ADVENTURE AT THE THRESHOLD

A Comparative Study of Pioneering Representation of Girl-Woman Protagonists in Bankimchandra Chatterjee and Richard Jefferies

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

IN

COMPARATIVE LITERATURE

BY

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DECEMBER 2001

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that Ms. Paramita Ghosh worked under my supervision for the degree of Master of Philosophy and fulfilled the conditions laid down in this regard. Her thesis entitled "Adventure at the Threshold: A Comparative Study of Pioneering Representation of Girl-Woman Protagonists in Bankimchandra Chatterjee and Richard Jefferies" represents her own independent work at the University of Hyderabad. This work has not been submitted to any other institution for the award of a degree.

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This is to certify that I, Paramita Ghosh, have carried out the research embodied in the present thesis for the full period prescribed under M.Phil. requirements of the University.

I declare to the best of my knowledge that no part of this thesis was earlier submitted for the award of a research degree to any university.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to many people for the final shape of my M.Phil. dissertation.

I would like to thank my supervisor, Professor Sudhakar Marathe, first for all his expected and unexpected contributions to this dissertation. He is, undoubtedly, one of the best teachers in my life with whom a single discussion, ranging from the lives of creatures to the subject of my M.Phil. would turn out to be a remarkable learning experience. And I will always remember the various instances of his relying on my capabilities notwithstanding the apparent dissuading factors. Both as a student and as a person I am indebted to him.

Mrs. Meera Marathe, the first person to read and comment on my hasty and amateurish translation of *Kapalkundala,* will always be remembered by me as a very nice and caring friend-cum-teacher. Her warmly greeting smiles and huge hugs will never let me forget her.

To Dr. Chitra Panikkar and Dr. Shivaram Padikkal, who have in various formal and informal discussions, extended their help and offered some invaluable suggestions in regard to my topic, I owe a major vote of thanks. I thank Dr.Padmakar Dadegaonkar for his kind efforts to find the translation of *Kapalkundala* for me.

Parameshwar *bhaiyya,* who not only manages the Comparative Literature Centre office but also has been helping me in various ways from even before I joined this University, I will always regard as an affectionate elder brother.

I must thank Mr. A.K.Bhowmik and Dr. Gopal Chakraborty for their extensive and genuine search for the translated version of *Kapalkundala.*

My friends in the hostel are, even if not always related to the student behind this dissertation, inextricably related to the person behind it. Among them I would like to mention Bindu, for her timely and spontaneous help in my initial student days, and since then Prasanna, Meenakshi, Prabha, Viji, Abhirami, Sriparnadi, Deepa and Babita. The frequent evening *mudi*-sessions with Saiseba have been too delicious to forget. The dinners and the post-dinner arguments with Somadi, I feel and think, have served me well in both body and mind. Nalini might have been my ex-room-partner, but she will remain a friend for ever.

Special thanks go to my family, especially to my father. He has tried to help me and my research in every way and whenever he could, juggling his busy work-schedules at the same time, during the past one and a half-year.

And finally, I would like to conclude by remembering those friends of mine, who, no matter whether near or far, have always been the relieving and much needed oases in the paths of life and are adored beyond any need of formal acknowledgement of gratitude.

CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION
SECTION 1

The present study* will attempt a comparative assessment of the girl-woman protagonist in *Kapalkundala* by Bankimchandra Chatterjee and *The Dewy Morn* by Richard Jefferies. (Passing reference will also include Jefferies' *Amaryllis at the Fair.*) But first, two preliminary questions need to be addressed—why this particular project is being attempted and how it expects to proceed with the proposed comparison.

Regarding the first question, we may give a two-fold answer. We may derive the answer from the approach of Comparative Literature as well as by putting the works in their more or less contemporary contexts. Here we should make it clear that these approaches are, in fact, complementary to each other. Nor can they be kept strictly apart; rather with their convergence from time to time, they may afford us valuable points of comparison.

In most general terms, Comparative Literature aims at bringing together two or more works or literatures on the same platform in some significant sense. It does so by way of comparing them to each other and thereupon bringing out both general points of value and specificities which give them their distinct character. Such a comparison is meant to bring out some useful perceptions concerning some important aspect of human nature and society. Therefore, when some works appear to be characteristically similar, the difference following a comparative study of them may reveal some altogether new facets of each work.

The same thing happens when a comparative study succeeds in highlighting the underlying similarities between works which are also instructively different. In addition, Comparative Literature can also help us put the works in question into a wider context by requiring us to study their historical and social or technical backgrounds. It is hoped that the present study may unfold useful possibilities of comparison concerning nature, when we juxtapose these particular novels, we shall need to compare on especially prominent aspect of their plots, namely the adventures which the girl-woman protagonists encounter.

* This dissertation will follow the MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers (4 th. ed., 1995) style sheet format.

As mentioned earlier, the novels to be compared in this project are *Kapalkundala* by Bankimchandra Chatterjee and *The Dewy Morn* and *Amaryllis at the Fair* by Richard Jefferies. The girl-woman protagonists as they feature in a variety of 'adventures' in these novels are Kapalkundala, Felise and Amaryllis respectively. From a comparative view point, we can bring these novels on the same platform also for these other reasons—their near contemporaneity, some essential similarities regarding their plots, and the colonizer-colonized relationship between the two cultures, English and India.

Bankimchandra's *Kapalkundala* was published in 1866, and *Amaryllis at the Fair* and *The Dewy Morn* were published in 1887 and in 1981. For the present study, we have taken up especially the aspect of adventure, primarily centered around the girl-woman characters, as the point of comparison in these novels. For especially *Kapalkundala* and *The Dewy Morn* share to a significant extent a major feature of narration, risk, threat, mystery, test of character and other elements of adventure. The social aspect, given the near-contemporarily of these works, comes as a significant and helpful ground for a comparative study also by means of the adventures of the protagonists. To put it in a different way, works belonging to two different periods would naturally have led us to two different developmental stages of society, and thereby would steer us off the common ground in social terms. So, even while the essential differences between two different kinds of culture (Indian, or Bengali in particular and British cultures in this case) remain, the temporal proximity of these works enable us to conduct this comparison to find out if there is any possibility of an underlying pattern among these works which can help us understand important aspects of English and Indian society.

Now, as for the similarities in the plots of these novels, the most important of them is the theme of adventure. As we will observe in our next chapter, all these young women, Kapalkundala, felise and Amaryllis undertake or go through a series of adventure which the other men or women characters, young or old, around them do not even think of taking up. By doing so, these young protagonists put their emotional, intellectual, social, and of course also physical safety at stake. Besides, all of them are in a transitional phase of their life, moving towards fullfledged womanhood from girlhood or adolescence. The novels concentrate mostly on these girl-woman characters, highlighting their unconventional attitudes and actions and their effects, in turn, on their own lives. Not only are such characters rare in the fiction of the times by age and growth, they are also quite unusual in their attitudes. There and the other similarities

regarding the plots of these novels and the crucial threshold stage in the characters' lives as girl-women will be discussed in detail in the following chapter.

As the contemporaneity of and some basic comparability in these novels allow us to bring these works on a common footing, next we may try to justify this process of comparison in an approach that may be called Comparative Literature. As mentioned before, a comparative study of these works will prove significant in the sense that both they may reveal some latent aspects when juxtaposed against each other. These aspects may help us not only to construct the specific nature of the individual works but also to study the condition of girl-women in both cultures at the end of the nineteenth century. And later, a comparison may inevitably lead us to some perception of the place in contemporary society of such women, allowing us a glimpse of lacuna or faults in both cultures. As each of these works concentrates upon an unconventional girl-woman, unconventional because of her transgression of certain accepted social norms, this study may allow us to make significant observations concerning this long oppressed section of society—women in a most vulnerable phase of their life. The basic similarity in these young protagonists, that is their adventurousness, will allow us to confirm how arbitrary and tyrannical were these conventions in either society in that particular period. And, since the two societies were then in a colonial relation, our comparison will allow us to assess some factors that were common in Indian and British society. On the one hand there were the colonized Indian people whom the British considered 'uncivilized'. On the other were the 'superior' colonizers .Yet what our study will reveal is whether the treatment of women really differed in these apparently different societies, whether one was superior or whether both erred significantly in the way the threshold between girlhood and womanhood was treated.

Comparative study implies that literature cannot be studied in isolation. The contemporary society and at least by implication the history of that society leave an indelible impression on literature. Therefore, it becomes necessary to take into account the historical backgrounds and the contexts of a particular literary work to put it in its proper perspective. In this project also we will briefly locate the works in their proper historical backgrounds in which they were written. Their juxtaposition will unveil a fresh understanding of both English and Indian societies of the later half of the nineteenth century.

From these observations on the basis of comparative study, we can conclude that this project has a twofold scope. First, the basic aim of Comparative Literature—to release the individual literatures from their watertight compartments and help us know them better, thereby enriching our understanding. Both these novels, one in English and the other in Bengali, will be studied by keeping in mind their individual historical backgrounds and contexts. Secondly, the comparative study of the adventurous girl-woman protagonists will enable us to achieve a new understanding of the techniques used by Bankimchandra and Jefferies.

What strikes us at first in both these novels is that in each a very young woman has been assigned the pivotal role as a protagonist in either perilous or challenging adventures. Given the time of publication of these works (the later half of the nineteenth century), it appears unique to have novels with such young and inexperienced girl-women, especially adventurous women, definitely taking charge of their own lives. The novels appeared at a time when women characters of such a strong mettle ran the risk of onslaught by negative criticism, if not also rejected by readers, on the ground of being contrary to accepted norms of behaviour. The reason behind a young, adventurous woman being unfashionable and therefore unacceptable relate to the social status of women in those days.

As for the condition of women in nineteenth century India, we need not explore in detail any historical evidence. It is now a well established fact beyond any possible degree of doubt that most women were obliged to live narrow, highly constrained and seriously deprived lives across the entire cross-section of Indian society, irrespective of caste, creed and political or other affiliation. In a study of women in nineteenth century India, therefore, we have every right to take it for granted that in general women were kept from the outside world as much as possible in terms of knowledge and experience, and control over their own destiny in the outside world was simply unthinkable. This partly explains, why, for instance, Bankimchandra had to place Kapalkundala in seventeenth century Bengal, clearly a distancing device. The contemporary stifling social constraints on women, with an embrace deadlier than that of a python, would not let him provide, within contemporary society, his predominantly adventurous and bravely independent heroine with the least social, physical and mental space to move freely. He had to use their technique of locating the story in a distant past as a convenient shock absorber against the anticipated general disapproval of the actions of such an exceptionally unconventional Bengali woman placed in a contemporary location. Yet, as is evident from the novel, written by a

socially aware nineteenth century novelist, the social predicament in Kapalkundala's life applies to any woman of nineteenth century Bengal as much and as stringently as to any Bengali woman of the seventeenth century.

Next arises the yet more pertinent question: what happens to women when they are able to or forced to leave their "home environment" and confront and deal with whatever dreaded challenge life outside the home happens to serve on their plates. The answer to this question, available in Bankimchandra's *Kapalkundala* (and some other Indian works) is the focus of our study. In a generally unromantic sense, or not in a merely romantic sense, such ventures of women like Kapalkundala are bound to have been "adventures". Our next section will, therefore, present in some detail the variety of senses of "adventure" that apply in the particular case of Kapalkundala.

In comparative terms, it is both reassuring and disheartening to meet a similar phenomenon in the life of an English young woman in England even as her country was fully entrenched in the "superior" exercise of "civilizing" Indian society. It may be fair to say that in treatment of women and many other genuinely important and fundamental aspects of human social existence, India did need civilizing. Yet, as we shall see in the next chapter from our study of Richard Jefferies' *The Dewy Morn*, contemporary England was hardly an ideal society for a young woman either. It is possible, therefore, that the condition of Bankimchandra's Kapalkundala and the condition of Jefferies Felise will together underline for us, across cultural and developmental gulfs, the general difficulty and unfairness that were the lot of very young women. In the latter case as well we see both a young woman's difficult encounters with the outside world (in Bengali "baire") and the revelation of her character during such encounters, which suggests far greater abilities and strength than ascribed by the conventional protective and limiting attitude to women in both societies. We need to explore this facet of each work in some detail for such a comparison.

The next most significant and interesting common factor in both these novels offers us yet another tempting motive to pursue this comparative study. It is hardly surprising that both Bankimchandra and Jefferies adopted the mode of adventure to celebrate the young women's meeting with multi-dimensional human life outside their pale. Although a brief introduction to adventure, therefore, will be provided in the next section, it will not be completely out of place here to point out the exceptionality of the novelists' choice of this mode.

Adventure is generally thought to be either the domain of children's literature or only fit to fill up books of the popular fiction category. This notion, however, seems quite strange especially when we remember our own immense absorption in works like Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* or Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* in English, or Saratchandra's *Srikanta* or *Mahasthavir Jatak* by Premankur Atarthi in Bengali to name a few. And we know that none of these works can be classified as juvenile or merely 'popular'. At a time when the mode of adventure was not thought capable of handling the elusive nuances of human life, or at any rate not where women heroes were concerned, both these near-contemporary writers used this mode in its full range of effects and capabilities in these novel. They used the notion of adventure to represent the apparently eternal struggle between the human will and his destiny. How much a human being can mould it and how much, in turn is moulded by it. It is indeed a bonus that both authors had the common sense and courage to apply this mode of writing to present the unacceptable predicament of girl-women and to show how far they could go in their adventures.

SECTION II

As our study concentrates upon three adventurous young women as protagonists, here it is necessary to provide a brief outline of the concept of adventure, which we can use as a convenient guideline in our analysis of these protagonists' lives, in our following chapter as well. The word "adventure" is derived from the Latin word " ad venir", which literally means, "to come at" or "to chance upon something". * We are familiar with the use of the verb "venture", of course. The word as we know it in English is formed by the combination of the prefix "ad" and the word "venture", which stands for a vast variety of experience at a venture, that is to say undertakings involving chance, risk or danger, and their accompanying emotions. Some of the various implications of this word, according to *The Oxford English Dictionary* are

i) Chance of danger or loss, risk, jeopardy, peril.

ii) A hazardous or perilous enterprise or performance; a daring feat; hence a prodigy, a marvel.

iii) Any novel or unexpected event in which one shares; an exciting or remarkable incident befalling anyone.

iv) The encountering of risk or participation in novel and exciting events; and so on.

In all these cases, we notice that in the sense of the word adventure the elements of unexpectedness and excitement automatically follow risk and danger as well as novelty, or even mystery.

The literal significance aside, it is really something of a bewildering yet necessary task to follow the comprehensive connotations of the concept of adventure. Keeping these connotations in mind, we find ourselves confronted by an endless list of situations which can be called adventurous— from the apparently simple case of visiting a fair to being drawn into an accidentally life threatening situation.

This apart, what makes our task of defining adventure tougher is the fact that adventure is

*_The Oxford English Dictionary_. 2 nd ed., Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989.

basically a relative and contextual idea. A classic example of this will be the story of two friends in the short story "Big Bill" ("Brihat-Chanchu" in the Bengali version of the story) by Satyajit Ray, where for a character to visit his favourite restaurant becomes a daily adventure. But for his counterpart, a friend, even the discovery that the small bird, of a species unknown to him, which he took as his pet has grown up into a huge, ferocious and carnivorous creature leaves him quite unperturbed. Therefore, I think we should try to point out the essential constituents of the concept of adventure, rather than looking for some universally accepted and persistent 'definition' of this amorphous and constantly re-shaped concept. Here, for instance, is one formulation:

> The concept of adventure, as is evident, seems to comprise the following crucial factors: namely, first, a possibility of a new experience, quite often arising from a journey; naturally a character participant, a chance or unpredictable happening which is more or less beyond the control of the character, of the action that involves him. Any event can be regarded as an adventure, therefore, if it is made up of a combination of these elements. *

Next, let us consider the elements of adventure and adventure narrative. An adventure narrative desperately needs a protagonist who undergoes adventure. It needs a central character or hero to highlight and carry the unique and heightened action of such fiction. He is the one to whom the exciting and unpredictable incidents happen and he is the one upon whose reactions to the initial happenings the rest of the narrative depends. The special constitution of adventure narratives usually allows only one central character to dominate the course of action or to form the focus of all major events so as to maintain the taut focus intact. Even when there is more than one heroic character in the narrative, all these characters represent some interrelationship amongst a certain unity regarding their actions. For instance, the adventures of Odysseus and his compatriots on their way home from the Trojan War.

As the vastnes of the scope of some adventure narratives, such as the epics and Mediaeval romances and even 500-page modern novels, suggests—there may be a variety in the

* Satyasree M. "Richard Jefferies: The Shapes of Adventure." Diss. University of Hyderabad (1988). p.17. Since there are no really thorough and exhaustive analyses of 'adventure narratives', I rely substantially on Satyasree's extremely helpful analysis while proceeding with the present section.

types of adventure heroes as well. The variety is immense, from the super-man-like hero (from Odyesseus or Aeneas to Superman or James Bond) to an ordinary person (Richard Shelton in Stevenson's *The Black Arrow*); from a mature and self-conscious hero (Srikanta in Saratchandra's *Srikanta*) to a child-hero or a social-outsider who gradually acquires the required level of self-consciousness through his adventures (Huck in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, or Bankimchandra's own Kapalkundala). It is quite interesting to note that in late-Victorian British fiction the use of a child's adventures to satirize or evaluate society in general became a major pattern : witness *The Adventures of Alice in Wonderland.* Similarly entertaining or critical effect was achieved when the child hero was replaced by an alien adult, as in W.H.Hudson's *Green Mansions* or Jule Verne's *Twenty-Thousand Leagues under the Sea* or *The Master of the World.*

Apart from the variety in physical appearance, attributes such as gender and age, the intellectual and emotional facets of the heroes (and occasional heroines) also vary greatly from narrative to narrative. Whatever the case may be, the central character- participant emerges as an indispensable feature of adventure narrative. This is true of fiction even when it unveils some fascinating observations on human life (as in Saradindu's *Chidiaghar),* thereby acquiring a universal appeal.

