it is made the source of underdevelopment…the overall effect of this paradigm is to deprive women of self-presence, of being. Because women are subsumed
under religion presented in fundamental terms, they are inevitably seen as evolving in non-historical time. They virtually have no history. Any analysis of change is therefore foreclosed. (87)

Yet another narrative mark that typifies the distinctiveness of these women’s identity is the depiction of the mother-in-law/daughter-in-law feud. The Indian woman comes into being in these narratives that center on the conflicts between the two women as they jointly inhabit the space of the family home. Particularly narratives like Home and Mother of 1084 abound with references to this sub-storyline that inevitably contributes to the production of women’s identity in the Indian scenario.

The bitterness that prevails between Sona and her mother-in-law has been conveyed by Manju Kapur in these words, “By now Sona knew this. When the two of them were alone, she could see how her mother-in-law had to struggle to even talk to her. Every gesture suggested the daughter-in-law had no right to exist, and if she had to live, why was she doing it in their house?” (Home 12). The narratives thus re-enact the cavil of women competing against each other to gain control or at least seek attention of the same man-son or husband. At one level, it adds another dimension to the struggle for space, for these Indian women seem to be competing not just with women but men too.

Repeatedly and endlessly the narratives focus on the Machiavellian machinations of the mother-in-law while the daughter-in-law suffers without evident remonstrance. Reference to Sujata’s mother-in-law leaving for her sister’s place as time for childbirth approached because she could not stand ‘all that’ is also significant in the same regard. Mahasweta Devi remarks in Mother of 1084. “She could not stand Sujata having her children, she looked at her withering hatred. When the time for childbirth approached, she would leave the house to go and live with her sister. She refused to stand by Sujata.” (Mother of 1084 2). The mother-in-law figures become a crucial node of narrative and discursive
significance. Time and again, the older woman is cast in a negative light for being too demanding and authoritarian.

The pitiable condition of the Indian women has been expressed by Gupta A. R in the following words in Women in Hindu Society. He remarks:

In a joint Hindu family, a young daughter-in-law is at a very low rung of the social status ladder. Only in the course of time, after having made necessary adjustments with the mother-in-law by means of undergoing prolonged trials and tribulations and partly on the basis of the amount of dowry and gifts received from her parents and partly depending on the social position and the earning capacity of her husband as also on her having given birth to a son, the status of a wife starts improving. (217)

Such narrative moves serve to replenish the trite ‘women-are-each-other’s-worst-enemies’ idea as also set up new notions of femininity being offered by the authors. That is to say, that the mother-in-law figure lives out an archaic lifestyle and is unable to reconcile the demands of the marketplace with those of the Indian values. Her brand of femininity is disabling, it is inimical to the nation, its present and its future. The mother-in-law thus becomes the flashpoint through which contesting definitions of womanhood and identity are negotiated.

In fact a related point about Indian women’s perception of their own sexuality may be made here. Mothers-in-law seem to be envious of their daughters-in-law because they are young and fertile. For instance Dibynath’s mother is jealous of Sujata for the same reason. The narratives thus also articulate women’s sexuality within the nation in a very provocative manner. Negative characterizations of the mother-in-law, the older menopausal woman, are also suggestive about the ways in which ideas of fertility are closely linked with the future of the nation. Biological body of the woman is collapsed onto that of the nation. The mother-in-law is inimical to the nation and has to unwillingly cede
her place within the family and of the nation to the putatively, fertile, younger and modern woman.

Speaking as one is about women's sexuality and its representation in these narratives, once again it becomes clear that these women have little control over it. In *Home*, there is an indisputable assumption that women must bear more and more children, in *Mother of 1084* the protagonist cannot communicate her refusal to produce more children and in *Manhattan Music* Draupadi has to unwillingly undergo abortion.

The construction of such an identity speaks not just about the complexities of Indian women's experiences but also about the cultural context that they are a part of. Zillah Eisenstein has made a similar point in her work *Global Obscenities: Patriarchy, Capitalism and the Lure of Cyberfantasy*. She says:

> Women's and girl's bodies determine democracy: free from violence and sexual abuse, free from malnutrition and environmental degradation, free to plan their families, free to choose their sexual lives and preferences. (21)

However the writers in question here do not succumb to this kind of unitary notion as see these women as agents in dynamic and ever changing socio-political space. The struggle of these Indian women is in fact hardly a struggle against patriarchal forces. The men in these narratives are not demonic tyrants. It is just that in a socio-religious establishment that we are all apart of, these men enjoy a position of privilege. The oppression of these women therefore is attributable to the power structures created and hegemonised by the establishment.

