CHAPTER - V

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When “the repressed” of their culture and their society come back, it is an explosive return, which is absolutely shattering, staggering, over turning with a force never let loose before.

(Cixous and Clement in The Newly Born Woman)

The image of woman has changed with time. As a reaction to patriarchy, the “New Woman” emerged. This “New Woman” portrays the radical image of woman. The steps taken by some women writers like Mary Wollstonecraft and Virginia Woolf, paved the way for the “New Woman.” The “New Woman” first appeared in English literature in the novels of great Victorians. Towards the end of 19th century, Grant Allen’s The Women Who Did, Thomas Hardy’s Tess of D’urbervilles and other works favoured a new image of woman. When Hardy sub-titled his novel “a pure woman,” he issued a deliberately provocative challenge to conventional notions of purity. There is a difference between the New Woman of the English tradition and that of Indian Novels. Here the woman has to face complex social and cultural forces at work. Therefore Indian writers have tried to keep within social and cultural bounds in order to be realistic.

In Indian novels in the second half of the 20th century the “New Woman” came to the forefront. The emergence of the “New Woman” was inevitable on the Indian scene as: “The genesis of the New Woman lies in the necessity to rectify the fallible tradition as well as the psychological view of femininity” (Pandey 135). Women as rebels were first introduced in the novels dealing with Independence movement. In the modern era women characters are shown as searching for identity, for self-awareness. Though women rebelled against major social issues in earlier novels, but in the contemporary novels, the new woman, rebels against accepting the traditional feminine roles. They have challenged the accepted ideals of marriage and maternity, and have chosen to work for a living instead. They refuse to conform to the image of the effeminate, docile, silent and long suffering woman, a picture invented and nurtured through a male oriented culture. The women of contemporary fiction are revolutionary in nature and the emphasis is on
creating a totally new character type. The new woman is talented, intelligent, and indulges in deep self-analysis and introspection. She has refused to accept unquestioningly the rules fixed for her by an ancient outmoded culture. The new woman is self-confident and voluntarily chooses (or takes decision for self) a career for herself rather than marriage and family. She rebels and does not fulfill any of the traditional roles meant for women, and she strives hard to achieve self-respect and self-expression. The “New Woman” portrays a revolutionary woman, the image of radical woman who does not conform to any traditional code of conduct.

The radical image of woman has shattered the myth of weak, clinging, dependent woman and shook off the irrational and traditional ties. The new woman refuses to play a second fiddle to her man in various walks of life. She desires to be independent and free as she is educated and enlightened. She is strong and capable and is more rational with a better balance between reason and emotion. She is no more a blind follower and believer. She questions her surroundings as well as her existence. This questioning is the result of her eagerness to know more about herself which indeed is a positive sign. This questioning led to the emergence of the “New Woman.”

The new woman of today is aware of the biased attitude of the society. She asserts her individuality by challenging the taboos and destructive social norms. The new woman who is also sensitive and aware realises the need for individuality and revolts against the established norms by “leaving a marriage that had become an emotional wasteland” (Berne 125) for her. She breaks away to seek self-fulfillment. Awareness in a woman that she can live a different but happy and purposeful life asserts self-confidence in her. She emerges as a new woman looking for self-fulfillment and self-realisation. The new woman is bold and courageous. She has her own ideas about love and marriage. She is not afraid of sex without marriage or pre-marital sex. She is frank and does not hesitate to express her desires and feelings. The new woman asserts her individuality and shows her willingness to confront reality and not run away from it. She has indomitable courage and unflinching determination. She believes in freedom, strength and self-assertion and protests against injustice and exploitation. She believes in liberation and realization of the feminine values through identity-assertion and self-affirmation. This new sensibility contributes to the radical sensibility of the new woman.
In her fiction, Amrita has recorded the plight of the contemporary Indian Woman; simultaneously, she has envisaged the new woman as she breaks away from old societal patterns and discovers her own selfhood. This revolt against stultifying convention is a persistent theme. Furthermore, the degree and manner of revolt and its consequences separate Amrita’s fiction into three clearly discernible, through inevitably overlapping periods from fifties to the seventies. Here only the fiction of the sixties is concentrated upon. Amrita, as a creative thinker, between these three decades had travelled a distance that would take Indian society many more decades to cover. Her novels present some of the most enlightened and sophisticated feminine characters to be found in modern Indian literature. They stand out for their pitiless honesty, subjecting themselves to the most hazardous experiments in unconventional and uncompromised emotional living.

In the fiction of the sixties, in *The Closed Door, Two Faces of Eve (Once There was an Anita)*, *Earth, Sea and Shells, A Line in Water (Village Number 36)* and *An Aerial*, the women characters to use Amrita’s own words, had “the courage to forget and demolish the present and build a new future, the courage to shuffle dreams like cards before they are dealt out” (*TRS* 35). These women are totally creatures of the future, totally free of the older morality and social values – this at least was Amrita’s intention. It was as if she had jumped fifty years ahead and presented the dreams as a reality. Amrita’s talks about middle-class women who as “New Woman” struggle to release themselves from the tradition-bound society. She does not project hysterical feminist views. She presents her women as believing in conjugal love and strong family ties. Only the options are now open and free. The women choose their way of life.

In her novels of the sixties, Amrita creates women who have learnt to assert themselves fully, and achieve that total integrity of self where the woman no longer needs any props to be herself, not even the man she loves. Self-awareness and dignity of self leads them to pave a path for themselves. Such women characters are Kammi, Chetna, Alka and Annie. Their achievement is reserved for themselves as they portray the radical image of the new woman.

This chapter traces the feminine sensibility of Amrita’s women in the different facets of the radical image they present. The radical image of woman is portrayed through
Kammi in *The Closed Door*, Anita in *Two Faces of Eve (Once There was an Anita)*, Chetna in *Earth, Sea and Shells*, Alka in *A Line in Water (Village Number 36)*, and Annie in *The Aerial*.

**Kammi in *The Closed Door***

Amrita Pritam created the character Kammi to be bold and questioning in the novel *The Closed Door*. Kammi is a young educated woman. She has no mother but a father in whose house she does not stay. She works as a teacher and leads an independent life. The principal of the school is like a mother to her. Kammi’s father wants her to get married for which she is not willing. She had decided not to marry in childhood itself, the reason being the suffering and tragedy of her mother’s life.

Kammi’s mother Tara lived the agony of an orphan at her uncle’s house in Rampur. When Tara was of marriageable age she was married to an average family in Ludhiana. Tara had hoped that the marriage would bring a change in her life, a change from dryness to greenery. Tara was totally disappointed with her marriage. Her husband physically tortured her as she had not brought enough wealth. “A woman’s youthfulness may wither, but her womb never withers without bearing fruit” (*TCD* 8). Tara got pregnant and bore a daughter, who was named Kamal and called Kammi. Kammi’s father treated Tara very inhumanly and unjustly. His behaviour was beastial and Tara’s lot was only to suffer without retaliating. He used to beat her brutally. Tara would get very sick because of it. She lied to people to cover up her husband’s torture. From her infancy Kammi had seen her mother being mercilessly beaten by her father. The child could never understand the cause or the reason why her mother bore this treatment silently. But she did question and did try to comprehend the reality by asking her mother why she would not go to the village to be away from her father. Tara had asked, “Which village shall I go to, Kammi! The ones who bore me are no longer alive, and the ones who married me off will reject me” (*TCD* 9). Kammi had questioned why her mother had married, and Tara had told her that all have to get married. It is the fate of girls to get married. And Kammi had asked “After getting married one has to suffer the beatings?” Kammi was a precocious child and Tara had said that, “Daughters have two births, Kammi! Marriage is second birth. It is a matter of one’s fortune” (*TCD* 9). Amrita Pritam presents the
predicament of women who like Tara silently and patiently accept everything in their life as fate’s doing. Tara was helpless and her fate was that she had to live with the brutal, merciless husband. For Tara marriage offered no security or happiness, in turn it demanded sacrifices and adjustments.

As a daughter, Kammi does not like her father when he beats her mother. She does question: “Mother! Why do you live with father when he treats you so badly?” “Where should I go then; tell me, Kammi. A woman is like dough. Inside the house the rats eat her and outside the crows peck at her” (TCD 10). In the beginning Kammi could not understand the reference to the rats and crows. But as she grows older, she comes to know its deadly significance. Seeing her mother’s predicament Kammi had felt a kind of hatred of herself. When she was just ten years old she expressed her feelings about marriage to Satpal, son of her mother’s friend. She opines that marriage was a bad happening and girls should never get married and that she would never get married. This thought of Kammi is because of how her mother suffered her father’s inhuman treatment.

When Kammi is sixteen and in college, she sees her mother die at the hands of her father. One wintery night her father turns her mother out of the house after beating her severely; having no place to take her aching body and humiliated soul, she lies outside all night feebly knocking at the door asking to be let in. Kammi’s father had thrown Tara out because she had burnt his shirt collar while ironing. He had got very angry and beaten her. She is finally admitted inside on Kammi’s intervention, but by that time the woman has contracted a cold and dies of pneumonia within a few days. Tara dies an untimely death. Her life was tragic and ends in a tragedy at the husband’s hands. Kammi’s soul is very troubled at the loss of her mother. Kammi had witnessed the gruesome behaviour of her father towards her mother. This spectacle of man’s tyranny and woman’s helplessness shakes Kammi as nothing else could. She realizes that in this society, though woman creates the home, it does not belong to her. It belongs to the male who can always turn the female out: “My mother died of exposure and my father gave out some sort of story to cover the truth. Man has always been turning the woman out. Has a woman ever done that to him? The truth is that a woman has no home of her own” (TCD 41). Tara’s death shows that a woman’s fate is unpredictable.
After her mother’s death, Kammi decides to stay at the college hostel. Her determination to have a life of her own is expressed when she says: “I am studying so that I do not have to look to a home whose doors can be closed on me” (TCD 27). She chooses to educate herself and live independently. She decides that she would become a teacher at the school that would be set up by the college principle Miss. Madan in the Kangra Valley. Kammi does not visit her father even in the holidays after her college study. When Miss. Madan tells Kammi to visit her father, Kammi said that she is happy in the valley and that her father’s house was not her home. This is true many a times for a woman. A woman’s life is so dependent that when she is married she loses her parents’ home and when she thinks that the husband’s home is her own; the husband throws the woman out. So ultimately for a woman there is no home that she can call her own. Kammi had experienced it happen to her mother. Witnessing her mother’s life Kammi had decided to educate herself and have an independent life, a life of self-respect and dignity. She keeps herself away from her father, and does not return to his house. After her degree she joins the school and becomes the first teacher there. Kammi’s determination towards living an independent life is a courageous step to beat down the patriarchal supremacy. The disillusionment with man’s home and the resolve to have a home of her’s changes the entire scene. Gone is the surrender to man and the ensuing suffering and suffocation that woman is forced to undergo.

Kammi lives together with Miss. Madan and day by day their relation grows into a very deep and strong mother-daughter bond. When Kammi is depressed many a times, Miss. Madan wants to know the reason for her sadness. Kammi expresses her feeling that she is unhappy with her birth and even with her mother’s birth – as both were women. She tells Miss. Madan that “a house will always be a man’s, a woman will never have a house” (TCD 26). Kammi had witnessed her mother suffer and die at the hands of her father. Kammi feels that the house where she was born was not her mother’s house but her father’s house. She feels that a woman in a patriarchal set-up will never have a home of her own. Kammi had educated herself so that she would not have to go to any such door that would be closed for her later. She works as a teacher and considers the school as her life-boat. Miss. Madan had assured Kammi that the school was the shore and not boat and Kammi could find the door always open for her there. Kammi does not want to go to
any other door in her life except stay at the school in the valley, and lead an independent life of her choice.

A woman may have her own dreams in life but the society does not allow her to live as she wishes. Kammi’s father wants her to marry Satpal to whom she was engaged at the age of ten, but having become a teacher, a self-supporting individual, she refuses to do so. Economic independence gives her the power to defy and she refuses to hand over her destiny to anyone. But Miss. Madan tells Kammi to understand that “life is like a telephone, if the telephone’s sound should be heard, one should call another’s number. Otherwise it is useless to have it” ((TCD 30). Kammi comes to know that Miss. Madan had dialled a wrong number and in anger and sadness had cut off all connection and later had repented. Miss. Madan convinces Kammi that not getting married would be an insult to humankind. So she should get married if not to Satpal, then to anyone she liked. Amrita believed in the togetherness of man and woman and so it is suggested to Kammi to marry and experience different facets of life.

Kammi is unable to make up her mind for marriage. She is troubled by thinking of the tortured life that her mother had lived which had led to her untimely death. Miss. Madan convinces her to move forward in life and not to stand at one point in life and that life should be continued. Kammi does not want to get married but the assurance and encouragement given by Miss. Madan leads her to get married to Satpal. Amrita believed in the harmony of man-woman relationship. She believed that both complement each other and one without another would be incomplete. Kammi agrees to marry of her own free will, but she feels it made no difference to her whether she married Satpal or anyone else. Though Kammi had not wanted to leave the school and the valley she presented herself with a smile, as if she had drunk all the sadness she had and gets ready to face a new phase life.

Kammi as a daughter, as a woman, as a human being had seen her mother struggle, suffer and die in marriage. She does not get married from her father’s house because she feels, “When the house could never become my mother’s home how could it ever become mine” (TCD 27). Her mother had died an early death in that house and from that day on, each brick from that house tortured Kammi. Only Miss. Madan understands
Kammi’s agony and pain and she convinces Satpal to get married at his village. Kammi does not show any happiness or excitement in her marriage. She performed and participated in the rituals and customs as if she was seeing a puppet-show.

