CHAPTER IV

SOCIAL EXPLOITATION

People followed the traditions or set of rules in maintaining relationship, celebrating the ceremonies, eating habits and the way of dressing. Whenever the milieu changes the customs also change according to the needs of society. Society means a large group of people who live together in an organized way, making decisions about how to do things and sharing the work that needs to be done. Though tradition and culture are common in a society certain rules affected the women only. In the name of culture, the article in The Hindu by Kalpana Sharma on February, 2009 shows the relevancy and the need of research from this perspective. In that article she asserts that culture is not about the tradition really, but all about keeping women under control. Another article, Gendered morality on the same issue in the above mentioned paper reveals that ‘culture’ and ‘tradition’ are notions defined by men to demarcate the boundaries of women.

Periyar, the social reformer in South India, insists: “If a country should prosper, the citizens of that country should have character. Chastity and character concern both men and women and not women alone” (Raju 76). On the contrary, society followed certain traditions which are exclusively for women. So there remained societal inequality. To maintain the inequality people imposed these traditions on women. The major traditions that affect the equality of the society are caste system, gender bias and religious hypocrisy.
Caste system was one of the social taboos followed in India. Untouchability was the social evil based on the caste system. Due to untouchability, the untouchables suffered socially, economically, religiously, mentally and sexually. They had to lead a life in an unhygienic place. As they were in a vicious circle they could not get water, money, education and respect. So cleanliness was impossible. If they were dirty it was the caste Hindus who have compelled them to be so. The denial of water was the inhuman and degrading part of untouchability. They were treated worse than pigs, and were considered as mere dirt by the caste Hindus merely because they cleaned latrines also. So they became the victims of diseases. This problem is highlighted by Mulk Raj Anand in his novel *Untouchable*, which was written before independence. *The Road* is another novel written about the evil of untouchability after independence.

The outcasts have to be at the mercy of the caste Hindus for food and other resource. Sohini and her brother Bakha, untouchables, in the novel *Untouchable*, suffered a lot due to social stigma. The social hierarchy did neither allow them to take water nor were they allowed to access the nearby brook as they feel it would contaminate well and the stream. “The outcasts were not allowed to mount the platform surrounding the well, because if they were ever allowed to draw water from it, the caste Hindus of the upper castes would consider the water polluted” (*Untouchable* 14). It was women’s duty to fetch water and cook. Like Sohini, the untouchable womenfolk, spent a lot of time in a day to draw water. Sohini returned home after long hours with a pitcher of water and then to prepare tea and clean the utensils.

Sohini’s long wait for a pitcher of water leads to molestation. There the high caste religious hypocrite, Pandit Kalinath asked her to clean the temple courtyard. At the well, he poured water for Sohini. Sohini was grateful for the favour he had shown her and hence went to the temple to clean the
courtyard. There an attempt was made to molest her. But, she did not yield to his sexual desire. So he made hue and cry over the so-called pollution. The passion of lust knows no caste system. The group of higher caste Hindus gathered on hearing Pandit Kalinath’s cry “Polluted! Polluted!” (Untouchable 53). Nobody asked Sohini as what happened there but they were very much interested to purify the temple than to support the real victim. Nobody was there to support or save her physically and mentally. Especially, the sufferings of women can be understood better only when the interaction takes place. The crestfallen Sohini was hesitant to collect food from the upper castes by which she was abused as ‘polluted.’ As there was no other way, her brother went to collect food on that day. Untouchable depicts the one day experience of Bakha.

Anand has portrayed women characters as it was in his time. In his time the young women especially of lower caste were not allowed to speak or expose their feelings to the society. Hence, Anand made them mute and Sohini’s feelings are reflected in the novel through her brother, Bakha. Women as they grow old are ingrained with the submissive feeling. They did not want to protest but accepted the society and continued to live.

The Road is a novel written after independence to depict the pathetic condition of untouchables with some improvement. Untouchables did not collect food from the houses where they worked. Unlike Sohini, Anand allows Laxmi to express her ideas. In The Road, the untouchables work in the fields of landlords in return for grain. Later they change their profession and are supported by the government to work for laying the road. In the novel The Road, there is a change in their attitude and profession. The road to the towns would lead them to enlarge their business and it will be easy for them to do their business in towns where nobody knows about the caste of the people.
Through Laxmi, an untouchable, Mulk Raj Anand points out the principles of Bhagavad Gita that man’s caste is based upon his profession and not by birth. It is pity, the awareness of an untouchable is not in the caste Hindus. She wants her son to avoid anger and be calmed. She says, “Look at me! Have I not suffered all my life?… First your drunken father and widowhood. And is my love growing less?...God’s love is welling up in my heart” (The Road 3). Though they were illiterate they have knowledge to lead a happy and contended life.

Laxmi and her son Bhiku were never allowed to go the temple. But the religious hypocrite accepted gifts like mangoes from the untouchable women. Yet, Laxmi’s love and generosity is revealed through her advice to her son.

Love them even if they hate you. Love them as Lord Krishna loved the whole world. Love the young and the old. Love the cattle, as Shyam, the God of Brindavan loved the cows. Love everyone and everything. Then through our good deeds only shall we rise from our low caste to higher caste. (The Road 1)

Laxmi’s ignorance is revealed through her thought that the pseudo respectability and the well being of them rest on the upper castes. It is a pity that she did not even know the meaning for the respectability and dignity. Centuries of servility have made them tame and passive incapable of resentment and revolt. They regarded the high caste Hindus as their superiors and their masters.

According to the tradition, at the time of sunset, women go to temple to light a saucer lamp. Electricity facilities were not available in those days. The use of oil lamp at the darkness was necessary. So people followed it as a tradition. They believed that forgetting or avoiding the tradition was
considered as a guilt and they would receive punishment from the Divine. Untouchable women being illiterate were quite superstitious. When their huts were burnt into ashes by Sajnu and his friends, the superstitious Laxmi thinks that “Kali Mai was angry, because this hour of sundown was the time when she should be coming, in the cool dusk, to light a saucer lamp at the mother’s feet and she had been late today and for many days. So Kali had made a huge lamp from the huts to light her own way to the heaven” (*The Road* 45-46). Due to her fear of religious tradition she could not understand the cunning nature of the people.

She believed in the power of Goddess Kali and of the landlords but not on her own power. Many times Bhikhu, her son protested but Laxmi said, “Join hands to them all and obey them. Don’t fight” (*The Road* 4). She tried to persuade him, “Son, we are chamars, and they are twice born” (*The Road* 4). When Bhikhu shouted, “One is a leatherworker by profession and not by birth.” Laxmi was not ready to accept it; but she said, “You have a name which must not be disgraced! We are the servants of the landlord and you must go to see him since he had asked for you. Our respectability and well being in life rests with the upper castes! We must have good relations” (*The Road* 105).