That, at least, two of these narratives blur the boundaries between fiction and non fiction and are nothing short of documentation illustrates the point just made. Documentation is never far from narrative either in *Mother of 1084* or in *Manhattan Music*. Whether it is fighting barbarity and cruelty of Police Force and Politicians or confronting problems of women who have been sexually abused or
simply trying to overcome a contaminated and crude public sector problem, these women are shaped by all these factors. Mohanty remarks in *Feminism without Borders*, “they are vulnerable economically, in caste terms, physically, sexually, and in terms of their health and of course, they are socially and politically invisible. Thus they are one of the most difficult constituencies to organize.” (166)

But amidst this social scenario that once again renders them as an absence, these women try to step out of their homes. There is always a sense of wasted blood, defeated struggle and betrayal but with their faint attempts at struggle they prove that they are not expendable. They are not social liabilities: they are dreamers, poetesses, social activists, mothers and fierce fighters- all at once. The difference between the western women’s predicament and that of the Indian women has been expressed by Yashoda Bhat in *The Image of Women in Indian Literature* in these words. She says:

The point is made very clear when we look at the issues before women in the two societies. In the west, now, it is purely a question of identity and equality; in India, it is still a question of stark survival. Women in India are still caught between feudal values and style of life and the fast approaching new life. Caught between the burden of the home and the work-place, child-bearing, mothering, struggling, with conventions, women has first to survive; the question of equality is a far cry. (Intro)

Yet amidst a set up that is putrefied and stinking, these women are incarcerated in several layers of suffering. No wonder then, prison as another narrative mark appropriately conveys their condition of a perpetual exile. At every step, they find their search for identity thwarted and themselves captured in the confines of prison. Literally the image has been employed by Mahasweta Devi in the *Mother of 1084* but suggestions of their imprisonment: sometimes within home and sometimes outside it.
The following lines are an indication of the pain and isolation of all Indian women from the society, family, and home and sometimes even themselves. She remarks, "There one lived all alone with oneself within four walls, with an iron door and a sole small hole in the wall. Immured in the solitary cell, one tried to penetrate the world outside with a mind as keen and cutting as the knife of the surgeon in the morgue."(Mother of 1084 73)

Incidentally it is also this period of solitary confinement that paradoxically leads to emancipation from shackles, or put simply it is precisely this exile where they are at home with their own self. The mirror effect is created and leads to self analysis. The co-existence and convergence of such discursive injunctions produces the possibility of a complex reconfiguration and redeployment. There is no self that is prior to this convergence. There is only a taking up of tools where they lie.

These and many other narrative marks reinforce the difference of Indian women as also of the narratives produced by Indian women. Such moves render both to the Indian women and the Indian women’s novel a distinctive character of their own. These novels by virtue of being historically, socially and culturally rooted reflected the changing needs, realities and aspirations of the Indian women. Under the impact of gender revolution, their novels unlike the western fictions have become de centered heterglossias where a constant collision of signifiers and signified enacts the infiltration of the language of power with the language of rebellion.

For instance Manhattan Music employs journals, sub-narrators, newspaper reports and socially diverse speech styles and Bakhtin, remarks about the same in The Dialogic Imagination:

These distinctive links and relationships between utterances and languages, this movement of the theme through different languages...
and speech types, its dispersion into the rivulets and droplets of social heteroglossia is its dialogization (263).

In fact all across these narratives, linguistic constructs have been questioned, disrupted and transcended. Myth, metonymy, repetition, counter-narrative and many other stylistic devices facilitate this transcendence. Whether or nor language of these narrative actually enables emancipation, is however another matter. Though these women try to recover pleasure by trying to appropriate the signs barred from the signifier, yet at times the move is only half successful, for Judith Butler says in Gender Trouble:

Language is the residue and alternative accomplishment of dissatisfied desire, the variegated cultural production of a sublimation that never really satisfies. That language inevitably fails to satisfy is the necessary consequence of the prohibition which grounds the possibility of language and marks the vanity of its referential gestures (58).

However by virtue of all these anti hegemonic moves, the novelists offer protest against not just western colonialism (which is the way with western feminists who assume all other women under one room), but also narrative, domestic, social, class, religious and even sexual colonialism. It needs to be mentioned here that the elaboration of these differences of Indian women should not be seen as Indian women writer’s submission to a demand for the marginalized other.

The consciousness of differences is likely to create hierarchies wherein the Indian women would be seen suffering much more than her western counterpart. However differences here are being suggested simply to imply the specificity of Indian women’s experiences. Moreover whatever danger of insuperable division and separatism it creates is further undone by the investigation of plurality within the Indian women.
Therefore what emerges as a more important conclusion from the analysis of the three narratives is not the difference of Indian women from the western women but the differences among Indian women. While the above said distinctions are both useful and necessary, these narrative marks by no means exhaust the analysis of women’s identity. The diverse, fluid and dynamic nature of the lives of Indian women cannot after all be collapsed into a few frozen indicators of their identity. Any such representation of Indian women threatens to circumscribe our understanding and analysis of the distinctiveness of the struggles these women encounter.

One sees in the narratives not just the plurality of Indian women but plurality of the selves of each of them as also of the narrative styles. There is in each of the narratives a depiction of multiple selves of one woman. The multiple consciousness embedded into the writing of these narratives reveals that understanding fully the experiences of Indian women is not simply a matter of taking counter stance to western women but of recognizing conflicting or opposing ideas. The same is enabled among other things through what Homi. K. Bhabha calls in The Location of Culture the “force of writing as productive matrix which defines the social.”

A careful reading of the three narratives has revealed that the representation of Indian women offered is not that of an indistinguishable huddled mass. In fact incommensurability is the defining feature of these images. The incongruous portraits of Indian women offered through these narratives rehearse an unfamiliar script of diversity. The content of these narratives opens up a bewildering variety of reactions, exchanges, flows. The formulations go beyond the popular way of seeing, it produces that subjects that are no longer confined within the representational politics of a single monolithic nation.

