CHAPTER VI
SOCIAL ACTION, SOCIAL MILIEU, AND THE WRITER:
THE CONCLUDING DISCOURSE

VI.1 Subject Positions and Problems of Interpretation:

In the process of interpreting a literary piece, a researcher is confronted with a number of subject-positions of which two are apparent. The first arises out of the researcher's institutional subject-position (as a student, teacher, critic etcetra), and the second in relation to the discipline of the researcher, and the subsequent process of application of appropriate tools, methods and perspectives. However, there are other sets of subject-positions which the researcher must 'reconstellate' (through a process of selection and exclusion) in order to understand and comprehend themes and meanings dominant, residual or emergent in the literary texts. These may refer to the subject-positions of the writer, and also that of the reader (who may not be a researcher). It may also acquire yet another challenging dimension when the contents of the story is historical and culture-specific. It, therefore, means that while interpreting a text, one may also have to examine the events in their historical context in order to visualise the nature of relationships between 'real', events
of history and those of literature. As a matter of fact, the difference between the historical and literary events may be seen in terms of degree rather than in kind. Referring to Barthes (1984), Spivak says:

"The difference between cases of historical and literary events will always be there as a differential moment in terms of what is called 'the effect of the real'... history will always seem more real to us than what is called literature. Our very use of the two separate words guarantees that: 'history' referring to 'true', while 'story', connoting the 'sanctioned non-true'."

Ariyoshi makes use of both - that which is perceived as 'literary' or 'subjective' and that which is termed as 'historical'. Her relationship with historical discourse becomes clear in the three novels viz., the stories of 'The Doctor's Wife', 'The River Ki', and 'The Twilight Years' which have been discussed. More specifically, the first two novels are fullfledged 'historical fiction, history transformed into fiction, though her mind appears to be gripped by the individual in history - her protagonists. The division between fact and fiction is operative in all

Ariyoshi claims to have thoroughly researched everything that has gone into the making of 'The Doctor's Wife':

"From his (Hanaoka Seishu) own personal records, diaries, books, and biography that were placed in a special museum, the author..., interlaced authentic and fictitious elements to create a fascinating tale that depicts the rise of a family of peasant origin to a position of wealth and fame."  

The events forming the plot of 'The River Ki' have almost identical characteristics as the story tends to be autobiographical. The general socio-political events frequently mentioned are truly historical and factual. Although, no such claim can be made for 'The Twilight Years', the fiction is also historical inasmuch as it presents a lively picture of of the daily life of a woman torn between the demands of the kitchen and her career.

The problem of interpreting culture-specific idioms, values, motives, and experiences covering a vast stretch of time - from the feudal to the contemporary, by an alien (culturally, socially, and historically) reader is a problem which needs some serious consideration. In case the reader is socially and culturally a foreigner, the subject-position

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of the reader becomes perilous, her value premises and
behavioural patterns or the whole range of actions and
emotions, are prone to exogenetic interpretations,
independent of the relevant cultural background.

In this vain, universal disciplinary tools, methods and
perspectives of enquiry may come to one's rescue. Thus,
that which has been articulated in terms of the dominant,
residual, and emergent agenda of the fictions (or literary
events) is examined with the help of the axiomatic tools of
analysis pertaining to the discipline (say, of history,
sociology, etcetra), which may not be necessarily in
conjunction with the motives of the writer and/or character.
This may help one achieve a somewhat 'value-neutral'
position: an objective stance. But how a value-neutral
position could be, specially seen from the point of the
writer or reader sharing divergent cultures remains
unsolved.

The attempt at examining the place of woman in Japan
over a fairly large span of time has all the ingredients of
the problem mentioned above. No matter what prism one may
use in order to visualise her place on the basis of literary
text(s), there is bound to be divergent interpretations of
cause-effect relationships. In what may be called 'a
discursive formation' specific formations of objects,
modalities of enunciation, concepts, and strategies are also built into the text, and it is, therefore, not a simple proposition to interpret the tale as reported. The dominant frame notwithstanding, the motives, intentions hidden between sentences, propositions, signs, and those lying within the subconscious and not expressed; as that which influences the actor in working out strategum etc., may not find appropriate tools outside the culture-specific idioms to analyse such events or actions adequately.

Women have been socially subordinate, a subaltern, from whatever perspective one may wish to apply. The disciplinary tools have their origin in an institutional framework (academic and socio-political), which has been dominated by the males. Even today, though the perspectives of the women have for long been knocking at the door of the male-dominated academic world, they are treated at best as feminists of varied shades and colours. This, therefore, has been an ethically-biased development. In other words, under the garb of objectivity a great deal of that which has been deemed as 'mainstream' or standardized tools of enquiry have been a product of academic-politic 'miscegenation'. It, therefore, becomes rather necessary to interpret, if one could, the text(s) using the prisms available in the novel itself, provided by the writer and the actor(s).
VI.2 Interpreting Social Action

