



ISSN 2249-6769

The Critique

A Peer - Reviewed International Refereed Literary Journal



VOL VIII - XIV 2018

**Chief Editor :
Gauri Shankar Jha**

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"Writers and Writing"

(A Literary Forum Dedicated to Creativity & Criticism)

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**Dedicated
to**

Gurudev

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**** “What does a Woman Want?” - The Anxiety of Influence on Human
Conscience and Convictions in Women's Writing**

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“... new poems originate mainly from old poems; that the primary struggle of the young poet is against the old masters. He, the *ephebe*, "clear imaginative space" for himself through a creative misreading of the strong poets of the past. Only strong poets can overcome this anxiety of influence; lesser lights become derivative flatterers and never achieve poetic immortality for themselves.

- Dan Geddes

The above quote of Dan Geddes taken from Harold Bloom's *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* can be taken as the starting point of discussion, in this paper, on the expectations and realities of women's writing in India. Bloom argues that new poems originate mainly from old poems; that the primary struggle of the new poet is against the established supremacy of style and expression of the generations of “old masters” before; that is the tradition set and established as supreme can neither be overlooked from the point of view of newer thoughts nor can it be “influentially” followed lest the new generation be read as unoriginal and lacking in personal mastery.

**** This paper forms a part of a chapter of my Research Project to be submitted to the UGC in relation to the Emeritus Research Fellowship awarded for 2015-17. It is the first of three papers relating to the research project on *Conventions versus Convictions: Strange Truths in the Phases of Evolution of Women in the Novels of Anita Nair***

T.S. Eliot rewrites the same as the conflict between “tradition” and “individual talent”. A simple rewording and replacing of Bloom's terms “new poems” tentatively with the tension experienced in “women's writing” and women's freedom of expression”, and “old poems” with purposeful and prerogative patriarchy offers a contextualized platform for understanding the plight of “female adolescents” or even mature women susceptible to the influence of “male masters” in the context of social survival and integral strength. It also will explain why women writers rarely attest themselves to be feminist themselves while presenting and promoting the conflicting female experiences in their novels. Both citations describe the inner qualm (or latent languishing) of overruling established artistic and socially dominant history; a history actualized by patriarchy. It is the conflict arising between personal conscience and personalized convictions in society. The former is the end product of religion and the latter a byproduct of social dissent.

Ironically, more than unfortunately, this male text of “*ephebe*” arising from the Latin root “*ephebus*” and Greek “*ephebos*” meaning “a young man/youth/adolescent, does not have a feminine equivalent since its mostly related to Apollo the god of wisdom, music and all that is life. This semantic margin created in classical literature has carried on till Bloom and is the sign of a “male text” that places women in the margins – negligible margins at that. The feminist movement that began as an assertion of women's rights in the late 18th century has now evolved enormously and intensely to to establish their autonomous and authentic existence against such patriarchal margins – margins created by history, society and traditional cultures.

Sara Van Butsel, with the assistance of Professor Marysa Demoor, in her research work on *Women's Writing and Writing about Women: Analysis of The Golden Notebook by Doris Lessing* (2008, states that when a woman writer could not be included in the dominant tradition, her work was described as inferior, inadequate or negatively connoted as —feminine:

... that female or feminist writing, in one way or another, searches, aspires and (sometimes desperately) looks for a way to represent —female authenticity. A way to break free from the dominant masculist tradition by which everything is

labelled and compared to; to be able to write as a woman and give a truthful account of the female identity without it being delineated as second-rate or a minor subgenre. This notion of telling the other side of the story in many ways describes the enterprise of feminist criticism, perhaps even of feminist theorizing in general.. . just like in society, a woman's role in fiction was reduced to a small potential. Gradually woman writers started to produce counter narratives and started to define themselves according to *their* point of view. (Butsel)

Itishri Sarangi, and Yajnaseni Mukherjee in their article “The Revolutionary spirit of the Contemporary Women writers of India” record Women's Writing as an explosion of pent up feelings that has long been gathered. Women writers have proved their stuff to be more serious and that which requires attention. They handle things efficiently balancing tradition and womanhood. To be a feminist is to be able to create a feminine mode of writing, fighting for the liberation of women and all that crap that destroyed the family and mutilated the feminine side of a woman. The infiltration of the western culture gave a serious blow to the Indian traditional life (Sarangi and Mukherjee 19).

and that “The social constructs of man and woman as separate entities in the binary oppositional structure fell apart and women no more subjugated to the whims and fancies of the male society. She had emerged from the cocoon of her existence, the beautiful butterfly ready to take on the world” (Sarangi and Mukherjee 20). It is true that “the binary oppositional structure’ has fallen apart as far as women's writings are concerned. But the subjects they write on – women – have not yet “emerged from the cocoon of her existence”, even though “The image of women in recent writings has undergone a sea change. Women writers have moved away from the traditional, age old portrayal of self-sacrificing women towards conflicting female protagonists searching for identity and self respect (21)”.

Though we may pat our backs and breathe a sigh of relief that women have now “self-actualized” themselves in a patriarchal social environment, the case for balancing tradition and feminism has yet to break open its cocoon of “indulgent fears”, despite the happy and welcome note of more cases of women standing up and proclaiming their rightful status in society and voicing vehemently against gender

discrimination and violence. Our overall view of the situation may be encouragingly happy but our consciences arising out of the consciousness of troubling and horrifying events perpetuated against women and marginal societies make it necessary to replace the pat on the back with a strong pinch on our arms; to awaken from a self-complacent slumber. In order to understand the gravity of the situation and seek holistic and impartial redressal of our consciousness of the “male text” has to be reevaluated and rewritten.

Understanding the basic nature and behavioural patterns of human society is the first and most important step in understanding the socio-cultural aspects of human relationships. One's consciousness of such socio-cultural factors and the relating consciences (or the absence of it) of people within it, which primarily influence the human behavior, forms the primary material for any writer who wishes to touch upon and present the conflicting realizations of that inner space of his/her characters (narratively brought forth through interior monologues). While formulating this *inner space* (conscience) most writers sacrifice the lynch pin of *inter space* (consciousness) in any human dialogic. While religious texts define and delineate on “conscience” as a steering moral principles of “good life”, literary theorists like Umberto Eco, Wolfgang Iser (*Konkretisiart*) and Martin Heidegger (*dasein*) have extolled the virtues of phenomenology in the understanding of interrelating consciousness in human societal interrelations. But, as discovered in the ever present discrimination of women in a patriarchal Indian society, the said consciousness is established and controlled by the religions and traditions of the nation. “Consciousness” is better understood from the application of Phenomenology developed by these critics.

There are a number of external patriarchal religious and social customs and conventions which govern and control the social space of a human mind and one such is the convention of moralities brought about by two socially inevitable and undeniable complementing factors – tradition and religion. Both, ironically, are factors formative of the dominant “absolute” male consciousness and have for millenniums come to form what has come to be referred to as “the male text” by feminists. It is these “conscious conventions”, brought about by the dominant male

text, which are inevitably prescriptive and patriarchal, that have apparently soaked through generations into the very being of the human psyche. Despite the influence of communication technologies and liberal postmodern worldviews of western societies, in countries like India, strongly soaked in “conscious conventions”, it is a social bridge next to impossible to change towards adapting concepts of western feminism. While on the one hand it affords a sense of personal and national pride and a sense of well being that all is well with the world.

Thomas McCarthy introducing Jurgen Habermas's book *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action* (1990) states that “when serious questions on value arise, deliberations on “one who is” and “who one wants to be” [where] questions of justice are involved, fair and impartial considerations on conflicting interests results in judgments concerning what is right or just. Habermas forges the fact that our basic moral convictions spring from something deeper and more universal than our contingent features of tradition. When moral agents try putting themselves in each other's shoes they understand the other's convictions in their conscience. Human beings are individuals connected to social networks of reciprocal social relationships where personal identity is from the beginning interwoven with relations of mutual recognition. “ This interdependence brings with it a reciprocal vulnerability that calls for guarantees of mutual consideration to preserve both the integrity of individuals and the web of interpersonal relations in which they form and maintain their identities” (vii).

The history or tradition and the culture of a nation greatly moderate the culture and beliefs of its people. Culture is the act of developing the intellectual and moral faculties of a people especially through education (to some extent indoctrination) of taste acquired by intellectual and aesthetic training. The integrated pattern of human knowledge, belief, and behavior thus gained or influenced depends upon the capacity for learning (or unlearning) and transmitting knowledge to succeeding generations. This is largely conditioned by the customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits of a racial, religious, or social group. Hence, there is no permanent set of shared attitudes, values, goals, and practices that characterizes an institution or organization, rather these attitudes change with time and consciousness

of one's self realization in the face of social/political dissent or disgust. At a larger macrocosmic level, social conventions and personal convictions are complementary even as consciousness and conscience are interrelated in any socio-religious discourse. Since the ontological study of society and literature in relation to life is seen as the realm of interrelating consciousness by philosophers like Heidegger, Husserl and Wolfgang Iser through their exponentials on human understanding and acceptance or rejection of each other, it is imperative that this study investigates conventional impositions on women from the point of view of controlling the conscience of a person. In short, it may be hypothetically stated here that Conventions are Conscience based and Convictions are Consciousness based.

The term “conviction” definitively relegates the state or appearance of being convinced about a truth or ideology and bases its stand point on a fixed or firmly held belief or opinion that is either personally felt or promoted by a community feeling. If Habermas's “one who is” relates to “convention”, his “who one wants to be” is based on “personal convictions” and the intermingling of the two relates to one's conflict in consciousness. At a distinct level of social awareness one's consciousness and convictions determines and designates one's quality or state of being a person i.e., personality where personality designates and relates to the condition or fact of relating to a particular person, *specifically or* the complex of characteristics that distinguishes an individual or a nation or group; *especially or* the totality of an individual's behavioral and emotional characteristics based on a set of distinctive traits and characteristics .

Amidst the various theories and philosophies propounded for the greater understanding of mankind in an evolving interrelated world, the existential philosophy propounded by Sartre and Kierkegaard evaluates man's evolution in his socio-political environment based on the choices he makes in life's tumultuous and tortuous existence. He evolves or degenerates depending on the authenticity of his choice made under a particular circumstance or situation; if his choice is rightly made he progresses or evolves into a higher order of life; if not, he is forced to retrace the stage of “Call” or “Crisis” which had mooted the necessity of a choice towards the successful stage/phase of “Rebirth”. The question of “authenticity” of choice made is

a variable depending on the “conscience” (a person's moral sense of right and wrong, viewed as acting as a guide to one's behavior). And this variable, in a post modern world of relativization, becomes difficult to pin down definitively, thus giving room for “doubting” any question of “authenticity” behind the “conscientious” choice made by an individual confronted existentially. This, as stated earlier, is a “Catch 22” situation that calls to ruminate on a similar situation confronted in “the act of reading” as enunciated by Umberto Eco, Husserl, Heidegger and the phenomenologist like Wolfgang Iser.

Edmund Husserl (1859–1938), one of the forerunners of phenomenology (extensively applied along with Heidegger and Iser in Reader Response Theories) rightly states that consciousness does its work of knowing the world, based on the thesis that “consciousness is intentional”; a doctrine that is borrowed from Franz Brentano. That is, every act of consciousness is directed at some object or other, perhaps a material object, perhaps an "ideal" object. Thus, the phenomenologist can distinguish and describe the nature of the intentional acts of consciousness and the intentional objects of consciousness, which are defined through the content of consciousness.

The improving of a social consciousness, which is an individual's interaction with others in a society, or a collective group's consciousness of the human environment shared by fellow individuals and groups within a society or across societies in order to establish and maintain harmony transcending hegemony, is vital in bringing about. In short, consciousness alludes to the “inter space” of cognitive activity engaged and the awareness derived within and during the act of interacting social relationships.

Contrarily, by the natural law of antithesis, it is a situation that also generates concern for the “well being” of all within our society made of many margins; class and gender are two which have been very much affected by this “male text” and makes one wonder if truly and impartially all is well with the world. Yet, the last four decades of Indian writings have steadily moved towards projecting the plight of Indian women in an oppressive patriarchal society and novels have sprung from women writers proclaiming the need for right to expression, speech and a way of life

by women as has been experienced and enjoyed by men. On the one hand women novelists assert and affirm the subjugated margins of women in the social and domestic fields while cautiously avoiding to be caught in the intriguing and patriarchally punitive web of being labeled a feminist. Either these Indian women writers are elite, overseas educated emigrants writing on the cross cultural experience of Indian women abroad, and hence twice removed from the reality of an Indian space; or they are Indian women who long to present the travails of an Indian female space but apprehensive to “proclaim” to be a feminist. The rejection to identify and conform may be for various personal or righteous reasons but, when their artistic exuberance profess the move towards self actualization of women, their personal stances hide ironically behind the male text of “the death/disappearance of the author”, or they find it hard to “delight” and be “didactic” simultaneously because they are themselves caught in the web of tradition and religion; it is inevitable for women to wear “masks and disguises” in a male dominant world, and use “slant” in self preserving form, to survive. Caught in the web of religious conscience (rightfully appreciable) and history (wrongfully written), while striving to emphasize their being and their becoming most women writers have managed to implant a “nothingness” to their protagonists who neither fully enter and experience the Showalterian “feminist phase” nor are willing to entertain the “female phase”. They rarely openly defy the male text nor do they engage in rewriting the same in the female spirit. Hence, this continues to influence and prohibit any “radical change” in modern Indian society in spite of its professed social rationalism.

