Renegotiating Transgression: A Study of Select Novels of Leo Tolstoy, Gustave Flaubert, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Arundhati Roy and U. R. Anantha Murthy

A THESIS

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CERTIFICATE

Certified that the dissertation entitled "Renegotiating Transgression: A Study of Select Novels of Leo Tolstoy, Gustave Flaubert, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Arundhati Roy and U. R. Anantha Murthy" is an original work of research carried out by Pradeep Kumar Sharma, completed under my direct supervision for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English and that it has not been submitted either in part or full for any diploma/ degree of any other university.

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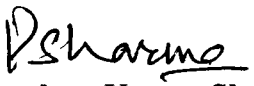

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Introduction

I

Transgression motif has perennially engaged human thought. No arena of human activity could ever remain untouched by it—be that religious, legal, social, political, cultural, economic, psychological, interpersonal, or literary. Literature reflects the finest, subtlest and the most intricate aspects of human thought and experiencing. Transgression being the most complex facet of human life, its literary representation in general and fictional delineation in diverse climes and cultures in particular has been attracting critical attention from time to time.

Transgression has been helpful in the evolutionary development of human beings in the sense that laws and restrictions of society may hamper the all round development of an individual. Limits and boundaries erected by society have been viewed as restrictions/ impediments in the evolutionary growth of a person. People often tend to seek freedom from constraints by way of resorting to transgression. Not that transgressive behavior simply spurns limits; it rather imparts a sense of completion as it crosses them. As Georges Bataille observes, "The transgression does not deny the taboo, but transcends it and completes it." He goes on to say that "there is no prohibition that cannot be transgressed. Often the transgression is permitted; often it is even prescribed" (Bataille 63).

As such, every limit/ boundary/ rule carries within itself the possibility/ necessity of its own fracture. This possibility/ necessity may be equated with an impulse to disobey prevalent within us. Thus, transgression is an intrinsic component of the rule/ limit/ boundary. Transgression is necessary for growth and progress of a culture. Chris Jenks rightly observes: "It is a dynamic force in the process of cultural reproduction. It prevents stagnation by breaking the rule and also ensures stability by re-affirming it" (Jenks 7). Interestingly, transgression causes

tension between our instinctual demands and the civilizational constraints.

Arguing on the similar line, Georges Bataille observes that strong urge in human beings to do away with the anxiety and boredom of existence by and large results in disorderliness and devastation. There is always a danger that human attempt to complete life and to assert her/ his actual self can threaten and also destroy life itself. Viewed thus, the life force itself is rendered "self-destructive" (Jenks 95). People sometimes feel trapped, threatened or even violently constrained by external forces beyond their control as they seek excessive and transgressive experiences, which in some cases, are even more threatening to their survival. It is worthwhile to quote Freud here: "Culture constrains not only his societal but also his biological existence, not only parts of the human being but his instinctual structure itself. . . . Left free to pursue their natural objectives, the basic instincts of man would be incompatible with all lasting association and preservation; they would destroy even where they unite. The uncontrolled Eros is just as fatal as his deadly counterpart, the death instinct. . . . The instincts must therefore be deflected from their goal, inhibited in their aim" (qtd. in Marcuse 29).

Transgression and limit lose their meaning in isolation simply because they are interdependent. As Foucault says: "a limit could not exist if it were absolutely uncrossable and reciprocally, transgression would be pointless if it merely crossed a limit composed of illusions and shadows". According to Foucault, transgression and limit find their meaning in their "intersection" and its "aftermaths." When they collide, it may cause violence. Nevertheless, in the moment of collision, the outlines/ boundaries become visible thereby imparting meaning to "limit." In other words, transgression becomes meaningful through the revelation of its "imminent exhaustion" (Foucault 73).

Human societies restrain the damaging potential of transgression/ transgressive behavior

through imposition of taboos. Even though transgression destabilizes the taboo, it also ensures its efficaciousness in the very process of destabilization. For Bataille "Transgression is an 'inner experience' in which an individual – or in the case of certain ritualized transgression such as sacrifice, a community – exceeds the bounds of rational, everyday behavior. . . . The experience of transgression is indissociable from the consciousness of the constraints or prohibition it violates" (qtd. in Suleiman 75). As the social world is constituted as a kind of "organized repression" (Jenks 47), there is a constant antagonism between the demands of instinct and the restrictions of society. Modern social environment has generated an ungoverned desire to extend, exceed or go beyond the margins of acceptability and normal social behavior. Viewed in this light, transgression is an all pervasive phenomenon that alludes to fascination of a sin, or desire to tread the forbidden domain.

At times, transgression is also considered as a potential means to achieve self-authentication which implies a sense of being true to oneself. We resist the roles and demands that society imposes on us, even though they play an important part in determining who we are. Such experiences cause anxiety and a sense of incompleteness and inauthenticity in us. The imposition of external conditions on the way we live our lives enables us to see that those conditions have already been tested at some point in time. Its reiteration and imposition therefore have a repetitive ring as it may fall into the groove of habit and eventually become monotonous. The transgressive act in such a situation becomes pleasurably liberating. The socio-cultural forces that regulate our lives and our sense of autonomy are often in conflict. As one challenges such forces, one feels empowered as s/he acquires a sense of control and self-authentication. Upon breaking rules that impede our individual freedom and bonds that confine/restrain our conduct, one feels a sense of pleasurable relief. Limits and restrictions contouring both the social order and

the socialized being end up stifling the personal.

The term 'transgression' comes from Latin *transgressus* (past participle of *transgredi*). Etymologically, *trans* signifies 'across' and *gradi* (past participle of *gressus*) means 'to walk/ go'. As such, transgression means going across limits/ boundaries/ fences erected by society. *Chamber's 21st Century English Dictionary* defines transgression as "an act or instance of breaking a rule, divine law, etc." *The New Oxford Encyclopaedic Dictionary, Vol. 3* defines the verb 'transgress' as 'to violate,' 'to infringe' (law or command especially of God). *The Compact Oxford Dictionary* defines 'transgression' as "passing beyond the bounds of legality or right, a violation of law, duty or command, disobedience, trespass or sin". *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English* describes transgression as going "beyond the limit of what is morally or legally acceptable".

As such, transgression signifies a violation of law/ duty, an exceeding of bounds/ limits, or an act of transcending boundaries. Interestingly, limit/ constraint plays crucial role in the process of human experiencing simply because it arrests our movement thereby offering an opportunity to negotiate the world in a rather non-conventional manner. Limits to behavior may be construed as moral imperatives that stem from inside. This implies that any limit on conduct carries with it an intense relationship with the desire to transgress that limit. The manifestations of transgression in the psychoanalytic sense essentially impinge on the individual at an intra-psychic level.

Julian Wolfreys has defined transgression as "the act of breaking a law, committing a crime or sin, doing something illegal, or otherwise acting in some manner proscribed by the various forms or institutions of law in societies, whether secular or religious, all of which have histories and which themselves are mutable" (Wolfreys 3). He further observes that the term 'transgression' is indicative of breaking a law, doing something illicit and disrupting order and

rebelling against societal norms. Nevertheless, if/ when we think we transgress; we do nothing except conforming to expectations of "acceptable deviance," according to Wolfreys. We just act in a manner already in some socio-historical sense prescribed and conform in a way that is more or less tolerated, even when "excoriated". In his insightful work *Transgression*, John Wolfreys describes the term 'transgression' thus:

> If I pass or cross a line, if I 'depart from the straight and narrow', as the somewhat clichéd, old-fashioned phrase has it, the implication is that while I was in one place, now I am in another. . . . The erstwhile location from which I have departed is, in the context of thinking transgression, always on the side of the law, convention, what is taken socially and culturally, as well as institutionally, to be standard, acceptable, decent, proper, correct, approved or authorized. The present location in which I find myself, in which I have placed myself by my own activity, this is the place of the illicit, the outlaw. This is what transgression means: to step over or beyond a limit or boundary, to cross a threshold, to move beyond the commonly determined bounds of law, decency, or whatever (Wolfreys 3).

Being human not only means to be transgressed, but also to be transgressive. Transgression points toward the limitless capacity of the subject to break her/ his own limits and still remain herself/ himself. It has no fixed meaning which is why what is deviant behavior for a person may be a kind of assertion of individuality for the other. The behavior considered socio-culturally transgressive in one age, may not be so in another, as the culture is never stagnant, it is always evolving. Transgression, therefore, becomes a complex term and is not as simple as it seems to define. For instance, homosexuality was once regarded as contrary to nature, perverted, warped, against the laws of man and God; but today there are people who rather than condemning

it are willing to view it as an alternative sexual choice despite religious bigots who view same sex relations as unnatural and hence transgressive. John Wolfreys in this regard states that "There is no stable identity, form or meaning to the idea of the transgressive. The very notion of transgression can never be defined as more than an abstract notion understood as the traversal of a boundary, and with that motion or passage, the deformation of the limits of form, identity or institution momentarily or provisionally" (Wolfreys10).

Freud addresses the notion of transgression in *Totem and Taboo* as he observes that "Taboo expresses itself essentially in prohibitions and restrictions. Our combination of 'holy dread' would often express the meaning of taboo" (Freud 41). More authoritative a society, the more is the force of organized repression to impel man to interiorize transgressive yearnings. Freud further observes that the child through socialization is forbidden to do certain things or relate to certain objects or places. Such prohibitions become very deep-seated in his psyche. The forbidden as a matter of fact engenders the fruit of desire itself. What is forbidden, beyond boundary, and potentially unclean carries with it propulsion to desire in equal measure. Freud further observes that "Originally the punishment for the violation of a taboo was probably left to an inner, automatic arrangement. The violated taboo avenged itself. Wherever the taboo was related to ideas of gods and demons, an automatic punishment was expected from the power of the godhead. In other cases, probably as a result of a further development of the idea, society took over the punishment of the offender, whose actions had endangered his companions. Thus man's first systems of punishment are also connected with taboo" (Freud 44).

The notion of transgression, thus, is as old as human nature. Whatever form it may take, transgression challenges reinforcement of rules thereby eventually breaking them. The relationship between rule and transgression may seem arbitrary, whimsical, individualistic,

accidental or silly; it signifies the very purpose of being. Transgression ever remains fluid/ unstable which in no way makes it 'good' or 'bad'. For Bataille the assertion of life force leads to transgressive acts as he observes: "The limits are intangible, socially and historically constructed and subject to both trial and resistance. The urge to drive through the limits derives from the life force or, to put it another away, the desire to 'complete' life. . . . The constant inability to 'complete' life, however, and the recognition of that inability generates a perpetual state of urgency and anxiety, this is part of the human condition" (Bataille 89).

The earliest known narrative evidencing transgression against the gods thereby highlighting relationship between humanity and supernatural is the story of Utnapishtim in the Sumerian *Epic of Gilgamesh* written about 2500 B.C.E. (Sanders). To search for meaning in life, Gilgamesh, the king of Uruk goes to seek Utnapishtim, the only human surviving in the great Flood and who was granted immortality by gods. Utnapishtim tells about the city of Shurrupak, where the citizens of the city transgressed into the godly domain: "In those days the world teemed, the people multiplied, the world bellowed like a wild bull, and the great god was aroused by the clamour. Enlil heard the clamour and he said to the gods in council, 'The uproar of mankind is intolerable and sleep is no longer possible by reason of the babel. So, the gods agreed to exterminate mankind'" (qtd. in Monday). The gods wreaked their vengeance via releasing great Flood to push out the mankind—the first instance of 'sin' against the divine godhead causing devastating aftermath.

Another example is the Greek Promethean myth (Monday). Prometheus, a rebel titan stole fire (symbolizing light/wisdom) from Zeus—an act amounting to outright transgression á la Adam and Eve. Promethean impudence provokes the wrath of Zeus with the result that entire world is sternly punished along with him. Prometheus' doling out fire/ light to ignoramus mortals

signifies a defiant act as it transgresses the conventions thereby disrupting and threatening Zeus' supremacy. Chained to the side of a rock, Prometheus was tormented by an eagle as tearing his immortal flesh and trying to devour his liver every single day. Prometheus, the transgressor, in fact, defied established conventional order that would insist on keeping man equal to or lower than even the animals. In Christianity, like Prometheus, Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden and committed "original sin" inherited by the human race. As such, transgression committed by the first human pair is inherited by the mankind, who are born corrupt, afflicted by the weight of this "original sin" (Monday).

Incest is another marker of transgressive behavior and is a taboo in almost all societies. Even before the genetic problems of such sexual intercourse became common knowledge, children of incest appear to have been considered in some way transgressive. Greek myths are full of intra-familial unions such as father-daughter incest. For instance, Thyestes is said to have raped his daughter, unaware of who she was. Later he received an oracle that he could avenge himself on his brother Atreus if he got a son consequent upon his incest with his daughter (Kinnucan).

The myth of Oedipus is yet another paradigm for mother-son incest. He fulfilled a prophecy that he would kill his father and marry his mother and thereby bring disaster on his city and family. Sigmund Freud used this myth to theorize about the Oedipus complex. The brother-sister incest myths can also be traced in Greek mythology. The myth of Aeolus is one such example. The children of Aeolus were happily married to each other. Macareus and his sister Canace fell in love with each other and had a child together. When Aelus discovered this, Canace was ordered to kill herself. Macareus took his own life. Mark P.O. Morford and Robert J. Lenardon in *Classical Mythology* have described another incestuous relationship between Myrrha (the daughter of Cyniras), who fell in love with her own father. Tormented by her sense of shame

and guilt, the poor girl was on the brink of committing suicide, but was rescued in time by her faithful nurse who wrenches the secret from her heart. She arranges that the daughter should go to her father's bed hiding her identity. This incestuous conjugal union bore a beautiful son, Adonis (Morford and Lenardon 120).

A major area of transgression concerns offences against goddesses' modesty. The stories about how Tiresias became blind and received his gift of prophecy vary. In one of the versions, he was blinded as he saw Athena nude while bathing. She struck him blind, but received the gift of prophecy in compensation for the loss of sight at the request of his mother Chariclo, a nymph favored by Athena (Roman 492). Another frequent kind of transgression would pertain to challenging sovereign deity's authority. For instance, Thamyrus, a legendary minstrel from Thrace had become so vain due to his many victories that he challenged the Muses themselves to a harp playing contest. The goddesses agreed that he could sleep with each of them in turn only if he won. Since he lost, they struck him blind taking away his musical skills (Lindemans).

Ixion is one of a group (comprising Sisyphus, Tentalus, Tityus) of primordial violators of the social order and of divine authority. Ixion had committed parricide by killing his father-in-law and throwing him into a fire pit to avoid paying him dowry. Later when he attempted to rape Hera (Zeus's sister and consort), Zeus tricked him into sleeping with a cloud fashioned in Hera's form. The impregnated cloud gave birth to Kentauros, father of the race of Centaurs. Ixion, however, boasted of his conquest to the point of enraging Zeus who tied him to an ever-turning wheel.

In another myth, Tityus tried to rape Zeus's consort, Leto and Zeus consigned him to Tartarus (a great pit beneath the earth) as punishment. He is bound across nine acres while two vultures tear at his lever perpetually. Willy Sisyphus, in yet another story, attempted to steal fire from the gods and defeat death á la Prometheus. As such, the crimes of all the above mythological

characters varied but all offended morality and challenged the authority of the Olympian gods. Their punishments were carefully devised with a view to provide gruesome spectacle and thus inspiring awe (Roman 287).

In Indian mythology too, there are numerous examples of the ascetics like Kapalikas, Pashupatas, Aghors who indulge in various forms of ritualized anti-social behavior easily spilling into criminal domain. The Kapalikas' terrible ritual penance corresponds exactly to the punishment prescribed in Brahminical law-books for brahminicides. It is the over-bearing fifth-head of Brahma who represents values of the pure, self controlled Brahmin class that is lopped off by the transgressor-god Bhairava. The tantric depiction of this head points to a central transgressive dimension hidden in the very heart of Brahminism. This fifth-head (also the central head) is more often characterized by wholly unbrahaminical trait such as his incestuous desire for his own daughter, Saraswati. There is a reference to Bhairava's pursuit of the goddess to violate her sexually after he was refused meat and wine by her. Bhairava was beheaded by the goddess after his passage through the womb cave of this primordial virgin (Adikumari). Transgressive notations are not lacking in mythology, rituals and representations of kingship. Bhairava himself has inherited the legacy of brahaminicide from Indra, the king of the gods. One of his characteristic deeds is the slaying of his Brahmin chaplain, Vishvarupa (Visuvalingam).

The *Mahabharata*, the encyclopedia of Indian culture, is replete with the lust crazed men who try to satisfy their carnal desires by getting the objects of their lust through means fair or foul. The Kuru ancestors right from Yayati onwards up to Pandu's generation seem to suffer from this moral defect. The story of *Mahabharata* starts with lust crazed Yayati who exchanges his old age for the youth of his son in order to satiate his lust, albeit fruitlessly (*Mahabharata Adiparva* 261-65). The theme of lust raised its ugly head again in the tainted generation of Kurus. There is

Shantanu blinded by his infatuation for Ganga like his ancestor Dushyanta, does not think about the conditions laid down by Ganga for marrying her (299-300). Shantanu displays his lustful nature again in his middle age when he is smitten by the charms of a fisher girl. He caused his son of his first wife to take a vow without thinking of the repercussions that would change the entire course of the Kuru dynasty. The lustful ancestors were to be followed by a similar kind of progeny who entered into a polyandrous marriage with Draupadi. The sage Vyasa's mother Satyavati herself had been a prey to the lust of sage Parashar. Dushasana too in the *Mahabharata*, tried to disrobe Draupadi whose honor could be saved only upon Lord Krishna's intervention.

In the post-Vedic period and during the age of the Puranas, Indra, the king of gods is shown as having big flaws, even having lascivious character leading him to commit immoral sexual deeds. For instance, he tried to seduce sage Gautam's wife, Ahilya. This enraged the sage, who cursed him to have wounds resembling female reproductive organ on his entire body. Likewise, in *Ramayana* too, Ravana abducted Sita and had to face consequences. The whole tribe had to bear his karmic retribution.

II

The present dissertation, which has been titled as "Renegotiating Transgression: A Study of Select Novels of Leo Tolstoy, Gustave Flaubert, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Arundhati Roy and U.R. Ananatha Murthy", deals with the study of transgression motif in diverse cultures across the world. The transgression has been traced from history, different mythologies and folklores of varied cultures of the world. Since transgression is germane to human experience (regardless of clime and culture), the proposed project seeks to explore it in diverse narrative traditions thereby enlarging its scope via initiating a cross cultural dialogue that enriches our understanding of diverse locales and cultures across the world. The selection of authors may seem random;

nevertheless, it is volitional and has a cross-cultural perspective in view, so that a holistically diverse understanding of transgression motif can be developed. The novels taken up for analysis represent diverse cultural backdrops and have been selected to establish cross-cultural, comparative dialogue vis-à-vis the depiction of characters who transgress social norms and conventions in different socio-cultural setups of the world.

Nathaniel Hawthorne was born on July 4, 1804 in Salem, Massachusetts. He was the son of Elizabeth Clarke Manning and Nathaniel Hawthorne, a captain in the U.S. Navy who died when Hawthorne was four years old. His ancestors were some of the first puritans who settled in the New England area and the lingering guilt Hawthorne felt from his great grandfather having officiated during the Salem Witchcraft trials provided a theme for many of his stories. He attended Bowdoin College and after an undistinguished stint at Bowdoin College, from which he graduated in 1825, Hawthorne embarked on a period of twelve years of relative isolation in Salem. He married Sophia Peabody in 1842. In April 1846, Hawthorne was officially appointed as the Surveyor for the District of Salem and Beverly and Inspector of the Revenue for the Port of Salem. From 1853-57, he held the lucrative position of U.S. Consul to Liverpool, England. Hawthorne was the descendant of Puritan worthies with whom he carried on an inner struggle throughout his life.

Hawthorne contributed short stories, including "Young Goodman Brown" and "The Minister's Black Veil", to various magazines though none drew major attention to the author. *Twice Told Tales*, a collection of short stories made Hawthorne known locally. His short stories possess great interest for the readers because of the insight they offer into the nature of this writer's themes. His short stories mainly deal with the predicament of individuals alienated from society; some have for their theme the essential fellowship of all men, some explore the

possibility of achieving a regenerated society in this world. The romance *Fanshawe* published anonymously at Hawthorne's expense in 1828 was not an auspicious beginning to a literary career. It was based on Hawthorne's experiences as an under graduate at Bowdoin College in the early 1920s. This was his first attempt at writing a novel. After its commercial failure he burnt the unsold copies. Hawthorne himself later disavowed the work as amateurish.

Hawthorne wrote *The Scarlet Letter* in 1850. The book became an immediate best seller and initiated his lucrative period as a writer. Often regarded as the first American novel to be fully realized as a work of art, *The Scarlet Letter* remains a masterpiece of composition, achieving a formal symmetry all the more impressive. It explores the tension between the demands of nature and those of the spirit. It is Hawthorne's tragic, brilliant tale of passion and retribution and possesses a strength and depth that he was never to achieve in any of his later works.

His next work *The House of Seven Gables* (1851) was acknowledged as the most valuable contribution to New England history. It is a gothic novel which explores themes of guilt, retribution and atonement in a New England family and colors the tale with the suggestions of the supernatural and witchcraft. The story is based on the legend of a curse pronounced on Hawthorne's family by a woman who was condemned to death during the Salem witchcraft trials. Finally, the descendent of the killed woman married a young niece of the family and the hereditary sin ends.

The Blithedale Romance (1852), his only work written in the first person, is Hawthorne's third major romance. The novel takes place in the Utopian community of Blithedale, presumably in the mid-19th century. It is a work of fiction based on Hawthorne's recollections of Brook Farm, a short lived agricultural and educational commune where Hawthorne lived from April to November 1841. The title identifies the novel as romance, probably of the dark romantic type as

Hawthorne was considered a dark romantic writer. It displays the characteristic symbolism of Salem, magic and the supernatural frequently used in dark romantic literature. *The Marble Faun* (1880) was the last of the major romances by Nathaniel Hawthorne. It was written on the eve of the American Civil War and is set in fantastical Italy. The romance mixes elements of a fable, pastoral, gothic novel and travel guide.

Gustave Flaubert was born on December 12, 1821 in Rouen, where his father was chief surgeon at city hospital and his mother was a respected woman from a provincial bourgeois family. Flaubert was educated in his native city and later went to Paris to study law. He experienced an attack of epilepsy in 1844 and subsequently abandoned his law studies and devoted himself entirely to writing. In the 1830s, Flaubert attended the college Royal de Rouen, writing for its newspaper, travelling extensively. At the age of fourteen, he began in earnest his own writings, inspired by his unconsummated love affair at this time with a much older and married Elisa Schlesinger. After the death of his father Flaubert lived in Rouen for the rest of his life. His malady of nervous fits caused him to be sequestered at home much of his time for treatment of it while allowing him the peace to continue his writings.

In 1845, Flaubert completed the first draft of *L'education Sentimentale* (In 1869, *Sentimentale Education*) which contrasts the respective rewards of love and art. In 1869, he completed the first version of *La tentation de saint Antony* (In 1874, *The Temptation of Saint Antony*), a novel inspired by a painting. Flaubert's friends rejected the work's excessive lyricism and lack of precision. Flaubert was persuaded to abandon historical subjects and turned to a project that could be realistic.

His masterpiece, *Madame Bovary* (1857) was first published in serial form in *Revue de Paris* from October 1 through December 15, 1856. An obscenity trial ensued and Flaubert was

charged with offences against public and religious morals. Flaubert's defense argued successfully that the novel was indeed a moral work, however, Flaubert was acquitted. Published in book form after the trial, *Madame Bovary* enjoyed widespread sales and significant critical commentary. Madame Bovary is a study of the romantic outlook. Its principal theme is the Romantic longing for happiness which the world of common experience can never satisfy, the disillusionment which springs from the clash between the inner dream and an empty, hostile universe. The strength of Madame Bovary lies largely in the fact that it is not merely a study of romantic outlook, but of the romantic outlook in a realistic setting.

In 1858, Flaubert travelled to Carthage to gather material for his next novel *Salammbo*. The novel was completed in 1862. This novel is the great representative work, a phase of development in the historical novel. It combines all the high artistic qualities of Flaubert's style. In it, Flaubert has applied the methods of the new realism correctly to historical novel. It is set in Carthage during the third century B.C. Flaubert's main source was Book I of Polybius's *Histories.* The book is largely an exercise in sensuous and violent exoticism. It recounts the revolt of mercenaries against Carthage in third century B.C. *Salammbo* is principally concerned with sacrilege, ruin and the tragic futility of desire. This work has both intrigued and repelled critics with its depiction of lust, violence and excess. As Giraud observes "From one angle, it is a novel of cold Parnassian perfection, from another; it is a mad riot of barbaric cruelty, but still expressing the yearnings, frustrations and bruised innocence" (Giraud 12).

Drawing on his childhood experiences, Flaubert next wrote *L' Education Sentimentale* (*Sentimental Education,* 1869), an effort that took seven Years. It was considered one of the most influential novels of the nineteenth century. This novel was pronounced by Emile Zola to be "the only true historical novel that I know in which the resurrection of dead hours is absolute, with no

trace of the novelist's trade" ("Introduction"; *M.B.*viii). The novel describes the life of a young man, Frederic Moreau living through the revolution of 1848 and the founding of second French empire. It deals with his love for an old woman. Frederic Moreau, the hero, is a young gifted man, full of vague longings, but he constantly meets people who have nothing else to offer but pessimism and cynicism. The ironic title *A Sentimental Education* means the education of feeling and refers to the failure of Flaubert's generation to achieve its ideals. It suggests that unfulfilled dreams are always superior to reality, which annihilates them.

The Temptation of Saint Anthony (1874) is a book which the French author Flaubert spent practically his whole life fitfully working on. In this work Flaubert tended to give free rein to his flamboyant imagination, but on the advice of his friends he later disciplined his romantic exuberance in an attempt to achieve total objectivity. It takes as its subject the famous temptation faced by Saint Anthony the Great in Egyptian desert. It is written in play script. It details one night in the life of Anthony the Great where Anthony is faced with great temptations and it was inspired by the painting which he saw at the Balbi Palace in Genoa. Flaubert himself said of *La Tentation de saint Antone* : "The sub-title of my book could be 'the height of insanity'. This book seems like his others, a book in which illusion after illusion is pricked, in which all knowledge, all beliefs and passions die away or vanish abruptly, but it is in reality a novel of frenzied violence and exaltation" (Giraud 11). He also wrote an unsuccessful drama, *Le Candidat*. He wrote *Three Tales* in 1877 which comprised three stories. After the publication of short stories, he spent the remainder of his life toiling on the unfinished *Bouvard et Pecuchet*, which was posthumously printed in 1881.