VI.2.1 The Sociological Perspective

Having considered the problems associated with interpretations of literary text, one may now venture to prescribe assumptions on the basis of which social action or 'conduct' of characters, actors or social actors in the literary texts in question could be examined. It has already been indicated in the introductory chapter that a good deal has been borrowed from the theories of action, with reference to those suggested by Talcott Parsons, Max Weber and in a limited sense to Marx and Vifredo Pareto as well. At the same time, one may also mention that such a mode of analysis necessarily entails reference to varied social milieu and its structural and institutional ingredients within which certain roles, ideas, expectations and aspirations take shape and are articulated. But as has already been mentioned, the modes of articulation tend to vary a great deal. Viewed from this perspective, social roles and conduct (or actions) in a literary text have three modes of articulation: borrowing Raymond Williams terminology, one may call them dominant, residual and
emergent. 3 Adapting Livia Monnet, 4 one may suggest that
the text, as has been shown in the previous chapter,
present a juxtaposition of cultural sequence of succession
in which pre-modern, modern and post-modern exist in
conjunction. Thus it would be rather simplistic to conclude
that that the pre-modern is 'a relatively inert,
historicized segment of social structure. It must be
understood that:

"the incorporating sense of tradition is
strong: where it is seen, in fact, as an
actively shaping force. For tradition
is in practice the most evident
expression of the dominant and hegemonic
pressures and limits. It is always more
than an inert historicized segment;
indeed it is the most powerful practical
means of incorporation. What we have to
see is not just 'a tradition' by a
selective tradition: an intentionally
selective version of a shaping past and
a pre-shaped present (and perhaps future
also), which is then powerfully
operative in the process of social and
cultural definition and
identification... From a whole possible
area of past and present, in a
particular culture, certain meanings and
practices are selected for emphasis and
certain other meanings and practices are
negated or excluded." 5

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3. Raymond Williams, Marxism and Literature (Oxford, 1977),
   pp. 121-127).

4. Livia Monnet, "The Politics of Miscegenation : The
   Discourse of Fantasy in 'Fusehime'," Japan Forum, Vol.

5. Williams, n.3, p. 115.
It may also be added that there may be a significant space or possibility for manoeuvrability to bring about 'innovation' which is successfully passed off as 'the tradition' in the interest of/or by virtue of some hegemonic development. Manoeuvrability is often a strategy adopted by an actor in order to facilitate achievement of his/her goals. Therefore, the idioms of tradition, more specifically selective tradition, and 'innovations' therein become part and parcel of the changing social order, institutions, values roles and social action. A discourse between the idioms of tradition and forces of modernity or 'the contemporary' has been powerfully articulated in the texts of Ariyoshi Sawako.

While dealing with the assumptions of the theory of action one may borrow extensively from Cohen who in turn draws upon a selection from Mises, Talcott Parsons and Max Weber. The assumptions are as follows:-

(i) "The actor has goals (or aims, ends) his actions are carried out in pursuit of these.

(ii) Action (or lack of it) often involves the selection of means to the attainment of goals.

An actor always has many goals; his actions in pursuit of any one affect and are affected by his actions in pursuit of others.

The pursuit of goals and the selection of means always occur within situations which influence the course of action.

The actor always makes certain assumptions concerning the nature of his goals and the possibility of their attainment.

Action is influenced not only by the situation but by actor's knowledge of it.

The actor has certain ideas or modes of cognition which affect his selective perception.

The actor has certain sentiments or affective dispositions which affect both his perception of situations and his choice of goals.

The actor has certain norms and values which govern his selection of goals, and his ordering of them in some scheme of priorities."

It follows that, one may now attempt to understand some fundamental questions concerning the degree of rationality of social action or the conduct of typical individuals. Max Weber and Vilfredo Pareto have separately attempted to present schemes on the basis of which it may be possible for draw meanings in order to judge the degree of rationality of social conduct (of social actors). According to Weber, "action is rational if it involves the assumption that the use of certain means is necessary for the attainment of
particular ends. This may be termed as 'instrumental rationality'. In this 'means and ends' are assessed by the actor in relation to the importance of the goal itself. The sociologists refer to another type of rational action which they call, 'value-oriented rationality', where there is no way of assessing the efficacy of the means; the goal is an end which is valued in itself. Weber refers to two more types - the 'traditional' and the 'affective'.

According to Weber:

"Traditional conduct consists in doing what has been done in the past without considering alternatives. This type of conduct (thus) is not rational, because both means and goals are accepted by the actor, a course of action... indeed (it) is not chosen at all... Traditional conduct may, of course be classed as rational on the grounds that the goal of such conduct is the preservation of tradition itself." 8

Affectual conduct is governed by the need to express some emotion. It may be at times reflexive and at another, where some means are deliberately chosen to achieve some emotional state, affective conduct comes close to rational, unlike the one which is reflexive where the conduct has no goal other than the expression of emotion.

7. Ibid., p. 81.
Pareto also categorises social conduct into types which, according to him, are 'logical', and 'non-logical' conducts. Pareto feels that logical action is hardly relevant for social enquiry or sociological interpretation. It is basically in the realm of non-logical (or using Weberian non-rational) conduct which is the stuff of enquiry. He seeks to read motives which lies concealed behind the proclaimed reasons of actors. Cohen says:

"Conduct can be non-logical, according to Pareto, for several reasons: if the assumptions of conduct are false or not empirical; if the consequences of action are not considered; if the motives of action are not recognised by the actor; and if the actions taken do not follow from the assumptions. Underlying the explanation of why these various conditions of non-logicality should occur, is Pareto's theory of instincts, residues, interests, sentiments and derivations."\(^9\)

Pareto's attempts at understanding motives are similar, though not identical, to Williams' emergent forms of articulation.