Conventions, customs, rituals and myths have been the traditional life sustaining principles of the people of India. They have been tailored into our social veins in order to bring about an order. But not every convention can be blindly condemned, it is to be studied and applied to life in a society and only when it is with enough evidence proven, that certain conventions are the causes for repressions can one come to a conclusion that a certain behavioural stand or stance is wrong or unwarranted. The role of religion and tradition cannot be and will never be undermined in any society at the cost of unprecedented change in social perspectives, especially the Indian, wherein religion and tradition are the ethical and moral life

blood of the people. This is a prime reason for the ineffectiveness of innovation of a common social ethics and culture that is not gender biased. Margaret Laurence, the Canadian novelist in her *A Bird in the House* (1970), shows how Vanessa learns about the life of those cast out from the world of patriarchal order and compassion, turnout to be depressed and disillusioned about life; Vanessa must discern an interplay of illusion and reality (or enchantment and disenchantment). When Vanessa sees the ordinary world as too ordinary, she creates an escapist fantasy which ultimately fails to satisfy. She is shocked to see the ordinary world in an extraordinary (often frightening) way. When a house is “too much in order” it ceases to be a home. This is so because more order and restraint are forced on women than men in rituals and social practices. It is only by “raising consciousness” levels of both man and woman in a multicultural, secular and male text society that a virtual notion of feminism in India can become a reality; not a reality as theorized and practiced in the West, but one written by women writers who are able to balance traditional truth with contemporary truths about life. In many ways, our Indian social existence is fast becoming a Canadian social “mosaic”.

Sovankumar Patnaik in *The Status of Women in India* (2007) says that women have comforted themselves with a view of scholars that women were greatly honored in ancient India from Vedic times. They enjoyed freedom, good status and learning opportunities. The decline in the woman's status later resulted from foreign invasions. In those days women must have had a certain amount of freedom; it appears that the Vedic women were probably comparable to modern women (Patnaik 81). In this context, Toni Morrison's pointed remarks may be taken as a revealing query towards reconciling gender extremes. “Tell us what it is to be a woman so that we may know what it is to be a man. What moves at the margin?” (Morrison 201)

Women were respected provided they conformed to the norms laid down by society. Sudhir Kakar in *Feminine Identity in India and in Intimate Relations* observes, that a women's status in Indian society is determined by her faithful adherence to the prescribed code of behavior. The traditional image has both positive and negative connotations. Images restrict a person, hamper freedom and a woman

not conforming to the image is either annihilated or denigrated. The modern Indian woman finds herself in a peculiar situation in which her freedom to interact with men is hampered by traditions and conventions (Kakar 203).

The women whose consciousness of self and their surrounding are those with education and jobs giving them a financial independence and a social self-esteem. The upshot of partially changed conditions is that women have started realizing their individual potential and predominance and learnt to self-actualize not only in society but also in domestic life. The change is so radical, though in select social sectors that a minimal percentage of the total population in India have entered and excelled in various public and private sectors as much as the armed forces competing and contending with men. This social and economic uplift in their status has resulted in a change in their consciousness. But, though there is more of self expression, expansion and assertion, the instances are minimal in relation to the greater percentage of women still under the influence of their false consciousnesses. In this self assertive and self deprecating social predicament, the question that rises in one's mind is "What does a woman want?"

Though Sigmund Freud is not the prime quote for expousing feminist ideals here, his works have been path breaking proofs of how the human mind works. Freud who opened the portals of psychological reading of human beings, himself was not very sure of what a woman actually wants. He says, "The great question that has never been answered, and which I have not yet been able to answer, despite my thirty years of research into the feminine soul is, "What does a woman want?" (Freud 444 - 446). According to him, "women oppose change, receive passively, and add nothing to of their own," as mentioned in a 1925 paper entitled "The Psychical Consequences of the Anatomic Distinction between the Sexes"; which we necessarily have to reject considering the tenets of modern feminism which primarily opposes "male texts", theorization and condescending treatises by man. That even Freud's understanding of woman was limited is obvious in his abrupt closure on the matter when he says, "That is all I have to say about feminity" (Freud 422, 1933). To make matters shift from the level of mere assumptions into assertions he goes on to say " If you want to know more about feminity, enquire of your own experiences of life, or turn to poets,

or wait until Science can give you deeper and more coherent information” (Freud 423,1993). The logical rhetoric to Freud's query and bewilderment should be “Does a woman want all that man wants or has or experiences? Fulfillment, regard, social space and recognition, economic and cultural independence? In short, a socially gender-free experience of life? That woman not be taken for granted? That is so!, is the emphatic statement in women's writing. Unfortunately this is not realized in all cases, in all places and all societies. What one understands from Freud's dictum is that consciousness of the other could be understood only in fragments and can never be generalized. An individual when subjected to experiences comprises his/her individuality in a social exchange.

What is the role of a woman and “What does a woman want?” has been thoroughly discussed and validated in the seminal works of three western feminist philosophers such as Simone de Beauvoir, Luce Irigaray and Judith Butler. During the past two decades Beauvoir's conception of existential ethics, Irigaray's philosophy of sexual difference, and Butler's thesis of radical constructivism have become important topics in feminist philosophy. Despite the fact that the work of Beauvoir, Irigaray and Butler differs in both content and approach, in all the cases there is the clearly discernable influence of phenomenology and the importance of studying consciousness in social interactions. Beauvoir has mostly concentrated on the body and the “lived experience” (Beauvoir 51) in particular. Beauvoir is essential to know the “exact experience of women” (where Irigaray opines that not all women's experiences are the same and hence cannot be exactly defined). The understanding between gender consciousness will never be possible and remain merely man's imagination and a woman will have always been what the men wanted her to be. But the problem is how far are these rhetorics of women's needs applicable, fulfillable, acceptable and writable in the Indian context of feminist writing is the daunting question however right and righteous the western feminists' demands may be; how far can western critical theories and interpretations be applicable to Indian women whose consciousness is embedded deeply in religious rites and traditional norms?

Writings by most Indian women today unveil steadily and argue firmly that values like freedom of thought and expression, liberation from oppression and

marginalization, and self assertion as a quest for dignity are the prime movers of their imagination and creativity as quoted by M.K. Naik. He also states that “the satirical edge, the ironic tone” are seldom predominant, despite the Shashi Despande dictum of “slant” as a medium of self proclamation of women (Naik 221) . Away from the past “double conscious” conventions the female fictional narratives in this millennium anchor and promote them as genderless virtues. These are writers who instead of looking back merely in anger and frustration, look at writings as a sign of creativity and hope for a better tomorrow for all people irrespective of any gender demarcation.

Writers like Gita Hariharan and Anita Nair have achieved what most other woman writers had wanted to but have been limited by this false conscious and double conscious perception of their characters. These two contemporary writers, comparable to the erstwhile and venerable Kamala Das, have managed to express the inexpressible, exercise the daunting and create a female space and culture that can balance traditional impressions and individual needs, the mythical conventions of the male text with all its strictures and prescriptions to women by rewriting myths (as in Hariharan's *Thousand Faces of Night*) along with revisiting the past (as in Nair's *Mistress* and *Idris*) attempted to transcend the limitations of women's writing and their psychological human boundaries and constrictions. They have been striving to drive home one idea through the various analogies of myths of past and present – to carry a false consciousness is hell; and pseudo feminists carry hell within as echoed by Strauss under a similar contest:

We have been taught to fear the impurity of foreign things, a doctrine which we embody in the formula 'Hell is other people', but primitive myth has the opposite moral implication: 'Hell is ourselves' (l'enfer, c'est nous-meme). In a century when man is bent on the destruction of innumerable forms of life, it is necessary to insist, as in the myths, that a properly appointed humanism cannot begin of its own accord but must place the world before life, life before man, and the respect of others before self-respect. (Strauss 299).

Cursed damnation or blessed deliverance rests in the choices one makes and the means one takes to achieve one's objectives in life. This “essential” principle of

religion also forms the basic principle of existentialism. The existentialist's phases of “Call”, “Crisis” and “Rebirth” are conceptually no different from the essentialist's “Sin”, “Suffering” and “Salvation”, but only in their terminology. The shift in phase for the better happens only in the case of authentic willed choices one makes. Githa Hariharan and Anita Nair present in their novels this existential angst borne of existential choices made, and depending on the “authentic or unauthentic will” of the choices made their self actualization is or isn't.

Anita Nair in her *The Better Man* focuses exactly on this capacity of one's will power to overcome human weakness and establish the right approach to life as the foremost duty of a man or woman. Her *Ladies Coupe* is a critique of male texts wherein women are constrained to endure suppression and oppression only because their will to endure gracefully is stronger than their will to exercise their authentic selves. *Mistress* is an illustration of how sensitive and masterful an Indian English writer could be in portraying personalities with varied emotional textures stretching beyond stereotypes in the process of regaining human love and dignity in the backdrop of the author's creative attempt to interpret an Indian classical art form. The very choice of this art and this as a ruse to explain the story is like she is saying that it is all a mere stage where however serious be the role of a person it is ultimately only a role which is all gained by the kind of an ego one nurtures in self. To unmask false consciousness and explore the strands of illusions which are bestowed by male texts in society in the name of culture, customs, conventions of tradition and religion and present the need for “consciousness raising” in women especially is the purpose of their writings. Almost all human beings, especially the women, are prisoners of patterns. Those patterns which are vividly presented in the religious tales, mythologies have been taught to women by men and women pass it on to their children with a conscientious fervor without culling, without examining their validity from the perspective of how, when and where they may harm her. Both in the past and in the present women have remained the same, the “conditioned composition” of innocence, ignorance, timidity, tenderness, motherly and stoic. Even if she fights for sexual freedom she is to establish an ethic for herself. Because, whatever cause one fights for one is not to forget that there is a greater responsibility

of shouldering a society. Whatever single radical step an individual takes against a social norm reflects on the entire community or gender. This is because to a great extent women have been and are the custodians of morality, and for generations they have been governed by certain ego (false consciousness) and this ego is indoctrinated by mothers mostly right from childhood. Rightly said, this is a Catch 22 situation; a vicious cycle where the head eats the tail. When all of a sudden this ego is contradicted by so called feminist theories gutsiness is covered with guilt (conscience). The only way out is to self activate; the choice between openly willed freedom (which religion and tradition speed-break) or covertly escape through anonymity. In *Mistress* Nair shows through the character of Radha and Radha's mother Gowri it is evident that life needs a much better and intelligent way of handling to escape a guilt laden life.

Anita Nair's works endorse female consciousness through feminine experience. Her narratives demystify patriarchal assumptions about the nature of human beings, their relation to nature, and the relation of physical and moral qualities in human relationships. To endorse female experience, the artist must defy or stretch traditional literary conventions which are rooted in philosophical assumptions for several thousand years of feminist art (as feminism is not new but is there in the culture since ancient times). And what a feminist did not subscribe to in the past was accessibility; and even today, not to every man or even to some women, it still remains inaccessible. When feminist art is difficult, the reason usually lies not in purposeful obfuscation, but in the poverty of a woman's language of feeling and the difficulty of rendering feeling into words: And this paucity of vocabulary to express a woman's experience is less found in the writings of Anita Nair. In many women writers this lack of expression occurs or the fear of expression due to certain restrictions that they still suffer of the patriarchal moulding and it becomes questionable for them whether the terms and issues of traditional aesthetics are applicable to feminist work of art. Traditional aesthetic principles are said and considered to be universal and art is considered to be “above” sex, or at least that sex is irrelevant to it. There is an art which is specifically feminist. Some, by virtue of

feminism, would deny this topic of 'art' arguing that its political interest violates aesthetic standards. (Broude 72)

The novel is essentially accepted and taken as a mode of “consciousness raising” in women – a raising that either brings a transformation or a shift in world view from a “ false woman” (false consciousness) to the “alive woman” (self actualized consciousness). It has also become one of the few effective media of communicating, directly or indirectly, the need for a greater personal conviction and a more intense awareness of self and society for women, and men too, in their relating to women.

