CHAPTER IV

FEMININE LITERARY SENSIBILITIES AND THE AESTHETIC WORLD OF ARIYOSHI SAWAKO

Ever since the end of the Heian period and through the early modern period, literary contributions from women have been almost absent. In other words, there appears a causal relationship between the rise of feudalism in Japan, and decline in feminine literary creativity. The absence of women from the literary scene of Japan for such a long period has been so conspicuous that even after their entry in the modern period they have generally been ignored by historians of Japanese literature and literary critics. On a close look at the anthologies or abstracts of representative works in Japanese prose and poetry, especially those pertaining to the modern period, one is dismayed to find that women writers, no matter how remarkable they are, do not even find a place. Throughout the modern period, writing has largely been a "man's profession", most of the names included in collections of modern literature are men, and some critics discuss the genre only in terms of male authors. As a matter of fact, the number of women writers has been steadily increasing ever since the first quarter of the present
century, so much so that they are as prolific as their male counterparts. Then, why are they being ignored? Are they less professional than their male counterparts insofar as their writing abilities, techniques, or talent are concerned? Are their works not received well by the readers?

One also comes across a term Joryu sakka signifying a category to which all women writers are generally said to belong, outside the mainstream literature of the Bundan. This tendency has been quite marked in Japan and is unparalleled in the world. ¹

There is no denying the fact that outside Japan, and especially in the west though the term woman writer has been in use, it has not been applied to categorise literary creativity merely on the basis of the gender of writers. As one may note, gender cannot form a scientifically valid

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¹ In response to the kind of male chauvinism which is reflected in making the separate category joryu sakka some women writers and critics have expressed their anguish. Danryu bungakuron (A Discourse on men's literature) by Tomioka Taeko, Ogawa Chikako, and Ueno Chizuko, 1992, is first of its kind where authors have reevaluated the works of great novelists like Mishima Yukio and Tanizaki Junichiro. It has sparked fierce debate and also demystified the notions about bundan as, the sacred male dominated territory. Also see, Saegusa Kazuko, 'Renaishosetsu no Kansei', (The Pitfalls of Romantic Fiction), Seidosha,1991; 'Onna ga Yomu Nihon Kindai bungaku' (Women's Views of Modern Japanese Literature) in Urushida Kazuyo and Egusa Mitsuko (eds), Shinyosha, 1992; and Ueno Chizuko, "The Rise of Feminist Criticism", Japanese Book News, No. 2., (Tokyo, 1993), p. 5.
principle of literature classification. The term 'woman writer has found its application mostly in the feminist sense, which is said to have grown out of the women's movement in the 1960s, which some western women writers find so confining and restrictive. The questions thus arise: how justified is it to lump all women writers together under the category called Joryu sakka? What are the literary or social origins and functions of such a category? Does the literature created by women carry distinctly different forms, tone, and contents to those of the male authors who dominate bundan or the Japanese Literary world? Do all women writers essentially write a similar literature or they too, as in the case of the males, write on themes, subjects, and issues which are diverse? In other words do women writers belong to a unified school or a 'ryu'? In the first part of this chapter attempt has been made to examine some of these questions with reference to the modern period only. Nevertheless, a brief section would also examine the rise and fall, and re-emergence of women writers in Japan with reference to the prevailing socio-economic and

political situations of different historical periods. In the second part, an attempt is made to place the works of Ariyoshi Sawako with reference to the general history of Japanese literature on the one hand, and women writers, on the other.

IV.1 JORYU SAKKA: Its Social and Literary Origins

The tendency to place women writers in a separate category can be traced back to the Heian period, when women were producing masterpieces of classical literature like "The Tale of Genji" in Kana (the Japanese syllabary), while convention required men to do most of their writing in Chinese. The term gained more circulation during the Taisho period (1912-26). It may be intriguing indeed to also be noted, that Taisho period also marks the beginning of partial democratic reforms and legislation seeking to redress and ameliorate some of the democratic political rights of women in Japan. Earlier, the new Meiji constitution of 1890, which introduced limited manhood suffrage, did not show any inclination towards providing the same to women. Instead, women were barred from organising or joining political groups: or even attending political meetings. Enfranchisement came much later, the regime of the Taisho in 1922 at least recognised
the women's right to organise and attend political meetings. ³

Around this period the institution of motherhood was introduced and perpetuated through legislation into the family ideology to serve national interest. The 1920s and 1930s saw dislocations and uncertainties common in societies undergoing rapid economic and social change; they were accompanied by various strands and shades of feminist thoughts; and debates concerning redefinition of their role in a new nuclear family set-up; and conflicting demands made on them arising out of the needs of the family and its economic conditions. ⁴

A number of women's groups emerged during the latter part of the first quarter of the century, whose objectives and efforts were directed at providing a forum for debate on a variety of issues pertaining to the place of women in Japanese society and polity. Prominent among the early groups was the Seitosa ⁵ (Blue stocking


Society) whose publication Seito provided a literary outlet for women writers became a vehicle for feminist criticism in Japan. The reemergence of feminine voice in literature was noticed during the latter days of the Taisho with the writings of three prominent women writers, namely Miyamoto Yuriko, Hirabayashi Taiko and Sata Ineko. They heralded a new stream of literary sensibility which came to be known as proletarian literature in Japan. But the prolonged silence of the feminine voice, in aesthetics and art, which was muted after the decline of the Heian aristocracy and subsequent rise of feudalism and military class, was broken for the first time during the late Meiji period by Higuchi Ichiyo. In fact, a few literary critics saw in her "the first true genius in modern literature." 6 Higuchi Ichiyo was also responsible for a gradual revival of literary sensibilities in the Meiji period. After her death in 1896 there was once again a brief silence, insofar as women's voice in literature was concerned.

While attempting to understand the socio-economic and political factors, influencing the historicity of social origin of the terms joryu sakka, one cannot ignore the role

of major upheavals in the Japanese social and political structure. Modernization in the post-Meiji period provided immense opportunities of exposure to western democratic ideals and practices, as well as to the Marxist socio-political paradigms directed towards creation of a socialistic order. The women writers who emerged on the literary scene of the Taisho and Showa periods (after a brief silence following Higuchi Ichiyo's death) came from a background of proletarian movement. They directed their intellectual energies to liberate Japanese women and society from the clutches of the exploitative, hypocritical, feudalistic and patriarchal order. It is to be noted that the course of modernization in Japan until the post-war was at best superficial. In other words, the spirit of modernization was superimposed on a social order which was essentially feudal. It created inevitable sources of conflict between the social and family norms on the one hand, and the individual's aspirations on the other. This gave birth to instability, which made the weaker section of the society suffer the most. Women who were part of the


weaker section received the worst deal irrespective of the social status, group, or class. The class-gender nexus of human suffering in a rapidly changing socio-economic order became the subject for women writers to dwell upon. Their realism was in divergence with those of the Shirakaba group of humanists who were males drawn essentially from upper class families.

The historical facts explained above may help in understanding the social origin of the term joryu sakka. The following proposition may also serve some useful purpose in this vain. Firstly, the reemergence of the feminist voice in literature took place after a long silence in history. The social order at that time had inherited a strong male dominated feudal value system which separated the domain of man from that of woman. Secondly, the literary works of women writers were marked by an explicit denial of those values and practices which gave them a subordinated status and also denied the Japanese women a dignified human existence. And, thirdly, the narrative prose created by women writers was couched in a value premise (discussed below) which was distinctly external to

the social norms and practices existing then. One may also add that, because of the above and also for implicit reasons, the male-dominated literary world in Japan was less inclined to accept women writers as equal partners in literary pursuits. Hence they rated their works in a separate 'marginal' or peripheral stream as Joryu Sakka.