Kammi lives with Satpal at Jalandar as he is a lecturer in a college. Marriage does not bring Kammi the happiness, the fulfillment, all those things that usually a woman expects to have in it. She is deceived by Satpal. After marriage Kammi is shocked when she comes to know that Satpal had loved a girl named Sheel and had even promised to marry her but had forsaken her. Kammi comes to know that Satpal had married her for his parents’ sake as well as for the house that Kammi’s father had promised to give in marriage. Sheel visits Kammi and tells that she had loved Satpal but now she could not love a man who had forsaken her for the sake of property. At this point, Kammi does not feel hurt or deceived by Satpal but rather feels kind of relieved on hearing Sheel. Kammi understands Sheel’s agony and tells her that a woman’s sorrow is very long. “The man is equally responsible as the woman for a crime – but in this world only the woman is punished” (TCD 43).

It is always true that in a man-woman relationship, man escapes freely without as much a scratch, but the woman has to suffer the brunt of the relationship. Sheel and Kammi both are deceived by Satpal. He turns out to be an obedient son, but he fails as a lover and also as a husband. Sheel was pregnant with Satpal’s child and he did not have the courage to accept his responsibility; but Kammi saw to it that Sheel was installed in Satpal’s house. She assures Sheel that nobody would snatch away her child’s home. Kammi behaves in a very courageous manner. She did not bother with herself; neither did she fear the society. She does not weep and wail, but very calmly decides to leave Satpal and breaks the marriage, “as easily as one switches of the light.” Without hesitation she rectifies the injustice that Sheel had undergone and bravely takes the responsibility of installing Sheel in Satpal’s life and home by marrying them. She forces Satpal to marry Sheel and she goes back to her old school to be a teacher once again, without bitterness or remorse, for she refuses to live in a home that does not belong to her.

Kammi had done justice to Sheel by giving her the rightful place in Satpal’s life. Kammi’s bond of marriage was broken but she did not regret it much because Sheel and
her child had a rightful bond with Satpal. Sheel had felt that there was no other way but to
die but Kammi had given her the path to live life. Though it had been a difficult job for
Kammi, she had completed it. Her marriage to Satpal had got over the minute Sheel had
told about her relationship with Satpal and so it did not make any sense to her to live with
him.

Kammi’s bold step to get justice to Sheel shows Kammi’s integrity and self-
respect. Kammi’s sacrifice is appreciated but it was thought that she had destroyed her
own future. Her father was very upset and angry with Kammi. He had expected her to
continue her life with Satpal who had deceived her. The society expects a woman to
forgive and forget whatever a man does. If a man leaves his wife it is accepted, but if a
woman leaves her husband she has to stand as a criminal in the witness box, and explain
and answer questions to justify herself. Many times a woman does not get an opportunity
to explain or justify her actions. Kammi keeps silent as she feels that her silence and time
both would slowly sprinkle water on the fire that had been caught up in her life. Her
silence does not portray her weakness but rather it shows her strength to face the truth of
life.

Kammi returns to Kangra Valley, only within fifteen days of her marriage. Her
life was in the school and it becomes her world. She spends a lot of time with the women
who lived in the hilly village. Kammi’s life is happy, she was happy with her school too.
As time passes, Kammi experiences a strange need, a need that a woman feels. She
thought, “Sometimes my hands: start searching for an identity. Don’t know whose
identity, but a man’s identity . . .” (TCD 53). This feeling of Kammi brings out the
sensibility of a woman longing for a man which is a natural desire in a woman. Kammi,
living a single life feels that she is in exile, as if the country had abandoned her. She feels
that the usual way a woman lives her life – the family life with husband, children at her
own home – she had been in exile from such life. Amrita through Kammi’s feelings
highlights that it is important for a woman to have a home and a family of her own.
Lonely life is an unbearable curse for human beings. She brings to light that though one
may have a purpose to live and one may be surrounded by people, a woman’s self still
longs for someone to call as her own.
Loneliness took a toll on Kammi in its own way. Years pass and one day Kammi found that everything inside her felt numb. She tried to think of the past, and the failed marriage, Satpal’s face, Sheel’s face, nothing came to her. She could not even feel hate or tears. She felt that her body and her heart both had gone numb or insensitive. At this point in her life Kammi gets to meet Sumesh. Sumesh is a young journalist, on a trip to Kulu hills. He got suddenly sick on the journey and needed doctor’s treatment. The station master sent him to the school doctor for treatment. He is a man of thirty or thirty-one. His leg had swollen because of a pierced nail. He is treated and was out of danger. Sumesh stays at the school’s guest house until he got well. Kammi visits him with the principal and took care of him. Sumesh got Kammi’s books to read and he becomes very much interested in knowing her. Sumesh gets to know Kammi through the lines, underlined by her in her books that he read: “Love is that flower, where sweetness is in the upper part and bitterness in the lower part” (TCD 59). On knowing her past life he is surprised by her courage and her boldness and he appreciates her.

Sumesh is attracted to Kammi and she too feels the same. But she does not respond to him as he would have expected her to. Sumesh tells Kammi one day that, “it was one man’s fault and she was punishing all the men of the world” and Kammi says, “if there is any punishment for my experience, it is only for me” (TCD 63). Kammi experiences fear because of her inner self. She had thought that there was nothing inside her nothing especially for a man. She really does not understand the inside of her self. She tries to know what was really going inside her. When Sumesh had left the Kangra Valley after he got well, Kammi feels that he had taken away so much of her with him.

Amrita presents the reality of Kammi’s feelings as a woman who loves Sumesh. When Kammi gets a letter from Sumesh she realizes that she was ready to offer her everything, all her self to Sumesh. She is overwhelmed when she reads that he wants to have her in his life. But because of her past experience Kammi writes to him that he should not invite misfortune to enter his life. He should leave it wherever it was. Kammi feels that she was an unfortunate person and she does not wish to spoil Sumesh’s life. Kammi has strong feelings for Sumesh, but she tells him that her past life was still with her and she would not be able to travel the new path with old shadows. But Sumesh is ready to come into Kammi’s world and he assures he wants only her heart and nothing
from the world. Though Kammi loves Sumesh she shows a lot of patience and control over her feelings and holds herself from accepting the new world offered by Sumesh. But later she goes to him when she learns from a letter of his that the pain in his legs had increased and he wants to come to Kangra Valley to be near Kammi to share his sorrow and pain with her. Kammi shows the sensibility of a woman in love who would never leave her beloved in trouble.

As a woman would feel with her love, Kammi living with Sumesh experiences a feeling of completeness, and it is the first time that she has such a feeling. When Kammi goes to Sumesh’s place in Delhi, he placed a flower in her hair and put a ring on her finger and said that their marriage had taken place. Though they do not get married according to tradition or law, Kammi accepts it. She is happy in the present, though she does not know what her future would be. One thing Kammi strongly feels is “I will never repent on my decision” (TCD 70), to have stayed with Sumesh. Amrita has created a very bold and confident character in Kammi who very courageously accepts her feelings and moves ahead without any bother for the society’s code of behaviour.

As time passes, one day Kammi is hurt when Sumesh expresses his feelings that he is troubled by the thought that he has no right over Kammi as she was not yet free from her marriage to Satpal. Kammi is quiet but cries. She feels that it is only a man who complains about a woman’s past life. Kammi could have done the same to Sumesh but she showed her mature understanding and maintains her silence. A woman in love leaves behind her good independent life, risks by going against society’s barriers, and goes to take care of the man, who in turn hurts her, by complaining to her. Kammi had accepted what Sumesh had offered her; she had not asked what usually a woman wants. She had not even asked for a formal marriage with him which the society would accept. Sumesh’s insecurity and narrow-minded attitude shows typical male possessive behaviour.

Kammi had been a good partner fulfilling all her duties and responsibilities. She tries to make Sumesh happy by cooking good food everyday and by keeping their room newly decorated every day. Though Kammi lived many happy days with Sumesh she finds him withdrawing from her, since she has not obtained a divorce from her first husband. Kammi comes to know that Sumesh’s parents would not accept the kind of
marriage that they had. According to the social norms, it was not a marriage at all. A man and a woman living together without a formal marriage get neither respect nor social acceptance. Kammi understands that Sumesh found it very difficult to live and go around with her as he found their living was like an uninhabited island, lonely and forsaken. Kammi thinks that if one had a companion one liked, he would be happy on a strange island too. But if one does not have a good companion, one would feel lonely in a world full of happiness. She feels that things appear to a person as one sees them. Kammi feels disappointed and hurt when Sumesh expressed that certain times he felt like he had been outcasted by the society because of having her in his life. She feels that their happy living together had to have society’s license of acceptance. Amrita has tried to present how society’s norms and regulations become a barrier to the life of a happy couple. She also presents how love flies out of the window when reality strikes hard. Kammi loves Sumesh and had accepted him without any doubts. But Sumesh seems to be bound by the dominant society’s chains.

Another ordeal awaited Kammi. She is shocked, when Sumesh tells her that he has kept it from his father that Kammi was living with him because it would destroy his career prospects. Kammi comes to know that Sumesh did not have the courage to face his father. So when his father telegraphs that he was coming to stay with him, Sumesh proposes to Kammi that she should shift to some other place, a hotel, preferably to her school, so that he may not lose the goodwill and property of his father who could never approve of their relationship. Though Kammi tries to assure Sumesh that she would face his father and get everything to be good, he does not accept it as he does not want to slog lifelong at newspapers’ offices for only thirty rupees. Kammi, a self-respecting woman, very boldly does what Sumesh wants. She lodges no protest and creates no melodrama. She cooks his evening meal, cleans his house, packs her belongings and leaves quietly. She does not appeal to Sumesh even in the name of the child she has conceived with him. Before leaving when Kammi expresses to Sumesh that she had considered his house as her house, he tells her not to be emotional. A man would never understand the sensibility of a woman towards having her own house. The house becomes a home, a secure haven, and gives an identity for the woman. It becomes her place of her happiness and contentment. If such a home is snatched away from her it is like her world itself is taken away from her. Kammi has to lose this world because of man’s selfishness.
The limit of Sumesh’s selfishness is seen when he had expected Kammi to get a job and had thought that she would be able to take care of some expenditure. As Kammi is pregnant she had told him that she would not be able to do a job in her condition. A shock of her life is faced by Kammi when she hears Sumesh tell her that they cannot have a child then and that she should go to a doctor and get it aborted. Kammi is not only deeply hurt but becomes desolated. On hearing such response from Sumesh she does not lose her courage but very bravely she tells him that she would make place for her child in the world where she lived and that the child would not come into his home. Kammi is very relaxed and controlled in her behaviour towards Sumesh. He thought that she understands his situation and would cooperate with him. Though Kammi shakes her head in confirmation that she would go to the doctor, in her heart and mind she knew it would be only after six or seven months to deliver the child.

What one finds here is the selfish, utterly worldly behaviour of Sumesh. He did not have the courage to defend his love neither the capacity to support Kammi and his child. He was not ready to bear the responsibilities that were expected of him. Sumesh shirked his duty because his personal gain, especially his ambition, is important for him. Kammi comes to know by the slip of Sumesh’s tongue that his father would send him abroad. She does not show that she was hurt but put up a bold front and said, “It is good. It will set up your career” (TCD 78). She leaves to where she has a home of her own, where the door is always open and never closed. Kammi is shown as a dignified woman who finds that it would be worth having her own home rather than live in a man’s home, the man who may turn her out any time and close the door. Sumesh arranges for Kammi to stay at a hotel and tells that he would pay all the expenses, but if his father stayed longer, she should go to Kangra Valley.

Kammi leaves Sumesh’s house without leaving a single trace of hers. She takes care to put away all those things from which the smell of a woman’s identity or existence would be found. Though she is in dejected condition, she assures Sumesh not to worry about her. He tries to justify his actions by telling that unless and until a man has no food and position for himself; his love will not hold any meaning for him. He asks forgiveness to her and confesses that he was not her worth and that she should forget him. His selfishness is beyond any pardon. He says to her, “I am a man Kammi! I want to become
successful in life! If I am not able to make a position for myself, what will I love?” (TCD 79). Kammi keeps quiet listening to Sumesh. She feels that a woman would never be able to understand what he had said, but she, had come to understand it that for a man career, success, property, are primary; love and woman are secondary or do not matter at all. Kammi had earlier read a French girl’s story and had found that “love always gives pain to a woman and nothing else” (TCD 58). That is what happens to her. Sumesh was not her worth but she gets deeply scared in love. She portrays a mature attitude by not retaliating and by going out in a dignified way.

Kammi sees the limit of Sumesh’s selfishness, when he had expressed his fear that she might later tell all about their relation to his father and claim her rights. She is very hurt when she found that Sumesh had never understood her in any way. He had considered her so low that she would go to his father to claim him and her rights. Kammi feels that she had never understood Sumesh. She wants to write a letter to him but was not able to do so because she could not find words to write. She experiences immense pressure on her mind. She feels she was surrounded only by worries and if she did not control herself she would fall into a pit. Slowly she takes care of herself and comes out of all the worries and writes a letter. Earlier she would address him as ‘my destination’, ‘my faith’ but it all turned to be a deception now. Kammi writes to him:

Sumesh, enjoy your house, and enjoy your earnings and your father’s earnings. Your house has beautiful flowers in the vase like religion, society, respect and prestige. I wish you enjoy all that. My love was like the dust on the road that had fallen on your legs. Today when you go home, wipe your feet on the door-mat” (TCD 82).

Kammi’s words bring out the pain, the hurt, the agony of loving and suffering that a woman has to bear for all that she had sacrificed. It also shows the generosity of a woman in love who would not want the man’s loss. Kammi was considered a burden, an obstacle in the path of his successful life by Sumesh. She frees him from all bondage and responsibilities. Kammi symbolizes the strength in a woman who can take care of herself when drowning.
When Kammi leaves the hotel she thinks that, “Yesterday morning that house was mine . . . but in the evening that house was no longer mine . . . why is this relation between house and a woman so feeble?” (TCD 83). Kammi goes to put the letter into Sumesh’s house. The door is closed, seeing the closed door Kammi is reminded of her mother who had suffered out in the cold because her father had thrown her out and closed the house door on her. In a way Kammi’s fate had turned out to be like her mother’s as Sumesh had closed his door on her. But Kammi is shown as a dignified woman who finds that it would be worth having her own home rather than live in a man’s home, the man who may turn her out any time and close the door. For Kammi the door at Kangra Valley is the only door that is always open for her, to welcome her. It was the door that would not only welcome Kammi but also her unborn child.