Considered among the most influential novelists of the Nineteenth century, Flaubert is associated with the realist and naturalist school of fiction. He was a meticulous literary craftsman

who infused his works with psychological realism. Flaubert raised the novel to such a level of intense self-commitment that the act of writing became his life. He made the novel an artistic creation to which he sought to give the density, form, and beauty that had previously been associated only with poetry. He did not write poetic prose but was mainly concerned with the art of the novel; its structure gave his novels a rigor and concentration that the genre had never previously attained. Flaubert directly or indirectly has influenced all the writers of fiction since his day.

Leo Tolstoy was born on August 28, 1828 at Yasnaya Polyana in Central Russia. He lost his parents in early age and was educated by his aunt Madame Ergolsky. In 1844, Tolstoy began studying law and oriental languages at Kazan University. He found no meaning in further studies and left the university in the middle of a term without a degree. For four years he tried managing his large estate in Samara, but apparently both bored and discouraged, went to Caucasus, where his brother was stationed, and enlisted in the army. He participated in some border expeditions and also fought in the Crimean war. He was widely read in English and French literature. Rousseau and Dickens had an irresistible appeal to him.

E. Lempert in his article "Tolstoy" remarks about the availability of information on Tolstoy: "More is known about Tolstoy than about any other Russian writer. His own and his wife's frantic diary-keeping, the merciless confessions, the numerous reminiscences of his family and friends and of many people who knew him, to say nothing of the vast number of biographies, seem like a screen between ourselves and his work" (Fennell 261). Leo Tolstoy is regarded as one of the greatest of all novelists. His masterpieces *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina* stand in their scope, breadth and vivid depiction of 19th century Russian life, at the peak of realistic fiction.

War and Peace (1869) is as much a family novel as a national novel. It is written against

the background of the Napoleonic wars. Tolstoy's constant attempt has been to blend the theme of war with the theme of peace. *War and Peace* can hardly be called an historical novel in the accepted sense. It is simply a great novel, perhaps the greatest novel ever written. As for the historical period described (Nepoleon's invasion of Russia in 1812), Tolstoy chose it merely as a canvas on which to unfold, with gusto, a tremendous panorama of life. Its greatest merit does not lie in its power of recreating an epoch previous to Tolstoy's own. Its interest and attraction for us reside rather in its well-nigh inexhaustible wealth, the panoramic vastness of its conception and majestic flow of its epic structure. It is a continent, the world almost as vast as yet far more reassuring than the one we come into daily contact. The events described in it circle around two aristocratic families, the Rostovs and the Bolkonskys whose destinies eventually intertwine. Each individual member of these two families is made intensely alive. We would look in vain for a more fascinating portrait of a girl, developing into a woman, than Natasha Rostova. Even her brother Nikolay – a mediocrity in every respect, is shaped into something memorable and then the superb gallery of other figures.

Anna Karenina (1877) is considered more artistic a work than *War and Peace.* D.H. Lawrence called it the greatest novel in the world. Even though it is only a domestic tragedy, Tolstoy lends it an incomparable depth to explore the passionate potentialities of human soul. The very structure of this masterpiece is based on a Rousseauesque impulse: on the antithesis between the idyllic country life and the artificial city existence. The happy marriage between Kitty and Levin is contrasted by the 'sinful' free union between the adulterous Anna Karenina and her lover Vronsky, both of whom are duly punished. Tolstoy, the moralist has meted out a particularly heavy punishment to Anna. At the same time, Tolstoy the artist could not help describing her feminine charm with matchless skill and admiration.

His first publications were three autobiographical novels, *Childhood, Boyhood* and *Youth* (1852-56). In these novels, we not only witness the external and internal process of a boy's growth, we also live it together with him as fully as though it were our own. *The Cossacks* (1863) is an unfinished novel which describes the Cossack life and people through a story of Dmitri Olenin, a Russian aristocrat in love with a Cossack girl. Here Tolstoy speaks about plain living and high thinking in communion with nature—a philosophy which he always preached and practiced. Olenin not only criticizes and condemns aristocracy, but is even prepared to break with it in order to come closer to the ordinary people and live their life. *The Cossacks* is believed to be somewhat autobiographical, partially based on Tolstoy's experiences during the last stages of the Caucasian war. Tolstoy is almost poetic in his writing, drawing you into the story with his descriptions of the breath-taking mountains, the vast, empty steppes and of course, wonderfully natural and easy going existence of the Cossack people. Evidently, the author of *The Cossacks* was to some extent idealizing a place that he had fallen in love with at first sight –the Caucasus, its grandeur and virginal beauty and the Cossacks with their unique way of life.

Ressurrection is Tolstoy's social, philosophical, moral, ethical opinions in a capsule. It was first published in 1899 and was the last novel written by Tolstoy. He intended the novel as an exposition of injustice of man-made laws and the hypocrisy of the institutionalized church. The story is about a noble man Dmitri Ivanovich Nekhlyndov, who seeks redemption from a sin committed years earlier. His brief affair with a maid had resulted in her being fired and ending up in prostitution. The book treats his attempts to help her out of her current misery, but also focuses on his personal, mental and moral struggle. Tolstoy's vision of redemption achieved through loving forgiveness and his condemnation of violence dominate the novel.

His novellas include *A Land Owner's Morning (1856)*, *Family Happiness (1859)* and *The*

Devil (1889-90). *A Confession* is a philosophical writing with which he was to emerge with a new religious and ethical teaching. It is a vivid story of Tolstoy's loss of faith, and even disillusionment about conventional religion. His persistent attempt to purify himself and the conclusion of his studies is in *My Religion*, *God is within You* and *The Gospel in Brief.* Tolstoy is also known for his short stories.

Udupi Rajagopalacharya Anantha Murthy was born on December 21, 1932, in Melige in Shimoga district. His education started in a traditional Sanskrit school in Doorvasapura and continued in Tirthahalli and Mysore. He did his M.A. from Mysore University and was awarded Gold Medal. He was appointed as a professor in the department of English at the same university. He earned his doctorate from the University of Birmingham in 1966. He remained the Vice-Chancellor in Mahatma Gandhi University in Kottayam, Kerala during 1987. Anantha Murthy served as the chairman of National Book Trust of India for the year 1992. In 1993, he was elected as the President of Sahitya Academy. He is a leading contemporary fiction writer, poet and critic in Kannada language. Recipient of Homi Bhabha Fellowship for creative writing, Anantha Murthy has been an invitee to the International Writing Program directed by Paul Engal at the University of Iowa where he taught courses in Asian literature and society. He received Jnanpith Award for his contribution to Kannada language. In 1998, he received the Padma Bhushan Award. Anantha Murthy's works have been translated into several Indian and European languages. In his works, he deals with themes having social relevance besides exploring the relevance of some of the traditional values in the changed context of today. His novels include *Samskara, Bhava, Bharatipuara* and *Awasthe.*

Samskara, Anantha Murthy's masterpiece, was published in 1965. In 1970, it was made into a nationally acclaimed, award-winning, but highly controversial film. It was translated into

English by Professor A.K. Ramanujan of the University of Chicago and published by Oxford University Press. The novel deals with conflict between two extreme ways of life, the ascetic and the hedonistic. Anantha Murthy portrays a decaying South Indian Brahmin colony in a village in Karnataka and deals with serious issues related to the orthodox Madhava Brahmin caste order, its adherence to the age-old traditions of rigid caste defined value system and its inherent contradictions and deviations due to human weakness.

In the novel, *Bharatipura* (1973), the Brahmin and the land owner Jagannath, is a young man in a hurry to implement his revolutionary thoughts, which he has picked up as much from his Marxist influence while studying abroad as from a sensitive observation of the ills afflicting the society around him. Jagannath goes back to his home town, which is bound to tradition and tries to change the social structure there after studying in England. He wants to enable the untouchables to enter the temple and has to face the resistance of the higher castes. His attempt to create a just system fails. Here too, one can see the desperate effort on the part of the writer revolutionary to reaffirm his commitment to the ideal of revolution. The novel is essentially a critique of the limitations of the radical middle class, claiming an exclusive and sympathetic right to change the nation. The novel is set in that scenic part of Karnataka, which is lush green, receives plenty of rains and is crisscrossed by rivulets and streams.

His third novel, *Awasthe* (1978), is the culmination of Anantha Murthy's pre-occupation with the conflict of personal virtue and idealism against the stark, cynical, pragmatic world. Using every devious means to defeat the sincere, well-meaning efforts of Krishnappa Gowda to maintain political stability, the divisive powers succeed in neutralizing him in the end, compelling his retirement from active politics. While being a realistic portrayal of the political scenario in present day India, the novel is also a character study of a sensitive, principled individual pitted

against the dirty business of practical politics. U.R. Anantha Murthy's *Bhava* is the latest novel which was published in 1998. It is a compelling tale of mystery, passion and spiritual exploration. We are led to consider that samsara (the world of illusion/*maya*) may not be very different from *shunya*, the emptiness from which everything arises. At times a drama of cruelty and lust, at times a lyrical meditation on love and transformation, *Bhava* is an exceptional novel by one of the India's most celebrated writers.

U. R. Anantha Murthy's articles in English have appeared in various journals like *Transatlantic Review*, *Humanist Review*, *New Quest*, and *Literary Criterion*. He has written numerous short stories also. Most of his novels are based on the duality of politics and morality in human society and reaction of individual in such a situation. The writings analyze aspects ranging from challenges and changes faced by Brahmin families of Karnataka to bureaucrats dealing with politics.

Suzanna Arundhati Roy was born on 24 November 1961 in Shillong (Meghalaya) to a Keralite Syrian Christian mother, the women's rights activist Mary Roy, and Rajib, a Bengali father, a tea planter by profession, based in north-east of India. She spent her childhood in Ayemenem in Kerala and had her early education in her mother's informal western style school, Corpus Christi, in Kerala followed by the Lawrence School, Lovedale, in Nilgiris (Tamilnadu). She then studied architecture at Delhi School of Planning and Architecture. While training as an architect she came to understand the terrible gap between power and powerlessness, between the privileged haves and underprivileged have-nots. Roy admits that her architecture background has influenced the structure of her novel. In 1984, she played the brief role of a "tribal bimbo" in Pradip Kishen's film *Massey Saab*. The film was a great success, and eventually Kishen and Roy got married. A scholarship to Italy to study the restoration of monuments came her way and

during her stay there she focused on writing. The four and a half years' exercise yielded *The God of Small Things*. The book is semi-autobiographical and a major part captures her childhood experiences in Ayemenem. The book won Booker Prize for Arundhati Roy and she immediately shot into prominence. *The God of Small Things* is characterized as an extraordinary art of imagination and opened up a global market for home grown literary stuff. Roy managed to free her from the shackles of conventional writing. Her narrative structure makes ample use of past-present technique, and she adopts a style which is in harmony with the narrative strategy. She also coins new words and uses the local language now and then. *The God of Small Things* is not written in a sequential narrative style in which events unfold chronologically. Instead, the novel is a patchwork of flashbacks.

Roy's ambitious work on a twenty-six episode T.V. serial *The Banyan Tree* to depict India's freedom struggle from the perspectives of five different characters fell through because of financial crunch. Her screenplay for the film *The Electric Moon* (1992), however, was not a success. Roy's early venture into journalism resonates with her later ideological preoccupation too. In 1987, she wrote "Soviet Intervention in Afghanistan: Causes, Consequences and India's Response". It is reminiscent of her two essays on Afghanistan, "The Algebra of Infinite Justice" and "War is Peace" (October 2001), following the American military strikes on the Taliban-ruled Afghanistan. In 1994, Arundhati Roy wrote a scathing review of Shekhar Kapoor's film, *Bandit Queen*, based on Mala Sen's book, *India's Bandit Queen: The True Story of Phoolan Devi.* In this review titled, "The Great Indian Rape Trick I and II", Roy charged Kapoor with misrepresenting Phoolan Devi's real life experiences. This controversial review, which was Roy's passionate intervention in local feminist debates, drew a good deal of media attention and also involved her in ugly court cases.

After a brief overview of the biographical information about the authors and their corpus of literary output, let us now focus on the novels that will be analyzed in the following chapters. Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* is set in the 17th century Boston, Massachusetts, then a puritan village. A young woman, Hester Prynne, is led from the town prison with her infant daughter in her arms and scarlet letter "A" on her bosom. On scaffold, she is to be publically ashamed for the crime of adultery she has committed. The scarlet letter "A" which she bears stands for adultery. It is a badge of shame for all to see. This scarlet letter can also be interpreted as social symbol, punishment and act of rebellion. She receives severe indictment from society for the act of rebellion against moral laws. In Puritan society, social law and religious codes are severely strict and none can dare think in terms of transgressing them. On the scaffold, Hester is asked to reveal the name of her lover, but she refuses to identify him. In the crowd, she recognizes her missing husband, Roger Chillingworth. The ruthless matrons who crowded around the pillory demand that Hester is put to death. Ostracism is too lenient a punishment for the sin committed by Hester Prynne for the puritan society. Chillingworth visits Hester after she is returned to her prison and forces her to promise never to reveal the name of her cuckold husband.

Several years pass. Hester supports herself by working as a seamstress. Pearl (her daughter) grows into a willful, impish child who is more a symbol than an actual character. Shunned by community, they live in a small village on the outskirts of Boston. In consequence of her ostracism, Hester's life turns from passion and feeling to thought. Dimmesdale, however, appears to be wasting away and suffers from mysterious heart trouble, seemingly caused by psychological distress. He suffers more from the guilt of his hypocrisy than his passion. He is too weak to confess it publically. He subjects himself to fasts, vigils, and even flagellations. Arthur is sincerely and wholly dedicated to a social and religious code which condemns his passion joining

him to Hester. Chillingworth attaches himself to the ailing minister and eventually moves in with him so that he can provide his patient round-the-clock care. Eventually Chillingworth discovers that Dimmesdale is the true father of Pearl. Then he spends every moment with him in order to torment him. One night Dimmesdale is so overcome with shame of hiding the secret that he walks to the scaffold where Hester was publically humiliated trying to punish himself for his sins. While standing there, Hester and Pearl also arrive. He asks them to stand there with him, which they do. Hester can see that the minister's condition is worsening, and she resolves to intervene. She goes to Chillingworth and asks him to stop adding to Dimmesdale's self-torment, which he refuses. Hester arranges an encounter with Dimmesdale in the forest and informs him of the true identity of Chillingworth. The former lovers decide to flee to Europe.

The day before the ship is to sail, the townspeople gather for a holiday and Dimmesdale preaches his most eloquent sermon ever. Meanwhile, Hester has learned that Chillingworth knows of their plan and has booked passage on the same ship. Dimmesdale, leaving the church after his sermon, sees Hester and Pearl standing before the town scaffold. He impulsively mounts the scaffold with his lover and daughter, and confesses publically. He falls dead just after Pearl kisses him. Frustrated in his revenge, Chillingworth dies a year later. Hester and Pearl leave Boston. Many years later Hester returns alone and resumes her charitable work. When Hester dies, she is buried in a grave near an old and sunken one, yet with a space between.

Samskara by Anantha Murthy unfolds in a brahminic context. Brahmanism like Puritanism is deeply rooted in the ritualistic aspects of faith. Both have acute disbelief in the earthly desires and are more concerned with other-worldliness. Religious considerations are more important than human life and values. *Samskara* is the story of life in an agrahara, a narrow street in which Brahmins belonging to the Madhava community live. The agrahara is situated in a tiny

hamlet called Durvasapura. The Brahmins of this agrahara are utterly decadent, narrow-minded, selfish, greedy and jealous. Their brahminhood consists only of fulfilling rules and following traditions. Still Durvasapura is famous because of two Brahmins. One of them is Praneshacharya and the other is Naranappa. Praneshacharya went to Kashi (Banaras), studied there, and returned with the title "Crest-Jewel of Vedic Learning" (*Samskara* 17). He is the local guru of Brahmins, not only of Durvasapura, but also of the surrounding villages. The other "famous" Brahmin of agrahara is Naranappa who is an adversary of Praneshacharya. He has actually rejected brahminhood and brought home Chandri, a prostitute from Kundappa and shamelessly lives with her. He drinks alcohol, invites Muslims to his home and eats meat with them. He throws the idol of *Saligrama,* which is believed to represent Lord Vishnu into the river. He has caught the sacred fish from the holy tank. He has also corrupted the local youth. The Brahmins of agrahara are afraid and sick of Naranappa.

The novel dramatizes the conflict between two extreme ways of life, the ascetic and the hedonistic: the former is represented by the orthodox Brahmin led by Praneshacharya and the latter by their defiant and contemptuous opponent, the pleasure loving and anti-brahminical Naranappa. Praneshacharya's personal conduct is loftily idealistic. He has based his life on extreme asceticism and sacrifice. He has married an invalid woman deliberately and for twenty years he has served her faithfully in order to be ripe for salvation. On the other hand, Naranappa has transgressed every moral law of brahminical society. He has flouted their religious beliefs and is bent upon destroying the brahminhood deliberately. When the novel opens, Naranappa has died, leaving behind him the thorny problem of whether a heretic could receive the death rites due to a Brahmin. The Brahmins look to Praneshacharya to solve this problem. Praneshacharya could not find any answer in his holy books. However, in his attempt to find an orthodox solution, he

moves from one place to another, and in the process gets exposed to a variety of novel experiences including sexual encounter with Chandri in the forest. Steeped in the orthodoxies of his creed, Praneshacharya accepts the conventional judgment that through this act he has lost his virtue. At the same time, he has also experienced not only physical and emotional fulfillment but also an increased moral awareness as well as a broadening and refining of his human perceptions. Chandri goes back home and cremates the rotting body of Naranappa with the help of his Muslim friends. Praneshacharya walks wherever his legs take him, haunted by the fear of discovery and haunted by the touch of Chandri. The novel ends as Praneshacharya decides to return to Durvasapura, and to own up his fall.

In Flaubert's famous novel, *Madame Bovary*, Emma is married to Charles, a village doctor. She believes that marriage is a cure to all desires. However, she soon loses passion for her husband as she becomes discontented with her marriage. She realizes gradually that Charles is no match to her and finds him dull and despicable idiot. Emma is full of emotional intensity whereas her husband is dry, passionless, contented with ordinary life and is concerned only with performing his official duties. He cannot measure up to her expectations of a gallant lover of which she has read in the novels. He is more concerned with his professional duties and cannot feel the burning desire in Emma's heart. She finds her life routine and banal compared to the lives of the romantic characters she has read in the novels. Trapped as she is in the glamour of high society; Emma longs for wealth, romance and adventure in every moment of her life.

She falls in love with a wealthy landowner, Rodolphe. Her fantasy for free and unrestricted freedom gives her a glimpse of the life of grandiose passion. Rodolphe cannot satisfy her unquenchable thirst for love and her longing for sensational life. He finds her demands overbearing, got bored of her and soon got rid of her. Emma after a short duration of

disillusionment and despair embarks on yet another love affair with Leon, a young lawyer. But in his company too she could not find remedy for her romantic malady. Gradually, she loses interest in him. Emma gives over to vanity, purchases increasing amount of luxury items on credit from a crafty town merchant, Lheurex, and crushing level of debts mounts quickly. Lheurex orders seizure of Charles' properties in order to compensate for her accumulated debts. Emma frantically tries to raise the money and pleads to several people including her lovers, Rodolphe and Leon, but she is turned down. In despair, she swallows arsenic and dies an agonizing death. Charles, heartbroken, becomes a reclusive and dies after some time, leaving his daughter Berthe with a distant relative.

Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* is a novel of social criticism. It has two plots: Anna and Vronsky's love and Levin-Kitty relationship. Anna is a beautiful, passionate and educated woman like Emma in *Madame Bovary*. She is married to a government official, Karenin. He is a cultivated and rational man. Karenin's entire existence consists of professional obligations with little room for personal whims or instincts. Karenin's lack of passion and emotions forbids him from appreciating Anna's uniqueness. His appreciation of her is only for her duties as a wife and mother. Anna and Karenin are poles apart in their temperament. Karenin is cold, official and dispassionate where as Anna is intensely passionate, emotional and full of vitality. To gratify her emotional or sexual needs, she rejects the norms or conventions of the traditional society and embarks on passionate search of love and belongingness. Both Emma in *Madame Bovary* and Anna in *Anna Karenina* try to follow their hearts and completely rejected any kind of obstacles in their way, whether they were codes of morality or traditional laws of propriety or family obligations.

Anna is introduced in the very first chapter as coming to Moscow to settle a dispute

between her brother, Oblonsky and his wife, Dolly caused by the infidelity of the former. She happens to meet Vronsky, a handsome young count and gets close to him. Thus, her visit ironically becomes the cause of infidelity in the relationship between Anna and her husband. When Karenin comes to know about their relationship, he decides to maintain the external status quo and warns Anna to cease all relations with her lover. He is worried about the societal decency and his public reputation. Karenin resents his wife's infidelity in part because it detracts him from his real life's work at the ministry. Anna gives birth to a child by Vronsky. Karenin gets ready to accept this child as his own due to the fear of scandal. He rejects Anna's request for divorce. Anna flees to Italy with her lover. She enjoys a short period of honeymoon and a transient happiness there. Vronsky being idle there returns to Petersburg with Anna.

Anna is nearly ostracized by the Petersburg society. Isolated, she clings to Vronsky for her undistracted attention. She does not want him to move from her sight. She requires his exclusive attention. She fears that his love is dying, and her fear expresses itself in her possessiveness. Wounded by his indifference and inflamed by the world's scorn, she turns to ever more defiant behavior. Her dream of love and romance was completely shattered. As a result, she rushes to railway platform one day and jumps in front of the oncoming train. She pays the penalty for her infidelity. Levin and Kitty have a purpose in life. They have robust idealism and their life is happily spent in the company of serfs and peasants.

Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* is set in a small town of Ayemenem in Kerala. The family living in Ayemenem House is Syrian Christian convert having an old woman, Mammachi presiding over it. Her husband Pappachi dies heartbroken because his discovery of so-far-unknown tuft moth has been stolen by a worthless scientist. Ammu, their daughter had been a witness to the brutal beating of Mammachi by her husband. Their relationship was devoid of love

and harmony. Ammu's marriage to a Bengali, who she accidentally stumbles upon, is a result of an escape from the uncongenial atmosphere of her home. She is soon disillusioned with her marriage because she found her husband alcoholic. She divorces him and returns to Ayemenem house with her twins, Rahel and Estha. She faces neglect and loneliness at home. She found herself unwanted by the family members. Ammu's brother Chacko's marriage to Margaret Kochamma follows the pattern of Ammu's story. His romantic passion remains only a fleeting experience and Chacko turns homeward when his Canadian wife rejects him in favor of a new and more affluent lover. Ammu's twins receive cold reception in Ayemenem house whereas Sohie Mol, daughter of Chacko is treated with great affection.

Velutha is a young outcast, a paravan, who is not allowed to touch anything that touchables touch. The paravans do not have access beyond the back entrance of the Ayemenem house. Nevertheless, Velutha's uncanny carpentry skills and remarkable facility with machines prompted Mammachi to appoint him as the factory carpenter and put him in charge of general maintenance. Velutha was one man who spontaneously loved Ammu's children. Ammu is drawn towards him. When their sexual relationship is exposed to the family members, Mammachi unleashed a fury on Velutha; she even spits on him.

Arundhati Roy highlights gender bias by referring to Mammachi's discriminatory attitude towards Ammu. A daughter estranged from her husband is made to feel unwanted in her parent's home whereas an estranged son not only receives warm welcome, he remains the rightful inheritor of the family fortune as well. Profligacy in him is encouraged in the name of "Man's Needs" (*TGST* 168) but identical behaviour in a girl decrees torture of being locked up in a room. Velutha and Ammu pay for their transgression with their lives, but Estha and Rahel are two hapless, innocent victims who not only lose their mother, but also are robbed of their childhood

and each other's company. Velutha is mercilessly beaten to death by the "touchable" police. Estha is returned to his father. Separation from one another has disastrous effects on both the twins, and they go through their adolescence and youth with feelings of loneliness, emptiness and incompleteness. Nothing could be more indicative of the immense hurt and pain that they have undergone than the incest that takes place towards the end of the novel.

III

After brief summation of all the novels taken up for textual analysis here, it would be pertinent to examine how various critics have interpreted their varied facets. The brief critical survey presented below highlights rich texture and layered implications of the novels selected for critical analyses. For instance, *The Scarlet Letter* has appealed not only to the critics but to reading public as well. The book created a great stir among the reviewers, who invariably saw it as a major literary event.

Frederic I. Carpenter in his essay "Scarlet A Minus" argues that it specifically suggests the nineteenth century answer to the eternal problem of sin. "Sin" might sometimes be noble, and "virtue" ignoble. "Rousseau himself might have defined the scarlet letter as the stigma which society puts upon the natural instinct of man" (Bradley 308). On the contrary, Steven R. Serafin critiques the novel and observes that "*The Scarlet Letter* reinforces Hawthorne's assertion of the historical as the basis of human self-understanding . . . he explores again the tension between the demands of nature and those of the spirit—working characteristically not toward a resolution of the tensions, but rather toward an acknowledgement of their inevitability, their necessity in determining the human condition" (Serafin 496-97).

Even though Hawthorne does not accept Puritanism as a way of life; Joseph Schwartz in his article "Three Aspects of Hawthorne's Puritanism" has strongly defended the charge of being

Puritan on Hawthorne. He observes thus: "The tendency that Hawthorne had for calling unpleasant things "Puritanic" is an indication that he also rejected Puritanism as a way of life. His habitual reference to the puritans as "stern-visage men" and "unkindly-visage women" sets the tone for his criticism of their way of life." (Gerber 41).

Austin Warren in his introduction to *Nathaniel Hawthorne* has significantly commented that "The New England conscience prevails in Hawthorne's characteristic writing—sometimes to morbidity. He has always more power in depicting what is repellent to his intellectual and moral sense than what he can personally love and admire. In his novel, strong characters are evil; the good are always weak" (Warren 39). In one of the articles on "*The Scarlet Letter*: A Tale of Human Frailty and Sorrow", John Caldwell Stubbs examines the contrasting images in the novel. In the whole novel we encounter an expanding series of opposing images. According to him, "Her (Hester's) role as a representative of unrestricted natural emotions is made clear by contrast with the beadle marching as an embodiment of "the whole dismal severity of the Puritanical code of law." (Bradley 413). Similarly,Hester and Chillingworth are part of the series of opposed images.