The first narrative, Home, a family centered saga with multiple characters and intersecting storylines offers several points of entry for an analysis of a woman’s identity construction. Despite the seeming predictability, the narrative
draws upon a range of social concerns. Though the narrative looks melodramatic on occasions, yet it allows one to engage with issues like contradictions of modernity, the traumas of class struggle and the search for identity. Such melodramatic narratives as Ann Kaplan has elucidated, reveal and conceal cultural conflicts; national crisis are displaced into the domestic realm, particularly that of the mother-daughter relationship.

The second narrative, *Mother of 1084*, dislodges not just patriarchal imperialism but even literary and cultural imperialism. That is to say in a western literary climate, there exists a contestation between psychoanalytical formation of female subjectivity and socialist structuring of female identity. There is a dichotomy between what Jameson Frederic refers to as “the poetic and the political, between what we have come to think of as the domain of sexuality and the unconscious and that of the public world of classes, of the economic and the secular political power.” (Social Text 65)

But *Mother of 1084*, a narrative loaded with poetic dream symbols in the backdrop of intense class struggle achieves the most unusual reconciliation of these two streams of thought. The text serves to undo the prejudice against feeling which is sustained by the assumption that the condition of interiority - required by feeling - presupposes a receding away from the social into the narcissistic pleasures of fantasy and the imagination. Such an orientation of the narrative thus makes it a site where according to Caren Kaplan as she expresses in Making a Difference “the opposing forces of femininity and feminism clash by night.” (146)

The third narrative is not just a text but a system the confrontation between the symbolic and the semiotic which disrupts its signifying process indefinitely signifying images and metaphors. The distinctiveness in the representation of women in the narratives can thus be undertaken under three such narrative marks that in a large measure define the role of a woman in a society. Mahadevi Varma remarks about the “Indian woman’s social status” in her “The Hindu Woman’s Wifehood” in Jasbir Jain’s *Women in Patriarchy* saying:
Her life’s primary goal was considered to be wifehood, and the ultimate one, motherhood. Therefore only one path and only one means of livelihood was open to her. If society can face the bitter truth it will shamefully acknowledge that it assigned to the women the most degrading means of earning a living. She is forced to live only as an exhibition of man’s wealth and as a means of his recreation. No value is attached to her life as an individual and as a citizen. Motherhood is revered because it keeps the society alive and wifehood is lauded because it caters to man’s fulfillment. But can it be conceded that the physical and mental state of all women will fit these two roles alone. (227)

The first in the series of these narrative marks that has been detailed in each of the narratives very differently is: Mother. The image has been developed in detail in each of the narratives but in a manner, that each brings out a picture of women that is different from the other.

Beginning with Home, the narrative resonates with utterances about mothers and motherhood. A look at the Banwari Lal family will reveal how there are many mothers spoken of in the narrative. Sona, Sushila, Pooja, Asha, Seema, Rekha and eventually even Nisha are all mothers. However the main storyline centers on Sona as the mother figure with others more or less in the periphery. The mother in this narrative does all that is seemingly right for her child, yet the image comes across as distasteful and derogatory. Sona’s ultimate aspiration with regard to her daughter has been summed up in these words, “Nisha needed to be grounded in the tradition that would make her a wife worth having. The art of service and domesticity should shine in her daughter so brightly that she would overcome her negative karma to be a beacon in her married home.” (Home 129)

Carved and created by the social structures and traditions of the society, this mother wants her daughter too to be nothing else but a conformist. The same
results in tension and Nisha, thwarted in her desires and ambitions develops a dislike for her mother. “Nisha stared at her mother in hatred. What a low mind she had. She wanted to get rid of her, get rid of them all.” (Home 299).

Sexual colonialism is thus offered to Nisha in the largest measure by her well-wishing mother who weans her daughter of an intended academic pursuit, her love, her business success and most of all, her identity. The world that Manju Kapur creates does not offer too many choices to these women. So compelling and forceful it is that Nisha’s release ironically comes in only one region – when she becomes a mother. In fact it is not just motherhood that becomes a disabling image in the narrative. The entire narrative has been conceived in a manner that all the characters- not just women but even men are helpless tramps- incapacitated and disabled by destiny. Every problem is ascribed to bad karma; the solution to each of them is with some astrologer, hakim, baba, guru etc. Even the manner in which Sona conceives Nisha is telling in the same regard.

In the middle class business society, that Manju Kapur chronicles the role of women is singular- to get married and carry forward the family line. Their self and identity is secured only through the paradoxical abandonment of individual desires and a dream, for it is the “collective good” that matters. Her only home is her husband’s and her worth is directly proportionate to the number of children she produces, or to be precise the number of sons she gives birth to.

The depiction of women’s suffering is most hard hitting in this narrative, for in the others women at least have a cognizance of their pain and exploitation. Mahasweta Devi offers a totally different picture of woman, particularly with respect to the narrative mark being discussed. The mother after all in this narrative is not the mother of Home whose life is smoothly closeted in the domestic space of her family. Sujata’s comes to us from the fringes of the society- her life far from being a political and a historical is charged with these factors.
Where women in *Home* pine for motherhood, the protagonist in this narrative takes no unnecessary pride upon giving birth. On the contrary her discomfort with it is loud and lucid. The difference in the perspectives of the two women awaiting childbirth is indeed very stark. Sona beams with happiness as she sees herself in a mirror. Kapur remarks, “her body grew heavy with the weight of the two; her round face became rounder and shone like the moon.” (*Home* 35). In complete contrast is Sujata about whom Mahasweta remarks, “She had herself violated and defiled throughout the nine months. The body gathering weight seemed like a curse.” (*Mother of 1084* 4).