Tagore also depicted the evil of untouchability in the play *Chandalika*. Ananda, disciple of Buddha in the play *Chandalika*, was in thirst of water. When he asked for water, Prakriti hesitated as she was the Chandal (low caste) girl. They have separate well which nobody would use except Chandal. Though she knew that denial of water is inhuman, her self degradation prevents her from pouring water for Ananda. Ananda, true disciple of Buddha, unlike Pandit Kalinath and Pandit Suraj Mani religious hypocrites in Anand’s novels, makes her realize her self dignity. Unlike Kalinath, Ananda made Prakriti realize what is respect and what is religion
when she asserts, “I respect him who respect me. A religion that insults is a false religion” (Tagore 154). As Tagore insists, religion is the tool to mend and to elevate the human beings to lead a better life. A true religious priest must use his scholarly learning to eradicate the ignorance of the people. In these works, the versatile writers, Tagore and Anand facilitate the untouchables to come up in life with a different mode.

Anand introduces flush system to solve the problem of manual scavengers and the speeches of Mahatma Gandhi enable them to think positively. The society has forgotten to recognize the services rendered by them to the society; in turn these women lack self awareness. Anand portrayed the evil nature of the religious hypocrites whereas Tagore introduces the ideal religious priest in his play to eradicate untouchability. The sufferings of Sohini and Laxmi of 1930s continue even now. Even, in Bihar, Gujarat and Kolar Goldmines there are so many Sohinis and Laxmis are suffering as manual scavengers. Their psychological trauma is revealed by Harsh Mander in The Hindu paper on Sunday, 29 June 2008. (Annexure 1) Untouchability is still social stigma to both men and women. There are many social taboos that affected the freedom of women exclusively. Not only men oppressed women but also women oppressed women in many of his novels.

Existence of gender in nature is essential for the rejuvenation and reproduction of life. As a matter of fact, identification of gender is based on physiological nature. To dominate women, society imposed many ideas as culture and tradition. Willingly or unwillingly women became the object of victimization. Though there are so many reasons for the predicament ignorance is the first and foremost cause for their suffering. Some people accept their suffering and subjugation as a part of life. To emerge from the subjugation they must realize their abject humility.
As Iraiyanbu says in his book *Ezhavadhu Arivu* self freedom is important. In the topic ‘*Suya Vidudhalai*’ he insists, “*Aduthavargalidam irundhu nam elidhil vidudalai petru vidalam – anal nammidamirundhu nam vidudalai peruvadhu dhan migavum siramam*” (Iraiyanbu 124). (trans: It is easy to get freedom from others; but not from one’s own self). He insists on the need of real freedom. It is easy to get freedom from bondage. More than social and economic freedom, freedom within ourselves is important. Women accept their position as inferior and did not protest against the social evils. Her slavery is not realized by her. So it is impossible for her to get freedom from the bondage. Further Iraiyanbu says: “… *adimaithanam adaimaippattavargalukku theriyamaley ethirukkidh. Theriyadha adimaithanathirundhu eppadi vidupadamudiyum*” (Iraiyanbu 125). (trans: Suppressed people are not aware of their own suppression. How can they get relief from their suppression when they are not aware of it?)

People who are enslaved did not know about their own slavery. Then it is not possible for them to get freedom from the unknown slavery. Once they started to realize the root cause of the evil then they can eradicate the evil. Unfortunately, for long period traditions enslaved women. “From birth to death, life is marked by the performance of rituals prescribed by religion and social norms. Every stage of human life is marked by the performance of rituals of one kind or another” (Singh 71). Arranged marriage is one of the traditions followed in India, to which the women characters in his novels suffered a lot. The suitability for a marriage is decided not on the basis of love between a man and a woman but on several other considerations such as matching horoscopes, caste, religion, sects, sub-sects, family status and the like. Further in a patriarchal society, after marriage girls have to leave their parents house and live with her husband. Joint family existed in India in those times. It was considered ideal.
To maintain the tradition of the family the newcomer of the family has to adjust and adapt to the family customs. Sundari, Krishan’s mother and Draupadi, Krishan’s sister-in-law in the autobiographical novels faced difficulties as a new comer. However, Krishan’s mother managed the entire family. But Draupadi suffered a lot.

Krishan’s mother used to tell the story of her life to her children. She married at the age of eight when her husband was studying in school. “Be like Savitri,” had been her father’s blessing, “be like the suttees of the gurus, loyal to your husband into death” (SS 68). Her mother had told her stories sagas of gods and goddesses and devoted wives. She had been imbued with the sense of responsibility that it has been customary to inculcate into the minds of young brides. “She was to go to her husband’s home as to a temple” (SS 69). She followed her parents advice: “mother’s injunctions about serving her lord and master without any expectation of reward and living by the happiness of having children and bringing them up had smothered that feeling till now” (SS 69). At last her husband had passed his entrance examination and taken service into the cantonment at Sialcot. The year father entered the army Harish, the eldest son, was born. When she had gone to live at the cantonment of Ferozpur where the regiment had been transferred, Ganesh had been born. Krishan had born two years later. Prithvi, born after a year, had died at the age of four. Shiv was the youngest son. As she wanted her family to flourish, she adjusted with her husband in all circumstances.

There was then no divorce in the laws of the Hindus and because the ill-matched couples compromised and accepted the fate which will-nilly put them together, my mother and father had accepted the prison in which they were involved, as they were not quite so ill-matched: she obeyed her lord and master; he recognised her homage
by taking her for granted, so that she was lifted from complete servitude and placed on a kind of fictitious throne. (SS 72)

She had slaved for her mother-in-law and her husband. She effaced herself completely.

When Harish was born, mother felt a slight relaxation in the stern attitude of her mother-in-law. The old woman was kinder, loving the baby, getting clothes made for him, loading him with jewellery. Though she was ill she tendered her through the nights. She remembered her mother-in-law’s service. So it was quite natural for her to expect the same attitude from her daughter-in-law. On the contrary, Draupadi her daughter-in-law had upset all the family plans. Mother had believed in the old idea of early marriage as a sort of betrothal, the consummation of which was not to happen till four years after the ceremony of going round the fire, by which time Harish would have got through his Medical school. Krishan’s father wanted his son, Harish to become a doctor. But Draupadi was not interested in his studies. She wanted to be with her husband. So Harish joined as an Assistant jailor.

Harish’s father was angry for “ruining the prospects and the “prestige” he would have enjoyed if he had persevered for three years and become a Babu doctor” (SS 62). From Sundari’s point of view her family was breaking due to her daughter-in-law, Draupadi. All that she wanted from her daughter-in-law was sons who could be her grandsons. Draupadi had not been taught to read or write. She wanted to be married to a Babu. Then she would go away with her husband to wherever he was posted. She did not know how these posts come about. “She had been indulged by her parents, who thought it immodest for girls to learn anything. She was a sentimental, humourless girl, obstinate and stupid” (SS 67). She did not realize the value of education. So she was criticized by her father-in-law and she could not beget child as her mother-in-law expected. So her parents-in-law disliked her.
Ganesh and Krishan stayed in their brother’s house. She loved Ganesh as he was vegetarian. Harish and Krishan were kept outside the kitchen by her as they ate meats. Krishan realized that Harish would have the patience to understand the reasons for Draupadi’s hostility towards him. Draupadi criticised the bad habits of her husband like drinking and spending money on bad women. Krishan felt that she could cook for the men folk like their mother. Later on Krishan understood the predicament of Draupadi. Draupadi poured out her feelings to Krishan thus:

You don’t know, childling, how badly he treats me, this brother of yours!.. Because I can’t have a child, he will have nothing to do with me. And he goes to “eat the ashes” in the prostitutes bazaar…Vay, you don’t know how I am oppressed!!..He comes home drunk every night and …..what shall I tell you….And your mother!….She thinks it is all my fault. (MF 182)

Further, her father-in-law advised her to consider Krishan as her adopted son as Devaki has adopted Ganesh as her son after the death of her daughter, Kausalya and her husband Partap. Even in her depressed mood she had to prepare food and take care of the family, though she disliked everyone. In a fit of anger she said, “If you talk of cooking and talk of housework, I will throw myself in the well” (MF 204). Harish took twenty thousand worth of cotton bales from the Borstal jail stores and sold them to a dealer because he wanted the money. He complained his mother that Draupadi leaked the information to the wife of his rival. Her mother prayed for her son to come out of the crisis and for the death of Draupadi.