Kammi is brave and strong to face all the tragic circumstances in her life. Both the men in her life Satpal and Sumesh turn out to be selfish and materialistic. Both deceive her. Satpal deceives Sheel and married Kammi for his own needs. Sumesh has Kammi at his own convenience and forsakes her for his ambition and career. He does not stand the true test of love. One doubts if he had truly loved Kammi. Neither marriage nor love could give Kammi a secure life that a woman desires. Kammi’s sensibility though hurt, deceived, does not lose the ground but it leads her to take care of herself. Rather than breaking down and losing her spirits, Kammi handles the situation in her life with confidence and determination. Kammi saying, “A woman’s womb will never become barren, mother! If a woman’s womb became barren then with whom will the life’s accidents play?” (TCD 84), though shows her pain it also is a ray of hope for her to continue to live life.

Amrita Pritam for the first time pronounced the truth that ‘woman has no home of her own’ in this novel. Earlier, she had never thought of nor talked in terms of a home. “She had attributed woman’s tragedy to fate or circumstance and sought a solution in submission, reconciliation, death and rebirth. But in The Closed Door, she realized woman’s basic weakness and hit upon the correct solution that a woman needs to be educated and strong to take care of her self” (Sharma 123).
In this novel, Amrita presents the image of woman as dignified and confident. She has made her say good bye to all compromises for all times and allowed her to go about and see if in the man’s world there is a home in which she could live respectably. Unfortunately, Kammi could find none in spite of two efforts. But Kammi’s end is not like that of her mother. She is a self-respecting, independent individual and so she survives for she has her own home. She can afford to exist by herself and she does. Though she suffers, Amrita presents her sensibility as a strong new woman who can lead life with dignity, by being independent and by not crying over split milk.

Anita in Two Faces of Eve

Revati Sharma observes, “Amrita Pritam’s woman cannot really live without love. She must have love, but not at the cost of her self-respect or individual dignity” (124). This novel, Two Faces of Eve, is in the nature of a counterweight. The bitter experience of Kammi in The Closed Door did not scare Amrita away from man or his love. She still continued to seek him and his love and this at her own risk. She did not ignore this basic instinct in human nature. Through this novel, Amrita appears to stress that, inspite of her seeking a separate home and an independent economic status, woman’s goal is not to escape from man but to escape into him. Anita says: “For some, a human being can be God; his love, her religion, his quest, her faith; I cannot speak for others, but in my case it’s so” (TFE 125). Anita projects “an image of life which culminates into the surrender of the hegemony of reason to the quagmire of impeccable passion” (Lal 43).

The novel is of Anita, married woman, wife of Rampal Sachdeva. Anita’s life was happy and very active. She took care of all at home and does a lot of work, cooking and serving from early morning till late night. As far as Anita’s relation with her husband and his relations is concerned it is good. Her tragedy ensues from her marriage with a man who is far short of her dreams. Rampal Sachdeva, a contractor earning enough and loving Anita deeply, is unable to sustain the life of her imagination. Her ideal of love collides against the reality imposed on her being. So her present life has become boring for her. She has ceased to speak or even to hear much. Though she wants to speak, she cannot. It is just the ennui, the boredom of it all which keeps her dumb. It is only that her present
life “was rather as if a voyager’s boat had been wafted by strong winds to an alien isle where he recognized none of the inhabitants, did not know their language, where he could only stare unblinkingly in every direction” (TFE 11). The security of the shore, here the husband, is not enough for Anita, and her hands stray to the paddles to sail to new destinations if the shore she is stranded upon proves unsatisfactory. Anita expresses the lack of intangible something in marriage with rare sensitivity. She feels a married woman’s life is like being stranded in an odd isle. She is forbidden to steer away the boat, paddling with the thoughts of anyone else. A married woman is expected to be happy with what she has, even if it is boring or stifling to live. So unsatisfied has Anita become in her life that she dreams of being chased to water’s edge where she finds that there is no escape for her. A woman cannot escape her fate. The dissatisfaction and helplessness experienced by Anita made her think that she is not one woman but in her single body, she is two women:

One was named Anita, daughter of Dharm Prakash Anand, wife of Rampal Sachdeva, a Hindu, a resident of India, subject to many rules and laws. The other’s name was just woman, daughter of the Earth and pining for the sky as her bridegroom. Love was her creed, the world her home and her quest the only law that bound her” (TFE 13).

As Anita’s routine life moves she gets accustomed to this dream of two women.

Anita’s search for love ends in a party where she meets Sagar whose voice resembles voice of the statue of her dream. Sagar’s face haunts her and she gives his face to the statue of her dream. The woman inside Anita falls in love with Sagar. So “whenever one Anita was sitting beside her husband, the other, was with Sagar.... the Anita of the body was there for everyone to see, but the, Anita not of the body no one could see” (TFE 14). The single person Anita thus becomes two Anitas – riven parts of the soul and the psyche who fought, questioned and reasoned over her illicit attraction for Sagar. Though she thinks he was nothing, Anita with body, feels he was everything to the woman Anita. The Anita with body feels that the woman Anita might rebel against her control or sway. The woman Anita is the soul of the body Anita. The heart can surely rebel against the mind. Here Amrita presents the dilemma, the duality that a woman
experiences with her true self. Anita’s soul aspires for love that would fulfill her. It is evident that Anita was not able to experience love in her marital life. The true self is the hidden self, a new self that had emerged after being married. The true self of Anita, the one that is hungry for love has to remain hidden. Lal opines: “Amrita Pritam exposes the inner realism of the individual life as against the distorted life of conventions. This takes on a rhythm of precipitating pain and plunges the character into a deep life of euphoria which leads to a music of fall” (43).

Anita tries to put down her heart, and even does not think or allow the heart to speak, but one day, the woman Anita of the heart, expresses her deep wish to get Sagar to come to her place once. Though she would not be able to express herself to him or speak to him, Anita, the woman wants only to see him. To fulfill this wish Anita invites Sagar and his friends to tea one evening. After they leave, Anita has a deep desire to touch Sagar with her hands. She thinks though it is not possible then, she could at least touch the things he had touched and feel him. It appears madness on the part of a married woman but she is not afraid of it. She takes the cup Sagar had used and drinks a sip of cold tea from it. She feels that drinking from his cup had made her feel immortal to remain young and beautiful forever.

Even as Anita lies with Rampal, a part of her innate self lingers with Sagar so that she feels disembodied: “She had remained in the abyss of the unconscious all night. When she gathered her wits somewhat next morning she found herself grasping a handkerchief in her hand, she had perhaps had it in her fist all night” (TFE 24). She makes a relic of a mundane object used by her dream-lover, even when in the arms of her husband. For Amrita’s women, “love or fidelity isn’t so frail that it is lost by the touch of someone else’s body. Maybe by passing through someone else’s body, they both become stronger, like a man’s mind does by passing through some calamity” (TFE 157).

Anita’s life continues with routine activities. Slowly she is unable to sleep. She starts taking sleeping pills. She meets Sagar when he comes to return a pen which he had taken by mistake. Anita tells Sagar to keep the pen and write songs with it. He asks for an ink bottle from her. Her feelings for Sagar had become so intense that she feels, “I do not want to remain a woman; I want to become a bottle of ink” (TFE 20). She also feels like a
smouldering cigarette. Though Anita knows what she is experiencing is morally wrong she feels that “everyone in this world can err; woman alone is not allowed to make mistakes . . .” (TFE 20). Anita has almost everything a marriage could offer a woman. Her husband and his family are good and rich. But she craves for love. She portrays the sensibility of a woman who has everything but who still is unhappy with her life as her inside self is not happy with her life. Anita, thus, portrays “an eternal woman, insatiable in love, hungry for illusions, unfathomable in sensibility” (Lal 44).

Anita wants to go to Sagar, but she controls herself. Her love for Sagar is perceived in the way she behaves with the cigarette butt that Sagar had left in the ashtray. She strikes a match and re-lit the extinguished stub and put the cigarette to her lips. She feels the fragrance of Sagar’s breath come to her through the smoke of that cigarette. It becomes a routine with Anita that everyday she invariably shuts herself up in the room at least once a day and religiously, lights up a cigarette to smoke and imagine Sagar’s breath in its smoke and also imagines Sagar as a genie coming out of the smoke. It is a puja or worship for Anita as her love for Sagar was beyond any words. One day her husband comes home to find that Anita smokes. He laughs and tells that she need not hide smoking as he is not against it. Anita then realizes for the first time that she was being unfaithful to her husband as he had come to see if any man visited her, but the truth was that someone was always sitting in Anita’s room, even though no one could see him. The pangs of being unfaithful for a married woman are a torture and agony. Anita was not deliberately unfaithful but her heart was the one that longed for Sagar.

Deep under the stress and strain of her impeccable passion for her life of imagination Anita is destined to undergo the vigour of isolation which becomes the sum total of her existence. Not inclined to participate socially in the life of things as they are, Anita, like a Bohemian dreamer, courts the confrontation of her will to taste a new wine. “Like an expert ballerina, she played simultaneously with the realities of her life and with her imagination” (TFE 23). But one day Anita sees Sagar at the railway station. She feels as if she had lost all energy from her body into the suitcase that Sagar was carrying and had no energy to talk to him. He comes to tell her that he is leaving as he had got a job in Calcutta. Hearing him, Anita is plunged into oblivion for a few seconds and when she recovers she thought he is going away without telling her. Anita loses her wits when
Sagar left. She goes through a great agony and thinks that relief would come only in death. But after a few days she comes to know that she has conceived her husband’s child in her womb. This did not make any difference in her feelings for Sagar. In fact her feelings for Sagar were on the verge of madness. She remembers eighth March as Sagar’s birthday and bakes a cake on that day. It was like she was not baking the cake, but it was baking itself through her hands. She puts the cake on a table in her room, cuts it and puts it into two plates and eats from both the plates. All day she is in a kind of ecstasy celebrating Sagar’s birthday.

On Sagar’s birthday in the night, Anita starts writing a diary. Writing it had become a compulsion for her, a kind of necessity. Writing it was like knowing herself. She wants to look at herself, to know herself. She wants to accept herself just as she was. She even reads a lot of books to know herself. The books were like thermometer which helped to measure her. This was how she spends time before her child’s birth. But before her delivery Anita fears that the diary could fall into somebody’s hands. So she resolves to burn it. The diary seemed to Anita “like a virgin who cannot bear to surrender her bareness to anyone” (TFE 33). Anita feels that Sagar should read her diary at least once so that he would be reminded of her later. Before burning the diary she reads and smokes along. Reading was like talking, reading and smoking always gave her the feeling that Sagar was standing beside her. Though she lives in her world of intense desire and imagination, she lives normally in the real world. “Every gesture Anita takes in her daily sojourn of imagination makes her passion the arbiter of her fate” (Lal 45).

At the birth of her child Anita experienced a strange thing. When she takes her child and gazed at its face she finds the child’s features are exactly like Sagar. Anita feels anger against herself because she was holding the child not as its mother and not because it was her child, but only because the child’s face reminded her of Sagar’s face. Anita feels that what she was going through was incurable and not a thing in the world could cure her. She thinks that it would be better if the fever that she has, never comes down so she could die of it. Anita experiences motherly feelings that bind her to the child at its birth. When she nurses her child, the milk welled up automatically from her breast and the tears from her eyes. The instinct of motherhood pulsates through every nerve of hers.
It is a queer phenomenon, that in Amrita’s novels women leave their children behind in quest of truth, yet they are panic-stricken to the point of hysteria about their children being stolen. Anita dreams of her baby in her post-natal languor: “A woman sidled up to where Anita’s baby lay by her side, then, in one quick movement snatched the baby and ran. A spurt of latent energy shot through Anita’s body as she followed the woman in hot pursuit ‘My baby . . .’ she shrieked (TFE 7). It is the deep-seated fear of having lost her lover, whose image she sees in the baby that galvanizes Anita.

In the forty days period after her delivery Anita experiences peculiar feelings when: “Sagar’s face in her imagination and the reality of the child’s face merged in her consciousness. The love-sick Anita in her and the mother in her were merging, too. A certain contentment was seeping into her, and the fissure of a certain split inside her was filling up” (TFE 37). After forty days, Anita feels that she could accept life as it had fallen to her lot, with a smile. She begins to feel that she would henceforth be able to render justice to her husband. After all, he was a good man who had never shouted at her, who had never spoken a sour word to her. And now he was her child’s father, too.

As time passes and the child grows, Anita’s days are busy and her mind occupied. She closes all doors to her mind when she went to sleep, but somehow Sagar manages to enter into her dreams; and in the morning she would put out all thoughts of Sagar. As the child starts going to school, Anita feels that she does not behave towards her child in a normal maternal way: “Many a night … she would lift the child from his cot and take him to her own. She would repeatedly comb his hair, no matter whether he was awake or asleep. And then she would arrange a curl of the hair across his brow” (TFE 37) She treats the child as she would have treated Sagar. The child took the place of Sagar for her. To avoid this agitation of hers, Anita got herself a job. It brought some sort of mild animation to the stagnant waters of her life. But one thing that she starts doing is, when she is outside home, on a bus, on road, she keeps on searching for Sagar. This becomes a habit with her and one day while watching expectantly she came upon him on the streets. She could not believe it at first.

