

THE SEARCH FOR IDENTITY
A STUDY OF FEMALE CHARACTERS IN MANOJ DAS'S FICTION

**A THESIS SUBMITTED
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BY

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis entitled *The Search for Identity: A study of Female Characters in Manoj Das's Fiction* submitted to the University of Hyderabad in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the Degree of MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY in English is a bonafide record of original research work done by *Mr. Panchanan Dalai* during the period of his study 1998-99 in the department of English, University of Hyderabad, under my supervision and guidance and that the thesis has not formed before the basis for the award of any Degree/Diploma/Associateship Fellowship or any other similar titles.

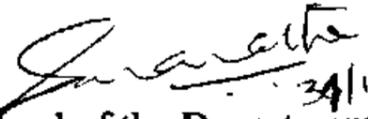

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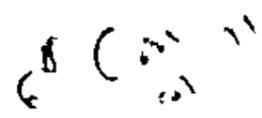
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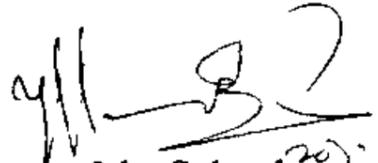
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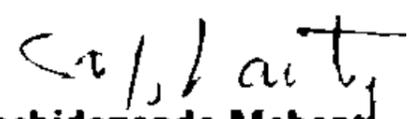
DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the thesis entitled *The Search for Identity: A study of Female Characters in Manoj Das's Fiction* submitted to the University of Hyderabad in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the Degree of MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY in **English** is a bonafide record of original research work done by me under the supervision and guidance of *Dr. Sachidananda Mohanty* and that the thesis has not formed before the basis for the award of any Degree / Diploma / Associateship / Fellowship or any other similar titles.


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PANCHANAN DALAI

DEDICATED

TO

MY

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CHAPTER-I

INTRODUCTION

The term 'Regional Fiction' generally refers to writings that emerge from a definite geographical space. Thus, literature related to a particular geographical area, language, culture and history, along with the changing social configuration may be treated as regional literature. Regional literatures owe their origin to two broad sources: the Vedic and Sanskritic traditions. Later, with the clear demarcation of regions and languages, regional literature branched out into separate lines. With the passage of time, these literatures flourished in various genres. As in the case of many traditional literatures, here too poetry flourished first. But before we begin to discuss the configuration of regional fiction, it may be useful to consider some of its literary, cultural and social aspects.

During the late nineteenth century, the rise of the middle class, the establishment of the printing press and publishing houses, the production of periodicals, journals and magazines accelerated the growth of Indian fiction and its readers. Fiction as a form gradually developed through the increase in popular literatures such as the detective novel dealing with thrilling events, intriguing stories and ideal characters. The demand for popular literature as a means of entertainment, on the other hand, caused an increase in prose narratives. Consequently, fiction and short story found a rapid circulation in the twentieth century. While the novel had established its strong position by the end of the nineteenth century, the short story found a new generic appeal in the beginning of the twentieth century. The short story emerged as a major form. As Sisir Kumar Das says, "this is a new form of art that emerged out of an automatic experience of rural India (Das1995: 260).

The intention in Fiction was to concentrate on the regions with their local colour and local life as seen and observed. The socio-realistic concern of the fiction led it to the frontier of all other literary genres. All the regional literatures during this period

seem to carry the realistic details of their region and geographical area with their landscape, language and people. Because of this quality Nirmala Jain claims as Sisir Kumar Das quotes:" 'the regional novel, claims Ninnala Jain, is another dimension of the socio-realistic novel'" (Das1995: 298).

Thus, the local panorama with all its variety began to appear in the many regional literatures. Parallel to this there developed another literature in a new and foreign language with Indian scenes and events. The naming of this new literature carried many ambiguities and contradictions. The process of interrogation started for the construction and categorization of this new literature. It is K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar who finally named this new literature as 'Indian Writing in English' (Naik; 1982: 5). According to him, Indian writing in English deals with any Indian writing that is composed in the English language about Indian subject matters and themes. The notion of 'English' as foreign language in turn brought the tension between Indian literature and Indian English literature. This tension came to the forefront with the pioneering writings by Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao and R. K. Narayan. With the growth of English educated middle class, the reader of Indian English literature became confined to a particular section. But the suave and simple method of presenting the Indian subject matter and theme gained for Indian English literature a high status and wide popularity.

Except the medium of English, almost all other aspects such as subject matter and story were Indian in the Indian English Fiction. Many Indian socio-political issues like casteism, freedom struggle, Gandhism and spirituality became the major subject matters for the Indian English writers. Novelists like Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao and R. K. Narayan excelled in depicting these subject matters with dexterity. Their great concern for the Indian issues and events gained wide popularity and demand for their works. Therefore novels like Untouchable, Kanthapura, A Tiger For Malgudi, The Cat and Shakespeare which dealt with ideological issues can be still considered as the classics of Indian English Fiction.

Beside the Indian subject matters, the story and narration also became indianized so as to present convincingly typical Indian socio-cultural aspects such as human relationship, social institutions and social systems. The direct incorporation of certain Indian words like "nimbu-pani"(Markandaya1974: 90), "dhoti"(Narayan1992: 24), "thanedar"(Anand1985: 129) translation of relationships and references from Indian words in to English such as "son of a dog"(Anand1970: 53), "amma"(Raol1974: 21), "huzoor"(Singh1976: 175), etc made the Indian English writing "more Indian" than foreign. Thus the distinction between Indian literature and Indian English literature became narrower. As Sisir Kumar Das suggests :

... a group of critics often claimed the Indian literature in English as the real and only 'Indian' literature , the rest being regional and parochial (Das1995: 44).

We can thus argue that Indian English writing can be regarded as a part of Indian literature since it deals with Indian subject matters and themes. Indian English writing can have a common acceptance among the Indians. But in the case of regional writings the question arises regarding its commonality and universality of themes and subject matters. For instance, we might ask; how 'Indian' is the themes of the so-called regional Fiction? How much of its language is known to the rest of the Indian population? Seen from the social, historical and cultural point of view the regions bear more or less a common identity. Perhaps on this basis of nationalism, we can say that India is one with the fusion of many and that all regional literatures written in India can be termed as Indian literature. Except the notion of language, both Indian English literature and Regional literature possess common characteristics. Though there is a distinction between these two literatures on the basis of the medium of language they can very well be placed in a common ground in the sphere of Indian literature.

When we think of 'India' as a country we think of it as a union of different states within it. Similarly, when we consider 'Indian issues and events' we think of the issues and events, which are prominent and common among all the regions and of India. The universality and commonality of an issue among different regions give it a common

Indian identity. For example, Casteism and Freedom struggle were not confined to any particular region but were the common socio-political aspects of all the regions of India. Therefore these may be described as Indian aspects or Indian issues. Moreover, though in practice marriage differs slightly from one region to another it is the prominent socio-cultural aspect of all regions of India. Thus in a larger context the regional issues and events of India very often can be considered as Indian. Regional literatures which deal with these aspects of their regions, can very much show its rootedness and resemblance to the Indian themes and subject matters and hence can be included as Indian literature.

Because of this relatively limited sphere where Indian English Writing operates, Meenakshi Mukherjee suggests in a recent talk that:

English in India on the other hand functions relatively fewer registers and it would not have been surprising if this remained a permanent liability, allowing the novelists to operate only within (Vikram Chandra, 1999).

Language on the other hand confines regional literatures to their particular language speaking groups. But by this reckoning it appears unjustified to give regional literature a lower status. As far as language is concerned both the literatures possess a limited language-speaking group. English is known to a limited section of the Indian people. Regional language is also confined to particular section of the people. Moreover, when the readers of the Indian English literature are gradually increasing with the spread of English education in India, the readers of regional literature are also increasing with the growth of multilingualism and multimedia

Thus from the above discussion we can conclude that both Indian English literature and regional literature seem to occupy almost overlapping space in the domain of Indian Literature.

II

Now that we have taken a look at the rise of different literatures in India, in our cultural context, we can focus our attention on the Oriya literary scene.

Novels and prose forms emerged in Orissa towards the end of the nineteenth century. Bengal, a geographically and culturally close neighbour of Orissa with its own literary traditions became a source of close literary and cultural interaction with Oriya.

Though the birth of the novel in Oriya is intimately related with the growth of periodicals in Orissa, critics are not yet unanimous as to which is the first full-fledged novel in Oriya. However the two novels Kalabati and Bhima Bhuyan, written respectively by Aparna Panda and Gopalaballava Das are generally acknowledged as the first instances of novel writing in Orissa. It is Fakir Mohan Senapati who can be said to be the father of the modern Oriya novel. He continued to be a model for the younger generation of writers in Orissa.

However there was gradually a departure from the Senapati tradition in prose narrative. On the other hand, novels written during 1930s onwards showed the authors' gradual consciousness of various socio-political ideologies like Gandhism, socialism, freedom movement that inspired the intellectual atmosphere of the country. As Ganeshwar Mishra says:

Most of the novelists of this category preach a romantic and vague sense of equality envisaging economic and social justice through non violent Gandhian means and propagate some of the well known Gandhian doctrines (George (1984: 672).

The post independent period felt the consequence of the Second World War and experienced an increasing socio-economic depression. The impact of communism, casteism, provincialism was felt. Most of the writers during this period started raising their voice against the traditional values, prevalent hollowness and increasing cynicism. The notion of alienation, helplessness, emotional tension and frustration of the modern man during this period were reflected in writers like Surendra Mohanty, Kisbori Charan Das and Manoj Das.

The humanitarian attitude and social values presented in the earlier works were replaced by a slight change with an individual identity and search for the meaning of life. The blending of narrative analytical style with the descriptive style of the earlier period has made the modern Oriya literature a distinct from the earlier trends. The Oriya Literature with its matured and developed style and forms can be suitably compared to other sister literatures. As Surendra Nath Bank says:

Oriya literature is not considered in isolation from other
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Indian Literatures. It is considered to be one branch of that single literature called Indian Literature. With all its individuality it breathes that common Indian consciousness (Georgel985: 1104).

Thus we find that Oriya literature developed in various genres through successive periods. The growth of prose in Oriya started exclusively towards the end of the nineteenth century with the influence of earlier prose writers like Fakir Mohan Senapati, Radhanath Ray, Madhusudan Das, etc. The implementation of English education, imitation of western literary styles, publication of various essays, fiction, short story and magazines paved the way for the development of prose in Oriya. Ram Shankar Ray's (1858-?) Bibasini. Pundit Gopinath Nanda Sharma's (1869-1924) Oriya Bhasa Tatwa. essayist Shyam Sundar Raj Guru's (1866-1909) Prabandhabali. Gopala Chandra Praharaja's (1864-1946) prose like Bai Mohanty Panji. Nananka Bastani. etc altogether prominently proclaim the smooth progress of prose in Oriya towards the last part of the nineteenth century.

In the twentieth century, Oriya prose developed with a fresh outlook towards humanity. The prose as a genre excelled in the writings of many novelists like Gopinath Mohanty, Kahnu Charan Mohanty, Chintananda Nityananda, etc. We find the emergence of the short story in a rejuvenated spirit. The most popular writers of short story were Surendra Mohanty, Raj Kishore Ray, Manoj Das, Prana Bandhu Kar, etc. The daily newspapers and monthly magazines in Oriya on the other hand, encouraged these writers to carry on writing.

III

Born on 27 February, 1934 in a remote village Sankhari in northern part of Balasore district of Orissa, Manoj Das, started writing in Oriya from a very early age. Das published his first volume of poems in Oriya Satabadir Aratanada while he was a mere fifteen. This was followed by another book Biplabi Fakir Mohan. Both these books were published in 1949. However his first collection of short stories in Oriya was published as Samudra Kshudha in 1951. In 1953 he published another collection of Oriya short stories called Jibanara Swada. This was followed by yet another collection Bisha Kanyara Kahani in 1954. His fourth collection of Oriya short stories was published as Aranyaka in 1961. This was followed by Sesha Basantara Chithi (1966), Manoj Dasanka Katha O kahani(1971), Lakshmira Abhisara (1974), Abu Purusha (1975), Dhumvara Diganta (1977), Manoj Panchsvimasati(1983). Vinna Manisha (1987), Bulldozers(1989).

Beside the short story, Manoj Das has also got a considerable number of poems to his credit. His literary career started prominently with the publication of his first collection of poems called Satabdira Artanada in 1949. This was followed by other collections such as Padadhwani(1954). Nandavatir Majhi(1957) and Upanibesha(1966).

Das's creativity is not only seen in his writing of short fiction and poems but also in other genres like essays and travelogues. His collection of essays Kete Diganta earned him the Sahitya Academi award. Apart from this he has also written travelogues in Oriya such as Indonesia Anubhuti (1957) and Dura Durantara(1973).

Thus we notice that Manoj Das handles the Oriya language in order to express his creativity in various genres like the short story, the poem, essay and travelogue. The influence of the early writers like Gopinath Mohanty, Fakir Mohan Senapati etc on Das is also seen in his treatment of language, style and the choice of subject matters. The publication of poems from the early age shows Das's inherent literary quality, which later started blossoming with the influence of literary personalities. The amount of his literary output put him in a respectable place among the writers who had made a major contribution to the post independent Oriya literature. Das's achievements put him on par

with other established writers like Surendra Mohanty, Gopinath Mohanty and Sachi Rout Ray. He received the prestigious Orissa Sahitya Academy award in 1965 for his collection of short stories Aranvaka. He was also awarded this prize for the second time for his collection of essays in 1989. Thus Das's literary creativity has always been admired and awarded. The importance of Das's place in Oriya literature can be very well gauged from his popularity and wide acceptance among the Oriya readers.

Manoj Das started writing when creative writing in English was getting consolidated in the country. His first collection of English short stories A Song for Sunday and Other Stories came out in 1967. It was during this period that the improved and scholarly writings of various genres such as fiction, poetry, essay and short story were enriching Indian English writing. The craze for English education, publication of various English magazines and periodicals accelerated the process of English writing. There were many writers who started writing in English. Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao, R.K.Narayan and Khushwant singh were the most notable among them. The subject matters of the story were basically socio-cultural and sometimes political aspects of society existed during the period of independence era.

