IV Woman Portrayed in the Short Stories of Mannu Bhandari

Introduction:

During recent decades a galaxy of women writers have started writing with the self imposed task of representing themselves in a style away from the stereotyping of women in fiction. This time they do not stand in the patriarchal circle of confinement. Instead they do come out of grotto and address the world from their vantage-point. Among Hindi women writers the name of Mannu Bhandari can be mentioned in this regard.

Reality emerging out of nayi kahani is very bitter which is the outcome of clarity and objective scientific attitude towards tradition bound Indian social structure. The sensitive human being evaluates each and every event and traditional values with the eyes of intellect and objectivity. Resultantly Indian social values look futile under this microscopic sight. Mannu Bhandari has successfully depicted her microscopic observations in her short fiction. Mannu Bhandari has contributed to the Hindi short story world some intimate portrayals of man-woman relationship. Bhandari’s women characters are depicted performing different gender roles as daughter, young college girl, unmarried woman, wife and mother. Some of them rise above this traditionally assigned role while some of them belong to the traditional roles. Anita Myles rightly points out,

A woman’s experiences of life as a member of a gender bised society formulate her psyche. Moreover, she is bound by certain other factors such as her individual circumstances, society’s expectation related to age, class, race etc. Thus each woman’s experience of life is different and therefore, unique.(Myles)

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Mannu Bhandari has given a distinct dimension to the total picture of woman in the family and society. The discriminating socio-cultural values, attitudes and practice which cripple the personalities of the female psyche are highlighted in her stories. In her shorter fiction women seem to work within social restrictions.

4.1 Girlhood and Adolescence

Mannu Bhandari has contributed to the Hindi literature some intimate portrayals of young girls who are pivotal in some of her short-stories. Bhandari explores the girl's sufferings as well as her efforts to harmonize the native and the acquired ideas as well as her problem after education.

Bhandari is aware of the different yardsticks for men and women in our conventional society. So she presents some glaring examples of gender sensitivity prevailing in our society. The protagonists of the following stories are even unaware of this injustice. It only proves that they have been nurtured since childhood in a society which perpetuates such inequalities. It is a fact that even today a woman has been made acutely conscious of her gender since childhood. Restrictions on her movements are enforced as soon as she reaches puberty. Any girl who tries rebel against such restrictions is severely reprimanded and shown her place. Seema Suneel put her arguments to support this view:

Before marriage, women are brought up strictly according to the traditional codes. The moment girl reaches adolescence; she is reminded of her femininity. She is constantly reminded by society that she need not assert her individuality as she is destined for man which is the ultimate goal of her life. (Suneel)²
Mannu Bhandari has delinated a distinct facet and dimension to the total picture of woman and society. We come across a picture of a girl in the following story who becomes the victim not only of cruel patriarchy but also of blind judicial system. The story Saza reflects the pathetic life of a promising young girl Asha. Her father is falsely caught under the charge of embezzlement of rupees twenty five thousands. Asha has left the school bus and she walks three miles to reach the school.

‘Maine school ki bus hi chhod di. Tin mil paidal hi jaati thi. Dhoop ho ya barish, chehre par shikan nahi laati thi.’ (254)

[I have also left school bus. Three miles I walked. Whether it was summer or monsoon; not a single wrinkle of dislike came on my face.]

The situation without income is very critical in her home and court has announced two years punishment to her father. Her maternal uncle, who has recently come from England support her father to fight for high court. Her grand father has to work hard to fulfill the family of his son. Meanwhile Asha's younger brother Munna is sent to her uncle's home in the village for study. The news came that Munna was not treated properly by his aunt, Asha is also sent to village to help her aunt and care for her brother. Asha has to leave her study and work hard at her uncle's house in village. She becomes expert in house hold chores. she thinks :

‘Papa aur amma to hamesha muje bachhi hi samajte the, Isiliye shayad badi hi nahi ho pati thi. Idhar ekdum kitni badi ho gayi hun. Saat aadmiy ko dono samay ka khana bana leti hun. Khana hi nahi, ghar ka
saara hi to kaam karne bagi hun. Mere saath school me jo ladkiyan padhati thi, Unse karva to dekhe koi bhi kaam! Par ve kyo ye sab kaam kare? Bhagvan kabhi unhe ese bure din na dikhaye!' (251)

[Father and mother always thought me as a child so I couldn't grow up. Here how much grown up I am. I can cook food for seven people twice a day. Not only food but total house hold chores are being done. The girls who studied with me, let them tell to any house hold work! But why should they do all this? May God never show them such bad days!]

Asha's mother becomes ill without her children and her father is jobless and under the spell of depression. Her grand father sends her father seventy five rupees from his pension and extra work. At her uncle's home Asha has to finish all the household work and many a time at night her legs pain and she cannot sleep throughout the night. She thinks,

‘Amma kabhi kabhi gaanva me kaam karvati thi to papa dant te the : 'mai apni Asho ko doctor banaunga, videsh bhejunga, Kya muje apni bitiya ki Jindagi kharaab karni hai?' (257)

[In village some times, when my mother forced me to do household work, my father angrily told: I will make Asha a doctor, send her to foreign, do I spoil my daughter's life?]

Cruel destiny and social system ruined the life of promising girl whose dreams never come true. At last court announced its judgment and makes
Asha’s father free from accusation. Asha is very happy by listening the judgment but his father is not happy because this four years span of suspension was worse than two years jail; which has ruined not one person’s prestige but the life of promising girl too. Here, Bhandari beautifully presents how social structure and traditional codes scatter the life of young girl.

Here the gender sensitivity is displayed by Mannu Bhandari because it is a significant factor in the Indian social set up. The society we live in is governed by ageold patriarchal norms where there is a strict code of conduct to be followed by girls regarding their dress, speech and behavior because of the gender. She is made conscious of her gender since childhood. In our society, which is essentially patriarchal, a female child is brought up under the strict control of parents with the view that she has to be given to a new master, her husband, who should find her acceptable, meeting his expectations. Marriage is thus, considered a great ambition and ultimate goal of a girl. The traditional feminine virtues and graces are instilled in her so that she could be an attractive 'commodity' in the marriage market. As Sunita Raddy remarks,

The daughter is considered an enormous financial burden in as much as she does not contribute to the family income and instead takes away a considerable part of her family fortune as dowry. (Reddy: 150)

The story presents a meek, docile picture of a young girl who represents all those Indian women who are covered with thick, slack layers of convention, ignorance and reticence in literature as well as in real life and who have no autonomous frame of existence.

In the story *Ek Kamjor Ladki ki Kahani*, a young girl is made weak enough not to put her brave thoughts into action just because from her childhood she is treated under the strict control of parents on the name of tradition. In a typical Indian set-up, daughter is considered a burden to be
eased, a problem to be solved, a responsibility to be dispensed with and a person who has no right to any choice in life. And as Veena Das puts it, ".... Once a daughter is properly married and goes to her own house it is like a debt that has been paid."(Das)⁴

Roop's mother died of heart attack when she was in the school. Her father Rameshbabu marries again and under the eyes of step mother Tara devi, Roop is growing up. Once her step mother tells her father that there is nothing sensible in school teaching, so her father decides to leave her school and arranges a teacher to teach Roop at home. Roop has opposed and argued a lot in her daydreaming but in the presence of her father she silently accepts her father's decision. Slowly instead of learning she has to work hard in the home. In our male dominated society, a female child is brought up under the strict control of parents. (Here step mother totally control the girl, Roop) With a view that she has to fulfill their expectations. Roop's father observes that,

'Dhire Dhire ghar ka saara kaam ek ke baad ek Tara devi ke kandho se sarak kar Roop par aata gaya aur Vah bhi bina virodh kie chupchap sab kuch odhati chali gayi. Chand dino me hi vah vidyarthi se gruhasthin ban gai.' (68-69)

[Slowly, one after the other, all household responsibilities are sliding from the shoulders of Tara devi to Roop and she is also accepting all these silently without any oppose. Within few days she has been changed from student to house holder.]

This shows that marginalization of woman who lives her life according to the wish of others is still prevalent in some typical conventional Indian family where she is not given freedom to express her desire. She walks and
moves like a puppet as other make her to do so. She possesses neither the will nor the room of her own. She is taught to merge herself.

Thus instead of studying at home she has to do house hold work at home. The entire purpose of shifting Roop from school to home is now totally changed day by day. Roop is made psychologically weak by the restrictions of her step mother. So her father decides to send her at her maternal uncle's home for further study.

When Roop comes to know about her father's decision again she thinks of strongly opposed to her father's decision by arguing that,

'Apana ghar kyon chhodu, school bhi chhudva diya, itna kaam bhi karti hun, phir bhi ye log muje apne ghar nahi rakhna chahte.' (69)

[Why should I leave my own home, they forced to leave me school also, I also do this much household chore, though they don't want to keep me here.]

Whatever be the age, the girl has to follow the decisions and orders of patriarchy. Here Roop also protests in her mind but she has to accept her father's decisions silently and has to go to her maternal uncle's home. She feels that as if their parents have displaced her from her home.

Roop is sent to her maternal uncle, who is doctor, where an orphan boy Lalit is also living with them. Within short time she mixes with the atmosphere and gets first class in metric with the help of Lalit. Lalit expresses his love towards Roop and goes to abroad for further higher education.

Roop's marriage has been decided by her father with Vakil Saheb who is generous by nature but workaholic enough to engage in his work. Here she also thinks to oppose the proposal of marriage but she dose not argue for it.

One day, after her marriage, Lalit comes to meet her and decides to run away with Roop. First Roop opposes Lalit's proposal but later she accepts
it and they plan to run away. On that night, Vakil Saheb tells Roop about an incident in which his friend's educated wife has run away with her lover and also expresses his feelings on his wife Roop's nobility that she is noble enough not to see at other man. Thus, Roop cannot run away with Lalit.

Here, Roop is depicted as a weak, docile and easily bent character at other's will which is the outcome of tradition and sanskaras. As a girl she is told to mould herself according to her gender roles. Thus, since childhood she is exposed to traditional patterns which presumably supposed that the daughter will have to lead a sacrificing and submissive life. It is indoctrinated in the girl-child to play the role of a disciplined daughter, a meek and submissive wife on which restrictions are forced upon.

In the absence of light of truth, one has to suffer from the lack of mother's love. The protagonist Pramila in the story *Sankhya ke Paar*, passes through such loveless situation. The college girl Pramila is restricted to meet her mother by her maternal grandfather Baba. Baba was well known for his anger and no one can stand against his anger. It has been said that her mother had left her and run away. Actually, after the death of Pramila's father, Pramila's grand parents and her uncle tried to sell Pramila's mother for money and spread the rumors that she was run away. Pramila is not allowed to meet her mother and her mother too is not permitted to meet her daughter. Here patriarchy rules the house, which is blinded by socio-conventional morality.

Pramila is not matured enough to understand the truth about her mother and in absence of such understanding, she neither loves her mother nor has sympathy towards her condition. Once Pramila's mother comes to meet her but she is at the college. When she comes home and goes in to store room and she sees,

'Bhandar me ja kar dekha ma aur Aaji aamne samne beithi hai, aur dono hi ro rahi hai. Mai ghusi to ma ek tak muje hi dekhti rahi. Phir sahasa unhone muje khinch kar apne sine se laga diya.' (292)
[Going in store room and I see that mother and Aji confront each other and both are crying. As I enter, mother is staring me, and then suddenly she pulls me and embraces me.]

Pramila's maternal grandfather Baba neither feels the pain of her widow daughter nor understands motherless daughter's voids. Baba wants to give the cheque of rupees 10,000 to her daughter but instead she puts five rupees note in Pramila, her daughter's hands during her last visit, and left the house.

In this story, Mannu Bhandari not only presents the loneliness of motherless daughter but also depicts a widow mother who has first lost her husband and later, without any crime, daughter and name too. Her in-laws defame her. The protagonist Pramila knows nothing about her mother's real situation. The strong patriarchy restricts her and her mother to meet each other in the name of fame and so called prestige. This is ironically portrayed by Bhandari.

In most of the cases parents and especially mother restricts her girl child and makes her conscious of her gender and shows the list of do's and don'ts. But the story Trishanku is a different kind of story portraying the picture of young girl Tanu. She is encouraged to be friendly with boys by her parents. Mannu Bhandari has beautifully juxtaposed here the two traditions in one mother, as if she is the victim of split personality and under the attack of split personality of her mother, the daughter gets confused.

Trishanku is the story about modernized couple and their teenager girl Tanu. They believe that they are free from traditional codes. Tanu's parents had a love marriage and for that Tanu's mother had to revolt against her father. Tanu's mother frequently tells her friends about this revolt with dramatic presentation and dialogues. Tanu's parents and their friend circle are
modernized enough to discuss and argue on modernism. Tanu's mother never misses a chance to show that she is modernized and open-minded so she also desires Tanu to tread the same path.

One day Tanu feels that she has become matured she thinks:

Palte-palte ek din achanak badi ho gayi. Bade hone ka yah ahesaas mere apne bhitar se itna nahi foota jitna baharse. (472)

[By being brought up, one day suddenly I become matured. The feeling of being younger is not sprung from inside as it is from outside.]

Once, the young boys, living in opposite house, remark on Tanu, when she is standing in her Verandah. In the beginning she feels some newness and excitement in it but later on she is frightened by those remarks. When they frequency of remarks is increased, Tanu tells her mother about this. With Tanu's surprise her mother tells her that tomorrow we will invite them for tea at our home. It was totally unexpected for Tanu but as her mother thinks her modern and she wants her daughter to be ultra modern.

Next day she calls boys for tea and makes friendship with Tanu. Tanu's mother tells the boys that,

‘Dekho ise apana hi ghar samjo. Jab ichha ho chale aaya karo. Hamari Tanu bitiya ko achi company mil jayegi.’ (474)

[Look, treat this as your home, whenever you wish, come here. Our daughter will get good company.]
After this incident, instead of remarks they literally talk with Tanu. One of the boys, Shekhar is more interested in Tanu. He regularly comes home and their friendship slowly turns into love affair. But initially the parents who sang the jingle of ‘being free and make free’ now change into the song of doubt. The colour of modernism is faded and one day Tanu’s mother doesn’t permit her to go with Shekhar in cinema. Tanu cannot understand her mother’s behaviour. Her mother angrily scolds Tanu about her relations with Shekhar. Tanu realizes as if her maternal grandfather is speaking through her mother. Tanu and Shekhar stop to meet each other. After a few days Tanu’s mother cannot tolerate Shekhar’s position as he has not eaten for four days. So she calls her at home and again she herself rejoin Tanu and Shekhar’s friendship.

One day Tanu comes late from her friend’s home and suddenly her mother starts asking questions about Shekhar. Tanu cannot answer her as she was very confused about her mother’s behavior.

‘Is bar to sara maholla hi bolne laga mummy ke bhitar se. ‘muh dikhane layak mat rakhna ham ko kahi bhi. Sari gali me thu thu ho rahi hai.’ (482)

[This time all neighbors are speaking through mother.
‘Don't ever leave us to show our faces, entire street spites on this.’]

Modern mother has disappeared and traditional taboos speak from Tanu’s mother mouth.

