Chapter - 5

VISION AND MISSION OF THE AUTHORS

The Webster’s Student Dictionary defines:

The word “vision” as a conception in the imagination and
the word “mission” as the specific business, task, or service
any person or group is sent or authorized to accomplish.¹

Vision is a dream to achieve a particular task. Mission is a purpose to reach the aim which is in the mind. The word ‘mission’ is closely connected with the word ‘missionary’. The benevolent values of religion compel for the service nature in the disciples. This service attitude is popularly imitated by women to realize God by serving the human world. For instance, Rev. Mother Theresa’s selfless service and love towards the destitute are unforgettable. Celibacy is considered as necessary to realize one’s mission and for religious practice of the congregation. Some Christian women realize God with their service within the nunnery. Orthodox Christianity views family attachments as hindrance in the way of service. Emaciating the body is also considered as amenable to service.

These selected Christian women authors display the serviceability, kindness, facilitation, self-confidence, accessible nature and courage and all Christian virtues held up by the religion like no other authors. Their creative temperament is clearly Christian in nature.

Othappu and Karukku interpret nun’s life. Bama’s literary attempt is to reveal the personal experience to the world. Sarah Joseph’s inner thoughts and familiarity with religious environment allow her to shape the characters to show society the difference between practical and idealistic religious life. Her critique of cloister is directed towards a vision of reformation of Christian institutions. The memorable roles in her novels create enlightenment in people who are stereotyped
in one way or another. The authors’ focus is not only to transform women’s status but they discuss the realistic issues of the contemporary world like casteism, Dalitism and class disparity. The idealistic doctrines draw them to build a path of vision with moral responsibility and give meaning to their missions.

5.1. Portrayal of Nuns in *Othappu* and *Karukku*

The realistic words of Sarah Joseph as follows:

The desire to be a nun lingers in the flowering-time of every Catholic girl’s life. Without this desire, her teenage is not complete. ‘Piety’ is a haunting passion for a girl from an orthodox background. Surrounded by moral values strongly based on the teachings of family and religion, she wanders in a mysterious world of passion for Jesus Christ. (O, p.ix)

Immature minds of Catholic Christian children are persuaded to begin their journey of renunciation. The depth of faith, moral teachings, religious atmosphere, nuns and priests in holy clad and their dignified life style with external devotion condition them to enter religious community. Christ’s associations with women as recorded in the Holy Scripture inspire woman to perceive Jesus in her own perspective. Yearning of Christian girls to the call of God is more than among Christian boys.

That’s why Sarah Joseph defines:

The ‘Christ’ defined by man is not the ‘Christ’ defined by woman. (O,p.x)

Sarah Joseph discusses a character, Margalitha in order to unfold the individual life of women within the religious framework. Margalitha, the protagonist in *Othappu* and Bama in *Karukku* acknowledge the divine communion and enter the citadel of nuns accustomed by the age old traditions of the church. Though Margalitha’s father and Bama’s family dissuade them from engaging in the life of convent, they accept the life of abbey with a vision to concretize the
teachings of religion with service and charitable work. Because Bama has a dream to render her service to downtrodden children by educating them and Margalitha longs for the beautiful life by serving God in the hermitage. Later a new dimension is given to the meaning of the word ‘service’ with their thoughts and acts of crossing the threshold of ostracized religious life. It is proved that serving humanity outside this cloistered system is possible. As an outsider as well as a single woman, Bama is on her truthful way and is discharging her visionary work. Margalitha shows that God is served without any restrictions to sexuality and her valuable service of serving the orphan boy, Nanu is the best.

The materialistic mode of life of religious members as noted fails to serve the needy. Margalitha and Bama appear as the true followers of religious doctrines. With their poverty-ridden life, they serve their purpose. Sister Lucy’s way of service is full of compassion and she serves the patients with loving heart.

“Sexuality” is a biological aspect of human beings which Sarah Joseph opines must be accepted and celibacy is against nature. She finds spirituality in the worldly process. So she urges her character, Margalitha to leave the convent and search spiritual happiness by becoming one with Karikkan.

In this context, Sarah states:

As a woman, I came to know my spirituality through the experiences of my body. My spiritual seeking spread through my desires, sorrows, ailments, labour, weariness, angst and pleasure. No woman can view her pregnancy, delivery, and breastfeeding as something purely biological. For her, every month’s bloodshed is spiritual. The spirituality of a woman lies in the pleasures of sexual intercourse and in the pain of delivering a child. (O, p.x)

In this regard Margalitha’s union with Karikkan, the protestant couple-Yohannan Kasseessa and the married woman, Rebekka who becomes a free
believer are all portrayed to bring awareness regarding spirituality. Womanhood is no where stands as an obstacle to seek God. This is picturized in the novel.