Manoj Das who was already a graduate by that time felt privileged to write in English. The English education and his profession of lectureship at Christ College, Cuttack encouraged and inspired him to write in English His literary output in English language is seen gradually in his continued publications from 1967 onwards Though popularly admired as a short story writer, Manoj Das is also well known for other kind of Writings in English such as novel, children's literature, column writing, and editing. He has two novels in English to his credit. These are Cyclones (1986) and A Tiger at Twilight (1991). However he has added more number of collections of short stories to his account. They are A Song for Sunday and Other Stories (1967), Short stories of Manoj Das(1969), The Crocodile's Lady and Other Stories (1975), Fables and Fantasies for Adults (1978), Man Who Lifted the Mountain and Other Stones (1979), The Vengeance and Other Stories (1980), The Submerged Valley and Other Stories (1986), The Dusky Horizon and Other Stories (1989), and Bulldozers and Fables and Fantasies for Adults (1990), Farewell to a Ghost: Short stories and a Novelette (1994), Mystery of the Missing Cap and Other

Stories (1995). These books were widely accepted and some of them were awarded. It is his collection The Vengeance and Other Stories (1980) that fetched him the prestigious Sarala award. The style of story telling, the use of language and the treatment of subject matter earned him encouragement and admiration from some of the leading writers and critics of Indian English Writing. Das's popularity, along with the demand for his works within the country, brought him international invitation from nations like U.K, Singapore and other island nations. He was assigned by the government of the Republic of Singapore to promote and help in their Moral and Ethical Studies Project

Apart from his position in Indian English Literature, Manoj Das has been widely acclaimed as an editor and a columnist in various newspapers and magazines in India. He regularly contributed for a number of years to the column "The Banyan Tree" in The Hindustan Times. He was the editor of the prestigious English magazine The Heritage (1985-89). Before this he also edited World Union (1967-68). Besides all these, Das has also contributed two volumes to the children's literature. These are Temples of India (1970) and Stories of Light and Delight (1970).

Das's non fiction works include some of his writings about Sri Aurobindo. These are Sri Aurobindo, a literary monograph under the Sahitya Akademi's ' Makers of Indian Literature' series and another is Sri Aurobindo in the first Decade of the Century published by Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust, Pondichery(1972).

From all these it is obvious that Manoj Das's literary genius lies not only in Oriya, but also in Indian English Literature. His handling of both Oriya and English language in depicting Indian socio-cultural issues shows his genius as a bilingual writer. Therefore P. Raja says:

Familiar to the readers of Oriya and Indo-Anglian literatures, Manoj Das is one among the few gifted writers of India who can wield the pen both in his mother tongue and in English with equal ease (Raja 1993: 2).

The ambiguity in us however arises in understanding an attempt to categorize the bilingual writers in the domain of literatures in India. For example, Manoj Das as a bilingual writer is a dilemma to his readers as to whether he belongs to the group of Regional writers or Indian English writers. Judged from the earlier discussion about the natures and features of Regional literature in this chapter, Manoj Das's writings in Oriya can be described as Regional literature. As far as his English writings are concerned these can also be called as Regional literature, as their subject matters are confined to Orissa. But Das's treatment of subject matters like feudalism, freedom struggle, early political situations of India, community life, etc as elaborately discussed in chapter-II, shows his masterly craftsmanship to extend these regional aspects to the Indian scenario. In fact, most of these aspects are also directly related and rooted with the issues and events. Thus Das's English writing can also be legitimately included under Indian writing in English.

IV

In the beginning of this chapter we have discussed about regional literature, its features and developments and its place in Indian Literature. We have also looked at Indian Writing in English, its developments and features. We have compared both Regional Literature and Indian English literature to show the close relationship between the two. The prime intention in discussing and comparing the Regional and Indian English Literature is to relate and assess the status of Das's writings

In the earlier section, I have discussed the development and progress of Oriya Literature in general and Oriya prose in particular. The discussion of Oriya literature here is intended as an introductory note. This will also provide elemental information about Manoj Das's position in Oriya Literature. I have described how Das as a short story writer started his career in Oriya. Towards the last part of the Section -II, I have briefly discussed about the rise of Indian English Short Story. I have also given an account of Manoj Das's literary output to the Indian English Short Story.

In chapter-II, I discuss some of the social aspects in Manoj Das's works including Fiction and Short Fiction. I have taken both these genres to find out the treatment of the social systems as dominant in his works. I try to see how social aspects like feudalism, community life, political situations during independence and human relationships bear the mark of Indianness and how realistically the writer has related these aspects to Oriya society in particular and to Indian society in general. At some places I bring out the connection and similarities of Das's subject matters and ideas with the subject matters and ideas of other Indian English Writers. I have also discussed how the influence of the freedom struggle, Gandhism and socialism have influenced Das to choose the subject matters, issues and themes for his works. Though some other aspects of Das's works like spirituality, humour, treatment of death, etc are related with the social aspects, I have not focused on these in order to discuss only the most visible and prominent social aspects. At the end of the chapter, I have briefly discuss how all the aspects show Das's rootedness in Indian subject matters and how the reality of his works can be seen from these aspects.

In chapter-III, I take three different stories to discuss the female characters as seen in three different situations. I discuss the female characters in these stories as presented by the writers, and wherever necessary I have applied feminist perspectives and points of view in order to discuss the female characters in a more appropriate and justifiable manner. At the end of the chapter, I examine the commonality in these three stories in presenting three female characters in three different situations.

Chapter-IV presents the institution of motherhood as found in the works of Das. I take six stories to discuss the role of mothers and mother figures as presented in these stories. The interplay of mother-child relationship is discussed to show the institution of motherhood as one of the finest aspects of human relationship. The role of the female as a mother or mother figure is also discussed here. The treatment of motherhood is seen in the Indian context. The mother figure is presented through little girls and married and unmarried women. However in all these cases the motherhood is seen as beneficial to the child who is in need of it.

Chapter-V portrays an overall estimation of all the chapters. In this chapter I analyze the status of Manoj Das taking all the aspects of his writings: the subject matters, style and language.

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CHAPTER- II

THE WORLD OF MANOJ DAS

As has been indicated earlier, regional literature refers to literature produced in a **specific** region and a particular geographical **area**. Every regional literature deals with the ethos and way of life of a region and is therefore culture specific. However, we may say that it is the notion of "**Indianness**" or "Indian Consciousness" which unites all regional literatures into a pan Indian phenomenon regardless of their internal differences. Therefore R.K Dhawan suggests that:

All inter-lingual inquiries in the Indian situation operate within a set of oppositions which can be called the unity-diversity set of oppositions. This unity-diversity set of oppositions otherwise is complementary to each other. There is no doubt that we have multiplicity of ideas, **multi-linguism** and multi-level meaningfulness of existence, but at the same time it is very true that literature in different Indian languages creates visions that transcend barriers of **diversities** and bring us nearer to one another to point out our basic unity (Dhawan 1994 17).

Oriya literature, which developed during the twentieth century, **owes** much to this concept of "**Indianness**" or "Indian Consciousness". The literature **which** flourished during 1950s and 1960s in Orissa shows the mark of ideologies such as Gandhism, socialism, and the freedom movement. The literature **written in** Oriya before 1950s and 60s also reflects much of this "Indianness" by dealing **with** the various Indian social systems and institutions like feudalism, marriage, caste **system**

Manoj Das who started writing during the **1950s** and 60s has depicted the various post-independent ideologies. However, he also presents the old social order **like** feudalism, thus making a bridge between the pre-independent and the post-independent literary traditions. His desire to deal with the Indian subject matter **is** quite **obvious in this** effort. His vision has been restricted not merely to rural Orissa but he extends **himself to**

the pan Indian themes as well. Das discloses this intention in a interview given to THE TIMES OF INDIA. May 18,1980.As P. Raja quotes:

I thought born in a village, born just before independence and hence living through the transition at an impressionable age, I could present through English a chunk of genuine India. Well, right or wrong, one is entitled to one's faith in oneself (Raja 1993: 6).

Das's rootedness in faith, ideology and tradition of his society is quite obvious in his literary works. The influence of the tradition on his individual genius is apparent in his choice of subject-matters, incidents, and events which are to be found in the rural villages of India. The issues and incidents he takes into his stories are not only regional but also Indian in scope. For example, feudalism, which Das deals with, is not only a regional system but also all Indian in character. The political situation, freedom movement and nationalism presented by Das have a connection with the pre-independent and post-independent India. The treatment of family and family life, though set in rural village of Orissa, reflects much of the trends of traditional Indian patriarchal family. Thus the reality of Das's works springs from his deep rootedness in the social, cultural and political situation of Orissa and India.

A brief discussion of Das's subject matters can bring out the "reality" of his works. This reality can be examined in his treatment of subject matters such as political situations, freedom struggles, feudalism, community life and human relationships In what follows, I shall attempt to discuss some of these subject matters

Being close to the period of the freedom struggle, Das presents the turmoil of political change in his novel Cyclones. The transitional situation of India during 1944-46 is intensely depicted in this novel. The narrative is developed in three dimensions portraying three dominant transitions i.e.; the transition of the country during 1944-46, the transition from feudal system in order to abolish the gap between the poor and rich and the transition of a serene rural village into a busy town. The country's awakening from its colonial past to the freedom is seen through socio-political turmoil like riots, communalism and the villagers' transformation from a remote rural place to the urban town.

The post-independent political situation, the need for a dedicated and faithful political leader and the peoples' participation in politics, the impact of nationalism and Gandhism on the younger generation etc are presented in one of the three dimensions of the novel, Cyclones. Sudhir, a college student, being influenced by the freedom movement and Gandhi's principles, takes part in the protest against British rules and even goes to prison for taking part in burning foreign clothes. Thus participating in various movements against the British as an active and responsible young man, Sudhir shows his obligation towards the nation. These young patriots are very often called upon to lead the common people. Sudhir in the present novel is seen as one such young leader. His leadership qualities are amply exhibited in volunteer works and acts of protest. Originally Sudhir is from the feudal background, the adopted son of Hari Chowdhury. But instead of believing in the feudal tradition and feudal power, he believes more in the liberal and universal freedom. Therefore the people of Kusumpur trust Sudhir and seek his advice and suggestion to fight against the government's plan to fill up their river Kheya. Sudhir, on his part, is also seen respecting the individual status and values of the common people.

Thus Sudhir becomes a suitable candidate for Seth Mukund Das, an industrialist and father of Reena and Kamal. The former inspires Sudhir to contest in the general election. As an enlightened and experienced citizen Sethji understands the transitional situation of India and therefore suggests to Sudhir to serve the country. This is seen when Sethji tells Sudhir :

And now is the hour to set the process in motion. You have
the spirit and I have the vision (Das 1987: 166)

Seth Mukund Das, here, stands for the source of wisdom while Sudhir stands for young and enthusiastic spirit. Seth as an old and experienced citizen expects the need for the union of both wisdom and the enthusiastic spirit for the solution of problems arising during this time. This can be described as the writer's intention to present the real demand for the support and spirit of the people during the Independence Movement.

The impact of nationalism is seen in another young lad Shyam, a college friend of Sudhir. Shyam as an educated person understands the need and importance of making

people conscious about the prevalent situations. His urge to cater to the people is seen in his sincere and serious talking with Sudhir:

What we must understand is that here is an opportunity to make the people act collectively. something they have never done, to rouse them to their right to agitate, to give them a taste of the thrill of resistance. Why? Well, that might help them to prepare for a greater and more sustained struggle in the future. Do you understand? (Das 1987: 63).

Shyam's intention, here is not only to make the people conscious but also to arouse a sense of protest among them. And for this, he thinks of the importance of the collective effort of educated people like he and Sudhir.

The impact of Gandhism and socialism was another feature of the freedom struggle. This influence is seen both among the young and the adult people. Gandhiji's humanism affected the common people, particularly the youngsters who started serving the masses. The rise of social institution and organization steered the process of the service for mankind. This impact of Gandhism and socialism is also presented in the novel Cyclones. Here, Das shows how young people in educational institutions Gandhism and socialism influence. Shyam, Reena and Kamal are seen helping and giving relief to the common people. The rise of volunteer organizations to serve and create awareness in common people is seen in Shyam, Kamal and Reena establishing blood donation camp, relief camp etc.

Besides this, Gandhism had also a great and miraculous impact on the personality and personal choice of the people. The young people in different institutions were particularly influenced by this. Das also presents this in his novel Cyclones. The influence of Gandhian principles is not only seen in Sudhir but also in many other college students like Kamal, Reena and Shyam. Kamal who always roams with his rich and aristocratic friends does not think anything about the situations. But when the situations aggravate he is influenced by Gandhism like other students. He is so influenced by Gandhism that he gives up pants and shirts and takes to wearing dhoti and kurta. The awakening of the common people is presented in the novel in an incident where the villagers of Kusumpur demand a new dispensary and other welfare facilities in return of their valuable votes for Sudhir.

Thus, Manoj Das proves himself to be a writer of high caliber. He creates heroes like Sudhir and Shyam who can be compared to that of Raja Rao's hero Moorthy who being influenced by Gandhian principles works for the upliftment and enlightenment of his fellow men and society. Das's genius in writing such a novel which deals with realistic details of a significant period of India puts him on par with the other Indian English writers.

Das's skill lies not only in his presentation of contemporary situations of India's transitional period but also in his deep and explorative study of the psychological aspects of that period, the influence of the transitional period on the people. The changes and modifications that came both to the community and common people are superbly presented by him in many of his stories.

The change in the post independent political sphere was a remarkable one. Though service for the motherland was the ideal aim for some, others started dreaming about entering into politics by using the mask of patriotism. This was a major trend during the independence period when many thought of their future in political terms. The aspiring politicians, on the one hand, started coaxing the established ones to earn their favor to get a seat in the legislature. On the other hand, they started deceiving people by making big promises and assurances. Thus the situation gave rise to many petty politicians. As Bidulata Choudhury says:

The lapse of hypnotizing Gandhian age with its staunch ideologies supported by ancient ethics was gradually followed by an age of hungry money-minded politicians ...(Choudhury 1995:29).

Das in his story 'Mystery Of The Missing Cap' presents such a peculiar political situation. His observation of the socio-political reality and the people of India during the independence is clearly to be seen in this story. This is reflected in the opening of the story where he says:

Came independence. As is well known, the ancient land of India has had four major casts from time immemorial. But during the days immediately preceding independence a new caste was emerging all over the country-thai of patriots (Das 1995:1).

patriots he means the rise of ambitious political leaders. A clear example of this is Shri Moharana, in this story, growing into a patriot. Moharana's patriotism is nothing more than finding a favourable seat in the State legislature. The writer discloses this intention of Moharana when he says:

As I found out later, he had even nurtured an ambition to be elected to the state legislature (Das 1995:1).

