CHAPTER V

TOSON'S PROJECTION OF WOMEN AND HIS BIAS

In chapters one and two I have discussed in length various Western influences on Post Meiji Japan and the change in status of women and their emancipation in the society. This will help us to make a right interpretation and assessment of the heroines and other female characters in the two short stories subjected to this study. As Shimazaki Toson lived through an era which saw tremendous changes in the social status of women in Japan both due to internal reforms and external influences, it is pertinent here to refer the above mentioned previous chapters for the discussion of this chapter.

A majority of his initial works, including both poetry and prose, have female heroines in them, depicting various aspects of women, their plight for equality and survival, their tragedy and their mis-conception of the modern concept of freedom and liberty for all irrespective of gender. In 'Warazori' he depicted the heroin, Okuma, as a helpless woman who had been molested by an old railway-guard before her marriage, and her husband, upon knowing the fact, beats her in such a way that her legs got broken. But, very unfortunate

1 Shimazaki Toson Zenshu-3 (Chikuma Shobo), pp.59-88.
she was, she could not save her life as she died by falling from a horse while she was taken to the hospital for treatment. Whereas in 'Oyaji', he depicted Oshima, the heroin as a woman attracted by all and every one in the village. As a result, nobody could own the fatherhood of her son, Misao, as Oshima herself was not able to identify him. Whereas in 'Suisai gaka', he depicted the simultaneous illegitimate affairs of both the husband and wife. However it was in Kyushujin and Rojo, the two short-stories taken for this study, that Toson tried to depict various aspects of modern woman, with a critical eye, carefully watching the conflicts between new and old in an era of great transformation.

Toson’s Contact with Women in the Real Life

(1) His Girl Friend

Before entering into a detailed discussion of projection and characterization of female characters in Toson’s literary works, first of all, I would like to look into his contact with women in his real life. His approach and understanding of woman, especially the characterization of the female characters in his works, had been influenced mainly by two

2 Ibid, pp.91-103.
3 Ibid, pp.135-193.
women in the real life, i.e., his girl friend and lover Sato Sukeko, and his wife, Hata Fuyuko. Toson’s contact with women can be classified into two categories, namely, contact based on pure love and affection and contact based on mere passion. His love affair with Sato Sukeko was based on true love at least until he came to know that Sukeko had been already engaged. Of course, failure of this relationship had a lasting effect on his literary career, both as a poet and a novelist. As I have already mentioned in chapter three Toson after graduating from Meiji Gakuin, joined the Meiji Jogakko in 1893, to teach English. There he became intimate with Sato Sukeko, his student who was one year older to him. He was serious in his affair until he realized that Sato Sukeko had already been engaged to one Shishiuchi and her parents were determined to realize that marriage. It was a great shock to him, as the depth of his love towards her was very deep at least emotionally, if not spiritually. Toson narrates his feeling towards Sukeko through Sutekichi in "Sakura no mi no juku suru toki" in the following way. "In place of the almighty Jehovah, the picture of his own pupil appeared in front of his closed eyes. Her fresh, reddish and youthful cheeks; her shining pupils; her fair and tender girlish

hands." Sutekichi's love towards Katsuko further deepened after he talked this matter to his friend Okuni. "Sutekichi's mind and body were filled with the figure of Katsuko. Some time, it had warm and affectionate expression like an elder sister, and sometime it had very girlish look of a younger sister." Young and easy going Toson of just 21 years old was fascinated by the physical beauty of his pupil, and on the moment he came to know that she had been engaged to another man, he decided to withdraw from the scene. It is very difficult to interpret this attitude of Toson here as it is very misleading and confusing. Here we should not forget the influence of Christianity on young Toson, who found it very complicated to distinguish the Christian ideal of love and human relationship with the inherent carnal desires of the mortal body. He wanted to lead a perfect life on the guidelines of Christian principles but soon discovered that his young and vibrant mind cannot concentrate on such sort of ideal love as preached by Christianity.

This confusion had created a void in his mind which ultimately gave rise to a kind of distrust towards women. In fact, Sato Sukeko was ready to reject the marriage proposal

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5 Sakura no mino Juku Suru Toki, Shimazaki Toson Zenshu-12, pp.137, 143. (Translated by myself) Toson completed the first part of this novel in 1915 and second part in 1918. It gives a detailed account of Toson's life and activities during his studies in Meiji Gakuin, his association with Bungakkai and his teaching job in Meiji Jo Gakko.
with Shishiuchi, had Toson been ready to boldly come forward and assured her a safe and stable married life. However, Toson just ignored her feeling, saying that he has no resources to look after her, as he was a poor school teacher only.' He, in fact, misunderstood his girl friend although Sukeko was sincere in her attitude. He thought that Sukeko was cheating him by keeping her engagement with Shishiuchi a secret. As soon as he came to know it, he resigned from his teaching job and wandered around the country after the footsteps of the great Haiku poet Matsuo Basho. It is quite interesting to note that soon after his departure for the wandering journey, his concern for Sato Sukeko had reduced considerably, although he could not forget her completely.' This is understood from his intimate relationship with Hirose Tsuneko, whom he visited during his wandering around Kansai. Hirose Tsuneko was actually the girl friend of Hoshino Tenchi, one of Toson's close friend. Upon knowing this new development, Hoshino Tenchi rushed to Kansai, and met Toson. They had a severe verbal fight and ultimately they said to have severed their friendship. All these happened within few months after Toson's separation from Sato Sukeko. Toson has

6 Ito Kazuo, Shimazaki Toson (Kokubungaku Kaishaku to Kansho 1971-5), p.79.
7 Ibid, p.84.
narrated these incidents in his novel "Haru" also. Whereas, Sato Sukeko, unable to forget him, agreed to marry Shishiuchi with great mental pain and agony. According to Soma Kuromitsu, a student of Meiji Jogakko who happened to attend Toson’s lectures there, this was a period when the society was still not ready to accept or accommodate pre-marital love affair between opposite sexes or love marriage. May be, this was one of the reasons why Toson abruptly disappeared from the scene. However, whatever, may be the real reason, Toson immediately after this incident left the church and bid goodbye to Christianity. In the conflict between Christian ideal of love and the physical love based on carnal desires, the latter turned out to be victorious in his case. However, this long physical and mental torment he experienced, ultimately shaped him into a man who never trusted women completely, a man who always watched women with suspicious eyes.

Was Sato Sukeko really intending to cheat Toson? Later studies have revealed the truth that she did not have any intension to cheat him, but Toson did not have the patience to understand her properly. As Kanzaki Kiyoshi pointed out in

8 "Haru", Shimazaki Toson Zehshū-5, pp.27, 31.
9 Soma Kuromitsu, ‘Mokui’ - Meiji Taisho Bungakushi Kaiso.
his work 'Nihon no Meisaku', Sato Sukeko was very serious about her affair with Toson and she was even ready to disobey her parents and reject the marriage proposal by Shishiuchi, even after their formal engagement. However, Toson did not agree to that, first of all, due to the reason that he did not have the confidence to look after Sukeko who belongs from a good family, and secondly, he did not want to hurt the feeling of the other party, that is, Shishiuchi. At last Sukeko lost her hold and had to heed to the pressure of her parents. However, unable to withstand the pain and sorrow, she died shortly after her marriage as she said to have lost her appetite due to morning sickness. Since death due to morning sickness is a very rare occurrence, there is all possibility that she must have committed suicide. Later on, realising his mistake Toson decided to study and observe various aspects of women, although his distrust and suspicion of women still existed. Sukeko's untimely sudden death gave him the impetus to review his own attitude towards women. Young Toson who used to roam around the Campus and places where young and beautiful girls gather, became melancholic and frustrated ever since this incident. This was the dark age of his life.