Crucial for the survival of the adventure narrative as a special category of literature are the motifs of movement and journey. The essential elements of unexpectedness, excitement, suspense and so on in the adventure narrative usually depend on or derive from the dynamic quality of the narrative imparted by the journey motif. This dynamism can be on the part of the character. It can be external, or internal or both. An instance of external dynamism may be seen where the sheer extraordinariness of the physical activities and deeds of the hero evoke the sense of adventure in the narrative, as happens with the James Bond tales.

The internal dynamism of the character (such as Bevis in Richard Jefferies' *Bevis: The Story of a Boy* or the child-heroes in the tales like *Patashgader Jangale* by Sirshendu Chatterjee) may also give rise to the outer dynamism in the story. Whereas, in general, popular adventure fiction tends to limit itself only to capturing the physical dynamism of the character, a serious adventure narrative attempts to acquire or achieve seriousness by capturing both internal and external dynamism of the hero. *Kapalkundla, The Dewy Morn, Amaryllis at the Fair,*

Saratchandra's *Pather Dabi* may be considered as some of the examples of the latter category, not to mention classics such as Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones* and Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*.

Indeed, as may be easily surmised by anyone, adventure narration has been the staple of human creativity. Characters of adventure heroes (and villains), therefore, abound in all cultures alike. But the kinetic energy in an adventure narrative may also be induced by the treatment of the plot by the author. The movement of the story in time and space (as in Jefferies' adventure-filled spiritual autobiography *The Story of My Heart,* which shifts amazingly in both time and space or of the very style of the narrative itself (as is the case with Ashapurna Devi's *Pratham Pratisruti*). A reader's experience of adventure can originate the dynamism in the narrative, as well as in heroic character and plot.

Speaking of the motif of journey, let us consider the following assessment:

> The journey motif is the most important or even archetypal feature of adventure narratives. Often adventurous or exciting actions beings to occur, naturally enough, when the character encounters strange new circumstances. That is most likely to happen away from a familiar, even protective, native environment. Thus, we have the protagonist of Joyce's story "An Encounter" hitting the nail on the head, as it were, when he says, "I wanted real adventures to happen to myself. But real adventures, I reflected, don't happen to people who stay at home: they must be sought abroad". The excitement, suspense, and fear, crucial elements of an adventure narrative, often result from new experiences encountered during the movement between these "home" and "abroad" territories. *

It should be mentioned here that the terms "home" and "abroad" do not necessarily or always mean the "safest" and "most unsafe" places respectively for the character concerned. The hero may have grown up in circumstances full of risk, such as in a dense and deserted forest, or in a war-torn country like Afghanistan. Yet leaving the forest for an apparently safer place like a village or city may become adventurous for

* Satyasree,M. "Richard Jefferies: The Shapes of Adventure". Diss. University of Hyderabad. (1988) P 41-2

him. Mowgli in Kipling's *Jungle Book* and Kapalkundala serve as examples here.

It is not always necessary for the hero to venture out to let the motif of journey take place. Adventure itself may enter the "home" environment of an unsuspecting hero, thereby giving rise to the feelings of danger and fear in him as his familiar environment transforms into a dangerous one. In the conventional kind of detective stories and also in some science fiction tales we find this technique used extensively. Even in *Robinson Crusoe*, the discovery of Friday's footprint by Crusoe in his uniquely personal island- home and the anguish it causes him serve as another convenient example.

The journey motif implies the process of journey itself as well as the place from where the character starts and his destination. But an adventure narrative may choose one of these stages of experience to concentrate upon. For example, Bankimchandra highlights the adventure in the process of journey in *Indira*, whereas he in *Kapalkundala* or Golding in *Lord of the Flies* chooses life in the new location to constitute the adventure in the tale. The process or journey itself, when it gives rise to the element of adventure in the narrative, can be used in various ways. Therefore, in some tales we see the character thrust into the uncertainties and suspense of the unpredictable course of a journey whereas in some other the hero consciously embraces the perlis himself. Indeed, adventure may even be encountered without leaving home and just by contemplation. Such is the case of Stevenson's unheroic hero in the stay-at-home story "Will o' the Mill."

As for the destination or the goal of the hero (perhaps of the journey as well), it emerges as another integrated part of an adventure narrative. Here once again is Satyasree on this aspect of adventure narratives:

> Sometimes there is a specific goal to be achieved which the hero strives to attain: for instance, a quest for identity or a hunt for treasure or safety, or home-coming; or in the words of Tennyson's "Ulysses", the goal may be fulfilment of a life-philosophy:
>
> To follow knowledge like sinking star
> Beyond the utmost bound of human thought. (11. 31-2)

Such a goal play a pivotal role in the adventure. However, this goal may or may not be specified or defined by the author, or rather, an

> adventure may utilize a goal without allowing it to monopolize the reader's attention [or allowing it to unfold with the events rather than revealing it at once at the beginning. This last, for instance, is the case of the novels by Bankimchandra and Jefferies that we have chosen to ex amine. And, indeed, growth and independence of a personality are liable to be goals that may not be expressed in so many words]. Or the goal may be defined or discovered or imagined by the character; or indeed it may be assigned to him or thrust upon him by another agency including chance. The delay or difficulty in reaching a goal not only determines the success or failure of adventure, but by adding to its complications it helps the narrative itself to achieve an obvious kind of roundness, self-justification, and heightened effect. It can be used, like other features of narrative, not only to motivate and push a character, but also to structure the tale itself. Goals, like heroes, can be of many types: for instance, personal, social, short-term, life-long goals and so on. The term accommodates Jason's quest as well as that of Odysseus, treasure hunts such as those of *King Solomon's Mines* and other motivating factors. Like Aristotle's God, the goals of adventure can be both prime as well as moving causes. *

The aspect of goals and journeys leads us to another essential feature of adventure narrative. The location or the setting of an adventure appears inextricably linked with the nature of the narrative. The setting, be it realistic or fantastic, external or internal, does not necessarily imply a fixed place in space and time. Indeed, the journey motif brings the hero to newer locations. That is why we find the concept of the "landscape of difficulty" as it is used to complicate the plot and therewith to test the potential of the hero, sometimes spanning over a vast course of space and time. Consider, for instance, the forests traversed by medieval knights in romances such as Sir *Gawain and the Green Knight*, or the horror-filled hellish tract traversed by

* Satyasree M. "Richard Jefferies: The Shapes of Adventure." Diss. University of Hyderabad (!988) pp, 43-4.

Roland in Browning's "Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came". A proper setting of this kind acts as an efficacious agent to produce the desired flavour of an adventure narrative, besides allowing an introduction of incidents the authors requires, although, as has been done in Dostoyevski's *Crime and Punishment,* this landscape of difficulty may exist on a psychological level, rather than on a topographical one.

Adventure on a more or less physical level is obviously moulded by the setting of the landscapes of difficulty and characterizes narratives as widely different as war fiction and *Kapalkundala.* The more hostile the terrain, the more challenging (not only physically, but mentally and morally also) the task becomes for the hero to prove himself. As we will see in the next chapter, the setting definitely plays a crucial role in *Kapalkundala*, as well as in *The Dewy Morn*, giving each adventure a unique pattern altogether.

It has been mentioned earlier that the concept of adventure must coincide with the element or the possibility of genuinely new and testing experience for the hero if a narrative is to achieve seriousness. When a character is confronted with the elements of danger, fear, suspense, etc., no matter whether he is thrust into the landscape of difficulty, or he ventures out to it voluntarily, he rises to the stature of an adventure hero only after he reacts to those situations at physical, emotional, intellectual or aesthetical levels. Such reaction, which may charge or influence the course of incidents as well as the hero's personality is, further sure to open a new or constantly varying sphere of experience to the character. And not very infrequently do we see the character to go through some significant changes while encountering this kind of experience. In a serious adventure narrative this change— physical, psychological or moral or in all of these aspects— may even be permanent, as is the case with Huckleberry Finn, or Saratchandra's Srikanta. The gradual or sudden growth of such characters following the remarkable incidents is too obvious to ignore and too significant not to become a crucial element in adventure fiction.

Whether or not the growth of character takes places reveals the purpose of the author which may be mere racy and superficial entertainment or genuine character development as in growth-novel or Bildungsroman. The most noticeable example of the first category is a usual James Bond tale, where pure entertainment is the sole objective of the narrative, with a great many unchanging 'givens' such as the character of Bond and the assumed rightness of his motives. Serious adventure narratives, on the other hand, concentrate upon the possibilities of moral and social criticism. The growth of Huck's character coincides with Twain's criticism of

American society, its prejudices and callous modes of thinking, feeling and judgement. Trailokyanath's absurd tales of Damarudhar also serve as a fine example where the writer successfully synchronizes the purpose of entertainment with that of instruction. Indeed, even spiritual goals may involve heroes of exploratory works such as *Jataka* tales and Richard Jefferies' own *Story of My Heart.*

Although the features of adventure we have discussed so far are among some of the most crucial factors in an adventure narrative, there are some other fundamental elements which demand our attention as well. The elements such as "chance" and "coincidence", "threat", "danger" etc. are inherent in the basic necessity of unpredictability in an adventure narrative. We can even say that the feature of unpredictability actually gives rise to the elements mentioned above. The unpredictability in an adventure can exist simply as part of the character's experience or it may subject the reader to suspense as well. In yet another possible case, the character may be partially exposed to the "risk" or "danger" initially, which helps him guess the future course of adventure. In such cases the narrative acquires the flavour of an anticipated adventure and enhances the suspense in the narrative concerning qualities of the hero's personality, as the character has only the awareness of the unpredictability, but not the full knowledge of its future course, and must rise to every occasion. The suspense, created by such an anticipated adventure, is often used by the writers to dramatize the action of the tale.

The elements of "chance" and "coincidence" similarly influence the course of adventure. The narrative, when it carefully exploits these elements to their full potential, can create some really breathtaking , exciting sequences. As for the element of "danger", it is used primarily to test a character, when his own life or the lives of his loved ones or those for whom he is responsible or perhaps his property or reputation, are threatened by some agent like a natural calamity or a villain deliberately acting against the interest of the hero.

As the kinds of danger presented to the character may very from a threat to his social reputation to his very life, even important abstract but real factors such as his nation's freedom, so also may vary the levels or intensity of danger. It can occur at so many levels of experience as physical, mental, emotional, intellectual, social, aesthetic and spiritual. Sometimes adventure at one level may actually represent adventure at a different level. As an example of this we can take up Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* in which the physical adventures represent the spiritual ones.

As has been mentioned earlier, this brief outline of the concept of adventure will not only help us to understand the adventurousness of the protagonists we intend to focus on, but it will also lead us to a proper and impartial evaluation of their adventurousness as such. The girl-woman protagonists we intend to look carefully at differ from one another greatly, but in the following chapters we shall try to show that however different they may be, essentially they are true adventurers, who dare to take the road not taken before.

What is extremely important also to remark at this point is the fact that they are women—for until the advent of modern fiction, the great majority of adventure heroes were males. It is necessary, therefore, to appreciate the univocation both Bankimchandra and Richard Jefferies achieved, as well as their courage in taking up the growth of girl-women as their subjects. This is a significantly contrary direction to millenia-old patriarchal convention, for which our authors must receive due credit. The following chapters of the present study hope to provide substance to this claim.

SECTION III

This section has been introduced for many important reasons. First, it will serve as the link between the introduction to the project as a whole and the succeeding specific discussion. Then it will include a short introduction to our two authors, Bankimchandra and Richard Jefferies. And finally, for the convenience of the readers, as the novels in question are not well-known nor current in general reading, brief outlines of *Kapalkundala* and *The Dewy Morn* will be introduced before being discussed. As for the outlines of the novels, they will be constructed rather from the viewpoint of this project, thereby highlighting only those specific parts and aspects of the novels which we will concentrate upon in their subsequent discussion. Besides the outlines of *Kapalkundala* and *The Dewy Morn*, that of the novel *Amaryllis at the Fair* will also be included here in a sub-section, as we will refer to this novel from time to time as a convenient example to assist us in the analysis because of its marked resemblance (in terms of adventures encountered by its heroine) to the novels under discussion.

This project, as the title suggests, is about two very young women who, because of their unconventional thoughts, feelings and daring acts, can be called 'adventurous'. Kapalkundala (in Bankimchandra's *Kapalkundala*) is a girl brought up away from general human society. But following some of her own actions she has to move to a suburban environment, where her uninhibited, independent and adventurous nature lead the story to its climax. As for Felise (*The Dewy Morn*), she starts as a very young woman, self-aware and determined to live life to the full and with a sense of justice. Her determination and courageous nature motivate her to venture out not only into her natural surroundings but also into active life as she makes her own choices and decides on the courses of action. Amaryllis (*Amaryllis at the Fair*), with her keen sensitiveness and receptive nature, emerges as another unique girl who fights to keep her aesthetic temperament alive in circumstances hostile enough to turn her into a self-absorbed and nagging and adversely inward-looking person like her own mother.

It will be our endeavour in this project to highlight all those thoughts, feelings and actions of these young protagonists, which help us to single them out as remarkably adventurous girl-women. Furthermore, we will also focus on the heightened effects of these thoughts, feelings and actions on their lives as we observe them going through a gradual but discernible growth of their

characters as the novels proceed. But we shall not examine the effects, as mentioned above, only on their inner levels of experience. For a detailed discussion from all possible perspectives on this topic, we will also include the effects of their thoughts and actions at the levels of their social and physical existence including the lives of other characters closely related to these protagonists and their adventures. In other words, once the specific nature of adventure in each novel has been outlined, we will proceed toward the elaboration of the impact of these adventures on their characters in the next chapter. Following this we hope to abstract a general trend of adventure in each novel which will finally enable us to make an assessment of adventure, in the concluding chapter, as a means of lending a voice to women on the threshold of social existence. In the following chapter the assessment of each protagonist will be presented aiming at elaborating the basic differences between their lives and adventures so that in the concluding chapter we can keep these differences in mind while comparing them. We have, towards this end, already provided ourselves with a brief introduction to adventure in our previous section which, we hope, will furnish this analysis across cultures of such girl-women with the necessary background to locate them in the realm of issues far too important not to broach or debate yet which were hardly debated in either culture in the late-nineteenth century.

Bankimchandra Chatterjee (in Bengali Chattopadhaya, 1838-94) belongs to the first innovating Bengali novelists. His method of mixing history with romance earned him the title 'the (Sir Walter) Scott of Bengal', though later studies have revealed some essential and noteworthy differences between him and Scott. Nevertheless, the literary influence of British fiction is quite prominent especially in his early writings such as *Durgesnandini* (1865), which were a happy blend of his inclination towards Western ideas and his native concerns and patriotism. As a result, we find most of his novels imbued with a predominant atmosphere of adventure. His literary output includes twelve novels, some stories and a vast variety of essays ranging in subjects from anthropology to the art of music. Among his novels *Kapalkundala* (1866), *Visavriksa* ("The Poison Tree", 1873) and *Sitaram* (1887) are considered his masterpieces.

Bankimchandra has been frequently accused of being a Hindu revivalist, but at the same time his fervent religious nationalism is thought to be trimmed off to s substantial degree by his personal obligation to the British rule (he was a Deputy Collector for the Government of British India). Another such conflicting feature has been pointed out by several critics as the clash

between his conservative outlook resulting from a traditional upbringing in a Hindu Brahmin family and his belief in European liberal ideas like that of individual freedom. Whatever be the case, the intensity with which he has depicted the restlessness, doubts and paradoxes of his time has retained the popularity of his novels intact till today. And in giving the role of heroine to a character like Kapalkundala he has done unique service for the cause of focussing on women's predicament in the contemporary society.

Kapalkundala begins with the disastrous homeward voyage of Navakumar, whom we may call the hero and his abandonment on a deserted shore by his fellow-passengers. The chance encounter with the Kapalica* in that wilderness threatens his life when the latter tries to sacrifice him to the deity of Kali. He is saved at the last moment by Kapalkundala's courageous and timely intervention. Kapalkundala, who is herself a foundling brought up by the Kapalica, next takes him to the safekeeping of the Adhikari, a priest and well-wisher of Kapalkundala. The Adhikari, anticipating the Kapalica's wrath may descend on Kapalkundala after she has thus interfered with his plans, marries Kapalkundala and Navakumar with the intention of sending her away from the Kapalica. Kapalkundala, completely inexperienced in social ways and with the premonition that her married life will not be smooth, comes to Saptagram, Navakumar's suburban hometown, as his wife and is warmly accepted in his household. Thus ends the first series of adventures, fortuitous for Navakumar and resulting in an uprooting revelation of character for Kapalkundala.

One year elapses. Kapalkundala appears a little domesticated the next time she appears in the novel. Yet her uninhibited and fearless nature remains unaffected and highlights the gulf of incomprehensibility between her and the utterly conventional people around her, including Navakumar. In this scenario, the reappearance of the Kapalica and Padmavati, Navakumar's long-estranged (first) wife, in Kapalkundala's apparently tranquil life create the next series of adventures. Padmavati, a determined and shrewd woman, wants to win Navakumar back, even at the cost of sending Kapalkundala to exile forever from Saptagram. The Kapalica, after witnessing a dream in which Kali orders him to sacrifice her, is also determined to sacrifice

* A sect of Kali worshippers who believe in highly brutal and violent religious practices, including the sacrifice of human beings.

Kapalkundala. Thus, without any sin or fault, Kapalkundala is about to become a victim of a double sacrifice on account of her initial, natural and humane action as for a womanly role actually thrust upon her.

Padmavati and the Kapalica join hands as they meet in the sprawling woods near Navakumar's house. Kapalkundala, in one of her nightly wanderings in the jungle, partially overhears the conspiracy against her and encounters Padmavati disguised as a man. Later, while running back home with a thunderstorm brewing overhead, she is chased by the Kapalica. Anyway, she goes to meet Padmavati in the jungle on the following night again as she has promised to expose the conspiracy to Kapalkundala. By now Navakumar has started suspecting Kapalkundala of infidelity because of her nightly absences and follows her. The Kapalica meets him and provokes him to help Kapalica sacrifice Kapalkundala. In the meeting between Kapalkundala and Padmavati, on the other hand, the latter requests her to leave Navakumar. Kapalkundala, as she finds herself least attached to domestic life and also because the news of the Kapalica's having received a divine command to sacrifice her, decides to leave Navakumar for her own reasons. But Navakumar and the Kapalica seize her and take her to the funeral ground at the bank of the Ganga, where they propose to perform the sacrifice. However, once Navakumar comes to know about the baselessness of his suspicion regarding Kapalkundala's fidelity, he wants to take her home. Kapalkundala, however, refuses. For by now she herself decided to sacrifice her life to Kali. Finally, the eroded part of the bank where Kapalkundala has been standing, falls into the river with her. Navakumar also jumps into the river. He cannot find her, nor does he himself emerge form the river alive.

