CHAPTER VI

Conclusion

Margaret Atwood studies Canadian society from close quarters and has to her credit works as diverse as *Alias Grace*, *Oryx and Crake*, *The Cat’s Eye*, *The Blind Assassin* and *The Handmaid’s Tale* to name a few. While *Alias Grace* reads like a Victorian novel, *Oryx and Crake* is scientific fiction, the *Cat’s Eye* is a novel largely dealing with childhood experiences (at the face of it), *The Handmaid’s Tale* is a dystopian novel and *The Blind Assassin* is a story within a story with suspense in its plot. The novels that I have picked out are representations of Canadian society in microcosm at various stages of development. The search for a Canadian identity which remains the preoccupation of most Canadian citizens and almost all Canadian writers form the nagging leitmotif of several of Atwood’s works. The perpetual search for identity results into a clash of ideologies and identities which lead to conflict at various levels. The institutions of society like the family, the Church, education and marriage are often faced with a barrage of conflicting identities and ideologies which result in a variety of dysfunctions.

Like all societies, Canadian society is also undergoing a process of transformation and this is clearly reflected in the works of various writers, and notable among them is Margaret Atwood. Atwood grew up in the Canadian wild as her father was an entomologist and her mother was an ‘an extremely free spirited woman’. She had to deal with the trappings of going to a urban school where she felt a total misfit because of her ‘wild’ Canadian life. Her childhood memories and fears are clearly seen in the novel *Cat’s Eye* though she does claim that the work in no way was totally autobiographical. Similarly her fear of religious hegemony and cultural abuse is portrayed in *The Handmaid’s Tale* while the drunken stupor of consumerism is seen underlined in *The Edible Woman*. Atwood also shows delineates the female psyche in the character of Xenia in *The Robber Bride*. Zenia is seen as a woman who can do anything to become the prima donna of society.

The present study focused on the discussion of various aspects of dysfunction in the Canadian society with a Gandhian critique that yields new insights into the politics of representation in Atwood’s novels.
The first chapter of the thesis Theorizing Dysfunction was an attempt to contextualize the concepts of functionalism and dysfunction. The importance of a structure is only felt when its constituent parts work in tandem to the contribution of the wellbeing of the body as a whole. The study of functionalism as a sociological precept chiefly propounded by Emile Durkheim has been the backdrop of my study and the subsequent fallout results in a dysfunction has been the thrust of my exploration. The novels under discussion by Margaret Atwood namely Cat’s Eye, The Blind Assassin, Surfacing, The Edible Woman and The Handmaid’s Tale are dotted with dysfunctions (as most literary works are), but these dysfunctions have been categorized into four slots and have been critiqued with a Gandhian perspective. The five categories were: familial and childhood dysfunction; economic and sexual dysfunction; Environmental and cultural dysfunction and religious and moral dysfunction. A Gandhian perspective entailed studying all the texts keeping the Gandhian philosophy in mind and examining the dysfunctions from the perspective of the universal philosophy of Gandhi.

Gandhi was highly critical of a hollow, consumerist modernity and this is evident from the attitudes that he had towards various aspects of ‘so called modern’ society like machinery, urbanization, contraception and commercialization. He was also critical of the empty desire to amass wealth which was an obsession among many. Gandhi deplored the empty desire for wealth. He felt that under the name of riches the real effort was to gain power over men. In simple words it was the power of obtaining for our own advantage the labour of servant, tradesman and artist. So that the art of becoming rich in the common sense is not only the art of accumulating much money for ourselves but also of contriving that our neighbours shall have less. In other words, it is the art of establishing the maximum inequality in our own favour. Thus there really is no wealth but life. That country is the richest which nourishes the greatest number of noble and happy human beings; that man is richest who has perfected the functions of his own life to the utmost, is also the most helpful on the personal and the financial levels, by means of his possessions, over the life of others.

