

**WOMEN'S ISSUES IN BENGALI AND INDO-ENGLISH FICTION:
MALE AND FEMALE PERSPECTIVES**

Dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment for the degree of
Master of Philosophy in Comparative Literature (ENGLISH)

by

Sharmistha Chakraborty

**Centre for Comparative Literature
University of Hyderabad, Hyderabad**

June, 2000

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled **WOMEN'S ISSUES IN BENGALI AND INDO-ENGLISH FICTION: MALE AND FEMALE PERSPECTIVES** submitted to the University of Hyderabad in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy in Comparative Literature** is an account of the original research work carried out by **Sharmistha Chakraborty** under my supervision. The dissertation or its any embodied part has not been submitted in this university or institution for award of any degree or diploma.



(Dr. Udaya Narayana Singh)

Supervisor

Professor of Linguistics, Centre for ALTS

University of Hyderabad, Hyderabad

Place: Hyderabad.

Date : June 30, 2000

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the dissertation entitled **WOMEN'S ISSUES IN BENGALI AND INDO-ENGLISH FICTION: MALE AND FEMALE PERSPECTIVES** submitted to the University of Hyderabad in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy in Comparative Literature** is an original research work carried out by me under the supervision of Prof. Udaya Narayana Singh, Professor of Centre for ALTS, University of Hyderabad .

I hereby declare that to the best of my knowledge, the present work or any part thereof has not been submitted previously for award of any other degree or diploma in this or any other university or institution.

Place: Hyderabad-500046, India.

Date: June 30,2000

Sharmistha Chakraborty.

Sharmistha Chakraborty

Enrol. No. 99HCHM03

Centre for Comparative Literature

University of Hyderabad

ENDORSEMENT

(Prof. Y. Venkataramana Rao)

(Prof. Y. Venkataramana Rao)

Head-in Charge and

Dean, School of Humanities

University of Hyderabad

Hyderabad-500046

DEAN
SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES
University of Hyderabad
Hyderabad-500 134

Udaya Singh

(Dr. Udaya Narayana Singh)

Professor, Centre for ALTS

University of Hyderabad,

Hyderabad-500 046

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Sharmishtha Chakraborty

**DEDICATED TO
MY MOTHER**

**WOMEN'S ISSUES IN BENGALI AND INDO-ENGLISH FICTION:
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0.1. It is good to begin a dissertation on the gender question by quoting a recent poem from an otherwise patriarchal literary tradition of an obscure language called Maithili to show how aware today's writing is about this question. I have come across these lines in its Bengali translation which goes like this:

raamke praNaam karo *by Bibhuti Anand*

ato joRe heso naako tumi
jaano naa-ki tumi ek naarii
dauRio naako oibhaabe

jene raakho tumi ek naarii
baabaake bhaaike peyo bhoy
jaanoi to tumi ek naari,

cokhtaa naamiye calo palakTaa jhepe
ekaa tumi berio naa jubatii kumaarii
jaano jaano tumi ek naarii
gaayer opar ei shaaRii
shaaRiir talaay rekho aabru tomaar

(Translated from Maithili into Bengali by Udaya Narayana Singh,
in Singh 1999:69; a part of the poem is quoted)

Translation:

Don't laugh heartily
Don't you know you are a woman?
Don't run like that
Know that you are a woman
Be scared of your father and brother
Know well you are a woman.
Walk with a coy look in your eyes
Don't go alone you virgin lass
Remember you are a woman.
Wrap the sari well on your body
Beneath the Sari preserve your virginity!

(Translated from Bengali rendering into English by Sharmistha Chakraborty)

0.2. This thesis, organized more in the form of a research fragment rather than a formidable dissertation, is a comparative study of four select novels, two Bengali and two Indo-Anglian. The novels chosen for comparison are written by a male and a female writer in each language. The major concern is the portrayal of women characters and women's issues therein from the male and female point of view. The Bengali novels include Baamaabodhini (1997) by Nabaneeta Devsen and Anubhav (1994) by Dibyendu Palit. Novels selected from the Indo-Anglian front include Bhabani Bhattacharya's Music For Mohini (1952) and The Dark Holds No Terrors by Shashi Deshpande (1990). All the above mentioned works are by famous writers who also happen to be the representative writers of their time and these works suggest the shift in the societal attitude towards women in the twentieth century.

My thesis is more of an essay with a brief introduction and finally a set of concluding remarks, interspersed by an analysis of the major novels by these authors. It is not intended to be a detailed analysis of the major women characters in the aforesaid novels. Some important themes which I have touched upon in my work are that of ideas of feminism, how the problems faced by women differ from place to place, the problems in their home front as compared to the ones in their work place, i.e. the private domain vs. the public domain. This thesis also brings out the individual sensibilities of the writers regarding their women characters in particular, and women in general.

1.1. The beginning of the nineteenth century marked certain sea change in the society with the Reformist movement furthering women's cause. Reformers like Raja Rammohan Roy and Vidyasagar aimed at bringing a change in the mundane life of the female lot. In those days, women had generally nothing else to do on this earth except for the role in the continuation of the race, rearing the children, looking after the domestic activities and to fulfil the requirements of her husband and children. The heads of the society then did not consider the education of women at all necessary. But the society envisaged an urge towards the emancipation of women with the various reform movements gearing up as a result of the positive influence of the West.

With the help of Lord Bentick and Ripon, Rammohan Roy, who was a champion of women's rights, and Vidyasagar, the well-known scholar cum social reformer, directed the reform movement towards facilitating education for women, which was until then, denied to them. In respect of female education, there was initial opposition because of the tradition which prohibited women from being exposed to bookish knowledge. The processes of social transformation included widow remarriage, and the stopping of cruel and inhuman practice of bride burning - known as the custom of 'Sati', protests against child marriage, and establishment of schools for women. They were all directed towards emancipation of women.

1.2. But like their predecessors, women in early 19th century were still within the bounds of patriarchy and still the values of chastity and motherhood were expected to be of supreme importance in their lives. In fact, the guardians of the society who initially supported the cause of female education wanted their women in the family to be educated so that they could discharge their duties as wives or mothers even better. They wanted a transformation in women without disturbing the role they were supposed to play at home.

However, it was the middle class women who started to take the benefits of formal education. They took this as the first step towards achieving freedom and equality. The Calcutta School Book Society, the Theosophical Society of Madras, and the Arya Samaj were the pioneers in promoting female education. There was a kind of "disciplining" (Chatterjee, Partha.1994, pp-129,130) and a stress on developing the essential womanly qualities of self-sacrifice, devotion, patience, love etc. There is no doubt that education helped women to voice their frustrations and talk about their deprivations. As a result, many women wrote about their lives, their time and the conditions in which they lived.

1.3. In the twentieth century women who were becoming educated themselves became the educators, whereas in the nineteenth century in spite of education emphasis was put on conservatism. In the twentieth century, women started defining their roles and at the same time, made efforts to redefine their future (Forbes,Geraldine.1998. p-61). Forbes

explained further that as women started assuming leadership roles they addressed women's issues regarding female education or the practice of purdah, etc. more effectively. They could share the experiences of other women even if they were not of the same economic and social strata. Further, educated men also wanted educated women as their wife, who would give them both emotional and intellectual assistance. Thus female education which was once introduced for better functioning on the part of the women gradually enabled them to voice their protests on several issues and demand equal rights as compared to their male counter parts.

It is important to underscore the cliché that women have always been deprived of their liberty and freedom in the male dominated society. While in some cases women's freedom is directly challenged by physical domination or exploitation of various kinds, in many others, there are impositions of socio-cultural taboos and beliefs. India has not been an exception to these trends. With its independence the country formed a national identity of its own. In the post-Independence era a woman also started a quest for her own self. The changes in the sensibility of the society gave impetus to women's aspirations. Literature alone can create the consciousness which makes one's existence meaningful. According to Sisir Kumar Das literature in the nineteenth century has been a manifesto of social change as far as woman's portrayal is concerned (Das, Sisir Kumar.1995.p-323).

In the literature of the post-independence period, the disturbed feminine psyche could easily be seen to be in a state of transition from tradition to modernity. Here, the psyche of women who waded out to create an identity of their own has well been portrayed. And so far as woman's existence is concerned both Bengali and Indo-Anglian fiction have presented a variety of women characters --- from conventional women to the New women. Bengali literature, right from the beginning, had presented the problems and dilemmas of 'being a woman'. This is evident in the writings of Bankimchandra, Saratchandra and even Rabindranath Tagore. Saratchandra is very often referred to as a writer who was dedicated to woman's cause. True, he gives a clear picture of how women from different classes suffer, but he does not probe deep into the question --as to why they suffer? There is no doubt today that the patriarchal society is at fault, but mere

presentation of women as victims do not serve any purpose. The real task is to find out the roots of the evil.

But, of course, one could argue that a writer's task is not equal to that of a social worker. A writer can only present the realities of the society in the garb of a 'a fiction'. He cannot teach or preach anyone about the evils. In these early writings women are basically portrayed as compromising ^{what} to be in the role of an ideal wife and a mother. Thus Bankim chandra Chatterjee's violent rebellious heroine Debi Chowdhurani becomes a dutiful wife at the end of the novel and comes back to stay with her husband Brajeswar. She forgets the fact that it was only because of his lack of assertion that one day she was forced to leave home and become a dacoit. The trend about woman's issues as set up by these writers seem to be continued by the later generations too – although there was a shift in the sensibility.

Sisir Kumar Das points out that there was always an inherent fear among the male members of the society that the educated women would ultimately challenge the ideals of womanhood – the 'stridharma' which was sanctioned and codified (cf. Das, Sisir Kumar. 1995. p-331).

It is assumed that female experiences are universal and that women share common types of oppression, the most dominant one being that of patriarchy. In the realm of social relations, the farcical nature of family relationships and marriages is well evident. The family plays a key role in Indian scheme of life. The Indian woman is still dependent on the emotional support and understanding of parents, husband, children and other relatives. Problem arises when family members are reluctant to accept woman members as their equals, as human beings.

1.5. Indo-Anglian writings, though less in volume, compared to other regional literatures, follows the same pattern so far as themes related to women are concerned. Mulk Raj Anand, one of the first generation Indo-Anglian writers has shown great concern towards social problems like untouchability, caste discrimination and also issues

concerning women. He was deeply influenced by Premchand, the noted Hindi novelist of the pre-independence era. While he portrayed traditional women as persons who were self-sacrificing and patient and as those who suffer all the atrocities against them silently, Mulk Raj Anand suggested that women should break away from the blind traditions for their emancipation. This is evident in his novel Gauri (1960). Gauri, an uneducated village woman silently suffers all the exploitation and atrocities meted upon her but finally she decides to put an end to all the fortunes. She walks out of her marriage courageously, takes up the job of a nurse and emerges triumphant at the end. She was sure about what she could do and we get the picture of a woman who revolted against her fortuous family members – both in her ancestral and in-laws' house. Gauri is a woman who knows her worth and asserts her identity.

2.1. In the post-independence era – especially in the works of Bhabani Bhattacharya, we find conventional women but with liberated outlook. They accept tradition and conventions but fight against the vices whenever necessary. His women characters are 'pure women.' He presents the Indian women as having been full of vitality and exuberance and shows how they are 'victimised'. But still "the reader feels that she is the ray of hope for mankind, that it is the pure woman, who, though victimised, gives form to an unjust life and informs us and the world we live in with love. The concept of the innocent victimised woman is a ^{sp}continous thread in his fictional output". (Krishnaswamy, Shanta, 1983,p-60).

Most of Bhabani Bhattacharya's works are set against the backdrop of famine. Both So Many Hungers and He who Rides A Tiger refer to the sufferings of masses and that of individuals also. The famine of '1942-43 was manmade and it killed millions of village folks. While many fled in search of food and job from the village, many suffered on the streets and died there. This novel shows the economic exploitation and the political suppression. He shows how men and women have been victim and how they died of hunger. Kajoli is the interesting as well as the most important character. She was a simple, chaste village girl who sacrificed herself always for some greater cause. Devata was her respected leader and under his inspiration she started selling newspapers. She

faced extreme agonies on the highway on her way to Calcutta in the hope of getting a job and some food. Bhabani Bhattacharya painted a sordid picture in showing jackals eating people on the road lying unconscious because of extreme hunger.

In a moment of extreme hunger Kajoli took a bread from a soldier without the least idea of what she was to face afterwards. While she was busy eating that bit of bread, the soldier raped her. Later, she had an abortion. She came out of that trauma, a bold and experienced girl who could face the harsh realities of the world more effectively. Bhattacharjee subtly shows how even a peasant woman does not lose hope and fight the constraints inflicted upon her effectively.

2.2. Bhattacharya's another work A Goddess Named Gold (1960) presents Meera as the female protagonist. Meera's grandfather is a wondering minstrel from whom she has received a magic talisman which is supposed to transform copper into gold. But for that she has to carry the copper on her own body and she has to be benevolent and unselfish and help others in need. Now, the Seth of the village is a staunch believer of various superstitions. He knows that Meera has to be benevolent and so he himself pushes his child into a well so that Meera gets an opportunity to save that boy. The Seth binds an amulet in Meera's arm but the moment she realises his evil designs she throws it away. Meanwhile the minstrel also comes back and explains the real implication of this talisma. The talisma is the symbol of India's freedom. The way Gandhi has given it to the country men, the minstrel has given it to Meera. The minstrel is an idealist and considers freedom "as a state of the mind" (AGNG, p-301). It is the freedom to be free. He dreams of reforming the society. True freedom can be achieved not by hoarding wealth but by dedicated service of the citizen. "Freedom is the means to that end"(AGNG, p-303).

