Chapter III

NEUROSIS GENERATING COMPROMISE SOLUTION

A Ph.D Thesis. S.R.T.M.University, Nanded
Introduction:

This chapter attempts to probe into the manner in which a neurotic tends to enter into gestures of compromise with the situations around him in order to survive and erect his head high in social ambience. There are social values and norms which are meant to regulate the behaviour of person. But sometimes they prove detrimental to healthy growth and survival of some of the individuals because the values and ethos imperceptibly enter the unconscious of the individuals and there ensues a sort of psychic conflict, in the individuals. These conflicts sometimes become too pronounced at a particular point of time in the lives of individuals when a part of their psychic apparatus refuses to yield to repression. In the resultant neurotic struggle some individuals arrive at a compromise solution for their problem because they find the realities of life to harsh and repulsive to put up with.
The major Novels which deal with the theme of generating compromise solution by neurosis in cases of the major protagonists of the novels are Jhabvala’s *Get Ready for Battle* and Nayantara Sahgal’s *The Day In Shadow*.

**Hypothesis:**

Every human being has an intrinsic nature as neither totally good nor wholly bad. It can be pressurized by habit and social and cultural forces. It cannot be eliminated altogether. If this inner nature is suppressed one becomes sick, if it is encouraged it forms a healthy personality but when one finds that he is unable to cope up with his environment and people he compromises with the situations in order to survive and actualize their selves.

**Neurosis Generating Compromise Solution in Ruth Prawer Jhabvala’s *Get Ready for Battle***:

Sarla Devi of *Get Ready for Battle* is a middle-aged woman. She is the wife of a business shark. She is separated from her husband Gulzarilal for well over a decade. Ironically their marriage has been by choice. Sarla Devi does not simply fit into Gulzarilal’s scheme of things. Gulzarilal always put emphases on wealth and obedience. The novelist does not disclose the exact reason for Sarla Devi’s virtual separation from her husband. But as the story unfolds itself, it appears that her idealist demeanor is incompatible with the materialistic outlook of her husband.
therefore she prefers to live away from husband. Another possible reason of her staying away is Gulzarilal’s clandestine alliance with Kusum, the window of Mr. Mehra.

At the outset of the novel, Gulzarilal is portrayed as living a very luxurious life where hosting parties and spending money recklessly are common features. The living of Sarla Devi had been portrayed as down to earth and simple. Sarla Devi’s living is depicted in the following manner:

There was a tin trunk in which Sarla Devi kept her belongings, and a tiny table with a plastic image and an incense holder and a rosary in it. On the wall hung a picture of Sri Ramakrishna and the Holy mother put against the wall reveals her strong idealistic dispositions. (Jhabvala, GRB:1996:23)

Jhabvala has portrayed the psychology of Sarla Devi so aptly and minutely that her being an Indian is strongly attested. Sarla Devi was legally wedded to Gulzarilal and was the mother of Vishnu. She could not adjust herself with the life-style of Gulzarilal, her husband and hence she was alienated from him. Unlike Simrit in *The Day in Shadow* and Dimple in *Wife*, Sarla Devi has not formed an ideal notion of her life with her husband.

An excessive attachment to any idealism, at the cost of the normal living pattern, certainly, amounts to neurosis. The blind adherence to ideological creed with a resultant drain on normal behavioural pattern, in
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fact, reflects the neurotic condition of Sarla Devi. Her illusory ideals and her blind persuasion of them make her unfit as a wife in Indian cultural context. Her abhorrence of materialistic concerns of her husband Gulzarilal does not appear to her as normal living behaviour and hence she deserts her husband. In fact, her abhorrence of materialism was so bitter that whoever knowingly tended to show material inclinations was condemned and denounced by her. She disliked even her own son, Vishnu’s materialistic outfits which had tended to antagonize Sarla Devi. As a result, Vishnu and Mala lived with Gulzarilal and Sarla Devi lived with her brother Briz Mohan whose financial condition is not very sound. It appears from the behaviour of Sarla Devi that she had fostered strong dislike for the luxuries of life. In an encounter with her son Vishnu she reprimands him most attackingly for smoking. She says: “It is bad for you to smoke.” (Jhabvala, GRB:1996:23)

Sarla Devi disapproves not only this, but the entire pattern of life that Vishnu followed. She says:

Your whole life is bad......She dislikes him all the more because she perceives in him the shadow of Gulzarilal who is a great materialistic. Sarla Devi cries: You are becoming like your father, in everything you are like him. You care for nothing but money and clothes and business – oh, Vishnu - Vishnu! (Jhabvala, GRB:1996:23)

Surprisingly enough, Vishnu understands that her mother is not normal. Therefore, he does not take her suggestions seriously. This makes
Sarla Devi angry: “No it is no laughing matter for you everything now
days is a joke. That is not the way to live” (Jhabvala, GRB:1996:23). Sarla
Devi wants Vishnu to become idealistic and renounce wealth and luxury.
For Vishnu, this is unrealistic and untenable. Vishnu replies back to his
mother: “You are like Gautama”, he said. He is always trying to lead me
into a better purer life.” (Jhabvala, GRB:1996:23)

Sarla Devi feels quite disappointed as she thinks she has failed in
changing the mind of Vishnu – “Everything I tried to teach you,
everything I showed you, you have forgotten” (Jhabvala, GRB:1996:4).
Vishnu does not listen to his mother because he knows renouncing wealth
is after all not practicable. His mother finds it very difficult to influence
Vishnu. She thinks that the ambience of Vishnu is quite hostile. The
mother of Vishnu eventually has forgotten how to behave with the people
and how to control her speech. Her neurotic tendencies have disposed her
to antagonize the people around her with her over-idealistic discourses.
Vishnu is displeased to listen to his mother talking against Mala. He
thinks that it is this aggressiveness on the part of his mother that had
enraged Mala also. Vishnu replies, “I think she does not like you very
much either” (Jhabvala, GRB:1996:4). Sarla Devi tries to defend herself
by saying that she does not like talking about saris and other womanly
matters. She says: “Of course, not, I can’t sit and talk with her about her
saris and her embroidery” (Jhabvala, GRB:1996:21). This shows that
Sarla Devi is not a normal woman as a normal woman would talk of saris and other things concerned with her aesthetic behaviour. Sarla Devi considers ideal matters as much more important than the mundane day-to-day talks. She is obsessed with idealism, which of course goes unacknowledged. When she finds that Vishnu does not support and endorse her psychological aberrations, she does not help pouring venom on Vishnu also. She says: “But it is your fault you have just let her live the life she is used to and never shown her that there is anything else” (Jhabvala, GRB:1996:24). And when Vishnu suggests that he is thinking of starting a manufacturing business her mother feels all about her and flatly replies “I don’t want anything from you. Nothing, nothing.” (Jhabvala, GRB:1996:25)