This, in essence is the series of adventures by which happens to be enacted a series of dramatic adventures that assail Kapalkundala as a personality and as a woman. From an unsuspecting, innocent person with both good instincts and the courage to follow them, she arrives at her status as a sacrifice to convention and womanhood in its 'dispensable' status in contemporary society.

Richard John Jefferies (1848-1887) was born and brought up amidst the multifaceted gallery of nature in Wiltshire, which comes so often into his writing with either its Arcadian beauty or its cruel indifference to the lot of human beings. His early short stories display his inborn romanticism and sensuous nature. Initially, his letters published in *The Times* (1872) on

the life and habits of Wiltshire labourers were the first of his works to attract the attention of the contemporary reading public. But his inclination toward writing novels soon produced his early extended works like *The Scarlet Shawl* (1874), *Restless Human Hearts* (1875). These novels show his rapid growth as a novelist and a combination of romance with adventure achieve a fully-fledged stature in his later works. Among them are *The Story of My Heart* (1883), a fascinating spiritual autobiography, *The Dewy Morn* (1891), which amounts to an announcement of the advent of the New Woman, and *Amaryllis at the Fair* (1887), an unconventional novel, perhaps even a fragment that directs our special attention once again towards a very independently adventurous modern girl–woman. Jefferies died very young— following the sufferings from chronic illness and a life long poverty, but not before he left some unforgettable sketches of human struggle against his destiny among which must be counted his (for that time) daring sketches of young or emerging womanhood, antithetical to convention, which even women writers were not as yet ready to dream about in public literature.

Felise, the young and beautiful heroine of *The Dewy Morn* is introduced to us in the very first pages of the novel as a highly self-aware and wilful individual who has already initiated herself into the adventure of being, just being at both physical and inner levels. Characteristically for both her and her creator, our very first meeting with her occurs in a private early morning scene in which she attempts to match her physical wellbeing with nature's well being. For we see nature waking up and Felise attempting to run up a hill in a nearly spiritual experience of health. This sort of adventure was as yet hardly 'allowed' to women by conventional attitude. This episode precedes her realization of the fact that she is in love with Martial Barnard, a tenant-farmer.

But as he has recently caused a break-up with his former beloved and fiance Rosa, Martial feels unable to involve himself in any further romantic attachment. Unaware of these complication Felise accepts the aloofness of Martial as a challenge to her passionate love for him, as something she must overcome to convey her emotions to him, thereafter leading him to reciprocation of her feelings. Accordingly she sets about persuading him in her own characteristically new way. Later she even buys back Martial's horse from the steward, Robert Godwin, and gifts it to Martial anonymously. Though Godwin secretly cultivates an obsession for her, when Felise pleads with him not to evict the poor and old farmer Abner Brown from his

cottage, he rejects her plea. Felise takes the case to the Court of Law, in her characteristic optimism, though in vain.

The following serious of incidents includes the romantic adventure of growing emotional proximity between Felise and Martial successfully surviving the impediments like Martial's being falsely accused in a suicide case. But the financial crisis owing to the evils of the tenant-farming system forces Martial to think of selling his farm and emigrating to the States. As a result, when he is given the responsibility to laud the 'successful' parliamentary affairs of the Squire, Cornleigh Cornleigh, at the assembly-hall, instead he exposes the seamy-side of the tenant-farming system causing a huge uproar in the hall. But this act of his earns him the support of Felise and the approval of his influential and wealthy friends in London who come forth to help him financially. The last incident which marks the end of the novel is a culminating adventure, a life threatening attack on Felise by Godwin following the bitterness of his unrequited love for her. But the providential appearance of Martial in the scene saves her. Godwin commits suicide shortly afterwards. The novel ends with the marriage and happy union of Felise and Martial.

It may be somewhat less obvious that Jefferies used adventure and a sense of adventure as his vehicle for what is, essentially, a strongly feminist novel about a girl-woman who earns her place in society and romance on her own terms. Equally importantly, from a woman feeling her own muscles in physical exercise with pleasure and abandon (an extraordinary episode in any age but far more so in the late Victorian age), to confronting established Court of Law and other seats of power— Jefferies uses a far greater variety of adventure than may be noticed to reveal Felise's character.

Amaryllis at the Fair has the feeling of being incomplete, a fragment. In this novel Amaryllis is a very young girl growing up in a queer combination of surroundings such as the serenity of the farmhouse, Coombe Oaks, the company of an apparently mundane, yet highly and naturally inward and intellectual father and the presence of a once beautiful and romantic but now complaining and hysterical mother. The story proceeds with the narration of her overlooking people going to the Lady Day's fair and her own experiences of the fair after she herself goes there. Much of the novel deals with Amaryllis' emotional encounters and adventures centred around her parents, especially her father, Mr. Iden, who is not efficient a money-maker

as he if as a farmer. Amaryllis, to keep the money-lenders and the debt-bills away from Coombe Oaks, desperately tries to earn some money through her drawings but fails ultimately.

Occasionally we find her in the bare attic room, praying for her parents, all anguished anticipating either an occasional visit by a rude money-lender to the house or the intrusion of her hysterical mother into her private cell with her verbal assaults on Amaryllis' futile efforts to earn money through her sketches. The novel, anyway, ends on a different note as with the visit of Alere Flamma and Amadis Iden Coombe Oaks forgets its troubles for the time being. In the last scene we find Amaryllis and Amadis reposing amidst the tranquility of nature, both the young hearts sharing a divine and unique bond— the bond of love.

This is entirely appropriate for a novel that opens with the simplest of adventures— Amaryllis encountering the tearing force of the wind as she comes round a house-corner. This novel reveals adventures a 'free' spirited girl-woman may find in the threshold of womanhood both out of doors and in her heart and mind, rather than risk and danger in their other two novels. All the same, in the extraordinary venturesome self-feeling character of Amaryllis, Jefferies has shown very readably and effectively how the inner life of a woman can itself be an adventure. In fact, in the next chapter we shall turn to some of the detail and the quality of adventure encountered by our heroines in the process of determining, defining and defending their own identities as emerging women.

CHAPTER II
ANALYSIS

SECTION I

"If I knew that for women marriage is slavery, I would have never married."

Kapalkundala, the adventurous girl-woman protagonist in *Kapalkundala*.

A chronology of Kapalkundala's life shows her being kidnapped by Portuguese pirates in her early childhood. That would qualify as an adventure in anyone's life. Following a ship-wreck the pirates then leave her on a deserted sea-shore. Marooned, she comes face to face with the first and a crucial adventure in her life when she is still a mere defenceless child. This incident is mentioned almost casually only once in the novel (p.24); but the message from the novelist to the readers is unmistakable—her life begins in adventure. This will confirm the important fact that besides being deprived of a normal life, Kapalkundala is very early forced to contend with such adventure.

And when she is at the end of her girlhood and Navakumar, lost in the coastal jungle, comes across Kapalkundala— the whole episode being an adventure for him as well—it is evening already and her astral presence on that dark, vast and deserted beach leaves him unable to determine whether she is a goddess, a human being or a mere illusion created by the Kapalica he had already encountered the previous night. The situation is already fraught with risks posed by a cult situation on the fringes of the mainstream of religion. Yet roaming in the jungle by herself, mostly during the night, is what sixteen year old beautiful, uninhibited and fearless Kapalkundala likes most. The desolate night-cloaked forest and beach, perhaps hiding uncountable dangers lurking within, cannot deter her from moving all along there. In fact, she loves her nightly rovings so much that later in the novel, when her movements become restricted after her marriage with Navakumar, she pines for these wanderings of her maiden days. So, here we are introduced to a heroine, for the first time in the history of Bengali literature, who is described as a 'sylvan goddess' ('vanyadevimurti', P 15), who is fearless, as symbolized by her undaunted habitual ventures into Nature in its wild guise of the forest, the beach and the sea

possibly hostile and certainly awe-inspiring. Already she is unusual enough in Bengali fiction to capture our attention.

This novel presents Kapalkundala as the doer, as an active agent of her own, free of will who cannot conceive of living in constraints— the typical attributes of an adventurous protagonist. The first instance in which we see these qualities takes place when she encounters Navakumar on the dusky beach. Navakumar is dumbfounded, Kapalkundala slightly worried. At length, she is the one to speak first, as she asks him without any reserve expected in a conventionally brought up young woman, "Wayfarer, have you lost your way?" And she shows him the way, both literally and metaphorically, while Navakumar follows her "like a puppet". He follows her in the climax of the novel also, where again she is the one who decides upon the direction.

Kapalkundala initiates herself into the next series of action when the Kapalica, her adoptive father, a savage ascetic given to temper and sacrifice, prepares to offer Navakumar as a human sacrifice to Goddess Kali. Kapalkundala warns Navakumar, time and again, against the Kapalica's plan. But Navakumar is unable to escape him. And when at last he is tied up by the Kapalica and to be sacrificed, again it is Kapalkundala who comes to his rescue. She hides the Kapalica's sacrificial sword and while he is away looking for it she comes to Navakumar, unties him and helps him to escape. She shows him the way, both of them run under the moonless sky, across the starlit dunes, through the deep, dark forest while the Kapalica chases them. The whole scene comprises all the elements of a universal and purely physical adventure such as threat to life, a dangerous adversary and a chase with an uncertain outcome. The hostile terrain, assisted by the sinister darkness of a moonless night and the two protagonists running away from sure death through all these impediments— set by both nature and man— stand for a little more than the landscape of difficulty. There are elements of the basic and eternal struggle of man from the first moment of his appearance on the face of the earth till now, against the various forces hostile to his existence. And in this fight and flight to preserve life, it is Kapalkundala who leads Navakumar as he is unfamiliar with the terrain. But it is quite interesting to note that even after she has been taken to a world familiar to Navakumar and unknown to her, it is again Kapalkundala who leads the way, through a similar hostile landscape, under another moonless sky, while he follows her. This is the way in which adventure, or its essence is both physically and figuratively personified in Kapalkundala and they become one.

At length, to return to their initial encounter, after escaping from the Kapalica, when Kapalkundala takes Navakumar to the safe refuge of a priest or Adhikari of a nearby temple, it is almost midnight.

This whole series of her actions, first, warring Navakumar against the impending danger, then coming to his rescue and finally taking him to a safe place, is described at a breathtaking pace, with moments of suspense, fear and excitement facing us at every turn. Kapalkundala, undoubtedly, is the character who gives rise to or confronts the adventure, definitely has motivation to take charge of its course and then she also, by and large, gives it the finishing touch. There is no doubt that Navakumar would surely have died without Kapalkundala's intervention. It is clear from the narrative that she is in awe of her adoptive father, the violent Tantrik worshipper of Goddess Kali, whose grotesque, bloody ways of worship she has witnessed innumerable times since her early childhood. She is not disrespectful towards him, but she does not approves of his barbarous rituals either. Her tender and sympathetic nature cannot stand another life being destroyed in such an inhuman way. This attitude and determination gives her courage to stand against the mighty Kapalica, the who commands that wilderness. She is well aware of his ruthless and violent nature and knows the possible outcome of her disobedience.

Her awareness is brought out clearly when the Adhikari requests her not go back to the Kapalica as he might kill her and she answers, "I know that." In fact, this knowledge or anticipation of the consequences of her daring action gives her adventure an air of inevitability—there is a rightness about the quality and outcome of her adventure. At the same time it also increases the degree of suspense (the reader only realizing this inevitability in retrospect) form her point of view as she knows her efforts to save Navakumar may have fatal consequences for both of them. However, even later, when Navakumar is well beyond the Kapalica's clutches, Kapalkundala knows she is still in danger. We cannot but look at this courageous girl with admiration. For even after anticipating the Kapalica's possible fury against her, she thinks of returning to him, partly because of her sense of duty towards him as her adoptive father and partly because she has nowhere else to go. In all these suspense-filled incidents we have to admire her quickly reaching decisions and firmly carrying them out. That she has no advantages and that she is only just entering her womanhood ought to force us to realize the importance of the subject Bankimchandra has embarked on here.

Under these circumstances, when the Adhikari suggests to her that she should marry Navakumar and go away with him, her reaction, as a girl brought up away from the influences of human society, is quite natural:

> "Ma-rr-iage!" very slowly Kapalkundala uttered the word and said,
> " I have heard it mentioned by you people, but I do not know much
> about it. What am I supposed to do? (21)*

The Adhikari, putting aside all the intricacies of the concept of marriage, tells her that marriage is the only 'dharma' for women. Here for instance is overtly the reason why we have chosen our texts for analysis – there can be no doubt that Bankimchandra's aim is to study the predicament of girl-women in convention-ridden Indian society.

This is a tough situation for Kapalkundala, she knows her life will be in danger once she goes back to the Kapalica. But she, naturally enough, is also ignorant about and apprehensive about the unknown ways of 'human society'. We witness her being led to such a dilemma by her own actions, when she had to choose between the devil and the deep sea. Life will never be the same for this young and brave girl. However, typically, she makes the decision to marry Navakumar and thereby again her own free will leads her towards the new phase in her life, towards the role of a wife, not the less adventurous than her maiden days on the beach.

The word "marriage" does not have any romantic connotation for Kapalkundala, nor indeed any other connotation. She opts for it just as the only possible way to escape the Kapalica, choosing the unknown devil over the known one. She cannot comprehend the enormous responsibilities related to the institution of marriage, the demands it will make on her, and the inevitability of a constrained life as a married woman surely made worse for her by the fact that she lacks any training in the ways and customs of society

* Since the translated versions of Kapalkundala in English were unavailable [for example, Bankimchandra Chatterjee, *Kapalkundala*, trans. H.A. D.Phillips (London, 1885)] I will use my own translation of the required excerpts from the novel edited by professor Shasankhasekhar Bengchi and published in 1965 (Bankimchandra Chatterjee, *Kapalkundala*, ed. Prof. Shasankhasekhar Bagchi, 7th ed. (calcutta: Modern Book Agency, 1965)] in this dissertation.

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Nevertheless, readers can anticipate the future of such a marriage and the possible impediments Kapalkundala has to face in her married life as the novelist himself anticipates and describes. The initiation of a 'sannyasini' brought up by the brutal Kapalica, into the society that also through marriage, heightens the suspense in the novel. We cannot divine for certain what fate has in store for Kapalkundala once she enters the precincts of society but we have a presentiment that there is trouble on the horizon.

Kapalkundala also shares this vague sense of foreboding with the readers as is clear later in the novel from her conversation with her sister-in-law Shyama. In this context we can quote an excerpt of this conversation:

> Mrinmayi (Kapalkundala after marriage) let a sigh escape her and said, "whatever the almighty intends me to do, I will do so. I will have to accept what Fate has in store for me."
>
> Shyama: "why do you say so? Fate intends nothing but happiness for you. Why do you worry?"
>
> Mrinmayi said, "Listen then, before departing with my husband, I went to offer a trefoil to Kali. I used to offer it to the goddess before taking up any thing. The Goddess would accept it if the undertaking were destined to meet with success, otherwise the trefoil would fall down. I was apprehensive at the thought of leaving for an unknown place with a stranger. Therefore I went to the Goddess. She did not accept the trefoil. That is why I am worried." (41)

It is quite clear from the excerpt above that although Kapalkundala decides to marry Navakumar, she is aware that there will be as yet unconceived perils following her decision. This awareness again leads us to the characteristic aspect of Kapalkundala's adventurousness, that is , her getting involved in an undertaking despite the likelihood of hazardous consequences. But it should be observed here that her anticipated adventures do not indicate mere longing for adventure or excitement. Rather, it is a dismal proof of her being given equally unacceptable options by life, though she is courageous enough not to shy away from exposing herself to the hazards of life. All her encounters result from her positive actions, and her actions derive from solid and laudable instincts. This is why for her 'fate' we must blame her society squarely.

Again, the particular scene in the novel where Kapalkundala and the Adhikari take leave from each other may be revealing further in this context:

> They went on in silence. At long last they reached the way to Medinipur. Thereupon the Adhikari took his leave. Kapalkundala started weeping: he, the only one well-wisher she has, is parting from her, she thought. (26)

Till now, the adventures Kapalkundala has gone through— wandering in the wilderness, or saving Navakumar, have taken place in a surrounding familiar to Kapalkundala even though they have had a serious edge of violence about them. Besides, she had a friend, the Adhikari, the "only one well-wisher" with her. But now she is leaving for a place – unknown to her, with a stranger she has met barely a day ago for the first time. We know, as does she herself, now she has to face a strange, new world all alone. Till now the dangers she has faced in the wilderness were concrete – the severity of the rugged terrain, the ferocious wild animals, the barbarous Kapalica and his ruthlessness – she could comprehend them and fight them. But now she has to encounter the multitude of the arbitrary and unnatural dictates of society, unknown and incomprehensible to her when encountered, untrained as she is in the ways of society. From the plight of the contemporary Bengali women, deeply embedded in imposed convention especially after their marriage, we can anticipate the enormous difficulties this very young, unreserved and free-spirited girl has to face, all alone, in a repressive society.

Henceforth begins the journey of Kapalkundala from the deserted beach of Saptagram, Navakumar's native place, from the known to the unknown, from girlhood to womanhood, from free wilderness to domesticity, with the stranger Navakumar in charge. For Kapalkundala it is a journey also from the enfoldment of the uninterrupted Nature to the enforcement of unforeseen, stultifying soullesseness which is the lot of most women her age in that time. This journey, one of the most important motifs of adventure, does not hold any immediate goal for Kapalkundala, for she knows not what to expect, on stead, the journey itself becomes an end in itself for her. In fact, this theme of movement is so pervasive in the whole narrative that we cannot separate the static from the dynamic moments in the novel. Yet we cannot miss the constant uprooting of Kapalkundala, at a time when some degree of stability a girl on the threshold of grown-up life might need.