Moharana, to be in the favour of the Present fisheries and culture minister Babu Virkishore, invites the latter to a grand feast. The former's intention to use Babu VirKishore as his trump card to get popular among the common people is seen in his (Moharana's) warm reception to the minister in the party. Though Moharana wins in his trick to invite Babu VirKishore, he fails to fulfill his aim to be a politician. The stealing of Babu VirKishore's cap by a monkey makes the situation a peculiar one where Moharana changes his plan forever.

Moharana's plan to enter politics through giving reception to the minister Babu Virkishore presents not only the pseudo-patriotism but also depicts the daily political life of politicians like the present minister of fisheries and culture. The writer confirms it in the following manner:

In those days a minister's daily life was largely made up of speech-making at public meetings (Das 1995: 2)

Thus the writer presents not only the political aspirations of Moharana but also the attitudes of the politicians who are already into politics. Moreover, the story serves as the symbol and mirror of the whole political situations of the independent period of India. Though the portrayal of Moharana's example is the particular attempt of the writer, the presentation of the political picture of the time is his general intention in this story.

Thus, through powerful narration, Manoj Das presents a wide range of political aspects of India from pre-independent to post-independent period.

II

Feudalism is another aspect of Manoj Das's works through which he proves his rootedness to the Indian sensibility. Feudalism, like casteism is a traditional cultural aspect of Indian society. Feudalism had always existed in the form of Rajas and Zamindars. But with the emergence of independence the whole system underwent a change. Though the system of Rajas and Zamindars have gone, the system of feudal attitude continues through many forms like master-labourer relationship, gender-relationship, husband-wife relationship, patriarchal family relationship etc. In the same manner, caste, which was also a social aspect of India, underwent a change. Both casteism and feudalism, at one point or other, share a common feature together. However, during the period of independence, while the notion of casteism became a popular theme for the literature, the notion of feudalism bidding farewell to independent India became negligent and marginalized as the subject matter of writing. Therefore while other writers take casteism to show problems and bring a change in the system, Manoj Das deals with feudalism to show its gradual ruin and also its impact on society.

Feudalism which was once a very dominant feature of the Indian society started its decline with the advent of the new found freedom and awakening of the common people from darkness to enlightenment. The Raj families and the Zamindars who had been enjoying their dominant power and prestige during the pre-colonial period started losing their position during the post-colonial period. The Rajas and Zamindars acting under the Britishers had to deal with liberalism and socialism with the withdrawal of British rule and emergence of independence. Moreover, the gradual transfer of feudal property into government property steered the process of liquidation and compelled feudalism to surrender to the new change and transformation. Thus feudalism started declining during the early half of the twentieth century.

At this juncture, Manoj Das takes up feudalism as his subject matter. He not only presents the gradual decline of feudalism but also as a "zealous marxist" analyses the ideology, relationship and life within the feudal society. The impact of the ruined and declined feudal system is another noteworthy aspect of his works. Thus his works show a chronological aspects of the society he deals with.

The two novels, CYCLONES and A TIGER at TWILIGHT clearly present the decline of feudalism. Similarly short stories like 'The Love Letter' and 'He who Rode The Tiger', etc show the writer's partial reference to feudalism. In most of these stories, Das presents different forms of feudalism like patriarchy, machismo, master servant relationship etc. Some of these examples can be seen in stories like 'Kuturi Nani', 'The Poison Girl', 'The Concubine' etc.

Cyclones, in one of its three dimensions, portrays the decline of the feudal system. This is presented in the gradual ruin of the Zamindar family of Chowdhurys of which Hari Chowdhry is the only surviving symbol. Before going to show the gradual ruin of the Chowdhury family the writer first describes the life style and status of this feudal family. According to the writer Hari Chowdhury's forefathers were notable for bravery and worldly prudence.

By giving these details and then describing the present status of Han Chowdhury the writer hints at the decline of the Chowdhury family. Han Chowdhury's inability to imitate and imbibe the feudal ideologies and principles of his forefathers has apparently resulted in the ruin of his power. Moreover, the luxurious life style of Chowdhury's father has led to a big debt to be cleared. Hari Chowdhury who is now in a period of transition finds it difficult to pay off these old debts. Thus the debt of his father became another threat to the feudal family. Hari Chowdhury starts selling off his property, thus precipitating the decline of the Zamindari estate. The gradual ruin of Chowdhury's estate is described by the writer as follows:

The liquidation of his estate began, chunk by chunk, to pay off the debts incurred by his father and to meet the demands of his own extravagance (Das 1987:7)

Thus economic handicap compelled the Chowdhury family to lose their feudal status and feudal temper. The changing time and situation also became a compelling factor to accept all the changes. With the sudden disappearance of Han Chowdhury, the feudal estate became a "kingless" kingdom. Hari Chowdhury's sudden disappearance shows his unconditional acceptance of the changes. Moreover, Sudhir, the person to take on the family responsibility has already joined a college where he is inspired by the Gandhian principles, freedom struggle and nationalism. Sudhir starts taking part in the protest against the British rule in the interest of the common people. The feudal norms in

him gradually give a way to the emergence of liberalism and socialism. Being influenced by Gandhism and socialism, Sudhir starts helping and **catering** to common **people**. Sudhir's love for his villagers along with his leadership quality makes him more as a leader figure than a feudal one. Urged by Seth Mukund Das, Sudhir agrees to begin a life of a democratic leader. Thus the gradual decline of the Chowdhury family continues from the disappearance of Hari Chowdhury till the appearance of Sudhir as a democratic leader.

Similarly, in A TIGER AT TWILIGHT too, Das presents the decline of feudalism. While the main plot here deals with the plan to kill a tiger, the sub plot offers a description of the feudal family of the so called Rajas of Samargarh, the district headquarter of Nijanpur. The writer clearly describes the last Raja's act of surrender of his states to the government of free India. With the emergence of democracy, the raja finds it uncomfortable to live among the people who were his subjects. Therefore, he sells off his ancestral place to the government. Even his officers are transferred to the government offices. Thus the whole affairs of the Raj system comes to an end with the independence.

In both the novels, Das presents the decline of the feudal system. Besides **these** two, he also hints at the decline of feudal system very briefly **in** many stories. For instance, in stories like **'The Love Letter'**, **'The Concubine'**, **'The Naked'**, **'Evening at Nijanpur'** and **'The Tryst'**, the writer hints at the decline of feudalism by writing about **it** in one or two lines. This repetition of the idea **shows** the writers' preoccupation **with** the notion of the feudal decline. In many stories **like** **'Kuturi Nani'** and **'The Poison Girl'**, he presents the impact of feudalism and feudal ideology. Thus **Das's** intention **to** treat feudalism with its many colours is amply evident.

III

The organized and collective community life has **always been** a **striking** aspect of Indian society. The high regard towards human relationship, **love** and understanding among each other, feelings and concerns for the **fellowmen**, sharing of **each other's** sorrow and pleasure are the important features of **India's** community **life**. **Though there**

has always been personal freedom in the community, obligation towards the community comes as the primary concern. The need of every single member's help either in action or in idea for the collective purpose of the community is another remarkable characteristic of the Indian community. This notion of individual contribution, on the other hand, shows not only the individual's obligation for the community but also respect for every member's ability and existence

Manoj Das's works which are basically set in rural villages also depict the community life as a whole. Das's works show not only his insight into individual relationships but also his observation of collective community life. The life style of the communities, as seen in their attitudes and approaches towards different situations, static or changing, is a remarkable aspect of his works. Through the process of presenting the attitudes and approaches of the community he also delineates the ideologies, culture and realities of that community.

The effect of change and transformation as seen through the ruin of feudalism and emergence of independence of the community is another aspect of Das's observation of community life. His interest in community life is evident in his attempt to present various rural communities through the channel of time i.e., from traditional, feudal society to a modern liberated one. This is a remarkable feature of Das when he takes different events in different period of time and presents them with much observation. For example, in 'The Farewell To Ghost' he presents the strong faith and belief of a community in the supernatural like a ghost. In the story 'The Tree' he presents the collective attitude of a community towards a difficult incident. In the novel Cyclones again the writer describes the community's protestive approaches towards the government's plan. In all these, Das presents the community as seen in different situations. This shows his indebtedness to the villages for subject matters for his works. Thus Das has not escaped from the group of other Indian writers who exclusively deal with the village setting. As Engade puts it

It is axiomatic that much of India is in villages. Every novelist of note had created the picture of a village-realistic, brutal, offensive, alluring or idealistic, depending upon his thematic need (Engade 1995: 7)

The aspect of the community stand is presented in the story 'The Tree'. The story deals with the villager's collective plan to save their old banyan tree believed to be a God

from the mouth of flood. The sudden coming of the flood makes them gather on the river bank. The writer vividly describes the villager's act of making each other conscious of sudden coming of the flood. As the writer presents it:

The flood came at a little past mid night. The jackals, with their long moaning howls, managed to wake up several people who called out to each other and, reassured of a collective awareness...(Das1986: 46).

When the villagers became aware that their banyan tree which was once a place for God, used for meeting and some times as a market place was going to slide into the flood water, they ask for each other's suggestions and help to save the tree from collapsing into the river. Nirakar Das, the retired head pundit, notices how the birds and animals were deserting the tree which was their home. Srikanta Das, another elder member of the community, suggests every body to take a solemn vow silently within the heart that if the tree was saved everybody would shorten their hair. He tells that because of the sin of the villagers the tree was going to collapse and therefore suggests that everybody ought to pray in order to be pardoned. Next to him, Shndhar Mishra, the well known homeopath, is also looked upon by everybody to find a quick remedy for the situation. Even Raghu DalBehera, the famous gunman of the village, is not left to be looked upon to find a solution. Thus, the curiosity among the villagers grows more and more to find a better solution to save their banyan tree from disappearing into the river. On the other hand, the possibility of the banyan tree collapsing very soon increases along with the increasing anxiety and tension of the villagers.

The situation worsens gradually and finally the tree slides in to the floodwater. But the banyan Goddess (in the form of a stone) is rescued by an old brahmin of the village. Bishnu Jena who used to be "possessed" by Goddess, earlier, seems to be seated before her now. And some body describes it as "...Bishnu is falling into his trance". The villagers, as usual, start playing cymbals, conch-shells, drums etc in order to arouse the power of the Goddess in Bishnu and to get the messages of the Banyan Goddess through him. On the other hand, we find Bishnu Jena speaking out "I will be bom as a thousand trees here, there, everywhere" (Das 1986: 57). The village folk announce Han Bol!, Hari bol! to bid a glorious farewell to the banyan tree.

What is obvious here is the collective consciousness, common ideologies like belief in

God and religion and integrated community, attitude and responsibility towards a complicated situation. The common belief and attitude of the villagers reflect their deep rootedness in the traditional Indian society. The invitation for favourable remedies to overcome the hurdle to save the tree and the responses of the villagers depict the notion of fraternity and universal brotherhood of the community.

The present story reminds me of a poem 'Night of the Scorpion' (Ezekiel 1992: 130) by Nissim Ezekiel. This poem, like the present story, depicts the collective attitude and collective life of a community as seen in a particular situation. The poem deals with a small but serious incident where a woman, the mother of the poet, is stung by a scorpion in a rainy night. In order to help the woman the villagers come like "swarms of flies" with their individual suggestions. While some pray to God to heal the poor woman, others try to give psychological relief saying that this suffering may reduce the next birth's suffering and misfortunes. Yet others predict as the poet describes:

May the sum of evil
Balanced in this unreal world
Against the sum of good
Become diminished by your pain, they said
(Ezekiel 1992: 130)

Thus the suggestions and wishes come out from the fellow villagers more and more who keep on coming into the house with candles and lanterns in their hands

The situation as in the previous story goes on worsening. The incantation of the holy man, prayers of the villagers fail to relieve the poison in the woman. Finally the poison is relieved when the poet's father bums the stung area with paraffin

The similarity in both the cases, is found in the presentation of community life their culture, their collective consciousness, their collective efforts and attitudes towards a situation. The collective consciousness is found, in both the cases, in the fellow men coming forward with their suggestions and views for the solution of the problem. It is in their attitude towards their respective situations that we find the cultural aspects of the two communities. But Das goes further to present the cultural life of the villagers in the story 'The Tree'. This is seen in his presentation of Bishnu Jena being possessed by the

power of the Goddess and the villagers* playing **of** cymbals, conch-shells, drums etc to arouse the spirit of Goddess in **Bishnu** Jena.

Thus, **Das's** aim of presenting the typical Indian community life with its culture and life is obvious from this **story**. His deliberate attempt to treat community life with all its aspects is also obvious in another story '**Farewell** to a Ghost*' where he portrays the supernatural belief of a community and their attitude towards the supernatural elements like a ghost.

In '**Farewell** to a Ghost' for instance, the writer presents the collective consciousness of the villagers towards a ghost in a village who happens to be an "illegitimate daughter" of a Sahib by a tribal woman. In order to possess **all** the gold and money kept by the Sahibs, the girl kills all the three sahibs by giving them poisoned food. But her plan to acquire the wealth fails when she **herself** is murdered by her accomplice. Thus the girl turns into a ghost.

The villagers notice the girl's lonely activity in the deserted villa **in** their village. Their attitude towards the ghost has never been disrespectful or harmful. The **writer-narrator** puts it thus:

It was only the girl that **mattered-I** mean her ghost. We always thought of her as one of us, although **we knew** quite well how different she was (Das 1994: 104)

The **villagers'** sympathy and concerns for the little girl **is** clearly presented **in** the pundit's offering a share to the girl. The **writer-narrator** presents **it** through the pundit's voice:

unhappy girl, here is your share of the feast **w hich** has been held by the benevolent so-and-so on such-and-such occasion. Be **satisfied** with this... We **have** never tried to dislodge you or disturb **you**, have **we?** No. Why not? Because we look upon you as one of our unluck> daughters. God grant you peace!(Das 1994: 104)

The innocence and simplicity of the girl (ghost) inspires the villagers to treat her more as a living girl than a ghost. Thus, the villagers had always treated her as one of their community members.

Therefore, when the government decides to “demolish the crumbling villa” where the girl (ghost) had been staying, the villagers become anxious to find a solution to settle the ghost in some other place. The villagers request the government to spare some days for them so that they can find a solution before the demolition of the villa.