Gandhi’s criticism of modernity was based on certain ideas that he had which were related to western ideals and western civilization. For Gandhi modernity was seductive as it focuses on only the immediate and the observable which were not the highest aspects of our lives. Gandhi saw modernity as addressing a person’s wealth (arthha) and desires (kama), but ignoring a person’s responsibilities of the spiritual
world (dharma). In his view modernity displaces such modes of thinking that are
found in religion, tradition, mores and norms of rural society. These methods of
knowledge according to Gandhi address the questions of morality that modernity
cannot and hence modernity does nothing substantive for the cause of the moral fabric
of a human being which is the most important thrust area in the life of a human being.

The structural-functionalist analysis in sociology is based on biology. Sociologists like Comte, Durkheim, Parsons and Spenser were advocates of this
theory. According to this analysis, society is likened to a system of interrelated parts
quite like a biological organism. An individual can easily be studied as a separate unit
without undue consideration of the evolution process or origins of the parts. Hence a
human being can easily be studied as an analogous unit under this system. In biology
an area of particular concern is cells and their specific functions. A biological
organism as a whole can be seen as made up of a series of structures with distinct
functions that make up the body. In classical sociology, society and the individual are
studied in the same way as the biological study of an organism. People, like cells have
specialized roles to play in the social system.

Organized collections of interacting roles can be studied as the organs and the
institutions of society and the functions that they perform can be likened to the
subsystems of society. Social order requires that most members of the society must be
motivated to fulfill the roles set for them by society and they have to share a culture
that falls within the parameters of minimum accepted behaviour. There are various
factors that rein in members of society, the chief among them being fear of censure by
other members of the group. Whenever there is a deviation from the norms that a
society has set for itself to function unruffled, it results in a dysfunction. Social
systems are expected to be in “dynamic equilibrium” at most times, however it does
not take a moment for the apple cart to be lopsided because of an equally strong if not
stronger counter-movement.

The second chapter of the thesis ‘The Cat’s Eye: Familial and Childhood
Dysfunction’ dealt with familial and childhood dysfunction. Elaine Risley does not
suit the new ‘habitat’ she has been thrust into. She has been brought up in the wild
eviron of Canada and she finds it difficult to fit into the new tribe of wealth touting
clothes horses that have a subversive sub-culture to be religiously followed by the
tribe. A sub-culture is the subject of discussion by many sociologists as it studies an
important aspect of individual behavior and group dynamics. Subgroups within a
society develop distinctive subsets of values or sub-cultures related to the dominant role they play. Durheim said that occupational specialization prompted subcultures even if there were very major differences in ethnic backgrounds. Members of a subculture tend to be different from the ‘dominant culture’ while members of their parent culture expect them to follow in line which they do not. She resists the new society but is attracted to it with an equally strong force and she tries hard and even ‘dies hard’ (the Mary Queen of Scots incident) to gain acceptance from the tribe. She then slowly becomes like them, inflicting harm on those weaker than her and deriving luscious pleasure out of the evil exercise. She is also betrayed by her group when they throw her into an icy stream and leave her to die in the water. Elaine however carries the memories of her childhood experiences later in her life and her attitudes and emotional responses to situations are ruled by these experiences.

The role that the family plays is of paramount importance in the novel. There has been a switch from the "golden age of the family" in the 1950s to the politics of the family later. The Canadian family is no exception to these changes. The Canadian family has moved from being an extended or a traditional family to a conjugal one in which chief importance is placed on the husband and wife relationship rather on blood relationships. The Canadian family has adapted to the changes in society and the economic opportunities available, just like a large number of families around the world have changed. Canadian family began as the good old extended family or what may also be called the traditional family. The increase in divorce rates and the subsequent disruption of family life is clearly seen in the world of Elaine Risley and other families around her. The basis of most of the relations formed is shaky foundations based on disrespect, failings and infidelity. The absence of healthy relationships prevents the opportunities of growth for newer and robust relationships and the relationships that exist are waiting for their natural death.