The marked feature of adventure, experiencing the as yet unexperienced, the new, confronts Kapalkundala from the very first moment of her initiation into the society itself, testing her every step of the way with no one and nothing to guide her. On their way to Saptagram, Navakumar and Kapalkundala happen to have a chance meeting with Padmavati, Navakumar's long-estranged wife, now a courtesan : here is crowding in the worst type of encounter for an inexperienced new wife. Padmavati, resplendent in her beauty and becoming ornaments, appear in front of Kapalkundala and is in turn spellbound by Kapalkundala's celestial beauty. She cannot take her eyes off Kapalkundala and eventually she starts removing her ornaments to adorn Kapalkundala with them. Navakumar objects in vain. Through the whole process Kapalkundala is a silent observer, somewhat surprised by what is happening to her. She finds all these things strange and does not know how to react to them. Therefore, on the next day, after resuming their journey, when a beggar approaches her she gives all the priceless (to her literally priceless!) jewellery to him unhesitatingly. When the beggar, unable to believe his good fortune, runs away immediately and speedily with the jewellery, Kapalkundala is surprised by his reaction.

Just as Navakumar, unfamiliar with the beach and the forest that were Kapalkundala's native environment, found them exciting and adventurous, so does Kapalkundala, unexposed to the social customs and manners, finds them strange. To encounter even a woman adorned with dazzling ornaments becomes an adventure for her.

It is quite interesting that this whole episode in Kapalkundala's journey to Saptagram carries a symbolic implication as well. As Padmavati adorns Kapalkundala with her precious and estimated jewellery, life also seems to adorn Kapalkundala with a handsome, wealthy and loving husband – the ultimate adornment a woman may have, according to contemporary social beliefs. But Kapalkundala is no ordinary woman. Her adventures are directed towards the essence of human existence, her aim is to delve beyond the meaningless superficial ways of custom to celebrate life. Therefore, the social customs and practices appear humdrum to her, without inherent justification. She can easily disown them, she can easily give away the precious jewelry to a beggar as she can give away Navakumar later, far less easily yet equally bravely when Padmavati begs her for him.

After Kapalkundala comes to Saptagram she is warmly accepted in Navakumar's household. Hereafter Bankimchandra gives us a glimpse of the process of Kapalkundala's naturalization in society. She is renamed 'Mrinmayi' (quite significantly, like 'Kapalkundala',

'Mrinmayi' is another name of Kali, the Hindu Goddess who symbolizes the power of destruction). We see her conversing with her sister-in-law, Shyama who coaxes Kapalkundala to tie her massive hair which she prefers to keep loose. Indeed, Kapalkundala's massive head of unfasteneded hair has been repeatedly represented in the novel to symbolize her being unfettered. Later in the novel when Kapalkundala appears to be partly domesticated and settled in Navakumar's household, we find her hair plaited. But in the climax of the novel once again we find Kapalkundala appearing in her former manner , with her hair untied and free , at the moment when she disowns the society she had involuntarily adopted for the time being.

However, to come back to the point of the naturalization process, in her conversation with Shyama, we find Kapalkundala desirous to roam in that forest rear the beach as in her earlier life, rather than decorating herself with exquisite ornaments and putting on flattering dresses. It is at this particular point that Bankimchandra leaves us wondering whether such a unique and hitherto unconstrained girl as Kapalkundala can survive the subjugation of society at all.

For a whole year Kapalkundala adheres to Navakumar's household before she appears before us for the next time. After this interval Bankimchandra re-introduces us to her in the following way:

> On that day Kapalkundala was sitting absent-mindedly in the bedroom. That was not the same Kapalkundala whom the reader had seen on the beach, unadorned and with her hair unfastened. (61)

Now the Kapalkundala we see has plaited her hair, is embellished with ornaments and is beautifully dressed up. At first she has the every appearance of being a docile housewife, unfortunately to be found in every ordinary house. In this re-introductory scene she is again shown as conversing with Shyama. We learn that both of them have been severely rebuked for going out into the woods adjacent to their house the previous night to collect some magic herb for Shyama. So, notwithstanding the opposition, the adventurous spirit of Kapalkundala is still alive! Their conversation may be quoted here partly to reveal Kapalkundala's recent status as a self-determined individual in a repressive social labyrynth. Very significantly, this particular section of the novel opens with a line from *Brajangana Kavya*, which reads like, " I plead with you to unshackle Radha":

Kapalkundala: Well, I have already identified that herb during the daytime today and have also seen where it grows. You needn't go there tonight, I will go and pick it.

Shyama : Leave it. You shouldn't go out alone at night.

Kapalkundala: But why do you worry? I've already told you that I am used to roaming at night. Do you think we would ever have met if I weren't used to this?

Shyama: I am not worried, but should any woman of a household roam in the jungle all alone at night? We were rebuked even after going together. Just think, what will happen if you go alone?

Kapalkundala: But what is the problem? Do you think that I will become unchaste simply by going out of home at night?

Shyama : I don't think so, but evil people use evil tongues.

Kapalkundala: Let them, they cannot make me bad.

Shyama: That's alright, but it will hurt us to hear anything evil against you.

Kapalkundala: Don't let yourselves be hurt for something unjust.

Shyama, "I can manage even that, but why to hurt Brother?

Kapalkundala looked at Shyama with her bright yet soft eyes and said, "What can I do if he is hurt because of it? *If I knew that for women marriage* is *slavery, I would have never married.*"(62-3)

This excerpt clearly underlines the uncomfortable and tense transition of Kapalkundala from a youthful *sannyasini*, free and brave, to the role of a wife in constrains that are tantamount to 'slavery' for her. The earlier Kapalkundala, who could freely wander in the forest for days and nights is now being severely rebuked for going out into the woods at night even with a sound motive. She has to encounter clearly arbitrary moral restraints and strictures so that she may not even think of moving about alone. Nevertheless, she adheres to her own notions of righteousness and acts according to it. As we learn later, Navakumar also observes that

> Kapalkundala was disobedient to him in certain matters. Particularly, Kapalkundala, despite his instructions, used to go by herself at all times to all kinds of places; she behaved with people

as she liked and what is more, against his instructions she roamed
in the woods, all alone at night. (73)

It is really disheartening to find an adventurous and unrestrained girl like Kapalkundala fettered by social dictates in such a way. But, as the excerpts quoted here show, Kapalkundala does not surrender to the inhibiting regulation of conduct for women in society— more powerful though they may ultimately turn out to be than she is. The conflict between a free-spirited individual and the efforts of the all-powerful society to shackle her becomes more prominently apparent when it revolves around a protagonist like Kapalkundala. But Kapalkundala, the girl who stood against her mighty foster-father and risked her own life to save that of a stranger, is a fighter, she fights the arbitrary and biased social conventions, justifies her unconventional thoughts and puts them into actions too, defying those around her including her husband. From this point of view, for Kapalkundala every single day she spends in Navakumar's household as a married woman begins and ends with a perennial struggle to keep her individuality alive. The marked physical adventure in the first part of the novel therefore gives way to the subtle yet more exhausting emotional adventure of her in this part of the novel.

As the former adventure costs her her freedom, the second one also come at a very high price. The innocent and inexperienced girl, who at one time did not have the slightest knowledge of even the concept of marriage, now has to argue that going out alone at night does not necessarily indicate impurity in a woman. Even a forthright, righteous and largehearted girl like Kapalkundala cannot help encountering the niggingly real social bonds on a daily basis however, as is clear, her self-righteousness and the tendency to venture out from the mundane world lands her in an uncomfortable situation. She has to face the disapproval of her unconventional thoughts and actions from the people around her whereas Navakumar even suspects her of infidelity. The aloneness of life in society becomes a harsh fact in this character of Bankimchandra. However, the whole process becomes so wearisome and complicated for Kapalkundala that she is on the verge of losing even her identity. For example we can take up the incident when she has a second chance encounter with Padmavati in the woods near her house and Padmavati asks her, "who are you ?"

If a year earlier Kapalkundala had been asked this question
in the forest in Hijli, she would have answered immediately. But

> now Kapalkundala had become a little domesticated and she was without a prompt answer. (66)

Whereas these emotional adventures of Kapalkundala originating from her social status as a married woman are followed by the consequences mentions above, they are later on followed by yet another set of predominant physical adventures for her thus leading the narrative to its climax.

This last series of adventure starts with Kapalkundala's decision to go into the woods alone at night to collect a particular herb for her sister-in-law Shyama. (This brings on another fateful adventure triggered by her sympathetic bid to help others in need !) Navakumar tries to accompany her, but she refuses to be accompanied by anyone. After she goes into the woods, alone, she incidentally overhears the conversation of the Kapalica and Padmavati at a rendezvous where they are conspiring. Whereas the Kapalica, following a dream in which Kali orders him to do so, wants to sacrifice Kapalkundala; Padmavati, to win back Navakumar's love, wants to send Kapalkundala away from his life.

Before Kapalkundala comprehends the situation, Padmavati, who is disguised as a Brahmin man confronts her. Her awesome appearance and her "penetrating eyes" give Kapalkundala a fright. However, the unexpected appearance of Kapalkundala at that place also prompts Padmavati to change her mind and abandon her plan. She promises Kapalkundala to disclose to her the conspiracy against her, asks her to wait and goes back to finish the conversation with the Kapalica. When she does not come back even after a long time, apprehensive about his (Padmavati's) motive, Kapalkundala heads towards home. The following paragraph, breathtakingly exciting and racy, is worth quoting at length as an apt case to display one of the thrilling adventures Kapalkundala faces:

> Meanwhile dark clouds started to overcast the sky, the moonlight started fading away. Kapalkundala could not wait any longer. She hastened to come out of the forest. Suddenly she heard some footsteps behind her. She looked back, it was too dark to see anyone. Kapalkundala suspected the Brahmin of following her. After coming out of the forest she looked back once again. It was not so dark there, but still no one could be seen. Kapalkundala hurried on. Once again she clearly heard someone's tread. The sky

became completely covered with the darkest clouds. Kapalkundala hastened yet again. The house was within her sight now, but before she could reach it, a thunderstorm crashed about her. Kapalkundala started running. It seemed to her as if the person following her had also started running. The storm coursed violently above her head. The frequent rumbling of the clouds and thunder came to her followed by frequent flashes of lightning. Torrents of rain followed. Somehow Kapalkundala reached home, crossed the compound and reached the outer room. The door was kept open for her. Kapalkundala turned back to close the door. She thought she could see the huge figure of a man standing in the compound. At that moment the lightning flashed once again. Kapalkundala recognized the man instantly. He was the Kapalica, from that beach. (67-8)

The flashing pace of the incidents, the violent weather, the dark night, the encounter with a person in disguise, the chase through the dark, the suspense before reaching safe haven all these constitute a classic case of adventure. The narrative accelerates to the climax step by step concentrating upon the element of danger Kapalkundala faces or is about to face. At first, it is Kapalkundala who goes out of her safe abode. Out of natural curiosity (another element of adventurousness not dampened by social convention), she willingly enters the forest and approaches the meeting place of Padmavati and the Kapalica. Till that part of her adventure the happenings are not really unpredictable for Kapalkundala as she herself initiates into some of them without suspecting or even considering their consequences. For her motives are good and that is enough for her.

But the situation becomes uncontrollable and darkly unpredictable for her once she is detected by Padmavati. Kapalkundala is naturally frightened at this point. And ultimately, when she decides to come out of the forest and its perils, which she herself has embraced, it appears to be too late to do so. Now the imperilment itself chases her. The erstwhile haven is hostile to her, it strikes at her with a violent thunderstorm. A faceless danger chases her. She runs for the shelter of her home and even manages to reach it. But, most significantly, having chased her all

through this episode, the peril also reaches there. The lightning flashes and Kapalkundala finds the Kapalica standing at the edge of the very compound of her house. The safe abode is safe no longer. Both literally and metaphorically, the element of danger has penetrated into it. In this way, once again Kapalkundala goes out to embrace adventure and once again it embraces her in return. The effect of this experience on Kapalkundala is quite strange:

> Kapalkundala closed the door slowly. Slowly she came to the bedroom. Very slowly she lay down on the bed. The human heart is like a boundless sea. When wilderness rages over it, who can count the innumerable waves it gives rise to? Who could count the waves raging inside Kapalkundala's heart? (68)

She recollects her life till that moment, lying on her bed:

> She remembered how she had left the Kapalica. All the demonic things the Kapalica used to do in the forest came back to her mind. His acts of Kali worship, Navakumar's becoming captured and about to be sacrificed—she remembered all those episodes. Kapalkundala shuddered. The incidents of earlier that night also came back to her. She remembered how Shyama had pined for the herb, how Navakumar had tried to refrain her from going to the forest alone, how she had behaved rudely to him, the beauty of the moonlit forest, the strange man she met there (Padmavati in disguise), his terrible beauty – she recalled each of these episodes. (69)

That night her strained mind lives through a nightmare, as frightening as her experiences themselves of that night had been. In that nightmare the Kapalica figures as her destroyer. Navakumar abandons her; and only the strange Brahmin tries to save her from the Kapalica.

This series of incidents, especially the re-appearance of the Kapalica, has a great impact on Kapalkundala's only partially achieved transition from a 'sannyasini' to a 'grihini' or 'wife'. None of the consequences of her acts has she herself desired, all arise from the conventions of society. When Kapalkundala enters the forest, the serenity of the moonlit forest brings back the memories of her former life on the beach, but the memories are 'faint' and only 'slightly aroused'. She is in a no-man's land between identity and non-identity, which is a state every girl-

woman embarking on adult life must know. When Padmavati asks her her name, Kapalkundala is, therefore, unable to answer. Besides, when Padmavati holds Kapalkundala's hand to lead her to another place, Kapalkundala forces it angrily, as she takes Padmavati to be a man. Afterwards, although she is supposed to wait for Padmavati, after waiting for a while Kapalkundala starts suspecting his (her) motive behind keeping her waiting in such a place as the enclosure in the forest. Furthermore, the dark sky, overcast with clouds, and an approaching thunderstorm make for a sense of foreboding that ultimately motivates her to run for the shelter of her home.

All this behaviour and reactions of Kapalkundala come as a striking contrast to those of the Kapalkundala we had first met on beach flanking the forest – for there she was composed, fearless and self-assured. She was able to touch Navakumar, without any womanly inhibition and roam endlessly in the terrain hostile to other like Navakumar, all the hazards of the land and weather hardly even noticed. In spite of witnessing the Kapalica's violent nature she had had the courage then to face his wrath. But the Kapalkundala we see now has undergone a whole year of the process of living in the enclosure of human society , not exactly abiding by but instinctively fighting its arbitrary norms as any girl-woman would were she able to do so. She has not lost her former self completely, but she has not escaped a partial loss of it either. But quite interestingly, the moment she beholds the Kapalica, standing in the compound of her own house, her self-control comes back. We can surmise that the reappearance of the Kapalica severs the feeble tie holding Kapalkundala within her new place in society and her domestic life. The transition from a *sannyasini* to a wife now starts to revert, a process to reach its culmination and very soon to bring the story to its climax.

The next morning Kapalkundala receives a letter from the Brahmin (Padmavati) inviting her to the woods, with a promise to tell Kapalkundala what she had wanted to know on the previous night. Kapalkundala decides to go meet him (her). Navakumar happens to read the letter and, not unnaturally, begins to suspect Kapalkundala of having an illicit relationship with the Brahmin. Therefore, he plans to follow her when Kapalkundala goes out in the evening. But he is interrupted by the Kapalica, who asks Navakumar to help him sacrifice Kapalkundala. To justify Navakumar's assistance the Kapalica proposes to show him his wife in a compromising meeting. He takes him to the meeting-place of Padmavati and Kapalkundala to convince him of Kapalkundala's infidelity. Meanwhile, Padmavati discloses her real identify to Kapalkundala and begs her to leave Navakumar. Kapalkundala, who has almost reverted to her former self, agrees

to do so, saying "why should I come in your way? Let your desire be fulfilled—from tomorrow you don't have to worry on account of me any more. I belonged to the forest once, and again I will do so". (79)

It is quite significant that till this point Kapalkundala has decided only to leave her social life behind. But while going home, she thinks of the dream of the Kapalica in which Kali had instructed him to sacrifice her – according to Padmavati's information. Kapalkundala, as free-willed and detached as a 'mountain-stream', becomes engaged in the thought of the essence and purpose of her existence. At length she decided to execute the divine command – Kapalkundala decides to sacrifice herself to the goddess.

This spiritual, moral and physical adventure of Kapalkundala is closely followed by her final adventure in this novel which is apparently predominately physical, but only if we forget that it concludes the life of a most promising and attractive girl-woman. While she is lost in her thought, Kapalkundala is confronted by the Kapalica and Navakumar. They take her to the cremation-ground, on the bank of the river Ganga. The Kapalica instructs Navakumar to give Kapalkundala a bath. While going to the river, Navakumar, torn between his love for Kapalkundala and his suspicion about her infidelity, breaks down. In response to his anguished cry, Kapalkundala, as composed as before, answers, "But you had not asked me" [whether she has been unfaithful to him or not]. On thus being confronted with his folly and the truth Navakumar wants to take her home, but Kapalkundala is determined to sacrifice herself, she announces: "I am not unfaithful. This is the truth. But I shall not go home ever again. I have come here to sacrifice my life to Kali and I will certainly do so. Go back, I will die. Don't grieve for me" (85-86). At that instant, as if by the force of her character, the part of the bank where Kapalkundala has been standing gives away to the wind-swept, lashing waves and crumbles into the river along with Kapalkundala. Navakumar also dives after her, though he is unable to find her.

As we can see, the climax of the final series of Kapalkundala's adventures spans just a few hours. It begins with her decision to meet the Brahmin once again. From this point, this is another of her partly anticipated adventures, as she is by now aware of the social stigma attached to a woman secretly meeting a man at night. But, on the other hand, it seems to be her only initiative where she expects a favourable outcome. The fact that the Brahmin wants to inform her of the impending danger and the dream in which the Brahmin appears as her saviour,

persuade Kapalkundala to decide to meet him and thus to avert a major calamity regarding herself. In this way, it is actually her bid to disentangle herself from some unforeseen disaster which becomes instrumental in letting the final disaster take place. The letter from Padmavati inviting her to meet him (her) induces the fatal suspicion in Navakumar, whereupon he becomes an easy prey to the Kapalica's provocation to sacrifice Kapalkundala. Besides, following the meeting with Padmavati, Kapalkundala herself first decides to leave her domestic life, and then the mortal existence itself behind for ever.