There are different interpretations and versions of facts relating to this episode, but one thing is clear here that,

10 Quoted in "Shimazaki Toson" by Ito Kazuo (Kokubungaku Kaishaku to Kansho 1975-5), p.79.
Toson had already lost his faith in 'renai' (love between man and women) which according to Kitamura Tokoku, is the only element in this world capable of protecting the human society from collapse. As I have mentioned in chapter three, Toson was one of the active members of Bugakkai, a group of writers formed under the leadership of Tokoku, the first writer in Japanese history to explore seriously the nature and potentialities of self and to propagate the power of love in evolving the individual's strength and character in a society which has been under the rigid control of Confucian principles. Tokoku's philosophy of inner self and love, was the motive force behind the young Toson, although he happened to had the opportunity to know this great philosopher for a short period of just four years only. Tokoku's wife Minako was an unusual woman of great discernment, experience, and thought, and Tokoku often used to praise her love of beauty, her high ideals, and her determination to serve society, qualities for which his philosophy always stood for. That is precisely the reason why he got married to her although she was three years older than him. However, Tokoku himself could not live up to the philosophy he preached, as the 'real world' (Jissekai) and the 'world of thought' (Sosekai) were distinctively different. Taking responsibility for the failure of his own philosophy, Tokoku finally committed suicide.
During the formative years, Toson was an ardent admirer and true follower of Tokoku in various respects, whether in the case of ideology, faith or day to day life. Both Tokoku and Toson were attracted to the philosophy and ideals of Christianity, not exactly because of the attracting or redeeming features of the Christian religion, but as a means to win over the heart of their lovers, Minako in the case of Tokoku and Sato Sukeko in the case of Toson, as both these women were true believers of Christianity. Failure of his married life with Minako, led Tokoku to commit suicide, and similarly, failure of Toson’s affair with Sukeko had led him to the verge of committing suicide. However, Toson was more ambitious, and determined to reborn as a new man with different vision and ideology. Although, after his wanderings in Kansai area, Toson had taken up a teaching job in Tohoku Gakuin in Sendai in 1896, he was no more the old Toson of Meiji Gakuin period. Here he conducted a secluded life like a hermit and wrote romantic poems. However, his romantic poems are not the poems of a person in love but the poems of a person who discarded love. Had there not been any encounter with Sato Sukeko, most probably, the romantic poet Toson would not have been born. Hence, Sato Sukeko’s influence on Toson,

specially in the evolution of his ideas and philosophy and views on women, was immensely great.

(2) His Wife

Another woman who had betrayed Toson's faith and trust in women was none but his own wife, Hata Fuyuko. Born and brought up in a rich family in Hakodate in Hokkaido, Fuyuko was one of the few privileged women of early Meiji period who could get good education at a time when majority of Japanese women were still striving hard for their liberation and emancipation from the male chauvinist society. In 1896, Fuyuko had graduated from Meiji Jogakko, the school where Toson taught for one year and where he met his lover Sato Sukeko. By this time Toson was already in Tohoku Gakuin in Sendai, where he kept on writing romantic poems which were published in his first anthology of poetry "Wakanashu". Toson's name and fame spread throughout the country as an aspiring young poet of modern world view and vision, who sung the 'song of love' which was much in need among the newly emerging, invigorated youth of Meiji Japan. Fuyuko, an admirer of Waka poems, yearned for the poet Toson, although she had already an affair with another man at that time. Through the mediation of Iwamoto Yoshiharu, principal of Meiji Jogakko of that time, Fuyuko was introduced to Toson and their

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12 Ito Kazuo, Shimazaki Toson Jiten, p.195.
marriage was held in 1899, just before Toson's appointment as a teacher in Komoro Gijuku, in Komoro.

Toson's marriage with Fuyuko was yet another turning point in his life. For him, marriage did not mean just having a wife, a medium for procreation, or mother for one's children. He credited marriage as a sincere contract with two individuals of the opposite sex, based on pure mutual love, trust, respect and understanding. However, his experience with Sato Sukeko made him skeptical about the sincerity of woman, as "there is nothing like human being who cannot be judged by appearance only". In fact Toson had very conservative view on marriage and the nature and attitude of a woman after her marriage in the fastly changing society of Meiji Japan. He had been noticing the deteriorating trend of marriage and family life in post-Meiji Japan due to excess impact of Westernization and high level of women's education. According to Toson's view, a wife must be modest, obedient to her husband, and prepared to lookafter her children and husband irrespective of her educational status. She should be loyal and faithful to her husband once got married, whatever may be her background before the marriage. In 'Joshi to Shuyo', Toson strongly advocated the following view point on woman. "After their marriage, women should cultivate their

13 Kyushujin, Shimazaki Toson Zenshun-3, p.10.
self and character, assist their husbands, and should have full of self-inspiration in them. They must be prepared to undertake the responsibility of nurturing their children and encourage others." Hence, Toson was dreaming of a wife fully and whole heartedly dedicated to the service of her husband. He held this view from his childhood itself, may be because when he was a child he knew about the disharmony existed between his parents, which in fact played a major role in destroying the future of Shimazaki family.

Hata Fuyuko was an educated woman who during her study in Meiji Jogakko came under the influence of Western concept of individual freedom and liberation of self. Meiji Jogakko was one of the centres of Meiji Japan which emphasized the need for equality for man and woman in all levels of the society through its magazine Jogaku Zasshi, and under the dynamic leadership of Iwamoto Yoshiharu, it played a major role in imparting higher education to women. Fuyuko was only twenty two when she was married to Toson, and was totally inexperienced in household works and rearing of children. As I mentioned early, immediately after his marriage Toson with his new wife left to Komoro to teach in the Komoro Gijuku school and it was an unbearable experience for Fuyuko. She had never lived in a remote area like Komoro in her life.

14 Shinkata-cho Yori 'Joshi to Shuyo', Shumazaki Toson Zenshu-6, p.81.
although it was a town fast growing economically and culturally, and her loneliness and difficulties said to have lured her mind to her previous boy friend. She continued to exchange letters with him even after her marriage, and Toson suddenly discovered her secret one day. Toson clearly described this matter in his novel 'Ie', which in fact, centred around the family life of Toson from his marriage till the death of Fuyuko. "Letters from Tsutomu used to come to Oyuki (Fuyuko in real life) occasionally. Oyuki has received a letter again. She found it very difficult to find a place to hide the letter from Tsutomu safely.... He (Sakichi=Toson) could imagine the contents and meaning of such letters but least surprised by it as he was not an immatures man. "As I had various affairs before, my wife too might have had various affairs before the marriage", he thought so. Very soon Oyuki would be twenty two years old. Sankichi does not consider the letters coming to the new house as something strange. Instead, "if my wife abstains from committing any mistake again and if she works honestly, that is enough", he thought. Toson dreamed of a small, happy family consisted of himself, his wife and their children. However, after discovering his wife's secret, he became a totally disappointed man who seriously thought about divorcing his

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15 'Ie' (Part 1), Shimazaki Toson Zenshu-8, p.75. 131
wife even before completing hundred days of married life, but finally he forgiven her and decided to watch the future outcome of their relationship. However, Fuyuko was actually a woman of integrity and she was indeed faithful to her husband. She wrote a letter to her ex-boy-friend after her marriage not with the intention to continue her affair with him, but with the intention to bid goodbye to him for ever. In ‘Suisai gaka’, Toson is giving us a clear picture of the content of this letter, although there is a division of opinion among experts regarding the models of hero and heroin of this short story. Denkichi, the hero (Toson) happened to read a letter written by Ohatsu (heroin-Fuyuko) to Naoe (her boy friend) in which besides mentioning about her busy daily life, she has also apologized her action and requested him to forgive and forget her for ever. "Whenever I think about our slender love, my pillow gets wet". "Now you please think that I am dead and only my heart which yearns for you is alive". "From desperate Hatsuko to beloved Naoe". Hatsuko has taken an ultimate resolution to keep her boy friend away at least physically because she wants to be faithful to her husband. Fuyuko apologized to her husband several times and requested him to not to misunderstand her. She wanted to proof her innocence and the depth of love and dedication she has toward

him, but it was difficult for her to express them in words. So she wrote them on a paper and gave to her husband to read. "I beg your pardon for giving you lot of worries due to various unavoidable circumstances. I have decided to come to you as your wife on my own discretion as I felt it most appropriate and suitable. I left my parents house with certain hopes and aspirations which are solely of mine.... Now that I have sent the last letter to Tsutomu to bid goodbye. Please pardon me." Oyuki's parents and Tsutomu's parents were friends and they mutually had agreed to get their children married when they are eligible for that. However, due to some rumours and allegations, their marriage could not be materialised. It is true that their yearning for each other still existed as fresh as when they were in good terms as lovers; but once she took the decision to get married to Sankichi (Toson), Oyuki (Fuyuko) determined to terminate her relationship with Tsutomu. In order to preserve the sanctity of marriage and to serve her husband with sincerity and full dedication, Oyuki decided to sacrifice her self interest, her love for Tsutomu which was once the most precious thing for her. What we see here is the clear image of a traditional Japanese woman who deny her existence for the well being of her husband and family. However, like in the case of Sato

17 'Ie" Shimazaki Toson-Zenshu-8, p.83.
Sukeko, Toson did not believe his wife until her death and his, bias, suspicion, and prejudice against women increased further after his marriage.

