

Journey from Innocence to Experience
A Study of Feminist Fiction during 1960-2000

THESIS

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis entitled “**Journey from Innocence to Experience: A Study of Feminist Fiction during 1960-2000**” and submitted by **Devika**, ID. No. 2002PHXF417 for award of Ph.D. Degree of the Institute, embodies original work done by her under my supervision.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

During the last couple of decades women writers have attracted significant critical attention as their contribution in the literary arena has become manifold. These female writers have established their credibility by presenting a comprehensible view of life in their works. It took them several decades to elicit admiration and recognition as renowned writers. Initially, when women stepped into the pale of writing, their position in this field was very shaky because the response they got for their writings was grey; they were hissed off easily as their writings were nothing but loud protests against males and the norms set by the males. Whatever they wrote was short of conviction because only males were held responsible directly or indirectly for the plight women used to undergo. Though it was unwise on their part, it was imperative as it relieved them of the deep buried aversion, they held and nurtured. After going through the *catharsis* they felt a bit relieved but still they did not know exactly how to manifest their thoughts and ideas.

Being conditioned to authority initially these female writers projected life from males' point of view and social norms remained more or less the same. They did take time to realize that they couldn't stand on their own and express their true inner self, if they incessantly kept on silhouetting life from males' point of view. They became conscious that in order to establish themselves they had to present a view of life that were not merely restricted to domesticity. With passage of time, they reflected a steady progression in their works, as after giving vent to their bitterness these female writers

commenced concentrating on something really constructive. They wrote about life, its mysteries, adventures, scuttles, and advantages; in short, they took into their stride every strand of life. Earlier, they had projected the pitiable plight of fair sex against the background of life itself. Now it was the turn of women writers to look at life in their own way. By and by they started showing signs of improvement in the selection and execution of subject matter as well as style; as a result, their literary works became polished. Though the early writers could not bring laurels to their names, they did the groundwork for posterity. Over the past couple of years, a new brand of feministic writings has come to the fore. The growth of their writings appears phenomenal in the sense that female writers like male writers have tried literally hard to widen the compass of their works. The focus has been shifted to the human beings and their inexplicable mysteries and inextricable complexities.

Although the struggle to gatecrash into the literary arena has been a long and difficult one, feminist fiction has got a strong foothold. Across the world writers, critics and scholars have been influenced by their writings and acknowledge their worth as writers who can air their views with literary brilliance. Observation and projection of human life seems equally unique and captivating when viewed from females' point of view. Currently this movement is very popular and prominent; hence, the desire to study the development of female writers was kindled. For this purpose, well-established female writers from various parts of the globe are considered for studying the steady progression of these writers. The present study focuses on various aspects that have actually helped these writers show their prowess, thereby bringing them due appreciation and adulation.

The objective of this study is to show how female writers from different corners of the globe have slowly but steadily moved on from innocence to experience and how maturity has enriched the quality of their works. This work gives an overview of how most outstanding writers, with the passage of time have brought weight and worth to their works by developing new patterns in subject matter and style. The study, however, rests mainly on analyzing the thematic pattern, cultural sensitivities and writing style as manifested in the selected works. With a view to provide a wider coverage of feminist fiction, the thesis surveys varied aspects with its focus on the major themes which are universal, those language embellishments which add vigour and vitality to written matter, and those cultural aspects which ricochet enriching subjective touch.

Established writers like Margaret Atwood (Canadian), Doris Lessing (British), Arundhati Roy (Indian), and Toni Morrison (African-American) have been chosen for this study. All these writers are living legends who have penned down the most recent fiction keeping pace with the current trends. Chosen from all the parts of the world, these authors show a broader perspective of feminist fiction. These writers are not only prolific and versatile but also prominent and globally acclaimed. Over the years their recognition as literary figures has considerably enhanced because of their realistic portrayal of the cross currents of the society.

The critical recognition acquired by them has also been coupled with quite a few prestigious awards won by these writers. Margaret Atwood is the winner of the Arthur C. Clarke Award (1987), the Giller Prize (1996), the Governor General's Award (2000) and

the Booker Prize (2000). Toni Morrison has to her credit almost all the prestigious awards – the National Book Critics Circle Award, the Booker Award, the Pulitzer Award, and the Nobel Prize for her contribution to literature. Doris Lessing has to her credit Somerset Maugham Award (1954), Prix Médicis (France) (1976), WH Smith Literary Award (1985), James Tait Black Memorial Prize (1995), Los Angeles Times Book Prize (1995), Companion of Honour (British Government) (1999), Premio Internacional, Cataluna (Spain) (1999), David Cohen British Literature Prize(2001), Prince of Asturias Prize for Literature (Spain) (2001), etc. By winning the Booker prize in 1997 for her debut work of fiction Arundhati Roy has left an indelible mark in the minds of readers across the globe.

Prestigious awards and rare reviews speak volume for their worth as writers and their coterie is quite exhaustive. But this study analyses only those works that help trace the genesis, evolution and establishment of these females as towering literary figures. The works have been chosen keeping in mind the purview of the rich thematic concerns, stylistic niceties and the cultural sensitivities that constitute the significant segment of these works. Nine literary masterpieces – Toni Morrison’s Beloved, Song of Solomon, and Jazz, Margaret Atwood’s The Blind Assassin, Bodily Harm, and Life Before Man, Doris Lessing’s The Golden Notebook and The Summer before the Dark, and Arundhati Roy’s The God of Small Things – published during the last four decades of the twentieth century, have been selected for the study. The works selected, not only reflect the eminence of these writers but also are in consonance with the development of feminist fiction which has gradually risen to a respectable position.

This study comprises six chapters commencing with introduction where background, selection criteria, significance and general plan of the study are given. The second chapter, focusing on the genesis and evolution of feminism, shows how females have struggled to get a concrete foothold in the social, political and literary arena. It also discusses how female writers have made considerable efforts to chisel their artistic skills so as to stand tall in literary field. The third chapter analyses the prominent thread of connectivity that runs through some of the themes making them stand in relation to one another. The focus is not on the elaboration of one theme in isolation but on the interdependence of varied themes on one another. With its emphasis on the stylistic niceties that have helped the selected women writers mellow their contents, this chapter looks into the figures of speech, sentence construction and paragraph formation in order to highlight the encompassing development of these writers who besides having incorporated the much trusted ways have also developed techniques on their own to impart a touch of distinctiveness. The fourth chapter shows how cultural refineries have brought added and required variety and individuality to their works. Deep-rooted links with their culture have further enriched the works for it is again one of those tools that have helped them bring depth and spontaneity to their works. While offering a summary of the study, the last chapter exhibits how an evolutionary pattern emerges as these female writers, with their increasing commitment and heightened consciousness, treat different aspects in their works. While all the works concentrate on different aspects, all are symbiotically related. These highly conscious artists, blessed with aesthetic sensibility, reach to people through their superb fictional art.

This study is expected to render more value to the existing body of feminist fiction with its wide coverage of varied aspects, such as, the thematic, stylistic and cultural viewpoints. A clear and critical perspective of the steady literary development of feminist fiction across the world over the last four decades may offer fresh insights to its readers into these varied aspects. Literary perception and depiction of the social affairs of life is also likely to provide aesthetic appeal and enhance the existing awareness of the readers. The diverse social, cultural and spatial backgrounds of these authors are likely to expose readers to an all-encompassing reality of life. Vicarious experiences delineated in their works may also help nurture cultural forbearance and social awareness, intensely required to develop harmony among human beings.

Chapter 2

Genesis and Evolution of Feminism

The fast burgeoning movement, Feminism, which is generally supposed to be the phenomenon of nineteenth and twentieth centuries, has its roots deep buried in antiquity. The generalized notion that it is a modern social movement does not hold much water as it includes legal, economic, political and literary territories as well. Moreover, the concept of its novelty is as primitive as that of Adam and Eve. It is so because the distinction between the two has been in existence since the very beginning. Accordingly, the undercurrents of feminism in different forms have been prevalent in society; only the use of word *feminism* has been amiss. In her research on feminism and suffrage, Ellen DuBois found that the term ‘feminism’ was in general use around 1910 to describe that political movement and the usage originated in France. Linda Kealey, writing about feminism, found that the term used by 1890s referred to the New Woman. Tracing its usage for the first time in print, Alice Rossi found it in a book-review published in the *Athenaeum*, 27 April 1895 though it got recognition and acceptance by the end of the century. Different critics have defined feminism in different ways, according to their perception, coruscating different shades of it. A perusal of the following definitions will crystallize the understanding of feminism as a movement.

In Webster’s Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary feminism is described as “the doctrine advocating social and political rights of women equal to those of men.” It further explains

feminism as “an organized movement for the attainment of such rights for women.”
(Webster’s Dictionary 1994 : 523)

Lisa Tuttle has defined it etymologically; since it is derived from Latin root *‘femina’* meaning “having the qualities of the female”, it is the movement of females related to female issues. (Tuttle 1986 : 107-8)

Barbara Ryan says that long-term activists describe feminism “as a process, not as a thing” and finds that this movement lays emphasis on the “desire for the equality of women, a break-down of all artificial barriers premised on gender/sex characteristics, fundamental change in the social, political, and economic structure, the empowerment of women and a raised valuation of female values.” (Ryan 1992 : 89)

Karen A Foss, Sonja K Foss and Cindy L Griffin affirm, “For us, feminism is a vital, engaging, and exciting perspective from which to view virtually every facet of life.”
(Karen 1999 : 1)

Margaret Atack quotes Simone de Beauvoir’s views expressed in an interview with Francis Jeanson in 1966, “Feminism is a way of living individually, and a way of struggling collectively.” (Atack 1998 : 31)

Chris Beasley finds, “On the other hand, the depiction of feminism as a general doctrine that can speak for all women has become associated with ignoring crucial differences

between them – such as cultural differences linked to race/ethnicity – and hence any straightforward notion of a shared set of ideas and values is now contentious.” (Beasley 1999 : 30)

Sushila Singh feels, “Feminism is neither a fad nor a logical extension of all the civil rights movement. The inequities against which the feminists protest – legal, economic, and social restrictions on the basic rights of women – have existed throughout history and in all civilizations.” (Singh 1997 : 13)

Maren Lockwood Carden says, “The new feminism is not about the elimination of differences between the sexes; nor even simply the achievement of equal opportunity; it concerns the individual’s right to find out the kind of person he or she is and to strive to become that person.” (Carden 1974 : 2)

Shulamith Firestone opines, “To understand why women are subordinate to men we require a biological not an economic explanation... and just as the ultimate goal of communist revolution is, in a classless society, to obliterate class distinctions, the ultimate goal of the feminist revolution is, in an androgynous society, to remove sexual ones.” (Firestone 1970: 12)

It is essential to mention John Stuart Mill’s views, “... the principle which regulates the existing social relations between the two sexes – the legal subordination of one sex to the other – is wrong in itself, and now one of the chief hindrances to human improvement;

and that it ought to be replaced by a principle of perfect equality, admitting no power or privilege on the other side, nor disability on the other.” (Mill 1989 : 3)

Dr. Claire Colerbook divides the stream of feminism into three distinct waves. He says that first wave feminist literary criticism looks at women writers, women characters and women’s self-development. According to him second wave feminism stresses the difference between sex and gender: sex is biological and natural being; gender is the social and cultural interpretation of that being. There is a need to assert women’s sex and challenge rigid models of gender. Of the third wave feminism he says that it rejects the *binary* model; there are not two sexes but a series of sexual identifications and performances. Instead of the sex/gender distinction or the assertion of a common humanity, the third wave of feminism stresses polymorphous and groundless difference, which means not a difference between men and women, but a continual and unstable difference.

In consonance with Dr. Claire Colerbook’s views on feminism are Julia Kristeva’s views on feminism. Like him, this French feminist also divides feminism into three tiers. She remarks that in today’s writing it is not the biological sex of a person but the subject position she or he takes up that determines their revolutionary potential. Julia Kristeva is of this opinion that the struggle must be seen historically and politically as a three tier one, which can be schematically summarized as follows:

1. Women demand equal access to the symbolic order.
2. Women reject the male symbolic order in the name of difference.

3. Women reject the dichotomy between the masculine and feminine.

Multiple theories of feminism exist because of the diversity of thoughts and beliefs. But, at the core, it remains a theory that hankers after equality of both the sexes in all the spheres of life. This concept does not harp upon the disparities or similarities between men and women; instead neither does it glorify women nor does it demean men; it just tells of equality on humanitarian level. Various scholars and critics have tried to put forth their idea of feminism, which has resulted into various ramifications as shown below:

Amazon Feminism rejects the idea of the superiority of males because of their certain virile or masculine qualities. It glorifies womanhood with advert to heroism. Even on physical scale they find women as strong and substantial as men.

Cultural feminism gives additional support to the qualities of women considering them superior to males, as being the compassionate creature they can even be great rulers in comparison to males.

Ecofeminism is a theory that finds that males have no right to rule over the females or nature. They say that patriarchal society preceded matriarchal society when women were the core of the society and revered to the heights.

Material feminism requires women to stop bothering about their mundane activities of nychthemeral affairs of life and wishes them to come out of their oyster to enjoy the

ecstasy and ebullience of life. It strives to free them of their duties as mothers, sisters, wives, daughters, etc., and expects women to recognize themselves as individuals and live for themselves irrespective of their 'material' responsibilities.

Radical feminism has been at its apogee from 1967 to 1975. This is a movement of the social change. It questions why men and women work according to the roles assigned to them according to gender discrimination. It tries to free both of them out of the shackles of the narrow gender roles.

Moderate feminism is about those women who have not directly experienced discrimination but feel that radical feminism is no longer viable; they tend to question the need for further effort.

Some opine that feminism is just about basic human rights and it's a modern social movement. But the truth is that feminism is neither only a social nor just a modern movement. Initially, there was no grass-roots movement to promote female-oriented consciousness and change but the history of women's odyssey for equality is a long one. John Kelly familiarizes us with four-hundred-year-old tradition in his Women, History and Theory (1984). Women were regarded inferior to men in all respects; they were deprived of the rights to own property, handle business, and take decision or to do something independently on their own. It was the practice from ages but patience has its limitations. A voice was raised to give them the breathing space.

Christine de Pisan (1364-1430?) is accredited to have modern feminist views; French feminism has a longer past and it was she who ignited the spark off the debate on women through her work, Querelle des Femmes. A middle class woman, Mrs. Aphra Behn 'earned her living by her pen like a man.' Aphra Behn and Mary Astell pleaded for the larger opportunities for women but it fell on deaf ears. Women played a subservient role to men and women across the world realized all this but American women were the first one to raise their voice against it. They tried really hard and paved a path to get their right. It's not an exaggeration that the organized movement of feminism originated in United States of America. In North America both Abigail Adams and Mercy Otis Warren worked for the inclusion of women in the constitution. In the 1630s and 1650s the religious equality for women was emphasized.

Mary Wollstonecraft in the Romantic Age catapulted Women's right to the fore. Her Vindication of the Rights of Women (1792) was the first feminist document. She retaliated against Rousseau's theory that men and women are different by nature. She was firm in her stance that women are more or less like their counter parts – *free, rational and independent*; hence their rights should also be at par. Similarly, women have been striving to obtain a character as a human being regardless of the distinction of sex and their first duty is to themselves as rational creatures. Though it was expected of women to carry out their responsibilities well, it was never restricted to the four walls of domesticity. It was in the wider public perspective that she expected women to do well. She strongly favored educational equality with fervor.

In 1820s Frances Wright carried further the torch of feminism; like Mary Wollstonecraft she also advocated educational equality. She was better known for her *ideas of egalitarianism, secularism and sexual freedom*. To help women she asked them to expand their area of domestic interests to other broader fields of life. Catherine Beecher also worked for the betterment of feminism though her approach was different.

Now, the moribund movement got resurrected gradually; this time the women not only raised their voice but also commenced questioning the system that was denying them the right of equality. Feminism didn't get the proper shape until 1848 when the first women's conference was held in Seneca Hall, America. Hence, the first movement really dates from 1848 when Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Lucretia Coffin Mott and the residue demanded full legal, educational, commercial equality along with equal wages, compensation, and the right to vote. The social issues like abolition, the social purity, etc., gave it an added impetus. Slowly, the movement gained momentum as Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan Brownell Anthony led the movement ahead vigorously. "Address Delivered at Seneca Falls" on July 19, 1848 put forth Elizabeth Cady Stanton's views on equality of human beings. She stated that God, in his wisdom, has linked the whole human family together. Any violence done at one end of the chain is felt through out its length. As woman's fall has doomed all, woman's elevation would redeem the whole race.

Elizabeth, the lady behind the Seneca Falls has enlisted the grievances to show that the history of mankind is the history of repeated injuries and usurpations on the part of man towards woman. In "Declaration of Sentiments" she raised the voice to demand the right

to vote, i.e., political equality. She demanded women suffrage, as she understood the importance of political power that could be used for the betterment of the females sans any dependence on males. She encouraged the women to join the political band as well to improve their positions in life. Her speeches and writings from “Declaration of Sentiments” (1848) to The Solitude of Self (1892) have a profound impact on the feminist movement. Efflux of egalitarianism is self-apparent in all her writings and speeches. Ellen Carol DuBois substantiated Stanton’s stance when she stipulated that by demanding political power women could struggle collectively against their degradation, rather than each against her own father and husband. They advocated the need on the part of women to have their own space, which they could use according to their wishes.

In fact, she has helped women realize the importance of political power only but she has also dwelled upon the issue of reform in marital relationships as she had firm faith that it provides a basis for the progress of human beings. She has held responsible not only males but females as well for the oppression and subjugation, the females suffered because they didn’t raise their voice against the atrocities perpetrated upon them by males. Her view that social upheaval necessitates the action to social reform has proved right. No doubt, she felt strongly that women wield the same abilities as men did; the differences and disparities between men and women are not innate but cultural. According to her *virtue* and *efficiency* don’t discriminate between male and female.

In the Declaration, she gave words to this view of hers when she said that all men and women are created equal. Though she vehemently supported feminism and carried it

ahead to the remarkable heights, she was never a part of any institute or organization. For her, home was the most suitable place to implement the changes. She regretted that the voice of woman has been silenced and fancied truly united and happy family for one and all. Further, she argued that there is no verifiable evidence to prove that men are born superior. Feminists also rejected the idea of Eve's genesis from the rib of Adam. Instead, the version that shows that God has created men and women simultaneously and both men and women have been created in the image of God is given approval. Thus scripture, as well as science and philosophy declare the eternity and equality of sex. Her educational background made her realize the importance of rights for better livelihood. She was quite impressed by John Stuart Mill who gave primary importance to individual relationships between males and females.

Soon, Feminism sprawled from America to Great Britain and other countries across the globe. By and by women's demands for equality (professional, legal, political, economic, and social) were conceded. The credit of being a feminist was not merely restricted to females. Males also felt very strongly for women. John Stuart Mill (1806-1873), in his famous book The Subjection of Women (1869) commiserates with the fair sex for being oppressed unnecessarily and sans any justifiable cause. He voiced his ideas to let women have their share of equality in life – both personal and professional. He has been right in his attitude that the masculine dominance was a corrupt practice, yielding unhealthy results. It was to induct the suffrage in the Second Reform Bill of 1867. Though initially beleaguered and mocked at, his idea gained favour with the passage of time.

John Stuart Mill was not the only male in this race, expressing concern for the betterment of women. Erasmus and other men also wrote in defense of women. In India, though the women were suppressed and subjugated, it were the male members who raised their voice against the injustice and atrocities meted out to females. They emphasized that women are equally good in their prowess. Scholars like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Swami Vivekananda, Mahatma Gandhi, etc., invited women to give their hand to them for the progress of humanity and nation. Women were given the opportunity for proper education that boosted their morale to move ahead and share their experiences with others.

In the Victorian era, feminism got linked with other social movements such as anti-slavery campaigns, Evangelical groups and Quakers. The suffragette movement (1860-1930) united women and their solidarity reemerged in the radicalization of the 1960s. It was not until 1928 that all women wielded the right to vote, which is considered as a crucial landmark in the history of feminism. The struggle on the part of women to get voting right yielded positive results after circa 70 years. During 1950s and 1960s women thronged the employment market. They not only continued to share responsibilities but also succeeded in establishing a welfare state system looking after the needs and safety of women, which was perhaps one of the greatest achievements for women at that time. Now, in the 1960s, feminism stood on its own, especially in United States. 1960s and 1970s were marked by the radical development of females; they had their share at the workplace and relished the right to get equal pay and compensation and were somewhat relieved of their household responsibilities as other members of the family shared their

responsibilities. In 1964, UN Commission on the status of women was established to secure equal political rights, economic rights, and educational opportunities for women throughout the world. The National Organization for Women was formed in 1966 putting a permanent stamp on the rights of equality for women. Bella Abzug, Betty Friedan, and Gloria Steinem worked very hard to push through congress the Equal Right Amendments in 1972 but by 1982 it fell short of ratification.

After paving their way for equality in other fields, they entered the world of creative writing as well. At the inception, the response they got was grey in shade. Possessed of indomitable spirit, they continued their efforts and started getting lukewarm response. Initially, the position of women in this field was very shaky because being conditioned to authority they took time to realize that they could not stand on their own if they incessantly kept on silhouetting life from males' point of view. Though they did not bring laurels to their names, they did groundwork for the posterity.

Women writers all over the world suffered from the same lacuna in their writings. George H. Lewes's statement is quite germane when he posits, "To write as men is the besetting sin of women; to write as women is the real task they have to perform." (Showalter 1999 : 3) Women wrote about life looking at it from male's point of view. They looked at themselves from the eyes of males as is evident from their description of woman as an object having elegance, beauty and charm, qualities attached to females by males. They believed "passionately in the supremacy of the male." (Beauvoir 1997 : 248) Literature has always shown life in its ever-changing and shifting colours, sometimes lackadaisical

and sometimes luminous. As women had recently come out of their life of subjugation, they regurgitated their bitter experiences. They brought forth their agonies and sufferings which they had in abundance. They dissected the theme of marriage from all possible angles; now they realized that they had led their life carrying out such mundane chores as drawing water, cooking, cleaning, giving birth to children, etc. Hence, literary feminism took time to get a proper shape. These writers got staunch support from those literary feminists who worked hard to bring forth the male-female disparities in their works.

Simone de Beauvoir (1908-1986) is one of the Twentieth Century's premiere exponents of feminism. She writes in The Second Sex (1949) that the terms masculine and feminine were used symmetrically only as a matter of form, as on legal papers. She elaborates her argument further, "In actuality the relation of the two sexes is not quite like that of two electrical poles, for man represents both the positive and the neutral, as is indicated by the common use of man to designate human beings in general" (Beauvoir 1997 : 15). Woman, on the other hand, was considered responsible for negativity that crept in the sanctimonious life of males. As such females didn't cherish individual status and were negative channels. She states openly that feminism was favoured in general by the reform movement of the nineteenth century because it sought justice in equality.

Kate Millet, the main theoretician of the new feminism also highlights the disparities in her famous work, Sexual Politics (1970). She shows that the myth of the fall still holds enormous power even in a rationalist era. This mythic image of the female as the cause of

human suffering and sin is still the foundation of sexual attitudes, for it represents the most crucial argument of the patriarchal tradition in the west.

Juliet Mitchell in her Woman's Estate (1971) argues that woman's oppression was linked to production, reproduction, sexuality and socialization. She also suggests that fancy rather than fact has determined gender. Luce Irigaray, through her works like Speculum of the Other Woman (translated 1985) and This Sex Which is Not One (1985 : 79), argues that the woman has been constructed as the other of man in all western discourses, "We are always one and the other, at the same time." Her rejection, of the male superiority in order to highlight difference, has been regarded as the radical feminist phase of the feminist movement.

Helene Cixous also argues that patriarchy is maintained by the exchange of women as possessions from fathers to husbands in order to gain something. The male gains authority, power, virility and pleasure in this economy based on property and exchange. She also argues that there is no pure male or female sex; 'each is the Other.' Toril Moi has also raised several questions regarding the theory of genesis. She also suggests that the development of feminism requires solid backup. The work of Bell Hooks, Ain't I a Woman (1981), reorients feminism into addressing the issue of race and gender, especially in the case of black women. In India, Susie Tharu and K Lalitha upturn women's text in their seminal work Women's Writing in India (1991). Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak in In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics (1987) and The

Postcolonial Critic (1990) does not leave high theory to men. In her works, all cross currents are brought into conflict at the same time.

Writers like Mary Wollstonecraft and John Stuart Mill expressed the need to rethink the role of women and social oppression against them; Virginia Woolf and Simone de Beauvoir raised questions about education, marriage, economics, sexuality and morals; literary feminists like Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar and Elaine Showalter provided the connecting links.

Elaine Showalter's A Literature of Their Own (1977) proposes a multipart model of the growth of feminist theory. She articulates that intelligence and imagination are not male traits; they are not gender biased, gender may intervene when explaining things but males or females have no superiority because of their gender; instead it's the possession of qualities that matters. Women started rejecting the gender tag as a means to assess and to judge the privileges bestowed upon the men. Virginia Woolf (1882-1941, London) and Dorothy Richardson (1882-1957, English) were among the first females to recognize this. Corollary, the female experiences commenced to show *positive affirmation*. The *intuitive approach*, if not warmly accepted, was given a proper place in literary tradition. Elaine Showalter limns how women reached this stage; she highlights all the conflicts and struggles these writers faced as their works were rejected for being superfluous and trivial.

In A Literature of Their Own Elaine Showalter Cambridge displays the evolution of female literature; she goes one step ahead and splits it into three stages:

In this book I identify the Feminine phase as the period from the appearance of the male pseudonyms in the 1840s to the death of George Eliot in 1880; the Feminist phase as 1880 to 1920, or the winning of the vote; and the Female phase as 1920 to the present, but entering a new stage of self-awareness about 1960. (Showalter 1999 : 13)

It does not exactly fit into years, because the first woman to get sweeping success was Jane Austen (1775-1817). However, women were given the chance to show their ingenuity in the literary field during Romantic Era; women assumed an important place in the literature also because of their exposure to education, which resulted in wonderful literary pieces.

Jane Austen as a writer remained nonchalant to past, terror, moral outlook and sentimentalism to provide her works a safe orderly harmony. Her observation, though on a much smaller scale, exhibits *negative capability* of Shakespeare. Precision of structure embedded with realism polished her narrative, simultaneously humorous, economical and illuminating. Her works have more enduring charm because of her exquisite handling of delicate day-to-day affairs; she was content with characters and their immediate surroundings. Her tinge of simplicity to the description of English life gave vivacity to the variegated facts of life. Her effeminate narrative brought back the novel to its substantial quality and exquisite charm. She presented the vigour of life through her vision of it as she included all the threads of life in her arena. She discussed all the problems related to life in a family from the compatibility between wife and husband to the marriages of their children, what is love, how it is different from infatuation, what's

the difference between high class and middle class family and the values related to both the classes. In short, the list of the issues she discussed is endless, but she was quite effortless in her progress as a writer. Her best work Pride and Prejudice (1813) possessed semblance of spontaneity making it a work of impressive appeal.

Apart from Jane Austen, Mrs. Anne Radcliffe, Maria Edgeworth, Hannah More, Jane Porter and Fanny Burney also got marked distinction for their works. Fanny Burney (1752-1840), praised for her venture by stalwarts like Johnson, Burke and Reynolds, took the town by storm by her very first novel Evelina (1778). In her maiden undertaking, she narrated, with admirable illustrative incidents, the entry of a young girl into the gaieties and adventure of London. As the first novel, in which a woman wrote of life quite frankly from the woman's point of view, it was really a big achievement. Somehow her experience and observation did not help her retain the original charm and hence, the creative streak crumbled in her ensuing works like Cecilia (1782) and Camilla (1796) though her *Diary* and *Letters* displayed her dexterity in reporting events with a lively eye for any dramatic incident.

Among female writers Mrs. Ann Radcliffe (1764-1823) was the first one to combine the mechanism of terror with sentiments resulting in effective descriptions of scenery. The Mysteries of Udolpho (1794) was the story of an innocent and sensitive girl entrapped by a powerful and sadistic villain named Montoni. Liberally abounding in mystery, horror and haunted chambers, this work truly attempted to offer a rational explanation of horrors. Despite mixed responses, this work stimulated the imagination of Shelley to such

an extent that he actually saw ghosts. Charlotte Bronte modified her Rochester on the same line and Emily Bronte immortalized Heathcliff by the subtle touch of her imagination. Treading on almost the same path, Mrs. Shelley brought forth one of the most competent terror tales in the form of Frankenstein (1817) by talking about a mechanical monster equipped with human powers, but of terrifying nature. Of all the works related to this aspect this work cherishes a specific place even today.

Mrs. Gaskell (1810-65) had a talent for combining social criticism and melodrama as she exposed the cruelty of the industrial system in her works like Mary Barton (1848) and North and South (1855) and gentleness and humour in a picture of provincial life in Cranford (1853). Maria Edgeworth (1767 – 1849) tried her hand at novels, memoirs, short stories abounding in didacticism, and feminist essays working strenuously under the aegis of Mr. Edgeworth, a well-know author. Some of the works which showed her versatility as a writer are Letters to Literary Ladies - 1795 (feminist essay), Moral Tales for Young People - 1805 (6 vols) Memoirs – (1820) Tales of Fashionable Life – (1809) The Parent's Assistant - 1796 (6 vols) Castle Rackrent - 1800 (novel), etc. Robert Hall, the preacher said that she did not attack religion, nor did she inveigh against it, but made it appear unnecessary by exhibiting perfect virtue without it.

Hannah More (1745-1833) became famous for her play writing and philanthropy. Through her writing popular religious tracts and pioneering work in Sunday Schools she has been recently rediscovered as both an early feminist and as an anti-feminist. She emphasized the need for female education in Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education (1799). She found it unjust to keep women ignorant and then scorn them for it.

Her broader literary activities and her development of Sunday schooling marked her as an important figure.

In the Victorian Era the female novelist Mary Ann Evans better known as George Eliot (1819-1880) presented the intellectual analysis of life. While Bronte sisters enjoyed the contentment of their secure reputation, she tasted the bitterness of dejection and collapse. Her creative achievement made her known as the most learned and the most adult of all the female writers. Before she took on fiction she had already translated Strauss's Leben Jesu, and acted as assistant editor of the Westminster Review. Her early Scenes of Clerical Life (periodical publication in 1857) was a great success. Immediately after her short narratives her Adam Bede (1859) was out and she became an overnight star. The drawback with her was the tussle between her intuitions and her intellect. In The Mill on the Floss (1860) her intellect marred the spontaneity set by her intuition; the contrasting forces found a balance in Silas Marner (1861). Her stint with historical and political arena brought her back to her spontaneity with Middlemarch (1871-72) where she collected all her prowess to come up with one of the great novels of her age. Perfect synthesis of intellect and genius gathered into sympathetic portraits of the lives of a number of families. To penetrate more deeply into character she desired to enlarge the possibilities of the novel as a form of expression.

George Eliot tries to cover all the aspects of life from love to hatred in the human life. Her iridescent projection of life scattered all the colours of life, be it lackadaisical or effervescent. She strived to highlight the inner struggle of her characters with the minutest details. Her characters are round characters who evolve with the passage of life

from one stage to the other one; they are mature enough to understand what's going on in their life. She also gives a panoramic view of life but her works abound in didactic approach. Though women remain the main concern in their novels yet human relationships are woven in the thread of society.

In originality none of the writers of this era came close to Bronte sisters. Their journey to the heights of success is surprisingly inexplicable, exhibiting dominance of their father, little exposure to the outer world and a comparatively short sojourn at this planet. The novels they have written, exercise great fascination for the reader generation after generation by its magnetic appeal. The sparkling talent of none of the sisters can be questioned, not even Anne Bronte's (1820-49). Her Agnes Grey and The Tenant of Wildfell Hall have readership even today.

Charlotte Bronte (1816-1855 Haworth) showed her creative streak scattered in various novels like Jane Eyre (1847), Shirley (1849), Villette (1853), and The Professor (1857). Blessed with far richer and more romantic experiences coupled with scenes from her own life, she went beyond into wish fulfillment. Perfectly grounded in realism, her works tend to explore human life with absolute fidelity though the logic is not as conclusive. *Jane Eyre* an autobiographical novel dealing with love quite delicately and pouring a beautiful love story with variegated shades of love, made up her conception of life. Jane, the governess, is shown in love with Mr. Rochester, a mystifying man with subtle streaks of sinister. Likewise, an air of mystery looms in Rochester's house. Though Charlotte Bronte's genius allowed her to blend an atmosphere of terror with a middle class setting,

but she lacked the courage to further her vision to a wild and disordered world adroitly adapted in Wuthering Heights by her sister. Commenting on the works of the early nineteenth century women writers, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar opine that these female writers were working from within a male vision of creativity. By the projection of rebellious impulses into mad/monsters women, the female authors of the nineteenth century dramatize their own self-division, their desire to both accept the structures of patriarchal society and to reject them.

Emily Bronte (1818- 1848) weaved a web of stark passionate world for a story of wild and cruel reality emanating probably from a mysterious, ever-quickening inner activity whetted by her apparent loneliness. In Wuthering Heights she tosses a mature love story even having morbid streaks quite convincingly. This is also her best work proving the universal truth that love can elevate a person to the heights of sky and it can take to the abysmal depth of inferno.

Harriet Martineau, (1802- 1876) published her anonymous article, On Female Education in 1823 in Monthly Repository. In Society in America (1837) Martineau concerned especially about the treatment of women devoted one chapter *The Political Non-existence of Women* to women and claimed that women were treated like slaves and argued for an improvement in women's education. In 1839 Martineau's first novel, Deerbrook, got published. In 1866 she joined with Elizabeth Garrett Anderson, Emily Davies, Dorothea Beale and Francis Mary Buss to present a petition, asking Parliament to grant women the vote.

Writers of this first slot are Bronte sisters, Elizabeth Gaskell, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Harriet Martineau, George Eliot, and of the later generation are Charlotte Yonge, Dinah Mulock Crack, Margaret Oliphant, and Elizabeth Lynn Linton. As feminist literature was at burgeoning stage, the reservation on the parts of women was still lurking behind everything they wrote. Initial stage was to just bash the men and reveal the bruised psyche of females. While lacerating the men territory women set out to *fight for equality*. They, at all possible levels, argued that women till now were not only ignored but also deprived of all the rights. They brought to light how society viewed them and how this affected their status. Their works were indicted of being *naïve, parochial, and primitive*.

Charlotte M. Yonge (1823–1901) was a best-selling author in her time whose works were read and enjoyed by noted Victorians as diverse as Gladstone, Tennyson and Rossetti. Her appeal was due to the liveliness of her portrayal of character. Her books are peopled with large Victorian families, every member distinctly drawn and presented with insight and humour. Charlotte's best-selling novel, *The Heir of Redclyffe*, is still in print. Its hero, Sir Guy Morville, embodies the appeal of chivalry and service in modern life, and was emulated by countless young people of the day. *The Heir of Redclyffe* is Yonge's all-time bestseller, but she has written over a hundred books, edited a magazine for fifty years, and exerted a significant influence over the lives of her readers from her quiet home near Winchester. Her books have a charm and freshness that continue to make them a *good read*.

The writers of this slot attempted to imbue themselves into the public sphere – a male tradition, and obviously many of them were in a fix what to do and underwent the conflict between obedience and resistance which is apparently evident in bulk of their works. During the Victorian era women gave healthy and abundant reading material to the readers. Still there was a feeling that women were left out and their lift sounded metaphorically paralyzed. Their language and their sufferings were still confined to the bourgeois propriety.

The second set of these revolutionary writers gave vent to their sense of injustice in a more germane and acceptable manner. They lashed out against the traditional values and standards demanding their right and sovereignty to be recognized by all. These females attempted to attack from all the possible vistas open to them. Scribes like Mary Braddon, Rhoda Broughton, and Florence Marryat raised their voice against marriage, and women's economic oppression. Militant Suffragists also indulged into protest wave. Women as Sarah Grand, George Egerton, Mona, Caird, Elizabeth Robins, and Olive Schreiner strongly raised their voice against wronged womanhood. They demanded privileges for women and also asked for chastity and fidelity from men. Their works were not great but opened avenues to explore female identity, feminist theory, and the female aesthetics. This lot of women became the connective of this chain of feminism, which was equally essential. Whatever was considered a taboo earlier was now not only accepted but also discussed openly. Women poured forth their literary works galore at the end of the nineteenth century. Until now, they wrote about life only from the angle of

mothers, sisters or wives, it took very long to write only as women, independent of their status.

The third and ultimate period is marked by self-discovery and some freedom from the dependence on the males. The odyssey for self-identity was taken on by plethora of writers with the twofold legacy of feminine self-hatred and feminist withdrawal to the inner space. Dorothy Richardson, and Virginia Woolf worked towards a female aesthetics – that female experience and its creative process held mystic implications – both transcendental and self destructive vulnerability. This wave of feminism traced the seeds of feminism in ‘literary context’ keeping at bay the sexual differences between the two or to put it in other words this wave of feminism dissected male-female sexual differences that could be *deconstructed*. Virginia Woolf in A Room of One’s Own (1929) and Three Guineas (1938) analyzes the gender biases and oppressive structures in pedagogic practices to meditate upon the woman’s question.

The portrayal of the inner life attracted attention from writers throughout but now it was explored more profoundly; the revolutionary developments in psychological sciences showed the disorder hidden in the mental existence. One of the earliest novelists in England, Dorothy Richardson (1882-1957) in Pointed Roofs (1915) set the trend in novels in which the consciousness of single character was exposed. Somehow, her works did not receive the recognition accorded to the works of Virginia Woolf (1882-1941) who began her career in the same year with The Voyage Out (1915). In all her works Night and Day (1919), Jacob’s Room (1922), Mrs. Dalloway (1925), To the Lighthouse (1927),

Orlando (1928), The Waves (1921), The Years (1937), and her unfinished work Between the Acts (1941), her means to unfold a story is to accept a plot with simple outline and bedeck it with minute details not the way they really occur but the way they occur in the mind of the characters. The inner soliloquy is perfectly blended with the well-ordered central theme. Blessed with intense intelligence and sharp sensibility, she imbued every ephemeral mood with a romantic touch that added to the exuberance of the narration. The characters she has created share her intelligence and decent delicacies. In her novels, women are in the lead role, have supremacy over the happenings, and act as the binding force, controlling all the actions. Indubitably, Virginia Woolf emerged as one of the most original writers but other female writers had also their share of contribution. Senior among them, Rose Macaulay (1881-1957) exhibited her satiric talent early in her Orphan Island (1924). Her historical novel They Were Defeated (1932) was followed by more ambitious and brilliant The Towers of Trezibond (1956), her last work.

Another writer who caught attention by her aggressively original and distinctive talent was none other than Ivy Compton-Burnett (1884-1969) who showed her creative genius very early with Dolores in 1911, but her distinctive style was developed with her Brothers and Sisters (1929). All her works are set against family life background; her novels are almost entirely in dialogue dipped in wit and aphoristic phrasing. Among her works Men and Wives (1931), More Women Than Men (1933), A House and Its Head (1925), Daughters and Sons (1937), A Family and a Fortune (1939), Manservant and Maidservant (1947) The Mighty and Their Fall (1961), and A God and His Gifts (1963), she allows a tyrannical figure at the center, conspiracies within families, and a flourishing

of the wicked. Veneer of elegance covers evil lurking underneath. Acknowledging the talent for satire, one wishes bulk for comedy because of her exceptional flair for it: “To know all is to forgive all, and that would spoil everything”; or ‘Pride may go before a fall. But it may continue after.’ (Ivans 1990 : 284)

Rosamond Lehmann (1901-1990) defied the romantic tradition to write sparingly but with superb brilliance. Her later novels exhibit sensibility marked by a wider awareness of life than that of her contemporaries. She is best remembered for her The Ballad and the Source (1944) which contrasts a young girl’s impression of an older woman with the actuality of that woman’s life. Her contemporary Rebecca West (1892-1983), a critic and observer of discretion, had a fertile imagination in immediate contact with current circumstances. The novels, which brought her name, are The Return of the Soldier (1918), The Judge (1922), and Harriet Hume (1929). Another novelist who made distinguished contribution in the elucidation of personal sentiment and human relations was Elizabeth Bowen (1899 -1973). Among her works The Death of the Heart (1938) fetched fame for her. It explores with subtlety the emotions of an adolescent girl placed in a complicated and insecure situation. The focus is on the upper-middle class gentry who are indulged only in their relationships and emotions. This delicate and revealing work does not touch upon the harsh realities of the year it was written.