Hence, the inability or the unwillingness to think for oneself and therefore toeing the line of the dominant mode is a sign of “inauthentic will” (in existential terms) and so will not allow the person to progress or evolve from a lower state of consciousness (self awareness/self-esteem) to the next higher level. That is, “rebirth or renewal” becomes an impossibility. A false consciousness leads the person, under duress, to shift between exercising self will and exorcising dominant will, thus leading one into the dilemma of “double consciousness”. In short, double-consciousness, is the sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, (Du Bois)

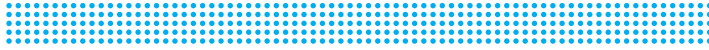
This question of the variables in social thought can be extended from the realm of existential choices to “consciousness' as implied by Umberto Eco who, in the *Role of the Reader*, points out that all kinds of texts do not invite the same kind of reaction or involvement in the same kind of reader; even as there are so many readers, so many interpretations can be possible. This foresees the need for an “interpretive community” of feminist thinkers who can understand and voice the female experience as it should really be. What better platform than the novel; and what better authors than women! Examining this from Husserl's conceptualization of “consciousness” the human mind is the centre and origin of all meaning involved in interpretation, where the text is the “le langue” and the reader “la parole”. Heidegger extends his master Husserl's theory to emphasize that interpretation extends the single human consciousness to the forces outside that govern this consciousness. Reading women writers has no doubt been conditioned on these lines, for writing by

a woman is derided as “self proclamation” by men, “self love” and self aggrandizement by a section of women who hesitate to cross the patriarchal boundaries of tradition and religion.

The term conscience is the popularly used from an intellectual and moral perspective to denote a person's moral sense of right and wrong, viewed as acting as a guide to one's behavior in a social setting of human actions and interactions. It is an “inner space” of awareness within one's mind conditioned by socio-religious laws and codes of do's and don'ts. It communicates the sense of right and wrong, or the moral sense of an action or thought or inclination through an inner voice; a voice within the person. Religious views of conscience usually see it as linked to a morality inherent in all humans, to the world at large and to Godhead.

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**The Paradox of Subjectivity: From Class-consciousness to
Self-consciousness, Critiquing George Gissing's novels
“Workers in the Dawn”, “Thyrza” and “Born in Exile”.**

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A typical Gissing protagonist is born class-conscious. The deep rooted class-consciousness of his protagonists evolve from their natural hostility between the self and the society often shifting them to the stage of self-consciousness. They broadly represent two classes working class and middle class or lower middle class. In preface to the second edition of 'The Unclassed' (1883) Gissing defines the third category in these words “...by unclassified, I mean not of course 'declassified'...male and female all the permanent persons of the story dwell in a limbo external to society”(Gissing, 1883, pi).

Gissing accepts the class notions and his novels strive to manifest the class struggle ingrained in the very fabric of the society. He rather shows the deeper implications of class antagonism and class struggle. John Helperin defines class in Gissing's novel as “One's financial and social position determine one's class not essentially but one's natural class”(Helperine, 1977, 1890). Most of the class-conscious characters of Gissing seek the best out of their own class, and when their search appears to be frustrated they turn back to the very worst within their own social group. In “Workers in the Dawn” Arthur Golding seeks aesthetic pleasure outside the harsh realities of the nauseating environment of the slums. He doesn't belong to working class by birth but it is sheer accident that he was born in slums. His father dies of excessive alcoholism and a friend of his deceased father brings him to slums and after a brief stay over there, he returns to streets of London. Though he is illiterate but slums have not corrupted him. To quote from this text “Arthur had

already several times given indications of what in a child of higher birth we might, perhaps, be allowed to call chivalrous feelings, from other boys of his position by certain want of brutality and absence of vulgar selfishness).(Gissing, 141). It is his own initiative that he learns to read and write and grooms himself as an artist. In his self-cultivated values, refinement, taste and habits he is hardly a working class character. In a letter to his family members commenting on this novel Gissing wrote “It is a novel ...of social questions and the principal characters are earnest young people striving for improvement in, as it were the dawn of new phase of civilisation”(Gissing,Letters,1927,153).Arthur's acquisition of wealth and his subsequent dilemma whether he should devote his money to the cause of social work or nourishing his own aesthetic pursuits. This can be seen as conflicts between the private and public codes of values. Symbolically Arthur's moral dilemma in his own movements between class-consciousness and self-consciousness. Gissing like Dickens shows the impact of money on individuals and the subsequent changes induced by it. We see Arthur as a committed worker but sudden acquisition of wealth leaves him more occupied with his aesthetic pursuits. The Christmas scene in “Workers in the Dawn" is another example of Arthur's class-consciousness as he stands outside commenting on the feast. The feast becomes an orgy –“...the merry making insensate drunkenness, and the warm feeling of humanity towards other a begrudging selfishness" (PJ Keating, 1971, 17).Gissing gives us minute details of culture and its criticism. Arthur's observation provides a sociological insight into the working class culture.” Don't such blackguards as these give good cause to the upper classes to speak of its working men with contempt? I warrant they waste as much money in guzzling and swilling as would give twenty or thirty poor starving wretches a good dinner for a week to come”.(Gissing, Workers in the Dawn, 113).Arthur Golding in his consciousness manifests different sensibilities from his fellow working class men. His attitudinal changes suggest this shifting from class-consciousness to self-consciousness. For Arthur self-knowledge or awareness comes in the form of self-realization and reflection on the low cultural achievements of his fellows. As Gareth Evans claims “the essence of self-consciousness is self-reference”. (Evans, 1982, 192).

Education as a means of social upgradation, cultural refinement and emancipation has been a potent factor behind the self-consciousness of many characters in Gissing's novels. However, it may be noted here that education in arising self-consciousness sometimes strengthens the notion of class-consciousness particularly when it fails to bridge the gap of prejudices between upper class and lower class. This can be seen in the case of Peep (Born in Exile) whose scholarly education and his failure to materialise his aspiration for Sidwell, a middle class culturally refined lady..Sidwell's brother Buckland observes it with his inherent sense of prejudice: "But I must remind you that Peak belongs by origin to the lower classes, which is as much to say that he lacks the sense of honour generally inherited by me of our world. A powerful intellect by no means implies a corresponding development in the moral sense. (Born in Exile, 380).Education in Godwin Peek's case whereas exposes him to scientific temperament and rational judgement, it also makes him ambitious. In the case of Godwin Peek and Henry Ryecroft like Dickens' Pip in "Great Expectations" education is instrumental in shaping their characters. The paradox of subjectivity is two pronged. On the one hand, it awakens awareness, on the other, it makes them alien to their own class. This is manifested in their own attitudinal and behavioural aspects viz criticism of the people, cursing their birth and heredity .It is strongly manifested in strong passion for social mobility. This awareness further leads them to collide against the social reality. Godwin Peak's conflicts with his own world and his subsequent rejection of dogmas are examples of such collision. Here Peak is caught between possible consciousness and actual consciousness. Raymond Williams examines the structure of feelings citing examples of Luckas and Goldman and shows how they have distinguished between possible consciousness and actual consciousness. To Raymond Williams Gissing's novels are realistic study of the society and consciousness of his characters are rather complex.(Raymond Williams, 1971, 22-25).Self-awareness in Peak is projection of his painful consciousness of class. It comes through education. Peak was born in a lower class but educated in provincial college among superiors he inherited some of the characteristics of them and these made him conscious of social and cultural deprivations he had suffered earlier. Peep's hatred against his heredity and his ideals

are manifestations of his self-awareness. His longing for Sidwell a girl from Warricombe family, is manifestation of this psyche which reminds him of his heredity and environment as stumbling blocks between his actual consciousness and possible consciousness. Peak goes back to his past later on evaluating himself “To me, my origin is simply a grave misfortune, to be accepted and if possible, overcome” (Born in Exile, 362). His disillusionment evolves from his own imagination which leads him to romanticise his love, art and religion. His strong desire to woo Sidwell who is socially and culturally upgraded makes him pretentious and hypocritical denouncing his own class and heredity. Here he stands in direct collusion with his own warring self which cherishes the ideals of love and his intellect which hates the dogmas represented by Warricombes. He is caught between his deep seated desire to have a wife of cultural refinement and his own convictions not to accept dogmatic ideas blindly. The situation that follows explains many complexities of his character and finally leads him to self-analysis. His alienation from his class and heredity and his affiliation with upper class of Warricombes, are two states of his mind fragmented by the real and the ideal. Jacob Corg (George Gissing: A Critical Biography, 1965, 161-63) and John Halperin (A Life in Books, 1982, 210-13) see Peak's hatred against his fellow men, his antagonism, his yearning for a class to which he thinks to be naturally belonging by the right of his intellect and his act as his duplicity and snobbery. Peak's evaluation of his own values in exile and his subsequent confession to Sidwell can be seen as disambiguation of self:

“If I thought of nothing but friendship it would seem rational enough that you should accept me for what I am a man of education, talking your language .Because I have dared to hope something more, I suffer from the thought that I was not born into your world, and that you must be remembering this difference.” (Born in Exile, 361-62). Gissing gives behavioural explanations of Peak's pretensions to marry Sidwell, a lady of 'refined culture', Peak's moral dilemma, his pretensions, his conflicts and sense of guilt have been artistically rendered in terms of psychological developments of a person who betrays his conscience to nourish his false consciousness. Mitchell Ballard in his reassessment of Peak's feigned self says he not Machiavellian but it is

his simple psychological experience to behave in a hypocritical manner .He further argues that "it is only after some sub-conscious impulse has promoted him to violate his own consciousness" (Mitchell Ballard, English Studies, 1977, 123-24).However, Gissing doesn't leave his readers with simple questions of life but deeper philosophical and psychological interrogations.

The self-conscious heroes and heroines of Gissing in their journey in their journey from 'class' to "self" pass through excruciating experiences of poverty, social barriers, social and religious prejudices and their own metaphysical and spiritual doubts. Thyrsa like Peak and many other characters show that their self-realization and their consciousness of the reality ends in death. This suggests that they couldn't stand the changed circumstances. Thyrsa like Clara (The Nether World) is too idealistic and fragile to bear the burden of crude realities. .Both are ambitious and show hatred towards their class. They have strong desire for upward social mobility. Thyrsa's self-consciousness comes through her realization that her desire for marriage with Walter Egremont , a capitalist who comes to deliver lectures to educate the working classes, is ineffectual and vain. Egremont's love for her was nothing more than an infatuation and her longings for Egremont her whims.Broken in hearts, she dies burdened by this cold realization. Thyrsa's disillusionment with her notions may be seen in her refusal to marry Gilber Grail,a working class man with 'intellect and enterprise". Aspiring above her class proved fatal for her. Herbert Rogengartenin his essay “The Theme of Alienation in Thyrsa”(The Gissing Newsletter, 1966, 24).sees strategic flaw in her decision as cause of her self-consciousness and alienation. Her desire for upward social mobility marks a departure from her own class lending her a false consciousness. This paradoxical aspects of Thyrsa, Clara and Peak suggest multiple selves that human beings assume navigating through different experiences of life. David Hume points out a paradoxical double role that the self plays in self-awareness, self as a subject and self as an object. The realisation of subjective self, drives them to self-consciousness often entrenching them from their own classes but the objective reality makes them to see the contradictions between the true consciousness and false consciousness.Out of these contradictions most of the characters under discussion relapse to anxieties, depression, alienation

and fragmentation of self. Gissing like Dostoevsky presents the social, environmental and psychoanalytical studies of his characters caught into their own pathology of circumstances. Mr Wyvern one of the radical characters in Gissing's "Demos" explains this pathology of fragmented self:

“Created by the mania of education, consisting of those unhappy men and women whom unspeakable cruelty endows with intellectual needs while refusing them sustenance they are sought to crave”. (Gissing, 101).

The stages of self-consciousness in Gissing's characters viz Peak, Thyrsa, Walter Egremont, Henry Ryecroft, Clara Hewett may be traced to simple sense of awareness about one's hatred towards one's own class. The second stage marks a strong desire of protagonist to uplift or enlighten himself and herself to the upper class. This is marked by an obsessive desire for individual upgradation and reconciliation with the upper class. Social mobility would better explain this tendency. To Gissing education was a means of socialisation and cultural refinement “bringing brutal nasty instincts to refinement. He looked on education as a civilising and moralising force” (Letters of George Gissing to Members of his Family" (ed.) Algernon and Ellen Gissing, 1927, 54). The third stage is the stage of non-realization of being where a protagonist finds his social and cultural aspirations getting crumbled against the social and economic reality. As one can see in the case of extreme form this may lead to the fourth stage i.e. stage of alienation. To Gissing's self-conscious heroes society is breeding ground for awareness. First, they become aware of their class and gradually they become apprehensive of their prejudices and distinctions particularly socio-cultural marginalization. This often makes them to question the existing system and its extreme form leads them to a stage of alienation. It is at this stage that he sees his ideal reverse of the reality. Gissing portrays the self-alienated heroes and heroines and their deeper psychological and intellectual implication. Gissing questions the social and cultural inadequacies and his self-conscious hero or heroines challenge the hierarchies of sexuality and social order. Gissing's many characters suffer from excessive burden of social deprivation and they manifest it in their behavioural patterns. To John Sloan "they conflate civilization with racial superiority" but they are “unresponsive to true culture and

civilising influence" (John Sloan, 1989, 147). Gissing's working class characters show idiosyncratic behaviour in defiance of their self which is either product of false consciousness or misconstrued notions. Disillusioned with their own class they seek affiliation with the upper class which further denied they resist the change.