As have been seen earlier, failure of his love affair with Sato Sukeko had made Toson a romantic poet and, similarly on the other hand, his marriage to Hata Fuyuko had forced Toson to leave poetry and take up prose writing. Unexpected events, such as discovery of Fuyuko’s ex-affair, in his married life had led him into a situation where he found it difficult to continue as a romantic poet as he had dearth of ideas suitable to put in verses. Moreover, Toson was not a born genius to excel in poetry. He became a poet only because of his hard work and ambition, and his early contact with famous Western literatures of the time. 18 As he did not have the inborn talent to be a poet, after being in the field of poetry for about five years, he quit it for ever. Toson observed complete silence for three years after his marriage to Hata Fuyuko. This was the period of contemplation, during which he sharpened his views, and ideas through constant observation and study of the countryside.

Besides these two women, his mother and elder sister were also influenced him in sharpening his outlook on women. It seems that as a young child Toson did know about the story of

his mother's extra-marital affair and the secret of his elder brother Tomoya's birth. Toson's mother, Shimazaki Nui, was an illiterate woman of rural background; who did not have any opportunity to have any contact with the external world during her youth. Although, one is not sure about the extent of truth in her illicit affair, Toson lost confidence in women in general ever since he came to know about this episode, and viewed them with disgust and disdain. May be, that is the reason why he never trusted Sato Sukeko and his wife Hata Fuyuko even after their repeated request. The only woman Toson really trusted and loved with compassion was his elder sister Takase Sono. Sono was the eldest child of Toson's parents and was older to him by sixteen years. She was fairly educated, and a modest woman who upheld the divine ideals of marriage as something which cannot be violated. On the contrary, her husband was a man of "loose character", who dared to desert his wife and children as a result of his indulgence in extra-marital affairs. Sono, in fact, had to experience a pathetic life in an age when most of the educated and awakened women of Meiji Japan stood against the atrocities of male chauvinism prevailed in the society since the middle ages. Toson had narrated the pathetic life of this good-

19 Ito Kazuo, Shimazaki Toson Jiten, pp.192-93.
20 Ibid, pp.262-63.
hearted woman, especially the second half of her life after her husband deserted her, in a novelette called "Aru Onna no Shogai" (Life of a woman). For Toson, Sono was not only a sister but he considered her as a person to be respected and revered like a mother.

Sono's husband, Takase Kaoru" was basically an intelligent and able man who excelled in studies and various other social activities. His family was traditionally engaged in manufacturing and selling medicines, and pharmaceutical, which were very popular among the daimyo who pass through the Naka Sendo highway. However, due to his weakness for the fair sex and his over indulgence in the quarters of entertainment gradually destroyed his traditional business as well as his career as a prospective school teacher of the Tsumagome primary school. At the time of Sono's marriage (1875) to Kaoru, the Takase family was, in fact, in the zenith of the prosperity and it was a matter of pride for the Shimazakis to have a matrimonial alliance with it. But soon the fall came, and Toson was a constant observer of these changes which synchronized with the vigorous social changes that followed after the Meiji Restoration. Sono, a woman of complete dedication and service to her husband, faced all the ups and downs in her life with courage which made her an 'ideal woman'

according to Toson's view. She never complained against her husband, she never thought of seeking a divorce or victimizing him for his act of unfaithfulness. She suffered, everything in silence and pardoned him whenever he apologized his misdeeds. "That was the time (before the birth of Sono's daughter, Tazu) when her husband had maintained relationship with several geishas (entertainers). One of them had given birth to his child. A worried Ogen (Sono) wanted to dispose of the matter herself.... Although she had been ignored and discarded by him so much, Ogen often used to pardon her husband who stand in front of her with folded hands begging her pardon, or just when he talks to her in sweet words...."22

Sono, being such a nice lady, was praised by Toson for her patience and prudence and had influenced him immensely during the formative years of his view on woman, especially his view on married women.

These are the women in real life who had influenced Toson greatly in the evolution of his view and approach on women from his childhood. Consequently, we can see various forms and faces of women in his works. There are mothers, wives, sisters, and women in love in his works, depicted on the basis of different motives and views. Toson had spent many years in studying and understanding the different faces, different

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22 Aru Onna no Shogai, Shimazaki-Toson Zenshu-20, p.65.
moods and attitudes of women in general and the result of his intensive study and observation was culminated into the forms of Aya, Osada, Uryu Natsuko, Sawa Sekiko etc. of the short stories which I discuss here.

**Toson’s Observation of Woman**

Though Toson was sent away to the city of Tokyo at the age of 10, he reared an yearning for the beautiful life in the countryside. This nostalgia and yearning for the country life seemed to have worked as the motive force behind him to accept the teaching job in Komoro school immediately after his marriage. During his stay in Komoro, Toson had travelled around the Saku hills and banks of Chikuma river to get a direct view and understanding of the life of people in the rural, country side. His sharp and critical eyes did not fail to observe the changing atmosphere in the country side as a result of rapid economic change and modernization of the country. However, this rapid urbanization and economic development did not change the status of working women in the country side. Followed by the Meiji restoration, many of the men folk of the rural Japan, whether it be farmer, artisan, trader or Samurai, lost their traditional jobs and source of their income, making their daily life more hard and difficult. Consequently, families in rural Japan found it very difficult to survive unless their women folk work in the field or go to
urban areas in search of work as industrial labourers or house maids. Although, the new government of Meiji Japan made the education of both boys and girls mandatory in 1880; it did not make any substantial change in the status of rural woman, although it tremendously influenced living conditions of the urban woman. Toson was constantly observing this division between the rural and urban women. He was sympathetic, on the one hand, with the poor working women of the country side and highly critical of the urbanized, modern girls of the society on the other hand. His depiction of female characters clearly indicates this fact.

He visited farmers houses several times, talked to them various matters related to farming and the calamities often they face. Their routine work, food, dress, festivals and celebrations, and customs were subjected to his close observation and later on he narrated them in his literary works. For example, the following paragraph in 'Chikumagawa no Suketchi' (Sketches of Chikuma River) is a best example. "...there was continuous stretch of paddy fields around me, some had already had harvest and some were waiting to be harvested. Two families were still busily engaged in cropping. The way they work would give us the impression that they hurriedly doing it because they want to finish it before

the onset of snowing season. Just in front of my eyes, a father with grey-white hair and his fourteen or fifteen years old son were engaged in hulling the paddy with long mallet. Its pounding sound reverberated on the earth and lot of white dust rose up. The mother of the boy with a hand towel in her hand and a covering for the back of her hand, put the hackled ears (paddy) into the winnow. By her side, there was another woman with sun-burnt face, who was in a stooping posture putting the rice hulled by the father and son into the sieve. Another woman who tucked up her sleeves with a red sash and wearing a dark blue tabi socks (Japanese socks) engaged in chasing away the smoke, formed by the mingling of empty paddy husk and dust while shaking off the unhulled husk in the winnow facing to the wind and holding the winnow above the head...." As clearly understood from this passage, Toson was very particular in investigating and observing various aspects of women in the country side. This and similar incidents which he observed and recorded in "Chikumagawa no Suketchi" give us a realistic picture of the countryside. As I mentioned earlier, this was the time when Toson decided to change his career from a romantic poet to a writer of prose based on naturalism. As a first step to that, he sketched the surroundings where he lived and depicted them realistically in

his short stories and Hakai, his first full pledged novel. His depiction of Keinoshin's wife in Hakai is a direct example of his observation of working woman in the countryside. Keinoshinshin is a poor school teacher who due to his illness and bad habit of consuming excess quantity of alcohol fails to keep up his responsibility as a school teacher and plunges into a condition where he is no more able to look after his wife and children. In such a condition, his wife with all her weakness and difficulties as a woman, determines to support the family by taking up the responsibility of cultivating the land and paddy field by herself. Her plight and sorrows are depicted in Hakai very realistically by Toson.