3.2. Among the novels of Shashi Deshpande, Roots and Shadows (1983) is a woman centered novel. Indu is the protagonist who has been brought up by Akka, a childless widow who came to her parental home years ago. While all the members of the family fear and respect Akka, who is the apparent authority of the household, Indu questions her supremacy. Much against Akka's wishes, she marries Jayant. Akka is confident that such

marriages never work. It is as if to prove Akka wrong that Indu marries Jayant and leaves her parental home, “full of hatred for the family, for Akka especially” (RAS, p-20), determined to show Akka how their marriage would work.

But Indu has a loveless married life and she retorts: “Love is a big fraud, a hoax....the sexual instinct is true....self-interest, self-love, they are the basic truths...”(RAS, p-173) . She is always denied the right to express her feelings. Her silence goes to such an extent that finally she loses the capacity even to know herself what she feels. And she says, “I hid my responses and emotions as if they were bits of garbage.”(RAS, p-40). Jayant humiliates her when she shows interest and asks her husband to help her about her physical needs. An enraged Jayant considers his wife “not a pure woman, not a faithful wife,” (RAS, p-92). She is forced to be ‘an anachronism’ and she herself is confused about her womanhood. Jayant is her only joy and without him her joy would be incomplete. She becomes so dependent that without the trap of marriage with Jayant she feels rootless. Though she tries to escape Jayant and comes back to her ancestral home, gradually she develops the courage to face the identity crisis that her marriage had posed. So, she returns to Jayant “to suffer and find her roots.”

That Long Silence (1988) is yet another fictional work by Shashi Deshpande and centres around the main character Jaya. Like Indu, Jaya is also brought up by a dominating mother and she also, as if to break the barriers of various constraints, plans to marry Mohan. Jaya’s mother, a traditional woman, opposes this marriage. Now, since the mother has opposed, Jaya must marry Mohan as it was, “Ai who finally made up mind for me,” (TLS, p-93). But she too has a loveless marriage like a pair of bullocks which have been yoked together. She is a wretched victim for according to Mohan he can not do any wrong. She understands the void in their marital relationship and is terrified. Jaya does not revolt rather, maintains silence. It is Mohan who revolts. He is charged with dubious dealings at his office and he considers his wife as well as his boss responsible for it. He is advised by his friend to stay away from his flat for a temporary period till everything cools down. So, Jaya and Mohan shift to a flat in Dadar where they have already stayed earlier before going to Churchgate. Despite her resentment she follows

her husband and during this period her self-introspection begins. She tries to discover her real self which is an ephemera of an unfulfilled wife, a disappointed mother and a failed writer. Her writings are rejected for something is missing in them and Kamat, the critic, points out that it was fear - fear of writing, of failing. She starts 'Secta' a column and gets the approval of the readers, her husband and editor. Jaya says, "she had been the means through which she had shut the door, firmly, on all those other women who had invaded my being, screaming for attention... women I had known I could not write about, because they might --- it was just possible --- resemble Mohan's Mother or aunt, or my mother or aunt" (TLS, p-149). So, not only patriarchy but women have also remained silent about themselves. Mohan manipulates her life in such a way that it is impossible for her to know what she has wanted and what she wants, "to know what you want..... I have been denied that." (TLS, p-25). But she does not revolt. She does not even desire to take revenge or at least walk out on Mohan. This turmoil and confusion, 'the panic', controls her view of life and she goes on with the burden of pleasing others. Gradually, her consciousness that she has been gulled fills her with agony which leads her to a self exploration. She understands that she has let the 'ghosts', take possession of her mind and she has only defined her roles in terms of Mohan. She has allowed herself to be subdued and repressed. She sometimes thinks about Mohan as an adversary more hostile than she had imagined but at the same time she does not find any meaning to her life without him. One is reminded of Indu here who also cannot think of her life without Jayant. As he goes on accusing her she feels, "What was he charging me with?...Oh God, why could not I speak?.....I felt foolishly inadequate, having nothing to offer him in exchange for all the charges he was pouring on to me....". (TLS, pp -120,121). But the clash between her two selves ultimately leads into hysteria, "I must not laugh." (TLS, p-122) . When all the problems in the office calm down and Mohan comes back she is again in a danger of being caged for the second time. Earlier she suppressed herself but now she has learnt to articulate her predicament. She has to face life herself.

By the end of the novel Jaya is determined not to stay as a passive, silent partner to Mohan. Her attitude towards Kamat is also suggestive of her submissive nature. Though Kamat was her only friend and a well wisher she does not pay him her last tribute only to

avoid confusion and suspicion among her contacts. This is quite ironical. Society approves of only the husband wife relationship even if there is no love or regards between the partners and disapproves of even a friendly relationship between two grown ups of either gender. However, once she decides to break her silence for two nights she puts down everything on the paper which she has suppressed in her seventeen years of silence.

4.1. Economic independence is an important factor in women's liberation but it is not the sole criterion. For instance Dibyendu Palit's *swapner bhitar* (1988) is about modern independent women and their crises. He questions if financial independence is the only sought after thing in modern women's lives? Or, Do they need some other security or shelter or happiness in their lives? The novel mainly revolves around Arpita and Bishakha --- two independent, determined but insecured young women who live in a working women's hostel. They respect their dignity and self-identity and that is why they leave the security of their homes. Arpita could have married the lusty man of her elder brother's choice but she denies. Bishakha is in love with Siddhartha who stays abroad. Siddhartha does not understand that she needs his presence in her life. He feels that Bishakha must be a happy woman because she is independent! Whereas even after all the independence that she gets she wants to settle down but since there is no initiative from the other side she maintains silence. They are all alone but whenever they think that they have to stay alone in the future, they are terrified. It is the thought of loneliness or the fear of it which they dread most. They want warm relationships----a husband to love and care, children, and a sweet home. There are a few other characters like Chhanda, Mamata, Sulekha and others. Very little is known about them. While Sulekha, a widow, is a nurse. Chhanda has alleged charges of prostitution against her. Mamata is a 'god-fearing' woman who has a son and her only ambition in life is to make her son a great success. There are rumors regarding Sulekha's profession and even Bishakha and Arpita despise her till a certain point of time.

²⁴When Jaya, Siddhartha's sister-in-law asks Bishakha to force Siddhartha to marry her, she nullifies the idea. Arpita, on the other hand, develops a relation with Anup, her

boss. He is married and is childless. He has an unhappy married life. As a result of this illicit relationship Arpita becomes pregnant. When she is yet to decide about her life and career, Anup's wife ---a childless lonely woman--- intervenes. She breaks down before Arpita and begs her not to snatch her rights. She has no one in the world except Anup. What is noteworthy is that Arpita herself has been afraid of loneliness but when Anup's wife begs her not to make her lonely she decides to leave Anup. Thus she goes for abortion without the knowledge of Anup, leaves him and decides to stay alone. The author shows that insecurity is there in every human beings life but it is all the more ^{seem} a terrifying presence in women's lives.

4.2. *cinemaai jeman hoy* (1990), another of Palit's creative works, which centres around women's issues is about the relationship between Gaargi and her husband Dipankar. Though they come from different social and economic backgrounds, they try to give permanence to their relationship. They love each other dearly. Dipankar even goes to the extent of leaving his family for the sake of his wife who could not adjust there. But gradually their values clash. Dipankar develops an affair with another lady and leaves Gargi and their son Dipra. Faced with the problems of survival she understands the void in their marital relationship as well as meaninglessness in other social relationships, too.

4.3. *acena aabeg* (1995) is yet another work on women and their crises. The narrative is a fusion of flashback technique and narration of current events. Samita, an independent working woman, is the major character in this novel. She loved Jaydeep and was planning to marry him when all on a sudden Vandana, Jaydeep's former wife came to her and disclosed everything about her marriage with Jaydeep, their divorce and about their child Tirtha. Samita was shocked as Jaydeep had concealed all those things from her. She considered that as a treachery for she had believed Jaydeep in her mental and physical relation with him. So, she terminates her relationship with Jaydeep who tries to contact her several times but fails. She feels deceived while Jaydeep out of his agony commits suicide, dressed as a bridegroom. Now, Samita is not allowed to stay alone. Her pragmatic mother, Aditi, suspects Jaydeep's sanity and pesters her daughter to marry someone else. She goes on reminding her daughter that life is not a game (Truly she does

the work of a mother). But Samita does not pay any attention to such suggestions. Aditi is anxious about what people would say if Paramita, the younger of her two daughters gets married before the elder one. But Samita is determined and says in a mocking tone,

“bole diyo baRo meye bidhabaa.”(aa.p-24)

Translation: “Tell them that your elder daughter is a widow”.

“prabancita haoaar dukkhe sahaanubhuti pete bhaalo laage naa. ekaar banchanaabodhe takhan maajhe maajhey Dhuke paRe niSThurataa. kichu baa ghriNao. aatmahatya karaar aageei, sutaraaM, jaydeepke dubaiye paathiye dey se.”(aa.p-78).

Translation: “Sympathy tastes bitter amid the pain of being deceived. Cruelty intrudes at times into the solitary feeling of exploitation. Haply some indignation as well. Hence she sends Jaydeep to Dubai before he could actually commit suicide”.

So she does not even tell her only friend Malini about Jaydeep’s death. She gives an impression that Jaydeep has gone to Dubai. Samita suffers from indecision. She is not quite sure if she has deceived Jaydeep at the end. She understands that her rejection has killed Jaydeep. It seems that the death of Jaydeep and her suffering thereafter makes her realise the intensity of her passion. Her ~~self~~ introspection makes her aware how he has suffered and what circumstances have forced him to destroy himself. So she decides to stay alone with his remembrances.

5.1. Ray Bahadur Jnanjan Mukhopadhyay got his daughter married to an intellectual in Nabaneeta Devsen’s *ekTaa dupur* [An Afternoon), 1996]. The daughter Bindhyabasini was a snob. She neither had beauty, nor had education. Only thing she had was money, immense riches that she inherited from her father. She was a snob and left her in-laws’ house immediately after her marriage, when her mother-in-law had problems with her. But she could not prevent her husband from going to there. He loved his brothers and sisters and the grandchildren very much. He was also very much popular among them. He

was a simpleton and could never establish his rights over his children due to his wife. She did not allow her husband to take the children to their cousin brothers and sisters. She hated her elder sister-in-law the most. Here Nabaneeta Devsen uses a different narrative pattern where different characters narrates incidents through which the details of two major characters, Bindhyabasini and her husband, are revealed. According to Bindhyabasini her husband was a gentleman, a jovial, simplistic person only apparently. But in his real self he was jealous of her wealth and always neglected and insulted her while maintaining a smiling face. Nobody realized her agony except her father who understood, though lately, how his son-in-law is maintaining a dual face. While he was eager to divide the property equally between his daughter and son-in-law, Bindhyabasini intervened. She was sure that nothing else mattered for her husband except her wealth. He had married her only because of her riches, he was never attached to his children, his concern was always for his nephews and niece and grandchildren. To some he was their uncle, to some he was grandfather and yet brother to some. And through their narrations, the real traits of the character is revealed. They give an insight into the character of Bindhyabasini, too. It became clear that she was an egoistic and sentimental lady who could not tolerate the indifferences of her mother-in-law and left the in-law house. She very well felt the indifferences of her husband. Almost all the characters have strong feelings against this lady. She collected the wrath of all her relatives including her husband and children. Throughout his life he never tried to understand her sentiment and before death even he inflicted another blow and that was the final blow that shattered her. Just before his death he says slyly, "jibaneo tomaar kritadaas hoye becechilum, maraNeo tomaar kritadaas hoye marchi"(*ed* ,p- 45).

Translation: "I have been your slave when I was alive. On my death also I am your slave."

He failed to understand that under this strong, egoistic personality there was another Bindhyabasini who loved him dearly. This could be variously interpreted. Earlier Bindhyabasini had discarded her sons Gopi and Tulu and they also discarded her. Just before he left her the husband also, gave a blow. Her ego was shattered and she broke

down. She realised her inconsiderate behaviour towards her husband and children. This could be considered a positive development in her character.

Another interpretation could be that everybody knew her egoistic stance but nobody knew that she had also been suffering a lot for her sons. Even her husband misunderstood her. Throughout her life she had suffered due to the indifference of her husband, but she never complained. She reconciled with her misfortune but when he cruelly struck another blow at her before his death she could not maintain her poise any longer. So she disclosed what he had said before dying and revealed his true character at last. This novel provides a glimpse of unfulfilled love, emotional dissociation and ego-self crisis.

5.2. *Thikaanaa* [(Address), 1999], is set in New York where Jhilli, the protagonist, goes for a seminar. And through her narrative, various characters and their traits are revealed. This novel again depicts the farcical nature of the institution of marriage as also the void in other human relationships. There are characters like Shipra, Sadia, Farhana, and others who do not put up any resistance against the exploitations and tortures they are subjected to. These women are not educated enough to assert themselves in an alien land and submit themselves mutely to the humiliation. There are immigrants like Samsul who marry and bring their wives from the country. But they remain so engrossed in their jobs that don't have any family life as such. The wives are mainly the worst sufferers. Most of them are uneducated and fail to come into terms with the metropolitan life-style. Samsul's young wife Farhana is also uneducated. His assumption that she would be very much happy amid the riches and comforts he had bestowed on her is proved wrong. She develops an extra-marital affair with Jahir who is without any riches. This proves that she has always longed love and be loved by someone. She finds love and support in Jahir and goes with him. Some people blame her for her infidelity while some other take her side. They blame Samsul for his indifferent attitude:

“jaabe naa kena se? taar jauban nei? taar sakhasaadh nei? jaahir jubak, jaahir supuruS. jaahirul dhanii nay. Taakaar lobhe jaayni sei meye, premer Taanei giyeche. tumi or dike

najar daaoni shaamsul, tumi oke gharer daasi baaMdi kare rekh diyechile. kebal gaynaa – kapaR dilei ki meyc – manuSer man paaoyaa jaay? man dite hoy. tumi man daaoni.”