Thus Cat’s Eye can be read as a chronicle of the family and childhood of Margaret Atwood’s Canadian world. The inter-weaving of the influences of the family and childhood experience results in development of personality. Dysfunctions may be observed at various points in the novel and neurotic, shrink visiting, pill popping, wrist slitting, casual necking and highly insensitive individuals dot the firmament of the novel’s landscape. The comment that Gandhi makes on the family as being the most basic of all institutions which have the seeds of all that a person will grow into becomes more and more significant as we leaf through the page of the
novel, while the characters slowly creek and crumble to meet their gradual moral downfall.

Gandhi was a strong advocate of the values that a family symbolized and he saw childhood as an age of innocence and exploration. It is for this reason that he advocated *nai taalim* which was a system of education in which a child was to be taught through nature and drawing rather than through rote and the three Rs. He said that a child had to be given a wider canvas to work on. Gandhi also promoted strong family values and unconditional loyalty in marriage, unless an exigency arose. Gandhi said that the education and upbringing of a child was a process of arduous labour and love. It in fact began right at the time of conception. He said that the physical and mental states of the parents at the moment of conception are reproduced in the baby. Then during the period of pregnancy it continues to be affected by the mother’s moods, desires and temperament, as also by her ways of life. After birth the child imitates the parents, and for a considerable number of years entirely depends on them for its growth.

The narrator of *The Blind Assassin* is Iris Chase Griffen, the old daughter of one Mr Chase and the widow of the powerful Richard Griffen. Through her own narration and through editorialized newspaper reports, it is quickly apparent that being born into a privileged family is not a fool-proof measure against the tumults of fate and tragedy. Iris’ sister Laura dies young after she commits suicide and her death is shortly followed by the death of Richard Griffen. Iris’ daughter, living a life of reckless abandon, also meets an early end; her granddaughter is taken from her by a manipulative sister-in-law. *The Blind Assassin* is a family epic of sorts, a gradual unfolding of the ways in which ‘women allow themselves to be trapped, and the small independences they manage to find in hidden corners of their lives.’

*The Blind Assassin* is a multi layered work. In its narrative it moves from smug Victorian life at the Avilion to the tumults of the World War, the Depression, politics and trade union warfare. Laura and Iris Chase’s childhood covers large parts of the novel, interspersed with the tale of the blind assassin and the virgin on their proverbial journey. The novel opens with unemotional, journalistic detail. Iris says that her sister drove a car off a bridge. The rest of the novel will be an eye opener with leads that will take us to the reason for the death of Laura and thereafter the events would fall into perfect place with no crumbs swept under the carpet. The novel tells of the World War and the depression and at some places echoes the
Economic Recession of the 2000s with financial upheavals, lay-offs and hectic trade union activity. In fact at times the novel reads like a chronicle of events dealing with changes in economy and politics. The novel is set against a milieu of tumult in industrial relations, with a major part of the action taking place under an ambiance of surveillance by police on the lookout for Bolshevik troublemakers.

The novel is laced with details of how the Canadian economy nosedives in the face of the Great Depression of the 1930s. The Button factory of Mr Chase is almost microcosmic of the bad times that Canadian economy is going through. The Great Depression of the 1930s was more than an economic phenomena, it was a social upheaval with cataclysmic changes that came about in the lifestyles of people who had to cope with a new economic order, unemployment and destitution. A poem by an anonymous writer on the editorial staff of the Spokesman-Review in Spokane penned a ditty to commemorate the novel ocean-going broker facilities, as quoted in Galbraith’s account of the crash.

We were crowded in the cabin
Watching figures on the Board;
It was midnight on the ocean
And a tempest loudly roared
“We are lost!” the Captain shouted,
As he staggered down the stairs.
“I’ve got a tip,” he faltered,
“Straight by wireless from the aunt
Of a fellow who’s related
To a cousin of Durant,”
At these awful words we shuddered,
And the stoutest bull grew sick
While the brokers cried, “More margin!”
And the ticker ceased to tick.

