CONCLUSION

The creativity of all the three novelists, Bhisham Sahni, Gabriel Garcia Marquez and Ngugi wa Thiong'o is rooted in social commitment. They are preoccupied with problems plaguing their respective societies and they foreground the suffering and the struggle of the powerless, deprived and dispossessed. In the process they expose the strategies of exploitation adopted by systems of oppression, be it imperialism or patriarchy. The novels depict an uneven power structure which divides society into the ruler and the ruled, the powerful and the powerless. As a result the texts juxtapose imperialism and patriarchy—two arbitrary systems of suppressing fellow human beings. Hence, while these authors expose the exploitation of the workers and other common people at the hand of individual capitalists and capitalist nations they simultaneously, with great detail and sensitivity, expose the exploitation and tragedy of women in their respective societies within the Third World.

The oppression of women is common the world over, in the overarching system of patriarchy but its implications and manifestations are different in the First and Second World and in the Third World, i.e. in the underdeveloped countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America who have recently been freed from colonial rule, but only to be
trapped again by the more subtle forms of domination under neocolonialism. Illiteracy and poverty expose women to the worst kinds of abuse and deprivation which the white, educated middle class women of the West do not have to experience. Gender oppression assumes ruthless forms as lack of education combined with economic deprivation leaves them helpless in the face of exploitation.

Violence is the most frequently adopted mode of suppressing women, both inside home and outside, as revealed in these novels. It is not only restricted to physical abuse in the form of rape or beating but extends to the whole person of woman in the form of emotional and mental injuries inflicted on her. Woman is treated merely as a creature of flesh available to satisfy all the needs of men—physical, domestic and even economic. Women in the Third World are more exposed to physical abuse as compelled by poverty or betrayed by the richer men in their own society they are forced to take to prostitution and live a stigmatized life. The men responsible for their plight and those who take advantage of their forced profession continue to enjoy respect and power in society. The dual code of morality in patriarchy—one for men and another for women—adds to women's agony and continued suffering.

Women on their part continue to be embodiments of love, care, sacrifice and often of courage, strength and determination. Ursula sustains the Buendia family through
its seven generations by her sheer dedication, hardwork and selflessness. She provides the norm to judge the flaws, weaknesses and hypocrisy of men around her. However, the reward of women's dedication and sacrifice is usually the lonely suffering as they are slighted and at best ignored by the other half of society. To the utterly desperate the only way out of their agony seems to be suicide, as attempted by Warininga and as materialised in the case of Thul Thul (Kunto).

Woman also stands vindicated even in the novels which provide limited space to her in the narrative. In the overtly political novels which deal with manipulations of power, conspiracies and betrayals, violence and bloodshed women are largely kept out of the scene of scheming politics. Instead they provide relief, security and care to the victims of political strife, as depicted in Tamas in particular. As embodiments of positive human values women provide a corrective balance to the selfish, exploitative and destructive tendencies of men. Also implicit is the plea that if women were allowed to be at the centre of socio-political activities, it will probably be a less violent and more harmonious and humane world.

The novelists not only portray women's plight and their struggle for a dignified existence with empathy and sensitivity but also frequently choose female protagonists, particularly in the woman-centered novels, to
expose the corruption, erosion of human values and ruthless exploitation in their respective societies. Both Wariinga and Basanti in their ordeals also represent the plight of common people under the neocolonial regimes of the so-called free countries. Women, however, are the worst victims since they have to bear the double cross of oppression—the neocolonial oppression and gender oppression. Their suffering and their compassion also qualifies them to be sensitive observers, recorders and reporters of the socio-political upheavals and changes in their society. Significantly, history of social decline, of slow invasion of capitalism in their respective societies is reported by Ursula and Nyakinyua, in One Hundred Years of Solitude and Petals of Blood respectively.

While the above mentioned preoccupations are common to the three novelists they work these out in their own specific styles and socio-cultural contexts. Sahni, constrained by his cultural context which does not provide room for easy love affairs, studies woman's personal relationships essentially in the framework of marriage and family. Ngugi and Garcia Marquez explore gender relationships both within the context of marriage and outside marriage, in pre-marital or extra-marital relationships as well.

Sahni's narratives of social realism focus on the world of the middle-class, partly because of his first hand
experience of this class and partly because middle class is a sizeable and effective section in Independent India. Mainly drawn from the middle class his women characters are economically dependent and burdened by social norms, and hence they largely remain passive acceptors of their fate. Only Basanti is strong enough to take her own decisions and defy the social norms, but then she belongs to a different class. Being from working class she does not have to carry the burden of a restrictive (i.e. middle class) morality and also she does not have much at stake. Her class, however, is also responsible for her manifold sufferings, which include exploitation both inside and outside home, and repeated experience of being literally homeless.

Garcia Marquez, in his narratives of magical realism, weaves very complex webs of personal and social relationships. Most of his women characters also belong to the economically secure classes of society. Resentment may simmer in them occasionally but they, like Sahni’s women characters, largely submit to their fate within the conventional set-up. Very few women have the courage to defy or reject the patriarchal world which is depicted in the form of sudden disappearance of women as in the case of Manuela Sanchez in *The Autumn of the Patriarch* and Remedios the Beauty in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*.

Ngugi, like Sahni, largely conforms to the narratives of social realism but he situates his women in a more
vehement critique of neocolonial exploitation. His female protagonists all belong to the working class, since society in the independent Kenya is polarized into two classes only, the working class and the capitalist class, the victims and the victimizers. Being from working class these women are exposed to more ruthless exploitation than middle class women. But these are also sturdier and stronger women. They do not easily start disintegrating under oppression, instead, after a while they fight back. They are rebels, protesters, and are capable of wreaking a revenge on their oppressors, as Wariinga and Wanja do, not scared by the consequences. His women are the strongest and resist oppression.

The novelists do not simplify reality. Not all men are monsters of exploitation. Some even help the victimized women in their struggle for a dignified survival. They accept the women as they are and respect their decisions as Gatuiria (Devil on the Cross) and Abdulla (Petals of Blood) do. In Ngugi’s fiction in particular a vision of complementarity of genders is built. Fulfilment can come with reciprocal respect and caring for each other. This idea of complementarity remains implicit in Sahni and Garcia Marquez’s novels but is overtly stated by Ngugi in the concluding image of the pregnant woman in some of his novels — Wanja is actually pregnant carrying Abdulla’s child (in Petals of Blood), and Gikonyo plans to carve a
stool with the figures of a man and a pregnant woman (in A Grain of Wheat) which marks their reconciliation.

All the novels discussed serve as exercises in conscious-raising as they provide voice and visibility to the oppressed, expose the mechanism of exploitation and call for a better world. The novelists propound a humanistic vision within a broadly socialist framework, since a more just and even economic order is the first prerequisite to ensure a happier and a more humane world, which provides justice and dignity to all human beings irrespective of their class and gender.