Sagar tells that he had gone to meet Anita at her house and chance makes him to meet her on the road. She finds that he is not married as he tells her that the one he would
have married is already married to someone else. Anita feels the earth tremble under her as she hears Sagar’s words. She tells him that for all the past years she had been talking only to herself. She comes to know that Sagar had been talking to her forever. He even imagined her lying to his right every night. He tells Anita that he could not say anything to her since she is married and that he would not break up a marriage. But Anita asks him, “When someone enters your thoughts and yet doesn’t enter your life, do you think much is left of your marriage?” (TFE 42). What Anita meant is that when a man holds a woman’s heart and if he is not her husband, the marriage in true sense does not exist for a woman. Anita is bold in expressing her intimate thoughts. She even says, “When a woman closes her eyes to see some man’s image and opens her eyes to see another man’s face, isn’t she living a big lie?” (TFE 42). Anita knows that she is not faithful to her husband as her heart beats for another man; she is deceiving her husband. A married woman is supposed to be loyal to her husband but Anita experiences being unfaithful to herself also. Though Sagar means existence to her, Anita is not able to submit herself to physical intimacy with Sagar. She finds her mind frozen and petrified. Out of sheer and sudden hesitation, Anita refuses, and that ends everything.

A terrible loneliness and guilt follows Anita and “it takes the people a while to realize how terrible is isolation, but then the realization comes and the people surrender themselves to this terror. Their steps become aimless, they go round and round the same streets, they keep sobbing wherever they are” (TFE 23). Later Anita feels as if she has pushed herself from a mountain top into a crevasse. She does not understand why she denied herself the closeness that could have made her Sagar’s. She introspects: “What have I done? I’ve waited for those hands all my life and now I have turned those hands away, empty . . . what good is this body to me now? . . . What have I gained by keeping this body undefiled? Is this what’s called purity?” (TFE 44) She is so crazily in love with Sagar that she regrets what she had done. She thinks that there was no use in living when she could not give herself to Sagar: “Let me put an end to this body. It’s better that way. I couldn’t surrender it to the man it was made for what will I do with it now?” (TFE 45). Drowned in tears, she is now a painful creature, a weak, love-sick woman. She repents and keeps on saying, “Forgive me, Sagar, forgive me once … come and accept me only once…” (TFE 45). Sagar had come in her life like a meteorite, but the emotional impact is tremendous that leaves her insatiable in love.
Anita feels very horrible with her behaviour towards Sagar. She thinks of taking her child to show Sagar that it has his own features. This way she thinks Sagar would forget his anger towards her. But she gets stuck in a dilemma: “How will I tell him this? How can he believe me? How will he concede that my child’s face resembles his? Until today I’d never even touched his hand. . .” (TFE 45). Anita tries to find Sagar but he had left town. She has a tough time as she spends days talking to herself, softly, without a voice, as if in delirium. She feels guilty of what she has done. Her feelings and thoughts bring out the regretful sensibility of a woman crazily in love:

He took my refusal so badly . . . he should have realized a woman refuses by instinct . . . he could have forced me to submit . . . he had the right . . . I was his after all . . . how white his face became . . . it is all my fault. I hurt his self-respect . . . he wasn’t rushing me . . . he had waited for years on end . . . now he is offended . . . he’ll never forgive me . . . he’ll punish me all my life . . . (TFE 47).

Anita portrays a fragile sensibility that she is very much troubled at hurting Sagar’s self-respect. She writes a letter to Sagar but gets no reply. Slowly she feels that her life had become like a boat that had lost its direction in a bottomless ocean with no hope of reaching any shore. Anita is disillusioned and has no relief in the present condition of her life.

Amrita does not allow her women character to wallow in their weakness rather she fills them with strength to recognize the positive side of things. Anita develops a peculiar strength to accept her defeat. She decides:

At least I can speak the truth. I ought to tell my husband the truth . . . I should tell myself the truth . . . if I am not fated to reach any shore, I should surrender myself to the sea . . . I shouldn’t remain in this good man’s house . . . If my mind does not consider this house a haven, my body has no right to seek refuge here . . . (TFE 48).

Amrita has created Anita to be honest and truthful. Anita does not want to be unjust to her husband, for she had been unfaithful by having feelings for Sagar. One night her courage
came to her lips and she tells her husband Rampal Sachdeva the truth. Anita knows that life of people like Rampal was simple and contented, and of people like her is difficult and tortured. It is not the fault of her husband but she only knows that they are made differently, as Rampal is a very practical person, while Anita lives in dreams and imagines very much.

Anita very honestly shares her feelings with Rampal that she wants to live alone and not spoil his life by living in his house. She also tells that she always has respected him but respect is not enough to live in a relationship. She feels if she stays there she would die there without having lived. “I feel myself sort of lifeless here” (TFE 49). So she wants to live for a few days before she died, no matter how few the days are. She confesses that she has felt like that from a long time, even before she took the job. In fact she took the job rather to be busy and to forget the lifeless feeling, as all domestic work or caring for the baby had not helped her. She very honestly tells Rampal that she was in such a condition because of a man who was there and who was not there. As the answer was like a riddle to Rampal, Anita explains, “I say so because the man does not figure so much in my life as in my thoughts” (TFE 50-51). Rampal is not able to understand Anita’s feelings.

Anita tells Rampal of Sagar, and that he had left for Calcutta seven or eight years ago and only once, only for an hour Anita had met him. She did not have any letter correspondence with Sagar and neither had they any physical relation. Though Rampal is all surprised, he soon feels disappointment and despair. Anita is troubled to deceive Rampal. He has always been a good man and she feels: “One hates to hurt the feelings of a man who isn’t harsh. And it’s so difficult to lie to him also” (TFE 52). Anita is in tears while telling her truth. Though speaking the truth breaks home and a woman’s life loses security, Amrita wants her woman to live an honest and sincere life. So she makes her woman courageous enough to accept the truth.

Anita lives life with a cold silence and she carried her shadow of silence with her wherever she went. One day she comes to know from a friend of Sagar’s that, he had suffered a nervous breakdown about a year ago. Hearing about his health Anita is troubled so much that she thinks one thing and does another. She thinks that if the same
behaviour continues with her she would only lead herself to the madhouse. The thought of going to madhouse made Anita shiver. She thinks, “It would be better to die than to live insane. . .” (TFE 56). Anita does not find an alternative way to escape the madhouse. She thinks of the many social obstacles, even legal snags that would stop her from attaining freedom. In her mind she conjures up the utmost tyranny that fate could inflict on her. But ultimately she decides to take one path and that was to leave Rampal’s house. The decision to leave is not only to do justice to Rampal but also to herself.

Anita finds that there is nothing to call her own except her child in her husband’s house. She is unable to take the child as the school does not permit, because Rampal forbids them from issuing a transfer certificate to Anita. The father is the legal guardian and the mother nothing. Anita finds the society’s obstacles like walls that will never crumble. A woman has to face so many barriers to find her freedom. The societal obstacles pose a threat as well as cause agony for her. Anita’s plight is that of a helpless woman in distress. In the meanwhile Anita gets sick and is not able to leave Rampal’s house. The remainder of Anita’s life stretched out before her like a boundless sea. Tossed on these stormy waters, she got occasional momentary respite only through two things; one was her child and the other books. Slowly her bodily weakness takes a toll on her and she experiences loneliness and thinks that one day she is bound to go mad. Anita feels: “I’m all alone; no one else is concerned about me. No one’ll shed a tear for me” (TFE 67). The feeling of loneliness leads Anita to untold misery and depression. Her loneliness is the result of her speaking the truth of her feelings. Her husband, her child all had become distant and she had to suffer the consequences of being truthful.

One day in the library Anita sees a photo of Sagar with a girl, in a periodical, that said they are to be married. Immediately Anita feels that Sagar had jilted her. She thinks that it is a very terrible punishment for one mistake of hers. She burns in regret and feels, “Anyone who spurns his luck deserves only this kind of retribution. Whoever turned away luck from his doorsteps? . . . I did. Even God grants forgiveness once! Oh, Sagar, you didn’t forgive me once. . .” (TFE 76). The feeling of committing a mistake and being punished for that without a pardon is a burden of guilt for Anita. She wants to cry her heart’s content but could not find any place where she could cry. Neither office nor home could be that place. She is not even able to meet her child that day to relieve herself. It
was such a day in her life that she finds she has no place to go to. The agony of suffering within her was a great pain to Anita. In a state of semi-consciousness she goes to Iqbal’s studio. Some days ago Anita’s loneliness had taken her to a paintings exhibition by an artist Iqbal. She was impressed by one of his paintings. Iqbal had come and talked to her and in the next visit, both had tea, and Iqbal was happy to share his life story with Anita.

Anita though, looks strong from outside but was all broken inside. She had never expected that Sanjay’s marriage would affect her in a painful way. Anita finds Iqbal as the person with whom she could share all about her life. She had told that she felt his face were that of Sagar’s. Iqbal was all the more wonder struck to know how Anita continued to exist that way in the imagination of another person. Anita’s justification was, “Love can do anything, Iqbal, but it can’t speak” (TFE 81). All that had happened in Anita’s life and all that would happen; it was because of only love. Love had become her whole existence and she had to live it so.

Anita goes to meet Iqbal frequently. She feels that she was building another sand castle and someone was helping her to cart the sand. The acute awareness of loneliness becomes the arbiter of Anita’s frenzied journey. There is a change in her from the time she had started to meet Iqbal. She says: “In my loneliness I had great need of someone. You don’t know what you have given me. Loneliness is a terrible thing” (TFE 85). Iqbal had rescued her from the curse of loneliness. But Anita will always suffer the loss of Sagar in her life. She could never have Sagar and her need of him would never vanish.

Anita experiences another tragic circumstance in her life. Just when she has found a kind of an anchor in Iqbal, she comes to know that he had got a job in Delhi. She experiences the same feeling that she had years ago when Sagar had left for Calcutta. Anita gets totally broken in her spirits. It is like she had found a coast, but suddenly the ground was removed from under her feet. She feels miserable, but is able to tell in few words that Iqbal’s going away would affect her very much. Anita feels that his going away was like Sagar going away once again. Iqbal rescues the intrigued Anita assuring her: “Sagar could go only once. He can’t go a second time” (TFE 89). Iqbal tells her that Sagar could go but he cannot go. Anita looks at Iqbal’s face but could only listen to the voice, the voice she had been waiting all her life to hear: “I can’t go anywhere. I can’t
leave you” (TFE 89). Iqbal’s words had put an end to Anita’s wait. At last she feels she had found what she had longed for.

Anita had decided to leave home once, but had not because she had not found her way to the house where she wanted to go. But in the form of Iqbal, life offered her another opportunity. He wants Anita in his life as she is the love that he wanted. Anita tries to convince Iqbal that she was six years older to him, he is young and he needs to experience the world that was full of beauty and youth and not tie himself to her. But Iqbal does not listen to Anita, rather gives her a key of his house telling that she could come any day to her house and that he would wait for her all his life. A dream makes Anita to decide to go to Iqbal. In the dream she had two cases with her, one which symbolised the colour of hope and the other the colour of despair. Anita had come to a cross roads in her life. She had to choose one path. She had felt many paths lead to Sagar and from one path someone called her that day and she decides to take that path which led her to Iqbal. Though Anita chooses to go to Iqbal, her feelings for Sagar have not vanished. For Anita:

Love can be one’s religion, the Quest one’s sustenance and a man one’s God. I don’t know about others it is this way for me. You’re my God, your love my religion and your quest my sustenance. You’re corporeal like God . . . so wherever I’m going, take it that I go in search of you, on the path of life or on the path of death (TFE 97).

Her love had elevated Sagar to the place of God in her life and she would always love and worship him. Anita portrays the sensibility of a woman for who love had become the life-breath, the truth of her sustenance. Anita had repented very much for losing Sagar and when Iqbal opened his arms for her she did not want to lose Iqbal because she has learnt a lesson once by losing Sagar. Anita is guilty of having denied once to Sagar and the same she does not want to commit again. It is true that Anita had loved Sagar but she loved Iqbal too. Though the world might not understand her feelings, she understands it in this way:
My love for you is like the sky whose existence no one can deny; but to live under it, one still builds a house of earth and bricks. My love for Iqbal is like that house, the protection of whose walls I need. No one can deny that a house is necessary, nor can any one deny that the sky is all-comprehending. Inside the house or outside, one is still under the sky (TFE 97).

Anita’s love for Sagar had become divine. She loves Sagar, “not the way a woman loves a man; rather the way a person loves God” (TFE 101). Such thoughts and feelings of Anita bring out the feminine sensibility of a woman who believed that love was and is everything in her life.

Anita writes letters to her husband and child when she decides to leave. Her motherly feelings express that she would wait for her child to grow up and stand on his own feet. Her feelings as a wife to a husband shows that she has no complaint against him; rather she is at pain that she could not realize the worth of a good man. Anita did not do justice as a mother or as a wife. But one can very well find that Anita could no longer live a lie. She has to take the offer life had given her a second time. Though she is happy to go to Iqbal, she is sad to leave her past life. She goes to Iqbal with a bold sensibility breaking all the shackles, forgoing all the morals of society. She is not beaten by what people would say of her behaviour but is ready to face the criticism of the society though, sometimes scared of it. “Anita was one of those people who try on any garment that they find in life, expecting it to fit their size and their taste, trimming here and cutting there always, whose life is one big ego, the numeral one, to which they tack on innumerable zeros in their dreams” (TFE 49). The ‘one big ego’ centering round deep passion and desire makes the sensitive in Anita ready for a terra incognita – a world outside wherein imagination would enrich the big ego. She leaves her sanctified home. All the women, surging forth to search for truth – the truth of their moral existence, have the self-knowledge that their life would be difficult and tortured. Personal life would be shattered and society would treat them as pariahs because they had dared to question its norms:

Anita conjured up in her mind the utmost tyranny that fate could inflict on her, then she told herself decisively, “Even so, it is better to take this course than to
take the other one.” Anita put on her chappals and jerked herself to her feet, as if she was going to walk right up the road of her choice immediately (TFE 56).