In the second half of twentieth century, women writers became more conscious of their work and worked really hard to provide versatility to their prolific output. Iris Murdoch (1919- 1999) in her maiden novel Under the Net (1954) came up with the story of a

young Irish writer engaged in casual adventures. Her characters are usually intelligent, sensitive, and sophisticated engaged in guilty secrets and unexplained mysteries and are often caught in improbable and bizarre sexual entanglements. Sometimes, it is quizzical to believe her characters because they frequently seem like puppets acting out patterns but despite that her novels are widely admired.

Another sophisticated and prolific writer blessed with a wider range of talents and resources is Muriel Spark (1918 b). Her novel Memento Mori (1959), which deals with the people of advanced age confronting the imminent prospect of death and dwelling on their long memories, is probably her finest creation because her characters are still active enough to keep up old quarrels and engage in intrigue. The writer describes this with a very balanced coolness and compassion. One of the most gifted novelists of her Age; she possesses great potentialities to surprise her readers though sometimes her detachment is coldly clinical. The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie (1962), though a very successful work, a humanly story of a charismatic schoolmistress, is not without considerable formal intricacy.

Women writers worked really hard to achieve this pinnacle and a number of writers appeared in fifties and sixties, who were interestingly precise because they wrote with direct knowledge about sexual or gynecological experiences, that was never treated before with such direct explicitness. Edna O'Brien (1932 b) in her August is a Wicked Month (1965) was considerably explicit in her descriptions. Margaret Drabble (1939 b), another novelist, also dealt with the question of pregnancy and motherhood. In fact, this

sharply intelligent woman dealt with these questions from a feminine standpoint, especially that of the highly educated modern woman. Though her male characters lacked the desired conviction, her works are of unequal interest and The Millstone (1965) and The Needle's Eye (1972) are among the best works of the period.

Black women literary period has its pioneering traces in the works of Zora Neale Hurston in the forties that boomed in the seventies and eighties with the advent of talented writers like Phillis Wheatley, Paule Marshall, Alice Walker and Gloria Naylor. These writers attempted to discover black women's self entrapped in the white society. The desire to discover one's self and its relation to the world became the important driving force of these novelists. Barbara Christian, as quoted by K. Sumana, explains the difficulties encountered by these authors:

The extent to which Afro-American woman writers like Alice Walker, Paule Marshall, Gloria Naylor, Alexis De Veau, in the seventies and eighties have been able to make a commitment to an exploration of self, as central rather than marginal, is a tribute to the insights they have called in a century or so of literary activity. (Sumana 1998 : 16)

Their predecessors strived hard to focus their views as they were bugged by other entangled issues. Early Afro-American writers like Frances Harper, Jessie Fauset, Nella Larsen and Ann Petry pleaded for the justice for their natives, but they could not utterly overcome the intention to impress and please the white readers. The time when pure black characters will be created, was yet to come. Petty brought it a step further by presenting females struggling against the social and economic hostilities. Zora Neale Hurston, as an exception, talked about black folklore and folk history, presenting her

characters with individual aspirations, lives and dreams. The major themes that emerged in the novels of Hurston were search for black woman's self-fulfillment through community, quest for the ideal relationship between man and woman, black sisterhood, and significance of fidelity in interpersonal relationships. Her heroines continually quest for personal freedom and self-love by placing themselves in relation to the community they live in. Hurston, a *transitional* writer, aimed to present positive image of black women but with little success. The clash between the actual and supposed situation of black females was reflected in the works of Ann Petry and Dorothy West when their heroines - Lutie Johnson (Ann Petry's The Street) and Cleo Judson (Dorothy West's The Living is Easy) - were defeated both by social reality and by their black self-knowledge.

The transition took concrete shape with Gwendolyn Brook's Maud Martha (1953) when the leading lady managed to lead a normal life within the prescribed arena. An authentic analysis sans extremities furthered black literature as it established the reality of black woman's true self. She projected this by placing her life in the context of black culture and community. However, the real big literary leap came with Paule Marshall's first novel, Brown Girl, Brownstones (1981), as Marshall's women speak to their own self and try to articulate their self with a great force. In this work her black females outpour their expressions from the depth of their souls in an undiminished stream. Meaningfully engaging herself to the task of reconstructing black womanhood, Paule Marshall sculpted her black female characters in relation to their culture and community. No doubt, she stood out as a pioneer of the black woman's renaissance as she gave a truthful reflection of black woman's realities.

During the sixties, a perceptible change in the attitude of writers regarding cultural renaissance, marked the beginning of literary consolidation. After a long and painful period their attempts to forget their excruciating past resulted in cultural upheaval. After this, the African-American literary traditions started unfolding itself. Conscious attempts were made by writers to grope for their roots and view the present in inseparable connection with the past. This radical change was manifested in Alice Walker's works also. Alice Walker prefers to call herself a *womanist* because *womanism* in her opinion expresses her concern better than *feminism*. It appreciates "women's culture, women's emotional flexibility ... and women's strength." (Walker 1983 : xi) Her concern for the liberation of woman from oppression is strong but being an African-American she is more "committed to exploring the oppressions, the insanities, the loyalties, and the triumphs of black women." (O'Brien 1973 : 192) Her masterpiece, Meridian (1976), talks about a woman who after leading a subordinate life as a black female, daughter, wife, and mother gradually awakens to nurture her own self and provides her selfless service to the black community.

Thus, by the mid-seventies, Alice Walker along with Paule Marshall, Toni Cade Bambara, Gayle Jones and Toni Morrison, not only defined their cultural context but also explored many facets of the interrelationship of racism, sexism, and classism in their society. These writers insisted on the centrality of black women to African-American history as well as on their pivotal significance to the contemporary social and political developments in America. They also challenged the prevailing definition of woman in male-dominated American society, especially in relation to motherhood and sexuality.

Interrelationship of racism, sexism and classism is a prevalent undercurrent in the works of all these authors. From Harper's Iola Leroy, (1892), to Toni Morrison's Jazz (2001), these African-American novelists have evolved as mature and invincible creators, incessantly referring to various configurations of social classifications. The novels of black women from 1892 to the present have reacted to the elements of race, gender, and class as the factors upon which the societal placement of black woman is based.

Limning women experiences has been the sole aim of all the feminist writers to give vent to their catharsis. Canadian literature in English began in the Pre-Confederation or Colonial era (about a hundred years before Canada became an independent country in 1867. The first work to get recognition in female Canadian history is The History of Emily Montague by Francis Brooke. In this epistolary novel, the main characters are women who explore life only from their point of view and of their interest.

A significant number of other British women contributed valuable descriptions of colonial life to early Canadian literature in the form of fiction, diaries, or letters - often exchanged between mothers and daughters: Elizabeth Simcoe (1766-1850); early feminist Anna Jameson (1794-1860); Catharine Parr Traill (1802-1899), author of the practical The Female Emigrant's Guide (1854); and her sister, Susanna Moodie (1803-1885), whose Roughing It in the Bush (1852) is a classic of pioneer writing. Their feminine sensibility helped them portray the flux of life when they talked of 'female space' in the lives of their characters making them the center of their novels as Virginia Woolf and George Eliot have done in theirs.

The first Canadian-born novelist to publish was Julia Beckwith Hart (1796-1867), author of the romance St. Ursula's Convent (1824). Only the works of Montreal-born Rosanna Leprohon (1829-1879), whose novels became the subject of renewed interest in recent years, are not forgotten. Leprohon's three novels published during the 1860s - The Manor House of De Villeraï, Antoinette de Mirecourt, and Armand Durand - offer a realistic portrayal of French-English relations, and her essentially feminist views on the education of women and on marriage as a partnership are of special interest. In this period of social ferment between Confederation and World War I, two internationally acclaimed Canadian women writers emerged: Sara Jeannette Duncan (1861-1922), who was the first woman to work in the editorial department of a leading Canadian newspaper and she also wrote numerous plays and novels; Lucy Maud Montgomery (1874-1942) authored one of the world's best-loved children's novels, Anne of Green Gables (1908). Another very popular Maritime writer for children was Margaret Marshall Saunders (1861-1947), whose sentimental Beautiful Joe (1894), one of her many animal tales, has kept her name alive.

Many more novels by women of the time, however, are beginning to be investigated only now. Most contain portraits of traditional women whose lives are centered in family and church, although some present new images of women and describe the technological, industrial, and social changes taking places in their day. Writers to be reassessed include Carrie Jenkins Harris (d. 1903); Alice Jones (1853-1933); Jones' sister, Susan Carleton Jones (1864-1926); Maria Amelia Fytche (1844-1927), author of Kerchiefs to Hunt Souls (1896; reprinted, 1980), a novel highly critical of the situation of women, especially as governesses; Lily Dougall (1858-1923), author of a dozen novels and the first editor of

The World Wide, a Montreal journal of contemporary thought; and May Agnes Fleming (1840-1880), one of the first Canadians to have a career as a writer of popular fiction.

The contemporary literary scene is dominated by powerfully influential women writers.

The personification of Canadian feminism for the first quarter of the twentieth century was, most obviously, Nellie McClung (1873-1951), popular novelist and political campaigner. McClung and other suffragists, shortly after the war, not only won for women the right to vote in federal and most provincial elections, but between-the-wars literature also dominated, finally, by the stunning international success of Mazo de la Roche (1879-1961), whose major triumph is a series of sixteen novels chronicling several generations in the Whiteoaks family; under the sway of a matriarch named Adeline (Gran), the family owns a splendid estate in southern Ontario, of which the focal point is their house, Jalna. Other fiction writers of note like Martha Ostenso (1900- 1963), Laura Goodman Salverson (1890-1970), Emily Carr (1871-1945) set the pattern for several later Canadian women's sagas of self-discovery in the wilderness. Most of the best works in Canadian literature belong to the contemporary period but they were simultaneously and integrally connected with both the nationalist and feminist movements of the late 1950s and the decade of the 1960s.

At present, many new directions are being explored by an increasingly large number of women writers. In prose fiction, the most outstanding work is done by Mavis Gallant (b. 1922), Margaret Laurence (1926-1987), Alice Munro (b. 1931), and Margaret Atwood (b. 1939). Other important novelists are Adele Wiseman (b. 1928), who wrote The Sacrifice (1956); Sheila Watson (b. 1919), author of The Double Hook (1959), the first truly

modern Canadian novel; Sylvia Fraser (b. 1935), whose career began with Pandora (1972); and Marian Engel (1933-1985), with whom an overtly feminist fiction began in No Clouds of Glory (1968; reprinted as Sara Bastard's Notebook in 1974). Two American-born writers, Audrey Thomas (b. 1935) and Jane Rule (b. 1931), who have settled permanently in Canada, deserve special mention. Thomas's autobiographical trilogy - Mrs. Blood (1970), Songs My Mother Taught Me, (1973), and Blown Figures (1974) - and her twin novellas Munchmeyer and Prospero on the Island (1971), all written in experimental, discontinuous prose, introduced new themes such as pregnancy, abortion, and miscarriage. Rule's novels - Desert of the Heart (1964), This Is Not for You (1970), and Against the Season (1971) introduced the subject of lesbian love.

In the past decade, all the major novelists and poets of the postwar period published new work culminating perhaps, in the enormously successful works by Atwood. New writers who made their debut include novelists Aritha van Herk (Judith, 1978) and Australian-born Janette Turner Hospital (The Ivory Swing, 1982); both of them won Seal Book Awards. Canadian writings by women, finally, seem to encompass three reasonably discrete phases of evolution: imitation of foreign and male models, protest against authorities - British parents, American cousins, and Canadian brothers - and free exploration of female experience. The rubric provided by Elaine Showalter's A Literature of Their Own, a pioneering study of British women's fiction, which divides writers into three chronologically arranged groups - feminine, feminist, and female -, is not without relevance to Canadian history too.

Sprawled in all parts of world, literary feminism created great impact in India also. It started with Toru Dutt's Bianca or The Young Spanish Maiden (1878) and carried on further by numerous writers. Kamala Markandaya, Nayantara Sahgal, Bharati Mukherjee, Anita Desai, and Ruth Praver Jhabvala are some of those prominent writers who got international fame in post 1947 era. They explored almost all the aspects of life from universal problems to typical Indian problems like hunger, insecurities of life, search for self, chaos engulfing the traditional Indian values, struggle for recognition, marriage (moving out of burdened relationships to maintain their original self), equality (of rights), dissection of human psyche, dragging out the morbidity of human relationships, etc. In short, they let the volcano burst with full force so as to let their lava come out and they showed their bruised psyche lacerating the male territory from all the possible angles.

The first generation of Indian novelists wrote about the plight of the rural peasantry and the urban middle-class, immigration and interracial relationships. Kamala Markandaya's (1924-2004) novels, set against an incomparably vivid background of Indian life, depicted the dilemma of people with conflicting occidental and oriental values. Her strength as a writer lies in her delineation of the struggle of the individual in a changing society. Markandaya created, with her vision and limpid style, a distinctive place for herself in modern Indo-British fiction. Perhaps the most enduring quality of her novels is her passionate portrayal of Indian life and a profound sympathy. Her characters are all ordinary people, ahead in search of happiness and intensely aware of ever-shifting time.

Her primary novel, Nectar in a Sieve (1954), established her reputation as a writer of rare imaginative range and sincerity of feeling. A story of personal and social conflict, most poignantly exposed, is told with lyrical simplicity; the inner strength of Rukmani and her husband never dampens and in spite of constant struggle, they share their transitory happiness. In Some Inner Fury (1955), an autobiographical novel, the east-west conflict was probed through the dilemma of Mira, a young woman in love with an Englishman. Similarly conflicting values dominate A Silence of Desire (1960), in which an office clerk is caught between the binary values. The cultural clash figured again in Possession (1963), a novel set in pre-independence India and England. A Handful of Rice (1966) describes Indian city life and The Nowhere Man (1972) deals with the problems faced by many immigrants, such as relationships with the British, parent-child conflict and racist violence.

Ruth Praver Jhabvala (1924 b), since 1955 has written a dozen novels, many of them set in India, including The Nature of Passion, Esmond in India, Travelers and The Householder. In 1975, Jhabvala won Britain's Booker Prize for her novel Heat and Dust. Her novels are about urban middle class Indian life tinged with domestic problems of an average joint Hindu family and an ironic confrontation between occidental and oriental values.

Nayantara Sahgal (1927 b) was hailed chiefly as a political novelist; her feminist concern was quite overt and her fighter spirit quite vocal in her fiction. Sahgal's concern for women, however, is that of a humanist more than it is of a feminist. This accounts for her holistic vision. Though defiant, all her women are not viragos as though overpowering,

all her men are not demons. She holds a truly Indian approach to the issue and added a new dimension to feminist philosophy without joining the fighter band. As a real life crusader, Sahgal made no scruples about the not-so-healthy vision of life that even some women held. Her novels A Time to Be Happy, Storm in Chandigarh, A Situation in New Delhi, Rich Like Us and Mistaken Identity are often set against the backdrop of pivotal events in Indian history.

Bharati Mukherjee's (1940) earlier works, such as the The Tiger's Daughter and Days and Nights, were her attempts to find her identity in her Indian heritage. The Tiger's Daughter is a story about the chaos and poverty of Indian and mistreatment of women in the name of tradition. The second phase of her writing encompassed Wife and The Sorrow and the Terror. These works originated in Mukherjee's own experience of racism in Canada. In Wife, Mukherjee writes about a woman named Dimple who attempts to be the ideal Bengali wife but out of fear and personal instability, murders her husband and eventually commits suicide. In her third phase, Mukherjee is well accepted as an immigrant, living in a continent of immigrants for a long time. She describes herself as an American and not the hyphenated Indian-American. Her latest works include The Holder of the World, (1993) and Leave It to Me (1997). Mukherjee's focus continues to be on immigrant women and their freedom from relationships to become individuals.

A great fascination for writing coaxed Anita Desai to plunge into this ambit at the tender age of seven. She cherishes a specific position in Indian writings by female writers; born of Bengali father and German mother she was blessed with dual heritage. Success was acquainted with her at the arrival of her very first novel Cry, the Peacock (1963), a tragic

story of distraught Maya. Voices in the City (1965) and Fire on the Mountain deal with the mind and the soul of a character, the inner working and hidden and silent thoughts rather than outer appearances. She has won Winifred Holtby Award for Regional literature of the Royal Society of literature, London and The Sahitya Akademi Award for English for the year 1978. Three of her novels Clear Light of Day (1980), In Custody (1984), and Fasting, Feasting (1999) were short listed for Booker Prize, and The Village by the Sea won her The Guardian Award for Children's Fiction in 1982. Clear Light of Day (1980) portrays the hidden depth of the protagonist who is haunted by nostalgic events; In Custody (1984), and Fasting, Feasting (1999) are more mature works of her, highlighting social and personal dilemma. Thus, she has heralded a new era in the realm of psychological portrayal of the character.

Shobha De, the modern novelist, is famous for portraying sexual mania of the commercial world. Her narration is frank and forthright. Her first novel *Socialite Evening* (1988) is very open in expression. Her other works Starry Nights, Sisters, Sultry Days, Strange Obsession, Snapshots, Second Thoughts, Shooting from the Hips, Small Betrayals, Surviving Men and Speed post appeal to the readers of modern scientific and commercial world where a large section of people crave for power, wealth and sex. Rama Mehta's first novel Inside the Haveli (1977) that got her Sahitya Akademi Award in 1979 deals with confrontation between urban and rural. Mahasweta Devi, the winner of the prestigious Jnanpith and Magassasay Awards for the novel, Mother of 1084 contends that women should not be submissive and should realize the inner strength of which they are known. Manju Kapur, in her maiden novel Difficult Daughters presents a

woman who considers marriage as the end of her life. Her second novel A Married Woman has focuses on female issues. Other women writers like Arundhati Roy and Jhumpa Lahiri have stepped in to shower their skills. These writers move one step ahead of other writers, as they don't hold man responsible for every injustice meted out to them.

Indian women novelists in English have made considerable mark in the field of English fiction as they are conferred with national as well as international awards. With writers of this caliber entering into the pale of writing all over the world, one thing is quite pellucid that women have started living life according to rules set by them. Irrespective of being Indian, Canadian or African-American these writers have attempted to free the female mentality from the age-long control of male domination. They have come into the arena of life, seen its current, and conquered to move that current in the direction they found apposite. No longer, they play second fiddles to males; they move on the path of life uninterrupted with a new zeal. They lead a life of vim, vitality, vigor, and vivacity and are busy exploring all the likely avenues of life.

The authors chosen for this study are the representative writers who have displayed exceptional writing skills. Margaret Atwood in her novels Life Before Man (1979), Bodily Harm (1981), and The Blind Assassin (2000) deals with the sensitive issues related to life. Here, she gives a meticulous treatment to the most intrinsic threads of life. She wants women to take a bold step in life to stare boldly into the eyes of reality and overcome it with all their spirit. She is working for the betterment of females by making them realize their Achilles' heel. Similarly, African-American Toni Morrison, in her

Beloved (1987), Song of Solomon (1977) and Jazz (1992) wants women to move ahead on the path of life, face it boldly, take decisions to overcome any stymie that impedes their journey, and enjoy its bliss. She wants them to tread over the issues that have bugged them over the centuries like lack of parental care, rootlessness, quest for identity, the cancer of apartheid, etc. British writer, Dorris Lessing, in her The Golden Notebook (1962) and The Summer before the Dark (1973) helps her characters look at life from an angle, where they are initiated into self-analysis by intangible twists of inevitable affairs of this unending process. Laceration and discolouration do take place to unwind the psyches. Likewise, Arundhati Roy, an Indian, in her The God of Small Things (1997) guarantees no pleasure for males and no dismay for females; characters suffer and enjoy not because they deserve it but because it seems inevitable.

Female writers give vent to their perception and sensibilities through literature and its analysis brings forth the burgeoning maturity of these artists. Initially neglected and scoffed at, these writers have accepted the challenge to emerge victorious in their efforts. An analysis of their works, efforts, role and position results in feminist criticism. It seeks to uncover biased position of males and females in relation to all the aspects of society.

To reprise, through the long line from Christine de Pisan to Mary Wollstonecraft through Simone de Beauvoir, the feminist consciousness, as a philosophy of life seeks to disinter and alter the more subtle and deep seated causes of women's oppression. It is all about raising the consciousness regarding beliefs and attitudes that perpetuate women's inferior status. The apparent disparity that has slyly slithered in the works of these authors is a

direct outcome of the situation, so is the case with the changes creeping in the established standards. The rebel against accepted norms has given them the scope to come out of the shackles and decide things on their own. The translucent change in themes and styles of literary writers is the proof of the change taking place. Awareness is increased, efforts are made, but total acceptance is amiss. What is crystal clear is the marked change in their efforts that prevailed over literary, social and political arenas. It's sprawled in literary, social, economical and psychological areas. Present day feminism is a historically specific movement and consequently wedded in deeply critical style to notions of truth, justice, freedom, and equality. It is a rapidly burgeoning system of ideas in its own right. Feminism, in its current trend, seeks to destroy masculine hierarchy but not sexual dualism. *It is necessarily pro-woman, but this does not mean that it has to be anti-man.* This notion acts as a rebalancing factor between women and men of the social, economic and political power within a given society. Assuming different configurations, the present day feminism is viewed as a humanistic philosophy as it encompasses a moral vision and emerges as a holistic and life affirming philosophy.

Chapter 3

Exquisite Pattern of Interrelated Themes

Amidst the coterie of male and female writers, modern female writers have carved a niche for themselves because of their kaleidoscopic delineation of the esoteric affairs of life sans any lopsided view of the reality. Though these writers, during the course of their literary journey, have established themselves as distinguished writers, the terra firma of their works chiefly consists of universal concerns of humanity and rests mainly on the principal query of relevance of human existence in universe. Exhibiting the ineffaceable marks of human struggle, they make their characters spokesperson of this issue. Their novels show the influence of existential thinking in a very discriminating way probing all the delicacies of human affairs. The novelists achieve a remarkable feat as they choose to probe the dilemma of human beings against a realistic social backdrop, a tactic, that renders their work all the more plausible and convincing. Their works leave an indelible impression on the mind of the reader because they explore human life through a string of themes within the territory of society itself.

The reflection of the happenings in the society has remained the chief concern of the writers throughout. In consonance with their mental maturity, they harp upon the basic but prominent themes. Their rare achievement to evolve an intrinsic pattern of intertwined links among themes renders their works the due recognition. With surprising ease, they make an exquisite pattern which begins with suppression, leads to alienation and existentialism gets intensified in self-discovery and self-assertion and finally reaches its pinnacle with self realization. One theme stands more prominently than the rest of the

themes but the themes remain inextricably interrelated. All other concerns supplement the fill-ups to provide a unified touch to their works. This exquisite pattern not only increases the worth of these works but also provides the solid contents, essentially required for universal appeal. Another uniqueness that gives these works a distinct flavour is the projection of life through feminine sensitivity.

Woman though always underprivileged and kept away from the main stream of society has remained more than contented and possibly would have continued enjoying moving spirally in the restricted gamut as *the other sex* has she been not oppressed to the extremes. **Suppression** is more prominent against females because they are considered the weaker sex, based on their physical inadequacies over which they have absolutely nil control. Males face no oppression, except in rare cases. This oppression takes on different shades in consonance with the surrounding ambience; it could be physical, psychological, economic and political. These authors universalize oppression; it's not that discrimination can be the only cause of sufferings. Black may torment black, men may be foes instead of friends, ladies may cheat ladies, and social forces may or may not be there. Despite innumerable varied causes depiction of life seems quite effortless and natural. The loss of identity, the echoes of void, feeling of insecurity, oppression, etc., are not new to humanity; only the intensity has increased.

Woman, the moiety of man, though an indispensable part of life, has never been given the fair share of equation in society for varying reasons. This world, sometimes, finds it impossible to let the mankind stand on its own without the valuable contribution of woman to human life and goes to the extent of saying, "*The hand that rocks the cradle*

rules the world’ and simultaneously finds her hard to tolerate and mutters, “*Frailty, thy name is woman.*” She has been allowed to oscillate between the extremes but never allowed to stay in mainstream with the prowess to mould things. The male has treated her as a mere commodity to be seen and used but has never allowed her to act and react. She has been eulogized where she could not be criticized and excoriated where she could not be cajoled. Woman’s inferiority seems axiomatic even to great thinkers and scholars like Aristotle, Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, Machiavelli, Sigmund Freud and Manu, the lawgiver of Hindu *Dharma Shastra*. A woman seems *God’s second mistake* to Nietzsche, Aristotle finds her *an inferior man* whereas Schopenhauer feels that woman is by nature *meant to obey*. Machiavelli goes one step ahead when he stipulates, “fortune is a woman, and if you wish to master her, you must strike and beat her.” (Singh 1994 : 4) Freud fails to solve the riddle of the nature of femininity as he feels, “you are yourself the problem.” (Freud 1966 : 577) Reacting to Freud’s observation, Kate Millet indicts him for bringing in “sexual politics”. (Millet 1969 : 241) Germaine Greer also accuses Freud of double standards when she says, “which is considered normal and desirable behaviour for men is thought to be neurotic or psychotic for women”. (Greer 1972 : 92)

Though the condition of female varies according to the region, religion, caste, etc., she has been given the same nonchalant or lukewarm response for all her endeavours, which have the spark to revolutionize the society. Caught in the web of domestic affairs, she is tormented enough to blame her husband for the maltreatment meted out to her. This has also forced her to think in the line of personhood, identity, the body, and the society. Simone de Beauvoir's trenchant observation, "He is the Subject, he is the Absolute — she

is the Other," (Beauvoir 1977 : 16) sums up why she should grope for a solid self that can help her justify her own stance. Being treated as *the Other* is like existing as a mere body. Society in its cultural, economic and political customs has portrayed her as a subservient side with mercilessly mutilated self. She has been always belittled to bask in the presence of male and get etiolated in his absence.

Margaret Atwood focuses on, rape, rejection, marriage brutality, political oppression etc. In her award winning The Blind Assassin, Iris and Laura suffer various brutalities in their lives when they get deprived of the aegis of their parents. Iris is married off to Richard in a hurry and under pressure because of financial crisis her father gets in. She is slow to realize that she is merely supposed to please her husband physically, "My job was to open my legs and shut my mouth." (Atwood 2000 : 332)

Richard unfairly uses the money as well as the daughters of Norval. His attempts to win over Laura fail and he feels very uncomfortable. Given blindly to the notion of ruling over females, he indulges in one or the other trick to use her physically. After repeated failures of seduction, he finally manages to have sex with her by blackmailing her on the account of Alex Thomas. He knows about her love for Alex Thomas, a communist. Richard, who is responsible for deflowering Laura, does not let the brutality end there; when she gets pregnant by him, he uses inhuman ways to get the baby aborted. She is not allowed to see her sister but to undergo all the physical pain, humiliation, and brutality alone and unattended.

When Iris gets to know of this oppression, she wants her daughter to remain away from his clutches but he along with his sister manages to take away the daughter. As a mother, she is denied the company, love and affection of her baby in the same way in which she has been denied the company of her younger sister. Consequently, she fails to be a good sister and mother; failure on her part to save her sister and daughter makes her so guilty that life slips out of her hands. Sufferings batter her psyche and she requires a whole life to come out of that, and that too is so late that she gets deprived of all ties except her granddaughter who also cherishes strong aversion against her.

Atwood rarely spares the cozy comfort of a tranquil life to her protagonists. Her novel Bodily Harm is about the physical harm, the leading lady faces resulting in psychological laceration. Considering herself a competent modern woman, Rennie feels herself capable of handling life on her own. She is very much in love with her boyfriend who seems to her a knight riding on a white horse in shimmering outfit. When he becomes aware of the cancer flourishing inside her body, he reacts in a composed way initially, but presence of death scares him out of his spirit. He decides to call it a quit and darts with all his speed leaving her alone to suffer on her own causing her psychological cancer.

Before her trip to St. Antoine, Rennie leads a life protected by artificialities but when she reaches there she gets to know that it is not as safe as it appears to be. When she, along with her friends, is beaten inside the prison, she gets to know that if one does not get into a relationship, it is no guarantee that he or she is secured against all atrocities. City life has merely oppressed her finer sensibilities, leaving her as a calculated woman of city

realities. Here, at this place, she sees oppression in physical sense where her friend Lora is beaten so much that the natural shape of her mouth appears to be a blotted one. This first hand experience of physical oppression forces her to view life in an entirely different perspective. She is aghast to know about the oppression women can be made to undergo for fulfilling their body needs:

But he went too far, he made her take off all her clothes, not that she had many on when he found her, and then he covered her with cow-itch. That's like a nettle, it's what you do to people you really don't like a whole lot. Then he tied her to a tree in the back yard, right near an ant hill, the stinging kind. He stayed in the house, drinking rum and listening to her scream. He left her there five hours, till she was all swollen up like a balloon. (Atwood 1999 : 240)

In her yet another powerful novel Life Before Man, Atwood highlights how oppression takes its toll on the psyche of her characters. In this novel, there is a paradigmatic shift in the apparent execution of oppression. The heroine of the novel gets so scared of being oppressed that she makes an attempt to keep everything under her control. She seems confident of her own identity, independent and autonomous. "Elizabeth is obsessed with being in control." (Parker 1995) But a careful study reveals that the embedded insecurity propels her to keep things under control from the very beginning because "her scrounging childhood, hunger and unbrushed hair behind her mother's helpless pretensions" (Atwood 1982 : 160) have made her see oppression very early in its most brutal form. Her ossified sensibilities are a direct result of the psychological oppression she has undergone along with her sister in her childhood. Her mother, after being deserted by her father, fails to cope with the loss and becomes unfit to take proper care of her daughters.

Frustration leads her to hand over her babies to her sister, liberating herself to make life hell for herself and her daughters.

Under the patronage of her aunt Muriel, she gets exposed to oppression. At times, she can't discriminate between real and imaginary and senses everything as, "exaggerated, invented. But why would she invent Auntie Muriel? Anyway, Auntie Muriel was like that; Elizabeth should know, she's got the scars" (300). Recollection of the mean-spirited oppression still makes her shudder. Her aunt's meanness is the direct outcome of the oppression she herself has undergone in her youth. Her mental agility and robust outlook have never helped her convince her father to permit her to go to the college. As she has been unjustly punished for not being physically smart and captivating, she takes every liberty to victimize her sister's daughter.

To save herself and her children from oppression, Elizabeth tries to reverse the process of oppression by always keeping her needs and desires at first place. She does not feel comfortable with her husband, "Living with Nate has been like living with a huge mirror in which her flaws are magnified and distorted" (206). The unleashed tension never allows her to share the scars of her bruised psyche. Physically, she is not beaten but psychologically she is not given her due. Her husband takes the liberty to fall for the charms of other women. He, somehow, does not expect women to be smart and intelligent and when he gets in relation with Martha, he loves her for her bland personality so that she gets adjusted according to his whims.

Oppression dons different garbs in the works of different writers; Doris Lessing, in her works has highlighted another facet of it with shifting shades. Her first hand experience helps her project with unfailing accuracy. Doris Lessing's blatant admission of this brutal reality highlights unending and uninvited opportunities for suppression. "There is a whole generation of women," she has said in her biography, speaking of her mother's era, "and it was as if their lives came to a stop when they had children. Most of them got pretty neurotic - because, I think, of the contrast between what they were taught at school they were capable of being and what actually happened to them." (Lessing 1995) Her most read, admired and criticized work, The Golden Notebook, is aptly summed up as an "experimental book exploring the destructive relationships between men and women that mirror the lack of coherence and order in our fragmented, materialistic century." (Belur 2001) Lessing's leading ladies are highly intelligent and politically aware human beings for whom the battle for equal rights has already been won. There are serious conflict tensions that constantly plague her protagonists in their personal, professional and political lives.

In The Golden Notebook, Richard gets married to Marion but since she requires space for herself, he leaves her and gets married to another woman. An uneven mix of some pleasure and much pain makes Marion lose control over her life, her body and her individuality. She is obliged to renounce her autonomy as masculine hegemony usurps her self-centeredness. Initially, Marion sinks without a murmur into marriage and motherhood but disillusionment unsettles her. When she stops drinking and makes an attempt to start living for herself it ruffles Richard a lot and she gives his piece of mind to

Anna, "What Marion says about money is usually nonsense.... Marion's never given a thought to politics. Suddenly she cuts bits of the news papers..." (Lessing 1977 : 377) Marion's dilemma is therefore this superimposed self-image glimpsed through the lenses of the patriarch. Her oppression is unjustly absolute because when she falls in love with another man who wants to marry her, Richard's male ego, unable to withstand rejection, makes every attempt to retain Marion at all costs, only to neglect and abandon her again.

In contrast to Marion, Anna Wulf represents a certain kind of modern woman crushed under troubles, which have relevance beyond their immediate setting. Anna, a passionate communist, makes conscious efforts to fight against all kinds of oppression and colonialism. Even love fails her because she fails to do the accepted thing as a typical woman. Her American friend Saul dislikes her for this undaunted spirit:

'I shall probably give you pompous lectures because I enjoy it. But I won't believe in them myself. The truth is, I resent you for having written a book which was a success. And I've come to the conclusion I've always been a hypocrite, and in fact I enjoy a society where women are second-class citizens, I enjoy being boss and flattered.' (583)

Her brave efforts to raise a daughter as a divorced woman bring her no dignified adulation. Desire to maintain her individual dignity and the practical need to fit well in society lacerate her spirit. Ensuing political adventure in the Communist party shows her another side of negligence when the direct confrontations with the passionless and apolitical young relegate women mercilessly. Suffocated and shocked at the double standards, she keeps hinging in between. Her fruitless adjustments to social norms lead her to a dead alley.

Lessing's heroines, seeking to become a *free woman*, mirror the problems of those who are socially, racially or politically oppressed. The Summer before the Dark is an exploration of the nature of grief, characterized by a woman who has been fragmented to suit her different roles. Kate is a poignantly painted mother and wife whose presence is for carrying out physical, social and moral obligations of everyone in her family. The marital stage thus seals the woman into the marginality of *otherness*, and further cuts off all sources of eminence by confining her to the predictable and commonplace course of feminine experience. An inescapable condition of binding exacerbates the feeling of resentment and restlessness. At this stage, Kate has not still awakened to the painful realization that the only way to full female individualism is renouncing wifehood and motherhood as dictated by the institution of the traditional family.

Sandwiched between unending demands of *five monsters*, she finds no opportunity for her own development; when her children inadvertently make her conscious about her real worth, she finds herself as helpless as a small innocent sulking girl. Initially the lady is shown catering to the needs, tastes and sophistication of others. Her worth, even her substance, has been assaulted. She feels, because of Michael, as a doll whose sawdust is slowly trickling away. A careful consideration reveals to her, "Looking back it seemed as if she had been at everybody's beck and call, always available, always criticized, always being bled to feed these monsters" (Lessing 1975 : 87). Devotedly, she continues her services to all of them but in return she is made to feel nothing but miserable:

The virtues had turned to vices, to the nagging and bullying of other people. An unafraid young creature had been turned, through the ling, grinding process of always, always being at other people's beck and call, always having to give attention to detail, miniscule wants, demands, needs, events, crises, into an obsessed maniac. (91)

In Arundhati Roy's The God of Small Things oppression is embedded in abundance. It limns trodden condition of sensations and sensibilities in the lives of unfortunate souls. Commencing with the first generation, Pappachi and Mammachi share an age-old relationship in terms of power, because the husband feels it his birthright to beat his wife depending on his mood swings. The lady does not do anything, as she never gets to know until very late that her husband wields no authority to beat her as and when he likes. When Chacko, her son grows up, he takes the reins in his hands to decide what should be done and how. Now, instead of being dependent on her husband she becomes dependent on her son.

With the next generation, the scenario does not change much. Ammu, Chacko's sister is denied all the privileges bestowed lavishly on her brother. This visible disparity, which she finds more humiliating, continues even after her marriage. The drunkard crippling wishes to thrive on the favours likely to be won by using his wife. Quite indecently, he asks his wife to stay with another man, as it will help him save his job for which he otherwise turns out to be quite incompetent. Ammu has taken in her stride the earlier beatings but now such an indecent proposal on her husband's part forces her to end their relationship. Back home, her aunt Baby Kochamma, makes her the target of her vengeance; she grabs every opportunity to humiliate and belittle her and her innocent children. It is she who manipulates oppression to the extreme case of death. Ammu and her lover Velutha get crushed by her grace.

Velutha, the untouchable, becomes the worst victim of oppression because his skill, honesty, compassion, sincerity, concern for the welfare of others, etc., help him nowhere. The only characteristic he is recognized with is his untouchability. He has been denied the right to live a life of equality with fair sense of pride. Socially, his indulgence for manual work is a must but his indulgence for real participation for fun, pleasure and equal rights gets blurred simply because he is an untouchable. Velutha, a real gem, with all the sheen of an invaluable treasure, fails to get approval of equality from the stalwarts of society. His exit from the drama of life is also made to leave no prints, conforming to their work; he is nothing but “The God of Small Things. He left no footprints in sand, no ripples in water, no image in mirrors.” (Roy 1997 : 265)

Toni Morrison, in her works that are a blunt expression of sordid reality of African-American life, grubs up all undesirable threads with apt intensity when she talks about rape, beating, slavery, and apartheid. Gloria Steinem (1984 : 7), in her introduction to Outrageous Acts and Everyday Rebellions, states this equation very tersely, “Just as male was universal but female was limited, white was universal but black was limited.” In Song of Solomon, Macon Dead turns out to be the man who imparts indifferent treatment to his wife because she does not fit in his world of pretensions and simulations. His wife loses her sensitivity when she is denied the love, care, and affection of her husband. With smashed sensibilities, she turns to her son for attention. When oppression forces her to lose her power to think and react reasonably, she stops behaving like a normal lady. To get from others the affection she is deprived of by her husband, she starts behaving like a child. Somehow she just manages to breathe in a natural way when she is in the company

of her sister-in-law, Pilate. Otherwise, the lady is always surrounded by her false persona, which is terribly distorted. Likewise, her daughters live the life of a shade because in the outside world they are supposed to behave the way their father wishes them to and inside the house their brother remains the axis of attention. They are used as mere commodities because their wishes and welfare always take the back seat. Their education is not properly adhered to, as they will not be requiring it for doing mundane things. The scope for their liking and disliking is nil because they are not considered independent souls but the required workers to keep the house in proper order. The lady of the house fails to look after her kids properly because her oppression has ruined her reasoning power.

Pilate, who is the representative of all women when she is presented as a lady sans navel, signifies the oppression of girls from the very birth because they are born as somebody's daughters, not as individuals with a separate identity of their own. Pilate gets to feel this oppression in this physical deformity, which results in her exclusion from the mainstay of society. Pilate's granddaughter, Hagar gets victimized by her own cousin, who uses her sexually and discards her when she stops appealing to him. This leads to a bruised psyche heading for unknown darkness, "What difference did it make? He had hurt her, left her, and now she was dead-he was certain of it. He had left her. While he dreamt of flying, Hagar was dying." (Morrison 1998 : 332)

Oppression slithers in the enactment of human drama in Toni Morrison's Beloved also where the apparent colour rift forces a mother to murder her own innocent daughter so that she is saved from the talons of slavery. Sethe, a black slave, used as an animal to get

the work done for commercial purposes, is treated in the most servile way according to the mood swings of the supervising boys. She considers herself unlucky when her babies are denied their birthright to suck her milk. Repeatedly raped and milked like animals, she is shown no mercy as a mother or as a lady. She has a fair share of physical abuses; the barren tree imprinted on her back is imprinted on her psyche also. Irrevocable losses hang too heavy on her:

I got a tree on my back and a haunt in my house, and nothing in between but the daughter I am holding in my arms. ... I took one journey and I paid for the ticket, but let me tell you something, Paul D Garner; it cost too much! Do you hear me? It cost too much.... (Morrison 1997 : 15)

The frustration and humiliation grow more because males are spared this type of humiliation; the worsened thing is that these oppressed men also rule over these women. When Paul D comes in her life after her husband and sons run away to lead a life of their own, he too finds her physically unappealing and questions her integrity of personality once he gets to know of her murderous deed. White males rule over blacks and black males let the hell of frustration break loose on their females. Denise Heinze (1993 : 132) says, "blacks are affected by a double-consciousness of racial values and gender. "

Not only physical oppression but psychological oppression also affects the otherwise composed life of females. In Jazz, Toni draws attention to how psychological oppression sterilizes their sensibilities to the point of shock. Deprived of motherhood, Violet fails to feel complete. Always nice to women, he becomes sterile to his own wife; she receives Joe's irritation and withdrawal. Sauntered by various contretemps, they break apart when they fail to retain the freshness of their relationship, so steadily developed. His

indifference and uneasiness make him treat his wife “like a piece of furniture”. (Morrison 2001 : 123). He becomes insensitive enough to ditch his wife for his own pleasures.