Margalitha proves as a true Christian with her love towards Karikkan and rejects the luxurious religious life of nuns. She accepts poverty. She takes the responsibility of an orphan infant and leads economically independent life as a sweeper in a shop. Sarah opines that a nun’s life inside the world of hypocrisy is not near to reality and it is beneficial only to the rich. Nunship should become pure service and useful for the society. But Aabelamma and her sisters’ acceptance of nunship in order to escape from poverty is seen as blessings in disguise in the contemporary pressurized society. The life of Rebekka and her kind of service to the people of utter poverty is the real mission. She claims herself as a free believer and makes lay people to have insight into the strength of their inner power. Sister Jereemiya’s role and her act of blasphemy are depicted to reform conventional limited status for women. Thus Sarah’s feminist attitude speaks of woman’s potentiality and rational views. The case of Sara Kochamma, elderly lady in the hospital, the ration dealer’s wife and Rebekka’s timely aid to orphaned Margalitha show how much need is there for women to come out in society and to uplift the needy and victimized woman with a helping hand.

Jancy James introduces Sarah as follows:

She thought, wrote, and worked intensely for women’s liberation, mobilizing women’s movements to resist suppression and denial of dignity. Her deep insight into the range of women’s sorrows and losses made her evolve a new role and profile for women, not only to resist and outgrow patriarchal oppression, but also to provide role models. (O, p.xviii)

The feminist note is also raised by the author to mobilize the forbidden, stagnant lives of women. Male dispensation towards the spouse is explored in the case of Margalitha and Rebekka. This type of harassment is traced in the Scripture
also, where Joseph suspects Mary. So the writer’s approach is to bring awareness among the men community and to create consciousness about the compatibility between man and woman. Depicting the plight of Rebekka from her husband, the suppressing acts of Margalitha’s brothers and how both of them regain their individual identities are Sarah Joseph’s approach to empower women. A. Albert expresses:

As a general rule, Indian Christians are more interested in the building of churches and in managing them than in launching upon wider service.²

Vicar Daniel Achen is addicted to the costly routine life of the monastery. He mechanically discharges his duty and prays as a Parishioner by following the guidelines of the church and he is not sensitive towards the distressed people. He is not even moved when Karikkan is disturbed by the corpse in the colony. His escapist attitude is mocked by the author and reveals view towards the religious institutions.

Sarah catches the church’s discrimination towards low caste Christians as converts. The priest refuses to name Manikyan’s mother as Thresia. Instead she is named Theredya to indicate her identity as a Dalit. Manikyan is also humiliated during the process of first communion and the Vicar denies for communion. Thus, the writer criticizes the church activities which entirely flout the religious and Christ’s preaching. Manikyan’s gaining knowledge of various fields including theology is a challenge to enter seminary and he changes his mother’s name as Thresia on the obituary notice. These acts inspire the reader to contemplate on the hypocrisy in the name of religion.

Father Augustine establishes a black seminary to realize God in the midst of Nature to stress the identity of Dalits through rational thoughts. He proves himself as a sincere Christian even if excluded from the external robes of the priest and outside the walls of the church. He is the true imitator of Christ’s deeds. He
renders social services such as building water reservoir to the poor without the assistance of the government. He performs selfless priestly service to the socially discarded people such as the forest workers and plantation laborers. He has no reservations against accepting Margalitha and an orphan child. In fact realistic renunciation, prayer and human service are witnessed in this model.

The story of Karikkan is an instance of a man who hides himself from revealing reality and is inclined to the power of religion. In contrast to Margalitha, Karikkan is a fear ridden man. Though he steps out of the seminary and rejects vicarship to accept Margalitha, disloyalty is proved with his inability to support his companion. He is dissatisfied with the church’s disparity towards the rich and the poor, but he fails to defend this rational thought in front of the powerful church. So he is picturized as:

Roy Francis Karikkan was neither an unbeliever nor a rationalist. (O,p.xxiii)

This aimless man is unable to justify himself as a priest or a common man because of his guilty actions. But his built up Catholic moral values lead him to render service in the church. So as an unknown person, he becomes a sweeper in the church in an unknown place.

Naasthikan George, as the name itself indicates that he stands against the social evils of society and advocates rejection of the conventional attitudes of religious institutions. With his team, he arranges drama to promote changes in society such as intercaste marriages. Sarah points out the attachment and deep rooted crude religious practices among the older generations and women. With these instances, she gives a ‘call’ to society to realize the practical happenings. She engages mutinously with the existing reality and the self-consciousness of woman who is inhibited by religious doctrines.
Sarah Joseph trespasses the social code and religious norms with her literary act of giving expression to a nun’s emotions. The editors of the book *Just Between Us* affirm:

> While male writers and poets have explored women’s bodies and lingeringly laid their feelings bare, when women write of their own bodies or their emotions they create disturbance and disease.\(^3\)

Sarah Joseph’s reforming thoughts are introduced to the readers through the narration of her stories and by scrutinizing the characters and situations. Visionary views of the author transcend the chauvinistic institutions in society. The Christian Catholic church exercises its powerful hold on the individual and public life of a human being. Her progressive and reforming thoughts on issues such as sexuality do not mean withdrawal from spirituality. On the other side, she upholds serving the needy outside the nunnery throwing light on materialistic stranglehold and the untold sufferings of the poor, the demand to have space for women in ordination, a call to come out of traditional and superstitious beliefs, realizing class caste disparity and dismantling the hegemonic rules of the church which suppress the individual and make them mute.