Parents “arrange marriages” (MF 220) without consulting the idea of their children. Most of the couples continued their life with struggle. The married life of Harish and Draupadi was not happy. If Draupadi had a child she would have been happy.
Harish’s illegal love for Mumtaj was one of the reasons for her unhappiness. Mumtaj was a victim of age old conventions. As she was born in the family of prostitution she was condemned to lead miserable life. So Krishan, the school going boy, said when he grew as a man he would forget all the prohibitions against her status as a prostitute and surrender himself heart and soul to the gaiety of her spirit and wed her. Krishan asked Mumtaj why she could not marry Harish though he was married. He knew that “a Hindu or a Sikh can marry any number of wives – as all the Maharajas do; while a Muhammadan can marry four wives” (MF 290). She had to lead a traditional life of prostitute.

She had modern outlook to come out of social clutches. She wanted to lead a normal life like other women. So she said, “I want to go away from here and read and become clever – away from all the silly idiot customs and conventions here!” (MF 290). Krishan inquired about her, hence she explained her existential predicament to him. “Childling, you are not old enough to understand what it means to be born – in the house of my mother. Once one is born like that, one can never be free… One is condemned to live as “bad women” (MF 290). It was not her mistake to be born in the family of prostitute. So Harish had illegal relationship with Mumtaj. Harish committed mistake and spoiled the life of Draupati and Mumtaj.

Unable to answer the question regarding her father, her eyes dimmed with tears and her lips trembled. She remained silent and really “moved her head to signify that she did not know” (MF 291). She derived more courage to narrate her mother’s life regarding her birth. Her words, “I don’t know who was my father” (MF 291), show the exploitation of men and tradition which exploited her mother. Her mother had to lead a life of prostitute and as she told her that her father was a Hindu Katwal and Moti’s father, a big Sikh landlord. But neither of them knew who those people were.
Through analyzing the character of Mumtaj Anand attacked the social evil, prostitution which enslaved women sexually.

Mumtaj heard that Kotwal her father was very cruel and threatened to cut of her nose if her mother “went with anyone else; and yet he did not want to pay money to her and she had to practice her profession” (MF 291) to bring up her daughters. Anyhow to earn money her mother gave training for music and dance to her daughters. Luckily, Mumtaj’s sister Moti was going to marry Noora, her lover. Unlike Harish he was ready to marry her.

Anand mentioned educated women characters like Sathyavathi, the Headmistress, Bhagwanti, second mistress in the D.A.V. Girls Middle School in the novel Morning Face. Parvati, a child widow, in the novel Morning Face was remarried to Dev Dutt, who belonged to Arya Samaj. Yet she suffered a lot. Even in the Arya Samaj family the young brides were secluded but aunt Dhanwanti did not observe purdah. Parvati did not come out as her other family members. Even her rheumatic pain was also criticized as inauspicious and unlucky by her husband’s relatives. Krishan saw the sacks of grain lying by her bed; so it seemed to him strange. She was living like a “kitchen maid in the storehouse” (MF 57). The estrangement between husband and wife is revealed through her speech to Krishan. Dev Dutt talked with her only after the marriage. He was good. But his brother and sister were not real Arya Samajists. Parvati said with tears. ‘Life is full of pain’ (MF 66).

Bhagwanti, Parvati’s teacher, arranged for Parvati to be married off to Dev Dutt as she stood first in the school. Then they had all joined the Arya Samaj and wanted to set an example by helping the poor. Parvati had been married off to a clerk by her parents when she was five years old. Unfortunately, before she could go to her husband’s house, he had died in an epidemic of plague in which her parents also died. At that time Bhagwanti was working among the poor. She took her, the orphan child- widow to live in
the hostel of Arya Samaj School. She was kind and cruel to her. According to Parvati, Bhagwanti and Dhanwanti are not real Arya Samajists, but only pretend to be devout reformers, began to say that she was an inauspicious, unlucky girl as she got rheumatism in her legs. Out of fear of them, her husband dare not talk to her. On hearing her pathetic story Krishan convinced her that he would ask him to be kind to her. But she told Krishan not to reveal a word to anyone of what she had told him. So she says, “The only thing for me to do is to kill myself. That is the only way for me to be free” (MF 66). Her speech shows her social predicament. Anand analysed the depressed mood of various women characters through Krishan. Anand also mentioned a few successful women like Shakuntala who continued her studies even after marriage.

Shakuntala is a wonderful creation of Mulk Raj Anand replete with modern ideas. Her husband Dr. Chuni Lal has a modern outlook towards the empowerment of women unlike Krishan’s father. So he criticized, “I am not a fake Arya Samajist like you, Babu Ram Chand. I want to practice what I preach! See! I want my wife to come out, without mock modesty to greet you!” (MF 415). He really wanted her to “discard all this formality and finish of her medical course one day. She left when she was in the second year, because her father thought I wanted a kitchen maid. In Peshawar, where she comes from, even Hindus behave like Muhammadans so far as women were concerned!” (MF 416). Krishan’s father after admiring her tenderness towards Krishan he said, “I wish I had the daughter-in-law like Shakuntala”. (MF 416) Shakuntala’s husband was helping his wife to complete his studies.

Dr. Chuni Lal wanted her ‘to be like Gargi, in the Upanishad, a sage who will serve people” (MF 416). Shakuntala explained so many things to Krishan. She told him about geometry, algebra. She explained Physics and Chemistry in terms of everyday life. She gave more information about life.
“Her only grouse was that many of the sages in the world were men and very few were women, as also that much of the knowledge of the world was from the point of view of men and not from the needs of women” (MF 420). Anand portrayed the desire of the modern women through Shakuntala. She realized the need of the invention of machines to lessen the burden of women’s work. “She felt that she could herself think of a machine which might be able to wash dishes and scrub utensils if only she had the time and encouragement to invent things. If this machine were invented, she would have more time to practice music which was the only healing for the sick soul” (MF 420-21). So Krishan felt that perhaps her medical studies had helped her to become clever. She explained that the main purpose of medicine was to lessen pain.