Finally, we find the villagers having a ceremony where they offer rice, banana, coconuts, sweet meats, cakes etc to the girl. Everybody, including women and children, are also seen allowed to participate in this ceremony. The priest who performs this ceremony using a human skull and a bone is seen calling the ghost (the girl) to take the food. The priest commands her to “eat to your heart's content and then leave the house”(Das 1994: 107). Accordingly the ghost comes but without taking the food follows the priest's command to leave the house. The priest takes her and orders her to get into a tall palm tree. Then he utters incantations and beats the tree with bone and circles it for some times in order to confine the ghost into that palm tree. At the end he assures the villagers that “she can never leave the tree, I have tied her to it” (Das 1994 108). The villagers feel secure in finding a solution to their earlier, insecure feeling that if the ghost was not given a place to rest in, then it could come and stay with any of the family in the village.

Thus the story presents the common belief of the community in superstition, regardless of the attitude of the outside world. The simplicity and straightforwardness of the villagers is reflected in their unconditional belief in the presence of the ghost and their sympathetic attitude towards her. However the emphasis here is on the villagers' collective attitudes and efforts to understand and find a solution to a demanding situation

The aspects of the community life are here seen in the community's collective stand for confronting a changing situation as presented in the novel Cyclones. The major story of this novel deals with the protest of the people of Kusumpur against the government's plan to fill up their river Kheya to construct an emergency air strip and to experiment with the munitions right on the southern stretch of sands near the village. The villagers of Kusumpur do not want to see the river Kheya being filled for it is “...the

companion that has never failed them through the ages, a river that has never harassed them with a flood " (Das 1957: 62).

When the government plans to fill up the river the villagers start protesting against the government's idea and support the leadership of Sudhir, Shyam, Reena and Kamal, the young leaders of the community. Sudhir is the last surviving symbol of the Chowdhury family of Kusumpur. Shyam, Kamal and Reena are the educated and young volunteers who come to Kusumpur to serve the villagers' consciousness of the growing situations of the village.

The full participation and support of the leadership of these young leaders is seen in their (villagers') act of gathering together and listening to the speeches and addresses. Ravi's (the family servant of Sudhir) plan to deceive the police to arrest Sudhir shows his active participation in the process. The villagers' strong protest against the government's plan continues along the leadership of Sudhir and Shyam. But after Shyam's arrest followed by Sudhir's the situation changes. The river Kheya is filled up by the villagers. Thus the villagers are compelled to accept the change.

However the integrity of the community is not lost. The country gets freedom. The villagers despite some changes are still seen united. Their collective demand for their welfare in return of their valuable votes shows their advancement and conscious understanding of the situation. This is seen when Seth Mukund Das and Sudhir go for campaigning into the village and the villagers demand for a dispensary and other welfare facilities.

Though the communities one deals with are set in Orissa, the sincere and faithful elaboration of various social features of these communities makes them typically Indian. If we are not very rigid on the names of certain places and characters, the style of Das's description and presentation of community life can resemble his communities anywhere in the country.

Manoj Das had spent his childhood in the midst of a lively community. His impressions and observation of the community are thus depicted in his stories. Thus when he writes about the community in his stories, it not only shows the influence of the

community life on him but also his mature understanding and observations. The lack of romanticization and glorification of the issues and events of communities in his works shows his conscious appreciation of the community life. The detailed description of places, people, their belief and action and also the mention of the time of action etc. show his realistic approach.

The reality of Das's description of the community can be gauged from the writer's intention to deal with this particular aspect. His objective has been to be aware of and to provide knowledge of various ideologies and features of communities rather than giving pleasure by writing romantically about society. His desire to avoid an imaginary and fantastic world has been reflected in his deliberate attempt in giving as much details about the place, people, action and time as possible. The near photographic details of all these aspects of the story make his works more reliable and realistic.

The observation of the community through their gradual change and transformation also gives sufficient proof regarding the writer's real concentration on the community life. He does not depict one kind of community as seen in a particular limited period. Rather he presents communities seen through various periods of time. The kind of changes and transformations he presents are not of his own imagination or creation but the real changes that came in Indian society with the passage of time. The ruin of feudal system, the awakening of freedom struggle and the impact of early politics are the various changes regarding which the writer describes the community life in his stories. Thus his deep observation of the community and society in a larger context reflects the realism of his works.

IV

The treatment of human relationship is another noteworthy aspect of Manoj Das. The families he deals with are seen in both feudal and civil society. Therefore the *types* of relationship he depicts range from patriarchal and feudal to the *pre-capitalistic*. As he deals with the story set against the changing social forces, the action and *attitudes* of the characters are often conditioned and influenced by these changes and *transformations*.

The changes in socio-economic conditions of India on the eve of our independence brought a change in the feudalistic insight and attitudes of the people in regard to the human relationship. Moreover with the new found freedom there emerged a commendable change in all sphere of the society, thus, influencing human relationship in general. The whole society underwent a change. Das who started writing in this period has not been wanting in depicting all these aspects.

Human relations depicted in Manoj Das take many forms: between parents and children, husband and wife, brother and sister, grand parents and grand children. By presenting the relationship as seen among various age groups, Das reveals his deep observation and clear understanding of relations within the society. Thus he is seen to belong to those Indian writers who have placed a primary importance on the family as the most significant institution of the Indian society. The discussion of the following stories presents a clear picture of Das's treatment of human relationship

In the story 'The Brothers' for instance, the writer presents the notion of brotherhood. The story deals with two brothers: Bhuvan and Saroj Mishra. Bhuvan who was a freedom fighter is now startled to notice many people using patriotism to promote their careers. His sense of surprise and silence as evident in the situation make other people look upon him as a mental case. The younger brother Saroj, a doctor in the West, comes home and sees his brother treated as a mad person. He is confused and fails to comprehend the reality of the situation. In return of his attempt to take his brother to an asylum, Saroj gets a slap on his cheek. Suddenly he remembers one of the incidents when he was hit by his elder brother Bhuvan for smoking. Saroj understands that his brother was not mad. He is still able to rectify his (younger brother) mistake. Bhuvan weeps for his act. Saroj also becomes emotionally overwhelmed and starts shedding tears. The sense of brotherhood is seen manifest here. Saroj's fear of losing a normal relationship with his brother is given up. Therefore he says:

Brother, You must accompany me to my place of work. I shall earn. You will use my earning for the needy. I have no desire to hoard. Once the period of my contract with the hospital is over, we shall be back here and you will lead me into the village. My services shall be at your disposal, ...
(Das 1989: 118).

Thus the younger brother not only understands his brother appropriately but also extends his love and services for his elder brother forever. The younger's promises to come back to village show his care and duty towards the elder brother. Thus the writer presents the notion of strong brotherhood.

The relationship presented through these two brothers shows the mark of patriarchal relationships. The emphasis on the long-lasting and strong relationship among the family members has always been given importance in the Indian patriarchal society. The desire to maintain a healthy and strong relationship is another aspect of the patriarchal family. This is clearly seen in the younger brother's attitude towards his elder brother. Though the Younger brother works in a western society he has not been influenced by the western relationship and bears the mark of his patriarchal ideology being careful and concerned about his brother. The younger brother's intention to spend life together with the elder brother, on the other hand, portrays the influence of the Indian joint family system.

Parallel to this, the writer presents the notion of friendship and sisterhood between two young girls of two families in a story 'The Rest of the World'. Veena and Anjani are two close and "cheery friends" who have completed their intermediate in second division. Once they go for shopping and buy two sarees of the same design but of different colour. They visit their friend Kusum's house, clad with their new saree. Veena puts on the green one and Anjani puts on the blue. When they visit Kusum's house, her mother appreciates everything about Veena : her saree colour, her success in the exam etc. She even compares Veena's success to the success of her own daughter though her daughter fails in the exam. Kusum's mother decides to buy a saree of the same colour of veena. When Veena suggests to buy a saree of the similar colour of Anjani, the former rejects the idea by saying " No, no, no, no, no. I want nothing inferior to this" (Das 1995: 154). Veena comes to know about the hypocrisy of Kusum's mother and therefore protests against her. She shows her friendship and respect respectively to Anjani and her parents by giving a fitting reply to Kusum's mother. As she observes:

How do you underestimate your parents' value by underestimating their gift? (Das 1995: 154)).

Then there is a break of thirteen years during which Veena marries a man working in a private firm in Delhi and Anjani marries a rich man. After their marriage, they were separated but once they come across each other at a textile exhibition in Delhi. Anjani's love for Veena is not reduced. She invites Veena to her house and share each other's plights. Anjani becomes overwhelmed over their meeting and says:

Veena, Destiny has brought us together again, is n't it so?
observed Anjani. As long as we can meet and talk, how do
we care for the rest of the world (Das1995: 156).

Unlike the story 'The Brothers', this story is presented in a different situation. The relationship here is presented outside the family system. The story is designed to present the strong notion of friendship and sisterhood between Veena and Anjani. Their relationship is often threatened by the hypocritical attitude of Kus m's mother. But it is the sisters who look upon each other's understanding and belief to sustain their healthy relationship. Their belief in destiny to keep their relationship alive is more than their belief in the rest of the world.

The story shows the sisterly love between two young girls who share each other's life in both good and bad times without caring for the impression of the rest of the world. Even the possession of money and wealth has not been able to change their strong friendship and sisterhood. So what is apparent here is the element of love and understanding which dominates both the stories, a general feature of Manoj Das's stories. As P.Raja says :

In Manoj Das's portrayal of human relationship, generally
the positive elements like love, and trust dominate over
other traits... (Raja 1993: 37).

Love as an aspect of human relationship is another concern of Manoj Das in his works. In many stories like 'The Love Letter' or 'A Transcendence', Das deals with the theme of love to describe the romantic relationship among characters. A brief discussion of some of his treatment of love may be given at this stage. In the story 'The Love Letter', the theme of love is presented in a sarcastic way. Gautam, a painter and researcher lives in the house of Pran Chowdhury where Gita used to live. Gita like Gautam was also a painter who died young.

Once Gautam circulates a news that he has found a love letter in Gita's room. While roaming on the terrace, Gautam meets Prof. Dhar, the vocalist and the later asks for the letter. Next to him it is Pran Choudhury who also declares his love with Gita and Gita's unconditional love for him.

What the writer has tried to depict here is the love of the people who even in their old age feel rejuvenated by expressing their romantic feeling for the young girl, a love that is more concentrated on the beloved's handwriting and message than on her own. On the other hand, it also discloses the lover's concealed feeling for Gita. Thus the story shows the love which was once hidden but expressed now.

Similarly in the story 'A Transcendence' the writer presents the complexities of love. Hironmay and Soumyendra are two college friends at Darjelling. These two friends are seen in love with a girl called Gargi. But the girl's silence in reciprocation of her love has brought frustration to both the friends. The way the writer presents this has been brilliantly graphic:

Their mood was alarmingly reflected on their unshaven cheeks, their long hair and untrimmed side-burns and in their taking to writing verses, threatening to take the good old world of poetry by storm (Das 1995: 63).

However, it is Hemang, the friend of Hironmay and Soumendra who assures both the lovers that he would find out whether Gargi was in love with a third person or not. It is Hemang who was in love with Gargi. Thus the story depicts a love triangle. The complexities lie not only in two people falling in love with one girl but also in the emergence of another who is a real threat to the other two lovers. Hemang tries to convince Hironmay and Soumendra by describing the complex nature of love as irrational and puzzling as only love can be (Das 1995: 63)

And finally we find Hemang married to Gargi. Hironmay and Soumendra, on the other hand, vow not to marry. Thus the story is dealt with love, frustration, promise and deceit. Gargi's silence in showing any positive sign shows not only the case of one-sided love but also a case of her lover's frustration. Hemang's marriage with Gargi on the other hand, shows the victory of the third person.

All these social aspects: early political situation, feudalism, community life human relationships reflect Das's keen observation of the society through its changiflg period. The treatment of community life and human relationships portrays his deep and clear insight into the human beings and their world. However Das's description of post-independent political situations and the ruin of feudalism in the country shows his attempt to cross the regional boundaries to look for national issues in his works. His works, which deal with many national themes and subject matters, show its relationship with the mainstream pan-Indian literature. Literature written during 1960s shows the mark of Gandhism as K.R.Srinivasa Iyengar observes:

Life could not be same as before, and every segment of our national life-politics, economics, education, religion, social life, language and literature-acquired a more or less pronounced Gandhian hue. Thus it was that Gandhi exercised a patent influence on our languages and literatures, ...(Iyenger1987: 248-249).

Moreover the impact of freedom struggle on the literatures had a greater appeal and made the literature more realistic. As Malta Grover says

The intensity of the political, economic, social and spiritual experience through which our nation has passed in its struggle for political independence has made our literary art realistic and down-to-earth (Gro\er 1991: 75).

Thus Manoj Das deals effectively with the social, political, spiritual and economic aspects of his community.

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CHAPTER-HI

WOMEN AT WORK

A significant aspect of Manoj Das's treatment of female characters is the way he depicts the straitjacketing of women protagonists in a typically patriarchal context. Many of his characters are forced to take up "professions" traditionally earmarked for women. Even as they minister to the needs of a domineering male society, they **find** no escape from the world of drudgery and imprisonment. In what follows, an attempt will be made to study Manoj Das's treatment of women and the world of vocation with the help of some feminist insights.

The story 'The Poison **Girl**' deals with the life of a prostitute called Heera. Heera lives in a half-tiled and half-thatched house near the "Price System Pure Hindu **Hotel**" on the eastern end of the Station Road. The owner of this hotel employs **Heera** to attract more and more customers to his hotel and in turn provides meals to her. Thus Heera has become the source of income for the hotel master. On the other hand, **she** continues the profession of prostitution to get meals, the only source of her livelihood from the hotel master. Prostitution has thus become a profession for her as she depends upon **it** for her livelihood.

Tragedy comes to Heera when she loses her beauty and charm. Her customers start avoiding her and choose other avenues. The hotel owner who finds loss **in his** business stops providing meals to **Heera**, who being deprived of food **and customers**, thinks of starting a pan shop.

Heera opens up a pan shop. But the customers notice wounds on her hands and spread the news that she was afflicted with a sexual disease. Therefore the customers reject her pan shop, depriving Heera of her **livelihood**. Heera **is kept** at arm's length and looked down by everybody. She loses all her hope for **life** and **finally dies** without anybody's notice.