Artificialities throb uninhibited to corrode the warmth of their relationship; Joe takes the liberty to leave his wife in lurch for another woman but when Dorcas, the girl he has been fiercely in love with, discards him for another male who is younger and smarter than him, he loses his self-control to the extent of killing her without giving this hideous act a good second thought. Since he is male, he wields the right to accept or reject a woman but when a woman exercises the same right it becomes unbearable to him. Murder, the extreme form of oppression, seems a justified act to him because he subconsciously knows that the right to dictate is still with him. The oppression he exercises is double fold: he stops taking interest in his wife and instead of helping her cope with the stress of city life indulges in the drama of indifference; secondly, he does not want to be deserted by a female because she has found somebody more appealing and takes the liberty to hurt her physically. Victimization of a female is not a big issue because it is something very common that takes place liberally, “Every week since Dorcas’ death, during the whole of January and February, a paper laid bare the bones of some broken women. Man kills wife. Eight accused of rape dismissed. Women and girl victims of. Woman commits suicide.” (74)

The next beads in the string of themes are **alienation** and **existentialism**. Things take on new shapes when they get distorted out of proportion; when oppression surmounts its peak then another thought erupts, forcing the wretched souls to feel alienated and ponder

over their very existence. Since a woman remains dependent throughout her life, any loss of relationship automatically results in “a total loss of self” (Miller 1978 : 87) and bric-a-bracs bring no solace. Her fragmented existence increases multifold the intolerable spasm of sting. The realization that she has no roots to stick to accentuates her feeling of estrangement, inferiority of position, dependence, helplessness, etc. True to the social scenario, Alison Jagger in her work Feminist Politics and Human Nature finds women alienated in “special gender-specific ways” (Jagger 1983 : 308).

Referring to alienation in the contemporary scenario, it makes all ruminates about certain unsolved mysteries of existence. Even philosophers and mystics wonder about this perennial predicament always more intriguing than ever before. This ever-shifting mystery is too rich to be explained verbally; only direct plunge into it could reveal its opulence. Frank Johnson (1973 : 3) feels, “... as a general concept, scientific term, popular expression, and cultural motif, alienation has acquired a semantic richness (and confusion) attained by few words of corresponding significance in contemporary parlance.” Writers all over the world, regardless of their age, gender, background or genre, show their concern about this inviting enigma and female writers are no exception. Acutely aware of the predicament of human beings in this subtly scrutinized universe these writers have attempted to communicate a sense of wonder at the mystery of their own existence and also try to replicate the same in their works.

Margaret Atwood in her vast territory of chatoyant concerns gives special place to the feeling of alienation triggered by enigmatic existential affairs. Her masterpiece, The Blind Assassin, takes the reader on a journey that shows the alienation of human beings

from others as well as from themselves. Here, the narrator (Iris Chase Griffen) presents life in its myriad forms ricocheting all the shades - black, white as well as grey. Of the two sisters, Laura is more bogged by questions related to life, choice, void, alienation, acceptance, etc. as soon as her mother dies. Her failure to relate to anybody accentuates devouring loneliness. On the verge of intolerance, she attempts drowning but Iris comes to her rescue. Coaxed by her sister, she promises to combat isolation but fails to feel affinity with those who know nothing about sincerity or devotion which she has for Alex Thomas, Iris and Reenie. After the death of her father, she refuses to go along with her sister and live in her house because she understands that there she would find it hard to live with those people. Her life revolves around certain people and spinning a yarn around herself, she creates a world of her own and denies entry to those who fall for false charms. When she is apprised of the news of Alex Thomas's death, the very idea of alienation scares her. Effortlessly, she befriends death the way she has decided to give life a try. She seems to wield the power to decide about her own existence:

It took Laura to get herself born into this world, said Reenie. It was like she couldn't decide whether or not it was really such a smart idea. Then she was sickly at first, and we almost lost her – I guess she was still making up her mind. But in the end she decided to give it a try, and so took a hold of life. And got some better. (84)

Dazzled by the sheen of money and charm of sophistication, Iris takes time to confront and combat aloneness. After her marriage, when she faces the vacuum and angst in her life, which Laura has faced when their mother died, disillusionment begins and she starts questioning her existence. Iris fails to share Laura's solitude because she has been making conscious efforts to understand her relevance, position and existence. And when Iris comes to know of the death of Laura, the way she reacts to the death of her sister

makes clear her alienation from her own self, "I noticed that my teeth were chattering, and that I was cold all over. I must be in shock, I decided."(2). After losing her sister, Iris does not want to lose her daughter but she has no control over ways of life and when time comes for her to react, she just fails to overcome loneliness that corrodes her life drastically:

Perhaps I should have stretched out my arms. I should have hugged her. I should have cried. Then I should have sat down with her and told her the story I'm telling you. But I didn't do that. I missed the chance, and I regret it bitterly.... I mourned her lost possibilities. More than anything, I mourned my own failure. (436-37)

In Bodily Harm, Rennie cherishes an alienated kind of anguish; she is detached not only from others but from herself as well. Oblivious of the deep understanding of life, she loiters around for a remarkable period of her life only to bask in self-imposed solitude. After her hectic life schedule that gives her no time to realize the essentialities, even her true self becomes alien to her. Having learnt well how to live with masks, she feels quite happy and fully satisfied with the artificialities of city life. Initially, alienation does not seem to work for her because Jack, her live-in partner, provides the much-required podium. But to bring her to a point where relationships break and loved ones ditch, Atwood forces her to undergo a surgery that amputates her breast. This amputation leaves less of her because her lover flees very soon leaving her shattered and sad. To feel complete, she forces the doctor to make love to her but that also results in nothingness. She is so alienated from herself that she has always treated her body as a commodity properly looked after, now she is surprised when her body has betrayed her, "She'd given her body swimming twice a week, forbidden it junk food and cigarette smoke, allowed it a normal amount of sexual release. She'd trusted it. Why then had it turned against her?" (85)

Even while doing her assignments as reporter she fails to remain true to the details and moulds it accordingly. Obsessed with surfaces and hollowness, she gives meretricious account of the latest trends in fashion and continues tampering with the facts to use it for her benefit, because her background has taught her to be sophisticatedly true to her self, “*If you can't say anything nice, don't say anything at all.*”(66) The alienation gets more acute after losing completely one of her parts though she is glad to be alive. After amputation her doctor tries to console her but she has her ulterior fears, “I don't feel human anymore, she said. I feel infested. I have bad dreams, I dream I'm full of white maggots eating away at me from the inside.” (87). Like Rennie and Jake, Doctor Daniel who is a dexterous surgeon, is also alienated from his self. In fact, completely immersed in his work, he gets so alienated from his self that he hardly remembers his own existence. Atwood's characters are typically alienated not only from society and others but also from themselves.

Exasperated by isolation to the extent of questioning their own existence, human beings become the worst victims, something very poignantly portrayed in Life Before Man. All the characters in this novel grope with uncertainty because none is there to understand and support them. Elizabeth, Nate, Chris, Lesje and Martha are so disillusioned with relationships that they hopelessly keep hopping from one to another for bond but get quite disappointed when life fails them at every corner. Nate, finding Elizabeth an impossible companion, switches over to Martha and Lesje only to realize their failure to make him feel attached and belonging. Conscious efforts on their part to get in relationships provide them with no sure means for happiness. Changing of partners, jobs and houses fails to procure any one of them the desired fulfillment, they frantically long for.

Distraught and dejected, they get diverted to their own existence, which they fail to justify to themselves. Elizabeth, the worst victim of alienation, fails to understand the enigma behind all these happenings whereas Nate keeps questioning his own credentials when failure is everywhere to receive him with open arms. Lesje thinks motherhood along with a family title can be the possible solution for her ever-haunting plight. Chris, on the other hand, when fails in his attempts to make Elizabeth realize about life, annihilates his physical existence hoping to infuse some understanding in her that could help her see things in relation to existence. Unnatural and untimely death of Chris makes Elizabeth feel alienated from her self so much that she starts treating her body merely as an object that requires timely service. She eats and takes bath “serving her body, like serving a car, ... ready for time when she may be able to use it again, inhabit it”. (85) On the same line, dejected Nate thinks of himself as “patchwork, a tin man, his heart filled with saw dust” (246). All the characters, ripped apart by social and psychological concerns and caught in the whirlpool of an ever-continuing eternity, are keenly aware of the predicament of being. The unending struggle to get rid of alienation along with the desire to exist in real terms keeps them going.

In conformance with her outlook, Doris Lessing, makes her characters detect on their own about their quandary of survival. She forces her characters to unwind themselves by getting to the core of existence but if her characters find themselves cozily contented, she snaps all those ties to let them float adrift to get to the kernel of essence. In The Summer before the Dark, negligence on the part of her family members makes Kate feel lost. Her alienation is double fold: first, she is forcibly alienated from herself and then she is

denied the security and bliss of relationships which keep the consciousness of a human intact and flourishing. After marriage, bearing and rearing children, she fails to tune in with her children, as her placid routine does not fit in their hectic schedule. Too immersed in his professional world, the husband is rarely by her side to help her out. Comparing herself to the stray cat that she has taken in she says, “That cat represents me, is myself. I am looking after this poor cat because I feel I should be looked after. But by whom? By my family, of course! Who no longer need me and who find me intolerable.” (98) Going by the standards of others, she is lost in the jumble as she loses the contact with her original self.

Despite being married she gets in physical relationship with another male to cling to somebody because that’s the only thing she has been doing throughout her life. Her physical journey with him makes her ponder over time and again about her own intentions. The same lady who used to dwell comfortably in her safely-guarded castle is exposed to the mystery of existence. Life shows its transitory and unpredictable side to her when she is sick, alone and frightened. Feeling a bit better one day, her decision to visit her house, makes her rethink about herself when the dog of the street, the neighbour, and her bosom friend with whom she has shared small sacred secrets of her life, fail to recognize her. Pleasantly shocked and surprised, she rethinks the whole scenario. Her dreams of the seal, which she carries on her back, make her think about her own existence.

In The Golden Notebook also, all the characters, like Kate, have existential concerns because here Lessing has dislocated all of them at the very beginning. All have snapped ties, unfulfilled dreams, broken hearts and unquenched thirst for something they can't name. Richard is interested in beautiful women, money, lucrative businesses and fame for himself. His concern for physical comforts makes him an arrogant man while something else is true of his son. Tom, much tense about the welfare of society and downtrodden, always feels the pangs to find out the essence of existence not only of others but himself also. His compatibility with the second wife of his father shows his desire to help those who want to move ahead and live for themselves. His parents and aunt are worried about this extreme stance of his but it never unnerves him. His extra concern for the physical existence of the downtrodden makes him an unfit even among the members of his family. The same spark that has set her mother and aunt on their expedition sets him on also, but from the very beginning his selfless attitude makes him different. More close to his existence, because he is aware of the hollowness of the entire process, he wants to put an end to his life that appears worthless to him.

His aunt, after working for the welfare of society and getting disillusioned, getting married and losing the charm of marriage, is now completely disillusioned. Since disillusionment provides no solution, she prefers to cling to all the age-old norms to save herself from getting lost but that never seems to work out. No longer individualistic and self-centered, Anna merely stands as a witness of and reflector upon the surrounding selves. Hard-pressed between conflicts of dreams and memories, she seems to befriend alienation that sets her imagination to question the relevance of her own existence.

Hence, the horizon of expectations is immediately reversed. Feeling of staleness comes over her; a sort of derisive boredom engulfs her. Tormented by guilt, responsibility and self-consciousness, she seems to head towards tumultuous anonymity. Her indulgence with many males never makes her feel attached because males want her to remain a weak and meek lady which she fails to do because she is a strong and intellectual lady.

More disillusioned with family ties, relationships, relatives, friends and acquaintances, Arundhati Roy's characters, after coming out of the crushing burden of oppression, are forced to analyze the very essence of being. Variations in the outlook give varying colours to their existence. Alienation, stemming from unfulfilled desires, strangles the real spirit of Baby Kochamma, making her a lady of calculated means. Existence seems too trivial to her and she starts questioning the existence of others, especially Ammu. Her brother Pappachi can't handle negligence and when he does not get the credit for his work, he feels alienated and dejected. Perturbed, he makes Mammachi the butt of his frustration. When Pappachi gets deprived of this right also, he stops existing. Mammachi, greatly relieved of physical abuse, feels contented to lead a passively alienated life though it spoils the life of both of her children – Ammu dies a premature death that undoes her children and Chacko fails to live a dignified life based on hard work.

Ammu and Velutha, are the worst victims. Intensely aware of this scathing sensation Ammu's disillusionment has already begun as a girl when she has been denied equal rights with her brother but it comes a full circle when her husband makes an attempt to use her physically to save his job. Social norms put her off because society has always

treated her in a rather alienated way taking her for granted. This passive acceptance makes her edgy and she starts feeling alienated. Suppression generates in her the power to question the quintessence of her being. Previously, all her attempts have been guided by various restrictions but when she has had enough of everything, she gropes for her being. This predicament and the conscious efforts to understand and come out of this predicament display her desire to exist. The opportunities for being a pampered daughter, a dotted sister and a beloved wife have always eluded her. Coming to her own subsistence as a woman who wants to be loved and pampered, she seeks solace in the arms of a paravan because he makes her exist in the most fulfilling way.

Velutha, the most unfortunate soul, works exceptionally hard to exhume his roots. The baffling situation forces him to find out the real meaning of existence in pure physical sense. Despite being a very good craftsman, he has to struggle to make people accept that like all of them, he also exists. Surrounded by a very stringent system, he makes conscious efforts to make himself as well as others feel his presence. In the society, he knows his position but the cruel disparity is unbearable on his part. He starts working as a communist to overcome the apparent alienation. Groping for the real meaning of life, he comes in contact with Ammu and her kids. As an individual entrapped in various crisscross currents, he longs to find out his relevance.

In Beloved, Sethe, an ex-slave, wishes to live life along with her kids but her husband and sons go away leaving her all alone. Miserably, she continues eating the forbidden fruit of life. Slowly and methodically, alienation keeps nibbling her spirit. Seclusion

remains Sethe's predicament, as she doesn't expect anybody to offer a hand of help. Ironically, "the black woman was deprived of a strong black man on whom she could rely for protection." (Gerda 1969 : xxiii) Societal pressures don't allow her the basic necessities, which in turn result in rebellion. Absence of the hub in her life makes the sordid condition more unbearable. Mikhail Sholokhov's words from his story "A Different Breed" (1989 : 106), "(m)orning-a pallid weakling-brought a feeble dawn from the blue-grey east", seem to highlight Sethe's bleak future. Struggling against the seemingly invincible forces to find out the mainstay of her existence, she makes every attempt to face "A bleak and minus nothing. More like absence" (270).

Utterly disillusioned and entangled in an inexorable rut, Sethe obviously chooses not to let the pockmarks make a tree on the back of her daughter as it has done on hers. Her decision about her daughter's existence brings out the acute pangs of existentialism; the question of *to be or not to be* does not arise at all; the only concern that remains is *not to be*. Throughout her life she keeps questioning the essence of existence, as it endows her with zilch relief from ever-throbbing sorrows. She justifies her achievements quite convincingly, "There's nothing to rub now and no reason to. Nothing left". (272)

Life bogs down her daughter Denver also, but her conscious efforts to stand by herself help her combat gory estrangement. Denver can't help crying when she finds herself isolated from all and her anguished soul outpours her desire to be a part of society. The pain of anguish is very finely tuned when she utters:

“I can’t no more. I can’t no more.”

“Can’t what? What can’t you?”

“I can’t live here. I don’t know where to go or what to do, but I can’t live here. Nobody speaks to us. Nobody comes by. Boys don’t like me. Girls don’t either.” (14)

In her yet another bewitching novel Song of Solomon, Toni Morrison lets the shooting pain of loneliness intrigue her characters to wonder about their existence. Urgently in need of an explanation for his being, Milkman Dead continues moving spirally in the arena of alienation. Nonplussed by the intricacies of the feeling of stagnation and “finding peace nowhere and in nothing” (127) he questions everybody. Active agony keeps torturing him and he simply blurs out, “My name is Macon, remember? I’m already Dead.”(118) Uneasiness coupled with the sense of isolation sets him on his journey to find out the meaning of his own existence. The jolt “(y)ou by yourself ain’t nobody” (67) triggers him on. Shooting pain of his directionless existence makes him wonder about his own relevance to the eternity. His mother, sister, beloved, aunt, father and his friends all seem to be engulfed by seclusion and his father gives his point of view regarding existence but nothing seems to work out.

It’s not the case of Milkman Dead only, Pilate also makes choices to have the bite of the fruit of life exuding acrid taste of absurdity. Through her, Toni Morrison delineates the throbbing and thriving spasms of settled solitude. The very sense of *belongingness* causes her the concern of her life that stands like an apparition face to face, always demanding some sort of answer to the befuddling queries. Loss of a navel that could provide the testimony of her *belonging* to something triggers her to obviate any unpleasant confrontation by making a choice of going against the rules of society. Her existential

angst is so strong that she prefers to lead an anonymous and outcast life but dares not reveal the secret of her missing navel. Her plan to get the baby outside wedlock without disclosing her secret of rootlessness succeeds and she refuses to get married because of the apprehension of losing her identity 'all on account of the fact that she had no navel', the first and foremost proof of belonging.

Binding of belonging gives the required impetus to beings for remaining attached to their roots. Toni Morrison projects the concept of the value of *rooted* personality very prominently with the meticulous touch of her skill and likewise Jazz is no exception. Morrison weaves the gossamer pattern of Joe Trace and Violet's life "where blasé thing takes place". (7) Their perfect marital bliss evaporates at the mere touch of cold reality when they realize the rift drifting them apart. Living at a place where "the rooms are like the empty birdcages wrapped in cloth" (11) isolation grabs them, distorts their outlook towards each other and carries them to the point where they become strangers once again. Caught in a world where "(n)obody says it's pretty here; nobody says it's easy either", (8) both grope for the meaning which could bind them to something substantial.

To relish the sense of belonging once again, Violet restricts herself to her alienation. Joe, instead of sulking in seclusion, gets in another relationship to stay close to *life*. Dorcas seems to fill in the void but her abrupt retreat to get in a relationship that will help her groom a personality of her own, leaves Joe thunderstruck. On the other hand, harassed by things over which she has no control, Violet requires a place where she could sit. Utterly bogged down by alienation she thinks it a great relief to vanish away, "All my troubles be

over if I could get my body sick stead of my head.” (84) Repeatedly, she hovers over others to make her feel attached in some way or another because she fails to hold herself alone. Similarly jealous and jolted, Joe murders Dorcas as her withdrawal seems to thrust him towards negation, of which he is horribly terrified.

Self-discovery, another prominent theme gets reflected in literature as well by a galaxy of outstanding writers through out the globe. Throughout their works, these female writers focus their attention on the inner action and try to delineate the life lived within by their characters. Consequently, the arena in their works is not the outer world but the inner one. Therefore, their novels essentially concentrate on the maladies of contemporary life characterized by anxiety, alienation, sense of loss, etc. leading to search for self. Human beings have strived hard to gauge their position, to make a critical analysis of the established views of their self, and to reclaim their selfhood and reconceptualize their self. “The topic of the self has long been salient in feminist philosophy, for it is pivotal to questions about personhood, identity, the body, and agency that feminism must address.” (Meyers 2004) Sans any moorings they find themselves caught in the flux of life; the buffet that they alone stands nowhere has stunned them and the quest for identity is the resultant theme of this deadening realization of their alienation. Frenetically, they grope for reality and in their madness they “give birth to... themselves anew” (Chesler 1972 : 28).

The dilemma of physical existence gets accentuated when after getting through the stage of physical being human beings get curious to know about their worth. All of them are

forced to undergo this stage of self-discovery because this stage is intrinsic to inch towards self-assertion and self-realization. Oppression forces them to find about their existence and their existential urge forces them to know about themselves. Search for self begins when the people close to them fail to consider them as human beings, when society sets norms which they fail to conform to, and brutal buffets of life snap all those ties which provide them with much required sense of security. An arduous attempt to liberate females from the psychology of liberation has resulted in considerable effect. Talking about female writers, Wendy Martin feels that a woman should highlight positive sense of feminine identity by portraying women who are 'self-actualizing, whose identities are not dependent on men.'

These female writers have always shown interest in exploring the ulterior motives of their characters while they undertake the journey of their lives. They wish their characters to undertake the journey of life, which is the true picture of life, because once born, life is inevitable for one and all. They set the dilemmas and the conflicts against the kaleidoscopic backdrop of life. Feeling compressed and strangled, uneasy souls always question their selves. Brutalities of society, patriarchy, apartheid, capitalism, and unforeseen powers contribute to the unraveling of self.

Margaret Atwood in her characters infuses alienation to such an extent that they are left with no choice but to find out the eventual certainty. The ties to which they have been attached are either weak or completely amiss. In her Life Before Man, she does not allow the bliss of wedded life to Elizabeth and Nate because had it been so they would have never made an attempt to go outside this circle to find out their selves. In the initial stage

of their married life, there seems to be no problem and both of them appear to be much in love. But when the rift becomes apparently visible, they prefer to switch on to the other males and females. Elizabeth finds solace in the company of Chris while Nate moves towards Lesje. Chris makes Elizabeth feel so comfortable in his company that she shares all the details of her gory past with him which she has never confided in Nate. But he wants her to take off all the masks, which she has put on with the passage of time. She becomes relaxed to stay in that relationship but Chris, after making several unsuccessful attempts to stay with her, shoots himself. He shoots his head off, as this has been the part for which Elizabeth used to like and admire him. Sensing the complacency that hinders the process of self-identity of Elizabeth, Atwood makes Chris leave her alone. His suicide again leaves her alone with nobody by her side to cling to:

“I don’t know how I should live. I don’t know how anyone should live. All I know is how I do live. I live like a peeled snail. And that’s no way to make money.... I want the shell back, it took me long enough to make. You’ve got it with you wherever you are. You were good at removing. I want a shell like a sequined dress, made of silver nickels and dimes and dollars overlapping like the scales of an armadillo. Armored dildo. Impermeable; like a French raincoat” (11)

Again, she sets on the spree to find her wholeness, which she has hitherto failed to achieve. Alienated, she is forced to hinge on her dilapidated relationship with Nate because the fear of being deserted scares her much. She succeeds to separate Nate from Lesje but he switches over to another woman. Dejected and depressed, she makes conscious efforts to snatch him back because his presence makes her feel secure in one or another way. But when she senses his reluctance she stalks them endlessly. To fill in the void in her life she hatches a plan to tempt William, the boyfriend of Lesje but she gets neither satisfaction nor pleasure. Even fulfillment of the sense of revenge betrays her, as

something unfathomable, which she fails to trace, still makes her uneasy. Leaving him there and then, she moves ahead to find out the root cause of this discomfort. Nate also, keeps shifting from one woman to another one but bliss eludes him everywhere.

When he falls in love with Lesje, she seems to him the saviour of his soul. Lesje also expects to get pregnant but her plans fail her. After going through various ups and downs, their relationship fails because both fail to see its real essence. Dissatisfied and disgruntled, they keep moving in circles and are amazed to find themselves arriving at the same point again and again. Their spiral movement seems to restrict them to a dead alley as they have narrowed down the predetermined purpose of reality. Sapped, they fail to think beyond the usual rut of mundane affairs. Nate somehow seems to reach near this ultimate end of self-identity after failing to break away from Elizabeth. Atwood forces her characters to move from the periphery to the hub of the real essence, to which some don't succeed, some partially succeed but some get to the core of it effortlessly.

In Bodily Harm, seeking satisfaction in nothing, Rennie treads ahead. Before her trip to St. Antoine, she has lived an alienated life, being a traitor to her real self. She has not considered herself a part of the whole but considered her fragmentary life the whole. She takes time to realize that it is normal to have ups and downs in one's life. Movement is very apparent in the novel; the bodily harm done to her helps her realize what harm she has done to herself otherwise. Her mental anguish clears the fog in her mind and attitude. The vicious forces inside her body are symbolic of the forces that are prevalent in the outside world. The trauma of letting a part of one's body go and exist without it signifies

that human beings may live even in fragments. The acceptance on the part of human beings of the presence of evil makes life more real. Though Rennie does not find the detached attitude of city life likeable, she herself has immersed this attitude in her. Her respectably maintained distance with others works only when everything goes right but seems to fail when situations demand urgency on her part. When Paul comes in her life, he shows her the real side of life. When he makes love to her and kisses the scars of stitches, she feels elated because her spirit seems to enter her body again. Now she understands, "what mattered was the relationship. A good relationship: that was what she and Jake were supposed to have." (109) Her outlook towards life assumes a different perspective when she sees life through the practical wisdom of Paul. Reality stuns her completely after going through the grotesque side of it on St. Antoine island.

Three different people, the dumb and deaf man and her friends Jocasta and Lora, work as her doppelganger to make her feel complete. Rennie's relationship with her friend Jocasta reveals that she is the complementary part of her self. Jocasta seems to genuinely care for her friend whereas Rennie reflects just the opposite of it. Like Jocasta, Lora also reflects the other side of Rennie's personality. When compared with Rennie, Lora appears tough, perceptive and affable. Atwood indicates that she is the shadow of Rennie; Lora yearns for acceptance and tries to befriend Rennie who avoids her completely. Open and honest Lora repeatedly warns her against the wily ways of the world. She is not interested in asserting the power but longs only for acceptance. Finally, she comes back illuminated that the self also needs acceptance.

The Blind Assassin, a masterpiece, which has made Atwood a household name, is rich in multiple dimensions. Laura, the sister of the narrator, is the most sublime soul. In fact, Laura starts her journey immediately after her mother's death when she is faced with alienation, anxiety and ambivalence. Though it's quite painful for her to come to terms with life after the death of her mother; her constant demands which never get fulfilled shatter her more, only to make her grope for an excuse that could justify everything. Gradually, she acquires the perception of understanding people in a better way and starts living in her own world because the norms of society stop existing for her. Atwood even allows her characters to discard the norms to discover their selves. She leads a life that is convincing to her, not a life that others find suitable for her. She develops an attitude to dwell in a domain of her own:

There are other people around, sitting on the grass or lying on it, propped on one elbow – other picnickers, in their pale summer clothing. It's all very proper. Nevertheless she feels that the two of them are alone; as if the apple tree they're sitting under is not a tree but a tent; as if there's a line drawn around them with chalk. Inside this line, they're invisible. (10)

Irrevocable losses at the stage, where she requires them the most, make her more conscious regarding her self. Her impervious territory does not allow those who have not experienced distancing, angst and emptiness. Her father's death pushes her ahead on the path of self-discovery. Richard and his sister Winifred succeed in their plan to hurt her but they fail to exercise any power over her. Richard physically assaults her on the account of Alex Thomas's safety. Her love for Alex Thomas, somehow, keeps her going but his death flusters her and she commits suicide. When Iris comes to know of her death she understands why she has committed suicide, "She was washing her hands of me. Of all of us."(2) She is gone, "Drowned, but shining."(5).

Iris presents a contrast to her sister. Initially Iris finds Winifred and Richard very refined and cultured and tries to adopt their etiquettes only to realize later that there is nothing inside this hollowness. Her journey begins after her marriage. Iris is contented to decide about her mode of life, “But long ago I made a choice.... I prefer to be upright and contained”. (43) When she faces the angst in her life, which Laura has faced when their mother died, she starts getting disillusioned. When she thinks about her posed pretensions, she wonders why she has opted for such an alternative, “How could be I so ignorant? She thinks so stupid, so unseeing, so given over to carelessness. But without such ignorance, such carelessness, how could we live?” (517) Hence, by setting both Laura and Iris on a search for meaning amidst chaos caused by the conflicting and complex human relations, Atwood seems to suggest that unless human beings suffer themselves they are not able to understand who and what exactly they are.

It’s not the case with The Blind Assassin only; she reflects the same kind of attitude in all other works as well. Sushila Singh, a critic, also shares a similar view about her characters as she feels:

Margaret Atwood discovers the self of woman through the psychic journey into one’s own interior.... Therefore, when Atwood’s narrator goes to the wilderness, it is not so much a flight from society as a symbolic journey into her own psyche, an endeavour to come to terms with one’s own self.” (Singh 1997: 150)

Doris Lessing, herself getting to unearth her self, always prods her characters to stand in isolation to find out their real selves. The Summer before the Dark, a woman’s journey into self-knowledge, concerns a woman whose marriage has disintegrated and whose life

is suddenly hollow, without meaning. When Kate's husband suggests her to take a job to help one of his business friends, she embarks on a new journey to find out her worth and she immediately "knew that she was already blooming, expanding, enlarging". (52) Lessing forces Kate to embark on a spatial voyage to find her real self that might make her emerge as a more enlightened soul. Deeply hurt by her kids and the pleasant indifference of her husband and "(w)ith not so much as a room of her own", (22) she plunges into various workouts, with every event finding a total new side of her personality. Kate, the central character, achieves a kind of enlightenment through what doctors would describe as a breakdown. Getting in professional world, she initially is surprised for being praised for the meticulous execution of her work, something she has done erstwhile also without any acknowledgement. In the end, she seems determined to be specific about "my area of choice... well, it's narrowed down to how I do my hair? Isn't that extraordinary?"(231)

Getting in relationship with another male doesn't bring in any exceptional revelation; it only makes her feel like a mother to the ailing fellow. Finding herself moving nowhere, she changes the track of her journey. Her return to the same city, without her husband and kids, brings in an entirely new feel of life. In isolation, she initially feels uneasy and unsure of herself, but she takes chances to go by her choices. Her choices reveal to her a new side of her personality. The power of decision making, irrespective of right or wrong, infuses more confidence in her. She realizes her worth as an individual, utterly shorn of relations and social bindings. Her physical transformation marks her mental change, bringing out latent contents of understanding. Her visit to her home without her

usual makeup unfolds another side of life when her best friend fails to recognize her and other acquaintances find her an undesirable person. Her place becomes clear to her; Lessing's device of making her physically ill seems to hint at the elusive surety of human body also. The process of self-discovery seems to reach its pinnacle when she fails to elicit response from those people who have known her well. Like the seal of her dreams, she has been urgently in need of water to save her self, "It moaned, and she knew she had to get it to water." (32)

Doris, in her iconoclastic novel The Golden Notebook, uproots her characters at the very onset to push them forward to find out their real selves. The dominant theme of The Golden Notebook is the fragmentation of life and consciousness, and its excruciating consequences. It is a story of an artist, Anna Wulf, and her loss of creative power. Anna Wulf, sandwiched between opposing elements within an individual's own personality, is struggling with crises in her domestic and political life. The conflict between the individual conscience and the collective good goads her to grope for her real side. Anna Wulf, the protagonist, is a novelist who experiences alienation and fragmentation of her consciousness in the disintegrated world. The novel consists of four notebooks, which symbolize the four aspects of Anna Wulf. A writer caught in a personal and artistic crisis, sees her life compartmentalized into various roles - woman, lover, writer, and political activist. Her diaries are written in different coloured notebooks, each corresponding to a different part of herself. Anna Wulf's different notebooks contain her different selves through time, viewed from different angles. Anna eventually suffers a mental breakdown

and it is only through this disintegration that she is able to discover a new 'wholeness' which she writes. Anna Wulf in The Golden Notebook laments:

I can't remember, it's all gone. And I get exasperated trying to remember --
- it's like wrestling with an obstinate other self who insists on its own kind of privacy. Yet it's all there in my brain if only I could get at it. I am appalled at how much I didn't notice, living inside the subjective highly-coloured mist. How do I know that what I 'remember' was what was important? What I remember was chosen by Anna, of twenty years ago. I don't know what this Anna of now would choose. (139)

The novel thus exemplifies the fragmentation of Anna's mind and personality, the problem of her blocked creativity, and the final psychic integration that restores the creative power in the protagonist. The fifth notebook called the "Golden notebook" is about the successful self-healing from fragmentation and blocked creativity, and this book enables Anna Wulf, the writer to begin her new book called "Free Women". She moves towards individualism and the finding of self through her self-representational writing.

An extra effort of Arundhati Roy to let her character move ahead in her magnum opus The God of Small Things makes her a writer to be praised and lauded. Mercilessly mutilated, her characters feel fidgety to unravel the enigma of self. Tattered by personal frustrations, her characters make extra efforts to relate themselves to some point which could make them feel secure and attached; the characters take different paths, use different means, get different treatments and ultimately reach different stages. Arundhati gives liberty to each of her characters to proceed but allows them varied levels of achievement keeping in mind their respective inputs. Chacko, Margaret, Pappachi, Baby

Kochamma, and Rahel don't move much on the path of self-discovery because they remain bound more by the standards of society than by the mores of self. Estha and Mammachi seem to accept their position as it comes to them, probably reflecting higher sense of acceptance. The worst victims, Ammu and Velutha, are highly conscious of disparity meted out to them from the very beginning. Finding herself an uncared daughter, she gets in a hasty marriage to find her real self; finding herself an unloved wife, she drifts back to her parents quite disheartened and lost; finding herself an unwanted burden she turns towards Velutha, who makes her feel attached and complete. Self gets explored but not without relentless and excruciating pain.

Her soul mate Velutha, a paravan, struggles to get a foothold in the society to make himself acceptable on the basis of his talent and working capabilities. An attempt on his part to work for the welfare of the downtrodden gives him a sense of satisfaction because he finds himself useful for the welfare of others. When he comes in contact with Ammu and her kids, he feels the change that makes him uneasy. Despite his abhorrence for the upper class, he gets drawn towards her. The unlimited shower of love from Ammu drenches his parched soul. In relation to Ammu and her kids he knows he belongs but that does not bear the stamp of authority. Self here gets guided not only by inner forces but innumerable social concerns and multitudinous unforeseen powers. Ammu too finds the peace of soul in the arms of an untouchable; reacting to the needs of her body, she finds a way to satisfy her soul. But this self-attainment is not allowed for a considerable period of time. As soon as the first step is taken, other forces come in to move beyond physical understanding of the body. Extra hurdles are set to test the stamina of the

wandering souls. The drama of much pain prepares them to see every facet of life in its cruelty. Life reveals itself in layers through various characters, every time something unexpected and undesired springs forth to make them more disillusioned and dissatisfied. Death seems to provide much required relief to the poor souls. The drama of self-discovery includes acceptance of death along with countless heterogeneous elements.

Toni Morrison, in her works of human concerns against societal setup, makes her characters find out the strings of self, which make them realize their relatedness. Sethe, Beloved, Milkman Dead, Denver, Pilate, Macon Dead, Joe Violet, and Dorcas are exposed to the atrocities of every possible type to set on the voyage for self, resulting in singular experiences. In Beloved, Sethe married off and blessed with children, is denied the basic right of freedom. Freshly freed of the clutches of slavery, life does not mean much beyond freedom; real unscrambling begins when she fails to know what should be done with the newly acquired liberty, "Freeing yourself was one thing; claiming ownership of that freed self was another". (95) Here, Toni seems to make her characters accept that the world free of slavery is not free of other constraints. She allows them the liberty to move at their own pace to reach their destinations.

Unable to understand and bear the undeserved pandemonium, Sethe wants to find out her position in the whole scenario. As long as she takes it passively, she fails to understand anything except that her slavery is the root cause of her sufferings. Nothing seems to catch her attention, "for the sadness was at her center, the desolated center where the self that was no self made its home." (140) When she has had enough of this humiliation,

hatred, and helplessness, she embarks on a journey to find out her relevance. The desire to find her real self forces her to react. When she reacts she finds her position more contrite and complex. Initially, she fails to understand the crux of everything but gradually she learns that like an individual she has to find her real self. The bindings, which have made her feel secure, are broken off by and by to leave her alone and perplexed, "Whatever is going on outside my door ain't for me. The world is in this room. This here's all there is and all there needs to be" (183)

Similarly, Denver fails to find out her relevance unless she is forced to react and discover her potential, "it was a new thought, having a self to look out for and preserve." (252) Distraught by the pitiable condition of her mother, she becomes determined to save her mother and in the process "At least she had stepped out the door" (256). After being rescued by Denver, Sethe still wonders, "will the parts hold?" (272) Paul D, Denver and Sethe are not whole selves but splintered ones who bank on one another to find out the relatedness. Paul D helps Sethe out, when he talks about their past which has rusted their present. "Sethe," he says, "me and you, we got more yesterday than anybody. We need some kind of tomorrow." (273)

In Song of Solomon, the characters psychologically evolve as an aftermath of their inner growth or lack of it. Milkman Dead's quest for his identity is the governing strand; the major obstacle he faces is the deadening effect of his father's need to own maximum property. A weakling, showered with undiluted attention, lives the limbo life of a zombie, always dangling in-between. He finds himself a misfit, "The deformity was mostly in his

mind. Mostly, but not completely....” (62) Various vicissitudes cast him in the proper shape to initiate his peregrination. This selfish, callous and insensitive boy is shaken out of foolish reveries by her aunt and his friend. Working as a bridge, Pilate, who has the guts to penetrate beyond outward appearance or material things, forces Milkman to overcome “the zero image” (Gerald 1970 : 350) by taking advantage of his rich past and accepting the challenge of the future. His friend Guitar also pushes him hard:

“What good is a man’s life if he can’t even choose what to die for?”

“*Nobody can choose what to die for.*”

“*Yes you can, and if you can’t you can damn well try to.*” (223)

Inquisitions gradually goad him to the threshold of self, resulting in tickling of consciousness. To get moulded properly, first he undoes himself and that’s the beginning of his journey. White peacock, symbolizing both the race and the wealth of the ruling class, makes him uneasy enough to shed his usual image and acquire a substantial one. To his own consternation, “he had stopped evading things, sliding through, over, and around difficulties.” (271) Having learned to respect the natural world more than the material world, Milkman finds himself capable of *really laughing*. Amidst his people, he is quick to learn that his money is not going to help him; he can neither show nor receive gratitude with money. Shalimar teaches him the strength of human relationships and exposes him to a way of life he has never seen before, “He felt a self inside emerge, a clean-lined definite self.” (184)

Pilate belongs to a different world, as she is the one who misses even a navel to boast of her roots. Acutely aware of her alienated self, she goes on a spree to create her own niche

by following her instincts. To keep herself feel attached she retains the bones of her dead father. Her chutzpah to get a child outside wedlock does not seem to bother her much; what seems to perturb her is the loss of navel in her body. Society with its artificial flavours hardly exists for her because bigger concerns occupy her thinking:

hampered by huge ignorances, ...not... unintelligent ... she had learned and began at Zero... she tackled the problem of trying to decide how she wanted to live and what was valuable to her. When I am happy and when am I sad and what is the difference? What do I need to know to stay alive? What is true in the world? (149)

Jazz is about Joe Trace, a 50 year old sample-case beauty products salesperson and his wife, Violet, a hairdresser. Caught in the whirlpool of life, both are first deprived of their much-felt bonding. Joe makes a choice to fall in love with another girl but gets stultified when gets rejected for another male. Violet, neglected and hurt, is more puzzled to find out how less she knows her husband. Both seem to get shaken by the turns of events in their lives. The process of finding their selves first shocks them and then shatters them. Surrounded by the shards of cruel reality, they awaken to the reality facing them. Deprived of the surety of their relationship, they are forced to find their place in society and in each-other's lives. The journey is quite poignant for both of them because both get alienated to feel the cramps of life. The ever-widening rift makes both of them uneasy, brooding over innumerable possibilities. Since Toni's canvas is very wide, she does not allow her characters peace of mind unless they come in close contact with death also and then forces them to brood over life, which may lead to death on its own.

