CONCLUSION

[The] study of English would no longer primarily serve to produce professional academic masculinized literary critics, or even mature men. Instead, it would be the purpose of such study to develop in students (teachers and taught) a sense of the cultural importance of the ways in which fictions are made, moulded, and channelled, with a view not only to more adequate and active involvement in making use of fictions, but in their production and circulations; and in developing new and more democratic links between modes of consumption, production and social dissemination.¹

- Brian Doyle

I

My main purpose, in this dissertation, was mainly to discover the simple and straightforward or complex and oppositional constructions of women in patriarchal cultures. I have found in this study of Hardy and Gopinath some differences in these constructions in accordance with the shape and range of discourses of women in which they wrote their novels. It is not difficult to see that Hardy's women characters are made against a growing social and intellectual concern with specifically women's problems. Similarly, a comparative lack of such concerns is discernible in the making of Gopinath's women-characters.
As we have seen, Gopinath is, for instance, unable to represent the problems of working women in the case of Sati in a comprehensive manner. But Hardy's Bathsheba characterizes the social fate of a woman aspiring for a farming career in the changing socio-economic condition of the then England. Like Bethsheba, Sati perhaps could have been a problematic and comprehensive representation of women's work ethics, if Gopinath had moulded her as a working-woman in the context of rural agricultural set up of Orissa, because the agony of being a working woman can be understood in a more complex and complete way where the socio-economic and cultural network of the institution of work operates in its total pervasiveness. Unlike women in an urban or rural middleclass household, women are the real bread-earners in the lower middle class families. For the lower class women in Orissa, marriage and motherhood do not constitute the only purpose in life. Work and economic support are additional tasks which they are expected to share. As Leela Gulati says:

[The] work situation is the first reality of their lives. Women work not only because they have no male support or the male support is not enough, but also because their commitment to the family is more intense. This is evident from the fact that they contribute a major portion of their income towards the upkeep of the family and are also willing to take up even the most menial tasks to augment their income for the support of the family.²
But Sati’s workspace is limited to an urban middle class milieu in Orissa. In that space Gopinath finds it difficult to explore the realities of a working woman in depth. The social mobility for a working woman in that space in Orissa is extremely limited. In other words the relationship of work and women, despite the individual differences of authorial abilities can get circumscribed by the ways a woman is placed in a social and intellectual context. It is to be noted that Gopinath has presented a character called Puni, a lower class woman in Harijan (The Children of God), - a character which I have not discussed above. But the author does not connect in the case of Puni the consciousness of gender and of class. She is seen simply as a field of class struggle in a simple Marxist sense. Work as a distinct social concern for women does not seem to fascinate Gopinath.

Similarly the institution of marriage being a subject of public debate in various forms, it is through the characterization of Sue Hardy deals with the subject in a multi-faceted manner. Sue’s reaction to marriage exposes its deficiencies as an institution. Sue’s questioning shows its failure to serve as a bridge between the individual self, more specifically a woman’s self, and the community. Gopinath is not consciously and intellectually engaged, like Hardy, with the issues of marriage. The way ultimately Jili accepts Ramachandra Sahukar in marriage actually
shows the story of exploitation of the tribal population in Orissa by a non-tribal money lender. Gopinath does not show Jili caught in the disintegrating institution of marriage in a tribal society. Further, as has been shown above in the description of the institution of marriage in a tribal society the assumptions of the author about man-woman relationships are of conservative middleclass origin. As a result of the lack of a concerned and focussed analysis of the institution of marriage Jili's essential problem as a woman within that institution does not come to the fore. Furthermore the general tendency of Gopinath to metaphysicalise the socio-economic realities also hampers the presentation of women and marriage. Jili's life as a woman thus becomes doubly hidden and secondary. The story of Sukrujani's exploitation by Ramachandra Sahukar at one level, and on the other, the story of Man as an exploited (seen metaphysically) creature in the universe suppress and dilute the problem of Jili in the specific context of tribal martial system in Paraja society. She is, as a woman character, distorted with easy acceptance of the immutability of patriarchy. As if, for Gopinath this immutability of patriarchy is completely submerged with the inevitability of Destiny.