Heera's life in this story concerned raises questions as to why she chooses the profession of prostitution; what are the factors responsible for her being deprived of the same job? An attempt to find answers to these issues will raise many questions such as "body and beauty", "women as economic object", "women as sex object" etc. All these issues have a pertinent relationship with the life of Heera in this story. The notion of cultural, ideological and patriarchal insights could also be discussed in present context

The causes for Heera taking up prostitution are nothing but her poverty, helplessness and inability to earn from any other source. The owner of the hotel "Price System Pure Hindu Hotel" has taken advantage of Heera's poverty and indirectly compels her to take up the profession of prostitution by providing her with meals. Heera is paid nothing except the meals, which she gets from the hotel owner. Thus Heera is oppressed and exploited here. She is oppressed when she unquestionably takes up prostitution. She is exploited because she is not given her due price. Heera's oppression and exploitation on the other hand advance the hotel owner's income and profession

Thus, taking up of prostitution as a profession is more of the hotel owner's intention than Heera's. The hotel owner indirectly controls Heera's decision in this matter. Her poverty and helplessness have compelled her to submit to the hotel owner's designs.

We thus see that the hotel owner has completely taken advantage of Heera His appointment of Heera as a prostitute and the clients' treatment of her provide Heera's identity as an economic object, as an object of sex, and a dominated powerless servant The provision of meals by the hotel owner shows his act of encouragement to Heera to carry on prostitution.

Beside all these, the powerlessness and the inability to rebel thwart Heera from coming out of the hotel owner's clutch. The powerlessness of Heera has compelled her to silently fulfil the hotel owner's intention. Thus we find a sense of power politics between

the weak and the strong, the master and the servant. The hotel owner is the master and Heera the servant.

Thus we find Heera being exploited and dominated sexually, economically and politically. The imposition of the hotel owner's will power upon Heera's way of life shows that women are controlled and ruled by men. As Kate Millet remarks:

What goes largely unexamined, often even unacknowledged (yet is institutionalized nonetheless) in our social order, is the birthright whereby males rule females (Millet 1970: 25).

Beside the identity Heera gets from her master's treatment, the writer has also described the identity of Heera as ideologically presented by her clients. It is not only Heera but also her house, which is ideologically described by the clients. The thatched and half-tiled house of Heera appears to be the magic house, the abode of joy for Heera's clients. Heera's beauty and charm make the clients see her house as a pleasure dome, a paradisaical sphere as Kubla Khan who while in his trance describes his pleasure dome in the poem. In the present story this is how the writer presents it:

For them, the half-tiled, half-thatched roof was the dome over a magic house of joy, the decaying earthen rooms and the pillars- some of which turned in to ant-hills—constituted a paradisaical sphere where they could freely fly about as long as they wished,... (Das 1995: 108)

Apart from her house, the clients also ideologically describe Heera herself. She is not only a prostitute for them. For them she is more beautiful and a better girl than the nymphs. The nymphs here denote the actresses in the theatres. Such comparison of females with nymphs of paradise shows the ideological conception of males about females. This ideological conception is seen in one of the clients who says

I don't know if those nymphs of paradise- I have seen some of them dancing in the theatre in the city—are in any way better than our Heera (Das 1995: 108).

This shows how females are given cosmic and mythical dimensions from the males' perspective. By describing Heera as better than the nymphs the clients portray Heera's superiority. But when they possess and control Heera physically and sexually, it shows their domination and possessiveness over Heera. The word "our Heera** here shows the idea of possessiveness. This act of "possessiveness of the prostitute" by the clients is clearly stated by another prostitute called Lalita in the novel Cyclones. Lalita, a prostitute, discloses her identity and her experience of being possessed by her customers to Sudhir, the hero of the novel who accidentally meets her in her house. Sudhir, as a stranger, hears Lalita disclosing her experience. As she observes:

I am Lily only for the inmates of this house. For your information I have a few other names too. Well, why don't you choose a name for me? You alone will have the right to call me by that name if you ever come back. And by that name I will be yours entirely (Das 1987: 148).

From this it is obvious how Lalita is possessed by her clients by the use of pet names like Lily. It is also obvious from the passage that Lalita is gradually trained to be possessed and therefore she tells Sudhir to give her a name. Heera like Lalita is also seen to be possessed by her clients. At first she is possessed by the hotel master and secondly by the clients. The intention in giving names (as Lily in case of Lily in Cyclones and Heera in the story 'The Poison Girl') is to be intimate and to possess the females. This ideological description of women by men is always aimed at depicting women as beautiful, weak and passive and making them subordinate to the men. From the above two instances, it is clear that not only the males' attitude towards the females but also the women's attitude towards men needs to be examined. Heera does not object to taking up prostitution nor does she ask for her due money. Similarly, Lalita is seen satisfied with the act of possession by her clients. This attitude of Heera and Lalita shows their contentment with their way of being brought up in a male-dominated society.

The profession of prostitution has thus led to Heera's physical exploitation. Besides, the body of Heera is seen as "merely flesh** to be consumed and abused according to the whims and fancies of the clients. The treatment of Heera as an object is seen in her

abused and injured body. The merciless and reckless use of Heera as a sex object is reflected in her morbid life. This is poignantly depicted by the writer:

The locality returns to life, leisurely. But Heera continues to sleep. If she sits up for a moment, it is only to collapse again. It takes time to bring her limbs to her own will, warding off the impact of the other's will on it (Das 1995:109).

The burden of Heera's profession has compelled her to take poisonous herbs to relieve the pains and sufferings of her sexual activities. She vomits to relieve "the burning sensation-resulting from her having to take regularly moderate quantities of poisonous herbs." Heera is thus played with as a sex toy without concerns and sympathy. The sexual violence and torture have not only given her the image of a sex toy but also hampered her later life. Thus Heera's life and image as a prostitute resemble what Mary Kelley suggests:

The sexual vulnerability and exploitation of women mocked the ideal of romantic love by rendering her a sexual pawn, outside the bounds of holy matrimony. To exploit woman as a sexual toy independent of marriage was to toy with the system of life (Kelley 1985: 261)

Thus it is obvious here that the "body and beauty" are responsible for Heera being rejected. This shows the importance of "body and beauty" for the women in order to live in a male-dominated society. Therefore Kate Millet says

Females who are frigid, e.g. not sexually compliant should be beaten (Millet 1970:9).

Sex thus becomes the security for the woman. The gratification of the men's sexual desire is the duty of women. Their body and beauty are measured in proportion to the sexual satisfaction they offer to the males. This body and beauty, on the other hand, also present women as mere sex objects for the men. Heera's beautiful appearance thus has portrayed her as a sex object resulting in her submission to the hold owner and the clients. Thus the beautiful appearance of the women can also be a cause for their

subordination and submission to their male counterparts. This conforms to Barbara Sichtermann's observation of the women during the 1950s. According to her.

The attractive women under the spell of 'feminine mystique' was (sick) really nothing but a sex object in the worst sense. As far as woman's appearance was concerned, the aesthetics of sexual attraction could only be seen as the aesthetics of submission (Sichtermann 1986: 44).

Women have always been deprived of their liberty and freedom in the male-dominated society. While in some cases their freedom is directly challenged by physical domination or exploitation, in many cases it is hampered by the imposition of socio-cultural taboos and beliefs. Their liberty is confined to the images they get from the rest of the society. Heera, having been thrown out as a waste object, opens up a pan shop to earn livelihood. But the customers hamper her choice and freedom for this profession. Heera fails to carry on the pan shop when she is caught in the suspicious eyes of the people. She is suspected of contracting a sexual disease. The wounds in her hand add much to peoples' suspicions. Therefore the customers avoid her shop. Thus her failure to own a pan shop owes more to the peoples' impression than to her own choice and freedom.

Heera is doubly rejected from society. She neither succeeds to continue prostitution nor is she allowed to take up the pan shop. While her lost beauty and body are responsible for her unfitness for prostitution, her diseased body impairs her *running*, the pan shop. Nobody understands who is responsible for Heera's plight and who is responsible for Heera's damaged limbs and poisoned body. Again who releases her pain and sufferings induced by the lustful men? Well, the answer is obvious here. It is her lascivious clients who are responsible for this. The disease, which she has got, is not because of her fault but because of her unquestioned submission to the promiscuous sex with her clients. All of Heera's problems and pains cannot be attributed to her personality. It can be attributed to the political and patriarchal control of the men in this story. This reveals that nothing is personal in Heera's sufferings, everything is political

The wild and lustful way of enjoying Heera shows the cruelty and hostility towards her sexuality. Heera has failed to control her sexuality. Her inability to control her own body springs from her complete surrender to the lust of the male. Thus we find a patriarchal power relationship between Heera's customers and herself. This power is seen in the cruelty and masculine hostility as expressed in physical and psychological treatment of Heera by the male characters in the story.

This domination and exploitation of women by men is seen in another context in the story 'The Strategy'. Like Heera, Gauri in this story is also seen working in a patriarchal and feudal society. Though she does carry on a decent profession of midwifery she has not escaped from the exploitative attitudes of her fellow male members. A close discussion of the story will provide us with the dominated and exploited life of Gauri, the main character of the story-

II

'The Strategy' is a story about the life of a widow called Gauri. Gauri is orphaned in her childhood and loses her husband at the age of seven. Even the son whom she adopts after her husband's death dies leaving Gauri alone in the world.

It is her grandmother who teaches Gauri midwifery at sixteen. After being alone, Gauri starts practising midwifery in the village to earn her livelihood. This profession of midwifery brings wide recognition and reputation to Gauri who responds to the first cry of the children. She thus becomes the idol of every body.

However when Gauri becomes old nobody takes care of her. She is rejected and avoided by all the villagers like Vanbihari, the money lender who were once brought by Gauri. Ahalya, another young widow, comes forward to learn midwifery from Gauri. She is the only person to take care of Gauri. Gauri who learnt the art from her own grandmother starts teaching Ahalya. Ahalya in turn is seen taking care of Gauri. However, finally we find Gauri dying without the notice of anybody.

Gauri's life in this story resembles much the life of Heera in the previous story. Like Heera, Gauri is also seen as a helpless woman. Therefore the answer as to why Gauri took the job of midwife may be her helplessness and early widowhood. Unlike Heera, Gauri's life has been very challenging and difficult from her very early age. Her character has been very inquisitive. The writer discloses her identity at the beginning in order to portray the background to Gauri's Life:

That was half a century ago. For a while she thought that with the death of the adopted son her sole interest in the world had snapped, having lost her father even before her birth, her mother at the age of three, her husband (she had been married off by her late uncle when five) at the age of seven and her grand mother, who taught her midwifery at sixteen (Das 1994: 84)

Thus the problem of existence and survival has arisen in the life of Gauri for which she has been compelled to take up the profession of midwifery. Gauri's helplessness in her childhood as an orphan and a widow at the age of seven have forced her to utilise her learned skill of midwifery for earning a livelihood. Moreover the death of her adopted son after her husband's death ensured and compelled Gauri to start the profession.

Thus Gauri moves from an orphan to the old mid wife. A girl child expects more problems both for her present and future course of life. Her gender becomes a factor for which she has to face many hurdles: social, economical and also political. The question of survival and existence arises in such cases. Gauri has moved through bad to worse first as an orphan, then as a widow and finally as a lonely woman. Gauri, being helpless, finds no real life options. Therefore she starts practising midwifery which she had learnt from her grandmother. She adopts a son to live with him. Her intention of dependency is cleared when Gauri starts practising midwifery only after her adopted son's death. Her adoption of a son can thus be seen from social, cultural and ideological points of view. While the intention to depend on a son shows subordination to the male, the adoption itself reflects the cultural practice of deliberately making oneself attached to the male ideology.

The question also arises as to why Gauri had to take up mid-wifery, why not other kinds of jobs? Well, here again, the answers are obvious. First, she chose it because she was taught to do it. The second answer will concern the socio-cultural background of our society. The women in our society are allowed to pursue certain feminine occupations like those of a maidservant, midwife, housework etc. Moreover, the social restriction on certain types of work lead them to choose a profession indoors.

Thus it is not only her helplessness but also the restriction of the choice of occupations for a woman which has been another reason why Gauri chose midwifery. This social restrictions and taboos might have regulated Gauri's life, which dates back to half a century ago. This may be the reason why Gauri felt comfortable enough to take up the job of midwifery. While Heera is directly compelled by the hotel owner to take up prostitution, Gauri in this story is compelled and forced by the socio-cultural forces to take up midwifery. However, in both the cases we find an indirect imposition and interplay of patriarchal power in deciding the careers of Heera and Gaun

Traditionally, women were not only restricted to certain jobs but also accorded a social identity according to their respective jobs. Therefore, after widowhood, Gaun bears the identity and recognition of a midwife. It is her job which has gained her more recognition and popularity in the village. Her profession has got her an identity as "the golden bridge". But unlike the ordinary' bridge, she has been the golden bridge as she provides superior service than the ordinary one. Thus it can be said that Gaun's objectification with the golden bridge springs from the nature of her profession. The only sympathy and respect in this objectification lies in being "golden", unlike the ordinary one. Gauri's sincerity and concentration in the job has brought her the reputation as a popular and successful midwife. She is the first person to touch new life in everyone. Her auspicious and successful hand has created many popular figures like the moneylender Vanbihari. Her engrossment in the job has made Gaun forget her past pains and sufferings as an orphan and a widow. She continues her job, leaving aside all her miseries. Her sincere duty has made her days happier. As the writer puts it

Her days passed amidst those loving faces growing up around her and the recognition given her by their parents (Das 1994:84).

Gauri's satisfaction with the recognition and the admiration she gets from the villagers has encouraged her to perform the job with dexterity till her old age. The peoples' praise has developed Gauri's loyalty to her profession. Her love for midwifery is also reflected in her effort at teaching midwifery to Ahalya, another widow of Gauri's next generation. Thus Gauri's image is presented as a devoted midwife. Gauri's image as a midwife is encouraged by the offer of rewards and prizes. One such prize is the golden ring, which she gets from the Zamindar of the village for seeing his daughter-in-law through a critical phase in the process of her delivery. Though the prize and the rewards on the one hand promote Gauri's skill and image, on the other hand they make her subordinate and dependent on the villagers. These patriarchal incentives as seen in the prize of the Zamindar in this story, show the oppressive and exploitative nature of patriarchy towards women to get service and benefit from them. Therefore Kate Millet says:

The image of women as we know it is an image created by men and fashioned to suit their needs (Millet 1970: 46)

Ahalya's taking up of the midwifery, on the other hand, shows how the sense of insecurity in women in a male-dominated patriarchal society forces them to follow, imitate and imbibe their own gender. Ahalya as a widow experiences the taste of poverty and loneliness. Therefore when she sees Gauri's happy life and good reputation, Ahalya starts to learn the art from Gauri. Thus it is apparent that the sense of insecurity and depravity in Ahalya has made her learn midwifery. This sense of insecurity is created by the socio-cultural practices of patriarchal society. For example, marriage in such a system is more of a security for the women though there is domination and exploitation. So Ahalya's insecurity and compulsion, which make her imbibe midwifery from Gauri are the result of the socio-cultural traits of her society.