When Sarla Devi finds that she is not able to control her son, she feels hurt. Her pride is hurt. A normal mother would never do so. The fact is that whenever her ideologies are rejected, her neurotic tendencies are aggravated. She reacts by disowning and condemning all such attempts irrespective of whether the person concerned is a near kin - husband or a son. This may be explained through the theory of basic anxiety. The theory is based on the premises that a person suffering from basic anxiety considers the world and environment around her or him as hostile and hence he or she tends to disclaim her or his associations with the ambience. Thus, this basic anxiety makes the victim deviate from the
normal pattern of behaviour, which is known as neurosis. Sarla Devi had deviated from the normal pattern of living as a wife and as a mother; she had become over-possessive and over-idealistic as a result of her neurosis. Sarla Devi’s estrangement from her husband has rendered Gulzarilal quite helpless, emotionally and psychologically. Gulzarilal is a grandfather and at this stage of life, one needs a support of someone very near to him but Sarla Devi, as his wife, has failed to fulfill requirements of her husband and hence there was a gulf between the two. In *The Day in Shadow*, Simrit does not fulfill the sexual urges of her husband. Even when the husband has urgency, on the contrary she urges upon her husband to live as brother and sister. The result is that her husband divorces her. Simrit fails to adjust herself with the circumstances and so does Sarla Devi. Sarla Devi compels Gulzarilal to pick up a widow as his beloved. The widow Mrs. Mehra is known as Kusum. Kusum is very practical, accommodating and loving. She knows how to win the hearts of the people. She is a normal woman; she knows how to captivate others with her politeness and humbleness. She addresses Gulzarilal as “chu-chu” (*Jhabvala, GRB:1996:45*). Sarla Devi is defiant and aggressive. Kusum is an alien for Vishnu, Mala and Priti (small daughter of Vishnu). Sarla Devi is a blood relation to them. But in times of crisis and disappointment they, too, turn to Kusum for solace and support not to Sarla Devi. Even Gulzarilal understands how much Kusum is needed in
his family. The following extract from the novel makes this sense very clear;

Poor Mala is a child in these matters. She misses a mother or mother-in-law. Remember, she comes from a large family and is not used to being alone. She needs you. You must come everyday. (Jhabvala, GRB:1996:44)

Kusum has stolen a march on Sarla Devi. She looks after the household of Gulzarilal. Gulzarilal has a social status, which he tries to maintain, but beneath that appearance, he has lust for flesh, money and comfort - probably the morality of the affluent. By virtue of his affluence Gulzarilal has imbibed this morality which has virtually led to the disintegration of his family. Kusum has excellent skills to accommodate herself to any condition and morality, whereas Sarla Devi lacked the skill to adapt her to hostile situations. But when she finds that the situation is beyond her reach and control, she finds out a compromise solution. A woman in India, particularly in the role of a wife, must see that her husband must be rendered satisfied and pleased with his wife’s presence in the house. Sarla fails here. As a wife or a mother she does not charm any one. Her excessive idealistic discourses displease everyone in the house. Kusum has successfully wielded her clout in the house of Gulzarilal. Kusum’s concern for the family of Gulzarilal was so deep and apparently significant that without her no one felt happy. Gulzarilal had become accustomed to the company of Kusum.

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For eight years now she had been always there she would have his bath ready for him, serve him with drinks, massage his legs, and at the same time she entertained him....She was always lively and entertaining. (Jhabvala, *GRB*:1996:28)

But Sarla Devi fails to adjust herself to the harsh realities of life. She does not know how to compromise with the situations. In a novel as in life, there are those who remain outsiders because they cannot accommodate themselves to the world of realities. Sarla Devi remains an outsider not only to the family of Gulzarilal but even to Vishnu, Mala and Brij Mohan and even to the members of Bundi Basti.

When she learns that the poor people of Bundi Basti are likely to be ejected under the pretentious plan of slum clearance, she incites her son to fight the injustice.

Oh Vishnu, Vishnu why are you like that? You are like my son, you are as beautiful as Krishna and as strong as Arjun. But your conduct is that of a little merchant’s son. (Jhabvala, *GRB*:1996:45)

She conducts her inspiring talk with her son is these words, “you must stand up son, fight, you sky-gazer with a heart overflowing with sympathy for the poor,” (Jhabvala, *GRB*:1996:46) but her son Vishnu is reality is only, “a little merchant’s son”( Jhabvala, *GRB*:1996:34). But she, unaware of the implications, compares him with Krishna and Arjun on the ground that “he is her son.”(Jhabvala, *GRB*:1996:37)
Sarla Devi works for the welfare of the people of Bundi Basti. She thinks that she is doing a social work and the social work is always ideal. She is obsessed with this idealism. Her obsession is so profound that she happily gives up her own family. This is a very clear case of deviation from the normal pattern of behaviour.

The question is how a person can sacrifice her happiness in one situation when he or she has failed to sacrifice her personal happiness in a more personal situation? Sarla Devi could not forgo her personal claims for the sustenance of the happiness of her own husband and son. How can she be expected to serve for the people of Bundi Basti with the feeling of self-sacrifice and dedication? She is, in fact, non-sacrificing and non-compromising because she is a neurotic. She lacks self-confidence and the skill of persuasion. She does not know how to outwit her husband Gulzarilal in order to retain the land for the people of Bundi Basti. She does not know even the channels which should be approached for safeguarding the interests of poor people of Bundi Basti. Frustrated, she goes to Gulzarilal for securing his permission not to interfere in the life of the people of Bundi Basti. Sarla Devi says:

They have lived there for fourteen years and now the municipality wants to acquire that land and turn them away. Gulzarilal contrived to look interested and concerned. ‘You know the commissioner.’ (Jhabvala, GRB: 1996:46)
Sarla Devi continues, “You know so many people; it is just in your line. You can help them” (Jhabvala, GRB:1996:46). Gulzarilal appears more tactful and practical in these matters. Therefore, he knows how to manipulate the situations. He justifies the displacement of slum dwellers because “It is a question of overall development.” (Jhabvala, GRB:1996:47) But Sarla Devi appears firm on her decision to prevent people’s displacement – she says; “Don’t try and frighten me with big words! The issue is clear; people are living there and you cannot evict them.” (Jhabvala, GRB:1996:47) Being a neurotic Sarla Devi is non-compromising because once she compromised there would be non-glorification of the self, which would not be acceptable to her. Therefore, firstly she shows her confidence “I will do what I can” (Jhabvala, GRB:1996:48). But very soon, her split sues for mercy, “I count on your help in this.” (Jhabvala, GRB:1996:48). This shows that she is on the verge of reaching a compromise solution because the realities are going out of her control.

While Jhabvala’s The Householder begins with marital dissonance and ends with consummation of marital love, Get Ready for Battle (1962) goes beyond, and portrays the new problems confronting the modern family and the consequent dissonance in the husband - wife relationship. Gulzari Lal and Sarla Devi, though married for many years, have discordance in their married life. The clash of attitudes appears to be the
cause for the dissonance. Gulzari Lal with the modern views is a strong believer of genuine idealism. Sarla, the protagonist of the novel, has an interesting background. She was born into a Kshatriya family of Punjab of the pre-partition India. For ages, it has been the tradition of Kshatriyas that the women were not permitted to move out except for performing religious ceremonies and for dispensing charity. But Sarla Devi is against such conditions laid for women. She represents the modern woman with powerful and strong ideals to be fulfilled irrespective of the consequences. Her marriage with Gulzari Lal is not the traditionally arranged one. She is of his (Galzari Lal's) choice. She agreed to marry him for the spirit he showed in choosing her as his wife. But she insists on maintaining her freedom after the marriage. Gulzari Lal too consents but quickly switches over to traditional rules of Kshatriyas ignoring his promise. Thus they began their married life with clashes. The concept of a wife according to Gulzari Lal is more traditional. She should give him companionship and solace with her warmth after his day's work, entertaining him with lively talk, engaging herself with the duties of a wife with no interest outside the house. Basically, he was attracted by Sarla Dcvi's beautiful figure and impulsive nature and took the decision to marry her. Sarla Devi represents such an idealistic bent of mind, life and practice. Gulzari Lal, her husband, though traditional in his thinking
in controlling his wife, is modern and purely materialistic in his practical life.