Side by side his observation of women in the countryside, Toson was also observing and studying the changing attitude of educated and emancipated women in the urban areas like Komoro town etc. Komoro, during the second half of Meiji period, was fast growing into a town with all modern facilities, like school, bank, hospital etc. Highly educated, rich women of urban background, began to challenge the existing norms and codes of the society by the end the

26 Nakayama Hiroaki, "Komoro" to iu basho (Shimazaki Toson ni Okeru Kinsen to gensetsu), (Nihon Bungaku 1993-7), pp.54-67.
nineteenth century. Women were granted equal opportunity for education and job and were allowed to possess property by 1873. Toson, who had studied in Tokyo and had the opportunity to witness the changing attitude of women directly as he was teaching in Meiji Jogakko for one year immediately after his graduation from Meiji Gakuin, viewed this attitude of modern woman with contempt. "We shall not marry" was the slogan of these modern girls who roamed around the cities and towns. Clad in western dress and actively participating in Western cultural activities like music and dance, these girls were forgetting the social and family set up of traditional Japan. Toson could not remain as a mere spectator. He lashed out at women, saying that 'gakumon wa mi o ayamaru' (learning will misguide one's self) and went up to the extend of ridiculing the modern women saying that they cannot survive without the moral and physical support of men. Toson was neither a proponent of Confucianism nor a supporter of feudalistic set up of the society. What he was actually criticising was the wrong and imperfect understanding of western concepts such as freedom, equality and right to self determination by the Japanese women.

Toson's ever attentive and critical eyes were observing the changing attitude of village women, their curiosity and inquisitiveness to know more about the modernization process that brought about fundamental changes in the behaviour of
city dwelling women. The education policy of the government in the first half of Meiji period had benefitted only a minority of Japanese women who lived in the towns and cities, as only 30 percent of the eligible girls were in school by 1890. On one side, he found women like Aya who "makes up in the morning" and "polishes in the night" and who "does not lack any luxury" in life. When such highly urbanized women walk on the roads, it was the habit of the poor village folk to look at them with curiosity and admiration. "There are none as curious as women in the countryside," Toson realised this fact during his observations. These village women were just not only curious, but also ready to change according to the time, provided that they are given proper guidance and education. The Meiji government had indeed provided better educational facilities to the rural women by the end of the nineteenth century and as we had already seen in Chapter 1, a law mandating the establishment of at least one higher school for girls in each prefecture was enacted in 1899. This law had the simultaneous effect of increasing the number of public schools providing post elementary education for women and narrowing the scope of education offered to the women. Although the Meiji government's true intention was to develop

28 Kyuhujin, Shimazaki Toson Zenshu-3, p.11.
young women of refined taste and gentle and modest character to fulfill their duties within the home, introduction of compulsory and universal education had changed the status of women in rural Japan considerably by the turn of nineteenth century. In Komoro too, high school for girls was already established by the turn of the 19th century. For example 'Ueda Girls High School' where Sawa Sekiko of 'Rojo' was teaching, was opened in 1901, just two years before writing this novel by Toson. In the same year, girls' high schools were also opened in Matsumoto and Shimoina in Nagano Prefecture where Komoro is also situated, and the number of rural girls attending these schools rapidly increased. There was a rapid increase in the number of female teachers also, as the number increased to thirty nine in 1902 from a mere sixteen one year before." Toson who was teaching in Komor Gijuku at that time was definitely sensitive to such changes in the social status of women. Both Uryu Natsuko and Sawa Sekiko of Rojo and Aya of Kyushujin are belonging to this category of women, who had been created purposely by the author to give a true picture of women during that period.

Like his contemporary Tayama Katai, Toson too believed in writing whatever actually happened or really existed after

29 Nakayama Hiroaki, Komoro to iu Basho, pp.58-59.
30 Oida Yoshiaki, Ryukuyoshu no Josei - "Rojo" Kara "Suisai Gaka e" (From Rojo to Suisai Gaka), p.18.
thorough study and observation. Tayama Katai (1872-1930) was one of the pioneers of Naturalist movement in Japan and its most admired writer. His first novel "Futon" (The Quilt, 1907) is considered as one of the best examples of Japanese naturalism in literature - influenced by the philosophies of Maupassant, and Nietzsche - he emphasized the need to express one's individuality, and natural impulses of individual in literature. He stressed the need to observe matters correctly and write only the things really happened or existed even if they look unnatural. Regarding this, Toson himself says the following: "Most of us usually see things on the basis of certain conventional 'views' and 'norms' set by our predecessors. If we abandon these preconceptions and view things independently of them, we will be certainly able to discover something which nobody has noticed so far.... For writing about things, we should view, observe and memorize them properly." True to his philosophy, Toson viewed and observed both rural and urban women and discovered the following facts about women; (a) "There is none as curious as women in the countryside". (b) "There is nothing as short as the happiness of women". (c) "There is none as lonely and forlorn as women". (d) "Women is cheerless and boring". (e) "Woman has no interest in the business of man" and (f) "Woman

31 "Miru Koto to Kaku Koto", Shimazaki Toson Zenshu-6, pp.155-56.
cannot live without loving and without being loved." His observation of women and his personal encounter and experiences with them in the real life had exerted great influence on the characterization of female characters in his initial prose works.

There is ample evidence to prove that Toson's observations of people and nature in and around Komoro and Saku region was systematic and real." His consciousness as a man from the province and his nostalgia for knowing more about the farming villages in the countryside, had made his attempt all the more meaningful. His association with Miyake Katsumi who had gone to Komoro in 1899 to teach and paint landscapes of the area, had helped him in sketching his observations in a more realistic manner. Miyake Katsumi (1875-1954) was a water colourist and a graduate of Meiji Gakuin like Toson, and settled in Komoro after his return from

32 (a) to (e) are found in Toson's short story "Kyushujin" and (f) is found in his short story "Rojo".  
(a) Inaka no onna hodo monomidakai mono wa arimasen, Kyushujin, chapter-1.  
(b) Onna no tanoshimi hodo mijikai mono wa arimasen, Kyushujin, chapter-2.  
(c) Onna hodo kokorobosoi mono wa arimasen, Kyushujin, chapter-2.  
(d) Onna to iu mono wa tsumaranai mono da, Kyushujin, Chapter-2.  
(e) So, Onna to iu, mono wa otoko no shigoto ni reitanna monoka naa. Kyushujin, Chapter-3.  
(f) Onna wa ai shitari, ai seraretari sezu ni wa ikite irareru mono dewa arimasen, Rojo, chapter-2.

33 Chikuma gawa no Suketehi, Shimazaki Toson Zenshu-2, pp.97-250.
Europe. Miyake Katsumi and Toson became intimate friends at Komoro and Toson recommended him to the post of drawing master in Komoro Gijuku. Miyake was an admirer of European painters such as Millet Jean Francois (1814-1875), Corot Jean Baptiste Camitte (1796-1875) etc. He often carried an easel and sketchbook with him. Similarly Toson also carried an easel, which he used as desk for writing down his observations. Toson incorporated the sketches he accumulated here, into various short stories and novels. Except two or three, all works included in Ryokuyo-shu are written mainly on the basis of his observation and sketches he collected from Komoro and Saku region, and Toson in his preface to Ryokuyo-shu called them as the "Stories of the banks of Chikuma river". His self-taught ability to observe things enabled him to reproduce reality in his works. Hence, a study of his female characters in his initial works, will enable us to grasp the true condition of women's attitude towards modernization and

34 Suisai gaka, Asa Meshi, Rojo, Warazori, Oyaji, Tsugaru Kaikyo, Yashi no hakage, and Kachiku are the eight stories published under the title Ryokuyo-shu in 1907 by the publishing house Shunyo do. Out of these, Suisai gaka, Rojo, Warazori, Asa Meshi, Oyaji and Kyushujin (which could not be published along with these stories due to model problem), are considered as the direct fruits of Toson's observation and study of nature in and around Komoro and the banks of Chikuma river.