Moreover, men's intention to maintain certain feminine practices and jobs continue to be seen in their act of giving prizes and rewards to the women who undertake

the same. The reward of the Zamindar has made Gauri psychologically indebted to him. It has also physically restricted her life to midwifery. The feudalistic approach of restricting women to certain jobs is seen in this act of giving prizes and rewards. The sympathetic attitude of men towards such women's profession is another aspect of this trend.

While men's dominance over women persists through their restrictions and limitations of freedom, women's subordination to men's dominance continues through their unquestioned submission to men's desire. Gauri has not escaped from the exploitative attitudes of her fellow villagers. Midwifery has become more of service and care than a profession to her. She has been the source of love, sympathy and strength to the newly born children. As the writer presents it evidently:

It was she who responded to their first cry, in which she deciphered the infant's assertion of its blind faith that there was someone to hearken to it. And in her own spontaneous loving response she heard the reassuring voice of providence (Das 1994: 84).

Gauri has anticipated this "voice of providence" in her duty. Her keen care for the helpless children shows her commitment that needs to be rewarded and reciprocated with love and care. But when she becomes old and helpless, she is no more reciprocated with the help and care. She becomes useless with the loss of her ability to continue the duty just as Heera becomes useless after losing her beauty. A sense of avoidance and rejection, as in Heera's clients, develop among the villagers towards Gauri. The attitude of the people who were once brought up by her becomes different. As the writer puts it

The attitude of the people was no longer the same—Gauri had now been aware of it for a long time -and in their eyes she was perhaps in no way different from any other aged woman (Das 1994: 84).

Old age has brought Gauri a fatal consequence. She is rejected and exploited. The villagers have not stopped exploiting Gauri even in her old age. Their exploitative nature is seen in their momentary happiness when Gauri decides to donate her patch of land for

the village school compound. Gauri is seen beneficial to the villagers till her old age. But the villagers have been negligent and careless about her plight in old age. They are unconcerned and unaware of even her presence. This is seen in the conversation of the Zamindar and his servant:

Gauri sthe midwife. She says that she is going to die, the servant spoke loudly, not without some irritation.

Die? Was she alive? The Zamindar shut his eyes in order to relish the hookah better (Das 1994: 87)-

And finally we find that Gauri dies without uncared for. The negligence of the villagers towards Gauri shows not only the negligence towards an old woman but also reflects on their lack of recognition and concern for her valuable service and sacrifice for them. Except Ahalya, nobody has shown their care for Gauri. Ahalya's care for Gauri and Gauri's concern for Ahalya present the idea that women are left to the care of women. We find a discrimination against Gauri here. The selfish and exploitative nature of the men folk is proved in their act of cheating and betraying Gauri till her old age. The sacrifice of Gauri's life career in the service of her young generation shows the magnanimity of the woman's heart. Thus the writer has succeeded in depicting the sacrifices of females against the selfishness of males

The story 'Kuturi Nani' similarly deals with the life of a young married girl called Kuturi Nani. "Kuturi" means one who is sensitive to tickling and "Nani" means elder sister and hence the name Kuturi Nani. The story is about the life of Kutun Nani and dates back to the narrator's early age when he had been to his uncle's house to spend a season with his newly married maternal uncle.

Kuturi Nani lives along with her husband in a lonely house situated on the other side of the river Vamsadhara of Gunupur Village. On the opposite side of the river is situated the narrator's uncle's house. Kuturi Nani collects milk from the cattle owners and supplies it to the different households in the colony. She also supplies milk to the narrator's uncle's house. When she meets the narrator, Kuturi Nani develops a kind of friendship with him. She discloses her story to her friend- Thus the narrator has presented

the life of Kuturi Nani as a story. Kuturi Nani has taken to the profession of supplying milk to live and support her drunken husband. Thus the story is aimed at depicting the domestic life of Kuturi Nani.

Unlike the other two stories, the present one portrays the picture of domestic dominance and exploitation of a woman in the household. Unlike the other two, this one is focussed on the domestic sphere. The domestic dominance here, is presented both in the physical and the psychological dominance of Kuturi Nani by her husband. The physical dominance of Kuturi Nani by her husband is seen in that she is being put into business of collecting and supplying milk while her husband remained an idler. Secondly, the husband's physical torture and assault of Kuturi Nani are other forms of exploitative dominance. The psychological dominance of Kuturi Nani is the result of her being physically dominated by the husband. Kuturi Nani is psychologically oppressed and dominated. Her psychological depression is seen in her lonely activity and interaction with the narrator. Thus Kuturi Nani is always subjected to oppression in her domestic life. But nowhere do we find her protest. The reason for her silent endurance of the husband's exploitation and torture is nothing but her role as a wife confined to a patriarchal family. As Millet says:

The position of women in patriarchy is such that they are expected to be passive, to suffer, and to be sexual objects, it is unquestionable that they are, with the varying degrees of success, socialized into such roles (Millet 1970. 194)

Kuturi Nani's act of collecting milk and supplying it to the households of the colony is a clear picture where we can easily notice the physical discrimination faced by her. We can consider this as physical discrimination because while the husband is an idle eater and depends upon Kuturi Nani's income to drink, on the other hand Kuturi Nani is compelled to pursue the business to support her parasitical husband. Kuturi Nani's idle and drunkard husband is a clear reason why she is forced to take up the tiring job. The direct physical discrimination is seen in Kuturi Nani being beaten up by her husband. As the writer discloses this act of "wife-beating" by the husband

I learnt from Nageshwar that **Nani's** husband was a brute, a drunkard and often beat her up mercilessly (Das 1995: 209).

The discrimination lies in Kuturi Nani being physically attacked by her husband for no fault of hers. The husband's use of power has made Kuturi Nani a mere slave to earn money for him. Thus the story, like the previous two, presents a case of power relationship where:

Violence against woman is perceived as a structural phenomena which is gender specific and is in built in the system. Coercion and force is used against women because of a hierarchical gender relationship, where men are dominant and women are subordinate (Madhurima et.al. 1995: 29-30).

The powerlessness of Kuturi Nani prevents her from protesting and resisting her husband's exploitative attitudes. This feeling of powerlessness and submission of Kuturi Nani can also be attributed to her physical violence by the husband. So it may be her experience of torture which generates the feeling of powerlessness making her adjust with the husband's whims and fancies. It shows how the physical violence brings out a voluntary submissive ideology among the women. Therefore Linda L. Lindsey observes

Battered women usually have a poor self-image, which contributes to their feelings of powerlessness and dependence. They may believe they are responsible for the violence against them and attempt to alter their behaviour to conform to their husband's expectations (Lindsey 1997 241).

Kuturi Nani's profession of collecting and selling milk can very well be related to the physical violence of her husband. She is physically forced to take up the profession, perhaps to support her husband's drunkenness. It is the masculine power of Kuturi Nani's husband which makes him master of his wife. Thus the game of power relationship is another dimension of this story.

Kuturi Nani is physically discriminated because she is not treated as wife but as a servant and slave whose valuable contribution to the family's welfare is not calculated. Kuturi Nani here is doubly discriminated. First, as a woman she is forced to bear the

burden of the business of collecting and supplying milk. Secondly, her labour and effort are not respected. Instead, they are neglected and abused. This is obvious in the exploitative attitude of Kuturi Nani's husband. This shows that women are tortured and neglected irrespective of their contribution to the family's welfare.

The psychological oppression of Kuturi Nani is seen in her isolated and lonely life. Kuturi Nani's loneliness can be known from her conversation with the narrator about her life as a housewife. The writer presents it in the following manner:

What do you do there? I asked.
I eat to my heart's content and lie on a golden bedstead
and sing (Das 1995: 207).

The "golden bedstead", "song", "heart's content" of course have an ironic connotation in Kuturi Nani's life as a milk seller. Her satisfaction with her morbid life shows her uncomplaining and silent adjustment with her poor and helpless condition. Her contentment with the poor condition of the house shows her alienation and aloofness from the luxury and aristocracy. This aloofness and alienation, however, has resulted in her isolated life. This is clearly evident in her conversation with the narrator. As the writer says:

Do you have a son like me?
No!
Have a brother?
No! (Das 1995: 207)

From the above passage we can very well understand the loneliness of Kuturi Nani. Much of her psychological depression springs from her physical alienation from her husband. Though she lives with her husband, we don't find any happy communication or conversation between them. The burden of the business and mental torture from the husband has perhaps prompted Kuturi Nani to talk to the narrator to find some kind of consolation.

Thus like other two stories, here too we find domination and exploitation. Kuturi Nani as a housewife has been subjected to household domination.

III

If we critically look into all the stories discussed above we will conclude that in all three cases, women are compelled to take up professions traditionally earmarked for them. The compulsion springs from the patriarchal and feudal control and domination of women by men. Heera, overpowered by the hotel owner, takes up prostitution. Gauri, having become a widow at an early age, takes up midwifery. And finally Kuturi Nani is compelled by her drunkard husband to carry on collecting and supplying milk. Thus Gauri as a widow, Heera as a prostitute and Kuturi Nani as a wife are seen compelled to submit themselves to the situations and circumstances created by their male counterparts.

It is also ironical to note the kind of exploitations Gauri, Heera and Kuturi Nani face in their professions. The physical exploitation against all these women is seen in the act of prostitution that involves violence and recklessness, in the case of wife-beating by Kuturi Nani's husband and in the act of the villagers' negligence and avoidance of Gaun in her old age. This physical exploitation they get from their work is unjustified. In all these cases, the women are put out to work for the service and benefit of their male counterparts. Heera's prostitution serves and satisfies the sexual desires of men. Gaun's midwifery serves the villager's need to get their children born safely. The same is true of Kuturi Nani's business in the running of her family. But Heera, Gaun and Kuturi Nani have not received their dues. Instead, they are exploited and dominated by their male counterparts.

The psychological and mental exploitation is another dimension of male domination in all these stories. The psychological exploitation is the result of their

physical domination. Heera's psychological exploitation is seen in the silent prostitution of her body and mind to the hotel owner and her clients. Her psychological depression also starts with her being rejected and deprived of food from the hotel owner. Moreover, the suspicious attitude of the people towards Heera is another source of her psychological depression, which ultimately proves fatal to Heera.

Gauri's psychological exploitation is seen in her helplessness and suffering during her old age. She has been deprived of proper attention from the villagers, which gives her psychological tension. Similarly in Kuturi Nani the psychological depression is seen in her isolated and neglected conjugal life.

The death of Heera and Gauri shows the triumph of the male power to which they were earlier subordinated. Kuturi Nani's domestic exploitation, on the other hand, shows the continuity and existence of male domination over the female.

In sum, we may conclude that Manoj Das shows a remarkable awareness of the interface between women and the world of professions. Whether as a sex worker or midwife, the female protagonists in Das suffer from the oppression of patriarchy. They are forced to stick to "professions" traditionally earmarked for women, and even here there is no redeeming feature. In offering a close look at the matrix of their lives, Manoj Das clearly adds to our understanding of the gender question in the regional context.

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CHAPTER-IV

MOTHERHOOD

The institution of motherhood is one of the **finest** aspects of the Indian society. Though most of the Indian families are patriarchal and feudal in nature, mothers and motherhood make an admirable contribution to the all round welfare of these families. The presence of women as members of the family is very often challenged and criticized. But their role as mothers brings them a respectable position within the household. The image of women in the Indian society as mothers or mother figures is always acknowledged as a very significant dimension of the social system. The significance of mothers can not **only** be derived from their social support to the members of the family but it can also be equally attributed to their economic, religious and moral assistance. Beyond their materialistic concern, the importance of mothers lie in their spontaneous sympathy, love, care and responsibility for the family. Their love is unconditional and extreme. Their love and devotion are unlimited and of a rare kind.

The image of the mother in India is not only confined to the women in real life but also to women in legend, history, and religion. In Indian society the mother figure is not restricted to married **women**, rather it also refers to any woman and girl irrespective of their age and status. All **Indian** women are referred as '**ma**' or '**amma**' in different parts of the country. Therefore **Usha** Bande says :

Since the concept of mother is central to Indian life and society, it has been treated with utmost care and concern in the **country's** philosophy, religion and literature. It is related to the historical process of the people within which the Indian society has been **engaged**, a process that is an intervening of tradition, culture, period of foreign rule and the final independence (Bande **1994: 1**).

Literature in India whether regional or Indian English has not escaped from depicting the institution of mother or motherhood as its subject matter. The aspect of '**motherhood**' has such a tremendous impact on the Indian writers that it has found its best expression and representation in the works of many authors like **Mulk** Raj **Anand**, Raja Rao, **R.K.**

Narayan, Anita Dcsai, and Bhabani Bhattacharya. This tradition still continues through the works of many younger generation writers like **Arun** Joshi, Gita Mehta, **Kamala** Markandeya and others.

Manoj Das who started writing in post independent era portrays the institution of **'motherhood'** with utmost care and concern. The mothers and mother figures in his works are portrayed through women characters of different age and group. We find the mother image both in married women and unmarried girls. Besides this, Das also presents the image of mother Goddess through the characters of real life **women**. The mother in **Das's** works is presented as a source and symbol of love, sacrifice and social security. He has treated the mother not only seen within the family but also outside the household.

The aspect of motherhood is seen prominently in the story, 'Lakshmi's Adventure'. Though the theme of the story deals with **Lakshmi's** meeting with the God and her subsequent encounter with the pundit of the temple, the notion of motherhood is conspicuously presented as a backdrop to this. The backdrop of motherhood is consciously made prominent by highlighting the role of two characters: Lakshmi as a six year old girl and the mother as Lakshmi's caretaker. They are from a poor family background and it is against this background that the institution of motherhood is projected. Both the characters are presented in a serious and sympathetic **situation**, and it is in this situation the relationships between the mother and Lakshmi provide us a clear picture of motherhood. Lakshmi is physically and psychologically not prepared to face the world beyond her child-world. Lakshmi's identity is thus presented as a child whereas Lakshmi's mother is presented as an adult experienced enough to cope up with the society. Thus the picture of a mother and a child is presented through Lakshmi and her mother to provide a notion of **"motherhood"**.