This part of the novel's final series of adventure, as has been pointed out, is marked with a predominantly physical level of manifestation, although it begins with the emotional turbulence Kapalkundala faces while deciding to meet Padmavati. She disregards the social taboo on such a meeting and the suspense she feels about the uncertain outcome of this meeting successfully creates the essential atmosphere of adventure. But afterwards her going to the woods alone at night, her being followed by Navakumar and the Kapalica and her being seized by them and being taken to be sacrificed, followed by her drowning – all can be categorized under the label of physical adventure.

But there is yet another prominent element of spiritual adventure as well, which we cannot overlook. As said earlier, in the meeting with Padmavati, Kapalkundala decides to leave Navakumar and to go back to the shelter of nature. But after the meeting, while coming back, she thinks about the divine command the Kapalica had received from Kali and she becomes engaged with that as the purpose of her existence as a mortal being. As she finds herself completely detached, from everything of the outside world, she concludes that it is futile to go on living. In that discomposed mental state she even witnesses a hallucination:

> When the human heart is afflicted by strange and profound thoughts, the strong inward attention to these thoughts may make us oblivious of the external world, resulting in witnessing the supernatural appearing as real. Exactly this was the case of Kapalkundala (82).

She sees the awesome image of Kali, cast on the sky, leading her down her final path. The image directs her in the direction the Kapalica wants. So "Kapalkundala, like someone foredoomed, followed the Kapalica without a single word" (83).

The novelist has used the supernatural element more than once as a primary cause of some of Kapalkundala's thoughts and actions. Earlier also, after her marriage with Navakumar, Kapalkundala offers a trefoil to the goddess and it falls down, and she regards it as an ominous sign against her married life, and it appears that she can never lose this assumption. It can be regarded as another reason for her detachment from her conjugal life and her prompt decision to leave Navakumar. Therefore, as it seems, though never used explicitly as explanation of her actions, the supernatural element has been assigned a prominent role to heighten the drama and suspense in the novel. Even the atmosphere of the narrative exhibits an indubitable and pervading sense of unpredictability and mystery crucial for an adventure narrative. Whenever Kapalkundala appears in the novel, it is either in the obscurity of the night or in the dim twilight. The most important events in the novel take place during nighttime. The novel opens on a dark and foggy night and even the following dawn and the emergence of light do not carry any ray of hope with it for the passengers of the ill-fated boat, lost on the vast waters.

As for the setting or location of adventure in the novel, it is most definitely what is called a "landscape of difficulty" and another significant narrative element used by Bankimchandra to its full potential. For it too helps significantly in bringing out the essence of adventure throughout the narrative. The rugged and hostile terrain where Kapalkundala grows up adds the necessary dramatic quality to the adventures she undergoes while saving Navakumar, besides providing a key to her 'unsocialized' or natural character. In this context, we may recall the spectacular scene in which Kapalkundala and Navakumar run breathlessly, with the Kapalica chasing them through the dark and dense forest. The landscape appears no less threatening than the Kapalica. The ruined city of Saptagram and the sprawling woods adjacent to Navakumar's house once again associate the landscape with the quality of Kapalkundala's adventures, which we can safely extrapolate to provide the inimical surroundings in which a girl must step into adulthood in Indian society at the time. A town like Saptagram may exist anywhere and at any time, as may the desolate sea-shore where we meet Kapalkundala for the first time— at any rate these surely symbolize the arid contexts of girl-womanhood.

This aspect apart, the topographical difficulties also make Kapalkundala's life ever more challenging, sometimes even becoming overtly life-threatening for her. The setting of her last adventure, the cremation-ground lying on the bank of the vast and wild Ganga is another such location of "difficulty". The atmosphere there is dreadful. It lies in complete darkness except for

some distant funeral-pyres, burning feebly. It is strewn with bones and decomposing corpses and the wild, carnivorous animals roam about freely. This ultimate "landscape of difficulty" succeeds at the conclusion in taking Kapalkundala in its deadly fold as the ground under her feet literally crumbles into the swirling river. And yet nowhere can we fault Bankimchandra either for romanticization or remote symbolism.

Further, the theme of adventure in this novel includes more than just the heroine. In fact, the novel opens with the adventure of Navakumar, following which he is abandoned on the desolate beach, until later he comes across the Kapalica and then Kapalkundala. The other two major adventures in the novel, their escape from the clutches of the Kapalica and the drowning in the river in the climax, are Navakumar's adventures as well. Padmavati is another character who, through her own adventures, becomes instrumental in leading the story to its climax. Her political adventures are to complicate the plot further, but her determination to win back Navakumar's love culminates in Kapalkundala's decision to leave Navakumar. Besides, her disguised intrusion (as a man) in Navakumar and Kapalkundala's life gives rise to suspicion in Navakumar. Above all, there is the character of the Kapalica, whose direct and indirect influences on Kapalkundala leads her to most of her adventures. He is one who, like the hostile terrain, the beach and the coastal jungle, provides the story with an appropriate motivation as well as setting for an adventure narrative. In fact, his first appearance— silhouetted against the dark sky, his matted hair and bearded face partly illuminated by a fire burning in front of him as he straddles a corpse, marks him as another common element of adventure, the sources of strangeness, mystery and danger.

Kapalkundala can be called a circular adventure narrative. According to M.Satyasree, in a circular pattern of adventure "the character goes out on an adventure and in some essential ways must return to the starting point for aesthetic and intellectual satisfaction, though sometimes he may return as a very much altered person" (Richard Jefferies : "The Shapes of Adventure", p. 48). In the last scene, Kapalkundala also returns to a somewhat similar state of mind and spirit from which she had started and to a somewhat similar atmosphere also to the cremation-ground. Again there is the wild and vast river (like the raging sea in the opening scene), the earth too seems hostile, like that beach and the jungle with carnivorous animals roaming around and bones and corpses strewn everywhere. Once again the Kapalica lights his

sacred fire to perform another human sacrifice. It seems as if the novel has come back full circle in the opening and concluding parts in which the earth and the horizon blend perfectly.

And between these two, Kapalkundala goes through a myriad of disturbed and novel physical, emotional and spiritual states. First of all, from girlhood she enters womanhood, followed by whatever impression her married life with Navakumar leaves on her body and mind. She goes through many intense emotional moments as well. For example, while only once in the novel do we find Kapalkundala in tears (when she takes leave of the Adhikari before her departure with Navakumar). Only once do we witness her losing her self-control, when she runs home after meeting Padmavati, with a thunderstorm brewing overhead and with the apprehension that she is being followed. Yet there is no doubt that a person in her stage of life must find these circumstances both daunting and disturbing. Her final spiritual adventure is significant in the sense that it leads her to the realization that there is nothing left on earth which can provide her with a satisfactory and substantial reason to go on living. Bankimchandra has carefully mentioned here that it is not merely her sheer dedication to her religious duties which eventually prompts her to decide to sacrifice herself to Kali, the redeemer. Rather, it is a manifestation of her detachment from the mundane facts of life, in which no one personally, nor her society, has helped her adjust. And in that sense, Kapalkundala is an ultimate adventurer who can put her very life at stake in her unhesitating immersion into experience of the yet unknown, to go beyond the mundane— a universal situation of girl – women.

It must be kept in mind that Bankimchandra does not end the novel with a customary declaration of Kapalkundala's death. Rather, we only have this concluding sentence of the novel: " Tossed by those waves— driven by the fierce southwind, of the boundless Ganga, where did Kapalkundala and Navakumar disappear? (86) This perhaps hits at a new beginning instead of an end. At any rate their appearance is as sudden and mysterious as their disappearance. And that is where we realize once again that life begins in adventure, it ends in adventure and that is why Kapalkundala can never be eliminated. She will reappear when again someone else, anywhere at anytime, will dare to defy the limitations put on human potential. Far more importantly, and unfortunately, that paradigm allows us to appreciate how young women are buffeted by unconcerned social convention, including religious convention and matrimonial convention. Kapalkundala comes out of this encounter with full marks for her readiness to act, to meet life

head-on, to risk everything for her conviction and natural inclination, her courage, her clear-headed pursuit of her destiny. In contrast, society has nothing for which to command it.

SECTION II

"The soul of her blood was the passion within".

Felise, the adventurous girl-woman protagonist in *The Dewy Morn*.

Felise, the young heroine of *The Dewy Morn* comes out quite early from the safeguard of her routinely cocooned existence to face the hazards of life, unlike any other typical girl-woman of her age and time. The novel in fact, starts with the racy description of her attempt, asserting and affirming as well as enjoying her freedom, to run to the summit of the Ashpen Hill on a dewy summer morning. The stage is all set: there lies the summit, apparently beyond the clutches of human endeavor and there is Felise, very young with a passionate soul urging her to step beyond the stultifying, almost meaningless existence of a young woman of her time— of never having the desire to venture out beyond the unknown or never having the desire to venture out beyond the unknown or never obtaining satisfaction of such a desire. Determined and devoted to her enterprise, Felise exhibits her mettle at the very beginning of the novel:

> Forced into the blood, the strong hill air intoxicated her. She forgot all; she saw nothing—neither the sun, the sky, nor the slope itself; her entire being was occupied in putting forth her strength. Up—from thyme-bunch to thyme-bunch; past gray flat flints; past rusty ironstone fragments; past the parallel paths, a few inches wide, which streaked the hill— up, straight for the summit! (8)

The novelist describes her in every minute derail as she exerts herself as a pure adventurer, to conquer the summit to conduct a physical quest for her own youthful wellbeing. This in itself is not only quite untypical of Victorian literature but also capable of throwing into sharp relief the constrained like of her peers:

> Brave as may be the heart of woman , yet the high hills must try it. So great was the rush of the aerated blood , it seemed to threaten to suffocate her. The supple knees could not straighten themselves; they remained slight bent. The pliant ribs opened to their widest, seemed forced outwards by an expansive power which must break them to get free. Her head was thrown back: she did not look now

> at the ridge: she looked up at the sky. Surely the summit must be rear?
> She would have dropped rather than give up; she would have dropped like a hunted animal before she would have yielded. (9)

Such descriptions, quests and trails of strength, especially conducted outdoor are reserved for men only in most in ages conventional society and more so in the Victorian age.

The task which Felise might have adopted in quite a playful mood thus emerges as rather intimidating and very demanding but she is undaunted. And at a time; when the concept of femininity completely excluded this kind of outdoor physical activity, her adventurous and unconventional nature does not go unrewarded— note how Jefferies is virtually a lone voice in his era to thus voice the simplest of desires, pleasures and fulfilment from a growing woman character:

> But she was nearer than she knew. Suddenly the slope became less steep, where the summit seemed planed away; her feet went along instead of having to be lifted. ...she had done it— the hill was conquered. (9)

As we shall see later, this endeavour of Felise serves as a highly significant and symbolic beginning, as the hazards of life are to confront her with the unfolding of the plot and she will brave them as resolutely as she has braved the uphill task here. Besides, this undertaking marks her as a unique girl-woman, who exposes herself to the outside, physical world at such a tender age, indeed an age which was most restrictively "protected" in contemporary society:

> Her natural body had been further perfected by a purely natural life. The wind, the sun, the fields, the hills— freedom, and the spirit which dwells among these, had made her a natural woman; such a woman as Earth meant to live upon her surface, and as Earth intended in the first origin of things: beauty and strength— strength and beauty. (10-1)

The outdoor, natural life and the vigorous physical activities to which she exposes herself, thereupon install in her a fascinating combination of beauty and strength, an extension of the essential elements of nature itself. And one will have to go a long way to find a comparable

description before the twentieth century. Felise, thus, indeed appears as vibrant and spontaneously passionate as a natural and spontaneous human being can be. It is not a question worth bothering about whether Jefferies' explanation is valid. That in the nineteenth century he should so conceive a woman is itself extraordinary:

> Something else beside the abundant young life of the blood was there to give the impulse. The soul of her blood was the passion within.
>
> This gave the vigour to her white limbs as she swam, supplying the force with which they thrust back the clear green sea; this pulled at the oar; this lifted her as she ran up the steep hillside. (15)

Event to conceive such a literary character, so radically different from the contemporary concept of ideal womanhood— docile and beautiful but fragile, leading a life which is anything but spontaneous and passionate— is an adventure in itself for the novelist as it is for us even today.

Moreover, what must be observed here is that, it is not Felise's extraordinary physique that enables her to extend herself to meet the challenges of the physical world, but it is a unique manifestation of her adventurous "soul" with exceptional perceptiveness or personality that enables her to do so. Jefferies himself point out with exceptional perceptiveness the uniqueness of Felise's adventurousness:

> There were women in the country far larger of limb than she was; more bulky of arm and brawny of chest— strong as reapers. They did not swim, though the sea was open to them; they did not row and spend whole days upon the water; they did not climb the hills and wander in the solitary valleys. They had the strength; they could have lifted a heavier weight than she could have done; they could have outworked her in manual tasks, yet they exhibited no energy. (14)

In this context, further, what appears even more important is that Felise herself is aware of her uniqueness, and this process of self-awareness, this essential realization of her BEING, her EXISTENCE is what represents another display of her adventurous nature and its intellectual actuation:

> Her strong heart beating, the pulses throbbing, her bosom rising and regularly sinking with the rich waves of life; her supple limbs and roundness filled with the plenty of ripe youth ... these produced within her a sense of existence— a consciousness of being, to which she was abandoned; and her lips parted to sigh. The sigh was the expression of feeling herself to be.
> To be! To live! To have an intense enjoyment in every inspiration of breath, in every beat of the pulse, in every movement of the limbs; in every sense! (5).

As according to Jefferies, what Felise does other woman can also do, although they do not, so her self-awareness also becomes an exceptional and adventurous process in itself. In turn, this self-awareness leads her towards the effort to actualize other, generous and not selfish desires it identifies. From that point of view, her conquering Ashpen Hill assumes greater import. Apparently a romantic and girlish whim, this desire to conquer the hill illuminates Felise's basic nature, which is to resolutely explore all the possibilities a person may imply.

The next major undertaking of Felise may appear quite conventional at first. Proceeding towards womanhood from girlhood, she finds Martial Barnard has become the object of her love, though Jefferies elaborates that "Felise's heart was lost before she saw him". The all-engulfing emotion of love, which has been running through her whole existence, was bound to find an object, which it does. But Felise, in spite of her "outward beauty of the woman" and " the inward beauty of her soul" does not find her love being reciprocated by Martial at first. Martial, who has recently broken up his engagement with Rosa Wood, is going through an emotionally vulnerable and withdrawn phase and he tries his best to avoid Felise's too apparent invitation to the kingdom of her love. Unaware of all these complicacies, however, Felise finds Martial's indifference towards her quite disheartening. Upto this stage, the storyline, indeed, resembles other romantic, conventional plots.

But what actually makes the storyline as well as Felise's reaction towards Martial's indifference is her awareness of the social restrictions put upon women and her determination to disregard these restrictions in pursuit of her love. But the whole process starts with her bitter realization of her unprivileged status in the society as a woman, thus providing an all too common hindrance to the "story of her heart":

She realized for the first time in her life the powerlessness of women. They cannot stir, they cannot move in the matters that concern them most dearly; they are helpless, at the mercy of the petty events called circumstances. A thousand little incidents might drift him farther away than he was now. She could not interfere. Strong and resolute as she was, what could she do? She felt suddenly alone. She was by herself, not merely in the physical sense of no other person being near, but alone morally, recognizing that she could not command the society she desired, forced her to feel absolutely solitary. (48 – 9)

Jefferies observes, and it is an extraordinarily true perception, that "woman's life seems to be nothing but waiting sometimes", for socially, at the most, they can play at waiting and active role-playing is always denied them (by conventional norms of feminine behaviour); "they cannot choose their friends, or their partners; they can refuse (the negative [although even that is not always available]); they cannot select". (49 – 55)

But Felise is made of different stuff. Her unconventional and adventurous personality, which previously aspired to conquer a hill, surges up within her once again. What Jefferies says of Felise here would satisfy any woman had she the means or opportunity to command her own life to be what she wants it to be:

> A silent and unchangeable resolve had been forming in her mind. She would, she must, she would have him with her... the forms of society were noting to her— she had already broken them. What the world said did not trouble her. She was reckless, ready for the most violent effort. She did not care; she would. (50 – 1)

But as it appears, a strong resolution is not sufficient to overcome a difficulty and Felise is well aware of the immensity of the problem she has to surmount: "But for a woman to introduce herself to a man— to select her acquaintance and her friend from the ranks of the other sex— is it not almost impossible?" (54)

Her awareness of the difficulties, however, cannot prevent her from pursuing her goal, in this particular case the goal being Martial's love. In fact Jefferies' commentary on Felise's mind and heart in operation is like a manual of feministic fulfilment:

She thrust away from her mind the contemplation of the powerlessness of women, and concentrated her ideas upon the way it could be done. She would not submit; she would to wait, to the burden of 'He cometh not' [a poignant reference to Tennyson's "Mariana"]. She would force circumstances to her will, and would her fate in her hands. The precipice was perpendicular, yet she would scale it. It was natural for a woman to attempt the impossible.

All the strength of her limbs seemed to support her resolution.

> Should she who could race up the steep hillside, who could swim, not only in this level lake, but in the swelling sea, who could run apace with the hounds—
>
> should she tamely stand by and see her prize fall to another winner in life's battle? (51 – 2)

With all these elaborations from the novel what one can validly project is that, behind the conventional, romantic plot there exists a conception which penetrates deeply into the existing social systems and exposes simply and directly the absurd and biased restrictions put upon the conduct of women. A transgression of these restrictions usually meant leading oneself to a moral dilemma, if not indeed actual punishment, as the ethical standards are always present and implicit in the standards of the existing social order. But what is interesting in this particular case is that Felise, aware of the fact that she is about to transgress these strictly observed social orders, nowhere suffers from any sense of guilt. She is honest and spontaneous as far as her emotions are concerned, and the resulting resolution rules out any false moral dilemma. Moreover, neither malice nor mercenariness taints her motives. In that way, her emotional adventure, centred around Martial's indifference towards her, culminates into her resolution to persuade him, to make him reciprocate her feelings. Felise is as unhesitating in carrying out her resolution in this matter as she was while making it.