(Thiikamaa, p-73)

Translation:“Why won’t she go? Does not she have youth? Does not she have her own interests and likings? Jahir is young, Jahir is handsome, Jahirul is not rich. She hasn’t gone for money; she has gone for love. You have not cared enough for her. You kept her like a domestic servant in your household. Is it possible to get the feelings of a woman simply by bestowing ornaments and clothes on her? You have to give her your heart. You have not given that”.

The novel does not end simply showing Farhana happily married to Jahir or Shipra happily married to Ajit. Jahir leaves Farhana and where does the latter end up? Ajit and Jashua leave Shipra and where does Shipra go? While Farhana finds her destination in a night club – ‘the Bengal rose’ of the striptease show, Shipra after having a brief affair with Jashua splits away from him and develops an affair with Palash. Nothing exists here in human relationships except lust and necessity. It seems people who expected love more were the worst sufferers. Palash uses abusive words for Shipra and there are serious clashes often but sometimes after the violence they reconcile. Infact, Shipra loves Palash and cannot conjure enough strength to leave him, even though Palash is married and has children. This novel also depicts in a subtle manner the exploitation of the Asians and the Blacks by the whites. Youths from Asia and Africa leave their land in lure of better opportunities in New York but they face terrible hardships in an alien land. Pulak, Jhilli’s friend, is apparently happily married to an American lady but the moment India performs the nuclear test, the power politics intervenes in their marital life. Marriage is nothing but a farce here. There is one Sadia, a simplistic village girl, whose husband marries her and brings her to New York. There she comes to know that he has already married another white lady. Expectedly, Sadia becomes the maid servant of the family. She submits to every kind of torture because there is no way to escape. Lack of education and will power force her to accept whatever she gets from her husband. Her passport is seized by her

husband. But as fate would have it, at the very first opportunity with the aid of some activists, she files a case against her husband and succeeds in getting a divorce.

Here, we also get glimpses of characters like Sipra also who are self-destructive, characters like Sadia and Farhana who at least try to change their lot even though they are not always successful. The twist is towards the end of the story when Jhilli -- amid such love, courtship, hatred, betrayal and divorce -- decides to find the man who once handed her over a page torn from a book with a passage in it in praise of her charming beauty. This was a shy young man called Benjamin, who once handed her over a torn page of a book with a passage on it in praise of her charming beauty and poise. The name of the novel itself is suggestive. 'Thikaanaa' means address, the place where one lands up. Farhana, Toibur, the taxi driver, Sadia, Shipra all of them have left their native land, their original 'Thikana' in order to find another 'Thikaanaa' on their own. May be Farhana did not ever think of such a 'Thikaanaa' but then she was forced to become so. These characters are not always successful in finding a prestigious 'Thikaanaa' for themselves but the surge goes on. And Jhilli is also out at last for a 'Thikaanaa' which promises love and care in her lonely life of 34 (thirty-four) years.

6.1. Mohini, in Music for Mohini (1952) is a product modern society but she is torn between tradition and modernity . The novel shows social realities of the new times and the conflicts between age old beliefs and new ideas. And in the process we see the emotional and intellectual developments of Mohini. Subjected to tradition, motherless at a very early age Mohini and her brother Heeralal grows up under the supervision of their old grand mother who is a tradition bound widow. Subjected to traditions and conventions at home she also has got modern outlook for she is convent educated. She is an accomplished radio singer too. She is a carefree girl and in the very beginning of the novel we see her involved in childish games with her brother, collecting English names that sound funny. But when Heeralal translates their father's name as 'Butter Boy Chief', she protests: Don't be disrespectful to father". Thus we see a traditional girl who is

conscious enough to show respect towards elders and she would guide her brother to do the same.

Mohini's father is a professor .He is a modern man and he is very much concerned about the proper upbringing of his children. He is just the opposite of his staunch orthodox mother. He is worried about Mohini's marriage but he does not believe in horoscopes in this age of microscopes. So while his mother pursues him for a match with Jayadev, a great scholar of Behula village, he first denies[?]. Mohini has all the eight luck signs that match with Jayadev's. Mohini's father is not only against superstitious ideas but also very much conscious about the well being of his daughter. He feels that his city-bred girl cannot be happy in a village. But now Mohini intervenes. She has read one article written by Jayadev in the journal, Maya. Besides, she has seen the photograph of Jayadev who is very handsome and that impresses her. So ^{when} both the grandmother and daughter consents the father has no other option but to accept the proposal. So Mohini gets married to a well educated youth in his late twenties of an aristocratic family of Behula village and goes to the Big House.

When she steps into the rural life of Behula Mohini, the convent educated girl has to confront with the traditional and superstitious mother- in-law and the stern disciplines of the Big House. The rural, orthodox village life is suffocating to her and she tries hard to strike a harmony between the two discordant notes of modern city values and the traditional village customs. Her husband shows little interest in all these affairs. He is always engaged in scholarly pursuits and has very little time for his wife. All he wants is a Gargi or a Maitreyi of her who were women of outstanding merit and had been with their husbands in their scholarly pursuits but here Mohini is not interested. So we see her as a victim of her own choice. She is depressed but at the same time she tries to wage a struggle against all these. The old mother is a woman of strong personality and she keeps pestering her daughter-in-law for a child for an astrologer has told her that Jayadev is going to die at the age of twenty eight if he fails to father a child before it. But her delay in conceiving makes her feel that she is a barren woman and she succumbs to the persuasion of her mother-in-law to offer blood to the virgin goddess to overcome her

barrenness. But she is timely saved by her husband who does not fail this time. Later she realises that she is going to be a mother. And that calms down all the discords between the mother-in-law and the daughter-in-law. At the end of the novel we see that she has been married for two years and is returning to her parents for her first holiday.

58⁷.

Marjories B. Snyder considers Music for Mohini as a “sociological battleground in which older generation clings to tradition” and the educated modern young generation struggles “to throw away charms and badges, to open themselves and their country....”(Snyder, Marjories B. August 10, 1952. The Chicago Tribune.). This novel shows how various superstitions and other social evils mar the development of the country even in the post independence period and how persons like Jayadev, Harindra, Mohini, Mohini’s father and others fight against these in their own ways. Thus we have a group of youths in Behula village who are called ‘ruffians’. They are the reformist group and are against child marriages and other heinous and superstitious activities. Harindra, the leader of the group and a doctor by profession comes to stay in the village inspired by Jayadev. His father is a doctor of Ayurvedic medicines and there arises a clash between the two. While he tries to convince the people of the village about the necessity of Allopathic treatments, he faces strong protests from his father. It reaches to such an extent that he is not allowed to give allopathic drugs to his mother even. He tries to give her medicines without the knowledge of his father but she is reluctant to take. She is a tradition bound faithful wife who would rather die for her husband.

6.2. Music for Mohini is a kind of exploration of the problems and confusion that come in the life of a carefree girl, Mohini, and how she emerges as a successful wife and mistress of an influential house with great traditions. Through the characters of Mohini’s grandmother and mother-in-law Babani Bhattacharya presents conventional women characters who cannot think of a woman beyond her role of a dutiful daughter or a faithful wife or a daughter-in-law or a mother. At the same time there are women like Mohini and Rooplekha who show a synthesis of traditional and modern values. They are of course projected as liberated women and they are also very much aware of their rights

and responsibilities. But they do never show that fiery zeal to break away from the traditions. When compelled by situations they just succumb.

Being a product of old traditions and conventional culture Mohini's grand mother expects Mohini to grow up as a traditional woman, with all the feminine virtues. She wants her son to give Mohini Sanskrit education but the father, much against his mother's wish, gives his daughter English education. Mohini also becomes an accomplished radio singer though much against her grand mother's approval. The very idea that if Mohini sings in the radio, her voice will be available to just anyone who wishes to switch on, makes her feel bad. She does not like this 'public', image of Mohini. She prefers the homely, domesticated figure of Mohini than her 'public figure.' Further, the 'old mother' has a great faith in stars and horoscopes. Thus when a bangle-seller brings a marriage proposal for Mohini with Jayadev, she pressurizes Mohini's father to pursue it. Her arguments are simple. For both Mohini and Jayadev's horoscopes show eight luck signs that match perfectly. She would not let her son object to this proposal even if it means that Mohini has to stay in a village and adjust to that life style as a consequence. But the old woman here is not shown to be standing for only age old beliefs and customs. There are bits of reasoning in her even. Even her temperament reflects the changing social codes to some extent. Thus she enjoys English movies though she is very much careful that the children do not watch any adult scenes in the movies. In one occasion she strongly criticises those persons who come to seek Mohini's hand in marriage for their son. She does not like their humiliating way of examining Mohini, her hair, her looks or her smile, her legs, etc. She does not protest on their face but supports her son as he asks them to take their leave. So the feeling that a woman is not a show piece, she is not an object for using at one's own convenience has already crept into the conscience of the society and into the mind of Mohini's grand mother. She is full of motherly affection. She has brought up Mohini since her childhood and when Mohini departs from her father's home after marriage she is shown to have misgivings, "Who knows what music the gods have in store for Mohini?" (MFM. p-56).

Mohini is the eternal woman in the novel. Her convent education has given her a logical and modern outlook towards life around her. But like most other girl she has an yearning for love. She is quite romantic and feels that only love can bring fulfillment in her life. Love is "the light, the saviour of life." She enjoys the attention she attracts from handsome youths who would give her all the love she craves for. She is a city-bred girl yet she is so impressed by Jayadev's photograph and intellect that she decides to go for the marriage and adjust to the village life. Unlike other girls, she talks freely about her likings. She does not hesitate to convince her father that she can adjust herself to any kind of situations. It seems her upbringing and her education has helped her in developing such a free spirit. After betrothal with Jayadev, she ruminates:

"You pretty enough for him?" she asked of her image in the mirror. All at once she had a great desire to be lovely.... Her body longed to be a gift, fit for offering. It never occurred to her to wonder at this sudden overwhelming urge to give herself completely to a stranger. For the stranger was, as it were, more an idea than a person (MFM. pp-54,55).

Thus Mohini, though she has been brought up in western ways, she is a typical Indian maiden who is excited at the very thought of marriage. Very much like other traditional women she also tries to prepare herself for her husband:

"... The Hindu maiden born and bred up in the ancient starlight of Vedic civilization, washed by the running stream of the centuries, sheathing her limbs and her thoughts in a conventional dress to suit the needs of each passing age was innately unchanged: She had retained all her ancient hunger to offer whorship."

(MFM, pp-54,55)

Mohini is a perfect Indian woman who would undergo any ordeal for the sake of her husband. She is determined that she would absorb new ways of thought and habit and cultivate new interests. Mohini knows very well that Jayadev is an intellectual and he is striving for an ideal society in the post-independence era. He is an idealist and she thinks:

“.. How hard to be an idealists wife! If only he were like other young men. No! How compare him with others! He was far above them all.”

(MFM, pp-128,129)

6.3. Bhavani Bhattacharya shows Jayadev always engrossed in his studies. He also points at the changing social codes, the reformist attitude towards emancipation of women. He shows how women could get good education without losing their femininity. This is again a step towards the emancipation of women where men wanted companionship and support of educated women as they advanced professionally. And this is true in Mohini's case. Jayadev wants his wife to be his partner in all his intellectual pursuits as Gargi and Maitreyi were there for their husbands; but Mohini shows less interest in this. A city bred girl, Mohini comes to live in such a village where women are preoccupied with womanly topics such as sarees, dowries, child rearing, and other trifle issues. The stern discipline of her mother-in-law and the Big House makes her feel suffocating. She feels depressed, a victim of her own choice but then she decides:

“She could. Her husband needed her help. How could she fail him? In their great task ahead she should play her part. She would be his true partner in feeling in faith, and in dream”(MFM. pp-128,129).

It is not that Jayadev and Mohini are a mismatch but surely there is some incompatibility in their relationship. While the husband is involved in nothing but his own educational work, the wife longs for his love and care. It is not that Jayadev does not love Mohini but he is determined to give his project more importance than his marital life. Here, he shows his conventional temperament and expects Mohini to understand him and work accordingly.

Mohini's mother-in-law is depicted as a good hearted but strong willed orthodox old widow. She expects her daughter-in-law to act as a traditional wife of her son and give herself completely in the service of the family. She knows that her daughter-in-law

is a talented radio singer but she discourages her when Mohini sings some modern songs. She wants her daughter-in-law to sing devotional songs and she says, “ ‘These modern songs make no sense. You have such sweetness in your voice, why not use it for religious lines?’ ”(MFM, p-32). Mohini is hurt and in a rage she smashes her musical instrument. The strict mother-in-law neither allows her to wear gorgeous sarees, nor use any make-up. The restrictions and impositions, the beliefs and customs of the old house proves too much for her and sometimes she feels like rebelling against them. Thus on one occasion she climbs a tree to pluck some fruits but this comes to the knowledge of her mother –in-law who reminds her of her status and asks her to order her servants if she needs fruits. Her act of revolt is to be understood as a mark of protest – much in the way she smashes her musical instrument.