As previously said the society restricted the freedom of women. It fixed the role models for women to lead a marital life. Even after the death of her husband the society expected the wife to devote her entire life to the dead husband. The immense value of the religion was not conveyed properly to the next generation with a rationalistic approach. After diligent study and painstaking research, Vidyasagar, the social reformer seized upon a verse in Parasara Samhita wherein it is said that remarriage of widows is permissible under certain special circumstances. Parasara says, “Remarriage is permissible on receiving no tidings of a husband, on his death, on his turning an ascetic, on his being found an impotent or his degradation” (Bandopadhyay 28). Rigidly, men followed the traditional rules in the Sastras which would be convenient and useful to dominate the depressed.

Exploitation of widowhood is depicted in these novels, *Confession of a Lover* and *The Big Heart*. The degraded condition of a widow in the Hindu society of his period was explained by depicting the predicament of Devaki in the novel *Confession of a Lover*. A widow had to observe mourning throughout her life. Her presence was considered ominous, and she was
forbidden to take part in family festivals, such as, marriage, feast etc. Besides, a widow had the apprehension of being ill-treated by her relatives. It is true that a Hindu widow’s life at that time was an unpleasant one. Perhaps she also feared life-long reproach and shame for not showing love to her husband.

The caste Hindus, in the name of religion exploited the young widows and untouchables. In those days, widows were not supposed to remarry. They were not allowed to wear gay clothes and jewels, and especially ‘kumkum.’ They could not attend any social function. This attitude is expressed by Anand through depicting the pathetic condition of Devaki in The Confession of a Lover. Devaki was condemned by the head of Panchayat:

You know, you are a young widow! According to Sanatam Dharam, widows are not supposed to remarry!...Nor eat pan! Nor drink liquor!...Nor wear gay clothes! Nor Jewellery! They are expected to pray to the gods and earn better existence in the next life with good deeds, charities and devotions. (COL 50)

Devaki was forced to spend money on the marriage of Ganesh, her adopted son, but she was prevented from seeing the bride and bridegroom. Ganesh’s mother said, “Come but remain away from the bride lest the shadow of your widow’s presence fall on her” (COL 92). So, Devaki wept, “They did not even let me across the threshold and stand inside to greet the bride or my adopted son! And when it was a question of spending money it was I who was the mother-in-law” (COL 93). She had the right only to spend money and not to greet the brides.

As Walter Ever has pointed out, suttee sacrifice was not always meant for the spiritual bliss of the woman concerned or her deceased husband, but for the temporal benefit of her deceased husband’s relatives thereby became free from the responsibility of
maintaining a widow and rather enjoyed her property. (Bandyopadhyay 54)

As Ram Mohan Roy said, Devaki’s family wanted to possess her property. He defended the legal rights of women by pointing out that women in ancient India were allowed to study the Sastra and enjoy equal rights and respect with men. He also asked for the protection of the women from their miseries due to polygamy. Mulk Raj Anand also presents the rebel characters who were widows in the traditional society. These women did not bother about the society. They wanted to live their life usefully. Mulk Raj Anand, though he was a male, presented the feelings of women characters.

The theme of The Big Heart is the clash between tradition and modernity. Naik comments on Anand’s views on modernity by analysing the relationship between Janki and Ananta: “Another aspect of modern machine civilization he approves of is the freedom it brings from old moral taboos. He recalls how in Bombay no one was worried about his liaison with Janki, which has brought him so much opprobrium in a small town like Amristar” (Naik 82). Janki, a widow, from Bombay, was a mistress to Ananta in The Big Heart. Ananta loved Janki truly and understood the problems of widowhood but they had not married in the traditional way. For a widow, nobody was there to protect her. Janki, the young widow was quite safe with Ananta. They lived happily like a husband and wife though they were not. But it did not last for a long period. Ananta was murdered. However, she remained true to him even after his death. But after his death, she feels the lack of protection.

Janki was affected by consumption. She did not have physical strength; but she had mental strength to support Ananta in his struggle. “From her comfortable childhood onwards she had suffered only from the arranged marriage to a man older than herself, and that, otherwise, she had gone on, not
knowing what she wanted or where she was going, expecting others to be responsible for her” (BH 174). Before she met Ananta she lived comfortably but it was a dependant life.

She recalled her past life. She could see through the disguises and pretences of her life. Though she tried not to think of people bitterly, she could not avoid it, as they denied her freedom. Her parents begot her “not because they loved each other but because they considered it a duty” (BH. 174). They regarded her as a curse when she was born as a girl. Her husband and his relations were more concerned with the dowry she brought than of her.

Later when the owner of my house had died, society considered as one who should be dead to all impulses and live only to worship the memory of my dead lord and master. Do you remember the things that were said all over the Punjab because I ran away with you? The followers of Mahatma in Bombai who believed in freedom, yet despised me because I was not married to you. I admit most of the comrades accepted me as a comrade, but I always felt some regarded me as a prostitute. (BH. 174)

As she lived against the traditional life of a widow some people regarded her as a prostitute. The policemen “winked and made lewd signs such as the procurers make in the market of love” (BH 225). She blamed the misdemeanours of all males to the poet. “‘They think,’ she said, ‘that now Ananta is gone I will set up as a common whore and open this house to all. And, being policemen, they think they ought to have the first commission’ ” (BH 225). Anand revealed the misusing power of policemen in this novel. Having wiped her tears, Janki sat down with another effort of will to keep herself from breaking down. She laments,
How is one to control one’s kismet if one’s life is not one’s own to live? She asked. ‘If one is only a woman!...The object of every joke, so weak, so vulnerable!.. Just think what they have been saying about me merrily because I had the temerity to live with him as his mistress. (BH 226)

He was everything to her. After the death of Ananta she said that they wanted to pawn her about to consider her easy game. Patting her head, the poet consoled her. “‘No one knows what a woman suffers,’ Janki said, between sobs” (BH 226). In a depressed mood Janki said bitterly it was too difficult to live “among malicious people who breathe evil, think evil, do evil!” (BH 227). She could not bear the death of Ananta. She felt mad and crazy. She moaned that all her life was ended with his going. “O God let the earth open up and swallow me! Otherwise they will destroy me, the vultures who are sitting there!” (BH 227). She loved Ananta truly. Without Ananta she could not imagine the life in the hostile society.

Though the society is not ready to accept widow’s remarriage Anand introduced the character to suit his purpose to question the prolonged social taboos. Janki is treated like a prostitute though she is not. She leads a life of sage. So, she has will power to live in this society in spite of fear. She is consoled quite often by the poet in this novel, as, “There is a life without fear. One day men will understand that there are many whores who have hearts of saints and many respectable people whose lives are putrid with hypocrisy” (BH 229). Like Ananta, Janki was generous to help others. Even though the people criticized her as a whore she was ready to serve for them. She knew the attitude of the society. The poet encouraged and appreciated her boldness thus: “What a great thing it would if women like you who possess such gifts of sincerity and grace, give yourself to bhakti, to devotion, to working for others!” (BH 229).
As the poet advised Janki in *The Big Heart*, “One has to take risks in order to prepare for the new life. That is the only way in which we shall learn to become new men and women” (BH 230). She has the clear understanding of life. So Anand conveys a message in this novel: “There is no talk of money, you must have a big heart” (BH 104). Here, *The Big Heart* implies tender, kind, sympathetic, understanding and flexible. Anand’s novel depicts his, “deep concern for the oppressed, the overburdened subalterns who are powerless to fight superstition, marginalization and humiliation which hinder them at every step in their search for better life” (Agarwal 8).