Darrel Abel though sympathizes with the central character of the novel, Hester, but he is not ready to condone her fault. In an essay entitled "Hawthorne's Hester", he comments: "Hester Prynne, the heroine of *The Scarlet Letter*, typifies romantic individualism, and in her story Hawthorne endeavored to exhibit the inadequacy of such a philosophy. The romantic individualist repudiates the doctrine of a supernatural ethical absolute. He rejects both the authority of God which sanctions a pietistic ethic, and the authority of society which sanctions a utilitarian ethic, to affirm the sole authority of Nature. Hester violating piety and decorum lived a life of nature and attempted to rationalize her romantic self-indulgence; but, although she broke the laws of God and man, she failed to secure even the natural satisfactions she sought" (Bradley 317).

The Scarlet Letter has also been interpreted from the angle of *felix culpa* (the fortunate fall) and it has been tried to prove that man must fall or commit sin if he has to rise to heights above normal men as the fall or committing sin can have beneficent effect. It is relevant to quote Donald Ringe here who observes: "The noblest qualities of heart and mind, true and profound insight into problem of human existence are attained only through sin" (Gerber 75). In yet another review, Evert A. Duyckinck impressed by the extraordinary power of Hawthorne in revealing the secret springs of the heart of characters, calls the novel a "psychological romance": "*The Scarlet Letter* is a psychological romance. The hardiest Mrs. Malaprop would never venture to call it a novel. It is a tale of remorse, a study of character in which the human heart is anatomized, carefully, elaborately, and with striking poetic and dramatic power" (Turner 45). Lawrence Sargent Hall in his work *Hawthorne: A Critic of Society* comments that "The theme of *The Scarlet Letter* is that of the isolation of the human heart. . . . The unrelieved painfulness which distressed even Hawthorne in this story, results from the fact that every one of the chief characters is segregated from the common life" (Hall 167).

Interestingly, Richard H. Millington in his interpretation of the novel has given strong arguments to justify the adultery of Hester and Dimmesdale by contrasting their adultery with the dull lives around them and Chillingworth's unlovableness and with town's unnatural moralism. For him "it is not adultery that is the original sin of *The Scarlet Letter*, but a forced, loveless marriage which Chillingworth sought" (Millington 26).

E. P. Whipple in a review admits that there is a comparative lack of relief to the painful emotions which the novel excites owing to the intensity with which the author concentrates attention on the working of dark passions, but it makes the moral purpose of the book more obvious: "It must be confessed that the moral purpose of the book is made more definite by this

very deficiency. The most abandoned libertine could not read the volume without being thrilled in to something like virtuous resolution" (Bradley 251). A. N. Kaul comments that Hawthorne has made a critique of The New England society by showing it lacking in the elementary Christian values, "a society which claimed to have based itself on the highest principles of moral idealism but which turns out at the first test to be utterly lacking in the elementary Christian values of love and compassion. Its program of regeneration is in reality a mask for repression, and its intolerance and bigotry are worse than those of the European society from which it has, on that very account, separated itself" (Kaul 181). As such, *The Scarlet Letter* has aroused different reactions in the readers, and interpretations from different angles testify its richness as a work of art. Despite a huge volume of writings on this novel, it invites critics to discover new things to say about it.

The critical response to Anantha Murthy's *Samskara* has come from diverse perspectives. Ramanujan, in his "Afterword", for instance, sums it up as "a religious novel, a contemporary re-working of ancient themes." He sees the characters in sets of polar opposites, one acting as a foil to another, and concludes that the novel naturally tends to be an allegory. It's theme for Ramanujan is the "complex relation between asceticism and eroticism" (*Samskara* 143). In one of the articles on "Interpreting Cultural Impasse in Anantha Murthy's *Samskara,* Kailash C. Baral says that "the novel dramatizes with astonishing artistic richness and compression the forces of disintegration within a Brahmin community and the protagonist's complex relation to it. It powerfully critiques and subverts a social system erected on degraded and unexamined cultural-religious system" (Baral 114). The novelist was accused of attacking Brahmanism. The initial reaction to the novel centered on the issue of its anti-brahminism. But for Meenakshi Mukherjee, "The significance of *Samskara* as a modern Indian novel lies precisely in the author's attempt to exploit the tension between two world views. . . . The difficult and uneasy process of transition

between the fixed settled order of life and the still inchoate stirrings of self is part of the thematic concern of the novel" (Mukherjee 166-67). The life in this decadent agrahara is static and routinized and along with other Brahmins, Praneshacharya is also part of this agrahara. The mind of Praneshacharya, the most conscious point of community, is the arena of conflict. Once Praneshacharya is touched by Chandri, his accustomed world is shattered and he, once jolted out of its groove, cannot be integrated again. Thus, the conflict between asceticism and eroticism becomes the central concern of the novel.

V.S. Naipaul "found the ethos of *Samskara* incomprehensible where identity is determined by *karma* and *varna* – is shown in collision with a new awareness of self, partly conditioned by existential thinking" (Mukherjee 166-67). For Naipaul, the novel dramatizes one man's search for identity and the novel takes us closer to the Indian idea of the self. According to Rashmi Gaur, however, "*Samskara* presents a vivid picture of a society which has accepted caste discrimination as a norm. It has unquestioningly accepted the Brahmin eminence, and pushed the lower-caste people to periphery. . . . The caste emerges as an independent character in *Samskara*. It informs the action, moulds the characters' responses and also provides the much-needed sociological background" (Gaur 37-38). D. Venkat Rao views *Samskara* as a novel that "dramatizes the moral dilemmas in the face of the simultaneous occurrences of contraries: sacred and profane, voluptuous and putrefying body, desire and disgust, chance and mastery etc. and the awareness that our actions can have unintended consequences" (Baral 223). R.K. Gupta in an article "The 'Fortunate Fall' in U.R. Anantha Murthy's *Samskara*" comments that "The novel interprets the orthodox theological doctrine of 'the fortunate fall' on a human and universal plane and dramatizes it effectively through a delicate interplay of character and situation" (Gupta 23).

Tejender Kaur's remark in regard to the chief concern of the novel is very appropriate.

She observes that "While handling many other issues in narrative, the basic questions raised in the novel are: (i) what is actual samskara? (ii) is it achieved by blindly following rules and traditions or it gets lost when they are not kept? (iii) are the good and bad caste defined? . . . the way Anantha Murthy has grappled with these issues makes it a unique narrative in many ways" (Kaur 38-39). Yet another perspective is offered by Guru Charan Behera for whom the novel "seeks to challenge, undermine and subvert the hegemony discourse of the high caste elitist male and create space for the discourses of the other—the low caste, the rustic folk, women and deviants" (Behera 182). The novel for him brings into focus marginalized voices and the representative of the highest caste, Praneshacharya, is transformed by getting involved with the commonplace, ordinary and banal. Virender Pal observes that "the novel is indeed a strong critique of the caste system and effectively proves that it has no place in the modern society and at the same time also proves that it has no religious sanction as argued by many" (Pal 101). From the above critical survey, it becomes evident that the theme of transgression has been touched by some critics marginally, but its comprehensive study has not been undertaken so far.

Being a universally acknowledged classic, Flaubert's *Madam Bovary* has evoked tremendous critical response. According to Birken, *Madame Bovary* represents an important turning point in western culture. He quotes Eric Gans saying, "the work was a watershed in the history of the novel, thus constituting major transformation in both content and form" (Birken 609). On the other hand, Martin Turnell studies different images and their symbolic meanings in the novel. He describes the world in *Madam Bovary* as "falling apart . . . . But in every society when something is destroyed, another thing takes its place. . . . The world which is falling apart is the traditional world, the world of liberal profession; the world which is taking its place is the world of 'spivs'" (Giraud 111).

David Gervais in an article "James' Reading of *Madam Bovary*" in his book *Flaubert and Henry James* quotes James' comments on Madam Bovary. According to him, James does not regard Madam Bovary a great *tour de force.* Finding no dignity in the vulgar tragedy of the wife of a country doctor, he is puzzled by the book's 'inherent dignity'. It must inhere in its 'form' rather than its 'substance' (Gervais 49). Even though Lawrence calls the book a great book and a very wonderful picture of life, but also comments: "We cannot help resenting the fact that the great tragic soul of Gustave Flaubert is, so to speak, given only the rather commonplace bodies of Emma and Charles Bovary. There is a misfit. . . . You can't put a great soul into a commonplace person. Commonplace persons have commonplace souls" (Giraud 97). Martin Turnell's remark is worth quoting as he calls *Madame Bovary* a study of romantic outlook: "Its principal theme is the Romantic longing for a happiness which the world of common experience can never satisfy . . . Emma's misfortune is caused by her inability to adapt herself to the world of everyday life. Her hunt for Romantic passion leads to adultery which undermines her character, involves her in a life of subterfuge and deceit, and in the dubious financial transaction which ultimately drive her to suicide"(Turnell 258). On the similar line, Starkie studies Emma's tragedy of dreams and comes to conclusion that her overexposure to romantic literature leads her to tragedy. According to him, "Flaubert wanted to study clinically the disease of romanticism. He knew, from the effects on himself, its deliquescing nature, how it prevented any clear thinking, any clear and objective view of self, and how it led to senseless dreaming which impeded all action" (Starkie 297).

For Eugene Hollahan, the theme of the novel is "hazards of desire and quest for freedom" (Hollahan 107). W. Somerset Maugham in his work *Great Novelists and Their Novels*, observes that Flaubert's attempt at complete impersonality fails as it fails with every novelist. In fact, he is himself a personage in the story he is telling. "He had no patience with stupidity. The bourgeois,

the commonplace, the ordinary filled him with exasperation. . . . He was violently intolerant. He flung himself into the sordid story of Madame Bovary with the zest of a man revenging himself on life by wallowing in the gutter, because life has not met the demands of his passion for the ideal" (Maugham 148). Charles Baudelaire also observes that Flaubert reveals himself directly or indirectly in the characters he creates: "In his discovery of 'virile soul in charming feminine body', he recognizes the complex intimate relationship between Flaubert and his heroine . . . who is lent time and again her creator's vision and his voice" (Giraud 9). Resorting to analyze the technical aspects of his fiction, Anthony Thorlby in his work *Gustave Flaubert and the Art of Realism* has remarked that "such an ordinary story can have been presented so powerfully. This forces criticism to consider those elusive qualities of style and form, which are always so awkward to discuss with regard to fiction" (Thorlby 33). Victor Brombert studies the pattern of images in *Madame Bovary* and observes that "the very movement of the imagery in *Madame Bovary* leads from desire to frustration and failure, and ultimately to death and total undoing" (Brombert 65). After going through the detailed study of critical works on this famous novel of Flaubert, it can be said that a great aura of perfection surrounds this novel. But it seems to me that there are still some things to say about *Madame Bovary.*

In *Anna Karenina*, Tolstoy examines the question of meaning of life in order to consider the problem of adultery. Both Anna and Levin adhere to Rousseauan ideal by refusing to abide by public opinion and meaningless social conventions. Levin resists the conventions of society, but comes to accept the wisdom of those related to God. Anna is caught in a web of social, family, moral and religious conventions, which she flouts but is unable to overcome, doomed by the inherent contradictions of her society and of adultery itself. Janko Lavrin in his introduction to the novel *Anna Karenina* writes "The very structure of this masterpiece is based on a Rousseauesque

impulse: on the antithesis between the idyllic country life, and the artificial city existence. . . . The happy marriage between Kitty and Levin is contrasted by the 'sinful' free union between the adulterous Anna Karenina and her lover Vronsky, both of whom are duly punished" (Lavrin 121).

Amy Mandelker in her book *Framing Anna Karenina* calls the novel a rich and complex meditation on passionate love and disastrous infidelity. She quotes Evans Mary's observation that "If there is a message in *Anna Karenina*, it is perhaps that domestic life and maternity save women from Anna's hideous fate of morbid jealousy and destructive introspection" (Mandelkar 39). Critiquing the novel from feminist angle, Anna can be considered a rebellious woman who challenges the conventions of the patriarchal society. But as she failed to stand up against the patriarchal hegemony and could not resist its pressure, she cannot be taken as a role model for the other women. It is pertinent to quote the observation of Evans here who accuses Anna of failing to act to subvert or resist the patriarchy: "Far from resisting conventions, Anna internalizes their constraints. Anna is a poor friend to other women and she is left in no position to challenge other's judgments of herself as a fellow woman" (Mandelkar 39). George Steiner in his work *Tolstoy or Dostoevsky: An Essay in Contrast* remarks that "in *Anna Karenina,* we pass beyond technical mastery to the sense of life itself. The work belongs (in a way in which *Madame Bovary* does not) with the Homeric epics, the plays of Shakespeare, and the novels of Dostoevsky" (Steiner 71).

From Marxists' point of view, *Anna Karenina* can be taken as a "historical document faithfully recording the transformation of old Russia by capitalism, which bureaucratized the ruling classes, destroying their humanity along with the masses they exploited" (Adelman 14). To Lukacs, "the 'liberals' and 'progressives' who sneer at Tolstoy as a reactionary, fail to see in *Anna Karenina* a subtle and masterful expose of the evils of capitalism" (Adelman 131).

Comparing *Anna Karenina* to *War and Peace*, L. Winstanley in his book, *Tolstoy*, comments that *Anna Karenina* is, perhaps, considered as a whole, a more artistic work than *War and Peace*: "everything is directed towards the one end—the tragic death of Anna—and though the novel has an under-plot, that is very skillfully blent with the main plot, and is everywhere kept sub-ordinate" (Winstanley 51). John Bayley in his book, *Tolstoy and the Novel* made a significant remark: "It is Anna who has classic relation to her creator—the relation of Isabel Archer to James and of Emma Bovary to Flaubert. In such a relation it does not matter how apparently dissimilar is the creator from his creation: it is not a kinship of externals and ideas but of a deeper psychological identification. In breadth and vitality of conception Anna infinitely exceeds any personal case. And yet, like Flaubert with his heroine, Tolstoy—had been given to such comments—could have said: "Madame Karenin, c'est moi [It's me]" (Bayley 201).

Interestingly, several critics and scholars across the world have responded variously to this masterpiece by adopting different approaches. As it is a great work having capacity to yield fresh insights for successive generations and despite the number of penetrating studies, criticism of the novel still remains far from exhausted.

Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* is much acclaimed and critically studied book. The Booker Prize to Roy generated unprecedented academic activity and sky-rocketed her to occupy a firm place in English literature. Jaydeep Sarangi in an article "The Discourse of Postcolonial Resistance: A Study of Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*" comments on the greatness of the work thus: "*The God of Small Things* has been appreciated for its verbal wizardry and verbal exuberance. It constantly foregrounds the conventional and accepted rules of language. She writes in an iconoclastic style, truly different from that of the other Indo-English novelists" (Sarangi 145).

The novel mainly deals with transgression of traditional boundaries and social conventions as in one of her interviews published in *The Week* (1997: 46), Roy says that her book is not about history, but it is about "biology" and "transgression." Many critics have studied the novel from the perspective of transgression and read it as assertion for freedom from the shackles of social constraints. Laxmi Parasu Ram in an article "The World of Small and Big Things: Transgression of Rules and Roles in *The God of Small Things*" writes: "I think that this word transgression assumes multiple ramifications within her book destroying rules, norms, roles and identities, and making one big issue out of many small ones that are used to exemplify it" (Dhawan 101). Madhumalti Adhikari in the same book in an article "The Woman's Question" describes about various enclosures of marriage, class, caste, politics, economics and emotions, and analyses them from the angle of man-woman actions and reactions (Dhawan 41-48). In an article "Freedom and Suffering in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*", J.M. Verghese has raised a question "Is *The God of Small Things* an erotic proclamation of sexual freedom for women of today? (Bhatt and Nityanandam 58). Joy Chakravorty and Indravadan Purohit have commented that "Roy seems to uphold the norm that society frowns on lovers. Be it Romeo-Juliet, Laila- Majnu, Shirin- Farhad or Ammu-Valutha, societal behavior is stereotyped. Hence, the reactions of society which Roy mirrors in her works is reflective of the fact that over the years societal behavior as far as lovers are concerned has not changed"(Dodoya and Chakravarty 150).

Many critics and scholars have studied the novel as a mirror of social, historical and psychological truth of the traditional Indian society. For instance, Amar Nath Prasad observes that "In *The God of Small Things,* the author has tried her best to cover almost all the details of social and historical setting and scenario so that the readers may be able to be acquainted with the pattern of livings daily routine, rites, customs, rituals and habits, etc."(Prasad 128). K.M. Pandey

observes that "The novel is a satire on politics, attacking specifically the communist establishment. One may also call it a protest novel which is subversive and taboo breaking". He also analyzes the technical innovation of the author and comments: "In terms of stylistic experimentation, it is the boldest novel of the nineties as *The Midnight's Children* was of the eighties" (Dhawan 172). Reena Kothari studies multiple power structure in Ayemenem and gives her comments thus: "The novel portrays the forces of power working in alliance in the novel. It shows how the caste system and hierarchy, which is still prevalent in India, operates and is powerful ally of patriarchy, which is another powerful component of Indian society"(Bhatt and Nityanandan 143). R.S. Sharma and Shashibala Talwar in *Arundhati Roy's The God of Small Things: Critique and Commentary* comment that "The novel is chiefly concerned with those creatures whose lives and works are regarded as insignificant, but who also embody the natural unsophisticated urges of life; it implied that the activities and passions of small people are possessed of real value" (Sharma and Talwar 44). For K.V. Surendran, the book is "a saga of lost dreams from several points of view. Almost all the characters in the novel have something to say about their loss" (Surendran 10)

From the above critical survey, it is evident that transgression motif has been fascinating critics from all ages as well as climes. Nevertheless, a cross-cultural, comparative research venture as has been undertaken by the present researcher here has always eluded critical attention. Indubitably, there are ample number of articles/books comparing *Madame Bovary* and *Anna Karenina*, but bringing *The Scarlet Letter*, *Samskara* and *The God of Small Things* within the ambit of transgression motif seemed really challenging. As such, this project seeks to tread fresh grounds in the realm of comparatism via rigorously analyzing the selected texts as well as their socio-cultural and historical contexts not only to offer a comparative critique but also to

convincingly demonstrate as to how despite diversity of cultures, the fundamental response to transgression (sexual in particular) is more or less alike. Furthermore, it will also be proven with considerable textual evidence as to how transgressive instinct always coils cozily in the close vicinity of strict code of moral conduct in every clime and culture of the world.

IV

This dissertation seeks to examine five novels representing diverse socio-cultural backgrounds to show the similarity and dissimilarity of human response to transgressive behavior in general and sexual transgression in particular. With this in view, different protagonists have been analyzed in the light of the theorization of the concept of transgression done above. The whole corpus of textual evidence has been explored to see how each protagonist responds to the temptations, stimuli and natural urges, and when trapped, how s/he tries to gratify her/his desire. It will also be demonstrated how in the process, s/he flouts social norms and comes into conflict with the society thereby undergoing suffering socially and psychologically. Some of the protagonists come out of the sufferings and evolve to a higher stage of growth whereas others perish in the way.

The novels taken up for rigorous textual analyses are: Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*, Gustave Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*, Leo Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*, U.R. Anantha Murthy's *Samskara* and Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*. The dissertation has been divided into four chapters and each chapter has been further divided into four units. The first chapter has been titled as "Transgression: A Socio-Cultural Perspective", with a view to study the response/ reaction of society on the infringement of moral codes by the protagonists of the novels under study. How the society recoils when they cross the limits, boundaries or fences erected by society. Transgression offends against the shared collective consciousness; it is, therefore, a crime against

society. The punishment that is always invoked is a symbolic reformation of the collective against the offending individual. When an individual commits transgression, he goes beyond the bounds or limits of social conventions. These social constraints are coercive when infringed.

The transgressor treads the forbidden path in order to stretch the confines/limits of the individual as well as social self. S/he seeks recompense for his defiled social self and strives to alleviate her/his feeling of depression. S/he feels her/himself displaced and discontented. The transgression on the part of the protagonists of the novels under study may also be attributed to their search for self/identity. They feel themselves shackled and constrained by the walls or boundaries of moral codes and social conventions. Their evolution is hampered due to various kinds of restrictions imposed by the society. Therefore, they strive to come out of these limits to satiate their simmering desires.

In the second chapter entitled "Commission of Transgression", the factors responsible for the transgression have been explored. When the protagonists transgress the societal norms they feel rejoiced in the grandiose passions of life. They are awakened to the life of natural instinct and wholeness. This delight of transgression has also been explored in a detailed manner in this chapter. Repercussion being the upshot of commission of transgression, the present researcher has analyzed diverse proportions of repercussion aspect of transgression. In various socio-cultural traditions across the world, the transgressive behavior of the protagonists is ruthlessly condemned /denounced as demonstrated and exemplified in the thesis.

The third chapter on "Repercussions of Transgression" seeks to explore the aftermath of transgression. In this, the present researcher has endeavored to study (comparatively as well as cross-culturally) the socio-cultural, psychological, moral and political repercussions of transgression. The commission of transgression results in psychological tumult, moral chaos and

disorder which culminate in suicides/deaths. But in certain cases, it also results in evolution to the higher stage of 'becoming' by way of gaining spiritual wisdom.

The last chapter entitled "Culmination of Transgression: Reconciliation and Realization" focuses on the culmination of transgression with some startling parallels in the texts taken up for critical consideration. Moreover, it is shown that despite utter unacceptability of transgression across the world, there are possibilities of reconciliation—a facet that evidences how mature a society is wherein it is committed (e.g. in *The Scarlet Letter*). The realization on the part of the protagonists has been assessed comparatively to show the points of convergence as well as divergence in diverse cultures reflected in each of the selected texts. Through conclusion, it has been reiterated as to how certain urges and desires in human beings are primordial and how they obtain across diverse climes and cultures. The conclusion also collates insights about multiple shades of transgression motif as evidenced through the texts under critical scrutiny thereby suggesting further scope of research.

Chapter 1

Transgression: A Socio-Cultural Perspective

Transgression can be defined as a deliberate act of defiance. The defiance can either be of social mores, conventions, or of religious laws. A society, a religious sect/faith asserts itself by law of some sort, or axioms. Individual and society have always been in a state of uncomfortable relationship especially because social epochs by and large, have been demanding conformity from individual; while s/he has either rebelled against social constraints or willingly accepted them. The society has its external boundaries, margins/limits that "contain power to reward conformity and repulse attack. There is energy in its margins..." (Douglas 137). Moreover, society has often acted as a bulldozing psychological force compelling individual to conform to its rules and dogmas. Viewed historically, flouting of the social edicts can invite severe punishment like rigorous imprisonment, ostracism, and even death.

Society evolved as an organization of a group needed for the survival of its individuals against the hostile environment. People survived because they adapted themselves in accordance with their environment by obeying certain parameters. Human evolution was enabled by her/his adaptable behavior. Cultural laws are created for the organization and survival of society because the natural instincts of people can be destructive, if not controlled. It may cause anarchy and disorder hampering the progress of a civilization. In fact, transgression evokes strong social reaction which reveals common prevailing taboos: "Transgression offends against the shared collective consciousness; it is therefore a crime (or transgression) against society itself. . . . The reaction to their fracture buttresses, restores and reaffirms their shared character and constraint" (Jenks 20). Societal laws and ethical values are sometimes so severe that they cause conflict with our instincts/emotional urges. These societal values deprive the self of its autonomy and

hence human longing for happiness results in tragedy. Whenever the culture sticks to its outdated norms created long ago and loses its contact with nature, it leads to catastrophe. Natural laws are the perennial source of nourishment and strength to culture. In spite of opposition, culture cannot break completely with nature and if it does so, it perishes in course of time. M.P. Sinha gives an apt analogy of nature-culture relationship:

> The relationship can be best explained by the analogy of a river and its canal. The river, part of nature, is wild and uncontrolled but the canal, its offshoot, is controlled and 'cultured.' It is also the canal, though in opposition to the river, is dependent on the river and once it is cut off from its source, it grows dry. Man creates culture for the existence of his group against the impersonal nature, but changes his laws in relation to the universal laws of nature (Sinha 71).

The story of civilization, in one sense, signifies the history of repression of mankind. The more a civilization progresses, the severer are its constraints. These cultural constraints force individuals to renounce their instinctual drives. The civilization advances once the human beings forsake their primary objective namely the gratification of their needs. Living amidst human environment, the individual comes to traumatic realization that full and painless gratification of his needs is impossible. Natural drives are controlled by the cultural constraints but they are only subjugated, not eliminated altogether, as they survive in the sub-conscious mind. The main victim of civilization is the sex instinct which bears the brunt of "civilization process" as Freud observes:

> Freud considered the possibility of a community which permitted natural expression of love between human beings, and he came out with the conclusion that this was well neigh impossible. The chief casualty of the civilization process is love and all civilization is

> based on repression. If we ask why society cannot rest upon love but must conflict with it, Freud's answer was, in part, that it is love that is inherently subversive. (qtd. in Sharma and Talwar 52).

In the context of women, male dominance has always been stifling their voice not only in family matters but also in personal ones like marriage. The patriarchal enclosure impedes all their attempts at seeking authentic self-expression thereby severely restricting their erotic freedom. This unfulfilled yearning for love aggravates women's cultural and psychological repression. In arenas other than sexual too, society has been crushing the individual desire mercilessly whenever s/he has tried to pursue private ethic to realize her/his dreams of happiness. Any wholesome and fulfilling relationship is crushed savagely by the so-called guardians of social justice. When people break the rules and cross over into forbidden territory, the impossible happens and the unthinkable/unimaginable becomes thinkable/ imaginable. Thus, we see that at times forbidden relationships become the only way to achieve selfhood for the deprived, oppressed and the powerless.

Literature representing diverse cultures of the world is replete with depiction of transgressive acts as the antagonism between the instinctual urges and cultural constraints is age-old and universal. As everywhere else in the world, transgression, especially of marital vows, is severely condemned in Hindu mythology. In Hindu culture, marriage is considered a sacred relationship and the marital bonds are established with gods as witnesses. The breaking of the sacred commitment thus is sacrilege signifying bad *karma*. In the *Vishnu Purana*, it is said that he who commits adultery is born in future life a creeping insect; his life in this world is cut short and in the afterlife he falls into hell (*Vishnupurana* III.XI. 239). Hindu law books are very severe against transgression of marital vows, not only for moral reasons but also for social reasons as

they consider that it would lead to confusion of castes, degradation of family values and destabilization of social disorder.