Toni attempts to show how Violet turns violent and how she recovers her lost self by destroying the violence in her self. To know more about the girl, Violet goes out in search

of Dorcas' past. As Violet starts her journey in the past she learns more and more about Dorcas and she also learns to associate herself with her. Sometimes, Violet wonders whether Dorcas is the woman who took her man or the daughter who fled her womb. Violet's identification of self with black woman like Dorcas gradually leads her to discover the real *me*. She becomes one whole again instead of two halves of a whole. Violet reaches an end of her pilgrimage in discovering her self:

Busy, they were, busy being original, complicated, changeable-human, I guess you'd say, while I was the predictable one, confused in my solitude into arrogance, thinking my space, my view was the only one that was or that mattered. I got so aroused while meddling, while finger-shaping, I overreached and missed the obvious. ... I dismissed what went on in heart-pockets closed to me. (220-221)

Another theme that adds a unique colour to the works of these female writers is **self-assertion**. The right to assert has always been the males but since in these works, females cherish central position, they flaunt it with authority and grace. Awareness of the burdens and monotony of life, deprivation of rights have not only jostled her but also set her afire. Perpetual attempts on her part have helped her gatecrash into the arena of freedom. Innocently new to the unknown and unexplored world, though at the outset she did not know what to do with her newly acquired freedom yet she has taken the odyssey of life to know its kernel. Though she has paid a heavy price for her foray, she has sprawled in all the walks of life. Karen Horney (1967 : 231) subscribes to the same thought when he posits, "Men have certain fixed ideologies concerning the nature of woman, that woman is innately weak, emotional, enjoys dependence, is limited in capacities for work, - even

that woman is masochistic by nature.” With the passage of time, the desire for self-assertion has become strong in the woman of today.

The same spirit has become perceptible into the works of modern female writers, throughout the globe. Arundhati Roy, Doris Lessing, Margaret Atwood and Toni Morrison are no exception. This undaunted spirit gets reflected in the works of these most renowned authors of the world when the leading lady in the works of these writers refuses to be subdued by the stringent social factors. She has become audacious enough to face the odds of life provided she takes on the path she feels may lead her to the understanding of the affairs of an enigma called *life*. Her impervious fortitude to confront males, social rules and unforeseen powers helps her to comprehend herself in a better perspective. Though sometimes she suffers tremendously for her self-assertion, she is willing to take the world in her stride as it enables her to realize her worth not as a female but as a human being who has the right to live life on her own.

In her works, Atwood explores how people use power in personal relationships, much as they do in business or political relationships. In The Blind Assassin Laura lives in her own world, leading a life that is convincing to her. She behaves the way she finds natural to her. She has displayed her assertion since her childhood by asking for favours. In fact, her pestering demands made Iris lose her temper sometimes when she used to fail to comply with the demands of Laura but nothing deters Laura from demanding. Her mother’s death makes her a silent but strong asserter. Remaining true to her self, she establishes her superiority over all the characters in the novel. Probably Margaret Atwood

wishes to convey through Laura that by remaining true to one's self one can assert one's uniqueness in a better light. At last, when she is apprised of the news of Alex Thomas's death, to free herself from the shackles of life she commits suicide to assert her willingness to choose.

Richard asserts himself when he manages to snatch both the property as well as the daughter of Norval. Laura goads her sister to assert her individuality when she tries to convince her sister not to get into an unwanted relationship but Iris buckles away. Under the aura of awe, Iris' nod to marry Richard awakens her about the lack of assertion in her. Her assertion erupts after her marriage when she starts getting disillusioned about the whole scenario. She requires time to come out of her cozy carapace, as her amiable disposition doesn't help her get the required due and her timidity doesn't allow her to rebel. Circumstances clubbed with unjustified inflictions snub her to stand for her interests. Iris takes time to become bold enough to challenge their authority. Her failure to protect her sister jostles her to become aware of her position.

Iris, with the passage of time becomes bold enough to pay Richard and Winifred in their coin. She gets into a relation with Alex, bears his daughter, and never lets them have the smell of her faithlessness. Then, she dares to move out of a rotten relationship. Her walkout spoils Richard's chance of winning in the election. When Winifred comes to settle the terms with her, she exercises her power for the first time and by being true to her self she gets the satisfaction that Laura has always had in her life.

Atwood's protagonists, deeply sentient of their rights, struggle to uphold their right along with their responsibility. In Bodily Harm, Rennie, a free-lance journalist, gives an idea about her assertion at the very beginning by being chary in her relationships. Her smug confidence makes her believe in open option rather than fall for the shackles of marriage. Unlike her self-effacing mother, her plunge into relationships is for pleasure and body needs. Her choice of breaking away from the oppression of self-abnegation, shows her assertion to lead a life of freedom where there are no fetters to bind and distort her individuality. Though her amputation shakes her faith in her beliefs, she emerges stronger by making every possible way to retain her aura. Finding herself caught in an unwanted relationship, she does not allow herself to be used as a mere commodity. Her undaunted spirit dares to bring an end to that relationship which she requires so urgently to keep herself intact.

Males, values, work, and morals give her the right to exercise her power over others. Males are required for physical and psychological needs; Rennie's desires and whims decide about the advent and departure of males in her life which she wants to live to the full. Sacrificing her life by serving others in subjugation never appeals to Rennie as she knows that these things will obliterate her complete persona somewhere in the usual rut, "I didn't want to have a family or be anyone's mother, ever; I had none of those ambitions. I didn't want to own any objects to inherit any. I didn't want to cope. I didn't want to deteriorate." (57) Accolades won at the cost of individuality fail to hold a charm for this woman who never minds tampering things for her benefit. Her economic independence further bolsters her stand and stance.

Protagonists of Atwood never fail to flaunt their assertion as she allows them to breathe freely and enjoy their status. In Life Before Man, Elizabeth, blessed with an incorrigible spirit, rarely allows anybody to use her unfairly when she is grown up. In fact, her childhood experiences sharpen her senses to be more alert about her claim. When her husband starts neglecting her, she does not allow him the right to deject her like an unwanted item; instead she keeps a close watch on his activities to react at the appropriate time to bring him back to his senses. Her failure to keep her husband away from the lure of other females does not deter her from asking her husband to leave the house. Even after his departure, she makes it a point to retain him as the father for her children which she successfully does. With her strengths and limitations, she turns to Chris, who makes her feel complete as a woman but she does not bind herself in another relationship beyond a certain point. Her physical and psychological needs get properly pruned to make her feel happy and contented resulting in total disregard for social tags.

When her husband strays into various relationships, she makes it a point to make the other feel that she *owns* him and calls Nate away on various emergencies. Her consistent attempts to keep Nate in check never fail her as she remains extra cautious to flaunt her presence at the right time to make others feel duly diminished. All women are weeded out of her husband's life by her strong desire to be the lady of the ceremony. As a mother, her fierce attempts not to let her daughters get deprived of their father's love, give her extra power to continue. Her secret desire to live life with Nate in old age hooks her to retain him at all cost which she invariably succeeds to do.

Doris Lessing allows full space to her heroines to assert their power. In The Golden Notebook, the leading lady of the novel, gets into communism because she wants to, writes books because that gives her money and mirth, gets married because she considers it a necessity, kicks her husband out when he fails her and gets into various relationships because she wants to. No explanation is given at any point of time to justify her acts. Financial independence helps her face the atrocities of society and it also makes her feel secure. When she gets in any professional and personal relationship she wants to make it clear that her likings and preferences should be adhered to. Lessing's free woman believes in sex that is essentially emotional for her but the stance of males makes her look at its perverse side too. Initial realization is always there in her women who are effectually independent and intelligent while their counterparts are mostly disoriented dreamers. The angry young woman, standing upright and usually mistaken for a cynical figure, fights for justice against all odds.

When Molly smells poor marital compatibility, instead of bearing the temperamental outbursts of her husband, she leaves him and nurtures no grudges. Similarly, the second wife of Richard prefers to walk out of a decaying and suffocating relationship. When she notices Richard has stopped taking interest in her, she falls in love with another man who wants to marry her but Richard tries every possible way not to let her marry the other person. After some time, when negligence crops up again, she first gives herself to drinking, but very soon, with the help of her stepson, she makes up her mind to leave him and the kids. She does not discard her children but when oppression starts smothering her she retaliates to have her space back. She does not hesitate to leave a man who does not

suit her. Her reaction conveys the message that she does not consider him fit for herself. For divorce also she makes him plead.

The greatest deed on the part of Anna is her temperamental habit of writing, a practice considered far below the intelligence level of females. Like Sybylla of My Brilliant Career, she keeps this passion a sacred right of hers, "I had a secret delight (writing the novel). I ceased to talk about it even to Pa." (Franklin 1979 : 37) Similarly, Anna does not want anybody to doubt her credential as an author. In fact, she gets four different diaries where she pens down her experiences and thoughts. When the American wants her to give him that diary of hers she is reluctant because she has specific attachment to her work, which helps her feel complete. In professional world also she goes by her standards. When one major company wants to buy her novel for making a movie she wants to find out whether they will be staying close to her analysis or not. When they suggest major changes she flatly refuses and despite their repeated attempts, refuses to give way. This is her assertion to maintain her dignity as a writer who wields every right to justify her work.

In The Summer before the Dark, Kate works quite strenuously to assert her individuality simply because of her extreme pliability as a mother and wife. Forced by circumstances to move out in the world, she gets instant acclaim for her ability to do her job in a rather fair way. New to appreciation she unfolds herself gradually because of her apprehensions about the ways of the world. Caught in the web of professional life she unconsciously starts asserting her likings when she goes to buy herself new dresses. After the beginning,

she never looks back, except rarely and that too, to notice the sea of change. Her indulgence with another male reflects neither guilt nor pleasure but she goes through it all simply because she wants to overcome her dullness so prominently prevailed in her life. Her desultory attempts to work, go on a journey, get another male in her life, remain alone, get weird hairdo, etc. are direct outcome of her assertion to give herself an independent place completely shorn of duties and responsibilities towards others, “But why should she not announce to the family that she was going to change, was in the process of changing?” (92)

Her mental determination to save the seal, which she sees in her dreams, is another example of her steadfastness. Despite her hardships she manages to save that Seal, which she unconsciously thinks, represents her. Her consciousness regarding the wounds and pain of that animal is her newly awakened consciousness regarding her own wounds and pain which she has suffered so long. The happiness she feels when she is able to restore the seal to the water is immense because unconsciously she has given herself the independence, vitality and individuality that have got lost somewhere in her married life. When the time is there for her to return home she knows her preferences and is determined to cherish her little desires to make herself happy.

In The God of Small Things, Arundhati Roy coruscates miscellaneous tinges of her characters who face life, take decisions and stand by them keeping pace with the prevalent norms which they liberally mould if necessity arises on their part. She has successfully limned her characters, especially women, of different generations exhibiting

the power of self-assertion that is flexible enough according to the generations these characters belong to. Baby Kochamma belongs to the first generation but the power she displays is amazing because being a woman nowhere deters her from taking all the decisions of her life. She refuses to get married and nothing on earth could make her change the decision in the world of males. Similarly when her niece Ammu comes back to her parents after her breakup with her husband Baby Kochamma never forgets to assert her position and superiority as she has never married and left her ancestral place which she thinks consolidates her position in the home. Her being female never balks her to carry out the devious plans and freely she leads life according to the norms that are acceptable to her.

Ammu, in comparison with her mother, is more assertive because like her mother she does not tolerate her husband. Instead she deserts him and returns to her parents because she feels it better to live without a husband than to live with a husband who has no scruples:

Ammu took down the heaviest book she could find in the bookshelf—The Reader's Digest World Atlas—and hit him with it as hard as she could. On his head. His legs. His back and shoulders....When his bouts of violence began to include the children, and the war with Pakistan began, Ammu left her husband and returned, unwelcomed, to her parents in Ayemenem. (Roy 1997: 42)

Ammu's irresistible desire for self-assertion comes to the fore when her children curl into the warmth of her and start playing with her body. Growing tired of their proprietary handling of her, "she wanted her body back. It was hers." (222). Further Ammu emerges as a rebel in the novel who challenges the andocentric notions of her society and becomes

a symbol of all that the men folk do not want her to be. Though Arundhati has placed her in such a tight position where she gets the whole hearted support of none, she makes her emerge as a strong woman who dares to defy the social norms where love is concerned. Her involvement with Velutha, a paravan who is considered not only undesirable but untouchable as well, highlights her as a woman who brushes aside everything when it comes to assert her wishes as a woman.

Ammu is not the only woman who deserts her husband; her sister-in-law Margaret Kochamma also belongs to the same category. Margaret falls in love with Chacko and gets married to him but when she realizes that Chacko fails in his duties and gets married again. The decision to desert him is entirely hers as has been the decision to marry him:

What Chacko loved most about her was her self-sufficiency.... He was grateful to her for not wanting to look after him. For not offering to tidy his room. For not being his cloying mother. He grew to depend on Margaret Kochamma for not depending on him. He adored her for not adoring him. (245-246).

Arundhati empowers great freedom of spirit to her female characters.

Toni Morrison, in her works, since she writes as a writer who has seen oppression in varying degrees, makes her character assert powerfully within the given orb. Sethe, in Beloved, after leading a life of slavery for many years finds it hard to continue bearing the yoke of slavery. Her upcoming surge to be the mistress of the fate of her children's life forces her to murder her own daughter as she does not want to yield this right to the white to make her children lead the same horrendous life which she herself has led, "No more running – from nothing. I will never run from another thing on this earth." (15)

Denver also evolves after realizing that she has to act and react if she wants to have a control over things. She takes time to understand that if people stay dormant they are likely to suffer as she used to when she did not understand things in a clear perspective. Similarly, *Beloved*, the spirit of the dead girl comes back to her mother to assert her right to live. Her return reverses everything. She requires undisputed attention on the part of her mother. She makes Sethe realize her failure to give her daughter a proper life, who now wants to fulfill all her desires. In fact, she sucks everything from her mother's life making her weaker day by day. Denver takes time to realize about the happening but when she realizes she takes a bold step to save her mother from the clutches of the spirit of her dead sister. And when Paul D wants to talk to her regarding her mother, she is quick to tell him indirectly that it does not matter to her and she wants to rely on her opinion only. "Well, if you want my opinion-" "I don't," she said. "I have my own." (267)

In *Song of Solomon* Pilate is the lady who asserts herself in the true sense. Her brother feels elated to lead a life of imitation but Pilate prefers it the other way. Pilate's way of living, taking decisions, and abiding by them to face the consequences of whatever she does in her life, makes her a lady of substance who dares lead life the way she feels comfortable. Since she doesn't lead life to make others happy, she refuses to tread on the trodden path; her crystallized goals help her do whatever she feels like. Her brother, though, secretly cherishes the desire to live like her yet prefers to remain away manacled by the restraints of society. In one of his short stories "Miss Harriet" Guy De Maupassant (1997 : 106) "felt that there was laid upon that human creature the eternal injustice of

implacable Nature!” Pilate feels the same way for her nephew. Going by the standards of society, somehow he realizes that it’s not society that will find out about his existence, it’s his job to do so and greatly influenced by her aunt’s way of living, leaves the apron of her mother and sisters.

She dares to set her own priorities without giving a thought to the norms of society. “And she holds the opinion very firmly that it is proper that her own ideas should be considered.” (Meares 1974 : 31) Her concern for assertion is so strong, though loser by the standards of society, she prefers not to hinge on the norms blindly followed by people like her brother; she feels satisfied to lead life not according to the currents and crosscurrents of society but by her own whims and wishes. Her throbbing desire to find a unique place for herself goads her to lead an anonymous life than to reveal the missing navel. Her plan to get the baby outside wedlock without disclosing her secret of rootlessness succeeds and she refuses to get married because of the apprehension of losing her identity. Her strong willpower makes her a strong human being who dares deny the established norms to secure her place.

Jazz, a musical composition of Toni Morrison abounding beautifully in mellifluous and cacophonous notes, brings to fore the effects of assertion. It begins with the revelation of Dorcas’s murder by Joe. He shoots Dorcas, an 18-year-old creamy-complexioned girl at a dance party because she has left him for another boy, Acton. The liberty on the part of individuals to choose ignites Toni so much that she bestows them with the power to choose and live. Joe feels the need to have a girlfriend now and he involves himself with

Dorcas, “I *chose* you. Nobody gave you to me. Nobody said that’s the one for you. I picked you out.” (135) Similarly Violet boasts of choosing Joe to show her power of selection, “I picked him out from all the others”. (96)

When she gets to know of her husband’s affair with another woman, she gets stultified. But when she comes to her senses like Joe, Violet also exercises her right to choose; she can’t help herself because “He had chosen; so would she.” (86) “Seeing bleak truth” (101) ignites her to such an extent that she wishes to spoil the face of a dead girl who has taken away her husband and intends to make up for the loss by doing deleterious harm to her. In fact, her assertion turns a bit weird as she crashes the funeral of Dorcas and disfigures with her knife a dead girl’s face. This right is not restricted to the husband and wife only; other characters are given the equal liberty to choose the most desired course of their lives. It is applicable to Dorcas also, who after enjoying life with Joe wants to change her boyfriend because he catches her fancy in a better way. Again, nothing stops Joe from getting jealous to the extent of murdering the girl he has loved with such an ardent passion. In this novel, strangely enough, the desire to exercise the power of assertion misleads all of them heading towards psychological, emotional and physical deaths.

An invaluable culmination of self-realization, the ultimate theme, exceptionally enriches the works of these female writers. Presence of this theme infuses a real spirit in a work. Continuously evolving process of self-exploration and self-assertion leads to a profound understanding of self-fulfillment. When people embark on their odyssey for self they are forced to undergo tumultuous vicissitudes because this peregrination demands proper

chiseling of psyches. But the end of this road leads to another road known as **self-realization** that forces them to rethink on a higher altitude about themselves as human beings given “to totality, and to a full, harmonious perfection”. (Arnold 1932 : 12-13)

Along with the sordid exposure to the ugliness flows a stream of throbbing hope and eternal beauty. This process requires greater objectivity dipped in boundless empathy. Writers across the world are making deliberate efforts to think of people not as males and females but as human beings cherishing ever-shifting positives and negatives. This quality has made these authors craft their works more mature and close to reality. Going by a somewhat similar trend, Catherine Helen Spence writes about herself in a pamphlet: “I am a new woman, and I know it. I mean an awakened woman... awakened to a sense of capacity and responsibility, not merely to the family and the household, but to the State; to be wise not for her own selfish interests, but that the world may be glad that she had been born.” (Thompson 1987 : ix)

Without espousing any particular ideology these writers have created a few characters who escape or reject the rigid roles that society sets for them. They take action to change their lives and do this by destroying a former identity that was imposed upon them, and in the process, create a new one. These characters often start out as victims of society but by replacing society’s imposed values with their own, take control of their lives through their creativity. These writers have sensed that the values of a society can be harmful and set out to explore how people recreate values to give themselves a more positive sense of awareness. They criticize the romantic notion of love that encourages women to find meaning in life by finding a husband, a notion of love that keeps women too dependent upon men.

In Life Before Man Nate, Elizabeth and Lesje all get victimized by fragmentation as well as alienation only to feel uneasy enough to look for the root cause of it. With the need for spiritual survival, they struggle in a pointless way to overcome alienation and achieve personal and social integration where they can have the freedom to love and to share. They feel alienated from others because they take life as a composite of disjointed episodes rather than the process it actually is. Spiritual survival requires an ongoing process of symbolic deaths and resurrections within the soul. When Nate and Elizabeth fail to get satisfaction in their successive relations, their movement seems impeded but they get forced to have realization of the life. The need to move ahead shakes Elizabeth, as is discernible from her silent shouts, "I want to be moved. Move me. *We are the numb. Long years ago/We did this or that. And now we sit.*" (100)

As a mother she stands tall. Learning a lesson from bitter experiences of her childhood, Elizabeth, after the death of Chris, refrains herself from committing suicide because that will bring her daughters to the same stage of life where her mother has left her and her sister. Like Sethe, she also does not want her kids to be left vulnerable to oppression, "I would never leave an image like that behind for my children. I've had that done to me and I didn't like it" (98). Atwood seems to imply that our salvation lies not in the outside world of art, politics and religion but in the discovery of our own spiritual depths. Nate's inability to move away from Elizabeth makes him realize that it is "a world of unfreedom after all. Only a fool could have believed in anything else.... He looks less like a clown. More like a turtle: wisdom has wrinkled him, encased him in a useful shell". (274)

Bodily Harm traces Renata Wilford's movement from a superficial and alienated existence towards spiritual survival which includes a deeper sense of self and others. Raw and smug Rennie, afflicted by growing cancer inside her body, on the Caribbean islands of St. Antoine, realizes for the first time that anything can happen to anyone, anywhere. She is shocked to know, "Nobody is exempt from anything." (290) The malignant cancer breeding inside her body is symbolic of malignant factors rampant in the society from which there is no escape. Rennie's painful and terrifying experiences make her realize that her cherished marginality has all along prevented her from living her life as a *human being* in the truest sense of the term. Paul's extreme tenderness filled with love gives Rennie her body back and she feels entering it again. Her self-versus-other attitude is immediately brushed aside by self-and-other attitude.

When Rennie understands herself as a human being, she realizes as well her duty as a journalist. Basking in the growing consciousness of the positive aspect of her power as a writer, she overcomes her crippling conscience to do justice with her job. She now decides to bear witness and determines not to deny anything human. Another revelation that comes to the fore in this novel is that males by no definite way are the winners and women by no definite means are the losers; it is not right to say that all females "are victims because of their sex and as a result of their sex they are brutalized in some way". (Waelti-Walters 1984 : 117) Atwood seems to suggest that sufferings in life make people realize the worth of being good or bad. Nothing seems to assure anybody about the innocuous side of life. Love for mankind serves as a means to get peace. Realization of mercy, pity and love in this power-mad world is the only way to live in a contended way.

In The Blind Assassin, Laura's love for Alex Thomas, which she neither tries to hide nor exhibits, shows her maturity as a human being. When Iris nods to marry Richard keeping in mind the welfare of her father, Laura wants her to rethink the whole affair. Though childish in her behaviour, she tries to convince her sister not to get into an unwanted relationship. Her subtle understanding of human character is in sharp contrast to Iris's understanding of the affairs of life. "But Laura never paid much attention to that kind of reasoning. She was more interested in forms – in what things were in themselves, not what they weren't. She wanted essences." (45) Though it's quite painful for her to come to terms with life, she realizes that life demands this sort of delving deep into its core. She remains true to her self and that establishes her superiority over all the characters in the novel. Probably Margaret Atwood wishes to convey through Laura that by remaining true to one's self one can understand life in a better light.

It is Laura who always sees that Iris remains in touch with her inner self. For Laura pretensions, simulations, hypocrisies, etc simply don't exist. Laura suffers a lot but never holds Iris responsible for her maltreatment but makes it a point to tell her everything. Iris takes 82 years of life to understand it:

Drowned now – the tree as well, the sky, the wind, the clouds. All she has left is the picture. Also the story of it.

The picture is of happiness, the story is not. Happiness is a garden walled with glass: there's no way in or out. In paradise there are no stories, because there are no journeys. It's loss and regret and misery and yearning that drive the story forward, along its twisted road. (518)

Doris Lessing, makes all her character undergo a journey that forces them stop questioning about social, political and economic concerns and start looking inside to find

out their reality in relation to themselves and the forces over which they exercise no control. The Golden Notebook reflects a shift from a unified vision to the stage of complicated fragmentation which seems simultaneously imperative and inevitable. Anna Wulf, the heroine of this landmark work makes unconscious attempts to separate her social, intellectual, political and personal life by penning down her thoughts in separate notebooks but she fails to find a pattern of fragments unless everything seems to be a part of the whole submerging in the *golden notebook*. There she is in constant struggle with various parts of her psyche which fail her time to time. Unless she surrenders to those powers where she does not exercise any authority, she remains restless and fails to head anywhere.

Shattered by the cruel blows of anarchy of her self she collects her smithereens to see the speckled self of hers. No apparent outer force seems to check her weeds unless she surrenders herself to the unforeseen forces. In Lessing's works the process of moving *on* becomes moving *in*. Her protagonists are intellectually aware human beings who have already crossed the line of sexual equality. Now, the gnawing issues like class, race and colour unnerve them. Realization is in synchronization with the ways of God when Anna finds her dependence on love and relationship, "Then I thought, the truth is I don't care a damn about politics or philosophy or anything else: all I care about is that Michael should turn in the dark and put his face against my breasts. And then I drifted off to sleep."(298) Insights overlap as Anna's moods oscillate, leading to a complicated nonlinear development, a kind of awareness regarding the state of life. It appears "out of chaos a new kind of strength" (472) arises. Admission of anarchy and annihilation as an integral

part shape the direction of quest. External actions rarely help them get to ends resulting in frustration, which gets meekly subdued when people look inside for ways out. "There is a close connection between Doris Lessing's perceptiveness about political and economic realities, which helped formulate her Marxist ideas in the first place, and her psychical and mystical insights which provide form to the later works." (Kumar 2001 : 23)

The Golden Notebook is unquestionably a classic of feminist literature because of its experimental style and its explorations of self, creativity, female identity and mystic overtones. Lessing's interest in mysticism owed much to the interpretations of the Sufi teacher Idries Shah, who held that the evolution of an individual's consciousness was closely connected with the evolution of the society. Throughout her work Lessing is describing life at the rawest edge, almost on the verge of insanity. Lessing tempts Anna to go through all the extremes to find out the hub of it, which she is able to get through at the end of the novel. Her acceptance of life as it comes, gives her some relief from an otherwise tattered life of hers. Her understanding, that a creative, purposive and nondestructive aspect to the human psyche is significant, helps her remain a sane person inching towards a realization that does not require any sex distinction.

Mrs. Lessing in her profoundly exploratory manner makes effort to alter her characters' expectations about life and about the range of their own consciousness. Similarly, Kate in The Summer before the Dark, moving through the seesaw fluctuations of a fatal and impersonal collectivity, gropes her way back to retrieve her identity, propelled all along by a galvanized personal will. As her individuality yearns more for self-emancipation, a

reverse immigration sets at work. Trammeled by invisible forces and incomprehensible circumstances, it is against this spirit of inaction and listlessness that Kate is going to fight. An inward life movement not only shatters the source of disillusionment but also infuses a new kind of self-consciousness of the infinite possibilities of *doing*. Kate is meant to grow into a being who achieves a universal, absolute wisdom not through development of the particular but *through* access to the universal. A mosaic reality emerges as the ultimate picture of life demanding acceptance.

Her realization of the bad state of world mellows her to accept the fact that morbidity fails to back up those who bank on it. Doing service for others brings fruits provided it is not done for any rewards. Assumptions about life, so sedulously pursued, after much assessing, balancing and weighing, are all fruitless as they never lead to the predetermined purposes. Life, before the period people are supposed to undergo and after they have gone through it, is entirely different because it's far from being predictable. Presuppositions felt at one point of time seem pretty laughable and jejune when put to scrutiny. Instead of blindly given to the notion of living merely for others she wants to concentrate narrowly for her petty interests and that sets the new path of life for her where she could be the mistress of her likings as well. Defiantly sure of her newly acquired sense of achievement, she heads forward to start her life afresh.

Hinging on practical creed, Arundhati creates characters who make desperate attempts to escape or reject the rigid roles that society sets for them. Her unequivocal treatment has given feminism a new face brushing aside the lopsided treatment of males and females. Males are not given privilege and women are not trodden over because they are of fair

sex. Males also suffer in her work and women are also given the liberty to exercise their power over others. It's now not the question of males or females; it's just the chance of being strong or weak. The treatment Ammu and Chacko get from the pen of Arundhati Roy is shorn of any kind of prejudice. If Ammu suffers because of no fault of hers then Chacko is not left behind in this race. His life has never been a bed of roses. True, he gets rights and money but peace, satisfaction, and fulfillment never befriend him.

S. T. Coleridge, one of the prominent lake poets, in his famous ballad The Rime of the Ancient Mariner does not allow the ancient mariner the peace of mind for the wanton act of killing of an innocent bird, until he appreciates the beauty of creatures both big and small and repents for his action. Similarly Arundhati does not allow peace and satisfaction to any of her characters until they appreciate things both big and small. Peace is allowed only to Ammu and Velutha because they transcend the barriers of discrimination, the retinue continues with dead albatross around their neck. Akin to God of Coleridge, the God of Arundhati also does not allow anybody to neglect and discard these small creatures of His. Arundhati Roy does not seem to believe in any *ism* but life being the ultimate reality of all living beings becomes the basis of this valuable work where she authorizes her characters to decide the course of their respective lives. Those who appreciate are not spared and awarded any material dividends but get punished because though they may not have sinned, they have committed crime according to the accepted standards of society. The mariner achieves calm and peace evasively evaded to modern mariners of Arundhati Roy. Arundhati has worked wonders while trying to make the connections between the very smallest of things and the very biggest of things.

The comparisons and contrasts highlight the changing texture of life that is a continuous state of flux and the remote control is not always in the hands of so called masters of ceremony but some unforeseen forces that weave a cobweb which engulfs all who try too hard to meddle with it. Human beings are caught into a labyrinth that is too complex for them to come out of it unscathed. Ultimately, they realize, “Life is not a series of gig lamps symmetrically arranged; Life is a luminous halo, a semi transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end.” (Woolf 1953 : 177)

Toni Morrison gives her piece of mind regarding duties and responsibilities when she tells Gloria Naylor, “The point is that freedom is choosing your responsibility. It’s not having no responsibilities, it’s choosing the ones you want.” (Naylor interview 1985 : 573)

Toni Morrison in Song of Solomon makes Pilate her mouthpiece. Projection of Black life is bulwarked by the profusion of universal tinges. When she wants Milkman to come out of his cocoon so that he can stand on his own reflects her endeavours to make him realize his worth as a human being. When Milkman decides to find out his roots she encourages him to learn to move ahead so that he can be mature enough to look beyond:

“You can’t take a life and walk off and leave it. Life is life. Precious. And the dead you kill is yours. They stay with you anyway, in your mind. So it’s a better thing, a more better thing to have the bones right there with you wherever you go. That way, it frees up your mind.” (208)

Milkman has never bothered before to cherish human relationships. Perhaps the most significant evidence of Milkman’s awareness is his commitment to guide Pilate to

Shalimar to bury her father's bones, the way she has guided him to bury the 'Dead' in him. In the end, a spiritually and emotionally grown man emerges who has shed his sins, his omissions, and his vast ignorance to be useful to others. Nurturing "a deep concern for and about human relationships" (280) helps him gain the very essence of the meaning. Milkman's transcendence is an imperative phase in his evolution, for his confrontation with and subsequent defiance of death teaches him both "sensitivity and sympathy, allowing him to look beyond." (Mbalia 1992 : 56)

Similarly in Beloved, though Toni allows her characters to undergo regional traumas, she forces them to understand life in its entirety at the end of their quest. Denver, bogged down by incessantly pestering personal problems, crumbles under the pressure. Instead of scrutinizing it as an outsider, when she herself undertakes the journey, she comes to know of life with its boons and banes. The journey may provide any sort of result-positive or negative- it gives a kind of satisfaction to Denver when she manages to save her mother from the spirit of Beloved, her sister. Sethe, too heavy a loser, bearing the scars of slavery, is ever conscious of the unpredictable course of life. Though she laments wholeheartedly, her losses make her show the spirit to face it boldly. Her quest for meaning and wholeness in slavery and in freedom is "a haunting amalgam of the past and present experience of an escaped female slave." (Sumana 1998 : 39)

The hardships endured by her drive home the dire need for collective action. Isolated struggle and selfish individualism does not pay her much. Past tragedies and current emotional and psychological sufferings bring her to the brim of realization. Paul D and Sethe struggle together to force a positive life under the most oppressive conditions:

"The future was sunset; the past something to leave behind. And if it didn't stay behind, well, you might have to stomp it out. Slave life; freed life- every day was a test and a trial. Nothing could be counted on in a world where even when you were a solution you were a problem" (256)

Consequently in Jazz the energizing life-giving force of humanity forces Violet, Joe and Dorcas through subdued mystery and simmering surprises from “freezing to hot to cold”(51) resulting in a sense of renewal. Violet, the wronged wife who falls a victim to her many selves within herself, sporadically stumbles into a psychic limbo. Her inhuman act of disfiguring the face of a dead girl gives an outlet to deep buried violence in her. Her resultant sense of guilt shapes her outlook as she makes a unified whole out of fascinating parts which join in surprising ways. The process of healing begins when Alice Manfred and Violet allow themselves not only to *talk* but also to *cry* and *laugh*. Inspired by the whole range of human feelings she becomes aware of a creative force that allows them to *remake*. Alice and Violet learn to laugh and learn that “laughter is serious... more complicated, more serious than tears.” (113) They learn “to move beyond sympathy, empathy” (Heinz 1993 : 195).

In Violet’s relationship with Alice Manfred, the affirmation of love and, more importantly, identification with the other, results in fulfillment. When she comes to Alice, she seems to come to an end of pilgrimage but not at the end of her life. Through bonding all beings benefit from each-other’s companionship. There she comes to know about the peace and love and what goes with these things, “You got anything left to you to love, anything at all, do it.” (112) She learns not only how to live but also how to dream something that puts her on the threshold of a more pregnant life. Understanding of self

leads to the understanding of relationship. Violet requires ample time on her part to become humble enough like True Belle who thanks God not only for life but death also.

Being a genuine product of youth Dorcas does not want to spoil her life by doing nothing. She wants to be alive and kicking, tries every possible way to remain happy and engaged but when she is at the threshold of her youth life becomes unbearable for her. "It is terrible when there is absolutely nothing to do or worth doing..." (63); at the same time, it is "ridiculous and delicious and terrible" (70-71). Human life is too unpredictable; Dorcas's life comes to an end before she starts understanding the concept of life and death. The novel ends with True Belle's acknowledgement. "Thank God for life," True Belle said, "and thank life for death." (101) Morrison is very assertive in her stance that not only life but death also is an integral part of this complete circle.

To sum up, Margaret Atwood, Doris Lessing, Arundhati Roy and Toni Morrison do not give any lopsided view of life. Instead of focusing on one theme at the cost of other themes, they give enough space to the themes of oppression, alienation, existentialism, self-discovery, self-assertion and self-realization. In fact, they maintain this thread throughout their works; the focus keeps shifting from one theme of another theme according to the position of characters and ambience of scenario. Things are perceived from feminine sensitivity but it does not mean outcast of males. Moving spirally in a bleak and compressed domesticity, females, the lost souls are bewildered enough to stay in tune with their existential sanity, but they are not the only victims. Flustered by continual and cruel battering of discriminations, society and unforeseen powers, they

have initially given way to oppression which sprawled itself to physical, emotional, economical and psychological domains. Suffocated, they feel estranged unfairly and alienation forced them to question their existence because nothing seems to hold them. Crumbling to pieces, they struggle strong enough to retain their fragmented existence. Undiluted desire to exhume their roots sets them on a spree to initiate their peregrination of self-discovery. Traumatized by turbulent vicissitudes they grope desperately to find out their worth as human beings. The odyssey of self does proper chiseling of their selves as they get to understand themselves. After disinterring their selves, they move to self-assertion; they indulge in the game of power and take proper care and apt measures to assert themselves in the most befitting ways. Irresistible exercise of assertion makes them bold enough to foray into a realm where sense of fulfillment awaits them. Here, they get close to self-realization; intensely varying in their participation and accomplishment they gain their equity to have their share of the ultimate understanding. At this stage, they learn the healing power of sharing and caring. Illumination befriends them and equanimity provides them the opportunity to burgeon and blossom.

Chapter 4

Diaphanous Exposé of Stylistic Niceties

Sublime ideas need exquisite garb to let their nobility trespass the threshold of commonality to create an ineffaceable mark on the spirit and soul of readers and drench them into the ocean of great gratification. The most momentous thing about literature is its appeal appared in artistic eminence which William J. Long (1997 : 2) also seems to assert when he states, “all art is the expression of life in forms of truth and beauty... but which remain unnoticed until brought to our attention by some sensitive human soul.” With the help of the touchstone of words, writers have scattered the treasure of life. The coverage of triviality and trinity, sensuousness and sublimity, bizarre and beatific, and dross and dignified, gives a work its distinct appeal; it also has given fruitful results in the form of fantabulous works. The more profound the impression, the more it appeals to our emotions and imagination. It is not so much what it says as what it awakens in us that constitutes the charm. A whole world of speculation and imagination is awakened in the readers.

The study of human soul, reverential in the presence of probity, melancholy before the sorrows and problems of life, and humbly positive in the presence of Omnipotent, gets unraveled in an artistic as well as suggestive way. A sanguine approach to the pouring of delicately intricate thoughts and feelings marks the culmination of an exquisite pattern. Though depiction of the *big and small things* of life is the hub of every piece of writing, it gets the distinguished flavour by the stylistic devices employed. Importance given to

expression is never less than the importance given to emotion. Attired in the magic of kaleidoscopic words, thoughts stand in perfect tune with the narration. Writers are the creation of not only their subject matter but also their style. Since style embellishes subject matter to such an extent that the work starts coruscating an aura of its own it has become a benchmark for writers to pay attention to style as well. The proclivity beginning with the pioneers has continued with varying degree to the present age.

Simply defined as the way of expression, style gives specific individuality to the writers. Writers, scattered to different parts of the world and belonging to singular time, have attempted to say at least a few words about *style*. Jonathan swift expresses his opinion, “Proper words in proper places make the true definition of a style.” (Evans 1990 : 317) His emphasis remains on the selection and execution of the words, the primary instruments of thoughts, whereas Buffon, the French writer says, “The style is the man.” (Martin 1962 : 217) William J. Long seems to justify Buffon’s statement when he decants his stance, “It is only in a mechanical sense that style is ‘the adequate expression of thought,’ or ‘the peculiar manner of expressing thought,’ or any other definitions that are found in the books. In a deeper sense, style is the man, that is, the unconscious expression of the writer’s own personality. It is the very soul of one man reflecting, as in a glass, the thoughts and feelings of humanity.” (Long 1997 : 6) Diversity of writers penning down the same thing gets justified by this statement. Style, the intrinsic ingredient of writing, gives a work its distinct flavour. Alan Warner (1964 : 2) finds style in perfect harmony with the subject, “The style of a work is not a sort of veneer glued over the outside.” He also finds it a pattern that goes all the way through the manifestation of the growth and

development of the meaning. Birjadish Prasad (1965 : 214) testifies the untainted magnitude of style when he says, “For style is nothing more than the expression of thought in the best possible way. Its characteristic feature is its complete identity with the thought it expresses, which may suffer materially if expressed in any other way.”

When whatever is needed to say is said in the perfect way, nothing can be added to it or taken away. Imagination in the highest degree, severity, restraint, association of ideas, aptness of expression, and loftiness of tone compel undiluted attention of the reader. If something grand is on the scale then the powerful action of the imagination sublimates the author’s utterance and if it is simple, the plainest language does the work, and if severe, then it manifests itself in a wise economy of emotion, ornament and expression. It suggests more than it says, impressing the reader by its austerity rather than by its decoration. The music of sound, cleverness, quickness of fancy and verbal ingenuity are generally and rightly admired. By all means it is a *thing of beauty* that is a *joy forever*.

Precision in the use of words, clarity of meaning in combining words to form a sentence, economy in their use, harmony between thought and expression always help the writer to use language in authentication with the thought. In bringing thoughts clearly before the reader lies the real force of the writer. By means of the power of suggestion, the capacity to move the reader by the writing, to make readers share their own state of mind, style becomes persuasive eloquence. The artistic grace of style, its musical quality, its picturesque details, its polish, its perfection of form, give it beauty and charm, which cannot be developed by communicating a fact precisely and intelligently. Enticingly

diverse magic of the singular styles of different writers cajoles and encourages readers “to follow their own spirits, and to share... the joys of their discoveries.” (Long : 1997 : vii)

Undeniably established in literary field, male writers have shown their skills and proved their authority. But women writers have recently stepped into this undisputed domain of writing. Initially accused of a style sometimes too woolly and sometimes too rigid, female writers had to try really hard to mark a distinct style of their own because whatever initially has been penned down by them has been seen from a masculine point of view. Diligent efforts on the part of these female writers have enabled them to write and view things from a feminine perspective, a rare and laudable achievement. In the galaxy of writers like Margaret Atwood, Doris Lessing, Arundhati Roy and Toni Morrison, there is a discernible shift in the old current of contents and their embellishments. These writers of excellent skills have recently come with certain innovations, which have helped them give a discrete touch to their works. Along with the much trusted writing techniques of male writers, these female writers have also incorporated their own modes. Subtle niceties of style, extensively and appositely used by males, are dealt with great precision by these females also. Individually unique in their own ways, these writers have the tilt to visualize the befitting coinage to derive the desired impact. Strength, simplicity, and directness - added wealth of expression - lead to better comprehensibility. Curious combination of crisp statements and sprawled descriptions impart a unique quality to their works. Flexible adaptability to the expression of intrinsic and striking elements accounts for the richness of style. The ways may or may not comply with the rules of

grammar but always conform to the relevance of the context. However, the focus mainly remains on the **figures of speech, sentence formulation and paragraph construction** in the works of these writers who have delighted the readers with their striking writing style.