Mulk Raj Anand presents his characters how they fight against the social evils with the help of self-confidence, education and universal love. Certainly, education and economic independence can bring a change. But education was denied to women in those days. Devaki has the desire to survive in life. She wanted to read the *Gita*.

She felt the need to understand life, beyond the mundane life. Devaki said, “I want to survive… I was hoping that Krishan will teach me to read and write. And I can begin to read the *Gita*. And—well, there are things I don’t understand…Strange things come into my dreams… I often see the spirit of ‘them’ come to possess me in the nights…” (COL 48). Her desire for learning was commented by her family as: “So that she can write love letters to all those men” (COL 48). Education was considered important for men. On the contrary the education for women was considered as a curse. So they suspect the moral behaviour of Devaki. It is said that some foolish parents believe that if girls are educated, they will correspond with their secret lover. Similarly, Noor’s wife Naseem said:

I would do anything to learn Angrezi and be able to read big books. So would Yasmin. We never had the opportunity, beyond going to the Mullah in the mosque, to learn Koran and some Urdu and
Persian verses. And you all have contempt for us ignorant women, who can only bear children and cook. (COL 330)

*Lament on the Death of a Master of Arts* is the shortest novel of Mulk Raj Anand. It is published in his collection of short stories *The Tractor and Corn Goddess and Other Stories*. Nur, in this novel, a Master of Arts could not find the suitable job. His prestige as a postgraduate prevented him to do his family profession (Confectioner). During the last days of his life, he recalled his past school life and college Life. In Gupta’s words the theme of Anand’s *Lament on the Death of a Master of Arts* is “the sad story of well-educated Indian who dies a miserable death after a prolonged lingering existence weighed down by unbearable responsibilities and gradually corroded by consumption which is itself a result of his unfulfilled ambitions and frustrations” (Gupta 97).

Not only Nur but his innocent ‘girl wife’ (TCG 82) Iqbal also suffered a lot due to poverty. “That poor, silly girl, Iqbal, was as much a pawn in the game which her father was playing with her’s” (TCG 77). Her father thought that he would get in to the Imperial Service with his first class degree. Nur’s father thought that the daughter of a respectable veterinary surgeon would bring a good dowry. Both the players were deceived in deceiving each other. Nur could not get in to the Imperial service, and she only brought the prestige of her father’s position, and her own self, for the dowry. Women must be given education to meet the financial expenses. She could do nothing.

Even, at time of pregnancy, she followed him like devoted dog. He was affected by tuberculosis. As he was sick she served him as a devoted wife. He moaned through the acrid drooling of his pain and strained his breath. At that time the two elderly women shrieked and wailed: “What will happen to us, what will happen to our Iqbal?” (TCG 82) Iqbal stood at the foot of the bed, unhooded and helpless, with tears in her eyes. The women’s
wails grew louder and shriller as his grandmother, his stepmother and the other women of the lane joined the chorus, the loudest of them adding to their shrieks a violent show of beating their breasts and smiting their foreheads. Nur realized the futility of his rage against them as they were only practicing a stupid convention that ordained the invocation of cries and shrieks and howls at the barest sign of death. Iqbal struggled to stop beating their breasts as he was not dead. She seemed so helpless and shy.

She had hidden the light of her affection and her love in her own distress. She never showed her suffering by word or deed. Nur recalled his past days. He ill-treated her. He could not tackle his responsibility as a son, as a husband and as a father. He felt that she was not a fashionable woman who could put on a sari and out with him. As a master of arts he was proud to lead a fashionable life. But it was impossible for him due to his poverty. It affected his innocent wife Iqbal. “She had followed him about tenderly, pathetically, fetching him cool drinks, and fanning him, pressing his head rubbing his feet, soothing him as he fought to forget the weariness of his struggle for a job in an afternoon’s sleep” (TCG 84). He had kicked her in the chagrin of his disappointments. While he was in the panic of the fear of fatherhood he had frowned at her. He refused to talk to her and ignored her utterly. Due to poverty, her pregnancy was an extra burden for him. When she had proudly presented him with the gift a little red-faced girl he had felt like murdering her.

Anand portrayed mother as devotion personified. Krishan’s mother slept after he had folded up his books at midnight and woke up at dawn. She used to give him the cool water of soaked amlas to wash his eyes for strength. She used to give him the cool curds for whey to give him a glass of lazzu, and, on his return from the college, she waited at the head of the Bazar, “to give him another tumbler of whey before he actually reached home” (COL 338).
This devotion personified mother was criticized for her son’s misdeeds. Krishan’s mother never discouraged his activities like taking part in the freedom movement as his father. For his higher education, he was in need of money. So he decided, “I would ask my mother for some money for the fare. I knew she had secretly saved some cash from housekeeping” (COL 380). Krishan’s mother was helping him to go by pawning her jewellery. Knowing about Krishan’s mother his principal admired her bravery and advised him to learn from her. “She must be a brave woman! You must learn to face fears, from her example. Take the plunge. Learn to swim in the troubled sea” (COL 392).

Anand portrayed the typical Indian mother with the beliefs in following the customs. Krishan’s mother enforced the rigid discipline on her children. Krishan was obsessed by his mother’s gossips. Krishan said:

Mother insisted on performing the ritual of breaking the coconut, putting the saffron mark on my forehead and giving me Ganges water to drink. These things had no meaning for me. But at the request of Mama Dayal Singh, I allowed myself to go through the drama, with all the poor people looking on at us as if this was a free tamasha. (COL 401)

She believed that people had to reap punishment for their immoral behaviour. So she says: “reward for all who did bad deeds, like eating betel leaf, smoking cigarettes, drinking liquor and playing cards with men as aunt Devaki” (MF 38). Smoking, drinking liquor and playing cards are immoral acts. To protect her children from these bad practices she instilled these beliefs on her children. Further, she had told Krishan that “everyone after death was asked to walk on a tight rope over the ocean of blood, full of snakes and scorpions; and one was struck with an axe for every bad deed committed
in this life to go through more deaths, until all the bad deeds were paid for” (MF 136).

She was a very good story teller who narrated stories from the mythologies. Once she narrated the family history. While describing the story of Fakir Sain Lok she said that Krishan’s grandfather could not have children for a long time. At that time, Krishan asked the name of his grandfather. The answer of Krishan’s mother shows the tradition not to utter the name of the elders especially males. So, she said, “Son, How can I mention the name of an elder? You must ask uncle Partap one day” (MF 43). Knowing the anxiety of Krishan, Devaki said the name of his grandfather as Lall Chet Ram. She supplied the information boldly. Though she has just given the information to the boy it was considered as disrespectful to utter the name of ancestor. The purpose of any name is to utter in the hour of need. So, Devaki said there was no harm. Further she says, “Nowadays that kind of respect is not necessary” (MF 44). But, for Krishan’s mother, it was the tradition to be followed. Anand introduced both types of women who followed the traditional ideas and the other who transgressed the traditional ideas in his novels.