Procreation is an important aspect of family life. And it is in her role as a mother that a woman achieves the greatest fulfillment. While most of the women around Mohini have conceived within one year of their marriage, Mohini is not at all worried about this, and it becomes a matter of serious concern for her mother-in-law. She is afraid about her sons's future. Once she suspects Mohini to be pregnant and sticks a chip of bamboo to her hair to save her and the child from evil spirits but Mohini throws it away angrily. Now the old mother suspects her to be a barren woman. When Jayadev survives snake bite his mother feels that he has narrowly escaped death. This came as a shock to Mohini and then she also succumbs to pressures and continious pestering of her mother-in-law. She feels depressed at her mother-in-law's behaviour. Here we do not see Jayadev extending his support towards his wife. It seems he is altogether ignorant of whatever goes on between his wife and his mother. Mohini feels that nothing matters in the Big House except for her role in the family way. For the time being she also starts believing that she is a barren woman and is carried away by superstition. So, she prepares to offer blood from her chest to the virgin goddess and appease her so that she may grant her the boon, a child. However, Jayadev's timely intervention scares her but the way she falls a victim to superstitions of the old mother-in-law haunts her. She is unable to forget the humiliation and pain caused by the whole incident.

Jayadev's mother is a typical orthodox woman. To her what matters is the well being of her son and the Big-house. Even though she is a woman, she fails to understand the agonies she had inflicted upon her daughter-in-law. A woman can be another woman's worst enemy. The moment her superstitions belief feels that the well being of her son is at stake, she becomes enmical towards her own daughter-in-law. She not only hurts her feelings directly but goes on conspiring at her back also. According to her plan she even grants Mohini permission to visit her parents after two years of marriage. Once she has gone she will get her son married to Sudha. She can only dream of the happiness which is derived by giving birth and rearing children, maintaining a happy home and family. Her pursuits are typical of a conventional woman. All her hostilities take a back seat the moment she learns that Mohini is pregnant. She understands how much she has tormented her on a baseless issue. Then again the humane side of her nature is revealed. She feels sorry for her behaviour and in the end Mohini's "life was music --- the true quest of every woman, her deepest need".

(MFM, p-180)

But it is quite impossible to ignore the fact that if Mohini were not pregnant her fate might have been the same as that of many Indian women who are sent back to their ancestral home in their failure to procreate.

Mohini has to face the hostility from not only her mother-in-law, but also another village girl, Sudha. She is yet another victim of superstitions. She is also educated and has all the eight luck signs but she is said to be Saturn-afflicted. Hence no match could be found for her. Once her marriage was fixed with Jayadev but it did not work out. That was more painful because she likes a Jayadev. Yet another time, the rigid caste system of the village separated her from a blacksmith boy.

Sudha is a traditional girl and wants security out of marriage. She wants to be the mistress of Big House and in her pursuit she considers Mohini as her rival. Sudha is a passive sufferer and despite her scholarship she is cowed down by the oppressive orthodox forces. Her hostile attitude is evident towards the end of the novel when she

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rushes to Jayadev and informs about Mohini's sacrifice to the virgin goddess. It is not out of any real concern for Mohini or to protest against one's submission to superstitious beliefs that she informs Jayadev. She is a superstitious woman and she feels that if Jayadev prevents Mohini to offer blood to the goddess, she cannot be a mother ever in the future. Then the old mother will of course, urge her son to marry again and this time, definitely Sudha would be their first choice. Here is a woman who can not fight the injustices and hypocrisy of the society even though she is educated and fails to revolt. Rather, it seems that she is also engrossed in all the vices and superstitions of a typical village. And in the process she becomes selfish and she can go to any extent in achieving her selfish designs. She is a woman but she does not think twice when she plans to doom Mohini's life. She plays a positive role in the conspiracy against Mohini. So, here there is yet another glimpse of how a woman can make another woman suffer.

6.4. Mohini is quite a contrast to Sudha. Though she knows about Sudha's likings for her husband Jayadev, Mohini tries to be friendly with Sudha only to get a cool and indifferent behaviour from the latter. Mohini is a symbol of mobility and shows compromising attitude wherever necessary. Always she thinks about Sudha's well being. She feels sorry for her. She is a liberated woman and does not take the question of caste and creed into consideration. She thinks that Harindra would be a perfect match for Sudha, though he is from a different caste. She does not have the least knowledge of what is going on behind her. Even at the end of the novel when she leaves for her ancestral home, Mohini plans to talk about Sudha's marriage with Harindra, when she comes back. Quite ironically Sudha, on the other hand, stands near the window and dreams of becoming the mistress of the Big House. What is important to note here is that if exploitation is wrong, allowing oneself to be exploited is equally wrong. The thoughts and personality of a woman are determined by the society and culture whose product she is. Very few women understand the meaning of revolt and can pay the price of revolt. And one such character is Sudha who is a passive sufferer and does not show any sign of revolt anywhere. At the same time she fails to realise her worth and in order to get her worth from a man, she does not hesitate to destroy Mohini. But Mohini knows her worth and her responsibilities as a wife. She loves Jayadev to such an extent that she does takes

up the ordeal of appeasing the virgin goddess. However, Jayadev saves her from the barbaric customs of the society and also from his mother, a product of these customs, “ “Values. Mother? There are values beyond your grasp. Since you’ll always try to reach them with your reason, never with your feelings. Life has punished you. Blind belief shapes your thinking; blind belief cannot make a sentiment’ ”(MFM. p-180). Mohini, on the other hand feels, “Her husband had awakened to her existence and cared for her awhile. This was one such moment, but he had no real need for her. She was only a pet, a habit, a physical convenience, a normal obligation. Mohini sighed deeply” (MFM, p-181).

It is not that Mohini lacks courage to break out of the conventions that she has so much detested after her marriage. A jovial girl full of energy as seen before her marriage, Mohini is disillusioned, once she comes to stay in the Big House. Many a time she feels like revolting but she never indulges in open revolt against her mother-in-law. She is caught between two opposite poles of tradition and modernity. Being educated and rational, she cannot accept orthodox customs and traditionality all the time. Though born and brought up in a city, the way she adjusts herself to the rural lifestyle suggests her spirit of compromise. She does not reject all bindings of conventionality, she loves her husband and performs her duties towards him. She meets the adverse customs and superstitions beliefs imposed upon her by her practical common sense. She takes the family as the source of her strength and sustenance. She accepts her role as a wife, a feminine role but she is not being conventional. She knows that she has to live within the system and fight against the imbalances from there. And she is successful. At the end she ruminates:

“... At home in Shibpur she would not be truly away. The Big House lived in her, a part of her in most self. At last, there was no discord. Life was music – a note of song for the old mother was in her. A note for Jayadev and his rebel gods, a note for the Big House and Behula village... Her life was music” (MFM. p-188).

J.P. Savita in "Music for Mohini: A Note" points out that music has been used symbolically throughout the book. Mohini is synonymous with Dilruba, a musical instrument. Dilruba also means a sweet heart, i.e., Mohini. Mohini is like her Dilruba and music moves with her wherever she goes. Yet she protests, if someone plays a discordant note on her. Her life has been all music in her ancestral home. But in the Big House of Behula village she is laid silent for its iron traditions. Her husband is a novice so far as the real music of life is concerned. He is an idealist who tries to convert Mohini into a modern Maitreyi. This is like striking a discordant note but gradually he learns how to handle it. When Jayadev's mother objects to her singing of modern songs she is hurt as if the most sensitive chord in her being has been rudely jolted. And she smashes her Dilruba. Near the end of the novel Jayadev brings Mohini a big surprise when he brings a new Dilruba for her. This episode signifies the restoration of lost harmony. Mohini has always tried "to make harmony of the discordant elements in her own life" and finally comes out successful, triumphant (Savita, J.P., 1995, p-38)

6.5. It is not Mohini alone, but there are other rebellious persons also like Jayadev, Harindra or Mohini's father who stand for the changing social values. They also try to strike harmony. By eradicating the evils of traditionality and uniting tradition and modernity. Thus, they are against superstitions, horoscopes and stars, caste discrimination, child marriage and bride fasting on the day of marriage.

A harmony is also established between East and West, the old and new ways of life. While city bred Mohini has to adjust to the village life, Jayadev's sister, Rooplekha, a village bred girl has to adjust to the city life after her marriage. Rooplekha refers to this city – village marriage: "We who're so wed, serve some real purpose. It's as though we made a bridge between two banks of a river. We connect culture with culture, Mohini, our old Eastern view of life with new semi-Western outlook." (MFM, pp 93-94)

J.P. Savita says, "All noise of national and social forces in which she (Mohini) is caught has not been able to wholly drown the enchanting music that she carries with her.

She is music incarnate, She is DILRUBA. (Savita, J.P. Music for Mohini, 1995. P.38).

7.1. These writers show a fascination for modernity. They not only present women in the private spheres, they are also interested in the public sphere. Their women are working women. They are educated and have reasoning and modern outlook. They are liberated women. Thus we have Aatreya and Aushumalas (Bamabodhini) who are courageous enough to voice their protests and fight for their rights whenever and wherever necessary. They are not cowed down by the injustices meted upon them. tit

Bhavani Bhattacharya shows awareness of the various roles women play in a society. Thus while he portrays characters like Mohini and Rooplekha on the one side, on the other, there are women like Sudha, Mohini's grandmother or her mother-in-law. These women are both victims and agents of patriarchy and are moulded by the system. They can conspire and could very well be stern in their attitudes but their capability of harming is not as much as the system. Quite often, follies and foibles of these women could easily be ignored.

7.2. According to Shashi Deshpande, it is only the crisis of identity which is the root of all problems in human life. And she affirms her belief by quoting from the 'Dhammapada' at the very beginning of the novel The Dark Holds No Terrors (1990):

You are your own refuge;
There is no other refuge.
This refuge is hard to achieve.

Shanta Krishnaswamy says:

The woman in the Indian novel now reflects the shift in the sensibility of the writer as well as the reader. She is no longer the paragon of virtue and chastity to be extolled by poets and philosophers. She is the symbol of imagination, of sensibility itself, of nature arraigned versus the forces abroad actively denaturing

humanityThe woman has now become the perfect image of the artist's insecurity. His isolation, fear, bewilderment, vulnerability and sense of acute violation; potential and actual; are all mirrored through her consciousness. (Krishnaswamy,Shanta.1984. pp-3,4)

Shashi Deshpande's women characters through their roles as daughters, wives, mothers, widows, abandoned wives etc. suggest the problems of being a woman. She concentrates mainly on the meaninglessness and sufferings related to the sexual confusion under the umbrella of confusion. All these women are victims of patriarchy and are bound in a tradition-oriented society. Crises arise when they revolt against age-old family traditions in search of freedom and quest for their selves. Deshpande with subtle strokes suggests the psychological complexities going on in the minds of her protagonists.

G.S.Amur points out: "Woman's struggle, in the context of contemporary Indian society, to find and preserve her identity as wife, mother and most important of all, as human beings is Shashi Deshpande's major concern as a creative writerThe operative sensibility in Shashi Deshpande's stories is distinctly female and modern...She is at her best when she works out her themes in terms of intimate human relationships, generally within the family. She uses the story as a medium of moral and psychological analysis and her focus is almost invariably on the inner life"(Amur,G.S. 1978. pp-9,10)

An interesting characteristic of Deshpande's novels is that her characters (women) move from one relationship to another, from one trap to another trap:

"The traps are created by mothers, the lovers, and finally by themselves, by personalities that have hypnotised themselves into accepting confinement---- personalities not capable of exorcising the 'ghosts' they have allowed to lodge in their minds. Victimisation, therefore, becomes a double-edged knife. It refers not only to the way her women are controlled and manipulated by men, mostly

husbands, but also to the means of controlling themselves...” (Hiremath, Ujwala. 1994. p-13)

7.3. In The Dark Holds No Terrors (1990), the protagonist Saru faces crises from all fronts... as a daughter, as a wife, as a mother and as an individual. Saru, being a female child, faces sufficient neglect in her family. Always she has craved for affection but her mother showed her preference for her brother Dhruva on the basis of gender difference only. Always she said that he was a boy and so was different. That haunted her mind always. When her brother died of drowning she was a silent spectator. That incident made her mother a totally different person. She held that Saru was responsible for her brother's death. While she expected some support from her father deepened by her mother's accusation: “You did it. You did this. You killed him...Why didn't you die? Why are you alive, when he's dead?”she failed to get any.

(TDHNT, p-191) Thus, these strange childhood experiences create a sense of insecurity in her and hinders her mental growth.

Saru in her marriage looked forward for love and a peaceful life. But at the same time she also wanted power and success. And in order to pursue a successful career she totally ignores her husband Manohar. Since she is a doctor she gains greater importance than her professor husband in the society. Her steady success makes Manohar jealous of his wife. He feels insecure and there develops a steady distance between them. It seems this sense of insecurity makes him sadistic and he asserts his right as a husband over her by continual sexual attacks. But it was almost a heavenly experience when they got married and they have experienced a happy marital life. But later sex becomes an instrument of estrangement and humiliation for Saru. She feels like a trapped “terrified animal” (TDHNT. p-99). She tries to talk to Manohar but he always appears quite normal in the morning compared to his violent behaviour at night. She feels, “Can a man be so divided in himself?” (TDHNT. p-99).

In fact, Saru fails to understand that she has walked out of her parental trap---- which was her family ---into another trap. To avoid one trap of relationships she only fell into another. Neglect from her family members actually creates in Saru a desire for love, especially love from a male counterpart which would make her feel that she too was to be loved. She has “dreams of a total female. I was all female and dreamt of being the adored and chosen of a supervisor, superhuman male. That was glory enough ...to be chosen by that wonderful male. I saw myself humbly adoring ,worshipping and being given the father-lover kind of love that was protective, condescending, yet all-encompassing and satisfying....Sometimes he was a poet, and there were throngs around him, offering him gifts, praise, adulation... our eyes met, his carrying message to mine” (TDHNT.p-53). So Saru marries Manu, a person out of her class and caste much against the wish of her family only to get rid of the insecure feeling of her childhood days. She never feels that in her pursuit of her career she has led Manu into insecurity. When Manu is insecure^{ed} Saru is faced with yet another kind of insecurity. Earlier the act of “loving ...as well as being loved, was an intense joy”.(TDHNT. pp, 40-41) But now, “What he does to me, he does it not so much because he hates me, but because he hates himself. And I ... I hate myself more for letting him do it to me than I hate him for doing it to me”.(TDHNT. p-98).