Richard Griffen with his business acumen and sugar-coated tongue is able to use economic factors to his advantage while he ruins the lives of the Chase sisters. He ‘manages’ to marry Iris while he rapes Laura constantly with the promise that he would save her Bolshevik boyfriend when he really is dead. He takes over the factory and their lands after forcing old Mr Chase to sign the papers. It was
rumoured that this act of Richard hastened the death of Mr Griffen. Richard accelerates his movement up the social mobility ladder by stamping on the rungs of people who had really created wealth. Richard, to top it all has no scruples at all.

The Blind Assassin is also a commentary on the weakness of a woman in an age where economic dependence could be manipulated by shrewd men like Richard. Iris and Laura do not have any opportunity to enjoy the wealth that rightfully belongs to them. It is as if all the wealth had been earned for Richard and his sister. The story of the blind assassin and the proverbial virgin also runs parallel in the story. She is to be sacrificed and the journey is described in arduous detail. The kingdom where they come from is built on the foundation of wealth earned by the blood of little children and the sexual sacrifices of young girls. Sexual exploitation is a rule in Sakiel Norm and the women dare not speak against the evil practice.

Similarly in the Griffen household no one can speak against sexual exploitation. Laura is continually sexually exploited by her brother-in-law while her sister is used as a sexually ratifying object at home. Right from the first night of their wedding she is afraid of sex with a sexually experienced man. She derives no pleasure out of the act and Richard tells Iris to get herself into one piece as she had been suffering sea sickness on the ship. He never bothers to ask how she feels and he keeps different female company on the ship too. Iris is horrified but she does not utter a word against him and she never could think of doing anything like that at all. The sexual exploitation that Laura meets at the hands of Richard make her just ride off the bridge and jump to her death.

The Robber Bride is a novel that is multi layered and has at the face of it the story of a group of friends who are haunted by the evil thoughts of their once upon a time friend Xenia. The story however unfolds to become a nightmare for all the friends as they find that Xenia not only invades their senses, she also influences every decision and attitude that they have formed even in later life. Zenia is made out to be a sexually charged cat on the prowl, who is looking for a man she can 'consume'. Zenia is however more than the sex-kitten that she seems to be. Her personality is the result of deep scars that have been created on her mind as a result of exploitation and early sexual exposure, all aimed at commercial gains. She then appears to be not a perpetrator of violence but a victim herself. A society and its attitudes create a crust around an individual and determine the limits of thought and movements, beyond which would lead to censure or even severe punishment.
Zenia uses her body in order to be able control the lives of others. She is as if on the constant ‘prowl’, looking for her ‘prey’ in order to satiate her sense of self. Here we come back to Freud and his age old adage about human behavior. Even thought the adage has been widely criticized by Carl Gustav Jung and Alfred Adler it remains almost the most celebrated of all his dictums. Freud said that all human behavior is motivated ultimately by what we could call sexuality. Freud designates the prime psychic force as libido, or sexual energy (Guerin et al 128). Xenia appears to fit into the framework of this adage as her actions are based on her sexuality and her manipulation of sex.

Margaret’s Atwood’s Surfacing is a novel of discovery and rediscovery. It is a journey of a woman from nothingness to innate understanding of herself in relation to a materialistic and consumerist universe. She discovers that she has to ‘resurface’ from her human skin and be analogous to nature in order to fulfill her aspirations as a woman and as a speck in the natural order. In Surfacing, Atwood focuses on the psychological dimensions of sexual politics which can lead a woman to the point of madness. In this act of victimization of women by men, Atwood holds women guilty too in so far as they show a defeatist acceptance of sexual exploitation thinking that they are powerless and can do really nothing to save themselves against exploitation.