The self-consciousness in Gissing as observed is not peripheral in meaning but it has deeper significance which constitutes man's struggles and sufferings, We see whether it is Peak or Reardon, Egremont or Mutimer or Thyrza, all of them are trying to seek meanings of life. Their struggle for actualization of their beings sometimes awareness generated by their interaction with the outer world or sometimes through education and sufferings make them aware of their actual self. Their sensibility is the most noteworthy as Virginia Woolf said "their ability to think and reason" is significant in keeping them aware. The three novels which formed part of this paper show how these facts go into shaping the consciousness of the protagonists and their paradoxical subjectivity torn between class and self. In this quest for 'self' Gissing's protagonists show acute severance between inner and outer world. Their consciousness evolves from their cultural sterility, wanton indulgence in the pleasures offered by the materialistic world and above all dissipation of human inner resources.

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Postmodern Currents in Hindi and Urdu Short Stories

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Postmodernism as a critical theory has received tremendous socio-cultural and literary responses from the academic circles worldwide. It has been widely acknowledged as an all inclusive theory that reasonably accommodates the emerging heterogeneous global trends in its fold providing sensible minds with a tool to interpret and understand the intricacies of human existence in cutting-edge technology driven world. Today's upcoming ultra-modern global village has brought-forth innumerable diverse and unpredictable situations in life leading to the emergence of new concepts required to define such unprecedented predicaments of human society. Postmodernism may be construed as one of such constructs that tangibly unfolds the embedded layers of inter-personal relationships with a multitude of shades emanating from the bedrock of interactions taking place between human and material constituents of existential domain. This paper attempts to explore the elements of postmodernism in the short stories of two eminent writers Kamleshwar and Nayyar Masood in Hindi and Urdu respectively who are well-received by their readers and have carved a niche for themselves in literary spheres.

It will be highly relevant here to take into account the views of eminent postmodern critics who have described postmodern features in varied ways but the totality of the impact created by their readings of this construct presents an idea that reaffirms its all encompassing nature. Linda J. Nicholson accepts postmodernism as a period not only of changed ideals, metaphors and hopes but also as a period of changed structures of family, work relations, and class distinctions. Postmodernism is also viewed as a form of subjectivity, as understanding of the self as a subject, but not as an object to be possessed by those who are culturally dominant in society. In literary studies, the stance of postmodern critics and writers is characterized by a rejection of the values of eighteenth century Enlightenment thought, most



particularly by a rejection of the notions of rationality and objectivity and of the understanding of the self as a rational, unitary entity. Postmodern thoughts emphasize a form of subjectivity that is multiple rather than singular and fluid rather than static. Subjectivity, as used by postmodern thinkers, refers to a subjective sense of self that includes agency, the capacity for action, as distinguished from the condition of an obliterated selfhood that results when an individual is objectified, made into an object to be possessed sexually, materially, or imaginatively by those who are culturally dominant. Moreover, postmodernism shows interest in mass culture encompassing political and economic factors which are vital aspects in the life of common men.

Andreas Huyssen considers that "the most significant trends within postmodernism have challenged modernism's relentless hostility to mass culture". Fredric Jameson reads this "as the demise of a resistant or adversarial position from which to speak to the dominant culture". It advocates that postmodernism deals with the decentred or the "marginal" or the "ex-centrics," whether it is race, or class or gender or sex as opposed to the homogeneity of modernism. Since women are treated as "ex-centrics" in patriarchy, and feminism which deals with marginality of women, thus relates it to postmodernism which deals with issues of marginality.

Further, postmodernism aims at contextualizing the specific culture aspects such as black, gays, lesbians and ethnic women and third world countries thus encompassing a vast and multiple responses to marginality and "ex-centricity." Postmodernism also makes use of theories on different language systems propounded by scholars like Saussure, Derrida and Lacan and many others. The postmodernist art believes in the unrepresentability of the event which can never be recovered by any metanarrative. It believes that every text can accommodate as many readings as there are readers and all of them are legitimate or illegitimate. The heterogeneity of the meanings or the signified is an important principle of poststructuralism which has contributed to postmodernism. Language is seen as the most powerful institution structuring the subject.

Ihab Hassan, influenced by Nietzsche, Barthes, Rorty and William Jones, was the first one to link postmodernism and American deconstruction. Both confront

and contest the lamentable contemporary situation in which cultural signification is controlled by the ruling class, overtly manipulating art to show their power and prestige. Hutcheon writes in **Politics of the Postmodernism**: “We live in a mass culture to which we do not simply submit. We take its images, its narratives, its formulation of desire, and measure them against our real experiences of a real world. At the same time we re-work and re-use them, in our conversation and gossip in our fantasies, in every aspect of our lives. And this re-use is an individual form of resistance”.

Psychoanalytic theories of Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan have reinforced the postmodern conviction that subject is a social construct, which is determined by language. Lacan analyses language as a process by which subject comes to be constituted. The demands made by society on the subject would result in the constitution of the unconscious. The unconscious is not open to analysis but the subject which is relational to the social, is open to objective analysis, and it is ideology which determines the relationship between the subject and the society in order to produce intended meaning. Freud views that unconscious plays a crucial part running parallel to the conscious in the process of thinking and cognition and it is unconscious which sheds light on the inclination of the subject by explaining the disorders of individuals. Consciousness, unconsciousness and ego, all go into the making of the subject thus rendering it decentred. This view is further supported by Louis Althusser, the neo-Marxist, who sees ideology as the main-constituent of the subject, that is non-contradictory. Language itself is conditioned by ideology and the subject is determined by an ideologically-informed language, hence the subject can be inferred as being dependant on ideology. Adding to the context, Foucault theorizes that power relations with which the subject is shot through are important as ideology. His significant contribution lies in juxtaposing power with knowledge. Power comes into existence when one individual's action is controlled by the other and the precondition for the existence of a power relation is the presence of two acting subjects. These observations help us propose that Postmodernism considers reality as an entity that is always mediated by a number of factors influencing the perceiver and the perceived. Language constructs both the subject and the object and

there is no pre-social subject or object.

The description of postmodernist context cannot be completed without taking into account the remarks of Roland Barthes who declares the death of the author. He says that no text is deemed to be an expression of the author's consciousness in the purest form. Saussure's structural linguistics provides the principle of representation by saying that the relationship between the signifier and the signified is arbitrary. Derrida introduces a great amount of instability to the relationship between the signifier and the signified by saying that signified is never fixed and is open to a number of meaning which resists any attempt of closure, thus giving the postmodern polemics of representation, legitimation to all forms of reading.

An indepth reading of the afore-mentioned observations of different theoreticians, it can easily be inferred that postmodernism provides ample scope of exploration of human psychology in all ramifications that facilitates the understanding of life mirrored in literary texts. The writers from across the globe are enfolding postmodern elements in their creations as these stand befitting the portrayal of situations arising out of postmodern predicaments of life. The stories of Nayyar Masood, a noted Urdu writer from India, generate contexts that force the readers to realize unforeseen situations conforming to the postmodern narratives. His two popular stories "Dustland" and "Destitute's Compound" have been taken into account here for deliberations from postmodern perspective. The story, Dustland, starts with first person narrative technique projecting an aura of scare in the air predominantly caused by the rootlessness of the identity of the protagonist. His identity remains under the cloud until last moment as he ends up as a mystery man having inordinate inclination for piercing through dusty storms. The story reveals those psychological strands pervading the mind of the protagonist which usually go beyond the range of interrogation of an ordinary mind. The obsession of the protagonist with coloured duststorm and his ability to be quite unperturbed in its aura gives inexplicable dimension to the existential truths of life. The unconscious state of Chhote Sahab which has a superstitious dimension viewed from the context that invited this situation can also be accommodated in postmodernist fold. The sudden

death of Bade Sahab when he was engaged in the plantation programme in Dustland lends a mystical shade to the occurrence. The presentation of the tree that is associated with bringing bad luck leading to the death of Bade Sahab can also be interpreted in terms of postmodern tenets which provide space to unfathomable experiences of life. The revelation of the narrator's identity as someone with fascination for duststorm leading to the arousal of Maleeka's interest in him as she finds him a Godsent character who could bring back consciousness in her husband and his association with Maleeka's mother at a certain point of time generates a discourse that appears to be inexplicable when viewed from mundane perspective. Maleeka's dreaming of the regaining of consciousness comes under the ambit of Freud's theory that is suitably assimilated in postmodern scenario.

As regards the story "Destitute's Compound" by Nayyar Masood, it sketches the life of the down-trodden section through the presentation of a milieu where individuals are born to survive somehow in the state of utter desolation. Life ends up without fulfillment of any desire or it would not be an overemphasis to say that the denizens of this world do not get chances to know what the pleasures of life are. Bari Begam dies unknown thoroughly dedicating herself to a tiny world of compound spending her life to earn only that much of bread which is required for survival. For such people, life stands for managing to survive and nothing is seen beyond it as they end up struggling for survival only. The lives of Childhood Love, the protagonist and the residents of this compound etc. all attest the same. The author has made a sincere attempt to portray the psychological inclinations of a young mind (the protagonist) that shows utter distaste for orders and instructions. The gambling spot run by Murad Mian gives an inkling of the ways people fall prey to, when they are deprived of proper parental care and guidance. The way Murad guides the protagonist by providing him timely support to send him to destitute's compound shows a strong emotional bond existing among the members of this down-trodden section that helps them eke out their living at least. The protagonist spends sixteen long years of his youthfulness in the compound without ever thinking of the rest of life outside it. This was the sorry plight of all the residents of the compound. They did not know about anything else except pasteboard and coloured papers which are required to prepare

the boxes for shopkeepers. The life-style of such people stands as a witness to the life majority of us encounter in the state of deprivation. As Afroz Ashrafi rightly considers that postmodernism underpins the significance of culture and the cultural studies in relation to the global tendencies, the form of life led by this created world of Masood amply conforms to his postmodern affiliations. The emerging global trends of consumerism has forced a large majority to survive on the base meant to produce the items to be consumed by the upper strata of society manifesting global tendencies.

The stories of Kamleshwar vividly exude postmodern strands as may be illustrated through his popular stories “ Dilli me ek maut” and “ Rajanirbansiya”. Dilli me ek maut rightly portrays a society which is neck-deep in the ultra-modern ethos of artificiality and affectation. The hollowness of this cultural trend has been beautifully presented in an ironical vein. The death of a big businessman Divanchand is mourned with the aroma of artificiality. People are unwilling to participate in his funeral procession as there is bitter cold. In the marriage ceremony of Divanchand's daughter, a very big gathering was seen and the scene completely changed on his death. Those who came at the cremation spot were well-dressed and appeared to be in a hurry to attend some other work. The face of the people did not show any sign of loss of someone dear to them. The dilemmatic state of the author, who has a speculative bent of mind, represents his real concern for the loss of life on one hand, and the bankruptcy of emotion reflected by others, on the other hand. The receptacle projected by the author in this story highlights the emerging consumerist trend in postmodern society which rarely shows any concern over the loss of others. It hints of growing individualism and self-centred nature of mankind promoting in the long run valuelessness and ideological bankruptcy befitting postmodern concerns.