Krishan’s mother believed in life after death. Her preparations for the séance revealed her beliefs in supernatural powers. Unfortunately, Kausalya, daughter of Devaki and Partap expired due to her illness. But Krishan’s mother regarded death as a punishment from divine for the misdeeds of the parents like gambling and drinking. Krishan’s father shouted against such practice to invoke the spirit of Sain Lok and advised everyone not to talk of either the disease, or its cure, before Kausalya, but to tend her vigilantly and to look after her with love. Besides he took this opportunity to tell mother and in fact the whole family, in the presence of boys, that he was a confirmed Arya Samajist and did not believe in the superstitions of the coppersmith brotherhood.
To make her son pass in the examination she arranged special tuition. Ganesh was weak in English subject and Krishan was weak in Arithmetic. As she believed in supernatural powers she says, “I will get amulets for you from aunt Aqi, so that you can both pass” (MF 103). Mother put a rupee on the platform and requested the priest to pray for her sons that they might not be punished by the teacher. She would offer a goat to the goddess. On the day of examination she gave auspicious food like rice and lentils with curds. Further she put blacking into their eyes to protest them against the evil eye of the people in the lane and in the bazaar. Not only Krishan’s mother believed in these practices but also most of the women followed that practice.

She regarded some incidents as auspicious and some as inauspicious. She had said that it would be good if they could meet either a woman with a pitcher, or a sweeper with a broom it would touch merit. At the same time, they met “Pandit Ram Nath, a Brahmin by caste, by the school office. And as it was supposed to be inauspicious to meet a high caste Brahmin before an event of momentous importance, we were doubtful about our success” (MF 110). She imbibed superstitious beliefs on her children.

Though Krishan’s mother is superstitious she talks like a philosopher. “Life is a journey in to the unknown world” (MF 153). Krishan’s mother advised her sons “every woman is a mother or a sister” (MF 56). Her love for meek creature and her principle of non-violence are revealed by Anand minutely.

Krishan and Ganesh were standing by the low terrace of the well, bending over the projection and holding the kittens out over the water. They could hear the echoes of the voices from the depths of the well, so they listened intently to see if they could also hear the echoes of the kittens’ miaowing. So Krishan let the kitten in his hand fall into the well. The kitten
was shrieking down and bobbed its head in the water. Krishan’s mother “came out of the house and beat her breast in mourning” (SS 39). She rebuked Krishan for committing such a sin. Then she called the gardener and requested him to descend into the well and rescue the little kitten if he could. But there was no use. The kitten was dead. There was no partiality in her love. She loved all creatures and understood the feelings of the animals. She gave importance to the life of a creature like a human being.

According to her, drowning the poor little kitten in the well was a sin. So she had to have a golden kitten made to present to the regimental temple of Pandit Balkrishan as an appeasement for his sin. After this incident Krishan was very much in disgrace. Her innocent love for kitten was turned to be the superstitious belief in her religion. So Krishan said, “For not only was she burdened with the consciousness of the sin I had committed, but she resented having had to pay for the gold necessary for the image of the kitten she had presented to the temple as an atonement for my sin” (SS 40). Her husband commented on her belief in hagiology and superstition.

Through the conversation between Krishan’s parents, Anand expressed his ideas regarding God. For the golden kitten present Krishan’s father condemned: “The toy will surely go to swell the coffers of my Pandit Balkrishan. The kitten is dead and gone. The little child is not guilty because he did not know what he was doing. And mad Sundariai is still suffering from a bad conscience” (SS 40). According to her husband, it may be superstitious. But, analyzing this issue in another perspective shows the nobility of a mother. She could understand the feeling of a mother cat as a mother. At the same time, as a mother she inculcate the good habit of love by using superstitious method. Further she was ready to present the gold, the costliest metal in the world. Her offering to the God would develop the nature of sacrificing the loving things among her children.
According to her, “the ways of God are strange and He is looking on all the time to see what we do. He sees even if we hurt the little ant” (MF 40). She did not want Him to be angry with her family for their karma. She wanted to ensure a long life for her sons. She requested her husband, “I wish you would stop mocking because I shall have to suffer for your sins” (MF 40). She had the belief that she should have to feast the priest on every full moon day for ten years for abusing the God. Her fear of God helped her to teach her children moral lessons. Her principle of non-violence reminds the principles of Lord Buddha, Vallalar and Gandhiji.

As a mother she was good but as a sister-in-law and a mother-in-law she was not so good. So Krishan could not accept her superstitions against his beloved aunt Devaki regarding the sudden death of her husband. She was complaining about Draupadi for her barrenness.

As reproductivity is necessary for the development of human race women enjoy as well as suffer a lot. Women get low priority in health and nutrition. This is revealed in Mulk Raj Anand’s novel Seven Summers. In Seven Summers Krishan’s father asked Krishan’s mother whether their daughter-in-law, Draupadi had had any food. For this Krishan’s mother-in-law said, “She will have some after the boys have eaten” (SS 65). Even now, some women have to wait for a long time in a joint family just to eat the remaining food.

Krishan says, “My mother had slaved for her mother-in-law from dawn till past midnight, and even suffered the beatings which my father have her at my grandmother’s instigation” (SS 69). As a result of her submissiveness she abused her daughter-in-law, wantonly rebuked her for some trifle and asked her to go and work in the kitchen. “The food she got was a loaf of bread, a ladle full of lentils and if she could steal it, a slice of mango pickle” (SS 70).
Irrespective of rich and poor the problem of mother-in-law and daughter-in-law is an unending one. But, at last, there is a change in mother-in-law’s attitude towards tenderness in Anand’s novel *Seven Summers*. Krishan says,

Mother felt a slight relaxation in the stern attitude of grandmother. She did not know why it was. She had only noticed that the old woman was kinder, loving the baby, getting clothes made for him, loading him with jewellery. This had pleased her and she remembered how much more zestfully she had entered into the service of her mother-in-law, tending her through the nights,…

(SS 71)

Nutrition is closely linked with environmental sanitation. Since women nurse the sick and dispose all excreta they were exposed to infectious diseases like Malaria, Cholera, Plague and Tuberculosis. All these are associated with factors such as lack of clean water supply, low environmental sanitation and lack of knowledge of personal hygiene. In Anand’s novel *Two Leaves and a Bud* Sajani, Gangu’s wife caught by malarial fever, became a victim to it. The malarial epidemic strikes the weak woman hard and even before the doctor arrives to examine her, she is dead. The entire family desperately cries out that cholera has broken out.

John De La Havre, doctor in *Two Leaves and a Bud* is committed to certain programmes of action to prevent epidemics caused by innumerable epidemics and fireflies. His plea for the setting up of septic tanks did not receive the attention of the Board. All that he could do at the moment is to put on a helpless smile at the miserable coolies.