Strictly speaking, materialism in India cannot be said to be an outcome of scientific and industrial progress. In fact, it has been in vogue since the time of Carvaka, the founder of Indian materialism. According to him, materialism stands for sensualism, self-gratification and individual assertion conforming itself to material happiness. It advocates the doctrine of pleasure and enjoyment. Such a hedonistic view of life is very much prevalent even in the present day. V.A. Shahane observes:

Jhabvala, like George Bernard Shaw and E.M. Forster, is deeply conscious of the value of money in modern life and the fact that all idealistic schemes of restructuring civilization will need money for their implementation in practical life. (Shahane, 1986:23)

Jhabvala traces these materialistic tendencies through the character of Gulzari Lal in her novel *Get Ready for Battle* which depicts extreme materialism of rich, corrupt, bourgeois of contemporary India. In the novel, the novelist deals with a number of intrigues - sexual, familial, social and also with the theme of marital dissonance in the upper middle class, money - minded urban society. All the characters in the novel are connected with the broken and disintegrated marriage of the Delhi based Punjabi businessman, Mr. Gulzari Lal. The sense of misunderstanding, incompatibility, the clash of attitudes in terms of materialism and
idealism and the mismatched feelings take a serious turn in the novel. Gulzari Lal is a brash businessman who throws big parties to dazzle petty Government officials:

...no one was bored, for almost everybody in the room could be of use to someone else and this was stimulating. There was a Commissioner who was stimulating to a number of fairly high ranking civil servants, who were in their turn stimulating to a number of middle-ranking civil servants and so on, down to the municipal engineer for whom the party was made by the presence of the Vice-Chairman of his Board. An overall stimulus was provided by a Maharaja, an imposing figure who, now that his kingdom and good deal of his income were gone, was taking an interest in business affairs; he was really of no importance to anyone, but his presence made everyone feel they had got into good company and had come a long way from where they had started. (Jhabvala, GRB:1996:7)

In contrast, Sarla Devi strongly believes in austerity and high moral principles. She wants to act according to her conscience. That is the reason she had “hundreds of interests away from him (Gulzari Lal), her swamis and politicians, her refusal every to be a wife such as he wanted and thought he had a right to expect” (Jhabvala, GRB:1996:38). Therefore, these differences which are linked with materialism and idealism wreck their marriage. She abandons the world of pleasure for being socially useful. She is more worried about the miserable life of the poor people of Bundi Busti (Slum locality) in Delhi than the needs of her husband. She regards her separation from her husband and her family as a
form of self-indulgence as she wants to work more for the people of Bundi Basti. Jhabvala observes that “all through their married life, whenever he had wanted her, she had been busy with something else; she had many interests and none of them had ever included him” (Jhabvala, GRB:1996:35). Thus the married life of the Lals is completely disrupted and disintegrated.

When the clashes become intense, Sarla Devi walks out of the house and settles with her brother, Mr. Brij Mohan. She devotes all the time for the poor people of Bundi Basti. The temperaments and ideologies of the husband and wife are not at all conducive to adjustments. Since Gulzari Lal needs a wife to attend on him personally, he takes a mistress called, Kusum, an Army officer's widow. Gulzari Lal does not feel that there is anything wrong in having a mistress in the house. He thinks that after he returns from office, he needs someone like Kusum who meets his requirements. Kusum takes care of his health, his food, his drinks, his clothes, his servants, etc. She massages his legs. She also shares his bed. She satisfies a man who has been living without a wife for the last ten years. Kusum has become a substitute for a wife in his private life. She wants Gulzari Lal to divorce his wife so that she herself may marry him. For the time being, Gulzari Lal does not feel like divorcing Sarla Devi as this step would bring disrepute to him and it may spoil his business prospects. Kusum even convinces Brij Mohan (Sarla Devi's brother)
tempting him with an offer of a bribe. She misleads Sarla Devi into believing that she is a 'spiritual' (Jhabvala, GRB:1996:108) person and makes her agree to divorce Gulzari Lal. In order to be the sole mistress of Gulzari Lal's house she drives Mala, Gulzari Lal's daughter-in-law away with her husband (Vishnu) by convincing her that it is better if Mala lives separately away from her father-in-law. This makes Kusum the queen of her house. She recommends Mala's proposal to Gulzari Lal for a separate business. At her instance, Gulzari Lal permits his son to have a factory for making fountain pens at Chandnipet with the collaboration of his friend Joginder Singh. Kusum does so to give justice to her ambition of becoming Gulzari Lal's legal wife and running the administration of the house herself.

The failure of Sarla Devi at the social level is nothing but a continuation of her failure in her married life, because she does not strike a balance between ideals and reality. Basically, it is her duty to be with her husband and other family members to serve them. Care and love for her husband and concerns for the family recede into the background. She goes on for ideals attending to the needs of other people instead of thinking of her own people. Such contrast of temperaments creates in their life such a big gulf that it is difficult to build a bridge.

However, Sarla Devi is not an ideal embodiment of spiritualism since she, at least in one way, rejects the ideal Hindu wife's way of living.
by rejecting her husband and her family members. Jhabvala's Sarla Devi appears to be a social reformer but her extreme reformist fervour and blindness to social reality with reference to modern age indicates her inability to function successfully in any capacity. She is a total failure in her life. On the other hand, Gulzari Lal is an extreme example of a degenerate businessman who represents the decadent modern age. The temperaments of two extremes play a vital role in creating the marital dissonance between wife and husband. Sarla Devi’s idealistic attitude clashes with Gulzari Lal’s extreme degenerative quality. The novel ends with Sarla Devi’s decision to go to the red-light district to find her brother’s prostitute, Tara, and extend sympathy to her as her brother, Brij Mohan, had driven her away from the house.

A group of critics have attacked Jhabvala for generalizing woman’s predicaments through her scantly experience of Indian life. But Jhabvala rebuts the charges by saying “It came about instinctively. I was enraptured. I felt I understood Indian so well. I loved everything” (Singh, 2001:47). It is a fact that Jhabvala excels in her portrayal of the people and their issues. One of such problems is the problems of marital discord, which is portrayed in almost all the novels most superbly, and her characters pass through crisis after crisis. They are in quest of better life-partner. But Sarla Devi does not try to find the partner rather she tends to
concentrate upon social reform as reaction against her neglect by her husband.

There are other characters like Tara and her daughter for whose suffering Sarla Devi quarrels with her brother. Sarla Devi’s dedication for the poor is evident when she agrees to protect Tara who is a poor victim of male barbarism.

