CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

It is generally thought that women writers are often involved in the topics concerning with females only. This perception has been accredited by critics as well as readers throughout the world. While putting examples about such female writers people generally quote the names of Bronte sisters who were called “outcasts from their sex,” Elizabeth Barrett Browning who
was pronounced “Coarse,” Kate Chopin whose *The Awakening* was banned as moral poison, Simone de Beauvoir who was announced as frigid and Kate Millett who was claimed as pervert. This notion is not confined to the western world only; it has also gripped the attention of the critics hailing from Indian subcontinent. Kamala Markandaya, Shashi Deshpande, Anita Desai, Nayantara Sahgal, Jhumpa Lahiri, Nighat Gandhi, Bina Shah, Tslima Nasrin all have been criticized for favouring one sex against the other.

Simone de Beauvoir’s structures on the artistic women are quotable:

Narcissism and feelings of inferiority are, according to Simone de Beauvoir, the demons of literary women, women want to please, but the writer of originality, unless dead is always shockingly scandalous. Novelty disturbs and repels. (*The Second Sex*, 345)

Ann Patchett, even though a representative of the most modern society in the world, keeps herself away from such controversies. She has particularly focused on the issues pertaining to all human beings, irrespective of their caste, creed, age, or sex. Her priority lies in writing true literature which serves as a guide to her readers. She never diverts from the basic purpose of fiction writing that is of course to represent the society it emerges from. As a matter of fact fiction is born out of the society in which it lives and thrives. It continuously influences the living styles of the society. It does not ignore the
changes in the society, synchronic or diachronic, rather portrays them in a befitting manner. For this purpose, a fiction writer portrays an ideal world which teaches, delights and improves upon the existing set of circumstances. As such, the writer constructs a world of fiction, which, though abstract, is beautiful and attractive. Through this process the fiction writer succeeds in penetrating a message into the very soul of the society.

Patchett’s works present a spot on panorama of the society they emerge from. She has been enormously appreciated for not dealing with any controversial issues in her writing. Her novels are among the bestsellers of her time. There will be assessments and reassessments; the charm of her novels is justified by the picturesque description of the events. This quality of painting the society she herself comes from puts her on the list of the best authors of the going on century. Her desire for living in a joint family serves the justification of her theme of human relationships in her novels. She is one of the most famous female fiction writers who have strongly and unambiguously expressed views on the turbulent relationships in the American society in particular and in the world in general. Her female protagonists assert their liberty to construct their selfhood themselves. They repent their decisions of leaving their relatives without any reason
whatsoever. They refuse to cave in while confronted with hard circumstances. For instance, Sabine, the chief protagonist in *The Magician’s Assistant*, proves her mettle by reconstructing the broken lives of both herself and the family members of her dead lover. Her efforts for a reunified life are met with fruitful results well in time.

Patchett never hesitates while talking about the unstable relationships permeating the whole American society. Through her characters she highlights the main reasons for attractions towards the opposite sex and breakups which occur due to the disagreement between the ideologies of the two persons involved in a relationship. She pushes her chief characters into a situation of confusion; thus putting them to an acid test that paves their path to a solution to all problems. Where she is at the height of literary audacity is the sphere of interpersonal behaviour of men and women, most directly associated with the gratification of most of the wishes of both. To her, durable relationships are the charm of life. She never supports the kinds of relationships which take sex and physical beauty as their buttress; but the relationships which are built up by keeping in view the interests of all concerned. It is not only a delightful biological need in human beings, but also a profound emotional and psychological experience. She is concerned with men and women who instinctively feel the need of a relationship.
Special attention is centered on those values of Eros that are kept in a primitive and unconscious state in traditional minds. She has stepped beyond that literary treatment of sexuality which either gives a passing attention to Eros-truth of life or at the most, presents men and women content with that degree of relatedness which is formed between them by an unconsciously instinctual sexual bond.

Patchett possesses a deeper knowledge of the mechanisms of not only families but also perverted situations people may be caught in, willingly or unwillingly. For example in her best seller *Bel Canto* she talks about the relationships which are established not as per the norms and traditions of the society but because of the need of the hour. Roxane, one of the towering figures in this novel develops as many as four relationships during a period of three months. Three out of the four relationships are the result of the circumstances; while only one is directed by true love. Her relationship with her accompanist (a pianist) has nothing to do with her desire for sex. It is all done because of the gentleness of the latter and the humility of the former.

Through the relationship between Rose and Thomas in *The Patron Saint of Liars*, Sabine and Parsifal in *The Magician’s Assistant*, Roxane and Hosokawa in *Bel Canto*, Patchett has highlighted how people differ in their attitudes and likings. Rose, for instance, is a complex woman who flees her
home town leaving behind a lot of reminiscence. She embarks on a long journey without having any idea about the destination. The warmth she receives from her family members does not allow her to leave home. What works here as a binding force is the altruistic love of her old mother who loves her more than anything else. It is Rose’s tenacious temperament that leaves most of the readers displeased and befuddled. This bizarre behavior of Rose brings her huge emotional loss by transporting her into another loveless relationship with a man she knows nothing about. We can see another kind of relationship in *The Magician’s Assistant* where a magician’s untimely death leaves his beloved in the lurch. This story is not just about a magician’s assistant, but the everyday magic that people work on each other to improve their outlook on life. This is the magic of everyday miracles that people become so accustomed to that they overlook the magic of friendship and family.

