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**REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN SELECT GUJARATI AND
ENGLISH NOVELS AND GUJARATI AND HINDI POPULAR
FILMS:
WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO 'A SUITABLE BOY' AND
'THE GOD OF SMALL THINGS'
IN ENGLISH AND
'AMRUTA' AND 'SAT PAGLAN AKASHMAN'
IN GUJARATI FICTION AND
'SHOLAY' AND 'HUM AAPKE HAIN KOUN'
IN HINDI AND
'PARKI THAPAN' AND 'DESH RE JOYA DADA PARDESH JOYA'
IN GUJARATI FILM.**

**DISSERTATION
SUBMITTED TO THE
SAURASHTRA UNIVERSITY, RAJKOT
FOR THE AWARD OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
IN ENGLISH**

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STATEMENT UNDER UNI. O. Ph. D. 7.

This is to certify that the work embodied in this thesis entitled “Representation of Women in Select Gujarati and English Novels and Gujarati and Hindi Popular Films: With Special Reference to ‘A Suitable Boy’ and ‘The God of Small Things’ in English and ‘Amruta’ and ‘Sat Paglan Akashman’ in Gujarati Fiction and ‘Sholay’ and ‘Hum Aapke Hain Koun’ in Hindi and ‘Parki Thapan’ and ‘Desh Re Joya Dada Pardesh Joya’ in Gujarati Films” has been carried out by the candidate Mr Hiren Trivedi under my direct guidance and supervision for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Faculty of Arts of Saurashtra University, Rajkot. I further declare that the work done and presented in this thesis is original and independent. I certify that the work has not been submitted either partly or fully to any other university or institute for the award of any degree.

Date: 21st April, 2009.

Place: Rajkot.

Research Supervisor:
Dr. Nila Shah
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Saurashtra University
Rajkot.

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the research work in this thesis is prepared by me after studying various references related to the thesis. The analysis and the critical interpretation found in this thesis are entirely original. Hence, I state that I am responsible for the critical opinions and other details found in this thesis. I further declare that this thesis is my original work and has not been submitted to any university or institute for the award of any degree.

Date: 21st April, 2009.

Place: Rajkot.

Hiren Trivedi.

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April, 2009.

Rajkot.

Hiren Trivedi.

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INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER – I

(I)

Art is an extraordinarily difficult term to define precisely because it covers a wide range of human endeavour. Over the years the boundaries of its meaning have changed gradually but significantly. What we understand now by the term 'art' is that it broadly means the use of skill and imagination in the creation of aesthetic objects, environments or experiences that can be shared with others. Dictionary of the Arts defines it as, 'all the processes and products of human skill, imagination, and invention; the opposite of nature. In contemporary usage definitions of art usually reflect aesthetic criteria, and the term may encompass literature, music, drama, painting and sculpture'.¹ The term popular art, on the other hand, is loosely used to describe the kind of literature, music, painting, architecture, and other cultural matter that is produced for unsophisticated mass consumption, designed to reaffirm and comfort popular attitudes and tastes. It seems to be a matter of general agreement at the present day that 'art' is something that can be enjoyed in the hours of leisure, earned by other hours of inartistic pursuits. However, the things were different in the ancient times.

A retrospect in the history will help us to understand how the conception of art has changed over the years, and how the film fits into the general pattern of art. In ancient time, seven activities such as history, poetry, comedy, tragedy, music, dance and astronomy were considered arts. Although each had its own principles, aims and rules, their immediate purpose was to describe the universe and our place in it. In fact, we can find the seeds of modern cultural and scientific categories of arts in these seven classical

arts. For instance, history led not only to the modern sciences but also to prose narrative. As the culture and civilization progressed, 'art' had begun to be viewed differently. By the thirteenth century, the literary arts of the classical period – history, poetry, comedy and tragedy – had merged into a vaguely defined mix of literature and philosophy. Precisely, the syntactic structure was a deciding factor and not the qualities.

The range of the term underwent a change once again by the seventeenth century. It was increasingly applied to activities that had never been included – painting, sculpture, drawing, and architecture what we now call the 'fine arts'. By the middle of the nineteenth century the term had more or less developed its connotations more clearly. It referred first to the visual, or 'fine' arts, then more generally to literature and the musical arts. As the concept of social science established its separate existence, the spectrum of art had narrowed to its present domain.

Besides philosophy, economics and politics, technology also helps to develop and influence the art. Sometimes, technology leads to a change in the aesthetic system of the art and at times, art calls for a new technology. The development of recording media gave rise to photography, film and sound recording. Presently, we have a range of arts existing on three levels: 1. The performing arts. 2. The representational arts. 3. The recording arts. Compared to the representational arts which communicate through a very complex system of codes and conventions, the recording arts communicate directly through a much more simple system of language. The more a work is

conceived of as a fine or elite work, the less dependent it seems to be on performance. Performing arts like drama, music, dance and pantomime have the qualities of simplicity and familiarity. John G. Cawelti observes, "If we start from the premise that popular art must have the qualities of simplicity, familiarity and strong impact to succeed, it is easy to see that a performed work has certain built-in advantages which make it more likely to achieve these ends."² In fact, most of the popular arts are centrally involved with performance or vice versa. Film, primarily as a representational art form, has characteristics of performance and recording arts too, and in that sense it differs significantly than the rest.

One can classify art in different ways i.e. elite and popular arts, verbal, visual and performing arts, ancient and modern arts so on and so forth. However, the objective of art is the same – a pure delight. Now, pleasure can be derived either through forgetting oneself temporary or escaping from the natural world. Although art in one sense may be concerned with the very essence of reality, it is clear that the persons and things, with which it immediately deals, are by no means real. But they are not therefore to be considered as illusions in the ordinary sense of the word, for they never mislead us. As a result, we neither believe nor disbelieve the reality. We only entertain the characters and things. Indeed, the artist never imitates the nature mechanically, but idealizes it and in it lies the secret of art.

The next question, one would like to ask is what purpose does the art serve? Art may serve many functions, but its prime and immediate

purpose is to give pleasure (*ananda*). Values of art recognized by Indian aesthetics are *atmananda* and *rasanubhava*. It may have some lessons or criticism of life to convey, but they are far more remote and secondary against the basic aim of giving pleasure. Hence, we can say that art has nothing to do directly with morality or didacticism. It should influence the pursuer indirectly through the character and the story. The conclusion can be drawn that art should not have a moral aim, but more necessarily have a moral view. At the same time, interference of any personal aim can devalue the pursuit of art.

(II)

Films in India have not only remained the medium of entertainment, but filmmaking has emerged as a major art form which is a creative expression of the filmmakers or artists. The literary art, with which film is most often associated, by far, is not the drama, as one might at first expect, but the novel; and the reason for this is above all that both are forms of telling stories, and their modes of telling those stories are comparably open. In other words, the narrative potential of film is so noticeable that it has developed its strongest bond with the novel, not with painting, photography or not even with drama. Both films and novels narrate stories at length with a wealth of detail and they do it from the perspective of a narrative while in the drama, the narrator would be found absent. These two forms of art possess more than one similar characteristic in taking the subject and using the techniques to deal with it. If we start from the basis, film and literature do more than share the distinction of being storytelling arts; both come to this tendency quite naturally. Unlike music, architecture and dance, both tend to be essentially representational arts which have a propensity to reflect the world-out there.

Film is indisputably the most extraordinary means men has yet discovered for reproducing his perceptions of nature and for re-creating the world in its own image. Simultaneously, one would hardly disagree that novel mirrors the reality most faithfully than the rest of the literary forms. In the words of Henry James, "The air of reality is the supreme virtue of a novel. The merit on which all its other merits helplessly and submissively depend. If it be not there, they are all as nothing."³ However, in both cases, the reality is transformed through the artist's eyes. A writer is a creative person, and the fictional world that s/he creates, is a product of his imagination. The director is also an artist, and though s/he takes his/her raw material from the nature or the novel, the way s/he uses the raw material has to be different. So, even if the novel is adopted by the film director for filmmaking, s/he visualizes it in a different way and looks at it from a different angle. Since the time film industries has overcome the 'art society' in the matter of making films and the producer looks for handsome reward, the filmmaking as an art began to be viewed more as 'entertainment means' rather than the 'creation of art'. Kundan Shah, a well-known film producer, avers, "Today, cinema as a pure art form is dying everywhere because cinema involves huge monetary investments. You can not have total creative freedom while making a film, the kind you can enjoy while writing a novel."⁴

As far as the question of the typology of characters in film and literature and particularly in fiction is concerned, it is complex, and probable too that both the genres of arts show more resemblance in that area. Ultimately, both tend to create character through a tension between the type

and the individual, or once again, between the universal and the particular. In films, nevertheless, a prototype turns to be a stereotype instantaneously. Moreover, both film and literature can deal very freely with time and space, more freely than theatre. The use of close-ups, parallel editing sequences, intercuts, fades, dissolves, camera angles, pans and tracks can be found in films and novels as well rather than in plays.

Film and fiction share not only the same narrative forms and many storytelling strategies; they also share the same basic appeal. Most of us have always liked to watch movies for the same reasons we read: for escape, for fantasy, for the opportunity to identify with - even to transform ourselves into-other human beings for awhile. Hence, film and fiction are alike not in their forms but in their functions. It is interesting to see how and where they take a turn from each other.

There are several dissimilarities too between the two genres; beginning from their creation, reading and perception. Novels are told by its author. We see and hear only what s/he wants us to see and hear. Films are, in a sense, told by their authors too, but we see and hear a great deal more than a director necessarily intends. Whatever the novelist describes is filtered through his/her language, his/her prejudices and his/her viewpoint. But in the case of a film, we have a certain amount of freedom to focus on one detail or the other. So, the viewer of a film can enjoy more freedom than the reader of a novel. However, the camera can also control our perceptions, determines our point of view, establishes our closeness or distances to figures and action,

blurs our focus or sharpens it, selects our angle of vision. And, not only telling us in this way what to see but how to see it. Nevertheless, the viewer here has a certain degree of freedom to see what s/he likes than a reader, as the words on the pages of a book are always the same, but the image on the screen changes continually as we redirect our focus. Film is, in this way, a much richer experience.

The other differentiating trait is that literature affects our emotions via intellects while the film influences our emotions more directly and less via intellects. Metz Christian notes, "In art (referring to visual arts) you accede to an idea, however vague and imprecise, through the emotion conveyed by the means of expression; but in verbal language you accede to the emotion through the idea."⁵ Hence, the impact of film experience comparatively is much more direct and powerful, possibly because it operates more at the emotional and feeling level and less at the intellectual level. Probably the most common distinction is one that sees the novel as more suitable to the presentations of inner state of mind, while the film is seen as being better able to show the exterior side of persons i.e. what they do and say than what they think or imagine. George Bluestone views, "The rendition of mental states – memory, dream, imagination – cannot be adequately represented by film as by language. If the film has difficulty presenting stream of consciousness, it has even more difficulty presenting states of mind which are defined precisely by the absence in them of the visible world."⁶ Because of all these factors, sometimes it is generalized that film is a simple rather than a complex medium in content.

On the other hand, feature films are commercial products which depend heavily for their very existence on being able to appeal to a relatively large mass. Even a film, which from its initial conception has targeted at a sophisticated rather than a mass audience, will lose money if it is not seen by a considerable number of people. The financial risk thus determines treatment of the subject. The success of a film largely depends on the entertaining and its re-run value. As a result, cinema particularly Indian cinema sacrifices idealism for the sake of materialism. On the other hand, novel, having no financial risk and limited readership, is written and read as a more serious form that involves less commercial risk. A reputable novel, generally speaking, is supported by a small, literate audience, is produced by an individual writer and remains comparatively free of rigid censorship. The film, paradoxically, is made by a group, supported by a mass audience, produced co-operatively under commercial conditions, and restricted by a self-imposed production code. These factors reinforce the autonomy of each medium.

The spectator at a film is much less free or flexible than the reader of a novel, and that brings us to various distinctions in regard to the perception and appreciation of film and written literature. The ease of availability and possession is a fundamental element of distinction in the experience of film or written literature. A dark room, a large audience, big screen, rocking sound – all these bring entirely a different experience than reading a novel in a private room, experiencing reading alone with many breaks in between and having no images or sound. In short, the foremost advantage cinema has over written word is in the matter of viewing, experiencing and identification of characters

within a film. Literacy and basic education are not essential conditions to experience and to understand the cinema. So, cinema by its very presence reaches to a much wider viewership than a short story or a novel. More often than not, the language of the film is so simple that even illiterate and semi-literate can decode the message without difficulty. Secondly, cinema has the benefit of giving particularity to the physical texture of reality. It is precisely fictionality that makes a narrative film a narrative film. Thus, whatever the differences in their raw materials, the two forms again display more than mere affinity; they even share the same decisive defining qualities. The cinematic medium has its own limitations. In its search for a mass audience, it tends to be rhetorical and melodramatic. The frames it chooses are different from those of the written narrative. Although the two mediums are very different and the reader/viewer relationship is very complex, the two art forms – verbal and visual – are not merely parallel but interactive, reciprocative and interdependent. When the two artistic mediums are so much analogous and distinct at the same time, it is also interesting to see how the women protagonists are represented in both the films and fiction and what sort of treatment they receive by their creators in the respective forms.

(III)

For ages women have been subject matter of literary texts written by men. Myth, legend, epic and lyric have sung in the praise as well as of condemnation of women. However, the prose fiction has raised several issues. Obviously, fiction allows a more comprehensive handling of the issues pertaining to the women than any other mode of expression. In earlier Indian English fiction, especially that written by male novelists, women were

represented more as symbols and less as an individual. They were portrayed in a one-dimensional manner as virgin heroine or temptress, the dutiful daughter or all sacrificing mother, the *pativrata* (devoted wife) or the redundant widow. The basic mythic and archetypal image of the woman of the ancient time rooted so strongly in Indian subconscious that it still continues to haunt the minds of creative writers. Opposite to this deified image is the degraded and exploited image which represent women either as vamps or subservient to their male counterparts and this duality is reflected in literature too.

The early Indo-Anglian novelists had shown women confined in the safety of four walls, but the novelists after 1940s depicted women in different hues. Women were empowered to take part in the freedom struggle, imbibing knowledge and experiencing a sense of emancipation. However, the number of such novels is small. Though woman was struggling to come out of the state of subjugation, women writers neglected this aspect. For instance, in Kamala Markandaya's *Nectar in a Sieve* (1954), the woman protagonist, Rukmani, in spite of her being spiritedly vocal on several matters at the beginning, frequently surrenders to the male dominated traditions. The first half of the 20th century did not accept the middle-class women very warmly as working women. They had to confront the opposition at the home and the suspicion and slur from the callous society. This is true not only in the case of male writers but also their female counterparts.

Very few male writers have centralized women in their works. Mulk Raj Anand's *Gauri* (1960) and R.K.Narayan's *The Dark Room* (1938) and *The Painter of Signs* (1976) are the notable exceptions. With the arrival of women writers like Kamala Markandaya, Anita Desai, Rama Mehta, Nayantara Sahgal and Shashi Deshpande among the others, women have moved to the centre stage. These women novelists take us inside the consciousness of their women characters dealing with their fears, dilemmas, dislikes and ambitions. In the novels of Anita Desai and Alice Walker, Tony Morrison and Nayantara Sahgal, we come across radical heroines. These novelists have brought a new model of female protagonist and have created virtually brilliant portrayals of women, iridescent with inner strength, and their protagonists show rare courage, resistance, tenacity and endurance of a different kind. They not only rebel against the rigid social norms but also attempt to be true to themselves. Raji Narasimhan's *Forever Free* (1979) is a good example of establishing a different model of woman protagonist living through defiance. Upamanyu Chatterjee and Amitav Ghosh have also shown how the modern Indian women attempt to free herself sexually and domestically from role bondage sanctioned by the past.

The recent years have witnessed a change in attitude of men towards their female counterparts. The hitherto insurgent and subaltern voice of the women is heard from different quarters of the society. Simultaneously, modern women writers tend to depict the oppression of women with greater consciousness, a deeper sense of involvement and often with a feeling of outrage. Especially, the second generation Indian English women novelists

have favourably responded to the changing social conditions and realities of India life after independence. They are emotionally and intellectually well equipped to give an authentic narration of the social scenario. They differ from their predecessors, who had deified and eulogized woman's suffering, in this regard.

Like the Indian English fiction, regional fiction spans a rich variety of themes – ranging from the theme of a conventional woman to that of the new woman, reflecting in the process, the changes that have been going on in the society. The early social novels, at the time of *Saraswatichandra* (1887-1901), pictured the woman in the light of an idealized being, who willingly accepted her socially assigned role of a devoted daughter, wife and mother, and when her mind derailed from these confines, she was overcome with a terrible sense of shame and guilt. The generations of Gujarati novel writers since then have portrayed woman more or less in the same light, though varied touches of creativity of the individual authors can be evidently observed. The trend continued till the end of the 19th century.

In the beginning of the 20th century, there were strong reformist movements seeking to free women from ignorance and social injustice. Opposition of *Sati* practice, early marriages, widow remarriages, and economic independence were stressed and they found expression in the Gujarati novels. The women characters in the novels of that period stood side by side with their male counterparts in the freedom struggle. The novels of Ramanlal V. Desai and others are replete with such women characters. By

and large, this is the image of the woman in the Gujarat fiction of the then, whether written by men or women.

During the independent era, some writers portrayed the woman in a slightly different manner. They presented women who dared to go out for pleasure outside wedlock. The novelists portrayed them not necessarily as immoral creatures but as those who were not hesitant to taking interest in the relationship outside marriage. With the coming of women novelists on the forefront, a picture changed more drastically. Dhiruben Patel in her novels *Vadvanal* (1963) and *Shimalana Ful* (1976) and Varsha Adalja in *Mare Pan Ek Ghar Hoy* (1971) delineate their women probing deep into their psyche. Saroj Pathak's women characters often tend to deviate from the traditional pattern. They are upright women groping their way towards an independent existence, seeking their identity, yet caught in the conflict of whether or not to break their confines. One of her novels, *Priya Poonam* (1980) has such women characters.

Bhagvatikumar Sharma, Dhruv Bhatt among other male writers and Bindu Bhatt, Dhiruben Patel, Varsha Adalja, Ila Mehta and Saroj Pathak among female writers have set a new trend to look at the female characters in the fields of novels. However, Gujarati fiction has not received radical and defiant women characters from the writers, as one would naturally expect. We would find considerable number of women writers in Gujarati, yet there is no much of feminist fiction as such. The most outstanding novelist, who can be

called a votary of feminism, is Kundanika Kapadia. Such exception in the world of Gujarati fiction remains an exception.

(IV)

Film criticism has a value for literary studies as it allows us to view them differently, to look for the unconscious reflection of social reality, the underlying power structures, the frames which melt into each other, the repetitive narrative patterns, the dialogues which use myth and history, the juxtaposition which take place and the simultaneity which the medium allows. There is no possible way that the cinematic medium, especially when the cinema has never shown any hesitation in appropriating literature for its purpose. But, since the cinematic medium has its own peculiarities, it tends to be different from novel. The functioning of reality and fantasy acquire altogether different dimensions in the films, which aim at mass audiences and pure entertainment. However, at times, even through these strategies they reveal the society's subconscious views and prejudices which work against women and her need for personal freedom. Stereotypes become a language of their own and the message awaits to be decoded.

Hindi cinema has been a major point of reference for Indian culture in 20th century. It has shaped and expressed the changing scenarios of modern India to an extent that no preceding art form could ever achieve. As Lalitha Sridhar notes, "Popular films are documents of social experience...with all its contradictions and tensions."⁷ The theme of social inclusion as it relates to media readily anticipates consideration of race, gender, class and other such visible markers of identity. The question of

woman's identity has remained a moot issue in the history of Indian cinema. It would be no exaggeration to say that without woman there would be no cinema. However, no genuine effort has been made to address the concerns of woman in films. From the very beginning of cinema a woman has been made the centerpiece of attraction, an object of male desire.

The filmmakers, more often than not, repetitively project two roles on the screen, those of mother and wife. The wife is represented as a victim of social conventions and her individuality is severely limited. Women's 'lack of status' has relegated them to silence and marginality. The 'Sati' concept led to a considerable number of films in the 1920s and 30s. The opposite of the wife is the vamp; normally a decadent modern woman. She flouts tradition and seeks to imitate Western lifestyle. Modernity often seems to be equated with being bad.

Another frequent representation of womanhood in the mainstream Indian cinema is of courtesan. The filmmakers have often turned to this ancient profession for their works. The film, *Devdas* has been made by different filmmakers in 1936, 1975 and 2002. *Mamta* (1966), *Pakeezah* (1971), *Utsav* (1985) and *Ram Teri Ganga Meli* (1987) are notable films of this category. Here, the courtesan is projected ministering to the physical and emotional needs of men. She obviously remains outside the normal domain of domesticity and she is deeply attracted to the protagonist of the film, although usually he does not fall in love with her. She showers him with comfort, care, and physical happiness and then, when he recovers from the miseries, he

goes back to his sanctioned life. The outcast woman does not occupy a permanent place in the life of the protagonist.

Indian popular films are largely romantic musicals and the female protagonist usually plays a role of romantic companion of the male protagonist who dreams and aims beyond the love relationship. The female protagonist with a beautiful slender figure is shown exposing body parts and the camera always makes a point of capturing her beauty in sensual detail. In their traditional exhibitionist role women are looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact. Although the image of the woman on the silver screen has evolved with the time, as a romantic playmate she has remained static.

From the 1960s through the 1980s, Hindi cinema discourse on womanhood has travelled an orbit – from reverence to rape, and then revenge. In the last quarter of the 20th century, new or parallel Indian cinema has attempted to some extent to look at women issues more seriously and to avoid some of the stereotypes deep-rooted in the film industry. The films *Bhumika* (1977) and *Nishant* (1975) by Shyam Benegal are good examples of such attempts. Slowly this movement gained momentum and the parallel cinema, committed to social reform, made the liberation of woman central to its statements. Directors who were and are part of this trend are Satyajit Ray, Ritwik Ghatak, Mrinal Sen, Shyam Benegal, Girish Kasaravalli, Ketan Mehta to name only a few. Their concern was to hold up a picture of the predicament of the woman in traditional Indian society, in which she was valued just by her

reproductive function and nurturing ability, denying her all independence, right to love and care or the expression of her own sexuality. This was particularly marked in Bengal, Karnataka, Kerala and Maharashtra. The articulation of the demand for the liberation of woman gained both sharpness and momentum with the emergence of major women directors on the scene, such as Prema Karanth, Sai Paranjape, Vijaya Mehta, Aparna Sen, Kalpana Lajmi and others. Surprisingly, it is true that almost all the male and female innovative and art filmmakers have been from the rest of India but not from Gujarat.

From the very inception, the filmmakers in Gujarat have frequently turned to history, religion, folk tales and social themes to choose the content for their films. Apparently, it has remained a man's world inside and even outside the films, and consequently in comparison women get far less space than men, they appear in a narrower range of occupations and activities and with far less impact on the narrative discourse of the films. Women are relegated to domestic roles. Even up to the latest release *Gamma Piyaryu Ne, Gamma Sasariyu* (2005), representation of woman remains unchanged. Under the shadow of the subjects pertaining to the lives of saints, kings, or person of some importance, or with culture specific themes, the woman's role and identity have not evolved even with the changing time. The films that project women in the right perspective from a humanistic and rational point of view are very rare in Hindi or Gujarati cinema.

Compared to other regional cinemas, Gujarati cinema has not treaded the field of feminine films. For example, Girish Kasaravalli's

Ghatashraddha (1977, in Kannada), Adoor Gopalakrishna's *Elippathayam* (1982, in Malayalam) are the films dealing with the feminine issues. In Bengal, Satyajit Ray has explored the issue in his significant works *Charulata* (1964) and *Mahanagar* (1963). Jabbar Patel's *Umbartha* (1981) in Marathi also grabs our attention. At the same time, the contribution of regional women directors is also noteworthy. Aparna Sen's *36 – Chowringhee Lane* (1981, in Calcutta) and Prema Karanth's *Phaniyamma* (1982, in Bangalore) are entirely different in their approach, theme and subjects. In Oriya, in Bengali, in Malayalam, even in Hindi, society's long denial of the woman as a person is being challenged and condemned. Sadly, only the Gujarati cinema remains wedded to an outmoded convention.

(V)

The representation of women in films and fiction can be studied from different perspective and theories. It can be a field of study for the social sciences and literature. But, one major difference between the approach of the social sciences and literature is that the latter is primarily concerned with the depiction of reality in the form of images. And this approach is adopted for study of this theme as it provides wider scope to probe into the issue. The changing image of women in English and Gujarati fiction and Gujarati and Hindi films through significant characters in various works within a selected time frame will help us to understand to some extent, a changing reality. But this approach in itself has its own limitations. It is not as though every writer sets himself the task of drawing an accurate picture of society. Many of them base their works on reality, but transform it through their imaginative power or idealistic leanings. In fact, the essence of art lies here in transformation of

reality into fantasy. The kind of approach adopted by writers must, therefore be borne in mind. Sometimes there is an identical approach permeating a given period of time. Even so, there are subtle yet important variations of attitude in a particular writer's work. Consequently, though several of feminist themes are referred to in the subsequent chapters, in keeping with constantly evolving development in literary studies, it is considered scrupulous to avoid applying any particular feminist theory. Even otherwise no longer is feminism presumed to have a single set of assumption. And it is definitely no longer merely the 'ism' of upper class, educated, bourgeois, heterosexual women, especially Anglo-American as it once seemed to be. As Ross C. Murfin has noted, "the evolution of feminism into feminisms has fostered a more inclusive, global perspective."⁸ In fact, "Feminism has often focused upon what is absent rather than what is present, reflecting concern with the silencing and marginalization of women in a *patriarchal culture*, a culture organized in the favor of men."⁹ Rebecca West, a British author and critic, remarks in this regards, "I myself have never been able to find out precisely what feminism is. I only knew that other people call me a feminist whenever I express sentiments that differentiate me from a doormat or prostitute."¹⁰ Radicals like Judith Fetterly points out, "Literature is political," and its politics "is male."¹¹ Activists like Simone de Beauvoir, Kate Millett and Betty Friedan prefer to examine a female 'self' constructed in literature by male authors to various male fears and anxieties. They saw literary texts as models and agents of power. *The Second Sex* (1949) by de Beauvoir raises questions like 'what is woman and how is she constructed differently from men?' She believes that woman is constructed differently by men. The thesis that men

write about women to find out more about man has had long-lasting implications, especially human, not woman. My study takes this argument as an outline of my hypothesis but does not solely depend on it as I have also included some literary texts written by women. Moreover, this study does not aim at feminism/s or feminist theories. Its primary focus is more on the cultural aspects rather than feminist concerns. Nevertheless, it does not, and does not afford to, turn away from them all together. For instance, I cannot ignore Kate Millett's observations on capitalism, male power, crude sexuality and violence against women. She argues that male writers distort women by associating them with (male) deviance. She aptly remarks that the 'interior colonization' of women by men is "sturdier than any other form of segregation."¹² While looking for such signs of 'segregation' and 'interior colonization', my study also probe inside these cultural, sexual, intellectual and/or psychological stereotypes about women in literary as well as visual art forms. It also interrogates the silencing and oppressing of women, overtly or subtly in films and fiction.