The unnamed protagonist in Surfacing is a commentary on society itself. She is exploited for sexual and economic value and she is not allowed to have a baby out of wedlock. She is forever haunted by the guilt of having killed a baby at her hospital bed by sophisticated doctors and paraphernalia that took away her conscience forever. She feels that the only way to reconcile herself with her lost baby is to give birth to a new baby in a new environment. She retreats into the Canadian wild away from the glare of the public, commercially prying eyes and she gives up all the trappings of a ‘civilized’ world including clothing, a home and canned food. She lives off the land and hides away from any human influence that may corrupt her and the new baby who is yet to see the evils of the ‘newfound land’. She experiences a new surge of energy at being cut off from the trappings of a heavily binding, totalitarian and a male dominated regime.

Cultural and economic destruction is clearly visible in Surfacing where the quest is one of identity and rebellion. The anti-imperialist strains are clearly visible in the way in which the protagonist shows her hatred for all that is American. The destruction of the natural environment and the Canadian wild is rued by the
protagonist. Canada has always been an attractive land for its vast natural resources and this is what puts its open to exploitation. When the protagonist sees the American forced influence everywhere, it makes her feel a sense of loss and that Canadian search for a culture and an identity come to the fore. Atwood as a writer has been very sensitive to the environment both through her fiction and her poems. She regards with zeal the once celebrated virginity of the Canadian environment and opposes any attack on its pristine nature.

The Edible Woman was written in 1965 before the Women’s Liberation Movement had begun in Canada. The Edible Woman focuses attention on the ‘sexual objectification and potential victimization of Marian MacAlpin as she consents to femininity’. Speaking a kind of a body language, The Edible Woman reflects both the cultural identification of women with body and the pervasive fear of the uncontrollable, uncontrollable female body as it puts the mature female body on display and scrutinizes its isolated parts. It has almost become synonymous with culture to scrutinize and criticize the female form for what it is or for what it isn’t capable of attaining. Marian is the victim of a cultural onslaught which consumes a woman and considers her to be the icing on the cake. Maria is a victim as she is the owner of a female body and society demands that her body be seen and used for the pleasure by a male. The feminist struggle of the 1960’s and 1970’s demanded legal access to abortion and women’s control over their own bodies which brought the ‘body, reproduction, and life itself irreversibly into the domain of public scrutiny and debate’.

Marian, like the protagonist in Surfacing is a satyagrahi, in that she is not willing to be used by a consumerist society which defines her domain and her margins. She identifies herself with ‘pleasure for the other’, like an icing laden cake waiting to be raped and devoured by a hungry guest list. She uses the act of rejecting all food, (food here being analogous with hedonistic pleasure) as an expression of refusing to consume and be consumed by a materialistic, greed- ridden society. She refuses to marry and in doing so asserts her unwillingness to fall prey to being captured in the permanent lens of a man who paraded her as if she were a trophy with a price tag attached to it.

An overly consumerist society is based on the principle of domination and violence. In the face of an absence of egalitarian principles, there is an imbalance in social and economic interactions. At every stage there is exploitation of the weaker
sections. Gandhi’s society was based on the principle of non-violence. He said that non-violence has to be the creed of a civilized society. Gandhi said that non-violence is the greatest force at the disposal of mankind. It is mightier than the mightiest weapon of destruction that has been made by the intelligence of human beings. Destruction is not the law of humans. Every murder or every injury no matter what the cause committed or inflicted on another is a crime against humanity.

Margaret Atwood has had deep concerns for the human condition and she has spoken out against totalitarianism and religious hegemony. She also has profound concern of the degrading environment and the imbalance that negligent acts towards the environment create. Her special focus remains on Canada and she is outright about the American trespasses on Canadian spaces. She says that Canadian resources and the Canadian psyche have gone through a systematic ravaging, with economic and cultural hegemony being targets. It is this ravaging along with the exploitation of the human body that prompts Atwood’s characters to break away and take up a unique satyagraha which is a silent, but not a passive protest against consumerism and lust.

When Maria refuses to be eaten like the icing on the cake, or when she does not want to be captured by the lens of her boyfriend, she is only refusing to be consumed by the greed of an intensely market driven, sexually hungry society. Similarly, the unnamed protagonist in Surfacing, retreats into a primordial state in order to receive direct succour from nature and give birth to her baby without the aid of forceps and matter-of-fact-paramedics.