This tendency has been so deep rooted that even in the contemporary literary world of Japan, women writers do not seem to enjoy quite the same level of respectability as their male counterparts. In this context one may recall that the narrative and imaginative skills of the Heian women writers whose works became the glory of Japanese literary history, as against those from the uncritical imitators of Chinese literature and culture. It has already been documented elsewhere in this thesis that women in the early Middle Ages had no access to learning Chinese language and culture, as the world of scholarship which was synonymous to knowledge of Chinese culture, was the exclusive territory of the male.

A few commentators feel that despite the preference and zeal amongst the Heian nobles for imitating Chinese culture and knowledge, the rise of feminine literature

10. Margaret Yamashita, "Higuchi Ichiyo Nameless and Faceless Women", in Harper, et.al. (eds.), n.6, p. 93.
in the form of stories and diaries became possible because Japanese society still retained vestiges of the matrilineal family system which gave women an overall high status relative to what it became in the later periods. And also, because the Heian court ladies received enormous encouragement and patronage from the court of Kyoto which relied more upon its cultural authority rather than military power. 11

On the other hand, Izumi cautions that a high women's status in Heian times should not be confused with gender equality. 12 He points out that despite existence of the vestiges of the matrilineal system, polygamy was fast gaining ground as a result of which women had to suffer tremendous emotional crisis. According to this source, it was their pains and sufferings at the hands of the men, especially of the noble class, which were reflected in the form of stories, diaries etc. In fact the constraints under which literature prospered among the women in a way became their advantage. While discrimination on the lines of gender got further perpetuated and became widespread, women in the post-Heian period could engage

12. Izumi, n. 8.
little in writing as they found themselves trapped in the newly founded fetters of Confucian "conventions" which were percolating down the social hierarchy.

Returning to the debate on Joryu Sakka, it would be pertinent to take a look at how the male writers felt about women making an entry into their exclusive bastion. In this context, it may be noted that the male authors who were also part of the prevailing social order did not feel any different from those outside the literary world. There were literary groups like Shirakaba which despite its professed ideological orientations of equality and individuality would just not admit a woman within its fold, and considered women as objects of love and procreation only.¹³

On the other hand, there were individuals like Mori Ogai, whose works influenced modern Japanese literature enormously as a writer and critic. He recognised the exceptional ability of a writer like Higuchi Ichiyo. In his famous comment on most contemporary writers Ogai once advised them (contemporary writers): 'It would do good to take a little of her (Higuchi Ichiyo) fingernail dirt

Mishima Yukio (1925-1970), commenting on the ability of women in creating literature was of the view that women lacked the objectivity for owing to their biological and social nature they cannot separate the mind from their womb. A woman generally grows up in an environment in which she learns to live under protection of her parents and/or husband. She feels insecure in isolation. She lacks self consciousness which is essential for objectivity. He further says, that literature is a vehicle for searching the truth. A tool which is subjective can never get close to truth. A woman's mirror is invariably a subjective mirror which glosses over the reality under the thick layer of make-up.

In one of its 1962 issues, the Kokubungaku Kaisaku to Kansho enumerated ten conditions for a woman writer to be identified as Joryu Sakka. Most of the conditions, barring a few, were in agreement with the those highlighted by Mishima. In a nutshell, it implies that in order to become a writer a woman must necessarily develop characteristics, attitudes and behaviour akin to that of a male, thereby liberating her 'self' from her

14. Murakami, n.6, p. 34.

physiology, renouncing her biological function as a procreator, and her social role as a wife and mother. Even after having done so what therefore remains of her as a Joryu Sakka: the marginal stream of bundan.

Most of these views cannot stand the test of scientific scrutiny as they may not also be corroborated by historical facts. Such views smack of a politics of exclusion so that the male bastion in the literary world of Japan remains unchallenged. This may also be interpreted as an attempt at socially depriving women of their potentials, a well engineered design, to reduce the literary sensibilities of women to rubble.

Contesting these a few observers have eulogised the advantages women tend to have as procreators. They suggest that though women occupied the backstage in society, they experience pleasure in carrying out the most 'human' activity. They have also been the repository and transmitters of the varied idioms of tradition, culture, art and aesthetics. While men have been, historically speaking, busy in fighting wars and politicking, women have been ensuring the survival of human destiny. Through their own experience as procreators, they have closely watched and understood the dynamics of nature. They are thus not only creators of men, but also of science and
Their varied experience provides them with rich perceptivity and bring them closer to realities of the struggles of human existence. This makes them more suitable story tellers than men who are deprived of such experiences. Objectivity is not independent of knowledge and experience. It is a product of consciousness which arises between social and personal experience, between the objective and subjective realities and impulses. A writer makes use of both, in order to inject life into his/her narratives.

Men and women together have created human history. Each has through sweat and tears built the social edifice and also created literature by making use of different prisms of outlook and experiences which have been intellectually and aesthetically equally enriching. Joryu Sakka, therefore, can at best be termed as an artificial category.

Another yardstick of literary classification may be based on similarities or dissimilarities of themes on which women writers through the span of literary history have chosen to write. The question one may ask here is

whether women prose writers, in terms of content and treatment of themes forming the storyline, belong to a single category or school ('ryu') distinct from those of male writers. In other words, what are the special features or characteristics of feminine literary works? Does it necessarily entail that they are different from those of men? A few aspects have been highlighted below on the basis of a general review attempted in the previous chapter.

IV.2. Features of Feminine Literary Sensibilities

While attempting to document and interpret some important features of feminine literary works one may consider the following postulates:

(a) Women writers in Japan have picked up themes which similar to those of male writers: its a testimony are of their response to situations arising out of socio-economic challenges relevant to the time of their writings;

(b) Despite common experiences as women in a male-dominated social structure, they have written on diverse themes, ranging from those of family, motherhood, and human sexuality to those pertaining to experiences of war, ageing, and the world of Japanese traditional art forms (such as Joruri, Kabuki etc.), and also on aspects such as inter-racial interaction;

(c) In their treatment of varied themes women writers show striking diversity. They, however, tend to highlight the experiences and problems of women more explicitly. They lay emphasis on the development of the
character of their protagonists who are invariably females: their male characters playing only a supporting role;

(d) The preoccupation of female writers with their female characters and feminine mode of thought does not essentially imply that their writings specifically deal with feminist issues: being 'women writers' a nebulous category itself, does not necessarily mean that they belong to the category of feminist writers.

These postulates have been examined below with the help of a discourse on the life and some notable works of a few prominent woman novelists of the modern period. Those represented here include Higuchi Ichiyo, Miyamoto Yuriko, Enchi Fumiko, Tsushima Yuko and Ariyoshi Sawako. The creative span of Higuchi Ichiyo pertains to the early modern period, while that of Miyamoto Yuriko essentially belongs to the pre-war period, though she remained active until her death in 1951. The latter three gained prominence in the post-war period. Tsushima, who was born in 1947, the youngest of all, is a representative of the contemporary feminine sensibility in Japanese literature. Since a detailed examination of Ariyoshi Sawako's life and works has

17. A detailed study on 'Joryu Sakka' is found in Okuno Takeo, "Joryu Sakkaron : Shosetsu wa Honshitsu-teki Josei no mono Ka (Tokyo, 1974); Iwaya Daishi, Monogatari Joryu Bundanshi, I & II (Tokyo, 1977); Muramatsu, Kindai Joryu Sakka No Shocho (Tokyo, 1980); Robert L. Danly, In The Shade of Spring Leaves: The Life and Writings of Higuchi Ichiyo, A Woman of Letters in Meiji (Japan & New Haven, 1981).
been attempted separately, those of others has been taken up in the following section.