The problem of nursing mother and frequent pregnancies are revealed in *Seven Summers*. Krishan says, “Now, however, with the two of us
sucking hard at her breasts, mother got very tired and irritable. She began soon to paint chilly powder on her teats to keep us both off. I remember she had to use very drastic methods indeed in subsequent years to make me give up this habit” (SS 14). Child bearing is important in human life. In those days, having no other solutions, they were beguiled by the Fakirs to give them some children. In Anand’s novel Seven Summers Krishan says, “For apparently my grandfather and grandmother had asked this Fakir to give them children. And the Fakir had said to my grandfather, “If you have a garden planted and a well dug, so that I could come to live there, then if you walk to the well morning and evening with your wife, I will duly grant you two children” (SS 12). Here religion nurtures the good habits of planting trees and digging well for a social purpose and it insisted on walking for good health.

In Seven Summers mysterious conversation transpired between Gurdevi and Krishan’s mother about Gurdevi’s inability to find a child. In Anand’s novel Coolie Munoo says, “the only quarrel between himself and his aunt, he realized was that she could not have children and people shamed for her barrenness” (Coolie 29). Draupadi was often criticised for her barrenness.

Like barrenness child bearing is also the problem that was created by the husband to his wife by questioning her chastity. In Anand’s novel Old Woman and the Cow, the docile cow, Gauri was tortured by her husband, Panchi, by sending her to her mother’s house for blaming her bad luck, her mother, Laxmi sold her in lieu of cow with her uncle, Amru. Gauri was neglected everywhere and by everybody, except by the doctor.

Anand’s character, Gauri, in the novel Old Woman and the Cow struggled a lot to adopt herself in husband’s family. But she was criticized by her mother-in-law, Kesaro for not wearing headcloth, not revealing about her menstruation, for talking with her husband’s friend, for not showing respect as she was expected. Hence she complained to Panchi as she was unlucky.
Already Panchi’s land was in mortgage. After the quarrel with his uncle he demanded partition from the joint family. His uncle Mola Ram demanded the money he has spent on his marriage. Kesaro, Panchi’s aunt criticized her daughter-in-law for Panchi’s poverty and the family disputes. On her instigation he beat his wife and sent her to her mother’s house. He started to blame his wife for his misery and poverty.

Gauri’s arrival was considered as a burden by her mother and her uncle Amru. So they decided to sell her to a rich man. The traditional Indian wife, Gauri was not pleased with the gifts offered to her by the banker. As she was ill, she was admitted in a hospital. There with the help of Doctor Mahindra she wanted to come out from her predicament. Her only aim was to live with her husband. So the doctor made arrangements to send her to her husband’s village according to her wish. To avoid the scandal of the villagers they came in the last bus from Hoshiarpur.

Though Panchi loved her truly, he questioned her chastity. According to the tradition he did not take care of his pregnant wife. He had failed to take care of his wife. Further he asked the proof of her purity. Her situation was compared to Sita in our mythology Ramayana. After the fire ordeal Rama says “This ordeal was to satisfy the people” (Rajagopalachari 469). Unlike Sita, the traditional heroine, Gauri protested against her husband. She knew that nobody was there to help her and to protect her. She had to meet the challenges and she had to take bold decision individually. So, she decided to go to the hospital and assist Doctor Mahindra as a nurse until her delivery. She realized her role as a mother and she wanted to give birth to her child in good circumstances.

The trivial things that affected the conjugal life of Gauri and Panchi are described elaborately. As arranged marriage was the tradition to be followed in the Indian family, the couple met each other at the time of
marriage only. Panchi’s eagerness to meet his wife is revealed in the following lines:

As Panchi had taken the second turn around the sacred fire, with Gauri tied to him from behind with her apron, he was anxious only for one thing: that, when the turns were finished and the whole embarrassing ritual of the marriage and customary feast were over, he would be able to lift the red dupatta which enshrouded the girl’s face, to confirm the rumour that she was not ugly but was as light-skinned as mother. (OWC 16)

Even before marriage, Panchi prepared to dominate the girl who is going to be married. Girls should be polite and modest. “For there was the prospect of a girl – a girl whom he could fold in his arms at night and kick during the day, who would adorn his house and help him during the work on the land…” (OWC 5). Thus the role of traditional Indian wife was fixed.

According to the Indian tradition, in the absence of the husband, wife should not talk with the outsiders (males). Kesaro, her mother-in law said, “I don’t like the visit to our home of Rajguru and your other friends, when you are not here—

‘Any of them been here today?’

‘Han, Raj Guru! – And, as usual, her head was uncovered while she was working!’” (OWC 37).

Uncovered head was considered as immodest. She must put dupatta on her head. So her husband asked “Has she been going about without putting the dupatta on her head?” (OWC 37). Husband considers the wife as his own property. She must be chaste. Without even asking his wife, he blindly
believes the words of his aunt. He got angry. “I shall kill her if she has been free with Rajguru!” (OWC 37). Then her mother-in-law insisted: “Only ask her to be careful about drawing her head cloth over her forehead” (OWC 38).

The custom that existed in the Indian family was joint family system. Panchi raised his voice after the quarrel with his uncle Mola Ram. So he decided for the partition of the family. But for this partition Kesaro, his aunt criticized her daughter-in-law. To convince and twist Panchi, Kesaro says, “But you must not mind what I have said about your wife! After all, she is in the position of a daughter-in-law to me and in the absence of her real mother-in-law” (OWC 39). Kesaro cried with the tears welling in her eyes. She began to howl and criticize Gauri as unlucky bride. Mola Ram, Panchi’s uncle was persistent in his stubborn will to impose authority over the rascally nephew. Though the quarrel was between Panchi and his uncle Kesaro blamed Gauri as unlucky bride.

The purpose of religion was not conveyed properly to the next generations. Misconceptions of the religion by the hypocrites affect the innocent economically and socially. They impose it as a culture. It is too difficult to follow and sometimes it is unnecessary to follow the culture as time changes. “This is the first novel in which Anand makes major use of one of the epic tales and it marks an interesting development in his art” (Niven 109). So, Aurobindo, the spiritual leader, also insists the need of the recovery of the old spiritual knowledge in dealing the modern problems.

The recovery of the old spiritual knowledge and experience in all its spendour, depth and fullness is its first, most essential work; the flowing of this spirituality into new forms of philosophy, literature, art, science and critical knowledge is the second; an original dealing with the modern problems in the light of Indian spirit and
the endeavour top formulate a greater synthesis of spiritualised society is the third and most difficult. (Aurobindo 19)

Menstruation is the natural biological feature of the women. At the time of menstruation, they were not allowed to touch the utensils or bring water or cook. To give rest to the women, people in those days followed these traditions. They were prevented to do their daily activities. Later on, they did not understand the physical condition of women but followed the traditions blindly and they were treated as untouchable during this period.

Gauri was criticized by her mother-in-law at the time of menstruation for not revealing her menstruation period. So, Kesaro who was ingrained by traditional values, criticized Gauri to Panchi “But she must not be so secretive and spoil the atmosphere of my house!.. I have had to clean up all the utensils again” (OWC 38). When Gauri was forbidden going near the kitchen by her mother-in-law she protested. Kesaro says, “Gentle as a cow! – you should have seen the way she burbled, when I forbade her to go near the kitchen!” (OWC 38). Panchi guessed from the reference to the purificatory ceremony, the nature of the crime which Gauri had committed. Gauri was not ready to follow the traditions. So, she remained silent about the fact that she had come to the twenty-eighth day of the month.