That is not all. Numberless illusions about motherhood are shed in the second narrative. Not only Sujata finds the experience of motherhood “painful” but also that Sujata does not love her children impartially and Sujata has no idea about the activities that her son Brati is engaged in. but that is not to say that Sujata is an irresponsible mother. In fact the reverse is true.

After her son dies a scandalous death, she singlehandedly keeps his memories alive and remains unapologetic about the neglect she offers to her family in the process. Her vulnerability in fact is attributable to the farcical and devious relationships that surround her on one had and on the other to the volatility of the social system that further cripples and paralyses her. Thus unlike the former narrative where women’s identity and search for a comfortable home space is defined only from the domestic standpoint, here the construction of her identity is also affected by variables like society, establishment and political forces.

The depiction of motherhood takes on a totally different enunciation when our heroine crosses the borders of her homeland and sets up a life in United States. In *Manhattan Music*, Sandhya is a mother to the five year old Dora. Unlike Sona, she is neither blinded by social conventions and dictates, nor is her love for her child as terrible and fierce as Sujata’s. Rather hers is a more of an existential estrangement from the life she is leading away from home in India. It is this
feeling of dislocation of her real self that affects her relationship even with her daughter. In the midst of near fatal suicide attempt, nostalgic yearning for her home, growing distance with Stephen, an affair outside marriage and myriad other problems the child is a picture of neglect. But regret follows soon as Sandhya yearns to revive the fast fading bond. Alexander remarks, “if only she could reach back to that time, reclaim those moments, those gestures, she might slip into a lost life, be a mother again to little Dora.”(Manhattan Music 216)

More importantly any attempt at trying to understand the plurality of Indian women apparent through these narratives will be incomplete if attention is not turned to those factors that constitute this plurality. Each of the narrative has as its backdrop a different cultural, historical and social situation.

While that has already been elaborated in the preceding chapters, yet another narrative mark that explains this plurality immanent in the depiction of Indian women is their role as wives. All three narratives invariably weave a plot around the overriding theme of matrimony but the picture of women as wives that emerges from each of these narratives is peculiar and distinct.

The first narrative, i.e. Home is indeed a narrative about marriages, man-woman relationships and childbirth. The story of mankind, not just womankind it seems is a story only of marriages with brief interludes of peace. In this large and unending procession of marriages, women’s most important role is that of a wife, everything else is a “time-pass”. In this world, love marriage is a taboo, dowry is not a sin, fertility the only virtue, fast and prayers for the husbands the only aspiration and producing a son the only desire. Any woman whose stars in the “marriage market” are bad is sure to lead a doomed life.

Despite the oddities, women in this narrative long and yearn to get married, to spend their lives in the service of their husbands. The sacramental ideal of womanhood which is overwhelmingly influenced by the dictates of the religion and according to which divorce has no place, dominates the lives of these women.
Pandita Ramabai Saraswati makes an appoint about the impartial justice in the treatment of womankind in her article titled ‘Woman’s Place in Religion and Society’ saying:

but no such provision is made for the woman; on the contrary, she must remain with and revere her husband as a god, even though he be a destitute of virtue, and seek pleasure elsewhere or be devoid of good qualities, addicted to evil passion, fond of spiritual liquors or diseased and what not. (212)

These lines that speak of Sunita’s mysterious death at her in-laws reveal how these women in case of an unhappy marriage are denied any other choice. Kapur says, “fourteen years after her marriage, Sunita’s hopes were answered. The Banwari Lal family got the news by telegram. There had been an accident in the kitchen and Sunita had died of burns in the hospital. The cremation would take place the next day. She was only thirty two.” (Home 18).

Thus every single woman in this narrative is a projection of Sita, the heroine of epic Ramayana. Each of them must aspire to be like her. To sum up in the words of Gupta A.R. in Women in Hindu Society, she should be, “tender and mild, soft and dreamy as moonlight, self-forgetting, filled with love, devotion, sincerity and faithfulness.” (24)

The picture of marriage as also of the wife figure changes as one reads the second narrative, i.e. Mother of 1084. Much has already been said in chapter two about the claustrophobia produced by marriage in the second chapter. The wife in this narrative therefore unlike the preceding one is seen choking in her husband’s home.

While she continues to stay with her husband despite his alleged affair with the typist and his indifference towards Brati’s death, yet that is not to say that the same amounts to an idealization of austerities and negations by Sujata. Sketches of her past suggest that she had attempted an absolute identification with the
husband’s desires but with the death of Brati, everything had changed. In fact an analysis of specific roles will suggest that in Home, women are wives first and motherhood is a distant second. But in this particular narrative, Sujata is indeed the mother that the great Hindu epic, Mahabharata alludes to stating that the mother excels in her greatness ten fathers.