As feminists, both Bama and Sarah Joseph express religion as discomforting that heaps dogma upon the individual. The conflicts of Bama’s service to the Dalit community as ex-nun and Margalitha’s service to the society and realization of God outside the nunnery offer an interpretation of Christian church doctrines. *Karukku* and *Othappu* contribute to the literary field stressing on women and religion. They give insight of Christian women’s struggles and confronted faith which takes them in the clutches of oppression. Even though the authors are from different cultures, their discussions and understanding of religion picturize the pressures on contemporary women. These from the cloister writings disclose the exile of Catholic nuns from the religious institutional system and reconsider the vision of their lives which is impossible inside the religious order.
The authors focus on religion and its injunctions on women to observe celibacy to realize the predetermined aim of life and their struggle for self-actualization. In this regard, they explore the women's relationship with religion and with its practices.

*Karukku* is about the restrictive doctrines of a religious order. Bama's rebellious thoughts make her travel outside the nunnery and compel to accept it as a challenge to a powerful institution. This book also takes the responsibility to resist the dehumanizing acts of the dominant tyrannical class while exposing the oppressed status of Dalits. She shows how Dalits are segregated and crushed to margins of the dominant class in rural areas of Tamil Nadu. Her writings show the existing social order which denies justice to enslaved people at every walk of life. With a view to liberate the suppressed, the author describes the cultures and affairs of the unprivileged and the privileged. The existence of ill-treatments and casteism in the Dalit Christian community are also delineated. Such torments are also noticed in the story of Sathianadan's *Kamala* which is expressed in the words of Padmini Sen Gupta:

> The real worth of Christianity was there, and she believed profoundly in it; but as practiced, she was horrified to see that even caste was still regarded as legitimate in some sections of Christian society.⁴

With a positive attitude, Bama as a Tamil Dalit Christian woman attempts to bring changes in her community and create awareness among Dalit to realize their significance. The author's existence in the Dalit community allows her to identify the discrimination and articulate Dalit's reality. She protests the unacceptable situation by writing about it. Her novels have been translated into foreign languages and have given voice to the Indian Dalit women's protest against their status. The apathy of the church towards Dalit Christians is also discussed.
Bama has a vision that is enabled by religion. The influence of devotion on her is more from her mother, grandmother, teachers, nuns and priests. The immature mind strictly observes piety with attending mass regularly, punctuality in attending catechism classes, and is conscious of sins and fear. But as she grows up, she finds dislike towards religious members and decides to realize God in her own way in her routine life. The acts of touching, chewing the host and unseen Spiritus Sanctus during confirmation service changes her view of God. Her style of critically interrogating the artificial service of the religious members invites the believers of the church to reflect over their acts.

In spite of her dislike of these whitened sepulchres, she resigns from her teaching job to accept the path of Jesus who is endowed with humility, obedience, patience, gentleness to render service to the poor. With the holy vision to dedicate her life to the suffering people, she acknowledges renunciation. A deep rooted belief of Scriptures pushes her in her choice to become a nun. Later she finds herself unsuccessful in her mission in the illusory world of religious pretenders. What she has learnt in the training class is far from reality. In the nunnery, members play as actors and their way of piety means only absence of humanity, serving the wealthy and powerful people, leading a comfortable life inside huge building with jealousies and competitions and practice class-caste disparity. This disturbed life dismantles her vision, so she comes out of the system.

The choices that Bama makes in her life and those of Margalitha in Othappu though appear as same; Bama’s way of service is different from Margalitha. Bama alone works for the upliftment of the entire Dalit community and for the liberation of women. With an independent life, Margalitha stands as a supportive to an orphan child and rejects the luxurious life offered by her mother. Bama does not find use for the love of man in her mission as Margalitha does.
The novelist has keenly made observation on the barred and limited status for the Dalit Christians within the religious institution. She narrates the saga of downtrodden people in order to make aware of these unconscious dimensions. She occupies the place of voice of protest in identifying the pain of Dalits in the midst of the hierarchical system.

From childhood, she is familiar with the experience of poverty and untouchability. The segregated settlement of low caste people in the village, ill treatment of Naickers towards Harijans and filthy chores assigned to Dalits without any care, humiliation faced in public places and the dark shadow of discriminations of upper caste even in the games of children urge Bama to start her new journey of struggle to bring reform in the conditions of Dalits. Her rational views on the deviant positions of Dalit Christians inside the church, the priority to rich children, neglect of poor in schools and hostels and exploiting money from the lower section in the name of God during festivals compel her to speak out for the poorer section.