One may now examine empirically the above in the light of the reading of Ariyoshi's texts. Beginning with Otsugi in 'The Doctor's Wife', a reader at once recognises the rationality of her action while persuading Sajihei, Kae's

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9. Ibid., p. 86.
father, to give his daughter in marriage to her doctor-to-be son (Umpei). The goal before Otsugi is to facilitate, come what may, her son's successful pursuit of medicine. To bring a Samurai as her daughter-in-law girl to Otsugi is just a means towards fulfilment of the avowed goal. In this episode, her action appears to be based on logic, and is thus rational. The means is suitably selected from among other alternatives, and is deliberate, with the full knowledge of her assumptions. But as it turns out to be, Kae poses a serious threat to Otsugi's dictatorial archetypal profile. The assumptions on the basis of which Otsugi made the choice of getting her son married to Kae were that a samurai girl could be submissive, hard working and fully alert to the needs of her husband's profession and career; that she would honour and take forward the traditions and aspirations of the family. However, she did not know that right beneath the soft, docile and submissive appearance of the samurai girl, there was a hard core of determination and courage and that she would never allow Otsugi to dictate terms.

One may, at this stage, introduce a slight modification in the concept of means and ends. Cohen's selective reflection on the problems is located in a static-situational framework of conduct. One may, therefore,
differentiate between goals which are 'immediate', intermediate, 'short-term', and 'long-term'. The choice of means under each situation may not be constant or may vary, thus affecting the achievement of long-term goals. Goals are not only varied and inter-related but they are sequential also. During the pursuit of long-term goal(s), intervening and/or short-term needs (goals) may crop up which may at times be incompatible with the needs and objectives of the long-term goal.

Otsugi's long-term goal as positively articulated in the text. It is to see her son become a successful doctor. The question that arises here is whether she was ever in the complete know of what comprises a successful career in medicine? Did she know, to begin with, that her son would be in a position to achieve an epochal breakthrough in his research? The knowledge of this during the course of the story fills her with a motive which acquires the characteristics of an emergent form of articulation. She becomes motivated to take total credit for having promoted her son's interest. In other words, she wanted to solely take the credit for making the breakthrough. The strategies she adopts, or the means she chooses are counterproductive. Was it rational on her part to maltreat her daughter-in-law? She may have made good of her avowed
goal without taking recourse to ignoring the sentiments of Kae. But, as it turns out to be, she is blind to the relationship between a wife and her husband. She ignores the rightful place Kae had in the family as well as in the life of her doctor son. Therefore, her action, after arrival of her son from his studies at Kyoto, inches towards 'non-logical' action of Pareto.

Was it in any sense an affective action when she makes the couple, meeting for the first time, sleep separately? But as Weber suggests, that when it is a deliberate action, driven by the desire to fulfil an emotional state, it becomes non-logical as the motives are hidden, though certainly known to the actor. When Otsugi barges into the couple's room in the middle of the night to speak to her son, she was compelled by eagerness and desperation. It was, therefore, perhaps value-oriented rationality where the 'end is value in itself' and the actor is in no position to examine the pros and cons of the chosen means.

It may, however, be pointed out that despite non-logicality of means and non-rationality of Otsugi's conduct, the ultimate goal is achieved much the way it was initially conceived. This was, perhaps, because there was hardly any conflict between Otsugi and Kae insofar as the goal was concerned. Kae too wanted her husband to succeed and she
was not in contradiction with it. Nevertheless, her goal was to achieve a dignified place in her husband's life. Her husband's success in his medical research to Kae becomes a means towards attainment of her goal. She understood that it would affect her husband's prestige and honour if people come to know that Kae allowed her ageing mother-in-law to become the subject of Umpei's experiments. She was also concerned when Otsugi, out of sheer pride, announces the success of her son's experiments while success was still distant. If a patient approached Umpei for treatment how will her husband attend to him? This thought bothered her the most.

She had no choice but to volunteer herself as a subject for the experiments. Kae's dedication to her husband's cause may be seen in the form of incarnation of womanly virtues of the feudal times. According to Isoda, it is far away from the process of liberation from the 'family', much less liberation of one's 'self'.

Turning to Kae's choice of means in realisation of her ends, one may find a resolute consistency. Notwithstanding her rivalry with Otsugi, she never allowed her dissatisfaction to surface during the course of her interactions with Otsugi. She respected the

values and norms associated with her role as a daughter-in-law. These values governed her selection of means. She never questions the parental authority wielded by Otsugi as much as she shuns confrontation even when provoked. One may recall Otsugi's remarks, "Only a fool..." though shakes her completely, but she exercises control over her emotions and successfully argues her point of view. She is genuinely aggrieved at the death of Okatsu and shares the intensity of sorrow with Otsugi. Kae was a mother too like Otsugi, and she could understand Otsugi's condition at the loss of her child. She resolves to bury her differences with Otsugi. Her rational attitude is exemplified once again when Otsugi pleads with Umpei to make his younger brother his heir. Motherhood is protective and promptly pardons this deviant stance of her mother-in-law. She felt that as a mother Otsugi was promoting her second son's future. Kae's actions thus are examples of Weber's 'instrumental rationality' where the actor's assessment of the cost of pursuing her goal in a certain way takes into consideration the value of intermediate goals as well. Kae considers that the goal can itself be treated as a means to some other goal.