Film and fiction are the carriers of cultural values. Moreover, novels compared to other literary forms and films against other visual forms of art provide ample scope for scrutinizing in depth how the women are projected by the artists of both the genders. Drama, poem, short story as well as painting and photography deal only with the one aspect of life while film and fiction covers a rich variety of life with different aspects. Novels and films have been selected for the research for the same reason. This study endeavours to explore the projections of women in both, the fiction and in mainstream or

commercial box office hit cinemas whether written/directed by a male or a female artist. Obviously, this research is not intended to form any opinion about the literary value of chosen works. The present study aims to analyze works of two major contemporary novelists, Vikram Seth's *A Suitable Boy* (1993) and Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* (1997) in English and Raghuvir Chaudhari's *Amruta* (1965) and Kundanika Kapadia's *Sat Paglan Akashman* (1984) in Gujarati and Ramesh Sippy's *Sholay* (1975) and Suraj Barjatya's *Hum Aapke Hain Koun* (1994) in Hindi and Arun Bhatt's *Parki Thapan* (1979) and Govind Patel's *Desh Re Joya Dada Pardesh Joya* (1998) in Gujarati films to investigate the construction of women in terms of recognizable roles, images, models and label in response to specific social imperatives. The research also aims to explore the representation of the women protagonists; their role in the narrative discourse, their treatment by the male protagonists and their own reactions towards them and their reading by the audience in case of films. While the selected works will be discussed in detail in terms of representation of women, I will also endeavour to examine very succinctly the changing image of women throughout the history of Gujarati novels, Indian English novels, Hindi films and Gujarati films.

In discussing the characters in the works, I have kept into focus the following distinctions: an individual approach of the respective writers / filmmakers and the differences expressed in their works. This distinction will help us to gauge the commonly held views regarding women in general and the different approach adopted by imaginative, sensitive and gifted writers. The women characters in the works under scrutiny will also be compared, and

the comparison between fictional and filmic representation of women would also be made to see the relevance and differentiation between the two representative art forms.

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STUDY OF REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN

IN GUJARATI NOVELS:

CHAPTER – II

(I)

The treatment of women characters by men and women in Gujarati fiction has passed through different concepts, phases and influences. At the initial stage, the fiction writers reflected an idealized image of the woman moulded under the mannequin of wifedom and motherhood. They were primarily shown in the service to make her husband happy and satisfied in every way and that was her supreme duty. The ideal of *sahcharya* – companionship, which is incised deep into the Indian minds, is almost absent in Gujarati literature. Nevertheless, right from its initial stage, Gujarati literature can boast of having women-centered novel. The credit of delineating women in different hues and dealing with some of the issues pertaining to women's world goes to Govardhanram Tripathi. *Saraswatichandra* (1887-1901), his epical novel, presents both, an archetypal woman in the form of Kumudsundari, and a 'new woman' in the form of her sister, Kusumsundari. The writers of the succeeding era preferred to replicate the image of Kumudsundari more or less in the same light in their works. This trend continued till the end of the nineteenth century.

The beginning of the twentieth century raised a voice to free woman from the age-old traditions and corrupted social practices, and it was reflected in the literature of that period too. During twenties and thirties, the literature which was largely influenced by Gandhian ideology and freedom movement represented women standing side by side with their male counterparts. The women characters in the novels of Ramanlal Desai and other novelists are far more mentally strong than their predecessors. However, they are deeply

dumped to homeliness. Reaching to the middle of the 20th century, the writers began to allow their women protagonists taking interest in 'the other man' as in Manubhai Pancholi's *Jher To Pidhan Chhe Jani Jani* (1952). Henceforth, a gradual but clear sign of indifference towards social problems has become evident. This trend was carried further through the literature of the sixties and seventies. Then the writers became increasingly aware of the world around them and started contemplating age-old traditions and conventions for social reconstruction. The women writers, too, who had begun writing cautiously and tentatively, started to assert themselves in their works. Inspired by the whirlwind of feminism and Western literature, Dhiruben Patel, Saroj Pathak, Varsha Adalja, Ila Arab Mehta, Kundanika Kapadia, Bindu Bhatt just to mention a few, have set new trends in the fields of novels as well as short story writing.

The women protagonists in Gujarati fiction writing have received treatment differently at the hands of male and female writers from the very initial stage. In the contemporary era, whereas gynocritics emphasize to see a work from the gender approach, the advocates of the 'pure art' reject the theory to study the work from the gender perspective. The former school of study believes that there is a marked distinction in the portrayal of women protagonists in the works of female writers. Chandrakant Mehta observes, "The representation of women in the novels written by male and female writers has been done from the different point of view."¹ While it has become an acknowledged fact that time and milieu inspire the writers to produce certain kind of literature, it is also now believed that gender plays a significant

role in the formation and treatment of the theme. According to Jasbir Jain, “Increasingly it is becoming evident that the specifics of time, place, sex and race are the meaningful aspects of the creative activity as they determine the relationship between experience and art.”²

In the light of such background, it would be worthwhile to examine two Gujarati novels, one written by a male and another by a female author to study how women are represented in them. It would be significant to see the image of the woman in Raghuvir Chaudhari’s *Amruta* (1965) and Kundanika Kapadia’s *Sat Paglan Akashman* (1984) in the backdrop of above mentioned two incompatible approaches. I have endeavoured to scrutinize whether the image of the woman has changed with the passage of time in the novels under discussion and if yes, then how far? Besides, it would be interesting to see whether a male writer and his female counterpart approach to their women characters in the same way or differently.

(II)

Among the modern Gujarati fiction writers, Raghuvir Chaudhari’s contribution is noteworthy. He tried his hand on several genres, like drama, poetry, travelogue, essay, short story and biography; and his skillful handling of the theme indeed merit our attention. Out of these literary forms, he excels in novels. *Venuvatsala* (1972), *Uparvas*, *Sahvas*, *Antarvas* (1976), *Shravan Rate* (1978) and *Amruta* among the others are a few of his most appreciated works. *Amruta*, written in mid-sixties earned him a prestigious place in the literary world. The novel had filled the breath of life in Gujarati fiction when it was on the verge of decline. It was just his second fictional endeavour

followed by *Purvarag* (1964), nevertheless artistic excellence is found at its best. Dhirubhai Thakar says, "In this novel, (*Amruta*) published in just a course of one year after *Purvarag*, the writer has emerged as a competent novelist by crossing the initial imperfections and limitations. That indicates his instantaneous development."³ The novel demands our attention for more than one reason. According to Ramesh Trivedi, it is "a novel of existentialism",⁴ whereas Dhirubhai Thakar calls it "a story of internal conflicts."⁵ To Babu Davalpura, it is "a novel of ideas."⁶ Krishnavir Dixit opines that the work is about the "foundation of freedom in man-woman relationship."⁷ Upendra Dave views it as, "aspiration of freedom of contemporary intellectuals",⁸ while Ramesh Oza calls it "crises of choice."⁹ Hasmukh Doshi views it with different aspects. He calls it "'novel of ideas', 'lyrical novel', 'a love story', 'novel of character', 'stream of consciousness novel' and 'picaresque novel'."¹⁰ These labels are attached with the novel primarily because it depicts the complexities of society of post independent India influenced by the notions of political independence, Tagore's humanism, Marks' socialism, Gandhian ideology and aftermath of two World Wars.

The novel can be studied from various angles but my concern is to see how women are represented in the novel by a male writer. Obviously, the story is centered around a woman who seeks freedom in the matter of love and marriage. It also reflects the different ways in which the two male protagonists look at their female counterpart and their interactions. *Amruta*, the woman protagonist, is an intellectual woman with sharpened sensibility. She aspires for freedom. For her, freedom means to meet people, to have an

openness of experience and to choose a life partner on her own. The most striking characteristics of her disposition are generosity and tolerance. She is the only daughter of affluent father. In his absence, she lives with her elder brothers and sisters-in-law at 'Chhaya'. She uses her privileges of the inherited property to pursue her study and research and not for luxury. Her keen interest lies in archaeology and enhances her career in the same field. Unlike other women characters of the story, she is free to choose (condemned to choose?) between the two young men Udayan and Aniket. Self – dependence is the central tenet of her personality. She wants to maintain her identity as Amruta.

There are two chief male protagonists in the story; Udayan and Aniket. Her innocent relationship with Udayan is a decade old. She is obliged to him for his active interest in her academic development. She also admits that what she is today is largely due to Udayan. At present, he is a lecturer of Gujarati in the college. Before and after being a lecturer, he also takes up a career of a free-lance journalist. It is Udayan who introduces Aniket to Amruta. Aniket is a son of a rich man living in Africa and he himself is a lecturer of science. The story revolves round these three characters. They come together owing to their similar problems of life. Udayan's influence sharpens Amruta's sensibility and in the company of Aniket, faith in herself strengthened. The story runs along two men's craving for a lady's love and making the right choice is her dilemma. The sequence of events swivels around this issue.

At the outset, two of Amruta's friends visit her to congratulate on obtaining a doctorate degree. Education, for Amruta, is a liberating factor, bringing promise of a rich intellectual life outside the claustrophobic environment of a traditional Gujarati family. Amruta passes through different traumatic conditions throughout the novel. Her life is not a bed of roses despite having economic self-dependence and sensitive and sensible nature. Traditionally, woman's extramarital relationship with the male is considered 'family dishonour'. Amruta's mutual relationship with two persons shocks the family and they deem it as disgrace. As they are steeped into traditional patriarchal family structure, they attempt to confine Amruta's relationship outside of 'home'. However, Amruta does not readily submit to their ideology. She believes, "I do not wish my future to depend on others' likes and dislikes. I shall build my future by my own independent willpower. And nobody has the right to interfere with it. Not even Udayan.... Aniket? Not even Aniket." (A: 80-81) Here, she reflects the image of the assertive modern Indian woman. However, it should be noted that Amruta undergoes conflicts and confusions for the sake of freedom. Suman Shah notes, "Her future depends upon her independent willpower in which the interference of the members of the family, Aniket or Udayan cannot be granted. In protecting her 'self', Amruta's grief gets doubled."¹¹ Truly, under the influence of modernism and currents of feminism, women received education that was otherwise impossible in the preceding centuries. Women's standard of education has shot up remarkably in the second half of 20th century. However, compared to their male counterparts, they are bereft of the advantages which education fetches with it. Aruna Bakshi rightly observes, "Independent decision-power manifested by

education and the influence of Western culture conferred women's existence a new direction, but this transforming condition is not acceptable to the male dominated society. Family and society do not consent woman's intellectual competencies – potencies or her independent personality.”¹²

Amruta is aware of the gender discrimination. Hence, she is not ready to be a plaything and prisoner in a male's hand. She knows that freedom which Aniket and Udayan enjoy is constrained for her and the rest of the 'Other'. Even, Udayan and Aniket, instead of accepting Amruta as an absolute personality, view her merely as a woman. Two male's eyes covet for her feminine beauty. Agonies of Amruta echo the plight of today's educated, sensible and freedom-wring woman. Though garbed in the Western style and manner, true Indian spirit pulsates within these Indian women. Suman Shah expresses his view in the following words, “In the Indian society, Amruta is not as free as Udayan and Aniket are. The sons of the society standing on the foundation of hypocrisy see Amruta as a beautiful woman though they are highly intellectuals. As Amruta says, in the out burst feelings of Udayan and in the tranquility of Aniket, what she realizes is the result of womanhood. And that is her nervousness; she feels jeopardized in the safety of freedom as a human being.”¹³

Amruta's chief anxiety is that she can neither neglect nor accept Udayan. She lives in a constant dilemma. Consequently, her life runs along the path of gloominess. Since Udayan is the collaborator of her progress, she cannot overlook him. She expresses her confusion in these words, “Duty

chooses Udayan and interest selects Aniket.” (A:153) She experiences dialectic tension in her choice. The more she thinks, the more painful becomes her plight. She does not wish to deceive and at the same time does not wish to be deceived. One more difficulty of Amruta is that, “By accepting and achieving, if I do not remain Amruta, what is there then to gain?” (A:300) This awareness gives her aloofness, meaninglessness and distress. She rather prefers freedom in her personal matters. Her freedom is the axis of her behaviour. Freedom that comes naturally to men, makes the women struggle to taste it, and that too, most often than not, at the cost of their mental peace. The fair sex has to confront large number of troubles to achieve freedom. Vidyut Joshi rightly says, “When a woman’s principles regarding life are independent, and do not fall under the influence of patriarchy, she is disregarded then.”¹⁴ In so called urbanized and civilized society too, freedom does not indicate the same meaning to a man and a woman. She may cross the sky but there is always a rope round her neck to keep her attached to the earth. The yardstick is contradictory in the case of male and female. What is common for the male is uncommon for the female.

Aniket says, “Oh! How happy I am then! I love both of you.

And I can say this too”

“Congratulation! What you can say, I can’t because I am a woman”,

says Amruta. (A:107)

There is written and unwritten code of conduct for the women in the male chauvinistic society. In the words of Babu Davalpura, “Aniket can love

both Udayan and Amruta in which there is nothing socially objectionable. But if a woman like Amruta dares to enjoy the freedom to love two male friends, in such circumstances, she either has to obey the '*Lakshaman-rekha*' drawn by society and family or as Amruta does by leaving affection of the family and '*Chhaya*', has to accept the distressing alternative of forlorn life."¹⁵

Amruta oscillates between two ends; Udayan and Aniket. Udayan's rude behaviour, outrageous dealings, satiric abuses and ludicrous sentences embarrass Amruta. He uses the words like 'arrogant', 'shrewd', 'feeble' and 'adulterous' for her. His aggressiveness and foolhardiness put Amruta into a tragic condition. More or less, he reflects the spirit of the modern day anti-heroism in the incident at Palanpur. In passionate rage, he slaps her and tears her blouse. The lady stands there silently shocked. As it is not enough, he crudely flings Amruta in the flow of the river at Balaram. Although she counteracts fearlessly enough at both the occasions, we have to agree to the fact that she is the evidence of male's oppression against a woman. Chandrakant Topiwala states, "Whether the woman character is illiterate or literate, the male protagonists are found battering them. For example, the husband slapping to his wife in Radheshyam Sharma's *Phero* and Udayan attacking on Amruta in Raghuvir Chaudhari's *Amruta*."¹⁶ Udayan does not suit her and Aniket's evasion put her in a tragic plight. Aniket loves and worships her as an embodiment of Goddess. He is attracted to Amruta because of her beauty. Shirish Panchal views, "In the society, there is a prolonged tradition to give a woman a decorative place and recite hymn of praise of her. Knowingly or unknowingly, it is an attempt to enrapture her."¹⁷ (Vidyut Joshi, 126) In the

context of the Indian woman, L. Tharabhai notes, "At times she is considered as Goddess Shakthi and at times she is considered as personification of evils. This contradictory nature of the stereotype formation is still perplexing the woman study scientists. In the same culture contradictory stereotypes are available which are the manifestations of attitude of society towards women."¹⁸

Amruta finds it difficult to confront with her personal yearning and the society around. As she could not find a ray of hope to come out of that dilemma, she even becomes ready to return to her parental home 'Chhaya' which she left once to seek freedom. She realizes what freedom she meant is only solitary loneliness. She confesses to Aniket, "I don't want freedom but love and harmony." (A:232) Intellectual freedom and the personal freedom are both altogether different things for the women. Ravindra Parekh says, "Raghuvir Chaudhari can create an illusion of bold personality, but feel some kind of hesitation in delineating a woman with absolute reality. Therefore perhaps, his women characters can enjoy intellectual freedom but remain far off from personal freedom."¹⁹

Amruta expresses her views on having freedom as woman very boldly at the college in Ahmedabad when she addresses the students on the topic 'Woman in the Ancient Indian Literature'. Her views regarding women's suppression in the past and upcoming of a new woman are remarkable in her speech. She says, "A woman desires freedom rather than to be worshipped. But who asks them?" (A:261) She further adds, "The female's entity is not

merely in love and sacrifice. She has her own curiosity and aspiration.”(A:262)
Her views are suggestive, thought provoking and argumentative.

An intellectual like Amruta, who is determined to make her own decision regarding her marriage, has to prefer sentiment against thought and understanding against awareness coming to the end of the novel. She puts her final choice on Udayan. She nurtures him with motherly affection in his terminating illness of blood cancer. She accompanies him to Bhiloda to look after his health. Upendra Dave quotes, “Kalidas’ Sita type ‘*tvamev bharta na cha viprayog*’ - the image of ideal devoted modern wife emerges from Amruta’s willingness to stay in Bhiloda with Udayan or Niyati (in *Nightmare*) runs to her husband or Sarna (in *Aakar*) proposes Yash for matrimony.”²⁰ It is dubious to say that Amruta makes her choice with her willingness. Once she even retorts that her choice also has not remained innocent. She has to accept Udayan though with compassion only. And the aspirant of freedom submits herself at the end of the novel. Her preferred sequence of Udayan-Aniket turns into Aniket-Udayan in the middle of the story. At the end, it reverses to the former one. Leaving aside the notion of freedom, she acknowledges the ideas of faith and understanding like an ordinary Indian woman and becomes a self-willed victim of what the feminists would call ‘dependence syndrome’. Her tragedy lies in this surrender. In the words of Suman Shah, “Amruta is a woman, an Indian one. Therefore, she experiences desolation of freedom and finds solution in submission.”²¹

Chaudhari, being a male writer, narrates his woman protagonist the most objectively and gives an impartial assessment of her 'self'. Amruta boldly reviews the institutions of marriage, family, issues regarding man-woman relationship and determines her course of life all by herself. She offers a multi-faced image of womanhood. However, towards the end, her sensibility seems to be caught within the social conventions and her own notions of free will. Bholabhai Patel states, "The writers living in the male-dominated society cannot permit as much space to the women protagonists as to the male ones under the name of ethics, values and religion. Even if the writers are benevolent to present the woman protagonist in contact with more than one man, the society instantaneously cannot accept the kindness shown by the writers. Consequently, the woman experiencing freedom in the novel is deceived in the society in trying to experience it."²² (Ravindra Parekh, 45)

(III)

Feminine work in its totality can specifically be found after 70s. Kundanika Kapadia's *Sat Paglan Akashman* is the milestone of feminine writing in Gujarati literature. Aruna Bakshi opines, "Catching the feministic conception so fervently, the novel - *Sat Paglan Akashman* has opened up unlimited possibilities in this field."²³

It would not be a cliché to say that *Sat Paglan Akashman* is more than just a fiction. It represents the contemporary women's plight with vividness and depth. Daksha Vyas believes, "...besides, the crisis of feminine independence is delineated by a woman. Hence, it creates the possibility of being more authentic and the echoing of experience."²⁴ The author, in the

introduction of the novel, asserts, 'It is not just a novel, it is a biography of thousands of women', and consequently it is a documentary novel.

Vasudha, a woman protagonist, is an average, educated woman with sharp sensibility, but submissive by temperament. She is the third of five daughters of ordinary middle class parents. Under the societal and familial pressures, she marries at a very young age, as many daughters do, to ease the burden of her parents.

Marriage, considered by many as a first step towards divinity, is not true in her case. After marriage, everything - her religion, work, interest, hobby, likes and dislikes change, and consequently she suffers inwardly. For her husband's aunt (faiba), 'bride is just a working animal who has nothing to say, to object, to express or to think'. Vasudha believes, "When a woman marries, she steps into a land of restrictions."(SPA:28) Dragged into household duties, she becomes the mother of three children in short time. Even at that time, she has no privilege to decide whether to be a mother or not; it is all decided by her husband, Vyomesh. Because of her endless and unassisted duty as a wife and daughter-in-law, she could not nurse her mother in her last days. Vasudha secretly nurtures the desire of being independent and leading a life of her own as Virmati does in Manju Kapoor's *Difficult Daughters* (1998).

Outwardly it seems Vasudha has nothing to complain about. Vyomesh earns well and they have a comfortable house to live in. She has

devoted herself to make the family members happy. She has lived as an ideal housewife – a person wedded to the house. She might have continued to live ideally until the end of her life but then she decided to lead her life as she desires.

Since her marriage at eighteen, she has devoted herself in the service as a spouse, daughter-in-law and mother. But when she experiences selfishness and snobbishness of Vyomesh in continuing the party despite his aunt's death, she is shocked and decides to live her own life without anybody's care and share. As Sumitra reflects, "Men's basic perception is that of ownership. If they see their hold weakening, they are frightened and try even harder to reinforce their authority. In the process the men themselves become dehumanized."(SPA:167) It is also true in the case of Vasudha. She arranges merely for 'a room of her own' in the house. But that is too much for the owner of the home. For her freedom of thoughts and actions, she has to suffer battering from her husband. She expresses her grief to Sumitra whom she meets at the garden, "It is a crime to read a book. It is a crime to ask serious questions. To think differently from the accepted centuries old beliefs, what has been done for generations, that's a crime. To do anything that may be disapproved by the husband or the mother-in-law, that is a crime."(SPA:80) Her acute desire to live a life the way she likes is exhibited at various stages of her life. Once, she wanted to help Ranjana who was badly in need of five hundred rupees. When Vasudha asked for the amount from Vyomesh, she was replied with very cold words as, "Women are stupid."(SPA:115)

Vasudha comes to believe that their relationship is only of flesh and blood. There is no place for love and feeling in it. She realizes Vyomesh's love has only one colour - the intoxicated colour of desire. The rift gradually widens as Vasudha becomes more and more aware about the injustice that she is made to undergo. In this process of silent revolution without blowing trumpets or without offending anyone, she suffers inwardly and finally she decides to leave her home for Anandgram, where she thinks her own identity will be appreciated. Raghuvir Chaudhari and Radheshyam Sharma opine, "Kundanika Kapadia has experimented to see how a woman named Vasudha's truth of life can be uncovered from the heaps of real countless injustice done to the woman."²⁵

Sumitra, who is an M.A., is at the opposite pole of the traditional ways of thinking. Her ways of attaining her goals are not those of Gandhiji, but those of a guerrilla. She is aware of the injustice done by the patriarchal society. She does not want to marry with the boy chosen by her parents. She believes, "Once a woman marries, what sort of metamorphosis occurs? She changes totally, she lives in a different house, her name is altered, her dreams are modified. Her husband's religion becomes her religion. Her time is not her own, her self does not remain her own. If a woman marries again, people say, 'In one life she has had two lives'." (SPA:68) She rejects the doctor as a suitor who begs for the dowry. Under the pressure of getting married by the family, she leaves her home to find her own path of life and reaches at Vasudha's place.

Vasudha wants to stand by Sumitra but against Vyomesh's and his aunt's disapproval, she is not able to give a place to her in 'her home' (which is not her either). Sumitra understands a plight of a married woman. She cries, "The relationship between men and women was a thorny flower sprung from the poor ground of the relationship between the exploiter and the exploited. Before history began, men decided how and for whom women should live, and it has percolated in their blood, and has become inherent in their soul. They are frightened of freedom and rarely prepared to fight for it."(SPA:167) She starts to work at the travel agency where she meets Animesh. He is talkative, smart and active. He has come to Bombay and started an advertising business. Sumitra likes his company and after a couple of meetings, she accepts his proposal of love. As they continue to keep company, gradually they cross the thresholds of closeness. Sumitra is in full bloom at Matheran. She feels to regain a new life in his closeness. They have broken all the boundaries. But then, he discloses the secret of his being married. Day-dreams of Sumitra fade away like the morning dew. She cannot sight the way out. She finds herself trapped in the deep well dug by the self-oriented man. He convinces Sumitra that he would divorce her wife and they would get together forever then. But it is also just a cunning craft. She realizes the hopelessness of her illicit love when she learns about the pregnancy of his wife. She at last finds her resort at Anandgram as the other women protagonists of the novel do.

Women are treated the same way as the *dalits* and the animals. The novelist has attempted to show the agony of feminine world from different

aspects. Besides the central characters of the novel, the other ones like Ranjana and Pramila are also ill treated by the patriarchal society. Leena symbolizes a feeble lady always busy labouring in the house. Shobha is not an exception either. Urmila, a graduate was a good painter. After marriage, her art became the glory of the past as the various household duties stole her day and night. The fate is not dissimilar even for Nalini. She had had to abandon her liking of learning different languages. A woman can't / shouldn't do this or that is the one idea where every man is united. Isha, the narrator of the story puts her idea before us in these words, "A women's world is kept limited so that she silently accepts everything as it is, remains satisfied with it, does not question it, does not look for a change."(SPA:97)

The fact of being a woman has never been a source of pleasure or pride for these protagonists because they are trapped in a man's world. Vasudha's neighbour, Lalita is an educated and practical woman. She is devoted to her husband. She wants to pursue research on Kalidas' literature but there is '*Patidev*' (husband) who slaughters her human desires and dreams inhumanly. Her liking, beliefs and way of living are determined by her husband. We know that Sita too, despite her chastity, had to pass through a test of fire to show her faithfulness to her husband, Ram and the countrymen. Hyper-paranoid Sudhir suspects her wife, Lalita's fidelity. Caught in the neurotic distrust, he even resorts to battering. Though Sudhir holds a reputed position in a big company, he is not different from the rest of his species.