35 Preface (Ryokuyoshu), Shimazaki Toson Zenshu-2, pp.239-41.
their understanding of individual freedom and equality in the society.

Characterization of Women in Toson's Works
With Special Emphasis to Female Characters
in 'Kyushujin' and 'Rojo'

Toson's style of writing fiction is considered as unique, as he had his own way of narrating stories with plot and characters taken from the real life. Unlike other great writers of Meiji Japan he lacked in imagination and creativity in the displacement of characters in his works. His characters, irrespective of male or female are simple, straightforward, and actual replica of different types of people in the society. His constant study and observation of the nature and society during the period of great social transformation had given rise to various characters reminiscent of people of that era. Toson took up his pen as prose writer during the most turbulent period in modern Japanese history when a vertically conceived social order had been replaced by a horizontally cast egalitarian society. Enhancement of women's status in the society gave rise to certain social problems such as destabilization of family set up, increased number of divorces, and an increase in the number of females who challenged the existing social and family set up and marriage. In such a background, it was quite natural for a naturalist writer like Toson to show special interest in the behaviour and attitude of women in and
around his family and society. Characters in his works, especially his females characters had a direct bearing on his personal life as they were the real copies of people known to him directly or indirectly. Among his female characters, we can trace the true images of his lover, wife, sister, mother and other women whom he knew closely. During his study and observation, Toson had analysed various aspects of women and had tried to express them in a very realistic manner through his works starting from Ryokuyo-shu, his first collection of short stories. In fact, Toson did not hold any one particular view on woman, but his approach and views were complex in nature and inquisitive and critical in reality. What he found in his observations or what he experienced in his family life was sufficient enough to evolve a typical outlook on woman. He sometimes sympathizes with women, sometimes views them with contempt and sometimes looks down on them with distrust and anger. He had different motives when he had depicted different female characters in his various works. His motive for writing “Warazori” was entirely different from his motive for writing Kyushujin, although both of them were written together. In Warazori, he depicts the ‘tragedy of

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36 Both ‘Warazori’ and Kyushujin were written in Meiji-35 (1902). Toson said to have taken hints from ‘Venus and Adonis’ (1593) of Shakespear for writing ‘Warazori’. As ‘Kyushujin’ could not be published in ‘Ryokuyo-shu’ (1907) due to model problem, Warazori is the first story Toson wrote among all stories in Ryokuyo-shu.
women' through its heroine Okuma, who is a typical example of an illiterate and powerless woman of rural background. She is a victim of male dominated traditional society where a woman had always been looked down as a subordinate to man.

Okuma’s husband, Gen, was an ambitious man who was ready to sacrifice everything for ‘fame’ and ‘glory’ and was a strong contender of championship in a horse race. Unfortunately he failed to get the top prize and the sense of loss and humiliation due to that infuriated him. Upon his return to his house, he manhandled his wife Okuma, until she broke her legs. Meanwhile, Gen also came to know about Okuma’s rape by an old railway guard when she was still an unmarried girl. The hapless woman was taken to a hospital by her husband at the insistence of his parents but she died on the way. When Gen was beating his wife, his parents try to stop him, scolding him for his senseless brutal act of manhandling Okuma. However, Gen did not have any intention to heed to their request or advice. Instead, he justified his action by saying that, "...well, it is I who have beaten her. Wife's life is husband's life, wife's body is husband's body. I have beaten up my own body, and what is unusual in that?"

Gen’s attitude here is a typical example of thinking by men during the Pre-Meiji period of Japan. A wife has no right on

37 Warazori, Shimazaki Tason Zenshu-3, p.81.
her own body and the husband who torture her was not answerable to anybody. This kind of suppression of woman by man was an essential requirement for the perpetuation of feudal ideology of the period. This situation had not changed much even after a quarter of century after the Meiji restoration. Toson was always disturbed by this discrimination of women by the dominant section of the society although he was not a supporter of excess emancipation of women. He expected women to be modest, humble and submissive to the extent that harmony will permanently exist in family life and he expected men to be lenient and rational in their attitude and behaviour towards women. Husband should treat his wife as equal and respect her sentiments and feelings as long as she does not betray his faith in her. In Warazori, an innocent and helpless Okuma for none of her fault was subjected to endless pain and torture and finally met her end silently, blaming everything to her fate. Toson's motive here was to depict the 'sorrow of woman', the helpless victim of the society.

In contrast to this, we see, in Suisai Gaka both husband and wife are engaged in love affair which ultimately drags their married life to the brink of collapse. Ohatsu,

38 'Suisai-gaka', Toson Zenshu-3, Chikuma Shobo, 1966, Toson wrote this novel in 1904 and published in 'Shinshoetsu'. Toson seem to have written this novel under the influence of works by Maupassant, Ibsen, etc.
the heroine of 'Suisai Gaka' maintains an illegal affair with Noae, her lover. Her husband Takano Denkichi, a water colourist, discovers their relationship and resolves to solve the problem by writing a letter to Noae, indirectly granting him his approval to continue their affair. "Soul (heart) of Ohatsu is your's and body of Ohatsu is mine", Denkichi writes to Noae. However, quick and sensible act of Noae brings an end to the troubled situation as he showed his willingness to discontinue the illegal affair. Meanwhile, Denkichi also decided to start a new life again and severed his relationship with Yanagizawa Kiyono a musician, which became intimate after Denkichi discovered his wife's affair. However, finally they settle down to a new life. In Warazori we find the husband with all might and power, who has the ultimate right on her wife to do anything on her and not answerable to anybody, a typical example of husband wife relationship in a tradition-bound family set up. Unlike Warazori, in 'Suisai gaka' both the wife and husband are treated equally. It shows the changing attitude and outlook of society on women and Toson's critical eyes were very sharp to take note of this change. Very soon he came to the conclusion that, irrespective of relationship or status, every individual of the society must be accorded equal respect and freedom to do anything which he

or she prefers to do as long as it does not disturb the well being of the society. The moment Denkichi started thinking about human relationship rationally, his attitude and outlook suddenly changed and he determined to restart a new life which he himself termed as the "beginning of a third married life" with the same wife. Toson's own married life reached at the brink of collapse in the beginning due to Fuyuko's affair with her lover, and it has compelled him to make the conclusion that 'marriage is a lifelong trap'. However, as Denkichi in Suisai Gaka, Toson too overcame the crisis and decided to live on with Fuyuko, a new life although he never forgave her fully even after her repeated request. Hence, Toson's motive of writing Suisai Gaka was entirely different from that of Warazori. Through Suisai Gaka's Ohatsu, Toson wanted to show us the picture of a matured woman who although desired for a life free from the iron fists of her husband, restrained herself in order to save her and her family from total destruction. Ohatsu was a woman with considerable level of education like Sawa Sekiko of Rojo and, like Sekiko she too preferred to returned to normal married family life. In short, we can see slightly exaggerated form of Fuyuko through Ohatsu in Suisai Gaka and Toson's real motive in writing this novel was to show his "distrust towards women."

40 Ibid, p.192.
Characterisation of Women in 'Kyushujin'

Toson's motives for writing Kyushujin were different from the previously discussed two stories, as it was the first fruit of his observation and study of countryside. In Kyushujin, we can see conflicts between new and old, urban culture and rural culture and educated women and illiterate woman. Toson through this novellette wanted to highlight the changing attitude of women in their outlook to family and social life. He wrote this novel in 1902, and that was the period when both government and general public in Japan jointly strived hard to achieve the goals of 'Rich nation and strong army' and 'good wives and wise mothers' by giving appropriate education to the citizens. However, majority of educated women of the period did not agree with the government policy of 'Good wives and wise mothers', which again put restrictions on the freedom and private life of women. According to 'good wives and wise mothers' policy of the government, a woman must be educated and trained sufficiently to manage the household works skillfully side by side taking care of her husband and children. It prohibited women from free indulgence in pleasure life and warned them that the defaulters will be punished severely. However, the policy of 'good wives and wise mothers' did not yield the expected result as many young and educated women resisted against the government move and they registered their protest by
excessively indulging in various physical pleasures and uncontrolled sexual activities. Toson was a keen observer of the situation and through Kyushujin he tried to depict the real face of a woman who revolted against her husband and another woman who revolted against her mistress.