In this context, the *Bhagvadgita* observes: "With the emergence of *adharma*, women become impure. And when women fall into bad ways, admixture of castes takes place. The ancestors (in heaven) also fall, as they do not receive the ritualistic offerings of food and water due to them" (*Bhagvadgita* 1.41-43). The observation is contestable as it is not only reductive but also stereotypical in its intent and purpose. The *Manusmriti* also says that by adultery is caused admixture of castes (*varna*) among men; thence follows sin which cuts up even the roots and causes the destruction of everything (*Manusmriti* 8.353). Hindu mythology has a number of stories illustrating the manner in which gods themselves often indulged in adulterous thoughts and actions. Other instances of transgression include Ravana's abduction of Sita in the *Ramayana* which leads to his eventual downfall. Yayati (a King in the *Mahabharata*) too engages in adulterous liaison with Sharmishtha due to his hunger for sexual gratification and is cursed by Shukracharya with invincible decrepitude. Likewise, Dushasana tries to outrage Draupadi's modesty by disrobing her, and it leads to terrible war.

Likewise, the story of Clytaemnestra and Agamemnon from Greek mythology has been represented in Sophocles' *Electra*, Homer's *Illiad* and *Odyssey* and Aeschylus's *Agamemnon.* Clytaemnestra's first husband was killed by Agamemnon and subsequently he had to marry her. When Agamemnon went to war, Clytaemnestra took Aegisthus as lover. On Agamemnon's return from war they both killed him. According to Aeshylus, Clytaemnestra plays an active role in murdering Agamemnon by trapping him in his bath. Years later, Orestes avenged his father by killing Aegisthus and Clytaemnestra (Roman 119). The legend of Zeus, an amorous god, who mates with countless goddesses and mortal women, also exemplifies transgression represented

variously by the writers. Zeus belonged to a monogamous society wherein there was male dominance and women were reduced to a subsidiary position. As such, illicit affairs, even though officially not sanctioned, were condoned in case of men but never tolerated in case of women (Morford and Lenardon 72-84).

As such, transgression, particularly sexual, has been a taboo across the world. Nevertheless, it takes place more often than not despite socio-cultural restrictions. This chapter aims at demonstrating how transgression is viewed, perceived and responded to cross-culturally with considerable textual evidence. From the instances briefly discussed above, an important fact comes to the fore that transgression (particularly sexual) has been pervasive phenomenon and individuals have deliberately flouted the social constraints to gratify their instinctual desires. It has been amply represented/illustrated in various literatures and mythologies of the world such as Indian, Roman and Greek to name a few. This infringement of the social conventions and flouting of cultural codes has always invited stern reaction and condemnation from the society. To illustrate the point, it will be pertinent to study response of various socio-cultural setups to sexual transgression as depicted in novels undertaken for analyses in the present dissertation namely *The Scarlet Letter*, *Samaskara*, *Madame Bovary*, *Anna Karenina*, and *The God of Small Things*.

I

The Scarlet Letter expresses the aspects of a strict Puritan community of the 17th century Boston. The values and morals of the Puritan settlement influence the social as well as moral expectations of the people. Dictated and governed by a set of religious laws, Puritan society restricted its people to mundane and ordinary lives. The theocratic based community was forced to live under hard and often strict guidelines of the Puritan church. Relationships between men

and women were extremely constrained. Religion would be the overall governing power and the community believed in destiny determined by God. Public discipline and punishment were used to discourage people from committing any crime or sin.

Puritans believed that there was a stern God who had decreed in advance the fate of each person for all time. Therefore, there was not much people felt they could do to become a better person in God's eyes but to do his bidding with their job. Their theology claimed that there was a pact of salvation promised by God to Abraham and extended to the whole community of Christians. As such, the only important things for a person apart from God were work and family. Their morality was extremely rigid. They were contrary to the feasts and theatrical plays and also their religious ceremonies were absent or reduced to minimum, giving importance only to sermon—the religious preaching to the members of the community. A life of humility and obedience was the best for every individual of a community. Relationships were looked upon as sacred and a woman was expected to be loyal to her husband. Once married, it was considered an unpardonable offence to be disloyal to your spouse. Life was centered on a rigid puritan ethic in which no one was able to divulge his/ her innermost thoughts and secrets. The emotions of human beings would remain bottled up until they become unstable as they found no opportunity for their expression. As such, people had to seek alternate means to relieve their personal anguish and desires.

The tragedy of the protagonist of *The Scarlet Letter*, Hester Prynne, is as a result of her repression by the puritanical, rigid and intolerant society. As a young woman, Hester married an elderly scholar, Roger Chillingworth, who sent her ahead to America to live but never followed. While waiting for him, she had an affair with a puritan minister, Arthur Dimmesdale. A daughter, Pearl was born to their union. Found guilty of adultery through the absence of her

husband, and the birth of Pearl, Hester is punished by being forced to wear a scarlet letter "A" (signifying 'adultery') on her bosom for the rest of her life. This transforms Hester into a living sermon against sin. Hester is immediately ostracized from the stern community and endures years of shame, scorn and loneliness.

The very first chapter of the novel depicts the prison in which Hester Prynne is locked and is expected to come out as she is to be punished by being exposed to the general public and standing on the scaffold. The location and condition of prison indicates the attitude of the puritan society towards the inhabitants of prison (mostly transgressors).The prison (symbolizing certainty of guilt in human nature) was built by the earlier inhabitants of the puritan settlement near a cemetery (symbolizing death). The wooden jail was marked with weather stains, which gave a darker aspect to its gloomy front. The iron work of its door is already rusted. The patch of grass near the prison is overgrown with unsightly vegetation (suggesting puritans and their gloomy vision of life). The atmosphere outside the prison has been depicted as depressing and awful. The inhabitants of Boston have fastened their eyes on iron clamped oaken door of prison (representing rigidity) when Hester is to come out of the door. The detailed descriptions of the crowd have the force of moral abstractions which Crowley describes thus:

> Hawthorne describes not so much the crowd as he does its predominant moral attitude – the colors of the clothes, the hats, the hoods indicate the same sombre and gloomy rigidity that the prison doors heavy oak timbers and iron spikes do. Even the word *throng*, in suggesting that the crowd is pressed tightly together, connotes a sense of pressure and weight bearing down on the whole scene (Crowley 71).

The law and religion were almost identical for these puritans. The transgressors might not look for any kind of sympathy from these people. Hawthorne makes it more explicitly emphatic:

"There was very much the same solemnity of demeanor on the part of the spectators; as befitted a people amongst whom religion and law were almost identical . . . that the mildest and severest acts of public discipline were alike made vulnerable and awful. Meager indeed, and cold, was the sympathy that a transgressor might look for" (*TSL* 41).

The matrons who are the part of the crowd outside the prison have been depicted with powerful irony. Their severity of outbursts reflects the perversity of womanliness. These envious matrons called ostracism of Hester, a light punishment. They want more extreme punishment than that decried by the magistrates. They do not want to show any kind of sympathy towards Hester despite them being women. Their fury will be calmed only if Hester is meted out with severest punishment and although the scarlet letter, the badge of shame, which she is forced to wear, cuts her from societal mainstream thereby isolating her completely as a hateful sinner. This scarlet letter has such a potent and disastrous effect that she is deprived of any kind of sympathy in society. The tirade of matrons reflects the harsh legalism of puritan society when they say: "The magistrates are God- fearing gentlemen but merciful over much that is a truth. At the very least, they should have put the brand of a hot iron on Hester Prynne's forehead" (*TSL* 42). The most pitiless of these self-appointed judges cried thus: "What do we talk of marks and brands, whether on the bodice of her gown, or the flesh of her forehead? This woman has brought shame upon us all, and ought to die . . . . Then let the magistrates who have made it of no effect, thank themselves if their own wives and daughters go astray!" (*TSL* 42).

Hawthorne has shown these hard-visaged matrons as ruthless, spiteful and malicious who cry for severest punishment for Hester. Suzan Last in her article entitled 'Hawthorne's Feminine Voices: Reading *The Scarlet Letter* as a Woman' quotes Monika Elbert characterizing these post-menopausal women as "mimicking the patriarchs of their community". She further

comments that these women "have denied their gender, their maternal power, and have no recourse in a patriarchal society but to adopt masculine power. These antagonistic women see Hester's sexuality in the way men conventionally have viewed it as a threat and have dealt with that threat by becoming more male, more hard than the toughest patriarch" (Last 357). Such is the judgment of society upon Hester. It becomes obvious that Hester has little hope for any kind of sympathy from any quarter as the womanhood of the society has lost all maternal instincts. The only female voice that speaks for Hester is the young mother in the crowd.

In this harsh puritan society, any mildest violation of the strict moral codes by any individual is frowned upon by the society. In case of sexual transgression by the protagonist of the novel, Hester Prynne, invites violent reaction. But society is not a worthy judge of these matters. Instead of following the teachings of Jesus Christ concerning love, these people of 17th century New England adhere to narrow rules and moralizing regulations. These people are hypocritical themselves. They assume themselves as if they are practicing virtue.

The first scaffold scene is very important because the scene sums up the beliefs of the general public at that time:

> The grass-plot before the jail, in Prison Lane, on a certain summer morning, not less than two centuries ago, was occupied by a pretty large number of the inhabitants of Boston, all with their eyes intently fastened on the iron -clamped oaken door. . . . It could have betokened nothing short of the execution of some noted culprit, on whom the sentence of a legal tribunal had but confirmed the verdict of public sentiment (*TSL* 40).

This scene shows the weight of values and morals upon society in the 17th century and how public punishment was not only used as punishment but as a way to discourage others from committing the same crime. Hester was led to a stage where she was doomed to wear scarlet

letter "A" on her clothing and stand there for the public sight so that she may be punished by a public stigma. "Mistress Prynne shall be set where man, woman and child may have a fair sight of her brave apparel from this time till an hour past meridian. . . . Come along, Madam Hester, and show your scarlet letter in the market place!"(*TSL* 44). She was thus displayed to the surrounding multitude. She had to face the scorn of thousands of unrelenting eyes which were so fixed upon her and concentrated upon her bosom. She experiences pain and such experience accompanies her throughout the novel:

> It was almost intolerable to be born. Of an impulsive and passionate nature, she had forfeited herself to encounter the stings and venomous stabs of public contumely, wreaking itself in every variety of insult . . . she felt at moments, as if she must needs shriek out with full power of her lungs, and cast herself from the scaffold down upon the ground or else go mad at once (*TSL* 46).

Hester's position on the scaffold induces memory of an unpleasant past. She recalls her poverty-stricken home in England, her mother's remonstrance, the scholar like visage of her husband, the "stern regards" (*TSL* 47) of these puritans.

Hester was ostracized from society but she did not flee. She settled on the outskirts of the town, where she found an abandoned thatched cottage. It was situated in remote place, on the shore and was out of the main social activity arena. In this little lonesome dwelling, with some slender means that she possessed, and by license of the magistrates, who still kept an inquisitive watch over her. But, though remote from the town and social activities, it still was attached with mystic shadow of suspicion:

> Children too young to comprehend wherefore this woman should be shut out from the sphere of human charities, would creep neigh enough to behold her plying her needle at

> the cottage window or standing in the door-way or laboring in the garden or coming forth in along the pathway that led town-ward; and discerning the scarlet letter on her breast would scamper off, with a strange contagious fear (*TSL* 62).

Hester's position was lonely without a friend on earth. She was cast away from the public sympathy. The puritan community tries that no kind of sympathy should reach her in any form. The matrons are not satisfied with the punishment inflicted on Hester by the godly magistrate. It is surprising that the women, who should naturally exhibit some sympathy and understanding for Hester's plight, are more savage than the men in their condemnation. But the punishment meted out to her, her ostracization, was too grave as it disengaged her completely from the social intercourse. Darrel Abel aptly observes the disastrous effect and the dread of alienation on Hester: "The ostracism called too lenient a punishment by perhaps envious matrons of the town was almost fatal to Hester's sanity and moral sense, for it almost severed 'the many ties that so long as we breathe the common air . . . unite us to our kind'" (Bradley 322).

Hester did not lose any opportunity for affectionate intercourse with other persons, but every social intercourse became a painful experience for her. If she entered a church, it was often her mishap to find herself the text of the discourse. She grew to have a dread of children for they had imbibed from their parents a vague idea of something horrible in this dreary woman.

> In all her intercourse with society, however, there was nothing which made her feel as if she belonged to it. Every gesture, every word, and even the silence of those with whom she came in contact, implied and often expressed that, she was banished and as much alone as if she inhabited another sphere . . . she stood apart from moral interests, yet close beside them, like a ghost that revisits the familiar fireside and can no longer make itself seen or felt (*TSL* 64).

Now, her primary task on the personal level is to get rehabilitated in society. She struggles to become a living human being, to reveal her identity and not remain a mere symbol. Hester lives by doing sewing and performing acts of charity. Her embroidery is a part of the outer self of human personality. Through embroidery Hester attempts to patch up her disfigured persona. Her suffering makes her aware of her humanness and she is acutely conscious of humanity around her. She gained a sympathetic knowledge of the hidden sin in the other hearts and used it as a means to assist and comfort others. In the prosperous families she receives warm welcome in times of pestilence, sickness and death. Ernest Sendeen rightly observes: "As a lover she has been ostracized, but as a 'self-ordained Sister of Mercy' she is warmly accepted, although her works of charity springs from the same fertile depths of her being as the passion which has made her an outcaste. She is the pariah that the human family takes to its hearts in times of affliction" (Bradley 375).

She was ready to give of her little substance to every demand of poverty even though she received a taunt in return. As such, the service to the humanity gave her joy and her creative art provided her power. Her art relieved her guilt that she endured in solitude. It is through her art that she is able to rebuild her life on a new plane as it gives her chance to rehabilitate in the society. She effaces herself completely in the service of the afflicted and the needy and in the process succeeds in eradicating guilt consciousness from her heart. Arlin Turner views it thus: "She always exhibits her guilt by wearing the letter, she continues to endure the burden of having tried to 'relieve' that guilt through art and through little Pearl, who is the living embodiment of what that entire scarlet letter stands for" (Turner 96).

The sin of Hester's lover, Arthur Dimmesdale does not come to be known by the society. His mind is steeped in puritan theocracy and beliefs and it reflects standard of morality and

decorum expected by the society. The moral dilemma which Arthur Dimmesdale represents is the symbolic extension of the social dilemma because he is the representative of the puritan society. The perception of his psyche can be taken as the sociological perception of his transgression. Dimmesdale prayed long and earnestly; he subjected himself to fasts, vigils and even flagellations. Exhausted by his long, fruitless struggle with his conscience, and horrified, he turns to Hester for help in a state of abject helplessness. Without his sin of passion and of concealment, Dimmesdale would have been a man learned in books and abstractions of theology but ignorant of life. In him, we find a morbid concern with self, an unrighteous egotism which evades all issues of human responsibility. He has withdrawn into himself and lost hold of the chain of human relationships: "Being committed so deeply to the society from which he is hiding his true self, there can be no redemption for him unless his confession is as public as Hester's had been earlier" (Kaul 184-185).

By failing to respond to Pearl's insistence that he takes her and Hester by the hand in the public square, the minister demonstrates a moral irresponsibility. Dimmesdale is isolated through keeping fearfully to himself his true position with respect to society. In him, the sin was not as demoralizing as the separation from life and his fellow men. Sargent Hall, in this regard, writes:

> It is not the consciousness of sin and guilt that fills the soul of Dimmesdale with its trance-like terror; it is the sense of the growing rift between him and society, the feeling that he has somehow become detached from life and is falling into moral limbo farther and farther from reality and the honest existence of men (Hall 171).

To sum up, we can say that the puritan society believes marital relationship to be sacred and any breach of marital vows would invite severe indictment from the society. Their hypocrisy is made manifest through their repressed transgressive yearnings. They sit on judgment on the

transgressors like Hester and assume themselves to be practicing virtues of high morality. At this juncture, it will be worthwhile to draw a parallel from the brahminical society depicted in the novel, *Samskara* by U.R. Anantha Murthy wherein the Brahmins claim to be holding highest moral principles in society but are inflicted by the instinctual desires deep in their hearts. In several ways, *Samskara* emerges as the textual extension of Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*.

Samskara unfolds in a brahmanical context. Brahmins, the priestly class of Hinduism, are said to have emerged from Brahma's forehead. Historically speaking, Brahmins had the privileged access to the holy language, Sanskrit and since all the scriptures of Hinduism are written in Sanskrit language, it was only this priestly brahmanical class who had the access to these holy texts. The society in the ancient times was divided into four castes—*Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras* . According to Hindu thought, *Purusha* is said to be a symbol of universe, immortal and supreme. It is said in *Purushsukta* that the *Brahmin* was his mouth, the *Kshatriya* formed his arms, the *Veshyas* his thighs, and the *Shudra* was born from his feet (Shastri 164).

Brahmins were supposed to have absolute faith in the authority of God and infallibility of the Vedas and other scriptures. They were also believed to be well-versed in the scriptures. Their duty was to study and teach the religious texts. The Brahmins were expected to uphold the highest principles of morality. They were expected to possess the qualities of: control of mind and senses, austerity, forbearance and the knowledge of the scriptures. Subduing the five senses, Brahmins were believed to focus exclusively on the contemplation of soul and eventually become one with God. Donald A. Mackenzie and Charles Squire in *Encyclopedia of Myth and Legend in Art, Religion, Culture and Literature* write about the highest status of Brahmins:

They were supposed to be born with 'spiritual luster', and their lives were consecrated to

> the instruction and uplifting of mankind and the attainment of salvation. A Brahmin's life was divided into four periods. The first was the period of childhood and the second was the period of probation, when he went to live in forest hermitage and received instruction in Brahminic knowledge. During the third period, the Brahmin lived the worldly life. In the fourth period, he abandoned his comfortable home and went to live in a lonely forest to prepare for the coming of death (Mackenzie 81).

In Brahmanism, like Puritanism, the emphasis is too much on purity and otherworldliness. Brahmins as well as Puritans are both deeply rooted in the ritualistic aspects of their faiths. Their world view is largely determined and conditioned by the religious and cultural ethos to which they belong. Both cultivated an acute distrust of the physical senses and earthly desires and are preoccupied with moral uprightness.

The Brahminic society of Durvasapura is steeped in ignorance, superstitions and orthodox beliefs. They cling to their past, culture and social roots. The whole Brahmin community remains in bondage to an unexamined tradition and the prescriptive force of its practices. The villagers are least concerned with the changing times and are against any fresh gusts of modernist thought. They remain occupied with managing two meals a day, yet they are so concerned with moral issues. The orthodox Brahmin society considers the act of love/ sex as something unpardonable, filthy and degrading which is reflected in their contempt for Naranappa and Chandri, despite their own vices of all kinds.

The cultural endorsement of the double standard has been reflected in the delineation of transgression by the novelist. When a man transgresses sexually, the onus is always on women who tempt him, whether we talk of the Hindu myths which describe repeatedly the tempting of the sages by *apsaras* or celestial temptresses or the characters of the novel. The Brahmins are

exonerated for their sexual transgression due to 'desexualization' of their own community's women and their cohabiting with lower-caste women is justified as having a history. Durgabhatta rightly says: "O no, a Brahmin isn't lost because he takes a low born prostitute. Our ancestors after all came from the North . . . history says they cohabited with Dravidian women. . . . Think of all the people who go to the brothels of Basrur in South Kanara" (*Samskara* 5-6).

The protagonist of *Samskara*, Praneshachrya is a profound scholar from Kashi and is well-versed in the *Vedas* and the *Puranas.* He is the "Crest Jewel of Vedic Learning"(*Samskara* 17) and occupies the topmost slot among the Brahmins of Durvasapura. He gains deep knowledge of scriptures through his meticulous study at Varanasi and commands mastery over them: "He claims the absolute ownership over the meanings of texts and rituals" (Behera 184). The people of Durvasapura are very religious and ardent followers of their social norms and traditions. The agrahara village inhabited by Brahmins is religiously and symbolically rich enough, but at the same time, the orthodox and superstitious attitude of its people could be termed as disgraceful to the human society. Due to their poverty, backwardness and semi-literacy, they are unaware of the basic values of humanity and duty toward the human society.

Naranappa, the adversary of Praneshacharya represents hedonistic ways of life. The novel describes the conflict between ascetic ways of life, represented by Praneshacharya and hedonistic ways of life, represented by Naranappa. Religion and morality are the most influential forces of social control. The Hindu caste system is looked upon as divine institution. People who violate it are looked upon as sinners and it is believed that God will punish them. Due to this internal fear, people do not have the courage to violate the laws of the caste system. In case of Naranappa, he did everything which was against society, humanity and most importantly against religion. Naranappa strongly conveys his views to Praneshacharya :

> You read those lush sexy Puranas, but you preach a life of barrenness. But my words, they say what they mean: If I say *sleep with a woman*, it means *sleep with a woman*; if I say *eat fish* it means *eat fish.* Can I give you Brahmins a piece of advice, Acharya-re? Push those sickly wives of yours into the river. Be like the sages of your holy legends—get hold of a fish-scented fisherwoman who can cook you fish-soup, and go to sleep in her arms. And if you don't experience god when you wake up, my name is not Naranappa (*Samskara* 25-26).

Naranappa flouted every social norm/ taboo. He took Muslims with him and went to *Ganapati* temple stream before everyone's eyes; he'd caught and carried away the sacred fish. Every one believed that if any man caught them he would cough up blood and die. He killed God's own fish. Now even low caste folk go there and fish. He undermined all good Brahmin influence on the others. Naranappa had broken the taboo. He drank liquor and even offered it to Praneshacharya. He also incited Garuda's son, Shyama to desert his family and joined the army by signing a bond. He was also held responsible for desertion of Sripati. Naranappa abandoned his lawfully wedded wife for the sake of Chandri, a low caste prostitute. He freely lived with Chandri and ate food prepared by her.

The society is not so offended by his living with Chandri, a low caste woman, but his eating what she cooked is severer offence. As Garuda says, "Naranappa had contacts with a low caste . . . he stopped into the middle of his sentence, opened his eyes wide, and dug into his nose with his upper cloth. As you know, he even ate what she cooked . . ." (*Samskara* 6). Naranappa not only deserted his lawfully wedded wife but did not even come to attend her funeral rites. His offence of non-observance of the death anniversaries of his parents is absolutely non-condonable:

> Naranappa had abandoned his lawfully wedded wife after tying the wedding- string round her neck. You may condone even that . . . Lakshmana had closed his eyes again and started talking. He went and got mixed up with some woman. My wife's sister became hysterical and died: he did not even come to the funeral rites. You may condone even that; but he didn't care to observe the death anniversaries of his father and mother (*Samskara* 7).

Chandri is considered by the people of Durvaspura as the root cause of all evils. She is held responsible for corrupting Naranappa. She is alleged to have ensnared him thereby alienating him from his own folks and also distracting him from the righteous path. Lakshamana's wife Anasuya curses Chandri to her heart's content:

> May tigers trample her at midnight, may snakes bite her, this whore, this seducing witch! If she had not given him potions, why should he, Anasuya's own maternal uncle's son, why should he push aside his own kinswoman, call her an invalid, squander all his property, and throw all the ancestral gold and jewels on the neck of this evil witch! (*Samskara* 07).

Anasuya also envies Chandri for the ornaments which she was wearing. She wails that if her sister had been alive, these ornaments would have adorned her. The womenfolk of agrahara feel their mouths watering when Chandri loosened them and placed them all in a heap before Praneshacharya as expenses of the rite.

Chandri, Naranappa's mistress falls outside the social order and epitomizes the position of outcaste in Hindu Brahmin society as she is a whore who lives within Naranappa's house, without being married to him. She therefore, has no legal right over his property or death rites. The author contrasts Chandri with other Brahmins who boast of being of superior origin and

samskara. She is accused of being interested in Naranappa's property and gold and of her having distracted him from the path of truth. She also has to bear the wrath of the Brahmin community for no fault of hers. But upon analyzing Chandri's conduct deeply, we find her to be a refined, cultivated and empathetic woman: "If we analyze her role, conduct, intentions, attitudes, actions in the novel step by step, these reveal her to be a grateful, kind, compassionate, humane, refined, cultured woman, in other words a *samskari* human being as compared to the male and female brahmin characters in the novel, who boast of their high birth and *samskara*" (Gaur 76). She never tries to flout brahminical traditions deliberately. Chandri has ungrudgingly accepted her secondary social status and learnt to act accordingly. When she goes to inform Praneshacharya about Naranappa's death, she stands meekly in the yard. She also requests Naranappa not to eat food cooked by her knowing that it is taboo in the Brahmin tradition. When Naranappa offers Praneshacharya drink by saying, "Chandri! Where is the bottle? Let's give the Acharya a little of this holy water?" Chandri does not bring the bottle and tries to stop him and later when she found that Naranappa is trying to humiliate Acharya, "she folded her hands and gestured to the Acharya to go away" (*Samskara* 24). Although Chandri had to bear the wrath and venom of the Brahmin women, she possesses acute sensitivity and is sharp to perceive the ways of the world around her.

Naranappa was nearly ostracized from society but was not excommunicated officially. The Brahmins of the agrahara feared that they would have had to leave the agrahara if he had really become a Muslim, as he had threatened. No law could have thrown him out of the Brahmin agrahara. The Brahmins of the agrahara are envious of Naranappa's enjoying life with Chandri. Although they expressed contempt outwardly for Chandri, but deep in their hearts, they also have longing to fulfill their carnal desires through Chandri. For instance, Durgabhatta casts amorous glances at Chandri: "For Durgabhatta, this was an internal issue. He sat unconcerned in

his place, ogling Chandri. For the first time, his connoisseur eyes had the chance to appraise this precious object which did not normally stir out of the house. . . . A real 'sharp' type, exactly as described in Vatsyayana's manual of love" (*Samskara* 8).

Durgabhatta, like many other middle-aged and young Brahmins of this agrahara, secretly desired Chandri. He felt jealous of Naranappa of possessing such a beauty resembling the figure of *matsyagandhi*, "the Fisherwoman in Ravi Verma print hung up in his bedroom, shyly trying to hide her breasts bursting through her poor rag of a sari" (*Samskara* 8). Naranappa tried to justify his relations with Chandri in the light of relations of their sages mentioned in the *Puranas*. The sages like Parashara and Vishwamitra had illicit sexual union and the Brahmins of agrahara took much pride clamoring them to be their proud descendents.