Hana's conduct as a wife and mother seems to oscillate between non-rational and rational actions. Her presentation in a purely traditional mould provides justification to her
actions. It appears that her belief in the traditional conduct as wife and mother is motivated by doing what has been done in the past. But soon the shades of rationality appear if one analyses her conduct in the furtherance and preservation of tradition itself.

Japanese social convention enjoined, in the feudal or premodern period, that the branch family must always remain subservient to the needs of the main family. But when her husband Keisaku voluntarily offers to give away all that his younger brother wanted in order to set up a branch family she understood the purpose, even though it was in violation of the usual practice prevailing at that time. She could immediately take note of her husband's ambitions in life as a politician which necessarily entails that he may first settle down his family problems before setting out on his course of an eventful public life. His action of relinquishing a large portion of his estate to his younger brother may reap phenomenal profits to him in furtherance of his political career.

Hana's goals were two-fold: first to identify herself with her husband's goals and purpose in life, and second to bring up her children on appropriate lines prescribed for them in the interest, dignity, and honour of her family. In accordance with these goals she wants her son Seiichiro
recognise his potentials and become a bold and ambitious person. On the other hand, she wants her daughter Fumio to become a successful housewife well-conversant in management of household chores, mannerisms and etiquettes. Politeness, she feels, is a feminine virtue and Fumio must learn to appreciate that.

It pains her to discover that while Seiichiro lacked ambition in life, Fumio, bold and energetic as she was, did not believe in the traditional womanly virtues. While she chose to restrain her daughter through use of parental authority she wielded, she chooses not to do much in order to motivate her son or help him recognise his potentials. Fumio is penalised for not being attentive in her Koto lessons. She is admonished for harbouring tom-boyish profile and ideals of equality with men, and democracy, while Seiichiro is not even questioned once for whatever he was doing. She appears to be more concerned with the 'deviant' stances of Fumio, than with inculcating in Seiichiro a positive motivation for excellence in life. Although Hana herself had reaped the fortunes of being considered as equal to her brother by Toyono was she not discriminatory against her daughter? Fumio was a product of a time when liberal ideas were gaining currency and the traditional values and practices were being critically
examined. She had views divergent from that of her mother, but she was not a deviant. Why couldn't Hana read the writings on the wall? If Fumio could be blamed for not being rational in her scrutiny of the tradition, Hana could not be held 'not guilty' for not scrutinizing trends of time, and the ambitions and ideas of her daughter.

However, Hana exemplifies rationality and courage when she, though hesitantly, agrees to send her daughter for further studies to Tokyo. She bows before Fumio's wish to get married to a person of her choice. Hana silently suffers Fumio's insulting tone and dispositions towards traditional artefacts, including Hana's dowry gifts to Fumio, some of which Fumio ruthlessly returns in total disrespect to the sentiments of her mother.

Fumio's range of conduct too clearly borders on rationality and non-rationality. She wants to become independent and equal to men. Then why does she, through threatening letters, ask her parents to support her stay in Tokyo? Was she not emotionally blackmailing her parents, especially her mother by saying that she would declare independence from them if her demands were not met with? Fumio, perhaps, knew her mother's mind who would not hesitate even a little, supporting Sei'chiro's study, whatever be the cost, but she would not do so in case of her
daughter. While Fumio's strategy in choosing the means for the attainment of ends may appear to be clearly judged and weighted, it presents a mismatch between the means and attainment of her ultimate goal of freedom from the drudgery and enslavement of the family. A person who strongly believes in such ideology must not accept parental help in seeking a house to live in after marriage, totally financed by parents. In a way, she may be seen to be articulating total opposition to the hegemony of tradition, at the same time, may also be quietly selecting certain idioms of tradition without acknowledging it. It may be reminded that Fumio who at once rejected all that she called superstition, herself takes to visit the Jiso-in (temple) in order to offer breast charms in propitiation of God for the safe birth of her child. While this may be interpreted as events that comprise the life cycle of an individual, it is also expected that the person who undergoes this process of change would acknowledge the same. Fumio does not.

However, Fumio emerges out to be no less successful as a mother in comparison to Hana. As a wife too she was reasonably good. She was a product of times which were different from that of Hana's, and therefore, in the changed circumstances it was not necessary to train oneself in traditional mannerisms and faculties of traditional art and
crafts. Hana's conviction that training in these made a person polite and pleasant, though not rejected, do not appear as necessary preconditions for success as mother and wife.