Tragic end of love is also experienced by Vasanti. Satish and she were studying together in a college. They found bliss in each other's companionship. Vasanti's song engrossed him and he would lose himself in her. For few years after marriage, they lived in the castle of happiness. Satish found a niche in a reputed newspaper agency. He climbed the peaks of great heights in his life. He was a member, adviser and the president of many organizations. His name and fame began to spread in his circle. One day, Vasanti expressed her desire to learn classical music. But, a male-ego didn't permit her. She was asked to look after the family and the house. The couple was equally talented in their college days, but afterwards their course of life changed considerably. They have different directions and goals: for one to be celebrated outside of the house and for another to be valued inside. Marriage leads a woman to subjugation and slavery. Women win their happiness at the cost of their freedom. The role of a wife restricts her self-development firstly by taking away her freedom of thought and expression and secondly by denying her the scope of giving free play to her artistic potential. Aruna Bakshi comments, "Education has made a woman to realize her existence, made them aware about their right to take independent decisions of their life, but in a practical world, nobody thinks about their aspirations. The idea that they might have their own likes - dislikes, recreation – longing was unacceptable at all."²⁶ Meanwhile, Satish falls in love with Sugiti Benerjee and settles with her without taking Vasanti into consideration. The contradiction in the views between man and woman's extramarital relationship cannot be ignored. Vasudha is a witness of this phenomenon. She says, "If a wife falls in love with another man, her husband would throw her out of the house or might

even kill her. But if a husband falls in love with another woman, the wife is expected to have patience, tact and forgiveness.”(SPA: 275)

Kundanika, in chapter seventeen, points out clearly where and how women are mistreated. Here, the women characters are shown trampled under the household duties, under the supremacy of their husbands, her unequal income for equal work compared to men and dejection of their hobbies and ambitions. An entire world is kept opened for a man and for a woman her world is restricted to her husband, children and home. Ila Nayak opines, “For centuries, a woman has been ruled by a patriarchal set up. Woman’s strength, divinity, fidelity, forsaking and other qualities have been adored and at the same time men have exploited them.”²⁷

Bela’s matrimony with Nishant does not result in everlasting blissful companionship either. And the sufferer is evidently Bela. She was involved in dancing since her college days. As in the case of other women characters of the novel, marriage has stretched a ‘*Lakshman Rekha*’ (a line of restriction) in her life. She could not find time to satiate her desire. Her husband takes to drinking and even beat her. In spite of her fatal efforts to keep up their relationship, she could not succeed. At last, she had to take divorce to escape from the devil hidden in a man.

Anna does not approve the definite system built on convention. She is of the opinion that everybody should get a chance to flourish according to his / her interest. She may be unaware of the other side of the protector -

man. Man is jealous of the progress of the woman, even though she is her life partner. Anna is a victim of such belief. Her marriage was arranged with Vipul, an innovative and broad-minded person. She left for London with him. There, she achieved recognition because of her benevolent nature and poetic asset. Her insurance work also expanded and her income shot up compared to her husband. The importance she gained in the society was unbearable to her husband who considered her to remain a step behind him. He grew more green-eyed. At one night, after a verbal war between them, he died because of severe heart attack. She was deeply moved at his demise, but she was also not ready to believe that her '*saubhagy*' had been vanished. She was a revolutionary to the notions attached with the widow. Even after her husband's demise, she had not changed her way of living. Nevertheless, she experienced that she was in the Western culture, and there too, she was facing the situation not different from the East. She had to endure the degradation in her every activity. She began to remain more concealed, aloof and isolated. In search of sympathy and support, she had to rush back to India.

Alopa was like a fragrance of spring, full of sweetness and pace. She had an independent thinking regarding her marriage. She was not readily dependable on the choice of a suitable partner made by her parents. She would often argue with her mother regarding the patriarchal set up. She asserts, "If a widow's son dies, it is considered the height of tragedy, but if a widow's only daughter marries and goes away – that's a great relief."(SPA: 237) She had an ambition to climb the Everest.

Pradeep whom she met during the training of mountaineering was her choice as a life partner. Pradeep was an owner of a factory in Bombay and she was a lecturer in a college. They had happy go lucky life for a few years. Vasudha remained silent and consequently burdened with three children at very young age. But, Alopa refused to have a child so early for her freedom and ambitions to be fulfilled. Under the economic obligation of his father, Pradeep also wished for an heir as his parents did. When she found no way out of that situation, she divorced him and began to live on her own.

The young girls, Bela, Anna and Alopa dreamt of a blissful conjugal life which turned out to be a mere illusion. Incidentally, many of the marriages in this novel are like formal transactions in which love or emotional considerations have no role to play. These protagonists wish to move out of the limited space of their marital home and choose a career of their own than that of a housewife. And they are certainly rewarded but with the punishment. Definitely, all women who marry forget their identity and live in submission to the written code of their 'in-laws' house. Their talents are developed only within permitted limits. Everything else is sacrificed to a virtue named peace. They exist within the bound imposed by family, society and tradition. Silent endurance has been woman's lot. They have been taught to be epitomes of endurance and, that sacrifice is the realization of their womanhood. Occasionally, they occupy powerful and respected position in their house, but in social prestige, customs and traditions, they are considered weaker to their husbands.

Kundanika has laboured to present the women's world with different aspects and concerns. Her women characters are made to pass through various traumatic conditions of the patriarchal world. In this process, they learn to encounter with the harsh realities of life to generate in themselves the power to cope with the male-orientation. The writer has sincerely crafted the women protagonists uprooting the age old soiled system. Daksha Vyas comments, "The novel has been written to rebel against – a typical Indian conception of womanhood – that is woman's power labours behind a male, adored as a mother but she has a secondary place in the world."²⁸ In this sense, the novel can be placed among the very rare category of the 'novel of protest' in Gujarati literature.

(IV)

Both the Gujarati novels under consideration are the products of the different era and hence they carry the image of the woman differently. *Amruta* swivels around its female protagonist of the same name. She seeks to have freedom in every aspect of her life and specifically in the field of matrimony. Economic independence and sensible maturity restrain her direct confrontation with the male-world. However, Udayan and Aniket are the two figures who play significant role in her life since she has to choose one of them as her life partner. Though the aspirant of the freedom, Amruta struggles and succeeds to enjoy freedom to some extent, she surrenders to the patriarchal notion at the end of the story. Unlike her male counterpart, Kundanika Kapadia represents the woman protagonists rebelling against the patriarchal world in *Sat Paglan Akashman*. Vasudha, the chief woman protagonist grows up in male hegemonic society but her introspection towards

the injustice and oppression by her husband, Vyomesh leads her to live her own independent life. The writer definitely puts her women protagonists to confront social-eco-political issues. They discard the archetypal image and establish their 'being' as a 'new woman'.

Except Amruta, there are no significant women characters in Raghuvir Chaudhari's novel. The creator has preferred to take a single woman and attempted to delineate her on intellectual ground. Whereas in *Sat Paglan Akashman*, there are other important women protagonists. Besides Vasudha, Sumitra represents the image of the modern girl who rejects the domination of the patriarchy. Vasanti is the victim of her husband's unfaithfulness and hence decides to divorce him. Bela is not an exception either. Anna and Alopa experience the same thing in their interaction with their husbands. More or less, all the women protagonists undergo exactions of the male and consequently they raise their voice against the system. They fight for their cause and win the battle.

Raghuvir Chaudhari has given little scope and space for the development of his woman protagonist. He has touched largely the psychic world of his woman protagonist. More or less, she has been modeled as stereotypical Indian woman who first aspires for the freedom but finally submits to the conventional ideology. However, the creator has not presented her with negative traits either. On the other hand, his female counterpart allows her women protagonists to cope with various socio-eco-political issues. They are victimized and hence they get inspired to come on the road to voice

against the male chauvinistic society. They suffer at various stages of life till it reaches beyond the limit. The scrutiny reveals that female writer has minutely brought before us the true to life picture of the woman than her male counterpart. It sounds right when Ravindra Parekh notes, "It is also essential to add here that in the matter of representation, the women protagonists of the female writers differ slightly to male writers. Though the women protagonists of the male writers are grand, noble, brilliant and smart, for some reasons, they are immoral, gratifying and vulnerable. They grow to incarnate the imagination of the writer and are obstructed by his interference. Anyhow, in the process, their degeneration becomes more effective. On the other hand, the women protagonists represented by female writers, without announcing of being self-respected and intelligent, strive naturally to retain or accomplish womanhood."²⁹

Note: All textual details and comments of the critics in Gujarati are translated by me. All the subsequent references in the chapter are shown as (A: for *Amruta*) and (SPA: for *Sat Paglan Akashman*)

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STUDY OF REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN

IN ENGLISH NOVELS BY

INDIAN WRITERS:

CHAPTER - III

(I)

When we look at the growth of the Indian English novel, we find three important stages of its development. It is in the pre – independent era that the big triumvirates – Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan and Raja Rao made the real beginning of Indian English novel. They endeavored for the emancipation of women through their works. National awakening and Gandhian ideology influenced the literature written during the period of Freedom Movement and the image of ‘a new woman’ emerged on the forefront. The other novelists like Manohar Malganokar and Chaman Nahal also dealt with different areas of experience and varied types of women characters, but the portrayal of women characters was without much significance. In this earlier phase, by and large the archetypal image of women was represented. In fact, it is only in the post – independent era that the women’s quest for identity really came to the fore. Arun Joshi, Nayantara Sahgal, Anita Desai are among the many who wrote with the feminine concern. New education, social reforms and contact with the Western world largely helped to change the traditional dogmas and lifestyle. The third stage began with the immense success of Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children* (1981). Perhaps the most striking feature of the contemporary Indian English fiction has been the emergence of feminist literature. Both male and female writers attempted to explore the issue of gender in their writings.

The sensitivity of the writers towards the issue of women has changed with the passage of time. Besides, the writers, male and female, have reacted in their own ways towards the issue of women’s marginalization.

In recent time, two paradoxical schools of critics studying the literature from the gender perspective exist. Whereas it is now believed that 'the great art is neutral'¹ and 'one has to be androgynous to write the novel', there also persists the belief that women's writing differs substantially from that of their male counterparts due to their different physical, social and psychological positioning and experiencing. Rajni Walia observes, "Women as represented in novels written by men are quite naturally a representation of observation from an exterior point of view. In her oft quoted words, Simon de Beauvoir has pointed out that how men see woman 'the other'. In Beauvoir's words; "She is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the subject, he is the Absolute – she is the other."² Miti Pandey states, "Virginia Woolf also felt that there is a world of difference between male and female feelings, experiences and expressions. According to Virginia Woolf each sex describes itself."³ The later school sees the gender plays a significant role in the subject of the literary work and in its treatment. Elaine Showalter insists, "Reading and writing by men as well as by women, is marked by gender."⁴

I have selected two Indian English novels written by a male and a female author each for the study of representation of women in the Indian English novels; one *A Suitable Boy* (1992) by Vikram Seth and the other *The God of Small Things* (1997) by Arundhati Roy. It would be quite worthwhile to study the novels under consideration in view of the above two contradictory approaches. Moreover, both the works were published in the same decade, and present the scenario of the immediate post – independent era. It would be

significant to see whether both novels represent two different images of women or the same of the particular time.

(II)

Vikram Seth's work cannot be placed in a single genre. Seth has worked with poetry, fiction, a travelogue and a libretto. *The Golden Gate* (1986) written in a sonnet form established him on the international publishing scene. Before *A Suitable Boy*, he had come up with collections of poems, *The Humble Administrator's Garden* (1984), *The Collected Poems* (1995), and *All You Who Sleep Tonight* (1990), dealing with different themes and tones; *Beastly Tales from Here and There* (1991), a fable in verse, *From Heaven Lake* (1983), a travelogue, *Arion and the Dolphin* (1994), a libretto. I endeavour to discuss his *A Suitable Boy*, moulded in the framework of post-independence India. For its gigantic form and multifaceted subjects, Nila Shah views, "The book is all about India into making, in its formative years, trying to grapple with the issues like politics, secularism, changing traditional values, crisis in the family and marriage system, and he has also lingered on the last strands of vanishing classical music, ghazals and refinements of culture."⁵ A.K.Singh calls *A Suitable Boy* "a saga of modern India."⁶

A Suitable Boy, in a broad sense, is obviously a tale of a girl who has reached to the age of marriage. The very opening sentence of the novel uttered by Mrs. Rupa Mehra, "You too will marry a boy I choose", (ASB: 1) reveals the thematic concern of the novel. It also shows that the young girl has no scope or freedom to find a suitable boy for herself. Conversely, she has to depend on the choice made by her mother. The story opens with the

marriage and ends with the same. Though the tone of the novel is basically ascribed to the quest for a suitable boy for Lata, it also takes in its stride the historical touch. Pico Iyer notes, “The novel is also a portrait of India, three years after the partition, trying to find a suitable future for herself and struggling to keep the customs that steady while shedding, the ones that stultify.”⁷

A Suitable Boy covers nineteen well-crafted sub-sections. Seth moves back and forth while telling the story of four extended families - the Mehras, the Chatterjis, the Kapoors and the Khans. Each family has a plot of its own and therefore there are four plots going on simultaneously and steadily, contributing to the main plot – the search for a suitable husband for Lata. More or less, each family represents a conventional Indian way of life of the post independence era. All the characters come together in the very first chapter attending the marriage ceremony of Savita, Mrs. Rupa Mehra’s elder daughter. She is married to Pran, a university lecturer in English and son of the State Revenue Minister, Mahesh Kapoor. The marriage ceremony is also attended by the Chatterjis residing at Calcutta and the Khans the Nawab of Baitar, one of the largest landowners of the state. Besides the Khans, the other three families are interlinked through the custom of marriage. The other juicy fruits of the relationships are also placed by Seth in his gigantic form of the basket *A Suitable Boy* through religion, culture, caste and class. Mala Pandurang opines, “Seth’s thematic preoccupations are multifold, but Mrs. Mehra’s quest for ‘a suitable boy’ will remain in connecting strand from the beginning to the end of the novel.”⁸

Mrs. Rupa Mehra, a sentimental mother, in absence of her husband leads the Mehras. She is a traditionalist. She is anxious to find a new home for her daughter, Lata who is a pretty young girl reached to the age of marriage. Her future is also like a new born country. Her three suitors - a poet, a carefree Muslim boy and an entrepreneur stand for three scopes on hand for the newly born country. Lata's marriage with Haresh expresses the country's changing outlook from sentimentalism to industrialism. In fact, Lata dearly loves Kabir, but his being Muslim by caste, makes their marriage almost impossible. Then, her eyes rest on a poet, but later on she does not find it a worth choice. At last, her choice falls upon Haresh, a man without family. "It is a curious choice", believes Ruth Morse, "although consistent with the Seth of the *Golden Gate*, whose view seems to be that women should choose reliable fathers for their children."⁹ Savita, her elder sister, is married to Pran Kapoor. She, like her sister-in-law Veena, is a typical dedicated Indian wife. Meenakshi who is a modern and liberated woman from the Chatterji family wedded to Arun. Her husband, Arun is sandwiched between the world of well to do and aristocrat and higher middle class personnel. The youngest of the family, Varun, a carefree tramp, is fond of gambling but ultimately he turns to be an I.A.S. Lata, Savita, Pran and Varun are on the side of Mrs. Mehra and therefore, are traditionalists whereas Arun Mehra and his wife, Meenakshi Mehra represent modernity.

To find a suitable match for Lata Mehra is a task to be performed under social norms. In an Indian society, parents feel burden if a girl is born in the family. They consider it to be an evil omen. To her daughter Lata, Mrs.

Mehra says, “And you don’t get married – isn’t that a trouble? And I am a widow with diabetes, isn’t that a trouble?”(ASB: 443) Like an average Indian woman, Mrs. Mehra believes that marriage is the destiny of woman. An unmarried girl does not possess the reputed niche in the society. It is the parents’ obligation and moral responsibility to get their daughter married. Besides, society looks for her virginity. Hence, Mrs. Mehra hastens to complete her parental duty as soon as possible by getting her daughter married. She believes, “Exam results meant nothing if a girl’s character was ruined.” (ASB: 184) In the course of the narrative, Maan Kapoor is advised by his Urdu teacher’s father that not being married is considered by both Hinduism and Islam as ‘adharmā’ or ‘against correct principles.’ (ASB: 668) The parents remain under obligation until the girl is married. We see that to complete Mrs. Rupa Mehra’s parental obligation, other members of the family and close ones assist her to arrange marriage of Lata. Mrs. Mehra is required to take into serious consideration issues of religion, caste and social standing to work out an appropriate alliance.

After the death of the family head Raghbir Mehra, the Mehra family lives on the charity of friends and they are under the stress of the sense of uncertainty and the consciousness of obligation to others outside the family. The adverse situation affects to mould their outlook. Lata, for example, was brought up by her mother “not to give trouble but to take trouble.” (ASB: 443) Savita asserts that she would never be in the same position as her mother is. She dares to be different. She ignores the taboos laid down by the elder members of the family. When Pran develops a cardiac problem, she realizes

that she cannot live forever under a dark shadow of insecurity and consequently resolves to study law. Contradictorily, her father-in-law, Mahesh Kapoor, believes in women's education but does not approve working woman in the family, and tells Savita that she should concentrate on her duties as a mother. However, Mrs. Kapoor favours her and so she continues to read her law books despite her father-in-law's resentment.

Seth's younger women characters are also trapped within a domestic space. Lata gets annoyed when she comes to know married women are not eligible for jobs in either the Indian Administrative Service or the Indian Police Service and a woman might be required to resign from the service "In the event of her marrying subsequently." (ASB: 458) She is not the type of a girl who would readily accept the norms of the society. When her mother remarks, "Lata, you are a vine, you must cling to your husband", (ASB: 22) she becomes half mad with anger and apparently shows her dissension with the age-old ideology. Mrs. Mehra considers her an ungrateful and unpredictable baby. It can also be noticed that the women protagonists are not offered the opportunity for their betterment. For instance, Veena Tandon who is keen to satisfy her desire for classical music has to confront strong opposition from her mother-in-law. Priya Goyal, S.S. Agarwal's daughter, lives in a conventional type joint family. She is caught in an intolerable situation with her in-laws. Zainab, the Nawab's daughter, suffers in the world of the purdah after her marriage and endures the adultery of her husband without protest.

Nineteen years old Lata Mehra could perhaps be considered as the chief woman protagonist of the novel. She is named after “that most pliable thing, a vine, which is trained to cling first to her family, then to a husband.”(ASB: 22) However, the young lady is not as pliable as her mother would have liked to believe. She is of the attitude to choose a suitable boy by herself and not by anyone else. She protests against a traditional way of choosing a boy for a girl by her parents. She wonders how Savita and Pran met just for an hour in her mother’s company and she would have agreed to be married off in such a brief period. We come to know about the characteristics of Lata’s personality even from the persons around her. Kalpana Gaur is a close friend of the family, and describes her to Haresh Khanna as “attractive and smart in an Indian sort of way. She looks forwards, I think, to a quiet, sober life in the future.” (ASB: 567) Haresh himself finds her to be “intelligent without arrogance” and “attractive without vanity.” (ASB: 597)

Lata’s first experience of romantic love is with the dashing Kabir Durrani. He is a student of history at the university and the son of an eccentric, though brilliant mathematics professor. However, their warm relation does not take them to their destination. They enjoy each other’s company only up to boat rides up the Ganges and a few brief stolen kisses. Tumult comes to her when she learns from Malati that he is a Muslim. She knows her mother would never accept a person of other caste. When her mother comes to know about the affair between her daughter and Kabir, it becomes quite unbearable for the orthodox Hindu woman. The writer notes, “The more Mrs. Mehra thought, the more agitated she became. Even

marrying a non-Khatri Hindu was bad enough. But this was unspeakable. It was one thing to mix socially with Muslims, entirely another to dream of polluting one's blood and sacrificing one's daughter."(ASB: 184) Regarding Lata's not marrying Kabir, Cardyl Campbell opines, "Lata, a Hindu, knows that she cannot marry a Muslim, and she also realizes, or she persuades herself, perhaps with more prescience that is entirely convincing that romantic love is not necessarily the best prelude to marriage."¹⁰ However, it is not the sole reason for her rejection. Earlier, when Lata suggested him to run away together, Kabir showed his unwillingness. He did not flee with her for the reason that he aimed to join the Indian Foreign Service. He considered her impulsive decision as unreasonable. As the narrative advances, Lata comes across two more suitors. The suspense of the novel turns around on who will be Lata's final choice – the 'unsuitable' Kabir, the practical shoe-sales executive Haresh Khanna, or the Cambridge-educated poet Amit Chatterji?

Haresh, another suitor of Lata, is on a business tour to Brahmpur. He works in the Cawnpore leather and footwear company. Later on, his managerial and practical approach and devotion enable him to rise in the position to a foreman in the Czech-owned shoe-trade empire of Prahapore. He sights Lata for the first time at the Brahmpur junction at the end of section four of the novel as Mrs. Mehra keenly tries to send her to Calcutta away from Kabir Durrani. She is introduced to Haresh Khanna at the home of Kalpana Gaur. Haresh is impressed by her and perceives her as good "wife material." (ASB: 597) We learn that "He isn't the kind to ask for it (dowry) and there is no one to ask on his behalf." (ASB: 562) Lata's first impression of Haresh does

not go with her ideal image of a husband, and she finds the thought of marrying the pan chewing Khanna, wearing two-tone co-respondent shoes of brown and white, quite “ridiculous.”(ASB: 575) Lata notes that he is not “westernized in proper sense.”(ASB: 575) However, the straightforward Haresh gradually wins over Lata’s affection through his letters.

Amit Chatterji proposes to Lata in section eighteen of the novel. Lata feels that he is more like a friend. She finds it difficult to adjust herself being his wife. She believes, “We are too alike, I don’t know if he’ll have any time for me. Sensitive people are usually very insensitive – I should know.” (ASB: 1296) Lata at last puts her choice on Haresh Khanna for practical reasons. She expresses the reason of her rejecting other two suitors to Malati. She views, “Haresh’s feet touch the ground, and he has dust and sweat and a shadow. The other two are a bit too god-like and ethereal to be any good for me.” (ASB: 1299) She is impressed by Haresh as being “generous, robust, optimistic, impatient, responsible” and willing to “Mehraise” himself for her sake.” (ASB: 1290) As she says, “Haresh is practical, he’s forceful, he isn’t cynical. He gets things done and he helps people without making a fuss about it.” (ASB: 297) Lata knows that her feelings for him do not have the same intensity as those for Kabir and yet she chooses to reject Kabir. In that reference, she quotes Clough’s lines on two different kinds of human attraction. “One that merely excites, unsettles, and makes you uneasy. And the other which is a calmer, less frantic love which helps you to grow where you are already growing.” (ASB: 1299)

Seth has come out as an excellent architect in interlinking two plots; the instinct of the search of India for a suitable place on the world map and the search of Mrs. Mehra for a suitable boy for Lata. It can't be suspected that plight of a young girl is the same as that of a newly born country's social, cultural, educational and political milieu. Mrs. Mehra's psychology is framed by the collision of the Tandonites and the Nehruites, the traditionalists and the progressive. It leads her to wonder whether to choose progressives like Kabir or Amit or a traditionalist like Haresh. The defeat of Mahesh Kapoor at the Assembly election, the rise of L. N. Agarwal to the seat of Chief Ministership of Purva Pradesh and the provisional agreement between Tandon and Pt. Nehru ultimately shift the choice of an anxious mother and her daughter to Haresh who is educated in foreign but deeply rooted in India.

The wedding of Lata is arranged towards the end of April. Seth's all the characters come together again on the lawns of Dr. Kishan Chand's residence. In the gathering, there are a couple of executives from the small Praha factory in Brahmipur, and some of the middleclass men from the Brahmipur Shoe Mart. The story ends with Lata and Haresh's journey on a train leaving for Calcutta. Lata waves to her mother from the train as it pulls out of Brahmipur Junction. An hour later when the train comes to a halt, Lata sees a small crowd of monkeys, sitting at the end of the platform. She throws a mussami towards an older monkey. As it moves to catch the fruit, the others also begin running after it. But before she could see what happens, the train pulls out of the station, so Lata is not sure what eventually happens between

the monkeys or what comes of the fruit. The narrative leaves to us to come to our own conclusion on what Lata's new life will prove to be like.

The novel is a gathering of a large number of women characters. Besides two chief female protagonists Lata and Mrs. Mehra, there are Savita, Malati, Veena Tandon, Zainab and Abida Khan. The characters of Meenakshi and Kakoli also present a deep insight into women's psyche. Saeeda Bai and her daughter Tasreen represent the world of courtesan. According to Lakhani Ali, "Seth depicts the patriarchal world where a visible or invisible, yet no less effective - purdah shrouds the lot of women."¹¹ Women do not enjoy ideal domestic space like their male counterparts. The masculine members of the families confine the woman folk only within the four walls, whereas they themselves participate in the public activities. The second half has to adjust itself with the patriarchal set up. Mrs. Mehra has to seek assistance of other people so that her four children may have the benefits of a qualitative English medium boarding school education.

Like Lata, her best friend Malati Trivedi is also bold and outspoken. Seth allows us an insight into Malati's background much before we come to know more about Lata. She is among the few girl students in a medical college of five hundred boys. She is well known in her surrounding for her outspoken views, her participation in the activities of the student's Socialist Party and her various love affairs. Like Lata, she has also lost her father at a young age and the bond of paternal loss ties them together. However, unlike Mrs. Mehra, Malati's mother was concerned more "with what was right than

what was convenient or approved of or monetarily beneficial.” (ASB: 27) Her mother wishes Malati and her sisters to be independent, and apart from schooling in Hindi medium, makes sure her daughters learn English as well as music and dance. Malati is trained in classical music under Ustad Majeed Khan. Malati’s mother has also made it clear to her that she would have to find her own husband. Malati, though brought up by women in an atmosphere where male-world manipulates supreme authority, does not succumb to the conventional image of the woman.

Maan sympathizes with the plight of the women. He knows that a woman alone cannot do much in the world owned by the men. Regarding his relationship with Saeeda, his remark to Dagh Sahib, “a woman by herself – what place can she find in an ungentle world? That is why she must have someone to protect her”, (ASB: 805) really leads us to probe the reason why the woman has to depend on one or the other member of the family / outside the family to survive.