Higuchi Ichiyo (1872-96) is considered as one of the most accomplished writers of the modern period. She is one of the first to have emerged from the restrictions of social conventions in order to find an expression for her artistic talents. Her works bear a significant imprint of the traditional Japanese literary traditions insofar as style and form are concerned, at the same time there is freshness of modernity in its content. It is for this reason and also because she heralds the return of women writers that her work provides an essential link between the traditional and modern literary conventions.\textsuperscript{18} She was also perhaps the first advocate of women's liberation.\textsuperscript{19}

Her early death at the age of twentyfour in 1896 was an enormous loss to the world of Japanese literature. In such a short span she could grasp the realities of growing in the feudal-patriarchal society of Japan and also assimilated with skill the new literary ideas. Ichiyo's short stories and novels published during her life time established her


\textsuperscript{19} Yamashita, n. 10, p. 93.
beyond doubt as a profound literary figure, but did little
to help her come out of poverty which finally took her life.

Although the subject matter of her stories and novels
mostly revolved around the bar-girls and prostitutes whom
she had closely observed at the Yoshiwara pleasure quarters,
she has also taken up the life experiences of women living
in Japanese homes. *Ju'sanya* 20 *(The Thirteenth Night)* was
written about a year before her death. The novel probes deep
into the emotions of its characters situated in different
capacities in Japanese society. Her protagonist, O-seki who
came from a poor background is maltreated by her affluent
husband Harada. Frustrated by her unhappy married life she
resolves to quit Harada and return to her parents. It was
on the thirteenth night of September, a traditional harvest
moon-viewing evening. Her father persuades her not to leave
Harada for the sake of her family. O-seki's father, knowing
his daughter's sufferings well, asks her to bury her pride
for the interest of her family, thereby becoming an
"unwitting pawn of the society which has taught him to
suppress compassion for his own daughter". 21 She returns
in a *jinrikisha* pulled by her childhood friend, whom she had

20. Tanizaki Junichiro et al (eds) *Nihon no bungaku :
Higuchi Ichiyo, Tokutomi Roka, Kunida Doppo*, Vol. 5
(Tokyo)

once wished to marry. Her childhood friend had also had an unsuccessful marriage and was now a poor man. This story ends with O-seki entering the unjust and unkind world that Harada’s house was.

Ichiyo brings out with profundity the problems of married women in Japanese society and successfully creates a faceless and nameless character in O-seki who has not a resolute personality or determination to meaningfully articulate and fight injustice. While the conflict between individual expectations and social order has been clearly highlighted by Ichiyo, she does not suggest solutions.

Miyamoto Yuriko comments on the women writers of her time: "They do not have a literary theory which could guide their work." 22 This may sound appropriate for writers like Tamura Toshiko but may appear a little harsh with regard to Ichiyo. Ichiyo may not have a literary theory per se, as there was hardly one at that time. But the poignancy with which she highlights and thereby delineates the problems of women in the social environment of the Meiji is remarkable. The perspective implicit in the story of Jusanya places the blame for women's sufferings squarely on the social structure of Japan as she

visualises individuals to be just 'unwitting pawns'. This perspective of Higuchi Ichiyo is also present in another work, *Takekurabe* 23 (Growing Up) which is a manifestation of a social theory she adopted.

Higuchi Ichiyo establishes her identity in a different way from those of the Heian women writers, who created narratives situated in a gloomy and dark backdrop and saw their protagonists suffering at the hands of their lovers. The passive sadomasochism characteristic in the narratives of the Heian court ladies is not present in any significant proportion in the works of Ichiyo. There is a sparkle of light, a search for freedom, an effort to disengage from the clutches of social norms but all draped in the realism of social constraints.

The revival of the feminine voice in Japanese literature started by Higuchi Ichiyo was carried forward by none other than Miyamoto Yuriko (1899-1951). Born to an architect father, she acquired liberal thoughts right from her childhood. She also had an occasion to visit the Soviet Union and was influenced by socialistic ideas through her association with another lady, Yuasa Yoshiko, a specialist in Russian literature. She joined the proletarian movement.

and soon became its prominent figure. She later married Miyamoto Kenji, who soon after their marriage, was jailed for about twelve years. Yuriko too went to jail several times for participating in democratic movements, and for her writings during the period of war. She was just not a passionate novelist but also a profound social activist whose strong personality, conviction and zeal with which she led her life, only a few in the world could match.

Although her first literary treatise was based on the life of destitutes (*Mazushiki Hitobito no Mure, 1916*), it was *Nobuko* 24 (1928) which is considered to be the landmark novel from where one may trace the origin of new literature. It is the first novel which deals with the theme of emancipation of women, but with a difference. 25 Higuchi Ichiyo craved for justice and freedom, Yuriko transformed it into action and gave meaning to it. 'Nobuko' lets in the freshness of the mountain breeze into the suffocating life Japanese women. It broke dawn over the dark and narrow valley in which women had been living for centuries.


Yuriko’s protagonists Nobuko in "Nobuko" and 'Hiroko' in *Banshu Heiya* - their name and characterisation signify broadening of the vision, the beginning of the process of enlightenment through self-introspection. The two novels document the process of development in the life of a woman who moves from the state of 'being' to the state of 'becoming': a dynamic process which the entire generation of writers barring a few, unfortunately missed out. Yuriko, even while selecting names for her protagonists is consistent and carries the conviction of her life: to live with broader horizons and to reap rich experiences in life seem to be her motto. It may not be out of place to mention that the 'Nobu' of Nobuko and 'Hiro' of Hiroko mean 'to enlarge' and 'to widen' respectively. 26

'Nobuko' was written soon after Yuriko suffered from the misfortune of divorcing her first husband Aragi whom she married much against the wishes of her family. Nobuko, too, married Tsukuda much the same way. Tsukuda like Aragi had a submissive and indecisive personality and lacked ambition in life. But as Yuriko always believed that love changes the man, Nobuko too strives hard through her affection, love, and care to transform Tsukuda so that their association with

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each other could become a memorable experience. Nobuko wanted to experiment and was convinced that she could tide over all difficulties she and Tsukuda faced in the present. She had to give up finally, as Yuriko too had to call it off with Aragi who was in a state of inertia. Nobuko like Yuriko respected individuals who were conscious of what 'they are' and wanted 'to become' something, and for that was ready to face challenges in life.

Despite an extremely simple plot, the reader of 'Nobuko' is set in a flowing tempo, perhaps because the character of Nobuko is earnestly moving ahead, bubbling with energy and enthusiasm, meeting challenges on her way. Not always victorious, she doesn't loose grip on her purpose in life, and looked composed and bright. A significant contrast to Yoko, the protagonist of Arishima Takeo's Aru Onna27 (1919). Yoko is also energetic, prepared to face consequences but she lacks direction. She is trapped in erotic, becomes sick, erratic and cruel, and gradually sinks into a state from which she could never come out.28 Arishima sees in Yoko, the heroines of Saikaku who chose a course which for them finally became a curse in life,

perhaps because the Japanese man in him could still survive despite a good deal of exposure to and acquaintance with western high culture and philosophy.

On the contrary, when Yuriko wrote 'Nobuko' she hardly had any exposure to Marxist and socialist ideology. It was her innate creative energies and experiences in life which shaped the storyline of 'Nobuko'. 'Nobuko' is autobiographical, self-searching and improvising. Yuriko did not divorce Aragi or for that matter Tsukuda for not being conscientious in life. By divorcing her husband Nobuko she questions the entire social milieu in which the relationship between a man and a woman takes place, where marriage becomes a great hinderance in their progress, especially that of a woman who is tied to a man in a way which definitely ends up in as master-slave relationship. Yuriko always believed that the unitedness of a man and woman through marriage is the beginning of a process which enriches each other's life. The spirituality in the relationship between the two, later becomes part of her life experience also. Soon after her second marriage with Miyamoto Kenji, and his jail sentence Yuriko supported him spiritually throughout. Their faith, and love for each other prospered to new heights of experience. Yuriko in her own admission thought that it was because of
mutual love and affection only that she could fight difficult times, and develop as a human being, author, and as a woman.