Bhandari brilliantly portrays the picture of a teenager girl who neither understands social moral values properly nor she can understand what modernity means. She only follows the emotions she feels in this age of transition in the presence of opposite sex. Bhandari also presents here the so called hypocrisy and generation gap. Instead of understanding her daughter's
need, the mother behaves under the illusion of fake modernity and pseudo open mindedness. This dual standard of her mother confuses Tanu very much and she cannot think how to face it?

‘Nana puri tarah nana the - shat- pratishat- aur isi se mummy ke liye ladna kitna aasan ho gaya hoga. Par in mummy se lada bhi kaise jaye jo ek pal nana hokar jiti hai to ek pal mummy ho kar.’ (483)

[Maternal grandfather was totally what he was- hundred percent- and that is how it was easy for mummy to fight with him. But how will I fight with this mother who lives one moment as maternal grandfather and lives as mummy for another moment.]

Mannu Bhandari authentically presents this inner conflict of a teenager girl. This is not only Tanu's problem but a typical Indian teenager girls’ problem: how to make bridge between this generation gap? She is helpless to do anything. The story projects the post modern dilemma of a girl who is aware not only of the changing identity and individuality but also of her mother's changing personality.

4.2 Pain of young girl and premarital agony of young woman

The conditions of modern life in the national and international contexts have brought about rootlessness of a very complex nature. In his relationship with the outside universe, the individual often feels alienated and regards himself as an outside and a stranger in the material world. It has rightly been called 'The Age of Alienation'. (Murchaland) 5 Edmund Fuller remarks that in our age
'Man suffers not only from war, persecution, famine and ruin, but from inner problem .... a conviction, of isolation, randomness, [and] meaninglessness in his way of existence.' (Fuller)

Mannu Bhandari, having experienced different phases of women in different roles, has reflected the same in her fiction through her female persona. Women occupy a central place in Bhandari's short story. She masterly presents a subtle analysis of conflicting phases, underlying reasons and to some extent, to suggest a way out of it.

Here the main concern of Mannu Bhandari is the urge to find one self, to create space for oneself, to grow on one's own. While dealing with such unconventional type of role played by her women characters, Bhandari was aware of the change that has taken place in the role and status of Indian women.

Social reforms influenced by the great personalities like Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Mahatma Gandhi and the foreign personalities like William Bentick had its great impact on the status of women in Indian society. Besides, the Western influence, coming through liberal education, forced new values and norms of life upon women. This change is very well noticed in some of her characters when they try to voice their problems and protest against injustice done to them. Such women overthrow all the taboos ordained by male-dominated society. This picture of women has found place in Mannu Bhandari's short stories.

Mannu Bhandari wants to convey through her characters that the real solution to the problem is possible provided one has tenacity and willpower and has decided to derive necessary strength from one's tradition. They reveal themselves as turbulent images of modernity. They refuse to let themselves to be eclipsed by any consideration, social, cultural or gender. Their progress is not definitely a march in certain
cases, but a move nevertheless in the direction of freedom.

Mannu Bhandari portrays a wide range of feminine characters from conventional to the rebellious. In other words the portrayal of woman in her shorter fiction is characterized by contradictions. There is a conventional image and at the same time a protesting voice. Since its commencement, along with the archetypal images, there are images of protesting woman also.

4.2 Pain of Deception

The story *Abhineta* presents the picture of a young actress who is broken by loneliness and later she is deceived by her lover who proves to be a better actor in real life. Ranjana is a famous actress with a great sense of art. She gets fame and fortune and becomes a successful actress but she feels utterly lonely. There are so many men who love Ranjana but no one whom she loves.

‘Prem ka abhinay karte karte uska ji tadap jaata ki kaash, koi hota, jisse vah sachmuch prem kar sakti, jiske sapno ke aasmaan me taro ka chandova bankar chaah sakti. Magar eisa kon hota hai?’ (32)

[By acting of love her spirit restlessly desires that perhaps someone whom she could really love, in his dream sky she could spread as canopy of stars. But who can be this?]

Meanwhile at her friend’s home Ranjana meets a business man, Dilip. Slowly she is attracted towards him and comes to know many things about him that he is to start his business and does not like acting. Within a short time Ranjana gets intimate with Dilip and decides to marry him. He also
suggests Ranjana to leave acting after their marriage. One day, Dilip asks her for money for his business, Ranjana credulously believes Dilip and gives him blank cheque.

Dilip fills the amount of twelve thousands in that blank cheque and goes to Dehradoon and from there to Delhi. Ranjana is waiting for Dilip but there is no news about him. At last she somehow finds Dilip's house and in his absence she decides to telegram him. When she opens the drawer of table for blank paper for telegram, she finds love letters of Dilip's beloved Rekha who lives in Dehradoon. She also comes across his father's letters. Ranjana comes to know about Dilip's wife and children from Dilip's father's letters. His father also warns him against the debt of rupees twelve thousands which he has taken from his advocate friend.

Ranjana is shocked by facing the cruel reality of Dilip and she only writes on the paper,

‘Mai to keval rangmanch par hi abhinay karti hu, par tumhara to saara jivan hi abhinay hai. Bade unche kalakaar aur sadhe huve abhineta ho tum’ (37)

[I act only on stage, but your entire life is an acting. You are great artist and seasoned actor.]

Ranjana comes back with broken heart. The shock she has received is not that she is cheated by Dilip but she has been deceived by the person whom she loves most. Not only that but as Dilip dislikes acting she has decided to leave her professional successful career of acting on which her fame and wealth depends. Bhandari remarkably says, ‘Aur toota dil liye, vah dagmagae kadmo se laut aati hai.’ (37) [And with broken heart and stumbling legs she come back.]

Broken heart and stumbling legs suggest that she again faces reality with loneliness but there is a marked difference between loneliness before
Dilip’s existence and loneliness after Dilip’s deception. In first loneliness doubt and fear were absent and heart was not broken. Thus, no bitterness was present but now doubt, fear and faithlessness cover her broken heart. Dr. Gulabrav Hade rightly observes,

> It is the cruelty of life that, her life, from beginning to end, is filled with loneliness and depression which has made her a moving corpse. (Hade) ⁷

In the male dominated world, a woman is always considered as a puppet to be played with. She is never considered as an equal partner in the journey of life.

Women take every relationship seriously and this tendency takes them on the verge of emotional breaking. When she is in love, she faithfully gives everything to loved one but after being deceived her heart is broken and her mind desires either to take revenge or to bound herself in the limits. The story ‘Stri-subodhini’ is also about a working woman who is deceived by her married bossi the name of love. She is working in income tax department and staying in working women’s hostel. She is highly impressed by her boss Shinde, because he is attractive, interesting and poet also. After sometimes she comes to know that Shinde is not only a married man but he is a father of five months child. She wants to break the relation with him but Shinde always shows his fake feelings towards her and slowly he has convinced her in ornamental language that it was his helplessness against his father’s will that he has to marry that woman. The protagonist is so impressed by his speech that not a single thought of doubt has come, as if she is blind in his love.

Once she decides to meet his wife but his wife is so unaware of their affair that she behaves as if nothing happens between them. The protagonist thinks:
‘Mai uski bivi ko trasta karne gayi thi, par khud hi trasta aur parast ho kar lauti. Iska aadmi teen saal se ek dusri ladki ke saath masti maar raha hai aur ise na koi taklif, na kashta!’ (468)

[I went to make his wife disturb, but I came back being disturbed and defeated. Her husband has enjoyed extramarital relationship with a girl from last three years and she has neither pain nor any suffering.]

The protagonist is convinced by Shinde in very artistic and intelligent manner by arguing and explaining that,

‘Sahjivan ka madhurtan paksha to hum bhog hi rahe hai, mai kyun bekar me shadi-byah aur ghar me jakadkar is madhur sambandh ka gala ghontana chahati hun. Muje lagne lagta ki main aur aurat se kuch alag, kuch vishista, kuch unchi hun, mere kandho par stri-purush ke sambandhon ko ek nayi disha dene ka dayitva hai.’ (468)

[We are enjoying sweetest side of union then why do you want to kill this sweet relation by entering uselessly into the matter of marriage and home. I felt that I am something different, something special, something higher then the ordinary woman. I shoulder the responsibility to give new direction to man-woman relationship.]
These feeling of something different, something special take woman into the dark abyss of loneliness and depression because there is nothing special about anything. But at last she comes to the truth that she is badly deceived by Shinde, who has made his transfer to other city.

The protagonist is bold enough not to depress but she starts advising young girls by telling her own story and her observations about men and their tricks to seduce unmarried girl. This is the awakening through pain which is creatively shared by protagonist. The story is told in first person narrative technique and starts with her lecture to young teenager girls and women. She sums up her speech as,

‘Is desh me prem ke bij man aur sharir ki ‘Pavitra bhoomi’ me nahi, thetha ghar-parivar ki upjau bhoomi me hi phalte phoolte hai.’ (470)

[The seeds of love is not germinated in the 'holy land' of mind and body but only grown and prospered in the land of home-family.]

Thus the protagonist of the story is awakened through crises and the light of awareness is also being shared with those who are in dark. She exposes and rebels against the injustice of the dual morality and the double standard adopted by Shinde. She rejects his false sympathy towards her. Mannu Bhandari has enlightened a woman's image to break the double standard in patriarchy. It is a story of personal journey, the heroine learns as she undergoes the crisis. The learning process however is a painful one.

The protagonist in Aate Jate Yayavar, Mitati is a teenager in college and living in hostel. Mitali was seduced by her classmate and she was sexually used on the name of breaking tradition and later on, her lover married with another girl.
‘Sanskar todne ke bahane kitni khoobsurati se vah muje hi tod gaya. Maine tay kar liya tha ki apne ko vaapas dayare me samet lungi. Meri jindgi me ab na koi utar-chadhav aayega, na mod, vah esehi rahengi, sidhi, sahj aur sapt.’ (416)

[On the name of breaking tradition how beautifully he has broken me. I have decided to close myself in to the frame of limitations. There will be no rise and fall in my life, no turn; it will be like, straight, simple and flat.]

When he comes with his wife and in introduces her with Mitali as his college friend, Mitali was astonished by his behavior and thinks;

‘Tab ek baar badi jor se ichha hui thi ki vah muje andhere kue se khinch kar laya tha, to mai bhi iski sharafat ka yah khol khich kar utaar dun, jise yah badi masumiyat ke saath apani patni ke saamne audhe beitha hai.’ (416)

[At that moment a strong desire came very fiercely that if he had pulled me out of dark well then I also pulled this mask of gentleness and removed it which he had put on very innocently, in the presence of his wife]

The psychological trauma of this incidence was so heavy on Mitali's heart and mind that she becomes afraid of developing relation with anyone, thus she develops a kind of 'reservedness' in her personality.
Once she is invited by her close friend Ramala where she meets Naren. Naren has recently come from USA and has divorced with his American wife. He has relations with many women. Mitali is well aware about Naren’s wondering nature though she decides to relate with vigilance that;

‘Ek bar mai bhi rang chadhane ki koshish karke dekhu, aur kuch nahi, keval ek challenge ki tarha! Sachmuch, ab baaten ya to challenge ke roop me aati hai ya badla lene ki krur bhavna ke saath.’ (414)

[One more time let me try to see by being colored, if not anything, only in a form of challenge! Truly, now matters come either in the form of challenge or in the form of cruel emotion to take revenge.]

Mitali cannot stand firm on her decision and is colored in the romantic talks of Naren. Again on the name of so called love and boldness. Mitali is seduced and cheated.

Mannu Bhandari presents men’s polygamous nature in this story. Woman is the easy victim of that polygamous natured man even though educated and careful enough. Bhandari depicts her women’s age old basic instinct of curiosity and emotional longing which take her on to the path of pain and predicament. It is said that woman gives body to take love and man gives love to take body. So whatever emotional fulfillment should be achieved after love relation, for women it looks always mirage in the desert of love. In this story awareness comes after experience but it is wasted in vain and no light of understanding is gained as it happens with the protagonist in the story Stri-subodhini.

Mannu Bhandari presents a picture of a young woman protagonist, in Ek baar aur who is under the spell of depression because of failure in her first love relationship. Binni is lecturer in philosophy and leaves with her fast friend
Shushma. Shushma's husband Shyam has gone to abroad. Binni is in love with Kunj. They also passed some days as husband and wife during their Nainital tour. Kunj has married Madhu and also maintains relation with Binni. Binni desires to break this relationship but she cannot because of Kunj's emotional talks and letter. On Madhu's insist Kunj wants to finish this relationship.

Binni is highly shocked by Kunj's behavior and cannot cope with present situation. It is difficult to accept for Binni that Kunj has cheated her on the name of love and marriage. Binni is still under that nostalgia of Kunj's love. Her brother Dinesh and Shushma suggest Binni to marry a proper person.

Nandan is an engineer and working on the project of marriage system in Aadivasi. Dinesh introduces Nandan to Binni, and Shushma encouraged her to develop the relationship with him. Binni is highly confused under the spell of shock so she cannot decide whether to join with Nandan or not. She cannot forget her first love and Kunj. She always day dreams about Kunj and the words and sentences of his letters echoes her mind. Thus under the pressure of past she cannot deal with present properly and she has been left in this confusing condition by Nandan without answer. Here Bhandari depicts woman's basic nature of indecisiveness. She has to follow or she puts herself in such condition, the decision is, of nearby persons may they be family members or friends or relatives. It seems that by portraying such female characters Bhandari may want to indicate a feature of woman's nature which reflects the tone of mechanistic attitude.

The past haunts her. The present is unsatisfied. She turns out to be in utter chaos of personality, a symbol of complexity, confused, perplexed and lost-to-herself-personality who has miserably failed to maintain her individuality. She feels miserably estranged not only from her family but also from her innermost nature, having nothing within or without her to fall back upon in moment of crisis and confusion.
4.2 Agony of Suffocation

Post independent metropolitan life especially in Kolkata is thoroughly sensed and experienced by Mannu Bhandari. Modern life and its impact on human beings is clearly seen and felt in her short stories. How morally strong and self willed human beings are broken by controversies of life and unavoidable situations is presented in the story *Kshaya* means tuberculoses.

The protagonist in the *Kshaya*, Kunti is the elder child of her middle class father who is suffered from T.B. Her father is retired person so she has to earn for the family. She is teaching in high school. Here she is famous for her student loving nature and sympathy for others. Her income is not enough so she decides to give personal tuition to a girl, Savitri, of rich family.

Under the burden of heavy work, work at home and work at school, Kunti thinks about her father's health.

‘Kya uska saara jivan yu hi nikal jaayega? Papa kya kabhi ache nahi honge? Kitne dino tak ve isi tarha pade rahenge?’ (226)

[Does his life pass as it is? Does papa never come back to health? How many days he will lie this way?]

Kunti becomes so depress that she bursts into tears where nobody is there to consol her.

‘Itni badi duniya me kya koi bhi esa nahi hai jo uski pith par aasvasan bhara haath rakhkar do shabda santvana ke hi kaha de?’ (227)
[Is there no body in this world who could put his consoling hand on her back and say two words of sympathy?]