Besides the love affair of Lata and Kabir, There exists another Hindu – Muslim relationship in the narrative. It is about the passion of Mahesh Kapoor’s son Maan for Saeeda Bai Firozabadi. When he first sights her at a recital at the Kapoor residence, during the festival of Holi, when the Muslim courtesan and ghazal singers skillfully make a melodious description of a young Krishna playing with colours. Seth’s acquaintance with the ghazal comes to the forefront. Maan sees the Urdu language as a means of winning Saeeda’s heart. He is even willing to take classes to learn the language from

the young socialist Abdul Rasheed. Seth uses this opportunity to touch upon the survival of literature in Urdu in post-independence India. In fact, under rigid social norms, a long-term relationship between Maan and Saeeda is impossible and Saeeda acknowledges the same. She knows that she cannot afford to get emotionally attached to Maan as she has a 'profession' to keep up. It is too late when she realizes how much she does love him. As a courtesan, Saeeda occupies a pre-determined public space. Susie Tharu remarks, "To be a public woman was to be a woman who was not the private possession of a patriarch, a woman who did not answer to the law of the father."¹² Saeeda once lived in the disreputable quarters of the city with her mother Mohsina Bai, in the disreputable alley of Tarbuz ka Bazaar. She used her physical attractiveness to claim her independence and now lives with her younger sister Tasreen in Pasand Bagh, a few kilometers away from the Kapoor residence, Prem Nivas. Here, she manages to have a better 'class' of 'customers'. Saeeda Bai's knowledge of Urdu poetry and her choice of music reflect "a strong intellectual taste for so sensuous a singer." (ASB: 85) There is "a touch of heartache in her voice", (ASB: 81) and we learn the reason of such strong feelings only towards the end of the novel.

Life of Saeeda Bai and Tasreen is like caged parakeets. They have to depend on the outer world which exploits them. Saeeda gets education in poetry and music. However, that education is more for attracting the male members and not to fulfill her desire. Saeeda determines not to put Tasreen in outside world. She takes proper care to protect her from the exploitive world ruled by the ungrateful pachyderms. Tasreen is also well aware that she will

ultimately “change these four walls for a different four.” (ASB: 114) The narration at the end of the novel discloses that Saeeda receives a regular monthly stipend from the Nawab of Baitar as the Nawab had molested the young fifteen-year-old Saeeda in a drunken condition. Tasreen by this means is not Saeeda’s sister, but “the child she had conceived in terror, had carried in shame, and had borne in pain.” (ASB: 1212) Saeeda declines the charity – further installments from the Nawab’s household. Besides, the shock of the stabbing incident has affected her voice. Affected from every side, She doubts whether she will ever sing again. The readers are perturbed with the questions such as, “What will happen to Tasreen?” “Will she ultimately follow Saeeda’s profession?”

Like Lata, Tasreen also has three suitors – Saeeda’s musician Ishaq Khan; her Urdu teacher, Rasheed who ultimately commits suicide; and Firoz, the son of the Nawab. Saeeda herself moves each of them out of the reach. As an MLA, Begum Abida offers historical justification for the traditional feudal lifestyle in the legislative council, and argues that those musicians whose livelihood was dependent on the system for patronage would suddenly find themselves left high and dry. She does not, however, refer to the social and sexual exploitation of women like Saeeda Bai.

The world of the Zenana becomes Zainab’s complete world. She crosses the criteria of the Zenana laid for women and displays great courage in order to save her ancestral Baitar House from the Custodian of Evacuee Property. But as a result of it, she retreats to an inert existence. A woman

does not possess as much liberty or a space as occupied by patriarchal society. It should also be observed that Savita and Pran enjoy the blissful conjugal life. This is the example of an ideal marriage.

Evidently, it is the family that assumes center stage in Seth's narrative. However, everything does not go straightforward with the institution of the family. Within the family, there are also areas of repressed sexuality and sinister desires. Lata becomes a prey of the lecherous eyes of her own uncle. On a visit to her mother's first cousin in Lucknow, Lata has a nerve-racking confrontation with her uncle, Mr. Sahgal who makes crude sexual advances to her at night. The middle-aged well-known Lucknow lawyer has brutally victimized his own daughter Kiran, who does not speak about her encroachment and largely turns the phobic. He describes his wife as being 'like Sita – the perfect wife', but takes pleasure in showing off photographs of his wife and daughter in distasteful poses. Although Lata escapes being molested, she is so shocked that she does not talk this dreadful distressing event even with her close companion Malati. Her lecherous uncle's figure haunts her in dreams. She falls in such a pathetic situation that she cannot speak to anyone about it because of the codes of honour. She is afraid of discussing the matters related to sex to others. Lata recalls that nobody told her about menstruation. When it did occur for the first time at the age of twelve, she was told she must not talk to anybody about it for, "Sita and Savitri didn't talk about such things." (ASB: 593)

A wife is compared to Sita or Savitri if she remains within the fortified boundary. Men take pride in her sense of duty and silence. Mr. Sahgal boasts, "My wife is a saint, every morning she does puja for an hour. She will do anything for me. Whatever food I want, she cooks with her own hands. She is like *Sita* – a perfect wife. If I want her to dance naked for me, she will dance." (ASB: 590) On the other hand, he embodies the qualities of Ravana and wants to seduce her niece, Lata.

It is a widely acknowledged fact that the male chauvinistic society has different yardsticks even for the two life-partners - husband and wife who may be standing on the same pole. Kishan Chand Seth does not suffer or even remember lovingly his past wife, Rupa Mehra's step mother, but Rupa Mehra, recollecting the memory of her husband's death in April, sinks in the gloomy sensation. Once Mrs. Mehra remarks, "If my husband was alive, he might have been Chairman of the Railway Board and we'd never have to lower our heads before anyone, certainly not people like these." (ASB: 552) She preserves the memory of her dead husband, Raghubir Mehra by a comic evocation of 'Him' in times of crises. It indicates that a husband is a centre of a woman's world. On the other hand, the death of his wife does not make any alteration in the life style of a man. One more corrupted practice of the society lies in man's desire to have more than one wife. Kedarnath desires to have second wife and he asks for the consent of his wife, Veena. He does not feel a sense of guilt or infidelity to talk such a thing to his wife. In contrast, when her wife reveals her inner desire to have a child, he refuses her tender motherly wish saying that, "We can't afford a second child. Not at the moment,

at any rate. My business is well, you know it is. And there's the possibility of shoemaker's strike." (ASB: 95) It seems woman's life is not her own but led by either her brother, father or husband.

Mrs. Mahesh Kapoor is another oppressed figure living under the patriarchal society. She is not a widow but she is also "the only one who was still mistress in her own house." (ASB: 177) As tradition demands, she refers to her husband either as 'Pran's father' or as 'Minister Sahib'. The writer notes, "To call him by name was unthinkable. 'My this' was all right." (ASB: 177) Mrs. Kapoor is burdened too much with the responsibility of the family and she is compared with the Harsingar tree which "...flowered, but kept nothing for itself." (ASB: 1042)

On the other hand, we find two women protagonists protesting against the patriarchal world or at least crossing the boundary of taboos. Ila Chattopadhyay related to the Chatterjis decides to take up a career even though her family members insist to abandon it. She is firm and quick enough in expressing her ideas. However, Seth gets Ila to comment on the intellectual squalor and academic sordid. Another catching figure is Abida Begum, sister-in-law of the Nawab. She is one of the leaders of the opposition Democratic Party. She wills to take independent decisions. At the time of partition, she chose to stay in Brahmipur and did not follow her husband to Pakistan. The Nawab contrasts her with his own wife, "Who had sweetened his life through her years of selfless care and love." (ASB: 259) The Nawab's late wife had put up with "unsettled youth" and ran the Baitar estate efficiently even in her

seclusion. She refuses to tolerate the strictures of the Zenana quarters. Awful thing is that her aggressive speech in the Legislative house is considered as funny thing and her rhetoric is never taken up earnestly by any of her male colleagues. Her words do not make any sense to the snobbish people.

Basically, the novel is a tale of a young girl of the middle class family, whose marriage is the parents' primary concern. With that, the novel is rich with the characters of different caste and class. The women protagonists also come up with various interests and concerns. Seth portrays women with different angles and shades. On one hand, there are modern, educated girls like Lata and Malati, on the other hand, there are traditional women like Mrs. Mehra and Mrs. Kapoor. Saeeda represents the courtesan world and at the same time Ila Chattopadhyay and Abida Begum stands as the challenge to the patriarchal set up. However, more or less, all the women protagonists ultimately seem to surrender to the norms of the masculine world. They do not raise their voice against the oppressive traditional dogmas. They are largely the stereotype figures. Thus, the women protagonists of Seth hardly protest as either they seem to be unaware of their marginalized condition or they are conditioned to accept their existence on their fringe.

(III)

Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*, the Booker Prize winner received a great hype and accolade from the readers in India and across the sea. With its publication, Roy carved an eminent place for herself in the English Literature in general and Indian writing in English in particular. Since then, the book has captured the attention of the critics of different fields for its

outstanding features. The novel is a subject of discussion for poetic narration, colonial study, erotic pornography and sexuality and human psychology. It can be studied as a political satire, a family saga or a work with religious overtones. It may be scrutinized as a protest novel breaking the taboos of social norms or a love story with a tragic end. Prof. Gillian Beer, the Chairman of the Booker panel of judges said, "The story is about love and death; about lies and laws."¹³ Besides all these things, feminine sensibility seems to be one of the major concerns of the author too.

The novel discusses elaborately how female protagonists live their lives under the hegemony of patriarchal society. It is observed that the second half of the mankind, called the '*virangana*', is repressed, denied basic rights that naturally occupied by the men. This unequal relationship is described as "A system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress, and exploit women."¹⁴ The novel opens with lots of happenings in the very first chapter and gradually leads us to the perception of the core.

The God of Small Things centers round a Syrian Christian family in Ayemenem. Pappachi, the head of the family, returns to Ayemenem from Delhi to spend the years of his retirement. He is accompanied by his wife Mammachi, Baby Kochamma, their son Chacko and daughter Ammu. As the story advances, Ammu gets married and becomes the mother of the twins; Rahel and Estha.

Ammu, the woman protagonist, remains uncared, unwanted and unwelcomed at the house of both her father and husband. She has experienced gender discrimination since the earlier days of her life. Her father, Pappachi, does not consider it necessary to get her educated as she is a girl. Her brother, Chacko, however, is educated at Oxford. Marriage is considered the utmost destiny of the girl but Pappachi and Mammachi look quite unconcerned regarding Ammu's marriage. "Her eighteenth birthday came and went. Unnoticed or at least unremarked upon by her parents." (TGST: 38) Being so frightened with "cold calculating cruelty," Ammu grows "a lofty sense of injustice and the mulish, reckless streak that develops in Someone Small who has been bullied all their lives by Someone Big." (TGST: 181-182)

Since no dowry is arranged for Ammu, she on her own paves the way for marriage. She accepts the marriage proposal of the man whom she does not know much. In fact, Ammu is one who comes out from the male chauvinistic family backdrop and marries a Bengali boy in Calcutta. She thinks, "Anything, anyone would be better than returning to Ayemenem." (TGST: 39) Her bold step lands her in hot water. Her luck disfavours her even in choosing her husband. Soon after her marriage, she finds that she has jumped from out of the frying pan into the fire. She finds that her husband is uneducated and works in a tea plantation, not on the executive post in Assam. She is proved wrong in selecting the right man. Her dreams are shattered to pieces when she comes to know her husband to be a full-blown alcoholic. The falsehood widens the gap between the couple. He remains a selfish husband

and a careless father. Sanjay Kumar views, "Victimized by the male around, Ammu appears to be a perfect scapegoat who, as Simon de Beauvoir observes, leaves one master in her father behind and chooses the other one in her husband. Her predicament reveals the tragedy of any other Indian woman who in search for a 'protector' is easily victimized."¹⁵ When her husband, Baba induces her to stay with his English boss in his absence, she returns to her parents at Ayemenem with her twins, Estha and Rahel.

She wants to remove all the things which associate her with her husband. She craves to change her name to maiden name. Nevertheless, she feels that, "Choosing between her husband's name and her father's name didn't give a woman much of a choice." (TGST: 37) The bitterness of her marriage putrefies her entire body. This makes her a perilous and an unpredictable woman.

"She was virtually", as Surendra Jha says, "an 'untouchable' in her family and society as well."¹⁶ The family is not ready to accept the 'returned' daughter from her husband's house. At the funeral ceremony of Sophie Mol, Rahel and Estha's cousin, she is humiliated. "Though Ammu, Estha and Rahel were allowed to attend the funeral, they were made to stand separately; not with the rest of the family." (TGST: 5)

Even Baby Kochamma makes several efforts to persecute Ammu. She persuades Chacko to lock up Ammu, holding her responsible for Sophie's death. She attempts to regain the fallen prestige of the family by lodging a

false F.I.R. against Velutha, an untouchable, in the case of rape and capturing the twins. When Ammu reaches to the police station to reveal the fact of the issue, the Inspector of Police, Thomas Mathews behaves degradingly with her. "He stares at Ammu's breasts as he spoke." (TGST: 8) His firing words are, "Police knew all they needed to know and the Kottayam Police didn't take statement from *veshyas* or their illegitimate children." "Then, he tapped her breasts with his baton, Gently. Tap. Tap. As though he was choosing mangoes from a basket." (TGST: 8) Maltreatment of women at police station is increasing day by day. The dignity of a female accused under police custody is outrageous. Her shocked silence is taken to mean as her involvement. Indeed, the officer, through his brute manners, represents the society's treatment of a woman who dares to love outside the rules of 'Love Laws'.

Ammu, a pathetic figure, has many roles to play. Ranga Rao rightly says, "In Ammu the novelist has presented with compassion, a woman, a feminist locked in a struggle with her family, its 'hidden morality' with society and tragically with herself."¹⁷ In her distress, she finds Velutha as a true companion of her soul and body. Velutha is 'The God of Small Things' for Ammu.

"Even later, on the thirteen nights that followed this one,
Instinctively they stuck to the Small Things. The Big
Things ever lurked inside. They knew that there was
nowhere for them to go. They had nothing. No future.
So they stuck to the Small Things."(TGST: 338)

In this brief relationship with Velutha, she experiences the pleasure of being cared, screwed, growing whole and complete. Because of him, she feels that she has at last achieved the significance of her essential femininity and maturity into a full-fledged woman. It is believed that without sex, femininity is not complete, it has no meaning. In the words of Catherine Mac Kinnon, "Socially, femaleness means femininity, which means attractiveness which means sexual availability on male terms."¹⁸ He further adds, "Arundhati depicts male sexual domination and female sexual submission. Through pornography, she seems to have controlled women's sexuality for male pleasure. Pornography leads men to treat the second sex as second-class citizens, as 'Small Things.'"¹⁹ Ammu is unwanted guest in Ayemenem. Her distress turns to her children considering them millstones around her neck. Her aunt, Baby Kochamma, hates her as she thinks there is no place for a woman in her parents' home after marriage. Her perpetual resentment towards Ammu's children can be noticed at various stages in the novel. To her, the children are unwelcomed guests. The writer notes, "Baby Kochamma dislike the twins for she considers them doomed fatherless waifs. Worst still, they are half-Hindu hybrids whom no self-respecting Syrian Christian would ever marry." (TGST: 45) According to Baby Kochamma, "As for a divorced daughter, she had no position anywhere at all." (TGST: 45) Ammu's plight is like a dove trapped in the net of the hunters. Ammu wills to leave her maternal home but before that, she dies in seclusion in Bharat Lodge at Alleppey, "Not old, Not young, But a viable, die – able age." (TGST: 3) The church refuses to bury her for several reasons. Only Chacko and Rahel witness her crematorium. N.D.R. Chandra views, "The death may be 'via-able' to her

family. Had it been a death case of a male earning member in Indian context, it would have not been so viable?”²⁰

Ammu is portrayed as a tragic figure. She struggles with the family, society, motherhood and above all with herself. Her broken marriage, her love for her children, incomplete love with Velutha and unwantedness in her parental family might have led her to untimely death. In the words of Indira Bhatt, “Hers is the story of the helplessness of the powerless against the powerful.”²¹ For women like Ammu, there is no happiness in either situation.

Perhaps Ammu is helpless in meeting the demand of her flesh, and so she turns to Velutha. In society, such as an Indian one, extra-marital relationship particularly on the part of the woman is looked down upon as a disgraceful activity, a sin against the setting of the culture and a degenerating affair. Hence, Ammu and her twins come into miserable situation. The incident also leaves ever lasting impact on the immature minds of the twins. They are separated because Ammu dares to cross the public morality. They suffer because they challenge to put themselves in the stereotyped and fixed images. They will to preserve their individual identity by breaking the laws of the society and consequently they are penalized.

Ammu’s children are not spared from discrimination too. In the pickle factory, the workers ceremoniously welcome Margaret and Sophie while the twins are ignored. Sophie is considered an angel, and the twins the world of trouble. Sophie is flattered while the twins are belittled. Chacko believes the

twins and Ammu a package of burden. Even the maidservant retorts that Estha can break as many beds in his father's house but not in Ayemenem House.

As far as the twins are concerned, their temperament and behaviour are very unusual compared to others. The sense of insecurity, lack of parental love and feeling of being unwanted are expressed through their behaviour. For instance, Estha in the place of his surname has written Unknown. He has been caught up in the terror of not belonging to anyone and that is reflected in his choice of the word 'Unknown'. As a child, Estha had always been quiet. At school in Calcutta, he was an average student. He cannot manage to mingle with his classmates.

Rahel was rather a mischievous girl in her school days. She marries Larry Mac Caslin and goes with him to America. But, soon she gets frustrated. She finds no meaning in their relationship. She returns to Ayemenem after divorcing her husband. Truly, she is the symbol of Indian Immigrant whose body is Western but her soul is Indian. Her physical relation with her own brother raises several questions in the minds of the readers. However, undoubtedly she takes the stand for a new woman. G.D.Barche states, "The element of identity is seen in the breaking of the social laws of love and bowing to the instinctual laws in the case of both mother and the daughter."²² She is not ready to accept the fate of her mother and grandmother. She breaks the relation with her husband as soon as she finds it worthless. She

does what she likes to do following her own ideology and challenging the patriarchal societal set up.

Separation is inescapable and that makes the life of the twin unbearable. Estha returns to his father. His childhood experiences ruin his life. His sister, Rahel, anyhow manages to recover something from nothing. She grows up into a beautiful woman. Because of her education and being modern, she resents to be fixed in the stereotype role of a woman. She has a greater perception of life. She acknowledges marriage as a brief arrangement for the fulfillment of one's life. She, therefore, turns to Estha for physical oneness. The twins "Once again broke the love laws." (TGST: 327) "Perhaps, Ammu, Estha and Rahel were the worst transgressors." (TGST: 31)

The evil of gender domination is also present between Ammu's parents. Ammu's father, Pappachi represents the image of the tormentor male personality. Wife beating is a regular phenomenon in our society and Pappachi resorts to this evil practice. He is an ill tempered and egoistic man who in a rage beats his wife with a brass vase. For him, marriage is the male's domination over woman and it is the birthright. He believes woman is nothing but a puppet in the hands of a man. According to him, "Wife is a slave who can be driven out of the house at his will." (TGST: 181) Pappachi has his male ego and that is why Ammu and her mother suffer for no reasons. The cruelty of Ammu's father to his wife is probably rooted in envy. He feels jealous with his wife's profiteering pickle-factory and her aptitude for violin-playing. In spite of his oppression to his wife, he cries for her negligence to

him to the public. On the other hand, the fact is that she has been devoted to him.

Margaret is one more example of the victim of the oppressive male society. She is attracted to Chacko's irresponsible, alluring and optimistic ways but soon realizes her mistake and gets divorce. Margaret later marries Joe who dies in a car accident. After Sophie's death, driven by hysteria, she slaps Estha. She passes through different crisis and concerns. We find that women have uncountable stress, interests and obligations. Paradoxically, Chacko is a representative of the exploitative male who subjugates the better half.

In the male dominated society, it is believed that the fair-sex could run a business only when the male member of the family is absent. The privilege of running the business and managing the property largely falls on the side of the male. Although Mammachi owns the pickle factory, Chacko registers it under his name when he returns from Oxford. Being a woman, Ammu has no claim on it. Chacko is of the view that women are unfit to wield power. However, the problems related to the factory are solved by Mammachi.

The desire to satisfy the physical need outside of matrimonial relation on the part of the woman is an atrocious act in the so called civilized society. Ammu is a victim in this case. Even her inter-religions marriage is spoken of contemptuously by Baby Kochamma. On the other hand, Mammachi grants the licentious relation of Chacko. His free sex with women

of different caste and class is accepted as 'men's needs'. To facilitate Chacko's needs, his mother makes separate arrangement for the entry of women labourers through a private way into Chacko's room. She pays handsomely to Chacko's victims who in turn accept money because of familial compulsion, economic necessity and not for gratification of carnal desire. To run to the flesh trade is a compulsion for the women labourers to meet the poverty and worse living condition. Contrasting to Chacko's libidinous relationship stands ideal love of Ammu and Velutha. They accept each other as they are, irrespective of the social norms. However, their freedom does not last long. Baby Kochamma, who does not object Chacko's sexual freedom, condemns the faithful relationship of Ammu with Velutha. Her double standards for Ammu and Chacko are rather too conspicuous. K.M.Pandey remarks, "Baby Kochamma's hypocrisy is exposed as she takes proper care of fulfilling her son Chacko's 'man's needs' by secretly allowing lowly women to enter his room and the same woman condemns her daughter for her affair with Velutha."²³ Malashri Lal retorts, "Traditionally men have ignored the barrier and partaken of both worlds whereas for women, a step over the bar is an act of transgression. Having committed the act, women may never re-enter the designated conventional space except by public "confession", and must otherwise live in the "outer world" by their irretrievable choice."²⁴ Roy, through their relationship, accuses the society where women are rubbed under the feet of the supreme power occupied by the male dominated society.

In fact, Baby Kochamma's ideology gets corrupted due to earlier frustrating experiences in her life. Her love for Father Mulligan does not end in

her favour. She, in a passionate love, leaves her home and religion to occupy the place in the heart of Father Mulligan. She enrolls herself as a nun to be physically close to him. However, he does not respond nor does he encourage her. But, because he is monopolized by other nuns, she abandons the nunnery. All her efforts to win him are proved futile. She decides to remain a spinster and Roman Catholic. Later on, she goes to America and obtains Diploma in Ornamental Gardening. Anyhow, she feels everything meaningless. She withdraws herself from the other activities and keeps herself indoors. She begins to prefer the world of isolation and dreams. Her aloofness has given rise to hate, anger, jealousy and revenge in her. She also bears grudges against Ammu's physical relation with Velutha. She begins to hate Ammu. Eventually she becomes a bad tempered woman who throws Ammu's family on the street. The undigested bitter fact is that though she wholeheartedly sacrifices herself to her lover, she is abhorrently malevolent towards Ammu and the twins. Rosy Misra opines, "Thus, in Roy's novel, the crisis is caused because human values of several individual are encroached upon. They unwittingly encroach upon the human values of others."²⁵

Since the earlier days of history, a man is considered superior to woman. We can notice it from the reaction of Kalyani. When Chacko visits Pillai's house, she refers to her husband as 'addeham' (respected form of 'he') while he calls her 'edi' (the form of you).

Much has been discussed from small social clubs to the parliament about women empowerment, their significance as the other half and their right

as an equal partner. It seems, though, nothing worthwhile has been achieved so far in this direction. Arundhati Roy, focusing on many issues of discrimination against women, shows the falling standard of social morality in the so called modern India. The plight of the women presented in the novel is more or less the same in other states of our country even in modern times. The novel is a social satire which is realistic and insightful at the same time. "Society", Annis Pratt says, "considers the sex experiences of man as attributes of his general development, while similar experiences in the life of women are looked upon as a terrible calamity, a loss of honour and of all that is good and noble in a human being."²⁶

The theme of the novel, if looked separately, is the truthful portrayal of the plight of the women in society and their quest to seek their identity. Life offers little choice for the divorced woman like Ammu who longs for happiness beyond any taboos. Roy focuses on a harsh irony of the man's domination over woman. She points a finger to the fact that woman is not a mere toy or an object of pleasure or even a means to gratify the male desire but a better part in a true sense.

Roy has portrayed the plight of the women minutely. The women, in the contemporary Indian society, are struggling to seek 'self' or 'identity'. They are transitional like Ammu. Marwah Ray says, "In cosmopolitan societies in India particularly women are preferring love marriage like Ammu and Rahel and claiming their identities like American and European women entering into

new field like media, film and armed forces and standing between Eastern and Western culture.”²⁷

(IV)

Though both the books present the milieu of post-independent India, their fictive representation of women is quite different from one another. *A Suitable Boy* is a tale about a girl, Lata who has reached at a marriageable age and to find a suitable match for her is her parents' prime concern. She is an educated modern girl yearning to find an appropriate alliance on her own. However, we find that towards the end of the novel, she succumbs her freedom to the parental obligation and marries a boy chosen by her mother. Whereas in *The God of Small Things*, the chief woman protagonist, Ammu ventures to marry a person of her own choice. When she feels her husband's exactions going beyond limit, she returns to Ayemenem and crosses the rigid boundary of the 'love laws' by having physical relationship with the untouchable Velutha. She does not abide by the laws and standards of a hegemonic patriarchal structure, and suffers its harsh consequence.

The other women protagonists of Seth's novel are also more or less traditional stereotypes. Savita, Lata's sister, finds fulfillment of her life in making her husband, Pran and his family happy. Like a mythical character of Savitri or Damyanti, the happiness and contentment of the husband becomes her only aim. Meenakshi, Mrs. Mehra's daughter-in-law, represents an image of modern housewife, who is hardly concerned about anything outside her family. For her too, moving outside the four walls of her home at her free will is not possible. At the same time, the world of courtesan serves more than

one purposes in the story and brings in the issue of sorry state of the women like Saeedabai and her illicit daughter Tasreen, who are free from the domestic concerns. Despite the fact that Saeedabai is placed outside the domains of domesticity, the normative pattern of her behaviour is defined by adherence to virtue and chastity. They create space for themselves and within those self-drawn lines of restriction, within a male dominated hegemonic structure, they strive to survive. Veena Tandon and Zainab are the worst sufferers in the male chauvinistic society. Only Abida Begum and Ila Chattopadhyay dare to lead their own lives to some extent.