Margaret Atwood's use of language is characterized by economy, precision, variety, and appropriateness. Enjoyment and appreciation complement simple analysis and exact description. Every good writer makes use of descriptions as they impart vividness to the meaning by calling up pictures in our mind. But to compare the same thing with two or more different or incongruous objects is an art that indulges in special chiseling of expressions. A little careful thinking while mixing images simultaneously helps her achieve wonders by helping her give an extraordinary tinge to her outpour. Her striking habit of intermixing dialogue and description, marked by an individuality of her own, immediately catches the attention of her readers. Drawing comparisons heavily from all the spheres she enriches her work. Her comparisons are natural as well as urban but her way is unique because of the delicacy of expression. An attempt to meddle with the accuracy of natural phenomenon is accepted if it helps her drive the point home dexterously. Her paragraphs are not traditionally maintained but maneuvered to fit in the need of moment, so is the case with sentences.

Similes in The Blind Assassin are not merely comparisons but affiliations between what is felt and how it is said. Aptness of expression resulting in unerring clarity enhances the value of her style. Banking reliably on the objects of nature, she manages to induce a special effect by using expressions like "sprayed like mildew" (Atwood 2000 : 35),

“sopping like a wet sheep” (150), “It was like shelling peas” (102), etc. Nothing seems to hold her talent when she creates expressions that the readers feel can’t be expressed any other way: “she feels the touch in advance, as birds feel shadow” (21), “Just never show fear. They’ll smell it on you, like sharks, and come in for the kill.” (235), etc. Though the comparisons are taken from Nature but these are not the only comparisons; fluctuating according to the suitability of the context she brings in urbane links also such as “his was hard and dry, like a leather suitcase handle” (101), “looked around her with a white glare, like a headlight.” (231), etc. Insensitive reception and ruthless detachment can’t be more poignant than these expressions: “*Dressed like a charity case*” (233), “I would simply be handed over to Richard, like a parcel” (234), etc. To increase the intensity of the moment she brings in objects like sword and train: “the tremors coming from her, like a train track vibrating” (210), “Something else materialized like a sword between them” (76), etc.

A healthy mixture of unusual resemblances is used for traits and situations that are not easily classifiable. It gives her work a unique quality. Convincingly, she makes use of similarities like “My head felt like a sack of pulp” (35) and “You’re white as a sheet!” (55), but that does not deter her from introducing invigorating expressions like “the small green apples watching her like eyes” (13) and “My bones...ache like history” (56). Diversity of associations marks her felicity as a writer who flaunts her art to enchant the readers “Like a sleepwalker” (237). Inanimate things are bestowed with human qualities while human beings are attributed the qualities of stillness like “kernels wrinkled like knuckles” (171), “she looked like a penitent - like a heretic in an old painting” (236), etc. One can be easily charmed by a lady who “looks courageous, dashing even, like a boyish

buccaneer” (68), or share the same feeling, “ideal sacrifice should be like a dance” (28-29), or get engrossed by the changes “like ink spilled in water” (1). Every association, irrespective of being simple or serious, is used to get the desired impact. Enjoyment, innocence, futility and bliss are given ample space in her expression like “She sighed a little, like a tired child” (211), “I seemed to myself erased, featureless, like an oval of used soap, or the moon on the wane”(235), etc.

Liberty is taken to meddle with the objects of Nature; the description used highlights the oddity of the situation or thing. Expressions like “The suns, all three of them, have set. A couple of moons have risen. In the foothills the wolves are abroad.” (115) help the readers feel the eeriness. Not even the Omnipotent is spared when “Over the trenches God had burst like a balloon, and there was nothing left of him but grubby little scraps of hypocrisy. Religion was just a stick to beat the soldiers with” (77). Beauty of the apt arrangement of simple words casts its own magic because of the clarity in sentences like “I could remember her absence, now, much better than her presence.” (142)

Reappearance, alliteration, and immaculate choice of words give her writing an extra depth embossed with freshness; experience of social affairs always gets a special place in her writings when she pens down the cogitations of her characters:

“Who cares what people think, I told myself. If they want to listen in, they’re welcome.

Who cares, who cares. The perennial adolescent riposte. I cared, of course. I cared what people thought, I always did care. Unlike Laura, I have never had the courage of my convictions.” (203)

Going by the need of the moment she coins soothing phrases like “the unfocused gaze of her dazzled, limpid, myopic eyes” (69), then allows the music of words to tell the tale of “smallholders, serfs, and slaves...(who) wore shabby grey tunics with one shoulder bare” (16) and switches over to the repetition of the same verb to indicate the stagnation settled in a man’s life as “He is tired of them, these women. He’s tired of their fangs.... He’s tired of their red talons.... He’s tired of bashing in their heads. He’s tired of the heroes...he’s tired of their ray guns” (250). Repetition does not give the impression of drabness alone but it is also used as a tool to flaunt the intensity of the moment when Atwood uses phrases like “Better not to start. Better to keep your mouth shut. Much better.” (205) and “As if to protect himself from her. As if to protect her.” (5), etc.

To derive the desired upshot, Atwood breaks away from the traditional sentence construction by introducing **one-word sentences** as well as phrases as sentences. Whatever is to be emphasized is given individual space; if shift is more important than the sense then we have a sentence like “On the contrary.” (17) and if restriction to be shown then a sentence like “Or some of it.” (17) is the right choice. When action and added details are important then a sentence like “Butchered – men, women, children, babies, even the animals.” (11) serves the purpose. On the other hand, verbs are given no place when additional information is to be presented: “The trace of blown cloud in the brilliant sky, like ice cream smudged in chrome. His smoke-stained fingers. The distant glint of water.” (5) Depending upon the requirement a sentence seems but a collage of phrases: “Over to one side – you wouldn’t see it first – there’s a hand, cut by the margin, scissored off at waist, resting on the grass as if discarded. Left to its own devices.” (5),

Paragraph, unique in its own way like her sentences, is written in a dialogue form though it is an amalgam of description and dialogue:

Space it is, then, he says. With tombs and virgins and wolves – but on the instalment plan. Agreed.
The instalment plan?
You know, like furniture.
She laughs.
No, I'm serious. You can't skimp, it might take days. We'll have to meet again.
She hesitates. All right, she says. If I can. If I can arrange it.
Good, he says. Now I have to think. He keeps his voice casual. Too much urgency might put her off. (10)

Bodily Harm begins with a dialogue not meant for the characters but for the reader, “This is how I got here, says Rennie.” (Atwood 1999 : 3) To impart an outstanding impact Atwood intermixes dialogues and description. Spontaneity gives it an added advantage because the sentence, “Take a look, he said, pleased with himself, in charge.” (6) does not look like a forced and disjointed effort. Her **sentences** are not only short but long also and her long sentences contain all additional details that are supposed to be known in one go:

But it would be tolerable if only the woman packed beside her on the bench would quit talking, in a maroon coat and curlers, no such luck, it goes on and on, triplets, polio, car crashes, operations for dropsy, for burst appendixes, sudden death, men leaving their wives, aunts, cousins, sisters, crippling accidents, a web of blood relationships no one could possibly untangle, a litany at the same time mournful and filled with curious energy, glee almost, as if the woman is childishly delighted with herself for being able to endure and remember so much pointless disaster.

In between long and detailed sentences there are sentences, which constitute either a phrase or one word. One-word sentences like “Invisibility.” (8), “Surfaces.” (20), “Weird.” (171), “Naïve.” (165), etc. are used to add emphasis to what ever has been

stated before. Sometimes the word sentence comes before and then the explanation follows in a phrase like, “Paul. A faceless stranger.” (261), while sometimes explanation occurs first and then the word appears which qualifies the preceding phrase as “Feeling like a wife. Incapable.” (275) Sentences like “Show and tell.” (157) are made of verbs while sentences like “A procedure.” (14), “A woman of achievement.” (67), “Mr. General Electric.” (73), “A hand, then an arm, a shoulder, and finally a face.” (38), etc. contain only nouns. Irrespective of the length or categories of words, the impact is always kept in mind and keeping in mind the desired output, sentences are framed. When absence is to be highlighted, only negatives are given space in sentences like “No gold earring, no wooden leg, no hooks on the ends of the arms, no parrot.” (43), “Nor admiration, nor absolution.” (44), etc. Verbs are not always given the due importance because sentences after sentences pour in where verbs have no place, for example, “A thing with a man. *Bizarre*. Possibly even gross.” (168), “And now another man, possibly in a bathing suit. A faceless stranger. Mr. X, in the bedroom, with a knife.” (175), etc. while verbs rule the sentences when Atwood writes, “Lime tree, where Paul has left her. Parked her. Stashed her.” (253) Construction of a sentence also adds its own beauty when she changes the arrangement of proper sequence, “Now they seem vast, sentimental, grandiose, technicolour, magical, ridiculous, her expectations.” (254)

Loss of innocence, purity and virtue is touched upon when people are compared to children and their guileless actions. Need of care and selfless love makes her refer to animals also who share the incorruptibility of children. “I imprinted on him, she thought; like a duckling, like a baby chick.” (28) Nothing related to childhood is spared; even the

negative traits are given space along with positive ones. At one moment “he’s sleeping like a baby” (182) while at the moment he is “talking like a spoiled child” (88) and his “eyes are bright, candid, sly, the eyes of a wary child.” (33) “It was soothing to think of Daniel, it was like sucking your thumb.” (266), something children invariably indulge in. To highlight the lack of experience and maturity, often it is said, “Which is childish. Loss of nerve, she’s decided.” (66)

Along with mundane similes Atwood brings in **urbane similes** too to accentuate the focus when she writes, “you’d look as a bar of soap” (72), “teabag... much like a dead mouse” (150), “lifting both arms like an orchestra conductor” (206), etc. Animal imagery, too prominent to be ignored, is given ample space here also but with a variety. Her characters feel “like a hen” (193), behave “like a goose” (29), grin “like a fox” (109), and “her eyes sparkling like those of some small malicious animal, a weasel or a rat” (222) reflect vigilance. Contexts help Atwood pick comparisons from all spheres, as the man at one moment seems “smiling like a Buddha” (71) and on the other hand “Having a married man would be like having a Group of Seven washable silkscreen reproduction in your livingroom.” (168) Appropriateness also plays the role as at one moment, the lady feels “like a straw that had been clutched” (267) but at the next moment, “she’s still twisting, like a worm” (331). She feels the bliss of weather when “heat slips over her face like thick brown velvet” (31), but when idle she feels “like a vacation, Daniel’s” (267). Utility makes “binoculars hanging like outsized talismans” (206) and the creative urge produces unparallel comparisons like “guilt shining around her like a halo” (193), “baby... pleated, shriveled, like a hand too long in water” (136), etc.

Food imagery is something new that Atwood brings in; time-to-time her characters inadvertently switch over to food items for similarities. Caught in an unpleasant situation, she feels, “like I was a raw steak or a fish or something” (188), and prays against it because “she doesn’t want to come out like crispy chicken” (63). Dirt and sweat force her to acknowledge, “she smelled... like an off cheese” (31) as she can’t be as “unconscious as a slit fish” (83). Her fears make her think, “she’ll shrivel up like an apple” (100) and “the scar on her breast splits open like a diseased fruit” (60) if she takes liberty with her body.

The aspiration to emphasize things in the most proper way propels Atwood to keep adding comparisons. When a reference is made to Daniel, he is compared to two things in a row; he is simultaneously “like an astronaut on the moon, like a rare plant in a hothouse” (321). The smell is given atypical quality when it is written, “water from the thermos, which smells like melted ice cubes, like the inside of a refrigerator, like cloth in a trunk” (47). Importance of equipment is exaggerated when a plane appears “like a cloud, like magic” (341) because it becomes life saviour. Worthlessness of a woman is aptly highlighted when “she feels like a car grille or the insides of a toaster” (181). With rare achievement, Margaret Atwood keeps on adding comparisons to provide variety and elegance to her expressions. Readers get lingering effect when they come across expressions like, “biscuits... look like enlarged corn plasters... tastes like a winter foot, like a cellar, like damp wool” (133), “fruits like warts, like glands” (104), “shrubs... covering them like a net, like hair” (225), etc. Delicacy of aged people is taken care of in an equally delicate way as, “the frail old man (is)... to be protected like clocks and

figurines.” (55) Two uncommon things are compared to one common thing and nothing seems untoward when we come across a comparison like “a headache and skin like a simmered prune’s” (271). On the top of everything, magnificence of expression provides undiluted delight to readers when they read, “Domesticity still hung around them, like dust in sunlight, a lingering scent.” (264)

Alliteration seems to counterbalance the drabness of the situation when phrases like “small stationery shop across the street” (149), “a dime a dozen down here” (201), “smells of cinnamon and coffee and sweat, a sweet, stuffy, unhealthy smell” (283), etc. are used. When “the soldier with the swagger stick saunters towards her” (32) then the “slip strap over my shoulder” (7) seems to supply the required relief. This rhythm diminishes the flatness when we come across “the borer and the boree” (12) and reinforces the splendour when we spot something “too blue to be believable” (10)

Her **metaphors** are functionary as when Atwood compares she emphasizes pertinence more than the source. Human beings may be functions, objects, animals and even parts according to the need of the expression. The comparison may be with more than one thing as is clear from this example, “He’s a mirage, a necessary illusion, a talisman” (321) when daring attitude is infused in abundance then no wonder, “I’m an animal in the dark” (126), and the secretive nature is disclosed when we get to know, “he’s a closed door”. (121) Known for their service “doctors were functionaries” (29) and a doctor is nothing but hands because “his soul was in his hands. Cut them off and he’d be a

zombie.” (221) Similarly, hands may be related to activity and life because when nothing happens then a person mourns, “I can’t find my hands”. (336)

The irresistible device of **repetition** is used for emphasis that is moulded accordingly as it is used sometimes for verbs, sometimes for noun, and sometimes for adjectives and adverbs. The questioning spirit is used to show the brewing irritation when she writes, “how boring she was being, how stupid, how predictable” (86). Similarly to highlight the characteristic feature, the same adjective is repeatedly used: “a dutiful husband, a dutiful parent, a dutiful son” (155). When emphasis shifts so does the category of word because it could be noun also as is clear from the following sentence “a woman with a dog, a woman with a pig, a woman with a donkey” (235). The focus is always to the point and so is the impact: tin images, tin arms, tin legs, tin children, tin sheep and cows, even tin pigs (71) Added information is given along with the main one and the impact is intense: “I could see feet and legs, shining feet, pressed legs” (4), “he was a fantasy for her: a fantasy about the lack of fantasy, a fantasy of the normal” (266), etc. Instead of merely using adjectives individual sentences are created to emphasize the qualities: “You were too nice. You were too naïve. You were too easy.” (275) Same word is used as verb as well as noun in a sentence: “smiling his cramped smile” (147), “smiles his crooked smile” (256), etc. repetition never hinders her ability to use the same words exceptionally with a charm of its own: “She feels guilty and useless, guilty because useless.” (282), “some serving, others being served, serviced” (339), etc.

Wisdom of life is there for the readers in an encapsulated form, “*Laugh and the world laughs with you, said my grandmother. Cry and you cry alone.*” (52) Simple but profound truths about existence are put in an equally easy way with intense effect. No extra effort is needed to convince the readers when awareness of life is concerned because people know instinctively, “Experiences were like other collectables, you kept adding them to your set.” (157) In the same way, lack of knowledge turns out to be the greatest bliss for ignorant people. No wonder, “Rennie envies people who are unaware of ugliness: it gives them an advantage, they can’t be embarrassed.” (68-69) Aptness of observation is never short of conviction when she uses a sentence like the following, “He smiled down at me, watching my face, almost delighted, like an adult who’s just said *I told you so* to some rash child with a skinned knee.” (6)

Illiterate people are there and when they communicate, they are given the freedom to use constructions that they naturally use. They are given the liberty to say, “We not talking to you,” (312) as well as “Why this happen” (282). Oxymoron shows the indescribable description of certain things that are simultaneously “transparent and impenetrable” (152). Even emotions fail a human being when, “he feels superfluous and both invisible and exposed” (261). Atwood imparts human qualities to abstract things and the resultant sentence exudes warmth of its own: “The silences were almost visible; I pictured them as grey, hanging in the air like smoke.” (52) Furthermore, silence is given shape when it is written: “The objects in the house were another form of silence. Clocks, vases, end-tables, cabinets, figurines, cruet sets, cranberry glasses, china plates.” (52)

Things are bestowed with life when she writes, “knitting machine... died a quick death” (123), “Rennie negotiates the chairs” (132), “the blank eyes of their sunglasses” (140), etc. her expressions have added vitality, one can’t help enjoying usage like, “Laughter trails her in.” (132), “a head surrounded by darkness, glassy and clear.” (27), etc. Ultimate end always guides her to use expressions like “bedrooms... smelling of lavender and dead air” (117), “face is streaked, mapped, caked, dark red.” (257), etc. Qualifying words like “a kindly threatening smile” (165) and “her well-lit visible frozen pose” (264) add extra charm to the expressions. Another advantage that trails in is the exactness of description because the image conjured by “round blue china-doll eyes” (39) and “the open-toed spike-heel sandal” (110) is crystal clear. Nobody can say it otherwise, “Black was for loss.” (71)

In Life Before Man, phrasal sentences like “Armored dildo.” (Atwood 1982: 11) “Behind her back. Out of control.” (140) and “Emulsified.” (213) are scattered galore. For emphasis **additional sentences** are used and only the required words are given space to pinpoint the focus. When an additional phrase like “A lot of man, a lot of women (161) is used, it clarifies the point in a better way. A human being is shown as nothing but an element and a change in the personality is as easy because it’s nothing but “Same molecules, different arrangement.” (270)

Atwood allows her characters to explain things when the necessity arises, “torture is a by-product. She’s merely trying to win”. (263) Power display is equally powerful when she writes, “She has been through this before, she can do it with one hand tied behind her

back”. (162) The dialogue “I want to be moved. Move me. *We are the numb. Long years ago/ We did this or that, and now we sit*” (100) slides from specific to general and the shift is shown by italics instead through an explanation. Repeatedly her characters crave “to create some balance in the universe, a tit for a tat” (177)

Jaded reality spitefully impinges on their desires and makes happiness an elusive element; no doubt Nate thinks of himself as “patchwork, a tin man, his heart filled with saw dust” (246) because he is a “hopeless sentimentalist” (162), making efforts to feel more than, “a teeny little dog turd”. (258) Absence of appreciation and acceptance forces him to think “of himself as a lump of putty, helplessly molded by the relentless demands and flinty disapprovals of the women he can’t help being involved with” (41) The **comparison** of a human being with things required for trivial purposes poignantly reflects the worthless condition of a man. Similarly when Elizabeth feels abandoned, Atwood uniquely describes her as “a dog in the manger” (203) to reflect supposedly blasé attitude of hers. The daughters are reduced to “counters in the bargaining process”. (204) Characteristics of lethargic indifference are pointedly portrayed when a man instead of a soul-mate seems “a large and fairly active slab of Philadelphia cream cheese”. (213)

Image of idyllic life is aptly conjured when newly married they enjoyed “a bygone romantic era, like some Disneyland movie about knighthood” (15). Under the intoxication of intimacy his wife appears to him “like a Madonna in a shrine, shedding a quiet light” (49) but she soon becomes “the lady with the axe” (49) when things go astray. Aptness of similes highlights the contrast between the different images for

women. At one moment she is like “some strange plant, smooth, thin, with sudden orange flowers” (71), the next she turns into a “boneless wraith” (267), or she could be like “a nurse hurrying over frozen Siberia, driven by love” (167), forced to “feel like a cipher.” (267) Allowed by Atwood, the lady characters can be fascinatingly labeled as “giraffe” (61), “a governess” (211), “the Dragon Lady” (245), “a dress at a bargain” (93), etc.

It may range from the zenith to the nadir but the impression made is always top-class. When a human being is compared, it could be anything and it could be any way because a man can be “probably as mysterious as any other object in the universe: a bottle, an apple” (213). The device of **anti-climax** though happens when there is an abrupt fall but the impact never dips, instead it raises the level of enjoyment when the hollowness of a man is unveiled using a statement like this, “he has pockets of energy, even violence, hidden in him, like Mexican jumping beans in a box of cotton wool” (213). The comparison may be the other way round also to show the different traits. The qualities could be really attention catching when a man is not a trash box but “a dangerous country, swarming with ambushes and guerrillas, the center of a whirlpool, a demon lover”. (213) Diversity of personality is reflected meticulously by an artist who is never short of well-crafted comparisons.

Her **similes** are functional because the impact desired is immediately created with considerable effect. When frivolity is to be highlighted, then for comparison trivial objects are inducted. Invariably, an uncommon gratification permeates. Degradation of the ceremony of marriage is brought forth ruthlessly when she allows her characters to get married “like trying on a shoe” (23). Similarly, characters stoop low to prefer

insignificant things to invaluable feelings and cry when deprived of masks, “I live like a peeled snail.” (11) Human body is merely shown as an instrument by Atwood as is clear from this usage, “servicing her body, like servicing a car ...ready for the time when she may be able to use it again, inhabit it”. (85)

Destructive power of the natural disaster is dexterously referred to, “the old fear... cataclysms... gathering like tidal waves at the other side of the world”. (140) Well wrought similes like “Impermeable; like a French raincoat” (11) are artistically manipulated by Atwood with perfect ease. Mechanical and manipulative nature of characters is revealed through the heartlessness of modern life, and the unusual comparison of ruthlessness of a place and insensitivity of a human being is remarkable one: “People think Toronto has changed, shaken off its blue-law ways, become chic and liberal, but Elizabeth knows that it hasn’t. At its core where there should be a heart, there is only Auntie Muriel” (121)

An unusual way of putting thoughts into expressions beautifies her narration. Expressions like “the land of perilous confidences” (160) work more prominently than the direct usage. Depiction of perception cannot be put in any other way without marring the beauty of expression: “What he liked about her at first was her vagueness, her lack of focus, an absence of edges that gave her a nebulous shimmer. Now it’s as if she’s been dropped on the sidewalk from a great height and has frozen there, all splayed angle and splinters” (34). Profundity of meaning is never diluted even when the same words are manipulated to coin the usage. On the contrary, the point becomes more focused, “something that might become her, something she might become”. (26)

Quite surprisingly, Atwood uses **musical repetition** for the description of harsh realities like “her scourging childhood, hunger and unbrushed hair behind her mother’s helpless pretensions”. (160) Use of the same words helps augment the intensity; when the novel begins with questions plainly placed as statements, “I don’t know how I should live. I don’t know how anyone should live. I live like a peeled snail. And that’s no way to make money” (11), the mental anguish gets unfolded.

Clarity is maintained but not the length of the **sentences** because they range from one word to many lines:

... in the days of Martha’s ascendancy, when Elizabeth thought she might be a real threat, she’d gone through considerable trouble to make sure thy met for lunches in good restaurants, where Elizabeth could demonstrate her own knowledge of the superior menu and get Martha slightly bombed on cocktails and wine (146)

Doris Lessing, known for her shrewd, no nonsense language, is greatly admired for apt observations and corresponding expressions. Joyce Carol Oates (1973) in her interview with Doris Lessing opines that Doris Lessing uses a style that is “never self-conscious or contrived”. But it can’t be stated about the effect of her works because the impression is always intense and deep. Her effortless attempt with words marks the induction of a style that got immediately noticed by its sheer uniqueness. Writing in an era where grammatical inaccuracy was always frowned upon she dared break free from the shackles and shocked puritans. Though very quickly, she got all the appreciation for the technical innovation she had inducted in her works. Her novel The Golden Notebook considered ‘a feminist classic’ is rich in style also. Alka Kumar (2001 : 11) vouchsafes for the superiority of Doris Lessing as a writer, “Lessing’s articulations are far meaningful in all

sorts of ways.” In moments of intense feelings to invest things and ideas with human qualities and passion, she attributes life and mind to inanimate things. Repetition of a word or phrase though used frequently is equally effective in fiction also for the sake of emphasis and Doris Lessing is no exception. “Doris Lessing uses repetition in the story to reinforce details of the scene ... or to identify people....” (Moore 2005)

Description is always given proper emphasis. To drive the point home, Lessing relies on different devices and accordingly indulges in crisp expressions, sometimes containing even a single word that tells us a great deal. Her following usage, in The Summer before the Dark, stand as a testimony nowhere lacking in the effect, “Thinking?” (Lessing 1975 : 5), “Three days.” (39), “Working.” (46), etc. Her **short expressions** like “Patience. Self-discipline. Self-control. Self-abnegation. Chastity. Adaptability to others – this above all. This always.” (89), “Who? The police?” (105), “sulked. Muttered. Broken plates. Slammed doors.” (194), etc. are used in between the sentences to provide relief to the readers because on an average her sentences are lengthy and snaking. When details keep following in immediate progression as pieces of information keep coming in the picture, the result can be a single **sentence** of many lines:

Men’s attention is stimulated by signals no more complicated than what leads the gosling; and for all her adult life, her sexual life, let’s say from twelve onwards, she had been conforming, twitching like a puppet to those strings... Next day Maureen was not anywhere to be seen – she had perhaps gone to Turkey?- and Kate wore the dark-green dress and was Mrs. Michael Brown all day, for with the mask, the charade, the fitting of herself to the template, came the old manner, the loving lovely Mrs. Kate Brown, whom shopkeepers served with a smile, and waiters liked to hover over. (176-7)

Condensed in capsule form perspicacity of life is always given its due place: “*Growing up is bound to be painful!*” (5), “*Ripeness is all.*” (9), etc. **Aphoristic statements** are never saturated with muddled obscurity: “*My life has changed because I have changed.*” (7), “It was all nonsense to see things in terms of peaks and crises: the personal events, like the public ones, were long-term affairs, after all.” (7), etc. To augment the effect of the indisputable reality, Lessing lets wisdom spill over in her expressions like “*Marriage is a compromise.*” (5), “*Love is a woman’s whole existence.*” (5), “We are what we learn.” (8), “growing old is a matter of years. (9), etc.

Exact impression backed by simple but aptly arranged words help her give a vivid picture resulting in the desired impact. Here, she displays T. S. Eliot’s magic of ‘visions and revisions.’ This sentence, “A woman stood on her back step, arms folded, waiting.” (5) gives the impression of something very serious but the second sentence “A woman stood on her back step, arms folded, waiting for a kettle to boil.” (5) brings in anticlimax. Simplicity of sense is never beyond doubt. Aptly, she makes use of long as well as short sentences, but to cast a unique spell she uses involved sentences where additional bits of information are buttressed along with the main one: “His round, humorous, harassed face – his permanent expression, because of being male nanny to so many committees – became agonized with remorse.” (29)

Verbs in quick succession are used to show the tumbling of events with nil breathing space: “Sitting and talking with Ahmed, standing and talking, walking and talking, making plans” (50), “What was the sense of loving, hating, wanting, resenting, needing,

rejecting – and sometimes all in the space of an hour” (36), etc. The condition of people, caught in the whirlpool of rat race, does not require detailed description when it can be put successfully in a succinct way: ‘All day long, busy busy busy – at what?’ (194) Sentences are simple to understand and the meaning conveyed is without any ambiguity as is clear from the ensuing sentences, “But why should anyone care that he, she, has changed, has learned, matured, grown, if he or she is a beetle?” (8), “She knew that she was already blooming, expanding, enlarging – she was wanted, needed” (52), etc.

Different verbs jostling with one another are not the only way of the depiction; by manipulating one verb only the long lasting impression is achieved: “They ... walking up and down, smiling, smiling, smiling.... They smile and smile and smile ... and bob smiling” (54), “And she smiles. She smiles. She smiles.” (55), “Kate was smiling, smiling” (56), etc. Various forms of the same word are used for emphasis on something specific that impart a unique quality to her description. The ensuing sentences speak volumes about this unique eminence of hers: “she is restless, can’t sit down, can’t sleep, can’t stop smiling, can’t eat.” (55), “and no matter how she dances, and smiles and poses and shouts” (55), etc. **Recurrence of words** is a dependable tool used for emphasis; except verbs, adverbs, prepositions, nouns are also used for meticulous execution of narration as is clear from the examples, “persuasive of irresponsibility, of gaiety, of people” (168), “it was saying again and again: This is what you have been doing for years and years and years.” (207), “Her manner – so indifferent, so sharp, so smilingly unsympathetic” (46), etc.

Comparisons taken from every possible source are scrupulously incorporated. Accuracy of impression, blended with acuity of expression, heightens the effect in the most spontaneous way: “the psyches ground together like pebbles on a beach in a storm” (86), “She did not walk inside, like the fine, almost unseeable envelope of a candle flame” (37), etc. Embossing is not the only requirement, lucidity is equally adhered to: “you look such a sad sack of a thing” (172), “like the start of an epic” (32), etc. Suitability rules when she writes, “she would be like a bit of useless machinery.” (50), “she felt like a doll whose sawdust was slowly trickling away” (65), etc. Loaded comparisons enrich the meaning in an indisputably supreme way. It can be inspired from the *things*, as is the case with these examples: “her room was like the undemanding box” (49), “She would be like a kind of machine herself” (27), “like a machine someone should have switched off” (56), “She had been set like a machine by twenty-odd years of being a wife and a mother.” (47), etc. Anything that suits the aptness of intentions is given generous space. Human, animal and mechanical similes are inducted and the impact bears testimony to the ingenuity of the author. Diversity enlarges the compass as the examples set the right tone: “Kate’s behaviour, her position, seemed like a wilful play-acting” (17), “her emotional self which seemed like a traitor” (123), “like a sentinel” (14), etc. Animal imagery is notably used with the maximum effect in the following comparisons, “That cat represents me, is myself.” (94), “Sometimes she had felt like a wounded bird, being pecked to death by the healthy birds. Or like an animal teased by cruel children.” (95), “like a queen termite” (52), etc.

Qualities attributed to expressions are not only profound but pertinent also as is visible from this example, “not only the thermostat switched to low, but her ‘sympathy’ switched off too” (45). Her range is assorted because her gamut includes varied expressions like, “hissing and dangerous water” (7), “gratified contemplation” (41), “a group-mother” (41), etc. Strangely enough she can be musical with the unmusical instruments like “saucers and spoons and sugar and strainer” (8). Adjectives pour in uninterrupted and in quick succession: “a shortened, heightened, concentrated time” (9), “the ever-available, ever-goodnatured, popular Kate Brown.” (53), “a dry, wry, cautious smile” (164), etc. Disorganized thoughts are disjointedly delineated with perfect ease when Doris writes, “She said she had ‘More or less’ decided to marry Philip. ‘After all’ – ‘what else’ – ‘who’d have thought that she, Maureen ...’ ‘Ah well, I suppose there’s no bucking it...’” (190).

Extended metaphor of seal is used to highlight the plight of Kate as like the seal she is also deprived of her authentic requirement of existence and sustenance:

But it was a seal, lying stranded and helpless among dry rocks high on a cold hillside. It was moaning. She picked it up. It was heavy. She asked if it were all right, if she could help it. It moaned, and she knew she had to get it to water. She started to carry the seal in her arms down the hill. (32)

Like the animal her mutilated self wants care and affections; bugged by indifference the need for help gets intensified and the efforts to save the seal become the efforts to save herself. In her dreams, she works hard to overcome the cause of sufferings because that will ultimately help her emerge as not only a survivor but also a winner.

The prolific dream life given to Anna Wulf, Kate Brown and others, who embark on a dream voyage into their inner space, illustrates the significance Doris Lessing attaches to dreams. According to Lessing, dreaming, like writing, is creative and she states, "The unconscious artist who resides in our depths is a very economical individual. With a few symbols a dream can define the whole of one's life and warn us of the future, too". (Lessing 1994 : 12) Lessing examines dreams as ways into knowledge of those levels of consciousness that our conditioning teaches us to ignore. The self, Kate Brown perceives as the real one, is a product of conditioning and it may be possible to access the "real" self by removing this filter of conditioning. Her dreams drag her to realize her position and show her the way out of the impasse:

When she notices it again she finds it hurt and bleeding. The winds and scars on its body require proper care and attention and as soon as it is looked after it starts showing signs of improvement. Indirectly, it is a hint for Kate Brown that the way she has looked after the seal in her dreams is the proper way to look after herself because nobody is going to lick her wounds which she has received while marching gracefully ahead on her path. No sporadic attempt is enough because it is so brutally hurt that it requires consistent and constant caring. Fanatic efforts on her part to save the poor creature are direct indication of her desire to save herself. As soon as suffering is seen the sufferings of seal come to the fore with a powerful thrust.

Conscious efforts are made in The Golden Notebook also to give space to the statements abounding in uncanny sagacity: "one can't go through one's whole life in phases" (Lessing 1972 : 268), "That's what life is, getting used to things that are really intolerable" (372), etc. The rays of prudence add extra chatoyant to her usage, making it philosophical in tone: "You must remember that the end of an analysis does not mean the end of the experience itself." (250), "everything has two faces" (251), etc. Readers get

spellbound by utterances like, “Because, in short, a man is as good as his fantasies?” (89-90), ‘All self-knowledge is knowing, on deeper and deeper levels, what one knew before.’ (241), etc.

Caring a fig for the **rules of grammar**, she can make use of *and* as many times in a sentence as she likes as is clear from the examples, “I feel like breaking out and shouting and screaming” (34), “everyone so kind, and so decent and so bloody dull” (65), etc. and she can delete it according to her whims as and when she desires as is clear from this sentence, “She slept, overstimulated, nervous, exhausted, cheated.” (306) Though rules are broken but the intensity of the moment gets justified by being true to the emotions. Her fertile imagination and individual liking brings out new verbs formed from nouns, for example, “small and low ceiled”. (178) Attached expressions are not without significance because the urgency is reflected this way in the most convincing way. Words are glued together and nothing seems to stop her from giving birth to new expressions like “this million-and-a-little-over-a-half people” (418), “gun-metal-writhing-grey streets” (431), “never-to-be-forgotten” (433), etc. **Rhythm** is generously used to highlight the disjointed course in the ensuing phrases, “Molly frankly and loudly sighed, shrugged and spread out her hands” (54), “terror of being trapped and tamed” (140), ‘the air would be full of screams, groans, grunts and gasps’ (422), etc. The recurring beat strengthens the sensation.

Sentences are meandering but meaning is accessible: “He gasped, breathed deeply, put his head down on my shoulder for a moment, then staggered to my bed and collapsed on

it, face down.” (571). Another characteristic feature of her writing is added explanation. Whenever the need for elaboration is felt and it seems disjointed with the flow then the information is never dropped but added with the help of parenthesis: “(he spoke the name with an already practised propriety, grave and formal)” (307), “(though she did not know why)” (623), etc. Immediate responses are always given space at the spur of the moment: “The word arrogant hits me; because I’ve convicted myself so often of being arrogant.” (353)

Extra emphasis demands extra efforts to impart a unique delight; grammar is always briskly brushed aside when the gaze is focused on the pleasure: “Now there’s a man! What strength! What calm! What serenity!” (603). Rarely she does but takes liberty with spelling also “Enuff said?” (348). Sentences sans verb like “Nelson and she instantly friendly.” (468-9), “And above this unpleasant neck, a narrow glossy pert head, like a bird’s.” (351), “He watching me, sideways, unhostile, with affection.” (599) are used with great success. Usual construction of a sentence is not always maintained: “Majestic and untamed is Africa!” (433). And sometimes puritans are also pleased when she writes, ““I *am* blind, aren’t I?”” (366) At all costs splendor of expression is maintained and everyone revels in when comes across phrases like, “walking through the chaos of his imagination” (613), “like a shadow that would absorb the body that cast it” (616), “I was inside a shell of anxious tension that I could positively smell, like a stale fog of nervous exhaustion.” (562), etc.

Apart from long and rambling sentences exhaustive explanation is also given with the help of words arranged in a beeline; eclectic word-selection intoxicates the readers as no space is left for digressions: “a lively, slight, lank, black-shock-haired, hazel-eyed, energetic young man” (96), “small, thin, dark, brittle, with large black always-on-guard eyes, and a fluffy haircut” (30), etc. The impact of such an account is instant and immense as is clear from “detailed, analytical, practically sensual appraisal” (309). Visual impact of these clusters of words is exceptionally powerful because when we come across expressions like “his new bitterly self-hating smile” (150), “kind, hearty, direct, full of battling self-respect” (186), “deliberately barren, limited relationship” (216), etc., the imagination is well-fed. Exactness of expression is never compromised; bewildered confusion and stammering is sincerely portrayed when unusual repetition takes place: “I, I, I, I – I began to feel as if the word I was being shot at me like bullets from a machine gun.” (538), “I. I. I am. I am going to. I won’t be. I shall. I want. I” (605), etc. Uneven conglomeration of objects for a sentence results in a construction like, “She had the child, her self-respect, a future” (180).

For emphasis **repetition** is heavily relied on because it turns out to be the best way to increase the intensity of utterance: “Yes, I’m angry. I’m angry. I’m angry” (60), “I was so bored, so bored, so bored.” (63), etc. The word repeated is not restricted to any category but liberally culled from all categories as it serves the purpose in the most befitting way: “a whole, reflecting a whole life, a whole human being” (226), “And you-you-you are free” (275), ‘But I think and think and think.’ (353), etc. Going by these examples, no wonder her style is labeled as innovative: ‘In one way and another, ditto, ditto, ditto.’

(69), “First, I’m twenty... Second, I’m twenty... Thirdly, I’m twenty” (138), etc. In one sentence the name is repeatedly used when the focus of attention are the split selves of the lady and in another example action is reiterated when the focus is not on person but on the action: “Anna, beautiful Anna, absurd Anna, mad Anna” (133) and “Jonnie played, played, played, quite oblivious.” (135)

While Lessing keeps the attention of the reader under consistent control by providing niceties in swift torrents she can be very short and soothing to provide them with a sentence merely clothed in adjectives, for example, “Warm, comfortable, discreet.” (290) One-word sentences and phrase sentences are scattered in abundance: “Another and another. Paul shot. A bird fell. He shot, the second fell.” (421), “Easter week.” (427), “The bare vast floor.” (427), “Few, yes. But *real*. This was reality.” (427), etc. Twelve words in succession stand for twelve one-word sentences and understanding of the concept is as clear as it could be: “Men. Women. Bound. Free. Good. Bad. Yes. No. Capitalism. Socialism. Sex. Love.” (63) Her sentences may be monosyllabic words, phrases or sentences of many lines:

When I talk about this with other women, they tell me they have to fight all kinds of guilt they recognise as irrational, usually to do with working, or wanting time for themselves; and the guilt is a habit of the nerves from the past, just as my happiness a few moments ago was a habit of the nerves from a situation that is finished. (358)

For reference even parts of the body are used and the resultant effect is never out of place. In fact, the impact is sounder in these references, “like painted clothes-pegs with painted round black eyes” (424), “his eyes like arrows” (430), “bosom was high like a shelf in front” (104), etc. In addition to that, animals are also referred to because a

distraught individual is as good as “an alert threatening animal” (564). The impact is always pristine and pointed in these references, “both as ignorant as monkeys about economics” (44), “sleep like a little cat” (107), “vigorous and fussy as an old hen” (114), etc. Insensitivity and boorishness is referred to when it is said, “Bloody complacent swine they all are” (63), “You are an inhuman swine” (142), etc. Her arena is not merely restricted to these references only, according to the need anything can be used to drive the point home effectively. It could be from nature or urban pieces, for example, “spinning off down like a leaf into the dark, into the sea” (315), “resentment is like a raging poison” (330), etc. Mechanical and malicious nature of life is revealed through such similes, “his mouth was tight, like a weapon” (569), “face like a fist” (559), etc.