When Saru starts earning more than Manu, he fails to compete with her status and her importance. Apart from her earning she even attracts more respect. Manu, on the one hand is jealous and on the other takes pride on her. He feels that a wife who is a doctor is an object to be showed off. Once she is needed for money and he asks her that there could be no going back. Manu does not want her leave the job. This incident gives her the feeling that only necessity and nothing else binds them together. It is not that love is dying between them. Instead it is as if a kind of disease that is attached to their happy married life. Saru feels that she has to be more sure, more certain that she does not want him. She is cold to his sexual advances and he himself fails to satisfy himself. She understands what is lacking in her. She needs to comfort him, but she can not. Saru tells him about Boozie who has always given her financial assistance to set up a chamber and Manu after failing materially tries physically to establish his right. He never considers

why people favour her and “there was perversely, no relief in me, (Saru) but contempt that he didn’t”. (TDHNT. p-93) He fails to realise that a doctor is considered the life giver next to God. Since Saru is a successful doctor she is sure to attract more attention than her husband. In patriarchal context most of the time it so happens that whenever a wife is more successful than her husband the marital relationship is disturbed. Jealousy and misunderstanding creeps in. Initiative from either of the partners sometimes saves the relationship and family from wreckage. In case it fails it is the time for the wife to sacrifice her ambitions if she has to keep the relationship going. Here neither Manu nor Saru takes any initiative to mend the relation. Manu suffers silently and pretends a normal role throughout the day as Saru’s husband at night also he justifies his role by desiring her sexually. Infact it is too late when Saru discovers that something wrong has crept into their relationship. Success that has come all on a sudden sweeps her off her feet. Even after she realises she could have mend it if she would have tried. But her silence and cold attitude mars the relationship all the more. Marriage is a bond that unites a man and a woman. Love between these individuals further strengthens it. When the husband’s success makes the wife too proud why does the husband feel jealous at his wife’s prospect? Here both could have sustained each other but their silence intervene. Saru finds fault with her husband’s attitude as if to justify her silence even strongly. Manu pays no attention when Boozie tried to possess her. This infuriates Saru, “It was not him I hated. It was Manu for doing nothing”. (TDHNT. p-94)

Saru is not without the sense of guilt. She remembers that she only persuaded Manu to give up writing poems, abandon the plan of starting a journal and instead take up the job of a lecturer in a local college for that would provide more security. Now she knows that she is neglecting her home for her profession. But the final blow comes from a friend of Saru whom they meet in a store and tell that they are planning a holiday in Ooty. That very moment she remarks, how it feels when his wife earns not only the butter but the bread as well. A hurt Manu does not forget to assert his right over Saru that night. Saru is fed up with all these nightly assaults and wants to discuss them with someone. Learning about the death of her mother she comes back to her parental home to meet her father (or to find out if her mother forgave her before her death?) -- again coming out

from one relationship and walking into another. She knocks at the door but she has left the rickshaw waiting as if to keep the path of her retreat open. Why? She is not sure how her father would accept her. Insecurity is a brooding presence throughout the novel. The way her father looks at her when he opens the door makes her feel unwanted. She escapes from the loveless marriage but it seems she had exchanged one pair of pinching, torturing shoes for another".(TDHNT,p-83) On the one hand, she feels guilty and is anxious about her children whom she has left and on the other hand, she is afraid of "disintegration". At length she is able to tell everything to her father. She confesses to her father about Manu, that he doesn't know it himself, what he does to Saru at night. It seems she has become aware of her cruelty which changes him at night though he is perfectly normal at day time. In a way, she is also a sadist like her husband. She wants a peaceful life and she ruminates that she must get away from that hell of savagery and submission. But she is also conscious of her own self and so she feels that if she carries her own hell within her, then there is no hope for her at all.

This is the characteristic feature of Deshpande's heroines. Their crises enable them to undergo self exploration which results in compromise and conformity.

Saru understands that her artificiality, her silence her hypocrisy have been the root cause of their strained relationship. She realises that it is she who has taken away from him something from his eyes, his face that made him a man. "Why don't you tell me what it is?" (TDHNT, p-89) asks her father and she feels that she should speak out. There is nothing in silence. She must tell that since her childhood she had been craving for this soothing which will make her realise her 'separate whole'.(TDHNT). She feels that "the dark holds no terrors" for her. She feels herself not as a woman in her parental home, not a split personality--- a successful doctor at daytime and a horrified wife at night detesting her husband's sexual advances, but a new Sarita. "We come into this world alone and go out of it alone. The period in between is short. And all those ties we cherish as eternal and long-lasting are more ephemeral than a dewdrop... we are alone and go out of it alone. We have to be alone". (TDHNT.p-208) She understands her cruelty to Dhruva, her mother, her husband. "The façade of deception had cracked so

completely she should never put it together again” (TDHNT, p-212). This creates a sense of guilt in her, unbearable pain and there is no running from it. So, she proves bold enough to face it. But when she learns about Manu’s arrival she is restless. But then her father who has so long maintained his poise turns out to be affectionate for which Saru has craved all through her life. He says, “Don’t turn your back on things again. Turn round and look at them. Meet him”. Saru understands that her brother died because she turned her back on him, her mother died from cancer without getting any medical assistance from her daughter .She died alone only because she deserted her. “My husband is a failure because I destroyed his manhood”. (TDHNT. p-217) Sarita is now a realist ready to deal with the realities of the world.

It seems Saru’s father is also a victim of that silence he allowed to grow in between him and his wife. The silence also crept in between him and his daughter. But he has broken the silence now and asks Saru to do the same. Saru feels, “Would it always be a failure, any attempt to reach out to another human being? Perhaps the only truth is that man is born to be cold and lonely and alone” (TDHNT. p-219)...Human beings ...they’re going to fail you. But because there’s just us, because there’s no one else, we have to go on trying. If we can’t believe in ourselves, we’re sunk” (TDHNT.p-220) She understands that she has to accept the different selves, “a guilty sister, undutiful daughter, and unloving wife to become whole again. But if she was all of them, they were not all of her. She was all those and so much more....”. (TDHNT. p-220)

8.1. Dibyendu Palit’s women characters resemble Bhavani Bhattacharya’s women characters very much. Palit’s characters are victims but they are impregnated with such an optimism that they overcome their grief. Atreyi, the female protagonist in *anubhav*, represents the liberated woman of modern India. Undergoing terrible sufferings she emanates with a new sensibility and better understanding of the life around. Through Atreyi the writer points at the farcical nature of the institution of marriage which is otherwise held in very high esteem.

Rahul marries Atreyi but after one and a half year of lifeless married life they end up in divorce for Rahul was having an extra marital affair with another lady. The obvious question (which may not seem so obvious to those who are engaged in protecting and promoting the institution of patriarchy in our society) which arises here is as to why Rahul married at all? He had the affair long before he got married to her. Is it only to establish legitimate relationship with yet another lady? Rahul is a perfect representative of the society which calls itself modern but is still adhering closely to the primitive ideas about women. He is a modern man well educated and well settled in life. But he accords a low status to his wife. He always feels that it is her responsibility to accept him as her husband. He does not believe that women can have an independent existence or a separate identity of their own in a male dominated society.

Economic dependence on husband very often makes the wife accept untoward situations and compromises with those. Atreyi too, is economically dependent on her husband. But she is optimistic and determined to lead a better life than the loveless married life. She is sure that she would get a job and this self-assurance enables her to leave her husband and return to her parents.

8.2. Dibyendu Palit builds the character of Atreyi with deft strokes and he is very much concerned with the subtlest details. Thus we see Atreyi passing through various agonising phases maintaining her self restraint:

“mane paRla raahuleer saMge aar thaakaa sambhab noy ei siddhanta neyaar panero diner madhyei taar lanDan theke kolkaataay phire aasaa. takhano jaanto naa Thik kii hote caleche”.

(*anubhav*, p-13)

Translation: “ She remembers how within fifteen days after she decided that it was not possible to stay with Rahul , she came back to Calcutta. At that instant she did not know what was going to happen”.

“ taar phire aasaar siddhanteaapatti karenii raahul.....bolechila, svami hisebe taake sviikaar kare neoyaar ‘daayitva aatreyiiir’: seTaa sambhab naa hole phire jete paare deshe” (*anubhav*, p-38)

Translation: “Rahul did not object to her decision of coming back(to home). He said, ‘It was Atreyi’s responsibility to accept him as her husband. If that was not possible she could easily return to her home.’ ”

But the moment she sees her brother waiting for her at the airport she bursts into tears. It is true that women want emotional support and assistance from their family members and here we see a very supportive brother, Saibal who is only a few years older than Atreyi but the way he consoles her and supports her makes him appear more aged:

“mane raakhbe... erpar natun challenge aasbe. At any cost tomaake egotei hobe. seTaa paarle natun confidence aashe – nijer bhabisyat nijer icchemato gaRe nite paarbe” (*anubhav*, p-58)

Translation: “ Remember, hereafter new challenges will usher in. You have to advance at any cost. If you could really do that, new confidence will emerge---you would be able to shape your own destiny.”

Even though Atreyi feels lonely:

“sakaler madhye thekeo se kato aalaadaa hoye geche sakaler theke ---- paarasparik samparker madhyeo gaRe uTheche kato Taa aaRaal!” (*anubhav*, p-58)

Translation: “Staying amid the crowd how detached she has become from every body---- amidst mutual relationship how veils have come up!”

Her mother says : “tor ei abasthaa hobe jaanle baaRir plan-e ekTaa baaRtii ghar raakhaa jeta !” (*anubhav*. p-17)

Translation: “Had it been known earlier that your condition would be like this, we could have had another room in the plan of the house”.

She thinks if: “baabaa, maa, bhai, bon ----- sheS parjyanta eraa ki kono nirbharataar jaaygaa?” (*anubhav*. p-17)

Translation: “Father, mother, brother, sister---- are they persons to rely upon ultimately?”

8.3. Atreyi gets a job in a consultancy firm and she is assigned the task of interviewing the callgirls and prostitutes of Calcutta to prepare a report about their socio-economic backgrounds and what factors forced them to take up this profession . But her instant reaction is noteworthy, “Can’t I get a decent job?” this proves the antipathy women have towards this profession which berates them. It seems to be an inconsistency in the character of Atreyi who has seen many ups and downs in her life. Moreover she is a modern woman. But Dibyendu Palit is perfect in his delineation. There are women like Atreyi who despise sexual prostitution without considering for a moment that they are also involved in prostitution, though of a different kind. Atreyi joins the agency as a trainee but within four months she gets promotion and makes her position secure. How? Women like men use their intellect in their place of work. But women also have their physical beauty and charm to enchant their superiors to gain secured position, if the situation so demands.

“ Men do not differentiate between sex workers (prostitutes) and other women. All women are sexual. Any women can be accosted.” (Ramaswamy, Geeta. April 7,2000. Life Style. Deccan Chronicle.)

This suggests that women, irrespective of their socio political and educational background, fall victim to various kinds of exploitation, oppression and prostitution.

They are merely treated as objects of desire. While some are forced into it, there are women who suffer at their places of work where their male superiors sometimes try to take advantage of their high ambition. And a few among them take up this opportunity to achieve something without any inhibition. They very well know that to achieve certain things in life they have to part with certain other things, and they plunge into the mutual give and take policy. Again there is a third category of women who do not succumb to any kind of pressure. They have indomitable spirits not to compromise with any kind of situation. Atreyi belongs to the second and third categories at the same time. She represents those women who want liberation but fail. In an attempt to get recognised for their own worth, they fail and then they compromise. However, Atreyi has all along been confident and courageous. So, at the end she despises her role and emerges out successfully from the deplorable condition which she was drawn into.

8.4. According to Patricia Oberoi, “Family is the most private domain where nation’s most cherished cultural values are nurtured and reproduced.....the very fabric of society would be undone if the family were in any way questioned or reshaped.”

(Patricia Oberoi, 1994. Introduction, p-2)

Dibyendu Palit shows as to how women experience the harsh realities in their day to day existence in the absence of any help and support from the family members especially the men folk. At the same time he questions the most strongest institution, the institution of family. It does not matter whether it is a Pamela or a Maya or a Shakuntala. All of them are prostitutes and reports reveal that all of them are neglected by their family members. Pamela fails to claim more attention from her father who took more interest in his second wife and step daughter. Shakuntala is married and is seduced by her brother-in-law who cheats her and forces her to become a prostitute. Maya is brought into this profession by an elderly gentleman. Her father throws her out of the house but takes money from her to support other members of the household. So, they not only fend for themselves, sometimes they are the only sources of income that support the entire family. Then there is Swapna, another victim of the institution of marriage. Her sufferings are

very much similar to that of Atreyi. After she got married she came to know about the extramarital affairs of her husband. She divorced her husband, came to stay with her parents and got a job in some private agency. Once there, she used only her physical charm to satisfy her boss. But her charm sans her intellect and she ended up as a prostitute.