Savitri is not studious enough to pass in the exam and her mother shows the power of money on Kunti and convinced her to teach Savitri. Demands of domestic situation and her father's ill health break Kunti mentally and emotionally. She feels loneliness. She works six hours in the school and two hours in tuition. Her brother was sent to Allhabad for further study on day when her father was diagnosed as a T.B. patient.

Kunti has to compromise with her ideals as her father's ill health has also broken her self confidence. She thinks,

‘Shayad yaha bimari hi eisi hoti hai ki aadmiko badalne padata hai. Uske jis aadarshvaad aur dradha aatma vishvaas par papa kabhi garva kiya karte the, usi par aaj ve shayad dukh karte hai. Unhe lagta hai jaise Kunti ko banana me ve kahi bhool kar beithe hai.’ (220)

[Perhaps this sickness is such that a person has to change. Once her father was proud of her idealism and strong self confidence now on which her father perhaps expresses pain. He feels that as if he has made mistake somewhere in making Kunti.]

She teaches Savitri whole heartedly but Savitri cannot pass in the preliminary exam so her mother sends Kunti to Savitri's school and forces her to meet teachers and principal for changing result. Kunti has to follow Savitri's mother's instruction against her will but she cannot say anything to anyone and she is mentally so tired that she sits there and asks for a glass of water
and with first sip she is so heaving coughing that as if it never stops. She feels the same sound in her coughing as her father's is, and when she looks into mirror she thinks that it is the same melancholy on her face which is always spreads on her father's face.

Bhandari presents here the picture of middle class young girl who is facing the cruelty of life. There is no escapism in Kunti's personality neither she has developed a suicidal tendency because of corruption of values. She is self reliant young woman who bravely faces the predicaments and calamities of life. At last she is broken by unavoidable sickness of her father and low income and becomes sick emotionally as well as mentally.

Bhandari is master of woman psychology who not only portrays the emotional state of woman but also present the authentic psychic diagram of her character. The story Ghutan, presents the suffocation of a young girl Mona who loves a young man and wants to marry him against her widow mother's desire.

Mannu Bhandari presents two women in this story, one is Pratima who is married woman and feels suffocation due to her married life and other is Mona who is also suffocated due to her unfulfilled desire to marry a man of her choice. Thus Bhandari appropriately juxtaposes two different women suffering in same suffocation due to different reasons.

Mona is elder daughter and only earning member of her family. Her sister and brother are still learning. Mona is the neighbor of Pratima. Pratima is a teacher in school. Her husband is in navy and comes once in a year for a month. Mona is in love with Aroop and both decide to marry Mona's mother does not want that Mona marries Aroop because after her marriage it will difficult to maintain house and her brother and sister.

‘Par Mona ki ma nahi chahati ki Mona usse byah kare. Mona byah kar legi to uske chote bhai-baheno ko kaun palega, buddhi ki bimari ka kharcha kaha se aayega?’ (152)
[But Mona's mother does not want that Mona marries him. If Mona marries then who will bring up her younger brother-sisters, from where will the expense of aged's sickness come?]

Thus Mona is considered as a machine to earn income in the house so her mother doesn't care for her emotions and desires.

Mona decides to run away with Arrop and tells her plan to Pratima. At midnight because of suffocation, when Pratima gets up to have a glass of water and sees that Mona's mother, is sleeping with her brother and sister at the main door of their house and Mona is crying in her bed due to failure of her plan.

Pratima suffocates in her hose because her husband is coming for one month and she does not like his drinking and other bad habits. She tries hard herself to make convenient to her husband but she could not. Thus she is suffocated by the thought that she has to live with her husband for one month.

Thus, both the protagonists in the story Ghutan suffocate due to different reasons. But the sense of suffocation is eternal for them which is shown by Bhandari. Pratima is feeling free without her husband and Mona is feeling free by marring with Aroop. Bhandari, here indicates that reasons of suffocation are not outside but within themselves.

4.2.3 Predicament of Misunderstanding

Many a times ways of expression of emotions can be different but tradition bound mindset cannot accept them as a part of emotional expression. This lack of understanding is rightly presented in the story Geet ka Chumban. The young girl in this story crunches between traditional mindset and modern ways of emotional expression. Kanika loves Nikhil but she tries
seeing her love and its responses through the spectacles of tradition and faces ultimately, emotional predicament.

Kanika is a good singer. She meets Nikhil in a function at Mathur Saheb's home. Nikhil is a poet and in that function Kanika sings Nikhil's song. Nikhil is impressed by her voice and the subtle emotions expressed in that song. Nikhil encourages Kanika to sing on radio and within a short time she becomes famous singer.

Nikhil is modern man who believes in free behavior between man and woman. Nikhil and Kanika are discussed on the issues of relationship between man and woman. Nikhil argues,

‘Jab tak koi baat amal me nahi aati tabhi tak vah huva, aneitik, najayaj paap jo kuch bhi kaho bani raheti hai. Kyo ki free mixing aaj aam baat hai. Sharirik sambandha ka jaha tak saval hai, shariro ko zuthalaya to nahi ja sakta, uski chetna ko to bhulaya hi ja sakta hai, use paakar.’ (46)

[Whenever any matter is not put into practice it becomes, immoral, improper, sin whatever you say. Because free mixing is very normal thing today. As far as physical relation is concerned, body can not be ignored; its consciousness can only be forgotten by achieving it.]

With this liberal attitude Nikhil wants to establish every relationship with Kanika. But Kanika has her traditional attitudes about man-woman relationship. She believes that,

‘Bate hum kitni hi badi badi banale par vyavahar me aage nahi badh pate hai. Hum itna jaante hai ki stri-

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purusho ke sambandh me ek maryada avashya rahen chahiye.' (45)

[Though our discussion may be high but in behavior we do not go further. I only know that there must be a limit in the man-woman relationship.]

Once Nikhil, out of his liberal attitudes, embrace Kanika and kisses her. Kanika is aghasted by sudden attack of Nikhil and she angrily slaps on his face. She is shocked that how could a respectful and trusted person behave this way!

Nikhil, after this incident, decides to go far away from Kanika but makes Kanika to rethink on the question that,

‘Sharirik sambandho ke pare bhi ladke-ladkiyo ki mitrata ka koi aur aadhar ho sakta hai ya nahi?’ (46)

[Beyond physical relation isn't there any other base for boys-girls friendship?]

Kanika is waiting for Nikhil but it is in vain. She cries a lot. She curses some time herself, for her rude behavior and sometimes Nikhil for his behavior. Kanika expresses her unsatisfied longing by sucking her own lips but Nikhil has left the town forever.

Thus Bhandari portrays a hidden emotion of a girl who desires to satisfy her emotion but bound by orthodox moral codes. Mannu Bhandari depicts that with your belief-system you cannot suppress your emotional demands. Because belief-system is given by society and family while your emotional necessities are needed to be satisfied. Here surfacedly at one point intellect and logic control the emotions but later on in behavior it is seen that intellect cannot control emotions.
Many a times it is seen that our logic and belief system limits our vision to see right emotion at right time, and most of our judgments and decisions are based on that preloaded traditional moral codes and belief-system. Sunanda is misguidedly judged the behavior of her student Shivnath in *Anthahi Gaheraliyan*. Sunanda is educated young woman teaching in college. She lives with her brother and his wife.

Shivnath is very bright in learning but he is very poor. Shivnath has to work for his family in which his paralytic old father and blind mother with three sisters and one brother are there. Sunanda's principal suggests teaching Shivnath because of his poor condition. Sunanda agrees to teach him.

Shivnath comes to learn thrice a week at Sunanda's home but after sometimes he regularly comes to learn. Sunanda's family members do not like it, even Sunanda is reluctant to teach him everyday. Shivnath is highly emotional boy and he has real hunger for knowledge. Once Sunanda angrily tells him not to come everyday, he writes letter of apology to Sunanda in which he writes:

‘Jaanta hum aapko bahutere kaam rahete honge, chahta hun ki teen din hi aaya karu, par jaane kaun mujhe roz aapke ghar khinchkar le hi aata hai - shayad aapka sneha. Aapne roz-roz aane ko mana kar diya-ab nahi aavunga, par apna sneh mujse mat chiniyega. Aapke sneha aur vishvaas ko khokar main shayad ek din bhi jinda nahi rah sakta hun. (138)

[I know that you are busy, I wish to come only three days but something pulls me every day at your home-perhaps your love. You have prohibited coming every day-now I will not come but don't snatch your love from me. Losing your love and trust, perhaps, I may not live even one day.]
Once Sunanda has heavy fever and she could not go to college for a week so Shivnath comes to see him and Sunanda's sister-in-law sees him bending on sleeping Sunanda. Later on she tells Sunanda not to teach Shivnath and Sunanda too becomes very angry.

After some days Shivnath gives a book to Sunanda to solve his queries. Sunanda finds a love letter in that book and reading the letter she angrily slaps on Shivnath's face. Next day she comes to know that Shivnath has committed suicide. She reaches home in confused mental condition. She feels guilty for the death of Shivnath. A boy comes to meet her after four days. He tells that Shivnath was needy boy and by writing his letter Shivnath earns money so he comes for his book and especially his love letter. Sunanda is highly shocked by her behavior towards Shivnath, and she also tries to cut her both hands by blades.

Shivnath is hungry for knowledge so every day he comes to Sunanda's home. He is highly emotional and has a respectful affection for Sunanda but he cannot bare his insult and he suicides. When Sunanda comes across the truth about letter she feels guilty for the death of Shivnath and tries for suicide.

Bhandari, remarkably portrays a protagonist who is highly preconditioned about man-woman relationship. This preconditioned mind set does not allow her to observe and sense the emotional nature of Shivnath and his true hunger for knowledge. Through the psyche of Sunanda she suggests that it is not the fresh perception of present which decides her future but the preconceived traditional mind set which decides the destiny of Shivnath as well as Sunanda.

Woman is not only seduced in society and at work place on the name of love and fidelity but she is misused on the name of religion and morality. Mannu Bhandari throws light on those things which are hidden behind the walls of religious morality. *Isa ke ghar insaan* is the story which shows darker
side of church directed college and the conditions of nuns who are working as teachers in that college.

The story *Isa ke Ghar Insaan* presents the girl who tears the mask of religious hypocrisy and rebels against traditional morality. The girls in the story hate the old tradition of church because the priest of the church, father Reverend satisfies his perverted lust on the name of 'Atmashuddhi' on the nuns of the church.

There is a missionary college in city surrounded by mountain, where most of the teachers are nuns. Ratana is appointed to teach Hindi to sisters. She has curiosity and fear for the father of college. Sister Anny and Jane always smiling and light natured but gloomy and melancholy always spread over the faces of Lucy and Marry, as Mrs. Shukla says,

‘Any aur Jane to aapani echhase hi Sab kuch chod-chood kar num bani thi, par in bechariyone jindgi me church aur college ke siva kuch dekha hi nahi.’ (101)

[Any and jane had become nums, by their choice by leaving everything. The poors haven't seen anything in their life except church and college.]

Once July kisses a girl while teaching her keat's poem and as a ‘Atmashuddhi’ from this sin, she is sent to the father for her purification. Father purifies her but Ratana doesn't believe this, when Ratna meets July, She asks fearfully,

‘father Kya karenge, kucha saza denge? ... Fir kabhi koi harkat kare to father ka jadoo ka danda ghumva diya jaaye.’ (102)
['What will father do? will he give any punishments ......if any tricks will be done father will swing his magic stick.]

When she sees her, July says,

‘Father ne uski atma ko pavitra kar diya, Uski atma ke vikar mit gaye, Muje lagta than jaise july ki atma hi mit gayi thi, mar gayi thi.’ (103)

[.... Father has purified her soul, impurities of her soul are cleaned, it seems to me that July's soul has been removed, has been killed.]

A beautiful nun Anjela is taken back but she behaves like a mad. Anjela is not controlled by father and who disclose the lustful, hypocritical, pious face of father Reverend,

‘...Mai father ko bhi dikha dungi ki jindgi kya hoti hai, yaha sab dhongi hai, mai yaha nahi rahungi. 'Mai nahi rahungi yaha, mai kabhi nahi rahungi. (106)

[...... I'll also show father that what is life, these all are hypocrites, I will not stay here. I will not stay here, I'll never stay here.]

Inspired from Anjela, one day Lucy runs away from missionary. After this incidence the walls around college are made high so that no one can overcome them. Bhandari shows that such sexual abuse is done under the guise of holly church of missionary college on so called moral and religious
codes and reties. The entire lives of young nuns waste behind the walls of missionary college. They are helpless to do anything. As mrs. Shukla says,

‗Kaash ye divaren kisi tarha hat jati aur mein dekh paati ki us paar kya hai‘ (101)

[Alas ! somehow these walls are removed and I can see beyond them.]

Women are jailed behind the walls of so called religion and morality while Anjela tried to break these walls but she is taken back again inside the wall. This time father tries to control her but instead of controlling her, father is controlled and got sick. July is inspired by entire event and she runs away from missionary college. The title of the story is very ironically presented the situations and attitude of church directed college. Overcoming of wall suggests that tradition bound morality can be overcome by courageous attitude. Angela expresses her rebellious attitude among the other nuns, in following words,

mai kabhi nahi rahungi. Dekho mere roop ko…. Mai apni jindgi ko, apne is roop ko church ki divaro ke bich nashta nahi hone dungi.’ (106)

[, I'll never stay here, see my beauty….. I'll not destroy my life, my beauty among the walls of the church.]

These young women are like terrified and trapped animals who continue to suffer and help to perpetuate such oppression. The tragedy is that they do not know how to come out of the trap. They are the victim of unkindest act of father Reverend. Anjela's challenge and lucy's rebel show the ineffectiveness of traditional morality. They both are presented here as
individual entity who are fight for their right to live freely. Anjela exposes and rebels against the injustice of the dual morality and the double standard adopted by father Reverend. She rejects his false sympathy towards her. Mannu Bhandari has enlightened a woman's image to break the double standard in male oriented society. It is a story of personal journey, the heroine learns as she undergoes the crisis. The learning process however is a painful one.

In the story *Jiti Bazi ki Haar* Bhandari presents three female friends who from their college days live together. Nalini, Asha and Murala are living in their separate world of literary idealism and intellectual discussions. Some of their classmates are married girl. When they have talked about their husband, home and married life. They all are surprised that how can an educated girl kill all her emotions and personality by marrying a man! They all three firmly believe in individuality and think that marriage kills individuality.

Nalini during vacation comes into contact with a professor of university and her family members decide her marriage with him. Asha also walks on the same path of Nalini and marries a poet, but Murala firmly believes in her idealistic attitude and develops her carrier as a university first student in M.A. and becomes a lecturer. When she prepares her third chapter of thesis she meets Asha in hospital with her five days born daughter. When Asha asks her when will you marry? she answers:

‘Vah sab tum logo ko hi mubarak ho. Shaadi karke mein apne Vyaktitva ko nahi bech sakti.’ (41)

[It all belongs to you. I cannot sell my personality by marrying.]

