CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

Culture could make you a better – a better person.

They believed that it could uplift you.

- Margaret Atwood

*TBA* portrays the social scene in all its variety, colour and complexity. The values relating to love, sex and marriage which are part of the cultural implications of a society are vividly depicted in the novel. The novel gives glimpses of both the rural and urban scenes of Canada. The themes of freedom, isolation, separation, and survival dominate in the novel. The quest for spiritual survival is also found. The characters struggle to overcome alienation and they aspire to achieve personal and social integration.

There are images of alienation, which are portrayed through tourists and immigrants. Spiritual, mental and psychological alienation have become powerful themes in the lives of Laura, Liliana and Iris. A gallery of vivid and realistic portrayal of human struggle is presented. Benjamin Chase’s struggle to establish the button factory and his economic struggle are discussed with all its complexities. Adelia’s struggle to instill the upper class culture is discussed in detail. She takes steps to hold parties and invites top leaders in the society. Norval Chase neglects his personal loss and meets all
the needs of the people in the society by offering jobs. Liliana struggles silently and dies due to abortion. Iris is burdened during her childhood and experiences suppression in her marital life. Her disintegrated self and loss of self identity forbid her to achieve fulfillment in life. Laura suffers from delusion and struggles to get human support but fails in her endeavour. Aimee is tossed between Iris and Winifred and hence experiences isolation. After Aimee’s death, Sabrina struggles to get basic necessities and begs for food.

In Canadian culture, men and women have varied experience of nature. Adelia experiences a golden life in lawns. She designs Avilion to face the two rivers, the Louveteau and the Jogues. In later part of her life she moves from nature to culture. It is found that she believes in culture, which gave her more authority. The smoldering leaf refers to Liliana’s unborn baby. Iris enjoys the silvery colour of the moon light and she derives consolation and comfort. Sailing and sinking of pods refer to the life struggle of Iris and Laura. Iris gazes at the lawn which symbolizes freedom from struggles. Whenever she sees parents and children walking together on the lawn, she is reminded of isolation from her parents.

It is found that various seasons represent different situations of the major characters. Autumn season represents the death of the brothers of Norval Chase. Winter season refers to the fall of icicles. It represents deterioration of values and decline of social status of the Chase family. During summer season, Iris gets plums from the neighbour’s house and she learns the social value of generosity through the plum tree. It is found that the funeral flowers, chrysanthemums help Iris to recollect the death of her
mother. She relates meaninglessness of life to the waves. Chestnut tree is a symbol of trap for Iris and crocuses refer to the fleeting fortunes.

Gardens are motifs in the novel. It is found that the Rock garden brings out the theme of suppression whereas the Perennial garden gives her solace. Isolation of Laura and Iris is portrayed through the imagery of an island. Challenges of life struggle are found through the Niagara Falls. The two rivers in Port Ticonderoga are the motifs of revelation, renewal of energy, happiness and death. It is found that weather channel is used as a symbol to refer to love and care or rejection. Iris’s childhood days are referred to dry flowers. Landscape and mindscape are found in the life of Laura in Bella Vista. Winifred dominates Iris by compelling her to establish the Rock garden.

Men in the novel destroy nature and develop their business. Richard destroys trees to make shovel handles. Richard’s death in the Jogues river reveals his true colour. Benjamin Chase shows off his power as the button factory owner, through his choice of flowers like zinnias and snapdragons. He also provides a healthy atmosphere for workers through nature.

There is a difference between men and women, whereas men like indoor settings and women love outdoor settings. Indoor settings symbolize restrictions and limitations. Iris is asked by her father to grow indoor plants like orchids and camellias. Women love lawns and gardens and it is proved through Adelia’s love towards the lawn and Iris’s liking for the Perennial garden. It is found that women want to enjoy freedom and need a change from household activities. Norval teaches Iris the principles of economy by showing a natural example of separating peas and pods. Ravens foretell the death of
Eddie and Percival. By comparing the experience of men and women it is found that women have rich and varied experience of nature than men. Even though experience of nature is universal, it differs according to their social experience. It is found that in Canadian society, women have closer association with nature.