The God of Small Things represents the women protagonists with more dimension and depth. Mammachi stands as the symbol of a typical woman who has thoroughly internalized the patriarchal definition of woman as subservient to man, or a wife as one who serves her husband. Whereas her daughter, Ammu challenges the patriarchal norms of society. In fact, Roy presents three generations of women; Mammachi, Ammu and Rahel. Unlike her mother and grandmother, Rahel is the image of the modern, liberated woman who resists and confronts 'male world'. Baby Kochamma is an educated woman who wishes to win the love of Father Mulligan. But, she cannot fulfill her dreams and hence remains a spinster till death. The women characters of the novel under discussion are largely the silent sufferers of the patriarchal society. They have the voices but they are silenced under the superiority of the masculine world. In fact, they succeed 'to escape' from the world around but not 'to protest' it.

A male writer sets their women protagonists in traditional role; largely in the context of love and marriage. He has preferred to fit them in stereotype roles. However, it is also true that though his women characters are painted in traditional hues, they are not tormented and tortured. Besides, there are a number of women characters in the novel, but historical perspective and other interests of the author confine the women protagonists from their whole round development in the narrative. On the other hand, his female counterpart presents socio-sexual concerns of her women characters. They are marginally more liberated and aspirant. However, in their journey to search freedom, they suffer and get punished. They are not submissive by nature and yet they are not the winner but the silent sufferer. In fact, they are not epitomized with conventional womanly traits on the one hand and at the same time they are not empowered to assert themselves. Nevertheless, we can conclude that Arundhati Roy has coloured her novel with feminine sensibility more than her male counterpart.

Note: All the references from the texts in the chapter are shown as (ASB: for *A Suitable Boy*) and (TGST: for *The God of Small Things*).

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PORTRAYAL OF WOMEN IN ENGLISH

AND GUJARATI NOVELS:

A COMPARISON

CHAPTER = IV

It needs constantly to be stressed that feminism is not entirely of the West. It has its indigenous roots. The idea of a 'self' does not exist in abstraction. It is deeply rooted in one's awareness of one's body, and is moulded by socio-cultural patterns. Each individual and each generation works anew for the definition of the self. Feminism, in its broadest, recognizes the inadequacy of male-oriented ideologies and struggles for the spiritual, economic, social and racial equality of colonized and biographically subjugated women. It can also be viewed as a concept emerging as a protest against male domination and the marginalization of women. With the feminine psyche trying to redefine woman's role in the society and re-assert her self-identity, a new perspective has dawned on the Indian social horizon. Although there are not many subscribers of feminism, among the Indian women writers, they have, knowingly or unknowingly dealt with the issues pertaining to the women. Two of the novels under consideration are written by women writers. Both the writers have been bestowed with prestigious prize for their respective works. However, both the works differ from each other in technique as well as treatment of the theme. The other two works, though written by the male writers, centralize women characters in their respective works.

Right from the outset, Gujarati fiction, like its counterparts in other regional languages, was clearly women-centered. From the earliest phase to the recent day, it has undergone many transitions. The Gujarati fiction has been allegedly remained imitative by nature. Instead of adhering to its roots and following its own indigenous traditions, the writers have, more often than

not, tried to pursue the western models. However, both the novels under consideration have their own distinctiveness.

Raghuvir Chaudhari's *Amruta* swivels around its female protagonist by the same name. The author has attempted to foreground sensibility of an educated woman. The novel deals with aspirations of a modern woman, who seeks to have a complete freedom in the field of matrimony. Her two suitors, Udayan and Aniket, subscribe to the freedom of thought and action. Udayan is, in a way, Amruta's mentor, but it is Aniket, who wins her heart and finally her hand. Amruta, on her part, faces a constant dilemma of making a right choice of her husband. She is deeply aware of her identity. She wants to maintain her identity as 'Amruta'. At the beginning of the second part, Maitreyi's words '*yen aham Na Amrita Syam Kim Aham ten Kuryam*' (what would I do if I can't remain Amruta with him?) are quoted, which reverberate in Amruta's consciousness. And hence, she cannot afford easy compromises and yet she cannot arrive at any sound resolution. She experiences dialectic tension in her choice. It seems that the author is more interested in delineating an idea rather than incidents and actions. The story hardly gives any scope to any of its characters to have all-round development. All the three major characters of the story, especially, Amruta, keep on contemplating their own vision of life. Though the character of Amruta is portrayed with some bold strokes, the later part of the story evidently shows a clear shift from modernity to traditionalism. The female protagonist is burdened with her self-made world of freedom and bends down under the pressure of circumstances. The question that confounds the reader is, whether the end of the novel would

have remained the same in the hands of a woman writer? The author, though pro-woman in his outlook, has betrayed his male sensibility towards the end.

Vikram Seth's much hyped work, *A Suitable Boy* is yet another instance of betrayed expectations. Although unlike Amruta of Chaudhari's work, Lata, the female protagonist of Seth's novel does not occupy the centre stage all the time. However, it is she, for whom a hunt for a suitable boy is carried out. Lata is not so intelligent like her counterpart of Gujarati novel. She values her freedom, though not so ardently as Amruta. The later is free to exercise her free will in the case of her marriage, while Lata, though she too dreams for a similar freedom, is told by her mother that she would marry a boy of her mother's choice. And that she did at the end. Seth and Chaudhari, both deal with just one aspect of woman's life. The issue of matrimony is their prime concern. Vijay Singh views, "Seth has represented a complete process of traditional Indian Hindu marriage in the novel."¹ Existence of a woman outside the institute of marriage is a remote possibility for both the writers. And in this regard, Lata is not given the power to assert her will, whereas Amruta, though empowered to assert it, yields to the pressures of the conventional society and rather surrenders to it. She seems defeated towards the end. Neither her intellect nor her education redeems her. *Amruta* as a novel spans a limited area, geographically and otherwise. As a result, the novel gives little scope to its creator to probe deep into the psyche of its female protagonist. She, it seems, does not have a physical entity, but has an ethereal existence only. The author's creative imagination is more concerned with the process of the character's inward journeys. However, in the case of

the fictive world of Seth's epical novel, there are a number of female characters, though none of them has received total attention of the author. Barring the portrayals of Ila Chattopadhyay and Abida Begum, the rest of them are stereotyped. The characters of Lata's sister and that of Pran's mother and sister project women in their traditional role of a devoted wife, living within the safety of enclosed world. Through the characters of Mrs. Rupa Mehra, Mrs. Mahesh Kapoor, Saeedabai, Lata, Veena Tandon, Zainab and others, Seth has more or less shown the marginal space of the women in the male dominated world. Mala Pandurang aptly says, "By describing restrictions enforced on women, Seth does to some extent problematise the inherent spaces allowed to women by patriarchal discourses. He does not however invest them with agency to act or to offer resistance. Seth may touch upon oppression of the women within the institution of the Indian marriage, but his main focus is still on the lengthy descriptions of happy domestic scenes between the "sweet tempered, fair complexioned, beautiful Savita" and Pran, "the first class husband and son-in-law." This is the Ideal Marriage that Lata must aspire to."² In short, it can be discerned that in both the novels, the male sensibility has gained the upper hand.

The women writers, on the other hand, have been more successful as far as the portrayal of women is concerned. Kundanika Kapadia, with her *Sat Paglan Akashman*, can claim to be fighting for a woman's cause as her work overtly voices the trepidations and tribulations of women. Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* treads on a similar path as far as the sufferings and misgivings of female world are concerned. But her work

departs from her Gujarati counterpart as her women characters lack the courage to 'bang' the door. They are rather victims of their circumstances and suffer silently, without raising the voice. The silence becomes a powerful metaphor in the novel. Mohini Khot states, "This is the tragedy of the women in Ayemenem: they cannot be heard."³ Ammu, though takes some bold steps, seems to be driven more out of compulsions rather than her own willingness. Voices, though there are many in Roy's world; they are silenced by the patriarchal model of the society "where men remain more equal than women."⁴ Roy's work is an expression of the mute and stifled female voice denied an equal freedom of self-expression. On the other hand, Kapadia's characters, after suffering to certain extent, opt to step out of their confined world in search of much coveted freedom. Since Kapadia's women characters learn in the course of their encounter with the harsh realities of life to generate in themselves the power to cope with the male-orientation, they make one aware of 'the heroic possibilities' in women while in Roy's they can be described as having reserves of vulnerability and endurance.

Apparently the family, as a basic unit of the patriarchal society, plays a significant part in the life of all the women protagonists. More or less, it remains the controlling unit of the women protagonists' sexuality, labour or production and mobility. According to Gerda Lerner, "The family not merely mirrors the order in the state and educates its children to follow it, it also creates and constantly reinforces that order."⁵ (Kamla Bhasin, 10) Amruta in the novel of the same name, Vasudha, in *Sat Paglan Akashman* and Lata and Ammu in *A Suitable Boy* and *The God of Small Things* respectively had to

pass through various traumatic experiences because of rigid and conservative notions of the family.

Noticeably, none of the works but Roy's reflects the socio-sexual concerns towards women. Seth and Chaudhari seem to be altogether indifferent to that aspect of a woman's life, and Kapadia prefers to keep that issue untouched, as she is more interested in physical and mental liberation of her female characters. *Amruta*, in a way is an intellectual exercise on the part of her creator. The woman protagonist remains unperturbed by socio-economic-political issues throughout the novel. Lata, too, needs not worry about harsh reality of the world around her, as there are other male characters to carry that burden. Vasudha and other female characters of the story, do consider that aspect at one point of time but they have their utopian world very much within their reach. Moreover, the female characters of Seth, Chaudhari and Kapadia do not represent the 'womanhood' in its entirety in their respective works because their female protagonists, like they themselves, hailing from the upper crust and class, are educated and belong to the socio-politically aware segment of the society. It is the plight of the female characters of Roy's work to subsist in the marginalized state. They are oppressed and at times play a role of oppressor too.

Both the women writers under consideration have set their women protagonists firmly at the centre of their fictive world. Both of them write almost entirely of woman, and from a woman's point of view. Theirs are thus much of a woman's novels and their feminine identity could not be mistaken.

However, in Kapadia's work the male characters are of peripheral significance and often exist for accentuating contrast, whereas in Roy's work, they are assigned specific role. Especially Velutha, the God of small things as well as of loss, share the same marginalized space with Ammu. Another striking feature of the Gujarati author is that she has attempted a stern analysis of the over-burdened conventional image of an ideal wife and deserves commendation that she did not allow her protagonist to succumb to stagnation or helplessness. Roy's work on the other hand, provides with the scene that led to dichotomous social and private self-image of women.

Vikram Seth and Raghuvir Chaudhari, on their part, have not allowed their women characters to go out of the focus. However, the female protagonist of Chaudhari is made to carry her own cross, while Seth has used his characters to further the story. However, both the writers are sympathetic towards the women characters, which are neither portrayed as the 'other' of the male protagonists nor are subjugated or oppressed in any sense. They, in a way, correspond to the romantic model of a woman that indulges in a dream-like surrender to the superior male as well as to the image of the protected woman who thinks it natural to be exploited by her lover-saviour.

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STUDY OF REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN

IN HINDI FILMS:

CHAPTER – V

(I)

Cinema has been the most powerful medium of entertainment and communication since long. India produces more than 900 films annually. Indian films are viewed not only in South Asia and South East Asia but also in East Africa, Mauritius and other parts of the world. Indian cinema, like most other cinemas, has evolved over time, responding to various social, cultural and political contexts and challenges. In order to understand the distinctiveness of Indian cinema, its distinguishing traits and privileged concepts and the image of the woman reflected by it over the decades, it would be worthwhile to have a glance at the historical development of Indian cinema which is nearly a century old.

Cinema made its dent on Indian soil on July 7, 1896 when Lumiere Brothers of France held first show at the Watson Hotel in Mumbai. Since then, the 'cinema shows' continued albeit at frequent intervals and for different periods. Though there were exhibitions of American, British and French films, the common Indian masses preferred to see provincial films and showed its inclination particularly towards the mythological nature. They were more prone to their own culture rather than the Western. The conservatism prevailed at such a degree in those days that a career in film, especially for women, was ignominious. Phalke who had the honour of making the first Indian feature film, *Raja Harishchandra* (1913), succeeded to remove the fear of stigma and inspired Kamla, a Maharastrian woman to act in his film *Bhasmasur Mohini* (1913). By 1920, Indian cinema was slowly but surely acquiring a strong foothold. Gradually, the taste of the audience also changed. The then

audience showed their interest in the films with 'social' and 'historical' background which continued for long period. However, the films of mythological nature persisted simultaneously. During the silent era, the Sati concept was repetitively exercised by the auteurs in their films, for instance *Sati Parvati* (1920), *Sati Anjani* (1922), *Sati Seeta* (1924), *Sati Savitri* (1927) and *Sati Ansuya* (1933).

In 1931, arrived the first Indian talkie, *Alam Ara*, directed by Ardeshir Irani. It was described as an 'all talking, singing, dancing' picture and became an instant hit. It is during this era that the interplay between tradition and modernity began to interest Indian filmmakers. During 30s and 40s, the films started encompassing themes like social, patriotic, topical and documentaries. *Gunsundari* (1934), *Amar Jyoti* (1936), *Duniya Na Mane* (1937), *Jagirdar* (1937), *Aurat* (1940), *Zeenat* (1945) and *Main Abla Nahi Hoon* (1949) are a few among the many woman-centered films of those times. The attempts were made to show the suppressions and sufferings of the woman through these films. An idealized image of woman was highlighted in most of the films of this period.

Film historians deem the 1950s as the golden age of Indian Popular Cinema. It was the decade of a great social change. The films of this period dealt with the breaking away from the pressures and the rigid rules of the society. *Awara* (1953), *Pather Panchali* (1955), *Do Aankhein Barah Haath* (1957), *Kagaz Ke Phool* (1959) are a few of the biggest hits of the decade. Largely, the films were made, in the words of Sushil Arora, "with mixed

pleasure and purpose.”¹ *Mother India* (1957), *Dahej* (1959) and *Sadhana* (1958) centralized the decentralized. The decade carried the heroine especially in a romantic role in most of the films. “Throughout the 1960s”, says Chidanandan Das Gupta, “the popular film tried its hand at various things without being able to find the formula it was seeking, uncertain of quite what the public had in mind.”² The woman’s image in 60s was only a replication of the previous decade. Towards the end of the Sixties, there was a marked rise in the sex and violence content films and hence predicted a change in woman’s representation.

The “sad or sorry”³ Seventies belonged to the macho image of the hero. Revenge remained the central cord of the narrative discourse. As far as the portrayal of woman is concerned, Chidanandan Das Gupta observes, “In the 1970s, motherhood came to be regarded as the sole destiny of women; the only free women were cabaret artistes and traditional courtesans.”⁴ The films with woman’s image as a romantic model and ‘the other woman’ - siren were also produced. Raj Kapoor’s *Bobby* (1973) and *Satyam Shivam Sundaram* (1978) and Ramesh Sippy’s *Sholay* (1975) won good dividend and accolade from the market.

In “the age of violence”⁵ viz. 1980s, the ‘angry young woman’ replaced ‘angry young man’ of 70s. Vamp almost disappeared from the screen. The ‘rape revenge’ theory was widely used by the directors. *Insaaf Ka Taraju* (1980), *Mirch Masala* (1985), *Pratighat* (1987) and *Zakhmi Aurat* (1988) were a few commercially hit films of this genre. Women were portrayed

in these films as “hardened, cynical, vengeful creatures”.⁶ ‘New Wave Cinema’ also simultaneously made films on gender discrimination and presented the protagonists resisting against the oppressive feudal and patriarchal system.

From 90s onwards, there have been two dominant trends in Hindi cinema, i.e. the action film and the family drama with the love story as an essential component. With the revival of the musical love story, the pendulum of woman’s role on screen has also changed the direction. She has again turned to her traditional identity as Radha-like lover and Sita-like wife. The ‘sexy doll’ or the ‘item girl’ on the silver screen also reveals a fact of a dichotomous representation of the woman. *Hum Aapke Hain Koun* (1994), *Kuccha Kuccha Hota Hain* (1998), *Dil To Pagal Hain* (1997) and *Hum Dil De Chuke Sanam* (1999) were the major hits of 90s while *Gadar* (2001), *Baagban* (2003), *Main Hoon Na* (2004), *Lage Raho Munnabhai* (2006) and *Vivah* (2006) are the box-office hits of the current decade. It is only in ‘Art Cinema’ that the articulation of the demand for the liberation of woman gained both sharpness and momentum with the emergence of major women directors in 80s and simultaneous attempts made by some innovative male directors. *Bandit Queen* (1994), *Fire* (1996), *Mrutyudand* (1997), *God Mother* (1999) and *Astitva* (2000) have been appreciated by a specific audience. These films were passed with moderate success on the theatres.

A retrospect in the history of Indian cinema, especially Popular Cinema, presents a woeful picture of discrimination and marginalization of

women. Whether it is a film of the 50s or of 90s, there has been little difference in the image of the celluloid women. Very few movies project strong women characters. Women are used to play romantic or decorative roles, or that of a mother, who spends her days to look after the lives of her children. Some of the sensitive filmmakers like Raj Kapoor and Guru Dutt have produced male-oriented films only, subtly exploiting woman's physical beauty and sensuousness. Right from its earliest days, commercial films have not changed much in their outlook towards women.

In the male dominated world, women are placed in the precincts, be in a real life or films. Women in Hindi films have been portrayed as devoted housewives, sacrificing mothers and dutiful daughters-in-law. This image has been so constantly drilled into the Indian female psyche that women themselves have started believing in this 'moulded image'. At the opposite pole of the representation of the wife stands the image of the 'vamp', normally a decadent modern woman. She flouts tradition and seeks to imitate western model. She is represented as a morally corrupt person. In addition, no one can disagree with the strong subconscious influence and hypnotic effect that films have on people's minds. The makers of these films (in most cases men) emphasize that they are simply catering to what the audiences are accustomed to seeing. There is a strong resistance to the image of the woman who is articulate, vocal and independent.

In the light of such background, it would be worthwhile to examine Ramesh Sippy's *Sholay* (1975) and Suraj Barjatya's *Hum Aapke Hain*

Koun...? (1994) to study how women are projected in these all time classics of Indian Cinema. I have endeavoured to scrutinize whether the image of the woman has changed in the course of time in the films under consideration. This research aims to explore the representation of women protagonists; their role in the narrative discourse, their treatment by the male protagonists and their own reactions towards them and their reading by the audience in these successful commercial hits.

(II)

Ramesh Sippy's *Sholay* can be said to have heralded the modern era of commercial Hindi cinema. When it was released in 1975, it broke all previous box office records and stands apart even today. It is considered the biggest box office earner of all time. Often described as India's best-known Curry Western, *Sholay* was patterned on American Spaghetti Westerns though much Indian in taste and interest. The addition of romance, comedy and songs gave it the ambiance that one expects of a Hindi film. Anupama Chopra succinctly appreciates the movie in these words, "It's timeless. *Sholay* is no longer just a film, it's an event."⁷ The film narrates the story of an ex-cop Thakur Baldev Singh. Notorious dacoit Gabbar Singh escapes jail. He is furious with Thakur, the man who had put him there in the first place. As an act of malicious revenge, Gabbar and his henchmen killed Thakur's entire family except daughter-in-law who was not at home at the moment. Thakur wants to bring Gabbar to justice. Since his hands are cut off, he hires the help of two convicts, Jaidev and Veeru to capture Gabbar, who has been terrorizing the small village, Ramgarh.

Once in the village, the cynical young Jai and Veeru find themselves growing fond of the villagers, taking pity on their sufferings under the tyranny of the dacoits. Some of the villagers evoke more than fondness. Both Veeru and Jai fall in love. Veeru is attracted towards Basanti, a feisty young woman who earns her bread driving a *tanga* (a horse-cart). Jai is drawn to Radha, the reclusive widowed daughter-in-law of Thakur. Both the outsiders - Jai and Veeru become the part of the village, celebrating festivities and partaking to people's sorrows. Getting sick by long drawn crooked life, they dream to spend an honest and happy married life settling down in the same village.

The film simultaneously unfolds many details of the characters interestingly in flashbacks. True to their strength, Jai and Veeru send the dacoits away couple of times when they attack on the village. As the story reaches towards the end, bloody clashes between Jai, Veeru and bandits follow. After much sorrow and suffering, the bandits are slain. In between Jai loses his life leaving Radha destined to a colourless life. The climax shows the final encounter between Thakur and Gabbar Singh, where Thakur kicks the bandit into submission. The film ends on a happy note as Veeru and Basanti get united forever.

Though seemingly a revenge story, *Sholay* has several covert messages. A close analysis of the film can bring several complexities and contradictions to the forefront. In contrast to the male world, which occupies large space and time in the film, the women protagonists too show the other half of the traditional rustic world in their own way. Whereas Jai and Veeru

(Amitabh Bachchan and Dharmendra respectively) are the leads in the narrative, Basanti and Radha (Hema Malini and Jaya Bhaduri respectively) are the chief women protagonists. Quite similar to their nature, they represent two different images of the woman. On the surface, it seems that the film has departed from the tradition of portraying its women characters as both the major characters have their own identities, and they are not depicted as mere puppets in the hands of men. But as far as male-voyeurism is concerned, the film is no exception. The subject and its treatment is quite unconventional to the nature of the Bollywood cinema, but the women protagonists are portrayed more or less in the same stereotyped celluloid image of woman, moulded by the Hindi cinema years ago.

From the very first encounter, Basanti wins the heart of Veeru and the audience too, with her chatty and effervescent nature. Chattering most of the time and yet claiming breathlessly, "*Kyunke mujhe befuzool baat karne ki aadat to hai nahin*" (I am not one to engage in idle talk) (SLY) leaves hilarious impression on the mind of the audience. Being orphan, she lives with her aunt (Leela Mishra) and drives the only horse carriage between the railway station and the village. She is proud of driving the *tanga* (a horse cart) and earning bread on her own. A woman, struggling for her living in the vocation that is entirely a man's sphere, is quite rare in real life, not to talk of films. In this case, Basanti is daring, yet quite simple-hearted. More often than not, she seems to behave with the male protagonists on equal footings. She offers her help frequently to blind Imam Sahib (A.K.Hangal) when he visits the mosque. Her forgetful nature worries her aunt and amuses the fun loving audience. On

the surface, she emerges as an energetic, outspoken, garrulous, benevolent, sensitive, guileless and bold and beautiful woman too.

When we take a microscopic look at the portrayal of Basanti, we would come across different techniques and treatments used for the projection of the woman on the silver screen. In this revengeful story, the women protagonists receive secondary locus to their male counterparts. Hindi cinema is ill reputed for the way they represent the women protagonists molested by the male counterparts, be it a hero or a villain. Sexploitation of the innocent country girl by a macho-man is an easy way to the filmmaker to provide voyeuristic look to the viewers. It happens when Basanti reaches to the mango grove to collect some fresh fruits. Unable to pluck them by herself, Veeru teaches her to use a pistol although for his foul intention. The hero, giving a shotgun in her hand, stands behind her by putting his hands over her hands which are holding the gun. In a way, she is partly embraced as the hero was standing behind guiding her how to operate the weapon. She is advised to close one eye. The hero enjoys proximity and when she shoots, she falls down over him. At last, she becomes suspicious towards the implied purpose of the hero and returns to home. The incident denotes that woman's act of overstepping threshold, constructed by patriarchal society, is considered disgracing and culpable, but a mal-intention on the part of a male does not arouse a sense of violation of cultural values. Sussane Kappeler rightly views, "The fundamental pattern at the root of men's behaviour in the world, including sexual assault, rape, wife battery, sexual harassment, keeping women in the home and in unequal opportunities and conditions, treating

them as objects for conquest and protection – the root problem of men’s relations with women, is the way men see women, is seeing.”⁸

The Indian Commercial Cinema has been predominantly male oriented and consequently the women protagonists are pushed in the margins. Picturization of song and dance centralizes the women protagonists although for a specific purpose. The filmmaker manipulates song and dance sequences to cater voyeuristic pleasure to the mass. Anneke Smelik opines, “Woman is fundamentally unrepresentable as subject of desire. She can only be represented as representation.”⁹ During the celebration of Holi, Basanti is shown dancing and singing along with the hero in wet clothes. Her graceful movements in colourful garb excite not only the male protagonist in the movie but also the audience.

Whether it is a film of silent era or a modern commercial film, the story largely focuses on the male protagonists pursuing a definite goal. They are in the leading roles attempting to achieve something worthwhile and their valour is rewarded at the end of the story. But, most often then not, it is not so in the case of women protagonists. They appear and disappear from the scene at the will of the director. They exist in the story primarily for imparting emotional support to the person doing heroic work. To get knotted into wedlock remains their basic concern. Basanti’s aunt is anxious to find a suitable match for her so that she can get rid of the burden of a marriageable girl. Basanti too, like a traditional Indian woman, prays the god Shiva and

observes fast to get a good husband. Evidently, it shows her as a traditional Indian country girl.