Yuriko places great emphasis on 'self' and individuality of women. She considers this a key to freedom from the shackles of social norms and conventions. She is critical of women who are conscious of their frailty and submit themselves to the wishes and whims of men. She says that in the present times the problems between men and women are increasingly becoming fatal. And to fight for the woman's 'self' would be a wrong presumption. One must live in a society as a human being and it is, therefore, essential to be compassionate to men who are also humans. Liberation of 'self' is a process applicable to both men and women alike. She is critical of Toshiko as an author, who regarded self-respect for women as pivotal for their dignified existence. But she was shocked when Toshiko developed an affair with Kobogawa Tsurujiro, the husband of Yuriko's close friend Sata Ineko - another proletarian literatus of great repute. Yuriko commented, "is it her (Toshiko's) way of emphasizing women's freedom and 'self-respect'? Thus, she thought that there should be

complementarity between what one professsed and what one did in one's actual life. Discovery of 'self' would remain incomplete in the absence of this.

The period immediately following the war saw the emergence of yet another accomplished literary celebrity, Enchi Fumiko, (1905-1986). Although Enchi began her writing career as a playwright as early as 1926 when her first play Furusato (Native Village) appeared. She took to writing novels after her marriage with Enchi Yoshimatsu, a newspaper reporter. She rose to real fame during the post-war period when her fiction became widely recognised.30 She was born to a Professor of Tokyo University who was an expert on Japanese, therefore, read Japanese classics from her childhood. She was particularly influenced by the decadent aestheticism which dominated the art of novel writing until the post-war periods.31 Enchi received numerous literary honours and awards. Among them were the Tanizaki Prize in 1969, and in 1985 she was honoured by Japan's highest award - the Bunka Kunsho (The Order of Cultural

Merit). She remained active as an author and an influential critic until her death in 1986 at the age of 81.

The range of Enchi's literary works presents a variety of subjects which she handled with almost equal competence. Her interest in classical Japanese literature prompted her to undertake a modern translation of The Tale of Genji. She also "created a highly charged atmosphere" in 'Onnamen'\(^32\) (Masks) by referring to the story of RokujoMiyasudokoro (Lady Rokyujo) from The Tale of Genji.\(^33\)

Women and their sufferings remained close to her heart. Whether she was depicting women in the traditional milieu or in a much liberated environment of the modern times, Enchi has portrayed them at times as mute, silent sufferers, and at times, revengeful. Gessel says:

"Reading works such as Onnazaka\(^34\) (The Waiting Years, 1957) or Onnamen (Masks, 1958), one gets the strong impression that a Heian woman writer is lodging within the withered tormented body of a contemporary shameness... The contrast between the calm, socially acceptable exterior of Enchi's women - often

\(^{32}\) Enchi Fumiko, Onnamen (Tokyo, 1958).

\(^{33}\) Matisoff, n.30.

\(^{34}\) Enchi Fumiko, Onna Zaka (Tokyo, 1957).
described in terms of makeup,... and the hot emotions bubbling beneath the surface create dynamic tensions... Enchi takes decaying forms - physical bodies beyond actual sexual contact.\textsuperscript{35}

Enchi thus portrayed women with a difference - unlike, that of Tanizaki's whose feminine psychology was determined largely in the context of actual contact of physical bodies. Enchi also seems to be fascinated by the world of spirits - evil and vengeful at times. In \textit{Yo}\textsuperscript{36} (Enchantress, 1956) she describes the tenacity of the vindictive spirit of a woman under the exacting feudalistic family system, which has an almost eerie appeal to the present generation.\textsuperscript{37}

In her very famous story \textit{Nisei no En-Shui}\textsuperscript{38} (A Bond for Two Life Times) a widowed woman is put into the service of a physically debilitated scholar who is shrivelled and impotent. But even in that condition, he appears to be a slave to lust. This has some similarity with Tanizaki's "Old Man" who carries on a flirtation with his daughter-in-law and becomes fascinated by her feet. While the protagonist in Tanizaki transforms the man-woman

\textsuperscript{35} Gessel, n. 31.

\textsuperscript{36} Enchi Fumiko, Yo (Tokyo, 1956).


\textsuperscript{38} Enchi Fumiko, \textit{Nisei no Enshui} (Tokyo, 1957).
relationship into some kind of religious devotion, that for
Enchi is stronger than religious devotion or anything else.

While in most of her works, Enchi has crafted out a
beautiful world of sadomasochism, Onnazaka portrays with
relentless accuracy the patient devotion of a woman married
to an egoistical profligate. It appears to be a full-blown
recreation of Higuchi Ichiyo's Jusanya, the difference being
that in Onnazaka the story leads to the cracking of the
pride of the egoistical profligate, a reincarnate of Harada.

Tomo, the submissive and docile protagonist of
Onnazaka, while lying on her death bed tells her husband:
"please throw my dead body into the sea." The brevity of
this statement carries deep meanings. It conveys her refusal
to be part of her family graveyard. It echos as if: "let
the hungry creatures of the sea savour my soulless body
which you devoured so mercilessly, why not !" On listening
to this, the mist which covered her husband's eyes
immediately disappeared. He looked an absent-minded old man
with his mouth wide open. His eyes looked so terrified as
if he had seen a ghost. His handsome and noble face got
distorted into an ugly mask. The intensity of this
statement was so strong that it broke his pride and ego
which he cared the most all his life ·into pieces.
Enchi hits hard on the male-dominated and male-centered society which rested on false foundations. She allows her protagonist to serve the social order created by people like her husband, made her do all that her husband wanted Tomo to, only to make his ego so brittle and fragile that it could not even bear her brief statement at the time of her death. The enormous strength and power concealed in Enchi's calm and gentle protagonist is perhaps the most powerful characterization known in the history of Japanese novels.

Morota says:

"Enchi touches those aspects of human mind which is hidden in human consciousness. It appears as if there is a different woman within Enchi - an estranged part of one's 'self'. This woman, under the pressure of social values and norms has to constantly kill her individuality (the 'self') and live publicly with accepted mannerisms and etiquettes. The woman inside Enchi's subconsciousness is an expression of self-realisation of the inhuman elements that embody a human personality that which is disguised by the artificial traits of behaviour which keeps inhuman elements alive." 39

Enchi's women protagonists appear faithful servants of the unjust social institutions and conventions, but within

them there is a total rejection of these. At the same time
them covert rejection of the existing social order was
instrumental in weakening it. The motive of Enchi thus seems
to be two-fold: one, to lay bare the falsehood of the social
foundation, and two, to help women and men realise their
weakness which would herald a process of change. The style
and tone of her narratives underline the inevitable
collapse of the present social order which is unjust and
cruel to women.

Among the contemporary women writers in Japan, Tsushima
Yuko (b. 1947) is considered as one of the most prolific
novelists, short story writer and essayist. Though, born to
a notable man-of-letters, Dazai Osamu (1909-1948), Yuko has
successfully and quickly acquired a separate identity
through the remarkable quality of her work. Yuko had to
keep up with a number of setbacks and tragedies in her
personal life. When she was barely a year old, her father
died (under mysterious circumstances). Her married life did
not last long and she had to assume sole responsibility of
raising two children. Yet another tragedy struck her in
1985 when her son died before attaining the age of nine.

Yuko's writing career began in the second-half of the
1960s when two of her short fictions 'Aru tango' (A Certain
Birth, 1968) and 'Requiemu: Inu to Otona no tame ni'
(Requiem for a Dog and an Adult, 1969) became successful. However, among many of her short fictions the notable ones are *Mugusa no haha* (The Mother in the House of Grass, 1975), *Kusa no Fushido* (A Bed of Grass, 1977), *Danmari Ichi* (The Silent Traders, 1984), *Hi no Kawa no hotori de* (On the Banks of the River of Fire, 1983), and *Yoru no hikari ni owarete* (Driven by the Light of the Night, 1986). For some of her later works Tsushima Yuko received several important literary awards.