In ‘Kyushujin’, Toson is depicting two equally important female characters, Aya and Osada. Highly educated, urban born and brought up young Aya finds the lonely life in the countryside boring and meaningless. Toson’s depiction of Aya reminds us the life of two women in real life, Sato Sukeko and Hata Fuyuko, the former Toson’s lover and the latter his wife. Aya is a combination of these two people. Aya loves Sakurai, the dentist, even before her marriage to Arai. This reminds us Fuyuko’s affair with her boy-friend before and after her marriage with Toson. Like Sato Sukeko who yearned for Toson, Aya wanted to marry her lover Sakurai but fate had separated them and she had to content with her marriage with Arai. Despite being a rich banker, Arai was an old man who dedicated his life for the betterment of the bank and welfare of people in Komoro. Aya who used to the comforts of upper class life in the city could not withstand the life in a cheerless and remote country town. The town where she lives in can hardly offer her the kind of social life she craves. As a result of her boredom and loneliness, she begins to meet Sakurai.
secretly as Oyuki (Fuyuko in real life) sent secret love letters to Tsutomu in Toson's novel 'Ie'.

Aya's husband fully aware of his short-comings had tried to appease her by making available any luxury or comfort she required. He was a broad minded person who was earnestly trying to live according to the changing social conditions and was ready to sacrifice anything for the happiness of his wife.

A very hard working and diligent men, Arai led a very disciplined life unlike the hero, Gen, of Warazori. "Master either would go for a stroll early in the morning, or would go through some documents sitting on the first floor and drink a glass of cow milk. At nine O'Clock he would go to the bank bearing a cap and 'maetaregake'. On holidays, he would entertain guests and chat with them in the visitors room in the ground floor. His friends were all respectable members of the society including town councillors, rich landlords, businessmen, and newspaper tycoons. After dinner he would chat with his wife sitting face to face and it was the happiest moment in his daily routine." Watchful Osada is viewing her master with great admiration and respect and gives a perfect picture of his routine. he is one of the best examples of successful businessmen of the era. But his wife is ignoring him completely. She does not bother about his

41 Kyushujin, Shimazaki Toson Zenshu-3, p.8.
achievement and business because she does not love him. Her mind is attracted to the young handsome dentist and she gets some relief from her boredom only when she meets him. Rest of the time she stayed in the house like a "bush warbler in a cage." Aya, though educated, is a person who does not want to face the challenges of life. She is a feeble minded woman who neither wants to take up any job nor wants to appreciate her husband who diligently work to make her happy. In order to hide her weakness, she often use rash and abusive language whenever she talked to her husband. In short, in Kyushujin we see a woman "intrinsically untrustworthy, licentious, and unable to properly fulfill the duties of a house wife." Aya is a symbol of modern women who wrongly conceived the concept of emancipation and liberation. For her liberation means, only the physical liberation, to indulge in activities which ensure pleasures, not the mental liberation which would have made her independent of her husband and empowered her with the courage to face challenges independently. Although she was incapable of doing anything independently, she often used to be boastful of her own ability and talent. This again is a proof for her weakness.

42 Kyushujin, Shimazaki Toson, Zenshu-3, pp.16, 21.
Aya had studied the mind and behaviour of man thoroughly and she knew how to make use of them for her own pleasure and benefit. Her opinion and view on men are very interesting and analytic in content. "Even if a man is handsome and owns lot of property etc., and possess the nature of praising other's talent and ability, he cannot be trusted if he is a grumbler always with a perplexed mind. On the other hand, an intelligent and very attractive man is more awful because he will be able to make fool of a woman, and will see through even her short comings. Some are generous but excessively lavish in spending money. Some are finicky but excessively enlightened, some are kind but highly reserved. If a man seems to be good, he will be feeble looking. So it is difficult to find out a man without a fault." Hence, Aya did know about the character of Arai properly. She knew that, he is a diligent and hard working man and also knew that her affair will be discovered one day. But still, she could not stop her affair with Sakurai because she loves him, not her husband. She wanted to live a free life like a woman in the pilgrimage but the social stigmas and bonds restricted a married woman to do that. Hence, it was essential for her to keep her affair hidden from her husband not because of her fear for her husband but because of her fear for social

44 "Kyushujin, Shimazaki Toson Zenshu-3, p.18."
ostracism and isolation. Therefore, she was compelled to get rid of Osada, her servant and one time confident. In order to attain this goal she hatched slanders against her. This again shows her intrinsic weakness as a woman. True nature of a person cannot be changed merely by education or by simply coming into contact with the concepts of modernity. Toson, whose married life was marred by the infidelity of his wife, was trying to depict the 'true nature of woman' and her 'faithlessness' through Aya. Toson was disillusioned by the high ideals of love as propagated by his friend and mentor Kitamura Tokoku ever since the discovery of Fuyuko's infidelity immediately after his marriage.

Like Ohatsu and Naoe in Suisai Gaka and Oyuki and Tsutomu in 'Ie', Aya also continued to have correspondence with her lover Sakurai even after her marriage and transfer of residence to Komoro. She even kept a photograph of Sakurai with her always. She stored all the love letters in a box safely and occasionally read them in the absence of her husband. Her attachment to these letters indicates how deep was her love towards Sakurai. "Mistress took out love letters from the letter box. She rubbed her soft cheek with those letters fondly and started reading one by one. Some letters had inside them pressed flower petals and leaves with their original colour. Mistress smelled the remaining fragrance of the flower and her whole body burned in passion. She wanted
to destroy those love letters by tearing them into pieces, so that master would not see them. However, she could not do that because of her attachment to them. What we find in Aya here is the image of Fuyuko, Toson's wife, who continued to write her lover letters even after her marriage. Hence, Toson's purpose, his motive was to depict through Aya the infidelity of a wife, her betrayal of husband's faith in her. In other words, Aya is a representative of a group of women who revolted against the traditional ethics of family life and society, who considered the 'liberation of sexual life' as the true liberation and emancipation of women.

In contrast to Aya, Osada is a simple village woman, illiterate but prudent enough to distinguish good and evil. She gets a glimpse of modernization of the society through her association with Arai family and enthralled by the comfortable, luxurious life in the town. But her true nature does not change. She acts very sensibly whenever her existence was in question. She faces the challenges in her life courageously and diligently and has the power to withstand any odd situation in life. Unlike Aya, Osada enjoys the life in Komoro town because life in her village is much harsher than the life in the town. Certainly, the rhythm of daily life and the proliferation of tasks, roles, and other

demands upon people obviously differ considerably for life in city and for life in the village. Therefore, Osada's lifestyle and thinking ought to be different from that of Aya. She had been sincere in her attitude and obedient and loyal to her employer as long as her ego was not hurt by the slanderous behaviour of her mistress.

In the story, Osada is entrusted with three distinctively different roles, namely, her role as a maid-servant, her role as a first person narrator and her role as an observer, who watches the activities of her employers with careful and ever attentive eyes. During the later half of nineteenth century it became a common practice among poor rural woman to go to towns and cities to work as factory workers or maid-servants to support their families. Hence Osada, who was in her early twenties, had happily undertaken the job of a maid-servant in Arai's family. As a maid-servant, she executes her job sincerely and obediently, like any poor, innocent person with a rural background would have done. She wins the hearts of her master and mistress from the very beginning and she too considers herself as a member of her employers family. She is not just a maid-servant only to her mistress, but a confident and a companion to her in her lonely life full of boredom, and here we see the simplicity and sincerity of a village girl.