Kamleshwar's Rajanirbansiya portrays the dilemma of upper and lower most strata of society through the life of the king and Jagapatti representing the two sections respectively. The king does not have children even after many years of marriage, and hence, the title of the story goes like this. A man without offspring of his own is looked down upon and the king faces this fate as none wants to see his face early morning which is ominous. Jagapatti is a character who virtually sells his wife

to Bachan Singh for the sake of money that he needs to start his small business for livelihood. His wife gives birth to a son who is considered to be fathered by Bachan Singh. After the birth of this child, Jagapatti starts suffering from the pangs of self-remorse from which he fails to recover as it culminates into suicide. It indicates the mindset of people living in a certain socio-cultural set up where they are forced to do all such practices that ultimately start eating into the vitals of their life leaving no option at all. The kind of life that Chanda, Jagpatti's wife, leads, reflects the precarious and repulsive situation a poor and helpless woman encounters. Her life raises feministic concerns of serious nature where a woman loses her respect for no faults of her own. Chanda, a loyal and committed wife, is forced to undergo a situation where nothing is left for her except torture, exploitation and disregard. On the other hand, the king's wife has to undergo an ordeal to prove her loyalty to her husband after she gives birth to her son. The situations presented in the story truly show the ill-treatment meted out to women of all classes. It can be seen as an element of postmodernity that largely enfolds feministic issues. It is one of the major cultural features operational in many social fabrics, especially in Asian and African continents. It is relevant to mention the observation of Wahab Ashrafi here who says-

“Postmodernism celebrates life and discusses the possibilities of human happiness and reasserts the importance of relationship between man and the society. One of the major postulates of postmodernism is that a person is never alone and his/her relationship with the society is indispensable”.

Mabaad-e-Jadeedyiat, Muzmiraat-o-Mumkinaat

Wahab Ashrafi is quite convincing as an interpreter of postmodern canons whose observation brings forth the concerns of Nayyar Masood and Kamleshwar to the fold of postmodernism as both of these writers portray the pitiable plight of women folk with the noble intention of improving their lot. These writers are effortful in the direction of exploring the possibilities of human happiness through the projection of issues festering our society at various levels. The range of psychological exploration made in deciphering the characters of these stories helps the readers develop a better understanding of the nuances that constitute a thick fabric of specially oriental

society. The stories present such scenes which vividly project the cultural traits of certain societies that need much both in terms of material as well as human elements to bring about positive changes. As for illustration, *Dilli me ek maut* portrays the scene of emotional deprivation, whereas *Rajanirbansiya* presents a sad saga of material depravity leading to catastrophic situations as Jagapatti commits suicide. All such situations constitute the domain of postmodernity which tries to enfold all sorts of deprivations leading to unprecedented calamities.

Thus, we come across an ambience created by Masood and Kamleshwar which contains the ample threads of emotional crisis, psychological percolations and pretentious deportment running down the thematic impulses. The themes deduced is explicitly or implicitly wrapped in the quagmire of human efforts interacting with destiny, consequently, producing many a time unexpected results that truly weave the pattern of postmodernity. The stories discussed stand a sound witness to the uncertain reality of life that has made Maleeka a widow in the real sense though her husband is alive and lives with her, Chanda a mother at the expense of loss of motherhood. These are the unexpected upshots of human efforts working in tandem with uncontrollable destiny that constitute the entity of postmodernity.

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Pattern in the Type of Characters of Diaspora Writings : the case of Gita Mehta

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In simple words, the characters of diaspora writings speak a lot – of colonial, post-colonial and the world of exile. Be it Amitav Ghosh, Salman Rushdie, Sashi Tharoor, Bharati Mukherjee, Gita Mehta, Anita Desai, Rohinton Mistry, Anurag Mathur, Meera Syal, Jhumpa Lahiri, or anyone else. Their life style, conversation, body language, aspirations and pursuit speak volumes and this chapter of study is devoted to the same sort of exploration.

In the diasporic writings, we can detect subaltern voice, alien pang, feministic cry, repressed utterances, desperate discriminatory articulations, anxious helpless pronouncements, etc. All assume the proportion of a categorical articulation but nothing disheartening – rather a cry of survival and sensibility. Here Edward Said's *Culture and Imperialism* becomes relevant which says, 'Survival, in fact, is about the connections between things: in Eliot's phrase, reality cannot be deprived of the “other echoes that inhabit the garden”'. (336)

Let us take Gita Mehta, as our first diaspora writer, who came in prominence with *Karma Cola* which interprets India to the Western world and it becomes accessible to the diverse audience as a story of her homeland. Through her eyes, one can see the 'indigenous traditions, folklore, cultural values and practices' – a country which is ethnically, geographically and religiously diverse – its tension and contradiction, sophistication and collision, reconciliations and variations, perennial and metaphysical.

'India' has been the sole interest for the Indian diaspora and Gita Mehta is one of them. She begins with *Karma Cola*, lingers over *A River Sutra* and concludes in *Snakes and Ladders*. The present paper seeks to examine Gita Mehta's endeavour to

present her native place India in 'glacial progress towards liberation; more than the political freedom', the modern India: beyond comprehension – to be marvelled upon, with specific case of *Snakes and Ladders*, a non-fiction.

Snakes and Ladders happens to be a collection of her brilliant essays on modern India which are at once fragmentary and personal, as she herself admits in the *Foreword* of the book. The game of 'Snakes and Ladders' is primarily the 'Game of Knowledge' used by the author as a metaphor for 'a meditation on humanity's progress towards liberation', for the 'roller-coaster ride' after Independence, the 'highs so sudden we have become light-headed with exhilaration, the laws too deep to even contemplate solution'; it illustrates our attempts to move our ancient civilization towards modern enlightenment. The author feels that we have vaulted our painful stages of bitter experience, as felt by other countries, as if lifted by ladders we had no right to expect; at the same time, the snakes of the past nightmares swallowed us back to square one. In the first chapter 'Freedom's Song' she talks of her birth and the role of her parents in bringing her up and their roles in the Freedom Struggle of India; her house as 'Absconder's Paradise', complimented by the Vicereine of India, later imprisonment and the humiliating experience at the hands of the Britishers during the nationalistic movement which had broken the *shibboleths* that constrained the conventional Indian society, yet they could discover their own strength in doing so. Whatever the case may be the author says repeatedly, "This is my damned soil", and quotes the words of her uncle, "I wouldn't recommend my life to everyone. But I think when you face everyday for years, and are lucky enough to survive, you learn a little about its limits." (12) She recalls Sarojini Naidu as her mentor who used to call Mahatma Gandhi a 'Mickey Mouse' and Robert Payne who used to call Naidu as 'exuberant, earthy, irreverent, improbable – one of those robust personality of such woman is 'fearlessness' and she says, "Their courage did not seem to be inspired by self-aggrandisement or ideological dogma or religious fervour – those certainties which usually fuel suicidal actions – and sometimes I wonder if they indeed possess what Mahatma Gandhi called a kind of moral force." (11)

In Independent India, the things have changed fast: 'from individual fearlessness in the face of social and political injustice to craven courting of those who possess social and political power.' (12) Such is her memory of a senior bureaucrat with a genuine conviction that Mrs. Gandhi's family owned India. Mrs. Gandhi was observed with an imagined inheritance which breed intense paranoia about those who refuse to accept it, it also brought spy-versus-spy paraphernalia of the world be despot. Yet it was her 'dammed soil.' She faces the question: 'Why does no one want to be an Indian?' The question may be innocent but it shows a sort of racial insult to which her reply is, 'I suppose, some of us have it thrust upon us.' (14) As a child she thought of getting respect for the richness of the past, but she failed to garner reverence on that ground because, the grim figures of the present where the realities of youth, a burden of social and economic disparities which even the most Herculean endeavour seemed powerless to reverse'. (16) The only reaction was: "What have you got but snakes and monkeys? Indians are just poor and dirty and backward!" (15) She could mutter 'damned, unfair'. (16) To the 'self-confident dwarfs from the first world'. (16) Another important reason that the author diagnoses is 'to be an Indian today is to be assaulted by the enormity of the tasks we have inherited with freedom'. (16) This task is targeted at illiteracy, poverty, corruption and the incomprehensible democracy.

In the section 'My Damned Soil' Gita Mehta describes the contradictory realities of India, its concept of nation and national integration, the annoying absence of identity, lack of homogeneity and the diversity in its vicious forms : language, religion, region, etc. which attracts comments from different corners of different sorts, such as, "Those who believe in the dialectics of materialism or the authority of history wander through the ruins of glorious empires and tell us India has burned nothing from the past. Others play statistical roulette and tell us India has no future". (20)

Then we have some catchy accurate phrase, for instance, India as 'functioning anarchy', 'the sum of a million worlds enclosed by oceans an three sides,

the mighty Himalayas on the north,' ' the land of fabulous contrast', 'the degrees to which diversity is attained, unity retained', (Arnold's definition of civilization, adequate for India), etc. The writer is assured that 'Indian culture is still in business that Krishna will continue to play his flute whether he is in a field, Rolls, or a rocket'. (24) It is in India only that 'we are still faced to remember that people are individuals as well as anthropological or economic statistics'; (25) and yet 'we could never survive as democracy because a hungry man can have no understanding of freedom... people whose stomachs are empty have no idea what democracy means; (29)... the diversities of India's past are more than matched by the immense complicities of her present, her problems infinitely more complicated than the simplistic solutions offered either by her own leaders or by experts from abroad' (30), and finally, 'India progresses, a monumental juggernaut of contradictory realities' (30); and say 'That is Bharat. That is India.'(31)

The second section of the book is rather stereotyped where the titles are self-suggestive such as 'Banish Poverty' and 'Banish Charity'. In 'Reinventing the Wheel' she talks of the art of wavering, the fabric and machination of Indian culture. In 'Food for Thought' there is a minute description of the famine in Maharashtra in 1973, the policy of Pt. Nehru and Shastri and the beginning of Green Revolution. By 1980 the things were completely changed, farmers going on nation-wide movements, demanding higher prices for their crops, demand for tax concession and subsidies, etc. But the result was not a happy one: "like her landless labourers India was herself now in bondage, facing ever larger interest payments to her foreign creditors on ever larger loans. But her peasants, her migrant workers, her craftsmen dependent on diminishing village patronage, were still leaving the land."(63)

Gita Mehta says that the old India was poor in which 'self-denial was solidarity',(65) and around Independence we were influenced by Gandhi's austerity which Sarojini Naidu observed as 'costing Indians a lot to keep Gandhi poor'(66), a sagacious comment at the murky economy. The author recalls her early days of sixties: "we were living in the age of ideology, the very heart of a Cold War that pitted

social justice against ruthless capitalism, and we were our poverty with pride----- After all, it was the heyday of Nehru's socialism” (67). Later on, the steps taken by Mrs. Gandhi was for 'self reliance, independence from the Western commercial imperialism that had replaced the Western political imperialism' (68) then came Rajiv Gandhi who dismissed hollow self-reliance and opened India's economy to the world, deregulating industry, slashing taxes. But his love for foreign goods in all ways could only make possible: 'Homespun was out, luxury goods were in', (69) and for the independent India 'it was politically correct to be rich.'(69)

India kept on changing its hue and colour; in the seventies it attracted foreigners for 'spiritual enlightenment' and in the eighties, with Rajiv Gandhi as Prime Minister, Indian economy underwent liberalization and 'money became the new enlightenment'. (70) At the same time, this was the time when the author could feel 'more patriotism paled into insignificance' (71) when she was invited to address 'five hundred international young Presidents and their wives arriving for India 1986'. The self-confidence of Indians got strength in the eighties: The skills of the modern world are by no means alien to us. Doctors, engineers, laboratory workers, economists, accountants – at the level of medium technology, Indians are second to none. And each time there is a new advance in technology, Indians are ready to seize it.' (85-86) Yet we are different from the West: “Ancient pragmatisms are India's saving grace, preserving a way of life in which the machine is still used by man, not one in which man becomes the machine. But that is a difficult thing to someone from the West.”(85) If Malaysia, South Korea, Singapore, Thailand and Indonesia are known as South East Asian Tigers, India is the Caged Tiger. 'One Indian Prime Minister after another, in the attempt to remove poverty, had only mired us further in poverty.'(87) The author has an accurate calculation: in the fifties Nehru's dream of self sufficient economy through rapid industrialization, neglected the needs of rural India; the sixties had green revolution; the seventies had obsessive centralization and spiralling farm subsidies: in the eighties Rajiv Gandhi's interest in a new India was soon exchanged for the political manoeuvrings of the old India and his successor V. P. Singh was less concerned with economic development than with political change; in

the nineties our foreign currency reserves were depleted and nation's gold was sent to London as surety against the international loans ; in 1991 Narshimha Rao moved from Indian socialism to market economy – and this India goes on , there is nothing to stop us; but democracy is a time-bomb and we are in a land of million mutinies, as V. S. Naipaul says. Gita Mehta recalls Dr. Ambedkar who drafted constitution and had cautioned against hero-worship in democracy; it is dangerous with powers which enable him to subvert this institution of democracy. Perhaps the author's final pronouncement is remarkable when she says, “For sheer idiosyncratic panache the spectacle of Indian democracy is unique'. (94) and the most annoying statement, “Modern India is a fiction.”(95)

The gist of the whole book '*Snakes and Ladders: A View of Modern India*' is to be found in the last chapter of the second section of the book titled 'Management of Crisis' where she says, 'India is a fiction --- a fiction in search of an administration.'(97) We have the vision of our old generation, that of, freedom, equality and non-violence which have turned into siren songs which N. C. Chaudharhi calls 'Continent of Circe' and calls India 'her political seduction have truly made swine out of men and women; 'it's scale of India'(97). Surprisingly Indian political leaders are finding tea and monarchy more palatable than governance; the reflected power creates megalomania in elected representative; democracy demands accountability which melts in the crowds. India is changing fast and in such a case megalomaniac is a convenient retreat; it is politics partially; but we are not ready to endure the injustice of the past. Economically we are yet to find a system of development for the vociferous population and the world of exploding scientific and financial expansion bringing out inimitable chaos. In this world winning an election is tantamount to winning a lottery and it makes the political corruption endemic, pilloried by satirists, yet from the vantage of time we are leading towards the unknown with Ambedkar's constitutional dreams and incorruptible non-violent politics of Gandhi.