Eco-feminism is dealt under three theoretical concepts; empirical, conceptual and epistemological. It is found that empirical claim deals with lack of division of labour in Canadian society. The household activities Adelia, Liliana and Iris are critically analyzed to portray the sufferings and suppression of women. The relationship between nature and women is asserted through the conceptual claim. Love of Iris is compared to the golden cloud and seed refers to productivity. It is found that nature offers women, liberation from slavery. Iris’s interest in listening to the weather channel and her concern over ecology proves that women are better knowledgeable about nature than men in the epistemological concept.

Peter Barry’s definition of the four areas, which move from nature to culture, is applied to the novel. It is found that the planet Zycron comes under area one ‘Wilderness’. Three different lakes and Niagara Falls come under second area ‘The Scenic Sublime’. The autumn fields and landscape fit in area three ‘The Country Side’. Three types of gardens, lawns and waterfalls are placed under area four ‘The Domestic Picturesque’.

In Canadian culture dressing style are considered constructive performance to narrate a particular incidence. It also helps to identify oneself or denotes transformation of self. Benjamin Chase chooses a frock coat and top hat to welcome official authorities.
It is found that the dressing style is a symbol of social status. Liliana wears a seal skin coat and it symbolizes warmth and love. Callista’s robe like garments marks the influence of other cultures on Canada. Iris’s wedding dress, gloves and veil are associated with her entrapment. Laura’s faded and pale dress symbolizes her faded values and chastity.

Hats are used for many purposes like fashion, protection and hiding. Iris selects a hat with a veil to avoid the queries of the reporters. It is found that it protects her from embarrassing situation. An egg shell hat of Iris, which is broken by Laura reveal the breach of relationship between them.

War is valorized in Canadian culture and it is found that Eddie and Percival sacrifice their lives in the war. Patriotism is found in Canadian society. Norval Chase’s personal loss did not affect his social service. But he loses spiritual and personal integrity. War affects the economy of the country. Impact of war on historic and economic aspects is studied. The aftermath of war on the society is found. Men become invalids and financial burden is experienced by women. It also affects the environment. The aftermath of wars affect economy of the nation. People like Norval Chase have lost their faith in religion. It spoils the environment as a whole. It affects the economic conditions of the individual family. At large, the society is affected.

The religious culture of Canadians and their values are found in the novel. Holiness of thoughts and deeds, God’s sacrifice, helping one another are portrayed. The characters are compared with the Biblical characters and incidents. It is found that Laura
and Iris are compared to Mary and Martha and Laura’s life is compared to a fig tree. Their helping tendency is compared to the deed of Good Samaritan.

Gender issues in Canadian society portray the major characters’ search for self identity. It is found that Liliana is suppressed by Norval and Iris is suppressed by Richard. Suppression is found in different phases like childhood and youth. It reveals the suppression between father and daughter, husband and wife.

Four types of victims are identified and their survival in the society is found out. Laura is placed in first position because she denies that she is a victim. On the contrary, Iris acknowledges that she is a victim and experiences isolation. But she accepts the general power of the economy of her family and loses her self-identity. It is found that Iris wants to make a compromise with Richard till the death of Laura. She feels that her role is inevitable and oscillates between the second and third position. Reenie occupies the fourth position as a creative non-victim because she lives happily with her family in the same Canadian society.

Richness of language and style is reflected in the novel as different narrative techniques are used to narrate the complex tale of love and loss. Atwood’s art of characterization is remarkable because each character represents a special quality. Analyzing the social values in the five generations of the Chase family, it is found that there is deterioration in the social and cultural values. Imageries are employed to portray the mind of the protagonist and inner struggle is depicted through animal imagery. Significance of newspaper reports bring out the biased nature of the reporters, which often do not coincide with real incidents of the Chase family. Similies bring out love,
beauty, relationship, goodness, power, respect, experience and treachery. Buttons holes are the metaphors, which portray the void in relationship and sewing refers to the mending of relationships.

The three settings of the novel and the shift in settings are found. The culture in Canadian society resembles the culture of the planet Zycron. The American city, New York portrays the happiness of honeymoon trip. Port Ticonderoga reflects the bounteous beauty of nature. Sakiel Norn in Zycron brings out the social hierarchy and depicts sacrifice and blindness. The sense of smell and sound is found throughout the novel to mark darkness, separation, suffering and death. The novel is permeated by smell such as peppery smell and the smell of nocturnal darkness.