Even before she determines what she desires, she is unreserved in her interaction with Martial Barnard. When they have a chance meeting (shortly after she conquers the hill) rear the hillside, she unambiguously expresses her emotion for him through her daring behaviour. .She feeds his horse, Ruy, strokes him and admires him, and "there was an emphasis in her manner as

if she would rather have stroked certain brown-gold locks (of Martial) near her".(32) Very soon, however, she grows impatient with his indifference towards her:

> 'Why does he not look at me? she thought. 'Can I not make him look at me?' Then aloud, sharply: 'Mr. Barnard!'
>
> He could not help but look, at the sound of his name. He saw a face full of wistful meaning upturned to him.... Large gray eyes that seemed to see him only— to whom the whole world, the hills round them, the sky over, was not— eyes that drew his towards them, and held his vision in defiance of his will.... For that moment he had no consciousness except of her, such was the power of her passion glowing in her face.
>
> Even Felise, eager to retain him with her, and unhesitatingly employing every means, could not maintain that gaze. Unabashed and bold with love, she was too true, too wholly his, to descend to any art. Her gaze, passionate as it was, was natural and unstudied; therefore it could not continue. Her eyes drooped, and he was released. (33-4)

Even later, when she decides to persuade him, she does so with all her honest passion and the audacity given by her initiative. She tries to manage some chance encounters with him under the pretext of trout-fishing near his fields. Unsuccessful in this, finally she ends up visiting his house on another trivial pretext. Still unable to meet him, she becomes even more resolute. When she finds that Martial has sold his favourite horse, Ruy, to Robert Godwin, the steward, because of his financial desperation, she resolves to buy it back for him. She collects the money, .though standing to lose her sole fortune, as she herself is far from being well-off. She buys the horse from Godwin and gifts it to Martial anonymously. The steward, Godwin, who has by now secretly cultivated an obsessive passion for Felise, realizes the hopelessness of his love by this act of hers. But his almost contrary or perverted nature, instead of trying to separate Martial and Felise, hatches a crooked plot to let them come closer. Felise and Martial become more intimate while always being in Godwin's secretly observing gaze. And Godwin, too observes that:

> Two facts by degrees became impressed upon his mind: the first was that Felise was the lover; Felise was courting, not courted;

> Felise was the passionate one. Martial received her love rather than sought it. (282)

However, this startling fact remains just that for Felise; her emotional adventure of entering Martial's society stands far from being accomplished even after all her endeavors. Rather, her efforts invite the unwanted attention of Godwin to them, and his jealousy and frustration lead to a violent eruption later in the novel which in fact threatens her life. Out of the bitter disappointment of his of his unrequited love for Felise, Godwin plans to disfigure her for life. Once when she is watching for Martial alone and unnoticed, in the fields, Godwin seizes her to execute his plan to make Ruy trample on her. This attack may be considered remarkably shocking and terrifying for anyone, especially for Felise, who does not have the faintest anticipation of this dreadful adventure. An excerpt from the novel may help us realize the extent of the shockingly unexpected way Godwin attacks her:

> Almost immediately a hand was placed on her shoulder; she started, and, as happens in sudden alarm, her lips parted. Before she could cry out a handkerchief was thrust between her teeth, choking the sound in her throat. A loop of stout cord descended round her shoulders and was drawn tight, effectually pinioning her arms. Savage force was used to throw her on the ground, and the cord rapidly wound round and round her body to her ankles till she lay swathed in rope. So swiftly was it done that she was helpless before she recognized Robert Godwin. (365).

The providential and not particularly unrealistic appearance of Martial on the scene saves her. He has to shoot his favourite horse to save Felise from a horrible disfigurement and perhaps even death. This life threatening adventure of Felise at last brings Martial closer to her and he realizes and acknowledges his love for her.

Besides Martial's initial indifferences and Godwin's violent obsession, Felise has to encounter some other obstacles as well while going through her packed emotional adventures. One of them is the knowledge of Martial's first love Rosa. Felise has fallen in love with Martial without being aware of Rosa's existence, but she has to face it later when Martial discloses to her the reasons behind his being unable to love her:

'He cannot love me,' this was the burden of her thoughts. 'He cannot love me.'

He could admire her, he could worship her beauty, he could appreciate her worth he could value her love, he could and would labour for her with all his powers, but he could not love.

He had loved another woman before her, and the spring of love was dry.

A woman will be able to understand the bitterness of this to her— he had loved another, therefore he could not love her. (320).

In this way Felise has to encounter the bitterness of these harsh facts as well. While most other women would have been dissuaded by this kind of reality, Felise is not and she fights for what she has set her heart on in her characteristic way. She considers the present situation better than not having him at all for she is sure of her own love and keen on following her nature. Once again she survives the violent turmoils of her emotional adventures and emerges triumphant. "To the bitter jealousy of his first love given to another, she became superior and overcame the sting and venom of thought" (321).

But, not only this, Felise also faces the implication of Martial in the suicide of Mary Shaw, Felise's attendant:

> But this was not all that her love had overcome. Rumours had been spread abroad since Mary Shaw's death, of a kind, which might have easily caused years of misunderstanding, might even have changed the course of their lives, had it not been for the steadfastness of Felise. (321)

As the novelist states, the rumours, harmful enough to cause misunderstanding between the lovers, cannot affect Felise's tenacity or her faith in her own instincts. And Felise does not even have the emotional security as the loved one (Martial has not reciprocated her love yet). She encounters the rumours on her own and does not let her emotions fall prey to them.

In this way, the emotion of love of Felise for Martial to which we were introduced in the very beginning of the novel, and what seemed to be privileged to enjoy a smooth flow reaching its culmination quickly, follows a different course altogether. She has to encounter a myriad of unforeseen problems— social, emotional and moral; and she has to encounter them utterly alone.

Even then, never for a single moment does she surrender to any kind of bitterness, almost inevitable in such cases. She accepts the whole unexpected storm of problems spontaneously and braves it with her characteristic resolution and honesty and knowledge of her own motivation. And in this whole process we witness her crucial transition from more or less unseathed girlhood to thoroughly experienced womanhood being accomplished successfully and without succumbing to conventional thought or behaviour. The dreamy and inexperienced Felise we met at the beginning of the novel appears even more confident, self-aware and self-assured than ever when she finishes her journey towards one of the chief goals of humanity, fulfilment in love.

Besides these emotional, moral and physical adventures, Felise inevitably has her share of the predominantly social adventures as well. For she is part of a society not only bound by convention but also by a strong class structure as well. Some of the problems of the existing social structure are exposed through two different agents in this novel, thereafter taking Felise up in their whirl. The first of them is old Abner Brown who is seriously threatened with an impending eviction by the steward, Godwin. Felise, moved by the plight of Brown— that a man who has given long decades of service should no longer have a roof over his head because he can no longer work— decides to help him. But the inhuman law, which provides the landowner with power to deal in this way with manual labour, including inevitable eviction from a cottage, is too insensitive to appreciate Felise's efforts to help the victim. Her personal request to Godwin in this matter is to no avail. With her characteristic optimism and spirit of a fighter she decides to take the case to the Squire Cornleigh Cornleigh, at the justice-room at The House.

Here Jefferies points out Felise's naivety in hoping for justice against such a system, for she is a yet "unlearned" in the ways of the world. This ignorance, however, enhances even more the degree of adventure she has undertaken as she is unaware of the utter futility of pleading the case with the Squire, he himself being one of the oppressive law-maker, of the privileged insensitive class. Nevertheless, Felise, with Abner, goes to The House. For both of them the experience is full of suspense and excitement. For Abner, the outcome of this venture will decide his fate for the rest of his and his family's life. As for Felise, through her overwhelming sense of justice, she is as much involved in this venture as Abner is. For her also, therefore, to be successful in this effort becomes a matter of utmost importance. This being the situation, the whole venture becomes an adventure for them. Abner, old and retired from mainstream life, finds the changed city, the crowded house and the unsympathetic ambience in the justice-room

too bewildering . Felise also feels the surrounding too unfamiliar and indifferent towards the plight of Abner she tries to project— the injustice of Godwin's eviction of Abner. The venture ends in utter failure. But, all the same, this unique adventure serves Felise as a valuable experience in the way of society's functioning, at the same time it also exposes the dark sides of her society to the readers.

The second social adventure Felise encounters is through Martial, who appears as yet another victim of the existing system of tenant-farming. His financial desperation brings about his decision to sell his fields and migrate to the states of America;. Tenant- farming, a system which may prove financially more than viable only for the landowner and never for the farmer, appears as ruinous to Martial as the inhuman law regarding cottage-occupation has been for old Abner. The adventure for Felise comes about when, in such a scenario, a curious political occasion occurs at The House during a spectacular presentation to Cornleigh Cornleigh (the Squire). As a tenant-farmer, Martial attends it, and Felise and her uncle, Mr. Goring, accompany him. At the assembly-room Felise and Mr. Goring are "advised to go up in the gallery, as there was a considerable gathering of the opposition party, and a fight was possible". The ambience in the hall downstairs appears tense and somewhat violent to Felise:

> Felise was full of wonder at what she saw beneath her; she could not understand it. Why did these people on the floor of the hall appear to hate each other so intensely? Why did they push and jostle with brutal rudeness, and use expressions of savage violence? It did not look human. (335)

And we may not wonder at either her ignorance or her surprise— for in late Victorian society a girl about to step into womanhood is hardly trained in public life. Felise's experience would not have occurred at all, but for her typical venturesomeness.

Felise, being in the gallery herself, is away from any possible danger, but nevertheless she is worried about Martial. For the 'crowd' is a typical political rabble:

> 'Is it quite safe for Martial?' asked Felise, anxious about him; the roar of the surging crowd seemed to threaten him most, because it was of him she thought.
> 'Not the least at present.'

> 'I wish he would leave the platform! said Felise. 'I do not like it; these people seem as if they would crush anyone who displeased them. (336)

For Felise the suspense becomes yet more unbearable, because she is a mere passive onlooker of the huge, active drama. Her inability to be of any help to Martial in any emergency enhances the anguish and suspense in Felise's heart far more than any that Martial himself might have experienced. Consequently, the responsibility to support the House of Cornleigh is thrust upon Martial when the solicitor to The House of Corndeigh selects him to second the resolution in spite of Martial's remonstrances. Completely disgusted with the tenant-farming system by now, Martial instead explicitly exposes the stifling and tyrannical facets of the system, rather than supporting the motion in the conventional way. His speech, naturally, causes a huge uproar in the hall, whereupon some people encourage his outburst and some other try to stop him:

> Tremendous cheering and groaning, in the midst of which Martial got off the platform into the crowd. Felise drew her breath, for to her it seemed that in the surging mass he was knocked to and for like a tennis-ball. The opposition helped him towards the door; the tenant-farmers pushed and struggled and struck to crush him.... (359)

Felise goes through some intense and anguished moments of trepidation for her lover, with an overwhelming emotion of fear and suspense over Martial's safety. This commitment and freshness mark her second remarkable social adventure in the novel.

These social adventures, as has been suggested before, serve a two-fold purpose. This kind of adventure serves as an eye-opener for the readers as well as for Felise regarding the evils of an otherwise or apparently fair and working social structure. In other words, typically for an adventure narrative, *The Dewy Morn* also constitutes the 'education' of the heroine. And Richard Jefferies' daring in choosing such an unconventional character for his 'hero' becomes a crucial fact that allows us to evaluate such a rare case of 'feminist fiction'— for not only are the events and Felise's reactions extremely unusual in historical terms but also as extraordinary in the history of English fiction as Bankimchandra's *Kapalkundala* was in the history of Indian literature. Besides, Felise's romantic dreaminess, nurtured by nature, rather than by oppressive influence (we must complement her uncle also for this), are in this way complemented by such

first hand and practical experiences of the ways of society, which have the potential to open her eyes and make her wise to worldly affairs. This new dimension to Felise's already self-aware and independent self, hastens the completion of her transition from girlhood to womanhood.

As has been mentioned once earlier, including Felise's social adventures all her other adventures take place against the backdrop of the countryside. Whether it is scaling the summit or swimming in the swelling sea or running space with the hounds, she is always shown as the personification of the essential beauty and strength of Nature. Like *Kapalkundala*, Jefferies novel is also unusual in thus choosing both a country character and a country setting for his extraordinary narrative and evaluation of contemporary society. Felise's self, in consonance with the eternal flow of cosmic life, Jefferies suggests in his peculiar way, is an obvious outcome of her adventure of Being. As a result, Felise acquires the immense self-awareness, equanimity, as well as veturesomeness which assists her not only in self-discovering but also in defying the prevailing social customs which she and Jefferies find restricting and arbitrary and which the novel both implicitly and explicitly criticizes. We know that eventually her adventure of Being is complete. Jefferies indicates:

> Felise made no affected secret to herself of her beauty; she knew that she had beauty, and did not conceal it from herself in any form of self-depreciation. She delighted in it, it pleased her intense, vigorous life to look at it. She enjoyed a sensuous repose while contemplating her face, or even her bare arms sometimes as she dressed her hair. She enjoyed herself. (59)

Once the adventure of EXISTENCE is over, Felise rises above the level of ordinary men and women, who with regularity fall victims to the arbitrary social and moral codes, robbing themselves of the natural honesty and spontaneity they are gifted with. Even though she has to acknowledge the overwhelming social restrictions upon the behaviour of a woman especially, Felise does not stop at that realization only like most other women. She resolves to transgress these boundaries whenever they appear unnatural and unnecessarily and unreasonably restricting to her. Once she resolves to do so she can even persuade martial to love her, even though such behaviour was (would be even today) regarded as highly unconventional and unbecoming for a woman of 'good' reputation and 'breeding' in the contemporary Victorian (or Indian!) society. It cannot be denied that by taking the initiative, Felise becomes the very embodiment of the

unrealized selves of millions of women whose real and natural selves have perished under the wheels of a tyrant society in the process of becoming women. Here lies the uniqueness of her adventures and of Jefferies' extraordinarily daring venture in fiction.

Her spontaneity and characteristic refusal to tolerate injustice leads her to fight the steward on behalf of old Abner, though she is not completely unaware of her opponents being in a privileged and powerful position. Here it should be noted that, Felise's adventures whether it is her sustained effort at persuading Martial or her rebellious and belligerent social adventures, do not meet with immediate success. For another extraordinary fact is that Felise is not presented in the novel as a superwoman who solves problems with a single magic touch, nor are the problems too trivial to deserve a good fight. Rather, with al her extraordinary appearance and intelligence, Felise has to face the full weight and historical burden of convention in confronting her challenges like any other ordinary person. At times she is met with indifference or even humiliation .but unlike any other woman character in Victorian fiction, Felise keeps her fighting self active instead of feeding her vanity or giving into the dominant convention of her time.

Another point to be observed in this context is that, although Felise has her share of bitter experiences, never in the novel does she turn into a cynic, pessimist or resort to self-serving cunning. She is confident and adventurous enough to accept the facts of life as they are without essential distortion of her positive and vibrant self, each reaching its culmination beyond the mundane goals but essentially in achievement of an extraordinary realization of womanhood.

Felise's adventures do eventually reach their tangible goals in the novel. So, while initially we witness the dreamy and girlish Felise on a dewy summer morning, basking in the physical as well as abstract satisfaction of conquering the steep hill, as we follow her she successfully finishes her transition towards womanhood. This we see on another dewy summer morning at the end of the novel in another unique episode in the history of fiction. So we see her on the morning after her wedding as a woman whose love has been fulfilled, and who can enjoy a deservedly "pure rest" now. The culmination of her adventures is as remarkable as the adventures themselves are, just as they bring her back to nature even at the threshold of complete womanhood.

> The man slept, but the woman, wakeful in happiness, sat by the window. The dawn shone on her face, and upon the beautiful golden hair drooping to her knees. Her hands were folded, the

same attitude in great happiness as in inconsolable sorrow; the dawn glistened upon the tears in her eyes.
Her feeling was perhaps the deeper because he slept, because she was alone and yet with him. She did not strive, womanlike, to mould her feelings to his mood— she gave way to her own.

Her joy was so great because her life was fulfilled. So soon in the spring-time of youth her life was fulfilled; there was nothing more beyond to strive or hope for. It was the joy of intense rest in possession. (394)

As we have observed in the previous chapter, *The Dewy Morn* is not the only representative of Jefferies' works that bring us contemporary status of women in Victorian society, for example, let us look briefly at yet another novel, *Amaryllis at the Fair* that depicts the immense hardships a girl-woman has to face when it comes to emotional and intellectual growth and the manifestation of that growth in contemporary conditions. *The Dewy Morn* begins with an adventure undertaken by Felise with the symbolical implication for the hardships she has to face one by one later on. Similarly, *Amaryllis at the Fair* also starts with a symbolical and equally 'natural' adventure of Amaryllis, when she is suddenly caught by the brutal east wind, as young Amaryllis, walking round a corner of the house

> Came face to face with the east wind, which took her with such force as to momentarily stay her progress. She laughed, but the strong gale filled her throat as if a hand had been thrust down it; the mind got its edge like a knife under her eyelids, between them and the eyeballs, and seemed as if it would scoop them out; her eyes were wet with involuntary tears; her lips dried up and perched in a moment. Stooping forwards, she pushed step by step, and gradually reached the shelter of the high garden wall there she could stand upright, and breathe again. (2)

This small incident essentially represents the whole series of Amaryllis' emotional, intellectual and spiritual adventures that follow. One interesting point to note here is that Amaryllis herself "comes face to face" with the east wind which buffets her as forcefully as any

sailor; here the adventure comes to her, unlike Felise's initial adventure. Then we must note that the east wind, signifying the impediments she has to overcome stays her progress but 'momentarily'. She fights back with all her might and finally is able to "breathe again". Al a glance, these are the salient attributes of her adventures in general. Despite her self, which is vulnerable to forces of nature, she exposes herself to the emotional, intellectual and spiritual adventures, eventually emerging triumphant. For any writer in the Victorian times, which were inimical to growth of women despite the emergence of genuine feminist movements, to have created two such characters remains an extraordinary literary episode.