In her fiction as well as in other type of writing Patchett has widely and frankly discussed the variety of relationships. She specially focuses on the relationships among family members. Whether it is a relationship between a haughty daughter and a passionate mother as the reader confronts in her very first novel or a relationship between a step father and his adopted sons as found in her fifth novel; all have been given a fair amount of
attention. Like Jane Austen, Patchett also puts her characters into tough situations where it becomes very difficult to maintain the dignity of a relationship. It is not just the relationships among her characters that she has focused on; she also gives equal importance to the establishment of relationships among her characters and readers.

Along with the theme of relationships, Patchett focuses on the role of fate and destiny in the lives of her characters. This is, without any doubt, one of the most occurring themes in her novels. In almost all of her novels it is felt that characters, irrespective of their actions, have to do what has been written in their destiny. Especially her chief protagonists have to face unwelcome and astonishing situations because of being mistakenly destined. Her novel *The Patron Saint of Liars*, for example, has several scenes where future course of action is decided not only as per the wishes and actions of the characters but also as per the will of the unseen powers which always lurk around. Rose, the chief protagonist in this novel, suffers a lot of humiliation and uncertainty in her life because of her wrong decision about giving up her child and leading an isolated life. Her fate drags her into a situation where she sees no way out. She craves for forgiveness all through her journey to a stranded place where she has planned to live rest of her life.
In spite of being a modern-day author, Patchett has intensively discussed the role of fate in a common person’s life. In her best seller, *Bel Canto*, the characters suffer to the extent of getting frustrated. We come to know how the auto run powers maneuver people into unasked for state of affairs. From the Vice President of the host country to the lowest ranked terrorist, all have to share the inflictions of time. People are left distressed without any reason. They are pressurized to lie down and obey the generals of the terrorist group. They are poked sharply in the backs of their knees with rifles. Life becomes so hazy for the hostages that not a single minute of their life seems to be useful for them. Conditions are so hard-hitting not only for the major characters; the simpletons also experience the same bad luck. The study quite obviously shows that fate and destiny play a major role in the lives of her characters. It is not possible that we always get the things what we want; sometimes we have to be handled by some invisible elements which go against our longing.

What has won Patchett incredible popularity is the treatment of terrorism and hostage crisis in her adventurous novel *Bel Canto*. Her take on this most talked of concern is to some extent optimistic. She has painted a telling picture of how people have to react when trapped in unusual situation. In spite of being a young author, she has dealt with this theme in a
way that can be anticipated only from an expert on this subject. It is not only
the political outcomes that the author focuses on here, but also on the kinds of relationships that may be developed among the hostages themselves and among the hostages and the terrorists. By introducing the scenes of chess and football playing, she tries to highlight the importance of love and relationships in adverse conditions.

The purpose of writing a novel on this theme seems that the author wants to attract the attention of the people towards both the positive as well as the negative aspects of captivity. The theme of this novel is very much related to the theme of Thomas Mann’s classic novella *The Magic Mountain*. In Mann’s novella, a man visits a sanitarium for patients with tuberculosis and finds that isolation and proximity to death heightens his senses, increases his sexual desire, and causes him to think more deeply about life. In Patchett’s novel, the four months of captivity enables both the hostages and the terrorists to experience life more vividly and profoundly. This transformation of Patchett from the theme of family relations to the theme of terrorism and hostage crisis has been enthusiastically acknowledged throughout the world. The subject matter is inspirational, particularly to the new writers in the field of fiction. Daniel Mendelsohn has fittingly highlighted the importance of this theme:
Bel Canto is an unexpected transformation in Patchett’s writing. Faced with the incident that inspired this book, many novelists would focus on either the action-- the takeover, the tense negotiations, the bloodily climactic raid-- or the anguished politics of the situation. Patchett takes another, subtler route, weaving her story from the four months of forced cohabitation of the jungle guerillas and their prisoners. (New York Magazine)

Patchett does not restrict herself to the themes of relationships and terrorism; she also finds ways to reconstruct what has been broken intentionally or unintentionally. It has been shown in her novels how broken relationships can be reconstructed. Almost all of her fictional works are crowded with the conflicts based on age, sex and sometimes dissatisfaction with married life. While going through her novels the reader develops a sense of rebuilding and deliverance. This all happens sometimes by chance and sometimes, perhaps, by the constructive approach of some characters. This heart-felt penchant of the author for reconstruction and redemption can be best perceived in her masterpiece Run. What is in focus here is a Boston family. It is all about the ups and downs of familial relationships and how we do the right thing and even though we know it is the right thing the result can irk us for years. It is also about compromise, how even though brothers and parents can take opposite paths, there are still connections binding them tighter than they recognize that can snap them back together instantaneously.
It is particularly reflected in Bernard Doyle, the chief protagonist’s indomitable love for his adopted sons.