Apart from references, the beauty of expression is maintained by the exquisite execution of words in expressions like, “a prisoner of his own nature” (52), “Suffering from a paralysis of the will” (261), etc. Readers, no wonder, easily associate themselves with “a tranquility of extreme fatigue” (109), “roughness of unhappiness” (127), “daring the Himalayas of truth of itself” (433), etc. Inanimate objects are bestowed with the power to feel human emotions and that’s how it becomes “anxious money” (471) and the “spectacles glinted anxiously” (635). Blessed with the same human attributes, “The water danced and drummed in a fury of white drops”. (406) Onomatopoeic sounds are used to impart a touch of authenticity when it is written, “Frrrrrr, frrr, frrr, say the banana trees” (430).

Dreams, a tool used to jolt and counterbalance the conscious, are aptly employed with maximum effect. Anna eventually suffers a mental breakdown and it is only through this disintegration that she is able to discover a new 'wholeness' that she writes about in the final notebook. Dreams bring in all the unconscious and subconscious apprehensions that plague her. Her realization commences through dreams when her unconscious and subconscious start reacting, sometimes she loses and sometimes she wins but she learns how and when to struggle. Dreams reflect insecurity and anxiety, starvation, invasion, attainment in accordance with her mental frame. The way Kate Brown comes to realize the importance of self, Anna also comes to accept the reality without inflated simulations.

Sections of conventional narrative ironically entitled 'Free Women' enclose and intersperse the four experimental notebooks of writer. The titles of the chapters are unique in the sense instead of referring to the related phrases Doris Lessing brings the concept of diaries, written in different coloured notebooks, each corresponding to a different part of the lady as woman, lover, writer, and political activist: FREE WOMAN 1, FREE WOMAN 2, FREE WOMAN 3, FREE WOMAN 4, including same The Notebooks (The Black Notebook, The Red Notebook, The yellow Notebook, The Blue Notebook). The same continues until THE GOLDEN NOTEBOOK comes and ultimately at the end comes FREE WOMAN 5. For FREE WOMAN and The Notebooks whole page is spared, to show the break and shift from one perspective to another one. Her stylistic experimentation to depict the personal and artistic crisis in the life of a character who makes deliberate attempts to compartmentalize her life into various roles seems to be perfect as it gives the intended impression.

Words, phrases, sentences or paragraphs, simple, intricate, long, short, clear or vague are used with pointed precision by Arundhati Roy to reflect the cultivation of sagacious choice of words dipped in good taste. Phrases with conflicting meanings enrich the texture by bringing in much required pleasure. The repetition of words, phrases or sentences is immaculately intermixed with the fluent flow of text. Instinctive use and arrangement of delightful sound result in the production of verbal music. The popularly accepted habit of thinking in vernacular and then giving shape to their thoughts into English gives rise to curious turns of phrases not totally unaccepted. Expressions that offend grammar of idiom are liberally scattered all over her works. The comparison, not only implied but extended also, shows marked degree of imaginative stimulus. *The God of Small Things*, says Jason Cowley (1997 : 28), “fulfils the highest demand of the art of fiction: to see the world, not conventionally or habitually, but as if for the first time.” Same trend gets reflected in her style also, which instantly catches the fancy of the readers. No wonder, the Booker Committee could not help eulogizing her for the exquisite endeavour. Surprisingly, she gets praise for syntactically breaking the conventional rules of grammar and syntax, abandoning orthodox punctuation, coining new phrases, importing typographical devices, and running sense impressions together with aesthetic richness. Uday Shankar Ojha and Gajendra Kumar (2001 : 210) also praise her, “Arundhati Roy, the Booker prize winner, is, indeed, superb in exploiting and exploring the linguistic competence, pliancy, resilience and mobility in English language.”

Arundhati Roy, liberally discarding elaborate paragraphs and replacing them with sentences of couple of words, introduces run on line paragraphs where it appears more

like dialogue delivery as is clear from the following **paragraph**. This is not the only passage, it is one of the passages scattered all over the novel, The God of Small Things:

Anyway, now she thinks of Estha and Rahel as *Them*, because separately, the two of them are no longer what *They* were or ever thought *They'd* be.

Ever.

Their lives have a size and a shape now. Estha has his and Rahel hers.

Edges, Borders, Boundaries, Brinks and Limits have appeared like a team of trolls on their separate horizons. Short creatures with long shadows, patrolling the Blurry End. Gentle half-moons have gathered under their eyes and they are as old as Ammu was when she died. Thirty-one.

Not old.

Not young.

But a viable die-able age. (Roy 1997 : 3)

In a unique way, Roy connects first and second chapter using one line **sentence**:

“HOWEVER, for practical purposes, in a hopelessly practical world...”

In her work one word sentences are in abundance, as many a time it's only a single word that stands for the entire sentence: “Wild. Sick. Sad.” (159), “Straight. Neat.” (39), “Trains. Traffic. Music.” (15), etc. But these one-word sentences like “Slimy. Warty. Croaking.” (187), “Unspeakable. Numb.” (12), etc. speak volumes about the corresponding thought. Phrase sentences are also scattered all over the novel: “After all these years.” (14), “The Stock Market.” (15), “A hundred times.” (60), etc. And nowhere the need is felt for more explanation when we come across these phrases: “Satin-lined.” (4), “Wrinkled by the sun. With sea-secrets in him.” (13), etc. Very short and crisp sentences are also there in her work to give her style a crispy flavor: ““Brass handle shined.”” (4) Not only that, words are clubbed together to form only one word: ““Whatisit? Whathappened?”” (6), “Stoppit. So she stoppited.” (141), etc. Arundhati goes

on to stun the puritans of language further as she attaches the same prefix twice to the same word: “their father re-Returned Estha.” (9)

Arundhati Roy draws captivating word picture with few strokes of words, “The house itself looked empty. The doors and windows were locked. The front verandah bare. Unfurnished. But the skyblue Plymouth with chrome tailfins was still parked outside, and inside, Baby Kochamma was still alive.” (2) Working like true psychologist, she employs the same words both as noun and verb in her sentences in quick succession, “Her own grief grieved her.” (5), “Ammu’s ‘life had been lived’ (38), etc. This device is dexterously displayed to develop the effect: “While the drummers drummed and the dancers danced” (127), “The nodder nodded” (129), etc. Not only that, noun is also unhesitatingly used as verb: ““Sophie Mol, hatted, bellbottomed” (186). Similarly, same verb is used twice but to the delight of readers: “*Where to?* the click was meant to mean.” (8)

Richness of imagination enables her to draw **comparisons** radiating a striking sheen; chatoyant similes give myriad of images. She takes great pleasure in finding comparisons for different parts of body: “‘jaw like raindrops on the edge of a roof’” (5), “‘Her skin was stretched... like shiny scar’” (160), “‘stomach like a domed monument on a hill.’” (117), etc. As if it does not seem to satisfy her creative urge, she goes on to compare the same limbs with different things, “Estha’s hair was... like the inverted petals of a flower.” (90), “hair ...like coiled wires” (133), etc. With reference to face, she thinks it can be anything because it reflects the mental state of the person: “a face like a knot” (79), “face was set like stone” (8), “closed her face like a cupboard” (29), etc. Eyes, the

window of the soul, can't be left unmentioned: "her eyes looked like pink-veined flesh petals" (135), "eyes were blurred jewels" (149), "eyes spread like butter" (20), etc. Mention is also made of flesh as well as voice; Estha's voice is "like sugarcane stripped of its bark" (14) while "her armfat swung like heavy washing in the wind. Now it hung down like a fleshy curtain" (62) and the "loose flesh that stretched willingly off his bones, like chewing gum" (14). Analogous things also appeal to her as the parts of the body and the following examples like "His vest...like a second skin" (116), "She looked like a bottled foetus" (170), "yellow church swelled like a throat with voices" (6), etc. bear the testimony.

Nature and abstractness permeate in her comparisons because she includes anything that catches her fancy for being apt. The objects of nature are compared to materialistic things: "Raindrops slid... like shining beads on an abacus" (90), "a raindrop glistened...like a heavy bead of mercury" (93), etc. Other things are compared to the objects of nature to highlight delicacy and beauty: "dropping like a dark star out of the sky" (6), "Like old roses on a breeze" (6), "sac ...bloated like a bubble" (162), etc. Whatever the way may be, it is always meticulous and gorgeous: "Strange insects appeared like ideas" (9), "Silence hung in the air like secret loss" (91), etc. Practical features preserve their due by getting required place: "Rahel drifted into marriage like a passenger drifts towards an occupied seat" (18), "she belched like a truck-driver" (161), "sharpened it like a pencil" (82), etc. At one moment, the attention is caught by "Dead as a doorknob" (118), next moment it drifts to "like a frog shaped stain on the road" (82), then shifts to "His puff looked.... Like well-whipped eggwhite" (137), and then it invariably rests upon "Like a coy, frightened bride" (80).

Capital letters are used but not only at the beginning of the sentences; even a question is asked with capitals and the need of safety is prominently highlighted by capital letters: “What was it that gave Ammu this Unsafe Edge?” (44) This unusual practice of using capital letters within the sentence helps her intensify the emphasis: “For the Time Being they had no....” (36), ““We’re Prisoners of War,”” (53), “Estha said that was a Bad Sign.” (58), etc. Not all the words, but desirable phrases are given the privilege of capitals: ““she was a Little Disappointed.”” (59), ““She saw Grief and Trouble ahead”” (78), “He said it was Sheer Greed.” (114), etc. Inappropriate and unacceptable pattern is preferred to the formal and dignified one because the emphasis created tunes with the intention of the writer: “Before the Terror.” (38), “Ayemenem his private Heart of Darkness.” (52), ““He had seen the Crawling Backwards Days”” (76), “And the Air was full of Thoughts and Things to Say.” (142), etc. Her imagination coaxes her to induct words with capitals inserted in-between, for example, “SatisfAction”. (302)

The desired impact is perfect when Arundhati writes, “Their Prer NUN sea ayshun was perfect.” (154), “When eggzackly?” (324), “Verrrry sweet” (323), etc. Similarly, place for regional words like “*Naaley*” (340), “*meeshas*” (318), “*Madi aayirikum*” (310), etc. is reserved. To show the reversed pattern of the life of Rahel, reversal of letters is preferred:

‘ssenetilo**P**,’ he said. ‘ssenetilo**P**, ecneideb**O**,’
 ‘ytlayo**L**, ecnegilletn**I**,’ Rahel said.
 ‘ysetruo**C**.’
 ‘ycneiciff**E**.’ (313)

Simple but unaccepted ways are used to illustrate the effect:

Nictitating
ictitating
titating
itating
tating
ating
ting
ing (189)

Outstanding among all these innovations is the device of **personification** that the author extensively uses to allow lifeless objects pulsate and breathe like living beings. Inanimate objects are given human traits. With effortless ease “Margaret Kochamma’s grief and bitterness at her daughter’s death coiled inside her like an angry spring.” (31) The house watched children play “Like an old man” (165) and at the same time, “Past the resentful older houses tinged green with envy.” (13) Road is compared to “a wide lady squeezing down a narrow corridor” (65). Silence is given special space because “Once the quietness arrived, it stayed and spread in Estha.” (11) Furthermore, it is given human trait, the way “The silence gathered its skirts and slid” reminds of a girl. (93) Keeping pace with the strangeness of objects Arundhati places two objects for the same verb while only one suits it: “music grew shrill and angry” (167), “His puff looked crisp and surprised” (137), “The grass looked wetgreen and pleased” (10), etc. However, except the desired oddity nothing seems preposterous. In a unique way even deadness is allowed to grow: “Only the vines kept growing, like toe-nails on a corpse.” (27) The beauty of “the ugly face of sympathy” (43), “Slim snakes whispering” (92), “the already frightened air” (68), etc. remains unmatched.

Human beings are compared to inanimate objects. Estha is compared to a “quiet bubble floating on a sea of noise” (11) while “Baby Kochamma rose between them like a hill” (62). Dejected and neglected, “They remembered being pushed... like billiard balls.’ (84) Proud and excited, “Margaret Kochamma and Sophie Mol...like a pair of tennis trophies” (173) while “She said that she felt like a road sign” (161). Utilitarian comparisons can be quite surprising: “Nuns walked across it. Like slow cigars.” (99), “that sit on dusty shelves like stuffed birds” (129), etc.

Rhythm gives a specific flavour to her phrases like “harbinger of harsh reality” (16), “guru of gore” (16), “something still and small” (19), “Paradise Pickles & Preservatives” (30), etc. The beauty of musical sounds enhances the enjoyment of the readers: “The time was ten to two” (123), “screaming steel bird in the skyblue sky” (139), etc. Sentences like, “She smiled a sleep smile that dreamed of dolphins and a deep barred blue.” (119), “Her belly button protruded from her satiated satin stomach” (117), etc., are sure means to satiate readers with pure delight. She also uses the devices of alliteration and rhyme put together in phrases like ‘voices muffled by mud and wood.’ (7) Chimes like ‘As big as the belly of a beer-drinking man’, (87) ‘Driftless driftwood’, (203) etc. are given a special place in her work.

Animal imagery exercises special influence in her work. Things are given the attribute of animals: the necklace “changed colour like a chameleon. (147), “The Plymouth looked like an angular blue animal” (70), “Shiny black hairpins, like straightened snakes” (133), etc. Human beings in conformance with the activities are compared to the related

animals. Estha is compared to “the uneasy octopus” (12), Father Mulligan is “like a high-stepping camel” (24), Chacko “lay like a beached whale” (119), twins are “like a pair of small bewildered frogs” (43), and Nuns “gathered like ants” (99). They are allowed to look like “a wild boar” (84), “an unfriendly jeweled bear” (102), while “he walked through the world like a chameleon” (14). Some of the notable images in *The God of Small Things* are as follows: “Rahel was like an excited mosquito” (98), “The driver has the ferrety alertness of a small rodent” (113), “The twins could swim like seals” (204), etc.

Double adjectives like “bright orange gardening gloves” (26), “A foolish jewelled bride” (43), etc. are also lavishly used to enrich her work. Not only that the readers feel gratified when they read such a rich work where double adjectives are scattered in abundance: “slightly feverish glitter” (39), “little orange pipette” (50), ‘tattered-curtained doctor’s door’ (133), etc. Immensely fascinated by eyes, Arundhati repeatedly adds different adjectives to them: “opaque green eyes” (12), “effulgent emerald eyes” (24), “slanting, sleepy eyes” (37), “Puzzled brown eyes” (42), “dry, aching eyes” (115), etc. Double negatives like ‘not wholly unaware’ (23) are also in plenty to heighten the effect. Similarly, opposites are used in the same sentence to show the difference: “Beautiful Ugly toads” (187), “a familiar voice in a most unfamiliar circumstance” (71), “bottomless-bottomful” (140), etc. Liberally, she uses contrasting words: “An unmixable mix” (44), “Touchables and Untouchables” (69), “Maybe or maybe not” (115), etc.

Repetition of the same word is used liberally to show the void existing in the lives of her characters: “Rahel grew up without a brief. Without anybody to arrange a marriage for her. Without anybody who would pay her a dowry and therefore without an obligatory husband looming in her horizon.” (17) Deprivation seems aptly prevalent when same word ricochets again and again: “not allowed to walk on public roads, not allowed to cover their upper body, not allowed to carry umbrellas.” (74) The ultimate fear becomes more and more prominent; words like the repeated beating of the drums intensify all fears: “At least not until the Terror took hold of him. Not until he saw.... Not until he saw it returned at dawn. Not until he saw what his Untouchable son had touched. More than touched.” (78) Effect increases with the help of repetition: “She thought of Slow being a person. Slow Kurien. Slow Kutty. Slow Mol. Slow Kochamma. (96) Aptness never eludes Arundhati, even when she employs the same words for unbolting her ideas: “It was not *what* he said, but the *way* he said it. Not *what* he did, but the *way* he did it.” (76)

Arundhati’s **metaphors** are adequately captivating. When she compares she seems flawless, “So, she a glass bead, and he a green gram.” (132), “Estha’s eyes were frightened saucers.” (133). Her metaphors that move beyond boundaries provide her work an extra richness: “His yellow teeth were magnets. They saw, they smiled, they sang, they smelled, they moved. They mesmerized.” (102) Confidently, she flaunts her device of extended metaphor. Velutha, the **extended metaphor**, is the harbinger of hope and happiness in the lives of others. He works for the betterment of the downtrodden so that in future his fellow brothers don’t suffer the atrocities of the old and stale system. He wants his father to be happy and contented. He is the source of constant joy and

happiness for Rahel and Estha. Not only that, he is also the force of life for Ammu, who hands over her body and soul to him because he makes her feel complete.

“It *was* Veluthashe knew his back. It had a light brown birthmark, shaped like a pointed dry leaf. He said it was a lucky leaf, that made the monsoons come on time. A brown leaf on a black back. An autumn leaf at night. A lucky leaf that wasn’t lucky enough.” (73)

“And a white shirt over a black back with a birthmark.” (79) His white shirt is the mark of his whiteness. “He was called Velutha – which means White in Malayalam – because he was so black.” (73) His name shows the purity of his soul. He is loved for his probity by those who don’t wear the spectacles of pride and prejudice. “And he had blood-red nails and a brown leaf on his back that made the monsoons come on time.” (191) His advent in the life of Ammu and her kids brings relief and love.

Toni Morrison’s use of concrete, vivid and pictorial words, her power of selecting the right word, the handling of pronouns, adjectives and the various tenses of the verb, the conversational tone, a return to the common speech, are some of the distinctive features of her writing style. She succeeds well in her attempt “to restore the language that black people spoke to its original power.” (Sumana 1998 : 38) She has also the knack of making powerful effects by the repeated use of a single word. The absence of fertility and peace is indicated by the repeated use of the negative in her prose. When she has to make some profound statement, she is more formal, rather than simple and conversational. She uses words, phrases and images taken from the sordid realities of everyday urban life. All grammatical links, all connectives, are eliminated, as in telegraphic language, and there is free association of ideas and sudden jumps from one concept to another to the great

bewilderment and enjoyment of the readers. To achieve dew-dipped freshness Toni consciously strives to “familiarize the strange and mystify the familiar.” (Morrison 1992 : 15) Like Coleridge, she succeeds with considerably singular impact.

In consonance with any musical composition Jazz begins with an unusually striking **onomatopoeic** word “Sth” (Morrison 2001 : 3) to suggest the beginning of a musical piece abounding in rhythm and beat. In Jazz one is forced to listen with delight to its mystery and music. Referring to the respective ups and downs, alliteration of sounds makes the prose much musical. In these sentence, “So the weekends, destined to disappoint, are strident, sullen, sprinkled with bruises and dots of blood.” (50) and “The song stopped, and a snap like the breaking of twigs took its place.” (177) Toni, with the help of jarring notes, tries to conjure the image of a land where barrenness is in abundance. With effortless ease she allows her ingenuity to create “eyes squinted and smoking with fury, (that) stared right at the sister” (21), or “the laugh-loose and loud” (20), when “his mind soaked and sodden with sorrow” (161).

Onomatopoeic effect is used to show the trauma of coming to the same things over and over again when “she dug down deep enough” (85) and “Suffer(s) the summer sweat” (56), “to soft skin on stone” (34). The battering of feelings where “mother-hunger had hit her like a hammer” (108) is aptly highlighted with the help of corresponding rhythm. Same words can be playfully placed within the rhythm for emphasis in sentences like “I walked and worked, worked and walked” (126), “He looked hurt, deeply, deeply hurt for a few seconds... clouding the crystal and softening the starched” (141), etc.

Reverberation of recurrence accentuates the stillness: “One for me, she says, and one for you. One for me and one for you.” (39), “how long, how long, how long” (56), etc.

Immensely rich **similes** that make her work affluent are scattered galore. Her comparisons, keeping pace with her portrayal of naked reality, are stark and pointing. Living under immense duress “the crowd didn’t scatter like the flock of redwings they looked like” (130) for “they had just stood there like street-lights (92) and “forgetfulness fell like pollen” (100) on people who “hunched like mice near a can fire” (113), while “Opinions, decisions popped through the crowd like struck matches” (20). Poor victims caught in the snare can’t escape as the ground is “as porous as a sieve” (182), the buildings are “like castles in pictures” (127), “Daylight slants like a razor cutting the building in half” (7), “rooms are like the empty birdcages wrapped in cloth” (11), and where “poisoned silence float(s) through the rooms like a big fishnet (5). Jolted out of the luxury of daydreaming, Joe feels the burns for “Noon light follow(s) him like lava into a stone room” (183), and aptly he looks “like an empty man” (158) who wishes to be redeemed “like a pawn ticket” (159).

Human beings who are as “Defenseless as ducks” (74) have been stooped to the point of mere physical existence as life entwined in the usual routine is nothing more than “glistening balls like soap bars left in a dishpan full of water”. (93) These “old cocks” (133) are nothing but “patent leather”. (132) “Later, and little by little, feelings, like sea trash (are) expelled on a beach” (75) and when they hear their “question like the pop of a toy gun” (85) they become “like the smiles of the dead left over from their lives” (161),

where the “train shiver(s) with them” (30). In this world of constant pestering it’s hard to maintain the innocence. Their eyes may be as “round as silver dollars” (83) or they may feel laughing “loud as a child” (86), or “moving like taut silk or loose metal” (66) but in fact, they are “like a lamp in the quiet” (139), “drawn like a magnet to a small side table” (80). Similarly, reference to a “lonesome chair left like an orphan” (89) is rather scary because even children are reduced to neglected, trivial and disposable things. Expressions like “Your wit surfaces over and over like the rush of foam to the rim. The laughter is like peeling bells that don’t need a hand to pull on the rope” (187), “Cologne in a blue bottle that smelt like a whore” (134), etc. display the rich range of Toni’s imagination. Whereas expressions like “Joe felt the pleasure of his own smile as though sand-coloured spats covered his shoe tops”, (70) “tree limbs are like wet fingers playing in wooly green hair” (118) etc. lavishly feed the imaginative hunger of the readers.

To emphasize the severity, intensity, and exigency, Toni reliably banks on **pithy statements** like “All that.” (5), “Hep.” (7), “Mix.” (9), “Yes. No. Both. Either. But not this nothing.” (178), etc. Toni does not remain satisfied with routine writing; writing correctly is not always supposed to be effective and honesty of expression is considered superior to grammatical accuracy because there is not only writer but reader also. The words and phrases used as sentences are fresh, full of strength and vitality because they are exact: “Molten. Thick and slow-moving.” (16), “Study, work, memorize” (63), “Distracted she was. About Dorcas, probably.” (72), etc. Instead of vague and general sentences, pictorial words and phrases are used: “he just did it. One man. One defenseless girl. Death. A sample-case man. A nice, neighborly, everybody-knows-him man.” (73),

“Nothing on his mind but her. Won’t work. Can’t sleep. Grieves all day, all night” (15), etc. Thorough explanation is not at all required when things are conveyed convincingly with the help of mere details: “Here comes the new. Look out. There goes the bad stuff. The bad stuff.” (7), “Some gleaming, cracking, scary stuff.” (10-11), etc.

Her overflowing array allows her to induct as many devices as she thinks suits her narration. Uncommon combinations are used not because of the preference but because of the requirement: “cream-at-the-top-of-the-milkpail face of someone” (12), “Where-did-she-go-and-why man. So-lonesome-I-could-die man” (119), etc. Necessity of being attached to things is brought to the fore by providing the right combinations glued together by force, such as “things-nobody-could-help stuff” (7), “ready-for-bed-in-the-street clothes” (55), “used-to-be-long-ago-crazy girl” (167), etc. Along with the hyphenated expressions Toni Morrison also uses run on details when her **sentence** seems to be simply sprawling:

Breathing hurts in weather that cold, but whatever the problem of being winterbound in the City they put up with them because it is worth anything to on Lenox Avenue safe from fays and the things they think up; where the sidewalks, snow-covered or not, are wider than the main roads of the towns where they were born and perfectly ordinary people can stand at the stop, get on the streetcar, give the man the nickel and ride anywhere you please, although you don’t please to go many places because everything you want is right where you are: the church, the store, the party, the women, the men, the postbox (but no high schools), the furniture store, street newspaper vendors, the bootleg houses (but no banks), the beauty parlors, the barbershops, the juke joints, the ice wagons, the rag collectors, the poll halls, the open food markets, the number runner, and every club, organization, group, order, union, society, brotherhood, sisterhood or association imaginable. (10)

To infuse a touch of reality Morrison uses words in the same way in which the concerned people speak. Words are written the way they are spoken. No wonder, she writes, “Gimme this, I give you that. Gimme this. Gimme this.” (39), “Spouse I tell her.” (47), etc. She even uses **ungrammatical constructions** to heighten the effect that is placed in perfect synchronization with the grammar of the moment in sentences like “But you wasn’t there.” (131) “A me he was loving” (97), etc. Astonishingly, nothing seems awkward when she uses expressions like, “He was persuaded to transfer hisself someplace, anyplace, else.” (100), “his house was full of motherlessness” (167), etc. Double negatives are used to counterbalance all prevailing hopelessness in expressions like “your faucet don’t drip no more” (48), “I don’t have no evil of my own” (80), “He never hurt nothing” (80), “You won’t be picking nothing in the morning” (104), etc. Another astonishing device that Toni uses is of using sounds as verbs in sentences like “Right after the gun went thuh!” (130), “The boy tsched his mule” (157), etc.

In Song of Solomon also, her **similes** are not pompous but pregnant because they enable her to draw attention to the related characteristic. Like every human being, caught in a situation where nothing seems to help, her character “felt like a garbage pail for the actions and hatreds of other people” (Morrison 1998 : 120) as “The questions about his family still knocked around in his head like billiard balls” (294). According to their capability and the treatment meted out to them, they react “Like the trees, they offered her all they had: love murmurs and a protective shade” (315), while “she stood there like a puppet strung up by a puppet master who had gone off to some other hobby” (301) and “Words tossed like stones into a silent canyon.” (319)

Along with short and simple similes, **extended simile** is also given space in the ensuing line, “Like a lighthouse keeper drawn to his window to gaze once again at the sea, or a prisoner automatically searching out the sun as he steps into the yard for his hour of exercise, Ruth looked for the watermark several times during the day.” (11) Comparisons following one after another for the same thing, give her work an extra flavour as when “Ruth was not impressed. Death always smiled. And breathed. And looked helpless like a shinbone, or a tiny speck of black on the Queen Elizabeth roses, or film on the eye of a dead goldfish.” (136) Opulence of her associations is easily gauged by the fact that Negroes are compared to different shades either of the same or different colours. Her description is deceptively undemanding:

“There’re five or six kinds of black. Some silky, some wooly. Some just empty. Some like fingers. ... saying something is pitch black is like saying something is green. What kind of green? Green like my bottles? Green like a grasshopper? Green like a cucumber, lettuce, or green like the sky is just before it breaks loose to storm? Well, night black is the same way. May as well be a rainbow.” (40-41)

Personification is used for an inexplicable reality like life because for Toni, it is also human, “Life that crawled, life that slunk and crept and never closed its eyes. Life that burrowed and scurried, and life so still it was indistinguishable from the ivy stems on which it lay.” (219-220)

Her lively and sumptuous expressions like “Her lips were alive with small movements” (30) and “His eyes traveled up the stairs” (239) delight her readers immensely. When she says, “She was old. So old she was colorless. So old only her mouth and eyes were distinguishable features in her face. Nose, chin, cheekbones, forehead, neck all surrendered their identity to the pleats and crochetwork of skin committed to constant

change.” (240), her strikingly outstanding grasp over the raw description gives her work an ineffable aura. Juicily, she dwells on details when she wants to but succinctly she restricts her description to provide enough food for the fertile imagination of the reader in phrases like “Dark, ruined, evil.” (238)

Sometimes in complete contrast with elaborate particulars or short sentences, verbs pour in uninterrupted in hordes and the ensuing **sentence** is an unexceptional example of bare details:

Grab it. Grab this land! Take it, hold it, my brothers make it, my brothers, shake it, squeeze it, turn it, twist it, beat it, kick it, kiss it, whip it, stomp it, dig it, plow it, seed it, reap it, rent it, buy it, plow it, seed it, reap it, rent it, but it, sell it, own it, build it, multiply it, and pass it on-can you hear me? Pass it on! (235)

Going almost by contradictory whims, adjectives are preferred about certain things in sentences like “a silly, selfish, queer, faintly obscene woman” (123), “her wide, dark, pleading, hollow eyes” (130), “a sad, pitiful, selfish, hateful man” (216), etc. She is enchantingly musical when talks about “amused, admiring summation of the situation” (15), but sporadic and bumpy when she questioningly states the essentials, “What kind of savages were these people? Suspicious. Hot-tempered. Eager to find fault and despise any outsider. Touchy. Devious, jealous, traitorous, and evil.” (276).

Suitable selection and elegant execution of words displays her worth as a writer who takes extra pains to chisel her phrases as is clear from the following example: “Near the window, hidden by the dark, he felt the irritability of the day drain from him and relished the effortless beauty of the women singing in the candlelight” (29). Sense of accusation

can't be better placed when she manipulates words to express deep-buried indignation: "You've never picked up anything heavier than your own feet, or solved a problem harder than fourth-grade arithmetic. Where do you get the *right* to decide our lives?" (215). Essentialities of common sense are projected in apposite terms, when she says, "the human body is robust. It can gather strength when in mortal danger." (101) Her statements like her words are well placed in sentences like "Why north of the South. So North exists because South does. But does that mean North is different from South? No way! South is just south of North...." (114), "No geography? Okay no geography. What about some history in your tea? Or some sociopolitico- No. That's still geography. Goddam, Milk, I do believe my whole life's geography." (114), etc.

Vivid description through reiteration of the same verb delights the readers, for example, "Just tired. Tired of dodging crazy people, tired of this jive town" (118). Same word or expression is given liberal space for required prominence in sentences like "I am a small woman. I don't mean little; I mean small, and I'm small because I was pressed small. I lived in a great big house that pressed me into a small package." (124), "Never mind you can't tell one letter from another, never mind you born a slave, never mind you lose your name, never mind your daddy dead, never mind nothing." (235), etc. If something is to be emphasized, then the expression is repeatedly used in the next sentence and repetition does its work efficiently: "A nigger in business is a terrible thing to see. A terrible, terrible thing to see." (22)

Grammar is restricted to her narration only; in dialogue delivery she allows her characters to use language in the most natural way, “We wanna ask you something. ... Somebody said you ain’t got no navel. ... Don’t sound like a question. Sound like an answer. Gimme the question. ... Do he talk?” (37) Similarly, double negatives go hand in hand with the accepted spoken usage of Negroes in phrases like, “You don’t like nothing sweet?” (61), “A dead man ain’t no man.” (81), etc. She also takes the liberty to use sounds in her description to impart it a touch of reality: “And before he knew it, he was hollering a long, *awwww* sound into the pit.” (252)

Her dialogue delivery is crisp and pointed, as she never allows her characters to ramble for nothing:

“Nobody lives forever, Pilate.”
“Don’t?”
“Of course not.”
“Nobody?”
“Of course, nobody.”
“I don’t see why not.”
“Death is as natural as life.”
“Ain’t nothin natural about death. It’s the most unnatural thing they is.”
“You think people should live forever?”
“Some people. Yeah.”
“Who’s to decide? Which ones should live and which ones shouldn’t?”
“The people themselves. ...” (140)

Well-praised for the immaculate appeal of her style, Toni never compromises for clarity. No wonder, she is lavishly praised for the simplicity and clarity: She uses simple language to convey her message, yet it is forcefully projected. The tone is plaintively matter-of-fact; there is no dodging the issue or obscure allusions. Because of this, her work has an intensity unparalleled by more complex writing. As Dannile Taylor-Guthrie

(1994 : xi) points out, “she writes and rewrites and rewrites, and, if necessary rewrites again and again until the language achieves a high level of exactness.”

Quick and captivating opening of Beloved, with enough details to make the storyline transparent, catches the instant attention of the reader. Introductory words of every new chapter are in capitals to demand urgency on the part of reader. The first **sentence** of the book, which is short but not simple, “124 WAS SPITEFUL.” (Morrison 1997 : 3) is unique in itself because a number is given not only life but human attribute also. One-word sentences or short sentences cherish a special place in Toni’s repertoire when she focuses her attention only on mere essentialities. The subsequent sentences, “Nothing.” (6) and “Then something.” (6) are minus elaboration, for then the dent would have got blurred. The emphasis for the corresponding condition and desired action is always given supremacy, that’s why she even brings in onomatopoeic sound like “Um hm.” (35) Short sentences are sure means to scintillate the readers: “Move. Walk. Run. Hide. Steal and move on.” (66), etc. Long-drawn-out and involved sentences, emitting their own beauty, come to her as smoothly as the short and crisp ones:

And it didn’t seem such a bad idea, all in all, in view of the step she would have to take, but the thought of herself stretched out dead while the little antelope lived on-an hour? a day? a day and a night?- in her lifeless body grieved her so she made the groan that made the person walking on a path not ten yards away halt and stand right still. (31)

Animal imagery is prominently portrayed in her works because of the treatment meted out to the neglected, tired, subjugated, enervated and parched people of her race who “breathed to the same beat, like one tired person.”(19) They are nothing but animals exhibiting related qualities because “working like an ass and living like a dog” (41) has

become their fate. The image conjured is as real as the feeling; deprived they are forced to react “Like a snake. All jaws and hungry.” (31) Drudgery does not allow them the time to enjoy, instead they “slept through dinner like a corpse” (21-22) and the related “quietness boomed about on walls like birds in panic” (76). The device of personification further helps Toni to be more defined and glinting. Aiming to emphasize the presence of a spirit, she compares the house to a person, “Shivering, Denver approached the house, regarding it, as she always did, as a person rather than a structure. A person that wept, sighed, trembled and fell into fits.” (29)

Aptness of expression, a rare quality to be acquired, comes to Toni effortlessly, enabling her to crystallize her thoughts. Delight of readers is well fed by her rich **similes** because she moulds her cast to suit the context. Her downtrodden characters are compared not only to animals but things also keeping the relevance in mind. Objects are selected from a rich array and the suitability enriches the enjoyment. “Soft as cream” (7), like every human beings, slaves are as “lonely as a mountain” (104) because “men and women were moved around like checkers” (23). They are mere objects for the owners, only a “face... a mask with mercifully punched-out eyes” (9). “Arms like cane stalks... as strong as iron” (32) give way to pressures and their “skin buckle(s) like a washboard” (6). Incessantly, they toil and moil “breathing like a steam engine” (53), as “bits of news soaked like dried beans in spring water” (65) bring them no respite. Realization is there for a slave also when the “closed portion of his head open(s) like a greased lock” (41) but nothing seems to work because “that day broke him like a twig” (68) because “her breath like burning wood” (78) ruffles him. Toni Morrison may be referring to anything but

what remains consistently fascinating about her style is her appeal to the finer senses. Her expressions like “her eyes ... were like two wells into which he had trouble gazing” (9) and “a nostril sigh, like the snuff of a candle flame” (37) abundantly oblige her readers’ emotional craving.

Her gambit is always rich in the sense of diverse similes because her comparisons are garnered from anywhere and everywhere. Whatever her sources may be her comparisons are always lustrous and rich. Her characters assume different roles according to the need of the moment and what ever they do or feel can’t be anything else. Corresponding to the tumultuous upheavals of Paul’s life, “the wrought iron maze he had explored in the kitchen like a gold miner pawing through pay dirt was in fact a revolting clump of scars” (21), his discovery is the most befitting one. When he comes in contact with those slaves he has known, he feels “relieved and easeful like a traveler who had made it home” (55). Likewise, Sethe’s life has corroded her and “although her voice was heavy as a man’s, she smelled like a roomful of flowers” (28) because she has compassion.

Her intention to be clear coaxes Toni to use words again and again unless the desired impression is achieved. Arrangement and selection of words to be repeated is never sans the magical touch of hers as it pointedly appeals to the imaginative hunger of the readers. Drabness fails to dwell even when she makes use of negatives; on the contrary, drabness of situation becomes alive when she writes, “No misery, no regret, no hateful picture too rotten to accept” (70) and “...no visitors of any sort and certainly no friends. No coloredpeople. Certainly no hazelnut man with long hair and no notebook, no charcoal,

no oranges, no questions.” (12) **Repetition** infuses life into narration when she says, “... it gave the four hundred black people in its audience thrill upon thrill upon thrill.” (48) and “Sweet Home rolling, rolling, rolling out before her eyes... it rolled itself out before her in shameless beauty.” (6) Quick repetition of the same word in expressions like “And He did, and He did, and He did and...” (23), “Oh, yes. Oh, yes, yes, yes.” (36), “A long, long, long, long way.” (65), etc. intensifies the effect. Stillness reigns supreme when we read, “... for standing still. Still, near a kettle; still, at the churn; still, at the tub and ironing board.” (30). Exactitude of expression, in “... hunted and hunting for, were men, men, men.” (52) and “Then she folded, refolded and double-folded it.” (61), remains unchallenged.

The use of verbs in quick succession enralls the readers because uniqueness is always an underlying current. Verbs, used this way, act in conformance with her intention to add extra emphasis. Impact is multifold as is clear from the sentences when she tells about the day-today condition of the blacks, “They ate those undercooked, overcooked, dried-out or raw potatoes anyway, laughing, spitting and giving him advice.” (21) In the same way, when information about Baby Suggs is given, it is presented in harmony with her workout: “Anybody Baby Suggs knew, let alone loved, who hadn’t run off or been hanged, got rented out, loaned out, bought up, brought back, stored up, mortgaged, won, stolen or seized.” (23)

Toni prefers American spellings like “neighbor” (11), and liberally uses double negatives to remain closer to the projection of the spoken form of the so-called uncivilized people.

Her **expressions** like “A man ain’t nothing but a man,” (23), “Didn’t expect to find no nigger woman” (32), etc. are grammatically incorrect but practically right for slaves speak this way only. In fact, she retrains the originality of their usage by allowing her characters to liberally use their language: “Couldn’t be no waiting.” (8), “you don’t have no appetite?” (32), etc. Adapting her language nuances, felicity of expression is miraculously flaunted by Toni, as she never deprives her readers from an overwhelming gratification: “The stone had eaten the sun’s rays but was nowhere near as hot as she was.” (90), “Sethe was licked, tasted, eaten by Beloved’s eyes.” (57), etc. Her benign pen allows her readers to bask briskly as well as get drenched in the sun and shower of her expressions: “The day breeze blew her dress dry” (50), “her eyes did not pick a flicker of light.” (9), “Denver’s imagination produced its own hunger and its own food” (28), etc. Her well-chiseled phrases and sentences are nothing but pure delight for the readers: “The clanging in her head, began as a churchbell heard from a distance, was by then a tight cap of pealing bells around her ears.” (30), “he saw the sculpture her back had become, like the decorative work of an ironsmith too passionate for display” (17), etc.