Asha replies her that this is not a business of loss and profit, she adds:
‘Ek samay mai bhi esa hi sochati thi, par ab nahi. Jis kimat par hum vyaktitva bechte hai vah itni avashya hoti hai ki sauda ghate ka nahi raheta. Shayad bachho ke bina jivan adhura hi rahata hai.’ (41)

[At one time I also thought this but not now. The price at which we are selling our personality is good enough that deal is not in loss. Perhaps without children life is incomplete.]

Murala argues with Asha and Asha insists that you will have to marry, whatever your thinking is and whatever your ideologies are! Asha in deciding tone firmly says:

‘Murala ho chahe koi, itna janti hu ki jisse shart laga rahi hun vah sabkuch ho kar bhi nari hai. Aur nari ko ek saathi chahiye, ek sahara chahiye aur chahiye bachhe. Uchh se uchh shiksha bhi uski is bhavna ko nahi kuchal sakti.’ (41)

[Either it is Murala or anybody, I have only known that with whom I bet is though everything but woman. And woman needs one companion, one support and needs children. Higher then higher education cannot crush such emotion.]

Murala replies that though people understand me as a weak but I am strong enough to live life without any support. They bet that winner will get whatever she wants form looser.

After fifteen years when they both meet, Asha takes Murala at her home where she is enjoying company of three children. Murala is still
bachelor and after two days of staying when Murala prepares to go Asha reminds her about the bat and says that you have won the bet. But Murala is not happy to win the bet. On Asha's insist that ask for whatever you want, Murala asks for Asha's five year daughter which shows that apparently she wins the bet but actually she looses it. Murala has achieved higher degree, desired higher profession, respect; reputation but somewhere inside there is emptiness which cannot be filled by all these things. That emptiness in emotional world is only filled by the presence of someone on which one can shower his or her emotions.

Bhandari ironically juxtaposes the situations in which material demands can be satisfied but emotional demands are unfulfilled. Murala has achieved material fulfillment but she lacks emotional satisfaction which is only achieved by some one's love. Thus Mannu Bhandari depicts the picture of strong willed career oriented woman whose essence requires emotional satisfaction. Here bhandari opens one more layer of woman’s psyche that if it is not only others who are responsible for woman’s suffering. She herself sometimes, is responsible for suffering.

Maintaining past love relation, in the midst of present relation, does not mean the breaking of loyalty. Modern woman of Bhandari passes through this dilemma with stability and courage but at the cost of striking age old moral codes. Deepa, in Yahi Such Hai, Is a modern educated young woman. Deepa and Nishith's love relation starts from the attraction but suddenly ends into haterated and separation. Time passes and no sign of reunion is seen.

Meanwhile Deepa meets Sanjay and their regular meetings turn in to love relation. She is so much in love with Sanjay that she forgets her past life totally. Once she goes to kolcatta for an interview where she eventually comes across Nishith and feels that,

‘Pahela Pyaar hi sachha hota hai, Atmiyata ke ye kshana unkahe bhale hi raha jaye par un buje nahiraha sakte, tum chahe na kaho par mai jaanti
hun, tum aaj bhi muje pyar karte ho. Mere Colcatta aa Janie ke baad is toote Sambandho ko phir se jod ne ki baat hi tum soch rahe ho. Tum aaj bhi muje apana samjte ho, Tum jante ho, aaj bhi Deepa tumhari hai,'

(272)

[First love is the true one though the moments of intimacy are, unsaid but they can't be unknown, you may not say but I know that you still love me. You are thinking to rejoin this broken relationship after I have come to Calcutta. You still consider me as your own; you know that still Deepa is yours.]

Deepa's such feelings are so deep rooted that she forgets the insult and dishonored by Nishitha. But Nishith cannot fulfill her expectations. She comes back to Kanpur and thinks of Sanjay. She believes that love during adolescence is an unavoidable but immature condition. She thinks,

'Atharah varsh ki aayu me kiya huva pyar hota hai bhala! Nira bachapan hota hai, Mahaj pagalpan! usme aavesh rahate hai, par sthayitva nahi, gati rahati hai par gaherai nahi. Jis veg se vaha aarambh hota hai -jara sa jatka lagne par usi veg se toot jaata hai. (264)

[Love, At the age of eighteen is love! it is only a childishness, only madness! There is a passion in it but not stability, it is moving but not deep, the speed at which it starts - with light jerk it is broken at the same speed.]
Love at the age of eighteen can't be real one and under the mental condition of uncertainty it is difficult for Deepa to find right answer of the question that whether the love of Nishith is real or love of Sanjay? The person who is nearer in the moment of intense emotion, his love is real. But after passing through long turmoil, she comes to understand that the moment of touch, present touch, is the moment of truth. Remaining is illusion.

‘Yah sparsh, yah sukh, yah kshanahi satya hai. Vah sab jooth tha, mithya tha, bhrum tha.’ (277)

[This touch, this happiness, this moment is the only truth. All that was false, was illusion.]

Here, Bhandari skillfully describes traditional triangle in totally a different dimension. Here the form of love is not a kind of romantic one but new and modern. Another remarkable point Bhandari shows, that traditionally it was male who decided the definition of love while here, a woman decides what should be the definition of love, not the man. Today's love does not consider traditional definition. Traditional values and social codes of male dominated society are not taken into consideration by modern educated woman. Love becomes only an event as in the case of Nishith and Deepa.

Mannu Bhandari portrays a woman who does not believe in the traditional definition of love neither she thinks that first love is the only love of life. She believes in enjoying the love of present moment which is the great step in the consciousness of woman.

These woman characters stand for feminist affirmation of woman's strength and weakness. The society presented in these stories is certainly one going through transitions where at least economically independent woman could have choices in life as Murala in Jeeti Bazi ki Haar but economic independence does not mean emotional independence so she has
to ask for Asha's daughter. However in some of her stories she has exposed their passivity, anxiety and confusion. In *Ghutan* the protagonist is economical independent but due to confusion and her mother's attitude she cannot put her thoughts into reality. Kunti in *Ek Kamjor Ladki ki Kahani* has to be passive against her father's physical sickness and Savitri's mother's touchers. She feels that her ideals and strong will are slipping from her personality. In some of the stories Mannu Bhandari has tried to make her women characters stronger than they are in real life. Angela in *Isa ke Ghar Insaan* is portrayed stronger to rebel against father's tyranny.

Predicament and pain are generated due to their traditional attitudes. They have started recognizing the need for change, but at the same time they continue to cling to the old values as they have been brought up with them. Mannu Bhandari very skillfully delineates both the kinds of women. Some of them consciously or unconsciously allow themselves to be marginalized by the traditional pattern while some of them oppose them.

Thus, Mannu Bhandari has convincingly portrayed two kinds of women: women with the awareness and women without the awareness of their 'self'. The first kind of women follows the path decided by the parents and continue the tradition, while the women with the awareness of the self defy the ages-old convention and do not succumb to the will of their parents. They are self-assertive, determined and strong girls who believe that there should be 'a room of their own'. Such girls seem to deconstruct the age-old idea of gender roles. In other words some of the women characters of everyday life try to assert themselves in their desire for a career. If Bhandari has portrayed the meek and submissive woman in some short stories, she has also created vibrant and sometimes radical women characters. These heroines, however, are not role models whose experiences are meant to be emulated. Some are reduced to mere automatons. Those who aspire more, end up feeling bitter or settle for passivity dutifully playing her role as the wife. However all the women characters of the above discussed stories are conscious of their predicament as victims of
inequalities. Bhandari has succeeded in her attempt, if not in finding an ideal solution, but at least in creating an awareness of the existing inequalities in society.

4.3 As a wife and Life partner

Introduction:

The true position of woman in Indian society would emerge if we critically examine her relationship with her husband. One of the most significant themes in Mannu Bhandari's short stories is man-woman relationship. She reflects a realistic picture of contemporary Indian woman and her relationship with her husband. The stories which have been discussed under this topic present the slice of reality where woman has either been entitled a most submissive and self sacrificing female role or rebellious one.

In the short stories of Mannu Bhandari the female characters are subjected to binary pulls torn between tradition and modernity. As Anita myles says.

The post colonial Indian fiction by the woman writer also moves within the same periphery by analyzing the women characters in the Indian social setup in their evolutionary paradigm of feminine to female.

(Myles)

The woman in these short stories are portrayed as the cultural backbone of the family due to their capability of providing physical, emotional and cultural vitality to their respective families and there by to the comprehensive family of mankind. Though the personality of the typical Indian woman is over whelmingly swamped by the male dominated attitudes against
the back drop of exclusive male oriented culture. In spite of the changes brought about by western culture and education, the struggle of the country for freedom, and the changes in economic condition, the shadowy role of woman still prevails. Meena Shirvadkar’s following view is much applicable to the modern Indian context:

She was left with no mind or personality of her own. She even gloried in the suffering that was indicated upon her by the wanton male. The glorification of the Sita image, particularly by women, the ‘pativrata’ ideal and craving to be a mother of sons all these are reflections of the male attitudes to which she had succumbed through ages. (Shirvadkar)

As ours is a male dominated society, the shadowy, suffering and pathetic role of woman has not yet been changed completely.

4.3.1 Conventional Image of a Wife

Mannu Bhandari’s fictional world has a domestic background where family relationships are dealt with in their varying forms like affection between parents and children, friends and cousins, grandparents and grand-children and man-woman relationship that is ever present in her stories. In most of her stories, the protagonists are married women. Hence, her portrayal of woman as wife requires special mention.

4.3.1.1 Wife at Home:

The story Kill aur Kasak is a painful document of unsatisfied married woman. Rani is the protagonist in this story who married Kailash one year ago. On the first evening of her marriage she fantasies her first night as:
‗Jab koi bade dular se uska ghunghat hatakar, apne rom rom ko aankh bankar uske roop ko niharega aur prashansha ke pool bandhkar do aparichit hridayo ki duri ke astitva ko hi mita dega.’ (90)

[When someone is going to remove her ‘Ghunghat’ with fondling, beholds her beauty by making eyes to his pores of skin and making a bridge of praise removes the distance between two unknown hearts.]

Rani, a young woman with lot of such aspirations in her heart is waiting late for her husband but with her surprise and shock her husband who is working hard in a printing press to meet the debt of twelve thousand rupees comes and reacts,

‗Itni der jaagne ki koi jaroorat nahi thi, tumhe so jaana chahiye tha. Mera to kaam hi esa hai. Savere tak kaam khatam nahi huva to musibat ho jayegi.’ (91)

[It is needless to awake so late, you should sleep. My work is like that. If it will not finish till morning there will be trouble.]

And Kailash sleeps, forgetting the existence of Rani. Rani becomes so angry by the behavior of her husband at the first night that she desires to hit him and buried his press. But she couldn't do anything except crying and sleeping.

Kailash is totally emotionless who works whole day in press. Working with machine it seems that he becomes machine. He has no feeling for his newly married wife, not only that he neither responses to her desire nor cares for her any feelings.
Shekhar is an unmarried young paying guest who is lodging in opposite room and boarding at Rani's home. Shekhar at the time of lunch praises Rani's food and once he takes bangles for her from exhibition. Rani attracts towards Shekhar and she bares dry behavior of Kailash in the warming presence of Shekhar.

After sometimes, suddenly, Shekhar marries a beautiful girl and starts living in that opposite room of Rani. Rani's so called emotional support seems to be broken and a hidden pain comes on surface. Slowly this pain engulfs Rani's total personality and she is expressing this pain in the form of criticism and taunting through fault finding nature. With the course of time this criticism turns into quarrel with Shekhar's wife. Rani's quarrelsome nature is the expression of her unsatisfied emotional and sexual desires which is not fulfilled by her husband.

The unfulfilled emotional and sexual desires now take the form of uncontrolled envy which generates the series of quarrels between Rani and Shekhar's wife. Rani's husband becomes so tired of these quarrels that at last he decides to change the house and Rani has to go else where with her unsatisfied psyche.

Such technique through the female protagonist's mental recesses reveals how indifferent the husband had been towards his wife. He had just married her but had not been keeping his duty as a husband. He had never tried to know from her how she passed her time the whole day, when he was at work. He never took any interest in her or showed any eagerness to know about her routine life. He never knew his wife's thoughts and feelings. The mechenicalness of routine work spreads too much in his mind that he can only see the surfacial events of quarrel. Rani's husband never tries to see in rani's unfulfilled emotional world.

Mannu Bhandari shows the girls bending to the will of elders. It is naturally accepted by the young girls in the middle – class family to marry the man of her parents' choice. In fact the girls are married at so early age that they have no sense of identity, no consciousness of self. Their ideal of
girlhood is to obey the elders and follow the tradition. This sense of obedience to the elders which the girls have to follow about their marriage pervades in the shorter fiction of Bhandari. In her writings, she has tried to see and define what an Indian marriage is in a typical middle – class Indian family.

Mannu Bhandari artistically depicts the emotional longing of her protagonist. Though it may be a small gesture of a person but it reflects the big pit in the emotional world of a person, and sometimes it is filled by a tiny warmth gesture of other but many a time it becomes life long empty and sometimes it turns in to violent negative emotions which ruin person’s life as it happens in Rani’s case.

Kammo, the protagonist, is suffocated due to unsatisfied emotional, sexual hunger in Bahon ka Ghera. Kammo always desires to be embraced tightly by someone. When she was five year old her step mother embraced and kissed her little child Tunni. Kammo could discriminate that,

Ma uski har baat, har ada par nichavar hokar use gale se laga leti aur bahon me bharkar chumbano ki bouchar kar deti. Kammo ke abodh man me badi lalsa ultati ki ma ese hi use bhi pyar kare, vah sakuchati si ma ke paas ja khadi hoti. Ma bhi pyar se uske gal par halki si chapat laga deti, par sine se lagakar use koi pyar nahi karta tha. (279)

[On his every movement, every action mother showered love and embraced him and showered kisses on him. Kammo's ignorant mind also desired that mother loves her in same manner, she hesitatingly went near her mother. Mother also lovingly and softly slaps her cheek but nobody loved her by clasping with chest.]
Desiring this, she went nearer to her step mother but she neglected her. Kammo's father did the same gesture when he came home. He took Tunni first and kissed him but Kammo's waiting was unfulfilled and everlasting.

When Kammo entered in eighteenth year she came into contact with Shailen. From his letter she desired to sleep in his clasp. But her dreams never came true, dreams remained dreams only. Kammo's father came to know about her relation with Shailen and immediately her marriage was fixed with Mittal, who is a hardcore businessman. Kammo desired to fulfill her unsatisfied dreams with Mittal and now 'her all emotions centered round some other face'. (280)

Within few days Kammo realized that her husband's only area of interest is business. He insisted Kammo to take interest in business and support him but the labyrinth of business was beyond Kammo's understanding. The control of entire house hold is now in the hand of Kammo but her emotions are still unsatisfied. Her three year old son Shon is always taken cared by her mother in-law. Everything from material world is at her hand but what about her unfulfilled emotional world? It seems that Kammo's emotional world will never be fulfilled.