The intelligent person in Hana chooses her means rather carefully on learning that her husband Keisaku, to whom she had been thoroughly faithful and cooperative, had kept a mistress in Wakayama. If one attempts to interpret her action in this context, from the perspective and experiences of the present time, then it may appear a little awkward and non-rational. Fidelity remains a virtue in defining or forming the basis of relationship between men and women in their marital relationship even today. But when examined in the context of the Meiji period, Hana's indirect attempt at exercising control over her husband looks rational. As one may recall, that keeping a mistress by influential persons was an acceptable trait of social behaviour in Meiji Japan. While her husband was secure in the knowledge that Hana would never confront him with the question, Hana too thought broaching the subject between them would only complicate rather than solve the problem. Although she enjoyed a tremendous amount of control on her husband but she does not make use of it in the present situation. Instead, she too moves to Wakayama to join her husband. Her mere presence was
enough to prove a formidable check on Keisaku's infidelities. As a woman she knew the power of love which she employs in a most positive way.

Akiko in 'The Twilight Years' is a woman of modern Japan. In her ideas, modes of cognition and knowledge of situations she displays rational conduct. She is aware of the fact that as she would hardly have time between her office and home to attend to her son's personal needs, she trains him to become more or less independent: a feature generally less visible in the case of Japanese motherhood. She thought it was frivolous going for outings on weekends as she valued the space that her home was. The unsettling impulses enter upon her after her mother-in-law's death. It was solely Akiko's job to take care of her senile father-in-law. As she comes forward to care for him she enters into a new experience which transforms her ideas, modes of cognition and knowledge of constraints in her day-to-day life. Though she ventures out to seek relief from old peoples' home, etcetra, she soon chooses a course of action commensurate with the needs of her ageing father-in-law. The cognition of goal and choice of means is rational, logical and sound. But what seems non-logical is Nobutoshi's insensitivity towards his own father. Nobutoshi takes advantage of the traditional male preserve which in
the changed socio-economic complex of modern times borders
on deliberate exploitation of the feminine body.

Why did Akiko tolerate Nobutoshi's insensitivity
towards his father? Akiko herself had been critical of Mrs.
Tachibana who tolerated her tempramental husband until her
death, then what makes her behave like her own mother-in-
law? These questions become relevant especially when time
is taken into consideration. Akiko is a lady brought up in
a modern cosmopolitan and liberal atmosphere of Tokyo in the
post-war period. During the phase of post-war reconstruction
socio-political, economic and legal systems underwent a
phenomenal change. Then why did she not gather enough
courage to resent what Nobutoshi was doing? After all it
was only her husband who didn't care for either his father,
son, or different chores inside the house, much less his
own wife. Why did this not fill Akoko with anguish to
demand her husband to cooperate? Well, if Shigezo failed to
recognise his son and called him a burglar, what prevented
Nobutoshi from looking after some of the duties at home?
Men in modern Japan had, perhaps, especially in urban areas
like Tokyo, realised this and had begun extending whatever
little help they could. It was understandable for Shigezo,
a Meiji man to behave the way he did, but how does one
understand Nobutoshi's apathy towards the situation at home?
One may, suppose that the process of social change of any qualitative nature tends to be slow. Development of attitudes and modes of behaviour in the process of primary socialization of a child draw lessons from role model. For Nobatoshi too, it seems his father was the role-model. That is why, as one gets to have some indications of this, he appears to be always worried about what his state would be when he attains his father's age. One may refer to the following conversation between Nobutoshi and his dentist which presents Nobutoshi's mode of cognition:

"When the dentist had finished, Nobutoshi, looking absolutely wretched asked: 'Doctor, are bad teeth hereditary?"

"Heredity is a factor, why do you ask?

"I've just remembered how my father used to suffer on account of his teeth..."\(^{11}\)

While Nobutoshi keeps philosophising about his old age, he also tries to convince himself that he will not grow senile like his father. At the same time, he bothers whether his son Satoshi would look after him in his old age. On the other hand, these questions do not seem to bother Akiko as much. She is convinced that since she is leading

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an active life she may not grow old like her father-in-law. At best she may pick up a few more hobbies to keep herself busy and active. The assumptions, motives, modes of cognition and rationality of Akiko are thus in divergence with that of Nobutoshi.

Reading through her conduct in different situations while caring for her father-in-law it may appear that Akiko is bound by the idioms of traditional value as a daughter-in-law. However, it is no less significant to interpret her action as a product of circumstances whereby she chooses means from among several alternatives.

VI.2.2 _The Writer's Perspective_

The sociological interpretation attempted above comprises an objective evaluation of conducts of the typically social actors. One may now consider an interpretation of the author's own reading of the subject-positions she enjoins upon her characters; of the circumstances and value premises which govern their conduct, and of the dominant, residual and emergent themes which Ariyoshi attempts to reflect upon through her narrative texts. In this vein, one may propose to highlight the following:

(i) The dominant concern of the author is to emphasise the role women have played in
different socio-economic conditions of the pre-Meiji, Meiji and post-Meiji Japan;

(ii) While she emphasises the sufferings of women on account of their subordinated status in the Japanese social structure, she is realistic in her assessment that certain roles within the institutional frame of family must inevitably be shouldered by women such as motherhood in primary socialization of children and stabilization of adult personalities through love, consideration and understanding which according to her are essential expressive functions for a harmonious and efficient functioning of a social system;

(iii) The process of social change must also liberate the women folk from some of the non-essential duties and responsibilities and ameliorate their life conditions in the interest of overall social development;

(iv) Ariyoshi also emphasises that the process of social change is slow and cyclical in nature. It is not imperative to cut oneself out of one's tradition and culture in a zeal to adopt 'new' modes of conduct. Tradition is essential, as it gives identity to individuals, groups and nation, and therefore, a progressive evaluation of the 'old' and 'new' must be carried out in the interest of social harmony. Tradition is not essentially hegemonistic, it acquires this character only when certain idioms of that are selectively utilized in order to perpetuate hegemony of a class, group or a set of actors bound by their motive of self-interest.