Going through the reports and interviews of various call girls, (realization = anubhav) dawns on Atreyi. She understands how women though they are human beings, are treated like objects. They are there as if to satisfy the physical urge of their male counterparts. Even in this twenty-first century when soldiers go to fight a battle for apparently a noble cause, women fall victim to their lust. Their bodies turn to battlefields. Human beings are also animals but they are the most developed of all the species on this earth. They are known for their wisdom, for their knowledge, for their conscience. But the behaviour of the male members with their female counterparts at several points of time only show their untamed animal instincts. At that time there are no differences between men and animals. What do they boast of then? It seems that the law of jungle is prevalent in human society where the weak is oppressed by the strong and there is only the survival of the fittest. Even at her own home a woman is not safe. Shakuntala is seduced by her own brother-in-law. Question is, Wherein lies the safety then?

Swapna's report makes Atreyi feel that there are little or no differences between Swapna's life history and her own sad state of affairs. Both of them got married but were divorced. Both of them got jobs in private agencies. Both were using themselves in a way to make their future secured. But Swapna has ultimately landed up in a nasty world. And here we get the picture that Dibyendu Palit's Atreyi is not all high ambition without any conscience. Her self respect and inner conscience to lead a normal respectable life comes into conflict with her free will and her conscience wins. At the same time the reports open her mind to the need for asserting themselves and breaking barriers to feel for the sex workers. She realises that she had been engrossed in her own petty sufferings and did not take any notice of the other harsh realities of the world, the crude sexual exploitation and their significance:

“keno ibhabchila research-er biSayTaa bhadra nay, taar ruci o sikkhaar pakkte asvastikar!” (*anubhav*, p-114)

Translation: “why did she feel that the topic of the research was not odest enough, uncomfortable for her faste and education!”

“bhabe se ekaai to ekaa noy.” (*anubhav*, p-128)

Translation: “ She thinks that she alone is not alone”

8.5. Dibyendu Palit draws women characters of different plains who are victims of divorce, rape, sexual exploitation etc. Atreyi and Swapna are of different kind altogether. They are working women and their misery is due to their high ambition. They are victims of patriarchy and of nasty power politics. They are victims of gender differences which make them only objects of desire at their work place. Who is to be blamed here? Do the male members of the society suffer likewise? It is they who initiate the sufferings and when women end up as prostitutes they fail to get the sympathy of their race. Atreyi and Swapna are disillusioned in their efforts to become independent. Several questions arise at this point. Shall it be fair enough to equate it with their high ambition? Do men with high ambition suffer like this? There is no fault in having dreams about future.

Dolly Sen is yet another female character in the novel. Her portrayal makes her a consistent character. She is also a modern liberated woman. Once she had been the heart throb of Kalpataru Dasgupta, the director of the company but gradually the love withered away. Though the writer does not give any details about the cause it seems that even Dolly Sen does not really have any explanation as to why their relationship turned bitter. The moment Dasgupta starts taking interest in Atreyi, Dolly becomes jealous. She feels insecure at Atreyi's prospect---- not about her position in the office but in the life of the man she loves. The way she talks to Atreyi at the latter's promotion suggests her displeasure. She reminds her that if one continues to be ambitious without knowing one's limitation, he she is bound to fail. This can be interpreted in various ways. Is she only

jealous of Atreyi? Or, Does she want to suggest something, about her past and present status in Kalpataru's life? She is also a co-sufferer of Atreyi, Swapna and other oppressed women. Though Atreyi does not pay any attention to Dolly's words she comes to understand her status with a great shock after going through Swapna's report. She does not raise any voice of protest against the system. Rather, very much like Anshumala of Bamabodhini she maintains silence. And in her silence lies her protest. She quits the job and leaves her resignation letter with the secretary of Kalpataru.

The novel opens when Atreyi was suffering the emotional and financial after effects of her divorce from Rahul. What she had wanted from her husband is what most women want --- a loving companionship. She did not want anything else, only craved for love. But Rahul's extramarital affair and his ultimatum that it was her responsibility to accept him as her husband proved too much for her. She knew that Rahul had already settled his mind. She tried to maintain a normal relation but when it failed she took a tough stance. Though she was shattered inward she maintained a tough posture outwardly. She understood her crisis and acted accordingly. To walk out of marriage, of the whole past with bag and baggage , it needs lots of courage and strong determination. Atreyi showed that temperament and faced the challenge. Later, she was supported by her brother Saibal and Utpal who supported 'liberty of women'. We see Utpal trying hard to bring Atreyi out of her abysmal darkness and loneliness. Utpal likes Atreyi and that thought is the only thrill Atreyi has in her life:

“antata keu taar janye aagraha dekhaacche, saMga pete caaiche taar, ei bhaabnaai bhare raakhe ek dharaner niraapatta–bodhe, caapaa sukh o kalpanaay.”

(*anubhav* p –35)

Translation: “At least someone is showing his concern for her, someone is craving for her, that very thought feels her with a feeling of security, some concealed happiness and imagination.”

Atreyi's struggle till the end is representative of the struggle of every woman. It is the fight of the new women folk who try to set themselves free from the social, economic and other pressures that curb their identity.

9.1. Anshumala in Nabanita Devsen's *baamaabodhini*(1997) is a well educated modern girl. She is highly accomplished and evinces great interest in various arts. She is an advanced researcher working on the origin, structure and the stylistics of Valmiki's Ramayana. She is (happily) married to Malay who is working in some firm. He is also well educated. In the beginning it seems he is proud of his wife who goes to Oxford to work on her thesis. He is all supportive then. But problem arises when back at home she keeps Kamamma as her maid servant and engages her attention in discovering nuances of the folk-Ramayans created by the women-folk of Andhra and Maratha communities. Kamamma is another victim of patriarchy.

The status of woman and bonded labourers are the same. The institution of family exploits labour and a woman is an unpaid employee working there. The economically dependent bonded slave is his master's possession (The Hindu, 1995).

Kamamma's narrative depicts the horrible condition of the bonded labourers. For three generations --- Kamamma, her mother, and her grandmother----they had been serving the zamindar. In return the zamindar and other male members of the household established illegitimate relationships with them. It had been a custom and children were born out of these relationships. When Kamamma was sixteen years old her father (ignorant that she is his daughter) tried to seduce her and she fled from that household. A sikh truck driver married her. Just when it seemed they had settled down in a slum in Calcutta the husband disappeared. Thus she was once again left alone in the world to fend for herself. She took up the job of a nurse. But taking advantage of the situation the youths of her locality called her names, disturbed her in many ways and then ousted her from her slum dwelling. Finally Anshumala gives her refuge. Problem arises at this juncture and gradually it spreads its roots. Kamamma informs Anshu that in

various parts of Andhra Pradesh, mostly in the village areas, Sita and not Rama plays the major role in the folk songs sung by female communities. The village women identify their pain and sufferings with Sita's. They hold Rama responsible for all her agonies. Naturally, the subject matter of these songs are different---birth of Sita, Sita's marriage, her days with her exiled husband, her love and affection for Lakshmana etc. So, Anshu's project tends to head in two directions much against the wish of her husband. On the one hand, she studies the folk songs with themes unimaginable in Valmiki's Ramayana or similar other texts but are those that reach out to women whose sufferings are sung by common village folk. On the other hand, she fights the servant's case as a crusade against injustices to women. Malay never supports her in these discoveries. He is more interested in Anshu's "real" project which will earn her name and fame as a scholar of classical texts. One is reminded of Manu in Deshpande's TDHNT here. He is jealous of his doctor wife for she attracts more attention from people in the society. In *baamaabodhini* Malay, at a point of time considers this deviation as unfruitful and unimportant and does not give any importance to her thoughts and aspirations. Rather he criticises her. This is evident in the diary Anshu keeps. She mentions how Malay ~~have~~ been very much supportive earlier. He was a kind of personal secretary to his scholar wife. He used to appreciate her works, arrange her writings etc. But slowly he changes. His change suggests that maybe he has always wanted an educated wife to equate his position in the social circles. Anshu's name and fame will earn him name and fame. Is it mere love for his wife that he is proud or is he using Anshu?

"The bonding between women has always been within the orbit of patriarchy." Shashi Deshpande refers to the conspiracy of women (Deshpande,1988. p-37), of a female world that exists between two women away from that of men. Kamamma and her village folks identify themselves and their sufferings with that of Sita. Herein lies the question of universality also. Women of different time and spaces share some common fate. Malini and Anshu are used by Sanjay and Ravi. After the death of Anshu's father Ravi had been her only support. He was the one to attend on her. He consoled her, took care of her. Gradually their friendship took a new dimension. Anshu fell in love with Ravi. Question is if Ravi treats her likewise? We see that he is quite clear about his

attitudes concerning love and emotions. Blatantly he discloses that he has chosen Sanjay as his life partner. Sanjay leaves his wife Malini and daughter Pushpa and unites with Ravi. But Ravi is considerate enough to console Anshu:

“tui bheMge paRis naa aMshu, aami ekhana tor sei bandhui aachi, ciradin thaakbo.” (*baamaabodhini*, p-15)

Translation: “Don’t be shattered Anshu, I am still your friend, and forever will be.”

So, they destroy two lives. Malini, as we see, is a traditional Hindu wife. She loves and depends on Sanjay but it seems Sanjay has only used her to maintain a normal face in the society. Malini dreamt of a peaceful life with Sanjay and Pushpa but once she is hurt she rejects the traditional role of a wife and strikes rebellion against the entire system of social relationships. Through Malini’s sufferings we can see the farcical nature of family relationships and marriages. Though at last Malini emerges as a triumphant modern woman, when Sanjay left her she was totally shattered. She sought Anshu’s support. In spite of being a modern woman she failed to tolerate her colleagues in the office. She cried out in grief: “They are laughing at me.....everyone.....I don’t listen to radio. I don’t watch Television. I can’t concentrate. I can’t read a book....”(*baamaabodhini*.p-58)

This is mainly due to the subservient position women have held in the society. The economically dependent woman has always been presented as the ideal for all respectable classes of society. This has gradually equated her status with any inanimate property. But Malini’s experiences show that even economically independent women do not enjoy any better status. It is Sanjay and not Malini who is responsible for the break off marriage. But it is she who suffers at her place of work. No one understands her agony. Says Malini,

“I am alone at homeI am losing my mind. There is no one I can talk to. I am surrounded by a hostile crowd.” (*baamaabodhini*. p-59).

Malini in her agony forgets that even though Anshu is unmarried their fates have

been the same. They have depended blindly on their men, too simplistic to question anything. But total surrender also doesn't yield any fruits here. They are deceived.

9.2. Female bonds are largely ~~hung~~ on the basis of mutual support. The support structure they build between themselves is utilised in different ways. Anshu is an introvert. In her agony, Malini hunts down Anshu and seeks support but the latter cannot lay bare her soul. She listens to Malini and feels that Malini is saying exactly what Anshu herself has in her mind :

“maalini ki sahaaj bhaabe bole jaachilo aMshuri maner kathagulo. kato anaayese! adhyaapak hole ki habe, byektigato prasMge se (aMshu) baakpatu nay... kintu sedin ektaa magic hoyechilo. maalini obhaabe aMshur maner kathaagulo gaRgaR Kare bole gela bolei kina ke jaane, aMshumaalaar jibher aaRaSTataa kete giyechila... anek, anekgulo katha se bolechilo maalinike. sudhu ki maalinikei, aMshumaalakeo ki nay? je bicitra ek parajayer baandhan maalini aar aMshumaalaake haatkaRi paranor matan kare advitiya ekti smritir srinkhale bandi kare rekheche --- sekhaane aMshu aar maalini abhinna hridayaa. e bandhan theke taader mukti nei.

(baamaabodhini.p-59)

Translation: “Malini was telling spontaneously those words what Anshu also had her mind. How easily.... Even though she is a lecturer she is not a good orator so far as her personal matter is concerned. May be because Malini went on telling fluently about Anshu's mind like that, Anshu also lost the stiffness of her tongue... she uttered many, many words to Malini. Was it to Malini only, or to Anshumala also?”

That strange tether, of defeat that has bound Malini and Anshumala together in a unique shackle of memoirs---there Malini and Anshu are united in feelings. There is no escape for them from this knot.

Anshu is a real support to Malini. “ We will turn this bottomless pit of loneliness into an everflowing spring of creativity.... We can do it Malini. We are strong women”

(baamaabodhini. p-60) .

9.3. Anshu points out to Malini that she has her mother-in-law and sisters who are very supportive indeed, but Anshu is all alone. And deception is the same, be it inside the marriage or outside the marriage:

“hridaybhaMer dhaakkaataa je ekai, biye hok na hok....” *(baamaabodhini.p-60).*

Says Anshu, “ think positive, Malini----- life has a lot to offer us”. She emerges as a strong intelligent woman, -----‘baamaabodhini’-----“No one can beat us---- not even fate.”*(baamaabodhini. pp- 59,60)*

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

The irony is that even after undergoing several problems they are careful enough not to express the homosexual relationship between Ravi and Sanjay. They do whatever their men tell them to do.