Her condition as a wife is no less pitiable in the first narrative. Sujata like most Indian women has been trained to accept all sufferings stoically. Mahasweta remarks, “she had never thought of asking questions. She never knew that she had the right to ask questions. She had been hurt at times. Hurt badly. Dibyanath had always fooled around with women. His mother looked upon his indiscretions with indulgence. For her, it was a mark of her son’s virility; her son was no henpecked husband. Sujata was hurt. But she had consoled herself with the thought that nobody in life had uninterrupted happiness.” (Mother of 1084 31)

However placed as she is in the midst of a turbulent social system that snatches away her son from her, she changes eventually from the coy and submissive Sita into a more assertive woman form. At times like Kali and Durga and at others like Uma or Sakti.

However a completely different picture of Indian women as a wife emerges in the third narrative, i.e. Manhattan Music. It is in this narrative that the visibly unhappy woman Sandhya, in search of her lost identity steps out of her marriage. In fact the narrative is replete with references to promiscuity, infidelity and the likes. The multi cultural ethics of this narrative is indeed the collapse of all ethics.

But what is interesting is the way Meena Alexander sets up a parallel to the women in Indian epics and thus seeks justification for the aberrations of her own heroines. The narrative thus by seeking sanctions for the same becomes a medium for bringing these women on the margins into the mainstream. Where the women in the first two narratives are all implicated in arranged marriages, in the third it is
something they plan and chose on their own. However that is not to say that the concept of love marriage is alien to the Indian ethos. Our ancient Indian literature has innumerable episodes of highly developed matrimonial harmony based on mutual love. The well known songs of Nala-Damyanti and the tale of Satyavana-Savitri vouchsafe that the basis of an ideal wedding in India was an absolute love.

Related points may be made about the representation of women in these three narratives. For instance each accords a different degree of significance to the physical charms of a woman. In Home, the same has superlative significance. Nisha’s skin maladies leave her mother crestfallen because they are likely to reduce her chances in the marriage circuit. The anxiety of the entire family in the same regard has been expressed in these words, “Months passed, months in which the family hoped that the eczema would vanish as it had come. Miraculously Nisha would get up one morning shining with pearly incandescence. Finally they had to admit that moment was not to be.”(Home 233)

However in Manhattan Music, though there are ample references to the seductive charms of Sandhya, yet in this narrative the beauty of body and soul go hand in hand. Persistent allusions to Draupadi who is a perfect embodiment of inner and outer beauty with respect to Sandhya testify this point. Once again this narrative accomplishes a Wastelandish linking of contamporeneity and antiquity by comparing the twenty first century Manhattan woman to the women in Classical Sanskrit literature and Puranic Literature.

The in-between narrative, Mother of 1084 seems to picture physical charm in a very suspicious light. The women who look good and dress well are hollow and immoral. In contrast is Nandini, the young heroine who despite her physical disfigurement is intended to cast an appeal. Mahasweta remarks about her, “On her thin, dark and weary face Sujata could see a permanent shadow under her eyes. Just as shadows linger on the slopes of hills or the foothills. Some unknown land of eternal shadows in the foothills.”(Mother of 1084 76)
In fact there is a difference not just in the construction of women’s identity with respect to their beauty but also with regard to the amount of sexual freedom warranted to them. Home, that brings alive a story teeming with marriages, pregnancies and child birth obviously implicates prolific and abundant sexual activity but keeping in mind the prudishness of the set up that it chronicles, it is invariably kept behind the scenes.

Mahasweta Devi, given the intensely political backdrop of her narrative has other issues to treat of. The women in her world are shaped and driven by different kind of energies. Even when a man–woman relationship like Nandini-Brati is narrated, it is the passion of common social interests that kindles fire. In a society where young people are dying, being consumed by sexual passions is pictured as both unnecessary and immoral. A passing reference to a movie plan between Balai and Neepa shows Sujata’s repulsion with anything of the kind. Mahasweta Devi remarks, “Balai clicked his tongue between his lips and his cheeks, and made a strange sound. Naked and meaty.” (Mother of 1084, 119).

A completely different image of women is presented in Manhattan Music as far as this narrative mark is concerned. The narrative not only beams with sexual frankness but also represents the same as sacred and desirable. Throughout the narrative, erotic symbols have been employed. Once again by doing so, Meena Alexander’s narrative calls to mind ancient Indian art and literature which over brims with similar kind of candor.

These and many such narrative marks contribute to the construction of a separate context and articulatory framework for these narratives. The blossoming of Indian women through these narratives that spell out difference as well as pluralism, serves as an important corrective to the homogenizing characterizations of the Indian women.

Grounding their fictions in such specificities and diversity at once enacts the undoing of one nation and one culture and one home. With focus on revealing
the freak social and cultural identity displacements the narratives alternate consistently between the field of appearances and disappearances. However it needs to be stated here that the field of narrative marks just suggested as fixed presence in not a naïve suggestion. One realizes that despite assertions of transparency being made through these narrative codes or marks there are hidden homes or zones. The rebellion of women is staged precisely through these zones.