She can stay with me, Sarla Devi said. The old woman lost no time in hurrying away. Tara looked sullen and stood straight in front of her, with her jems working over her betel leaf. Brij Mohan continued his sitting or his mat. If you are so fond of her, then take her with you upstairs. After all this time you can’t suddenly say to the girl to get out. I am finished with you. She is not an old pair of shoes to be thrown away. (Jhabvala, GRB: 1996:190)

Sarla Devi identifies herself as intimately as possible with suffering humanity. She can only do so through a voluntary embracing of privation:

Sarla Devi walked for a long time..... the sun beat down on her and the glare of it pierced her eyes. Dust and stones from the unpaved road got into her sandals, and she had to stop time to time to take them out..... It was an effort for her to walk on again, but she always made it. She walked on the bank of the river, then under the bridge and along the walls of the Fort. Sometimes she stumbled with tiredness and heat, but she willed herself on. Her very exhaustion was a triumph for her; it brought her closer, she felt, to all the poor with whom she so much longed to identify herself. (Jhabvala, GRB: 1996:113)
Sarla Devi’s efforts on behalf of the poor are doomed to end in defeat, but her identification with them is total. She strikes “a discordant note” (Jhabvala, *GRB*:1996:176) in the elegant drawing room of her social equal Mrs. Bhatnagar because she is physically indistinguishable from the pariahs of society. On her way to Bundi Basti, “No one paid any attention to her: she was just one more old woman, in the plain cotton sari worn by the poor.”(Jhabvala, *GRB*:1996:113)

Humiliation and invective are her portion, as they are of the deprived sections. Her brother calls her a mad woman; her daughter-in-law accuses her of extreme self-centeredness and even the prostitute Tara hurls insult and abuse at her. Ruth Jhabvala seems to be suggesting here that the moment a woman asserts her individuality in India, she has to confront a social milieu conditioned by the Shastras – a code of laws in which a women’s role is defined only in terms of her relationship with males. All sections of society look askance at a woman who believes in choosing the kind of life she wants to live. Sarla Devi’s behavior and living do not conform to the rules as enumerated in the shastras because for her what she is pursuing is ideal. She visualizes her actions as ideal because she considers abnormal as normal and ideal. As a result she fails everywhere- in her marital life and in social one.

Walking back from Bundi Basti where “nothing had been achieved” (Jhabvala, *GRB*:1996:168), weary and footsore, Sarla Devi sits
down to rest on the bank of the river and undergoes her first transcendental experience:

.....the water stretched as far as the horizon where it merged with the sky and lay all still in a shimmer of heat. There were only sum, river, and sky, and Sarla Devi felt flooded with peace. The burden that lay on her heart had lifted and all the poverty and misery of the world had melted from her. She felt so pure, soblissful that tears came into her eyes; her body felt light as a straw blown on mind. If only it could be so always, if only she could be thus free for ever: free from her own body and from the sense or that of others. All her life she had wanted to be free and alone, like this, thinking nothing and being nothing, only a disembodies state and acceptance.... (Jhabvala, GRB:1996:168-69)

Ruth Jhabvala’s delineation of Sarla Devi, however, “goes beyond this ideal whose traditional image symbolize the tortoise within the shell, the lotus leaf on the pond and the flame that is still and unwavering” (Mukharjee, 1971:102). denote a state of being that is disengaged with surrounding life. To Ruth Jhabvala, with her Western bias, such an ideal is hardly a worthy one in the face of India’s massive problems. Sarla Devi’s idealism is not practicable in Indian situation. She lives in a very hostile surrounding. She has to fight against everything. She becomes a fighter because her neurotic condition does not allow her to compromise with the situations. She has the only option to become an idealist. Her idealism is born of an attitude of revenge and necessitated by an inner compulsion to escape.
It is very surprising that Sarla Devi seeks help from a person who always behaves like a colonizer and for that reason she dissociates herself from him. Perhaps, she knows Gulzarilal's ways cannot be mended, even then she expects him to help her. Gulzarilal exploits this moment, as always, for his personal benefit. He knows his alignment with Kusum can be legalized if Sarla Devi gives her consent. Therefore, he, very cleverly impresses upon Sarla Devi to sign the divorce documents. Gulzarilal is very tactful to influence Sarla Devi with his decision by showing how helpless he was without her consent;

We have a Hindu Code till now; he began his main topic. 'I want Vishnu to go away. Somewhere on his own, away from you, where he can start again from the beginning all by himself. 'It is no longer necessary to remain married. If the marriage is not successful.' 'Why are you saying all this now? It is ten years since we have finished being married, and I need no law to come and tell me what I am 'yes, yes', he said in some exasperation, that is all very fine, but you always forget that you are living in a society.' 'I forget! Who is it that cares only for himself, who never thinks of the millions who have nothing and live in novels on a handful of rise. (Jhabvala, GRB:1996:5)

As a neurotic Sarla Devi harbors imaginary pictures and strives to live up to them and all her efforts are directed towards actualizing a false image forsaking the real self. That is why, before signing the divorce papers Sarla Devi discusses with Gulzarilal, not the more vital question of her life regarding her divorce; but pleads with him for saving the poor.
Sarla Devi here seems to be more concerned with imaginary ideals than the real ones. The reality is that she needs to patch-up her strained relationship with her husband but as a neurotic she gives precedence to the welfare of the people than to her own problems. Having stayed away from her husband for nearly eight years, she has turned her attention to social work. She considers imaginary as real. She thinks that her destiny lies in advocating the cause of the downtrodden. She strives to promote the cause of the poor slum-dwellers for their permanent settlement on the land they have legally occupied in Bundi Basti colony.

Sarla Devi fails to understand that Gulzarilal is not alone responsible for pressurizing the eviction of the people of Bundi Basti, on the other hand, the property agents are more instrumental in deciding the fate of the slum-dwellers. It is a great irony that the property agent who manages to get the orders for their eviction are feared and respected by them (slum-dwellers). The property agent's main motive is to prevent the fall in the price of land next to the colony by getting the slum-dwellers evicted from it. What appears more pathetic is that her idealistic social work goes unacknowledged and unrewarded. The slum-dwellers strike deal with Gulzarilal behind the back and they accept some money to vacate the land.

Gulzarilal is not at all interested in the welfare of the slum-dwellers. Economic considerations alone guide his actions. Their eviction
is expected to restore the exorbitant price of the land adjacent to the colony and prevent a possible fall in the price. Sarla Devi fails to motivate the Slum-dwellers. Her failure may be attributed to her neurotic dispositions because she has developed a tendency to live in the imaginary world which is expected to be complete. Protected and safe guarded from any harm. She fails to handle the situations in a more practical manner. The motives and personal interests of the builders are not understood by Sarla Devi. She fails finally, even in her personal married life. She experiences only troubles, problems and sense of domination shown by Gulzarilal. Sarla Devi did not show her concern for her reconciliation with Gulzarilal. A normal married woman would not do so. Sarla Devi signs the divorce papers without any consideration. Her brother, Brij Mohan, however, tries to prevent the reputation between Gulzarilal and Sarla Devi. He urges upon Gulzarilal to reconsider the idea of divorce. He says, “A Woman from a family like ours cannot be so easily divorced” (Jhabvala, GRB:1996:68). The technique and skill of Mrs. Jhabvala in portrayal of women’s psyche in the contest of Indian culture and Indian social milieu has been lauded by Arjun Kumar in the following manner:

Mrs. Jhabvala, being an outsider, has studied the characteristic Indian traits from the viewpoint of a culturally advanced on-looker. This expresses partly why she feels sometimes so terribly upset
about social manners and even the postulates of Indian life. (Kumar, 2001:70)

In the novel Gulzarilal cannot be persuaded to change his mind. However, Kusum succeeds in changing the mind-set of Brij Mohan. Kusum stands in contrast with the character of Sarla Devi. Sarla Devi lacks all this skill and surprisingly she lives within an imaginary idea of divorce. She wants others also to join her in this venture and when she finds that others are hindering her, she does not help wrecking vengeance upon the person. She thinks that she can coerce the people into submission.