The Handmaid’s Tale can be read as a religious dystopia and it narrates the story of Offred who has lost her voice in the Republic of Gilead as she is only a sexual object now and a reproductive machine. The Handmaids Tale is a story that shows us explorations of fundamentalism and feminism, dystopias and patriarchies. Offred is not allowed to read or write as women in the Republic of Gilead are merely cogs in a wheel. The interpretation of religion by those who run the business of religion is revealing in that it point blankly shows a bias against the female kind. Religion is not a set of beliefs here; it is an encrusting cage the captures a woman and makes her game of evil intentioned men. The Republic of Gilead is not able to understand what the true essence of religion is and what its functions really are. Gandhi said that the laws of nature are changeless, unchangeable, and there is no infringement or interruption of Nature’s laws. We may try to copy God, but not He us. Time for him is
eternal. For us there is a past and a present and a future. And human life of a hundred years is like a speck in the ‘eternity of time’.

Gandhi said that women must be given full protection in social, economic and political spheres. He also recommended equal remuneration for women. In his ashram he offered equal facilities to both women and men inmates as this model regenerated not only peace and harmony but also better output in training selfless satyagrahis. He believed that women are gifted with equal mental capacities and have the same right to freedom and liberty to participate in the minutest details of the activities of men. He also said that since men and women were equal, women must cease to consider themselves the object of men’s lust. They should enjoy absolute equality in public life and Gandhi believed that women should suffer no legal disabilities.

At Gilead religion is the business of a ‘few wise men’. They run the republic on patriarchal principles and the body of a woman is the common property of all. The womb of a woman (and not a woman) is considered sacred because births have become a rarity owing to various reasons including the previous eras’ desire not to have children, the sharp increase in levels of pollution and the widespread disease of AIDS which has almost wiped out the child bearing population. The novel begins with epigrams from the Bible which lay stress on fertility and the desire to be blessed in order to have a child. A Handmaid in the kingdom of Gilead has no voice except the voice of a rented womb. When Offred mentally reconstructs the past that she had spent with her husband and her child, she is really committing a crime like Moira of recalling a life that is no more. She is however aware that being a Handmaid, she has lost the right of speech and she knows that everyone is not as lucky as Moira.

Religion plays an important role in the lives of almost every member of the society. Religion has a number of important functions to perform. Religion acts as a means of social control, through a series of positive and negative sanctions and thus encourages socially acceptable behavior. It also helps in conflict resolution by reducing stress and frustrations that lead to social conflict. Besides this religion imparts Group solidarity as it helps people to express their common identity in an ‘emotionally charged environment’. It has cognitive functions in that it ‘explains the inexplicable’ and gives us comfort about thing which could have otherwise unsettled us a great deal. The emotional function of religion is to help people cope with
anxieties accompanying illness, death and other misfortunes. The functions of religion are positive in nature but it is only the misinterpretation of religion by the ‘keepers’ of the institution that give religion its evil shape and colour.

Religion as an institution has functions to perform but at Gilead religion is not religion, and if at all, it is dysfunctional. At the drop of a hat, God and the Bible are invoked but the purpose behind it is always subversive. Religion is used as a tool to rein in women and ‘keep them in the fold’. When Offred prays to God, she has a casual relationship with The Maker, bordering on the friendly and the practical. However at Gilead God is synonymous with power and this power is used on the woman. Atwood was scathing in her attack on pseudo-religious practices which are mostly targeted against women. In Gilead the church and its keepers are evil men who monopolize religion in order to dominate over the weak who are the women.