Homi K. Bhabha has made a rather interesting analogy of the interplay between appearance and the process that gives rise to it. He remarks in “Signs taken for Wonders”:

Despite appearances, the text of transparency inscribes a double vision: the field of the ‘true’ emerges as a visible sign of authority only after the regulatory and displacing division of the true and the false. From this point of view, discursive transparency is best read in the photographic sense in which a transparency is also always a negative, processed into visibility through the technologies of reversal, enlargement, lighting, editing, projection, not a source but a re-source of light. Such a bringing to light is a question of the provision of visibility as a capacity, a strategy, an agency. (157)

Resistance is thus offered not only through the negation of other cultural codes but also through the writing of identities through narrative moves that defy closure, linearity, one image, one author and one home.

Thus the three narratives studied exile the rather exoticized notion of Indian women by adopting narrative strategies that are distinctive and different from each other. After all true depiction of cultural difference intervenes to transform the very scenario of articulation. For instance a narrative like Home, is more of a mimetic document where the author’s concern is more with the characters than with anything else whereas Manhattan Music seems to tread the semiotic approach. It treats characters more as patterns of recurrence or motifs
“which are continually re contextualized in other’s motifs”, and as such lose their privilege, central status and their definition.

The production of self and identity therefore takes place in the midst of complex interactional frameworks. But simply the existence of a body of Indian women’s narratives is not a sufficient evidence of decentering hegemonic histories and subjectivities. A more important challenge here is the invention of spaces and images that encode resistance.

However different the narrative styles of these three texts are, but seen in unison they do suggest a volatile and tenuous partnership. After all, the alliance between these sibling texts is informed by a mutual suspicion of the western discourse on Indian women. For instance each of these fractures the colonizing gaze of the western academy in its own way. To take an example, Home, by narrating a tale of women in oblivion to variables like race, nation, ethnicity, works a disavowal of the much too eager imbrications of race and gender in the case of third world women. Kapur’s narrative therefore refuses to surrender Indian women to the sentimental and often opportunistic enamourment with ‘marginality’.

Meanwhile Mahasweta Devi enables this imperialist decentering in a totally different manner. By bringing forth a tale of women in the backdrop of definite historical and political circumstances, the text causes a major setback to the ethnocentric myopia which disregards the enormous material and historical differences among Indian women.

Meena Alexander’s Manhattan Music accomplishes the same by locating itself in the heart of west. The cross cultural narrative thus serves a blow to the ‘Othering’ of the third world women as also to the self consolidating separatism of Western women. The three narrative thus in a manner that is peculiar to each disable the “voyeuristic craving for the colorful alterity” according to LeelaGandhi in Postcolonial Theory (85)
However that is not to say that all enlightenment ends with the exposition of differences. In fact the emphasis on the specificity of differences is just a way of spelling out a vision of equality that is attentive to power differences within and among Indian women. An interesting point has been made by Mohanty in the same regard. She says, in *Feminism Without Borders*:

In knowing differences and particularities, we can better see the connections and commonalities because no border or boundary is ever complete or rigidly determining. The challenge is to see how differences allow us to explain the connections and border crossings more accurately, how specifying difference allows us to theorize universal concerns more fully. (226)

Having cited that the narratives written by these Indian women novelists create identities that are culturally rooted and therefore diverse, it also needs to be illustrated that however de centered and counter hegemonic there moves may be, yet they cannot completely ignore the gaze of the western eyes. Not only that, these writers lives inside a western language and negotiate it every day. They make their home at times in Calcutta, at times in Delhi or at Tiruvella but a reference to the western world cannot be ignored. Their cross race (brown vs. white in *Manhattan Music*), cross class (capitalist vs. communist in *Mother of 1084*) and cross linguistic (the very fact that the anguish of Indian women is conveyed in English) strategies locate or rather dislocate them in a world where the borders are not fixed.

Not just that specific evidence of a trans-national enterprise at work can be cited in the narratives of these women’s novels. While there are differences that exist in relation and tension with other women, yet what is also suggested are relations of mutuality, co responsibility and common interests. Thus the focus is not just on the differences of race, class, nation etc in varied communities of women but on mutuality as well as complication, which is inevitable given the modern day, inter weaving of the histories of these communities.
The idea is not very different from what Robin Morgan has suggested in her work Sisterhood. She remarks in Sisterhood:

Danda writes here of her own feminist epiphany...Ama Ata confesses the anguish of the women artist...Mahnaz communicates her grief and her hope... Manelousie opens herself up in a poem. And do we not after all recognize one another? Why? (35)

However, speaking strictly in terms of experience of women, it is primarily in the diasporic and multilingual fictions that the transnational perspective is explicitly visible. That is why a text like Manhattan Music resonates with narrative marks like the subway and wings which suggest an identity that is fluid, unsettled and multiple. References to the subway in Manhattan Music are many and varied. This piece of conversation between Sandhya and her five year old daughter Dora is telling in the same regard.

“One afternoon the child used her crayons and made plane with silver wings, an odd wobbly thing, thick bellied. Two stick figures, one big, one little, were going up the steps. There was blue all around, sky, air, but in one corner of the picture stood a dark, jutting thing.

“What’s that, darling?” Sandhya asked.

“A subway, Mami, there’s a subway.”

“In the sky? Sandhya leaned against the fridge, a cup of cocoa for the child in hand. Dora nodded solemnly.