Bama is proud of the culture and customs of her particular community. She gives foremost importance to education which works as medicine to the diseased community of her village, the problem of intercaste conflict even over the cemetery and the poverty ridden life of Dalits.

Bama's life as nun is encircled by the church’s practices, traditions and rules which are against her conscience. Her autobiography reveals the clashes and conflicts she faces in reaching her mission and vision. With her perspective, she critically analyses them and suggests the society to be conscious of the hypocritical situations.

The narrator in her literary world criticizes the superstitious beliefs among the people of her community and her selfless endeavor illuminates the marginalized to accept the right path of progress. Betterment of the untouchables
in society is the ultimate goal of her life. Her literary piece is a rebellion similar to *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* by the American woman writer, Harriet Beecher Stowe which has been considered as instrumental against slavery of the Black in the hands of the White dominant class in USA.

*Karukku, Sangati* and *Vanmam* are the outcome of Tamil Dalit community’s denied status, its struggle and awareness with progress. These books occupy a prominent place in Dalit literature. The commitment and involvement to fight against the injustice of society towards Dalits motivate every individual. The author’s literary endeavors work as catharsis in her suffering life.

Bama and Sarah Joseph are touched by the values of Christ’s words in the Gospel and condemn the assumed practices of the church which trap the believers from having powers. These authors find it incapable to stay untouched by the thorns of religious malpractice. As disturbed souls, they refuse to accept artificial masks of religious denomination and walk out to live with the maladies of the commoners. They sow the seeds of needful changes in the minds of the contemporary generation. Sarah through her women dominated novel exhibits woman’s rational views and a voice coming out of suffocating citadel of the religious system which exercises authority over the believers.

5.2. **Highlighting the Dalit and the Marginalized Women**

The authors fictionalize the roles of woman from birth to the end of her life. Women’s cause and rights are addressed with different perspective. Many women writers have attempted to explore the distressed lives of women, but Bama’s and Sarah’s aspirations are appreciable. Because deep insight over Dalit women in rural areas and of dislocated women doing ever menial work in urban areas are shared in their literature. These particular sects of women are ignored in the women’s liberation movement. So it is the vision of Bama and Sarah to bring
progress in the bonded life of these women. And their mission is the deliverance of these women from tears to strength.

In the feminist Bible Sangati, Bama explains the experience of marginalization and the clamorous attitude of the Dalit women which is a basic instinct among them. It documents the minute details of Dalit women’s life realistically and symbolizes the stoic personality. The bold women characters of Bama strive hard to have their autonomy in their own way. Highly contentious issues of Dalit’s existence in Tamil Nadu are traced out by the author. Her literary works stand like a lighthouse for social research and for social transformation.

Sangati effectively provides authentic perspective of the author, who tries to picture the anxieties, responsibilities and aspirations of the Dalit women with many interwoven anecdotes. It investigates realistic individual experience of woman’s life in the author’s village. The Dalit women are alienated and victimized both at the hands of lower and high caste men. Outcry is not glorified, but the liveliness, self-confidence and courage of Dalit women spread light on the women’s world to cope up and build a new society.

“Dalit Feminism” that Bama draws out, idealizes the lives of Tamil Dalit women. Positive qualities of all generations of Dalit women are projected to bring awareness in the minds of oppressed Dalit women to think over their welfare. This literary book is a guide to the future generation to adopt a combative strategy to enjoy liberty regarding individual life. She stresses the requirement of education to every Dalit, especially to Dalit woman. With a view of rendering service, she takes up the job of teaching children. Even the desired nunship is embraced to serve her community and common people. Thus she offers herself to the service motto which is the basic doctrine of her accepted religion.

Bama celebrates the spirit of women in Sangati who are in the world of hard realities. Her literary venture insists upon Dalit women to transgress the
threshold of gender limitations, caste inequality, and injustice within the religious institution. The use of Dalit dialect alerts this particular group to take charge of them and the men are inspired to share the responsibilities with women. She wishes every girl and woman should ward off ignorance and become literate.

At the end of the memoirs, Bama clearly speaks of the resolutions which should work in the minds of people to change themselves and leave behind the deep rooted suffocated norms to build a healthy society. Through her rational thoughts, she encourages women and calls upon them to be outspoken. Her vision is expressed in the literary works as a kind of service to the Dalit women.

Sarah Joseph as a woman activist has participated in the liberation movement to get equal opportunity for women in society. She demonstrates a particular group of women in Thrissur city of Kerala. The realities of women’s existence and resistance against all perilous moments in spite of the lethargic male community muster the women’s community.