The predominant concern of her writings revolves around themes focusing on institutions of motherhood and family in contemporary Japanese society, challenging the traditional concept of female sexuality through her protagonists who are invariably 'uncompromising, tough and resilient women'.

Tsushima seems to be preoccupied with her concern at the prevailing conceptions of 'what a woman should be and how she should act'. In her act of contempt, she creates woman characters who tend to be unwed or divorced mothers, who strive hard to make it on their own without any help from family or men, unperturbed by how 'others' felt or what


41. Mitsutani, n. 2, p. 316.
they said. While doing so she strikes a positive and progressive note, to fill the void of an order which is fast becoming archaic. While she deals with the 'most immediate and compelling problems of isolation and malaise' of her woman protagonists, she does not 'concentrate on spirited escapes from the mundane' as Enchi's protagonists.\textsuperscript{42}

Tsushima's opposition to the present institutions of family, motherhood, and child raising, as well as of the conceptions of female sexuality emerges dominant (though at times ambivalent) in a number of her fictions. She herself had once commented that it was the very institutionalization of marital system during the Heian period which put an end to the flourishing career of women writers. In 'Fusehime',\textsuperscript{43} Yoko (the female protagonist) says "I hate marriage...I really dislike children...I just couldn't stand them" (p 32). At the same time she cautions, "I don't mean, of course, to say that you can dispose of your kids any time like garbage." It clearly emerges through the discourse in her texts that while she is alive to the gender-specific functions of women, it is the irony of oppression, discrimination and subjugation of women that she is critical of. Through her narratives she may not appear

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{42} Gessel, n. 31, p. 416.
\item \textsuperscript{43} Tsushima Yuko, Oma Monogatari (Tokyo, 1989).
\end{itemize}
to be suggesting any definitive solutions to the variety of problems of women in the contemporary Japanese society, the political tone may be clearly discernible.\textsuperscript{44}

The way themes such as 'female sexuality' have been articulated by Tsushima and a few other contemporary women authors, are clear indicators of their attempt at redefining the socially constructed definitions of human sexuality. The changes in female sexuality are at least in some part motivated by emancipatory drives. A great departure indeed, sexuality which has generally been a private matter is turned into a public concern - a motive not dominant but certainly emergent from writings of Tsushima.\textsuperscript{45}

Now let us turn to Ariyoshi Sawako and her literature.

\textbf{IV.3: Literary World of Ariyoshi Sawako}

\textbf{IV.3.1 Her Life}

Ariyoshi Sawako was born in Wakayama city in 1931. Her father Ariyoshi Shinji was a bank employee, he spent considerable years in overseas postings. As a consequence, Ariyoshi spent most of her childhood outside Japan,

\textsuperscript{44} Monnet, n. 40, p. 54.

\textsuperscript{45} An interesting collection of studies on the emerging issues pertaining to human sexuality has recently been brought out by Giddens, (ed.),\textit{The Transformation of Intimacy: Sexuality Love and Eroticism in Modern Societies.} (Cambridge, 1994).
particularly in Jakarta. Her mother Akitsu was the daughter of a politician. She was a strong and progressive woman. She was opposed to traditional customs and values which held women in a subjugated status.

Her father had a brilliant academic career. During his student days he became a member of Kusa no Jikkari, an association formed by a leading literary figure, Arishima Takeo, whom he admired the most. Shinji had a rich collection of contemporary literary works, particularly those by Arishima Takeo and Natsume Soseki.

Ariyoshi Sawako did not keep good health. She had to remain absent from school very often. While at home she used to read the works of Arishima Takeo and Natsume Soseki, and other popular literature especially the writings of Shinjufujin and Narimonhicho. It is reported that by the time she reached III standard, Ariyoshi had completed reading the major works of Arishima Takeo and Natsume Soseki. She gradually lost interest in school education as she already knew the subjects taught there, which mostly comprised study of language. Reading books took most of her time and hence she had few friends.

It was at such an early stage in her life that Ariyoshi started reading the biography of Madam Curie, which her mother had recently finished reading. At this time, her
interest developed in reading books on science. She also thought for sometime of writing on science. Her Parents were happy to see this and they encouraged her by ordering books on science and literature from Japan.

On her return to Japan in 1943, she was admitted to the Tokyo Furitsu go dai Womens' High School but had to withdraw soon. She did not continue for long in any school, mostly because of her father's regular transfers, and also on account of her frequent illness. Later, she went to Wakayama Kojo (the hometown of her mother). This was around the time when World War II was ravaging the country. Once again, Ariyoshi had to discontinue her studies on account of illness. During this phase of prolonged illness she read extensively on philosophy, Chinese classics and also books from the west.

Ariyoshi learned English from her aunt and Chinese characters from a teacher called Hanasaki Saitan. Her aunt lived in an English house with her brother before her marriage, and therefore, could manage to speak, read and write English. Her uncle too had a rich collection of books on philosophy to which Ariyoshi had easy access. Her great interest in philosophy showed her natural talent for becoming a skilled woman author on literature. Also, her interest in gerontology emerged during these days. In 1949,
she graduated from Toritsu Daigo Women's High School, and subsequently, took admission in Tokyo Women's University in the English Department. Here again, she had to remain away from class for full one year because of illness. In July 1950, her father expired. In April 1951, she was readmitted to the second year in the English Department.

It was at this stage that she developed interest in classical art, and also aspired to become a drama critic. She participated in a Kabuki research committee and also took part in the Fourth Essay Competition organized by the "Engekikai" magazine and received the prize. At that time "Engekikai" was the specialized magazine for Kabuki. She also became a member of the Catholic League and actively participated in the research committees organized by Miyamoto Yuriko and Takiji.

In February 1952, at the age of 19, she took up a part-time employment for "Engekikai" on the recommendation of a famous drama critic Toshikura Koichi, who was also the editor-in-chief of the magazine. She was entrusted with the job of conducting interviews of foreigners on Kabuki. Ariyoshi was greatly encouraged by Toshikura Koichi, under whose guidance she started writing.

In March 1952, she graduated from Tokyo Women's University Junior College in English Literature. In August
the same year she took up a permanent assignment on the editorial staff at the Okura Publishing House. During the same period, she became a member of *Hakuchigun*, a magazine brought out by the members of "Engekikai". She was also associated with the publication of "Shinshicho" magazine. It was in this connection that she got a chance to meet Miura Shumon, Sono Hiroo, Sono Ayako, Yoshiyuki Junnosuke, Murakami Hyohei, and Kajiyama Hideyuki (all leading literary figures). She received a great deal of encouragement from these people in her endeavour of writing. Her maiden work 'Rakuyo no Mitsugi' (later Rakuyo) was published in "Hakuchigun" in 1954. It was received well by the readers and was also acclaimed by Takayama Tsuyoshi - a bungei critic. The same year she went to America with Azuma Tokuho, a great master of ballet with whom she later worked as a correspondent and Private Secretary of the Azuma Kabuki Executive Committee.

Ariyoshi made her debut in the literary world in January 1956 at the age of 25, when her maiden novel *Jiuta* was nominated for Bungaku Kai. In September the same year *Jiuta* was nominated for the 35th Akutagawa prize. The success of her novel motivated her further. She started writing plays also. Many of her plays, including dance-drama
episodes were successfully performed on the stage and were widely acclaimed.

In 1957, "Ishi no niwa", a television drama for NHK (Osaka) received the 12th Artist Promotion Award, followed by a lyric for "Homura" (for NHK, Osaka) which was honoured with the 13th Education Minister Award for Art. By this time she had carved out for herself a respectable place in the field of writing at such an early age and her artistic qualities had been well recognized. Her concern with the traditional, in terms of performing arts found expression in the form of innumerable short stories. "Kirikubi" (1956), "Mashiro no ke (1957), Uminari (1958), Eguchi no Sato (1958) are narratives revolving around the world of performing arts and the lives of performers.