“The image of women as we know it is an image created by men and fashioned to suit their needs.” (Millet, Kate.1970.p-46)

Anshu asks Malini to conquer the inner sense of weakness, but they have been weak when they defended Sanjay and Ravi. The positive connotation can be that even though their experiences leave them battered and broken, they save themselves. Anshu marries Malay and Malini seeks support in her tiny daughter, Pushpa. However, in the long run we see Anshu is not at all happy. The folksongs about ‘Sitamma’ influence her so much that she starts writing articles on topics that did not find any place in Valmiki’s Ramayana. These issues happen to be controversial and Malay accuses her of

“jeopardising” (*baamaabodhini*.p-74) his future and calls her irresponsible. He thinks that Anshu has planned it well before to get the name and fame taking advantage of the political turmoil. Anshu is astonished to get an inkling of Malay’s real self. He holds Kamalamma responsible for all the odds and pursues Anshu to sack her. He is always against Kamalamma. It is only when she finds out the illicit relationship between Malay and Kamalamma that reality dawns on her. So long Malay has been afraid of himself. That is why he has tried his level best to sack Kamalamma: “keu nijke cene naa bole gol paakiye phele, aar keu cineo golmaal aaTkate paare naa. pratham theke kamalaamma ke baRite rakhaay tabe ei bhayei baadhaa diyechila malay? kamalamma ke nay, nijkei apachanda, nijkei abishvaas chila or. o jaanto, o hayto ekdin paarbe naa. malay rabi noy. malay nijke cinta.” (*baamaabodhini*. p-92)

Translation: “ Some people mess up everything because they fail to recognise themselves, some recognise themselves well, still, they cannot control the mess. Is that the reason for which Malay was deadly against the idea of keeping Kamalamma in the house? It was not Kamalamma, he did not like his own self, he did not have faith on himself. He knew that one day, he could not. Malay was not Rabi, Malay knew himself.”

9.4. Comparing this with Jaya in Shashi Deshpande’s *That Long Silence* who needs a Kusum to understand her self, Jaya admits, “without Kusum my sanity seemed suspect. (Deshpande, Shashi.1988.p-24) She can view herself only in relation to someone else who shall henceforth be referred as the “other”. Infact a woman (or a man) has been conditioned to need an “other” to make herself comprehensible. Anshu consoles Malini but cannot express her own feelings to her. But at this juncture she needs a Malini to lay bare her shattered soul . And she evokes a Malini in herself, “Malini, uh: amra ki boka re!” (*Bamaabodhini*, p-92).

Translation: “Malini, Oh: How foolish we are!”

Most women get married with the idea of a secure home, of love, of a sharing and caring life-partner. But very soon they begin to despair when they find that there is no contribution from their male counterparts to maintain the relationships. It is only they who have to sacrifice everything. To opt out of marriage at this point also needs courage and enough strength of mind. Sanjay, Malay and even Ravi prove to be average male who do not bother much about the woman's needs and desires. Their relation with their female counterparts lack mutual understanding and reciprocation.

Anshu displays a radical and modern sensibility .She remains unperturbed by the new developments in their relationship and every thing goes on as before mechanically devoid of spirit. Her pen is her only companion and her diary suggests her 'inner cry'. Her writing is the only means for a communion with her ownself:

“abhyasmato table-e ese base aache – aMshur to Thakurghar nei, eTaaI or grihadebataar aasan” (*baamaabodhini*, p-92)

Translation: “... She was sitting at the table as usual---Anshu does not have a room for her idol, only this is the pedestal for her idol.”

So, Anshu accepts the reality without reacting adversely to it. It seems experience has her to be complacent in such situations. She has stopped expecting love. from Malay and theirs become a loveless life of marriage.

Kamamma doesn't prevent Malay's access simply because she can't. She cries,
“e baRite – didi aami kemaN kare --- aami kiibhaabe kii karte paartaam?”
(*baamaabodhini* p-93)

Translation: “In this house --- elder sister, how do I --- how could I have done anything?”

• “सब जयगातेि आमाादेर कलु नल कलु एका कललर थलके – हलतु तलर जलने एकता दलम दलते हल – कलनु एल परलशतलतल तलरलल हते देवललल उकत हलनल..... तुमल गलरलतेल कल हलतु मे‘नल’ हलते पलरते.” हलते हलतेल अशु हलते पलरते बलपलरतल बललल जलतु सलह, कलरल तलतल सलह नल. कलके येतल? कल कलरे ० पलर पेतल? के बलशवल कलरतल ० कलथल? अशु कलरतु कल? ` (*हलमलभुदहनल*, प-93)

Translation: ‘ “Everywhere we have something or the other to do ---- may be you have to pay a price for that --- but it was not right to allow this situation to crop up..... you could have said ‘no’ at the very beginning.” While saying these, Anshu understands that it is easy enough to advise, but to do the same is not so easy. What could have she said to anyone? How could have she escaped? Who would have believed to her words? Had Anshu believed? ’

9.5. Anshumala, Kamalamma, and Malini are from different backgrounds, from different setups. But their fates are the same. They all are contemporary counterparts of Sita. Many women tend to ignore the absence of love, understanding, dignity, equality in their married life for the security, the institution of marriage offers. But women like Malini and Anshu search for love, dignity and equality. They want their marriages should work. They do not bend, rather break down. Here none of these three lose hearts. They find their own ways to lead their own lives. They fight against the hierarchical gender relationship where men are dominant and women are subordinate.

10.1. Sisir Kumar Das points out that along with the mother, the girl child becomes a co-sufferer and co-traveller in the journey of life. Both the mother and daughter are victims of social injustices. That is the reason why the Indian mother looks towards her son for hope and recompense.(Das, Sisir Kumar, 1995.p-334) Sudhir Kakar using Helene Deutsch’s statement has pointed out that mothers have a special maternal affection reserved for daughters. The mother unconsciously identifies with her daughter, and this bond is stronger than the one between the mother and son. Through her daughter, she relives her experience as a cared-for girl. (Ghadially, Rehana.1988.p-49) Dibyendu Palit’s mother figure in *anubhav*, Atreyi’s mother has her motherly roles to play but she

is not a stereotypical mother. She is also an emancipated woman and she supports her daughter unlike other traditional mothers who would always remind their daughters that once they are married they are guests in their natal homes. At the same time she is also worried about the problems and inconveniences caused to her other children. So, quite spontaneously she speaks out that had they known it earlier that Atreyi was coming to stay with them they would have had another room in their building plan. One cannot blame her for this. Devika is yet another mother figure in the novel and Dibyendu Palit is successful in getting our sympathy for this character. She is a widow with a small daughter. She is dying of cancer. Here is one woman who is alone in the world after her husband's death with no one to look after her except Utpal, her husband's friend. She is in her death-bed but the sole thought that keeps her well occupied throughout is the future of her only daughter who would be alone in the world after her death.

10.2. The representation of the mother figure in literature depends to a great extent upon the theme of the work and also whether the writer is a male or a female. While female writers refute and challenge the traditional image of mother Bhabani Bhattacharya's or Dibyendu Palit's mother figures are different in the sense that there is a blend of both traditional and modernity in the mother figures. Bhabani Bhattacharya's mother figures deserve mention because they show a propensity towards emancipation that was quite unlikely at that day and age.

Bhavani Bhattacharya, following the tradition in Indian literature, idealizes the role of mother and at the same time defies her on various occasions. Mohini has been a victim of her stem mother-in-law's injustices but at the end she is happy at the prospect of becoming a mother. As she goes to visit her parents in a palanquin she resolves to come back to Behula village with her new born, unite Sudha and Harindra and dreams of turning the village into a model village. Thus her husband's dreams will also be fulfilled. When the woman is reversed, she is reversed as the mother as Mohini in Music for Mohini is the little mother of Behula. Ananda Coomarswamy points out, "Indian women do not deform their bodies in the interests of fashion: they are more concerned about

service than rights: they consider barrenness the greatest possible misfortune, after widowhood.” (Krishnaswamy, Shanta, 1957, pp-65,66) This is evident in the case of Mohini. Her barrenness even after a year of her marriage with Jayadev becomes the major issue of her friction with her mother-in-law. In India a woman is made to feel morally obliged to bear a child especially a son. This mother-in-law is an ideal mother who is scared of her son’s longevity. She is afraid that Mohini’s barrenness would destroy the family tree. And she continuously keeps reminding Mohini of her duties as a wife. She tells her how one of her predecessors sacrificed herself in the funeral pyre of her husband and became a ‘Sati’. This old mother had already dedicated her right hand to Siva at the Holy City twenty years ago for the health of her son who was then a little sickly. But Bhavani Bhattacharya also defies this ideal motherhood. In fact he puts most of himself in the character of Jayadev. Jayadev has all the modern outlook. Thus at one point he opposes his mother on the point of untouchability. According to him untouchability is a social curse and he says to his mother, “All untouchability – there are different sorts under different labels almost everywhere – is being brought to an end. Mankind has a new charter of equal rights for all.” He does not believe in stars, “We are not slaves of the stars. There is no room in the Big House for crazy beliefs. The village looks to us for ideals and a way of living. The pattern we set is not our private affair; it carries the strongest social sanction.” (MFM. p-179) & Jayadev’s mother does not want to lose her son at any cost. So when Jayadev prevents his wife from offering blood to the virgin goddess the mother breaks down. She closed her eyes, struggling to control herself. Suddenly, sternness and pride left her face and she was a helpless woman, pleading. “Jayadev,” she begged, “this petty penance would do no harm anyhow.” (MFM. p-180). But he smiles and says, “ Let’s not be terrified by what seems to you inevitable. Are we not greater than our Karma?” (MFM. p-180)

10.3. The mother figures in Shashi Deshpande are uneducated, old-fashioned, tradition bound women who stand in the way of their daughters’ progress. They show extreme bias towards male child as we see in The Dark Holds No Terrors. Saru’s mother shows more affection towards Saru’s brother and after his accidental death Saru also dies for her mother. Gradually Saru’s detest for her mother goes to such an extent that she rejects her

mother, "If you're a woman, I don't want to be one" (TDHNT, p-63). She does not get any affection or attention from her mother during her puberty and continuously she tries to escape from that sickly environment. She becomes defiant and rebellious and marries out of her caste and class. So, mother and daughter has a strained relationship and they never try to reconcile. In Saru's mother we get the picture of a very cruel and exceptionally dominating woman. Her ego is so strong that when it is hurt she does not even hesitate to go to any extent. Though she is a woman and a mother she curses her daughter. So she predicts that they would have a strained marital relationship. She retorts, "I will pray for her unhappiness. Let her know more sorrow than she has given me" (TDHNT, p-197). And as fate would have it Saru's marriage really fails and one is left to wonder if it is due to the curse incurred on her by her mother. However towards the end Saru accepts the truth, "I have been clinging to the tenuous shadow of a marriage whose substance has long since disintegrated because I have been afraid of proving my mother right" (TDHNT, p-220). "She hated me always," (TDHNT, p-197) goes on like a refrain throughout the novel reminding one of the bitter relationship.

Though Saru hates her mother she is not altogether free of the guilty feelings. She feels that she is only responsible for her mother's early death. She goes home after her mother's death and her thoughts continuously centre round her mother: "It's because I wronged her that I am suffering now. And the more I suffer, the greater the chance, perhaps my expiating that wrong" (TDHNT, p-204). She has always hoped that her mother would forgive her before her death, but when her father failed to state anything positive about that her hope dies.

The strained mother –daughter relation continues even to the next generation. Thus we see Saru's daughter who is only nine years old is a cause for concern for her mother. She remains silent almost all the time, draws pictures which are lonely, cheerless, and frightening. It seems that she has also developed in herself that loneliness that had marred Saru's childhood. Saru describes her as a "cold, shrewd, objective observer" (TDHNT, p-33). The same thing happens in Deshpande's other fictions also where the

female protagonists protest against the kind of lives lived by their mothers only to face the same from their daughters in the near future.

Deshpande does not idealise the role of mother, though the way Saru's mother treats her daughter is stereotypical role of a mother. She wants Saru to grow up as a traditional woman, then marry someone from her own caste and settle down happily. Saru's mother is a victim of patriarchy and has been so moulded by the system that she wishes her daughter to be like that -----a woman conforming to the traditionality. Deshpande also points out the limitations of a mother's love towards her children. Ideally a mother does not discriminate among her children but Saru's mother is a representative of all those mothers who consider girl child a curse. Saru has a disturbed childhood for her mother always bestows the best for her brother Dhruva. This is a major issue and most families even now show greater concern for the male child. The girl child is ignored. Can we, then conclude that mother child relationship is also farcical? Deshpande has understood these problems and brings them to the notice of the reader not as women's issues but as human issues which are to be considered seriously not only by women but also by men folk

10.4. Jayadev is very much pleased with himself after saving his wife from the superstitious beliefs. "He had rescued Mohini from her ordeal, and he had seen the changing grace of her face: startled, pale with alarm, tearful, proud, triumphant.... Barren? Was it not enough that she was alight with beauty, giving a touch of it to all with whom she had contact? Her presence filled the Big House...." (MFM. p-180).

Jayadev is sure that Mohini is not barren. "Barren? And if the child came, after all, as he must? A wistful smile grew on his face. Better, perhaps, if his son were to wait awhile, a year or two, so that the horoscope was wholly disproved and discredited." (MFM, p-181).