Anita is very happy with Iqbal. She feels that she is the luckiest one to have found a young prince charming like Iqbal. She had thought that no man but Sagar could come into her life. But Iqbal had come and filled her life with love. Though Anita is bold to leave her home in a way she is insecure also as she says to Iqbal, “Don’t ever give me up” (TFE 101). Her inner most feelings present that a woman is tired of living a dual existence. She feels:

I want to live one life . . . both inside and out! I broke the rule because I lived one life inside me and something else outside. What I thought with my eyes closed was different from what I saw with my eyes open. It’s not easy to break the web society weaves. I spent years thinking it over. And now I’ve gone and done it so that I shouldn’t have to lie to anyone, nor to myself (TFE 102).

This confession of Anita brings to the fore that it is very difficult for a woman to break down the shackles of society and live a true, meaningful existence. Anita takes a courageous step for the sake of truth. She also wants to save her soul from the scars of untruth. Amrita Pritam stresses upon the sensibility of Anita that got ready to break down the web of society to stand up for truth. Though Anita braves the world as a woman, she as a mother missed her child very much. She lamented but she puts up a brave front to wait for him. This is the strength of Amrita’s woman.

Anita goes to stay with Iqbal in a new city. As days pass Anita comes to know a characteristic of Iqbal; at first he has a difficulty to get to like anything at all. But when he takes a fancy to something he does not hold himself with patience, as he has to have it. And when he owns it, after a few days it palls. He got bored with it and could not live with it even for a moment. Anita is in displeasure at Iqbal’s behaviour. Though he assures her it is only to do with things and not people, she experiences deep down in her mind, lurking somewhere inside her, a sense of fear that could spoil her happiness. Anita examines her mind closely and finds that her present is not afraid, it stood calm and composed; it is her future that trembled with apprehension. A woman in love is like a
creeper, most dependent on a solid pole. The reality of life always challenges a woman. Living in an imaginary world and loving some one like one’s breath is the most uphill task for a woman. Anita had left her marital life, crossing all barriers of society to live a life in love. Now it seems to her that it would be a tough one.

Anita takes utmost care of Iqbal, when he got down with typhoid. She also notices that he is sad and she keeps on thinking what made him so. When Iqbal questions Anita why she took so much trouble to look after him, Anita says: “When a woman loves, it’s with all her being. She keeps nothing back” (*TFE* 116). Anita asks Iqbal if he loves her, and to tell her the truth as she had come with him in search of truth. Iqbal’s answer: “It is true that I love you, but it is also true that I don’t love you wholly” (*TFE* 117) leaves Anita in a condition as if the whole world reeled around her and she was in a whirlpool of emotions of being left nowhere. Iqbal said that as Anita had become his, he lately imagined a girl who was exceedingly beautiful and young. Anita controls her shock and sadness at Iqbal’s deception and faces the situation in a strong manner. Rather than be angry at him, she assures him that he would find his heart’s desire one day. When Iqbal had asked Anita to come into his life she had tried to reason with him telling that his decision would make him repent later. Though it does happen, it is Anita who gets burnt and bears the pain. She is in pain but her strong sensibility shows that she is a woman who could take care of herself even in diverse situations.

Anita surfaced from the condition with some hidden energy and leaves Iqbal. She could not live with him when he does not need her. She does not want to live where she is not wanted. All along Anita’s patience had held her heart’s woes in check but at last like a dam on a river broke, Anita experiences the feeling of drowning in deep waters. Her life in a way had become a laughing stock. She knew that nothing was hers in this world except her child. The child was still alive and if he needed her, she would get him. She returns to the city where her child was. She does not bother if the city treated her with bitter tongue or looked at her with jealousy. She did not care for the city’s angry eyes or its lashing tongue. Though she feels emotionally and psychologically drained out because of Iqbal’s truth, her self-respect saves her. She experiences the slough of despondency within her. She knows she would fall into it as she also knows that she is not particularly a brave woman. She is afraid of the rebuff. But she controls herself and moved on to Ram
Bali’s house. A woman has to face the society and also its wagging tongue but Anita is not in a position to answer anybody. Anita chooses to go Ram Bali’s house because he knew of Sagar and Iqbal and at his house there was no woman to pester her with questions. She feels that in her society, every woman knew how to choke to death in its suffocating mores, but not how to break a door or a window to be able to breathe. So for a woman in her situation the least sympathy could be expected from a person of her own sex.

Anita deserted emotionally by Iqbal and devastated mentally, introspects to write: “Drink your cup alone, though it tastes as your own blood and tears; and praise life for the gift of thirst. For without thirst your heart is only the shore of a barren sea, songless and without a tide” (TFE 124). She had been drinking the bitter cup of life’s despair all alone. Her heart has remained ‘a shore of a barren sea, songless and without a tide.’ Her life is shorn of music. Hope is far away from her, for even dreams have given her only the dark pictures. Amidst such a life of infertility, her only child who comes to her lap before she leaves the world becomes a ‘flower’- a metaphor ensuring light and hope.

Anita felt glad that life had given her the gift of thirst. She feels that life makes one to suffer alone. One is responsible for one’s situation in life. All that had happened in Anita’s life had been her own making. She had to suffer it. But a thirst in life will surely help a person to continue living life. Anita tells Bali to convey to Iqbal that she was not angry with him because she felt, “If I hadn’t met Iqbal, I would never have known the pinnacle of human achievement. I would have lived - and died in a world of make-believe” (TFE 126). Anita is rather grateful to him to have given her some days of his life. She feels that she had done nothing for Iqbal. All she had done had been only for her. Anita’s sensibility is of a woman who goes in search of truth of self. She was a woman who had loved and who had tried to find fulfillment in what life had offered her. She had left home in search of knowing herself, in search of truth. It is difficult for many to understand Anita’s sensibility, the feminine longing for her utopian love and the bold sensibility of forsaking home and security and not finding peace.

Anita’s end is painful as she suffers a cerebral haemorrhage. On her death bed she gets to meet her son Rashmi. She looks at him and calls him Sagar. She found Sagar in
her son. She feels she is lucky to get them both. When Anita dies the last flicker in her eyes seemed to say, “As long as a woman, seeking life’s truth, cannot have both her child and her lover, her fate shall be as mine!” (TFE 131). Amrita presents death as a solution to Anita’s life. If Anita had lived she would have continued to live in agony of being away from Sagar. And Amrita spells out the last word on Anita’s fascinating uniquely psychic duality of nature – that a woman is not to be explained, but understood (Banerjee 138).

**Chetna in Earth, Sea and Shells**

The novel *Earth, Sea and Shells* is one of the most significant novels, where Amrita’s concept of the feminine personality had matured into the most uninhibited form and has touched the highest points of personal dignity, self-respect and self-fulfillment. The novel is of Chetna who loves Iqbal. He loves her too, but warns her that he would never marry her; the reason is his emotional commitment to his mother, who has had a very unfortunate past. Chetna accepts this position. She promises never to seek marriage, but does ask one thing: “You know, Iqbal, sooner or later, a woman has to abandon herself to a man. I want nothing from you except that you should be the one I first go to bed with. . . Iqbal, I wouldn’t be able to have my first sexual experience with anyone except you” (ESS 108).

Even when she has a child (son) by Iqbal, Chetna never discloses the fact to him, for she would not have him coerced into marrying her. He must marry her solely for her sake. Chetna is an enlightened woman who is strong to face things as they come in her life. Amrita has created her to be very candid and bold to express her deep desire for what she wants from life. She takes such a step because she did not want to lose the opportunity that she could cherish forever in her life. This sensibility of Chetna portrays a radical sensibility of a woman that represents the new woman.

Chetna lived in Delhi with her mother and brother Sumesh. Iqbal was her neighbour. He stayed behind Chetna’s house with his mother in a small, simple house. They knew each other from the time they had been children. Chetna went to college in Delhi and Iqbal went to study medicine at Poona as he got scholarship for studies, books
and hostel. He had chosen Poona because after his degree he could get doctor’s job in the army and it would also be an end to his mother’s troubles.

Chetna had a special bond with Iqbal’s mother. She used to go to his house after college to water his plants and write and read Amma’s letters to Iqbal. Amma was indebted to Chetna for all the help she rendered in writing and reading the letters. From three years neither Iqbal nor she had written any letters to each other. He knew that Chetna read all his letters to Amma and wrote all Amma’s letters to him, but never had he mentioned a thank you any time to her. Amma used to say he was a shy guy.

After three years when Iqbal comes to Delhi, his mother was happy to see that he had grown up. She keeps her head on his shoulder and breathes a sign of relief. She had taken care of this plant in her womb when she had the scorching sun of youth on her head. The man who had to become her shelter had abandoned them. She had taken care of her child alone and now that her son had grown up she feels free of all worries.

When Chetna meets Iqbal after three years and half years, he just looks at how beautiful she had grown. She had completed her degree and tells Iqbal that she would not study M.A., as she had got a good job. She tells him that she would do the job to stand upon her own legs. She had got a job at the TV Station office. Chetna is not only presented as a very understanding, humble, caring person but also as a self-reliant person who wanted to take care of herself.

Iqbal called Chetna as ‘Cheti’. He used to dream of Chetna when he was in Poona. It was difficult for Iqbal to maintain natural acquaintance and friendship with Chetna. During one of his visits from Poona, Chetna is asked by Iqbal if she loved him. He also tells her that, “In this world, I love only one woman . . . that is my mother! And to keep this love whole it is necessary that I don’t love anyone else . . . you may probably not understand. . .” (ESS 103). Chetna says to him, ‘Whether I understand or not, but I will not like to stand or come in between anywhere as an obstacle” (ESS 103). Chetna shows a mature understanding in her behaviour with Iqbal. She asks him, if he thought it proper, to tell her the reason to his loving mother. And she gets to know that he was his mother’s
Amrita brings out the exploitation and injustice faced by women through the character of Anvari, Iqbal’s mother. Anvari was the daughter of Rehaman, a washerman. When she had been about fifteen years, she had been sent by her sick father to deliver the clothes to a very rich man’s house. Anvari had been raped by the rich man and she had got pregnant to suffer all her life. Anvari’s father had wanted to marry her off to an old washerman to save her from the humiliation. But Anvari, an unmarried mother, had worked hard at a hospital as a nurse, washed utensils and took care of her son. The rich man who had exploited Anvari wanted to pay some money to her and have Iqbal as he had no children from his several marriages. Anvari was not wanted, but the son she bore was wanted. The suffering that a woman has to bear is never over. This is a grave injustice that women have been suffering in the male-dominant society. Anvari was not accepted as a wife by the rich man and years later too she was not accepted as a mother. The man had escaped free though he had committed a heinous crime, but the woman had to bear the brunt of the cross.

Knowing of all his mother’s suffering and sacrifice, Iqbal had resolved to give her his entire love and allow no other woman to come between them, in any capacity. Iqbal tells Chetna that his life was dedicated to his mother and he would not share that right with anybody else and he would not love any girl too. He also tells that except marriage she could ask anything else from him. Chetna understands Iqbal completely, more than completely. She even understood what he had not wanted her to understand. She is told by Iqbal that he would never marry and he could extend only a hand of friendship to her. Chetna very willingly and wholesomely accepts his hand and promises Iqbal that she would never ask him to marry her.

Chetna express her heart to Iqbal: “A woman probably may never have said this . . . I too would never have said . . . but if my condition had been simple, I mean ‘normal’. . .” (ESS 108). Chetna tells Iqbal that nobody was as dear to her as him in the world. She tells him that, “when time comes, a woman has to give herself to some or the other man. Maybe it is possible that I may not find that man to be as dear as you Iqbal, for
Chetna wants Iqbal to be the first (and probably the only man) in her life to have the physical intimacy with. She expresses her desire, “... I only want this, what experience a woman gets from a man, if it is found with the man who I do not find as a stranger…. I would not be able to get this first experience in life from any other…” (ESS 109). Chetna expresses herself very boldly and without any regret for what she wants. She loves Iqbal to such an extent that she is ready to cross all the limitations imposed by the tradition-bound society. Chetna depicts the strong sensibility of a woman who is very much in love and who would not like to miss any opportunity that life offered her. A very bold step was taken by Chetna in announcing her deep desire to have sex with the man she loves. Amrita opined, “My concept of an ideal relationship between a man and a woman is based on the mutual admiration of two complete individuals. There is no place for hierarchy, domination or even merging into each other in love” (Malik 7). Amrita had created Chetna at a time when such braveness and frankness from an unmarried woman could be considered blasphemy in a tradition-bound patriarchal Indian society, especially from a middle-class woman.

Iqbal is not ready to listen to Chetna’s wish as it would be unjust and not fair to have physical intimacy without the vows of marriage. He thinks that without any commitment having intimacy with her would be an injustice as it had been with his mother. But Chetna convinces Iqbal that “whatever had happened between his father and mother was without the woman’s consent or wish. Any thing that ever happened without the woman’s consent cannot be forgiven, even if it is by a legal husband or a stranger” (ESS 109). In her case Chetna was willing to have the intimacy with him and so it would not be an injustice in any way. When Iqbal embraces her she feels secure in his arms and also feels that it was the arms of a strong and an honest man. She experiences fulfillment of her desire, the desire of a woman madly in love. A justification for why Chetna wanted to have intimacy with Iqbal could probably be that she does not want to repent later in her life feeling that though she could have had intimacy with Iqbal, she had never tried or pursued it.

Chetna takes the first step, the first step to tell the man she loves, of a genuine desire of hers. She is very bold in her sensibility not only to present her desire but also to get the desire fulfilled. It is Chetna’s love for Iqbal that made her courageously seek her
heart’s desire. She had been very clear with what she wanted and also was ready to take the consequences positively. She had found self-fulfillment in what she had shared with Iqbal though it was only for a brief time. One finds the intimate desire of a woman that makes her feel complete and contended. Amrita has created such a character in Chetna that would shock the society.

Chetna leaves Delhi and stayed at Mumbai for one and half years in her brother Sumer’s house. She gave birth to a son and never told Iqbal about it. She feels very complete with her motherly feelings. When the child is born her mother and Sumer leave it at an orphanage telling them that they had found it on the seashore. That day Chetna suffers a great agony when her own child, her love- child, was told to be an orphan. Though the child is brought back later, Chetna knows that what was done by Sumer was for her own good as the society would not accept an unmarried girl to have a child.