Amaryllis' adventures to a great extent result from her secluded life in Coombe Oaks, her house. Though immensely inspired by her intellectual, sensitive, quietly adventurous father "farmer" Iden who is just as open to nature, she cannot overlook the financial hardship in which he finds himself as he is not practical. The debtors' bills and the occasional visits by the moneylenders, rudely demanding to be repaid, become a constant threat to the serenity of the farmhouse as well as to Amaryllis' emotional stability. She even tries to earn some money through her sketches, and although fails in this attempt, once again for a teenager the attempt itself amounts to adventure. Besides the financial problem, what challenges her journey towards womanhood from girlhood most is the discord between her parents and her mother's hysteric nature, thereupon intensifying the level of her emotional adventures. Amaryllis, with all her sympathy for her mother, strives not to become one like her.

Another remarkable adventure which takes place outside her house comes about when Amaryllis goes out on the day of Lady Day's fair to pay her annual visit to her grandfather, on behalf of her parents. The serious breach gapping between Amaryllis' parents and her grandfather, her rich grandfather's eccentric and unpredictable nature, her intense dislike for the proposed dinner with all the relatives putting up the best show of their vanity and hypocrisy— all these things transform the simple task of visiting her grandfather's place into an adventure for her. However, even after encountering all these factors, there is yet another adventurous experience waiting for her. After the dinner grandfather Iden takes her to the spectacular household of Raleigh Pamment, whom he wholeheartedly idolizes. His servile attitude irritates Amaryllis' proud flamma (her mother's maiden name) blood. Moreover the leering glances of young Raleigh at her annoy and at the same time threaten her so much that she desperately rushes out of the Pamment house, while her frantic escape is accompanied by her feeling of

being pursued. This adventure, in fact, is the ultimate form of her initial adventure of that day; overlooking the great variety of people going to attend the fair, and though witnessing such a parade of humanity greatly excites her, there she was a mere onlooker, perceiving the multitude of human forms and actions from behind the safeguard of the garden wall, .but here in this ultimate form with unpleasantness around her, she is no more a privileged onlooker but the one observed person, now she has to participate in the great fair, which eventually turns out to be an adventurous experience for her naive, inexperienced and growing self.

Amaryllis at the fair does not follow any conventional plot and its narrative style is purely poetic creativity. It does not offer any final and conventional culmination of Amaryllis' emotional, spiritual and intellectual adventures. It is virtually a fragment that gives us a mere glimpse of her ongoing struggle to keep her ideas, her dreams and ideals intact in the somewhat hostile surroundings, while she goes through the vulnerable phase of the transition from girlhood towards womanhood. The novel, however, ends a different note, with Amaryllis' acceptance of sick Amadis as her lover. The end indicates the future full of possibilities in the continuation of Amaryllis' adventures with some new objectives to strive for and some more impediments to struggle against. But it also indicates that Amaryllis is all ready to venture into this course of life, undaunted and determined.

It should be clear from this brief survey of Jefferies' two novels that the threshold location between girlhood and womanhood appeared to him crucial. It also seemed to him that the threshold revealed on one hand the quite unconcerned and insensitive ways of society in 'bringing up girls to be women". He clearly saw an enormous amount and variety of potentialities that women could bring to fruition if they are able to venture into life following their natural and positive inclinations. That women in this threshold are treated shabbily, that their treatment converts most into personalities that fit the 'acceptable' stereotype of unquestioning, unprotesting womanhood, that to deal with any person or personality in such ways amounted to fundamental injustice— Jefferies clearly saw all this. Perhaps many others also saw the same problem that overpower women. But following his own natural instincts, Jefferies created these two extraordinary optimistic characters in an age that seemed to reveal little hope for women. His writing itself constitutes a revolutionary or rebellious act and reveals both understanding and appreciation that amount to serious and severe social criticism.

CHAPTER III
CONCLUSION

This chapter will endeavor to place our two girl-woman protagonists, Kapalkundala and Felise, on a single platform along with the novels in which they appear. As has been outlined in the introduction, such a juxtaposition may be expected to reveal some hitherto unnoticed attributes in both the works and the adventures the protagonists undertake as well as enlightening us generally about the condition of women entering full womanhood. Since an individual analysis of each protagonist's adventures has been presented in the preceding chapter, here we may proceed towards putting the works and the girl-woman protagonists in juxtaposition, whereupon the similarities and differences between them and their circumstances may begin to materialize. Thereafter, in conclusion, we may be able to reach a general assessment regarding the role of adventure in the girl-women's existence in those days and age in two related but different cultures, may even present an instructive paradigm of the lives of women on the threshold of fullfledged lives in convention-ridden societies.

As for the novels, we have already observed their near-contemporaneity and some other essential similarities regarding their plots, for instance the employment of the mode of adventure in both the novels and weaving it around a girl-woman protagonist. This venturesomeness on the part of the characters being the major characteristic attribute of the girl-woman protagonists, which is in fact, the focus of our study, should be analysed from different perspectives, according to its application by Bankimchandra and Jefferies in their own ways. In these novels, however, the mode of adventure has been employed in a different way than done in contemporary or later fiction. Jefferies and Bankimchandra concentrate on the potential of this mode to efficiently deal with the eternal quest of woman concerning her simultaneous existence in the natural universe and in society. To assign such a dually serious task to this mode is an adventure in itself. The ways in which this mode has been used earlier, mostly for pure entertainment and involving mainly male heroes, can be traced in Bankimchandra's first novel *Durgeshnandini* (1866), which preceded *Kapalkundala*. But in *Kapalkundala*, the atmosphere is different, a philosophical quest takes the place of almost purely romantic entertainment and at times the novel rises to the level of directing some very embarrassing but relevant questions at the existing social pattern of convention and decorum.

For instance, we may witness Kapalkundala's declaration that if she knew that marriage is slavery for women, she would have never married (p.63) , or Felise's realization of the " powerlessness" of women in society who cannot stir, cannot move in the matters that concern them most dearly (p.48). But both the discovery of their social status by the protagonists through their venturesomeness and then challenging the limitations as well as the justification of that status again by their adventures, and the consequential realization of self and constraint on the self are what make these novels noteworthy. In most cases of narratives involving young women, the protagonists' adventures culminate in a mere realization of the realization of the limitation of the roles ascribed by society for them to play— they almost never proceed beyond that to a serious confrontation between self and society, to an effort at preservation of their selves' integrity. Take, for instance, Vimala in *Durgeshnandini* (1865) , who with all her fascinating adventurous nature, eventually accepts the humiliating status given to her by society without any further attempt to question it. Another most peculiarly comparable case is that of Dorothea in George Eliot's *Middlemarch.* Sometimes the women adventurers are conscious of their "powerlessness" but they find it better to exploit whatever privilege they have been given by society as a woman, rather than fighting the other arbitrary restrictions. Indira in *Indira* of Rohini in *Krishnakanter Will* (1878) may serve as the examples here.

There are women adventurers also like Hira in *Visavriksa* (1873), who fight the injustice meted out to them by society in such sinister ways that other innocent victims perish in the outburst of its wrathful fury. And finally, there are adventurous girl-women like Kunda in *Visavriksa* (1873) who, although succeed in challenging women's constrained and unprivileged social status, lack the tenacity and courage of a fighter found in both Kapalkundala and Felise, and they too ultimately succumb to their tragic fate, or like Louisa in Dickens' *Hard Times* merely give in to circumstances. All these examples, we hope are sufficient to point out not only the uniqueness of the girl-woman protagonists in the present study— Kapalkundala, Felise and Amaryllis— who do not fit in any of these categories but also to highlight a pretty universally uncongenial situation for young women.

It is important to note here that neither Felise, nor Amaryllis or Kapalkundala, goes out of her way to invite adventure in her life for *the sake of adventure*, but they do not shy away from it when an active and unconventional response is expected of them or when their notions of who they are happen to be encroached upon. They all express their realization about themselves and

their position in society mainly through action, only rarely through words. In fact, in all these three novels, the novelists provide us with other women characters who, through their predictable and sometimes conventional responses to the difficult situations they face, help us to appreciate the adventurousness and high self-assessment in the three girl-woman protagonists we have taken up for study. Padmavati (Navakumar's first wife) is one such character in *Kapalkundala*, who, like Kapalkundala enjoys an independent state of mind, is actually an outsider to society in some ways like Kapalkundala, but ultimately lacks Kapalkundala's generosity or good intentions or the strength of character to act unselfishly. These qualities enable Kapalkundala to venture out into life without the least hesitation when her instincts guide her. That is why Padmavati's adventures become tainted with selfish motives and ruthlessness, whereas Kapalkundala's sympathetic and honest nature upholds her true adventurous spirit, her capability of an ultimate fighter, who even after being apparently sacrificed at the alter of an unjust social structure, is actually beyond any ordinary standard of victory or defeat. Shyama, Kapalkundala's sister-in-law, gives rise to another stark contrast between her and Kapalkundala through her conventional and unquestioning acceptance of her status as one of the several wives of her *Kulin* Brahmin husband. And at one point in the novel, she even tries, desperately but unsuccessfully, to charm her husband by a magic herb.

In *The Dewy Morn*, next, we have the character of Rosa Wood, Martial's first love, who early in the novel is presented on somewhat the same plane as of Felise as far as receiving Martial's love is concerned. But whereas Rosa's conventional and passive response to the situation widens the gap between Martial and her, Felise's determined and persistent action towards persuading Martial with all the innocence and honesty of her love for him eventually brings them closer. The message is crystal clear, a woman goes after what she wants and contains it here.

In *Amaryllis at the Fair*, the contrast is created between Amaryllis and her mother, Mrs. Iden. Mrs. Iden was a beautiful, romantic and vivacious young woman before she grew into a hysteric, nagging and depressed person over the years after her marriage. But what is interesting is that the perpetual near-poverty and the seclusion of the farmhouse from the outside (especially urban and flamboyantly aristocratic world of her maiden days) world, which lead Mrs. Iden to such mental and emotional states, arouse the fighting spirit in Amaryllis. She tries her best to counter the poverty; even from the seclusion of the farmhouse she desires to and is able to overlook the great

human parade in the outside world, refusing unlike her mother, to be a willing Lady of Shalott. And most importantly, Amaryllis is determined not to grow into someone like her mother.

In this way, a similar pattern emerges from all these three novels in which the novelists consciously depict the positive and serious fact of the adventurousness in these girl-women by clearly distinguishing them from other conventional women characters who, in spite of having the need to fight the possibility of a conventionally meaningless existence, do not do so. This marked distinction of Kapalkundala, Felise and Amaryllis appears more striking when we consider the age-group to which they belong. Quite interestingly, all of them are adolescents, on the verge of womanhood. And the reason for both the novelists' choosing this particular transitional phase, a most vulnerable and special one in a woman's life, in which to let the adventures take place, cannot be mere accident. For their state itself engenders their struggles. The uniqueness of this phase, when one may wake up to herself and to her surroundings provided convention is not allowed to stifle one, might be one of the reasons as each of their serious adventures is inevitably followed by a new kind of experience. Naturally, this is a phase of a woman's life which welcomes (can, indeed, hardly avoid) any kind of novelty in experience. But in the lives of these extraordinary girl-women, the adventure is also able to carry them forth into the future.

Besides, as we have already observed, the concept of placing a woman protagonist at the centre of some serious adventures being an original and new beginning in itself, the mode might have appeared to the novelists as most suitable to successfully convey the travails of the onset of womanhood to the readers. Whatever the case may be, all these courageous, honest, unconventional and venturesome protagonists appear in this transitional phase of their lives when the novels open, and as the narratives proceed they successfully enter womanhood as well, with all their essential attributes intact even after undergoing the whole series of stormy adventures, the difference being evident mainly in the three different outcomes.

Another common attribute shared by all these protagonists, which might, in fact, have shaped their adventurousness, is the absence of a satisfactory mother or a worthwhile mother-figure in their lives. One may even be tempted to speculate here on whether this hints at the abandonment of girl-women on the threshold of womanhood by women themselves.

Kapalkundala is a foundling, and except the Kapalica and the Adhikari she had no one with her in her growing years. Felise, too, loses her parents very early in her life and is brought

up by Mr. Goring, whom she considers as her father, but there is a most obvious 'lack' here of a mother. Amaryllis has her mother around her. But she does not fit into Amaryllis' concept of mother figure, as a result of which she rejects her consciously as a role model in her life. This absence of a congenial mother or a mother-figure who might have guided these girls through the most difficult feminine transition, in turn, might have helped the protagonists to either escape or adjust well to a pre-conceived notion of ideal womanhood as prescribed by society. However, as conventional roles are usually presented to young girls to emulate by their mothers, this lack may constitute both a blessing and a criticism of mothers' role. The following line form *The Dewy Morn* appears quite significant as well as representative in this context: "There were no women at Mr. Goring's to show her [Felise] the delicate lines that divide decorum from impropriety"(p.157). The girl-women, therefore, grow up in the absence of any imposing notion of womanhood held up before them as norm; in other words, without such informal yet debilitating schooling in womanhood at home by a mother or mother-figure they retain a chance of growing naturally. As a result, they grow up into the spontaneous, generous, deeply involved, venturesome and unconventional individuals as we see them.

On the other hand, their attachment towards their fathers or adoptive fathers should also be noted. What might this tell us? Kapalkundala weeps when she parts from the Adhikari, Felise addresses her uncle, Mr.Goring, as 'papa', Amaryllis finds her intellectual as well as instinctual guide in her father, Mr.Iden. Is it possible that the novelists, depending upon their observation, concluded that a mother or a mother-figure is n most cases a powerful carrier of the socially upheld notions of womanhood ? Is this why they consciously avoided the use of such a figure in their protagonists' lives, for whom they intended a path of significant deviation from the contemporary notions of womanhood ?

Apart form the absence of a mother-figure and the prominent existence of a receptive father or father-figure, another important aspect which these girl-women share as they grow up is their ability and desire to embrace Nature. Kapalkundala grows up on a desolate shore girdled by a dense forest. Even after her marriage she finds her new home in Saptagram surrounded by woods, with a vast river flowing nearby. Although she was born in city, Felise comes to the countryside to stay with her uncle, Mr.Goring, after she loses her parents in her early childhood. The woods, hills, meadows and the sea accompany her throughout the novel and she literally grows up amidst them. Coombe Oaks, the farmhouse in *Amaryllis at the Fair*, surrounds

Amaryllis with all its serenity and the richness of natural beauty around it. From a curious girl, who peeps at the huge crowd of fair-goers from behind her garden wall , she grows up into a young woman whose love for Amadis matches the soothing protection of Nature from every kind of material problem. Nature appears so prominently in all these novels, from the opening scene to the concluding one, that it almost becomes another living character of a kind flesh and blood or concrete definiteness. It accompanies the protagonists with all its changing shades, from their childhood, through their girlhood, to womanhood and in turn leaves the essential and indelible impression of some of its most prominent attributes upon these young protagonists' minds, hearts and their adventures.

In *Kapalkundala,* Nature apparently gifts to Kapalkundala its fearlessness and the all-embracing sympathy for every form of life on the earth. In *The Dewy Morn* it encourages Felise to take note of herself, enjoy her physique, match her physical and emotional well being to her natural surroundings, which ultimately leads her to her intense realization of her self, her "BEING" , unique yet able to extend itself to the rest of the universe. In *Amaryllis at the Fair*, Nature appears in a somewhat different fashion.

Here it is mainly created and nurtured, unlike in *Kapalkundala* and *The Dewy Morn*, by Mr. Iden, Amaryllis' father. Yet he is himself so attuned to Nature that he communes with each potato before planting it in the soil. So there we witness Nature lending its vulnerability as well as strength and sensitivity to young Amaryllis, who looks up to her father with all admiration and awe due to the Creator. Consequently, she refuses the brooding self-centredress of her mother and finally, she appears sufficiently self-assured to grow on her own, independent of her creator like the huge trees in the concluding scene under whose shade she reposes with Amadis. But the unmistakable motivating as well as sustaining factor in all these three cases is that the undaunted, spontaneous and fearless self of each of these young protagonists that makes them untypically venturesome in their time as in almost any other era, actually confirms the contribution of Nature more than any thing or anyone else towards the making of their unconventional mettle.

But, since this omnipresence of Nature has been dealt with variously in these three novels, let us look at the diversity as well, for that provides the protagonists' individual adventures particularly diverse shades. In Kapalkundala, Nature appears in its primitive form both as inspiring force and as 'landscape of difficulty'. The vast ocean, the deserted shore, the dark, dense forest full of wild creatures, the remoteness, the sprawling dunes, the ghastly

cremation- ground on the bank of the Ganga, the sand-bank, collapsing at places into the whirling river without the least warning— all these constitute the awe-inspiring appearance and presence of Nature in this novel. Kapalkundala, too, appears as an essential embodiment of this Nature. Detached, 'unschooled' or unsocialised and free as she is, she appears as incomprehensible and fascinating to Navakumar and to the other characters around her as Nature. Her self-righteous yet generous nature is expressed in such a unique way through her adventures that even a ruthlessly selfish and experienced woman like Padmavati cannot help looking at her with awe. All this not only goes to mould Kapalkundala's character. It also fits perfectly into the location of the character in guideless wilderness.

In *The Dewy Morn*, on the other hand, we observe quite a different presence and use of Nature. It appears with all its warmth and sensuous beauty in this novel. It is also felicitious, the guiding sprit of Felise which arouses the best of her emotional, intellectual and physical capabilities. The sea invites her, symbolically, to accept the challenges offered by life; and the hill inspires the determination of the conqueror within her, whereas the beautiful and lively woods and meadows fill her heart with the intense joy of living and being. Here Nature appears as quite a contrast to its presence in *Kapalkundala*: Nature, and consequently Kapalkundala never appear in front of the readers without the mysterious even at times hovering and threat-filled aloofness of a dark night, early morning, twilight or dusk. In *The Dewy Morn* it is quite the opposite. Never in this novel we find Felise but wrapped in felicitious natural conditions such as sunlight, whether it be a bright morning a brighter noon or a beautiful afternoon. In fact, Nature operates in utter contrast to each other in these two novels, which in turn moulds the adventures of the protagonists, their characters and their fate as well, it becomes clear as a bell from our study that the condition of women, especially adolescent women, in both societies is terrible and cramping, inimical to natural growth and flowering of personality. Yet if may be representative of the darker, more deeply entrenched oppression of such women in Bankimchandra's India that his heroine must be swallowed up by the flood waters of the Ganga, whereas Felise manages to achieve peace and fulfilment on earth without sacrificing either her womanhood or her essential personality.