Metaphor is another device that Toni Morrison uses to augment the affluence of her expressions. Sethe has got a tree on her back but she is blessed with milk also. The capability to nurture and nourish is there as she herself acknowledges, “they took my milk.” (17) Even the narrator is there to sustain her statement, “she had milk enough for all” (100). Withstanding the atrocities of slavery, she reveals, “I got a tree on my back and a haunt in my house” (15). The tree on her back takes different shapes according to the treatment meted out to her. Initially it is introduced as a mere tree with all the parts:

“A chokecherry tree. Trunks, branches, and even leaves. Tiny chokecherry leaves.” (16) In perfect harmony with the bestowing nature of tree, “Sethe smelled like bark in the day and leaves at night” (19). But the tree becomes barren with the passage of time, because it has been refused the proper nourishment. When Paul comes across Sethe, he “finds nothing like any tree he knew because trees were inviting” (21) for the tree has become sapless like her. But it has not been this way always; When Sethe runs away to lead her life afresh with her husband and children, the tree has been in full bloom:

It’s a tree, Lu. A chokecherry tree. See, here’s the trunk-it’s red and split wide open, full of sap, and here’s the parting for the branches. You got a mighty lot of branches. Leaves, too, look like, and dern if these ain’t blossoms. Tiny little cherry blossoms, just as white. Your back got a whole tree on it. In bloom. (79)

To wind up, these gifted writers have put into adequate words the emotions and aspirations, which all writers feel but only a few can ever express. Uniquely diverse in their ways, all these authors have successfully managed to weave gossamer filigree of words. Margaret Atwood is widely known for her extraordinary style, because her writing style exudes a uniqueness of its own. Instead of keeping dialogue delivery and description separate, she intermixes both to suit her creative streak. Wisdom of the world is expressed in a pointed way with no space for ambiguity. Meddling even with the objects of nature is allowed if it renders crystal clear ideas. Comparisons are not restricted to single things; one thing/person is compared to many things in a single go. Her sentences are neither lengthy and meandering nor contrived and ambiguous like that of Doris Lessing. In fact, Doris Lessing keeps adding explanation with the help of parenthesis. Her temptation to use short sentences is restricted one and same is the case

with her paragraphs. Her imagery is more urban. Like the rest of the authors, she also meddles with the rules of grammar, but only when it becomes imperative. In Lessing's works, philosophical overtones are there that push her to include plain and pithy statements. Dreams, which exercise a specific place in her works, help her characters remain in touch with their unconscious and subconscious one. Liberally accused of taking liberty with accepted usage, she more prominently focuses her attention on expression. Keeping pace with the stalwarts of literary arena, Arundhati Roy also has carved a special niche for herself by exploring all the possible niceties of English language. Her sentences are generally short and crisp. Rules of grammar are broken anywhere and everywhere – be it sentence construction, phrases or even words. Simple words, phrases, sentences, and figures of speech are embossed with uniqueness to enthrall the readers. Unexpected and unaccepted usage is made elegant and vibrant by the sheer touch of her imagination, though that has displeased some of the critics. Diaphanous exposé of narration remains the sole intention while accuracy is always adhered to. Her paragraphs are equally distinctive as it may range from one word to one sentence to a couple of sentences. Her adherence to the accepted rules is limited and sparse and sometimes she seems to stretch it too far. Toni Morrison, with the help of regional language, imparts a touch of genuineness, which seems to assert for her dexterity. Her simple but elegant use of language to familiarize the unfamiliar and mystify the familiar information enriches her narration. Though her sentence length is average, yet her sentences - long, short, simple or complex - are always exact and pointing; the impression created is never short of the desired intention. Even her long sentences follow different patterns, as is the case with phrases. Diversity of expression in Toni Morrison is unexceptionally rich. Arundhati

Roy, Toni Morrison, Margaret Atwood and Doris Lessing derive admiration and awe in singular ways for each ricochets a kaleidoscopic luster of her own. Exquisiteness and excellence of expression imparts an elegant touch to their extraordinary works, which remains unparalleled by all means.

Chapter 5

Composite Reflection of Cultural Sensitivities

Writers, through their writings which are invaluable treasures, reflect various aspects of life sometimes as it is and sometimes as it ought to be; they write about the relationships human beings share because though human beings may be the supreme creation of the Omnipotent, they can't withstand and survive solitude. They gain meaning only in relation to the whole. Jung's (1972 : 38) observation regarding the all-embracing chain of connectivity seems an apt one, "the psyche is not individual, but is derived from the nation, from the collectivity, from humanity even. In some way or other we are part of a single all-embracing psyche, a single 'greatest man,' the homo maximus, to quote Swedenborg."

An inextricable part of family, society and humanity at large, human beings are caught in the flux of emotions and feelings, common to all. Ambition sets them high, love humbles them, fear besets them, happiness elates them, jealousy blinds them, hatred corrodes them, compassion mellows them, adversity toughens them, challenge excites them and depression drives them crazy. Life teaches them to care and share when they find themselves as a part of something larger and fulfilling.

Despite the same feelings and relations, people react to the same thing in various ways. What veers the direction is the unconsciously but actively working sense of time and space and the response is a coruscating reflection of their outlook, social ambience and

race. Mary Jane Edwards seems to strike the right chord when she opines, “A writer cannot be a good internationalist and a good nationalist without being a regionalist, for it seems essential that the creative writer has a strong sense of his own time and place.” (Denham 1980 : xvii) Referring to the deep-rooted relation between writers and their works, William J. Long (1997 : 2) has something similar to say, “Behind every book is a man; behind the man is the race; and behind the race are the natural and social environments whose influence is unconsciously reflected.” These social, regional and racial factors are known as culture which in its broadest and fundamental sense is not merely an aspect but a function of experience. Descriptions of these affairs are varied and different because factors that are affected by dissimilar ideologies, guide them. Erich Fromm (1966 : 114) in his The Sane Society vouchsafes for the difference of experience when he accepts that it “differs from culture to culture”.

M. F. Ashley-Montagu, as quoted by Ralph Turner (1940 : 486), takes the observation one step ahead when he gives his point of view, “Cultures differ from one another to the extent to which their experience has differed.” Cultures and societies may differ from one another but a society and its corresponding culture are inextricably intertwined with each other. Ralph Turner (1941 : 1240) says pointedly and justly too, “A society and a culture are always paired and extend through the time as parallel elements in a single continuum. Neither of them can exist without the other.” That’s why writers reflect the kaleidoscopic spectrum of the affairs of life against the background of not only culture but society also.

Cultural disparities abound in the works of all writers irrespective of cast, creed and/or age and these cultural fineries tend to percolate their sensitivities which invariably result

in the diversity of views regarding the projection of eternity and its riddling enigma. However, a latitudinarian attitude does help writers to have a more encompassing intake of diversity. These writers – Margaret Atwood, Doris Lessing, Arundhati Roy and Toni Morrison – unconsciously let the richness of cultural impact colour their works and consciously, attempted a deliberate subterfuge of cultural dint, inching towards a better delineation of life in general. The needs and aspirations of human beings are largely conditioned by the social milieu, the economic situation, and the educational and employment opportunities. Writers tend to set and tackle the problem from their own cultural perspective, which in turn polishes their work with poised touch of authenticity. The cultural aspects, which influence the life of characters in their works, are emphasized with a focus on the responses that are instantly specific and individual. Some issues are very prominently highlighted in the works of one author, but surprisingly those issues are completely missing from the works of another author, for the selection, collection and execution of issues is largely guided by cultural aspects. Same relationships elicit different responses, families hold varying place, and the importance of society ad self also keeps changing because of the cultural sparks.

Discussing the role of a writer in society, Atwood remarks that the writer “tends to concentrate more on life, not as it ought to be, but as it is, as the writer feels it, experiences it. Writers are eye witnesses, I-witnesses.” (Singh 1994 : 16) Like all writers, Atwood also reflects culture against social background. She is the eyewitness of the environment of Canada, a country that achieved independence without a war and is on the route of fast improvement and progress. Its psychological transition from a colony to a nation has been particularly unhurried and hurting. Though time has strengthened the

political, social, and economic scenario, Canadian literature in English still represents the overtones of American culture. In fact, part of the national psyche is a typically postcolonial sense of national inferiority. Northrop Frye also feels the same way when he says that Atwood's novels reflect the western cultural perspective and many Canadian cultural phenomena are not peculiarly Canadian at all, but are typical of their wider North American and Western contexts. Atwood (1986 : 332), in her article "Through the One Way Mirror", seems to hit them hard when she forthrightly admits, "There is no call for Canadians to fret about their identity, because everyone knows they're Americans only." Self respect also evades them because of "a colonial mentality – the nation cannot act because it sees itself as acted upon, it accepts a passive role and, with perverse narcissism, perpetuates it." (Sullivan 1977 : 32) However, this does not seem to adulterate the Canadian culture because changes are likely to be there with the passage of time; moreover, it nowhere substitutes the Canadian touch. Though Canadian culture is a breach of American culture, the Canadian character is generally seen as more respectful of law and order and less ruggedly individualistic than the American. Moreover, existence of various ethnic groups brings diversity in their outlook to maintain the part rather than the whole of it. These unambiguous divisions make them obsessed with the limitations rather than the possibilities of human experience. Canadians desire to cling to what is known and safe and prefer to stay at home. The uncivilized wilderness, the insignificant small town, or the 'beautiful loser' - the victimized character - all are central symbols in the Canadian imagination.

With an embedded Canadian psyche, Margaret Atwood limns a picture of the affairs of life, all dipped in the regional tinge. The major issue that troubles Canadians is how to

maintain their individual identity because they have always thrived under the aegis of other culture. Still, the sense of being an individual is peculiar with Atwood's characters and their value lies in their own personal fulfillment and development. Since they are not submerged in the family and community, they feel terribly secluded. Atwood presents her characters complexity and contradictions and to help them overcome the feelings of alienation and despair, she emphasizes the need for personal myths. A band of current Canadian writers, including Atwood, can't stand negative identity which ensues from the self-destructive survival myth so they consciously work to help other Canadian writers and critics help Canadians create a more positive identity. Atwood makes extra efforts to help her characters overcome traumas.

Atwood's characters seem to be haunted by a different crisis, as the existential concern for them is less intense than the physical displacement. Physical diversity troubles them to the point of self-doubt which results in making them hibernate rather than activate. The confusion and insecurity, emanating from being physically dislocated, shape their psyches according to their resilience and endurance. Northrop Frye (1971 : 220) in his "Conclusions to a Literary History of Canada" says what perplexes them more than "Who I am?" is "Where is here?" In Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature, Atwood (1971 : 17) also seems to touch upon the same point when she states, "'Who am I?' is a question appropriate in countries where the environment, the 'here', is already well-defined.... 'Where is here?' is a different kind of question."

Landscapes are often interior landscapes related to the events taking place in the lives of the characters. These landscapes are maps of *a state of mind*, the character is in. Physical wilderness like the unconscious both tempts and terrifies those who dare enter it. Its lure is irresistible because it provides much desired escape from an unending continuity of quotidian dealings. Like nature and life, these physical locations have warped extremities from one end to another one in its womb. In an article "True North", Atwood (1987 : 143) finds North always at the back of Canadians' mind, "The North focuses our anxieties. Turning to face north ... we enter our own unconscious. Always at retrospect, the journey north has the quality of dream."

North represents that part of mind, which does not succumb to rational, intellectual and scientific explanation of being. Its attraction lies in that it seems an escape from dreary settlements, conventional responsibilities and the decadent, sterile values of the South. On the other hand, it infuses a sense of terror, for few have the inner resources and experience to cope with the isolation and harshness of the North. In Atwood's novels Toronto often takes on mythic overtones and functions as a symbol of alienation in the world at large.

Physical displacement weakens Atwood's characters as they are subconsciously afraid of unknown places. Success myth in foreign locales is not for them. Laura and Iris in The Blind Assassin lose control over their lives when they are forced to leave their native place. Physical displacement, for them, becomes one of the means to insecurity. Marriage to Richard, which brings the harsh exposure to the bigger world, makes Iris feel the

coldness of city life. Initially Iris makes efforts to adjust herself to the new scenario but at every step there is failure and disappointment. Even in the company of her husband, she feels lonely because she can't relate to the place. Lavish rooms, luxurious life style and profuse money fail to cultivate the sense of belonging in her. Boarding houses, rented rooms and hotels convey a profound sense of rootlessness for Iris.

The case becomes hopeless with Laura also, as she always remains an alien to the place she fails to relate herself to. The traumas that enshroud her make her more cautious of the place as well as people. The manner in which Laura runs away to come back to her own land and home seems to justify the point, for Laura gains hold of her life once she is back to the place she belongs to. Since, Iris cannot come back to her place again she takes time to gain her original self. Similarly Rennie, in Bodily Harm, fails to control things once she moves out of Toronto. Things fall apart for her as long as she stays there. Her placement has varied connotations for when she moves out of her native place she loses contact with her natural self and becomes one with her mask but when she leaves Toronto, the mask gets stripped off and she realizes her worth in relation to the whole scenario. Laura, Iris and Rennie are worst hit by place displacement because their life undergoes tremendous changes when they get uprooted from their places. Canadian experience of survival is deeply guided by "nostalgia ...for a unique sense of place." (Sullivan 1977 : 30)

The gap between the small town life and big city lures means different things to characters. Town-life suits Laura and Iris. Making no efforts to change herself according to the taste of city life, Laura neither tries nor exhibits fakeness. Though Laura undergoes traumatic physical tortures yet the wickedness of city life fails to corrode her spirit. City life, on the other hand, fascinates as well as frightens Iris, who does make efforts to get adjusted to the environment of city. Initially, Richard and Winifred sweep her off her feet and she desires to be like them but artificialities of city life do not come to her easily. She feels envious of Richard and his sister Winifred, as they make use of masks so beautifully. It takes time on her part to learn their ways though she never becomes adept at it. However, city life suits Richard and Winifred well as they feel quite comfortable with affected mannerism.

In Bodily Harm, Rennie also feels quite uncomfortable when she imagines herself in the confines of small town life. The choice of Rennie to sacrifice originality for easy access to fame and name provides beneficial results in the beginning but with the passage of time this tampering tarnishes her innocence. This deliberate and undemanding endeavour isolates her from her genuine self and this isolation intensifies as the time passes. Atwood forces her to stand face to face with those aspects of her life and personality which she has meticulously avoided or ignored. Deprived of flimsy falsification she finds it hard to survive and longs for her innocence. Rennie's visit to the Caribbean to recuperate astounds her onto another awareness that life is too unstable. But what is perhaps worse is that people are unpredictable, staggering, and shocking in their attitude towards others.

Rennie, believing in the unchained liberty, prefers to stay in a city as it allows her to live for herself, where she can manipulate things to suit her. She finds it funny and unconvincing that her mother should spend her whole life serving others. When she imagines herself in the place of her mother she shudders at the thought of servile servitude. When she leaves for city she is full of ideals but city life teaches her a different lesson that veracity is not meant for immediate and unopposed acceptance. Fakeness is instantly alluring and rewarding but it requires defilement of values. City life teaches her to accept things not as they should be but as they appear to be.

Atwood's characters, irrespective of being urban or rural, are so detached that they prefer to put on masks on their faces to hide their deficiencies. Gradually, being enslaved to their fake persona, they start maintaining the distance from their inner selves. The earlier Canadian writers accepted this fard as one of the essential things but the current breed of Canadian writers is consciously making an effort to bring disjointed self face to face. This revolution is not abruptly sudden but steadily gradual. Of all Atwood's characters Laura is one such character who defies all conventions of society to remain true to her self, a trait that makes her stand outstandingly among the throng of characters. When she senses Iris getting swayed by the meretricious glamour of hollowness, she makes every possible effort to jolt her out of her illusory reveries. Similarly, in Life Before Man, Nate and Elizabeth are also not allowed to dwell in the abode of fancies.

Adherence to appearances leads her character to reflect the impact of colonization. The race to avoid contact with the true self and not to show the true side to the outer world

weakens their spirit. Their motto remains that to succeed in today's world, reality should be tampered with. And to stay at top, rationalization is always emphasized as an added bonus. But Atwood shows an aversion for the technological men for they corrupt the base of all things.

The separation of mind from body is another concept that keeps the characters occupied. Alienation from land, nature, animals as well as other human beings emanates as a result of self-versus-other conscious which should be amicably supplanted by self-and-other consciousness. Self, according to Atwood, is the holy altar where experiences of life share the podium. Self never succeeds to stand against environment but accomplishes success in perfect relation to experiences.

Laura epitomizes the perfect synthesis between self and the other. This trait of hers makes her invincible because psychologically she can never be won over. The distance between true and simulated self makes Atwood's characters mechanical and calculated. The desire, to be a part of that world where glamour rules, forces them to turn away from their usual selves. Since this world of pretensions is a cruel world where none spares the other if they get to know of the weak points, precautions are taken in advance not to reveal the real side of personality. Richards and Winifred always take extra care to face people with a mask of pretensions glued to their faces which gradually becomes one with the real face and affectation becomes an intrinsic part of their life. Every time, bargain is in the mind; profit and loss rule the scene; emotions are there but just for the sake of it.

The barriers between mind and body, self and other, and male and female are psychologically flexible; similarly, the boundary between good and bad is mere gossamer. Canadians tend to view themselves as good, innocent and morally superior to their forced counterparts who appear to them nothing else but bad, nefarious and morally corrupt. Atwood seems to work out the possible solution but creating characters who are an amalgam of positive as well as negative traits yet can't overcome her aversion for people who bask in artificialities and fail to learn from the experiences of life.

Atwood's concern for the weak against the strong and the victim versus the victimizer gets ricocheted in her concept of *power politics*. Division of reality into extreme opposites permits patterns of subjugation and domination which Atwood refers to as power politics by which she means "how power operates and who has power over whom." (Vevaina 1996 : 16) Working in consonance with her Canadian soul, she works to find a way out of duality to move towards an all-inclusive process of correlation and continuity. She advocates the same ideology when she divulges to Graeme Gibson:

If the only two kinds of people are killers and victims, then although it may be morally preferable to be a victim, it is obviously preferable from the point of view of survival to be a killer. However either alternative seems petty hopeless... I think there has to be a third again; the ideal would be somebody who would neither be a killer nor a victim, who could achieve some kind of harmony with the world, which is a productive or creative harmony. (Graeme 1973 : 27)

Struggle for survival is prominently strong in Atwood. Her focus is not merely on physical existence but on dignified and justified survival. The bodily harm done by others is far worse than the body's betrayal. The victims are mostly and predictably women.

They are afraid of men and it is simple, it is rational; they are afraid of men because men are frightening. Atwood, nowhere, wishes her characters to be intimidated; she wants them to face boldly their stalkers who want to annihilate the existence of their individuality.

The cultural setup of each country has certain norms governing the behaviour of woman. Atwood is mainly concerned with the place of woman in the modern society against highly commercialized and technological age where the rat race is in full swing. She does not allow her protagonists to be solitary weepers; instead she cajoles them to make decisions, perform actions, be ready to face the consequences, whatever they are and to be ambitious. The desire to please man, to be meek, docile, quiet and obedient is long overcome by Canadian women. They have already gone through the stress and strain of breaking the shackles of meekness and docility, but do not seem to have found the ground firm enough to stand all by themselves. Their aim is not to be treated as an object for the use and pleasure of others but rather to be treated as an individual in their own right. The same stance is reflected by Sunaina Singh (1994 : 124) when she gives her piece of mind regarding Atwood's characters:

Atwood poses all these present-day feministic solutions and rejects them bluntly. Her protagonists learn through trial and error that imitating male attitude does not lead them towards a complete and dignified life. They are forced to rethink and re-evaluate their decisions and choices. It is here that their self-examination is significant. But the final step in all her novels is a sort of personal exile, a solitary existence. The contemplative protagonist is unable to accommodate herself within the prevalent social system.

The modern Canadian women are comparatively better placed; they are all employed, economically independent and live by themselves. Atwood's focus is on the treatment and condition of economically secure women. Economic liberation is never sidelined; it remains one of the main foci. Economic independence might help but certainly it has not helped them to lead a complete life. There is a lacuna in their freedom; when major decisions are concerned only men wield the authority. Surprisingly, woman in Canada is still treated as an object.

Atwood in Bodily Harm very categorically states that one should be glad if one is able to escape for a short while, for the final victim position is certain – there is no getting away from it. Marriage and man-woman relationship, Atwood firmly affirms, have lost its credibility. In modern times, marriage has become, says Atwood, tense and tedious. The couples constantly indulge in a tug-of-war. Women's own choices or decisions are important to them and the realization that the consequences are irreversible makes them spend a lot of time in thinking before making a choice. The men in Atwood's novels are pompous and superior but if analyzed carefully, they feel threatened by the women protagonists. Still, they take their role as a challenge in taming the *conscious* protagonists.

Another difference stemming from the different cultural ethos is that Atwood's heroines take recourse to extra-marital affairs, on the rebound or otherwise. Life Before Man deals with the portrayal of modern marriage. Elizabeth believes in the institution of marriage and wants to have a luxurious life but when her husband fails her hopes, she loses faith in

him. But deep underneath she wants not to lose him because she is afraid of being alone. She discards her husband to land in the arms of Chris because he understands her in a better way. Her involvement with Chris is also detached because she refuses his marriage proposal. To show her the ugly side of her materialistic approach regarding marriage, he commits suicide. The covering, which she used to have, is instantly taken off and she feels like a naked thing; too afraid of being exposed to others she wants to have her cover of artificialities back but nothing seems to work. Even swapping partners does not bring any relief to Elizabeth or Nate. They are like fragmented beings seeking solace in the arms of other ladies or gentlemen but without any commitment. The urgent need to make others adjust to their needs never works as it distorts the whole world of the other person. When compatibility does not click, they move on to other partners but end up almost with the same fate:

Marriage for both Elizabeth and Nate has lost its sanctity as is with most other marriages. But what is typically Canadian about their marriage is that despite the lack of warmth and trust, they still cling to each other. They find it difficult to break-away despite each other's affairs. Both Elizabeth and Nate take recourse to extra-marital relationships once they realize that the sterility of their own relationship cannot keep them happy. (Singh 1994 : 104)

The responsibility of males and females as parents towards kids rarely remains the focus of attention. An individual relationship with kids as mother or father is maintained. The desire and propensity to have individualistic existence never allows them to be a part of the whole, instead it induces in them the desire to be the hub only that seems to fail them every time. Parenthood happens to them but it is not the most blessed stage of their life. Sacrifices are not made for the kids; conscious and combined efforts to present themselves as mother and father are occasional. Children are taken as responsibility who

increase the burden and instead of being looked after as treasures, they are used as commodities to have an edge over others.

The healthy relationship between parents and kids is not normally seen; the tussle between mother and father always affects the children and the focus remains more on the breach in-between them. Elizabeth is also the victim of her parents' breach; her mother has crumbled under the pressure and discarded her own daughters something Elizabeth never prefers to do but she also uses her daughters to hold Nate. When grownup Rennie finds her father involved with somebody else, she makes no effort to pay her mother back; instead she diligently tries not to serve others as her mother has done through out her life. Her mother prefers to stay back and serve her parents but Rennie never likes the idea; in fact, she desires to be away from such a scenario where she can be forced to live for others by neglecting her own wishes and comforts.

Alienation from *Self* and others is also caused by estrangement from one's own past. Atwood feels that a psychological and spiritual retrospective of one's own past is essential to psychic health; links with the ancestors are required in order to determine their existence, aspirations and social relevance. Through Rennie, Atwood reflects the desire to lead a luxurious and secure life. But to lead a sound life, a sound culture is required. Colonial and ex-colonial countries find this task grueling as they are habituated to importing religion and culture from other countries. Richard and Winifred lead an envious life because people remain in their awe. But Atwood rejects the imported as untrue and through the victory of Laura over others emphasizes the need to come to grips

with native myths, religion and culture. Spiritual survival through the disinterring of mythic magnitude of one's being is always emphasized to help Canadians survive under the duress of technology. Her characters are not allowed to renounce the world but rather forced to be a part of life; they make conscious efforts to overcome alienation and achieve personal and social integration, where they can be forced to dig through the surfaces to the inner recesses, essential for elated human life.

Like Atwood, Doris Lessing also highlights the individual variations of her culture. In Britain, after Second World War, dissent and decadence flourished in profusion. However, this growing dissent in society helped in establishing a critical and influential tradition of social realism. There was a discernible shift from the highlights of the better educated affluent minority to the concerns and problems of ordinary people. Since, nothing seemed stable, evasive inwardness and nostalgia resulted in resentment and anger. Young people rejected politics and consumerism in favour of spirituality and enlightenment. Somehow, the situation changed with the passage of time. "Expansion of higher knowledge encouraged many young people to think critically about politics and society." (Christopher 1999 : 8) In addition, material affluence increased their self-confidence.

Subtle shifts keep enriching beliefs and habits. Noticing the difference between mid twentieth and late twentieth century, in an interview with Dwight Garner, Doris Lessing has this to say:

You know, people that didn't smoke, it was quite extraordinary. People were quite apologetic, "I'm sorry, but I don't smoke." And the drinking! We drank! And that's gone completely, because if I ask people around now, less and less alcohol gets consumed all the time. Whereas if I had a party, let's say, in the '50s, enormous amounts were drunk as a matter of course. (Garner 1997)

Perpetual alterations do take place but things don't transform completely; the undercurrent, even with changes, remains more or less the same. Primarily, British are "uninhibited, tolerant, exhibitionist, passionate, aggressive, sentimentalist, hospitable and friendly people." (Else 2003 : 65) Many British people hold strong views and these normally lie beneath the surface, but not that far below. For them, the order is sacrosanct; codes of courtesies and formalities are prevalent and exercised also. In fact, its absence makes the whole scenario look very flabby. Characters engrossed in personal, professional and social exchange unconsciously take extra care to adhere to the accepted and expected rules of conduct. Even for small things the decorum is maintained, as is clear from the situation when Anna and her boyfriend in The Golden Notebook say sorry to each other, "He apologised for not telephoning; she apologised for not being dressed." (Lessing 1977 : 627)

Unlike manners, money receives passive acceptance. Though money exercises an important place in life, it is never blown out of proportion. British people may be rich but no conscious efforts are made to flaunt their accumulated wealth. They don't put too much emphasis on money for "(s)ignificant section of people had money to spend on an alternative." (Christopher 1999 : 8) In The Golden Notebook, Doris highlights the attitude of English people towards money, "By English standards they were all rich. In

England people as rich as they are don't talk about money. An atmosphere of money all the time, anxious money, with these American people." (471) Absence or presence of money neither spoils nor improves their relationships. It rarely comes directly in picture and it never gets importance to the extent of being hub of anything; though money is required, life is not altered for the same. Even Richards, who is very money-minded and ambitious, keeps it at the back of the talk. There is no display as such and it never becomes the main focus of the things. Richard does not feel comfortable with his wives and he marries thrice but without any trace of money. Similarly, in The Summer before the Dark, Kate and her husband plan to move to a small house not because they have less money but because they have other reasons. Their relationship as husband and wife is never affected by monetary concerns. Treading on the same line, Anna Wulf's life is never steered astray because of money. She gets money from the royalty of her books. Though it is never in abundance yet it does not change her decision not to sell her novel when they want her to change the contents of her work. The idea does not appeal to her and she refuses the agreement despite repeated requests. Money never gets prominence to affect her relationships with her divorced husband, friends or one-night lovers. The distinction for holding the money is not primarily for males as is the case with Indian culture.

Another aspect that is utterly different from other cultures is the relationship males and females share in terms of physical abuse. Concept of female liberation follows in relation to the existing trend of her place. In fact, after Second World War the "most significant advance was in the position of females." (Christopher 1999 : 6) They are not bruised and

physically abused, something very prominent or at least not absent in the works of Indian, African-American and Canadian writers. Alistair Davies (2000 : 3), in the introduction to his book British Culture of the Postwar: An Introduction to Literature and Society, says, “Women writers appeared – notably Doris Lessing and Margaret Drabble – who devoted themselves to the ... distinctive insights of women.” In the other societies, women may be intelligent, economically independent and mature, but in their relation to males they take subservient position and males are free to exercise their physical power over these females as and when they desire. In Britain, females may not be intelligent, economically independent or mature but wife beating as such is not a part of their culture. Husbands are treated as merely human beings not as the focal point of their life or demigods. Women are neither contented to serve their husbands like slaves nor do they deify them; rather they are treated as normal human beings with no special gifts. In The Golden Notebook, Anna and Molly are nowhere beaten by their husbands. In The Summer before the Dark, Kate is nowhere physically bruised by her husband. Physical torture does not take place, for it is not a part of their socio-cultural life.

Male female relationship or specifically husband-wife relationship is also different. Males don't cherish privileged predominance and the females are not purely dominated by males. Husbands are not meant for guiding and instructing the wives about the handling of affairs; wives take their own decisions regarding economic and professional matters. Nowhere, they are looked down upon by male counterparts; their capabilities are never doubted or scoffed at. Richards does discuss things with Anna and Molly, when he is concerned about his son. When Kate takes up the job of an interpreter, the husband is

not jealous of her or does not take the decision on her part. She is advised about the perspective and then the rest is left with her to decide on her own part. It does not matter much whether she remains inside the house or goes out for a job. In fact, he suggests the name of his wife for the job.

Marriage is there on the cards but it is not the ultimate goal of relationship. Marriage, divorce and fornication are not serious affairs. In marriage, undiluted dedication, reverence and complete surrender are neither expected nor fulfilled. Kate in The Summer before the Dark is one such lady who has no expectations from her husband; When Kate is away from home she does think of her husband but she does not miss him. The intensity is not as acute as in Indian scenario and females are not mere tools meant to serve and please husbands. Marriage is also not a sacred institution to provide fulfillment, instead “(m)arriage had had a load heaped on it which it could not sustain.” (Lessing 1975 : 62). Kate and her husband have been aware of this and accordingly “they had been right in making sure they did not expect too much from each other, or from marriage.” (63) Domestic unhappiness has crept in and divorces have ensued in abundance. That’s why, in The Golden Notebook, Richard, Anna, Molly and Marion, don’t expect wonders from their marriages. Anna, Molly and Richard walk out of the institution of marriage as soon as it starts appearing to be a burden to them but another marriage is never out of question. Services of psychiatrists and marriage counselors are liberally sought. Richards marries three times and Molly also plans to get married again. Though the desire to have a steady relationship exists, it does not mean the end of the world if it does not get fulfilled. They have the liberty to walk out of relationships sans much propaganda.

Nevertheless, her heroines are highly intelligent ladies who despite being aware of reality willfully choose to stay in relations. A stage of reality is portrayed where complexity and fragmentation are perceived as both necessary and inevitable.

Another distinguished feature of marriage is that the relationship the couples share is too flimsy because after marriage fidelity is not something very strictly adhered to. Sexual liberation is taken as an individual right and these excursions are allowed in happy married lives also. There is a “more relaxed attitude towards sexuality.” (Christopher 1999 : 4) Women enjoyed sex as much as men and discontent and adultery were common. Kate in The Summer before the Dark does take care of her husband and his needs but she does not mind sleeping with another man when she goes out for a tour. Shifting of male partners is not a transgression; Anna Wulf, switches over to any and every male who comes in her life, though she has got married and has had a daughter. Anna wants fulfillment with the help of a male but when she senses an intrusion, she puts them at bay.

Though sporadic excursions in sexual arena are not uncommon, sex is nowhere considered something sacred culminating in the realization of wedded bliss. It can take place when something is to be done and when nothing is there to be done, then sex must go on. It is strangely deprived of love as well as hatred and strongly infused with indifference. This mechanical activity dominates, brutally brushing aside even the fulfillment of a basic need. Nonchalant indulgence makes it just a physical activity to be accomplished. Anna Wulf, the lady who does not wish to compromise, is too liberal in

her attitude to sex. Whenever a man comes in her life, she sleeps with him though she derives neither enjoyment nor satisfaction out of it. Both Anna and Molly remain interested in men with a curiosity as if there are so few good ones left that it is necessary to hunt them amid the ruins. Both, in a wry and pleasing way, are frank about their sexuality; both are ready to have affairs when their emotions are stirred. Males are expected to make them feel complete and when one fails them they switch over to another one. In fact, they don't shun males completely but when emotional desires are stirred, efforts are made to bask in the company of males. Since they are not serious about males, they don't mind having affairs.

Personal space is sacredly preserved; anything or anybody that intrudes is discarded. Females prefer to lead a life where they may remain free women; sometimes they pay too heavy a price for their freedom but they prefer not to be fettered by relationships. When Kate fails to have the sufficient place to move around, she feels smothered. To give herself enough breathing space, she rids herself of her accepted garb, something too prominently flaunted by Anna. Her efforts are not as bold as that of Anna but she does make try at her own level. Efforts are small but they do exist and the desire and intention are not overflowing but smoldering somewhere in her. They understand that they have to pay a heavy price for being free creatures but they do give it a try. Irving Howe (1979 : 113) in his article "Doris Lessing: No Compromise, No Happiness" talks about the desire to retain the freedom, "At the very least, Anna Wulf is someone who has measured the price for being what she chooses to be—'a free woman,' she would say with pride and irony—and who is prepared, no matter how much she groans, to pay it."

In The Golden Notebook, though Anna and Molly pay heavy price yet they prefer to cling to her saving difference. They demand from their men the completion of their being and claim that they provide those elements of strength and assurance which they, as women cannot. Anna, as a representative, wants in her men “both intimacy and power, closeness and self-sufficiency, hereness and thereeness. Modernist in sensibility, she is traditional in her desires. And no matter what she must settle for at a given moment, she does not delude herself; she will not compromise with the idea of compromise.” (Howe 1979 : 115) Irving Howe clarifies further that not only the desire to retain the freedom but also the spirit to stand by that choice does prevail. Anna Wulf and her old friend Molly understand perfectly well that modern women do face crippling difficulties when they choose one or another role of freedom. But they do not fall back upon their charm, wit or head aches.

All females try hard to preserve their independence, which means not a refusal of relationships but a hard decision not to bamboozle themselves, when they do take up with second-raters and even more, a strict watch, mostly within themselves, against the mediocre, the resigned, and the merely comfortable. In the end, Kate wants to go home to her husband, Molly does think of marriage and Anna after coming out of the disastrous affair with the American keeps pushing ahead when she decides to go into Labour Party work and probably to take a job as a marriage counselor. They remain loyal to that refusal to compromise which has bound the two women in friendship.

Ruthless honesty about relations they share with males in their lives makes them more detached and objective in their relations. Kate and her friend never give a false picture of their conditions and whenever Anna and Molly meet they repeatedly talk about their personal relations but always with muted irony and impatience. They are alternately open and guarded, sometimes wounding but usually honest. No efforts are attempted to make the scenario appear serene and soothing. Honesty is highly valued. If they are unhappy, they don't hesitate to accept it and if they are happy in casual flirtations, they don't feel ashamed. Pretensions are neither made nor appreciated. When conversations between Anna and Molly recur, one turns to them with delight of encountering something real and fresh.

They stand in sharp contrast to Atwood's heroines who prefer hiding behind the mask they put on and which becomes an integral part of their personalities. Lessing's heroines remain away from simulations, as they firmly believe in candid confessions about the reality. They may be hurt, they may be losers but tampering with reality is not allowed by their conscience. They discuss their failures in love, their problems as divorced women with children to raise, their disillusionments as former communists who would still like to needle the Establishment, their ability to talk with the passionless and apolitical young, their contempt for the new gentility of intellectual London, and their difficulties in coping with the disillusionment of self-sufficient women concept.

When the protagonists want to realize an internal self, independent of social forces, they often end up inventing multiple and conflicting subject positions. Sometimes they

perceive themselves as simply a feminine figure waiting for a man to call their selves into being. This contradiction between the desire to find themselves as well as to be created by men leads to self-divisiveness in their perception of themselves. Although they are initially seduced by the romantic discourse to actively take up a gendered position in a type of narrative that can be loosely described as *woman needing a man for fulfillment* they can hardly ignore their other self that is essentially anti-romantic in nature. Their personalities are highly fragmented; their sharp knowledge of self does not allow delusion of any kind and their intellectual honesty makes them accept that many diverse personalities are struggling to coexist within them. Their experiences fail to satisfy them and the longing to integrate these disparate parts remains. Kate though willy-nilly has adjusted herself according to the accepted norms yet feels uncomfortable as the desire to follow her own instincts persists. In the end, though not too rebellious, she wants to shed the nonchalant acceptance of something that does not suit her temperament. Nowhere does she make an attempt to tamper with the reality; not even when she is brutally treated by her kids. The same discomfiture is visible in Anna Wulf also who, like Lessing, strives for ruthless honesty as she aims to free herself from the chaos, emotional numbness, and hypocrisy afflicting her generation.

They may be battered by the affairs of life but they are tough-minded and face every difficulty with determined grit. They are concerned not only with themselves but with those things also over which they have little control. Lessing's heroines suffer because of the social upheavals also as visible from the case of Anna for Lessing grasps the connection between Anna Wulf's neuroses and the public disorders of the day. The

feminine element does not become a self-contained universe of being; it sprawls beyond its immediate setting. Anna Wulf, a mature intellectual woman and a writer with sophisticated mind, sharp tongue and an abundance of emotional troubles, is “sufficiently representative of a certain kind of modern woman to persuade us that her troubles have relevance beyond their immediate setting; she is also an intelligence keen enough to support the public combativeness and personal introspectiveness that Miss Lessing has given her.” (Howe 1979 : 113)

The tussle between social and personal is very strong; when they pay too much attention to themselves then the society ignores them and when society accepts them then it is at the cost of their personal freedom. This leads to disintegration in her characters; the degree may vary drastically but there is no escape from this erosion. Some prefer to cling to social norms but the leading ladies feel fidgety about it and they do try to have personal fulfillments discarding some or all of the social norms. Efforts are made and prices are paid for being the axis. There is no fear of social stigma; they hardly care whether people know about them or not. Social system is not stringent and social approval is hardly cared for. They are open about their relationships and society also does not pay too much attention. In fact, “a fit of collective indifference” (Ward 2001 : 3) lulls the social concern. Though social acceptance for relationships is not required, the desire to improve the social standards prevails; people make conscious efforts to improve the scenario. When they notice nil difference, they become disappointed

The desire to break away from the society is too strong but it never materializes. Most breakdowns in women are known to take place when extraneous factors like familial responsibilities do not make the kinds of demands they once did “with children having grown independent, leading to a feeling of superfluity and unwantedness in the female psyche. Kate in Summer before the Dark goes through a similar experience.” (Kumar 2001 : 60-61)

There is guilt in Lessing’s response to motherhood too. This experience is not a rewarding one but a constricting and peripheral experience; mothers are either bent under the duress of guilt or they are blessed with disinterest. Mother remains as an individual not as a mother; expectations set her as a servant who takes care of everybody by sacrificing her interests but unlike Indian scenario this mother-child relationship is not maintained. Mother is given her due space and if she finds motherhood too burdensome then she is also given the liberty to move out of it, take a break or even discard it. In British culture, when children are grown up, parents, especially mother feels unwanted, for their needs can be fulfilled elsewhere. : “Mother was an uncertain quantity. She was like an old nurse who had given her years to the family and must now be put up with.” (91) Kate openly admits being maltreated by her children and also refers to psychological void in her life. She calls her kids monsters who thrive on her sap and they have enervated her of her energies to pay attention to her own likings. When her kids shout at her she feels like crying and compares herself to a stray cat who is simply worthless.

Parent-child relationship is detached; children prefer to be independent as soon as possible. Hostels are preferred to homes because children exercise more liberty there. Home is a place to be regularly visited. Needs and desires of children are nowhere monitored by parents only. The concern about the well being of parents is not of the children. Parents have to look after themselves. Kate's kids use her as a commodity who is there to cater to their needs. On the same line, Anna prefers her daughter to stay at home but the baby girl prefers hostel to school because the concept of family or parents is different for her. A joint family where grandparents and grandchildren share the same home is rare because younger generation requires more and more space for themselves. "For children like Janet the fabric of security is woven, not of grandparents, cousins, a settled home; but that friends telephone everyday, and certain words are spoken." (257) The concept of joint families is weak in occidental world. Intricate patterns of relationships don't create much problem.

Kate, her husband and her kids are mentioned; the relatives are nowhere in the picture. Similarly Anna, Molly, her husband and their kids are mentioned but no reference is there of the elder generation. There is no space is for the parents of the elder generation. Parents don't have much control over children and separate lodging is required for them to lead a life of their own. And as soon as they are grown up to take care of themselves, they prefer to lead an independent life. Parents, instead of enjoying the company of their children, know it well that they have to stay alone now. Kate and her husband know it perfectly well: "... she and her husband had recently been saying that now the children would soon be altogether grown-up, it might be time to start thinking of getting

themselves something smaller? A flat? They could buy a house in the country and share it with friends – perhaps the Finchleys.” (12)

The apparent sense of detachment is not untoward because it is prevalent there. The close-knit bond that makes parents and children inseparable or interdependent is not a part of their culture. Their culture and society have seen, accepted and practised decently distanced relationships. They behave this way because their culture does not object to it. Culture, indubitably, is a determinant of human behaviour.