People think that she had taken care of an orphaned child of Sumer’s friend. But when Chetna visits Delhi she shares the truth with her friend Champa that the child was her own and that she had not married and would not marry also. She has no regrets of what she had done neither was she guilty of it. She expresses her faithfulness in love: “The child was not because of any mistake or wrong I had committed but the man I love could not marry me and I would not marry anyone else either. I would spend the rest of my life with his child” (ESS 138). She had thought about her life and has accepted it boldly that her life had been her choice; she had chosen her own fate. Chetna represents the new modern woman who is mentally strong and ready to bear all the responsibility of her decision.

Chetna felt that she would not be alone all her life because she had the child to spend her life with. Chetna does not tell Iqbal of their child because she does not want him to think that she is trying to trap him or marry him by giving the child as an excuse. She does not want to use the child to tie him down or to burden him with any obligations. Her love for Iqbal not only respects and abides his wish but also does not create trouble in any manner. She takes a job and begins to live life comfortably with her child. Amrita presents through Chetna the generosity, the patience, the understanding, the self-sufficiency and the finer sensibility of a woman who is trust worthy.
Chetna meets Iqbal’s mother when she comes to Delhi with her mother to sell their house. Anvari, while bathing Chetna’s child sees a birth mark on the child’s back similar to that of Iqbal. Iqbal worked as a doctor in Poona. She calls him to Delhi and tells him to marry Chetna. She gives him the ultimatum that if he does not marry Chetna she would not go with him to Poona, but stay alone in Delhi. Iqbal is surprised by her talk but thought that she might have somehow realized his feelings towards Chetna. Anvari does not give him any reason for such a demand of hers. Even Chetna is shocked when Iqbal tells of his mother’s demand of marriage to her. Though she too wonders what might have been the reason, Chetna does not know that Anvari had identified the birth mark on her child Anuraj’s back. Chetna is sure that it was not Iqbal’s wish to marry her ever. But when he insists that for his mother’s sake he would marry, Chetna accepts. She is sure and determined of one thing, that she would not abandon her child even if she got married as people think that she had adopted the child.

Chetna is accepted with the child. She does not tell Iqbal that the child was not adopted but her and his own creation. She does not want to bind him down to herself for the sake of their child. She strongly believed that if Iqbal wants her in his life it should be only because he wants her, not because of some obligation. She does not want any pity or sympathy to be the ground for her acceptance by Iqbal neither for their marriage. This thought of Chetna highlights the enlightened sensibility of the new woman who wants to be accepted for who she is. Chetna comes out as a woman of substance, with determination, strength and dignity.

Chetna tells Iqbal after their marriage when they settle in Poona that the child Anuraj was not adopted by her, but he was Iqbal’s own son. Chetna tells Iqbal that both of them had written a ‘flesh and blood diary’ (ESS 162) and that was their son. When Chetna tells the truth to Iqbal she has the dignified explanation to give in defense: “I never wanted you to think I was using the child to pressurize you into marriage. I wanted that if you ever decided to marry me, it should be for my sake, solely for my sake” (ESS 163). One can truly appreciate the patience, the wisdom and understanding portrayed by Chetna. She is duly acknowledged because Iqbal’s mother Anvari understood Chetna very well. She had known that Chetna was such a person that life-long she would never
have told of her child to Iqbal or even to Anvari. Chetna had kept her promise to Iqbal. It was fate that changed everything in Chetna’s life.

Amrita created such a character in Chetna that the image of Indian woman could alter. Chetna for her love stood faithful and loyal and did not worry about the tradition-bound society. She put up a bold front and gave birth to her love-child and decided to bring him up without troubling Iqbal. Though Chetna wants to have her child, she could not claim it as her own son. She had to put up with a lie that the child belonged to a friend of Sumesh’s and the family was not alive to take care of the child. Chetna is forced to adopt her own child. The tradition-bound Indian society would not allow an unmarried girl freedom enough to have and bring up her child as her own. The social stigma and burden cast down upon a single unmarried woman especially, a mother becomes unbearable like a curse. The respect and value that a married woman gets in society is not the same that an unwed mother could hope for. After the birth of her child, Chetna had to send it to the orphanage. Her brother and mother could not allow Chetna to keep her child. The Indian family cannot take the risk of supporting their unmarried daughter to have her child. But, of course, in Chetna’s case the family got back the child. It was her good fortune that she was united with her child. It will surely take years on until the Indian society would be able to accept unwed mothers. This is still a western way of life and as an Indian woman is still dependent, the patriarchal society binds the woman down. If a woman has to have freedom in choosing and doing what she wants, she has to master the courage to free her from the shackles of tradition-bound society. Chetna stands to suit the new woman who believes in self-actualization. Chetna wants to have her child and it was not any burden or binding for her. It was a symbol of her love for Iqbal. She could not part away from the child. The child gave a meaning, a purpose and even an identity to Chetna to live life even without Iqbal. Revati Sharma opines:

The girl unabashedly seeking her first sexual experience from a lover who would never marry her; the girl carrying a child in her womb with the unfearing intention of giving birth to it; the girl who would not declare the fatherhood of the child even though it could help her to marry the man of her heart – all this was new, unheard of in early twentieth century Indian literature. Perhaps no woman writer
had created such a possibility bold, self-confident and self-respecting character as Amrita Pritam has in her Chetna” (125).

The character of Anvari demands all attention and respect too. She was a very strong woman who kept on fighting almost all her life. She was raped by a rich man who had not accepted her. The man who raped her did not accept her, though she became pregnant; he merely offered help in getting an abortion. But she did not agree to destroy the child in her womb; she gave birth to Iqbal and had worked all her life to give him all that his father had denied him. Though she was forced to marry a very old man for the sake of her child, to have a respectable life, she had put down her feet and had not compromised to marry the old man. She had taken the responsibility of herself and her son into her own hands. She had not taken any help from her father or her brothers. She had left her place to come to Delhi and had worked as a nurse to support herself and her son. She had faced all the ups and downs in the life with grit and courage. Though she had lived a poor, difficult life she had lived with dignity and respect. She had brought up her son in such a good manner that he became a doctor. A rape had changed the life of a very young girl totally. Anvari had tolerated the injustice because always a woman is made helpless in a tradition-bound society. But with an iron-determination she had taken her life into her own hands. It was only because Anvari that Chetna could find fulfillment. Anvari had been exploited and had suffered from a young age. She does not want Iqbal’s son to have the same fatherless life that Iqbal had and she also never wanted Chetna to suffer and have a fate similar to her.

Anvari and Chetna represent the new radical image of woman who live and fight against all odds in life and with courage stand to live life as they would like. The self-awareness to live life according to their wishes without bowing to societal pressures portrays the radical sensibility of the new woman.

**Alka in A Line in Water**

In creating the character of Alka also, Amrita Pritam’s concept of the feminine personality has matured into the most uninhibited form and has touched the highest points of personal dignity, self-respect and self-fulfillment.
Amrita, in the novel *A Line in Water*, presents the situation of Alka, a love-lorn girl and the dilemma facing her lover. Alka remains one of Amrita’s favourite creations. Amrita was so moved by Alka’s deep love for Kumar that she has written a poem to her. Alka is liberated on one level, in that she is able to get away from her comfortable middle-class home and father to stay in a remote place at Kangra Valley and study painting with her beloved, the artist Kumar. His home and studio is called ‘Village Number 36.’ She had been coming to his studio for a good six months and paid Rs.100 each month to Kumar. She lives in a rented apartment on the first floor of a tumble-down house half a mile away.

Alka loves Kumar passionately but he lives a life of independence and self-sufficiency. He believes one must not get into the habit of being subservient to anything including money, fame and women. He believes that: “one must get used to one’s own self, that one must not get habituated to anything or anyone: one can, in fact, be completely self-contained only when one is liberated from all extraneous needs” (*ALW* 11-12). Alka and Kumar are clearly mismatched but the feeling of mutual attraction is so powerful that they cannot help getting entangled with each other and before long their feeling becomes the starting point of a conflict.

Kumar being very eager to remain in tune with art “does not relish at all, to forge any relation with anything else, except art.” Kumar’s art is hardly a source of fulfillment. It only alienates him and even alienation spreads through the process of the act. This alienation manifests in the relations an alienated being forges with oneself, the others and nature. A ‘thing’ with which Kumar does not relish to forge any relation excepting art is woman. The alienation of Kumar, the alienated being, is inevitably reflected in his relation with women. He is almost incapable of forming a full-blooded human relationship. He does hunger for the body of a woman but what he does not understand is how to merge his being with that of another person. Kumar is even more uncommitted than Iqbal of *Earth, Sea and Shells*. He does not want to lose his identity by falling in love with any woman. He prefers to have “paid relationships,” so that in the process of seeking “relief from physical urges,” he does not incur emotional obligation or involvement with any woman.
Whenever Kumar dreamt of a woman, he would find the physical hunger inside him and he would go to town to satiate his need. He used to visit a woman who charged him at the rate of rupees twenty for a visit and this allowed him to keep his freedom. He values his freedom more than anything, and does not want emotional entanglements and attachment. Marriage means commitment and emotions that would bind him. And to keep far of all such things, paying twenty rupees and being satisfied was worth maintaining.

Alka is portrayed as a very patient, understanding and dignified woman. She has her own way of doing and saying things. Alka discloses her inner desire to Kumar: “If only I’d been the woman you paid Rs.20 each time to” (ALW 13). She says this very boldly and stands her ground, literally standing unperturbed in the same position. She loves him and is distracted to the point of making herself available as a prostitute. Kumar could not believe that a serious girl like Alka could say such a thing. Her bold stance and unashamed announcement of her deepest desire was a new thing on the Indian scene of traditional living.

Alka wants Kumar to understand that by binding himself to a woman, a man would not lose his freedom but rather a woman would help the man to understand himself like how art helps to discover the depths of the artist’s inner self. Kumar does not believe in love. But Alka wants him to know and understand love. She tells him “love is like a part of oneself. It is as much a part of one’s being as one’s eyes or tongue. Perhaps more . . . .” (ALW 13).

Alka loves Kumar deeply but she does not throw herself at him. She accepts him as he is. Though she discusses, argues or refutes with him, she still is patient and enduring. When Kumar tells that they would confine themselves only to their work and never go beyond their limits, and that she should never interfere with his way of life and never even mention the word ‘love’ in particular; Alka promises to do everything exactly as he preferred. Kumar in a confused situation does not understand Alka at all when she accepts whatever he said. It is always been said by men that women are difficult to understand. Whether the woman is a simple, uneducated one or an educated, intelligent, worldly-wise one; man finds woman to be an enigma. The sensibility of a woman remains an unknown, unexplored area to man.
Alka is portrayed as a woman with generosity and concern. When Kumar wants to go to town; she gives him money that was due to him just in case he should need extra money for ten days of his stay in town, especially if he would pay twenty rupees each day to the woman he would quench his thirst with. Alka is very patient and poised and she does not break the promise made to him that she would not interfere in his personal life. Alka is also a woman with fine sensibility and wit. She is not afraid of her feelings for Kumar. She boldly tells him: “The only fear one ever really has is from one’s own life” (ALW 23). Kumar wanted to view life in its proper perspective, so it was necessary that he talked with Alka. Alka tells him that “many people cannot face themselves” (ALW 23). Alka is very courageous when she questions Kumar why he needed to go to town to quench his physical need. She very astutely expresses, “I think I am in every way superior to the woman who for a mere Rs.20. . .” (ALW 24). Alka bold, confident appraisal of self shocks Kumar.

Alka offers herself without any hesitation, without any fear of consequence. It shows how much she loves Kumar and how far she was mentally and physically prepared to go along with Kumar. Amrita has created an unbelievable character in Alka, who stands with truth as far as her love towards Kumar, was concerned. Her love was so true that she is ready to cross all limitations that bind a woman in Indian society. To get love, to know the man she loves, to share the closeness, Alka is ready for any kind of adjustment. She is even ready to take the place of a prostitute. All this for love that may not be returned, shows Alka as a woman who was strong to face the consequences. “A normal woman would hate and fly from such a selfish and degenerate man who can accept a woman only after reducing her to the status of a prostitute. But Amrita’s Alka accepts this condition with moral equanimity and insulated dignity” (Sharma 126). Kumar is choked to speak after hearing what Alka wants. He said:

“What’s come over you today? You are a respectable girl coming from a respectable family.”

“What has respectability got to do with it?”

“It is not respectable giving your body for Rs. 20.”
“And why not?”

“Simply because it is . . . it is not . . . well, er, respectable.”

“According to you then, it is not respectable taking another’s body even on payment” (ALW 24).

The conversation between Alka and Kumar highlights that Kumar is unable to fathom Alka’s outburst of being superior to the woman who got mere twenty rupees from him. It is considered not respectable when a woman boldly expresses her intense desires. It is way too easy and respectable for a man to pay money and sate his physical need. Alka was not happy with Kumar biased thoughts. She asked him, “If you can’t think of yourself in terms of respectability, why must that middle-class virtue seem so necessary for me in your eyes?” (ALW 24). Alka tells Kumar that “there’s such a virtue as respectability which has value for man, hardly any for woman” (ALW 24). Alka found the double-standard behaviour of the society repelling. Always a woman’s virtue is considered a delicate issue. A virtueless woman is not respected and valued in the traditional society. In a patriarchial set-up, it is all acceptable if a man goes out to satisfy his bodily hunger but the same is not acceptable with a woman. A woman loses character and respect in the society and also gets branded. A woman is not allowed and has not been able to cross what Amrita describes as the ‘Ramayanic line of honour; the novelist’s metaphor for the Hindu ideal wife, Sita.’ Alka however is prepared to go beyond that line and reduce herself to the level of prostitute in order to seek Kumar’s love. Revati Saran Sharma opines:

Amrita’s woman … has become so confident, so secure, both psychologically and economically, that she is prepared to accept whatever terms will enable her lover to make his love available honestly. ‘Honesty’ is most significant in the context of Amrita Pritam’s literature. In fact, it is this ‘honesty’ in the relationship between man and woman that she has been seeking even from the period when she wrote her first novel, Dr. Dev (126).