The institution of motherhood is strengthened with the mother's care and concern for Lakshmi and Lakshmi's love and respectful attitude towards her mother. Lakshmi as usual with a child is, once fascinated by a **"beautiful** frock displayed at the window of a shop in a bazar". She wants to buy and put it on. When her parents come **to know** about

her desire they go for buying it. But before they start to go, unfortunately they meet the moneylender from whom Lakshmi's father had borrowed money. Lakshmi understands this economic crisis and changes her mind. She tells her mother not to buy a new frock but to make one from her (mother's) old saree. This is how Lakshmi explains to God:

I told mummy, I had no desire really to buy a frock from the bazar. All that I wanted was to make a frock out of a torn but beautiful saree which I had seen lying useless in her trunk for a long time! (Das 1975: 51).

What is apparent here is not only Lakshmi's understanding of the poor condition of her family but also her love and desire for her mother's saree. Though Lakshmi is seen as a child, her act of understanding the situation presents herself as a mentally matured child. However her love for her mother's saree shows her as a child confined to the mother's saree. Her love for the mother's saree shows her conscience in which the mother's saree becomes a superior and better alternative to the bazar frock. Lakshmi's description of the saree as "torn but beautiful" and "lying useless" reflects her intention to show how a beautiful thing was lying useless. This act of Lakshmi not only shows her love for the saree but also reflects her love and respect for the mother. The saree may be torn but it is beautiful for her. It is also useful for her. Therefore Lakshmi tells the mother to make a beautiful frock out of it. Her desire to renew the saree in the form of a frock shows Lakshmi's reverence towards her mother's motherhood. All these descriptions of the saree and the attitude towards her mother, on the other hand, reveals Lakshmi's satisfaction with the motherhood of her mother.

The mother's extension of her motherhood to fulfill the desire of her child is seen in the mother's quick act of making the frock for Lakshmi. As Lakshmi tells God about this experience:

Mummy sat down to make a frock out of her old saree that very evening. She tried her best to hide her tsars from me (Das 1975: 51).

This immediate act of the mother shows her hearty feelings for Lakshmi. The act of love and feelings of the mothers for the children is the act of gratifying their

motherhood. Perhaps this is the reason why the mother in this story is keen to make a frock for Lakshmi. This act of the mother shows her reciprocation of feelings and gratitude. But it is ironical to note the mother's act of hiding tears from Lakshmi. The question arises as why the mother cries in stead of being happy in making a frock for Lakshmi. If the mother's quick attempt to make a frock shows her keen interest in reciprocating her love and concern for Lakshmi then why does she cry? The answer is as obvious as the mother's inability to buy a new frock for Lakshmi. The mother is well aware of the economic hardships of her family. If she was rich she could have bought a new frock. But when she reviews the situation she experiences a sense of diffidence in making her motherhood useful and supportive for Lakshmi. The making of a frock out of her old saree perhaps appears as a stain on her motherhood.

The question arises as to why the mother was so worried? Why not the father? As we know, it is her father who was more interested to buy a frock for Lakshmi. Lakshmi discloses her father's keen interest to buy a frock for her, to God. She says:

My daughter never asks me for anything. Since she desires to have a new frock I will buy one for her at any cost (Das 1975: 50).

Thus the father's interest is seen more determined here. Being unable to buy a new frock he should be more worried than the mother. But we find the mother being more worried. The situation appears to be reverse and this may be because of the writer's intention. His intention here is seen in his attempt to highlight the act of the mother and her motherhood. The tears in the mother's eyes on the one hand show the real attitude of the mother towards Lakshmi. On the other hand, it also shows the hindrance and depravity in utilizing motherhood for her.

The notion of motherhood is not only seen in the mother's and Lakshmi's attitudes towards each other but also in the former's role as a responsible mother and member of her family. Lakshmi's mother appears to be more responsible for the family than her father. The writer has presented this by making the mother's role more important

than the father's role. Lakshmi's father is presented as timid and weak to face the outside world. As Lakshmi observes:

To be frank I am a timid girl. Noise frightens me . And I believe, papa is no different. You know, he had high fever last week (Das 1975: 50).

In contrast to the timid father, Lakshmi's mother is presented as a responsible, clever and energetic mother. This is seen in the mother's act in manipulating the situation when the moneylender comes to collect money while her husband is sick. As Lakshmi says:

opened the door half and told him that papa was away and would return after a week (Das 1975: 51).

The mother's cleverly manipulation of the situation shows her ability to adjust the situation as a housewife. In this time of crisis when the husband was pitted against the moneylender it is the matriarchal strength of Lakshmi's mother that sustains the family. She thus proves herself as a devoted wife. Her sincere role as a mother and a housewife adds more vitality to her aspect of motherhood. This, on the other hand, conforms to what Linda L. Lindsey says:

The motherhood mandate issues a command to females of all ages instructing them that motherhood demands selfless devotion to their children and a sub-ordination of one's own life to the needs of children and family (Lindsey 1997: 194

Beside all these the motherhood of Lakshmi's mother is seen in her role as a mother in bringing up Lakshmi socially. This is seen when the mother asks Lakshmi not to tell a lie. The mother inspires Lakshmi to be a good mother by being truthful and decent. This is seen in the mother's advice. As Lakshmi puts it:

... 'But you will grow up to be a much better woman. You will not tell a lie under any circumstances (Das 1975: 52).

Thus we find the institution of motherhood appears to be a strong bond between the mother and Lakshmi. Lakshmi has as much role as of her mother for keeping the motherhood alive in this story.

Motherhood as an institution of love, care, and affection often serves as social security. It gives the child social dignity and recognition. This aspect is seen in the story 'The Third person'. Once in a rainy night a married couple takes shelter in a roadside inn. The innkeeper tells them to pay half a rupee for one night's shelter. Accordingly the couple stays there. But the woman gives birth to a son in the night making the total persons from two to three. So in the next morning when they start to leave the inn, the innkeeper charges extra for the third person, the newly born baby. But the father is hesitant to pay extra for the baby. Thus a quarrelsome situation arises. And it is against this background that we find the strong notion of motherhood.

Though the situation appears to be very peculiar the writer's intention in presenting a picture of motherhood is quite obvious. The "motherhood" is seen both in the mother's approval of paying full rent for her baby son and also in the different attitudes of the father and the mother to the situation at the inn. The attitudes of the mother and the father to the particular situation, here, makes the notion of motherhood more apparent and prominent.

The writer's clear description of the whole situation shows his underlying desire to project motherhood. This is seen in his description of the birth of the child. The writer highlights the birth of the child by describing it as creation versus destruction. The narrator explains it as follows:

During the night, while the region lay prostrate under a threat of destruction, in the dim interior of the cottage the law of the creation was in operation. A son had been born to the couple (Das 1995: 122).

The birth of the son not only lights up the dim interior of the cottage but it also throws the first light into the motherhood of the new mother. The woman becomes a mother. She is anxious and overwhelmed in extending her motherhood for the security

and comfort of her baby. "The woman came out, carefully holding her babe to her bosom" (Das1995: 123) says the narrator. This photographic description of the mother with her child by the writer provides "dignified appearance" of the mother. The mother is as happy in carrying her babe in her chest as she is keen to act as a mother. The mother's hand and her bosom here become the place of security for the baby.

Moreover the mother's motherhood is enhanced when she asks her husband to pay the rent for her baby. "...she directed her husband, in a solemn tone, to pay up the innkeeper"(Das1995: 123) says the narrator. The innkeeper who listens to this, generously tells the father to pay half the rent if not full for the child. As the narrator reports:

No! said the lady advancing towards the cart, Give him the full rent for the baby. Why should my child remain indebted to anyone from his very birth? Hasn't he any prestige? (Das 1995: 123).

These statements of the mother however show her motherly approach to secure social prestige and dignity for her baby. The word "my child" reflects her complete sense of possession of the baby in heart and mind. Her question, hasn't he any prestige? shows the mother's seriousness and acknowledgement of the baby's prestige. It also shows her serious attitude in not allowing the baby's prestige to be hampered. Moreover, the intention to be the mother of a prestigious baby is also obvious in the question. The intention to pay the rent for the baby in order to save its prestige is balanced with the mother's intention not to disrespect her motherhood. Therefore she is more happy and proud than the father to pay off the rent.

Thus the notion of "motherhood" is presented superior to money. Money which appears a threat to the prestige and dignity of the mother and her baby, in this story, is suppressed by the right attitudes of the mother. The writer has juxtaposed money motherhood indirectly to assess the superiority of the mother and her motherhood.

The role of the mother is not confined to bringing up a child only. The mother's role can also be in making the career of the child, in establishing him/her in the rest of his/her life. Such an example of mother's role in settling the career of her son is seen in the story 'The Concubine'. Sati Dei, a concubine of the late Raja of Sumanpur, is seen as a mother. The prince, the only son of the late raja is seen as the child to Sati Dei.

The prince who has lost his parents is now in the care of Sati Dei. Sati Dei who was once advised by the queen to take the responsibility of the prince is seen treating the prince as her son. The prince contests in election against the member who is supported by the members of "The Progressive Club". Sati Dei who goes for campaigning for the prince is caught in the exploitative eyes of Makhan Ray, Pradeep Bishoi, and the members of "The Progressive Club". Therefore in a meeting called by Sati Dei the members of the club as planned earlier disclose her identity as a concubine and harass her in carrying out the meeting. It is in this context we find the role of Sati Dei as a mother.

Since motherhood in patriarchy demands man's adequacy as husband and father, Sati Dei's motherhood has become questionable. Therefore the members of the club try to unveil Sati Dei's image as a concubine, hence making the people know that Sati Dei is a "kept wife", a concubine. Sati Dei's image of concubine is thus related to her image of mother. Her sense of motherhood which she practically shows for the prince is thus related to her womanhood.

Sati Dei who is looked as a concubine at the meeting starts to convince the members of the club by disclosing the reasons for which she is so careful about the prince. Sati Dei says:

When she was dying, the Rani had entreated me, "Sati, take care of my son!" That's why I'm doing my bit. ...The boy however, is as gentle as a calf." (Das 1994: 154).

Thus though Sati Dei is a concubine she is "entreated" by the queen as mother to the prince. Sati has become a mother substitute who exerted a tremendous influence on the prince's life. Thus we find a transfer of motherhood from one woman to another. The

queen while dying has performed this act of transferring by telling the latter to take care of the prince. And there is no doubt that it is Sati Dei who provides the prince the security and service which he obviously needed. Sati Dei's treatment of the prince as her son is seen in her appreciation of the prince as "as gentle as a calf. Thus we find a sense of motherhood in Sati Dei. Though she is socially deprived of being a mother, her love and service for the prince portrays her as a mother. Sati Dei has suppressed her image of a concubine with the image of a mother. Therefore she was bold enough, unlike the concubine, to come out of the palace to campaign for the prince. "Were the Raja alive, he would have skinned me alive" (Das 1994: 154) says Sati Dei. This shows how she as a concubine was confined to the four walls of the palace. But now as she sees herself as a mother she is encouraged enough to come out to help the prince. She comes out to campaign because she has forgotten her image as a concubine. She has taken up the role of the mother to help her son, the prince. Sati Dei's real intention in helping the prince to get the favor of the people is seen in her unquestioned confession as a concubine. As Sati Dei confesses her identity to Makhan Ray as:

Live long, sonny, how did you know so much about me?
You are right. I am the same Sati Dei;...(Das 1994: 154).

Sati Dei's confession here has more to do with the future of the prince than for herself. Sati Dei knows that any hesitation on her part to confess her real identity would lead to escalate the situation and it might hamper the popularity of the prince. Therefore she readily confesses her identity. Sati Dei's intention in helping the prince in each and every way is very obvious here.

Sati Dei's image as a mother is not only seen in her concern for the prince but also in her motherly attitude towards the members of "The Progressive Club". Her love and sympathy for the members is seen when sati Dei orders her servant Nrutya to "give my sons a couple of ladoos each. Don't you see how they have come braving the summer sun?" (Das 1994: 154).

The word "my sons" and the sentence " 'don't you see how they have come braving the summer sun?'" show Sati Dei's love and care for the members as a mother. Though the members of the club look at Sati Dei as a concubine, the latter presents her hearty love and affection as a mother. One can not ignore her feeling for the members of the club when Sati Dei orders Nrutya to serve ladoos to them. As a mother, she feels in herself the pains and sufferings of the members who have come out in the hot summer. This love and affection of Sati Dei have won the hearts of the members. Therefore the members leave the place bowing their heads to Sati Dei. The members present it as follows:

After we had consumed a couple of ladoos each and taken leave of Sati Dei, duly bowing to her. We felt that the day had suddenly become extremely tender and pleasant (Das 1994: 154).

Despite the members' verbal tussle with Sati Dei they are finally overpowered by latter's love, care and tolerance as a mother. Thus we find the victory of the motherhood. This story unlike the other two leaves back the idea that motherhood can be ascribed to any woman who is full of love, feeling, care and attention for the child.

The notion of motherhood is prominently presented in the story 'The Substitute for the Sitar'. The mother being bored with monotonous life starts playing with a sitar which she has got from her sister. Meena the young girl of the mother is seen indifferent to this activity of her mother. Therefore she starts hating the instrument. As the narrator says:

Meena, who at first had looked quite pleased with the novel look of the instrument, developed a furious jealousy towards it for the unexpected treatment it had received from her mother (Das 1969: 106).

Meena's hatred for the instrument on the other hand shows her love and desire for the mother. Her jealousy can not be considered as negative as it is the most noticeable feature of children. Therefore K.C.Baral says:

The infant's birth and subsequent awareness of the mother as the object of love sets him to learn that in a mutable world mother is the only enduring image. Jealousy and envy directs the child towards his siblings who are his rivals to possess the mother (as quoted Bande 1994: 20).

Despite Meena's dislike and resistance to her mother's love for the sitar, the mother continues to play with the sitar. Meena who finds it difficult to adjust with the mother's habit disappears. The parents search for her around the house. The mother curses the sitar for being responsible for Meena's disappearance. Therefore she goes to crush the sitar and she tries to get it out of the box. When she puts her hand on the box she finds Meena ready to jump to her lap.

The importance of motherhood here is projected with the cause of Meena's abhorrence with the instrument and her subsequent disappearance. The influence of the motherhood on the child's psychology can also be seen here.