(v) Actors are products of the prevailing social order, their conduct in a literary text must follow from the realism of social values, norms and practices. The actor as an individual cannot be independent of his/her associations with a larger social entity. Emphasis on the primacy of 'self' outside that of the group has unsettling social
repercussions. However, articulation of one's 'self' is not essentially in contradiction to that of the larger social entity, it depends on its form, content, and modes of articulation.

A good deal of discussion on the above has already been carried out in the previous three chapters. In chapter V, while attempting to place Ariyoshi's literary texts in relation to the broad literary perspectives of some notable contemporary women writers, her style, form, tone and content were analysed. From there it emerged that family and motherhood have been the most important subjects on which women authors have chosen to concentrate. Sako Jun'ichiro says that Ariyoshi's reflections on such subjects have been purely feminine in perspective.12 Ariyoshi, as in the text discussed above and many others such as 'Uminari', 'Umikura', 'Aritagawa', and 'Kinugawa,' places motherhood as the highest moral character of women. She does not consider it a physiological event but a psychological conditioning which is a typical feminine experience. It is by virtue of this that she is capable of not only creating life but also restoring moral and physical state of human beings. Motherhood is selfless, eager to identify itself to a phenomenon, deviant though it may be. It pardons rather

than judges. Nothing in the world can antagonise or hurt it. In her new treatise *Shin Onna Daigaku* Ariyoshi says:

"We cannot make a happy environment for ourselves if we do not nourish motherhood within ourselves..... it is her mother's nature."  

Further in *Ki no Kawa* Ariyoshi through Hana writes:

"(A) Woman carried the spirit to serve the family she joins after her marriage. Her service to the family becomes the basis of the survival of the family. She is so engrossed that her personality and interest of the family become synonymous and she lives with this spirit and purpose all through her life."  

But she also recognises that it is within the institution of family that womanhood as well as motherhood have been subjects of humiliation. It gives more value to men who have attained great heights. But who made their achievements possible? Ariyoshi is emphatic as she strongly feels that it was the support of women and none other. Women have something unique in them that men lack. Although incredible as they are histories are totally oblivious of women's contribution and their


place. It is not the fault of history but of historians. Women's subjugated and suppressed status should not become an excuse for them to refuse duties such as motherhood which is the basis of human civilization. The last sentence of 'The Doctor's Wife' conveys how society valued the contribution of Otsugi and Kae vis-a-vis that of doctor Hanaoka Seishu:

"If you stand directly in front of Seishu's tomb, the two behind him those of Kae and Otsugi are completely obscured."\(^{15}\)

Here one may also add that tombs of Okatsu and Koriku who died in the services of their doctor brother were not even there. According to the normative definition of Japanese family, Koriku and Okatsue, as they died unmarried, could only be as good as a commodity or perhaps slaves, although they were blood relatives of the Doctor.

Although the text is essentially a narrative of true historical events, considerable amount of imagination has been spent into piecing together the events. Ariyoshi could have, perhaps given Koriku a place she deserved. But Ariyoshi as a realist, fully conscious of the moors and

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values of the feudal times chooses to use Koriku as a link between herself and the reader.

Returning to Ariyoshi's conception of motherhood one finds a good deal of consistency and continuity of her thoughts present in all texts. The two faces of motherhood represented by Kae and Otusgi; the ideal type of motherhood played by Hana, and rediscovery of womenhood in Akiko have common threads binding them together. In truth, motherhood is magnanimous and eternal. According to Suzuki Hideko, there is an effort in Ariyoshi's writings to look for images of eternal mother: "Eiei no haha no imagi." Her attempt is to create and rehabilitate this image. At the same time she does not fail to admonish male insensitivity towards the problems of women. Through Koriku she lets her mind speak: "Don't you think men are incredible? ... Isn't the relationship between man and woman disgusting?" In "Twilight Years", she prompts Kyoko, Shigezo's daughter comment on her father "a modern woman would divorce a man like that after three days of such treatment."

17. Ariyoshi, n. 15, p. 187 (Tr. 163).
18. Ariyoshi, n. 11, p. 43 (tr. p. 35).
It has been stated earlier also that insofar as historical facts are concerned Ariyoshi turns out to be a systematic and conscious observer of history. Her reflections on the process of social change are not founded on myths. Her materials are well researched. The profiles of the changing character of the institution of family from the late feudal to the modern times have been neatly presented. The structure of society and modes of interaction across vertically arranged status groups are well reported by her in 'The Doctors' Wife' and 'The River Ki'. Ariyoshi introduces the reader to a form of marriage that Kae went through who got married to a book of medicine placed where the bridegroom would have been seated. The plights of the younger brothers as they set up branch families has also been highlighted in the personification of Kosaku in 'The River Ki'.