Amrita’s Alka is found far ahead of her times in expressing her true feelings. Alka becomes a challenge for Kumar. He tells her that he cannot take any liberty with her
because some day she would have to get married and deal with another person who is bound to have values different from her and him. Alka was strong, firm and expresses her independence when she spoke her mind to Kumar. She tells him “that a girl like me can accept her own set of values, not anyone else’s” (ALW 25). Alka is not afraid or ashamed of her feelings and desire for Kumar. She not only expresses it but also justifies herself. Alka’s love for Kumar is such that she goes to the extent of making herself “both faceless and nameless” for his sake.

Kumar is not able to understand why Alka took all the trouble to become intimate with Kumar, to make him happy or comfortable, to follow or agree to all his terms. Kumar knows that having physical intimacy with him was not a need for her. Alka tells him that he would not understand even if she would tell him as they both do not see “a good many things eye to eye” (ALW 26). She talks about their respective points of view that would be always individualistic. It is indeed found difficult for a man to understand a woman’s mind and soul. The finer sensibility of a woman remains a challenge for a man to understand.

Alka accepts Kumar on his terms that she has to be ‘faceless and nameless woman’ whenever he needs her. She feels it a great honour bestowed on her by Kumar. When he fulfills his physical need with her, Alka asks for Rs.20 as she feels there is nothing morally wrong to accept rupees twenty from Kumar because she loves him. Accepting money in such a manner by Alka was to not only make her point but also to comfort Kumar’s ego. Kumar utterly failed to understand Alka, especially when she spoke, “I can challenge that I can set myself up as a whore with the same ease as I can as a wife” (ALW 28). Though it really is a shocking revelation that a woman can bring herself so low to make a man feel honoured, it is to be judged from the perspective of a woman who is deeply and truly in love. Amrita Pritam has created a very challenging character in Alka having such a starking bold sensibility at the time when society would not have been ready to accept such a democratic, secular cosmopolitan living style.
The depth of Alka’s love for Kumar is noticed once when she dipped her chin and almost half-face in the water, and laved her eyes when she stood downstream. This was done because the water coming her way was anointed in her eyes by its passage over Kumar’s body. So she bathed her eyes as if it was ‘Holy Water.’ She continued to hug the waters, until the time the waters came from Kumar. This deep reverence from Alka shows that her love had turned to devotion for Kumar. Alka presents a very strong resolve when Kumar tries to test her endurance. In a conversation sadistically Kumar wanted to irritate Alka. He tells her that she would not be able to earn the twenty rupees from then on. He had expected that his words would hurt her and reduce her to tears. Alka surprised Kumar by her behaviour. She told him that though what he said was painful enough, she cannot sit and cry, “Because I drank my tears dry when I decided to take this road” (ALW 43). Alka had been well-prepared to face the situation that came with the decision that she had taken. She had made up her self so strong that let what may happen on the path that she had chosen she would never cry or repent.

Kumar wants to humiliate her so he could hurt her but Alka is not in the least affected with his behaviour. After their union when he gave her twenty rupees, taking the money from his hands, a smile comes to her lips, but a smile that had drunk all that was humiliating and had left lurking in its place only a sense of pride. Alka had accepted the relationship with Kumar on his own terms. She had gone to the extent of accepting even the price-tag Kumar put on her body. One can very well note that Alka has converted that humiliating factor into unrivalled pride. She does not feel degrading about it. What Kumar offered her was humiliating, was insulting, probably no ordinary woman would have been ready for it, but Amrita’s woman has a strong and courageous stature to accept the joys and pain that love brings. Alka is bold and self-respecting. She insists on seeking nothing unless Kumar wants to give it to her willingly.

Alka had got used to Kumar being always too rough and gruff and even insensitive sometimes. She always felt that she was an outsider for Kumar. She waited for that day when she would not be constrained to be an outsider any more. A woman offers her everything to the man she loves and worships, but she had to wait in expectation that some day she might be accepted for who she is. Alka has a very optimistic sensibility to
believe that time would bring change and a change would change her relationship with Kumar.

As time passed, slowly, Alka became part and parcel of the dream-world of Kumar. Once, he had a feeling that Alka assumed the form of a rope which continued to bind him even in dreams. When Kumar understands that he had fallen in love with Alka, he wants to go to town for two months, just to sort out his thoughts. Before leaving on a trip to Delhi, he treats her very tenderly and his tenderness makes Alka cry. It was such an enriching experience for her that she was unable to contain herself, and had broken into tears.

Kumar confesses his feelings to Alka before going to Delhi that he cannot own her without foregoing his freedom and he wanted her. (ALW 63-64) Alka identifying the affinity between love and freedom responds: “You cannot . . . until your love and freedom merge into each other and becomes one” (ALW 65). Kumar like a typical man insists, “Alka, these are two different entities, how can they merge into each other? They will never . . .” (ALW 65). Alka very staunchly assures him that though love and freedom are countervailing absolutes, the day he overcomes his depression, that day love and freedom would coalesce. Alka is portrayed as very determined and strong-willed woman who accepts everyday as it comes. She is very understanding for she does not want to be an obstacle in Kumar’s life as she knows that he loves to retain his freedom. She tells him to forget her but he does not agree. Alka as a final note gives expression to her inner feelings: “I shall wait for that day when I would be no more extraneous to your (inner) being” (ALW 100). She waits to be an intrinsic part of Kumar’s inner being but Kumar is selfish and he does not agree with Alka. Critics comment on this very important aspect of Alka’s personality that “on one side she awaits to be an intrinsic thing for Kumar and on the other she is willing to marry (any one) at the instance of Kumar” (Sobti 123).

Alka gets a telegram from her father to return to Amritsar. Even Kumar gets one from her father, imploring him to persuade Alka to return. Alka’s father wants her to return to get married. She is told by Kumar: “Go to Amritsar for Heaven’s sake and get
married for once and for all” (ALW 99). Alka is not happy, and she asks him why only once she should get married. She said if her getting married would bring him any intense satisfaction she would get married as many times as he says. Alka controls her emotions and goes to Amritsar to fulfill Kumar’s wish. Alka is very troubled leaving Kumar. Before leaving she pours her love for him in a note:

It’s so simple, it’s impossible to express.
It’s so personal, it’s hard to communicate
It’s so lonely, it’s difficult to share
It’s so sacred, it would be profanity to proclaim –
for having once left the heart, it could never be found again without disdain (ALW 100).

Alka’s words bring out her love, her sensibility that is truthful and honest. Her deep sense of pain of not being able to express or share makes her love sacred and such sacred love does not need to be proclaimed, it only needs to be felt and understood. Alka had given her heart to Kumar and had loved him selflessly, expecting nothing in return, always admitting him on his terms. She had given her heart never to get it back again. It was her undefiled love that made her to go to Amritsar with a heavy heart. She was to get married only at Kumar’s insistence, only for the satisfaction of Kumar. It shows that she would do anything to make Kumar happy, at the cost of self-negation.

Alka meets Captain Jagdish Chander, the man chosen by her father for her. While answering his questions as politely as she could, in her heart of hearts, she keeps thinking of the bigger things she would have to cope up with in the time to come. Alka represents a woman who not only has to sacrifice her dreams and wishes but also take pains to adjust and portrays the perfect woman or daughter or wife. What a woman really wants is not something that the patriarchal society bothers with. A woman is faced with new demands every day. Alka has to present herself as normal human being in front of Jagdish Chandra. She behaves as a girl who was happy and interested to marry him. She maintains her jovial spirit and beauty which caught Jagdish’s interest in her.
Alka is a woman who speaks the truth to Jagdish that she is already in love with someone else, but the man does not want to marry her. Alka is able to tell very courageously that she would be marrying only to fulfill her promise to Kumar. She very boldly and frankly tells Jagdish: “Should I come to know that he has changed his mind or that he needs me, I will not hesitate to seek a divorce from you to go to him” (ALW 113). Jagdish listening to Alka’s brave words appreciates her courage to discuss such things with such candour. He believes that a girl like her would never tell a lie. Alka presents the sensibility of an honest and loyal woman. Alka sought Jagdish’s permission to write a last letter to Kumar to inform of her marriage that would take place after a month. Even in a grave situation Amrita’s woman is not only trustworthy, but honest and true.

Alka is a self-willed woman. She had agreed to marry only to make Kumar happy. But when later Jagdish feels that it would not be proper for them to get married, Alka accepts that too. Though she was sad, she does not feel sorry for herself. She feels heartily sorry for Jagdish Chandra. She is even moved to see him suffer and have so many thoughts and worries about their marriage. Alka’s concern and feelings show the empathizing strength of a woman. She forgets her plight and sympathizes with Jagdish, which only a mentally strong woman could do.

Alka had agreed to marry Jagdish but it was all for the sake of her love that knows no bounds. Alka’s decision to marry may be unacceptable from society’s point of view but Amrita has created a rebel character in Alka, a personality for beyond imagination in the times when the society is still traditional and narrow minded as far as a woman’s existence is concerned. Jagdish after some time realized that Alka is a very different person. He comes to ask her to marry him again. He had felt that no one could think like her and no one could speak like her and that what he had discovered in her, he would not ever find in anyone else any where. This thought about Alka makes her to stand out as a person, as a woman with a fine sensibility who had impressed Jagdish very much. This was all because of her generous, humane understanding. He had recognized her true worth but it was too late for Jagdish to get her back. Alka does not accept Jagdish’s proposal and tells him that she had been married to Kumar a long time back, when Kumar had believed that a line could be drawn through the waters.
Alka comes to know through Jagdish that Kumar had been sick and probably might have died. Hearing him she decides, whether Kumar is alive or not, she would go home, to Kangra Valley, to ‘Village Number 36.’ Alka loved Kumar so deeply that she chose to stay as his widow for the rest of her life. Amrita Pritam portrays the sensibility of a woman who knows her feelings, who is strong to accept the change that time brought. Alka is not imbibing any Sita or Savitri, but what Amrita stresses upon is the genuine, pure, true love that a woman has for a man. It is said that love conquers everything and it also gives strength and courage to lead life. One finds a completely matured Amrita addressing serious issue in this novel. “Victorian minded readers were taken aback when candidly discussed sex of a girl who wants to play a double role - prostitute and wife, just because she passionately loves him” (Mokashi-Punekar 48). Alka represents the radical image of the new woman who shocks and also awakens them to a feminine sensibility that is far above or beyond simple understanding. Amrita’s Alka is a personality for beyond imagination in the times when the society is still traditional and narrow-minded as far as a woman’s independence and self-actualisation is concerned.

**Annie in The Aerial**

People who love generally are very foolish. They hand over the key to their treasury to some stranger and then because he might spend a single small coin from it, they look about to give the key to someone else. They never take their own wealth as wealth; this is the secret of their beauty . . . this foolishness of theirs makes others love them (TA 13).

Annie is described as a very beautiful and foolish person. She is foolish because she handed over her key to the treasury of her being to Anwar. Amrita Pritam writes that there are two types of people in this world. One kind is the lover, who she calls as ‘instruments’ and the other kind is the one who make themselves loved who she calls as ‘real snakes.’ Amrita compares the woman to an instrument and also to a corpse. A woman is very unlucky; unlucky because she has to die again and again. And even after neglect of days, months, or even years if the owner just touches the corpse, and calls it
with kindness this corpse comes back to life (TA 13-14). A woman is supposed to remain silent and embrace the fate of hers as it comes. Annie is compared to an instrument and a corpse; Anwar is compared to the real snake who sits upon the treasury.

Amrita, through the character of Annie, portrays the agony, the victimization, the pain that women bear even after all sacrifices, adjustments and challenges. A woman is always at the suffering end, emotionally, psychologically and even physically. Most of the times, in a man-woman relationship, it is the woman who suffers. The man goes scott free to enjoy himself as he has all the freedom to indulge in whatever he wants. Loyalty and faithfulness are only expected from a woman, for a man has the liberty of going beyond them any time he likes. This patriarchal construct allows man the power to be disloyal and to deceive innocent, humble women.

Annie is Anwar’s wife. They had married very young; when he was yet a student. They live with their son Salaam, aged seven, in a three-room flat in Worli, Bombay. Anwar’s feelings for Annie were that she “was the shore of his life’s ocean. A shore is always a secure place, a person can sit in the sun on its wet sand for hours, play with shells . . . The shore is the wife; the roof is the home; the shells are the children” (TA 15). Anwar, after nearly ten years of marriage to Annie, has extra-marital relationship with his secretary, Liz. Annie one day faces Anwar’s question: “Supposing I leave you . . .” (16). Annie had lain quiet, as unmoved and fixed as the shore.

Annie had been fifteen or sixteen when she had fallen in love with Anwar. He had been just an ordinary, good-looking college student, but her love had changed Anwar into an extraordinary person, and his boyishness had been elevated into manliness. Anwar had known that Annie’s well-placed parents would never accept him. So he had challenged her love and said to Annie: “You’ll never have courage enough to leave your parents and come to me on the sly” (TA 16). Annie’s mind had advanced beyond her physical charms to the extent that she would never refuse a challenge, or ever admit that she could not meet any danger. Annie was very courageous and bold and her love so genuine that she had risen to the challenge, crossed all barriers of society and come knocking one night at Anwar’s dormitory door saying: “Anwar, you said I’d never come” (TA 17). Seeing her at his door Anwar had been frightened, and so perplexed that he had half-closed the door on
her. It was an unexpected and shocking happening for him. He could not fathom that Annie would get so serious so as to leave every luxury, comfort and security for love’s sake.