Progress and changes are inevitable in society. The eagerness to develop economically, socially and politically is visible everywhere. But in the name of development, only a particular section of people are moving upward on the social ladder and the utter level section is consciously neglected and pushed aside without any opportunities. Besides this, Sarah Joseph minutely observes and criticizes the destruction of the environment which in turn makes way for the displacement of the settler.

In *The Daughters of Alaha*, Thotis are subsided and forced to make their sustenance on the border of Thrissur which is unsuitable for living. Once again, the cruelty of the powerful class in society forces this downtrodden people into dislocation. Sarah expresses discontentment towards the rich class who deny opportunities, facilities and even a bit of solace in the name of urbanization and modernization. The aspect of development does not touch these poor people to get
out of their poverty. The disaster of flood over Kokkanchara and contagious disease from Francis to Yaani are the indication of forbidden advancement and enforced poverty. The establishment of huge buildings, compounds, and rules that enforce silence should be uprooted.

The women represented in this novel are Christian women. The activities of missionaries are not reachable to this downtrodden Christian community. Sarah exposes the failure of religious institutions in their mission of serving the poor. Instead of uplifting the neglected group of society, they support the rich class. The reality is realized when the nuns serve the rich children in largely built convent of Kokkanchara. They are not successful in their service. For instance, they are unconcerned for Annie’s education and personal development. Though progress of urbanization and religion enters into that area, no changes appear in the poverty-ridden families of Kokkanchara. The progressive light brightens the life of the rich, darkening the marginalized. Both society and religion fail to justify the lives of the downtrodden people in Kokkanchara. Editors of *Just Between Us* points out that:

> Women are prevented from speaking of a world free of pain, violence and exploitation; and while ‘upper’ caste women are censored in the interests of tradition and culture, ‘lower’ caste women are censored in the cause of caste identity.\(^5\)

But these writers demonstrate the internal conflict about religious traditions, practices and imagery and denounce them by responding to various gestures of the church. Ethnicity and culture of these writers vary, but their efforts are valuable to demonstrate gender, class and caste bias. The modes of thoughts and complex issues that are raised of lay women in urban and Dalit women in rural areas assist to establish identity in the feminist world.
Both writers envisioned to wipe every tear from every eye and their writing acts as powerful weapon to keep women away from ignorance, illiteracy and suppressed situations.

5.3. Urban Women in *Dangerlok* and *Dev and Simran*

Eunice De Souza reveals her feelings in the novel in many contexts via poetry. Poetry is identified by the editors of the book, *Just Betweens Us* as follows:

> It can be used “as a shield”, giving them the license to express themselves without fear because “each reader understands a poem differently.” Not every layer of meaning in a poem can be uncovered by the reader, and each meaning lends itself to many interpretations.⁶

The women of Eunice De Souza make the readers to assess the complexity of women drawing on casual events in routine life and their attempt to deal everything for survival.

Eunice De Souza projects herself as a typical urban writer. She does not state answer for woman’s alienated state and lack of perfection in relationships in the contemporary world. She just focuses on the existentialist and alienated human relationships in urban society.

The psyche of woman is voiced in the novels of *Dangerlok* and *Dev and Simran*. De Souza mirrors the realities of women particularly in metropolitan cities, where dilemmas conquer the life of females at every stage. She intends to display how the outer modern outlook of woman and societal traditional norms inside her soul hold her back and she brings out the conflicting attitudes in a personality. For instance, though Rina elects to be single, sometimes imagines and prefers company and even escape from loneliness by keeping parrots. Simran also limits her life without thinking of second marriage, but as a typical woman, she takes the company of the dead husband by writing letters.
In our society, the life of single women is looked down upon. Even then at a certain level, this acceptance of single life allows them to identify themselves. They may escape from gossips and get the opportunities of life in urban areas where an unmarried woman is not largely bound within the socially constructed structure. Even though sometimes, the limitations of society try to shake their potentiality. Feminists stand up for the single female existence with a view to recognize individual identity. But Eunice De Souza attempts to capture how the conventional and modern modes of thought in a single woman bar her to the changes in life out of a desire to live in the prevalent circumstances. The ambiguous and complex mind of women in this cruel world seeks satisfaction in every relationship but which is proved as illusion. The concept of satisfaction is eclipsed in the lives of single woman, marital woman and woman in the family.

Eunice De Souza considers upon being of single middle class women in the urban society of Mumbai. The contemporary existence of an unmarried woman, Rina and the widow Simran are portrayed in her two novels. Rina negotiates the lonely life with parrots and Simran remains alone with the circumstances.

In both novels, Eunice De Souza depicts the protagonists’ act of writing letters. Writing letters become a way of relieving anxieties and to share experiences. The mind of contemporary women is not open to everyone, because she hesitates to accept the given images of the society. So she seeks a companion to associate her daily happenings. It reflects the awakened thoughts towards her roles and her attempts to search human compatibility without subversion. Thus the author projects the minds of contemporary women in a diverse way.