As for the impression of the diverse atmospheres upon the adventures of the respective novels, we should study the different techniques used by Bankimchandra and Jefferies while employing the mode of adventure in these particular novels. The adventures in *Kapalkundala*, as is obvious,

have a very serious, challenging and adverse atmosphere. Most of Kapalkundala's adventures are risky if not always life threatening for her and even when not so in physical sense, the atmosphere still threatens to oppress, even eliminate, her very identity. The atmosphere where she grows up extends itself to shape the adventures she undertakes. The lonely beach, the perilous forest, the dazzling but lifeless dunes, the boundless, roaring sea and amidst all these the violent and inhuman Tantrik rituals of the Kapalica, induce the realization concerning the vulnerability of not merely human life but the virtually abandoned state of female adolescence. Perhaps it also has the effect of making her detached yet protective of the imperiled lives around her. Her quest is a serious one and it reaches its climax when she discovers that she has no essential bond with anyone or any thing at all in the world and must ponder alone on the meaning of her own existence. Nature once again appears with all its ferocity at this stage and snatches away Kapalkundala from the face of earth into the whirling waves of the flood. The atmosphere of the novel and the serious undertone of Kapalkundala's adventures become so complementary to each other that only after the concluding scene do we remember that not even a single streak of bright sun has made its appearance anywhere in the whole novel. It seems quite tough to decide whether the strange atmosphere of the novel has shaped the fabric and mood of the adventures Kapalkundala encounters or whether it is the other way round. Whatever the sequence, her life stands as a stark symbol of the lives of young women in contemporary India.

In contrast, the atmosphere of *The Dewy Morn* and its extension to the adventures Felise faces appear as different form those in Kapalkundala as possible. Right at the onset the novel opens on a bright summer morning, with the summer dews making it all the more fresh and invigorating. Nature is generous in this novel. It supports Felise's strong physical and mental faculties with such rich abundance that an otherwise die-hard, materialistic, and selfishly inimical prosaic Robert Godwin is also fascinated by the exhibition of the intoxicating manifestation of existence, witnessed for the first time in his life, when he views one of Felise's numerous trysts with Nature. Almost all her adventures— whether her adventure of BEING per se, her emotional conflict over her possible deviation from the socially accepted code of behaviour for women, her persuasion of Martial are accompanied by all the brightness of the magnificently sunlit moments.

As for Amaryllis, she has her share of both the worlds that of Kapalkundala and that of Felise. *Amaryllis at the Fair* opens with a symbolical adventure for her, when she is brutally

confronted and battered by a forceful east wind. Nature is not always friendly and supportive in this novel for Amaryllis or her struggling parents, just as Amaryllis' life itself is less comfortable than Felise's. She has to brave the occasional severe cold or lasting torrents of rain. But quite significantly, the concluding scene presents Nature in all its benevolence and the atmosphere is that of a bright , encouraging morning when even a perpetually depressed woman like Mrs.Iden also cannot but feel a vigorous flow of life throbbing inside her.

However, in all these cases, it is quite apparent that the novelists have consciously presented a natural background and atmosphere which can enhance the effects of these adventures on the young protagonists and shape the course of their entry into womanhood. The description of Nature and the atmosphere created thereby in *Kapalkundala* may appear to be a very interesting contrast to that of in *The Dewy Morn*, but both novelists undeniably follow the same technique of portraying adventure of character against a suitable backdrop of natural setting in their novels.

Another interesting point of contrast emerging from the adventures of Felise and Kapalkundala is related to their initiation into society. Bankimchandra presents Kapalkundala as on outsider in relation to society. She is brought up away from the influences of society, in the company of two ascetics who could guide her in anything else but in the ways of society and in the ways of womanhood. Again and again in the novel she is referred to as "sannyasini" (by the novelist as well as by the other characters in the narrative). And as we have already observed, her transition from a "sannyasini" to a "grihini" (wife) was never to be quite satisfactorily completed (a process which almost robs her of her identity). The socialization process, even after her adherence to society for a year as married woman, is never able to leave any remarkable and permanent impression on her deepest self. Therefore, we witness her beautifully plaited hair— symbolizing the partial success of the socialization process on her— unfastened as in her maiden days at the slightest provocation. It proves her continuous status as an outsider in society when in the climax of the novel she unhesitatingly decides to leave Navakumar and her domestic life behind to go back to the forest.

As for Felise, at times she also has the awareness of being an outsider, for instance, at the moment of her realization of the powerlessness of woman, followed by her strong unwillingness to be another victim of arbitrary and oppressive social codes of behaviour: " She felt suddenly alone. She was by herself, not merely in the physical sense of no other person being rear, but

alone morally " (p.48). But apart from these solitary moments, in most other cases she appears as a vigorous fighter, whether it be persuading Martial or fighting Robert Godwin on behalf of old Abner.

However, if we study her carefully, then, underneath the cover of Kapalkundala's aloofness, we find her as passionately involved with the people around her whenever she encounters then as Felise is. We may recall her courageous act of saving the life of Navakumar, a complete stranger to her at that point of time disregarding her own safety. Besides, her voluntary effort to help her sister-in-law get a herb she needed (an effort that triggers her last series of adventures in the novel) is another example of this fact. Her unusual growing up, amidst the wilderness and in the company of a violent Tantrik, may be held responsible for her apparent detachment and unexpressive mien. But, her adventures undoubtedly portray her as a sensitive and generous person who can go to any length to help others (even strangers) in need, even it lit costs her her own life. Similar is the case of Felise, whose wholehearted bid to help old Abner or Mary Shaw demonstrates both her sensitivity and generosity as well as her courage.

But, even with all their noble and courageous actions, these girl-women, ahead of their time, do not find that they are absolutely welcome in society. They have to carry a parallel world of their own in themselves which the contemporary milieu is unable to comprehend, even if the writer is able to show in subtle ways, and which they know they have to carry alone. In *Kapalkundala* this aspect is given a tragic manifestation, though in *The Dewy Morn* it is tinged with reasonably realistic romanticism. But this solitariness, which cannot be penetrated even by their most near and dear friends (they hardly have any), continues beyond any doubt both during their adventures and in their culminations. Remember, for instance, the portrayal of Felise's inwardness, after her adventures are over, in the concluding scene:

> Her feeling was perhaps the deeper because he (her new husband) slept, because she was alone and yet with him. She did not strive, womanlike, to mould her feeling to his mood— she gave way to her own. (394)

It is more direct in *Kapalkundala* when she turned her inner eye towards the whole world— and she saw no one. She looked into her heart, Navakumar was not to be seen there in her heart. (79)

One important difference between Felise and Kapalkundala's adventures is their respective goals and the landscapes of difficulty in the way of their adventures. Felise's

adventures comprise of more or less tangible goals, for example, attaining Martial's love or the prevention of old Abner's eviction, and the landscape of difficulty in her case includes social, moral and intellectual impediments rather than natural obstacles. But Kapalundala's adventures, most of them not anticipated by her but perhaps by the reader, do not focus on any immediate goal, instead they reveal her character. And quite siginificantly, the landscapes of difficulty in her case demand immediate responses, there being a greater degree of raciness. One of the reasons behind this contrast may be the apparent difference in the setting or backdrop of their adventures. The setting in *Kapalkundala* is more perilous or primitive and from time to time it proves life-threatening for Kapalkundala and it is remote from society, whereas in *The Dewy Morn* it is not so demanding or threatening for Felise.

Besides, we also get the feeling of Kapalkundala being given almost no choice or equally bad choices, in an adventurous situation, to defend herself from any possible harm. This is also supported by the impression that she was hardly like to have been thrown int such adventures in her original, secluded life. Take for instance the case where she parts from the Adhikari while leaving with Navakumar for Saptagram and appears emotionally quite vulnerable, partly from the pain of separation from her "only well-wisher" and partly from her total ignorance of the future hardships while interacting with society. Felise appears more fortunate in this context, although both unknowingly run awful risks. Unlike Kapalkundala she has at least the emotional support of her adoptive father (Mr.Goring) and her own passionate love for her beloved Martial. Kapalkundala does not have even the Adhikari beside her in her moments of emotional crises and there always exists a widening gap between her and Navakumar, whose passionate love for her has its origin more in her bewitching beauty than in his receptive understanding of her unique self.

Kapalkundala's unconventional thoughts and actions, therefore, end up in people around her misunderstanding or failing to understand her at all. Without any fault of hers she is vicitimized by the shrewed and self-centred Padmavati, who consider Kapalkundala her rival in the way of Navakumar's love. Felise, in comparison seems fortunate to have Rosa Wood as her rival in the efforts to achieve Martial's love, for Rosa appears innocent and sorrowful yet conventional to attack her as venomously as Kapalkundala is by Padmavati.

Finally, we must not forget the mighty Kapalica in Kapalhundala who is very significantly related to both the social origin and isolated culmination of Kapalkundala's

adventures. Besides casting his shadow in Kapalkundala's sensitive mind through his grotesque ways of worshipping Kali, which include human sacrifices, he also lends her a religious inclination which at times tilts towards superstition, which in turn regulate the outcome of quite a few of her adventures. His indulgence in her early adventures is what makes them life-threatening for her, demanding the quicket responses on her part, as his ruthlessness is no secret to her. Thus the Kapalica represents both a male and a socially sanctioned control over the girl's life. And it is mainly his reappearnce in the climax of the novel which hastens Kapalkundala's journey towards her tragic fate yet more.

The lack of the prevailing presence of such character in *The Dewy Morn* may be considerd one of the reasons behind Felise's advnetures not being perilous, though we must not forget the character of Robert Godwin in the novel. Godwin, as violent and ruthless as the Kapalica, gives rise to the most shocking and only life-threating advneture in Felise's life when he tries to get her trampled by his horse. But Godwin is allowed very few chances to penetrate into Felise's life to threaten her emotional and physical safety by the narrative, whereas the Kapalica is privileged with the sole authority over Kapalkundala's life as her adoptive and all-powerful father.

After surveying all these major or prominent aspects of these girl-woman protagonists' multifarious adventures, now we may concerate on the point which bridges the two different culture represented by these novels, British and Indian, and connects them at a certain point—which is the treatment of women by contemporary society. The later half of the nineteenth century, as we know, was a period of great social upheavel. On the one hand there was the emergence of the liberal doctrines of humanitarianism which declared that men and women are equal, and in England definite beginnigs of the modern feminist movement, on the other there were the long-ingrained social pracitces which could not accept such a radical idea at once.

The orthodox and constricting forces in society rather resulted the new, "advanced" doctrines of womanhood. Some of the movements with a deceptive appearance of being scientific and unprejudiced, were themselves as restrictive and conventional under the surface as the earlier attitudes. Just consider one view of this situation in Malavika Karlekar's revealing observation in this context:

> From the beginning of the century, Victorian notions of a woman's physical frailty and lack of strength had been cited as factor

> contributing to feminine inferiority. Around the same time, Evangelical religion had sanctified the "passionless" woman and sexual control, particularly among women, was stressed as the ideal. (91)*

And due to the colonial-colonized relationship of Britian with India, the latter was not spared this imposed hypocrsiy either. As Karlekar remarks in the same text:

The image of the New (Victorian) Woman in Britian inspried the making of the New Woman in Bengal. There was one difference between them though; the Bengali women, shouldering the responsibility of a large family (or joint family) could not afford to be frail or weak, like British women. So the 'angelic' part in British women was stressed to be developed in Bengali women. (92 – 3)

However, Indian society had already had millenia to oppress women and hardly required such assistance from outside! But, along with this new guise of reform concealing deeper conventionalism, genuine social reforms concerning the status and condition of women in society were also taking place very rapidly. It was the time when J.S.Mill published his *Subjection of Women* (1868) and the Reform Act in England was also passed (1867). In India, the legislation of the Indian Age of consent Act raised the age of legal marriage to twelve years for the girls (1891) and it was the time when zealous social reformers like D.N.Karve in Maharashtra or Raja Rammohan Roy in Bengal were fighting for the social upliftment of women.

It does not seem possible, for socially aware writers like Jefferies and Bankimchandra not to notice these dual forces and oppressice practices concerning women. While the liberal ideas hit the long-held orthodox notions hard, the rampant hypocrisy prevalent in both societies could not let these liberal ideals convert themselvess into reform too quickly. This might, in turn, have led these sensitive writers to create these New Women much ahead of there time in either society. To protray the emerging notion of new, liberated woman to its full potential must have appealed to this authors as a viable weapon to counter attack the parasitic or decorative notion of traditional womanhood in society.

* Karlekar, Malavika. *Voices from Within: Early Personal Narratives of Bengali Women.* Delhi: OUP 1993.

Therefore, we find Bankimchandra's Kapalkundala literate, even able to recite Sanskrit *slokas* (a daring deed at a time when to have a single glance at the alphabets by a woman indicated, according to the guardians of Bengal society, the sure and immeidate death of her husband). She declares her outrageous view that marriage is tantamount to slavery ("dasitva") for women and, obviously, does not consider home and hearth the most sacred place in the whole world. She is a woman who takes all her decisions, major or minor, on her own, whether it be going against her mighty adoptive father the Kapalica to save Navakumar or deciding to go into the forest all alone at midnight, disobeying her husband. It might appear to some an interesting argument here that Kapalkundala, who is finally shown lost in the waves of the vast and wild Ganga, is a deliberate creation by Bankimchandra as a warning against the rebel inside them. But a careful study of Kapalkundala and other novels by Bankimchandra rules out that possibility as it is proved beyond doubt that he voices his opinions, whenever he has any, too clearly, without any risk of ambiguity. And his impartial and objective stance in this particular novel is too definite to let such an undercurrent of criticism rule the fate of the rebellious protagonist. Rather, the absence of any immediate, material goal regarding her adventures and her ultimate goal— to achieve her individual status by her own right inside or outside society— being almost impossible in even the most radical of writings of the day mark such an interpretation untenable. We should give Bankimchandra due credit for not conferring death on Kapalkundala as either escape or soft way out. There is no doubt that Kapalkundala is a rebel and all she does is a criticism of contemporary society.

In the absence of a primtive setting and an utterly orthodox social sturcture like those in *Kapalkundala,* Jefferies' Felise is spared the tragic culmination of Kapalkundala's adventures. But her bitter realization of her unpriveleged social status as a woman draws our attention definitely to the oppressive social conventions underneath the relatively smoother surface of a late nineteenth century British society. There are equally definite negative factors in British women's lives as well. These restrictions appear powerful enough to smother Felise's newly awakened emotional, intellectual and aesthetic identity, if not exactly endangering her physical existence. But, just like Bankimchandra in India , Jefferies also felt the need to criticize his society. Felise's physical strength, unlike the fragility of the typical or ideal Victorian women, is stressed again and again in the narrative by the novelist. She enjoys a full-blooded existence , a

passionate emotional frame which cleraly sets her apart from the remaining lot of contemporary cowed, docile and angelic women.

As observed earlier, both these girl-women being brought up away from direct influence of society, amidst the seclusion provided by Nature, they find themselves outsiders when they opt for an active interaction with society. The arbitrary, oppressive social codes are easily discernible to them and when they spot them, they start fighting these arbitrary norms from inside society. Their fight, however , makes it clear to us that, notwithstanding all the cultural and political differences between a colonized nation (India), and the colonizing nation (Britian) who claims to have a definite moral and cultural superiority over the "uncivilized" natives, women were treated just as badly in British society. And it requires, unfortunately in both societies, a novelist's imagination to show his people the true potential of a woman once she is released form the false and restrictive notions of womanhood.

The novels were, of course, written in different cultural contexts. The individual courses of incidents, at length, naturally conclude the novels in two different ways. Kapalkundala decides to leave her social identity behind, to abandon it, whereas Felise succeeds in creating one for herself in defiance of society. But we must refrain from making these protagonists as mere victims of social oppression in the light of their obvious social predicaments, as it will rob them of their due respect as fighters. We must not forget that these girl-women are die-hard fighters, ulimate adventurers. The fact that these protagonists, inculding Amaryllis, force themselves on their situations while carrying out their adventures; leaving their outsider status behind or refusing to give in to it adds to their adventures another substantially serious dimension. But never in the whole process do they surrender or admit defeat. Jefferies' observation about Felise in this context seems very appropriate as comprehending the spirit of not only Felise but of Kapalkundala and Amaryllis too : "Her nature was too strong, too vehement, if she failed, she would be utterly broken, if she failed, the end would come quickly" (*The Dewy Morn* , p. 52) . And we know none of them failed. Therefore, it clearly remains for us now to ask what we can learn from these novels, these characters, these novelists.

FINDINGS

Following the analysis of each protagonist and her adventures and then a comparison of them, next we may try to present a brief conclusion in the light of the first section of the Introduction where we had discussed the various possible outcomes of the following comparative analysis. At first, the daring of both novelists, Jefferies and Bankimchandra, strikes us because of their successful representation of these two adventurous protagonists, much ahead of their time. The protagonists, when compared on the basis of their adventures, exhibit both their self-realization and their ability to act following this self-realization with a strain of striking similarity. Most importantly, all these female protagonists being adolescents, their adventures become serious once they acquire social leanings. Therefore, though there are some prominent social and cultural differences between the two narratives while they present these protagonsits and their advantures, the comparison brings forth the common underlying factor regarding the treatment of women in both Indian and British society, with a remarkable exactness. Despite quite clear difffences, in other words, all three novels succeed to a significant even unprecedented degree, in representing the crucial, daunting, at times roughly dangerous predicament of girl-women who must confront norms of what they should become. The other benefit for us of such a comparison also clearly justifies our study— all three novels mean to lend and succeed in lending a rarely heard voice to a crucial phase of life in the lives of women in both cultures. Despite differences, and despite some changes during the next one hundred years of history, girl-women essentially conformt the same conditions today.

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