In the setting of the modern period, the family as a truly nuclear form, emerges clearly in 'The Twilight Years.' The older Tachibanas did not share the house in which the young Tachibanas lived. They ate from separate kitchens and lived in houses adjacent to each other.

The novels throw sufficient light on the process which led to the erosion of the concept of filial piety, specially in the Samurai households, which in the past the Japanese
strongly believed in. Kosaku and Nobutoshi had no respect for it. At the same time, Ariyoshi also shows how the authority of the mother-in-law changes from the feudal times to the early modern and the post-war times. Otsugi who until her death didn't relinquish her position for Kae to take over, while Hana was promptly handed over this responsibility. Mrs. Tachibana instead of being cold and critical of her daughter-in-law, expressed warmth towards Akiko whenever there was a problem between Shigezo and her daughter-in-law.

The most profound reflection on the question of social change pertains to Ariyoshi's discourse on tradition and modernisation which remains one of her major preoccupations in her literary creativity. A close scrutiny of a large number of literary texts written by her, such as "Kirikubi", "Izumano O'Kuni", "Managoya O", and "Ki nu Gawa" besides her very first novel "Jiuta" bear the imprint of her concern and development of her ideas on this theme. It has been indicated earlier that ever since Ariyoshi returned to Japan after spending most of her childhood abroad with her father, her singular purpose was to discover the spirit of her own country. In her writings she does not appear to be searching the traditional beauty of her nation. Instead she attempts to identify the waves of change threatening the existence of
traditional values, norms and practices. It pains Hana, Chiyo (Ki nu gawa) and Oyonbaba (Umikura) when traditions and values were broken in front of their eyes. The values which fuelled their lives, provided strength and identity to their existence were now being made to lead an obscured existence.

In Ariyoshi's own perception, tradition is a product of the blood and sweat of people. It is easy to laugh at the "old" or renounce it but it is difficult to enter into the feelings of people who have lived with it. It is easy to question 'why tradition, at all ?' but difficult to maintain it. Once responding to a question pertaining to 'Ki no Kawa", Ariyoshi said:

"It takes 100 years to make human beings. If you take the three generations into account you understand the process of human formation." 19

In 'Ki no Kawa' she writes:

"If Fumio were mentally prepared to question the concept of family' and not just blindly rebel against it, she would receive a response overflowing with vitality."20

Does this imply that Ariyoshi is a firm traditionalist?

Perhaps not. A clue from her work "Dangen" in which the


protagonist says "She likes temples as well as May Day," may indicate Ariyoshi's understanding of tradition and modernity. It appears she believed in the fusion of the two. Change is the character of time, a given culture must be succeeded by another. Elements of 'new' must take their slots but be accommodative towards the 'old'. It is in this vain that she moulds the events and episodes of her narratives in such a manner where the sufferings and sentiments of those aggrieved by the process of change are allievated.

Generally speaking Ariyoshi seems to be following closely the perspectives of the Kenyusha. From sociological perspectives she could be seen to be holding views similar to that which may be called functionalism, at least inasmuch as she emphasises the primacy of harmony. Her perspective of development may be called 'cyclical' which is indicated below in a letter Hanako writes to her grand mother Hana:

"...The family' has flowed from you to Mother and from Mother to me.

Please don't laugh at me. One day I shall marry and have a daughter. It amuses me to imagine how my daughter will rebel against me and regard her grand mother with affection. And then, I shall think that, just as people lived in the distant past and will continue to exist in the years to come. However difficult the
present may be for me, I must live for
tomorrow." 21

Building the future is important and it is in this
process that, as Ariyoshi quotes T.S. Eliot: 'tradition'
should be positively discouraged. To Ariyoshi perhaps
tradition is history, a stream like the river Ki
originating in the distant past. Modernity is comparable to
numerous small or large tributary streams falling into the
Ki, being fully subsumed by the main river and also
changing its character. Ariyoshi presents this when Hanako
tries to take a look at the River Ki from a telescope. Huge
smokestacks obstruct her view of the mouth of the River.
She doesn't see what lies there but a little up stream the
water of the river doesn't appear as clean as it did near
Musota. Hanako moves away from the telescope. A little
later the lens shutter closes automatically. If one reads
this in relation to what Hanako says, "I must live for
tomorrow", then the meanings becomes somewhat clear. Fresh
water must flow through the course of the river in order to
clear the filth down-stream and restore its old glory. But,
is modernity always polluting? Death of the old is imminent
like that of ageing Shigezo, but it requires persons like

Akiko who would make the process of decay respectful and dignified. It's Hanako now, with whom the dignity of the past, the tradition must lie.

One may now turn to reflect upon the sense of realism adopted by the author in characterising and depicting the conduct of actors in her texts. Ariyoshi's realism is again a product of her methodology. In this context, she places a high premium on the prevailing social values and practices. In order to illustrate this point one may ask as to why Shigezo has been presented as an old senile person? Loss of personality does not necessarily accompany the process of ageing. Senility developing into loss of personality or of one's 'self' was perhaps necessary for the development of new relationship between Shigezo and Akiko. How can a man who held a superlative profile and criticised his daughter-in-law all through when he was mentally sound, become a total dependent on her while still mentally alert? It is no wonder that he also fails to recognise his son Nobutoshi and daughter Kyoko. Similarly Yasu (The River Ki) turns blind before she could send commands to her daughter-in-law Hana - a typical profile as a Meiji mother-in-law.