It will not be an overstatement to say that Patchett has handled the theme of reconstruction and redemption in the manner of an uncompromising worker. Her sketch of major characters is praiseworthy. Though some of these characters suffer hugely at the initial stage of their lives, they recover from all kinds of predicament as they move forward on the path of recovery. What gets out of order because of misapprehension and frailty in nature is very soon reconstructed.

Patchett possesses a peculiar knowledge of the human relationships of various kinds. Her penetrating insight into the lives of all kinds of characters; married, unmarried, fully grown up, youngsters and even children has helped her in building up her imaginative power stronger and stronger with the publication of every next book. For example, her latest novel *State of Wonder* is far better in imagination than any of her earlier ones. The author has really justified the title word ‘wonder’ in this provocative and ambitious book set deep in the Amazon jungle. By casting the character of Dr. Marina Singh, a research scientist with a Minnesota Pharmaceutical Company, Patchett has shown her considerable expertise in characterization. The narrative abounds in with the scenes which are very
much cinematic in nature. What is felt after going through this book is the pleasure of watching any Hollywood movie.

It is not hyperbolic to say that among the celebrated female writers of the century Patchet enjoys a respectable place because of her deliberations on the most relevant issues concerning every human being in the world. Through her novels, she expresses her cordial yearning for leading a life full of respect and mutual cooperation. Her dream of a family where everyone helps everyone is appreciable as well as recommendable. She does not believe in a relationship built up to satisfy one of the partners, but in a relationship that is of reciprocal nature where both the partners have equal space and opportunity to develop. It is not a relationship of dominance and subservience as found in the works of most of the present epoch’s feminist writers, but a relationship of common understanding and sharing of interests.

The very favourite thing about Patchett is not that her characters are complex, contradictory and allusive; but it is in the relationships she builds among such characters. These relationships are somewhat different from the relationships we find in our daily life. As a matter of fact, most of the literary connoisseurs give more space to the descriptions of love between men and women. Patchett does not follow suit and takes it to be secondary to the love she finds between a mother and a daughter as shown in The Patron.
Saint of Liars and a father and his sons as depicted in Run. Such a love may or may not be romantic in the true sense of the word; the love of a parent for a child does not need any kind of authentication.

It is important to accentuate that in her novels, Patchett has drawn lively picture of what generally happens in the upper class families. She has particularly emphasized on the family problems which come up because of the differences between the views of two human beings who want to lead their lives as per the wishes of their hearts. Sometimes such differences crop up because of generation gap as seen in her fifth novel Run. Such disparity is generally found when people differ in their interests and choices. Another reason for such contradictions in ideas is the conceited outlook of some of the leading figures.

In her works, Patchett seems to point out that whatever the circumstances we are surrounded with, we have to reach a settlement sooner or later. It is an open secret that every human being suffers from his/her own idiosyncrasies. Everybody takes himself/herself to be true in saying and right in doing; but solutions can be reached only by adopting give-and-take process.

A resourceful artist, Ann Patchett selects her own vision and her novels are offered as true examples of the experiences of her time. Her art
comes from her loyalty to the life we actually live. She has a great power of observation and her fiction is rich with the sounds of authentic voices. She judges as well as chronicles a complex social, political and economic reality by exposing her characters to the real life situations. As a freelance writer, she has consistently and meticulously used her out of the box imaginative prowess. She is famous for her ability to find out new vistas in life for her characters when they are caught between the sea and the devil. Unlike other contemporary writers, she is neither hopeless nor sentimental. There is a definite constructive and reformatory slant in her writings. She attempts to make her literary works a vehicle of her ideas regarding relationships, redemption, fate and destiny and quest for survival in the most unhygienic conditions like terrorist attacks and hostage crisis.

It goes without saying that all the works of Ann Patchett are sated with the productive and pioneering ideas. The unbiased study of her works shows her concentrated desire for a life full of collaboration and shared understanding. What she has recorded is the part and parcel of every human being’s life. Her range is not limited only to family members; it rather extends to the entirely strange people. “I have been accused of being a Pollyanna,” she says, “but I think there are plenty of people dealing with the darker side of human nature, and if I am going to write about people who are
kind and generous and loving and thoughtful, so what? In my life I have met astonishingly good people” (The Guardian, 12). In many ways her optimism is appealing. She has made a specialism in her novels of characters bonding across classes and races. Run features African-American brothers successfully adopted by Irish-American Catholics: and her belief in happy endings can feel progressive as well as redemptive. Human goodness, in her books, usually carries hints of divine grace, whether or not these are interpreted by nuns or priests, and her endings, which are full of epiphany, are moving. When her fiction jars, at least with secular readers, it may be when spiritual uplift seems to tip over into a didactic cancellation of difficulty or sadness.

Works Cited


<http://nymag.com/nymetro/arts/books/reviews/4804/>