Doris Lessing’s works, with a touch of subjectivity, display an impressive array of mores that are deftly dented by cultural sparks. This proclivity is present in not only a prolific writer like Doris Lessing but also Arundhati Roy, a newborn star who has dazzled the readers by her extraordinary skills as a writer. With an uncommon sensitivity, Arundhati Roy festoons her work with Indian ambience which speaks volumes about Indian culture encompassing social echelon, customs and life. With its multicultural and varied geographical sprawl, it has various features which reflect its richness. Arundhati’s world revolves about how family ties manipulate people. The concept of joint families may be changing but individuals are still recognized by their place in the family. The established norms are there and all are supposed to fit in their roles; any perversion results in the distortion of the normal and healthy routine of life. Even in nuclear families people are known by the ties they share with the family tree:

In India family plays a dominant role in the life of a woman, the family ties are more important and essential to a woman than her own welfare, her own advancement depends on her relationship with her family members. In a cultural environment where woman is known by her family history and is identified with it, it is important that the ties should be strong. The woman feels completely lost without this familiar binding force. (Singh 1994 : 68)

Marriage still remains the most revered tie. Married women, however deplorable their condition may be, enjoy respectability. Divorce, though it has established itself, is still considered a stigma and divorced ladies never get the same amount of respect. When Ammu comes back after her marriage failure, she never gets a dignified treatment from her family members. She is not at all welcome there because an already married daughter is not supposed to stay with her parents. The great difference that exists between the status of divorced daughters and unmarried ladies of the house is clearly reflected by showing the difference of status between Baby Kochamma and Ammu. The former wields all the rights while the later longs for all the rights but never gets them.

Keeping pace with Indian context, Male female discrimination works most prominently in the works of Arundhati Roy. In Indian culture males lead a blessed life; in society they cherish unchallenged authority; rules never bind them; in fact, they bind the rules. Even though the changes are there, they have their superiority by all means. Nirad C. Chaudhuri's (15) observation seems to be an apt one, "Since to exist is to change, nothing can hope to remain always the same, but I cannot believe that such changes destroy the once formed personality of a people or civilization, or alter their basic character." Husband wife relationship, overriding other considerations, remains more or less the same. In the first generation, Pappachi, the wife of Mammachi, though shows no weird

approach like that of Baby Kochamma, remains tethered to the shackles of her generation and dares not come out of the cocoon. Her husband bullies her and she nowhere raises her voice or ever thinks of rebellion because she considers it the fate of her life. Like his wife, Pappachi also is the plant of earlier generation who finds the beating of his wife justified and when their son intervenes, he retreats because he finds that now he cannot exercise undisputed control. The trend continues in the second generation also. Ammu undergoes the same treatment her mother has already gone through; when married she wants to make her marriage work by putting in all her efforts. Cruel beatings on the part of her husband are not considered something highly undesirable and unnatural. What becomes intolerable to her is the shameless proposal of her husband to please his boss.

Males relish privileges generously denied to females. This discrimination is applicable not only for husband wife relationship but for boy and girl child also. K. K. Sinha's (2001 : 10) comment on this issue reflects the typical Indian ethos, "The middle class girl has hardly any choice. She learns to live on the physical (or even emotional) left-overs of her elder or younger brother." Chacko and Ammu always get different treatment from their parents. Chacko and Ammu are brought up in such environment where distinction between male and female is transparent; Ammu is forced into a marriage because she has no other option. Her parents give her due only as a daughter but not as a child. Her desires are always ignored and she is always denied the equality. Her preferences are never paid any attention and this biased treatment forces her to get in a hasty and mismatched marriage. Chacko gets married on his own will, so does Margaret. There is no place in their marriage for beatings, and when Margaret wishes to opt out of the

wedlock Chacko meekly acquiesces. But Ammu is not as lucky as Margaret; her husband is the replica of her father and is quite liberal in his beatings. When she leaves the house of her husband and returns to her parents, once again the distinction between a son and a daughter crops up. Ammu works with Chacko in the factory but Chacko keeps mentioning 'my factory my pickles'. Chacko is the son, so he wields the license to have as many relations with his female employees. Again in consonance with Indian tradition the situation is reflected, for in India males have the privilege to have physical intimacy with as many women as they like. Elderly ladies know all about such aberrations of Chacko but they find nothing wrong with this practice as they feel, "He cannot help having a man's Needs." (Roy 1997 : 168)

Even ladies have double standards in life for males and females. Mammachi's son is the omphalus of her directionless life; that's something different that as soon as becomes the boss, he takes all the rights off her hands. His intrusion to put a full stop to the torturous process of regular beatings makes him her saviour. She turns a blind eye to his misdeeds but when her daughter responds to the call of her body she is at her worst. When Ammu and Velutha are involved, she does the same thing to them of which she has been a victim throughout her life. It is she, who gives support to Baby Kochamma to move ahead on the path of destruction, where her efforts mercilessly devour both the innocent lovers. The distinction is furthered even for the children of the son and daughter. The crystal clear distinction between Chacko's daughter and Ammu's children again brings to the fore the Indian discrimination between son's and daughter's children. Even Mammachi

who has suffered throughout her life, does not stand by Ammu's kids. They are left to their own destiny when their mother dies, which in result spoils the life of both of them.

Indian women, caught in the quagmire of emotions and unfulfilled desires, are still dependent on their males, parents or society for the approval of their actions. When Ammu returns to her parents' house after her marriage fails, she keeps shunting between the surname of her father or husband. She does not start living individually because the idea to stay alone and work on her own does not occur to her. In India, a woman's life is governed by tradition and family customs. A good woman is a good daughter, wife and mother. To be good means to be of a sacrificing, self-abnegating, meek and of quiet nature.

Indian ladies are quiet, sensitive and intelligent married women who react strongly against their complacent, insensitive, uncaring though dutiful husbands. Arundhati's women become victims because of the traditional mode of existence sans a strong foothold. This makes them instantly and intensely conscious of their lack of identity. Modern Indian woman is contemplatively conscious of her position. Her struggle often results in failure but she continues to fight against the strong currents. Women in Indian scenario are not only ignored but thought to be ignorant and childish also. They are mostly used as showpieces in social gatherings and treated as pets. The men themselves are busy with their work outside and come back to home to rest and sleep. The males are indifferent and bossy but modern women are neither passive nor indifferent of their plight. Freedom is not looked for outside the household, for fight of females is not for

equality, but for the right to be acknowledged as individuals – capable of intelligence, insight and feeling. Ammu is conscious of the vacuum in her life; instead of going by the stringent caste system, she goes by her body-instincts. G. D. Barche (2001 : 43) seems to justify her stance when he says, “She has disobeyed the social laws of love but obeyed the instinctual laws ‘Swadharma’ by sharing the body with Velutha, an untouchable, three years junior to her.” A relationship is developed where love is shared and desires are fulfilled. As a woman, she uses her right to be accepted and desired by a male.

In India, females also dominate in certain areas of life. Anees Jung (1987 : 26) in her book, Unveiling India rightly holds the view, “In this complex pantheon of diversities the Indian woman remains the point of unity ...” As a mother, she is respected for her selfless love and devotion. Motherhood is revered. But again, the mother as such has to place herself in relation to her son and his wife. She has to be meek, tolerant, for it is her *dharma* to be in a subservient position under the authority of his son. This extreme commitment to traditional values is changing but still it is there and strenuous and futile efforts are made to come out of this completely.

Since in India there is an amalgam of many religions, in social life no great tussle exists; cultural forbearance gets reflected in Arundhati’s work as she gives the account of the dressing of Christian women:

Christen women had started wearing saris, Kochu Maria still wore her spotless half-sleeved white chatta with a V-neck and her white mundu, which folded into a crisp cloth fan on her behind. Kochu Maria’s fan was more or less hidden by the blue and white checked, frilled, absurdly incongruous housemaid’s apron that Mammachi insisted she wear inside the house. (170)

Another striking characteristic of this novel is the placement and treatment of *dalits*. Arundhati highlights the plight of these untouchables not to win any accolades but because she has woven a larger pattern where there is a place for all. Her accurate, apposite and accommodating observation adds authenticity. Velutha occupies the central space because as a meticulous craftsman, he is unparalleled and so is he as a human being who dares to love a girl of upper class. Velutha is introduced as a person who is deprived of the right to cover the upper part of his body. This trend becomes clear when he is introduced in the novel: “Someone like Velutha, bare bodied and shining sitting on a plank, swinging from the scaffolding in the high dome of the church, painting silver jets in a blue church sky.” (6) Instead of writing in words, Arundhati paints a word picture to suggest that this person is an untouchable. Similar sort of reference is given again and again in the novel. They are merely presented as victims and no rights are given to them. He is maltreated everywhere because he is the less privileged.

They are not allowed to enter the houses from the main gate and they also cannot take the liberty to touch things that are to be used by the superior touchables. Not only that, Mammachi still remembers the practice when paravans were not allowed to leave their footprints on the sand:

When Paravans were expected to crawl backwards with a broom sweeping away their footprints so that Brahmins or Syrian Christians would not defile themselves by accidentally stepping into a Paravan’s footprints.

... ..

It was like having to sweep away your footprints without a broom. Or worse, not being *allowed* to leave footprints at all. (73-74)

Velutha's talents are not allowed to flourish fully because he belongs to a caste that is not considered respectable enough to occupy a superior position. Even Mammachi feels that he is an excellent craftsman, "if he hadn't been a Paravan, he might have been an engineer." (75) Velutha is a matured person not only as a worker but as a human being also. He does not accept the parameters of restriction imposed on their caste by the so-called superiors. His father is aware of this fact and fears for his son because he is acquainted with the mercilessly stringent and crooked ways of these superiors and ultimately his fears take a concrete shape when he gets to know of his son's temerity to touch the untouchable: "he saw what his untouchable son had touched. More than touched." (78) The undesirable relationship between an aristocratic woman and a paravan reflects Indian disapproval.

The death of Velutha shows the plight of these Paravans who live merely to serve the superiors and should remain contented to play subservient role in the society because the society needs them for certain purposes. His death takes place under the most inhuman conditions because he is born as a paravan. He is mercilessly beaten to death and nothing happens when an innocent dies an unjustified death. A. N. Dwivedi (2000 : 52) also draws attention to the rigid caste-structure of India, "The weaker sections of our society – like the paravans, the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, the dalits and the have-nots, inescapably suffer a good deal in the process of caste-stratifications. Arundhati Roy vividly portrays the acute suffering and deep frustration of these sections in her novel." There is no place for retribution in Arundhati's novels for paravans because they are not supposed to leave their footprints and likewise Velutha is expected to sweep his

footprints. But outside the oyster of these inferiors and superiors Velutha leaves indelible marks on the hearts of readers. The quick and deft touches by Arundhati Roy have made Velutha an eternal figure in the golden pages of literature.

While Arundhati makes her work typically Indian by talking about untouchables, boy-girl distinction and marriage sanctity, Toni Morrison garnishes her works with apartheid, slavery, and a desperate attempt to stick to their customs and rituals. The most formally classy writer perceptively describes various facets of black's life. Though hailed for universal concerns, she produces literature that is irrevocably and irrefutably black. She is quite candid in her confession, "I am very much concerned about what is happening to my people and what we are doing with our precious tradition." (Dumas 1988 : xiv) As Toni Morrison is deeply concerned with and committed to African people in America, she uses each of her novels as a framework for investigating various solutions to the African's race and gender oppression and class exploitation, of course, in terms of fictional art. Though her greatness as a writer gives an unusual rarity to her creative outbursts but instead of talking about the problems of white she is generously concerned with the problems of black only. Racial discrimination is prominently focused on and not without a good reason. Roxann Wheeler (2000 : 2) seems to justify Toni's stance when he expresses his view, "Even today, however, black and white are simplifying, though powerful, cover stories for a dense matrix of ideas as closely associated with cultural differences as with the body's surface."

There are writers who describe the ugliness of the world but that also makes their works look and seem ugly; Toni's charisma erupts when she unearths the unscathed beauty and intact hope flowing underneath the sordid affairs of life. Her probing of many facets of the interrelationship of race, gender and class has never deterred her from defining her cultural context as a distinctly African-American one. The African-American race, absolutely ghettoized, victimized and viciously proscribed has been unjustifiably strained to retreat into the dead alley of despair, despondency and doom. Treading on the same line, Toni has this to say about her father, "My father was a racist. As a child in Georgia, he received shocking impressions of adult white people, and for the rest of his life he was justified in despising all whites, and that they were not justified in despising him." (Strouse 1981: 52) No wonder, Toni's fiction emerges from within the universe of her mind shaped by her African-American culture chiseled by her own experiences as an African-American woman.

Toni Morrison is primarily concerned with Blacks only; the focus always remains on the blacks though whites may be there but only in relation to the blacks. They are not given the liberty to be the protagonists of her works. In her works, males, females, parents, children whoever are there they are only black people. Being a black herself, she writes with gusto about her race only and that shows her as a writer representative of the race. Her concerns begin with slavery, and stretch as far as the search for self and self-realization, something that makes her a writer of exceptional power. In Beloved, Sethe, Beloved, Devner, Paul D, and Baby Suggs are black people; in Song of Solomon, Milkman Dead, Macon Dead, Ruth, Pilate, and Hagar are black people; in Jazz, Dorcas,

Violet, and Joe are black people. Like a true writer, Morrison addresses all her novels to the need for black people to see themselves in a culture. “By virtue of its origin, nature and function, black writing is mission-conscious. From the beginning, black writers have written a literature of social protest and human enlightenment. ... This has been and is the burden as well as the heritage and the legacy of every black writer in white America.” (Sumana 1998 : 129)

When the focus is on black people, the first thing that catches the immediate attention is slavery. Though an obsolete practice, slavery is made alive in her works and the pangs are really felt by the people directly concerned. She writes about the heart-wrenching experiences of leading the life of a bonded slave. Sethe, in Beloved, takes her whole life to come out of the trauma of being a slave. This haunting narrative of slavery and its aftermath, traces her life, who has kept a terrible memory at bay only by shutting down part of her mind. The novel deals with Sethe’s former life as a slave on Sweet Home Farm, her escape with her children to what seems a safe haven, and the tragic events that follow. Although Sethe survives, she remains emotionally subjugated. She is milked like animals because she is a slave, her marriage cannot take place according to the rites and rituals because she is a slave, children born to her are born slaves because she is a slave, and freedom is too costly because she is a slave. She murders her daughter to save her from the cruel talons of slavery. Her husband abandons her because he fails to save her from the atrocities bestowed upon by the Whites. The mute watching of the repeated rapes of their wives makes these black males retreat without any voice of rebellion. These blacks enshrouded by the cruel reality of racism have become aware right from the very

beginning of the disadvantage of their colour. Frustration of these males makes them either to run away from the scene or rape their own daughters, wives or other black females. The inherent desire to belong to the group of white is prominently reflected in Morrison because she has sensed it all as a black woman. Morrison explicitly gives the message to the blacks that united they stand against oppression. To drive home the dire need for collective action for the survival of African people, she juxtaposes isolated struggle with collective struggle and selfish individualism with individualism conditioned by social responsibility.

Viewed against the background of white man's standards of life, black's life has been deplorable. When this slavery got abolished, it left its indelible scars. The problems faced by Macon Dead, Milkman Dead, Pilate, Violet, and Joe are direct outcome of slavery. Cut off from their own culture, they find nothing to cling to. In Song of Solomon, Toni Morrison's concern with the way of life of Negroes, who have just attained freedom, is genuine because the desire to get acceptance and reverence sweeps them. The directionless confusion after liberty is too strong for them. The difficulties faced by the former slaves in keeping the horrors of their pasts submerged within the subconscious are poignantly and realistically portrayed. Somehow, the desire to get acceptance and the desire to retain originality of their race get clashed; Pilate and Macon Dead, both brother and sister, reflect the contrasting lifestyles. While Macon gives supremacy to the power of money, Pilate remains contented by following her original values. Macon deserts his sister for name and fame while Pilate comes forward to help Ruth have a baby from Macon and later on extends the hand of help to his directionless son. Macon's mechanical

and barren outlook and temperament make his children mere shadows, while Pilate jostles his son to the realization of the real affairs of the life. Song of Solomon presents the effects of middle-class values on black families. Macon's obsessive need for money and power, his desire to further himself are totally in tune with ethos of the technologically advanced capitalist culture that surrounds him.

Morrison uses the mode of jazz to depict the experience of black community in the city of New York during the 1920's. Jazz, tells the pathetic tale of Violet and Joe Trace who are married over twenty years. Toni Morrison mainly writes from the perspective of Black consciousness, covering the whole gamut of black experience. In her latest novel, Jazz, she uses jazz, a form of music, to depict the experience of black community. Barbara Browning (1998 : 11) supports Toni, when talking about rap, one of the forms of music, she says that it "is perceived as a musical language of protest, and of course it is associated in particular with black resistance." Similarly, the very title of the novel Jazz, reflects the resistance of black community. Husband-wife relationship is dissected against the background of urban changes. Proud of their physical prowess, both husband and wife shift to the city where they see a cruel face of city life because it exposes them to the cruel machinations of contrived city life. Artificialities of city life deprive them of the charm and that results in a breach between the two but Violet, with great persistence overcomes every hurdle that spoils their relation.

Absence of love, trust and faith finds distinguished place in her works. In Beloved, Jazz and Song of Solomon she talks about money because it matters a lot. Violet is desperate

to make money to secure her future, Macon Dead is afraid of being relegated to slavery in the absence of money. They represent all black people who have been subjected to servile servitude. Surrounded by the scattered shards of their native values, they lose their authentic self, get infected by feelings of inferiority, and make a fruitless attempt to imitate the white values which make them stand more out of place. The only thing that the blacks can own is their African soul, which also gets whisked aside by imposing white values on them.

Right from the days of slavery, the blacks, irrespective of sex have bore the cruel pangs of racism. Black females bore the burns of the atrocities of both white and black males. Just as blacks as a group are relegated to an underclass by virtue of their race, so are women relegated to a separate caste by virtue of their sex. Sexism, undid black females because whites as well as blacks sexually assaulted them. Confronted on all sides by racial and sexual discrimination, the black women had to face daily the reality of their relationships with white men, with white women, and above all black man. They had to work really hard to survive and thrive. Referring to the plight of black females Gloria Wade-Gayles (1984 : 3-4) has this to say:

There are three major circles of reality in American society, which reflect degrees of power and powerlessness. There is a large circle in which white people, most of them men, experience influence and power. Far away from it there is a smaller circle, a narrow space, in which black people, regardless of sex, experience uncertainty, exploitation and powerlessness. Hidden in this second circle is a third circle, a small, dark enclosure in which black women experience pain, isolation, and vulnerability. These are the distinguishing marks of black womanhood in white America.

Dishonour of being black, slave and a female chars them psychologically, no less than physically. Sufferings at the hands of males, the African-American woman prepares herself to give a tough fight for survival inside as well as outside her house. Barred from attaining real freedom in social, political and economic area, these females have to take unexceptional stand for just basics, leaving aside independence and prosperity. Stultifying ambience of prejudice, discrimination and superciliousness nips even the faintest chance of freedom. Black males, helpless and tense, making black females the soft target of their frustration and helplessness, still fail to question the unfair scheme of things set by whites. The angles keep shifting but the focus always remains the confusing chaos blacks find themselves in. The distinction between women caused by class and community is specifically highlighted by brilliantly contrasting Ruth, a society lady and Pilate, a total outcast. Pilate is totally beyond class and distinctions and yet is the embodiment of the spirit of her community. Ruth symbolizes those women who become the emblem of a man's wealth and class position while Pilate is the guide to essences beyond outward appearance or material things. Pilate is also the embodiment of the tradition of her family and is the guiding force for Milkman in his essential journey to the past.

The only viable solution to the oppression and exploitation lies in the unity of the African people; In Song of Solomon, Milkman sees himself as a part of community in Michigan and in Shalimar as a prerequisite to becoming a part of his living. Joint efforts are made by Ruth and Pilate to save Milkman because this fledgling is the symbol of their continuity. Not knowing the past, he is unsure of his future. His need to develop the race

consciousness is roused because that allows him to see himself and other African people as one, having a common identity and a common struggle. Toni furthers it when she emphasizes gender unity for women who are separated from their husbands because of slavery or hunt for jobs. It leads him to knowledge that brings with it an acceptance of the responsibility of adulthood in general and Africanhood in particular. His quest makes him aware of the conscience and sensitivity of the black psyche. Now, he looks at the black mind and black life with a knowledgeable sympathy.

He gets to know that he can neither show nor receive gratitude with money, for humanism is a traditional African principle valued more than money and held in esteem more by African masses than by the African petty bourgeois. Morrison's conscious focus on collective rather than individual struggle is clarified through her repeated assertion that Beloved is the story of a people rather than a person. Her candid confession in an interview with Angelo Bonni (1989 : 121) is crystal clear when she says that the book is not about the institution of slavery but it is "about those anonymous people called slaves. What they do to keep on, how they make a life, what they are willing to risk, however long it lasts, in order to relate to one another – that was incredible to me."

In Beloved, Sethe relies on African community in order to purge the ghost from 124. And surprisingly, people come forward to help as if driven by a force. No place is left for personal grudges or differences. All become one to overcome the problem. Toni seems to take the reins in her hands by suggesting ways as viable solutions. After proposing collective class struggle against capitalism, as a viable solution to African's problem in

America, in Beloved, Morrison adds a new dimension to the solution arrived at, in her next novel, Jazz, with its thematic emphasis on the unity of women as a solution to gender oppression.

While the idea of race unification is not new but gender solidarity and women bonding as the only viable solution to gender oppression, as exemplified in Jazz, is altogether new. Just as in jazz, the story and the telling of the story are one, so in Jazz, theme and structure blend together to suggest the unity of that must exist among African women. Novel's inscription and its first word 'Sth' help convey the message of gender solidarity through the women bonding which can't be conveyed in a better way than in jazz, a music form in which songster, song and song telling are one and the same. She specifically uses only jazz because it's the music of blacks. Violet accepts the influence of Dorcas, Alice and Felice on her life because they not only lead Violet to self-discovery but also help her work on her relationship with Joe.

The relationship shared by black females is very strong, sympathetic and understanding. People have read "very little about the friendship of women, and them having respect for each other like it's something new. But black women had always had that, they have always been emotional life supports for each other." (Sumana 1998 : 118) When Sethe arrives with her newborn daughter tied to her breast, Baby Suggs welcomes her. She has a powerful mentor in Baby Suggs who kindles a desire in her to know her past and to love herself as a person. In Jazz also, though Violet has attempted to spoil the face of dead Dorcas, Dorcas's aunt and other black females help her feel normal about her self

and their compassionate sharing of the affairs of life makes her stable in her attitude. Similarly, in Song of Solomon, Pilate, Ruth, Hagar, stand for one another. Pilate helps Ruth to have the love of her husband. She helps Hagar also to know life in a better way, but things take a different shape.

Toni wishes that the black should know about their past to cultivate a sense of belonging, “What we have to do is to reintroduce ourselves to ourselves. We have to know the past so that we can use it for now.” (Morrison 1974 : 90) Morrison knows that their culture ties are strong and so is their resilience so she validates black culture and reaffirms its adaptive survival power, “its creativity amidst oppression, its life-affirming qualities as well as its ancient wisdom and humanity and its capacity for survival.” (Reed 1988 : 50) Therefore, Toni blends her artistic innovation in the projection and interpretation of black experience by giving a refreshing interpretation to the black experience in her novel, Jazz. The energizing, life-giving force of jazz originates from mystery, continues with surprises and end in a sense of renewal. This is how the novel Jazz works too. In Beloved, Toni shows all blacks taking stand against slavery and despite being brutally bruised they pick up their shards and make an attempt to put all pieces back in place. Same trend gets reflected in Song of Solomon where Pilate, even after being an outcast, manages to make Milkman aware of the need to untie the secret of his roots. K. Sumana (1998 : 130) shows how it is reflected in this unique novel of Toni Morrison when she elaborates, “... it is inspired by the whole range of human feelings. As the complicated story moves along, it modulates back and forth in sometimes very unexpected ways. In the end human passion is urged on as a creative force, with the narrator telling us that we

are 'free' to 'remake.'" Their phoenix like power to take birth out of ashes makes these blacks extraordinary as despite the most inhuman treatment they have acclaimed dignity. Their suppression to slavery has taught them not to show inhumanity to others and understand perfectly well their own position. Thus, Jazz represents the culmination of Morrison's fictional attempts to connect with her readers, to move them beyond sympathy, empathy, and even understanding of what it means to be black in white America.

To sum up, works of these writers transcend narrowly prescribed conceptions to deal with human concerns where the binding thread remains too strong to be snapped and the patterns and overtones appeal universally to all. Their literary and artistic abilities and competence make these writers stand in the vanguard of contemporary writers of fiction, transcending both their racial identity and gender. Although firmly crossing country boundaries, the works of these authors are delicately bedecked by individual cultural heritage and social concerns. In perfect consonance with Canadian culture, Atwood's characters are incessantly haunted by physical displacement. Their individualism shatters utterly when they are set against unknown place or destination. Village life puts them off because it is too demanding and completely shorn of adventure and fun. City life, on the other hand, seems scary and sarcastic for it infuses barrenness and artificialities. Simulations, as a result, cajole her characters to believe in appearances by losing contact with their real self. Slow but steady affinity with masks forces her characters to maintain a safe distance even from their real selves. Her works reflect the cultural richness of Canada while Doris Lessing shares the richness of the culture in her works. Money never

rules her culture neither do family ties. Personal space remains the hub of everything and relations are put at stake to maintain individuality. Though no compromises are made at the cost of personal liberty yet they prefer to bind themselves in relations. This strange tussle between individuality and bonds lacerates them to pieces. Whatever the outcome may be her characters like Lessing remain true to themselves. The degree may vary but it is always there. In Lessing's work there is a marked difference between her earlier and later works. The intensity is less in initial works but it intensifies with the passage of time. Male female relationships are based on mutual compatibility if it is absent then the liberty is there to walk out of relationships sans much hullabaloo, something very entangled in Indian society. Arundhati infuses Indian culture in her work by talking about untouchables, boy-girl discrimination, marriage sanctity, etc. Velutha and Ammu die premature death because the strict caste values do not allow the illicit or even legal relationship between a woman of upper caste and an untouchable. Ammu's return to her parents after her divorce again shows the strong family setup holding social life. The distinction between married women, unmarried ladies and divorcee is distinctly diverse. Marriage is still considered the most sanctimonious relationship. Women stand in relation to marriage and family ties. Husband-wife relationship is never of equality because boy-girl discrimination works very prominently in Indian scenario. Respect and dignity can't be sacrificed for the likings or preferences of anybody. As Arundhati's work reflects the mores of Indian culture, Toni's novels also are directly influenced by African folktales. She is wholeheartedly concerned about the issues that are of direct relevance to the black people. Her gamut begins with black people, their concerns, and problems and comes to an end with possible solutions. Slavery, the most wretched plague on human beings

comes effortlessly to her because of her relation to the race. The grit and determination of blacks to resurrect themselves from ashes speak volumes about their survival instinct. Plight of females is deplorable because they get victimized manifold. Individual struggle doesn't gain much foothold because race consciousness has helped them live life freely. Toni even suggests gender solidarity for survival and growth, since blacks have been forcibly denied their culture and customs, in Toni, there is a deep urge for blacks not to forget and discard their culture. Her desire to create interest in their tradition helps her characters feel one with the people they are part of. Sense of rootlessness vanishes when sense of belonging settles in. Honest adherence to the cultural fineries helps these cushion their deep rooted sensitivities. Had the works of these writers not affected by cultural aspects their characters would not have reacted the way they do and the story lines would not have been different and varied.

Chapter 6

Conclusions

The voyage of female authors to gain name and fame in literary arena has been long and arduous one but it has been worth all the efforts because now having withstood the test of time they have proved themselves as eminent writers. The effort to bring perfection to their works is visible from the effects their works induce after being read critically. The changes that made these female writers bask in the glory of fame are not sudden and shallow but progressive and profound. Renowned writers like Toni Morrison, Margaret Atwood, Doris Lessing and Arundhati Roy highlight subtle nuances in their works that have made them more mature and mellow. All strike a delicate balance between their commitment to society and their aesthetic responsibility to their art of fiction. They brilliantly succeed in their attempt to elevate through fictional art the reclaimable and beautiful in the human condition. Their experiences are not far-fetched but real ones. It never seems contrived and derived but surfaces as the expression of something existent in its own right. Their works move forward to portray a new concern but without completely ignoring the previous ones. Hence, the movement is concurrently linear and circular. Quite surprisingly, all the works are symbiotically related and this fact reveals the emergence of an evolutionary pattern.

These writers do write about feminist issues like women's dilemmas and alienation caused by their marginal position in patriarchy but they refuse to go to war against men for they believe that by doing so women themselves remain psychologically amputated.

Theirs is a mature and justified reaction. They don't go for seeing either men or women as examples of gender and believe that if women have problems so do men as they are not members of a separate species. They are not interested in portraying ideal women but women as they really are with all their strengths and shortcomings. All of these writers believe that women have to take the concerns of men as seriously as they expect men to take theirs. These are not the only female writers who think in this line; all of them seem to be equally concerned with the fair treatment meted out to males as well. Honest acceptance of the stand of males and females in relation to each other demonstrates not only their mature mindset but balanced judgment also. Their broad outlook gets reflected in the multitudinous changes suffused in their texts.

Since the changes have been multifold, varied aspects like theme, style and cultural fineries reflect them simultaneously. Theme or the recurring idea of the novels is not unusually exceptional but the treatment of these themes is captivatingly novel. The focus of these works is not the allegations formed against somebody specific be it race, religion, gender or anything else. The uniqueness of these writers is the specific pattern they weave of themes; instead of lopsided emphasis on any of the numerous themes, an encompassing coverage of prominent themes is taken into consideration. The themes are different but an underlying and profound thread of continuity binds these themes. The pattern that emerges out of the works of these writers is wider and easily acceptable because it appeals to varied readers in a wider context. It begins with suppression, smoothly gliding towards alienation, resulting in the questioning of existence, guiding towards self discovery and finally awakening people culminating in self-realization. All

themes are not isolated but interdependent; these are a part of the whole but with shifting focus. While in some of the works suppression remains the hub of the action, some works centre around alienation; in others the issue of existentialism unnerves the characters. The ultimate stages of self-discovery and self-realization complete the pattern.

Suppression, the stage where people are denied some of the basic rights, may be multifold also as it may be enforced physically, emotionally, psychologically, economically and politically. In the world of males, the accepted victims may be women but in the world of these female writers anybody may be a victim; the privileges cherished by males never save them from so many of the other maladies, sustaining the fact that men do feel passive and helpless at times. In Arundhati Roy Chacko, Pappachi, Estha and his father are never better placed than Ammu, Mammachi, Margaret, Rahel simply because they are males. Similarly, in Margaret Atwood Nate, Chris, Mr. Griffin, Richard, Alex Thomas, Dr. Daniel, and Jack crumble under pressures and tend to become passive and helpless against unforeseen forces. Doris Lessing also creates male characters like Richard, Tom, Paul and Mr. Brown who get victimized because they can't have control over all the things. The attempt to bring forth the fact that not females but males can be the sufferers also is dignifiedly flaunted; the reasons which cause these breakdowns may stem from anywhere and sometimes these wounds remain uncured. In the stage of suppression, though females have large and intense share of sufferings, males are not spared. Nevertheless, the objective and impartial treatment emanating from the pen of these writers ensures that males are not unnecessarily indicted for everything that goes astray in the lives of females.

Alienation, the stage where affinity suffers a tremendous jolt, is equally applicable to males and females though it may also vary because of cultural factors. It goads them to probe into their existence and find about their roots and the connecting past. Pilate, Milkman, Laura, Macon Dead, Ammu, Chacko, Pappachi, Mammachi, Nate, Elizabeth, Anna, Molly, etc., make extra efforts to feel connected. Groping incessantly, they gradually commence asserting themselves. The more negligent the characters the more they enjoy bullying others and the more mature they are the more tolerant they turn out to be. The mellow treatment of themes becomes possible because of the induction of true-to-life situations and characters. Situations and reactions of the characters are realistic and convincing. Their characters' dilemmas and sufferings, desires and errors and their ability to consciously or unconsciously wound others, make readers react to them not as fictional characters but as live human beings.

In self-realization, the next stage, they get to understand their position in the larger context. The characters are encouraged to unify the warring aspects of their inner and social selves; see themselves as strong yet fallible, acknowledge the essential humanity of others, show regard for all things great and small and experience a healing sense of peace which follows understanding. This stage however is not meant for all; while only a few learn to survive at a higher, spiritual level, some struggle towards it and others still continue to exist in their atomized lives. Characters like Pilate, Milkman, Laura, Chris, Estha, etc., familiarize themselves with the most profound realization where they can remain the hub of their lives and extend beyond boundaries, when required. Their awareness is broad and all-encompassing. In short, rules don't bind them; they don't

force themselves on others and understand well that life has its share of sorrows and joys. There are other characters like Rennie, Iris, Violet, Sethe, Denver, Mammachi, etc., who know the materialistic side of life unless they are shaken out of the reverie. Their acceptance of life as it comes does not allow them to attain perfect realization while some characters like Elizabeth, Richard, Winifred, Beloved, Chacko, Babu, Joe, etc., remain closed in the gyres of restrictions as their consciousness is extremely narrow and limited. Juxtaposition of isolated struggle with collective struggle and selfish individualism with individualism conditioned by social responsibility helps these female writers present a balanced view of social life.

All the writers explicate the presence of beauty, love or more often, the absence of it but whatever they write about are not only accusations but continuous and consistent efforts to relate themselves in the bigger scenario. Thus, by focusing on pertinent issues, they lay the cornerstone for a sound and thorough outpouring of the feminist aesthetic thoughts and feelings. They attempt to show terrible consequences for people internalizing the values of a foreign culture that both directly and indirectly rejects them though it never diminishes their forbearance. Instead of waging a war against other cultures they force their characters to have firm faith in their own culture because theirs is the richest one. Toni and Atwood illustrate to their characters the importance of the awareness and acceptance of their history in order to liberate themselves from inhibitions and aberrations. In order to provide a clear focus to her writings, Toni makes a very mature selection by concentrating on Blacks. Similarly, these female writers want their characters to see, understand and face the reality; else it turns out to be something

immature and illusory. They make their characters understand that freedom is not escaping the responsibilities but choosing the ones they feel comfortable with. Another important aspect which is found in abundance in all the writers is the desire to stay connected to other people, place, customs, and humanity at large. Simultaneous attempts to live for themselves and to stay connected reflect the stark realities of human life.

Closely linked to the subject matter remains style for whatever gets conveyed gains or loses charm by the manner of its utterance. Oversimplified style never catches the attention just as trendy presentation puts the readers off. The technique of modulating mechanism according to the mood swings of situation and characters has helped these writers strike a perfect balance between what is presented and what is required. Hence, the impression created is never short of the desired intention. Uniquely diverse in their ways, all these authors have successfully managed to weave gossamer filigree of words where there is no space for ambiguity. An outlandish attempt to flaunt their high vocabulary and intense sentence construction never overpowers these writers. A perfect combination of grace and depth embosses their works with befitting style.

All the writers meddle with the rules of grammar, but only when it becomes imperative. The figures of speech which help writers enrich their ideas are used in the most germane way to authenticate the corresponding ambience. Similes, metaphors, extended metaphors, onomatopoeic words, oxymoron, etc., are used not for inconsequential impression but for explicit and exact expression. Functional embellishment of language adds weight to their narration for then it always appeases the imaginative hunger of the

readers. Contrived and convoluted sentences which detour the way to the meaning of the message are dexterously kept at bay. Further, the sentences made of single words stretch to short as well as long phrases and a single sentence of many lines. Sentences are not meant to follow a grammatical pattern – a sentence can contain only verbs or only nouns. Even paragraphs take a new shape because the narrative demands it and accordingly all the writers adapt the length of paragraphs.

Though they seem to incorporate similar changes, the treatment makes it stand individually. The diversity of expression in Toni Morrison is unexceptionally rich and revival of the language spoken by the race Toni belongs to is a remarkable feat because it makes her work more convincing and exact. In the same way, Margaret Atwood's extraordinary style exudes a uniqueness of its own. Instead of keeping dialogue delivery and description separate, she intermixes both to suit her creative streak. Doris Lessing's way of synthesizing dreams, philosophical overtones and pithy statements brings out the extraordinary genius in her. Keeping pace with the stalwarts of literary arena, Arundhati Roy also has carved a special niche for herself by exploring all the possible niceties of English language. She has not only Indianized the language but also revolutionized the way language can be manipulated to convey the ups and downs of life.

Diaphanous *exposé* of narration remains the sole intention of all the writers while accuracy is always adhered to. Arundhati Roy, Toni Morrison, Margaret Atwood and Doris Lessing derive admiration and awe in singular ways for each ricochets a kaleidoscopic luster of their own. Exquisiteness and excellence of expression imparts an

elegant touch to their extraordinary works, which remains unparalleled by all means. Indubitably, these gifted writers put into adequate words the emotions and aspirations that all writers feel but that only a few can ever express.

The perfect harmony between the condition of the characters and the expression of the writers increases the merit of their texts. Toni makes her characters use language that is broken and ungrammatical for it seems fit according to their background; Atwood's little educated characters too take the liberty to use broken sentences; Arundhati allows all her characters to use the language accordingly. This exercise further endorses the level of maturity. When the characters are in thoughtful mood or when the blows of fate undo them, they use profound statements, which sometimes contain philosophical overtones too. Anger, frustration, urgency, fear, hatred, etc., get conveyed appropriately with apt use of words; choice of words, arrangement of phrases and construction of sentences tune well with the corresponding state of affairs. Style is influenced by not only the characters and the situation but also by personal proclivity and cultural influences.

Culture moulds the language but along with it, it also moulds the way people think, perceive and react. Social structure, relations, responsibilities, duties, etc., mean different things in different cultural contexts. In Indian scenario, males cherish undiluted supremacy; females get recognition in relation to marriage and family ties. Decisions taken are immediately influenced by these factors and characters fail to see themselves as complete whenever there is some diversion. Had Arundhati Roy's Ammu been in place of Doris Lessing's Anna, she would have never reacted the way Anna did. Honest

adherence to the cultural fineries helps these writers cushion their deep rooted sensitivities. Had the works of these writers not affected by cultural aspects their characters would not have reacted the way they did and the story lines would not have been so varied. Arundhati infuses Indian culture in her work by talking about untouchables, boy-girl discrimination, marriage sanctity, etc. As Arundhati's work reflects mores of Indian culture, Toni's novels directly echo African folktales. Likewise, Atwood's works are the direct outcome of the uneasiness caused by physical displacement, loss of money, self-woven simulations, etc. Atwood's characters prefer to stay inside a shell where the contact with their real selves is limited and formal. When deprived of their masks they feel vulnerable and meek, something nowhere visible in the characters of Doris Lessing.

Although the works of these authors are delicately bedecked by individual cultural heritage and social concerns, they firmly cross national boundaries to appeal to one and all. The desire to save their children, the fear of unknown, the inner urge to remain true to themselves and the yearning to stay in relation to those who emotionally and psychologically make them feel complete are nurtured by all. Patterns of relations, closely guarded by social ifs and buts are visible in the works of all the writers. They also delineate how these associations manipulated by society provide comprehensive view of humanity at large. Sincere adherence to regional niceties enriches their works by providing it individual identity. The thematic and stylistic aspects become vast, varied, rich and unique. Situations, in which the characters are entangled, are different and same is the case with the reactions of the characters to these situations. When all the segments

amalgamate the overall area covered by these female writers increases. Their honest devotion to their respective cultures gleams throughout their works. Since they remain true to their culture, their works exude an originality and sparkle of their own, debarring themselves from the traces of imitation.

Margaret Atwood, Doris Lessing, Arundhati Roy and Toni Morrison are amply recognized as masters of the dominant literary artistic form. The selection and execution of their subject matter and style is not narrowly restricted but has sprawled considerably resulting in the expansion of their oeuvre. Like all serious writers, they also hope to increase the awareness of their readers by not denying anything human but by recording their perceptions in as truthful and artistic a manner as possible. Their focus on human personality and character is indisputably universal with reference to their specific problems of social situation. Transcending both their racial identity and gender, their literary and artistic abilities and competence make them stand in the vanguard of contemporary writers of fiction. As highly matured fictional artists, they stand in perfect comparison with one another as they play with a variety of viewpoints where people observe and understand or misunderstand each other. They develop a rich irony by juxtaposing heroic expectation with mundane reality. Through the craft of writing and art of storytelling they seek to discover the consequences of choices and the actions of their characters. Their writings are riveted on the relationship between the inner life of their characters and the world within which they find themselves. None of them presume to tell the reader how to think and act and nor do they dole out simplistic solutions. The readers are not handed over ready answers but rather must become part of tale's

resolution. No wonder, with their artistic genius, these writers reach out to the entire world and their works transcend narrowly prescribed conceptions to deal with human concerns where the binding thread remains too strong to be snapped and the patterns and overtones appeal universally to all.

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