Kesaro mentioned the tradition in the religion which his mother, his grandmother followed. “In the time of your mother, your grandmother, and, in fact, in the whole tradition of our religion, a woman has been considered untouchable during her period, isolated, and given food away from the kitchen, and not allowed to contaminate anything!” (OWC 39) All these practices were followed among women. These unwritten rules affected the life of Indian women. As hygienic was impossible in the olden days they had to follow the rules. At that time Gauri remembered the “kindness she had received at home especially when her back ached” (OWC 41).
Often, Gauri, in her wretched condition, decided to go to her mother’s house where she thought she would live happily. But it was not so like that. Gauri said, with her eyes bent and face downcast at the enunciation of this traditional formula of the unhappy young bride. Uneducated and poor Panchi started to blame his wife for his misdeeds. Then he sent Gauri to her mother’s house. Gauri “felt she had returned to her real home, her mother’s home, where she had been born and where she really belonged, where the Goddess, her name sake ruled supreme. Perhaps she would get serenity and calm here, near the source of her life” (OWC 106).

Laxmi advised her daughter that she should have been humble and not so stubborn. “You might have sent us a message or your husband could have brought you!” (OWC 108). After marriage girls were expected to return to her mother with her husband only.

There arose in him the vague bitterness about the humans – particularly against his wife Gauri, “whose coming had somehow coincide with the fall in the family fortunes, through quarrels through the debts, and the interest on the debts, for money borrowed for the wedding, and the drought that had followed the marriage” (OWC 28). Celebration of marriages was a tradition followed by Indians. At that time of marriage people spent money beyond their limits. Due to poverty the family members often quarrelled.

After the quarrel, his uncle Mola Ram would not give him that barn until he had paid off the money, he had spent on his wedding. “And it cost me five hundred rupees more than that five hundred which Birbal gave me on the mortgage of your acre and your mother’s necklace” (OWC 44). Though she was cruel as mother-in-law she loved Panchi. So, Kesaro appealed for mercy to her husband. Before Nikka was born, while his uncle was away in the army, she used to dote upon him and consider him as her son.
Panchi requested Kesaro to forgive her. Further she says, “that inauspicious girl whose coming has upset our family… She would never have tolerated my even coming to look at you” (OWC 95). For the misunderstanding between him and his uncle she blamed Gauri as an auspicious girl.

The quarrel between Panchi and Mola Ram was different from the quarrel between Gauri and Kesaro. The quarrel between women was based on tradition. The traditional role of Indian women is to prepare food. Women ‘will give food but not speak a word!’(OWC 76). Gauri’s protest was intolerable to Kesaro. So she told her son, “Control her, if you can!.. This bride of yours!... she has begun to answer me now , when she was meek and obstinately silent before!..” (OWC 37). Kesaro shouted. “She is egging Panchi on to ask for partition! So that they can live separately from us!” (OWC 44). Both Panchi and Gauri demanded the partition. Gauri demands, “…Separate from them!... I can cook and keep house! Who does all the work here if not I?...” (OWC 43).

Panchi promised his wife he would arrange to get another barn somewhere. Gauri insisted , “Do not beat me again—at her bidding!” (OWC 49). Panchi as the pride and arrogant husband told airily: “But the husband has to chastise his wife if she goes wrong” (OWC 49). Gauri was lying curled up on a small string charpai when he entered the bedroom on the right hand side of the barn. “He could not, out of pride, now humbly ask his wife to forgive him for his past hardness towards her, he could not appease his guilt and, therefore, merely felt angry” (OWC 40). Further, his own mother had practiced this wisdom and consoled him often by saying: “‘Have a good cry, son, the pain will pass away.’ And he repeated this advice to Gauri in suppressed whispers: “Have a good cry, childling have a good cry, the pain will pass away!” (OWC 42). He could not understand her feelings. Just to convince her he asked to cry.
“Freedom of speech, expression, movement, association, assembly, profession and religion are guaranteed as the fundamental rights” (Bharadwaj 50). These fundamental rights are not only denied to women but also misused by men. After the quarrel, Panchi sent her to her mother’s house. Her mother and uncle unable to feed one more mouth, they sold her.

Her life in Hoshiarpur was the object of gossip in the village and it obsessed Panchi. So, Panchi shouted. Gauri said with tears, “He turned me out and I have come back to him – as pure as I went away” (OWC 282). Though she was chaste and though he loved her truly she could not prove her chastity. “What is the proof of your purity?” (283) Panchi bawled. The proof for her purity could not be produced by her before her husband. She faced so many ordeals in her life and sexual harassment from the banker and Doctor Batra. Like the fire, she protested everyone who approached her with bad intention. But she could not show her purity.

Panchi kicked her and blamed her as a curse and a bitch. As Balarama Gupta says, “Gauri is no longer the old meek creature to accept this sort of treatment unprotestingly” (Gupta 90). So, Gauri decided, “I shall go and work in haspatal and have my child there” (OWC 283). Further she said about Panchi “He pretended to be a lion among the men of the village! But really he is a coward! They are telling him that Ram has turned out Sita because everyone doubted her chastity during her stay with Ravana!... I am not Sita that the earth will open up and swallow me, I shall just go out and be forgotten of him...” (OWC 283). Though she wanted to be traditional Indian wife she was not ready to lose her self dignity.

At first, Anand depicted the traditional modest character Gauri. Anand depicted the transformation of Gauri, at last. Anand shows the change in Gowri. “Her face shown from the stricken heart, transfigured from the gentle cow’s acquiescent visage of the time when she had arrived in Panchi’s house, to that of a woman -- with a will of her own” (OWC 284). Anand’s
redefinition of the traditional use of mythology is revealed by Suparna Mishra, “The novelist adroitly makes use of the old myth of the Ramayana and suggests how it is no longer possible for man either to keep women suppressed or to neglect her lawful liberty, equality, identity and individuality” (Mishra 170).

Rafique Chacha and his wife Hoor Banu, their well-wishers asked her to come back. But she refused.

For a brief moment, the thought that the earth must open to rescue her as it had opened up to receive Sita, came as an echo from the memory of her race. But the ground was hard and solid under her feet and showed no sign of opening up, to prove her innocence. She waved her head to forget Sita and thought of the road to the town. (OWC 284)

The paternity of the child was in doubt as she had lived in Hoshiarpur with strangers. Now a day, through the help of modern technology it becomes easier to clear the doubts through test. But, all these are not available for her. The only solution is to get out of that place. Instead of blaming others, she decided herself with will of her own. This time nobody forced her to go to the town. She could not expect any body’s help. She realized that she must take decisions on her own. At first, when her husband forced her to go to her mother’s house she begged him. Similarly, when she was sold by her uncle and mother, she wept. Her bitter experience in her past life gave her strength to be aware of the harsh realities of life and the strength to protest against the traditional rules which tormented her for a long time. So Anand says, “Strength of mind is the king of all qualities!” (OWC 270). She seemed alert and dignified like the modern women with courage and confidence. Now a day, women work in night shifts as men. As education has given them courage and confidence, they do not bother about the evil tongue of the scandal mongers.