Rina is an English lecturer which shapes her social identity, economic security and independent life. She sets her solitary life with parrots in the cage, spending time with crows and rescuing the stray dogs.
Today positive picture of single women is visible which portrays the ability to live. She is afraid of fake and unhappy relationships, so she prefers single life. Rina has maintained a psychological barrier to lead life alone after her debacle with David. This resembles the situation of the caged parrots at home. The frustrated image of parrots mirrors the lack of courage and lapsed will to accept the change and acknowledge the radical views. Rina considers modern trends of life like living together relationship, single motherhood, avoiding procreation and nuclear family but nobody willingly adopts these concepts. For instance, she is conscious of many revolutionary thoughts and experiences the oppressive state but hesitates to be radical. She herself says, she is “a vague lefty”. Even married women like the maidservant and Vera deny coming out of their existing pressurized circumstances. In this way, the author tries to discover woman’s state that makes her to deviate from the traditional system and limits her from materializing freedom with modern views.

Human beings necessarily desire a companion. Every one’s single life is shared with something. Rina spends her time with parrots and with her intimate friends. Attachment is human nature, which leads to success. But if Rina has committed herself to research work, she may not need the company of others. The novelist describes some sections of women, who desire to be far away from risky life and mental pain and adjust themselves to the existing world. Even take the example of Rina, she likes hill stations but resists to visit due to mosquitoes. She is not even ready to vacate from the city of Mumbai to go abroad. She is unable to imagine even a temporary detachment from her residential area.

The author’s vision of life catches the inner world of reality and the outer world of reality for the contemporary women. Rina’s mother’s insistence on education in a women’s college, the lecturer job, and to get job particularly in the city of Poona and Mulk’s expectation from Vera to be a potential wife and Vera’s life with in-laws describe the inseparable traditional socialization of women. The
portrayed habits of smoking, drinking vodka, watching horse race and feminist consciousness evoke the outer appearance of modern outlook in the female character. The hold of conventional norms on women becomes evident here even though she is aware of rights and reforms in the society. The contemporary woman finds sometimes helpless to face the reality and fails to be satisfied.

Rina has built a wall around her to get away from the cruel world. In the monologue she carries on and says that she doesn’t wish to listen to the words of parrots; likes to read detective stories not spy stories. This reveals woman’s problematic existence and her need to get peace of mind by avoidance of the surrounding supervision.

Eunice De Souza through these characters shows women, who, irrespective of their status in society feel imperfection in life. Rina is a single woman but she sometimes desires physical intimacy of Jay or David. To overcome her loneliness, she uses writing, drinking tea and smoking. Married women, Vera and the maidservant are also not satisfied with their existence. Rina depicts herself as a lapsed Catholic and at the same time, she is aware of damnation at every level. Again she holds the readers with the influence of Hindu God images. Even religious beliefs are also creating conflicts in her. That’s why urban woman’s wish and bewilderment to seek accomplishment in all walks of life are unfolded. Thus the author points out the unsatisfactory shadow that lingers on women.

The author again tries to capture the life of a widow, named Simran. She also represents the situation of women in Indian society today. They are not openly embracing rational thoughts but at the same time, they are not free-willed to reject traditional roles. Majority of the woman class are inclined to marital life due to family pressure, attraction towards men so on. Simran marries to release her family members from the responsibility who think her as burden. After the death of her husband, Dev, she is least bothered to remarry. The muteness of Simran at the loss of her child, Sarah and husband projects the silent rebellious nature and strong will to face the obstacles of life.
Once again the author brings forth the need for companionship in a human being. Though woman lacks respectful position in the patriarchal world, Simran remembers her husband very much after his death. She misses him and shares her feelings with the dead husband. She tries to overlook the reclusive life in the midst of Rishad, Deblina, Vimi, Ved, kids and with stray dogs. She is happy in their company because they have not tried to direct or control her. She desires to live for herself. Her dislike of the older generation is evidence of resistance to the confined state. Even she shares her experiences with her dead husband by writing letters. Through these acts, she intends herself to be free of the dominating images. But the words of Simran clearly reveal that she is dependent on Dev for security without expecting happiness. Creating such a character, the novelist observes imperfection in women as a wife and as a widow.

Maya represents herself as the feminist in our Indian society. She strongly supports women’s rights and is influenced with feminist’s views. But she fails to implement her views practically. That’s why, she neglects her research work. The situations like degrading attitude of the society, treating her as enemy of men, her wish to be away from loneliness and attraction towards marriage inspire her to opt for the wedlock and veils her feminist thoughts. Through her, the author prefers to tell the societal holdings on the individual even in the present age.