Meena's dislike for the sitar comes out of her jealousy towards the instrument. Her jealousies increase with the mother's increasing love for the sitar. The longing for the motherly love and affection is always inherent in the children. Therefore Meena marks that her mother was gradually increasing her love for the sitar. The former becomes jealous to get more love and attention of her mother. Meena wants more attention. As the narrator says:

...Meena vaulted into her mother's lap and in a determined bid tried to separate her from the instrument. Nothing would pacify her until she occupied her whole mother (Das 1995: 48).

Meena's jealousies thus can be attributed to her strong desire in diverting her mother's love and attention from the sitar to her (Meena). Therefore the mother's unchanged habit of playing sitar has led Meena to disappear. Meena's father says:

But my wife was only too sure that our anguished daughter had left us because of her impression that her mother loved the sitar more than she loved her (Das 1995: 48-49).

Meena's action suggests her penchant for the mother's love and care. Therefore when she is deprived of getting it she hides herself in the same box where the sitar lies. And when the mother tries to get the sitar out of the box, she finds Meena ready to jump into her arms. This is followed by the mother "clasping the child to her breast in a wild ecstasy". The mother understands the cause for Meena's annoyance and abhorrence with the instrument. Therefore she starts to love Meena with all emotion and attention.

The quest for the mother is depicted in another story 'A Letter from the Last Spring'. Rina a little girl whose mother is in the sanatorium is seen waiting for the post master to get a letter from her mother. The narrator who always watches Rina from the opposite balcony develops intimacy with her. Once the narrator finds the watch man of Rina's mansion delivering him a letter. And to his surprise the narrator finds that the letter is written from a distant sanatorium to Rina. As the narrator reads it out he confirms that the letter is from Rina's mother.

The mother's letter to Rina shows her indomitable love for her. It also shows Rina's love for the mother. Thus we find a strong mother child relationship between Rina and her mother. The narrator discloses Rina's love for her mother as seen in the latter's dislike to be dressed up by others than her mother. This is seen in the mother's letter:

...I am sorry to learn from your father's letter that because I am not there to dress you, you refuse to pose for new pictures (Das 1995: 196).

Thus Rina's resentment in being dressed up by others can be attributed to her love and liking for the mother. She does not find the same love and care in others as she finds in her mother. Therefore when the mother is away in the sanatorium her letter becomes the only source of love and affection for Rina. This is the reason why Rina is frequently found waiting for the postman. Rina's anxiety in getting a letter from her mother is seen in her curious questions to the postman. As the narrator describes it:

She waited for the postman, who appeared at the distant turning a little before noon. When he came to her house, she leaned as far as possible over the railing and, in a voice marked by a hope and fear, asked, "Is there a letter for me? My name is Rina (Das 1995: 195).

Rina keeps on waiting even though she fails to get any letter. The ecstasy to get a letter from the mother has suppressed her pains and suffering in continuous waiting for the postman. Thus her desire to be overwhelmed by getting a letter from the mother has made Rina to inquire repeatedly with the postmaster. As the narrator presents this:

She would come out once more and lean over the railing, to withdraw only when the post man, on his second round, would wave his hand and cycle away (Das 1995: 195).

As an isolated child Rina seeks her mother's attention and care. The letter appears to be the symbol and source of motherly love and care for Rina. The mother on the other hand understands the needs of Rina. And therefore in her letter she promises Rina "...every week I will write a letter to you. I wish I could write more." (Das 1995: 196).

Thus the mother is also seen anxious to provide love and care which her daughter needs. As a mother she has clearly understood her child's problems. She has very well understood the psychological pressure on Rina. Therefore the mother writes letter to Rina to reduce her psychological pressures. The expression of motherhood is not only seen in the mother's act of writing letters but also in her intention to see Rina .This is obvious in the mother's letter where she says:

I am always thinking of you and dreaming of you. I always look at your pictures.. .Please, my dear child, allow them to take your pictures. I will love to see them as soon as possible (Das 1995: 196).

Thus we find a reciprocal relationship between the mother and her child. Rina's longing for the mother is as much as the mother's intention to see Rina. But the situation has deprived both of them. The mother has died leaving Rina to wait for the letter. Rina who is unaware of her mother's death keeps on waiting in her balcony for the letters from her mother. Rina's father on the other hand tries to divert Rina's continuous waiting by

providing her money. But Rina's anxiety in waiting for the letters has not been diverted by her father's wealth. Her longing for the mother has never died though her father has tried to divert her attention. As the narrator puts it:

Rina's father was rich. But all the diversions his wealth could provide had not succeeded in making his child forget to wait for the postman (Das 1995: 197).

Rina understands the importance of the love and attention of the mother. It is her child heart, which has felt the necessity of the motherhood. Therefore when Rina notices the narrator waiting in his balcony opposite to her she thinks that the latter was also waiting for a letter from her mother. Therefore Rina sends her own letter, which she gets from her mother to the narrator. According to the narrator:

At last she knew the answer. She decided to offer me the only letter she had ever received from her mother. She assured me that the letter was now entirely mine and hoped that my anguish at not receiving a letter from my mother would be reduced (Das 1995: 197).

This act of offering letter to the narrator reflects Rina's understanding of the importance of the mother. Rina as a child has felt the absence of the mother and therefore she has been straightforward to fulfill the narrator's anxiety. Thus Rina appears as a mother figure to the narrator. The institution of motherhood is highlighted here by presenting the notion of motherhood through Rina and her mother. The writer's intention to give importance to the role of the mother is seen in his act of subordinating the father's role.

In the story 'A Crack of the Thunder', the image of a girl is seen in two different types. The theme of the story deals with the Zamindar's plan to trap Lalita, a twenty years old orphan to his lustful act. The Zamindar once notices Lalita while the latter returns to her village, clad with the wet cloth after taking bath. Lalita's youthful beauty has made the Zamindar lusty, and therefore the latter tries to have the former in his house that very night. The Zamindar orders his servant to get Lalita into the house. The libidinousness of

the Zamindar is obvious in his statements of order to Shekhar, his servant. As the writer puts it:

Thereafter, he had informed Shekhar categorically, lowering his voice, that he had fallen in love with Lalita. He must have her that very night (Das 1989: 127).

Shekhar the old servant who has been serving the Zamindar's family from the old zamindar till the present one is thus assigned to lure Lalita to come to the Zamindar's house that very night. Therefore takes the help of Heera, the maidservant of the Zamindar to motivate Lalita to agree to the Zamindar's desire. Finally they succeed in luring Lalita by providing ornaments and cloth. Lalita is brought into the Zamindar's room that night. But Shekhar who very well predicts the aftermath of Lalita's entering into the Zamindar's room feels very sympathetic about her. As the writer describes it:

He felt as if he was towing someone along. In his mind flashed the vision of a goat being dragged to the altar for sacrifice. He had done that himself several times (Das 1989: 129).

Shekhar as an experienced servant of the family easily grasps the evil intention of the Zamindar. Shekhar has been doing this job of collecting women for the Zamindars. But in the case of Lalita, Shekhar feels guilty and uneasy. Shekhar visions the wretchedness of Lalita in the hand of the Zamindar that night. As the writer observes:

The vision was insufferable and the sensation accompanying it excruciating. Lalita could only weep, she could not protest (Das 1989: 130).

Thus it is clear from Shekhar's vision that Lalita has fallen prey to the Zamindar's lustful eye. She has become an object of sex for the Zamindar. But this prediction of Shekhar is sarcastically terminated when in the next morning he goes to take Lalita from the Zamindar's room to the former's house. The Zamindar has failed to fulfil his planned desire. He tells Shekhar:

You are already here, *Naib*. to take her away, are you? Is the night past? Bad luck. All was in vain. Look there,

grumbled the Zamindar, pointing his finger into his room
(Das 1989: 131).

Shekhar to his surprise sees the image of the mother Goddess. He also notices the "little priest kneeling before the deity". Shekhar becomes confused to understand all these transformations. However it is the Zamindar who discloses the secrets of the night to Shekhar. The Zamindar says:

It was his sudden whim to join me here and he arrived soon after you left. And Lalita's face inspired him to draw pictures. Have I slept a wink? Time and again I get up and observe him engrossed in his work. I failed to coax him to go to bed," reported the Zamindar, penitent yet proud. "From the chest he took out those ornaments meant for the deity at Dusserah and adorned Lalita with them, he added (Das 1989: 131).

Thus it is the motherless son of the Zamindar whose treatment of Lalita as a Goddess has changed the Zamindar's treatment of Lalita as a sex object. It is the son who has saved the sanctity of Lalita's womanhood by giving her the image of Goddess. Thus Lalita becomes a mother figure both to the father and the son. The Zamindar's evil intention in enjoying Lalita is changed into his noble act of respecting the later. In the word of the writer:

The landlord stepped back, awe-struck, and joined his palms and bowed involuntarily (Das 1989: 132).

Shekhar who had the fear about the ill treatment of Lalita by the Zamindar is overwhelmed to see Lalita in the image of the mother. Lalita's mother-figure has transformed Shekhar's outlook and belief for which the latter hears "a perfect invocation to the Goddess, *ya devi sarva-bhutesu matri rupena samsthita!* "Thou dweldest in all as the mother" (Das1989: 132).

Shekhar prostrates himself at Lalita's feet and begs pardon for his evil task of canying her to the Zamindar's house. Thus we find a sudden transformation of Lalita's image from a mere girl to a spiritual mother figure. It is ironical to note the Landlord's

acknowledgement of Lalita's image of mother. However it is also obvious that behind this transformation of the Landlord's attitude lies the attitude of his son. As a motherless son he has not failed to recognize the image of the mother in Lalita. Many young girls and women who have been the Zamindar's victims have escaped from the son's eye. Finally, his searching eye for a mother is fell upon Lalita's luminous and innocent figure. And therefore being present in the room, the son hinders his father's evil action.

II

The treatment of motherhood in all these cases are presented in an Indian context. The mothers are always marked with their benevolent qualities. They are seen in their lovable and affectionate attachments to the children.

The sacrifice of the mother for the wellbeing of their children is noticed in Meena's mother's giving up of the habit of playing the sitar. It is also seen in Sati Devi's help for the prince and Rina's offering of her mother's letter to the narrator.

Motherhood is depicted in the relationship between the mothers and their children. The roles of the fathers are not developed in all the stories, perhaps to present the picture of motherhood in a prominent way. It is also interesting to note that except in 'The Concubine', in all other stories, the relationship is noticed between the mother and the daughter. But the notion of "motherhood" is never neglected. Rather it is extended from the social context to the spiritual sphere.

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CONCLUSION

THE ACHIEVEMENT OF MANOJ DAS

This chapter, as a conclusion to the thesis, begins with a summation of my discussion of different literatures in India and the close relationship that exist among them. I also review the social aspects and the subject matter in Das's works as well as the treatment of female characters in his fiction.

In the first chapter of this dissertation, I have attempted to find out the close relationship and commonality among different literatures in India such as Indian English literature, Indian literature and regional literature. I have analyzed the features which bring out commonality among all these literatures. The discussion of Oriya literature and Manoj Das's output in this field are aimed at giving an introduction to Manoj Das as a bilingual writer.

Besides the English language it is the choice of subject matters and themes, which seems to provide Indian English writing a distinct character. The difference in the choice and treatment of subject matters brings out the difference between Indian English literatures and Regional literatures. It is in this context that I have discussed the subject matters in Manoj Das's works, as a bilingual writer.

In the second chapter I have discussed various social aspects in Das's works such as feudalism, community life, human relationship, early political situation during the independence era of India etc. From the discussion it would be seen that the subject matters in Das are not imaginary. Rather, they are representative and drawn from the reality at the grass-root level. These issues and events never fall outside the boundary of the society. Rather, they are the integral part of the community life. Issues like belief in

God and ghost, participation in politics and Gandhism etc. are very much related and are close to the Indian society. The names of the places, people, events and institution in Das's works show his socio-cultural understanding. Thus the reality of Das's works can be gauged from his choice of subject matters which are the part and parcel of Indian society. It is in this choice of subject matters that Das crosses the regional boundary and positions himself as one among the other Indian English writers.

Beside the subject matters, the use of English language in a convincing manner is another noteworthy aspect of Das's works. The spontaneity of his narration and fluid expression of thought reflects his command over language. The perfect use of words enhance the literary effect though there are certain local words which denote reference and relationship, the idea and expression are never confused. The use of short and simple sentences makes the narrative highly readable. The use of conversation and colloquial expression on the other hand, makes his work fresh and lively.

The third chapter analyses Das's characterization of women in relation to their position in society. His treatment of women characters, as discussed in this chapter, has satirical undertones. His social vision lies in his keen observation of socio-cultural institutions and customs such as prostitution, mid-wifery, and household matters in Indian society and in the treatment of the plights of women as seen in these spheres. His satire is evident in his style of narration and the way he presents women's status and the male ideology. The woman question in Das is focussed on the socio-cultural matrix. His women characters are drawn from a patriarchal and feudal order and are found pitted against male ideology. The stories dealt with these issues present the problems which Indian women face in the male dominated society. Though Das has not given any clear cut solution to these problems, his intention to make the readers conscious about these issues is very clear. The discussion of the three stories in the third chapter, which dealt with women characters, as seen in their profession is meant to raise consciousness among his readers. By depicting the issues like prostitution, mid-wifery and household torture, the writer points out some of the real-life problems which women in India face, dominated as they are by their male counterparts. At the same time the writer also presents the male attitudes towards women in society. I have used here some feminist

insights and have shown how these conform to the feminist ideology. The alignment between Das's treatment of the women's issues and his feminist ideology reflects his approach to the treatment of his female characters.

Women characters in Das are basically treated as mothers and mother figures. Chapter four examines the image of women as mothers and mothers-figures from various angles-sociological, cultural, psychological and spiritual. The institution of motherhood is discussed here. It follows from the discussion that the role of mothers and mother figures can be seen in their role in influencing a situation, a character or a plot. The mother's role in a situation is seen in the story 'The Third Person' and 'Lakshmi's Adventure'. The story 'The Crack of the Thunder*' presents the role of the mother in influencing character. The institution of motherhood is treated from an Indian point of view. Thus the spirit of sacrifice and responsibility that Indian women exhibit as mothers and mother figures is apparent in the discussion.

Women in Manoj Das's works are, thus presented as complex beings with many dimensions. They belong to all age groups and have a pervasive role. The treatment of women in all these myriad aspects, on the other hand, shows Das's intimate observation of human behavior in society.

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