46 Inoue Kiyoshi, Nihon Joseishi, pp.189-98.
She admires her mistress's charm, fashion and advanced living standards, and tries herself to imitate those good qualities, so that she can serve, her mistress better. However, her innocence and simplicity, and her faith in the employers had been betrayed by the wicked, selfish action of Aya, her mistress. Suddenly, Osada returns to her 'true nature' of a Saku woman and decides to prove her innocence. Here, we see an Osada, strong, fearless and fighting for justice. She gained this strength from her innocence, her intrinsic nature as a simple, uneducated poor village woman. She just could not believe at the first moment that a civilized, fashionable, educated Aya of urban background would hatch up baseless slander against her. She never thought that such malicious words would come out from the beautiful lips of her mistress and was amazed and also frightened at this cunning world of so called enlightened people. "Hence, she decides to challenge her mistress and in their fight - a fight between urban woman and rural woman, a fight between modern and tradition and sincerity and insincerity - Osada ultimately wins. Here, Toson's motive is to highlight truth's triumph over falsehood, predominance of sincerity of rural woman over the wickedness of so called enlightened urban woman and exposure of 'women's true nature'.

47 Kyushujin, Shimazaki Toson Zenshu-3, p.45.
Next, as an observer, Osada is playing an important role. She with her rural background knew nothing about the urbanized modern life in the town and cities until she joined the Arais as a maid-servant. Once on the job, she regularly observes the activities of her master and mistress with a critical eye. She is not sparing anything in her observation as she critically studies the nature and character of her master, mistress, the dentist and even the structure of the new house of Arais.

"Although this house had Komoro style gate, it was a quiet and two-storied house with new latticed work.... The new house was built in tokyo style", Osada observes and she substantiates her opinion with the narration of her master's attitude. "My master, a broad-minded person, lived like as if he had transplanted Tokyo to Komoro.... In this world there are some people with very peculiar appearance. Even when they are crying they look as if they are laughing. My master was one of them.... He loved to work diligently and never wasted any time in idle. Whenever, anybody in Komoro wants to start a new business or work, it was Arai whom he consults with first. In other words, my master was the most important personality in Komoro." Osada's observation of her master

gives us a clear picture of successful post-Meiji businessmen. Compared to her father who is a lazy drunkard who wastes his time in idle, ignoring his responsibility as a rural former, men such as Arai in the town are hard working and ambitious. This was a new and startling revelation to Osada. On the other hand, Osada finds that her mistress, Aya, is always spending her time in idle, reading novels or just sleeping. She had extremely beautiful features and even Osada herself was fascinated by her beauty and elegant life style, who "makes up in the morning" and "polishes in the night" and wears only "costly and colourful dress". Osada understands the contrast in the life of urban and rural women's status. Women including her mother in the countryside have to work in the field even when their male counterparts sit idle, and Osada soon understands the difference in quality of life of urban and rural women. Her mother's hands are large, stoutly built and sun-burnt and looked like the hands of a man, whereas her mistress has fair and tender hands. Her mistress has all luxuries and comfort, but her mother in the village and other women in the countryside lack even the minimum provisions for a mere existence.

Osada's observation does not stop at the external aspects of life in the urban and rural societies. She peeps into the private life of her master and mistress and discovers for the first time the disharmony existing between them. Initially,
she was under the impression that her master and mistress were the best example for an extremely affectionate, intimate and harmonious couple one can take as a model. She even envied them. But her impression soon turned upside down as she realized the truth that "human being cannot be judged by his appearance only". She realized the truth that, however educated a person may be, or however advanced his living standards may be, the basic human instinct in him will not change. She was stunned to see Aya's faithlessness to her husband, which she never expected from a cultured "modern woman." "Enraptured by the story of love - love like a dream in a spring night - I peeped into their room through the gaps in the sliding door. Mistress's face, in that night, reflected in the bright lamp light was extremely beautiful. I have never seen her so beautiful before or after that, I could see her drinking wine while narrowing her glossy eyes. Also, I could see the dentist laughing very happily waving her slender, fair hands. As their romance progressed, my mistress completely forgot her worries of the past and anxieties for the future...." Osada as a village girl was eager to know what was happening in between her mistress and her boy friend. That dragged her to Aya's room. For her, even Aya's infidelity was a novel thing, unheard in the remote country-

50 Ibid, p.32.
side. Still, she consoled herself, thinking even this as a part of urban life.

Osada's eves dropping, and peeping at last helped herself from the trap laid down by Aya. If Osada was not vigilant and careful, she would not have got the opportunity to prove her innocence, and would have been thrown out of the house as a disobedient and dishonest ugly countryside maid-servant who spreads rumours about her employers. "I stood silently there with bated breathe, listening to their conversation. Mistress was telling my master something like as following. She was complaining to the master that many articles have been missing from the house including even a violet silk scarf kept in the drawer of the needle box. Thinking it strange, she opened and searched my furoshiki zutsumi and found every missing articles in that, including the scarf, obiage, ring etc. Also she told him that, I talk about my master behind his back when I go to the well to fetch water and spread baseless rumours about him. Further she also told him that I have become very selfish and disobedient, and one day somebody had seen the young milkman embracing me from my back, holding his hands around the nape of my back...."51 What is seen here is that Aya is trying to make Osada a criminal by depicting her as an abode of all kinds of evils, peculiar to the nature of woman. Actually it

51 Ibid, p.43.
is Aya who possesses all these evils, but her being educated, and urban and the status of her being the mistress of Osada, gave her an advantage over Osada. That is why she tried to make Osada a scapegoat for her own misdeeds. However, ever vigilant Osada did not allow Aya to victimise her, and in the end, it was Osada who emerged as victorious. The observing Osada’ is a very matured person as she views everything critically and takes decision only after proper analysis. What we see in 'observing Osada' is the image of the author himself. In other words, Toson through Osada’s eyes views the attitude and nature of urban and rural women and make timely comparison to highlight the simplicity of rural mind and wickedness of urban mind. He views Aya with scornful eyes as he placed fuyuko in her and it was a necessity for Toson to punish Aya for her misconduct. That is why, Osada is given an upperhand in the end in exposing Aya’s infidelity.

Another important role Osada got in this story is her role as the narrator of the story. The 'narrating Osada' whose sensibilities in turn define a subject through whom we see the events. She is the one who sprinkles the account with epigrammatic comments, who resorts to the conventions of popular Edo culture in relating her tale, and who has reason
of her own to colour the narrative.  Moreover, as the time and space of the 'events which are narrated' and the 'actual narration' vary, it is difficult to assert how far her narration is authentic and true. Being the narrator, she has certain privileges and she can twist the events in such a way that it will turn favourable to her. But for Osada, the narrator, hard physical labour, poor working women in the countryside and their poverty ridden life, were a matter of constant concern as she belongs to the countryside. That is why she becomes very sentimental when she narrates the plight of her diligent mother and other folks of Saku region. She narrates their life in comparison with the luxurious, comfortable life of city bred woman, Aya. Of course, she later on discovers that, the life in the city and countryside are fundamentally different as the proliferation of tasks, roles, and other demands upon people obviously differ considerably in both the places. Through out her narration we find this comparison of urban and rural life, and towards the end we see Osada lamenting for adapting herself to the splashy life of the town. Towards the end when Osada discovered that her mistress has vicious plan to trap her, she turned into the old Saku woman and determined to punish Aya. Thereafter, the

narrator directs the story to progress in a direction completely controlled by herself and finally she succeeded in punishing her mistress by exposing her infidelity to her husband. In 'Observing Osada' we can clearly see the shadow of the author but in 'narrating Osada' we can have only a glimpse of an uneducated village woman who feels compelled to tell her experience as a maid-servant in a rich family in a provincial town years before, venting her anger and asserting the rightness of her position and the small victory of a powerless peasant woman over a rich and beautiful city woman. Hence, through Osada Toson not only depicts his own image as a sharp observer of the contrasting reality of the society, but also a young and diligent village woman, who although simple and rustic, does not want to be victimised for the sin she has never done. In other words, Osada is a symbol of innocence, simplicity, sincerity and strength. Through Aya and Osada, Toson, besides his real motive to write the 'tragedy of women' and his 'distrust towards them', probably wants to convey the message that 'woman's true nature' will not change only by education or with urban background, and everything modern is not superior.