Ariyoshi Sawako's place in the world of literature was established with the appearance of her first long novel Ki no Kawa. It was published in Fujin gakuho as a serial from January to May 1959. It was the first long novel of its kind through which Ariyoshi could establish herself comfortably as a novelist.

For one year while in New York on invitation of the Rockefeller Foundation she did not write. This was an opportunity which awakened her mind all the more. Soon after her return to Japan in 1961, Ariyoshi got down to
writing Koge which was published in Fujinkoron and Sukezaemonyondaiki as well as in Bungaku kai in 1962.

She married Jin Akira, Chairman of the Board of Directors of Art Friends Association in March 1962. Unfortunately, her married life did not last long. After two years of their marriage the couple had to seek divorce due to unavoidable circumstances. During the three months of her marriage with Akira, the Art Friends Association found itself in the midst of financial problems. It did not even have funds to support its very elementary activities. There was no money left with the company to pay for the retirement allowance of its outgoing employees. Jin Akira did not want his employees to suffer. He decided to help them as well as the company. He requested Ariyoshi to make money through her writings so that the company and its associates could be supported financially.

It was indeed a stupendous task, and a painful and unhappy experience too, for a newly wed wife to write and work in order to support her husband, as well as his company. Ariyoshi understood the urgency and gravity of the situation and promptly agreed to help and completely devoted herself to writing only.

She married Akira because she liked his egoistic and manly nature. From within, Akira was a soft person of
genuine intentions:. Despite the herculean efforts of Ariyoshi and Akira, the problems of the company showed no signs of improvement. They became more complex and entangled. Akira gradually started losing his characteristic cool. He would at times even scold Ariyoshi, advising her to keep away from the problems of his company, even though it was her efforts day-in-and-day-out which at least got his company going? Apparently she became only a source of money for his company. Although these feelings would hurt Ariyoshi at times, she never questioned Akira's superiority in matters concerning his company. She was proud of Akira, who had to face more problems in his capacity as Chairman of the company. However, at times, she thought herself as a wife on contract.

The members and associates of Art Friends Association in whom Akira reposed enormous confidence conspired against him and organised a strike at a critical time. Akira had to borrow lots of money in order to quell the corporate storm. He had to mortgage all that he had, including Ariyoshi's house. He was caught up between difficult circumstances where he could only choose to separate from Ariyoshi as his adversaries in the Art Friends Association had their eye fixed on Ariyoshi's property also. Akira, at no cost would want this to happen. Ariyoshi always came forth with
whatever she could to help her husband. She did not care for her poor and fragile health and kept writing in order to support the Art Friends Association. Finally, they had to separate legally despite their immense mutual love and affection. Ariyoshi respected Akira's decision 'as it was manly.'

During this period, her major writings were "Aritagawa", "Karinui", "Hishoku", "Tsuremai" and "Puerutoriko Nikki". In 1963, she received the Tenth Shosetsu Shincho" prize for *Koge*. The same year, she gave birth to a daughter.

In the year 1964 there was no major work from Ariyoshi. Perhaps, it was her preoccupation with the baby which did not allow her to write. Although Ariyoshi was very happy to give birth to a daughter and she always felt a genuine concern for Tamao's future, it was Ariyoshi's literary career which did not allow her much time to spend with Tamao. Tamao spent most of her childhood and youth in the care of her grandmother.

In 1964, Ariyoshi got an opportunity to visit China where she studied Chinese religion Tenshukyo. She also went

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One of her most famous novels "Hanaoka Seishu no Tsuma" was awarded the Sixth Women's Author Award. Her play "Akainoshishi" was awarded the Minister of Art Prize in 1967. In 1968 Readers Award was conferred upon her for "Umikura" and subsequently, Fujinkoron Readers Art Awards for "Izumono no o Kuni" in 1968 and 1970 respectively.

Her major writings during the early seventies include "Boke no hana", "Kokotsu no Hito", "Fukugo Osen", "Akujo ni Tsuite:, and "Kaimaku beru wa Hanayakani". A good number of plays from the early stages of her writing career were staged several times. A number of her novels were adapted for movies and TV serials.

A woman of such great literary talent could not play a long innings. Her poor and deteriorating health snatched her way rather very early at the age of 53. She died on 3rd September 1984, leaving behind a corpus of unfinished literary works.

IV.3.2. Ariyoshi: A brief synopsis of her work

Ariyoshi Sawako achieved fame as a playwright, a short story writer and a novelist. The depths of her talent and skill could be gauged by the fact that in-spite of being a woman she could emerge as one of the most popular novelists
of post-war Japan. As an author Ariyoshi commands a large readership and has admirers in all age groups and circles. She is often called a gifted story teller. Critics are of the opinion that Ariyoshi was a born story writer: "Tensei no monogatari sakka".  

She used to examine the material carefully, arrange it properly and then work on it. Above all, she always succeeded in building up a tidy story. Her technique was so simple that a reader felt "as if an old lady were telling a story to her grandchildren enthusiastically."  

Ariyoshi preferred not to use the most popular style of her time. In the post-war literary circles contemplative novel (Shinkyo Shosetsu) was strongly favoured and respected in order to lay down the personal accounts of one's mental state. Ariyoshi's style of story telling was remarkably different from those of others. It deviated much from the tradition of I-novelists.  

She excelled in the art of story writing by dramatising the events beautifully. "Hanaoka Seishu no Tsuma" and "Narayama Bushi Ko" are examples of this manifestation. Her

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skills were such that she could effortlessly convert darker and serious situations into bright and interesting stories like 'Umikura'. Irrespective of the subject or theme of Ariyoshi's narratives, they bear a unique and original style.

Her maiden novel Jiuta takes the theme from the classical world of art and to create an absorbing novel on such a theme at a very young age is an indication of her imaginative skills and original capabilities. Her plays also bear ample proof of her literary excellence which was beyond the reach of an ordinary person: "It was amazing to see her taste for the unique and antique things".

Ariyoshi is emphatic that in order to create a meaningful story the author has to be an energetic and active person. Her protagonists are also cast in an active profile far away from dullness. They are bold, daring and progressive. So was Ariyoshi herself. Despite many ups and downs


downs in her personal life she was never upset. Inside the ailing body lived a healthy mind.

She had a profound sense of assimilating the old and the new which she accomplished without letting her own preferences entering into the body of her narratives. She believed that the reader was the best judge.

While she was deeply concerned with the structure of the plot forming the storyline of her stories and novels, she paid equally important attention towards the development of the characters. This special talent of hers can be observed when she is depicting the psychology and the inner layers of life of her characters in general, and particularly those of woman protagonists in such a way that may, at times, prove quite an experience to a reader. Her own strong personality does not seem to allow her protagonists to get mauled in any situation. Her characters appear to be conscious of their identity but they are not unreasonable or stubborn. In this connection she is different from other women authors too. What made her to achieve such a status? In order to become a remarkable story maker and a author of such a great reputation, one has to have a rich knowledge, and rigorous training.

53. Toita, n. 48, p. 714.
Ariyoshi as reflected in her life also had a strong desire to become an author since her childhood. She had the natural environment and opportunities to develop this skill. She read lots of books on varied subjects at an early age. She was far ahead in knowledge as compared to the children of her age. She acquired knowledge of literature, science, philosophy and got help and encouragement from all the corners. Her family members deserve a special mention in this regard.

Her knowledge of English helped her in the beginning to start with and then she was fortunate to work with Azuma Tokuho (a great master of Arts) at that time. There she could meet and talk and know about the field of art. She used her acquaintance with old masters of arts to inform her about the world of traditional Japanese arts.