New views and a way of life are seen in the characters of Deblina and Rishad. Deblina resides abroad and the western society gives space for her Feminism. But in our Indian society, a less scope for reformist ideas is visible. Maya and Simran are advised to marry for the second time and are asked to settle abroad. Even Rishad’s attitude towards women is entirely different from traditional notions. Simran though sticks to the typical role, she is happy with the new thoughts of Rishad and Deblina. This is evident that Indian woman is trying to come out of their age old societal norms and are attempting to accept new thoughts.
Sometimes the lack of encouragement and co-operation from the women's side towards the woman limit the improvement of life, which is shown in the portrayals of Eunice De Souza. The character of Vimi in *Dev and Simran*, is suspicious of Simran's company with men and Utter in *Danger Lok*, teases the behavior of a single girl. The author explores the actualities of contemporary women in our social structure. They try to cope up with every situation without getting satisfactory answer.

Eunice De Souza, who is termed as a conservative and orthodox writer by the critics, upholds the heterosexual relationship. She believes that sexual relationship is desirable and important in human existence through characters in her urban novels. She denies the existence of strong, perfect relationship in this contemporary world. Urban woman fails to get satisfaction and feels alienated. Every minor character and minute things are expressive of truthful facts in this insensitive world seen through the eyes of the author.

5.4. Exploring the Identity of Women in *There is a Dance for Every Song* and *The Dead Cannot Hear*

The record of characters of two successful women artists is reflective of the author's vision to create strong-willed and judicious women and guides to shape the future. The altered lives of Sujatha in *The Dead Cannot Hear* and of Mridula in *There is a Dance for Every Song* bring significant change with their creativity.

The purpose of life of human beings is realized through self-actualization. This aspect finds meaning in the basic requirements like love, solace, identity and creativity in our life. Giving expression to our vision is to fulfill the mission.

Feminists argue from their perspective for the unique role of creativity to liberate women from all social constraints. They perceive talent is a medium for woman's expressive capacity. They condemn patriarchal views which prohibit
women from being creative and develop talent. In Charlotte Gilman’s *The Yellow Wallpaper*, the wife of a physician is confined and forbidden to engage in her creative writing. In turn, it isolates her and brings obsession. Self-realization is possible through the exhibition of creative talents to society. Creativity gives life, internal happiness and helps to get self-satisfaction and economic independence.

Diverse creativities of women are essential for a healthy society. Aesthetic facets of women are visible in multiple areas. Sometimes even in the contemporary period, the exhibition of woman’s creativity appears as blocked thinking and that creativity is concentrated to men only. The characters in *The Dead Cannot Hear* and *There is a Dance for Every Song* excel in their creativity. These personalities overcome the adverse factors in their lives and become attached to creative expression as powerful. They are role models for women. Painting and dancing assist them to be expressive and provide a way for self-gratification. Creativity in women is associated with her personal relationship, nurturing of friendly rapport, domestic work, decoration, spiritual activities and service to others.

Alice Saldanha explores the quest of woman’s self to realize her hidden talent and opines that the sophisticated upper class family is also not free from suppression and discrimination on women. The author makes the women’s world to be aware of humiliations inside the family towards educated women. Other significant decisions on a woman’s life without her individual choices turn out to be discontenting. Finding one’s self and realizing individual identity give liveliness in woman to succeed.

The victimized world is not a permanent feature of a woman’s life like stagnant water; let her to be a flowing river. That’s why, even though Saldanha refers to various sufferings of women, they explore new turns defying the limiting social values. The novelist creates the urge in woman to redefine herself as a blossoming flower.
The life of Sujatha in *The Dead Cannot Hear* reflects the niche before the marriage and after the marital life. The Brahmin family’s alienated and collapsed marital life suggests the existence of colour discrimination and disloyal faces of men’s world. The personality of woman is considered as commodity and unbearable responsibility. Men are insensible towards her choice and desires.

Sujatha stands up against the marginal position of women in the society. The lack of love in her parental house makes her to expect affection in marital relationship. Disappointment in her expectation turns her depressed to some extent, but she once again conquers life with her individual decision. She breaks out of the backward life, discovers her hidden creativity and seeks a guide, philosopher, friend and a compatible companion in Prem who supports her at every stage of life. Sujatha’s artistic taste is enhanced with Prem’s similar thoughts. She balances family and creative career.

The daring and positive attitude of Sujatha is appreciable compared to her husband, Sanjay. When her vision of happy life and love from the life-partner collapses, she comes out of negative thoughts. With the potentiality and by convincing her parents, she herself creates a favorable environment and finds a way to promote her hidden talent. But in the case of Sanjay, we get the picture of suicide out of depression. To possess the world of creativity, a suitable and inspiring atmosphere and daring are required. They liberate, bring out talents and make independent. Sujatha’s talent for painting provides words to the picture of Rosanne and even her own feelings are exhibited through her work.