Praneshacharya also transgresses societal norms. Though married, he has sexual encounter with Chandri. Despite the fact that he does not violate social conventions at any point in time in his life, his chance encounter with Chandri is indubitably a transgressive act. Since his transgression does not come to the fore, society remains unaware of his sexual union with the outcaste woman. The socio-cultural perception of his transgression can be traced back to his entire soul-searching process that follows the sexual act. In fact, his mind is the most conscious point of the community of the Brahmin agrahara. His disgust with himself can be viewed in terms of his disgust for the society especially as he best represents it himself. The introspection of his own inner nature through his monologues and his self-inquiry symbolizes the quest for liberation of the tradition-bound Brahmin society. The Brahmin community of the agrahara remains in bondage to the unexamined traditions and the prescriptive force of its practices and values as interpreted by its religious heads. Steeped in the orthodoxy of his creed, Praneshacharya accepts the conventional judgment that through his sexual encounter with

Chandri, he has lost his virtue: "I've lost it; if I don't have the courage to speak tomorrow, you must speak out. . . . I have no authority to tell any Brahmin to do them, that's all" (*Samskara* 68).

Praneshacharya felt guilty deep in his heart. He was not in a position to face the Brahmins of agrahara: "I'd never experienced such dread before. A fear of being discovered, of being caught. . . . I lost my original fearlessness. How, why? I could not return to the agrahara because of fear, the fear of not being able to live in full view, in front of those Brahmins" (*Samskara* 96). At the same time, however, he has an irresistible sense of having attained through his experience not only physical and emotional fulfillment, but also an increased moral awareness as well as broadening and refining of his human perceptions. There is a great transformation in Praneshacharya from perfect and static innocence to full and dynamic knowledge through initiation into experience.

Basava Raj Naikar sees few striking similarities between Graham Green's *The Power and the Glory* and *Samskara*. Although depicted in two different religious contexts, it helps us understand common human tendencies all over the world. Graham Green delineates the life of a priest against the atheistic background, whereas Anantha Murthy's *Samskara* depicts the life of a priest against an orthodox religious background. But the common theme in both the novels happens to be the desecration of religious values. The priest is expected to uphold the high ideals of Roman Catholicism and likewise Praneshacharya is expected to uphold the ideals of Madhava Brahmanism. Since the protagonists have not been able to live up to the ideals expected of them, both of them have desecrated their holy ideals, because of their weakness of the flesh. Sexual transgression/ adultery thus happens to be the common denominator of their degeneration despite diverse cultural backdrops (Gaur 125-126).

The transgressive behavior of Naranappa causes hindrance in the performance of his last rites as nobody wants to perform them due to his involvement in anti-brahminic activities alongside keeping a low caste woman in his house. In Indian tradition, sexual relations across caste boundaries are considered corrupting and hence unpardonable. They also lead to confusion of classes. Praneshacharya is also helpless and unable to find any solution for the problem. Though Naranappa has close friends in the village but they are horrified to go against the orthodox societal conventions. The relatives of Naranappa fear that they may be ostracized from community if they come forward for Naranappa's funeral. Despite offering of gold ornaments by Chandri as expense for the cremation of Naranappa, there is nobody who could dare come forward to cremate his dead body. Eventually, it is Chandri who does it with the help of his Muslim friends since the Brahmins could not find any solution to the problem neither in their religious scriptures/ texts nor anywhere else.

The confusion regarding funeral rites in the Brahmin society evidences apathy and unconcern on the part of the agrahara Brahmins who have become dumb and deaf to the point of completely ignoring their duties toward humanity only on account of the fear of rigid social taboos and orthodox religious code of moral discipline. The Brahmins including their religious leader, Praneshacharya get confused in the face of dated customs and rigid societal norms imposed by the orthodox society. The stringent religious norms inspire awe in them. Their Brahminhood consists only of unfailingly following age-old rules and observing rituals without ever questioning them and remaining "unaware of the basic values of humanity and duty towards the human society. Although at the end of the novel, they prepare to cremate the dead body yet till then they had wasted a lot of time in trifle matters related to their traditions" (Gupta 172).

Let us now compare these two novels namely Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* and U. R.

Anantha Murthy's *Samskara.* Despite their belonging to 19th and 20th century respectively, they parallel each other in several respects. Both these novels deal with the issue of individual versus society. The male protagonists of both these novels are not only great scholars but they also practice most difficult tenets of their respective ethos (Puritanism and Brahmanism) with utmost severity. Both of them are steeped in their respective religious orthodoxies and highly complex systems of dogma which weighed their naturalness down. Their lives are devoid of any genuine human experience. They have become just like another object in a world of objects. Their asceticism is not natural but derived from the scriptures and removes them all the more from joys and sorrows of life. Praneshacharya, like Dimmesdale, puts more emphasis on the intellectual and spiritual aspect of life than on the physical side. The religious orthodoxy, rituals and codes of conduct have enslaved their personalities that are suffocating in a shell from which there is no release.

Hester and Chandri, the female protagonists of the novels mentioned above are passionate women full of vitality and life. Hester's elegant figure, her abundance of dark, glossy hair, her regular features and rich complexion, her "marked brow and deep black eyes" (*TSL* 43) is an impression of great erotic power. Whereas, Chandri's beauty has been compared to those of mythological figures like *Matsyagandhi*, whose beauty captivated sages like *Parashara.* In their looks, they are unlike Praneshacharya and Dimmesdale who have grown prematurely old. The respective encounters of Dimmesdale and Praneshacharya with Hester and Chandri jolt them out of their complacence. They are liberated from the confines of their ethical selves, characterized by obsession with the codified, ritualistic way of life to awareness of the world of reality. Hester and Chandri are life giving forces to Dimmesdale and Praneshacharya.

The forest scenes in both the novels play a significant role in the lives of the two male

protagonists. The forest symbolizes the liberation from the confines of social conventions and shackles of out-dated moral values. After his encounter with Hester in the forest, Dimmesdale is tempted to follow his emotions to make blasphemous suggestions about the Last Supper to a deacon, destroy a lonely woman's beliefs in after life, makes lecherous signs to a young virgin, tell dirty words to a group of children and trade off-colored jokes with a drunken sailor. He has consigned himself to the pursuit of emotions that may often be evil. The true nature of his condition is revealed here.

On the other hand, Praneshacharya's encounter with Chandri in the forest opens up a new world of naturalness and wholeness to Acharya. His vision suddenly becomes clear, as if a veil which has for all these years separated him from the throbbing, pulsating world, has dropped. The symbolic intent of the forest scene is that man and woman find fulfillment in their relationship only outside the socio-cultural taboos in forests and mountains. Social conventions are thus, a hurdle to individual's growth and development. Even though the transgressive acts of Dimmesdale and Praneshacharya do not become known to the society, their conscience being repository of social and ethical values make them undergo agonizing mental anguish and psycho-spiritual conflict. Dimmesdale inflicts punishment on himself by acts of vigils, fasts, and flagellations. Praneshacharya also feels intense mental and spiritual anguish. His conscience tells him that he has lost authority over other Brahmins. He begins to search for some way out of his agonizing situation. The tremendous anguish which Dimmesdale and Praneshacharya have to undergo as a result of their frustration on their chosen paths reorients their attitudes and responses to life.

The forest meeting of Dimmesdale with Hester has liberated him from the restrictions of conventionality. It also leads him to a sort of epiphanic experience during his drafting of the

Election Sermon. Praneshacharya's experience with Chandri in the dark is like a rebirth for the Acharya. The experience represents the Acharya's break with monotonous object like existence and his initiation into life and self knowledge.

Ancient Hindu mythology and the Indian caste system are interwoven into *Samskara*. The level of intolerance towards those who step away from the narrow prescribed paths is far more deeply ingrained here than in New England as presented in Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*.

II

The French novel *Madame Bovary* (1857) was written between the outset of French Revolution (1789) and World War I (1914), and this historical span is described as the era of the middle class. However, there were three primary classes (upper class aristocracy, middle class bourgeoisie and lower or working class) in France in the nineteenth century. The main impression of the French society, as evident in *Madame Bovary*, is one of mobility, money on the move, an economic and social transformation of a true middle class in which positions and powers are gained through commerce and finance. The French society as depicted in *Madame Bovary* is occupied with financial consideration and seems to be obsessed with raising financial and subsequently social status. Remi Clignet in an article describes the social condition of the time thus:

> ...there were acute tensions between the newest bourgeois elites, anxious to promote further economic development, and the more traditional rural aristocracy, keen to maintain the existing social and physical boundaries between nation-states and between classes (Clignet 293).

During the nineteenth century, many new occupations were created which primarily used

mental skills rather than physical labor. The number of individuals and families in these fields exploded in number, creating a substantial and eventually a dominant middle class. The power of French bourgeoisie consisted in its economic and financial power. With its money, it bought propaganda and armed force, and dominated politics. In this class of elite, it becomes apparent that the desire and higher aspirations belong to the wealthy elite class of the society. Emma, the main protagonist of *Madame Bovary*, a proletarian is slowly enthralled by the promises of capitalism and economic prosperity that is why she is bound to be despaired. Emma Bovary desires to be happy in lovely clothes, in swift carriages, dancing at balls, and being admired. The vagueness of her fantasies saps the sense of reality from her world and simultaneously lays her open to the financial depredations of Lheureux who sells her the concrete toys to act out her daydreams. The elite class has imprisoned Emma, the proletariat, by letting her aspire to achieve the same wealth and social status that they had been enjoying. Emma has moral corruption that means she cannot accept and appreciate the realities of her life, never recognizing that her desires are unreasonable. These moral errors can be reflected in Emma's inability to accept her situation and her attempt to escape it through her infidelities.

During the time *Madame Bovary* was written, the male remained the primary wage earners and the women were relegated to the household and domestic chores. Humanitarian protests against the treatment of women and the children in factories led to legislation restricting women and children from dangerous and heavy occupations as it required minimum age and restricted maximum hours. Married women lacked many basic rights regarding property ownership, divorce and custody of children. Women had few educational, occupational and political rights; they rebelled and began fighting for increased rights. By the mid-century, long courtships and elaborate marriage contracts became less common as marriage based on romantic

love became more widespread. Until 1870s, nearly half of the infant population was fed by wet nurses instead of their natural mothers. The use of wet nurses declined as mothers' breast fed their babies and babies grew healthier and stronger.

Emma Bovary, the protagonist of *Madame Bovary* is born with a natural tendency toward sentimentality. She prefers the dream world to the real one. Rather than being brought up in the realities of everyday living, she is sent, when very young, to a convent where she indulges in daydreaming and sentimentalizing about life. At the convent, she begins reading romance novels which deeply impacts her. The books are all about "love, lovers, sweet hearts, persecuted ladies fainting in lonely pavilions killed at every age, somber forests, heartaches, vows, sobs, tears and kisses, little skiffs by moonlight . . . gentlemen brave as lions, gentle as lambs . . . and weeping fountains" (*M.B.* 48). In religion too, she searched for the unusual, the mystic and beautiful rather than for the real essence of the church.

Elizabeth Amann in her book *Importing Madame Bovary: The Politics of Adultery*, has compared Emma Bovary to Don Quixote. She calls Emma Bovary a feminine counterpart to Don Quixote: "Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* would launch a tradition of female Quixoticism that included some of the most important novels of the nineteenth century" (Amann 15). Like Cervantes's knight, Emma Bovary longs to enter the stories she reads. And in each case, this reading sets the lot in motion and is the key to the protagonist's growth. Emma's reading is always anticipatory as her novels reveal the exciting adventures she hopes to have. In much of Madame Bovary, the heroine is waiting for an event: "At the bottom of her heart, however, she was waiting for something to happen. Like shipwrecked sailors, she turned despairing eyes upon the solitude of her life, seeking a far off some white sail in the mist of the horizon" (*M.B.* 81).

A parallel to *Madame Bovary* can also be drawn from a Portuguese novel O *Primo*

Basilio. In this novel, Luisa Mendonca's literary tastes coincide with Emma's. Both heroines are fans of Sir Walter Scott and long to change their mundane existence for Scottish castles – with pointed arches and knights sporting feathers in their caps. But Luisa's taste quickly moves in another direction: "But it was the modern that captivated her, Paris, its furniture, its sentimentalities . . ." (Amann 16). The difference between the two heroines Emma and Luisa is that the former longs for the idealized past whereas the latter does not need to look backward to find a desirable, exotic world. For her, the modern itself is as remote as the past is for Emma.

Like Madame Bovary and Luisa Mendonca, Paco Vegallana in Spanish novel, *La Regenta* reads *La dame aux camelias* quixotically, looking for analogies in the real world and attempting to re-enact its plot (Amann 45). While in convent, Emma is fascinated by the images of her prayer book and the language of the priest: "The comparisons of betrothed, husband, celestial lover, and eternal marriage that recur in sermons stirred within her soul depths of unexpected sweetness" (*M.B.* 47). Emma, though familiar with the realities of country life, is not impressed by the lyrical appeal of the nature, not for pastoral tranquility but for action and narrative. She loved the sea for its storms alone: "Accustomed to calm aspects of life, she turned, on the contrary, to those of excitement. She loved the sea only for the sake of its storms, and the green fields only when broken up by ruins (*M.B.* 47).

Emma's marriage to Charles, a country doctor could not satisfy her as it did not fit into the fictionalized accounts that she had read about. She missed the bliss, ecstasy and passion that she had hoped she would find in marriage. Her husband, Charles, stands for the ordinary man, for humdrum everyday reality as he is dull, sluggish, unimaginative and ill-mannered. He seems to be idolizing her with boundless tenderness. He showers her with all the material goods his hard earned income can provide. In every sense Charles appears to love his wife selflessly. But

to Emma, he lies at a polar extreme from her preconceived notions of a lover. "Charles's alliance proves disastrous as it was an alliance with unbalanced, over-imaginative Emma" (Turnell 266). Emma appears vain and self-absorbed. Her indifference seemingly grows in proportion to his love for her. The rift between them begins shortly after their marriage. They are invited to stay with the Comte de Vaubyessard for the family ball. Emma finds herself for a moment in an aristocratic world, a world of luxury and romance which suddenly seems to offer everything for which she had unconsciously been longing: "Her journey to Vaubyessard had made a hole in her life, like one of those great crevices that a storm will sometimes make in one night in mountains." (*M.B.* 73)

Gradually, she starts feeling irritated with Charles. At the bottom of her heart she is waiting for something to happen. Emma feels constrained in her life with Charles in Tostes and desperately longs for freedom from this humdrum life and surroundings. Her throbbing desire for freedom is emphasized by the use of the words such as 'free' and 'freedom' and also 'window' which signifies unrestricted pleasure out of doors. In other words, Emma wishes to escape from the sleepy, confining world of mediocrity to which she feels condemned by her life with Charles. Charles shifts her to Yonville-L Abbaye, which hardly provides her escape from lethargic and insensible emotional surroundings. She is simply not able to absorb the affection and admiration of her husband. She had a desire to have a self-aware husband, which could not be fulfilled, and hence she turns to fantasy and eventually to adultery. Her attention turns to Leon and hovers on the verge of adultery but is only saved by Leon's departure for Paris. Emma is surrounded by the men who do not possess sensuality. Most of the men in Yonville are complacent men of commerce that is why she turns to the earlier ages, particularly to aristocracy, to realize her dreams. This is precisely the reason that she is attracted to the vain and insensitive man,

Rodolphe who affects the manners and eccentricities of the aristocracy. As Birken observes, ". . . among the dandies and pseudo-aristocrats, who affect a dandified air in order to convince the world that they are aristocrats, Emma seems to find some kind of ideal" (Birken 617-18). Emma identifies an affair as a means to social advancement, a way to achieve the level of sophistication to which she aspires. The final phase of the novel opens with Leon's return and Emma's liaison with him. Her liaison with her lovers and buying expensive gifts causes her financial ruin and eventually leads her to suicide. That Emma fails in her attempt to craft her own reality, is a partial reflection of the restricted role of woman in nineteenth century.

Emma is by a wide margin the smartest and most perceptive of the novel's main characters. She wonders how to express uneasiness so intangible, one that changes shape like a cloud that changes direction like the wind. She considers her being woman the cause of her frustration. Like a feminist, she hits at the society for imposing constraints on woman. She tries to find out what one exactly means in life by terms such as 'bliss', 'passion', 'ecstasy' that had seemed to her so beautiful in books. She searches for that which is found in fantasy world of books, in her own real world and falls short of expectations. She laments that due to her being as a woman, she has not been able to find freedom to explore the world of dreams. She does not like the limitations of being a woman. She ponders how much more freedom her hoped-for son might someday enjoy compared to her. She sees quite clearly how much of her sense of confinement comes from the restraints imposed on her as a woman. She is disappointed with giving birth to a daughter and wishes instead it had been a son, since a male child could grow up to be free in this world to taste the forbidden pleasure. Her desire for a son is emblematic of her sense of confinement in the role of a woman and her hoped-for son is a kind of compensation that she craves for in her circumscribed life:

> She hoped for a son; he would be strong and dark; she would call him George; and this idea of having a male child was like an expected revenge for all her impotence in the past. A man at least is free; he may travel over passions and countries, overcome obstacles, taste the most far-away pleasures. But a woman is always hampered. At once inert and flexible, she has against her the weakness of the flesh and legal dependence. Her will, like the wheel of her bonnet; held by a string, flutters in every wind; there is always some desire that draws her, some conventionality that restrains (*M.B.* 117).

Emma feels confined in the household and society she lives in and feels contempt for it. She shared the gloom of her lover Leon who thought:

> He was to be pitied for living in this village, with Homais for a friend and Monsieur Guillaumin for master. The latter entirely absorbed by his business . . . understood nothing of mental refinements . . . as for the chemist's spouse, she was gentle as a sheep, loving her children, her father . . . such a bore to listen to, so common in appearance and of such restricted conversation. And what else was there? Binet, a few shopkeepers, two or three publicans cure, and finally Monsieur Tuvache . . . and quite unbearable companions (*M.B.* 126).

The society around Emma is hostile and callous. Everyone is obsessed with profits and gains. Not a single soul is mentally polished who can appeal to Emma. Emma feels constrained in this horrendous socio-cultural setup. Everyone seems to be business-oriented and that is the reason she considers herself to be a misfit in this kind of society as there is none who can understand her true aspirations. Flaubert, in the words of Michael Danahy, has expressed his sympathy and admiration for Emma as he observes that ". . . his romantically obsessed heroine is contrasted on the one hand to her lovers who have no dreams, however tacky, to which they commit

themselves, and on the other to those equally obsessed men whose specific egoist goals (i.e., fame for Homais, money for Lheureux, and "art" for Binet) lack the virtue of Emma's pursuit of human relationships however eroticized, hallucinatory, harmful and narcissistic" (Danahy 478). Her husband, Charles is totally unaware of her longings. He often seems like a cipher, so conventional that he lacks any individuality whatsoever. On the other hand, Emma is unconventional in tastes and aspirations. She is loftily idealistic and is above her monotonous society. Elizabeth Amann has rightly observed: "Emma Bovary is a solitary figure bereft of interlocutors. Yonville lacks elevated souls that can truly understand her" (Amann 75).

Flaubert's ironic treatment of the characters that populate the reality of her bourgeois existence suggests sympathy for her plight that precludes outright condemnation. Emma's dissatisfaction with her middle class contemporaries and her aspirations for a higher level of taste and sophistication are to a certain extent admirable. That Emma aspires to a higher level of existence than that of the stifling middle class, suggests in her a certain social awareness. That she recognizes the limitations of her middle class life and seeks ways to escape them is commendable. In his description of the French society, Flaubert expresses his disgust for the pettiness of his characters and the banal world of provincial Tostes and Yonville. The men surrounding Emma did not possess the slightest residue of sensuality. They are complacent people absorbed in their own calculations of profit and loss. Given the perceptive and highly sensitive nature of Emma and her tenderness of heart, it was inevitable that she felt a kind of tediousness in her society and Emma's dissatisfaction with the kind of society she was living in is in actuality, the expression of Flaubert's own sense of ennui/ boredom as he was impatient of the pettiness and trivial nature of his own society. It is her attempt to fill the gaps of her dissatisfaction that Emma indulges in love affairs.

The fantasies of Emma are exploited by Lheureux. He allures her to buy expensive items and makes her sign the bills and ultimately obtains the order of seizing her property. In her attempt to obtain the sum of three thousand francs she implores several persons. She goes to notary who tried to take shameless advantage of her distress. The disappointment of her failure increased the indignation of her outraged modesty; she had never felt so much esteem for herself and so much contempt for others: "She would have liked to strike all men, to spit into their faces, to crush them" (*M.B.* 392). Then she went to Binet, the tax collector's room where she was seen by mayor's wife. She hurried to tell Madam Caron, and the two ladies went up to the attic, stationed themselves comfortably for overlooking the whole of Binet's room. The ladies were not able to listen because of the noise of a machine tool what she was saying. They gossiped about her possibly making advances to Binet and perhaps compromising herself. They reacted with severe contempt: "Woman like that ought to be whipped" (*M.B.* 395).

Thus, we see that the sexual transgression of Emma in *Madame Bovary* does not elicit such strong reaction from the contemporary French society as we found in puritan society depicted in *The Scarlet Letter* or the Brahminic society portrayed in *Samskara.* Although, sexual transgression brings condemnation by the womenfolk, as we see in the contemptuous words of the womenfolk referred to above in the text, but the society, in general, is self-possessed and nearly every one transgresses the ethics of the society. Lheureux transgresses business ethics by exploiting the fantasies of Emma and alluring her to buy expensive gifts. She brings financial ruin of Emma and ultimately obtains the order of seizure of her property. Homais appears to be friendly with Bovary family but in reality he is selfish as he is running an illegal business without obtaining license and his apparent friendship is to avoid complaint. He is responsible for the ruin of Charles's career as a doctor as he was the person who encourages Bovarys for

clubfoot operation whose failure spoiled Charles's reputation and his career. His friendship is malice in disguise. Binet is also seen transgressing the law when he indulged in illegal hunting. Emma Bovary is seen suspiciously with her lovers by the people at different times but the society is so self -absorbed that it does not draw out any alarm to the people although it causes some kind of malicious gossip in the society.

Let us now have socio-cultural perspective of the Russian society via expounding upon Leo Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina.* This novel was written at the time when there was major upheaval in the social, political and economic condition of Russia. The emancipation of the serfs in 1861 was the single most important event in 19th century Russian society. It was the beginning of the end of the landed aristocracy's monopoly of power. Emancipation brought about a supply of free labor to the cities. Industry was stimulated and middle class grew in number and influence. The freed peasants had to buy land allotted to them from the landowners with the assistance of state. The government issued special bonds to the land owners for the land they had lost and collected special tax from the peasants called redemption payment at the rate of five percent of the total cost of allotted land annually. The entire land allotted to the peasants was owned collectively by the *Mir*, the village community, which divided the land among the peasants and supervised the various holdings. Fennel rightly observes thus: "Tolstoy looked with revulsion and scorn at the new development in which bourgeois relations and habits were breaking and a thrusting class of vulgarians was coming to its own, with its inquisitiveness, its obtuse ambitions, its obsession with meaningless words and worship of lunatic ideals" (Fennel 267-268).

Russian society was patriarchal like the majority of her European counterparts. A Russian woman's father and husband controlled most aspects of her life. Even noble women had no right to vote. Secondary and higher education was almost unavailable for women till 1870's. Marriage

was the career goal of the Russian woman, though she could find it ultimately restrictive, confining institution. Among nobility matches were often arranged through parents in the same class or better, seeking aristocratic background that would add to a family's social status. Women also selected their own husbands though they were expected to choose from upper class men at social occasions such as parties and balls. Once married, a wife's duties were to take care of her husband, preside over the household and bear children. Husbands determined when their wives could leave the house and conducted business or gained employment even though in extremely rare cases.

Russian society of the era depicted in the novel was rigid, deceitful and hypocrite. It was engulfed by inhuman social norms. The people took perverse pleasure in mudslinging and scandal mongering. It was a kind of callous, sadistic and vindictive society. In this society of duplicity and fraudulence appearance was everything. Simmons aptly comments in this regard: "In this ostentatious society, marriage for love or preserving the sanctity of marriage is an antediluvian [antiquated] notion" (Simmons 138).

Tolstoy in *Anna Karenina* not only portrays a spiteful and brutal society but also preaches simple Christian values. Anna, the central character of the novel is a charming young lady full of emotional intensity and like Emma Bovary has been fed with romantic illusions. The novel opens with her coming to Moscow from St. Petersburg to effect reconciliation between Stephen, her brother and his wife Dolly, after her discovery of his unfaithfulness. Thus, the central theme of infidelity is introduced right from the very first scene of the novel. Anna, coming to heal the rift in her brother's married life meets Vronsky, the man who will cause the breakup of her own. Anna had travelled to Moscow in the same compartment as Vronsky's mother to whom she had recounted her sorrow at being parted from her son Serezha. Vronsky's mother has no inkling of

the fact that it is her own son who will precipitate the breakup of Anna's marriage and cause her deep unhappiness by bringing about a permanent separation from her son.

Vronsky is so infatuated with Anna's charm that he, in effect, jilts Kitty, his fiancée. Anna is married to Karenin, a government official of high rank who is twenty years older to her. He is cold, official, passionless who is always worried about his official duties and the progress of his work. He is dry sans warmth and friendliness whereas Anna is a passionate young lady and Karenin is no match for her emotional intensity. So, she feels bored in his company and is impelled to live with pent up feelings of unfulfilled desires. She wants to escape her cloistered life and craves to be released from the shackles of constricting social norms. When Vronsky tries to seduce her, she reciprocates as she has also been looking forward for this kind of opportunity. Soon they embark on full blown love affair.

During her married life she was unhappy, but she had accepted it with stoical fortitude. Though late, she realized as she met Vronsky that her marriage was a farce. Vronsky appeared to Anna to be brilliant and elegant. Anna imagined that her lover was passionately devoted to her, and would be glad to forgo everything for her sake. Anna looks towards Vronsky as a fictional hero and herself as fictional heroine. Her dream of a perfect mate seems to be fulfilled in the beginning.

Anna also comes in contact with immoral ladies like Princess Betsy. She learns to make an immodest spectacle of love. Anna has confined herself exclusively to Betsy's social circle in order to be accessible to Vronsky and finds herself replying to his passionate words with eyes full of love. This flirtation could not have occurred without the co-operation of fashionable society. The scenes in Betsy's opera box and salon, thus demonstrates how the opulent world enables Anna's illicit passion to ripen. When Karenin comes to know that his wife has an illicit

liaison with Vronsky, he is awakened from a sense of torpor. For Karenin, her liaison is nothing more than an irritant that is intruding his important official work and subsequently it grows into a social embarrassment. He handles it the way he would tackle any official problem. He is more concerned with propriety and social decorum. He had objections to his wife's way on various counts: defiance of society and public opinion, the violation of the sanctity of marriage, the repercussions of the mother's infidelity on her son and the impact of her conduct on herself. Social propriety was with Karenin a thing of vital importance. Karenin coldly and calmly tells his wife: "As you know, I look upon jealousy as a humiliating and degrading and I shall never allow myself to be influenced by it; but there are certain laws of propriety which one cannot disregard with impunity". He was actuated not by love but by the fear of public opinion that is why he says to Anna: "Your feelings concern your conscience but it is my duty to you, to myself, to God, to point out to you your duties" (*A.K.* 144).