Annie’s parents had finally consented to their marriage and even taken care of Anwar’s educational expenses. But Annie had to suffer the rift created between her and her parents because of Anwar. All the help that she had taken from her parents seemed only to add to her obligation to them. For Annie, marrying Anwar had meant to break all relationships with many people. A woman has to pay a heavy price for the sake of her love. Many times Anwar would jokingly ask young Annie what she would have done if he had left her. Annie loved Anwar so much that she had told she would die without him.

Annie was not just one woman, for Anwar, she had two images. He was afraid of that Annie who had left everything in the world to come to his door. He loved the other Annie “who melted like snow in his arms” (TA 18). It is seen here that a man is afraid of ‘a willful wife’ but he loves the wife who has weaknesses, who is dependent. Male-dominant society expects women to be dependent and values women only when they are meek and submissive.

Anwar is disloyal towards Annie by sleeping with his secretary. Though he does not regret it, deep within him he found a pang of shame. One day he asks Annie again: “What’ll happen to you if I leave you?” Annie’s eyes were neither downcast nor perplexed. She answers calmly. Her words were clear and forthright when she said: “Whatever happens, I won’t die” (TA 19). Her reply upsets Anwar greatly; he feels that she was not the Annie he had been looking for everyday for the past ten years. He sees a different Annie before him. This different Annie, he had seen her at the age of sixteen. He had never needed to know this Annie because he liked the other Annie who was like “a wet cat in his arms” (TA 18). Annie had surprised and shocked Anwar with her words. Always a woman is taken for granted. She has been considered as a commodity to satisfy the male ego. Annie had come to Anwar sacrificing and leaving every comfort behind. She had trusted him and loved him with all her heart and soul. She had been very bold when she had forfeited everything to come to him. When she spoke the words that she ‘won’t die’, Anwar felt “that the boldness she had shown in coming to him could also be
the boldness needed to leave him” (*TA* 20). Now, after years of marriage, when Anwar seems to be tiring of her, she accepts his disloyalty without cringing and without any recriminations.

Amrita brings the ‘new woman’ through Annie. Annie’s words though may not have conveyed to Anwar how much she is hurt or how she feels on the talk of being left, it definitely shows her courage at accepting the changing scene in life. Though it is a situation where a woman’s world is torn apart, Annie presents herself with self-respect and integrity. Amrita does not allow Annie to be a doormat, but rather raises her self with dignity and independence. Her bold and strong sensibility strikes Anwar hard. And Anwar hates this in Annie. He had always loved that part of Annie which was weak. And he wanted to excite that weak point to force her to come to him. The physical intimacy he had shared with Annie made her weak and Anwar thought that he could use it to win her back. One can note here that man can act in an unreasonable way but he cannot take it from a woman, even if the woman acts in a reasonable manner. The typical selfishness of a man is visible in Anwar’s behaviour.

Annie had become so strong that it appeared impossible for Anwar to break down the walls surrounding her. When Anwar tells Annie that it is possible for a man to start loving another woman, another time, Annie says, “values change . . . levels too” (*TA* 23). To Anwar’s question supposing he really had started to love some other woman, Annie’s response: “I won’t stand in you way”, “I can only be a friend then, not a hindrance” (*TA* 23), knocks Anwar down as he had never expected her to say such a thing. “Anwar thought all these answers were the outcome of some kind of hackneyed idealism. It wasn’t Annie, but some character in a novel, uttering artificial sentences” (*TA* 23). An ex-wife being a friend to her ex-husband is a western concept for a typical Indian male to accept. Annie is so shockingly bold that her stance is unacceptable by the male ego. Amrita stressed that man-woman relationship, like everything else, is part of the same journey. Therefore the relationship must not be bound by the constraints of time or of a social set-up. It should be limitless. Amrita believed that man-woman relationship should not be judged according to the established social norms.
Annie stands with such brave manifestation that even when Anwar tells her he could divorce her, she gracefully acknowledges saying: “If that’s the case, then I suppose you should” (TA 23). Annie accepting the divorce issue with such coolness and control disturbs Anwar. He tries to breakdown Annie; he wants to awaken the ‘throbbing heart of living Annie.’ When Anwar threatens to keep their son, she accepts this as well. This thought “was like putting a pin in the most delicate part of Annie’s being” (TA 23). Indeed it is difficult for a woman as a mother to part away from her child, but Annie is tested by Anwar and her reaction is only ‘silence.’ Though Anwar is certain that he had found a place where he could break Annie, but she shows an unbreakable attitude, utterly shocking and confusing Anwar. Annie’s response: “If he gets his father’s protection, I’d be satisfied” (TA 24), is the ultimate that Anwar could take from Annie. It is normally expected that a woman would cry, or beg or complain in such a situation, at least, not to be far away from her child. But Annie’s face shows no emotion, no tears, no complaint, only a trace of fatigue.

Annie realised that she is no more wanted or needed by Anwar. She accepts the present situation in her life with such courage and strength of mind that Anwar was reminded of her earlier behaviour. Many a times whenever he had insisted on getting something from her, she had always kept quiet and suppressed her own wishes. A woman is expected to sacrifice all the time, her feelings, her wishes, her total self. Annie’s very tolerant and understanding behaviour is noticed when she agreed with Anwar that he was not a bad person. She addresses him warmly and intimately: “Anwar, you’ve never hurt me” (TA 24). Annie’s sensibility as a woman of substance is brought out by her attitude. A man, one’s husband does not want the wife anymore, his feelings have changed for her, but the woman does not cry, or plead, nor quarrel. Though she is hurt and in a way deserted, Annie shows her grit behaviour by not weeping or quarrelling which she could have done earlier. Almost ten years of marriage and the ups and downs in her life had made Annie stronger. Annie tells Anwar: “When I used to cry, I didn’t like myself for it. I always hated myself later. Now I don’t want to hate myself” (TA 25). Annie believes crying is weakness and a reason to hate one’s self. This shows the new awareness in her, the new woman who is ready to take life as it comes. The new Annie ‘with a bright face’ (TA 25) is aware of her self and takes a bold stance of doing things her own way.
Annie’s tolerance forces Anwar to ask Annie if she would not like to know who the other woman is in his life. Annie shows her indifference by: “I’m really not interested” (TA 26). Here one finds how Anwar is found as an insensitive chauvinist who wants to tell his wife about the other woman in his life. When the man Annie loved and sacrificed so much for, does not want her anymore, why would Annie bother with him anymore. Surely she would not be interested with what he does or what happens with him. She leaves his house without a backward glance. Lal opines:

Annie’s great weapon to fight her broken life is her sense of endurance. Through the process of dying while living a tormented life, she shows the true meaning of life – the one has to accept one’s lot. She moves beyond the limitations of her personal exigency of life through the process of her acceptance of social life (46).

Amrita brings out here that the life of a married woman is always insecure. Annie had to leave the home which had been her home. Leaving Anwar’s house, she lives in a career woman’s club and gets an office job, but later leaves it. She does not even go to her parents though they come to fetch her. Without any grudge or ill-behaviour, very amicably Annie leaves Anwar. A self-respecting woman would not like to be dependent neither would like to be a burden on anybody else. Annie’s independence is applauding. The Annie who left Anwar was not the same Annie who had come to his door when she had been a teenager. This new Annie was mature, brave, dignified and self-respecting.

The patriarchal society expects women to be dependent. It does not accept single, independent women who fend for themselves. Traditional society respects women only when they remain helpless and dependent. Amrita presents Annie as “a woman not to be explained, but a woman to be understood” (TA 28). The predicament of women has always been that they have never been understood. The sensibility of a woman always appears as a mystery, as something unfathomable, especially to the male-dominant society because it has never tried to understand woman or value her self.

Annie has the courage to break away from Anwar because she cannot live a lie or sham, because she has to seek the truth of individual dignity. “If she had given in, she would have been pinned down under this heap of pebbles” (TA 35). Leaving Anwar,
Annie lives in an apartment willed to her by her grandmother. She prefers to live a lonely life as she did not want any advice, arguments, pity or protection as of now her life was no more with Anwar. She earns her livelihood by selling hand-painted blouses and shawls at night clubs. Apart from that she also builds up a small emporium at her place, Annie Emporium. Annie becomes a self-reliant woman with a new identity who is not at the mercy of others. Amrita presents the new Annie who contributes to the radical image of woman. This new Annie is to be respected as a woman of substance. Her mature outlook is found in her attitude towards Anwar. She never told anybody of her separation with Anwar. If people asked her she retorted and stopped everything cold in one sentence: “I don’t owe anyone any explanation” (TA 30). Annie not explaining, not discussing anything about their separation makes one admire her patience and control. Her humanitarian concern too is admirable when she comes to take care of the quiet sick Anwar.

Anwar being a typical man did not like her coming to take care of him. He finds himself with a complex feeling as he was guilty of deceiving her. Annie’s generosity and broad-minded behaviour shows: “Love or fidelity isn’t so frail that it’s lost just by the touch of someone’s body. May be by passing through someone else’s body, they both become stronger . . .” (TA 32). Annie tries to make Anwar more comfortable with his thoughts by forgetting her feelings. Though he had been unjust to her, Annie has no ill-feelings for Anwar; neither does she want him to suffer the guilt. She is laudable as a woman who had kept her personal feelings aside and as a very mature person made Anwar feel comfortable and not guilty of his deed. She does not do anything out of pity. Anwar finds that Annie had gone beyond his reach. She was on a “high standing pedestal” (TA 33) and he could not touch her. Annie tells Anwar that if it would make him feel better “I can come down to where you are, to where you feel you are” (TA 33). The Annie presented here shows such integrity and understanding that she is a woman not to be explained but a woman is to be understood. The new Annie was more invulnerable as she possessed no grudge against Anwar.

Annie does not come back to stay with Anwar. She comes only to take care of him in his sickness. Anwar resents her moral superiority over his. She tells Anwar: “I haven’t come back as a wife . . . Just as a human being” (TA 33). Annie’s humanitarian
concern is evident here. She does not expect to be treated as a wife. That relationship with Anwar had broken long ago and so she tells Anwar that she cannot stay with him as a wife. She speaks: “I can’t stay with you as a broken woman, that’s for sure. You might call me your wife or anything you like. But as I think about it, ‘wife’ in this country generally means a broken woman” (TA 33). She refuses to be mere wife. Annie represents the revolutionary values of the ‘new woman.’ When Amrita wrote of this new woman, Annie, the society was not yet ready for her.

Annie expresses the sensibility of a woman who had been given up. She had felt like a broken woman since the night she had come to his dormitory door and Anwar had seen her there and had closed the door on her. She had experienced such a shock of being alone that she had not realized it then when she had been at his door, but had realized it after ten years of marriage life. Now Annie was anything but a broken woman. She had taken care of herself and proved that a woman does not need to depend on a man for anything at all.

Betty Freidan says: “For woman, as for man, the need for self-fulfillment, autonomy, self-realisation, independence, individuality, self-actualisation is as important as the sexual need with as serious consequences when it is thwarted” (282). The new Annie shows a great deal of awareness and maturity. A new identity is born for Annie. She tells Anwar that she hated the old Annie (one who Anwar loved and liked) and that Annie was not the real Annie. The old Annie was a broken Annie; the one who Anwar sees now is the new Annie. Anwar wants the broken Annie back, but she refused to oblige and confidently tells: “I’m sorry, Anwar, but you’ll never find her again” (TA 34). This change in her shocks Anwar. The new Annie does not give herself into the hands of emotions when she dealt with Anwar. It could be said that most women would have given away, but Annie shows courage, strength and integrity of self that is hard for a man to apprehend or accept. She had moved forward in life; and respects her self and does not bother with the past. When Anwar would not accept the strong Annie, she leaves. Amrita expresses her opinion of Annie in this way: “In my opinion, faithfulness has little to do with the other person; its fullest relationship is with the person’s own self, and the recognition of that self” (The Battle is On 11). Annie remains an unbroken woman, a
woman who took the remaining years of her life in her own hands and lived a dignified life.

Amrita throws light on the injustice meted out to woman at the hands of human feelings. Annie as a wife, as a mother and as a woman had to suffer. She was left in a miserable condition. She had to deal with the reality that as of when Anwar announced that he would divorce her, she had no husband, no son and no home. Annie’s acceptance of all that Anwar said and did shows her resistance to male ego. Annie does not retort noisily or violently. She shows her resistance by giving him what he wanted, by leaving him amicably, by holding no hatred or any anger towards him, by turning the tables on him and showing that a woman is not an appendage to man. She does not compromise or reconcile and waste her life for Anwar. Annie depended only on her will-power and her strength, and courageously faced the world. It was Annie’s self-confidence that helps her to achieve self-actualisation. It makes her an individual who goes beyond the understanding and knowledge of Anwar.

Amrita’s Annie is surely a ray of hope, an inspiration for the Indian women who can change to live life gloriously, by being independent and by being themselves. Annie shows that life does not end for a woman, if a man rejects her or deserts her. In reality, a woman with self-confidence, self-respect and integrity sculpts out a path from stones, rocks and begins living meaningfully with a purpose. Annie was sometimes called as ‘Historic Beauty’ by Anwar. But she called herself as not ‘Historic’ but ‘Pre-historic’. This shows the value of self that Annie had for her. Things which are pre-historic have more value and are always maintained. Amrita, through Annie, presents the triumphant emergence of the new woman.

Amrita Pritam presents a radical sensibility in her women characters, Kammi, Anita, Chetna, Alka and Annie. In the traditional milieu, with their revolutionary thinking and self-awarenesss they break down the social and cultural bonds to achieve self-fulfillment. She portrays the self-awareness and self-realisation that these women experience in their lives to live life as they want. Emotionally and psychologically though they suffer at the hands of men, they stand up and face boldly the situations in their lives. Kammi and Anita walk out of their marriages to find their own true selves. Chetna and
Alka very boldly go against conventional morality, express their desires and find fulfillment in what they want. Annie shows that a woman with her own set of values can live a meaningful life with a new identity, without being a broken image. Amrita’s women, all represent the radical image of the new woman who believes in self-actualization and in living a life of independence, self-respect and dignity without the man as a prop.
Works Cited


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