Veeru, on the other hand, craves to win the hand of Basanti by any means. When Basanti's aunt refuses to allow her nuptial with him, he threatens to commit suicide. The only way, he finally wins her hand in marriage, is by getting drunk and making a hilarious attempt to commit suicide in Basanti's name. He succeeds to get consent from Basanti and villagers. Conversely, it seems hesitant Basanti has no scope to think about her choice. She has to succumb to the choice made by her counterpart. Of course, Veeru's way of wooing is not so different from his counterparts in other hit films. But, it is taken for granted that the heroine would fall for the hero, in whatever crude way he woos her. Jyotika Virdi rightly observes, "Narratives of love foreground women caught in dramatic moments of conflict with their conscience: they wrestle with love, desire and duty. Men do not face conflicts in love: their universe expands beyond love into lofty struggles against society, for social justice and against evil forces. The male hero wins the woman he wants, while she struggles within her narrow moral universe to make the "right" choice – choosing the hero."¹⁰

On the surface, Basanti seems to be an independent figure. She is shown more or less following her own way of living regardless of the image formation among the people. Although she lives as an independent and self-reliant woman, she is not allowed to cross the boundary of the feminine qualities. In fact, her feminine traits overshadow her heroic qualities reducing

her personality to a peripheral significance in the narration of the film. It seems proper when Jyotika Viridi observes, "In several films women appear as autonomous, independent – minded and spirited characters - but somehow they never develop beyond fledgling roles. Moreover, discovery by the male protagonists completes her rights of passage to womanhood, with its accompanying feminine grace and charm. Examples of this subgenre include Jaya Bhaduri as a prankster in *Guddi* (Doll, 1971), as the self-employed street vendor in *Zanzeer* (Chain, 1973) and Hema Malini as a horse carriage driver in *Sholay* (Embers, 1975)."¹¹

Radha is the antithesis to extrovert and lively Basanti. In fact, we get two different readings of her personality as a young girl before marriage and as a widow. The preceding image brings to us an impression of a lively, spirited, colourful girl playing Holi and saying, '*Agar rang na ho to kaisi berangi lagegi yeh duniya*' (If there were no colours, this world would be so drab and colourless) (SLY). She is quite sociable and likes to celebrate the festivals. Thakur Baldev Singh (Sanjeev Kumar) finds her as a suitable match for his son. She is projected performing her '*dharma*' (duty) in a single scene after her marriage. But her colourful life does not last long as her husband becomes the target of callous Gabbar (Amjad Khan). Scene immediately cuts to another image of Radha with her washed-out face, all dressed in white. Like a conventional Indian widow, she is shown going to the temple in a traditional *saari*. She lives a secluded life passing days without any tinge of vitality. Her widowhood has wiped out all colours from her life but white. She is never shown at the market place or participating in the festivals. She is

projected as an out and out traditional sacrosanct figure worshipping God to mitigate her misfortune. It is a unanimously acknowledged fact that woman is represented in an archetypal silhouette no matter what role does she play in the popular film.

Jai is attracted to Radha sympathizing with her tragic plight. Their love develops in silence and nocturnal darkness. Jai's arrival seems to bring a new beginning in her life. In nurturing her love with Jai, she finds the way out of the dull, dismal existence. Being a widow, she is unable to express her feelings and consequently she is content only by gazing at her loved one and listening to his harmonica in her desolate garret. It is Jai who dares to break the law by asking for Thakur's permission to let Radha marry again. Thinking about her tragic plight and lonesome life, especially when he is not around, Thakur approaches Radha's father, Narmadaji (Iftekhhar) to discuss the matter and gets him convinced to remarry Radha. But Radha has something else altogether stored for her. Nature intervenes and takes Jai's life away leaving her broken-hearted once again. Trapped, once again in an empty, eternal, meaningless existence, she is left to mourn, "*Tu ne yeh kya kiya, Bewafa chal diya, Rah mein phir mujhe, Peeche chhor ke.*" (What is this you have done, O unfaithful one! Left me behind on the path of life) (SLY).

It clearly indicates that in India and more specifically in the rural parts, widows are still stigmatized and treated like outcasts. The filmmaker, remaining faithful to the Indian dogmas, does not allow his woman protagonist to transcend the patriarchal structure. Radha is idealized and honoured as a

widow and as Esha Dey puts it, “Being the eternal other, she can never be an individual, freedom and choice lie forever out of her reach.”¹² It is highlighted in the film that fate and nature concurs with traditionalism. Life, in an Indian society, has its rules and a violator gets punished. It is not prepared to let Jai and Radha break those rules. The lovers cannot be left happy through this act of rebellion. Ramgarh has deep-rooted patriarchal norms and it does not bear the tempering of general society rules. And hence, the director tactfully settles the issue by taking the life of Jai.

It is quite interesting to see that the male protagonists in the film can excel in almost every way; they can ride a horse, a scooter or run a train. They are able to deceive the cop, they can dance and sing, they can risk their lives and battle with the dangerous dacoit and even win the love of the desired lady. Quite contradictory to this, the female counterparts are hardly presented with any heroic qualities and even if they are, it is not woven as a part of her persona. Basanti and Radha are the silent bearers either of lovelorn Veeru or brutal Gabbar. According to Pramod Nayar, “Harking back to the (in)famous ordeal-by-fire of Sita and Rama’s continued anxiety about her chastity, the hero runs, fights and risks death to save his mother/wife/sister/fiancée from villainous hands (the films invariably present a scene where the villain extends a paw/hand to lasciviously caress the woman, emphasizing the corporeal threat she is in).”¹³ What Michael R. Real states in reference to the representation of the women in Hollywood films is quite applicable to that of Bollywood and more specifically to this film. He states, “The major difference between male and females was the degree to which

men were involved in violent action, either as law enforcers or as criminals. Further, women were far more likely to be victims of violence rather than the perpetrators of it.”¹⁴

It was a general practice of films of 70s to use ‘vamp’ to arouse sexual appeal among the large number of audience. Many of the films of that decade had a couple of item songs and dance sequences where a female character was made to dance in revealing clothes. The song, “*Mehbooba... Mehbooba... gulshan mein phul khilte hain.... jab sehra se milte.... mein aur tu*” (SLY) performed by a Gypsy dancer (Helen) in scanty clothes with graceful body movements exhibits woman as a sex symbol. It sounds right when Laura Mulvey states, “In their traditional exhibitionist role, women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact, so that they can be said to connote to-be-looked-at-ness.”¹⁵ During the song, the camera angle focuses the anatomy of the female dancer and exposes a little bit of breasts, stomach, thigh or the naked legs to give karaoke experience to the viewers.

In fact, the film of the millennium, *Sholay* represents three different images of the woman; a young talkative girl - Basanti, a sad and silent widow - Radha and a glamorous dancer, Helen. Surprisingly, none of the women protagonists is ever shown capable of rational, logical thought or action. They are primarily emotional appendages or a thing of scopophilic pleasure for the male protagonists. The report of the UNESCO reveals, “The images of woman projected by the media constitute a main obstacle to eliminating discrimination

against women throughout the world and a main factor in preserving traditional sexist attitudes towards them.”¹⁶ Nevertheless, compared to the other block-busters and commercial films, *Sholay* proves to be a film with difference as far as the portrayal of the women characters is concerned, may be because it is more male-oriented or perhaps the director is more interested in foregrounding the masculinity of the heroes. The theme of revenge, the scene depicting the cruelty of the dacoits and delivery of catchy dialogues overshadow the space and scope of the heroines. There were women centered films in the 70s like *Julie* (1975), *Jai Santoshi Maa* (1975) and *Noorie* (1979), but it was in the 80s that the image of ‘angry young man’ was replaced by ‘angry young woman’.

(III)

Sooraj Barjatya’s *Hum Aapke Hain Koun..!*, a very successful family drama depicts a typical Indian family in its entirety. It is, on the surface, a love story of Prem and Nisha. A top student; Prem is learning the ropes of business under his elder brother Rajesh and uncle Kailashnath, a big industrialist. In another town, Nisha is learning computer and she is the darling of her elder sister, Pooja and parents Prof. Choudhary and Kamladevi. Fate brings two families together, culminating in the marriage of Rajesh and Pooja. This is also where Prem meets Nisha and falls in love with her. At the marriage ceremony, which is a typical Indian marriage, lovers have a great time with their pranks. Amidst all the funs and games, a physical touch and a close proximity makes Nisha shy away in embarrassment. While parting, Prem apologizes for tender mistake and for the first time Nisha’s heart longs to belong.

Pooja brings a portal of joy to the Kailashnath's family. As the time passes by, Pooja gets pregnant and Nisha is invited to attend the traditional ritual before the child's birth. Nisha's arrival is like dream coming true for Prem. She stays till the child's birth and becomes a part of the family owing to her pleasant nature. She takes over the household chores. The youngsters commit their love in soft whisper and dream to spend lifetime together. However, a cruel blow befalls upon the two families as Pooja dies in an accident.

The flow of ever going joyful life in the family comes to a standstill. The future of motherless child worries Rajesh and the family. As the last and best resort, both the families decide that Rajesh should marry again to fill the place of late Pooja. And owing to coyness on the part of Nisha, a misunderstanding takes place. Her parents arrange her marriage with Rajesh. The flummoxed lovers decide to sacrifice their love for the sake of family. It's marriage time again and Nisha is about to get knotted with Rajesh when the fate again plays its role. The agent of the God, Tuffy, a pat dog hands a letter to Rajesh who then comes to know the reality of lovers' sacrifice. The story ends with Rajesh's handing over the child to Nisha and lovers get united in a blissful atmosphere. This miraculous event wipes the word 'koun' from '*Hum Aapke Hain Koun..!*' (Henceforth referred as HAHK) and pleasantly completes the movie as '*Hum Aapke Hain..!*' The filmic world of HAHK is a microcosmic version of Indian society. In the words of Madhuri Dixit, "*Hum Aapke Hain Koun*' presents a perfect 'utopia' – about simple values and guileless

people.”¹⁷ The film is deeply rooted in Indian soil and projects various images of women quite faithfully.

HAAK is a film that can be read not only by what it shows or voices but also by what it erases, silences and makes invisible. The center of attraction, Nisha - role played by Madhuri Dixit, is portrayed as out and out good Indian daughter of her parents. From the very inception, she is focused as a daughter every parent would feel proud of. She is extremely loquacious, lovely and gregarious by nature. She is shown as witty, vivacious and live wire during all the social gatherings. On the surface, the film exhibits Nisha as a highly educated girl, having secured a degree in computer. She interacts with men on equal footing. On couple of occasions, she is screened as skating, smoking, and playing cricket and billiards. Owing to such depictions, she might be judged as a modern, liberated girl, but the image is just a decorative one. To give her character a positive image of an ideal woman, highly feminine traits of her characters are highlighted. In spite of her modern education and witty conversations, she is shown as sensible, coy woman. As Fareed Kazmi puts it, “All these explicit codes in common perceptions are the markers of a modern miss, who, according to the filmic discourse, constitutes a potential threat to the established order and must be made to disappear.”¹⁸ So, in order to make her acceptable, the film eliminates all such details that might project Nisha as a ‘modern miss’. Hence, even though Nisha is educated, she is never shown at her place of work. She is never shown even remotely near a computer throughout the film. The ‘modern miss’ is transformed from active agent to passive object. These erasures are not

accidental but have been made in accordance with the internal logic of the film, which portrays that a woman gains her identity bestowed by the patriarchy. In a patriarchal society, it is only the men who are the earning members; women are expected to look after the home and the family. Aarti Mehta states, "The images of woman in Indian cinema indicate the position of women in the patriarchal society, which has defined their roles, limits and functions. The process of repressing women is present in almost every film."¹⁹ Linda Williams more plainly opines, "The only apparent representation of women [in film] has been repression. Women are repressed by the very films that are supposed to represent them."²⁰

Nisha is shown to be adept at all domestic chores. She prepares dinner, waits till late night for Prem (Salman Khan) to come back from the office and also serves him food. And since Prem's favourite sweet is '*halwa*', Nisha predictably manages to make it deliciously. She manages to suitably impress Prem through her culinary skills and not by her 'computer skills'. Thus by foregrounding Nisha as a home-maker and erasing her professional skills, the film implies that Nisha is going to fit into the role of a '*seedhi-saadi*' (simple and straightforward) housewife and not be a demanding career woman. Interestingly, even Nisha is shown submitting her identity to merge it into that of her would-be husband. In her dream sequence of would-be-wife of Prem, the camera shows her the custodian of his needs and performing her role as a predicted ideal wife. Nisha, like her elder sister, Pooja, is not only an excellent cook but '*saare gunon se sampan hai*'. (HAHK) (She embodies all good qualities) Linda Williams views, "Feminine traits are those traits that

have been assigned to woman by society, a society that operates under the rules of patriarchy in which 'all men are created equal'.²¹

As far as Nisha's costumes are concerned, she is introduced in the film breezing into the room on roller skates, wearing a tight fitting jeans and a top. Since these garments are 'western' and are associated with modernity, she cannot possibly be filmed throughout the movie with the same garb. Besides, it is a general implied impression of the Bollywood Film Industry that an educated girl with modern ideas is a threat to the patriarchal system. Hence, She is often found wearing '*lehenga cholis*', '*salwar - kameez*' and of course the traditional '*saari*'. These clothes managed to convey the fact that Nisha is a domesticated Indian girl and not a '*naye khayalat ki ladki*' (a girl with modern ideas). (HAHK)

Nisha is also shown as a dutiful and self-sacrificing daughter who never questions her parents' decision. This image emerges apparently in a song where she sings, "*Main farz ki khatir, sub kuchha bhula dungii...*" (I will forget everything for the sake of my duty). (HAHK) She is a loving girl friend to Prem. Though at an overt level, the film shows them on an equal level, subtly it always portrays Nisha as subservient to him. Be it the '*juta chhupai*' (hiding of shoes) prank or the game of 'passing the parcel', Nisha always seems to lose against Prem's superior qualities. In all such incidents, male's supremacy is accentuated. Himat Kapasi rightly opines, "Whether it is a rubbish type of Indian commercial film or a type of American commercial film, women are represented as clockwork toys."²² (Translation mine)

We cannot claim that the film shows the reality of the society in its totality. At the same time, we should accept that the films are the product of a particular society of a particular time and hence, more or less this visual world resembles the real one. This is also true in the case of women. It seems the woman's life is not different whether it is in reel life or real life. Years later, (after the release of HAHK) when Madhuri Dixit (Nisha in HAHK) gets married with renowned NRI doctor, she resolves to leave her flourishing career as an actress. In an interview, she responds, "See, I don't have any intention to save or to prolong my career. I am not going to sign any film except one of Yash Chopra. I am also one 'dutiful' housewife. That is my huge responsibility."²³ (Translation mine) The thing is not different too in the film HAHK where her career is cornered against her celluloid image of dutiful daughter and would-be wife.

Ever smiling and a pot of happiness, Pooja (Renuka Sahane) is represented as the deep-rooted ideal Indian wife. As the patriarchal society demands, she is a dutiful daughter, a devoted wife, a doting sister-in-law and an affectionate *bahu*. She is a B.A. and has liking for painting. She is a good match for Rajesh (Mohnish Bahl). At the ring ceremony, the song, which is filmed on both of them, clearly echoes the notions of the patriarchal society. Its lines run like this, "*Suno jijaji, aji aapke liye, meri jiji ne bade tap he kiye, mandiro me kiye phere, puja sanj sabere, tin lok ko dise devo ko rahi ghere.*" (Listen, brother-in-law, my sister has observed great self-mortification for you, circum the temple, worshipped at morning and night, surrounded the Gods gazing at the *trilok*.) (HAHK)

While the narration of the film is significant in analysis of the characters, song and dance sequences should also be taken into consideration since they are the essential ingredients of the mainstream cinema, showing ideology and sentiments of the characters. At the marriage ceremony of Pooja, the farewell song, filmed on her, apparently represents the plight of the married woman departing to her new home. Over again, the words of the song dictate her stereotype Indian woman. Some of the lines of the song run in this fashion, "*Mere sasurji pita hai, pati devta hai, devar chhabhi Krishna ki...*" (My father-in-law is a parent, husband is a deity, brother-in-law is an image of Krishna.) (HAHK) At their arrival, the couple is blessed and gifted by their elders. Rajesh's uncle (Ajit Vachhani) fixes her in the role of Sita as she steps into their home, by giving her the Ramayana and also reminds her that there is Sita in it. Predictably, the family wishes her to play the same role. According to Sachin Bhaumick, "Our main source of family movies are two books: Ramayana and Mahabharata. So we underline in all our family movies the value of relationship, respecting elders, father, mother, brother, sister etc. and their mutual interactions, larger than life characters, clash of good and evil and how the good wins, in short, idealism in family life."²⁴

Pooja becomes an apple of an eye for everyone. She wins hearts of all the family members. She is shown busy with household chores and making her wishes and aspirations secondary. Not even once, she is shown pursuing her hobby of painting at her husband's home. Her brother-in-law, Prem admires her in these words in a song, "*Pehli kiran jab se uge, bhabhi meri*

tabse jage, sabka pura dhyan dhare, woh sham dhale tak kam kare." (From the very first ray of the sun, my *bhabhi* awakes, takes care of everybody, works till the sun sets) (HAHK) If she does not perform all these duties and spare time just for herself, would she be so ideal for the family? Kusum Rana and Manju Gupta say, "The woman is considered ideal only when she is in her nurturing roles and as a supportive supplement to a man."²⁵

The image of the woman in Indian films is either amalgamated with that of either 'virgin' or 'vamp'. The filmmakers willy-nilly avoid giving her an individual identity particularly in the mainstream cinemas. In contradiction to the feminine image as 'sexy doll' or 'item girl' of the 90's, Rajshri Production represents her as an idol of conventional hierarchical virtues. Be it Nisha, Pooja or the rest of any woman protagonist, they are bestowed with feminine qualities. These are women characters who are primarily interested to be a good helpmate to a man or to get a man – in other words, women who more closely resemble the stereotypes routinely presented in men's films. Here, the attempt is not made to show her as the modern vamp as in other hit movies of the decade like *Mohra* (1994), *Khalnayak* (1993), or *Khuddar* (1993), nevertheless the image projected is not different from the earlier commercial cinema, say that the image of homemaker. Asha Bhende rightly opines, "In films most of the female characters are portrayed as homemakers with hardly any interests outside the home. In her role as a homemaker and a mother, she is depicted as one who sacrifices all for her husband and family. When she places her family's welfare above her own, she is extolled as the ideal of Indian womanhood."²⁶

'The women-of-the-world' in HAHK have their demarcated space in which they fulfill their designated tasks. Their identity is subsidiary against the male world. What Asha Bhende believes in reference to the image of woman in commercial cinema in general is also quite appropriate in the case of the film under consideration. She says, "Many commercial films today depict women only in secondary roles. The male dominates, the female follows. The number of films where the theme revolves round the problems of women is small and even where the films do revolve round the adventures and physical feats of the hero, the heroine is not even shown as supporting him in his activities, but often plays only a decorative role, an appendage considered necessary for the song and dance sequences."²⁷ Whereas it is dreamt that Prem may earn a good name in the outer world, no such desire is expressed for the women protagonists. Rajesh and Prem are shown as tycoons, decision-makers, innovators and venturesome while the women protagonists are represented as followers and caretakers. Directly or indirectly, they are taught to be obedient and ideal wives. Kamladevi, (Reema) Nisha's mother advises her to learn how to run a home from elder sister, Pooja while she is going to stay with her. At another occasion, when Pooja dies accidentally, it becomes difficult for the family to adjust in absence of a loving person of the family. They seek to fulfill the place of Pooja by a suitable mother for the infant. Meanwhile, it is Nisha who nurses the baby and not its father, Rajesh. S. Wal and Shruti Benarji view, "Women are shown as passive, subservient, vampish and indecisive. A woman is ideal only when she is in her nurturing role, as a doting mother and a devoted wife, a Sati Savitri." "... Girls are always shown cooking and looking after the younger siblings, whereas, boys

are shown as adventurous and problem solvers.”²⁸ Likewise, Kamaladevi represents an ideal mother. She keenly looks after the needs of her husband and daughters. She is never shown to express any desire, hope or aspiration of her own and expects her daughters to follow her steps. The other women characters are also ideal counterparts of their respective husbands and those that try to step out of this stereotyped role are condemned not only within the film but by also the viewers.

HAAK has its predecessor in *‘Maine Pyar Kiya’* (1989) - a musical love story that hit the box office with tremendous response from the audience. Getting inspired by this success, Rajshri Production came up with *‘Hum Aapke Hain Koun’*. By catering the expectations of the mass, the film made it way to break all time box office records. The decade also witnessed the films almost similar in content and the treatment. The movielore appreciated films like *‘Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge’*(1995), *‘Raja Hindustani’* (1996), *‘Hum Dil De Chuke Sanam’*(1999), and *‘Hum Saath Saath Hain’*(1999). Among all these films, in one way or the other, the women protagonists are represented with the age old cinematic outlook. Rajshri Production’s *‘Maine Pyar Kiya’*, *‘Hum Aapke Hain Koun’* and *‘Hum Saath Saath Hain’* portrait the man’s world with superior qualities to the female counterparts. Vinod Bhardwaj says, “Definitely in the relationship of man-woman (means a lover), a man is more unjust, aggressive and ingenious, therefore by the medium of films, the image of women of Rajshri Production has damaged significantly the Indian woman since fake traditionalism and idealism is projected over there.”²⁹ (Translation mine)

It is true that HAHK is distinct from average films in the sense that it does not show any of the women characters with negative traits. The subsidiary women protagonists are also projected with noble feminine virtues. Only an aunt (Bindu) and Rita (Sahila Chaddha) play characters with a slight tinge of negative traits. Certainly, they appear more as comic rather than celluloid antagonist of 90's. Nevertheless, two contradictory images of women have been shot on the reel. Romila Thapar views, "... thus both the images – that of the goddess and that of a lowly being – distance the woman from the normal order of things, very cleverly making her the 'other'. In the social set-up, woman's experience is not considered noteworthy."³⁰

All the women characters in the film are set into the stereotypical role of mothers, sisters, wives, *bhabhis*, would-be-wives and sisters-in-law. They are not projected with independent identity. It is always in the relation of the male that they are defined. Sunil Dhar and S.N. Pattnaik observe, "Image of women in the Indian media has always been projected wrongly and unrealistically. Newspapers, magazines, radio, television and films all these mass medium are not putting any concrete efforts to change the conventional image of Indian women. Instead of enhancing the prestige and respect of women in Indian media, these mediums knowingly or unknowingly are contributing for lowering the image of women by projecting superficial, physical and ornamental characteristics of women."³¹ Not only that, while depicting an ideal woman, the focus of the camera-eye is often on the low neck-lined clothes of the idealized woman protagonist. They are often attired in set of clothes which expose those parts of the bodies which are otherwise

supposed to remain concealed. In the name of art and designer dresses, the women characters are exposed to male gaze. Moreover, It would be worthwhile to note that even behind the camera, in making of the film, there is hardly any female artist except the singers, make-up assistants and the characters themselves. After all the scrutiny, one can sum up that even a box office hits like HAHK do not depict the women in the right manner. They hardly play a lead role in the sense that their roles do not make contribution in furthering the story line. Their characters, however idealized, are used to attract the male audience and to play with the sentiments of the women viewers.

(IV)

Sholay and *Hum Aapke Hain Koun* were the trend setters in their own way during a specific period of time. They present two different social ambiances and treat their women protagonists in their own way. Neither of them, like most of the commercial films, concerns as regards to women' issues and yet they articulate a specific celluloid image of women, almost same as their existing image in the society. Both the films even envisage the collective male ideology practised in day-to-day life. In both the films, there exists a strong patriarchal authority under which the women protagonists partake and play their roles.

Basanti and Radha are the chief women characters in *Sholay*. Since the film is largely centered around male protagonists, female characters have peripheral significance only. Theirs is the world with limited space and in which they feel content performing their assigned roles. They are mostly

emotional appendages for their male counterparts who perform heroic tasks. Unlike *Sholay*, *Hum Aapke Hain Koun* is a family drama. The film narrates a story of a joint family of Kailasnath in which conflicts and contradictions have no place. In the words of the maker of the film, Suraj Barjatya, “The film is a tribute to the traditional joint family.”³² The dissimilarity between the films ends here. As far as the portrayal of the women characters is concerned, it does not differ from its predecessor. Nisha and her elder sister, Pooja, the leading women protagonists find their happy world in performing their role as traditional daughter, wife and mother. They never question the parents’ decisions. Though they have acquired high education and belong to the upper middle class family, neither of them has any personal hope, aspiration and desire. Paradoxically, their feminine traits overshadow their professional skill and make them suitable to be perfect home-makers. Lynda Nead aptly views, “‘Woman’ is offered as a unified and coherent category through the fulfillment of her domestic duties and mission.”³³ (Gita Viswanath, 44)

In *Sholay*, except Radha and Basanti, there is hardly any other major female character. The reason can be that the maker of the film might be interested in foregrounding the macho image of the male characters excluding other women characters in this violent action film. The male world occupies large space and time and women protagonists – those who are in the film, except in song and dance numbers, remain out of the domain. While *Hum Aapke Hain Koun*, being a family drama, probably covers a good number of women characters and they are offered more space and time to develop. Besides Nisha and Pooja, there are other women characters. But, all of them

follow the patriarchal authority like traditional Indian women. They are 'angel in the home' who think that service and obedience to their husband or father is the passport for their happiness and safety.

In fact, none of the women protagonists in both the films asserts for their rights and freedom. Rather, they happily find themselves protected under the shelter of patriarchy. In neither of the films, attempts have been made to show women as pursuers of their dreams and desires. The filmmakers of both the films set their women characters largely in their traditional role and obviously more in the context of love and marriage. The filmmakers, remaining faithful to the Indian dogmas, do not allow their female characters to transcend the patriarchal laws. The films simultaneously denote that as far as women live within the fortified boundary of society, they would have less traumas and tensions.

Note: Dialogues and fragments of the songs of the movies are translated by me. References from the movies in the chapter are shown as (SLY: for *Sholay*) and (HAHK: for *Hum Aapke Hain Koun*).

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STUDY OF REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN

IN GUJARATI FILMS

CHAPTER – VI

(I)

Any regional cinema, by and large, is a component of the national cinema i.e. Hindi cinema and it is more germane if one talks about pre-independence era. However, in a country like India with so many diversities; indigenous culture, tradition, ethics, values and other factors make a regional cinema distinct from the mainstream. When we look at the history of Gujarati cinema, we would find that in the beginning, it was amalgamated with Hindi cinema. The reason could be that Gujarat had not received separate existence as it was then under the Mumbai State. Moreover, the films were produced and watched at Mumbai, the economic capital of India, where many people other than Gujarati also lived. Hence, during the silent era, as the films had no voice, the audience was multi-lingual and multi-cultured; one would hesitate to call the films 'Gujarati'. It was only through the costumes of the characters and the subjects dealt in those films, one could fathom that the films were Gujarati in genre. When the talkie era began, Gujarati cinema got a separate identity. In order to understand distinguishing traits and concepts of Gujarati cinema and the projection of the women in films, it would be better to have a glance in the history.