Karenin thereafter gets into his placid shell of cold formality. He was incapable of deep agony, for agony is the outcome of the passion of a pleading and lacerated soul. He finally decides to maintain the external status quo and warns Anna to cease all relations with her lover. Karenin says unto himself: "My aim is to safeguard my reputation, which I need for the uninterrupted pursuit of my career" (*A.K.* 277).

Anna attends Betsy's party which illustrates the alternative to clandestine adultery. Lisa Merkalova, with her entourage of lover and husband, is hardly an outcast; Sappho Stolz, similarly makes a display of her lovers and belongs to the "cream of the cream of society" (A.K. 292). Betsy advises Anna to look at things less tragically as affairs can be handled. But these women, exhibited by Betsy for Anna's edification, are speaking pictures of what fashionable adultery does to a woman.

Oblonsky is the pivotal figure highlighting the social decadence and sanctimoniousness. He is the representative of the prevalent social norms. His wife turns a blind eye to all his indiscretions; thus, he maintains his image of the family man and continues his clandestine liaisons as well. He even thought that "she, who was nothing but an excellent mother of a family, worn-out, already growing elderly, no longer pretty, and in no way remarkable – in fact, quite an ordinary woman- ought to be lenient to him". He is inconsiderate to the feelings of his wife, Dolly and takes full advantage of her wife's absorption in domesticity and fidelity. Dolly is the kind of traditional wife who is devoted to her husband and children, and effaces herself for others. She turns blind eye to the infidelity and sexual adventures of her husband. In an added scene, Oblonsky is actually seen giving a moral lecture to Anna, endorsing the social laws, which he has probably followed none. He enquires from his sister if she has taken any measures to alter Karenin's decision towards the divorce. After being told that Karenin has not changed his decision, he tells Anna that the sanctity of home must be preserved. In this social set up, it is acceptable to cheat your husband but unacceptable to leave him for someone you love. Tolstoy through the characterization of Oblonsky has exposed the double moral standard practiced in Russian society.

Karenin is so furious with Anna that he is willing to initiate divorce proceedings which will surely create a scandal. There was no civil authority that could grant divorce in Russia until 1917. One had to appeal to the Synod of the Orthodox Church, which could dissolve marriages on the grounds of adultery, either by proof or by confession by either partner. The divorce laws of the time placed tremendous power in the hands of men. In order to seek a divorce, she has to be innocent party because if she is the guilty party, then according to the laws of the time, she cannot marry again. She requires that Karenin pretends to be the guilty party but Karenin cannot

adopt this method. Since there was no fixed law regarding the custody of children, the law favored the father. Anna, though had no access to him, she could not bear to lose him in legal custody.

Anna elopes with Vronsky to Italy, where they enjoyed a brief period of contentment. They find unalloyed bliss to be together without hindrance. In other words, they enjoy an ideally happy honeymoon in Italy. But they were out of work and occupation. They found their position in Italy also as inexorable as before. L. Winstanley has described their unrelenting life and discontent in isolation in Italy in these words: "Neither Vronsky nor Anna can remain content in isolation; they are both rich and generous natures, meant for fruitful intercourse with their fellows, and they cannot, in their position, obtain either suitable society or suitable duties" (Winstanley 57).

Vronsky could not find occupation there and tried his hand in art but soon discovers that he is a mere dilettante, wasting his effort and his time. They soon return to Russia where he devotes himself to the duties of a landed proprietor, becoming reasonably successful. When Vronsky and Anna reach Petersburg, he goes to see his brother. There he meets his mother and his sister-in-law who receive him just as usual enquiring about his trip abroad and speaking of mutual acquaintances, but did not say a single word about his union with Anna. Vronsky had expected that they would be received in society as there was so much progress, and public opinion must have changed: "Of course they will not receive her at Court, but intimate friends can and should see things in right way" (*A.K.* 524). But he very soon notices that though the great world was open to him personally, it was closed to Anna: "As in the game of cat and mouse, the arms that were raised to allow him to get inside the circle were at once lowered to prevent Anna from entering" (*A.K.* 524).

One of the first Petersburg society ladies he met was his cousin, Betsy. She received them happily but her gladness cooled down when she learnt that Anna had not yet been divorced: "They will throw stones at me, I know", she said, "but I shall come and see Anna. Yes, I will certainly come. You are not staying here long" (*A.K.* 524). She really came to see Anna the same day, but her manner changed altogether. She gossiped about society for not more than ten minutes and before leaving said: "You have not told me when you will be divorced? of course I have kicked over the traces, but others, straight laced people, will give you cold shoulder until you get married. . . . I am sorry we shall not see one another again" (*A.K.* 524).

Vronsky realized what he had to expect from society, but he made another attempt with his relatives. He knew that his mother, who had been so delighted with Anna when she first made acquaintance, was now merciless toward her for having caused the ruin of her son's career. But he placed great hopes on Varya, his brother's wife. He thought she would cast no stones but would receive her at her own house. But to his astonishment, she also refused to entertain:

> But we must call things by their real names. You wish me to go and see her, and so rehabilitate her in society; but please understand that I cannot do it! I have daughters growing up, and I must move in society, for my husband's sake. . . . I cannot ask her to my house or must do it in such a way that she does not meet those who see things differently. That would offend her. I am not able to raise her (*A.K.* 525).

Vronsky understood that it was vain to make any further attempts and that they would have to spend those few days in Petersburg avoiding contact with their former world not to lay open to unpleasantness and insults which were so painful to him. As Anna and Vronky were cast out off the Petersburg society, their life became unbearable to them. The sense of alienation proved fatal to their moral sense. Vronsky flutters his wings to escape his confinement and tries to engage

himself in other business than love making, but Anna clings to him so fiercely that she does not allow him to disengage:

> Lacking society, lacking the family, they are destroyed by a conflict of wills that arises with appalling inevitability. Without the freedom of society, their passion becomes a prison. Tolstoy puts it in a characteristic metaphor : we can sit motionless for hours if we know we can stretch our legs at any time; but we develop agonizing cramp if we feel we cannot" (Bayley 201).

Anna also receives chilling reception at opera. Her beauty does not protect her from the insults of society. The Kartasovs vacate the box near to hers as if she were infected. People who had come to see the opera, tried to shun her and no one wanted to sit near her. Although she tried to show external tranquility, but deep in her heart, she suffered acute pain of isolation and aloofness. The woman of Petersburg society avoided any contact with her as if they would be infected with some contagious disease. Humiliated by the shame of her position, she rushes back to Vronsky with deep longings; she requires his exclusive and impassioned attention. She shuns the thought of a divorce because it would give Vronsky the freedom to pursue his political ambitions. Anna feared that, in effect, it would end up being tied to another Karenin.

Tolstoy surpasses himself in the venom of his attack on fashionable society as a preface to Anna's suicide. Anna is an image of the best that is possible in this debased society where she can find nothing to sustain her. Princess Myagkaya says, "Since everyone is attacking her – all those who are a thousand times worse than she, I've thought she has acted splendidly" (*A.K.* 720). We come to see that Anna, who remains true to her love and does not wear the mask of social propriety, is punished by the Russian society whereas other transgressors go scot free. In addition to that they sit on judgment on Anna and condemn her to be isolated from the society.

This question is also posed by Angus Calder thus:

> The book's epigraph – 'Vengeance is mine and I will repay' – implies that Anna gets what she deserves. But in that case why doesn't Tolstoy punish Stiva and Betsy? He clearly isn't implying—he simply couldn't imply - that sin leads inevitably to punishment on this earth . . . the society of forty or so exalted people in Petersburg which ostracizes Anna is so amoral, or immoral, in its own standards that it above all has no right to judge her (Calder 219-220).

Many other characters also commit adultery but they keep the social pretense of decency and thus remain unscathed. Their crooked ways, double standards and deceitfulness shields them, whereas, Anna's intrinsic truthfulness implies that she is bereft of the shielding cover for her. For a while retaining a thin mask of morality, Russian urban society of 19th century accepted affairs if they were conducted discreetly. Social convention would therefore require that Anna live the lie of her marriage and carry on a quiet, casual affair with Vronsky. But the inherent lie in this social convention contradicts Anna's determination to live truthfully. Anna rejects the society that has discarded her. She realizes that society will never allow her to live in dignity which she so deserves. Moreover, the idea of being judged by the so called 'guardians of society' to whom she feels and knows herself to be intellectually and morally superior is revolting. She is on higher plane than those who condemn her. However, her own internalized guilt which comes of social conditioning makes it clear to her that there is no future for her. Anna is crushed by "her sense of being outcast from the kind of society in which she is most naturally at home and where at the beginning of the book she was at home, that gives Anna her final despair" (Bayley 227). There is no way out for Anna. People are hideous; life itself is horrific, everything is disgusting. At the station platform where Vronsky has left the Moscow train to see his mother, unable to

bear his separation any more, she throws herself under a freight train.

Tolstoy in *Anna Karenina* may be presenting a compassionate understanding of a fallen woman, yet his admiration for marriage and family is far higher than his sympathy for Anna. Tolstoy had a conservative belief about the infallibility of marriage. He considered it a divine institution and it does not matter how it is entered, whether it is compatible or not. It is indissoluble and it has to be preserved at any cost. Hugh I Anson Fausset in his book *Tolstoy: The Inner Drama* has rightly commented:

> His (Tolstoy's) implicit argument is that a marriage, whatever its nature and however entered, is divinely consecrated and that physical submission by women to their husbands is a law of life and not of a given society. The woman therefore who transgresses this law, not only by breaking her marriage vows but by becoming conscious of herself as a human being with rights and individuality, tastes and distastes, is inevitably punished by God as well as by society (Fausset 181).

Interpreting the tragedy of Anna from Marxist angle, the capitalist society can be held responsible for her destructive tendency. Anna becomes a victim of materialistic and dehumanized society where genuine human emotions are not held in esteem. The capitalist society is on the move and there is cut-throat competition where genuine human sentiments, like that of Anna, are crushed. George Lucacks, the Marxist critic comments in this context:

> . . . in this society of inhuman competition and exploitation, the few people capable of genuine feeling are doomed to perish . . . . She is crushed by the callousness and hypocrisy of her husband and society and by growing coldness of her lover – that is, by the social force unleashed by the growth of capitalism in post-emancipation Russia. From this perspective, she is the accuser of bourgeois-capitalist society (qtd. in Adelman 132).

Upon comparing and contrasting the two novels, it can be argued that *Madame Bovary* and *Anna Karenina* both expose the nineteenth century deceitful, hypocritical and rigid societies of France and Russia. The French and Russian societies in the era depicted, are marked with the spirit of evil and deceit. These societies take perverse pleasure in mudslinging and scandals. In French society depicted in *Madame Bovary*, both the lovers of Emma Bovary are deceitful who play with the emotions of Emma and seduce her in a planned manner by extravagant declaration of love and devotion. Emma is so deluded by the romantic notion of love that she cannot see the lack of sincerity in them. The words of her lovers seem to her entirely credible as she is deadly earnest in her love for them. Their insincerity is proved soon when Emma is caught in financial crisis and both of them desert her. Homais and Lheureux are hypocritical and are responsible for her ruin and her ultimate suicide. In *Anna Karenina*, the society around Anna is spiteful. Anna's lover, Vronsky is selfish. When Anna faces continuous humiliation, he never comes to her defense. At the time when he should have stood by her, he lets her down.

The comparative analysis of these two novels also reveals the double standard of morality in their respective societies. Both the heroines find it hard to cope with their constricted inner space and bruised psyches. Emma Bovary feels contempt for the society in which woman is granted little freedom, whereas man can explore the vast world and taste varied pleasures. In *Anna Karenina*, the violation of social norms and moral values by the male characters is taken for granted, whereas, the same breach of societal norms by female characters is looked down upon as a heinous crime. This study unveils the subtle process of oppression and gender differentiation at work in male-centered familial and societal setup. Interestingly, the predicament of the female protagonists is analogous to women in general across the world. These protagonists are caught up in conflict between individual aspirations and social demands and this

result in their aggrieved psyches.

Both Emma and Anna feel choked and frustrated with their fake life and crave for freedom. They resist actively their assigned roles. They could not find means of personal fulfillment in the bourgeois society they inhabit. Anna's husband, however, does not share with Charles Bovary, the reader's sympathy. Karenin, Anna's husband lives an artificial life, completely foreign to Anna's dedication to living by truth. Anna does not seek out an affair as a cue for boredom, but following Vronsky's bold advances, she slowly begins to consider the pursuit of her own happiness as a possibility. As opposed to the shallow connections shared by Emma and her lovers, Anna and Vronsky's affair develops into genuine love and commitment, not typical of the casual affairs that occur all around them. Both have ordinary and sexually unappealing husbands and are living dissatisfied lives. Both have romantic longings which have made it impossible for them to inhabit their houses. They believe that there is something more, some more intense experience, some wider horizon if they could find it. Their desires are formed by their reading romantic novels. They want to achieve complete autonomy and in the process violate all the set norms/ rules and regulations thereby debunking hypocrisy and double standard of society.

Both the heroines, Emma and Anna abound with restless energy. Their tragedy is that their vitality has been diverted into channels which cannot satisfy them. They both are infected with the ideal of the perfect mate, as found in the novels and stories they read. Since this ideal is absurdly distant from the more difficult rewards of any actual relationship, it guarantees that both will remain unhappy always.

Neither Emma nor Anna succeeds in achieving the level of self-definition and freedom from social constraints for which they both strive. Their suicides, however, serve as a

continuation of the statement of resistance they made in the way they wish to escape the confines of the place society assigns them. Emma and Anna are defined through their relationships with men and therefore denied the means to pursue an individual destiny, come to the conclusion that their suicide is the only option open to them as a way of deciding their respective existences.

III

Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* also deals with transgression motif in a remarkably layered manner as there are transgressions at various levels. She also demonstrates the reaction of the society to sexual transgression. Besides this, Roy also deals with issues related to women and low caste people in particular who have to face and insult and humiliation on day-to-day basis. It is sad that more than six decades after independence, untouchability still stares us in the face. An untouchable, according to *Manusmriti*, has no right to go to temple, and no liberty to listen to the incantations of the *Vedas* or other scriptures. The reformers like Mahatma Gandhi, B. R. Ambedkar, R. N. Tagore, Swami Vivekananda, Maharishi Dayananda and Bal Gangadhar Tilak have scathingly attacked this casteist mentality. But in spite of their best efforts and many constitutional provisions, untouchability still prevails. Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable* portrays Bakha, who has to suffer insult and abuse without any rhyme and reason simply because he is an untouchable. Arundhati Roy, a great champion of the cause of the downtrodden, brings into focus deep roots of casteism, which has stifled healthy growth of a considerable section of Indian society. She also flings a harsh irony on the man's domination over woman. She seems to say that a woman is not a mere toy, an object of pleasure or a means to gratify the man's baser passion, but the nobler and richer part of his life. *The God of Small Things* portrays an engaging tale of cross-caste love between a paravan boy and a Syrian Christian girl with serious repercussions.

The greater part of the novel and much of the action takes place at Ayemenem in Kerala, which is the ancestral home of the main characters. Three cultural setups get reflected in the novel namely Keralite, Bengali and British. Ayemenem society can be better perceived through social stratification. In every society, one finds a division based on factors such as religion, language, economic conditions and different ideologies. The Syrian Christians, who form about twenty percent of Kerala's population, were, by and large, the wealthy estate owning feudal lords. On the lower strata of the society are the Paravans, Pelayas and Pulayas who are considered to be untouchables. The novel powerfully portrays ill-treatment of the untouchables by the others. They were not allowed to touch anything that touchables did. In Mammachi's time, Paravans were expected to crawl backwards with a broom, sweeping away the footprints. When British came to Malabar, a number of Paravans, Pelayas and Pulayas converted to Christianity to escape the scourge of untouchability. But they were made to have separate churches and separate priests and later found that they were not entitled to any government benefits like job reservation and bank loans.

In Ayemenem society, like every society, men are considered superior to women and there is a strong bias against women which we see later in the treatment of Chacko and Ammu for the same crime. In the traditional joint families some women assume dominant role with greater authority over others who are lower down. One of the obvious examples of it is the ambiguous stand adopted by these women with regard to Ammu's relation with Velutha. Their casteist hostility finds double force in Ammu-Velutha liaison and breaks out into expressions of moral indignation while Chacko's sexual indulgences with low caste women are overlooked. While men enjoy greater laxity and freedom, the family's dignity and honor rest on women's unblemished moral conduct.

Another great divide one observes in the society is the gulf between the rich and the poor, or the 'haves' and the 'have-nots'. Communists have a dominant role in Kerala's politics and are in a position to influence the course of social events. They project themselves as savior of the poor and the working class but behind their politics they play dubious games. Due to their inherent selfish interests, they shamelessly cross the limits of party ideology. The author's anger is directed against the political hypocrisy that is so deeply ingrained in the politicians, their unprincipled behavior and the glittering mask they always wear.

In Ayemenem society, like all the Indian societies, relationships outside caste and community are not recognized. We become aware of the variety of permissible combinations of relationship that are available. For this society, purity resides in adult, heterosexual, monogamous union, preferably further qualified by ethnicity, religion and social class and caste. That is why Ammu's marrying a Bengali Hindu is strongly resented by the family and we see the reaction of family in the consequent segregation of Ammu and her children. Since the family was very traditional, Ammu with her children Rahel and Estha were not allowed to be close to other family members while they attended the funeral of Sophie Mol since she had married a Hindu without the consent of the family members and not according to Christian traditions. She is disowned by her staunch Christian family. She is now a half Hindu and her children "Half Hindu Hybrids whom no self respecting Syrian Christian would ever marry" (*TGST* 45). She was accused of having sexual relationship with Velutha, the Paravan belonging to a low caste.

This elicits a sharp reaction from the Ayemenem society as they were horrified that the caste and class barriers of the ages have been broken and it endangered the fundamental composition of the cateist society. All the so-called guardians of society worked in unison to avert this danger. The family members unleashed a fury on Ammu and Velutha and local

Communist leader Comrade Pillai deserted them. When she went to the Kottayam police station, her statement was not recorded by the police inspector saying that "Kottayam Police did not take statements from *veshyas* or their illegitimate children" (*TGST* 8). There could be nothing more humiliating than to be called a *veshya* (prostitute) for a respectable woman.

The novel revolves around the three generation of Ipe family, a Syrian Christian family. The members of this family consider themselves the privileged descendents of Reverend E. John Ipe, a priest of the Mar Thomas church and well known in the Christian community for being "blessed personally by the Patriarch of Antioch, the sovereign head of the Syrian Christian Church" (*TGST* 22). As the incidents unfold and the story travels down to the subsequent generations, it unravels the tale of the decadence of the house. The family which was exemplary in theological matters fails to set an example as far as human relationship is concerned.

A brief glimpse into the marital life of John Ipe is given in the beginning. The focus shifts to Baby Kochamma and Pappachi. These two comprise the first generation which finds elaborate reference in the novel. The Ayemenem family is dominated by male, and women did not merit much freedom. Male dominance in family matters stifled their voice in personal matters like marriage. This is the reason why Baby Kochamma had to live the life of a spinster even though she secretly doted on Father Mulligan. Her clandestine love for the priest continues even after she achieves the status of a grandmother. Perhaps it is her spinsterhood or unfulfilled yearning for love that accounts for her treacherous nature. The marital relationship of Pappachi and Mammachi is devoid of love, and harmony remains but an illusion for the family. Lack of love between married partners cuts deep down into the psyche of the children. Pappachi tyrannizes his wife and child. One can notice a streak of schizophrenia in him: "not content with having beaten his wife and daughter, he tore down curtains, kicked furniture and smashed a table lamp" (*TGST*

181).

Pappachi-Mammachi relationship is ridden with jealousy, violence and hatred. The edifice of their marriage survives but its spirit crumbles totally when Pappachi,warned against beating by Chacko, his son, withdraws all communication with his wife. By depicting the shocking relationship between Pappachi and Mammachi, Arundhati Roy drives home the point that children brought up in such a vicious environment crave for an escape which might lead them to happiness. Ammu had been witness to the regular beatings of her mother by Pappachi. The beatings increase directly in proportion to the degree of success she achieves in her entrepreneurial project, Paradise Pickles and Preserves. He resents the attention his wife was getting due to her growing business. Every night he beat his wife with a brass flower vase. One night Pappachi broke the bow of Mammachi's violin and threw it into the river. Both Mammachi and Ammu have been sufferers for long years. He is at pains to project himself as the neglected husband.

Ammu's marriage to a Bengali, who she accidentally stumbles upon, is a result of an escape from the disastrous atmosphere at home. She was not allowed to go to college as her father considers the college education "an unnecessary expense" for a girl. Ammu is confined to Ayemenem house. She gets an opportunity to spend summer with a distant aunt in Calcutta. Here at a wedding reception she comes across a pleasant looking young man of twenty five, working as an Assistant Manager of a tea estate in Assam. "He proposed to Ammu five days after they first met. Ammu didn't pretend to be in love him. She just weighed the odds and accepted. She thought that anything, anyone at all would be better than returning to Ayemenem"(*TGST* 39).

Ammu rebels against her own family. She flouts the social conventions and without the consent of her family marries outside her community. A marriage of convenience can be as

disastrous as an arranged marriage. If the two individuals belonging to the same community and identical moral codes fail to sail together happily, the relationship forged between two communities, runs the risk of being more fragile. The severest blow to such marriages comes from within girl's own family; as such marriages rarely get parental approval in a traditional Indian set up like the Ayemenem family. To her great shock, her husband turns out to be "not just a heavy drinker, but also a full-blown alcoholic with all of an alcoholic deviousness"(*TGST* 40). The imagined freedom remains elusive. As an archetypal woman, Ammu decides to suffer patiently, but her tolerance is completely ruptured when she comes to know that her husband is ready to send her to his English boss Mr. Hillock "to be looked after" (*TGST* 42). She returns to her parental home with her twins and with no more dreams.

Arundhati Roy dwells upon the theme of gender bias by referring to Mammachi's discriminating attitude towards Ammu. The double moral standard of society is exposed by the author by simultaneously portraying the unsuccessful marriages of Ammu and her brother Chacko. Chacko, like Ammu married outside her community and without the consent of his parents. Both the brother and sister returned to their parental home after their fiasco in love marriages. But Ammu receives cold reception at home, whereas, her brother is warmly welcomed. As R.K. Dhawan remarks: "A daughter estranged from her husband is made to feel unwanted in her parent's home whereas an estranged son not only receives warm welcome, he remains the rightful inheritor of the family fortune" (Dhawan 81). The sexual adventure is not barred to men, whereas, the same indulgence is denied to women. The society takes the sexual transgression of men lightly, even ignores it, but in case of women, they have to bear harsher censure for the loss of virtue.

Baby Kochamma disliked her twins, for she considered them doomed, fatherless waifs.

Worse still, they were half- Hindu hybrids, whom no self respecting Syrian Christian would ever marry. Baby Kochamma represents the traditional belief about status of divorced daughter in Indian society. She has internalized deeply in heart the traditional patriarchal belief:

> She subscribes whole heartedly to the commonly held view that a married daughter had no position in her parent's home. As for a *divorced* daughter-according to Baby Kochamma, she had no position anywhere at all. As for a divorced daughter from an *intercommunity love* marriage – Baby Kochamma chose to remain quiveringly silent on the subject (*TGST* 45-46).

Baby Kochamma resents Ammu because she saw her quarrelling with fate which Baby Kochamma graciously accepted. Baby Kochamma was herself in love with an Irish monk, Father Mulligan and even changed his religious faith in order to be near him. But her chase proved futile as her love remained unrequited. This repressed and frustrated feeling of her made an adverse psychological impact on her nature. She became mean, spiteful and sadistic. M.K. Ray in an article "The God of Small Things: A Feminist Study" observes:

> Baby Kochamma is a study in meanness and perversion that may result from unnatural self-repression and the consequent frustration . . . Her frustration in love and lack of understanding of her feelings on the part of her parents made her a neurotic, and particularly after Rahel's return, she lives in the past than in the present (Pathak 100).

Controlled and trapped by society, with all escape routes firmly walled, Ammu faces the perennial dilemma of woman. Under the circumstances, her sexual needs are ignored completely. Because of the patriarchal enclosure she turns into a minx, an outcaste in her own society. Ammu is drawn to Velutha, the paravan. Velutha was appointed by Mammachi as the factory carpenter and was made in charge of general maintenance. He had a mysterious carpentry skills and

remarkable facility with machines. Ammu was attracted towards Velutha as his strong body appealed to her sexual longing. Besides there are other reasons as both of them were outcast from society and both resented the injustice of society. Velutha was the man who spontaneously loved her children. A.G. Khan in an article "Wrinkled Youth and Pickled Future: Comparing Githa Hariharan and Arundhati Roy" cites reasons of mutual attraction between Ammu and Velutha: "Her woman's needs were there but at the same time she wanted a person who would be equally devoted / acceptable to her children. In Velutha, she had the satisfaction of having found a person 'who loved her by night and her children by day'" (quoted in Bhatt and Nityanandam 94). These were the reasons why Ammu was drawn towards Velutha. When their sexual relations come to be known by the family of Ammu, hell is loosened on them. By violating the traditional norms of society, she had committed a crime against society. When Mammachi thought about her sexual union with Velutha, the paravan, who she thinks has a particular paravan smell, she nearly vomits. She expresses a cold contempt for her daughter:

> She had defiled generations of breeding (The Little Blessed One, blessed personally by the Patriarch of Antioch, an Imperial Entomologist, and a Rhodes Scholar from Oxford) and brought the family to its knees. For generations to come, forever now, people would point at them at weddings and funerals, at baptisms and birthday parties. They'd nudge and whisper. It was all finished now (*TGST* 258).