Once Kammo's niece Shammi and her fiance Inder come for the shopping of their upcoming marriage. Their intimate behavior and caring for each other arise her hidden unsatisfied emotional fire. From childhood to till the day she desires that someone loves her deeply by embrace her tightly. Her mother in-law suffers form fever so her son Shon is sleeping with Kammo. Kammo could not sleep from last three days because of that unsatisfied feeling. On that might her son becomes afraid of some bad dream in sleep and out of fear he suddenly wraps his hand at his mother's neck and Kammo is patting him and she also goes in to deep sleep with the clasp of her child.

The unsatisfied urge form childhood is satisfied with the embrace of her child is symbolically presented by Mannu Bhandari. Kammo, from her childhood, longs for someone's embrace suggest that there is a gap of
intimacy in her emotional world which is neither filled by her lover nor filled by her husband. Her son is also taken care by her mother in-law and the gap is unfulfilled.

The innocent clasp of a child fulfills all her longings from childhood and she sleeps deeply. Here the gap is built because of lack of attention of people who are near and dear. That is to say that she is not accepted as an individual from her childhood. Thus the accidental small gesture of her son fulfills her pit of emotional world and she goes deep into the sleep of satisfaction. Woman needs emotional support from male. Physical relation cannot satisfy her inner psychic, hunger, so even after physical satisfaction she attracts toward man to fulfill unsatisfied emotional psychic hunger.

The story shows the wife in her traditional role as a housewife. The wife here appears in the Pativrata image like Sita, Sati, Savitri. The ideal of Hindu wife is so stamped on her mind that she never raised a word of complaint against such an indifferent attitude of her husband. Total submission and devotion, even when the husband neglects his wife, is an ideal ingrained in the women's mind since early childhood.

The projection of the social situation and the reflection of social consciousness have always been the primary motivation of the fiction. ‘Literature reveals principally three sets of relationships - human beings in relation to the universe, individual in relation to society, and man in relation to woman.’(Suneel in Dass: 219)\(^\text{10}\)

In other words, the fiction may be considered a document of social criticism. Mannu Bhandari has risen to the occasion and adequately reflects the various human relationships, including the image of woman and man-woman relationship.

The story Teen Nigahon ki Ek Tasveer, reveals the inner pain and sorrow of protagonist Darshna. Naina is the daughter of Darshana’s elder sister who comes to see her sick and ill childless aunt. But Darshana cannot recognize Naina so she decides to stay there. Darshana dies soon. Naina
comes across the diary of Darshana and story of a writer named Harish. Thus she knows the entire story of her aunt Darshana.

Darshana takes care of his sick husband who is suffered from T.B. Relatives and friends only give oral sympathy and due to this deadly decease they hardly came to see Darshana and her husband. Due to economic tightness she decides to give one of the room on rent. Harish, an unmarried young man and a writer is rented a room. Harish has a deep sympathy towards Darshana and her husband, but due to weak and incapable husband Darshana attracts towards Harish. Day by day the health of Darshana's husband is decreased and Darshana cries,

'Meri Saari Koshise bekar ja rahi thi.Aankho kea age anthakaar cha jaata tha.Man bada toota sa raheta hai.Sab aur nirasha, Udasi! (130)

[My entire efforts are going in vain. Darkness covers my eyes. Mind is broken into pieces. Frustration and sorrow spread everywhere.]

Darshana's attraction towards Harish and Harish's sympathetic behavior cannot bare by her husband so he brutally beats Darshana.

'Aaj bhi Unhone muje maaraShaadi ke baad aaj paheli baar maine Jaana ki inke sharer me Aab bhi Itna Zor hai. Inki bimaar laato ne Meri Kamar tod di hai. (132)

['Today he has beaten me again.First time after marriage, I know that his body has still so much power. His sick kick has broken my waist.']
Her husband also writes about this attraction of Darshana to her parents brothers & sister in such a way that they also start behaving differently towards Darshana. Their oral sympathy turns into taunts and dislikes. At last Darshana leaves the home. Darshana receives the news of the death of her husband after some time and she writes in her diary,

Aaj Unki mritu ka samachaar suna. Meri to Saari bhavnae jaise Mar gayi hai, mai hi jaane Kyo Jinda hun ? (132)

['The news of his death is heard. As if my all emotions have been dead. I know not why I'm living?]

At last she passes her last phase of life by serving as a music teacher in a school.

Mannu Bhandari uses flash back technique and story within the story technique very beautiful here to disclose the other side of truth. Harish as a writer wants fame by writing the story and psychoanalysis about it. Harish fantasies the event but writes nothing about the real mental and emotional conditions of Darshana in that story. Darshana discloses other side of truth which her niece at last comes to know through her diary and gets the true picture of her aunt.

Bhandari present here three different eyes or angles from where we can see the truth about Darshana. One side is shown to Darshana's family members by her husband by writing letter about her relation with Harish, the tenant. Other side is presented in the story written by Harish about Darshana in which he tries to show her as an unsatisfied woman attracted towards other person. While third side is presented through the few pages of Darshana's diary from which we finish the missing part of picture.
A healthy woman unsatisfied of her husband attracted towards other person which her husband cannot tolerate and humiliates her in the eyes of her parental family members and gets her out of home. She does not get broken and gets job as a music teacher. With all these pains and predicaments Darshana is free from the social taboos and male dominated society.

Here two sides are taken by males and one side is shown by female. Which, in most of the cases, is always either unseen or made distorted. Bhandari opens it very delicately to readers and tries to agitate, to see this third side of truth.

As ours is a male dominated society, the shadowy, suffering and pathetic role of woman has not yet been changed completely. Even today, she has no existence as a domestic creature. Moreover she herself is not able to come out of the cocoon of pride in-suffering. The pativrata image has grown into her very being that she is unable to look on herself as a human being. Not only that under any difficulties, she fulfills her husband’s bad habits though he is cruel to her. Let us examine this story. Sarla Jagmohan rightly observes that,

Traditionally, ours is a male-dominated society, in which the feminine mystique is glorified. Woman is supposed to be an ideal wife and an ideal mother and a home-maker, no matter to which part of India she belongs. She is expected to be an epitome of virtue. (Jagmohan, Sarla P. no.43)\textsuperscript{10}

Mannu Bhandari reflects changing times through private lives. In some of her stories, the protagonists undergo transformation by the end. Bhandari depicts the empowerment of the suppressed gender and the emergence of a new woman. Empowerment of the suppressed through education consists the theme of the story.
The realization of urge to live in a particular way becomes the quest for identity. However social mores and wants complicate the condition and the malice appears unredeemable. Ultimately, the expression and fulfilment of it can be called the purpose of life.

Bhandari authentically reflects reality of Indian middle class woman in ‘Nasha’ which represents the picture of such 'pati parayan' woman. Anandi married Shankar at the age of ten, and after her mother-in-law's death, responsibilities of entire house is shouldered by Anandi. Her husband Shankar is a hard core drunkard. Out of three, Anandi's two children were died during infancy. The only son Kishnu survived. Whenever money earned by hard working at neighbors’ houses by Anandi, that are snatched by Shankar for his liquor, and he also hit Anandi for all his demands.

Kishnu at the age of fourteen could not bare his mother's condition, so he fought with his father and left home. After twelve years Kishnu comes and takes his mother with him. Kishnu and his wife takes good care of Aanandi and Aanandi also doing sewing work in the neighbor and the money earned out of it, she sends to Shankar. Aanandi believes her husband as her God, though god is drunkard. Shankar has ‘nash’- intoxication of drinking liquor and Aanandi has intoxication to satisfy her husband's drinking desire.

### 4.3.1.2 Wife at Working Place

The concept of working woman in Indian society is a comparatively new phenomeno. Traditionally, her role was confined to the household work but the pressing economic needs, the education of the woman and the changing concept of work-values have enabled the woman to seek employment opportunity. Career is the sphere in which a person's individuality is expressed and rewarded. Anita Myles observes that,

The oppression of women is not only a material reality, originating in economic conditions, but also a
psychological phenomenon – how men and women perceive one another. (Myles) 11

This extension of the role of woman has resulted into many conflicting situations and new demands in the field of marital adjustment, familial life and social participation. The career not only provides a new status in the family but also demands new adjustments in her personal and social life. This aspect of working woman is delineated in different ways by Mannu Bhandari in some of her short stories.

It is well known that the Indian society is today passing through a phase of transition. The changes that we witness in contemporary Indian society have been brought about by a gradual process of modernisation as a result of Indian contact with the west through the agency of the colonial British rule and partly through the development programmes launched in India in the post-independence era. Needless to say that alongside the in the various aspects of society and culture, changes have also come about in the position of women in India. Especially education has had a deep impact on their outlook, the value which they cherished under the influence of tradition are undergoing a radical transformation. In fact, a new concept of womanhood is gradually emerging in India which is at odds with the traditional concept to the hearth and home.

The aim of the present study is to find out the values which are shaping the outlook of women who have received the benefit of education and who have been exposed to modern influence in the urban setting. The modern type likewise will be described in terms of the prevailing conceptions of women's place in society whose main emphasis is on equality of men and women. They also express a desire to share social responsibilities with men. It therefore appears imperative to make an assessment of the changing time has left on Indian society with special reference to the portrayal of woman in the short-stories of Mannu Bhandari
It will not exaggerate to say that woman herself has perpetuated the idea that the husband is superior to her and that she must obey her husband and look to his comfort and satisfaction. The ideal of Sita-Savitry, the *Pativrata Stri*, is the ideal she strives to realise. Such woman suffers in silence or sublimates her sorrow as the traditional image of ‘Pativrata’ wife is so deeply rooted in her mind. This stereotyped image of wife has been very well portrayed in some of the stories of Mannu Bhandari.

Her women protagonists show that they have realized how society and patriarchy have suppressed their individuality, that all they have to do is to make conscious efforts to realize their dormant capacities; they have to awaken themselves and realize what they are in reality. Mannu Bhandari suggests through these characters that there is a greater chance of happiness for women if they learn to conquer their fears and assert themselves. In these stories, the women protagonists do not merely think but also act out their role and bring about a concrete change in woman’s life.

Mannu Bhandari is very conscious of the unfair situation prevailing in society with regard to women. There are several incidents in this collection which subtly prove that woman has always been playing the role of a perfect wife in order to keep her husband and his family happy. In fact the unawareness of her individuality prevails among women because since childhood they have been nurtured in traditional patterns which sharply define the male/female pattern of behaviour. The woman protagonists in some of the stories of Mannu Bhandari achieve ‘personhood’. They go beyond what Elaine Showalter calls the ‘Female Phase’ which is a phase of self discovery, a turning inward freed from dependence of opposition, a search for identity. (Showalter)\(^\text{11}\)

Thus in modern age people are accepting the importance of education for girls. She is even encouraged to study further as her higher education would make her an economically independent person.

*Kamre, Kamara, Kamare* is the story of a woman whose life, from beginning to end, moves in rooms. Here room is symbolized as an unseen
system of controls and restrictions which is silently imposed on the protagonist Nilu.

Nilu shoulders all the responsibilities of her family because of ill health of her mother. Her house is made of five rooms but none of them is in order. Wherever they wish to eat they use that room. When they play game in one room and their mother comes with neighbors the play is shifted in another room. Thus all the five rooms are used for all kind of activities. In this disorder Nilu feels,

‘Jab tak vah ghar mein rahati hai, vah panch kamaro aur chathi rasoi me banti-bikhari rahati hai. Nilu ne kai baar chaha aur koshish bhi ki ki vah ek kamara apne liye le le. Par varsho se chali aai us vyavastha me Nilu ki chahana kabhi puri nahi ho saki.’ (294)

[U]ntil she lives in this home she is scattered among five rooms and sixth kitchen. Many a times Nilu desires and tries that she takes one room for her. But under this long timed established order Nilu's desire never fulfills.]

Nilu passes her master degree exam with first class and gets job as a lecturer in Delhi College, where she is given one room in ladies hostel which she is sharing with Mira Patel. Within short period Mira becomes Nilu's fast friend. Now Nilu lives in one room. Mira goes to United States and again Nilu feels loneliness in this one room of college hostel. She wonders during day on the streets and roads of Delhi but at night she thinks,

‘Raat ko saari sadake aur saare sthan use vaapas uske kamre me hi chood jaate. Aur vah heran thi ki jis akele kamre ki usne itni kaamna ki, jis kamre ne use
kaha se kaha lakar khada kar diya, yahi kamara aaj uski sima ban gaya.’ (295)

[At night all the roads and all places have left her again in her room. And she confounds that the personal room she desired most, that room takes her from where to where, the same room, today, has become her boundary.]

Once during her trip to Jaipur Nilu meets Srinivas who is sophisticated widower businessman. After few meetings, they both decide to marry and Nilu shifts from her one room to the four rooms flat of Srinivas. On Srinivas's insist she also leaves her job and Join Srinivas's office in which she moves among seven rooms of office. Thus in office and at home she slowly losses her individuality and identity. Her degree of Ph.D., her papers in conferences and so many other creative activities are ended under the work pressure of her husband's office. Thus a creative lecturer becomes a business woman.

Eventually she comes across an article by Mira Patel in newspaper on the subject which was her favorite subject and was suggested by Nilu to Mira. She desires to publish those articles but under the pressure of responsibilities of her husband's office she cannot rewrite them and she feels that her creativity and her individual identity is slowly broken and merged.

Mannu Bhandari beautifully portrays a picture of a woman who hardly finds room for her at her father's home where five rooms are there. Her creativity and individuality flourishes when she has her own room but after marriage, with individuality she also loses her creativity as well as desire to write articles on different subjects, under the responsibilities of her husband's demands.

This presents a painful picture of a wife who becomes a mere puppet in the hands of patriarchal authority. The age-old orthodox norms of the male-centred society are so deeply rooted in the minds of women that
they succumb to such servility. Bhandari masterly portrays the psychology of woman in which not only the emotional state of woman is portrayed but also present the authentic psychic diagram of her character. The story Ghutan presents the suffocation of a married woman Pratima and young girl Mona. Mannu Bhandari presents two women in this story. Pratima is married woman and feels suffocation due to her married life, while Mona is also suffocated due to her unfulfilled desire to marry a man of her choice. Thus Bhandari appropriately juxtaposes two different women suffering in same suffocation due to different reasons. We have discussed the case of Mona in young girl section.

Pratima is the protagonist in the story Ghutan. As we have seen that she is married to a person who is officer on ship and he is coming after two days after one year's gap. She has few sweet moments to be remembered in the company of her husband. In the presence of friends her husband called her 'dry ginger' because of her orthodox attitudes. Because she neither gives her husband a company in drinking wine nor she is interested in those vulgar jokes. Thus Pratima feels suffocated in the presence of her husband.

‘Uska pati ek saal baad ghar aaya tha. Use sharab se badi nafrat thi, pinevaloo se badi nafrat thi. Par yah saamne beithkar jo pi raha hai, usse vah nafrat nahi kar sakti, vah uska pati hai, uska sarvasva, jo saal me keval ek mahine ke liye aata hai.’ (156)

[Her husband has come home after one year. She hates wine, she strongly hates drunkards. But the person who is drinking before her she cannot hate him, he is her husband, her all and everything who comes once in a year for a month.]
Pratima’s husband forces her to take wine on the occasion of his home coming but in the night of summer, Pratima feels that she cannot tolerate her husband obstinacy. She desires:

‘Vah ek baar khoolkar saans lene chahi thi, swachha hava me, jaha kisi pasine ki durgandh na ho, kisi ke sharabi sans ki ghuta dene vaali badboo na ho.’ (156)

[She wants to take breath once openly, in clean air, where there is neither smell of some one’s perspiration nor bad odour of stifle liquorious breath of any one.]