Gujarati language was heard on the screen for the first time when the first full-length Gujarati feature film, *Narsinh Mehta* was released on 9th of April, 1931 in Bombay. With the release of this film, the voyage of Gujarati cinema commenced in a true sense. Though the production was very meager, Gujarati cinema was slowly but steadily gaining an independent identity. Only 11 films were made between 1931-'41. *Sati Savitri* (1932) and *Sansarlila*

(1934) can be considered woman-centered film among them. *Achhoot* (1939) also won plaudits on the box-office. During this era, Gujarati cinema revelled in mythological and devotional themes. There was a glimmer of social reformist zeal among certain filmmakers.

The early 40s were barren for the Gujarati film industry because of the War years. A break-through came in 1945 when *Ranakdevi* became an instant hit. It started a period of prosperity for Gujarati films. The filmmakers turned to historical, religious and social themes to satiate the demand of the audience. *Kunwarbainu Mameru* (1945), *Gunsundari* (1947), *Jesal Toral* (1948), *Jogidas Khuman* (1948) and *Mangalfera* (1949) were successful films of the era. An image of ideal woman was drawn in *Nanand-Bhojai* (1947) and *Mangalfera*.

The fifties again proved largely barren as most of the filmmakers were turning to Bombay with a view to making Hindi films and earning good rewards. However, a few films like *Gadano Bel* (1950), *Mulumanek* (1951) and *Malela Jeev* (1956) proved popular on the theatres. The 60s was remarkable in Gujarati cinema for various successful experiments were attempted. Social theme formula brought success in this decade. A few of the films concerning with feminine sensibilities are *Akhand Saubhagyavati* (1963), *Liludi Dharti* (1968) and *Kanku* (1969). The later presents a story of a widow who struggles to retain her self-esteem against duping social circumstances.

70s is believed to be the golden era of the Gujarati cinema. The state government's announcement of exemption in the entertainment tax on all Gujarati films boosted up the production. *Jesal Toral* (1971), *Santu Rangili* (1976), *Kashino Dikro* (1979) and *Mari Hel Utaro Raj* (1977) won appreciation from the audience. *Dakurani Ganga* (1976) and *Parki Thapan* (1979) were woman-centered films pertaining to different themes. In fact, numbers of films were made with the tone of folk-tales and in them the 'Sati concept' was manipulated to portray the image of the ideal woman.

80s marked a complete change in the audience's tastes and interests. Outdated folk themes and social family dramas have given place to the so called action films with unlimited fights and sick love scenes like Hindi films. *Bhavni Bhavai* (1980), *Dhola Maru* (1983), *Ma Veena Suno Sansar* (1981-82), *Hiran Ne Kanthe* (1984) and *Mahisagar Ne Aare* (1989) won applaud at the box-office.

90s onwards, the cineastes have trailed Hindi film formula to pull in the crowd at the theaters. More often than once, they have replicated the Hindi film's subject in Gujarati. The heroine began to take a role model of romantic partner for the hero. *Manvini Bhavai* (1993), *Unchi Medi Na Uncha Mol* (1997), *Desh Re Joya Dada Pardesh Joya* (1998), *Dariyachhoru* (1999) and *Pandadu Lilu Ne Rang Rato* (1999) were the blockbusters of 90s. The Gujarati Film Industry has given a few commercial hit films in the current decade like *Mahiyar Maa Manadu Nathi Lagtu* (2001), *Gam Ma Piyariyu Ne*, *Gam Ma Sasariyu* (2005) and *Muthi Uchero Manas* (2006).

Looking into the history of Gujarati cinema, one would feel that even though Gujarati cinema has a parallel history to Hindi cinema, it has not evolved with the changing time and trends. Rather, it has stringently adhered to the old themes and techniques. Unlike its Hindi counterparts, Gujarati films, for a considerably long period of time dealt with either the lives of saints, kings or person of some importance, or with culture specific themes, usually enmeshed in rural backdrop. The reason behind this trend was that it mainly targeted for the rural audience, ignoring the possibility of attracting the educated urban viewers. However, during the late seventies, some of the filmmakers chose to depart from this trend and started to produce films, dealing with social issues or based on some literary works. The films made from literary works were devoid of directors' own creativity, cinematic elements and charm and hence they could not attract the audience for a long time. Besides, as Bakul Telar observes, "With a few exceptions, no mark of social, political, cultural events of 20th century in Gujarat, Independence Struggle, Maha-Gujarat Movement, Reformation Movement, Reservation Campaign, Famines of Gujarat or social transformation brought by Industrial Activities could be seen in Gujarati cinema."¹ (translation mine) Moreover, as a commercial art too, the films have not been made in the category of thriller, suspense, musical, horror, crime, action and animation. It has been a tendency of Gujarati filmmakers to reproduce the films frequently with the same subject. All these factors have directly or indirectly constrained the scope to change the celluloid image of the woman.

As far as representation of women in Gujarati films is concerned, they are portrayed in their traditional hues since the inception. They have been shown deriving their identity only through their relationship with their male counterparts. Very few films have dealt with the feminine issues, and very few among them have achieved success and hardly any has played a significant role to alter the social purviews. Moreover, the films have shown women in subsidiary roles, upholding traditional values. They represent the community and are seen as reserves of community values. In the words of Mahashweta Devi, “Even after fifty years we’re at a point of no return. Today India has an extension of a medieval value system.”² (Bandana Chakrabarty, 165)

In the light of such background, it would be significant to study how women are represented in Arun Bhatt’s *Parki Thapan* and Govind Patel’s *Desh Re Joya Dada Pardesh Joya*. Both the films proved very successful in their times. The films were released in different era and therefore it would be interesting to see whether the image of the woman protagonist has taken a new mould or not on the screen. This research intends to explore the representation of the women protagonists focusing on their role in the narrative schemata, their treatment by the male protagonists and their own reactions towards them and their reading by the audience.

(II)

Parki Thapan, directed by Arun Bhatt, is a woman centered film, a rarity in Gujarati cinema. Obviously, the film narrates a tragic tale of a young woman named Usha. A love story of Nisha also runs parallel with the main

narrative of the film. Two sisters, Usha and Nisha get separated as Usha is lost accidentally in her childhood. She is found by Thakur Vijaysinh in another town and he rears her considering a God's gift. The film moves on swiftly and shows the grown up sisters in two different environments. Nisha is brought up at her father's house in an educated and urban background. She is studying in a college and comes into contact with a brilliant student, Ajay. Both confess their love to each other. They continue to meet secretly away from the college and home. They dream to get married soon. But, the fate has something altogether different stored for the lovers. Ajay returns to the village to look after her sick mother and from her, he learns that his betrothal had been fixed with a village girl, Gauri during his childhood. To oblige to his sick mother, he chooses to get married with the girl of her choice. On the other hand, Usha has reached a marriageable age too and her father, Thakur Vijaysinh is anxious to find a suitable match for her. But since he is not her biological father, he finds it difficult to get a match for her. It is then a kind hearted Manoj who comes forward to accept Usha's hand.

The story takes a twist when the train by which both the newly married couples are traveling meets with an accident. In this mishap the wives are exchanged and Ajay brings Usha to his home thinking her to be Gauri. In good time, he comes to know her real identity and starts to search for her husband and father but all in vain. When Usha realizes that she is not Ajay's wife, she runs away from his house and coincidentally she is found by Madhavrai. Subsequently, she is sent to Manoj's house to nurse her ill mother. In fact, she is at her husband's house but she thinks it better to

withhold the secret as she finds that Manoj is going to marry Nisha. It is a marriage time again and frustrated Usha decides to end her life. But the fate again plays its role when all the characters get together at the marriage ceremony. All the complications and misunderstandings get clear towards the end. Manoj accepts her lost wife, Usha open-heartedly and the lovers – Ajay and Nisha are also blessed to be bound in a knot. The film ends as two sisters get their desired destination after long suffering.

The film revolves round the sorry state of two chief women protagonists, Usha (Snehlata) and Nisha (Ragini). Usha is projected outright as a dutiful daughter. For her, well-being of her father and later of her husband remains a principal motive of her life. Though she is grown up in a rich family, she is devoid of education. She is primarily represented as submissive by temperament and nonchalant about her present or future. Her ways of life are decided by a male person around. She seems to be trapped in the male dominated world. Her life becomes more and more wretched as the story advances. In fact, viewers watch her as a domestic doll weeping on the screen night after night which only strengthens the stereotype of a helpless, weak and powerless woman. Ever since she was lost in the train when a child, the audience keeps on guessing what would be her plight.

The camera quickly moves on Usha who is found and reared by Thakur Vijaysinh (Arvind Pandya). She enjoys serving her father without being bothered to get married. But for her father, her nuptials is his primary concern. He endeavours to find an appropriate match for her several times but she is

not considered fit for the inter-caste matrimony for the reason that she is not originally Thakur's daughter. Hence, she has to bear humiliation frequently for the same reason. In Indian society, an unmarried girl is considered a mark of disgrace for the family. Consequently, the parents are eager to send the daughter to *parke ghar* (other's house) as soon as possible. When Usha's nuptial does not turn possible, Vijaysinh considers himself '*Abhagi Pita*' (unlucky father). The young girl finds herself alienated and a worthless burden for her parent. And hence, when Manoj (Dipak Gheewala) shows his willingness to hold Usha's hand, her father feels greatly relieved from the anxiety. Evidently, it can be seen that whatever happens and whoever comes in Usha's life, she never asserts her likes and dislikes, her agreement and disagreement. Her life remains rudderless in the male hegemonic society.

A train accident plays a crucial role in Usha's life. It happens that while returning with Manoj, a train accident takes place and unknowingly the brides are exchanged owing to it. She comes to live with Ajay (Rajiv), thinking him to be her husband. A clear picture of idealized Gujarati wife emerges hereafter. She is enclosed in the four walls, always looking after the needs of her husband. She is hardly ever presented in the social gatherings. Her home becomes her world and her husband her deity. However, she passes through traumatic conditions as she suffers from the insensitivity of her husband who is, in fact, not her husband. When she comes to know the truth of their relationship, she feels helpless without any support to cling to. She finds no place to live in and becomes the victim of feeling 'unprotected'. And consequently, she runs away to commit suicide. The incident denotes that

women cannot have a respectable identity without being under the shelter of a man; as a daughter, a wife or a mother. As Manu, the law-maker of Hindu ideology, says, "In childhood a female must be subject to her father, in youth to her husband, when her lord is dead to her sons; a woman must never be independent."³ (Aruna Vasudev, 98) What drives Usha to run away from Ajay's house is her sense of being unprotected and guilt of staying with a stranger in his house, which is quite unpardonable social offence for a woman.

The film minutely brings before us the tragic plight of an average Indian woman like Usha who is dependant on others' grace. Like a chattel, she is passed from one master to another. Even when she finds her real husband, Manoj, she decides to sacrifice her privilege because of an obligation to Nisha and her guilt of living with another man. She takes care of Manoj's needs and nurses his old mother secretly taking proud of doing wifely duties. Her image as an ideal wife emerges when she says, "*Have to jivish toy mara pati ni seva karta ane marish toy mara swamina charnoma.*" (Now, I will live serving my husband and die at the feet of my master.) (PT) It is, however, towards the end that she is accepted by Manoj when her real identity is revealed. Hindu mythology advocates an ideal wife must be sexually pure and the epitome of sexual fidelity. And hence, Usha has to pass through an acid test to assure her chastity before she is allowed to take the preoccupied place. Usha's fault is that she is too mild and docile to assert herself. Colette Dowling states, "It has to do with dependency: the need to lean on someone... Those needs stay with us into adulthood, clamouring for

fulfillment right alongside our need to be self-sufficient.... Any woman who looks within knows that she was never trained to feel comfortable with the idea of taking care of herself, standing up for herself, asserting herself.”⁴

As far as her wardrobes are concerned, she is represented draped in the traditional saari. The filmmaker has endeavoured to project her as a simple and guileless country girl unknown of the way of the world. She is hardly ever exposed in any way on the screen. Basically, the film shows her as a true to life picture of a Gujarati woman. In fact, her image stands for an average vernacular woman who considers ‘to be wife and mother’ is the sole purpose of her life. As Marry Anne Doane observes, “Women in films are often merely objects used to advertise to the masses. As both object and subject, women are both a representation for the commodity (often fashion or make-up) and the consumer who buys that commodity. The commodity, however, doesn’t have to be material; it can be an idea. The audience identifies with the commodity (in both cases women) and then “buys” the concept. Unlike material purchases, the selling of ideas can be instantaneous, and, therefore, extremely effective.”⁵ The image of the idealized woman projected through the character of Usha reinforces the patriarchal order in the psyche of the audience.

The other chief woman protagonist of the film is Nisha. She is a dear daughter of her father, Madhavrai (Vishnukumar Vyas) who is the principal in a Law College. She seems to interact on equal footing with her male counterparts. She is outspoken and honest at heart. She falls in love with Ajay

at their very first meeting. She even dares to express her feelings for Ajay to her father. She seems to be amicable, educated, free willing and inquisitive. Simultaneously, a seeming independent woman turns to be vulnerable when she confronts with the male world.

It is a general practice of Gujarati cinema to present the male protagonists in larger than life view but the same portrayal of female protagonists is a remote possibility. They are hardly a match for the male protagonists. Nisha, though talented and clever, loses at a prank against Ajay during a picnic. Moreover, as soon as her marriage is finalized with Ajay, she restricts herself in wearing a traditional Gujarati dress. Her manners and the language she uses also undergo a change. In fact, she is transformed to an acceptable 'wifely material'. It sounds right when Kobita Sarkar says, "After the heroine has crossed the flirtation line into serious consideration by the hero – she restricts herself to the glamour and femininity which the saari lends her even though more informal clothes would be more appropriate."⁶ Tania Modleski more aptly views, "After setting the women up as the object of male desire and curiosity, the film proceeds to submit her to a process of purification whereby she is purged of her excess sexuality in order to be rendered fit for her place in the patriarchal order."⁷

In contrast to the female counterparts, male protagonists are reflected with superior qualities. They are highly educated and celebrate dignified locus in their group. While Ajay is the top student in the college and a lawyer later on, Manoj has obtained a medical degree from abroad. On the

other hand, female protagonists are confined to the domestic roles. They have hardly anything to do with the outer world. Obedience and service to the male seem to be the attributes of their personality. Both the women protagonists are largely the sufferers of their own psychological fears and enslavement. Bharati Ashok Parikh opines, "In traditional Hindu culture, a female by convention and practice ought to be shy, modest and should exhibit childlike obedience and reverence to elders. In addition to these, dependence, deference and servitude to elderly male are other attributes of the female gender in Hindu culture."⁸

Besides the chief women protagonists, there are Urmilaben (Vatsala Deshmukh) and Chandra (Rajnibala) who play fairly significant roles in the story. Urmilaben is a widowed mother of Manoj. She has passed hard days to get her son obtain a higher degree in medicine and then his marriage remains a prime motive of her life. Chandra, wife of Lalit (Ramesh Mehta), is garrulous and soft at heart. Almost all the women protagonists are shown with feminine traits and virtues. The film is an exception in the case that none of the woman leads is reflected as morally degraded.

It is also significant to see that Gujarati cinema has a long tradition to express sexuality through pun and vulgar dialogues and humorous scenes rather than physical exposure. Undoubtedly, the woman protagonist remains an object of erotic pleasure for the male fantasies. Sexist language is a device used more often than not in Gujarati films for the purpose. In the film under discussion, Chandra is represented more as a caricature figure rather than an

equal partner of her husband, Lalit. He describes her using words with negative connotations. Many gender-related words metaphorically insult or belittle her as animals and objects. As Narendra Nath Kalia puts it, “By enabling us to speak / think of women in unfavourable terms, such language actually prompts us and those who hear us to believe that women are, in fact, bad or inferior.”⁹

Much in the film has a bearing on how female characters live their lives and their complex relationships with the men who mostly control them. There is a substantial exploration of female experience and provides a wider view of society. A woman’s desire to be possessed by a man and her emotional dependence on him has been focused on in the film. Here, it is the men who are instrumental in deciding the fate of the women and the vulnerability of the weaker sex is stressed. A woman protagonist, Usha faces many social prejudices and orthodoxies, yet none of these problems is articulated or challenged. The title song of the movie faithfully reflects the vision of the male-world; “*Dikri ne gay dore tyan jay, dikri to parki thapan kahevay.*” (A daughter and a cow would go wherever they are prodded; the daughter is considered another person’s property.) (PT)

(III)

Produced and directed by Govind Patel, *Desh Re Joya Dada Pardesh Joya* ran and re-ran almost in all the theatres of Gujarat attracting the viewers of rural and urban area. The film narrates a love story of a poor boy and a rich girl flourishing under the rigid patriarchal system. Ram, an orphan child, is unable to pay the school fees and hence the teacher threatens him to

expel from the school. Radha, sympathizing his plight, pays the fees on his behalf and saves his education. A day later, Ram with her sick mother goes to stay at his uncle's (his mother's brother's) home in another village. The film quickly introduces young Ram and Radha making fun of each other in Laxmi's nuptials ceremony. The marriage is also attended by NRI Deepak and Rita who have come to India to find a suitable match. Rajesh, a younger son of Savjibhai gets knotted with Rita keeping the elders in the dark. Radha goes to stay at Laxmi's house where she meets her long separated love. They express their eternal love there and then. Finding it a perfect match, the families arrange their marriage. But, things were not so easy for them. Ram is kidnapped on the same day of his marriage and is believed to be murdered. It is a cunning craft of Hari and Velji who want to get Radha married with Deepak only. By sending the dead body of someone else, they keep Ram alive and imprison him in a solitary cottage under the guard of hooligans. Meanwhile, the sense of family revenge and intrigues from the part of Rita, Ganga, Hari and Velji upset the tranquil familial world of *dada* (grandfather).

The joint family is about to be divided when Deepak again plays a cunning role and wins the heart of everyone by cursing his sister, Rita for her involvement behind all those disputes in the family. Deepak very fraudulently presents himself as a staunch follower of Indian traditions and the deceived *dada* thinks him to be a suitable match for Radha. Ram succeeds to escape from the captivity, but it is too late for him. Radha flies to USA with her NRI husband. However, Ram comes to know that it was a plan of Hari and Velji to prevent his marriage with Radha. To take the revenge of earlier insults,

Deepak treats Radha very rudely and cruelly. During the scuffle, he falls down from the top floor of the building and loses his life. A widowed Radha returns to India with her in-laws. At the climax, there is a bloody fight between Velji's gang-men and the grandfather's family. The grandfather loses his life to save his children. The film comes to a happy end as Ram and Radha are united forever.

The story moves around the lives of members of a very large family, consisting of grandparents, sons, daughters, daughters-in-law, uncles and aunts. But primarily, the film largely revolves round the aspirations and anxieties of Radha (Roma Manek), a younger daughter of Savjibhai. As the title of the film itself suggests, the central cord of the story is Radha who experiences two incompatible worlds – East and West. Her life treads on zigzag way though not for her own fault. It is interesting to see how the woman protagonist moves with the progress of the story. By and large, the film projects her as an ideal Gujarati girl throughout.

The film shows Radha as a loving member of the joint family since her childhood. She revels the festivities and celebrations enthusiastically. At the same time, she knows her duties and responsibilities well. She is an affectionate daughter to her father as well as to her grandfather and a doting sister for her brothers. Because of her benign nature, Ram (Hiten Kumar) could study further. She even does not hesitate to oppose the family's decisions when they are to affect her life. She refuses to get married with Deepak (Sunil Sokhi) even though he is the choice of her parents. An

educated girl knows well the malicious role of her uncle Haribhai (late Narayan Rajgor) and aunt Gangaben (Kalpana Diwan) in intriguing against the stable family. She represents an image of the educated modern girl at a few instances.

Looking at the other side of the image of the woman protagonist, one would come across the frustrating details. She enjoys the pivotal position in the family, yet she does not have the privileges that are offered to the male members. She has been taught not to speak or act against the male wishes. Obedience and servitude seem to be her in-born qualities. At a time, it appears she defies the paternal laws by falling in love with Ram. But Indian cinema, both Hindi and in regional languages, allows the woman character to take such freedom if it is devotional kind of love like Radha and Krishna of Hindu mythology. Moreover, the viewers take it for granted and instead of condemning the lady's love, appreciate her dedicated love. And hence, the filmmaker willingly represents the role model of Radha in film after film. Ratan (Anandi Tripathi) in *Mahiyar Maa Mandu Nathi Lagtu* (2001) is shown more or less in the same light. K. Moti Gokulsing and Wimal Dissanayke aver, "Women were permitted to indulge in romantic love if it followed the Radha – Krishna model. In classical Indian texts, the love of Radha for Krishna is all-consuming, absolutely pure and eternal and this is the kind of romantic love depicted in mainstream Indian films. Women who seek to live by the traditional norms find happiness, while those who dare to transgress them are punished and victimized."¹⁰

An educated and seeming independent girl succumbs to the decisions of the family's venerable head, *Dada*, (Arvind Trivedi) when he arranges her matrimony with Deepak. As Ram is believed to be dead, she agrees with their choice despite her unwillingness. Moreover, she symbolizes an ideal image of the Indian wife in America where she silently endures her husband's perpetration and humiliation day in day out. She is shown doing 'puja' and looking after her in-laws. For her, her husband is not less than 'pameshwar' (god) even though he beats and persecutes her. In fact, she represents the traditional image of 'pativrata' (devoted to husband) who has been inculcated that dedication to her husband is her basic 'dharma' (duty). As Susan Wadley quotes from the *Laws of Manu*, "Though destitute of virtue, or seeking pleasure (elsewhere), or devoid of good qualities, a husband must be constantly worshipped as a god by a faithful wife."¹¹ Hindu religion teaches that to revolt means further moral decadence and it will multiply their *kukarmas* (sins) in this life. Radha has absorbed the ethos of orthodox upper class family living and fastidiously performs the duties expected of her as wife. She envisages the ideal traditional wife, no matter whether she is in India or in USA.

As far as her costumes are concerned, Radha is represented in traditional rural garbs and sarees. It is in song and dance numbers that the woman protagonist is objectified as a sex symbol. The lights brighten up her fairness luminously; the camera angles on specific parts of the body and the actions are made to squirm and wriggle the body to welcome the male gaze. The dress designing is accordingly made to carry out the purport. Unlike Hindi

cinema where sexual exposure of a heroine is a common practice, Gujarati cinema restricts itself to some extent. Nevertheless, the camera hardly misses a shot to show semi-nudity of the women protagonists through traditional wardrobes.

One would not surprise if he sees women either idealized as a goddess or as a morally degraded in the films. Whereas the man is supposed to be highly intellectual and civilized after studying or living in the West, the woman is regarded 'modern' with all the immoral values associated with a western lifestyle. In the film under discussion, Rita (Pinki Parikh) exemplifies the second side of the male view. She is introduced in the film wearing a tight fitting jeans and a top. She laces her vocabulary with English words. A modern girl does not believe in adhering to the patriarchal dogmas. She refuses to occupy a secondary locust the family offers to the newly arrived wife. She seduces Rajesh (Rajdeep) to marry her and then intrigues to intersect the family so that she can have an important place in the family. She deceives almost everyone by her fake demeanor. Noticeably, a modern girl in the film is expected to reform her behaviour towards the end of the film or gets punished. Rita confesses her wrong doings and acknowledges the true value of Indian culture and tradition. K. Moti Gokulsing and Wimal Dissanayke opine, "There is an interesting contradiction here. Indian cinema is a product of cultural modernity and it has accelerated the process of modernity in India as few other media have. Yet the woman who chooses to identify herself with modernity is almost always portrayed as decadent and punished for it."¹²

In fact, the film represents two contradictory versions of the woman; women with positive traits are Radha, Laxmi (Dixita Gajjar) and Sharda (Bhumika Sheth), while Rita, Gita and aunt Ganga display some base qualities. Laxmi and Sharda are pictured as 'an angel in the home' serving male round the clock and are unconcerned about their own expectations and aspirations. Conversely, Gita and aunt Ganga indulge in rifting the family into two. However, in spite of their good or bad qualities, women are portrayed inferior to the masculine gender. They tolerate thrashing, slapping and abuses when the males doubt their virtues. Jyotika Viridi quotes, "Women, the prominently visible "heavenly bodies" with little material or directorial control in the industry, are the putative ventriloquists' dummies reassuring men of their dominance."¹³ Moreover, the younger women characters undergo more traumatic conditions as they are marginalized not only to the males but to the elderly women also.

The family is the primary unit of an individual's life. It is the family which socializes a person – a male or a female to perform the designated functions. In the family based on patriarchy, women are expected to be docile, passive and conventional. Kamla Bhasin notes, "The family is also important for socializing the next generation in patriarchal values. It is within the family that we learn the first lessons in hierarchy, subordination, discrimination. Boys learn to assert and dominate, girls to submit, to expect unequal treatment."¹⁴ In the film under scrutiny, women are mostly projected preserving the cultural values. It is only the 'fallen' women who defy the norms. Moreover, society, religion or tradition control women's freedom and consequently they are

deprived of power and knowledge. One would hardly disagree with Virginia Woolf's opinion that patriarchal society is the root cause of educational, economic and cultural backwardness and disabilities hampering women's creative, cultural and social growth and stature.

The film is no exception from hackneyed formula of representing women. There is no 'a replacement or transformational model' of Sita and Savitri in the film released towards the end of the 20th century. The film evokes our cultural heritage and moral values. But the way the characters of women are depicted is annoying. Besides, the element of voyeurism, the subjugation of the women – in spite of their education and family background – in more than one ways, sends wrong signals in the new millennium where equality and equal opportunities for all are watchwords. The women have been relegated to the passive position in film after film. What Budd Boeticher says about the narrative cinema in the west is also true for their Indian counterparts, "What counts is what the heroine provokes, or rather what she represents... In herself the woman has not the slightest importance."¹⁵

(IV)

Parki Thapan and *Desh Re Joya Dada Pardesh Joya* reflect the plight of an average Indian woman. Both the films swivel round the women protagonists and primarily throw light on the issue of their matrimony. *Parki Thapan* is divided in two parallel subplots, dealing with a life of Usha and Nisha respectively. Having lost the umbrella of parental warmth and care, Usha finds it difficult to get an appropriate alliance. While Nisha, in spite of having strong family background, becomes a prey of circumstances.