“That’s the subway through heaven. We’ll go on that to see Appachen.”(Manhattan Music 142)

The image symbolizes multitude of meanings in the text. It is at once a symbol of great technological liberation and at once cultural devastation. It is sybaritic, novel and commercial. The repeated word disengages one from order, stability and fixity of meaning. The contemplative erasure of meaning accompanies the wait for meaning. While it produces a modest insufficiency of
meaning it also, becomes an image of equalizing as opposed to hierarchy as it amalgamates far reaching extremes.

In fact it signifies not single meaning but free access to meaning. The liberated, egalitarian extreme of its mobility and the distances eye of writing dissolve bonds and flatten hierarchies. It is an image not just of “Free Enterprise” but also of free will and ecstasy- silent, erotic and absurd.

Mobility and motion are the key words. To the extent that even Sujata’s identity (Mother of 1084) is crafted in motion and that it takes her on a journey from “roots” and “routes” is evidence of solidarity across ethnic absolutes being suggested even by Mahasweta Devi. Fixed origins are used as backdrop in Mother of 1084, it is an account more of a homing desire than a desire for the homeland. Sujata’s identity is constructed through encounter and dialogue across home and class, rather than by way of competition between static entities.

Such a move is relevant particularly in the case of women for it has been mentioned on many occasions that the concept of static identity is alien to their life, for different constituencies of class, religion, race, and language shape it. No wonder then, that even novelists like Manju Kapur and Mahasweta Devi, show in their texts the consummation of women’s identity outside their own homes (for home is also the denominator of culture/ nation/ roots) which disrupts notion of a bounded, historically linear entity of nation/ culture and replace it with juxtaposed and co-existent modes of spatialisation.

It is through narrative moves like these, in the area of cross over between spaces and subjectivities, that women writers find particular affinities with trans-local or trans- national. Francoise Lionnet in Postcolonial Representations examines the potential and significance of such relationality for women. Without disavowing her frame of particularity, she insists on the dialogue between “the nature and function of feminism as a global process and the social function of femininity within different cultural contexts.”(2)
In fact despite the construction of Indian women’s peculiarity and cultural identity, it has been observed by critics like Elleke Boehmer that the postcolonial novel in English, particularly the Indian novel, is profoundly trans-...it is in consequence of this internationalism that critics have rushed to nominate the epic size, promiscuously allusive Indian novel in English as the desirable, the hybridized other to the reviled purism of the west.

In fact it may be stated in the case of Home and Mother of 1084 that they do not demonstrate trans-border, cross ocean of intra third world preoccupations in any way, but certain convergences and stylistic concerns that suggest the same can be traced.

For instance Manju Kapur’s Home that by its very title is a search for women’s space also sheds light on the idea of shifting. The emphasis in her ‘home’ is on many constellated locales and on diversified space as resistant to homogenous, ‘masculine’ space nuances the text’s possible association with multiple identity locations. That the text does not offer strictly one – dimensional linear journey of the self is evident from the fact that she at least touches upon other axes of social identity, underlining therefore the need to explore intersections and imbrications between these axes. Nisha’s Creations- her business line thus is one such narrative mark that is significant in this regard. Manju Kapur’s remark about Nisha’s business is telling in this regard. “But nobody who was privy to Nisha’s account books could call her Creations a mere time pass.”(Home 297)

That she tries to create new possibilities for identity beyond the conventional parental/ husband dualism by allowing articulation across gradations of difference has an important implication. It i.e. her basement where she carries out her business becomes a spatial shift of power as an explosion of the centre-margin picture and the recognition instead of dispersed and diverse spatiality. She conceives thus of identity as a constellation of elsewhere, or in Rosemary M. George’s conceptualization, ‘home’ is at once dispersed and resituated.
Similarly in *Mother of 1084* that tells the tale of Brati “who died differently” demonstrates even more directly an awareness of the global or trans-local forces that impinge on and sometimes even violate internal, private spaces. The Naxalite movement that the narrative speaks of in itself enacts a decentering of the nation state for the same is in part a reaction to the global capitalist policies.

The following lines of the narrative show how the characters are witness to different kinds of cross-border interchange, transgression and self-division. She remarks, “the banks in Calcutta had had transactions worth cores of rupees, an elephant club was flown from Dum Dum to Tokyo carrying the Indian Prime Minister’s best wishes for the children of Japan, a festival of European films opened in Calcutta, the radical artists and intellectuals of Calcutta demonstrated against barbarities in Vietnam, on Red Road and before the American Centre on SN Banerjee Road.” (*Mother of 1084* 49)

Not just that Brati’s murder by the guardians of the nation-state further alienates Sujata from this space as a mythic ancestral ground. In fact hers is a desperate, destructively trans-home, trans-local and trans-nation search for a sense of autonomous selfhood. She views history and the spaces she travels through piecemeal. The writer remarks, “The city of Calcutta seemed wrong to her. it still has all its old landmarks- the Maidan, the Victoria Memorial, the Metro Cinema, the Gandhi statue, the Monument. Still, it was not Calcutta. She did not recognize, did not know this Calcutta.”(49)

Still more, in the same narrative, women like Sujata, Nandini, as victims as well as survivors are drawn willy-nilly into the arena of public, national and male authored history. The linearity of nation and history is thus transcended through confrontation and negotiation.