The third section of the book starts with the sudden death /murder of Gandhi

by a Hindu fanatic as he was preparing to leave on a peace march for the killing fields of Partition, the mass exodus, fleeing the orgy of fear and savagery, for whom non-violence and proud humility went hand in hand, and who believed that Indians would govern themselves with greater justice than their colonial masters. However, India has seen the beginning of nepotism with Pt. Nehru as anointed leader of the Indian National Congress by his own father while travelling to a nationalist convention in 1929, and later Pt. Nehru appointing his daughter Indira Gandhi as President of the party organization, both of them becoming the Prime Minister of the country subsequently, leading to the shut down of democracy in the whole of India, for instance, the dismissal of the Communist Govt. in Kerala in 1959; this was the first major act of corruption in free India's public life, denouncing the left claim that communism was a legitimate road to social justice. The post-Independence India started with Congress culture and the Congressmen who cynically retained power by playing on the fears of the country's minorities: the Muslims, the lower castes, the Buddhists, the Christians, etc. The author recalls her visit to the North East (Assam) in 1978 when the turmoil was at its peak and there was a movement against the people of other states residing in Assam, they were brutally beaten and compelled to leave the state; India's pluralism and Gandhi's non-violence were at stake; the chaos and crisis need no rehearsal and it was in full swing. Non-violence is India's creed but it has failed enormously. Now the horrified Indians could watch in disbelief as our politicians forged ever more unholy alliances to keep themselves in power and it resulted in exponential growth of corruption in public life, dependence criminals to ensure electoral success, increasing hatred as pattern of democracy, etc. India has seen its dark days of the emergency of 1975 and the excesses of the period, resulting in Mrs. Gandhi's losing her parliamentary seat by a massive margin ; the Emergency was India's watershed. Another watershed could be sensed in the Sikh resolution, the Blue Star Operation, the murder of Mrs. Gandhi and the upheavals afterwards and the author is surprised to articulate "The wonder is that India still exists to surmount them ----- Democracy of India is a wonder of the world ---- and its guardian is not the politician so beloved of feature writers but the faceless, nameless, all enduring Indian voters." (159) The problems that we have to face are sectarianism, affirmative action,

political assassination, Civil War, unstable coalitions, the electronic marketing of political aspirants, separatism, corruption, and above all, the rhetoric of religious hatred as an illegal use of political process.

In the fourth section of the book Gita Mehta begins with defining India and she cites the definitions of Mark Twain and Alex Aronson. Mark Twain visited India at the end of the nineteenth century and wrote of his delirium, “-----the land of dreams and romance, of fabulous poverty, of splendour and rags, of places and hovels, of famine and pestilence, of genii and giants and Alladin lamps, of tigers and elephants , of cobra and the jungle, the country of a hundred nations and hundred tongues, of a thousand religions and two million gods, cradle of humane race, birth place of human speech, mother of history, grandmother of legend, great grandmother of tradition, whose yesterdays bear date with the mouldering antiquities of the rest of the nations – the sole country under the sun that is endowed with imperishable interest for alien peasant, for lettered and ignorant, wise and fool, rich and poor, bond and free, the one land all men desire to see, and having seen once, by even a glimpse, would not give the glimpse for the shows of all the rest of the globe combined.”

On the other hand, Alex Aronson said that India was a civilization and 'civilization is always a process: not a being but a becoming.'(164) However Gita Mehta has her own influences/observations that labels India as 'Karma Bhumi and Land of Experience'. (164) Even today these observations are astute with unpredictable and surprising civilization defying definition of any sort , may be due to her indolence. The author is of the view that, “In any case, in a world of perpetual motion India remains a perpetual becoming, a vast and protean sea of human improvisations on the great dance of time' (164,)She further admits, “ The art if there is one in India, is supposed to lie in the living.”(175) Therefore , she writes about filming (Satyajit Ray), the telecommunications company, the relevance and significance of trees and forests, love songs of India (Jaydeva's '*Gita Govinda*'), the greatest sages of India, the national anthem and the final acknowledgement to God for His fabulous gift of making 'India at his leisure'.

Obviously, India remains an undefined entity, God's special gift to mankind and despite all its distractions and drawbacks, 'a thing of beauty, a joy forever'; like V. S. Naipaul she does not have a negative proposition as 'an area of darkness', 'a wounded civilization' or 'a million mutinies' rather India as 'Karma Bhumi'- the land of Experience- dismissing other countries as the land of consumers'(199), 'an extraordinary world spinning through an extraordinary time'.(VIII)

Indian Diaspora writing reveals an unbelievable fact that the crowd of characters has a pattern, in this way or that way, which can be easily identified while going through the works of different writers.

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Indian Women, Changing Roles and Advertisements: Setting New Stereotypes

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It will perhaps not be incorrect to state that a modern man's life, to a great extent, is dependent on advertisements. While buying products from the smallest to the most luxurious items, advertisements have their say as we consciously or unconsciously consult the ads before the ultimate purchase. Advertising agencies design the images exploring the various angles of the purchasing power of the consumers, and advertisements have become so predominant in modern times that they have gone to the extent of creating new societal realities.

In this age of information, one is always already lost at the crossroads of projected reality. Referring to this, Jean Baudrillard, in his *Simulacra and Simulation*, states: “We live in a world where there is more and more information, and less and less meaning” (Baudrillard 1994: 79). In this age of virtual reality, billboards and hoardings in the cityscapes play a prominent role in fashioning the lives of the people. In the words of Baudrillard, hypermarkets and hyperspaces have led to the growth of a new social reality – the hyperreality. And advertisements play a predominant role in the creation of these hypermarkets and hyperrealities. The huge hoardings directing towards the mega shopping malls and the marketing centres create hypermarkets, leading to the hyperspace of commodity where a whole new sociality is elaborated. This mushrooming growth of hypermarkets centralizes and redistributes a whole region and population, concentrates and rationalizes time trajectories and practices. It, thus, create an immense to-and-fro movement totally similar to that of the urban commuters, absorbed and ejected at fixed times by their work place. These hypermarkets, in the words of Baudrillard also call forth other issues like 'acculturation', 'confrontation', 'examination', 'social code' and 'verdict'.

People visit these places to find and to select objects – responses to all the questions they may ask themselves; or, rather, they themselves come in response to the functional and directed question that the objects constitute. The objects are no longer commodities: they are no longer even signs whose meaning and message one could decipher and appropriate for oneself, they are tests, they are the ones that interrogate us, and we are summoned to answer them, and the answer is included in the question. Thus, according to Baudrillard, all the messages in the media function in a similar fashion: “neither information nor communication, but referendum, perpetual test, circular response, verification of the code” (Baudrillard 1994:75). In advertising parlance, the huge billboards, in fact, observe and survey the consumer in the same way as “policing” television. Thus, there is two ways traffic – the billboards looking at the consumers and the consumers looking back at themselves in the billboards; it is a mirror without silvering in the activity of consumption, a game of splitting into two and doubling that closes this world on itself. The hypermarket cannot be separated from the highways that surround and feed it, from the parking lots blanketed in automobiles, from the computer terminal – further still, in concentric circles – from the whole town as a total functional screen of activities. The hypermarket resembles a giant montage factory, but is, at the same time, beyond the factory and traditional institutions of capital, the model of all future forms of controlled socialization: retotalization in a homogeneous space-time of all the dispersed functions of the body, and of social life (work, leisure, food, hygiene, transportation, media, culture); retranscription of the contradictory fluxes in terms of integrated circuits; space–time of a whole operational simulation of social life, of a whole structure of living and traffic.

The hypermarket paves way for the metro areas, leaving behind the traditional markets set in the heart of the city, a place where the city and the country came to rub elbows. The hypermarket is the expression of a whole lifestyle in which not only the country but the town as well have disappeared to make room for “the metro area” – a completely delimited functional urban zoning, of which the hypermarket is the equivalent, the micromodel, on the level of “consumption,” and the objects no longer have a specific reality there: what is primary is their serial,

circular, spectacular arrangement – the future model of social relations. “Neighbour's envy, owner's pride,” this famous tagline from Onida T.V. ad boldly stands for some of the seminal concepts on which contemporary advertisements are designed. Some of the key mantras that the advertising agencies use for creating publicity images are glamour, envy, transformation, sexuality etc. and these very concepts have been silently bestowed on us, to a great extent, by advertisements. And, indeed, it's amazing to think how our lives are getting more and more dominated by advertisements. In fact, consciously or unconsciously we come across these images almost at every step of the day: right from going through the pages of the morning newspaper, to the advertisements aired in radio and television, the big hoardings in the cities to the small posters in every nook and corner. In designing these publicity images, the advertising agencies often fall back on female sexuality to create an aura of mass appeal. The female sexuality is projected in a fashion where her body or body parts are used to sell a product that testifies to John Berger's statement in his *Ways of Seeing* “...publicity is the process of manufacturing glamour.” (Berger 2008:125).

Now coming to the changing role of Indian women in contemporary society, we basically view this change in a positive light where Indian women have travelled a long way from the confines of the patriarchal set up to new heights of success. The contemporary Indian women have, no doubt, traversed all barriers to scale new heights in both domestic and professional spaces. This new found aura and optimism in Indian women have been much hyped both in academic circles and otherwise. It has been a long ride for Indian women to reach where they stand today as independent entity playing multifaceted roles, working out a balance between the personal and professional lives. This changed image of a confident and independent woman, though visible in both rural and urban spaces, the new image of the urbanite women as flag bearer of women's liberty has been much hyped in advertising arena, both in print and electronic media. From the supermom image to the power woman image, advertising industry has roped in all possible images of a contemporary Indian woman while selling a large array of products. From the perfect home maker to Olympic medallist Mary Kom, from the company executive to the adventure

freak, from the celebrity actor to the lady pilot, almost all the ads featuring Indian women are today designed round the idea of women's liberty and self confidence. However, in this progressive image that advertising has bestowed upon Indian women, the element of glamour shrouds all these women in the advertising frames.

The paper will engage in studying certain advertising frames where women are projected in progressive roles, and, at the same time, questioning if these projections are free from gendered connotations. Is the new image of the new women really positive? or is it setting some new stereotypes? Has woman been able to come out of stereotypical roles as demanded by the systems of patriarchy? or Have newer stereotypes been framed for them which too ultimately gratifies the patriarchal expectations? The paper will try to analyse how women have been commodified in the hypermarkets and how they are victimised in the building up of hyperreality. The paper will also examine how the image of women is explored in the advertising frames to add the quotient of glamour; in fact how glamour is manufactured in the prospective buyer in this age of hyperreality. In establishing the arguments, the study has fallen back on the theoretical assumptions of Jean Baudrillard, especially as established in his book, *Simulacra and Simulation*, and gaze theorist John Berger's seminal work, *Ways of Seeing*.

The small screen today is galore with advertisements where women are projected real smart and confident— be it the Horlics mom, the Bournvita mom, the Complain mom, the Surf mom, the Maggi mom (and the list could go on and on). In the advertisements of all these products, she is presented as a super mom, a perfect homemaker, and perfect in her decision of choosing the product, not to forget the perfection in her looks and physique. All the moms are young and glamorous looking, and an aura is created to mirror that they have chosen the right product for their family, especially their kids. This super mom feel, minus the mom feel, is lent to each and every woman that adorns the advertising frames either in the print or electronic media. A state of hyperreality is created where the consumers, especially the female consumers are made to identify themselves with the projected figures in the frames and transform themselves into the same, either in the choice of the products or in emulating their glamorous look and physique. Thus, a state of

hyperreality is fermented and foregrounded by glamour. To analyse the point, the study picks, at random, a few ads that featured in regional and national media, especially in print media. The advertisements selected can be broadly classified under the following heads:

- (i) Ads featuring women as perfect home maker
- (ii) Ads for fitness, slimming and beauty treatment
- (iii) Ads promoting sales in relation to female consumers

(i) The perfect homemaker syndrome : The homemaker is a happening concept in the field of advertising today. Right from the kitchen to the child's education, from washroom products to the family's health, from healthy food to the kid's extracurricular activities, from buying detergent to choosing the paint of the walls, the woman in the ads are presented as perfect homemakers who have chosen the right product for her family. Her decisions are beyond the periphery of compromise of any sort, either quality or price. She is ready to offer anything for the quality assurance of her family. In building up this perfect homemaker image, the advertisers take care to project a woman who looks stylish, educated, smart, confident and above all glamorous. A hypermarket of products has been created with the hyperrealistic message that the homemakers have bought the right product for their homes and an equally hyperrealistic image of the homemaker as the bold and the beautiful has been built. As an elaboration of the fact we can consider certain ads for Kids syrup, Branolia memory and health syrup, Vim Gel dishwasher, Kutchina Modular Kitchen and a few more.