It was during this period that she was inspired to write 'Jiuta'. Ariyoshi's long association with the artists has definitely helped her to know more about them. It gave her an opportunity of an exposure to the traditional forms of Japanese art. Particularly 'Jiuta' exhibits deep interests and experiences with the classical arts and Ariyoshi herself has stated how her interest for the classical art developed when she was a child. "I was in 5th standard when I returned to Japan from Indonesia. It
was the time when war had opened up. It was the time of emergency (crisis). Things were in shortage and people were in a terrible condition. I returned when Japan was not looking beautiful. It was a great disappointment for me. I was always longing to see Japan more beautiful than I could imagine. I always thought that this is not the true Japan I always heard and read about while I was abroad.'

"...I decided I must understand Japan which has many good things. I set out to discover my country through literature and classical art." 54

It was through this process of discovery that Ariyoshi could stuff her narratives with extremely absorbing events, ideas and themes; treating her reader to a real intellectual feast. One is amazed at the diversity of subjects on which Ariyoshi has written her great novels. While she is portraying an historical event which led to a scientific discovery, her focus is not on the discoverer of the physical and biological laws that comprise the mystery of the human brain, but on the behaviour of two human minds and happenings in their hearts which provide the contours of their interrelationships. In another, she goes to discuss the hazards of pollution that is increasingly engulfing the life of humanity in its forward journey. While the journey

goes on, there are those like Oyonbaba who is left out from the mass of human traffic, fleeing their island home, which is presented by Ariyoshi in yet another masterpiece. Her creativity reaches a climax when she looks across three generations of women who are caught up in the vicissitudes of their respective times, a subject of great social relevance, classical Japanese art in Jiuta and the ailing Shegezo, the father-in-law of Akiko in Kokotsu no Hito.  

Jiuta is a narrative of the pace at which social and economic changes were taking place in Japan during the period after World War II. These changes were coming so fast that they were soon replacing all that was traditional, good or bad. The younger generation particularly were fast losing contact with their cultural roots. This resulted in conflicts between the old and the new. Ariyoshi's protagonists in this novel, unlike several others is a male - an ageing father of Kunie. Kunie had learnt the art of Koto from her father, the greatest player of the Koto at the time. The father Kikuzawa Kengyo wants his daughter to remain in Japan and continue with the great art that she has received from him. Kunie loves to play Koto and she plays

exactly the way only her father could. She would like to go to America with a person whom she loved and got married. Her father did not like this marriage perhaps because it was going to create a distance between him and his daughter, or rather between Koto, the art he loved the most, and the player, whom he loved no less. The story depicts the theme and thoughts so vividly that one is struck with awe. Jiuta is a portrait of the human mind which suffers with the coming of new trends, and this was the most important theme for a modern novel at that time.\(^{57}\) Sako Junichiro seems to have reservations about the statement written on the cover page of Onnadeshi: a 'marvellous work of the author engrossed in traditional art', he says, "Ariyoshi has just taken the subject matter from the artistic world like Koto, Buyo and Joruri, but she has not dealt with the artistic theme deeply. The kind of anguish in Jiuta which the father has towards his daughter can be a universal phenomenon, there is nothing specifically artistic in it."\(^{58}\) On the other hand, Chikami Takeshi writes that when Kikuzawa realised the presence of his daughter through music then his reaction to the situation is not like a father in normal

\[^{57}\] Hosokawa, n. 47, p. 116.

\[^{58}\] Sako, n. 51, p. 74.
This episode in Jiuta is a product of the indepth understanding Ariyoshi could develop while working amongst the artists such as Azuma Tokuho. Kikuzawa's reaction was not of a father. It was truly an outburst of an artist who valued his art more than blood relationship. Ariyoshi could depict problems, sentiments, feelings and emotions of the artists in her piece of art. A conflict between a father and daughter can be a common phenomenon but the way this conflict has been projected in this novel is one which on the surface appears to be taking place between two individuals, but is actually happening within the artist himself. It is the anguish from within which gets and her concern for the obstinate old, in the world of articulated in different ways. It is basically the anguish about the future of traditional Japanese art which is swayed by the forces of westernism.

Kikuzawa is unhappy with her daughter not because she married against his wishes but because of the fact that her husband cannot contribute anything to her art. He may rather help her to forget all that she attained since her childhood. She is more than a daughter to him. He nurtured an art in her. She inherited his art.

One may trace further a continuity and development of these ideas and motifs when Ariyoshi wrote Jiuta. Her latter fictions mainly "Kirikubi", "Izumino O'Kuni", "Managoya O", "Kinokawa" bear a similar theme but differ in treatment. Ki no Kawa (1959), Koge (1961), Sukezaemonyondaiki (1962), Aritagawa (1963) and Hidakagawa (1965) and Kinugawa (1975) are also works devoted to a discourse on modernity and tradition - a theme with which Ariyoshi remained occupied the most.

Ariyoshi had a liking for the Chinese proverb: "it takes 100 years to make a human being". If you take three generations into account you understand the process of human formation. 'Kinokawa' is devoted to understanding complexities of this process. 60

'Kinugawa', 61 is an account situated in the backdrop of the Russo-Japanese, was the first World War, Manchurian War, the Sino-Japanese war, and the Pacific War. All through these wars the woman Chiyo lived to see her husband, son and a grandchild being sent to participate in wars as soldiers. When they returned they had lost the spirit or strength to live. Though Kinugawa does not present an account of war as

such, it is a moving portrayal of people's sufferings and hardships caused by war. Men who returned home after war were left with hardly any motivation to work and live. Instead, they were always looking for one or another pretext to escape from the realities of day-to-day life. They finally fall prey to a dream of unearthing a hidden treasure. For the rest of their lives the search for the hidden treasure became their only preoccupation, until they all get buried under the heap of sand and died. While all these went on, Chiyo and other women remained silent spectators. Chiyo kept herself busy weaving and doing all the sundry work in order to support the men and her family.62

'Kinugawa' thus presents a strong portrayal of a family though not directly affected by the devastations of war, yet could do little to escape from its unsettling effects. The implications of war have been clearly brought out in the characterisation of the three men who had become mental wrecks after witnessing, and also causing, devastations during the wars. The story is a critique of the legitimacy of war which may make nations win or lose a battle or two, only to eventually define their doom. War made those men

escapists. War itself, as it emerges though not dominantly, is an act of escapism, an antithesis of creativity and production which supports human life. Chiyo who lived through the three generations understood the value of human life as she kept herself busy carrying out all that could ensure the survival of her family. Ariyoshi creates contrasting worlds, one of life and activity, and the other of death and idleness.

*Koge* presents a tale of sorrow and grief, of dedication and opportunism, of support and abandonment, of life led by many such unknown souls whom the history dominated by the Samurai, and the lords could never take account of. It is a reflection on the woman, who, in the bargain for a better future, uses her daughter as a servant in her own home, and also sells her to house of the geishas. Ariyoshi in her portrayal of Ikiyo almost recreates a woman of the kind that readers of Tanizaki are familiar with. But, Ariyoshi goes a step further. While Tanizaki's women have been cast in a shadowy environment in which his women seem to take advantage of their charm and beauty, those in Ariyoshi's do the same but in total disregard of society, thus challenging the social norms

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and values. It, however, doesn't last for long, and ultimately it was Tomoko, Ikiyo's estranged daughter who takes care of her mother and also of her half-sister and step-father.

Tomoko attains the highest stature in the ranks of Geisha and, as a consequence, commands enormous influence in society despite her very unattractive looks. She had no dearth of worldly comforts, but she ever longed for love and affection, for a home and a child whom she may call her own. Koge is an account of a mother who could not become one despite bearing a child in her womb, while in the other, the woman attains the highest level of womanhood and motherhood even without conceiving one. In the latter, the link between the womb and the heart, between mind and soul, between the social norms and personal aspirations are so complete that the protagonist deserves adulation. At the same time, the reader also smells the filth and stink that a beautiful body may contain.