One o'clock at night Pratima’s husband still taking peg over peg and after finishing that he asks her to sleep with him. She goes mechanically in the bed with her husband but she is sensing,

‘Vatavarn ki ghutan apne charam ko pahunchi hui thi. Aur usse bhi adhik ghdutan thi Pratima ke man me jo pati ki jaroorat se jyada majboot bahon me jakdi hai tadap rahi thi mukti ke liye. ‘(156)

[The suffocation of atmosphere has reached at its extreme. And there is more suffocation in Pratima’s mind who is palpating for freedom, tightly embraced in her husband’s strong arms.]

A husband forcefully imposing himself on his wife is, however, never publicised at least among the Indians where the Puranas dictate that ‘it is a wife’s duty to please her husband in bed.’ (Reddy)
invasion of one's body, even though sanctified by marriage, can be as traumatic as rape. Rape has always been a horrible indignity heaped on woman by the male species merely to show the basic animal instinct and strength of brute force. This violence and condemnation become worse when it occurs within the sanctity of a marriage.

Suffocation symbolizes the plight of countless women who face the same situation but dare not even think to voice their feelings. She has suppressed her feelings, fears, doubts and everything in silence. It only proves that they have been nurtured since childhood in a society which perpetuates such injustice. She is the victim of male domination and also of her own silence. According to Yashoda Bhat,

‘A woman’s individual self has very little recognition and self-effacement is her normal way of life. Indian woman too, as a part of that set up has accepted it and lived in for ages.’ (Bhat) 13

There is another phenomenon which can be observed in Indian society during recent decades. It is the working wife, especially in the middle classes. Education and economic conditions have changed the attitudes and created a need to work. The working wife has to face the problem of marital adjustment of quite different type. If the non-working wife faces boredom, the working wife lacks the time and energy to carry out her responsibilities at the place of her work and in the home. There are other emotional and psychological problems too.

As more and more middle-class women entered jobs, sociologists and writers are bound to reflect their problems. The middle-class working woman, a product of education and economic conditions, appears in the fiction after the forties. Such images of women who feel or do not feel satisfaction in their work and who feel role conflict have been fully portrayed by Mannu Bhandari. She tells us about the motivations and reactions of women
who work.

The self sacrificing image of woman is very well portrayed in the story *Nayi Naukai*. The protagonist, Rama leaves not only her job for her husband’s promoted job but she has to lose her promotion also. Rama has been working as a lecturer of history in college since ten years. Her husband Kundan is hard working and loving husband. Kundan’s boss Dr. Fisher appoints Kundan on new job which requires different kind of house set up and high society lifestyle. Company also provides Kundan a big flat. Kundan’s entire personality is changed due to his new job, though he tries to maintain his routine with Rama.

Kundan enters in high society culture so he has to live accordingly and as a new house is needed to be decorated; all responsibilities are given to Rama. In decorating house and selecting right thing for right place Rama can not get time for preparing her lecture. Rama has to go with Kundan in party during evening and she has to select things for new house so Rama feels very tired and at last Kundan insists Rama to leave her job, because Kundan insists that she entertain higher officials from abroad at her home by serving Indian food and hospitality. Kundan wishes,

‘Kundan chahata tha ki yah kaam Rama ko karna chahiye, kyo ki yah kaam usika tha.’ (366).

[Kundan wished that this work should be done by Rama because this is her own work.]

Every evening Rama has to go to party with Kundan and she becomes so tired that she cannot prepare for her lecture on next morning. Once she promised to prepare a paper on given topic, before fifteen days but due to decorating and perchaising things for house and evening parties with her husband she can not prepare the paper, and she feels,
'Muje yeh sab nibhata nahi. Yah ravaiya mere bas ka nahi hai. Kitni guilty feel karti hun. Bina taiyar kiye padhana, lagata hai jaise ladakiyo ko cheat kar rahi hun. Do ghanton ka samay bhi to muje apne liye nahi milta.' (361)

[I do not bare all this. This attitude is not of my capacity. How much guilt I am feeling. Teaching without preparation, it seem as if I am cheating girls. I can not find at least two hours for me.]

Rama also feels sorry for not giving enough time for her only child's education so, she says, Kundan,

'Banti ki report dekhi? Hammesha first aaya karta tha, is baar seventh aaya hai. Kab padhaya karu, tumhi bataon?' (361)

[Have you seen Bunti's report? He always came first, this time he has come seventh, when do I teach him, you tell me?]

When Rama has left her job she was crying silently, Kundan consoles her that,

‘Tumhe katai akelapan nahi lagega, tum jara bhi kami mahesus nahi karogi, rather you will be feel relieved. Kitna strain he tum par aajkal?’ (360)

[You will never feel loneliness, you won't feel lack any more, rather you will be feel relieved. How much strain is there on you now a day?]
Rama remembered that on the farewell function her principal gives her bouquet and a set of parker pens and tells her,

'Mrs Chopada, aap esi pen se apni thesis puri kariye. Jab bhi vaapas kaam karne ka man ho, bina kisi sankoch se chali aaiye, yaha aapka hamesha hi swagat hai.' (360)

[Mrs. Chopada, finish your thesis by these pens. Whenever you wish to work again come back without any hesitation, you are always welcome here.]

Kundan consoles Rama after leaving her jobs that whatever he is doing is for the wellness of Rama and Bunti only. He says,

'Tumhe shayad lag raha hai ki meri vajah se, is nayi naukari ki vajah se tumhe apna kaam chodna pad raha hai. Par yah to socho, muje hi is naukari me kya dilchaspi hai? Tumhare liye, Bunti ke liye me ye sab kar raha hun.' (363)

[You may be feel that because of me, because of my new job you have to leave your job. But think, why am I interested in this job? For you, for Bunti I am doing all these.]

If Rama is going to finish her thesis within six months she could get selection grade but she has to leave her job. Once Rama expresses her dissatisfaction of not being working in college as she had been working since last ten years. Kundan replies her,
'Mera santosh, tumhara santosh nahi hai, meri tarrakki, tumhari tarrakki nahi hai?' (363)

[Is my satisfaction not your satisfaction, is my promotion not your promotion?]

Thus in the fire of her husband's new job Rama has to sacrifice not only her job but also her carrier and her personality. Rama has to erase her individuality for enriching her husband's personality in his new aristocratic circle. The protagonist looks at herself as spectator. She experiences anunknown fear, i.e. fear of losing her real self. The individual in her is in crisis on all front – as a mother, wife and above all as an Indian woman. The writer's analysis of her character brings out the real problem to our view. She is in search of her 'being' which is lost in the practical, hypocritical as well as artificial life of her husband. She fails to find her real reflection in the mirror of life decided by her husband.

Bhandari portrays a meek, docile and humble image of wife put in a rigid conservative and domineering surrounding. She is placed in an orthodox patriarchal culture and has her roots in her native soil. The story very clearly presents the male counterpart as a typical Indian who considers himself the lord and master with dominating nature and wife as a submissive one, not independent to take decisions.

The protagonist, Manjari in Bandh Darojo ka Saath is a lecturer in college and married woman. She is very happy with her family life but one day she sees the lock in the third drawer of table, and she feels doubt instead of faith and feeling in husband-wife relationship. She opens the drawer and comes across the things, and she shockingly thinks,

‘Kyo ki daraj me Vipin ka keval atit hi nahi tha, Vartaman bhi tha or usme bhavishya ki yojanae bhi.'
Vah jeise jeise Vipin ke vyaktigat jivan ke nikat hoti ja rahi thi, anjane aur un chahe hi Vipin se door hoti jaa rahi thi’. (337)

[Because in drawer there lies not only the past of Vipin, but present and also his future plans. As she is slowly going nearer to Vipin's personal life, unknowingly and unlikely she is going far from his life.]

At that night in bed room Manjari fells that,

‘Usne bhitar hi bhitar mahesoos kiya ki uske saath sonevala, use pyar karneval Vipin sampoorn nahi hai, keval ek khand hai, ek tukada. Sampoorna Vipin use hamesha fool ki tarha halka lagata tha.’ (337)

[She feels internally inside that the person who sleeps with her, loves her, Vipin, is not total, it is only a part, a piece. Total Vipin was felt her as light as flowers.]

They discuss long on the other than marital relations of Vipin and atmosphere is very tense. But this is not a kind of atmosphere of tension in which emotions like quarrel, anger, hatred or suicide can be seen. They try to understand each other's helplessness and maturity. Though there is a pain in this tension but they are ready to accept the situation arise out of it. Both have decided to depart. These are the words of a determined woman. Rama very calmly tells her decision that she is leaving him and home. Though she does not show her resentment aggressively, Rama in her thoughts gives way to her anger violently.
‘Ab sneha ka sthan sandeh ne le liya tha aur tarko ne saddbhavana ke reshe-reshe udhed diye the.’ (337)

[Now doubt has taken place of love and logic has shattered each and every fibers of sympathy.]

Manjari lives with her three year old son Asit. She feels that her behavior towards Asit is not proper so she takes two decisions simultaneously. One, to send Asit in the hostel, and another, to find life partner for her. Because she believes that,

‘niri bhavukta hai aur bhavukta ko lekar aadmi keval kashta pa sakta hai, ji nahi sakta. Manjari jina chahati thi.’ (338)

[It is only emotionality and with emotions, person gets only pains, but cannot live. Manjari wants to live.]

During this phase Manjari meets Dilip and they married. Manjari, who did not care for people's opinion at the time of divorce, now consider their opinions important and leaves her job on the fear of people. Manjari is satisfied with her family life. Asit comes home during his vacation and Manjari fulfills all his demands. At time of Asit's departure, six months hostel bill is given and Dilip denies paying the bill. First time Manjari feels a sense of repentance for leaving her job. Manjari’s life divides into two different drawers, one for Dilip and one for Asit. Manjari thinks,

‘Aaaj Jindagi ka har pahelu, har sthiti aur har sambandh ek samadhanhin samasya hokar hi aata hai, jise sulzaya nahi ja sakta, keval bhoga ja sakta
[Today, every aspect of life, every situation and every relation come like a problem, which cannot be solved, only it has to be endured in which, human is continuously being scattered and broken into pieces.]

Mannu Bhandari depicts here a very strong emotional woman who fights with situation but at the same time presents the importance of economic stability for woman. Manjari is strong enough to deal with her divorce with Vipin but she has to think twice for the fees of her son when she does not have economic independence. This story narrates the painful realization of Manjari, even after her second marriage with Dilip. She wants to live in totality after second marriage but she has to compartmentalize herself in male dominated world.

Traditionally, education of women was not at all considered important. But these stories indicate that the trend is towards modernity and a dear departure from tradition. Regarding educating their daughter, the families in these stories are in favour of giving higher education to their daughters, to enable them to stand on their own feet at the time of emergency. These educated women no longer want to remain confined to household duties but are keen on entering public life. The majority of them are interested in taking up a career. They do not consider themselves inferior to men.

These women characters stand for a feminist affirmation of woman’s strength. The society presented in these stories is certainly one going through transitions where at least economically independent woman could have choices in life. They are dignified, self-reliant women leading a meaningful life of conviction. However in some of her stories she has exposed their passivity, anxiety and confusion. Somewhere she has tried to make her women
characters stronger than they are in real life. They have started recognizing the need for change, but at the same time they continue to cling to the old values as they have been brought up with them. In short, Mannu Bhandari very skilfully tries to delineate both the kinds of women. Some of them consciously or unconsciously allow themselves to be marginalized by the traditional pattern while some of them oppose them openly.

Mannu Bhandari has portrayed a traditional image of wife who has been subordinated by the androcentric culture. This patriarchal ideology teaches woman to internalise these concepts in the process of their socialization. As Simone de Beauvoir observes,

‘One is not born woman, but rather becomes a woman. It is civilization as a whole that produces this creature..... which is described as feminine.’ (Beauvoir) ¹⁴

Moreover, these women suffer, tolerate injustice helplessly because their brains are washed by traditional taboos or they are unable economically and still more emotionally to lead an independent life. And it will give her an infinite pain if she tries to rebel as an individual because she cannot leave her home as wife and mother due to her emotional home-loving temperament. According to Meena Shrivadkar,

‘She prefers to suffer, in silence and remain at home even though a part of her being dies in the process. Moreover, it is difficult for the wife to rebel because the code of submission, sacrifice and chastity is dinned into her ears and imprinted on her mind from childhood.’ (Shrivadkar) ¹⁵

Some of the stories project a woman who is still no more than a
domestic servant and woman too accepts her inferior position in the family. Ironically she herself perpetuates the idea that the husband is superior to her and that she must obey her husband and look to his comfort and satisfaction. In fact she considers it as her *Pativratadharama*.

‘For an Indian wife the traditional ideal held forth is that of the *Pativartadharma* which consists of *atmasamarpan* merging her identity in that of her husband's having no views or voice different from the husband's.’ (Shirwadkar) \(^{16}\)

In an Indian society, a woman’s traditional role is to perform domestic duties and to bring up children. So even if she plays a role of a working woman beside her role as a house-wife, her family doesn't attach much importance towards that 'extra role'. Her occupation and income are taken as secondary by the family. Woman in such family suffers mental as well as physical fatigue. The portrayal of working women represents all those women who are crushed under the weight of double roles. This is the picture of all those women whose dreams, expectations, aspirations remained unexpressed. Her individuality has limited scope rather no scope to express itself. They are helpless as they cannot unburden any one responsibility due to economic compulsion.

If all these stories are taken together, it appears that women in Mannu Bhandari's stories are initially conventional, but emerge as unconventional through the course of the plot. They free themselves from convention which tries to put them into a subordinate position. Some of them even break the marriage vows which prove to be hindering her self-respect and individually. They do not compromise with the situation. They find self fulfilment more important than anything else. It is also observed that when these women are in search of self fulfilment, they become stronger and are ready to fight obstacles. Their breaking
the chains that tie them down is just a means towards the end. Bhandari also suggests that the woman must avoid subtle traps which are there in the guise of love and affection. She must take a somewhat curt but timely stand to assert her independence and to establish her individuality.

Marriage is a sacred institution and is treated so in Indian Society. Matrimony is often regarded in India as the *summum bonum* of a woman's life. But these stories present that marriage is no longer a sacrament; it is a convenient arrangement always to the disadvantage of woman. Women in these stories attach much importance and seriousness to fidelity in marriage. They cannot endure the violation of the sacred institution of marriage by their husband. All the male characters in these stories have entered into an illicit relationship. Wives in these stories react against the traditional image of woman and present the image of New Woman. The structure of these stories can be observed in four phases, i.e., fight from reality; frustration, determination; and ultimately an attempt to break the traditional role.