In contrast to the sophisticated life of Sujatha, the author figures out Uma, a maid and Rosanne, a classmate who are assertive without succumbing to their captive lives. Rosanne’s life as prostitute is not willingly accepted. The environment of the family with a cruel father and the poverty push her to earn her livelihood through prostitution. She comes out of that dark world when she gets
life with a supportive partner. Victimized Uma is also not an exception, the new life as a maid gives her confidence to make her living. The new thoughts in the minds of young people are noticeable, Shaila, Sujatha’s cousin marries Paul, a Christian boy. Motivation towards changes, accepting a new perspective, the necessity of self decision and self-support are the messages of the novelist. She imparts them to the human world and to the feminine psyche. Sujatha’s mother, a home-maker reflects the existence of individuality even in an ordinary woman who is tied to domesticity. This novel in an optimistic way puts out the happy resolution to the problems of women.

Globalization allows women to be economically independent and self-decision provides an opportunity to seek realization. Mridula Martis depicts herself as a model of talent who realizes her wish to develop the ability of the dance art. No doubt, her creativity is also proved in the corporate world through her commitment and love for work. Financial support, encouraging parents, deep engagement, patience and risk taking attitude motivate Mridula to pursue the attractive art. Single minded devotion stimulates to take up the deal of moving to London to learn Salsa dance. This choice of her life is not only felt as necessary to self but with a purpose to share and teach creative dance to others.

Mridula happens to meet her past lover in London but she adopts and devotes her mind to learn art extensively. She works out continuously and realizes extreme pleasure of her choice. With this obligation, she works hard and contributes her talent in the field of dance. The supportive system and the incredible potentiality inside bring success to Mridula. She is content by establishing a school and imparting many students and corporate people the art of dance.
Sujatha’s parents in *The Dead Cannot Hear* ignore the creativity in her and want their daughter to be married to discharge the domestic responsibility. But Mridula’s parents let her to do something which interested her. Their hope on the daughter enables her to learn dance and also music which are inseparable and allows her to perform service in her own way. Certain impediments, the author faces in the unknown land really depicts the challenging and daring attitude. Even the frustration of John towards her performance makes her difficult to deal. The positive attitude and commitment to learn tap dance help her to be trained and she proves it.

She uses her talent to satisfy herself and also for the benefit of the society. She gives a direction to women to develop their talents actively. The intensive process of realizing the talent helps her to avoid conflict and guilt as a human being. This gifted artist as a professional dancer with creative endeavor contributes to the society. Dorothy Sampath Kumar writes:

> Many of the talents of most women lie hidden. May be we are just too scared or baffled to venture out. The ‘birthing’ of our dreams and aspirations blesses our lives and others as well. This can happen only when first women are determined to overcome and rise to achieve our goal. Secondly, cooperation and encouragement is needed from society, particularly from men who will recognize the potential and abilities of women. In some homes women give in to preferential treatment towards the children. Girls may not receive the similar attention as the boys. Both boys and girls should be encouraged.⁷

Thus the authors intend to show the importance of women’s talents to the world with their valuable contributions. The attempts of these personalities are considered to be eminent. It is suggested that the ability to face challenges making use of the opportunities, commitment, education, needful support from the living environment are factors for creative women to make their own expressive world. Strong willed and hard working Sujatha and Mridula Martis mirror themselves as
models to contemporary women. The accomplishment of prestigious position through creative work is possible to all women. The authors stress the need for developing and encouraging talents of women without gender bias and the necessity of support to share their experiences with the outside world.

The pictures of contemporary women and their issues that are depicted by these women writers mark them immortal in the world of literature. The existing emotions among people and their social relationships in their writings allow the readers to construct their own personalities. Without concealing the plights of women, they show human concern. And by throwing light on the aspects of women, they bring societal change. Women writers and their writings are ignored due to lack of realistic thoughts. But these literary figures are able to prove themselves as powerful writers with the projection of factual and debatable concepts of women’s lives in various societies. Their endeavors in identifying the social reality of woman and to transcend such tyrannical reality through thoughts are admirable.

One of the woman activists, Surekha describes:

Social changes will not truly liberate women unless they spring from a changed mental attitude. Only when people begin to respect women as people created in the image of God as much equally as men, the possibility of egalitarian structure has some hope.¹

All these writers’ visions are worthy. They render sincere and truthful effort in their mission through the power of creativity as interpreted in the novels. The valuable service of these women authors is recognizable, especially to the world of women.
Chapter 5  Vision and Mission of the Authors

This section has explained the stands of the leading writers on Christian women who are depicted as minority sect in India. Their sensitive treatments towards the plight of women develop an emancipated attitude among the present women especially the Christian women. The idealist traits of these writers as revealed by their novelistic portraits that highlight service to the downtrodden and to society, fortitude against odds of life, and creative instinct to liberate them.

These women writers reflect the societal dogmas and other institutional taboos towards the women with the picture of their cultural regions. They also show the impressive resistance of women to these dogmas. They thus focus on the female self, expression, wishes, choices and opportunity in a positive way.
Notes