Mammachi's unleashing of fury on Velutha and Ammu is in contrast to her condonement, rather complicity, in facilitating her son Chacko's sexual relationship with various 'low caste' women, which she justifies as being 'Man's Needs'. What is desired and facilitated in case of a man is branded blasphemous and sinful in case of woman as evident from Ammu- Velutha relationship. The elder women of the Ayemenem house-hold seem to have internalized the patriarchal notion

that is why they remain blind to the sexual needs of Ammu. It is ironical that the women of the Ayemenem house, like the matrons of the puritan society in *The Scarlet Letter*, play the active role in condemnation of the Ammu. Being woman, they should have sympathized with Ammu, but it is Baby Kochamma and Mammachi who pave the way for her ultimate disaster. Antonia Novarro Tejero's observation in an article "Power Relationship in *The God of Small Things*" in this regard is remarkable. He says:

> By depicting Chacko's improper advances to the factory workers and juxtaposing it with Ammu's love affair with Velutha – which is horrendously repulsive to Mammachi – Roy emphasizes a crucial difference between the siblings: he is depicted as one of the exploiters of female sexuality, and she along with the female workers as the sexually exploited. The first generation of women in the novel gives extreme importance to patriarchal norms, indeed they succumb to them. When it is publically discovered that Ammu , a respectable high class woman, also has 'Woman's Needs', the situation becomes unbearable to the traditional conservative sector of the community . . . Mammachi's tolerance of 'Men's Needs' as far as her son was concerned, became the fuel for her unmanageable fury at her daughter (quoted in Prasad 105).

Although Ammu -Velutha relationship is the only relationship which germinates from the inner most core of two human hearts. It is the perfect kind of relationship, and only one which is illustrated with scenes reverberating with love, sex and feelings of mutual fulfillment. However, it is not a normal alliance because it is a bond which is out of wedlock and therefore against the social ethic. Secondly, it is against the laws of history. Hence, a relationship between a Christian and a 'Paravan' (outcaste) is bound to be doomed. The society crushes the individual mercilessly if he/she pursues her private ethic to realize his/her dreams of happiness. Ammu and Velutha are

crushed savagely by the so called guardians of social justice. It is remarkable to quote the observation of M.P. Sinha here: "The physical attraction leading to physical union symbolizes the victory of love over the power of law but the law does not take long to have its revenge over love. The social mores are broken by them and they are, as usual, punished for this" (Pandey 82).

It is unthinkable for a woman of a Syrian Christian family should have anything to do with a Paravan. Their unreasonable prejudice is expressed in their intolerance of the so-called "peculiar paravan smell" (*TGST* 257). The narrative identifies the purity and pollution core of caste psyche in these words of Mammachi. She is myopic in terms of physical sight as well as moral perception, is horrified at the suggestion that her daughter could have coupled with a paravan. Mammachi spat into Velutha's face. She screamed: "Out! If I find you on my property tomorrow I'll have you castrated like the pariah dog that you are! I'll have you killed" (*TGST* 284). The entire community may be horrified and repelled when their liaison is discovered. It breaks down the ancient social and economic barriers of caste and class, just as it defies the age old injunction of community against Eros for the woman.

In a bid to save the family honor Baby Kochamma lodges an F.I.R. against Velutha accusing him of molestation and later kidnapping. Velutha goes to the local communist chief, Comrade Pillai for help but is defeated by his refusal of the protection that could have changed the whole story. The callous Pillai, when contacted by the police inspector, Thomas Mathews, not only disowns Velutha as a party worker but also does not refute the false allegation of abduction and rape. The untouchables like Velutha can own cards, not power and decree. At critical moments they were turned away unprotected from the leaders' houses like that of Pillai's. This gives a chance for the corrupt police to inflict torture and savagery to the innocent Velutha.

As soon as Ammu comes to know that Velutha has been implicated in a false charge of attempted rape and kidnapping, she reached the police station to tell the truth, but the treatment she received at the police station shows how pitiable is the condition of woman in the society, particularly when the woman is a divorcee and has loved an untouchable. The treatment meted out to Ammu at the Police station speaks for the callousness of the casteist and patriarchal society: "Inspector Thomas Mathew stared at Ammu's breast as he spoke . . . then he tapped her breasts with his baton. Gently tap, tap. As though, he was choosing mangoes from a basket. Pointing out the ones that he wanted packed and delivered" (*TGST* 8).

The Inspector represents the society's attitude to a woman who refuses to conform to the society's "love laws." Incensed by righteous anger a posse of 'touchable' policemen beat up into pulp the molester of 'touchable' woman. Velutha dies in custody. To cover up police brutality a confession is extracted from Estha – the martyr – that Velutha had kidnapped the three children.

The policemen are deftly used as tools of the system, a part of coercive machinery which keeps things in order. They perform their duties only for those in power. Their brutality springs from the fact that they did not consider him a fellow human being. "These were history's henchmen. Sent to square the books and collect the dues from those who broke the law . . . They were not arresting a man . . . They were merely inoculating a community against an outbreak . . . They were exorcising fear" (*TGST* 308). The policemen and politicians make sure that no transgressors of rules are spared. It is in their hands to establish order and punish those who defy the orders; Velutha is the extreme transgressor of rules so he pays the price of disobedience. Whenever there is a threat from the outside, the so called guardians of the society take a united stand to preserve the inner structure of the society. In case of Ammu-Velutha relationship the boundaries of caste and gender of the patriarchal society seem to be erupted and

there is a threat of subversion of caste structure from this affair, hence it is necessary that the collective force of society is enforced so that conformity to the love laws are maintained. It is relevant to quote Indira Bhatt and Indira Nityanandam here: "The Big Things, in spite of their own individual difference unite whenever there is a threat from Small Things. The 'Small Things' – Ammu, the twins and Velutha, who get together for mutual warmth and genuine love, not for any material benefit are crudely acted upon and destroyed" (Bhatt and Nityanandam 177).

Baby Kochamma's extraction of lie from Estha serves her purpose as Velutha is implicated in the false case of kidnapping and eventually punished fatally for his "crime". But she could not understand the harm she has caused to the innocent mind of Estha. The trauma of that guilty confession later turns Estha into a silent idiot, "a quite bubble floating on a sea of noise" (*TGST* 11). After Sophie Mol's funeral the trio is banished from the Ayemenem house. Estha is returned to his Baba in Calcutta. Rahel is sent to convent school. Ammu goes in search of a job. Years later weighed down with asthma and branded as a prostitute, she dies in a grimy lodge in Aleppy at the age of thirty one. Her affair leads to tragedy, leaving Rahel and Estha, "doomed waifs", insecure and wandering. Ammu struggles to conserve her frail independence. Ammu-Velutha relationship brought fulfilling moments to them. They slake their desires which were smoldering in their heart. Ignoring the sociology they assert their biology which although brought contentment, delight and self satisfaction, but in the process they forgot about the strictures of society and the aftermaths of this forbidden relationship which are extremely horrific for Ammu, Velutha as well as Estha and Rahel. As Murari Prasad observes:

> The most tragic and poignant moments in the novel are those that deal with Ammu and her children, and Velutha's brutal mutilation. The novel traces the longing and passion of

the key characters, the emergence, for a brief period, of a sense of selfhood and mutual alliance between them, and the eventual destruction of this fulfilling liaison in the face of traditional strictures (Prasad 161).

The church refused to bury Ammu on several counts. So Chacko had to transport her body to the crematorium. The refusal of church speaks volumes about the wrath that Ammu's transgression has evoked among the champions of morality in Ayemenem. Therefore, "Ammu had to be cremated where, nobody except beggars, derelicts and police custody dead were cremated," (*TGST* 162) fit punishment for breaking the laws laid down by a hide bound, caste ridden, repressive patriarchal society. Amina Amin comments: "Arundhati Roy examines how various characters in the novel suffer as a consequence of breaking certain inalienable laws which human beings have to obey if they have to live in a civilized society" (Dhawan 110).

There is also an incestuous relationship between Estha and Rahel. The very fact that Rahel and Estha feel compelled to break a law which is culturally so deeply ingrained is symptomatic of the fact that they have been hurt to the core of their being. The twins certainly were not privileged to have a wonderful childhood as they had seen the turmoil and disturbance of their parental marital life. They were victims of broken family and were totally engrossed in each other's company only to make people grudge them. The outside world gave very little or nothing at all to the twins as they were products of inter-caste marriage and worse still a broken marriage. Baby Kochamma has a special grudge against them: "Baby Kochamma grudged them their moments of high happiness . . . but most of all she grudged them the comfort they drew from each other. She expected from them some token unhappiness" (*TGST* 46). Baby Kochamma had always felt that together the twins were trouble – Satan in the eye. They had to be separated. There was always a suspicion that, "the confusion lay in a deeper, more secret

place" (*TGST* 2). They were unaware of the hint of the doom which was their childhood. When the family had gone to receive Sophie Mol, the twins had slept together in Chacko's room in the hotel.

IV

As such, the above textual analyses evidence that transgression of social conventions and moral values in different social setups across the world evokes more or less the same reaction and it further establishes the fact that this confrontation/tension between the demands of human instincts to gratify natural urges and the socially structured parameters/barriers to stem them, is a perennial phenomenon. People often feel constrained by the repressive force of these social barriers as they stifle their instinctual desires and seek different ways for their gratification. As evidenced above, the novels selected for textual analysis represent different cultures across the world such as American, French, Russian and Indian. A glance beneath the surface reveals a world that has primarily remained static and is still governed by deep seated antediluvian (obsolete) social and moral diktats. Analyzing these socio-cultural milieus reflected in the writings of authors discussed above, it can be concluded precisely that these irrational and absurd moral values which the societies seek to thrust upon individuals impel them to transgress and overthrow all societal beliefs bringing eventually a major conflict in their lives.

As we see in *Samskara*, Naranappa deliberately violates social and moral diktats as he regards social beliefs to be illogical, ridiculous and absurd. He is aware of the hypocrisy, greed and lust in the lives of Brahmins of the agrahara who claim to be guardians of the highest moral values in society. This is what we see in *The God of Small Things*, where the mindscape of Vellya Paapen is still haunted by the idea of practice of backward crawling before the upper

castes, sweeping away the footprints by paravans. Velutha, the paravan was harboring an impending sense of being victim of this unjust society. The social laws denied him what he sought, smothered his defiance and annihilated his budding individualism. Whenever and wherever, the individual steps out of the narrow social confines and restrictions and try to seek individuation and independence; his/her liberation is equated with degeneration.

All societies analyzed above, whether it is Russian, French, American or Indian, cling dearly to their codes, conventions, rules and regulations and impose them on individuals through their agents or the so-called guardians of social traditions as depicted in the novels being examined. These ossified socio-cultural conventions have been unmasked with the deft hands of irony employed by the authors. As we see in French and Russian masterpieces, *Madame Bovary* and *Anna Karenina* respectively, the societies depicted in the era are marked with the spirit of selfishness, evil and deceit. These societies are hypocritical and cling to appearance and social norms crushing mercilessly the true human emotions. Although, the socio-cultural perception of transgression cannot clearly be marked in *Madame Bovary*, as in *Anna Karenina,* because the French society is deeply engrossed in materialistic pursuits and is uncaring and unresponsive. *The Scarlet Letter* depicts the life in a community which is strictly governed by religious laws and curtails any kind of emotional outlet. The religious laws of this theocratic community hamper the gratification of instinctual urges thereby burying in deeper recesses of the mind. The more authoritative a society, much more is the interiorizing of the yearnings. But as discussed earlier, transgression is the intrinsic component of the rule or limit, every rule /limit carries with it the possibility of its fracture. That is what happens in not only the puritan society depicted in *The Scarlet Letter*, but in every socio-cultural tradition of the world. Feeling uneasy in the stifling atmosphere, the protagonists of the novels being examined here, revolt via confronting

head-on the force of social restrictions/taboos thereby seeking to subvert as well appropriate them. Summing up, we can say that the obsolete, absurd and unreasonable socio-cultural laws across the world impel individuals to transgress, infringe and overthrow them and thus cause conflict in the societies.

In case of women, they continue to be defined within confining boundaries of virtue, marriage and motherhood across the patriarchal world. Everywhere they are expected to obey the norms of behavior framed by patriarchal society. The societies want them to accept passively and submissively their roles as ideal wives with acute docility and without any resistance. Whenever they start shunning the virtues that become a means of their victimization and show some kind of resistance and revolt against the prevailing patriarchal system, they are looked upon suspiciously. Everywhere across the world, women are treated as objects and they are never allowed to attain authenticity of the self. Emma, Anna and Ammu feel choked in the stifling socio-cultural milieus and strive for autonomy of the self, which they achieve via crossing barriers and breaking conventional norms erected and imposed by the society. The treatment meted out to the transgressors in the novels starkly exposes the disparities cultivated and practiced between the sexes in patriarchal societies. For the same act of transgression, man is scarcely questioned, whereas woman is castigated, condemned and even ostracized under the pretext of socio-economic or religious grounds as evident in the treatment of Ammu and Chacko in *The God of Small Things* and Anna and Oblonsky in *Anna Karenina.* Ammu's craving for the fulfillment of sexual desire is harshly repudiated by her family and society, whereas Chacko's sexual adventures are accepted and even facilitated by the family. Even women of the household could not sympathize with Ammu and her instinctual needs as their minds are conditioned by the age-old patriarchal rules. They see nothing wrong in men's needs as they have instead provided

enough exits and doors to the house for the smooth functioning of this patriarchal practice and even bribed the women victims. This kind of mindset can also be seen in *The Scarlet Letter* wherein merciless matrons cry for the harshest punishment for Hester. They have deeply imbibed in themselves the patriarchal notions. In *Anna Karenina,* the society including Oblonsky's wife, turns a blind eye to all his 'indiscretions' and thus maintaining his image of the family man and also continues his clandestine liaisons as well. Anna, on the other hand, who is honest in her love with Vronsky, is intolerable to the society. The men committing the same folly in *Anna Karenina* do not appear to be as base as the women and they do not face the wrath of the author to the extent women do. Most of the marital rules place a higher moral onus on women and are restrictive for them. The slightest flirtation on their part is regarded as most reprehensible, whereas in case of men most societies turn a blind eye to most of their transgressive acts including the sexual ones.

Chapter 2

Commission of Transgression

In the previous chapter, it has been established that transgression has a socio-cultural context and that it is not an event that takes place outside spatio-temporality. In this chapter, an attempt will be made to establish that the reasons behind the commission of transgression on the part of the protagonists of the novels being examined in this dissertation are more or less identical. As discussed earlier, various mythologies of the world offer enough evidence to prove that despite denunciation of transgressive acts, they have been repeatedly committed. There is enough textual evidence to demonstrate that there is always a conflict between the societal/conventional authority and natural urges of an individual. As such, individuals in every socio-cultural setup strive to overthrow the rigid and repressive socio-cultural code of moral behaviour in order to achieve a sense of fulfilment. It is interesting to note that the process of committing transgression follows a pattern and a clearly traceable route barring of course few exceptions.

The socio-cultural laws are created to order and organize society. If the individuals are allowed to act in accordance with their emotional urges/ natural instincts, it may cause disorder and anarchy in society. Basic survival of the group/ society and the individual is ensured by adaptive behaviour. In ancient times, the social laws and norms were given religious colouring as these used to be identical with religious laws. Any breach of such laws was considered not a crime but a sin, and the violators were severely condemned/ punished. The institution of marriage, for instance, was considered a sacrament which could not be dissolved whatever may be the supervening circumstances. The Hindu as well as the Christian ecclesiastical law would condemn any violation of marital vows as one of the most heinous sins. A person who was guilty

of prohibited or illicit sexual relationship was condemned to hell. Among Hindus, marriage was considered to be a sacrament, a union – an indissoluble and eternal union to be continued through seven *janmas* (lifetimes). Moreover, it is believed that a man is incomplete until he gets married as it is his wife who as a life partner/ better half (*ardhangini*) completes him. So much so that after a point, their identities coalesce and become one.

Marriage under the English law was also regarded as sacrament. The ideal married life was attributed to Joseph and Mary. St. Paul compared the relation of husband and wife to that of Christ and his church and was the first to give the idea of marriage as sacrament. Even in those societies such as early Roman and Muslims where marriage was regarded as civil contract, sexual transgression is nonetheless considered to be a sin. *The Quran* along with the Muslim ethnologists also condemns sexual transgression as most heinous sin. In Hinduism, the writers of *Dharamsutra* believe that marriage is a sacrament and that even if the husband or the wife became *patita* (morally corrupt), the *samskara* (a ceremony/ rite) already performed is not annulled. They further believe that even if a wife committed adultery, she still remains a wife and when she performs penance for the moral lapse, it is not necessary for her to have a fresh marriage *samskara* performed.

Regardless of the transgressors being condemned severely from the time immemorial, the transgression is committed nevertheless. Upon reading Hindu scriptures, we find that Hindu sages used to resort to *sangrahana* (sexual contact) signifying unlawful coming together of men and women. Nevertheless, all sages have considered *sangrahana* as sinful. *Sangrahana* has been considered to fall in three categories: (a) brought about by force (b) by deceit (c) by sensuous passion. The last category is termed as adultery if one of the partners happens to be a married person.

The sexual transgression was pervasive in Greek also. Nearly all the great men of Greek had sexual relations with the beautiful courtesans of the time. Hyperides had intimate relations with Phryne; Epicure had relations with Danae, Plato with Achaenassa, Corynth with Lais, and Pericles with Aspasia. The great orator Demosthenes characterized the sexual relations of Athenian men thus: "We marry women to have legitimate children and to have faithful guardians of our homes, we maintain concubines for our daily service and comfort, and courtesans for the enjoyment of love" (Bebel 43-44). The wife was only destined to bear offspring and like a faithful dog, to guard her master's house. But the master himself lived to suit his pleasure. In many cases it is still so. The state laws approved of deeds committed by men as being their natural right, while the same deeds were branded as criminal and despicable when committed by women. As such, the Greek women frequently seem to have taken vengeance upon their husbands for their oppression.

As such, literature is replete with transgression motif across cultures. This chapter seeks to work out the reasons of sexually transgressive behaviour on the part of protagonists in novels undertaken for critical analyses in this dissertation representing different cultures of the world. Firstly, the reasons for the commission of transgression have been discussed followed by the delight involved in the process of committing transgressive act.

Boundaries and taboos alongside those markers that contour and manage both social order and the socialized being, repress individual desire. The roles and demands that society imposes on us are always resisted even though these play crucial role in determining the identity of the individual. By conforming to the assigned roles and conditions imposed through external agents, an individual feels anxiety and also a sense that something is lacking/ missing as if we are incomplete or inauthentic in some way. Transgression can therefore be perceived as a

potential means to achieve self-authenticity (sense of being true to oneself). The transgressive act likewise can thus be experienced as a liberating factor. Authority and our sense of autonomy are often in conflict. Challenging external authority can provide a sense of power and control as well as affording a sense of personal authenticity. A sense of pleasurable relief is often experienced once the repressive bonds are thrown off, or defeated.

The optimum development of an individual requires growth of autonomy, a sense of 'me' and a real sense of accomplishment in life. Being autonomous means being self-governing, determining one's own actions. Authenticity means experiencing self-reality by knowing, being self-governing, being and becoming credible and responsible persons. When an individual finds himself in the fullness of his capacity, having satisfied all his needs and playing consistent roles in society, identity can be said to have been established/ accomplished. The emphasis shifts from conformity to creativity, that is, a wish to attain egocentric gratification in life. An individual wants to break the shackles of bondage in order to gain a deterministic control over her/ his life. In a bid to do this, s/he starts revolting against the constraints of age old societal norms and conventions.

In case of women, the humiliating treatment prevalent for ages, has given rise to a sense of revolt. They suffer from an impending sense of being victims and stifled by the 'iron gates' of moribund society. Female identity has for the most part been discreetly ignored and shoved aside by men, forcing women to adhere to the patriarchal norms of demureness, innocence and virtue. Simone de Beauvoir rightly conceives women of "hesitating between the role of object, the other which is offered her, and the assertion of identity" (Beauvoir 33). In this man dominated hegemony, the female is denied any sexuality of her own, but is trapped in a cult of permissive sexuality through males. Through ages, women's sexuality has been expressed by the needs of

adherence to her society's so called feminine codes. She has been denied any entrance to her sexual self. There lurks a wish in her inner self to get rid of this repression. And it is her sexual desirability that makes her exhibit sexual violence.

The craving for the fulfilment of love and sex on the part of women can be one of the reasons of their flouting the societal norms and values. Sex is the vital source of procreation, the moving energy in the production of life. Stevens observes that "Sex is a blaze of passion which constitutes the primary element of the will to live and the chief expression of craving. It is the cord of sensuous desire that binds us tighter and tighter to the wheel of life" (Stevens 22). This divine passion, this all pervading, impelling force is the actuating creative spirit of the Almighty. The matters pertaining to sex are generally avoided and we are taught that the sexual appetite is an animal craving that should be subdued and concealed as unworthy of man's superior nature. For the cultivation of culture, human beings are required to renounce their natural needs. The civilization becomes more and more refined and graceful at the cost of suppression of the instinctual needs of the individuals. It is pertinent to quote Clifford Howard here:

> It is surprising that they fail to realize that not only is it the cause of our individual existence, but that it is the foundation of society and the well- spring of human life and happiness. Were men deprived of this instinct, it would not only result in the extermination of the race but all ambitions, endeavours and affections, all poetry, art and religion – in short all the emotions and achievements, inspired by what we term love, would cease. The world would become cold and passionless; destitute of sentiment or aspiration, devoid of any sense of incentive. It is universally admitted that love is the animating spirit of the world, and what is love but a manifestation of the sexual instinct (Howard 28).

Sex knows no morality. It is sheer hunger and thirst. The moral and ethical codes hamper the gratification of the sexual drives. It is to be recognised as a basic human need if an individual is to be allowed normal growth. There is an antagonism between the natural instincts and the civilization process as the progression of civilization is proportionate to the degree of suppression of individual's natural/ animal needs: "Sexual impulse is neither moral nor immoral; it is simply natural like hunger and thirst. Nature knows nothing of morality. But organized society is very far from recognizing the truth of this sentence" (Bebel 102). Sex is captivatingly overwhelming impulse. It induces transgression. The pull of sex is so powerful that it impels breaking of moral restrictions. It is sex that ruptures the borders that stabilize and constitute both the self and social order. It is for this highly disruptive reason that sex is couched in taboos and prohibitions. Human beings are driven away from committing transgressive acts by the unknown terror of taboos which are locked into space through reference to the metaphysical agents such as God or the laws sanctioned by the society, but the captivating force, mainly love and sex, impels human beings to commit transgression as sexual or love instinct is beyond control and has a deep fascination. As Bataille remarks: "Men are swayed by two simultaneous emotions: they are driven away by terror and drawn by an awed fascination. Taboo and transgression reflect these two contradictory urges, the taboo would forbid the transgression but the fascination compels it" (Bataille 68).

On all sides woman is hemmed in by restrictions and obstacles unknown to man. Many things a man may do, she is prohibited from doing. For instance, many social rights and privileges enjoyed by him are considered a crime in her case. She suffers both socially and as a sexual being. The sexual desire is deeply embedded in every normal human being, and upon attaining maturity, its satisfaction is essential to physical and mental welfare. Luther was right

when he said: "He who would thwart the natural impulse, seeks to prevent nature from being nature, fire from burning, water from moistening, man from eating and drinking and sleeping" (Bebel 99). No physician or physiologist could more accurately express the necessity of satisfying the human desire for love. It is the love/ sex instinct which impels human beings to relate to others in the true sense. It is the main driving force behind all the endeavours of life. Life sans love or sex is not worth living. It is the sublimated form of love instinct which is expressed in all forms of art, literature and religion. Dr. Elizabeth Blackwell says in her essay on "The Moral Education of the Young in Relation to Sex":

> Sexual impulse exists as an inevitable condition of life and the foundation of society. It is the greatest power in human nature . . . while undeveloped it is not an object of the thoughts, but it remains nevertheless the central force of life. This inevitable impulse is the natural guardian against all possibility of destruction (qtd. in Bebel 101).

Such being the intensity of sexual impulse, it is not to be wondered at that with both men and women, sexual abstinence frequently leads to nervous disorder and in some cases, even to insanity and suicide. Sexual activity should not be associated with moral downfall of an individual as there are numerous instances in mythologies of different religions that by indulging in these activities people have attained enlightenment. Shayne Clarke remarks pertinently: "Sexual activity is an opportunity to confront the monster of sensual desire and such a 'small death' should not be regarded as failure" (Clarke 423).

Whether it should be regarded as moral "failure" or not shall be contested in details in Chapter 3 which deals with the repercussions of transgressive behaviour. Let us now examine the reasons and circumstances which impel the protagonists of various novels undertaken for textual analyses. They not only succumb to the temptations and stimuli for committing sexual

transgression but also delight in it deeply, even though briefly, after the bonds of repression and socio-cultural restrictions are thrown off.

I

Hester Prynne's transgression in *The Scarlet Letter* may be attributed to the neglect of her emotional and sexual needs as she was married to a much older man, Chillingworth who wandered away from her. She was forced to stay in isolation in New England as she proceeded to this new country prior to her husband who was soon to follow her. But for two years, she had to stay alone anticipating his arrival. In due course of time, she came in contact with a loving and warm-hearted young minister, Arthur Dimmesdale. She fell in love with him and their union resulted in the birth of their daughter, Pearl, although nothing has been described about their married life. The novel mainly deals with the repercussions of transgression, but upon examining the cold temperament and crude behaviour of Chillingworth as shown in the later part of the novel and the attitudes of puritan society toward Hester, the reasons of her transgressive act can be identified.

Immediately after the marriage, Hester Prynne was separated from her husband and had to live in isolation. It was the time when her husband should have taken care of her emotional and sexual needs. Besides, her husband was twenty years older to her. Taking note of their age difference, and his frigid behaviour, it can be said that their marriage must have been spoiled by their sexual and emotional incompatibility. Sexual incompatibility is the inability of one or both spouses to understand each other sexually. Marriage is uniquely designed as a relationship of commitment of heart, mind, body and soul. It presupposes total allegiance to each other with all aspirations and dimensions of the life interwoven together. Developing patience for and understanding of each other may be what the sexual incompatibility in marriage is all about.

The sentiment of the husband and wife should be so responsive as to be complementary to each other. The spiritual element should respond to the spiritual and the physical to the physical, so that the men and women are bound together by a three-strand rope of soul, mind and body. There is true union of men and women only when the spiritual and mental bond precedes the physical which is the complement or completion of the former. Sex is an essential element in the normal growth (physical as well as emotional) of the individual. As Jyoti Singh remarks: "Sexual desire is the basic human need, which finds fulfilment in marriage, and more than the gratification of a physical need, it is an expression of love, contributing to the emotional and physical well being of the two people involved" (Singh 116). In case of Hester, utter lack of communication in her marital life sucks the sap of love out, making it dull and dry. She feels dejected due to failure of her husband to rescue her from emptiness and loneliness by filling the inner space. Boredom must have crept in her life. Hester Prynne was engulfed by ennui and withdrawal with a suffocating emotional vacuum in her life. She finds herself stifled by pressures of loneliness. Emptiness as a human condition is a sense of generalized boredom, social alienation and apathy. Feelings of emptiness often accompany depression, loneliness, despair or other mental and emotional disorders.