Another common factor to observe in the stories is that the woman, whether dependent or independent, seems to be complete in her. She does not need anyone to support her, whether it be her father, brother or husband, neither they fight conflict in her mind whether to submit to the tradition; she takes the decision to live her life of her own as soon as her husband proves unfaithful. Theses heroines walk out of marriage or refuse to re-enter it. They know that the way of the world leads to domestic bliss in the traditional sense of the term, but they would take the road less travelled by. Despite the agony it causes and the difficulties she has to steer through, there could be no turning back.

Moreover, these stories do not end up glorifying the stereotypical virtues of Indian woman, like patience, devotion and acceptance of whatever is meted out to her. These are totally different stories in the sense that they explode the myth of man's unquestionable superiority and the myth of woman being a martyr and paragon of all virtues. They are
based on the problems faced by woman who goes against the polygamous nature of her husband.

The reason why women in these stories seem to be irrelevant is that they emerge from a male-dominated society. Society is in a transition now where gender roles are being redefined. Kate Millett terms our age as one of ‘sexual revolution’, wherein women ‘might come to play a leadership part .... quite unknown before in history’. It is an age where sexual stereotypes are no more relevant, where ‘freedom from rank or perspective role, sexual or otherwise’ is increasingly evident. (Millett: 363)17 The change is less evident, however, in ancient and tradition-bound cultures like the Indian, where the male domination persists. But then the fact cannot be denied that woman today, is passing through a transitional era.

4.3.2 Unconventional Image

The protagonist in the story Diwar, Bachhe aur Barsaat is open minded and brave enough to free from traditional taboos. Ranibibi, an educated cultured woman, is married with a person who is rigid and traditional minded husband. Her husband cannot tolerate Ranibibi’s open minded nature so they frequently quarreled. Actually the behavior of Ranibibi is free of gender discrimination and her activities related to literature and literary persons that make any tradition bound woman to doubt her. But no one is there to understand her progressive thoughts and pure womanhood of Ranibibi.

Ranibibi’s husband tries to control her personality but she does not want to suppress under traditional wife’s duty. However activities like writing in news papers, reading new books, meeting people of her hobbies are going on and on. They quarrel many times but there is no sign of change in the behavior of Ranibibi. One day Ranibibi comes late from the meeting and her husband angrily tells her to get out of home.
‘Jin yaar dosto me ghoom rahi hai Unhi ke ghar jaakar beith ja.’ (84)

[Go and live with those friends with whom you are wondering.]

At the same time she replies with awareness that,

‘Hum dono ka saath nibha na sake to saath rehene se kya fayada ? (84)

[If we cannot support each other then what is the meaning of living together?]

Rani leaves her husband's home at the same moment in the words of Bhagoobhabhi, the neighbor tells,

‘Ranibibi, ghela-pai kucha nahi le gayi, bade thasake se gayi hai. Haath gale ka zevar tak utaar kar gai aur kaha gayi ki main kisi ki dabot hokar nahi raha saku.Khud kama kar kha lungi.’ (84)

[Ranibibi, crazy woman, has taken nothing with her, she has gone with very proud. Even ornaments of hands and neck were also left here, and has said, I cannot live as subordinate. I will earn and feed myself.]

While Bhaggobhabhi tells this incidence of departure of Ranibibi to other women of society, outside, an old wall is collapsed by a small plant which is grown up in the wall. Bhandari here suggests that Ranibibi is the
symbol of newly grown plant which is capable enough to collapse the wall of
tradition. The newly acquired knowledge and fearlessness generated out of it
are well portrayed through the brave character of Ranibibi. Once she said,
why I should say sorry for wrong thing which I don’t believe wrong thing at all.

Ranibibi is stronger than her husband and rebellious enough to leave
her husband's house for freedom. Ranibibi here not only challenges traditional
values and morality but also breaks the age old, loyal meek and docile image
of wife. She never tries to save broken home by compromising with situation.
As if compromise is the weakness which decrease the individuality of person.
Her husband, though educated, is of typical middle class mentality who
cannot understand the true nature of his wife, and always quarrels with her, at
last losses her. This story brings out the image of new, self willed woman who
cannot tolerate anything beyond her understanding.

The protagonist struggle to obtain selfhood by dissolving her
pessimism, by inculcating the strength to survive with dignity and by
analyzing her problems rationally. She refuses to surrender before anxieties,
indoctrination, social conditioning and resultant oppression. She displays a
determination to face the riddles of life boldly. The continuous analysis of
her own self enables her to understand and solve her problem. She struggle
to change the existing world order and usher in a new order, where there is
no place for hypocrisy, pretence and dual morality.

When Ranibibi decides to leave, it is a symbolic act of self
assertion, a declaration of independence, and a bold affirmation of her identity
as an individual. She emerges as a protesting woman when she takes a bold
decision to leave her husband. This step of leaving home and husband has
started threatening the age old institution of marriage, which is based on
fidelity, understanding and mutual love. Though some people could doubt the
acceptance of the new heroine of Mannu Bhandari in the society but the fact
cannot be ignored.

Mannu Bhandari has beautifully raised the question of equality in post-
marital relationship on the part of woman in this thought provoking story,
Unchai. Shivani and Shishir are happy in their eight years married life. They have two children. Priti their son studies in hostel. After vacation Shivani goes to leave her son at hostel where she meets Atul with whom she had love relation before eleven years. Atul is steel bachelor and doesn't desire to marry. When Shivani asks Atul about his bachelorhood, he replies,

'Tum se kat kar mai shayad kahi se itna jyada toot chukka tha ki fir kisi ke saath us tarh se jood nahi paaya. Shayad main kahi se behad jad ho gaya hu - I am completely dead Shinu, completely dead. Kisi ladaki ko den ke liye mere paas kuch bhi to nahi hai. Mare huve pyar ki laash ko main dho raha hun aur use dhote dhote main khud laash ho gaya hun'. (350)

[Cutting from you I probably have been breaking so much that I can not join again in the same way with any body. May be from somewhere I have become very very insensitive. I am completely dead shinu, completely dead. I have nothing to offer to a girl. I am carrying a dead body of dead love and by carrying it I, myself becomes a dead corpse.]

This answer shakes Shivani very deeply and deep in her mind she feels guilt on Atul's present condition.

'Vah dekh rahi thi aur soch rahi thi us abhav ki baat, jo vah uske jivan me bharkar chali gai hai. Par vah to uske liye uttardayi nahi. Fir bhi jaane kyo lag raha tha ki is sabke beech kahi vah hai'. (349)
[She observes and she is thinking on the matter of lacking or absence which she has filled in his life. But she is not responsible for that. Though it seems that she is, somewhere, in the middle of all these.]

Shivani decides to fill that sad gap in Atul's life and on her return journey, she stays one night at Atul's house and physically satisfies him. Shishir comes across this matter from Atul's letter after four months and he strongly reacts on this matter.

'Dohari chot tumne muj par ki - ek aur bevafai to dusari aur dhokha, chal. Kaun sa karan hai jo visvaas karu - tum apna sharir tak ek purush ko de aayi aur keise itni badi baat ko pachakar bade svabhavik dhang se chal padi?' (348)

[You strike doubly on me - on one side infidelity and on other side deception, cheating. On which reason I trust you - you have given your body to a man and how normally you behaving after digesting such a big matter?]

Shivani explain him by presenting her side and says,

'Chipane ke piche bhi tumhe dhokha dene ya chalane ka uddesya katai nahi tha. Jo kuch bhi kiya tumhe kasta den eke liye nahi, apne ko kasta se bachane ke liye kiya. Apna dayitva pura na kar pane ke karan shayad main apne ko kabhi kshama nahi kar pati. Jaisi sthiti thi, usme laga ki yadi yah nahi karungi to muje bahut kasta hoga. Yadi main jara sa dekar kisi
ke jivan me purnata la sakti hun, uske abhavo ko bhar sakti hun, uske saare jivan ka raveiya badal sakti hun, to use dene me kya harj hai’. (348)

[In hiding this matter I did not purpose to deceive you or cheat you. Whatever I did was not to pain you but to save myself from pain, I did that. I might not forgive myself because of not fulfill my responsibility. In that situation I felt that if I didn't do that I could feel extreme suffering. If, by giving slightly, I bring totality in someone's life, fill his emptiness, changing his whole attitude of life, then what harm is there in giving?]

Shishir is so disturbed by this event that he leaves the house without informing Shivani where he goes. Shivani thinks,

'Jara se thande dimag se socho to saari baat kitni tuchha hai. Aur fir Shishir ke liye, jisne neitikta, prem, vivah, sex sabko napne ke liye apne alag gaj bana rakhe the. Ek hi bar napne ka mauka aaya to gaj chota pad gaya'. (346)

[If you think cold mindedly then how insignificant this matter is. And for Shishir who has made his different yardsticks for morality, love, marriage, sex. If chance of measuring occurs only once then yardstick becomes very short.]
A letter comes after fifteen days which tells Shivani to meet Shishir at Rajgiri. They both meet; Shishir suggests that they should take divorce. Shivani replies,

‘Yadi hamare sambandho ka aadhar itna chichola hai, itna kamjor hai ki ek halke se jatke ko bhi sambhal nahi pata to sachmuch use toot hi jaana chahiye. Aur agar is sambandh itna jyada pavitra hai ki saare sansaar ki apavitrata bhi isme aakar pavitra ho jati hai’. (349)

[If the foundation of our relationship is so shallow, so weak that even a light jolt or jerk is not born then truly it should be broken. And if this relationship is so holy then all unholiness of life becomes holy after merge in it.]

Shishir argues that you are forgetting your responsibilities towards me and your family. Shivani replies,

'Jo tumhare liye hai uska bhagi na koi hua hai, na bhavishya me hi koi ho sakega. Pati ke roop mein to main kisiki kalpana bhi nahi kar sakti hun, Atul ki bhi nahi. Tumhe lekar man ka kona-kona kucha is tarha bhara hua hai ki usme aur koi kaha aayega bhala? Tumhare siva aur koi baat hi man me nahi thi. Sharir par chahe vah chaya hua ho, par man par tum, keval tum hi chaye hue the’. (354)

[Whatever for you is neither parted with anybody nor in future it will be parted with anyone. I can never
visualize anyone else in the form of a husband, not even Atul. Every corner of my mind is full of you in such a way that how anyone else can come there? No other matter then you were only in my mind. He might be shadowed on my body but on my mind you were, only you shadowed.]

Shishir is still not satisfied with Shivani’s answer and he argues about the importance of family and relationship. Shivani replies,

‘Mere jivan me tumhara jo sthan hai, use koi nahi le sakta, lena to door, us tak koi pahunch bhi nahi sakta. Kisi ke kitni hi nikat chali jaun, chahe sharirik sambandh bhi sthapit karlu par man ki jis unchain par tumhe bitha rakha hai, vaha koi nahi aa sakta, kisi se uski tulna karne me bhi tumhara apman hota hai’. (355)

[Your place in my life can not be taken by anyone, taking is a distant scene, but nobody can even reach there. How for I intimate with anyone, may be physically intimate but at the height of my mind where you are seated, nobody reaches there, even in comparing, I feel, as if I dishonor you.]

The protagonist in this story, questions the validity of the accepted set of values and coldly rebels against the existing moral codes and social norms which are man-made. A realistic picture of woman in the egoistical, hypocritical and entirely insensitive male dominated society constitutes the theme of the story. Shivani is so much clear conscientious in her attitudes and feelings that she can put all her emotions in
the right expressions and convinces Shishir.

This shows that though the world today is still patriarchal and male oriented, the women have gained legal as well as social liberty and moral courage to voice their feelings and to protest against injustice done to them. This is largely due to the fact that the society is passing through a transitional era. The story presents a woman who practices an open defiance. The passages from the story show that the woman today is establishing her right over herself and instead of guilt, she maintains her individuality and dignity.

The story *Tisra Aadmi* shows the predicament of loveable wife Shakun whose husband Satish, under the spell of inferiority complex, doubts his wife. Mannu Bhandari presents here a healthy, open minded wife who loves her husband and doesn't have any hesitation in her behavior towards others.

Satish and Shakun are happily married couple who love each other very deeply. They do not have any issue even after three years of their marriage so Shakun decides to check up herself medically. Doctor advises her to send her husband for medical checkup and when she tells Satish about doctor's advice, he feels very inferior and this feeling of inferiority is so intense that he thinks himself as an impotent person who is unable to give child to his wife. Shakun is now working as a teacher in higher secondary school but she is also depressed by the behavior of Satish. Every night Satish firmly decides that tomorrow he is going for check up but in the morning he does not go to doctor for checkup.

Shakun becomes silent in her behaviour towards Sathish and Satish looks indifferent. Meanwhile Shakun's acquainted writer Aalok is invited to come at their home. Aalok's one day staying at Shakun's home and Shakun's warmed behavior towards Aalok are not tolerated by Satish. He doubts this relationship but tries hard to make normal himself. The tension arises in the mind of Satish and out of his inferiority complex, his mind runs on the roads of doubts. He fantasizes of some illicit relations between Shakun and Aalok and
cannot concentrate in his office work. So he comes back home, Aalok and Shakun are waiting for him to go and see the town.

Next day when Aalok goes back to his home, Satish feels the normal behavior of Shakun then his all doubts are vanished. He realizes the complex game of his mind. Mannu Bhandari presents loving, open hearted wife and a narrow minded husband whose doubts don’t have any concrete ground. Here bhandari shows that woman can digest the weakness of her husband and can prolong life without any dissatisfaction but husband is not having this height to consider his wife’s frank behavior with her friend whom she has invited. He forgets his own weakness and tries to encroach all these on his innocent, frank wife.

Woman in Mannu Bhandari’s stories is initially a conventional one, but emerges as an unconventional through the course of the plot. She frees herself from the convention which tries to put her into a subordinate position. She breaks the marriage vows which prove to be hindering her self-respect. She does not compromise with the situation. Thus a disturbed but a brave feminine psyche in the new ethos.

New generation very speedily changes their attitudes toward man-woman relationship, especially, husband - wife relationship. Educated and economically stable woman does not compromise with deception in this genuine relationship.

4.4 Motherhood

Introduction:

Social science affirms that a woman's place in society marks the level of civilization. Every civilized society accepting the importance of equality of sexes has, therefore, has made affirmative provisions against gender discrimination. But in spite of enactment of these provisions, equality between men and women continues to be an eluded goal. The reason for such a wide
gap between the idea and the practical is not only due to historical reasons but mainly because of attitude of inferiority and bondage towards women. Women are thus deprived of basic freedom and thereby exposed to easy exploitation.

In India, both men and women writers have seen women in different relationships. Both intellectuals and sociologists regard Indian society as a traditionally male-dominated or where individual rights are subordinated to group or social role expectations. Woman has often been a victim of male oppression and treated like a beast of burden. Woman has always been an object of gross and severe violence at the hands of man. The biological weakness of a woman makes her an easy prey particularly to physical domination. She is often a victim of physical violence not only outside her home but also in her home.

The portrayal of women in its true essence is what Mannu Bhandari has attempted in her collections. All her characters seem from the real life—from ordinary women in ordinary situation to women in urban situation, from women of metropolitan importance to women of village and daily-life participation. She is of the opinion that women can never be categorized in any classified group or name. For women in India, there is only one truth she is either a grandmother, or a mother, or a wife, or a daughter, or a friend. She has to exist with a relation to her counterpart, always negotiate a balance between the relation and the self-image. Mannu Bhandari in this collection explores these complex and real relationship. Her characters have analyzed their mere equilibrium of tradition and modernity, and expressing their insecurities and fears and desires.