Sarla Devi is a total misfit in the family ambience and relation and also in the society. She is so because she has deviated from what is known as normal pattern of behaviour. Sarla Devi’s behaviour shows how much tact she requires for facing the realities. She is not realistic and practical in her approach. What is evident here is that Sarla Devi loses control over her and almost quarreled with the members of the family—

Mala wriggled her arms to try and free herself, but Sarla Devi’s grip were remarkably fierce. Mala cried, ‘let me go!’ and tears of fury welled from her eyes, ‘But I will never allow you to make my son like that?’ and in her agitates on Sarla Devi shook Mala’s arms up and down and Mala twisted here and there shouting; ‘Don’t touch me!’ The servants came running. They stood round and implored ‘Bibiji!’ and Pritti cried. ‘Don’t touch my mama!’ and tugged at Sarla Devi’s sari. (Jhabvala, GRB: 1996:90)
As a neurotic, Sarla Devi wants Mala to follow what she says. She thinks what she says is always true and correct. She considers her stand as ideal. She also thinks that the case of Bundi Basti was as great as that of Mahabharat. She considers her son Vishnu to be as great as legendary Arjuna. She urges upon him to fight the battle with her. She provokes her son to fight the injustice.

Oh Vishnu, Vishnu why are you like that? You are like my son. You are as beautiful as Krishna and as strong as Arjun. But your conduct is that of little merchant’s son. (Jhabvala, GRB:1996:89)

Therefore she inspires her son to fight for the cause of the people of Bundi – Basti-. “You must stand up my son, fight; you must fling yourself into the world” (Jhabvala, GRB:1996:91). Now she herself may be a sky gazer with a heart over flowing with sympathy for the poor, but her son, Vishnu in reality, is only little merchant’s son. Her comparision of Vishnu with Arjuna is totally unrealistic. This inadequacy of assessment and description of her own son’s qualities is all the more odd because she compares the cause of Bundi Basti people with that of the “Pandavas of the Mahabharat.” (Jhabvala, GRB:1996:91)

It is often said that Mrs. Jhabvala is very critical of Indian society and she laughs at Indian mode of life. But according to Arjun Kumar, this view is not tenable. He says:

... the parliament concerns of Mrs. Jhabvala are the manners of white – collared people who
experience mental agony in their pursuit of modernism as it involves alienation from their familial and cultural roots. She focuses incongruities for intensifying awareness, and not for attacking or providing carping criticism of Indian mode of life, or even for creating ideological statement. (Kumar, 2001:70)

Mrs. Sarla Devi considers the imaginary ideal as real. Her actions do not conform to accepted pattern of behaviour as fixed for a wife. Even Kusum does not consider her as an ordinary woman. Kusum says:

I know, she has no use for the ties by which other women, ordinary woman, are found. Further, Mala, too, considers that Sarla Devi is a mad-woman. (Jhabvala, GRB:1996:128)

She says:

She is a mad woman!" Are you listening to me?"
.... It is dangerous to let such woman into the house! Listen to me! (Jhabvala, GRB:1996:92)

Sarla Devi is a product of the modern cultural crisis, which is an outcome of a gradual disintegration of traditional connections, and customs. Cultural crisis takes place because of man’s materialistic pulls, which renders him devoid of spiritualism. Gulzarilal’s perpetual and vigorous pursuit of wealth tends to make him forget the basic principle of Indian ethics of surrendering one’s libido for the good of the society. He forsakes his wife because he has got weakness for ladies. He finds Kusum more enticing and entertaining. His wife, Sarla Devi, on the other hand,
does not know how to adjust with the realities. She prefers to estrange herself away from her husband.

The causes of rootlessness are hardly understood by Sarla Devi because she takes imaginary to be real Sarla Devi retaliated her neglect by her husband not by destroying either herself or her husband. She is the kind of woman who wants to maintain her individuality. She thinks that her idealism of working for the welfare of the unprivileged is the only way through which she can maintain her individuality and existence in the society. She does not regret the fact that her concern for the slum-dwellers goes unacknowledged. During one of the visits of Sarla Devi to the slum area, the slum-dwellers do not consider her any better than any other social worker. For example Ramchandra’s wife says about Sarla Devi:

She is one of the social workers; and the way she said suggested that she saw plenty of those and that for all the good they did they could stay where they come from. (Jhabvala, GRB:1996:111)

Most of the slum-dwellers do not support Sarla Devi in her fight against the capitalists. It was so because Sarla Devi does not know how to manipulate in order to live in the society. She fails to talk with the officers for non-transference of the piece of land of Bundi-Basti. She does not have confidence in herself for mobilizing the high profile officers. She seeks the help of Mrs. Bhatnagar to prevent the displacement of the
slum-dwellers but she too connives with the greedy traders and Sarla Devi fails to accomplish her task. The point here is that how a woman who is unable to accommodate with her husband could survive outside her home where people are so cunning and undependable. Sarla Devi fails because she considers that she can survive in her imaginary dream world with her high sounding and abstract ideological tenets.

Sarla Devi’s concern for the poor is, therefore, unmatched but her power and zeal for social work does not emanate from healthy mind but it originates from a mind that is sick and neurotic. She goes out of her husband’s house as she feels that her idealism is being checked and suppressed. So, she forsakes her well-established family. Therefore, she sets on an endless journey for the retrieval of her glorified self. She comes to Bundi Basti, which she fails to rehabilitate despite all efforts and desire, and from there she goes to reclaim Tara and her daughter who have been most unceremoniously driven away by her brother, Brij Mohan. The novel ends on a note of desperate journey of Sarla Devi to bring back the destitute, Tara and her daughter. She thinks it is a duty to help them and only then, Sarla Devi could become free from all her delegations.

**Neurosis Generating Compromise Solution in The Day in Shadow:**

Simrit in *The Day in Shadow*, is the woman protagonist who is a neurotic character. She is unable to adjust herself with the people and
surrounding that appears adverse to her mental make-up. Her married life proves a hell for her. She does not get from her husband what may be called real love. Simrit finds herself as fish out of water in her husband’s house because her husband is devoid of feeling and emotion, which to her are indispensable for the making of a perfect man. Som. Her husband would never pay heed to her even in making ordinary decisions of everyday life: “Non even about chair covers and curtains. Even there, Som had a veto Not even about servants.” (Sahgal, TDS:2008:3)

Simrit in *The Day in Shadow* is also compelled to escape from the constraints of her life. The novel is mainly concerned with the depiction of lack of understanding and sympathy in marital life which causes negative impact on the mind of Simrit. She is unable to cope with the materialistic and mechanical attitude of her husband. She becomes neurotic because herself is suppressed and her imaginary ideals about ideal relationship between husband and wife crumble into pieces. Som, her husband, treats her merely as a sexual object. He never prefers to exchange views with his wife. Meaningful arguments and refined talks which Simrit is very fond of do not make any sense for Som. For him what matters alone is business dealing and flow of wealth. He even goes down to aggressive level to earn a profit. He is a typical product of the modern civilization and his character appears analogous to that of the one-eyed ‘Smyrna merchant’ created by T. S. Eliot in his *The Waste*
Som has no regard for what may be called heart-to-heart relations with the persons close to him. He thought only in terms of loss and profit. He finds it utterly frustrating when Simrit asks him to spend more time with herself. Commenting on the character of Som, Rajeshwar says: “Anything that is not straight forward and intrinsically not useful is outside the scope of his comprehension and experience.” (Rajeshwar, 2001:92)