The poetic style in *TBA* brings out social problems in Canadian culture – discrimination of class, isolation, falsehood, complexity of life, poverty, fate, evil and good. The significance of the title with relevance to the characters and their blindness are found. Blindness of women characters and assassination by men characters are found in the novel. Sometimes women like Winifred and Iris also act assassins. Blindness of the Chase family is compared to the blindness of the children in Sakiel Norn.

Robert Lecker’s thirteen types of relevance between language and culture are portrayed. Objects of products in the society, proverbs which embody cultural values, social roles, customs, traditions and representatives are found.

The feminine search for a distinctive identity, within a predominantly feminist framework is found. Atwood’s intention in her fiction, however, is not merely to expose woman’s complicity in the processes that lead to her colonization and enslavement. It
also explores the possibilities of combating patriarchal structures of power and domination that disallow woman’s equal claims as an individual in society.

In *TBA*, Atwood brings out the quest for inner self and self assertion of woman which is quite natural. Atwood also expresses the family relationship as a central element in her novels. Patriarchy and colonialism involve relationship of domination and suppression, assumed superiority and imposed inferiority, where the dominated is forced to take up the oppressed, exploited victim position. In both, the dominant party makes the laws for its own benefit and advantage, to be conformed to by the dominated group, offering reward for conformity and punishment for non-conformity. A sensitive and consciously self-aware writer like Margaret Atwood exposes these powers structures and their effects on both those who exercise power and those who are subjected to it.

It is found that in *TBA*, women are treated as victims by both time and society. The women are oppressed and humiliated by the society. Throughout the novel women are victimized not only by men but also by women. It is well expressed by Atwood that life for women in this male-dominated society is to strive hard for one’s survival.

It is found that nature is portrayed as an enemy in the beginning; the author concludes it as a divine force. For example, river symbolizes death. Winter season is suggestive of chillness and lack of relationship. Towards the end of the novel, nature is a divine force. Iris recollects how the wind of the Chase name blows around the house. There is a fading aura of power and money lingering in the air. Richard’s purity is not like the purity of the driven snow. The association between nature and women are found
in the novel. Barrenness of nature and toppling of trees indicate lack of self identity and self assertiveness.

It is found that there is a close association between Liliana and Laura. Both of them undergo abortion. They are silent and blind to the external forces. Gender issues in the novel are analyzed in all the three generations. Adelia marries only money. She is expected to refine money like oil. Atwood’s work posits essential nature of men and women. She sees the female nature as superior and does not project reconciliation between the sexes. One can find the mutability of human nature and the possibility of psychological liberation.

Atwood uses language as a subversive weapon. The female characters create female space for themselves except Laura. The names of her characters reflect their basic qualities. Chase family is chasing for power and money. Iris wants to occupy the central focus of every one just like the iris in every one’s eyes. Atwood has collected all types of the characters in the novel. The button factory owners stand for power. A fugitive, Alex is seeking for survival. Laura is searching for love and affection.

_TBA_ is note-worthy for its open ending strategy. It hovers on the verge of new possibilities. Locale plays an important role in the novel. Port Ticonderoga represents a new land, which provides a state of bliss and unhappiness to the Chase family.

The novel has a specific socio-cultural background. The patterns of inner experience recorded in the novel are the memories of home and childhood, parental relationships, betrayal of love and marriage. Atwood elicits the quest for inner self and self assertion of women in _TBA_. Atwood also expresses the family relationship as a
central element in her novel. She emphasizes, through the heroines of her work, that women should not lose their identity. They should always make up their minds to struggle against all the problems in their lives and lead the life to possess their own self-identity. Thus, the novel establishes an effective confluence of social and cultural domains.
**Scope for further study**

The application of social and cultural domains can be used in other novels of Atwood so as to bring out the complete picture of Canadian’s social system. Comparative study on the thematic and stylistic aspects can be done between the novels of Anita Desai and Atwood. The technique of postmodernism can be analyzed in the novels of Atwood. A comparative study of postmodernism between the novels of John Barth and Atwood can be made. The short stories and poems of Atwood can be analyzed. A detailed stylistic study can be done on the novel to bring out the linguistic features of Atwood’s writing.
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