Characterization Women in Rojo

Compared to the characterization of Kyushujin, in which Toson tried to express his 'distrust' towards woman through
Aya a replica of his wife Fuyuko, in rojo Toson chose the theme of 'tragedy and sorrow of enlightened woman' as the motive. Like Aya and Osada in Kyushujin, Rojo too has two contrasting female characters, Uryu Natsuko and Sawa Sekiko. Unlike women characters in his other short stories and novelettes, the heroines of Rojo are not only highly educated but also have the experience of teaching in schools. Natsuko had been the head teacher of a girls school in Ueda near Komoro for some time and Sekiko is still a teacher in ueda girls high school. 

Hence, both Natsuko and Sekiko are different from Aya and Osada as far as education and employment are concerned. Written in 1903, when girls higher education for the first time in Japanese history was in its peak after the promulgation of 'Koto Jagakko Rei' (Girls High School Ordinance) in 1900, Rojo is one of the best pieces of literary works which precisely deal with the fall of the so called enlightened women who challenged the family set up and roamed around the cities and towns shouting the slogan, 'We shall never marry'.

Uryu Natsuko is not an ordinary woman. She is a strong-willed woman who wants to put her theoretical skill obtained through higher education into practice. She does not want to be locked up in a house after marriage. She wants to work

like men and for that she is ready to forgo marriage, because marriage restricts woman's movements especially in a society where women are expected to be 'good wives and wise mothers'. Her confidence and ego provided her with the motive power necessary for living a rebel's life in a conservative society. Unlike Aya of Kyushujin, who although educated preferred to be lazy and idle and whose interest is only to enjoy the carnal pleasures even at the cost of her marriage, Uryu Natsuko is very energetic, active, and optimistic in her approach and attitude toward life in the first half of the story. She is very well aware of the existing social discrimination against women, but not ready to accept that with a submissive attitude. Instead, she is all ready to fight it out courageously. "I don't mind being a crippled person. Let the world around me say anything. I don't mind being a sinner. Actually we are different from other women around us - our thoughts, tastes, and even our morals are all different." Natsuko is aware that an unmarried woman in the society will be branded as crippled and will be considered as a rojo (old miss). She is ready to accept it whole heartedly. According to her, a woman can easily manage to live in a society if she has a job, and therefore, she determined to stay unmarried. She has no faith in man and she never loved a man sincerely.

and she does not want to live like an 'ingenious girl', modest and submissive to man. Here what we see is a clear picture of highly educated young women during the turn of the century who stood for equality and freedom.

However, by the end of nineteenth century Japan was moving towards imperialism and, as a part of that, government had imposed severe restrictions on the role of women in the society. The government policy was to impart proper education to women, not for better job opportunities in companies or elsewhere, but for transforming them into 'good wives and wise mothers'. Hence, job opportunities for women outside the four walls of their house were very little and restricted. Through Natsuko, Toson is trying to show us the trend of the time and the tragedy and plight of such educated women. Natsuko had resigned from the school where she was the head-teacher to find out green avenues where she can demonstrate her talents more efficiently. But she is unable to get a good job and finally decides to go back to a village and take up a teacher's job in a school there. Gradually, she realizes that a woman cannot survive independently. She becomes a pessimistic woman and her agony and fear for the future increases in the moment she noticed the decaying of her youthfulness.

Natsuko, a fugitive from the society, who never loved or trusted men was in fact a slave of her passion, and her flesh
never let her to be independent of men. Even during her youthful days when she used to be confident and optimistic of building up her career independently, she could not restrain her passions, and could not spent even a day without a male companion, although she "threw away the flowers after enjoying their fragrance". Here, the view of Toson is very interesting and typical of a person lived in a society which still considered marriage as sacred institution for the well being of mankind. "A man can live only with his job and honour. But a woman cannot survive without loving and being loved. As the proverb goes, woman is like an ivy vine which would wither unless it clings to something. Natsuko is exactly one of them. Her enthusiasm and desire to get rid of the pain of being a spinster has all the more forced her to indulge in fervent love affairs." Her tragedy starts from the time she realised that she cannot survive in the society independently and she soon turns into a downhearted and depressed woman who seeks comfort and consolation from men. All her class mates and old friends are married and well settled in their lives. But only she remains in this 'crippled' condition which cannot be rectified as it is very late now. Natsuko wants to retain her vigour and youthfulness and wants to engage in work actively. She thinks now that only through indulgence in love

55 Ibid, p.115.
that she can retain and safeguard her youthfulness and vitality. Therefore, she makes love with more and more men. Finally she gives birth to an illegitimate child whose father is unknown. Natsuko, who once boasted of her ability and talent and proudly discarded marriage and family life, turned into an insane woman, desperately looking for a husband.\footnote{Ibid, p.132.} She could not achieve anything which she determined to achieve, and on the contrary, she could not refrain from doing whatever she determined not to do initially. A best example of irony of woman’s life. An irony which haunted the life of hundreds and thousands of enlightened women of the period, who by discarding their traditional duties and roles in the society tried to build up a masculine image forgetting their innate feminine disposition and qualities. In short, natsuko is a typical example of enlightened women, for whom enlightenment meant complete deviation from traditions set by the society, and their foolish actions always led them into their complete destruction.

In contrast to Natsuko, Sawa Sekiko is very moderate in her approach toward life. Equally, educated she utilises her wisdom to categorize good from bad, and without any hesitation she readily accepts the positive aspects of tradition which would be helpful for a successful social life. She recognizes
the importance of marriage and even advises Natsuko to reconsider her attitude and outlook on life and marriage. Sekiko is also employed and after her marriage she might have to leave her job. But she is not unhappy to do that because she thinks that a married family life will bring more happiness than an unmarried lonely life in solitude. Work alone will not bring happiness. Sawa Sekiko is a fine example of educated, virtuous woman, an image of Sonoko, toson's elder sister who always kept the sanctity of marriage and family life above personal interest. She represents the opinion of the author who always held the view that learning will misguide one's self. Toson is making here a comparison of life of a married woman with an unmarried woman. Who is happy, Natsuko or Sekiko, is the question here. The unmarried life of, Natsuko destroyed her completely like a 'withered grass', although she kept her decision to stay unmarried till she became an insane woman. Whereas, the married life of Sekiko assured her all kinds of luxuries and physical comforts although she had to discontinue her quest for learning after the marriage. Hence, in comparison, Sekiko's life is much happier than her friend's life.

As Aya's life in Kyushujin ended in tragedy, Natsuko's life too ended in tragedy. Similarly, as Osada in Kyushujin won her fight with her mistress - a fight between the urban and rural women, the former with a wicked mind and latter with
a simple and straightforward mind - Sekiko ultimately won the bet which her friend Natsuko over confidently made. Both Aya and Natsuko are typical examples of enlightened women of Meiji period who earnestly tried to come out of the clutches of male dominated society by freeing their souls, but failed to achieve their goals due to insurmountable pressure from the society and the country. Toson also wanted to see their destruction mainly due to three reasons. One is that, he was not a staunch supporter of women’s liberation in the same way as had been understood by women like Aya and Natsuko. He certainly agreed fully to the point that they should be provided equal opportunities for education and employment, but he was totally against the mentality of enlightened women who tend to discard their traditional status and responsibilities blindly. He expected the women to cultivate their self and character after the marriage and dedicate themselves to the service of their husbands and children for the benefit of the whole family, meanwhile protecting their own interest in a moderate manner. This is what he expected from his wife Fuyuko, which the latter had failed to provide him because of her affair before the marriage. He had the opportunity during his observation to witness the fall of several well settled families due to the unconventional behaviour of women who themselves considered as educated, modern and enlightened. Therefore, he considered it as his duty to depict the tragedy
and destruction of such women with extreme behaviour and negative attitude. Secondly, he wanted to depict the infidelity of such modernized women who on one hand look down upon men and criticise various social institutions such as marriage etc., and maintain secret affairs with men on the other hand. Infidelity and faithlessness of women were two items which always disturbed Toson, and therefore, it was a necessity for him to depict them through his works. Thirdly, Toson wanted to highlight the significance and sanctity of marriage and other social institutions. In his real life, he was very much impressed by the life and attitude of his elder sister, Sonoko, who even after her desertion by her husband, clinged to the traditional values of marriage and family for preventing the family from complete destruction. What we see through Sawa Sekiko in Rojo is a typical example of such moderate women. Toson is clearly a supporter of such women.