Some critics have treated Som as villain as he is found responsible for making his wife’s life miserable. But this treatment is not fair. Simrit is equally, rather more responsible for the crises that are precipitated in her life. The genesis of the problem with her can be traced back in her upbringing. Simrit has lived an artificial and snobbish life in Delhi as a child. She has believed in freedom at all levels. Her parents taught her the doctrine of peaceful existence. The author says:

From the high spot an immense valley of choices spread out before her gaze and she felt free at last to choose what her life would be – She was filled with sheer rightness of being alive and healthy at this particular time. (Sahgal, TDS:2008:236)

Simrit was not taught to adjust herself to the realities of life and what may be called vicissitudes of life. Her “scholarly father” (Sahgal, TDS:2008:3) and “unworldly mother”( Sahgal, TDS:2008:3) had a tendency to withdraw from “anything outside and orthodox Brahmanical fold.” (Sahgal, TDS:2008:3) As a result, Simrit could not develop a
realistic perspective of life. Like Maya in *Cry, the Peacock*, her parents pampered Simrit. For Simrit, Som appeared quite dashing and dazzling. She is charmed by the personality of Som. She thought his associations with herself would make her life colourful and charming. To her, Som had everything, which her parents did not possess. She developed high expectations from him and entered into a marital fold. For some years the life was happy and “they had got easily enough on the surface, and that had created a sort of its own intensity, depth and devotion were never brought into play at all.” (Sahgal, *TDS*: 2008:4)

But very soon Simrit is disillusioned with marriage. She finds that her husband does not love her as she wanted him to. Som is more practical and his materialistic concerns alone keep him awfully busy. Som does not find it useful to talk to her about her inner problems. What may be seen here is that only physical side of love does not matter in married life. There should be a balance between what is known spiritual and physical side of love to keep material life happy and harmonious. Simrit and Som reach a stage of saturation in love after which it must fall if there is no spiritual dimension to it. The love between Som and Simrit as a result is an imbalanced one. In D.H. Lawrence’s *Sons Lovers* Paul’s relation with Miriam breaks down because it is too spiritual, and his relation with Clara Dawes breaks down because there is overindulgence in love which is merely physical. Therefore, there must be a balanced
proportion of physical and spiritual love, if it has got to be enduring and long-lasting. The love between Som-Simrit is totally devoid of what may be termed as spirituality. The scholarly interests of Simrit and her penchant for intellectual life run counter to Som’s outlook. Som could never understand his wife hence he could never appreciate her feelings. As a result, Som stays cut off from her. The reason for existence in the eyes of Som is money. Simrit recalls:

Money had been part of the texture of her relationship with Som, an emotional, forceful ingredient of it. Intimately tied to his self-esteem. Money was, after all, a form of pride, even of violence. (Sahgal, *TDS*:2008:60)

Simrit, on the other hand, had a deep-seated dislike for the person who does not show concern for her. She lived in a world of illusion of her own. She began to make neurotic claims i.e., she demanded her husband to be over-careful about her. When her demands are not fulfilled, she becomes vindictive. By showing her vindictiveness, she thinks, she would be recognized. Being vindictive is a contrivance to the neurotics to glorify one’s image. A neurotic does not realize that by doing so he or she is harbouring illusions. He lives in the realm of fantasies. He should be as he has visualized himself to be. There are inner dictates that enumerate his standards for him. They stagger in the face of realities of life. When they are shattered, the neurotic pride suffers a blow; as a result, the neurotic becomes vindictive. Simrit undergoes the same kind of
experience. Simrit was over taught to face the realities of life. Her Delhi life was quite artificial and the culture in which she was brought up appeared to her paradoxical. About Delhi-life Simrit appears to be a bit sceptic.

Delhi had been simply home, a place to bring up children. But apparently it was much more, the touchstone for whatever happened in India. Delhi could become the heart of her critics. (Sahgal, *TDS*:2008:12)

The opening chapter of the novel serves to introduce the readers with all the dramatic personae of the novel who meet at the get – together part of the Intercontinental Hotel. The very first sentence throws light on the flow and glitter of the Delhi – life:

The huge mirrors of the zodiac room at the intercontinental festooned in carved gilt reflected every one of consequences in the ministry of petroleum and a lot of other officials besides. And their wives and some of their daughters – the supple, fat stomached young, with their saris tied low showing their novels, their hair scourging long and loose or pilled high in glossy architecture. (Sahgal, *TDS*:2008:01)

The artificial background of Delhi – life as reflected here prevents Simrit from developing into a more mature realistic and practical human being. The artificial nature of life in Delhi and hypocrisy of Hindu culture combined together to make Simrit hollow, empty and ambivalent. Simrit could not learn how to live realistically. Further the crisis was deepened by her marriage to Som. Simrit has married him against the wishes of her
parents and that of her friends. In this context Shyam Asnani has lightly remarked:

Her Brahmin parents with their instinctive withdrawal from anything outside the fold, get upset at her choice of a businessman husband, but her friends do not like him either. They think him a boar for people always dislike and distrust commercial flash and glare if they do not possess it themselves. A man has to be flashy on a big scale to be thought well of, and majestical vulgar to be admired, and Som does not belong to that category. But his flash is what has charmed her solitary, book-loving childhood. Som is colour and life and action. (Asnani, 1973:60)

As a result, Simrit does not develop a proper perspective about her married life. She develops a feeling of being rejected and humiliated. She begins to act in a more unpredictable manner. Som is unable to know the real problem with Simrit. He says to his friend Vetter in the next room:

I'm worried about Simrit! She's not herself. Has she had a medical checkup? Yes, yes lot. There's absolutely nothing the matter with her physically. That's what's worrying me. (Sahgal, TDS:2008:77)

Simrit feels her hands so sweaty. In neurotics there are different biological reactions and emotional feelings. Therefore they do not want to live in people because these different chemical reactions in their bodies may be noticed by others. They develop a tendency to live alone. It has also been rightly said that the neurotics have a tendency to live isolated because they feel protected. Simrit, too, likes to love alone. She tells Vetter that she does not need anybody to spend more time with her. She

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is very completely with the children and her writing. But Simrit does not find reasons in it. She feels alienated from her husband. Vetter tries to bring reconciliation between husband and wife. Vetter tries to tempt her to have shopping-clothes, jewels anything; trips abroad, summer trip to Europe, but nothing moves her, nothing satisfies her. Simrit cries wordlessly:

We cry about things we can’t change. She gets single clear thought. Som and Vetter belong to a world that just goes on perfecting techniques, and cannot bear living in it any more. There must be other world. (Sahgal, TDS:2008:85)

The sickness of Simrit is beyond the grasp of Som. Simrit moves into her room and fully dressed on her bed, she tries to strengthen herself and says to herself:

Imagine instead the things that happen in this very city, sometimes just down to road. Imagine the vagrant children, the days without food, nights without shelter for people with no additional, outer threat over them, no fear of war. Why let imagination travel further than that to some woman with a child in her body getting Som’s and Vetter’s bomb, or whatever it was, and flying a part, leaving bits of child that could be exchanged for a whole new drawing room furniture and upholstery, silk and velvet cushions for gracious and civilized living. Children in their cradles should fear men like you. (Sahgal, TDS:2008:87)