It is true that Mohini does not get the attention of her husband which she craves for, when old mother's behaviour disturbs her. She had great need to lean on him, to take

shelter in his strength. But he failed her.” (MFM p-166) On the other hand Jayadev had his own problems. “He was breaking down under the pressure of work. He grew depressed, irritable” (MFM. p-166). Infact his thesis proves to be a futile effort and he feels that Mohini has failed him. Instead of supporting him she is engrossed in her own problems. Why would he not stand by her in her suffering? Why would he not see what she felt?” thinks Mohini. Jayadev also feels the same. Both of them are unreachable to each other. Thus “two sensitive people who could have sustained each other were beaten and plunged in miserys.” (MFM. p-167) Bhabani Bhattacharya himself explains the plight of Mohini and Jayadev. A terrible misunderstanding crops up between them though both are pure at heart and love each other. Bhattacharya has genuinely portrayed an idealist husband and an idealist husband’s equally idealist wife. When old mother furiously exclaims, “Your barrenness will curse it (the Big House) for all time. You will take the life of your husband, you will put an end to the Big House----. Those deceptive luck signs – scrape them off your skin with a knife. Do not bear the shame of so much falsehood. “Mohini feels that she is needed only to beget a son. A conflict goes on in her mind. She remembers her father saying.” Do not bow down to such insults. You are the New India. The old orthodox ways have been our yoke’ have enslaved us. Let us be free.” (MFM. p-166)

Jayadev talks about the sacred bond between husband and wife but in these moments of crises he is not to be seen supporting his wife. And Mohini does not understand that Jayadev is caught between the double pulls of the stern idealist and the all too human husband. Mohini is a figure of sacrifice. She feels that he would never know the measure of her denial. “Did he see any of her denials? Or did he simply take them for granted?” (MFM. p-106) She consoles himself. She has duties to discharge, responsibilities. How could she let herself be defeated by discomfort and desolation?” (MFM. p-106). She suppresses herself and adjusts to the new mode of living while her idealist husband fools himself. “The true happiness of a woman, was to be mistress of her own household. Give a woman bright playthings – the money to spend, the kitchen to run, the power and prestige. There lay the material to make her content. Yes, men and women are altogether different” (MFM. p-107). Jayadev is quite right in finding out the

differences between men and women. They are different in their sensibilities. He can easily forget his duties as a husband, but Mohini does not forget her duties. While she fails in one aspect she tries to make it up in other fields. She does not let Jayadev feel her agony. And therein lies the difference between a man and a woman.

A characteristic feature of Bhavani Bhattacharya's writings is the close tie between himself and his woman protagonists. Be it good or bad as judged from the reader's perspectives, his women characters have an integrated personality. He looks forward to social changes and in his fiction he holds women responsible for bringing out positive developments in the society. While there are stereotypical mothers, mothers-in-law possessive women like Sudha (whose "possessive love know nothing of selflessness. She couldn't marry him , therefore let no one else be happy with him, no matter what happened") (MFM.p-182) the fact cannot be denied that even now----- about fifty years have passed since the publication of this book----there is no dearth of these women in our society. There are also glimpses of purity and nobility as seen in his heroines like Mohini or Sunita (SFL. 1966) or Kajoli (SMH. 1978) or Meera. (AGNG.1960) They are not modern working women but they show their reasoning and intellecty in whatever role they are assigned to. Even in their feminine role they show glimpses of their liberated spirit and do not become conventional. They are not types but individuals who assert themselves, whatever their roles may be.

10.5. Srinivas Iyengar points are worth mentioning here that the women are thrown into a whirlpool of a world along with the men and are burdened with a great many choices and impurities. They are caught in the counter pulls of existence and impurity. Only the strongest survive..... like the women in his fiction, he (Bhabani Bhattacharya) is suffused by a vision of human beings alive and sensitive, warm and outgoing, responding challengingly to the many forces abroad that can be modified and directed towards a better future Bhattacharya asks us to join hands with Mohini and Jaydev,.....and forge ahead with quiet confidence. After all, as Jaydev points out , "Are we not greater than our Karma?" (MFM. p-180)

Shashi Deshpande deals with the predicament of modern women who break away from their family tradition but face psychological turmoil in doing so. Shashi Deshpande herself admits, "Gender is...one of the most important factors in our lives. The first question asked when a child is born is 'boy or girl'? Our lives are to a great extent shaped by our gender. So are our experiences related to it. But these gender related experiences are a part of the human experience...women's experiences are believed to be of interest only to women, that women's problems, ideas and lives are specifically and narrowly considered women's problems, not human ones....When I wrote The Dark Holds no Terrors I never thought of it as a woman's novel...it satisfied me as much as one's writing can satisfy one". Saru in this novel has failed everything. She has failed all relationships----her mother, her father, and even her husband. Always she has been afraid of her loneliness and goes on seeking security. But everything is insecure. She finds love in her marriage but when all on a sudden success dawns on her a distance develops between Saru and her husband. While Manu feels jealous at her growing success, it is too late when she realises the silence, the indifference on her part. Everywhere in the novel to withdraw from different relationship is evident. Thus, Saru's mother is stern enough to withdraw from the life of her daughter when the latter defies her mother. Same is the case with Saru's father also. Again, in the relationship between Saru and Manu and Saru and her daughters the same symptom is betrayed. Saru's feelings of insecurity mar her married life. While most women compromise with their situations, Saru is not a type but an individual, a modern middle class working woman. She does not compromise only to realise at the end that her ego has created all the problems. A sense of waste and futility captures her. She decides to break down the silence between Manu and herself and she waits for him at the end of the novel, who will arrive soon. She realises, "walking along a road, going on and on knowing with a sinking feeling that something, somebody awful and frightening was waiting for her at the end of it. But it was important to go on just the same, not to stop, even though there was doom waiting for her." So she marches forward to emerge triumphant. Question arises if modernity means insecurity in a man's life? Or, is it more prominent in the life of a modern woman who desperately wants an identity of her own? Both Shashi Deshpande and Nabaneeta Devsen catches on the psychological conflicts and other complexities in the lives of individuals like many other women

novelists, they too have a feminist tone, but they are very much different from other women writers who were influenced by their western sisters. Both Nabaneeta and Shashi Deshpande show concern for the individualist stand of women characters and in their novels depict so.

As Adesh Pal says, “ ... these protagonists of Deshpande fail to attain their freedom, completeness and realize their self-hood. Neither the extreme aggressive, revolutionary way, nor their adherence to the stereotype role-model, nor the pendulum like state of swinging between two extremes can help them realize their identity. It is the balanced ego-self axis which makes revelation of their relationship.”(Pal,Adesh.1995.p-71)

10.6. Coming to Bengali fiction, Dibyendu Palit's women are all modern women. Atreyi in Palit's *anubhav* represents an educated woman who faces various conflicts due to the expectations of the different roles in her life and fulfilling her own ambitions. She is dissatisfied with her married life when she learns that her husband has extramarital relationship with another woman. Divorce seems to be the only solution and she walks out of the marriage to find a meaning of her existence. She exhibits strong courage and determination outwardly and gets a job but she is caught up in a ugly situation where one has to ^{5th}oneself to gain name and fame or to gain security. Her madness to seek an identity of her own makes her follow this mutual give and take policy until her conscience strikes her. She feels that this is not the right path to gain security. The insecured position is far better than this kind of security and she leaves the job. Thus Palit portrays the plight of a modern woman who struggles hard for a room of her own, for her own footing. He has shown that men though call themselves modern, have not yet been able to cast aside conventionality. They still try to thrust their power on women. Thus, it is the wife's duty to accept her husband as he is. Whenever, there is a difference ,the woman is left to fend for herself. It is not that working class women as portrayed by Palit do not need marriage and security therein. It is not that they do not dream of a happy married life with husband and children. But if left alone they can fight the imbalances that would ruin their lives

and can chalk out their own emancipation. They are confident and courageous to seek their own space.

Dibyendu Palit has said that he has always tried to feel the sensibilities of women as intimately as possible. And to do that is not necessary that a male writer has to become a woman:

“.... What is important is if you are covering all the required points...you will have to imagine, you will have to keep on watching women of different ages, listen to them, how they react to situations etc. There cannot be one typical reaction to one point... every single woman would behave in a different manner.... react in a different manner... it would be better if you keep on watching these different behaviour pattern....” (As in a recent interview with Krishnanjan Bhattacharjee).

10.7. Interestingly, even Nabaneeta Devsen and other renowned women writers have said that Dibyendu Palit's women characters are more truthful and authentic than many woman writers.

Anshumala in Nabanita Devsen's *baamaabodhini* is also an educated working woman. She is economically independent and is not dictated by anyone. But she also craves for companionship and is deceived again and again. Malini, also faces the same fate. While the latter accepts life as it comes and finds refuge in her child, Anshu seeks for a space through her intellect. Like Atreyi in Palit's *anubhav*, she does not walk out of the marriage. She becomes cool in the marital relationship. She does not feel the necessity to leave her home and other responsibilities. She takes up writing to express herself and seek an identity. Anshu feels that she does not have a prayer room to take refuge where her mother and grandmother might have had their solace. This is an indication of the changed status of women in the society. They are now at least not the passive sufferers like their predecessors. They are now courageous enough to assert and express themselves. The changing sensibility is also seen in the way Kamalamma flees

from her life of bonded slavery. But she cannot save herself from the so called educated and civilised society. She saves herself from one trap but falls into another. But finally she also asserts her position and escapes from the trap of Malay. She develops that courage to fight against the civilised people. Nabaneeta Devsen's emancipatory vision is evident in the plight of her women characters.

“You are your own refuge”-----as quoted by Shashi Deshpande proves to be true for all the new women discussed so far. Anshumala's refuge is her pen and diary that she keeps. She finds her solace there from the turmoils of a loveless cold relation with her husband. Malini finds solace in her daughter and her job. Atreyi ----so long afraid of her loneliness -- gets the strength from within herself. Similar is the case with Saru who envies her mother's strong will power and feels that she must go on, too. Running away from the reality is no solution. So, despite being created by male or female writers, all those women have nurtured and cherished the strength within themselves. They do not need any man or woman to accomplish their status and identity. They do not need anyone to protect them. As Virginia Woolf puts it, “no need to hurry, no need to sparkle, not needs to be anybody but oneself.”

10.8. The women in *baamaabodhini* or *anubhav* are deeply rooted in Indian culture. They are rebellious in their own way and they respect their individual identity. Anshumala or Malini in *baamaabodhini* or Atreyi in *anubhav* suggest the shift in the status of women. Their struggle for freedom, for identity of their own is more meaningful than the security they looked for in the institution of marriage and thereby failed. Their self respect forced them to withdraw themselves from any sort of emotional and sexual involvement in meaningless marital relationship. If we analyse Deshpande's heroine Saru's fight we tend to feel that the fight of these women for liberation is not at all a blind one. She has a deep understanding of her quest. Her introspection enables her to visualise her own mistakes that resulted in a strained relationship. So, she is ready to start anew for she understands she cannot turn her back to reality.

11.1. Though it is commonly believed that women's issues concern only women writers, after going through the works of the above mentioned writers -----among whom there are two male writers----- it seems that women's issues are a major concern for these male writers also. Though the writers in Indo-Anglian fiction have been influenced by western ideas, in the writings of Bhabani Bhattacharya and Shashi Deshpande there is a commonality. Characters such as Mohini, Rooplekha, Saru and even the characters in Bengali fiction assert their position being rooted in the Indian tradition. Except for Atreyi all the characters suggest that family still plays a dominant role in the society. Saru decides to unite with her husband, Anshu decides to stay with her husband, in the family scape and fight in her own way. Mohini's is a happy family at the end of the novel. So far as Atreyi is concerned, she finds solace among her family members with her supporting elder brother. That she wants economic independence is altogether a different story. And if she decides to fight alone at the end it is due to her own personal choice. The problems faced by these women are different and they devise their own methods to fight against these situations and finally they emerge successful.

11.2. Dibyendu Palit's *anubhav* is the most bold writing in the sense that Atreyi openly revolts against male domination and exploitation working women face in their place of work. Saru tries to break away from the patriarchal constraints but the way she does that is wrong and finally she decides to give her marriage another chance. Anshu is an intellectual and rational woman and stays within the family and fights alone. For Mohini the family is not at all a constraint, rather it has music in it. An important characteristic to be noted is that all these women are 'Indian' in their sensibilities. They do not attempt to deny their feminine role in order to define their selves. They do not ignore their responsibilities and problems arise only when their dreams of personal fulfillment and identity clash with the harsh reality. Tamjali in *anubhav* quotes Lachmi: "... aami jodi puruS hataam taahale peT bhaRaanoR janye manuS khun kartaam, kintu, naarii hisebe shariir bikrii karei peter jvaalaa meTaaacchi."

Translation: "Had I been a male, I would have killed people to feed myself, but, since I am a woman I am selling my body to earn my living."

(*anubhav*, p-76)

This suggests that while men can defend themselves and are strong enough to fight the hostile forces, women do not have that physical strength to protect themselves. And most of the time in the cases of the prostitutes when their male family members failed to protect them, the society failed to protect them, they were compelled to take up the flesh-trade to fend themselves.

11.3. If we study stereotypes of women, the sexism of male critics, and the limited roles women play in literary history, we are not learning what women have felt and experienced, but only what men have thought women should be. Since the problems or issues concern women, women and not men have to find a solution for all these sound illogical. So, quoting Tamjali it can be said that the sooner these abstract theories are eradicated from the world, the better. Tamjali is quite practical when she says that the fate of women can be bettered if and only if the men folk also realises the root cause of problems and come forward with the motto of finding a solution (*anubhav*.p- 74)

11.4. Both in India and the west commonality lies in the point that leaving aside the upper class women, the middle class women still are dependent on “male bread winners” to a great extent. Women are still dependent daughters or wives or mothers. While women going out for work suffer from economic exploitation, exploitation at the family level is different. In India both the rural and urban middle class women are victims of patriarchy. Education of women have made the urban women aware of the ills of this patriarchal system, the farcical nature of marriage relationships and other relations etc. Except for a few characters, all the women characters -- whether they are created by male authors or the female ones -- are urbane and they demand to be treated as equals and not as ‘others’ by their male counterparts. The feminist movement is mainly against the double standards of giving equality and,

∴ Individual freedom to everyone but denying the same to women. Important point is that Indian women have already begun to assert

themselves. She is fighting with her strength and integrity against the exploitative and sexually discriminatory world.

All the writers included here portray their women in such a naturalness that if the author's name is kept secret, it would be difficult to make out from the writing whether it is by a male or a female writer. The writers have grappled with the situations and have successfully shown that the demands of the suffocating patriarchal system on women as mother, daughter, wife have led to rebellious thinking and attempts to break away from its confines by the aspiring characters.

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