The society in which Gopinath wrote his novels, for a number of reasons, is yet to be really aware of what is called today the empowerment of women. Political tokenism in this regard cannot hide the fact that significant
women's movements have not yet taken place in Orissa. Even today the simple literacy rate of women in Orissa is 34.40%. Despite the growth of women-writings after independence women's issue have hardly been debated in their full range in public in Orissa. Activist feminism is non-existent in Orissa. It is this general lack of serious concern of feminist questions which obviously constrains even a major Oriya novelist Gopinath's delineations of women characters.

Incidentally, Gopinath Mohanty was a student of English literature who later became a bureaucrat of the Government of Orissa. There is no doubt that he was acquainted with Hardy's novels which formed a part of the English syllabuses in the colleges of Orissa. More importantly, Hardy's rural landscapes inspired Gopinath to write on the tribals who lived in the forest of Orissa, away from the cities. The question of influence or inspiration is, of course, a complex matter. But it will not perhaps be erroneous to insist that there exists an actual literary link between Hardy and Gopinath, though my aim here is not to elaborate and discuss this link. As stated, I have tried to see if the two authors - Hardy and Gopinath - react in comparable and similar way, in to the problem of womanhood not withstanding their various differences. In this modest manner, this feminist comparison of the two authors extends the existing critical positions relating to them while reinforcing some of the basic arguments of feminist
criticism against patriarchal dominations. My approach to the women characters has been essentially thematic illustrating the problems of women in patriarchal...Naturally I have not studied these literary character in all their dimensions. I have isolated some aspects in their characterization to discuss the said problems.

Though the historical differences influence the nature and shape of characterization of women in Hardy and Gopinath, there is a commonality of fate of women in patriarchy particularly with regard to their subordination. The forms of women's subordination may vary according to historical circumstances, but women have a common fate in their relation to men. In this light, I have tried to reexamine the claim of Davis that the novel as a genre creates a myth of universality of characters. Actually the element of universality that I have noticed in the study of women characters, questions the simple notion of historical differences. Difference, in women's subordination does not obliterate their "universal" problem of being subordinated in a patriarchy. As Lola Chatterji rightly points out, what women share all over the world is probably more than what divides them. By foregrounding what concerns them, feminist criticism hopes to provide tools for continuing comparison, analysis and research.³

Indeed when one looks at a character in the novel from a
feminist - comparative angle (as I have tried to), one recovers a faith in the possibility of making a 'character' which, in other words, means a faith in the possibility of changing the making of a character. This study while it accepts realism or a realistic character as a literary device, it sees in this literary device the possibility of a certain faith in human acts, and social change. Both Hardy and Gopinath, it may be noted have a basic faith in the ideology of realism. In this context, I believe that a faith is not just an illusion but can be an active ingredient in personal and social action. So while this study can be described as a deconstruction of patriarchy, my analysis shows how deconstruction can be positive and affirmative instead of being cynical and self-reflexive.

Lastly, I would like to mention that the novel is, in the words of Walter Ong, "clearly a print genre", and as such it is connected with certain forces in the formation of a modern society -- a society which comes into being under the pressures of new technologies such as the technology of print. Ong explains this phenomenon, which he calls "the technologing of the word ", elaborately in his book, Orality and literacy. My point, here, is that notwithstanding the varieties, subject to time and place, within the genre of novel, the novelist as a creature of a modern society confronts issues like the growth of individualism, or "the privatization of self"; the spread of literacy and a widening of the reading public ;
the rise of new personal values with the collapse of the old values of order and community. (It is not without significance that the novel is described as "a bourgeois epic".) My study of the women characters in the novels of Hardy and Gopinath is, I believe, posited against this novelistic heritage. Accordingly, it is the common fate of women in patriarchies which has concerned me the most in this dissertation. This concern is rooted in an awareness of the making of a modern society.

Notes


5. Ong, Walter J. (See ch. five and seven).