Gandhi regarded woman as being the most important part of a family at the micro level and of society at the micro level. He said that a woman has the innate capacity to be able to reject the overtures of a male-dominated society that did everything to muffle her voice and make her follow its dictates blindly. He did not believe that a woman was weak as she was endowed with all the abilities that a man has been endowed with. He felt that even sexually, a woman does not have to be the bait of man because nothing can happen against her will if she is able to repulse the undesirable desire of a man for sexual gratification. Gandhi said that the sex urge is fine and a noble thing. He said that there was nothing to be ashamed of it. He was also in favour of teaching young boys and girls the significance and right use if their generative organs. But he was not in favour of the indiscriminate exercise of sexual libido. He said that the moment a relationship is carnal there is a lack of love and when carnality disappears, spirituality is the result.

Gandhi was against the view that society was preoccupied with the chastity of women. It is a morbid anxiety that exists about female purity. The exact opposite is also true as women have never raised any objections about the purity of a man. Men should not arrogate to themselves the right to regulate female purity. It cannot be superimposed from without, it is a matter of evolution and therefore it is a matter of self-effort (Gandhi, All Men 206). This is exactly what is happening in the Republic of Gilead. Women are guarded and kept chaste so that they maybe used by the Commander and other men in order to increase the population while deriving sexual pleasure at the same time.
Chastity and virginity undoubtedly form the foundations upon which we base our opinions about women in many cultures. The mantle of ‘cultural depositories’ and ‘paradigms of sacrifice and untiring efforts’ are inevitably carried by women as a part of their responsibilities. This puts an additional burden on them; with the effect that the angst and the nervousness of not being able to perform drag them down and instill a further sense of insecurity and inferiority.

Gandhi was in his early writings skeptical about the western concept of sanctity of marriage. He realized that the importance of marriage had dwindled rapidly as there was free availability of sex in the open. In traditional societies the attraction of sex remains one of the major impetuses to marriage. The lack of its availability outside marriage or the very few opportunities to its access makes it even more attractive to the uninitiated. In more liberal societies where sex is not considered sanctimonious, its free availability reduces its attraction and furthers its misuse. Gandhi said that money rendered a man helpless. The other thing which is equally harmful is sexual vice. Gandhi has reiterated his stand on self control. He said that a person must be able to control not only lust but all other senses as well. He spoke against promiscuity as it violated the very spirit of purity of a human being. A person who managed to make this conquest will become a \textit{karma yogi} who will fear no temptation at all. Gandhi considered both the evils of money and lust as poisons. However he said that whereas money destroyed only the body, sexual vice destroyed body, mind and soul. In \textit{Cat’s Eye} too the escapades that Elaine has with her partners are never very satisfying to her. She often goes through the routine of sex as if it were some mundane chore. However she carries on as it gives her a sense of being wanted by both Josef and Jon.

Individual \textit{satyagraha} is an essential concomitant of Gandhi’s view that in the ultimate analysis freedom belongs to the individual and therefore the individual himself is the final custodian of his or her freedom. Fasting was regarded by Gandhi as the last resort of the individual \textit{satyagrahi} to be undertaken only if all other non-violent means have failed or are destined to fail and there is no other alternative left for the rectification of some social injustice. Gandhi undertook many fasts and they were generally in response to the various demands of the freedom struggle. He said that a fast is a means of bringing about a radical change of heart and it is something that even the most hardhearted would find difficult not to give into. Marian uses fasting not to bring a change in anyone’s heart but she wishes to cleanse herself of the
consumerist grime that has settled in all the corners of her soul owing to being a part of the greed-driven society that she lives in. The empty surveys that she conducts are indicative of empty statistics and a growing consumer pool which only believes in the principle of use and throw and use and misuse. She does not want to be a part of that greed driven world which dictates terms to her and tells her the limits of her personality.

The dysfunctions represented in the novels of Margaret Atwood under study reveal many changes that are taking place in Canadian society which affect various institutions of society. A Gandhian approach helps in a broader understanding of these cataclysmic changes as the ideas of Gandhi are universal and have in them the philosophies of ages. Gandhi rightly said that he had nothing new to give to the world as truth and non-violence are as old as the mountains.