In most ads dealing with health products the mother is shown responsible for the kids' health and she is more than happy to have chosen a particular product for her children's health. For instance, in an ad for Livsav tonic showcasing a mother and her kids, the punch line declares: “kids are kids, will eat outside, it's the responsibility of each mother to take care of them”; it very subtly makes an appeal to the motherly instinct of all women to take care of their children's health. The glamorous looks of the mother as supermoms is an added appeal urging every mom to be a supermom by

buying the same product and keeping their children fit and healthy. An aura has been created round the mother's image that every homemaker would look up for emulation, and in the process a new stereotype has been created, the stereotype of supermom. Similarly an ad for Branolia tonic is built round the same idea of appealing to the motherhood instinct. Although the mom is not that glamorous looking, yet the language chosen— “I am a Mother...like all mothers I want, my children to bloom successfully in their future...so for bright and better future, I trust only – Branolia”— has a mass appeal to all the mothers. Language in the ads has been tactfully exploited so that every mother looking into these ads would like to be one of them by buying the product and keeping her children safe. These ads have built a new image or rather a new stereotype of the mother, the 'supermom'. There is practically no space for a short, dark or short mom. Likewise, the perfect homemaker image too is explored to trap prospective buyers. One such homemaker is happy to wash all the utensils with Vim Gel. Her smart and bold looks give an added dimension to the product, implicitly meaning “chosen by the smart and the confident.” In almost all these ads showcasing homemakers, the women become lovable in the eyes of their spouses for the choice of the particular brand of products: like the ones in Kutchina Modular Kitchen and many more who seem to be super smart for their choices of a wide array of products ranging from lunchboxes to home linens. The women are, no doubt, beautiful and appealing but they are being turned more appealing in the eyes of their spouses because of the products they use. The glamorous looking women in nearly all the ads have played their part in building up a new stereotype: the supermom and the perfect homemaker. The ads have been designed to manufacture glamour which ultimately builds up a state of what Baudrillard calls hyperreality.

(ii) Slim, fit and sexually appealing : The cocktail of glamour and hyperreality is even more tactfully dealt in the advertisements for slimming and beauty treatment. Publicity images, in general, come with a proposal: proposal to each buyer that they can transform themselves or their lives by buying something more. To quote John Berger: “Publicity persuades us of such a transformation by showing us people who have apparently been transformed and are, as a result, enviable. And publicity is the

process of manufacturing glamour.” (Berger 2008:125) However, there is a huge gap between the publicity and the pleasure or benefits it posits to be enjoyed from the things it advertises. Publicity, in a way, is effective, as it feeds upon the real— be it clothes, jewellery, cosmetics, cars, shoes, electronic gadgets, soaps, detergent etc.: they are all real things to be enjoyed in themselves. Publicity, in the words of Berger, “begins by working on a natural appetite for pleasure”(Berger 2008:126). But it cannot offer the real object of pleasure and there is no convincing substitute for a pleasure in that pleasure's own terms. Although publicity convincingly conveys the pleasure of bathing in a warm, distant sea, the spectator-buyer is aware of its distance and remoteness. Thus, publicity can never really afford to be about the product or opportunity it is proposing to the future buyer who is not yet enjoying it. In the words of Berger, “Publicity is never a celebration of a pleasure-in-itself. Publicity is always about the future buyer. It offers him an image of himself made glamorous by the product or opportunity it is trying to sell. The image then makes him envious of himself as he might be. Yet what makes this self-which-he-might-be-enviable? The envy of others. Publicity is about social relations, not objects. Its promise is not of pleasure, but of happiness: happiness as judged from the outside by others. The happiness of being envied is glamour.” (Berger 2008: 126)

Publicity images draw a huge line of gap between the spectator-buyer and the spectator-owner. And the whole purpose and intention of the publicity is to make the spectator marginally dissatisfied with his or her present way of life. Not with the way of life of society, but with his or her own as a part of the greater and larger society. The clear cut message is that if the consumer buys what publicity is offering, the consumer's life will become far better. It offers the viewer an improved alternative to what he or she is. To quote John Berger “Publicity is addressed to those who constitute the market, to the spectator-buyer who is also the consumer-producer from whom profits are made twice over – as worker and then as buyer.” (Berger 2008:136) This gap between the present and the future where the consumer is meant to be dissatisfied with the present self is explicitly found in the publicity images related to beauty and fitness treatment. This tactic is particularly to be seen in VLCC ads and ads for beauty and slimming medications.

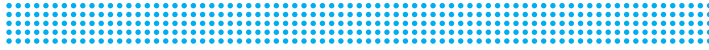
The women in all the images related to beauty treatments offer a future to the prospective buyer by hitting at their present figures and looks and make them feel that it is in no way perfect. To give it an all perfect look, the future buyer needs the help of professionals. One such VLCC ad brings out this dissatisfaction with the present as an obese woman in the image looks at herself in the mirror regretting “I learnt about my enlarged waist when I tried on my old jeans”, and she is yearning to be like the other women in the advertising frames who have already undergone beauty and slimming treatment either at VLCC, Slim and Shape or have taken medicated slimming capsules. The images have achieved their goal: to goad the future customer to a better future and highlighting the gap between the present and the future. In highlighting the gap, the ads have showcased women or parts of a woman's body that symbolise seduction and sexuality.

However, the women in all such images though look confident and successful, with their appealing physique are ultimately reduced and objectified to a spectacle for male gaze. The glam and sex quotient ingrained in them have set a range of new social prescriptions, leading to new stereotypes and new hyperrealities. The new image flaunted by these ads carry the implied message that a successful woman also needs to look confident and glamorous and this confidence will come only with a perfect or near perfect figure that can arouse sexuality in a man. Although the images are centred round the concept of confident and successful women, the level of confidence to a great extent is dependent on looks and physique. The ads, no doubt, rope in the changing role of Indian women, but this changing role is again stereotyped with certain connotations. And the connotations of the new stereotype has been set: successful women need to be confident, and this confidence in turn will be showered by the professionals who can make the women look slim, fit, glamorous and above all sexually gratifying for men.

(iii) Women and Sales Promotions : Another stereotype making the rounds is to be located in ads promoting sales. The huge billboards in the cities and metros promoting sales mostly attract female consumers and in turn project women as shopaholics who go wild over sales. New social relations have been set where

women's moods are directly proportional to shopping— the more the shopping, the happier the woman. One such frame featuring sales in Arvind Store though has no woman in the ad has an animated man holding a bunch of roses. However, the implied message in the ad is quite clear in the tag line “Shop more. Woo more”, giving the feel to men that it's easy to please women by shopping more. In many such ads for promoting sales of branded products, the women in the frames are made to either feel good, feel glamorous and even feel wild in the name of sales. In one such promotional ad for sales in Phoenix Marketcity, Mumbai, the going wild connotation has been symbolically wrought out by the ad designers by doing the hair of the model into protruding horns of some wild beast. The women in these ads are made to look earning enough or financially sound to garner the advantages of sales; however, this image of the financially independent women carries other new meanings: the powerful woman has to shop a lot to experience the feel good factor and she can be wooed by taking her on a shopping spree. These hyperrealities are the creations of the ads whereby new stereotypes have been built for women. The women are no doubt, strong, confident and financially sound, but their lives get meaningless without shopping and without owning certain products. Thus, with the setting in of the trends of materialism and high consumerism in this age of hypermarkets and hyperrealities, new stereotypes are created.

Thus the study establishes that although contemporary Indian women are presented in progressive roles, they are not free of certain gendered and stereotypical connotations. The projection of the gen X women are simply setting new stereotypes appealing to the patriarchal standards— be it the supermom, the perfect homemaker, the glamorous looking modern woman or the shopaholic freak; each and every contemporary Indian woman in the advertising frames are playing their part in building up some new stereotypes. To conclude, it can be said that though Indian women have traversed a long way in the road to emancipation, advertisements have turned women into hypercommodities of hypermarkets bringing in its strides new hyperrealities.



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A QUEST FOR 'ABORIGINAL AUSTRALIAN IDENTITY' IN WANDERING GIRL

Rajesh Kumar
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As I lifted myself up on my elbow to gaze out the window towards the hills that surrounded the mission, the aroma of wild berries come drifting past my nose. Yet I felt dispirited and sad, for today was the day I was leaving my home to work for white people (Ward, 1987, p. 1)

As a matter of fact, Australian Aboriginal Literature protests against the two centuries of colonial rule, loss of Indigenous rights, culture, languages and Identity. It tries to reconstruct the identity and history of the Aborigines from an Aboriginal perspective and deconstruct the same that have been created by the whites. The 'stolen generation', which was one of the atrocious consequences of colonialism, is the crucial theme of Aboriginal Literature given the fact that most aboriginal writing is autobiographical and most aboriginal writers were stolen children. They were stolen from their people and culture in the name of education and etiquette and trained to become good domestic servants in white households.

Until quite recently, Aboriginal children could be excluded from schools for the only reason that they were Aboriginal. For many Aboriginal students in an urban situation, the question of identity remains at the forefront of everyday school life. For some, their identity is denied by the school itself. It can sometimes be the case that schools fail to recognise a student's Identity, or deliberately deny it, as they view Aboriginality in terms of certain physical characteristics, employment, dress and ability. On the other hand, many Aboriginal students decide not to identify, because it makes life at school too difficult. At one time it was believed that Aboriginal people were "uneducable" and should be taught housekeeping and farm work. Most of this teaching" took place at mission schools. There was, and unfortunately continues in some areas to be, a perception that because people were black, they were Inferior and had no need of a Western education. It was wrongly held by the white people that Aboriginal people were destined to work in unskilled areas.

Wandering Girl, the text under consideration by Glenyse Ward, is also a first-person account of an Aboriginal teenage girl Irving in Australia in the 1960s. As was the case with many Aboriginal children at the time, the author too, was taken away from her natural parents at the age of one and placed in a German Catholic mission to be raised in the European manner. At 16 she was sent out to work as a maid for a wealthy white family. After suffering many humiliations from her mistress, Ward summons the courage to strike out on her own. She eventually finds a better Job, marries and raises a family.

We will see that as the narrative unfolds Glenyse Ward's personal story; her experiences are similar to those of many other Aboriginal women. For this reason this personal story can be viewed as 'testimony' to the way Aboriginal people were treated by non-Aboriginal people: in particular, the government in the form of the Aborigines Protection Board, the Native Welfare Department, the Education Department, the Police, the Church, missionaries, and other institutions within the state apparatus. Most importantly, I'll try to illustrate how Mrs. Bigelow, the antagonist is representing the class 'white women' and Glenyse representing the class 'Aboriginal women' in general.

The Stolen Generation

Before turning directly to the specific text, Wandering Girl, I want to discuss the way that the Aboriginal people were treated in the years between 1885 and 1969 and also the way that Aboriginal children were taken away from their families and forced to work as domestic servants and to live on the White peoples' government - controlled missions and reserves. In the state of New South Wales, Aboriginal tribes have been forced to leave their tribal lands and go onto government - controlled reserves, it was commonly believed by white settlers that the Aborigines would soon die off, and the reserve land would be sold and used for farming - but, by the start of the 1900s, a new generation of Aboriginal children was growing up in the reserves. This fact, combined with the large-scale arrival of white Immigrants from Europe, changed the



Aboriginal life forever.

When it became clear that the Aboriginal people would not die off, the protection board for the Aborigines decided to break up all Aboriginal communities. They would then sell the land to the newly arrived Europeans for farming. The board started by taking away all the rights from Aborigines to own or use reserve lands; and thus the Aborigines could own nothing. The reserves were made a training ground for Aboriginal children to become servants. The protection board had plans to remove Aboriginal children from their reserves and place them under the control of white employers. After these children were removed, they were never allowed to return home. The white society thought it would be in the best interest of the child to remove her from the corrupting influence of her Aboriginal family; they would send the girls to an institution or foster home, and train her to become a servant. There were no rules or regulations for the treatment of the Aboriginal children who were sent to work. In the middle of the twentieth century, Aborigines worked for flour, sugar, and tea rations on the cattle stations of northern, central and Western Australia. Aboriginal women on settler's stations often worked harder than the men, who were mostly stockmen. The women not only had hard domestic chores - such as cooking, cleaning, washing, and caring for children - but they also worked as cattle drivers; with camel teams; as shepherds; road repairers; water carriers; house builders; and gardeners. If they tried to escape, they were captured and beaten.