The role of a mother in the world of male dominance depicts the pseudo-togetherness trait of patriarchal masculinity. The fulfillment of passivity and perishable aspirations has been inherently subservient in the framework of female suppression and their sexual decadence in the patriarchal society through such pseudo-attitude. However, the assumption of mother as a timid, docile, passive has always been the symptomatic
overpowering masculine nature. The males have emphatically pronounced their power and superiority without even complementing the creative and cultural role of the woman as a mother.

However, the higher education, the employment, new concept of child-rearing, and the increasing independence of women all are influencing the socialising role of the women as a mother. In modern times, moulding the future of children, for preparing them for better economic opportunity, for raising the socio-economic standard of the family and for socialising the younger generation, education has been considered as an important goal of parental care and family concern. Moreover, of late the education of women has also gained momentum and more mothers are aspiring for higher education of their daughter.

In the stories discussed under this title, Mannu Bhandari has depicted different aspects of mother’s life. She has given conventional, suffering picture of mothers as well as strong, determined and assertive picture of mothers. In others words some of them cannot raise their voice against the straight jacketed role-models of mothers while some of them revolt against social taboos, the cramped, wrinkled traditions and values of their ancestors, and ceaselessly question the very concepts of love, marriage, sex and motherhood, and feel an urge to redefine human relationship and behavior.

*Majboori* is a story about an old aged mother who only works in Mumbai. Old Amma lives in village. Her husband is Aayurvedic doctor son he spends his most of time in his dispensary. Their son Rameshver lives in Bombay with his wife and a son, who is coming home after three years. His mother has gout in her knee though she is working hard by forgetting her knee pain. Old Amma is going to prepare so many things, especially for her grand son Betu. Next morning when they arrive she snatches her grand son in excitement that she forgets everything. Old Amma talks with her maid servant about her son that,
'Do, do baras mujse door rahkar uske din keise bitte honge, par kya kare, naukari to aakhir naukari hai. Mere paas aaj lakho ka dhan hota to bete ko yu naukari karne parde nahi dura deti’. (164)

[How did he pass his days by staying away from me for last two years, but what shall I do, Job is job. If I have lakhs of rupees I would not send him abroad for job.]

When old Amma observes that her daughter in-law, Rama becomes pregnant, she secretly desires if Betu, her grand son lives with her. Rama, also desires the same and when she announces this news to her mother-in-law, old Amma is so amazed by this news that she cries and says Rama,

'Apne kaleje ke tukde ko nikalkar Mumbai bhej diya. Rameshver ke bina yah ghar to masana jaisa lagta hai. Mai akeli ye pahad jaise din kaise kaatati hun so to mai hi jaanti hun’. (165)

[A piece of my heart had been removed and sent to Mumbai. Without Rameshver this house seems to be a crematorium. Only I know how I pass the mountain like day.]

The crematorium like place becomes a home with the presence of her grand son Betu. Old Amma learns to fill the milk bottle from her daughter-in-law. Old Amma takes care of her grand son in best possible ways. She tries to fulfill every desire and demand put by her grand son. She forgets her gout pained knees and moves to satisfy every demand of Betu.
Next year when Rama comes to see her son, she is highly disturbed by Betu's behaviour. Betu is so obstinate in every small matter that he violently reacts on it. Rama is also angry on the matter that he is not sent to school also. She thinks,

'Jis Betu ko vah chhod gayi thi, aur jise ab vah dekh rahi hai, do no me koi samanjasya hi nahi tha'. (167)

[Betu, whom she left here, and Betu whom she is seeing, there is no parallel between these two.]

Rama instructs old Amma regularly through letters about Betu's education but Amma cannot follow those instructions. After two years when Rama and Rameshver come with their three years old son Pappu who has been sent to nursery school. Pappu behaves good manneredly with everybody but Betu's behaviour is unchanged, so Rama decides to take Betu with her at Mumbai. Betu is so intimate with Amma that it is difficult for Rama to put him under discipline. At last she takes him to Mumbai and after a week a message comes that Betu becomes familiar with the atmosphere of home and Mumbai.

Bhandari juxtaposes two mothers here. Old Amma treats Betu in her own manners. She tries to fulfill all his desires though she has pain in her knees. Old Amma treats Betu out of her longing for her own son. Rama blames old Amma for Betu's behavior but she cannot understand unsatisfied feelings of Amma. Old Amma tries to forget the pain of absence of her son, and the medicine to this pain is the presence of Betu, her grandson. On other side Rama is worried about Betu's education and mannerism because on the standards of Mumbai Betu looks uncultured. Bhandari beautifully represents the inner pain and loneliness of old Amma here.

*Sankhya ke paar* is the story about a widow mother who is not only defamed by her in-law's family but also restricted by her father to meet her
only daughter. The story narrated in first person by a young daughter Pramila who never meets her mother but only has heard rumors about her.

Pramila's mother, after Pramila's birth becomes widow. Her in-laws forced her to remarry that person because he will give big amount of money to in-law's family. Pramila's mother leaves that house and Pramila is given to her maternal grand parents. The in-law family spread the rumor that Pramila's mother runs away with someone.

Pramila's maternal grandfather shocks and becomes very angry from this incident and restricts her daughter to enter in his house and meet Pramila. He says his wife,

'Vah nahi aa sakti..... is ghar me paun bhi nahi rakh sakti. Sach kaheta hun, vah aayi to main uski tangent tod dunga. Tum laakh rouoo, rote-rote mar bhi jao tab bhi vah is ghar me nahi ghusa sakati. Tum kahelado ki vah shahar chodkar chali jaae. Meri ijjat,pratishta, sukh-chain sab mitti me mila diya'. (289)

[She cannot come .....can't even step in this house. I am truly saying, if she comes I will break her legs. Though you cry a lot, even dead by crying even then she cannot enter in this house. You tell that she leaves the city. My prestige-fame, happiness-peace all are ruined to dust.]

Once Pramila's mother comes to meet her. When she sees Pramila, she pulls her and embrace her, at that moment her father enters. He tries to give her a cheque of ten thousands rupees but she denies to touch it. Instead she puts five rupees note in Pramila's hand and leaves the house.

Bhandari authentically presents the painful condition of a mother, who has neither the support of her husband nor the happiness of being mother.
She is not only culminated by her in-law's family but also discarded by her father on the name of so called social prestige, without knowing the true reasons.

The plight of modern man has been discussed by Melvin Seeman under a set of five interrelated operational conditions, viz. 'powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, isolation and self-estrangement, which he considers to be different manifestations of alienation; (Seeman)\(^\text{18}\) Taviss speaks of two different kinds of alienation, i.e. 'social alienation' and 'self-alienation'. By 'social alienation' she means the sense of estrangement brought out by the sudden discovery that the social system is either oppressive or incomplete with the individual's desires and ideas. 'Self-alienation', however, means the loss of contact of the individual selves with any inclinations or desires that are not in agreement with the prevailing social patterns, as a result of which the individuals are 'forced to manipulate in accordance with the social demands or feel incapable of controlling their actions.' (Taviss: 46-47)\(^\text{19}\) Alienation from oneself is the more basic form of rootlessness, which forms the subject of many psychological, sociological and philosophical studies.

Mannu Bhandari presents in 'Akelee', an intimate picture of lonely old woman Soma Buaa whose only young son died of disease and due to this truma her husband became Sanyasi from last twenty years. The whole year Buaa's husband stays at Haridwlar and comes home once in a year for one month. But she never waits for her husband’s arrival.

Buaa's normal emotional and social activities are restricted in the presence of her husband because of her husband's emotionless behavior. Though her husband is alive, Buaa is living the life of abandoned woman. In the absence of her husband she passes her time with neighbors. On any occasion like 'mundan', 'janeu', marriage, engagement or event of sorrow, Buaa reaches there without invitation and works hard as if she is working on her own occasion.
Now a days her husband has arrived and he restricts Buua from her regular activities. Buua believes that relation should be maintained among relatives, either She is invited or not. Her husband is of the opinion that without invitation she must not go there. On this issue they have quarreled. Buua expresses her hidden agony to her neighbor Radha, in following words.

'Ek mahine ko aate hai to bhi kabhi meethe bol nahi bolte. Mera aana jaana inhe sujata nahi so tu hi bata Radha, ye to saal me gyarah mahine Haridwar me rahete hai. Inhe to naate-rishtevalo se kuch lena-dena nahi par muje to sabse nibhana padta hai. Mai bhi sabse todtaad beitha jaaun to keise chale'. (120)

[He has come for only one month though he never speaks sweet words. He does not like my going there. you say Radha, eleven months of year he lives in Haridwar. He has nothing to do with relatives but I have to maintain with all. If I breaks with all of them, how it will be maintained.]

Once Buua desires to go on marriage ceremony at one relative but, because of not being invited she is restless. She is disturbed because her husband does not support her. She tries to convince herself by arguing internally and she is preparing on the assumption that invitation will certainly come, even at last moment of ceremony. She sells the ring to purchase the gift for marriage, Which was the last sign of her dead son. She wears new saari for marriage but no body comes to invite her till evening and at last under the spell of sorrow she starts preparation for meal.

Mannu Bhandari presents emotional portrait of Soma Buua. Out of her loneliness she feels intimacy with everyone in neighbor in daily chores. She work hard on their occasions as if she is one of their family member. But she
is neglected by them. Bhandari presents a picture of inner sorrow and turmoil of old aged woman here.

The portrait of mother presented in *Trishanku* is unique in Hindi literature by Mannu Bhandari. The story narrated by a daughter Tanu, who has entered her teenage. Tanu's parents always make themselves ready to show other that they have very modern attitudes and etiquettes. They tries to prove among their friend circle that they are intellectually open minded.

Tanu's parents have love marriages and for that her mother had to revolt against her father. Her mother explains this incident of revolt so many time among her friends that Tanu remembers each and every dialogue with expression. The mother believes herself a modern and open minded attitude person so she also wishes that her daughter should tread her path. Once some boys in the society tease and comment on Tanu, she invites them on tea and makes them Tanu's friends. It is the occasion for the mother to satisfy her modernity. So she tells every details of this event to her friends.

Once the mother comes to know the growing intimacy of Tanu and Shekhar, out of doubt, she tries to restrict Tanu. Tanu is amazed by the opposite behavior of her mother. She can not understand that which mother is true? Once her mother comes across Shekhar's letters and she angrily says Tanu,

'Tum ko chhoot di.....aazadi di, par iska yah matlab to nahi kit tum uska najayaj fayada uthao!'. (478)

[You are given relaxation......given freedom, but this doesn't mean that you take unjust benefit of it.]

Tanu is shocked by her mother's behavior that, is this the same mother who encouraged her to start friendship with boys? Tanu tries to conclude her relation with Shekhar and after sometimes everything becomes closed. Again after some time under the hypnotic spell of modernism her mother invites Shekhar on tea and restarts their friendship and again whole episode is
repeated. Tanu cannot understand her mother’s behavior; she is confused about her mother’s attitude.

Mannu Bhandari beautifully depicts the duel personality of mother, who on one occasion becomes modern and on other occasion she becomes orthodox. in tanu's advocate. Here Tanu’s mother represents the transitional role of woman who is not totally transformed to modernism nor she could forget the past image.

*Rani ma ka chabutara* is a story about brave poor mother Gulabi who worked hard with empty stomach for her children in slum area. Nagarseth had made 'Chabootara' in the memory of Rani ma, where on every full moon night women of slum light the lamp to fulfill their desires. But Gulabi does not believe in all these rituals. She is brave enough to fight her drunkard husband and drove him away. She is living with her nine years old girl Meva and two years old son. Gulabi works hard for whole day to meet both ends. The women in the slum criticize Gulabi as she locked her children in the hut when she goes for work. Though Gulabi is poor she is brave woman, as one of slum people says,

'Jo apne aadmi ko jaadu marker nikalde vah kiski sagi hogi?.... Ab aadmi to uska tha hi aisa ki marker nikal diya jaaye. Vah pasina bahakar kamati aur vah ghar mein beitha daaru pita. Aakhir use do bacche bhi to paalne the !' (212)

[How can she be anyone's relative? Who has driven out her husband by hitting broom. Her husband was such of the character whom needed to be driven out by hitting. She earns out of her sweat and he is drinking liquor at home. Ultimately she has to bring and brought up two children.]
She is very poor but her self esteem is so high that she never thinks of herself as a beggar. Once Rameshver, a neighbor, gives her daughter a set of bangles, but she thinks that her daughter has stolen them so when she angrily asks her about bangles and comes to know the fact she says,

'Di hai to kyo di hai? Kya hum bhikh mange hai jo kisi ka diya pahenenge? Aaj mere ghar me koi muchovaala nahi beitha hai to sab log bhikh dene chale hai. Kisi ke daan-punya par palnewali nahi hai Gulabi, thunkti hai tumhaare chande par'. (215)

[If given, then, why given? Are we beggars who will wear given things? Today there is no male in my house then all are giving alms. Gulabi doesn't rely on anybody's, donation, I spit on your donation.]

In slum area government has opened a child care centre where five rupees monthly fee is decided. Gulabi works very hard but she cannot collect enough amounts so she decides to start extra work other than labor work.

On one evening slum people gather and talk, they see that two persons are lifting the unconscious body of Gulabi. They come to know from her body's position that she has eaten nothing from last three days. When they see in her hands, there is a set of bangles and a receipt of child care centre where she has submitted five rupees for her two years old son.

Bhandari depicts here a portrait of poor but brave and proud mother who is working hard for the welfare of her children. In spite of the uncertainty and insecurity, she does not want to be supported by anyone. Unlike conventional woman, she does not try to close her eyes against the drancardness of her husband. Even though she is illiterate, has no one to support her.

Mannu Bhandari, in her stories delineates the problem of identity
arising out of alienation. The problem of alienation is intimately related to the loss of and quest for one's identity. Donald Oken rightly suggests that 'it is the loss of identity that results in alienation.' (Oken in Johnson: 84) Bhandari's women characters find themselves alienated and rootless due to the awareness of the selfhood. There are two types of characters in her stories – people with awareness and people without awareness of the inner self (individuality). They are usually sensitive and thoughtful creatures, who ruminate over their fate and position in conservative society.

‘They endeavour to know what they are, how men folk behave with them, why they stump into inanity and desperation, and why they feel alienated and truncated.' (Dwivedi)  

The above observation of A.N.Dwivedi is applicable to the short fiction of Mannu Bhandari also. Alienation or rootlessness occupies a particularly important place in some of the short stories of Mannu Bhandari.

Mannu Bhandari has given convincing portrayals of women from middle class families. She has tried to show the Indian woman in her home who has no voice even in the decision related to important events of her life. Marginalization of woman as daughter, wife, mother, is clearly indicated in her stories. She is sexually stereotyped by the conservative attitude. She is psychologically accustomed by the norms laid down by the traditional culture.
REFERENCES


(All the textual references are taken from this collection)


[16] Ibid. P. no. 65.