But the main reason of her envy is that she desires the world to be more kind to her. “Surely there is such a world, she thinks, after all,
people once believed it was flat and it turned out otherwise. If its shape could turn out different, so contexture" (Sahgal, TDS:2008:84). Som tries to console her. He explains to her that he is very much busy and hence he cannot attend to her. But Simrit does not listen. The feeling of being rejected and neglected haunts her all the time. She becomes vindictive. She stays separate. She behaves quite abnormally. She decides to punish Som by withdrawing sex from him. Simrit desires Som to just hold her hands and live like brother and sister. She wants him to be just like loving friends. Som is utterly confused. He tells her flatly that whatever she is trying to get at is quite beyond him. Som behaves as ever in domineering manner. His manly pride is hurt by the unusual demands Simrit has begun to make. He wants to rectify her. He scares Simrit by saying that he will be away to Madras for a week, and that would give her ample time to think over and decide what she wants to do. He asks her to get on with a normal life and finish this game once and for all. Som does not know that such an attempt to rectify her would ruin her forever. Som’s behaviour hurts Simrit’s neurotic pride. Her neurotic pride makes her utterly disappointed Asnani has very rightly commented: “She feels forlorn non-plussed, all her freshness, char and gaiety lost. Society had actually died forever long before she was divorced.” (Asnani, 1973:63)

Thus, Simrit’s married life failed to yield any pleasure to her. She wanted Som to pamper her, which Som was incapable of doing. Her
marital life with Som has proved to her a meaningless existence and wastage of her talents, because there is no compatibility between Simrit and Som. Simrit is a true example of the image of a 'feminine mystique' as defined by Betty Fridan:

There was a strange discrepancy between realities of our lives as woman and the image to which we were trying to confirm, the image that came to call the feminine mystique. (Fridan, 1971:9)

The decision of Simrit could not find fulfilment. She had expected that her marriage with Som would fructify all her dreams, but nothing could happen. Her desires were repressed and hence she deviated from normal pattern of behaviour. Furthermore, she always remains worried about her decision to marry Som. Resultantly, Simrit was torn into conflicts. Simrit’s cravings for a respectful life suffer a deep blow at the hands of Som. She finds Som quite unprotective and uncaring, so she begins to live a life of withdrawals and lonliness. Many critics have argued that this behaviour of Simrit encourages male chauvinism. But Urbashi Barat refutes such charge but she agrees with the views that –

Simrit’s responses are the subversive protest of the weak, the disinherit and the marginalized. Her personality has been shaped by her feminine experience in a patriarchal society, which as Karen Horney points out in her Feminine Psychology, prevents her from achieving self-confidence, and inculcates in her a degree of dependence on love in relationship. (Barat, 2001:80)
Simrit’s desire for imaginary happiness remains unfulfilled. She safeguards her neurotic pride by withdrawing sex. She refuses to sleep with him as husband and wife. She challenged the basic thing that marriage entails. Marriage is a legalized device of sex-fulfillment and the sacred aspect of marriage is procreation. She withdraws sex from Som thus propitiating him to understand the futility of marriage. Som, as a result, does not find any logic and meaning in continuing his living with Simrit. So, Simrit has never anticipated that her mild step to rectify her husband would ruin her married life forever. She could never think of the pros and cons of her decision, as she had never learnt how to face the realities.

Some of the critics have opined that Simrit loved freedom and when it is refused to her, she rebels. Here it may be said that the meaning of freedom is quite elusive. Precisely speaking freedom is bondage. Simrit is constitutionally unable to grasp the meaning of freedom. She thought of enjoying freedom of communication of ideals with her husband beyond the glandular sensations of sex. When she finds that her husband does not respond to her properly, she is compelled to seek human communication or friendship outside the bounds and bond of marriage. Simrit reflects:

Sex was no more just sex than food was just food .... And once past its immediacy, sex had it visions too – of tenderness of humour, of more
than a physical act. Sex could be an argument or a problem shared. (Sahgal, *TDS*:2008:90)

Simrit thinks that freedom of communication is not there between herself and her husband. She is ignored and isolated like a piece of furniture but used occasionally by Som whenever needed by him to satisfy his biological urges. Simrit’s ego is hurt. She feels denigrated and humiliated and for the restoration of her glorification of herself, she behaves abnormally. She allowed herself to be sexually assaulted by Som. She willfully suppresses her own sense of pleasure resulting in her impregnation time and again. She gives birth to babies not for their own sake but to fulfill her neurotic need. According to Rajeshwar the provocation to her serves three purposes:

The babies serve three purposes simultaneously: They draw Som’s attention to her, they satisfy the creative wife in her, for she has been a writer of sorts but has given up writing on regular basis and they satisfy her ego in the sense that she sees them as an extension of herself. (Rajeshwar, 200:9)

Simrit has always profoundly desired the kindly attention of Som. Som would feel quite attached to her whenever she would become pregnant. This was a moment of intense pleasure for her:

Simrit did not specially want a boy or another baby. But pregnancy had taken all the time in the world to fulfill itself. It transformed Som, making him little afraid and beautifully unsure. After the baby came he would go back.... But while this lasted she made the most of it. She
never told him she felt reckless, not fragile, during these months. (Sahgal, TDS:2008:25)

Som’s feeling for her is what she craved for. He turned to her and showered his love upon her, but she interpreted it only as instinctual urge on the part of Som, which for her tended to obliterate her individuality. Hence, Simrit responded to his dispositions indifferently and acrimoniously. Som’s relation with Simrit might be seen as equal to that between Catherine and Valmiki in Kamla Markanday’s Possession. Valmiki does not enjoy freedom of communication with Catherine in the same way as he has it with the swami. Catherine possesses Valmiki like an object. It is Catherine, who determines Valmiki’s likes, dislikes, and because it is so unnatural and unreal that finally antagonizes Valmiki. Mr. A. V. Krishna Rao has rightly opined that: “Som in Mrs. Sahgal’s nove, is the masculine edition of Catherine is his affluent arrogance, sexuality and utter lack of refinement” (Rao, 1976:59). Under the domineering influence of Catherine, Valmiki could not develop and articulate his artistic dispositions; hence, he broke away from her. Simrit’s intellectual dispositions do not get a proper ambience for prospering in company of her husband, hence she thought alienated and rejected. She wanted him to be free from the mad pursuit of money and to share her feelings with him. She did not find a proper lover in her husband. She failed to find her childhood love in Som. Her repressed feeling to get a lover in Som is not
at all fulfilled. Marriage turns out to be an entirely different experience for her. She thinks Som is not at all fit for her. She perceives that Som’s power of wealth will overwhelm her; hence, she decides to break her relation with Som. A neurotic has a tendency to withdraw from the realities particularly when the realities do not appear glorifying the self of the neurotic Simrit thinks that herself is not being glorified. It is not being glorified within the bonds of the married life and that Som has got no value for her intellectual and romantic bearing. For Simrit, as Laxmi Parsuram has observed: “Som is getting rich very fast and ... He has become less and less capable for contemplation.” (Paruram, 1970:156)

Can withdrawal of sex by Simrit to mend the ways of Som be a justified and normal step? A normal human being would not dare do so. Marriage is a legalized sex, that is what most of the sociologist have suggested. Withdrawing sex from marriage would mean denying food to life or sort of denying milk to a baby. For Simrit however, withdrawal of sex seems to be the only way to rectify her husband. That night Som compels her with his urgency, she stays separate, excluded and rebellious. In fact, Simrit has developed a conception of sex, “Sex could be an argument or a problem shared.” (Sahgal, TDS:2008:90)

Her romantic affair with a young boy during her adolescence days also seems to be guiding her idea of sex. She remembers, “It was a very romantic attachment. We held hands and kissed a bit – not much and
rather chastely, and yearned a lot” (Sahgal, TDS:2008:107). Simrit applies the parameters of the romantic love to the married life. She treats marriage as an extension of romantic love to the married life. She treats marriage as an extension of romantic love-affair. She fails to see the reality. She continues to live in an illusory world as neurotics create an illusory world. She fails to understand that she could be a vital linking force between husband and wife. On the contrary, she feels that married life could be lived with intellectual and romantic yearnings alone.