Like Chiyo, Oyonbaba also lived to see he three generations of spring grow (Umikura).64 She also experiences the ravages of war, hardships, sorrows, and happiness while living in Mikura Island off Ise. She is cast as a symbolic figure of culture and tradition of this

64. Ariyoshi Sawako, Umikura (Tokyo, 1972).
island. She loves her native place and is pained when she finds the younger generation leaving for Tokyo. Younger people liked to stay and work in Tokyo where there were more facilities, new things, and fast moving vehicles. They did not like to stay any more on the island where everything was too slow. Life was full of hardships here. Oyonbaba fails to understand the change in attitudes of people as she herself had never seen Tokyo. She thinks that no place can be more comfortable than Mikura. She is proud of the beauty and natural resources of the island. however, she also realises that things have changed in Mikura too. The island now has water supply, electricity, new roads and a truck.

When Mikura Island is selected for a firing range she becomes furious. She thought that the natural beauty of the island will be spoiled by it. However, a large number of people were happy as they expected huge sums in compensation. They became materialistic and individualistic. Oyonbaba thought it was against a peaceful communal life. Suddenly, the news that the island was not found suitable for the proposed firing range came in. This filled Oyonbaba and some others with joy. On the other hand, many were disappointed also.
Tokiko and her husband Konjiro decide to leave the island and go to Tokyo. Tokiko was already working in Tokyo and had come to the island for a short while only. Her husband who had never been to Tokyo, while leaving the island, said to Oyonbaba: 'Look there is nothing in this island, it was not even suitable for a firing range. This statement sums up the state of deprivation and despair from which the people in the periphery suffered from.' Finally, Oyonbaba realizes that winds of change had arrived and that it was now a fate accompli. Inspite of that, her heart beats only for the island, its people and traditions.

The story binds together diverse themes and experiences, emotions and aspirations, values and visions, which are more in contradiction than in harmony. Ariyoshi's Umikura', therefore, coincides with that phase of Japanese history which was associated with a highly centralised and concentrated patterns of industrial development which made people flee their homes in the mountains, and the islands in search for a more attractive and comfortable life in the cities, particularly Tokyo. The concluding sentence: Shima no michi wa, Mukashi Kara, Ima mo Saka da (the path of the island remains as steep today as it was before), according

to Sukegawa, it conveys that "Life is not so easy to live, one has to face many difficulties in order to survive." 66

The struggle for survival takes a different course of in *Hishoku* 67 (1963). This story has been written in the backdrop of a particular phase in the history of post-war Japan, when a large number of Japanese youth were falling indiscriminately for all that was American. In fact, a large number of Japanese girls preferred to marry an American or anybody else who lived in America.

*Hishoku* deals with the racial problem in American society portrayed through the eyes of Emiko. Emiko married a handsome, bright looking black American soldier Tom, who was posted in Japan during the occupation. Tom completed his duties in Japan and returned to New York. Since Emiko had given birth to his child (who looked like Tom) she could not stay in Japan any more and was forced to join her husband in New York.

Here she discovers that Tom was no more a bright looking person and he did not have a good job either. Her life's struggle starts when they have to manage with little money. As a result, Emiko starts working. She was surprised

66. Sukegawa, n. 50.

to see how the blacks were discriminated against just because their colour was not white. She understood the discrimination between haves and have-nots. She revolts in protest against this.

During the course of time, she changes her lifestyle to that of the black Americans. She stops working for a Japanese man. She starts working for meeting black and underprivileged people. She was determined to fight and struggle for their children's future. She takes a pledge to bring brightness back into the eyes of her son Sam, which Tom once had.

The content of the novel is highly progressive as it dwells upon an international problem of racism. This perhaps could be seen as a product of Ariyoshi's observations during her frequent sojourns to America. While the focus is laid on the inter-racial relationship, the peculiarities of a Japanese woman and her transformation is esoteric, at the same time universal.

Ariyoshi's concern with the world of traditional Japanese art forms is reflected once again in 'Izumo no Okuni'. The story is situated in the latter half of feudal times when various forms of performing arts were seen only as a means of entertainment and pleasure, and their performers could hardly enjoy a respectable place in
society. Ariyoshi describes the struggles of her protagonist Okuni who as a celebrated dancer of her time lived her life for the sake of popularising her art among the masses. She found spiritual solace in her art and wanted that it is given its rightful place in the hearts of people.\(^6\) Undaunted by criticism, she declines to marry a person whom her family had selected, as he could not appreciate her art and sentiments. Her search for someone who could appreciate her art and understand her sentiments was in vain. She met Sankuro who used to guide her in art, but soon realised that Sankuro's affections towards her were prompted by selfish motives. Sankuro wanted to use her art in order to gain political contacts with the royal court. Nagoya Sansan, another man in her life too had similar ambitions as those of Sankuro. Only Densuke understood her sentiments and provided moral support to her, but she could not marry him as he was already married.

While Okuni's search for a man in her life remained incomplete, her dance went on. Her art became the philosophy and purpose of her life.

In the depiction of Okuni, Ariyoshi presents a critique of man-woman relationship which normally ended up in carnal

\(^{68}\) Chikami Takeshi, "Ariyoshi Sawako no Ho : Izumi no kuni ni tsuite", \textit{Minshubungaku} (Tokyo, 1970), pp. 53.
lust institutionalised by marriage. Love, and therefore, marital relationship must be based on proper and selfless appreciation of each other's sentiments and purpose in life. Although the narrative is situated in the backdrop of feudal times, through 'Izume no Okuni' she wanted the present generation to understand and give respect to the traditional art-forms of Japan. Even though the times had changed, people did not give much respect to these art-forms and their performers. The attitude of the feudal days towards traditional art persisted.

In addition to the stories outlined above an attempt has been made in the following chapter to provide an indepth analysis of the themes and events in which the protagonists of her three major novels are situated.

A reading of some of the representative works of noted woman novelists discussed in this chapter, if seen in conjunction with those of the male authors outlined in the previous chapter, may enable one to understand the unscientific basis and irrationality of the term Joryu Sakka. The subject matter chosen by the women writers in Japan are as diverse as those of the males. A focus on family, motherhood, human sexuality, and love are such themes which appear in varying proportions, intensities, and configurations in almost all literary works, whether
ancient, medieval, or modern. The perspectives from which different authors may have chosen to reflect on these themes also vary a good deal, and it is difficult to see even broad similarities, between the works of male authors and those of the women authors. One may at this juncture, venture to point out that while a majority of the men authors have attempted at reinforcement of social values, institutions, and socially constructed roles, women authors have provided socially and politically relevant discourse and critique motivated by the desire for change. However, to suggest that they have been the sole one's belonging to what one may suggest the reformist-emancipative school of thought would be a gross error of judgement. The reformist zeal is dominant in novels and stories of Toson also. His critique of the Japanese family system has been, by all means, 'revolutionary' and 'progressive'. Toson, again is not alone among the male writers.

Even among the women writers the difference in their perspectives and purpose is well evident from the review attempted just above. Tsushima Yuko, Enchi Fumiko, Miyamoto Yuriko, Higuchi Ichiyo as well as Ariyoshi Sawako have presented a strong critique of the social system, but each one of them differs in the nature of her discourse and treatment of the subject-matter. While Yuko moves closer to
the European feminists in her rejection of socially constructed roles for women in Japanese society, those of Enchi Fumiko and Higuchi Ichiyo are a little cautious. Similarly, while Yuriko's discourse on the identity of the 'self' is structured on the philosophy of individualism, that of Aryoshi is an attempt at seeking the 'self' through self-introspection, reform from within. Yuriko's concern for the discovery of 'self' is not total or in contradiction with that of the other authors, but she would go only up to a point. Aryoshi on the other, strongly believes that the change in social order is meaningless without a change of one's 'self'. The two are concomittant and, therefore, she appears to be in favour of gradual change. The difference between the perspectives of Tsushima Yuko and Aryoshi stand out to be even more than glaring. Tsushima would want the present social order to be completely replaced by another where none of the traits of the earlier social system remained to jeopardise the development of the women's 'self'. 