It was the women who were responsible for keeping Aboriginal groups together in camps and on these properties. They cared for their children and for their men. The older women taught traditional skills and customs to the younger generation. Most girls who were removed from their white employers ended up in Sydney working for the middle-class white people. These girls usually were awakened before 5:30 A.M. to do all of the household jobs. Employers had the girls working seven days a week. They only got paid a small amount, and often got nothing. The middle-class whites didn't allow the girls to show any affection to white people, since they said it was like black rubbing off onto white. The Aboriginal people were just there to work.

The removal of these children from their families affected more than just a



few people. In New South Wales the government estimated that, in New South Wales alone, there were at least 8,000 Aboriginal children who had been taken away from their families between 1885 and 1996. Aboriginal children were often taken for being "neglected". The missions and reserves were often the places where the Aborigines would eventually die off. The children in the Institutions were the most neglected children in Australia. Many had to sleep in dormitories with about nineteen to twenty-five other girls in each of dormitory. If any of the girls wet the bed, she would get her rubbed in the wet sheet and then receive a beating. The food they ate was so bad that sometimes the meat was infested with maggots. They were not supplied with shoes; in order to keep their feet warm, children would jump into the cow dung.

Often the white people would send Aboriginal women out into the white community, and if they came back pregnant, the rule was to keep each woman for two years and then take the child away; sometimes mother and child would never see each other again. The white society thought it would be in the best interest of the child to remove her from the corrupting influence of her Aboriginal family. There were no rules or regulations for the treatment of the Aboriginal children who were sent to work. The children then grew up in a white community knowing nothing of the Aboriginal culture and environment. Young Aborigines were soon forced from their homes to travel the state looking for work. For the first time, many whites and with Aborigines and realized what poor conditions they were forced to live under. Even with this evidence, it was not until 1967 that Aboriginal people had a vote about their treatment in society. The protection of the Welfare system remained in place until 1969.

Turning now to a specific text, it is evident that Glenyse Ward's *Wandering Girl* is a very first-person account of an Aboriginal teenage girl (the author herself), forcibly taken from her parents, as was the case with other Aboriginal children at that time, and raised in a strict Catholic institution. She describes her time as a servant during the 17th year. Glenyse writes:

You see in the early days of survival and struggle, there was a lot of hardship and agony amongst the Aboriginal people. Through the misguided minds of earnest

white people we were taken away from our natural parents. This affected all of us. We lost our identity through being put into missions, forced to abide by the European way(Ward, 1987, p. 1).

She describes her life in the following words: I was taken away from my natural parents at the age of one, because mum took me to see a doctor when I was sick. The Native Welfare was called in and mum was told she was an unfit mother and I would be better off put into a home and reared up the Europeanway(Ward, 1987, p. 12). We can notice that Glenyse had no other choice: she's delivered to Mayor Bigelow and his vicious wife as their one domestic. Housed in a dirty garage, Instructed to eat meager, inferior food after cooking sumptuous meals for the family to share in their luxurious dining room, given unfamiliar tasks with no Instruction, browbeaten and humiliated at every turn, she quietly retaliates by garaging hungrily and luxuriating in the Bigelow's bath when they are out and by hosing the Inside of their car when told to 'wash' the back seat where she herself has been sitting.

She was supposed to wake up before dawn every day and slaved for fifteen hours. She was given tin plate to eat off and tin mug to drink from and slept on a shabby cot above a garage. It must have been very humiliating for her to drink off a tin mug, which was given to pet dogs and cats. She was amazed when a tin mug was placed down in front of her. She notes:

As she powered herself and Mr. Bigelow tea in beautiful cups and lowers, I wondered if I was going to get a cup. I could only see two cups and saucers on the table, when she went to a cupboard in the far left of the kitchen, and I thought, "Oh, that's good, she's going to get me a cup and saucer". To my amazement she came back to the table with an old tin mug, poured tea in it, and placed it down in front of me(Ward, 1987, p. 12).

Glenyse couldn't even retaliate properly she was amazed though because she was taught 'never to speak out to people unless we were spoken to first no matter what the circumstances'(Ward, 1987, p. 12). She was given very clear instruction by Mrs. Bigelow that she was there as her dark servant, that she was to obey her orders and do what she was told to do. She writes that 'In those days, not so long ago either, we were

not allowed to say anything against our white bosses'(Ward, 1987). The stolen children being brought up in mission were not allowed to meet even their parents. Glenyse says of her mother 'she once came down to wandering and tried to visit but I had not been allowed to see her'(Ward, 1987, p. 126).

Louis Althusser rightly points out that it is these Instituting through which ruling class ideas are legitimated(Althusser, 1971).Furthermore, this writing is also a 'testimony' to the dominant attitudes (in the text shown by Mrs. Bigelow) and beliefs of the society at a particular time.

One instance of a communal experience is the events recorded as personal stories in the narratives of the Bringing Them Homereport which are given testimony again in the writings by Aboriginal women and here it is given by Glenyse Ward: for example, the removal of children from their homes, parents, or school. What is foregrounded here is the 'terror' the child experienced and in a sense the 'horror' of the Aboriginal children being taken away from their family. This 'terror' emerges because of an 'unspeakable' act; an act that silences a people because they are 'already' judged as 'inferior'. The voices of Aboriginal people have been judged as not legitimate in the phrase universe of the dominant Anglo-Australian policy making. Glenyse Ward gives her testimony as to the manner in which she was taken from her mother to Wandering mission :

I was taken away from my natural parents at the age of one, because mum took me to see doctor when I was sick. The Native Welfare was called in and mum was told she was on unfit mother and I would be better off put into o home and reared up the European way(Ward, 1987).

Thus, this 'unspeakable act' is experienced by a community of parents, and children who were sentenced by the legitimation of a law that denied them agency. It has been seen that the writers of the life stories give testimony to being removed from their mothers through 'compulsion' or 'duress' by the station owners or white people for whom they worked. The argument put forth by the station owners or managers was that the children would be taken to get an education, but to the dismay of the girls they found they were being used as 'slave' labour. In the case of Glenyse Ward The Native Welfare accused her mum to be an unfit mother and took her away and later

she was used as 'slave' labour.

Having viewed the text *Wandering Girl* by Glenyse Ward from the position of Aboriginal women as 'victim' to colonial practices, now I want to look at it from another perspective. I will now compare the society of white women which Mrs. Bigelow is representing with the society of Aboriginal women which Glenyse Ward is representing and show how Aboriginal women are struggling to make their own recognition or create their own Identity under the dominance of white women.

Identity and Recognition

The native people here, of course, were not Indigenous Australians but women; the colonizers were all men. The disputed territory was woman's body. In her 1975 essay, 'Black Women in Australia - A History', black activist Bobbi (Roberta) Sykes insisted that Black women were subjected to a particular form of contempt in Australia. On the other hand, Aboriginal people had survived largely through the work of women in raising up families and sustaining communities. But the Black woman remained oppressed:

Burdened down with the complexities of bringing up children in this sophisticated and complicated society, she remains an object of sexual fulfillment for the white man, and an 'invisible' woman to her white female contemporaries, especially the 'establishment' of Women's Liberationists who chatter on about sexual oppression and the competitive orgasm, and who spare not a thought for the true object of sexual oppression in this country today" (Bobbi, 1975, p. 318).

The most important obstacle faced by Black women, Sykes concluded, was 'the barrier of racist attitudes' (Bobbi, 1975, p. 319). In a 1993 article entitled 'Aboriginal Women and the White Lies of the feminist Movement', published in *The Australian Feminist Law Journal*. Larissa Behrendt reminded her (mostly) white readers: 'White women lived and profited on the land stolen violently from Aboriginal women'. She demanded acknowledgement of the real relations of oppression in Australia:

Aboriginal women have been oppressed by white women. White women were missionaries that attempted to destroy Aboriginal culture. They used the slave

labour of Aboriginal women in their homes. White women were the wives, mothers and sisters of those who violently raped Aboriginal women and children and brutally murdered Aboriginal people. White women can be racist as white men. White women have benefitted economically from the dispossession of Aboriginal people(Larissa, August 1993).

White women, had to recognise that Aboriginal women had a different history and thus, a different political agenda. Aboriginal women were also necessarily pro-family; there was a need to rebuild families, which had been systematically smashed by the state through the removal of children. They emphasised the preservation of language and culture and improved access to health, education and legal services.

Wandering Girl' by Glenyse Ward can be taken into consideration to see how Aboriginal woman was oppressed by white woman, that is, Mrs. Bigelow. Mrs. Bigelow is the antagonist in the story because she is always rude and wants everything her way. Everything has to be perfect. The protagonist is Glenyse because she pulled through when Mrs. Bigelow was ordering her around all the time.

Glenyse, representing the Aboriginal women, shows a very positive attitude towards Mrs. Bigelow. She was always being ignored and disrespected, but she never let it get to Mrs. Bigelow. On the other hand, Mrs. Bigelow's attitude like white women, was not very positive, she always show negative attitude towards Glenyse. She made Glenyse do everything and did not call her by her name, she called Glenyse her "dark slave'. Even other white women's behaviourwere also very negative towards Glenyse. Let us consider an example from the text. Mrs. Bigelow had arranged a party and Invited all her white friends who had gathered into the V.I.P. room. Glenyse thought of helping Mrs. Bigelow and went there. She narrates: Soon as I opened the door all the chatter and laughter stepped. You could hear a pin drop as all eyes were on me. All of a sudden, some pushed-up voices, with a plum in her mouth, come out of the crowd. Tracey dear, is this your little dark servant? I Just stood there smiling, I thought it was wonderful that at last people we'e taking notice of me. There were sniggers and Jeers from everywhere, I turned to the lady who did all the talking, and said. 'My name isGlenyse". She was quite startled; she said. 'Oh

dear, I didn't think you had a name(Ward, 1987, p. 24).

In this way all the white women were laughing at her not showing even little bit of positive attitude. Glenyse receives absolutely no respect from either of the Bigelows. Nothing that Glenyse told sounded unreal, she had the experiences that other Aboriginal woman also had. But some people Just haven't been through anything upsetting in life so they don't know how to attempt the "real world" which was the case with white women and here in this case Mrs. Bigelow.

Glenyse was made to cook, clean, polish and do yard work, which was the same case with all the Aboriginal women. But If Glenyse didn't complete her work she punished very severely for that. Glenyse, infact, hated to cook and clean for the Bigelows, but ended up with all of the work anyway. One can juncture what would have been Glenyse's undergoing sufferings when at the age of 13 she went from helping the nuns with a group of people, to becoming a slave and doing tons and tons of work by herself. One can wonder how Mrs. Bigelow felt all through the book when they knew she didn't have to clean ever and how she felt when she almost never had to talk to Glenyse, in a friendly manner. I wonder If Mrs. Bigelow actually would associate with people who weren't as wealthy and as powerful as herself and her husband. Mrs. Bigelow was most likely brought up in a wealthy home, with stuck up parents and was raised to think that people other than her are less fortunate and less important. She was, just like white women, most likely raised to believe that there is only one colour or skin.

I was surprised at the beginning of the book when Glenyse went to work for the Bigelows and Mrs. Bigelow said she was going to put on some tea. When the tea was ready she got out two cups and saucers. Surprisingly, the two cups were for her and her husband. What did Glenyse get? Mrs. Bigelow placed a tin mug and a tin plate in front of her and then poured some tea into it for her. Glenyse was shocked. In one way, the author is trying to remember her past and make a point about racism, which was prominent at that time. She was not treated equally just may be because of the colour of her skin. She is trying to point out to others that racism should not occur anymore.

To conclude with, it can be argued that one can understand how Aboriginal women were oppressed by white women by being used as 'slave' labour in their homes. So, white women can be as racist as white men. But now the situation is changing and Aboriginal women are intent on debunking the cherished myth of 'sisterhood' and refusing the political identity 'woman'. 'I am no more woman than I am Aboriginal', insisted Lynette Morris (Lynette, 1996, p. 203). Jackie Huggins, like O' shame, Behrendt and Morris, pointed to Aboriginal women's different needs and priorities, and reiterated the refusal of indigenous people to assimilate themselves to the white world, the white feminist mould. The struggle for identity, for recognition, was taking place on the terrain of culture and in opposition to 'white feminism and women's studies'.

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