It must be pointed out here that sex in marriage has different meaning for men and women. In this connection Rajeshwar has opined.

Men and women are divided by desired discrepancy over sex. For men it is one act complete in itself. He desires it for the intimate pleasure it is capably of yielding. For women it is more of an act of intimacy and emotional gratification. Simrit had additional reasons to be sexually gratified independent of her husband. Psychological studies have proved that pregnancy, delivery and lactation yield tremendous amounts of sexual satisfaction resulting in a dimming of desire for the act itself and Simrit has ‘hordes’ of children. Given the nature of Som we cannot attribute on awareness of this fine distinction in his and his wife’s attitudes towards sex. On the contrary, he has a greater need for sex. It is well known to psychological that people like Som, who have strong passions, as a rule have strong sexual drives. Som, as is usual with middle-aged men, also perhaps beings to suspect his sexual browels and thus needs the reassurance of his wife. So he is insisting in sex in utter disregard of her feelings. (Rajeshwar, 2002:98)
Thus, the feelings of Simrit are hurt. Sex, for Simrit, is a contrivance of controlling the women. She does not want to be controlled. Her neurotic pride is hurt when herself is not glorified. As a result, she decided to break away from her husband. On the other hand, Simrit’s withdrawal of sex from him appears to be quite melodramatic. He retaliates by cutting her off from his life completely explaining that “when a woman freezes up every time her husband touches her its time to call it a day.” (Sahgal, *TDS*:2008:99)

The marriage is dissolved. Simrit had neurotically sought to dissolve it in order to gain freedom. But she does not get freedom. Som imposed the ‘Consent Terms’ (Sahgal, *TDS*:2008:80) on her, which oblige her to pay heavy taxes. Thus what Simrit gets in the name of freedom is victimization. Simrit is overburdened with financial liabilities, which tend to spoil the prospects of her freedom. Further, her desire to get freedom from male-domination ultimately proves to be a great disillusionment as another male, whose name is Raj, rescues her. Raj, a bachelor with Christian background is linked with Simrit for two qualities -justice and genteelessness. He shows non-attachment and disinterested involvement in the problems of Simrit, which soon develops into a mental liking for each other. For him Simrit is a woman of culture,

She could be that rarity, a woman with a profession, an independent person living her own life. She didn’t need a man for identity or status.
There was an internally private rapture in making and shaping own life that few people recognized. (Sahgal, TDS:2008:140)

It is Simrit’s assertive nature that brings her closer to Raj. The sense of glorification of self of Simrit is fulfilled through her association with Raj. Simrit’s turning to Raj in one more example of the woman’s continued greed for an equal relationship in which she can find both, true love and herself. She breaks her seventeen-year-old marriage just to fulfill her neurotic pride. She is ready to undergo all kinds of trials of tribulations in order to safeguard her glorified self. As a divorcee she feels uprooted and abandoned. Suddenly she is deprived of the luxurious way of living. She has taken

All the living wealth (children) and had kept behind the crockery and furniture and jewels and silver. Som got all things, the cars, the bank accounts. (Sahgal, TDS:2008:58)

While Som rolled in wealth, Simrit lives in penury. Her sacrifice of wealth and prosperity is vindictive. Simrit turns to Raj for security and support. Raj has a liking to intellectualize on the most ordinary things. He develops interest in her because he is opposed to the oppression of the females and he considers the divorce settlement as “the ultimate in outrage inflicted on an unsuspecting, unsuspecting victim.” (Sahgal, TDS:2008:37)

Simrit’s going to Raj and her association with him is similar to
Sarojini's going to the Swami for faith healing. Sarojini feels neglected and humiliated by her husband Dandekar in Kamla Markandaya's *A Silence of Desire*. Sarojini seeks glorification of the self, which she gets when she comes in contact with the swami. Simrit is instigated by Raj to have confidence in herself. He suggests her not to worry much about the problem imposed upon her by her husband. Raj does everything that Simrit would like somebody to do for her. Simrit associates with Raj most freely. She forgets the world she has left behind. But she is perpetually worried by the crippling consent terms. She appeals to Som through her lawyer Moolchand to reconsider the terms of divorce settlement, but this exercise goes in vain. Raj provides her all support. And finally, Simrit decides to marry him. Simrit, however, knows that marriage would endanger her individuality and dignity. But she is of the opinion that in the company of Raj she can live a truer life without any pretence and suppression of her desires:

The personal world of Raj and Simrit, grounded in sympathy and understanding, hence communication and friendship, rather than bestial sensuality and cruel insensitivity, seems to be world that Nayantara not only wishes to depict but also prescribes as the only one and sensitive alternative to the mechanistic world of power, atrocities and greed. (Ansani, 1973: 130)

The action on the part of Raj fulfills the neurotic pride and Simrit and also contributes to glorify the self of Simrit. There are several
instances to show that there is perfect equality between them. Very often Simrit takes a decision and imposes it upon Raj. Simrit turns down Raj’s proposal to have dinner in a hotel and “Raj accepts defeat” (Sahgal, TDS:2008:14). At another time, Raj’s proposal to have coffee at a restaurant is declined and instead Simrit suggests going to her house. Raj concedes, “All right, let’s go, With you, I face a dead end of every turn, unlike Som. Who must have ridden roughshod and triumphant did he?” (Sahgal, TDS:2008:139) So, even so far as going to Moolchand, her lawyer was concerned, it was Simrit’s own decision. Raj has recognized the independent spirit of Simrit. Raj always tries to provide her a kind of psychological lull. His mentor Ramkrishna advices Simrit that “she should live as if the horror of the tax burden over her head does not exist at all?” (Sahgal, TDS:2008:181)

Simrit accepts Ramkrishna’s advice and the belief makes her exaggerate, “overflow, tell the world about the mild, sweet heart sending rapture of being alive” (Sahgal, TDS:2008:205). Ram Krishna advises her to live for freedom and he suggests her to forget the ‘Consent Term’ and to conclude, Urbashi Barat’s critical assessment of the incidence seems more befitting.

Once though Indians had been solves, they had lived as if they been free, heads helds up, chest thrust out, invincible under Gandhi. And what price matters if it had lifted not even a spark, if it could never happen again?” (205) Commenting of
Shahgal’s concern for portrayal of women’s psyche Pradip Lahiri writes that Sahgal brings to the foreground the inner reality of an individual belonging to the female species, seeking to be free in Free India, from the cobwebs and tentacles of false social taboos and desiring to tentatively tear away from her household role, in order to search for a sexual freedom, self-respect and a satisfactory inner realization. (Barat, 2001:169)

Conclusion:

Thus, both, Sarla Devi and Simrit follow an opposite neurotic course. They feel safe and secured in their own shell. They refuse to come out of it. Rather they try to bring their counterparts inside their shells. But when they find their counterparts cannot be influenced they prefer to withdraw themselves from them. On being compelled to silently suffer the strains of life, they do not bite upon their heart but defy the social injections, only to become compulsive idealists.
Works Cited:


A Ph.D Thesis. S.R.T.M. University, Nanded