Forced to exist in an open ended nomadic future, Nisha and Sujata, they show a mistrust of fully formed ideals, as well as rounded dreams. Their
subjectivity is shaped as they go along, in ad hoc, provisional ways. Their groundlessness, in so far as it constitute their space is establishes as the medium of women- a medium in which they are denied a centre. However this rootless medium is far removed from the transitional space of the transnational migrant Sandhya. The migrant represented in the third narrative is seen straddling countries in a state of inventive plurality. Sandhya of Nisha in comparison do not have the autonomy or resources that would allow this kind of multicultural plenitude and playfulness to be either achieved or expressed.

But returning to the suggestion of trans-local focus in Mother of 1084. Mahasweta is concerned throughout the narrative to expose the valorized meanings of ‘independence’, ‘nation’, ‘land’ by plunging her characters into horrifying situations of social conflict and physical torture. All shreds of fixity and stability are obliterated. The mutilated corpses, the agonies inflicted upon the young expose a useless dream that cannot give protection from killers who act in the name of established national government. An independent history, which one seemed to hold the promise of a bright future, has betrayed these women on all sides. Internal division has broken the nation apart.

Perhaps because how their own histories are disturbed and fragmented, women like Sujata symbolize the fate of the entire country’s women. They not only define the shape of freedom but even identify the hope of a whole “contaminated” society. Their voyage into tragic spaces reveals a county with land but no habitat.

Meanwhile Home, with its small circle of a joint family running a business in Delhi, its petty privileges repeatedly poses the central question as to who does what to whom. That is a further way of reflecting the broader meta textual question concerning the work’s possible global complicity. That is to say, that though the text deals only with familial or local interdictions, yet the same are a product of a long history of cultural encounter over many ages.
The juxtaposition of these writers against each other suggests that their narratives agree in the affirmation of the small, private spaces as well as larger public spaces as sited here women’s identity is located. Importantly, however, the significance of these sites is qualified in relation to one another, such that something like the constellation of spaces already mentioned, of the woman’s identity as balanced against local and trans-local links crystallize into shape. In all their writings, home, such as it is, is seen as the intersection of different modes of inhabitation, the product of different narratives of identity. And the nation-reclaimed rather than merely endured is turned into one of it’s incarnations.

All these writers therefore in different ways calibrate the transnational with the national and the other way about. Their texts, either directly or through suggestions pay attention to how transnational horizons and trans local journeys usefully disperse some of the unitary and more restrictive definitions of a nation and fragment its enclosing borders. At least a couple of them interestingly explore the impact of the nation or post colony on women by taking the risk of representing women’s stories as synonymous with the nation’s.

These writers point out dissent internal to a home, quasi-national dissent as well as transnational forces that disrupt homogenous national homes/ spaces and identities. While Nisha’s psychic dispossession is a function of within home dislocation, Sujata’s is a case of nationalist conflict while Sandhya’s is attributable to nation-al displacement. Thus in different ways, the nation home reclaimed for women as a differential space, can become a ground on which their subjectivity-relational and multiply located – is expressed, a vantage point from which social injustice and inequality can be seen.

However the deployment of any of these images should not be seen as an attempt to condone the locatedness of cultures. Sara Suleri has made a similar point in The Rhetoric of English India. She says:
To deploy such interpretive figures is not at all to repress the crucial situatedness of cultures, or to suggest that the colonial encounter can be re-read only as an abstraction so slender as to be effete. Instead it implies that the stories of colonialism - in which heterogeneous cultures are yoked by violence - offer nuances of trauma that cannot be neatly partitioned between the colonizer and the colonized...indeed the migrant moment of dislocation is far more formative, far more emplotting. (5)

Qualifying the transnational with the translocal and the national, their work not only rejects the rhetoric of post colonial as only transnational but by the same token it is adequately subversive of the global hegemonies that it itself underpins. In plainer terms, by exploring the different modes through which identity, resistance, and home may be expressed, their novels deconstruct the one-dimensional notion of women across the globe as also in India.

Once again it is important to mention here that the intention at the end of it all is not to idealize and essentialise the “epistemological opacity” of the Indian women. By making her the bearer of an identity that is in excess of western vision or analytic categories, one paradoxically invests her with the very iconicity that one set out to challenge.

What is important and needs to be asserted here is the primacy of woman above the quarrels of western/non western women. or else there is always a fear that Spivak has expressed in “Can the Subaltern Speak?” She says, “Between patriarchy and imperialism, subject constitution and object formation, the figure of the woman disappears, not into a pristine nothingness but a violent shuttling which is the displaced figuration.”(306).

However the problem is that these kind of debates only accentuate the dislocation of women. Returning home to the point where it all originated, absolute divisions between genders, women as also nation cultures stand exiled in
the modern society. While one believes that there cannot be a truly universal identity, home or selfhood which is not attached to any specific culture, yet as Nayantara Sehgal says in *Women in Patriarchy*:

Separateness is probably the most absurd and dangerous of all illusions. There was never a time when it was a sound idea. My own belief is in a reconciliation of cultures. It is not time for me to become more like you, and to pattern myself on your ways but it is time for us to harmonize our ways of living and thinking, so that we will never be strangers to one another again; so that from a relationship that partakes of all our identities .(264)

Thus creating a hope for newer and brighter identities can be inscribed and narrated.