Ariyoshi also presents a realistic picture when she offers a lengthy account of Akiko's search for institutional support for her father-in-law. A lively discourse follows
on the worthiness of traditional institutions vis-a-vis modern ones created by the rational-legal public welfare systems insofar as problems of the aged are concerned. She has no intention of showing that the efforts of the state and voluntary welfare organizations are meaningless, but she candidly conveys their supplementary and secondary role while emphasizing the primary role of the family in this regard.

The institutions of the rational-legal system such as the old-care Homes and other voluntary welfare measures are good but in their functioning they are essentially impersonal and thus cannot adequately take care of the varied emotional and affective needs of the aged. Health care other than emotional and financial needs of the aged, are the areas to be really taken care of. She is emphatic that the primary responsibility of caring for the aged lies within the traditional institution of the family, no matter what its form may be. Ariyoshi also indicates that caring for the aged is not like purchasing a commodity from the market. The market can generate comforts but not necessities. If caring for the old is 'commoditized' as tradition is made to be in modern times, then women like Hana will be left with no option but to sell all valuable traditional possessions of the Matani household to antique dealers. However, even
as a 'commodity' it benefits the society. The question is: "Is commoditization of tradition a form of decay or a process of metamorphism which gives birth to the modern?

VI.3 Reflections on Social Change and the Place of Women

Certain dimensions of social change as manifest in the institutional structure and social order have already been mentioned in the previous sections. It may now be pertinent to conclude the discussion with respect to the place of women as it has been articulated in the texts in relation to processes of social change. If one examines the nature of social and cultural succession in Japan from the feudal times to the modern period, one may promptly acknowledge a progressive improvement in the status of women in the inner domain of family, as well as in the outer domain of the work place.

Kae's struggle enables her to assert her place in the Hanaoka family. Hana enjoys a highly respectful and dignified place among the members of the Matani's family. Kosaku realises this and avoids encountering her. His hostility towards his sister-in-law is more a product of Hana's eminence in the family than on account of his infatuation for her. Keisaku on the other hand, entrusts Hana to take all decisions pertaining to the affairs of the
house as well as those pertaining to the education of their children. It is Hana who meets Fumio's teachers at the Wakayaama Girls School. It is she who is sent to Tokyo to explore Fumio's marital prospects. One may also reiterate that Hana handled all jobs pertaining to her husband's office in Musota. In both cases, that is of Kae and Hana the identity of their self is by virtue of their qualities, than because of the position of their husbands. Similarly the older Tachibanas have to live in a separate cottage because of frequent confrontations between Shigezo and Akiko. Akiko's independence in matters pertaining to her family is a manifestation of her liberation from the traditional idioms of family. As a working women she is conscious of her place in her office. She knows that if she has to give up her job because of increasing burden at home, her office would the suffer the most. She is not one of those who worked outside home as subsidiary workers, extending homely functions like serving tea etc. Her attitude is that of a professional who has certain skills and utility in the formal organisations outside the primeval institution that the family was.

None of Ariyoshi's protagonists takes things as they come to them. They are critical and their responses are based on systematic evaluation of information. They may
look submissive at home but in matters pertaining to those outside they present a sound sense of judgement.

Such a profile of their presentation could not have been possible without emphasising the importance of education. Kae, Toyono, Hana, Fumio and Akiko are all well educated and well-informed. It makes a lot of sense when Toyono in a way admonishes Hana for her lack of familiarity with the story of Saint Kobo. She says, "Being a woman is no excuse for being ignorant". Toyono's education and knowledge was responsible for her place in the family. Her intelligence and enormous debating capacity had a liberating effect on her life which hardly anyone of her age could ever enjoy.

Hana's character is a mould similar to that of Toyono. She too is educated. Fumio is as well educated as her brother. But as it can be clearly made out from the text, one's education must help in broadening one's horizons, it must supplement one's personality and help one negotiate problems with prudence. Knowledge must make a person polite, candid, and confident than ruthless and proud. The difference between Fumio and Akiko is remarkable. Fumio sounds proud, disrespectful and evasive while Akiko represents calmness like Hana.
While attempting at documenting change, Ariyoshi tries to rehabilitate the virtues of womenhood. She strikes a positive note in the characterisation of her protagonists. Women may appear to be getting increasingly burdened with work in modern times as they now have to devote their time outside home also; situations of conflicts may thus arise. But it should not lead to relinquishing one's responsibilities or social roles. This may lead to chaos. A new order emerges from within and may not always be a response to exogenetic forces. Ariyoshi's protagonists are therefore not cast in a gloomy shadowy situation like those of Enchi or Tsushima Yuko. They have a sparkle and brightness within them which enables them to solicit a better deal. They are as courageous as Ineko's or Yuriko's heroines but they also tend to have a soft corner for womenly virtues. The role and place of women seen in relation to those of men should not be construed the way an accountant prepares his balance-sheet. They must be seen in their totality as together they have been the architects of human history and civilization.