Throughout the film, both the women protagonists are projected as dutiful and obedient daughters and devoted wives or lovers. The representation of the young girl is also more or less the same in *Desh Re Joya Dada Pardesh Joya*. The chief woman protagonist, Radha, though enjoys freedom in choosing husband on her own at one stage, yields to the decision of the grandfather. She silently endures all the exactions and suppressions of her husband, Deepak in the USA. The director exemplifies the ideal image of Indian woman through the character sketch of Radha.

Besides the chief women protagonists, Usha and Nisha, there are other significant characters like Urmilaben and Chandra in *Parki Thapan*. But, they also do not form any separate identity in the narrative. Women, though there are many, the filmmaker seems not interested in depicting any independent woman character. *Desh Re Joya Dada Pardesh Joya* presents the world of the women divided in two parts; women with good virtues and those with corrupt values. Besides Radha, Laxmi and Sharda carry a typical image of Indian women, fastidiously performing their wifely duties expected from them. Rita, Geeta and aunt Ganga are portrayed with degraded qualities but they are reformed towards the end of the film. In neither of the films, women come out from the cocoon of patriarchal social system. Their roles and functions are determined by the male and they unquestioningly perform those duties. Those who defy the system are relegated not just by characters within the story but also by the presence in the auditorium. In fact, women, adhering to the old values and orthodoxies and being submissive to the patriarchy, exalt superior standing of the masculine gender. As Virginia Woolf

puts it, "Women have served all these centuries as looking glasses possessing the magic and delicious power of reflecting the figure of man at twice its natural size."¹⁶

The title, *Parki Thapan* means that a woman, especially a daughter is like somebody's property in her father's house, having no say in the matter regarding her nuptials. Surprisingly, an uneducated girl, Usha and highly educated Nisha both sacrifice their desires in favour of marrying a boy of their father's choice. They are depicted like emotional dolls, too willing to oblige their male relations. *Desh Re Joya Dada Pardesh Joya* screens the similar image. Thus, both the films are no exception from hackneyed formula of representing women. Besides the element of voyeurism, the subjugation of the women in more than one ways can easily be observed. The women protagonists in both the films face many social prejudices and orthodoxies, yet none of these problems is challenged by them.

Note: All the dialogues and fragments of the songs of the movies are translated by me. References from the movies in the chapter are shown as (PT for *Parki Thapan*) and (DJPJ for *Desh Re Joya Dada Pardesh Joya*).

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PORTRAYAL OF WOMEN IN HINDI

AND GUJARATI FILMS:

A COMPARISON

CHAPTER – VII

From the study of the blockbusters in Hindi and Gujarati, it can be ascertained that stories depicted on the screen are mainly male-oriented, reflecting their conflicts, dreams, aspirations, desires, heroism and masculinity. The woman exists only in relation to the men, as their mothers, wives and especially their lovers. There would hardly be a story that revolves around a single unattached woman. In addition, one rarely ever comes across an instance, where a woman is shown to act independently, taking her own decisions, questioning authority. Traditionally, women have been reduced to being a mere spectacle in the movies. It is only in the song and dance numbers that they attain a central locus that is otherwise denied in the narrative discourse.

According to Gayatri Gopinath, “Forty percent of an average popular Indian film is made up of song-and-dance or fighting sequences”¹ and obviously women’s specially constituted role as spectacle, as the subject of the ‘look’, is especially evident in the songs and dance numbers which are sine qua non for the publicity and selling of a film. For instance, ‘*Mehbooba mehbooba...*’ song filmed on Helen in revealing outfits in *Sholay* seems completely out of context. Likewise, in another song in the same film, where Veeru’s life depends on Basanti’s capacity to dance in order to keep him alive, the camera zooms onto different curves and contours of her body. In fact, there is an entire genre of songs, called ‘item numbers’ in industry parlance, which generally have a showgirl or dancer performing, and a predominantly male audience watching, that are deliberately inserted into the film, often without any relevant connection with the story. At times, just one such song

carries the load of the entire film, making it a hit. '*Chamma chamma*' from *China Gate* (1998), '*Chumma chumma de de*' from *Hum* (1991), or '*Hama... hama... Ek ho gaye hum or tum*' from *Bombay* (1995), '*Mehbooba.... Mehbooba*', from *Sholay* are some of such hit numbers. In such songs, the styling in terms of make up and costumes, and the cinematic elements of lighting and shot taking – the way the body is arranged with respect to the subjective camera and hence the eye of the audience, the movement of the body – all add up in turning the woman into a spectacle. Asha Bhende observes, "In modern films no such demarcation (that of vamp and virgin) is found necessary and most female characters are required to reveal their physical charms, because such exposure is claimed to be essential for the proper delineation of the concerned characters and a necessary element of the story."² In modern films, where a vamp has disappeared from the screen, a heroine has begun to expose her physical charm to fill the gap. Take an example from the movie, *Hum Aapke Hain Koun..?* Even in this seemingly 'clean' movie, in a song like '*Didi tera devar diwana...*' the gaze is invited to certain parts of the body of the heroine. The selection of the costumes is often dazzling with sequins or a metallic finish, brightly coloured and revealingly cut with a make-up techniques to match it. This masculine ideology does not bend even slightly in regional cinemas.

In Gujarati cinema, the songs, in most cases based on the folk tradition, are the convenient way to flaunt the female body, flouting the norms of decency. In order to emphasize these unnaturally distended body propositions, the women are frequently shot either from a low angle, or from a

high angle to show the cleavages. For instance, in *Desh Re Joya Dada Pardesh Joya*, the film begins with a popular folk song sung at the water tank by the heroine and her friends. The song gives the director the opportunity to expose various parts of their bodies to the subjective camera as it is the all female world and the girls are unmindful of the surrounding. Though women have acquired sexual liberation, it has denigrated them more than anything else. What Molly Haskell says in reference to the representation of women in Western films is also applicable to the Indian films. She views, "Sexual liberation has done little more than reimprison women in sexual roles, but at a lower and more debased level."³ To add to these, more often than not the action and the body movement of the dance often mimic sexual movement. All these add up in objectifying and sexualizing the body of the woman for the audience (largely male) "who has specific needs and expectations."⁴

Laura Mulvey observes, "In their traditional exhibitionist role, women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact, so that they can be said to connote to-be-looked-at-ness."⁵ Thus, the women displayed have functioned on two levels: as erotic object for the characters within the story, and as that of for the spectator within the auditorium alone, who seeks to control and 'indirectly' possess the female figure through narcissistic identification with the male protagonist on the screen, who controls the gaze and events on the screen, thus giving the male spectator a reassuring sense of omnipotence. To take recourse to Laura Mulvey again, "In a world ordered by sexual imbalance,

pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female.”⁶
Male as a subject objectifies the female.

Like Hindi films, most of the regional films, especially the Gujarati films of 90s have strong figures of authority, usually a father, grandfather or uncle. In *Desh Re Joya Dada Pardesh Joya*, grandfather is a dominating figure, a family head, who takes most of the decisions. He takes it as his right to fix up his children's and grandchildren's marriages to the suitors of his choice. By reclaiming the idea of the joint family system as essentially an Indian way of life, the film foregrounds the idea of domestic bliss, achievable through submission to a hierarchy. Young men are unbelievably obedient to the elders and the women are subordinate both to the men in the family; and the older women, who in their turn exercise power over the younger women. These different roles of women and men, in the family and in society, are affirmed and celebrated as a harmonious synthesis.

Courtship in Hindi films is invariably crude and insensitive, the hero frequently taking recourse to behaviour, which can be termed as 'eve teasing'. In his nightmarish fervour to win over the girl of his dreams, the hero is often seen to pursue the heroine and pester her by manhandling her roughly, or pulling at her *dupatta*, pinching her cheeks, and so on, professing his undying love for her, till the girl succumbs to him. Inextricably bound up with this manner of wooing is the idea of masculinity. The more 'macho' a man is, the more compelling it appears for him to railroad the girl into accepting his proposals. One comes across a scene where the girl slaps the boy for

pestering her, immediately followed by a scene where the boy masterfully walks up to her and kisses her in a deliberate, provocative, least romantic way in public, after which the duo breaks out into a song and dance sequence. For instance, in *Sholay*, Veeru compels Basanti to accept his proposal of marriage by threatening to commit suicide. In another hit film, *Ishq* (1997), when the hero finds that the heroine is not responding to advances, he walks straight to her and kisses her in public. Another concept that defies all logic is that of the heroine flipping for the hero after he rescues her from the unwanted attentions of certain unsavoury characters. However, this trend is slightly changed with the popularity of the films, foregrounding the 'family drama' type films. But in such films, one would see a different scenario, where the women are made to worship their husbands and submit to their wishes, on failing of which they are considered vamps or rather too modern types. Monica Motwani rightly states, "The heroine may have metamorphosed over the years, but she still cannot break away from the shackles of certain norms set by Hindi cinema years ago."⁷ Tied up with this is the concept of a woman as property, a thing to possess and which can be put on display or can be passed on. Within the patriarchal parameters, the man who has known a woman carnally brands her as his forever, much in the manner of animals being branded by their owners. Whoever dreams of asking a cow whether she wants to stay with the man who has bought and branded her? The much popularized song, after which the movie takes its name, *Parki Thapan*, runs on the same lines, "*Dikri ne gay dore tyan jay, Dikri to parki thapan kahevay.*" (A daughter and a cow have no will of their own, but they would go wherever they are prodded as the daughter is considered another person's property.) *Desh Re Joya Dada*

Pardesh Joya also reflects the same notion. After the death of Ram, nobody thinks it necessary to ask Radha whether she would like to marry Dipak.

The projection of the female protagonists remains in sharp contrast to their male counterparts. Whereas male protagonists are shown active, dominating and rational, the women are identified as passive, acquiescent and emotional. What Michael R. Real views about Western cinema seems right about Indian cinema too. According to him, "As cinema developed, we can see from the fact that male stereotypes changed more rapidly than female stereotypes that the use of stereotypes has a specific ideological function: to represent man as inside history, and woman as eternal and unchanging, outside history."⁸ More often than not, women are shown being raped, widowed and assaulted only to create a macho image of the hero. Indian cinema which is the prime accelerator of modernity has not succeeded to replace the traditional image of woman. K. Naresh Kumar says, "If the heroes get the very best in the motion picture industry, the women invariably are handed out the most abominable treatment possible on every ground – remuneration, roles and respect."⁹

Cinema is a medium that cuts across class and caste boundaries, and is accessible to all sections of society more than any written literature or other forms of art. In order to be financially viable, it needs to incorporate within it all those ingredients, which may contribute to its success at the box office, but at the same time one is required to draw a line of discrimination between decency and void of it, as ours is a cinema obsessed society. Film in

general and behaviour of the heroes/heroines in particular can leave a deep impression on the minds of the viewers. Popular films are like a social mirror. It is believed that films are a true reflection of society and social values. It would not be wrong to say that Hindi films have had a deep impact on the changing scenario of our society in such a way as no other medium could ever achieve. So, while in reality the things are changing in the Indian society and women are successfully trying to carve an identity for themselves, it is quite disheartening to find that equitable gender representation is still a distant dream in Indian cinema. Each of the selected films was youth oriented and was huge hit. If cinema has such a major influence on the youth of today, then it is about time that cineastes start thinking about presenting a strong woman's identity through their films. Though this is happening slowly in the 'off beat' films, the popular cinema has a long way to go.

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CONCLUSION

CHAPTER – VIII

Issues pertaining to women are central to every society, primarily because they go on to define all human relationships and social constructs. There can be differences in concerns of and about women as a social construction and a period of time change. What women aspire and experience in the West can be substantially different from women of the East for each country has its own social peculiarities. Nevertheless, the identity of women has largely been conditioned by religion, society, culture and customs constructed and propagated largely by men. In the nation like India, with numerous religious theories and rigid social norms, women have been positioned inside the circle for the reasons that are not necessarily pro-feminist. The Indian, man or woman, rich or poor, lives on many levels, each level revealing more than a physical reality.

In recent times, especially after 70s, it has been observed that feminism and feminist thought have enhanced women's consciousness and awareness about themselves in the relation to their environment. Moreover, with the spread of education, the number of self-reliant women has increased. Influence of urbanization, westernization and women's empowerment has transformed the Indian consciousness to a great extent and offered women a gust to come out of the restricted role and space. Consequently, the sensibility of women has changed considerably. House making and child rearing are no longer sole purposes of a woman's life. However, their male counterparts are yet to acknowledge the changing role of women. It is especially evident as far as portrayal of women is concerned, be it in literature or in any other art forms. Our study of works of literature by some of the

award-winner writers in English as well as in Gujarati, and the box-office hit films of Bollywood and those produced in a regional language, spanning a period of almost three decades confirms this observation. Noticeably, the change in women's role in the society has been accommodated but their conventional image has not changed much.

Before reaching to any concrete conclusion, it would not be incongruous to analyze different ways in which women are presented in literature and films. As discussed in the preceding chapters, she is portrayed largely in three different hues, (a) in a social ambience, (b) as a familial self and (c) as a woman.

(a) Her social self: It views her in relation to the society at large, in the roles of a daughter, sister, wife, mother or at times as a struggling individual. She is largely viewed in the relation to her male counterparts. She is devoid of having her own independent self. For instance, Ammu, in *The God of Small Things*, is deprived of her privileges and dreams. Whether it is her father, brother or husband, each of them voiced and imposed the patriarchal ideology and hegemony, which did not allow her to have any right whatsoever as a daughter, wife, sister or citizen. She was expected by her male counterparts to play an assigned role necessarily submissive. Moreover, it is not only the male that victimize her, women also act as agents of male patriarchy to undo another woman.

At times, woman is represented in multiple roles, often overlapping responsibilities, overriding and contradicting one another. More often than not, when a woman is portrayed in one such role, she is placed at the fringe, as there always exist/s her male counterpart/s to take care of her and to fight for her sake acting as a 'male protector' especially in films. In other words, woman's existence is fossilized. She is being obliged by her male counterpart/s. She is not allowed to emerge out of her cocooned state. For instance, Jaya Bhaduri, always clad in white saari to gloss her widowed state in *Sholay*, hardly indulges in any sort of decision-making process. Although loved and respected by all in the movie, she holds no authority within the household. Both the women protagonists in *Parki Thapan* are portrayed in a similar way. Likewise, Kamaladevi in *Hum Aapke Hain Koun* hardly requires to do anything else than to look after the needs of her husband and daughters.

(b) The familial self: A woman is shown as attached to one or more familial ties. She is depicted as inextricably bound to her parents, siblings, husband, in-laws, children or relatives. In this ambience, she is positioned at the center, but her place in this core area depends on her eagerness to sacrifice. After nineties, this trend has evidently dented the scenario of Hindi as well as the films in the regional languages. The women protagonists of the films *Hum Aapke Hain Koun* and *Desh Re Joya Dada Pardesh Joya*, subscribed to it. Within the fabric of the family, women's position is marginalized. Irrespective of their own dreams and desires, their center of concern remains comfort and

happiness to their male counterparts. More often than not, the family remains the controlling unit of her sexuality, labour and productivity.

(c) As a woman: the private self of a woman is not so visible in any of the films undertaken for study. They have largely been reduced to being a mere spectacle in these movies. Undoubtedly, the art films or the non-commercial films like *Arth* (1983), *Aastha* (1997), *Mrityudand* (1997), *Astitva* (2000), just to name a few, depict their women characters not as mere puppets but as striving and aspiring for acquiring their own identity. Interestingly, this facet of women's characters is evidently observed in all the literary texts chosen for the study in one or the more ways. For instance, Amruta is a liberated modern girl and is nowhere in bondage, nor is she required to oblige anybody from her family in the matter of her matrimony. Lata, on the other hand, is not so free to choose her partner in life, but undoubtedly, she is given more space than her counterparts in films. Vasudha and a number of other women characters of *Sat Paglan Akashman* squarely fit in this category. Though, their lives were appended to their male counterparts, all of them in their own ways were able to review their lives in terms of individual rights available to them as a human being, and could break the fetters of tradition. The doubly victimized characters of Roy's novel have a different tale to tell. Ammu and Rahel tried in their own respective ways to tread on their chosen paths. They were not willing to adhere to the set norms of conventional society, and suffer the consequences of their respective efforts. Still, they are not portrayed as embellished dolls, wearing a pleasing smile and talking all the niceties.

Both in the films and novels, the women protagonists are burdened with visible markers of traditions, society and male authority. To whatever stratum of the society they belong to, they do not enjoy freedom and power that male protagonists naturally acquire. The writers, male and female, represent the women protagonists in different social scenario and contexts. In the works of Seth and Chaudhari, the women protagonists belong to the upper class and higher middle class Indian family, while in the works of Roy and Kapadia, they come from the upper and lower middle class. However, differences in class or caste do not affect the women protagonists' state of having freedom and power. Only in the work of Kapadia, one can see the strong reactions of quiet, sensitive and intelligent Indian women protagonist/s, becoming defiant for acquiring self-respect. Vasudha, an emerging new woman is contemplative about her plight, and has in a traditional society the nerve to question the indifference of man. She chooses to remonstrate and fight against the accepted norms and currents. Moreover, the whole gamut of women's experiences including wife beating, molestation, sexploitation, pregnancy and mothering, have been openly dealt and explored by the writer. Although the women protagonists in the work of Roy do not readily succumb to the patriarchal world, they lack the courage to bang the door. In fact, the novel misses an inspiration or struggle for dignity and independence for women. Ammu accepts her lot unresistingly at every stage of her life, while Vasudha dares to fight for the cause of her own identity and for women of the world at large. Amruta and Lata, aspirants of freedom in the beginning, try to find harmony later at the cost of their own freedom. None of the films under study represents an 'egalitarian woman character'.

Moreover, inner conflicts, agonies of women are not reflected in popular films or in the novels of male writers so ardently and to that extent as we see them in the novels of female writers. For instance, in the work of Kapadia, Vasudha is contemplative about the issues like her early marriage, her conflicting life after marriage and her unfulfilled dreams and desires. In fact, her inner self does not find happiness until she leaves her husband and begins to lead her life independently. Moreover, the novel takes in its stride a complete range of issues concerning to women. In this sense, *The God of Small Things* also presents several questions regarding the predicament of women. Raghuvir Chaudhari, though not concerning with socio-eco-sexual positioning of woman, presents the woman protagonist's inner state of mind and traits of her disposition through stream of consciousness device. However, compared to male writers, their counterparts deal with the feminine issues more implicitly and effectively. As far as the filmmakers under the discussion are concerned, they overlook the women's issues. Evidently, they indulge to present outward persona rather than inner self of the characters, possibly the camera helps a director more to capture physical reality rather than abstractions. Through the works under consideration, it can be ascertained that gender sensibility plays a significant part.

At times, the women protagonists correspond to the romantic model of a woman that indulges in a dream-like surrender to the superior male as well as to the image of the protected woman who thinks it natural to be exploited by her lover-saviour. Films under the scrutiny confirm this observation. More often than not, even in films, representing the image of

angry and avenging young women who seize a sickle against the male despotism, they are shown needing assistance and protection from a male protagonist to accomplish her task. For instance, in *Tejaswini* (1991), *Damini* (1993), *Army* (1996) and *Lajja* (2001) to name just a few among others, the women protagonists are aggressive, yet not they, but a male protagonist performs heroic deeds and brings justice for them. It is evidently shown that without the assistance of 'macho', she lacks in wielding of her strength. The depiction of women protagonists in such a manner shows them as 'weaker sex'. In comparison to the filmmakers, the male writers of the works taken under the scrutiny have centralized their women characters, yet they too are obliged to their lovers - saviours.

Obviously, the representation of women in literature differs from that in the film in many ways. Perhaps, the medium of expression is responsible for these dissimilarities. As film mainly appeal by audio-visual means, the women characters, beside the role they play, have to cater to the male gaze too. Moreover, the visual medium offers choices, which the written narrative may not. There is a greater freedom in the choice of perspective as multiple devices of narration like camera eye, narrator, lights, use of space, the spoken dialogues, body language, facial expression as well as the silences are available to a filmmaker. There is also the strategic projection of stereotypes. In films, the women are not only shown in subordinate roles, upholding traditional values, they represent the community and are seen as repositories of community values. Women authenticate a national / cultural identity. The body of the woman is the carrier of cultural signs. Symbols of

marriage like the *mangalsutras*, *sindoor* are fetishized. The long-suffering Sita-like woman is a permanent fixture in Hindi cinema. She is invariably cast as a foil to the sensual, pleasure-seeking vamp, usually associated with Western culture through recognizable visual signifiers like wearing miniskirts, short hair, heavy make-up, cigarette in mouth and so on. The Gujarati movies, more often than not, imitating their counterparts in Hindi, follow the same practice. In Hindi as well as Gujarati films, the sanctity of marriage as a social institution is upheld. The heroes of silver screens are projected as male protector/s, creating and reinforcing the myth of supremacy of patriarchal structure. But such exploits on the part of the hero also provide gender sensitive readings. Such themes suggest the '*izzat*' of the Indian family rests in its women. The outsider / alien / foreigner is expelled in the movie and even by the audience. The value of the family and by extension, the community is endorsed. In literature, too, this factor is prioritized, but not so overtly as found in visual art.

Another reason for dissimilarity in representation of women between both the art forms can be attributed to the fact that the stories played on the screen are the men's, they foreground their conflicts, their dreams, their aspirations, their desires and their heroism. At times, in the name of patriarchy, they tend to influence socialization processes and reinforce subordination or compliance to the norms defined by patriarchy. In this way, popular cinema may be considered as a site of plural signification, in its role as a vibrant and dynamic medium as it may affect the mass-psyche in more than one ways, and can be taken as indices to measure public and private

manifestations of human conduct, a signpost of cultural values and a receptacle of dominant ideologies. At the same time, it has been used as a reflector of confirmatory and resistant positions, sometimes filtering prejudices and biases prevalent in the society, and often acting as a tool of our allegorizing hallucinations on love and hatred, heroism and villainy, riches and poverty, vice and virtue.

Literature, on the other hand, has limited readership, more so in the case of regional languages. The written text would not generally take a large mass under its sway, and even if it does so, it would appeal to people's intellectual faculties rather than any other. Moreover, on the financial front, the writers do not have to invest heavily in writing a text, though writing itself is a taxing exercise, whereas the film producer has to stake a large amount of money, amounting to seven to eight digits. They would naturally be tempted to attract viewers by catering to their lower or baser instincts. More importantly, the cinemagoers too insist on the tried and trusted formula.

Through the study of novels and films, we can ascertain some basic characteristics of cinematic and fictional output.

- Women are assigned subsidiary roles in general, and occupy less central roles than men.
- The women characters are shown as passive, acquiescent and emotional, more so in the case of films and in the fiction with token exceptions. They are hardly represented as active and dominating agents of the society.

- In almost all the works, at least there are one or more incidents showing female protagonists being a victim of male – violence.
- Films, dissatisfactorily ignores or distorts the women’s movement.
- Irrespective of their marital status, majority of women characters are home-based and the family remains the controlling unit of the women’s sexuality, mobility, labour or production.
- Marriage is seen as a primary motive of a woman’s life, if single, she is working towards achieving that state; if widowed / divorced, she is rarely happy. She is suppressed and pestered heavily in such condition. Even if she is making a success of her life, underlying that is her sadness at her single and lonely state.
- In their relationships with men, the ideal women are benevolent and dependent, those who are aggressive, modern or independent minded, are not considered desirable role models.
- Those who try to break the traditional norms of society and family do not meet with a happy end. At best, they have to compromise to some extent, but by far the commonest fate reserved for them is humiliation and failure.
- Patriarchal society is the chief reason of educational, economic and cultural backwardness and disabilities obstructing women’s creative, cultural and social growth and stature.
- Largely, they are resilient by force, not by choice.
- Image of the woman in literature, especially novels has evolved with the change in period of time, but over the decades the celluloid image has remained static to a large extent.

Our study of the novels and films reveals that whether in a film or in a piece of literature, the woman protagonist faces many social prejudices, orthodoxies and beliefs, yet none of these problems get articulated or challenged, more so in the case of films under discussion. Women are portrayed by well-defined speech, dress, appearance, social and religious practice. The women, whether urban or rural, the issues of subjugation and emancipation have often been the subject matter for both, the writers and the filmmakers. However, true and realistic portrayal of women, with different class positions, social backgrounds and individual dispositions are ignored. The women characters are treated more in terms of abstractions, and their basic projection centers round the need to be loved and accepted. A semiotic and psychoanalytical approach to the representation, especially in the case of popular cinema, reveals that the image of women is not wholly congruent with the reality of women's life and conduct outside the cinema hall; on the contrary woman functions as a 'sign' within the definitive parameter of myth, custom and ritual. The traditional roles as devoted housewives, sacrificing mothers and dutiful daughters-in-law are so constantly drilled into the Indian female psyche that women themselves have started believing in this 'self-portrait', so much so that expressing the self and innermost desires have become taboos for most of the female writers. However, some of the female directors like Kalpana Lajmi and Deepa Mehta, have shown remarkable courage by producing films like *Rudaali* (1993) and *Fire* (1996), but such films would never rise to the category of popular films. The popular films are yet to cut loose of the stereotype traditional portrayal of women.

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Director: Govind Patel.
Cast: Hiten Kumar, Roma Manek, Arvind Trivedi, Kalpana Diwan etc.
2. *Hum Aapke Hain Koun* (1994)
Director: Suraj Barjatya.
Cast: Madhuri Dixit, Salman Khan, Mohnish Bahl, Renuka Sahane etc.
3. *Parki Thapan* (1979)
Director: Arun Bhatt.
Cast: Snehlata, Rajiv, Ragini, Dipak Gheewala, Arvind Pandya etc.
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Director: Ramesh Sippy.
Cast: Amitabh Bachchan, Dharmendra, Hema Malini, Jaya Bhaduri etc.

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