Lack of emotional compatibility is another factor in Hester and Chillingworth's relationship. Emotional compatibility means truly valuing and caring about feelings, wants, needs and desires of each other. It helps women feel more secure, safe, protected and trustful. The couple must share the same emotional needs and values and must respect those needs of each other equally. Emotion is the bedrock that the relationship is built upon. If one is emotionally distant, whilst the other needs emotional security, the very thought of compatibility becomes pointless.

Hester considers inter-personal relationships important, but failure to find joy and happiness in marital relationship fills her with loneliness and angst. Her forging an alliance with Dimmesdale may be read as one such instance. The indifferent, cold, apathetic world around her, deprivation of solicitude and her instinctual demands lead her to crave for a man's love and gratify it through warm-hearted Dimmesdale. That is why Hyatt H. Waggoner seems to observe: "Hester might not have committed adultery, had Chillingworth had a warmer heart or perhaps even had he been younger or less deformed" (Waggoner 153).

Temperamentally too, Hester Prynne and Chillingworth are incompatible. He is of cold temperament devoid of any warmth of love and affection as the name ''Chill'-ing-worth' itself indicates. He was given to intellectual pursuits and spent his life in learning the facts of medical science. He is like those men who have dissipated their faculties. To sum up, we can say that a vibrantly passionate woman has been given to an exceptionally cold and sexually non-responsive man. Chillingworth himself acknowledges their incompatibility in marriage thus:

> It was my folly and thy weakness. I, –a man of thought, –the bookworm of great libraries, –a man already in decay, having given my best years to feed the hungry dream of knowledge, – what had I to do with youth and beauty like thine own! Misshapen from my birth-hour, how could I delude myself with the idea that intellectual gifts might veil physical deformity in a young girl's fantasy! (*TSL* 57).

Their loveless bond is evident from the words spoken by Hester to Chillingworth, "Thou knowest," said Hester, "that I was frank with thee, I felt no love, nor feigned any" (*TSL* 58). Chillingworth, who is no match to the vitality and intensity of passion in Hester, acknowledges the same: "We have wronged each other. Mine was the first wrong, when I betrayed thy budding youth into a false and unnatural relation with my decay" (*TSL* 58). He admits that between them

the scale hangs fairly in balance. He considers her act of adultery justified in the light of her circumstances. But, Richard H. Millington considers loveless marriage more serious a sin than adultery.

> It is not adultery, then, that is the original sin of the Scarlet Letter, but a forced, loveless marriage, which Chillingworth sought "in order that the chill of so many lonely hours among his books might be taken off the scholar's heart" (1:176). Like Hollingsworth, he has acted as a vampire, feeding off the innocence and vitality of his young wife, who turns elsewhere for love (Millington 26).

Their adultery is justified by contrast with the dull lives around them, with Roger Chillingworth's sheer unlovableness and the community's unnatural (and thus unacceptable) moralism.

Even the part played by the church and state in this sort of marriage is not worthy. The state officials or the officiating clergymen whose task is to perform the marriage ceremony, never pause to consider by what methods the couple they are about to join in wedlock, have been brought together. It may be quite evident, that the two are in no way matched either in regard to their age or physical and mental qualities; the bride may be twenty and the groom seventy or vice versa; the bride may be beautiful and full of vitality, the groom old and inflicted with infirmities, but it scarcely makes any difference to the representative of the state and the church. The marriage is consecrated. Nevertheless, when such marriage turns out to be an exceedingly unhappy one, both church and state persecute the unfortunate victim, usually woman, remaining ironically oblivious of the wrong both the agencies have themselves caused. The dignity and destiny of a woman is seen within the rubric called marriage as Simone de Beavoire rightly observes, "Marriage is a destiny traditionally offered to woman by society" (Beavoire 444). In

the Indian as well as Christian culture, marriage is a sacred institution, where husband is worshipped, and around whom her whole being revolves. A woman is expected to sacrifice her whole being in doing her duty to her husband irrespective of what/ who he is. Most of the women continue to get battered in such profoundly patriarchal perception of the institution of marriage, but there are other women, even though very few, who choose to rebel.

By and large, women compromise and adapt even to crumbling relationships without raising their voice in order to continue and save relationships from disruption. The patriarchal setup and mindset encourages them to stay engrossed in fulfilling others' needs by effacing their very being. The relationship between Mammachi and Pappachi in *The God of Small Things* exemplifies such an instance as Mammachi endures her ill tempered husband's impertinent domineering attitude like a voiceless victim for long.

However, Ammu rebels as opposed to Mammachi, a la Hester Prynne, who revolts against the conventions and the patriarchal setup marginalizing her position. In a sense, Hester alongside Ammu step into new roles due to feeling uneasy in the identity handed over to them and strive for a new independent identity for themselves. The difference is that Hester overcomes the crisis, while Ammu succumbs to the pressure of conventional society. Hester transcends the emotional frigidity of her relations with her husband and embraces the warm and passionate affections of Arthur Dimmesdale. She kept craving for the emotional as well as sexual fulfilment for long. These desires smouldered in Hester's sub-conscious and culminate in her decision to come out of loveless, stupidly subservient marriage arrangement. Setting aside marriage, she secretly fulfils her desire to be loved and valued.

Any inclination to affect a strong bond of relationship in the puritan society as depicted in *The Scarlet Letter* would be unimaginable. The puritan way of life was enmeshed in a chokingly

rigorous code of existence. The puritans cultivated an acute distrust of the physical senses and earthly desires, and tended to see life in dark, gloomy and morbid colours. All affairs of men, public as well as private were directed towards one end—achieving salvation in the other world. Dimmesdale is deeply rooted in the ritualistic aspect of his faith. His worldview is largely determined by the religious and cultural ethos to which he belongs. He is supposed to have chosen a life of celibacy and has committed himself to the spiritual welfare of his people. He is also burdened with the wisdom of the scriptures, due to which he is cut off from the common rhythm of life.

Dimmesdale was living the life of an object—a lifeless, passionless entity. Observance of rituals and religious practice and the subsequent reputation earned had made his life mechanical, robotic and thus devoid of any feelings of human heart. The emphasis is on the intellectual and spiritual; he has altogether neglected the physical side of his being. His life is based on extreme asceticism and he is completely cut off from the common joys and sorrows of human life. The orthodoxy, rituals and codes of conduct have enslaved his personality.

The puritan society in which he lived was harsh and crippling for the individual's inner self. The societal rules were identical to religious laws and religion is always in opposition to nature. The individual desires are always at odds with the regulations, institutions and laws of society. In Freudian parlance, the civilized moral human being is obviously a repressive formation. Every human being needs the opportunity to express her/his feelings and unfortunately, puritan society did not permit any kind of emotional expression. Thus, characters had to seek alternate means to give vent to their personal desires.

Dimmesdale finds sexual as well as emotional fulfilment in his intimate relations with Hester. His repressed sexuality and emotions are reawakened after coming in contact with

passionate Hester. Dimmesdale's asceticism and austerity is defeated before the sexual appeal of Hester Prynne:

> Tall, with dark, abundant hair and deep black eyes, a rich complexion that makes modern woman pale and thin by comparison . . . and we believe it – she is said to cast a spell over those who behold her. She is a passionate woman whom Hawthorne does not need to call passionate, for he has the evidence: her state of excitement bordering on frenzy . . . her continuing love, so unconfessed that we can only assume it to be there . . . her power of speech . . . her sudden revelation that through years of loneliness she has not consented to let her soul be killed." (Kaul 131).

In the face of such a spell-binding feminine presence, the Freudian erotic plagues and tempts Dimmesdale almost in the manner celestial Menaka tempts the mythological sage, Vishwamitra or Chandri's magical touch overwhelms Praneshacharya in *Samskara* shredding the screen of his self-negation born out of austerity of the senses and mixed with pride in the rituals and celibacy thereby impelling these all to break the rigorous code of moral discipline that they have been subjecting themselves to thus far.

The rendezvous of Hester and Dimmesdale in the forest produced exhilarating effect on Dimmesdale. "It was the exhilarating effect – upon a prisoner just escaped from the dungeon of his own heart" (*TSL* 144). Dimmesdale is revitalized, as if born again: "Do I feel joy again?" cried he wondering at himself. "Me-thought the germ of it was dead in me! O Hester, thou art my better angel!" (*TSL* 145). Hester asks him to forget the past, and removing the scarlet letter from her breast, throws it away. Hester also feels a new sense of release. She removed her formal cap also and hairs tumble out. Her cheeks glow with youth and beauty which had earlier seemed to be lost to her forever. Life seemed to have returned in all its joy everywhere.

When Hester makes Dimmesdale meet Pearl, the minister is doubtful about such a meeting: "Dost thou think the child will be glad to meet me?" (*TSL* 146). Pearl looks like more an angel or spirit than a human child. She is one with nature. Dimmesdale's meeting with Hester gives a new life to him. It lent him unaccustomed physical energy. A new mood of blasphemy was upon him. While greeting a deacon on his way back to town, he wanted to shock the old man by blasphemies about the communion—supper of Jesus Christ. He whispered an unanswerable argument against the immortality of the human soul in the ear of the oldest member of the village church. In fact, Dimmesdale was in exalted state of being: "At every step he was incited to do some strange, wild, wicked thing or other" (*TSL* 155). He stopped short of teaching some very wicked words to a knot of little puritan children who were playing. The minister wondered whether he had made a bargain with the devil and sold his soul. "What is it that haunts and tempts me thus?" cried the minister to himself. . . . "Am I mad? Or am I given over utterly to the fiend?" (*TSL* 157). Thus, the crossing of the line of moral code of conduct offers Dimmesdale the delight beyond words. Nevertheless, it entails a lot of psychological anguish which will be taken up in the next chapter.

In *Samaskara*, Praneshacharya, the protagonist and the head priest of Durvasapura was educated at Kashi which earned him the title "the Crest-Jewel of Vedic Learning" (*Samskara* 17). He is respected by the Brahmins of Durvasapura as he upheld the ideals of Madhava Brahminism. Steeped as he was in religious rites and rituals, he would do chanting of mantras and make offerings of incense and flowers to God without fail. As a whole, he lived within the confines of his traditional Brahmin worldview, which he had internalized deeply. He deliberately married an invalid and sick woman namely Bhagirathi. As such, he lives the life of a celibate and takes delight in his selfless and self-sacrificing nature. His life is pure, totally devoted to religion,

and utterly devoid of selfish motives. Praneshacharya's personal conduct is also loftily idealistic. He has based his life on extreme asceticism and sacrifice, eschewing in the process large areas of vital human experience. For twenty years, he has served his invalid wife faithfully and well, tending her as one would tend a child, without taint of self-reproach or dissatisfaction. As for himself, he has carved out a routine which is as austere as it is unvarying in its monotony. His life lacks spontaneity and is based on extreme abstinence. He is cut off from common joys and sorrows of life. The orthodoxy, rituals and codes of conduct have enslaved his being, which is suffocating in a shell from which there is no release. Through sheer power of his will, he has suppressed and overcome his physical urges. His excellence in erotic descriptions in his recitations illustrates his passionate nature. Listening to him drives Sripati hot with sexual longing to the embrace of a low caste woman, Belli. That is why he is accused by Naranappa of ruining brahminism, "Acharya-re- didn't the Achari himself corrupt the brahminism of the place?" (*Samskara* 25). Though he has forcefully repressed his sexual longings, it has made home in his sub-conscious mind. His evocative description of erotic scenes in purans exhibits his repressed desires. As Guru Charan Behera observes:

> The character of Praneshacharya presents an image of contradiction. Pranshacharya, very ironically, excels in reciting and explaining erotic scenes depicted in purans, thrillingly rendering juicy salacious descriptions of women's body and erotic experiences. . . . When he stops reciting erotic and starts on moral tales he finds no enthusiasm. This is rather an expression of his libido, his suppressed sense of the other (Behera 185).

Praneshacharya, like Yogi Kumargiri in Bhagwaticharan Verma's Hindi novel, *Chitralekha*, is a victim of single obsessive thought and outlook in life which makes him neglect the biological demands of the body. Absence of conjugal bliss in life, austere living and

obsession with right conduct make Praneshacharya a victim of monotony, dullness and despair. His sinking spirit, when he was caught in dilemma and was failing to find the right way, finds solace and comfort through chance encounter with Chandri that opens floodgates of his repressed desire. When his repressed sexuality explodes, all morality and spiritual teachings remain of no avail as he becomes one with his wild passion.

Chandri is more or less a symbol rather than a realistic character embodying a natural wholeness and an instinctual spontaneity. She is natural in pleasure unaccustomed to self- reproach. Chandri is compassionate to Praneshacharya, who she knows, has been suffering for the cause of others. As such, she offers her body to Praneshacharya in an impulsive gesture. She gives him food, solace, and by giving him access to her body, brings grace to his life. She has no intention of trapping him. What happens in the forest is natural and unintentional. Praneshacharya's sexual encounter with Chandri brings him face to face with a new reality which he always ignored. His senses become sharp and acute. As Meenakshi Mukherjee remarks: "His vision suddenly becomes clear as if a veil which has for all these years separated him from the throbbing pulsating world, has dropped. All his five senses are awakened in a sudden joyous awareness" (Mukherjee 175). Chandri pulls down the face mask of Praneshacharya with her powerful seduction, revealing the natural world to him, which he had missed for years. His senses become keener and clearer:

> He looked about wonderingly. A night of undying stars, spread out like a peacock's tail. The constellation of Seven Sages. . . . Below were green grass smells, wet earth, the wild *vishnukranti* with its sky-blue flowers . . . and the smell of a woman's body-sweat. Darkness, sky, the tranquillity of standing trees. . . . In the forest, in the silence, the dark was full of secret whispers (*Samskara* 67).

Basav Raj Naikar in his article titled "Desecration of Religious values in Graham Green's *The Power and the Glory* and Anantha Murthy's *Samskara*: A Comparative Study" shows the essential unity of human life by comparing the life of protagonists of both novels. Both these texts depict two different religious contexts, yet we can see a few striking similarities between the two which helps us understand the common human tendency all over the world. The anonymous priest in the anti-clerical Mexico is expected to uphold the high ideals of Roman Catholicism. Similarly Praneshacharya, the head priest of Durvasapura is expected to uphold the ideals of Madhava Brahminism. It is on account of the moral responsibility that these protagonists are respected by the believers of their respective faiths. But the protagonists have unfortunately not been able to live up to the ideals expected of them, and instead desecrated them because of their weaknesses of the flesh.

The priest of *The Power and the Glory* has committed fornication with Maria in a moment of drunken loneliness and begotten an illegal child called Brigitta. Praneshacharya, also in spite of being the "Crest Jewel of Vedic Learning" (*Samskara* 17) stoops to the level of having sexual intercourse with Chandri. Adultery or fornication thus happens to be the common denominator of their degeneration, though cultural contexts leading them to the sin are different. Whereas, the whisky priest was compelled to indulge in fornication by his drunkenness and loneliness, Praneshacharya is tempted to have his sexual fulfilment with the low caste Chandri when he is fully conscious of himself. The superficial brahminical or Vedantic discipline is shattered at the slightest stimulation by Chandri in the forest at night. Praneshacharya, thus, becomes a symbol of "sudden degeneration of brahmanical asceticism" and "triumph of elemental sexual instinct of Lawrentian dark gods" (Gaur 125-127).

The epicurean Brahmin Naranappa is the worst transgressor in the novel. His philosophy

of life is quiet opposite to that of Praneshacharya: "Praneshacharya's way was that of penance and faith in the ancient ways while Naranappa used to adopt demoniac ways" (*Samskara* 20). The Acharya had promised Naranappa's dying mother to bring her son back to right path. He fasts two nights in a week for him, but Naranappa persistently turns a deaf ear to his counsel. He wants to roll up the Brahmin respectability and "throws it always for a bit of pleasure with one female" (*Samskara* 21). Naranappa believes in the Charvak philosophy of hedonism which says- "borrow, if you must, but drink your ghee" (*Samskara* 21). He wanted to enjoy life fully inhibited by any social or religious restrictions. He has completely rejected the principles and the ideals of the orthodox brahminhood. To the Brahmins, whose hypocrisy and sterility he despises, he responds with defiant ridicule and withering contempt. Praneshacharya finds in him a demonic pride. His followers like Sripati and his friends represent the demonic in a less strident form.

Naranappa keeps a low caste woman, Chandri as his mistress in his house and abandons his lawfully wedded wife for her sake. He takes his Muslim friends to the Ganapati temple stream and catches fish. The Acharya was afraid of the bad example. With this kind of rebellious example, righteousness cannot prevail. The conflict between Praneshacharya and Naranappa is the conflict between asceticism and eroticism. He enjoys drinking liquor and is audacious enough to offer it to Praneshacharya. He mocks at the Acharya's anger and discomfiture. He challenges Praneshacharya: "Let's see who wins in the end—you or me. I'll destroy brahminism, I certainly will. My only sorrow is that there is no brahminism left to destroy in this place—except you" (*Samskara* 23).

Naranappa is bent upon destroying every norm/rule of Brahminism. The reason behind his transgression of rules and roles of Brahmin traditions can be his knowledge of the hollowness

of the brahminical ways of life and the hypocrisy of Brahmins of agrahara. He exposes the greed and hypocrisy of the Brahmins of his agrahara:

> Garuda, Lakshmana, Durgabhatta – ahaha – what Brahmins! If I were still a Brahmin, that fellow Garudacharya would have washed me down with his *aposhana* water. Or that Lakshmana – he loves money so much he'll lick a copper coin off a heap of shit. He will tie another wilted sister-in-law round my neck, just to get at my property. And I'd have had to cut my hair to a tuft, smear charcoal on my face, sit on your verandah and listen to your holy-holy yarns (*Samskara* 23-24).

The greed of the Brahmins may also be one of the reasons of Naranappa's disbelief in the Brahminism. He had been a victim of their greed for money and property as he was deprived of his legal property as Garuda's father had managed his father's property saying "the man was not bright enough to manage it himself" (*Samskara* 42). He had also managed Lakshmidevamma's little property or jewellery she had. This greed also comes to fore when Chandri offers her gold ornaments for the expenses of the cremation of Naranappa. The hypocrisy, greed, hatred, selfishness and jealousies of these *sanskari* Brahmins who are expected to be above such meanness and base feelings are exposed when instead of appreciating Chandri's act of offering her gold, Durgabhatta and Lakshamanna along with their wives stare at the heap of gold and started to quarrel over its possession. These two Brahmin wives had earlier warned their husbands not to agree to perform the rites, but now, out of sheer greed, they start persuading them to claim their rights as his kins to cremate Naranappa's body. Guru Charan Behera aptly observes: "The revolt of Naranappa, a Madhav Brahmin against brahminic supremacy is an act of subversion from within. This is symptomatic of the inherent instability and vulnerability of the dominant" (Behera 185-86).

The sexual transgression by the high class Brahmins can be attributed to the repellent, sterile and withered women of their community. As Sripati makes a contrast of his sexual experience with Belli and to those of other Brahmin girls: "Which Brahmin girl, – cheek sunken, breast withered, mouth stinking of lentil soup, – which Brahmin girl was equal to Belli? Her thighs are full. When she is with him she twists like a snake coupling with another, writhing in the sand" (*Samskara* 37). Praneshacharya was also able to make a contrast when he had his sexual experience with Chandri. He also felt that the essential femininity of the Brahmin women has dried up in the repressive order of the orthodox Brahmin community. Meenakshi Mukherjee observes thus:

> Praneshacharya's invalid wife epitomizes the diseased sterility of the entire agrahara. The life principle embodied in women has dried up in the rigidity of the orthodox community, while outside this enclosed world, there is a celebration of life made more desirable by contrast. (Mukherjee 172)

Chandri's naturalness has been compared to a running river. She was ever auspicious, daily wedded, the one without widowhood. She is like Tunga River that does not dry, doesn't tire: "But these Brahmin women, before they bear two brats, their eyes sink, cheeks become hollow, breasts sag and fall – not hers. Perennial Tunga, river that doesn't dry up, doesn't tire" (*Samskara* 44-45).

Thus, Brahmin females in the novel are all asexual objects devoid of any feminine charms, whereas the untouchable females are described as the epitomes of female beauty. Besides being sexually attractive, they are also faithful and good-hearted as becomes evident when we see that Chandri readily parts away with the gold ornaments for cremation rites of her beloved, Naranappa. Brahmin females, on the contrary, start competing with one another in

coveting for that gold. Naranappa shattered his brahminhood for Chandri's sake. His life stands in utter contrast to the barren life of Praneshacharya, full of privation and sacrifice, where all spontaneity is stifled and where "God has become . . . a set of table, learned by rote" (*Samskara* 92). Paneshacharya's life is full of restraint, control and denial whereas Naranappa's is characterized by complete abandonment to the senses. Naranappa rejects his lawfully wedded wife from his relations for Chandri, as he remarks: "'O Acharya, who in the world can live with a girl who gives no pleasure—except of course some barren Brahmins!' 'You fellows – you Brahmins – you want to tie me down to a hysterical female, just because she is some relative, right? Just keep your dharma to yourself'" (*Samskara* 21).

As such, transgression on Naranappa's part is deliberate. In his lifetime he openly flouted, mocked at and questioned the prescribed ideology and code of conduct for his caste. He deliberately wanted to break the social norms envisaged by the Brahmin society. Nevertheless, Naranappa had a kind heart as he helped the needy as much as possible. That is why his doing everything against the society, traditions, customs and religious orders seem to be carefully planned. As Guru Charan Behera observes: "He seems to use deliberately his relationship with Chandri to fight Brahmin supremacist ideology" (Behera 186). On the other hand, the sexual transgression of Praneshacharya is a chance occurrence. His transgression is not volitional as it simply happens as Naipaul comments: "It cannot be said that he falls or sins . . . the sexual moment simply happens" (Naipaul 107).

After Praneshacharya's encounter with Eros in the form of Chandri, he feels completely vulnerable and relaxed as if "lying in his mother's lap and finding rest there after a great fatigue" (*Samskara* 67). His experience of sexuality takes him to a new world wherein he is freed from the traditional clutches of the caste and decides to walk "away free, leaving everything behind"

(*Samskara* 91) with neither duties nor debts. Praneshacharya's repressed sexuality knows no bounds once it is given a free play. Such wide spread obsession with sexuality gives an oceanic feeling that helps him in bonding between the isolated self and the rest of the world. By submitting to passion, he recovers from repression and celebrates human passion. These fantasies provide Praneshacharya the opportunity to escape from the load of religious authority that always seems to weigh on his chest. A new world of naturalness and wholeness opens up before Acharya as his five senses are awakened in a sudden joyous awareness:

> A night of undying stars spread out like a peacock's tail . . .below were green grass smells, wet earth, the wild *vishnumukhi* with its sky-blue flowers . . . tranquillity of standing tree. . . . Chirping sounds, from a bush that suddenly appeared outlined like a chariot, a formation of twinkling lightening bugs. He gazed, he listened, till his eyes were filled with the sounds all around him, a formation of fire flies (*Samskara* 67).

From a dispassionate observer of life, he wants to be an involved participator. No longer the paragon of virtue, he has the desire to "tell lies, to hide things, to think of one's own welfare". The act of love, instead of being an initiation into adulthood, paradoxically reveals to him the sensory nature of a child's consciousness: "He is aware of the sensual joy of swimming in cold water and rolling in sun-warmed sand afterwards, caressing the neck of a playful calf as its hair began 'raising in pleasure' and it began to lick his ears and cheeks with its warm rough-textured tongue" (Mukherjee 91). Before his sexual encounter with Chandri he was blind towards his repressed libidinous urges. He became aware after sleeping with Chandri that "breaking social taboos and challenging communal superstitions does not lead to all hell breaking loose upon the violator" (Rath 107).

If we compare Dimmesdale and Praneshacharya, both represent the repressive aspect of

human psyche which considers the demands of libido as sinful, but it stands in sharp contrast to the natural world of Hester and Chandri. The common bond of puritans was religion even though their idea about religion was medieval. The core of catholic thought in the Middle Ages was that man was created for the glory of god, and that the unique duty and purpose of life was to serve him and to do his duty. The puritan in American society was one in which individual and his or her actions were often pitted against a social order determined to stamp out behaviours it considered immoral. They refused to tolerate any beliefs or practices in civil society that conflicted with the idea of religious superiority. They tried to rationalize and validate social control that included prosecution of those who transgressed their beliefs.

Likewise, the Brahminic society represented by Praneshacharya was totally concerned with other worldliness and adherence to the pursuit of spirituality. For instance, Praneshacharya lived pure life of an ascetic ignoring all joys and sorrows of life. There is no celebration of life depicted in *Samskara*. People lead a barren life devoid of festivities, or sensual enjoyment. Praneshacharya exists in the modalities of intellect. He deprived himself of any genuine human experience. His asceticism and renunciation point towards the lack of any vital experience in life.

On the other hand, Hester and Chandri represent the life force or Eros. They are kind, compassionate, humane, refined and cultured women. Hester is a charmingly real woman whose abundant sexuality was charming and would stand out. She was tied to Chillingworth in a loveless marriage. There is a feeling in her that he has wronged her more deeply than she ever wronged him. Hester wonders how she could have been persuaded to marry him. To quote Ernest Sandeen: "She deemed it her crime most to be repented of, that she had ever endured and reciprocated, the lukewarm grasp of his hand, and had suffered the smile of her lips and eyes to mingle and melt into his own" (Bradley 373).

Chandri, like Hester, was utterly beautiful, beyond compare. Durgabhatta and other Brahmins of agrahara had a deep longing to possess her. Durgabhatta felt jealous of Naranappa for having such a beauty resembling the figure of Matsyagandhi for himself. Hester and Chandri ushered Dimmesdale and Praneshacharya to the world of flesh. They are so overpowered with sexual passion for them that these learned religious men break the shackles of their caste and creed. We see in these novels that these learned priests in spite of their lofty ideals, suffer from all human weaknesses and failings. Contact with women exposes the inhumanity that underlies religion and it also brings to fore how quintessence of humanism is overruled by taboos and dogmas. Praneshacharya feels lightness after his sexual contact with Chandri and learns his first lesson in humaneness. When he caressed Chandri's breast, it did not occur to him to say, "I am sin". Now he is really involved in the wheel of karma: "This is a life of passion. Even if he had left desire, desire had not left him" (*Samskara* 78). Sexual act takes Acharya out of his head and down into his body. Hitherto, he had suppressed his sexual urge under the weight of concepts like celibacy, salvation and religious pedagogy. Now he feels that he has come down to the level of fellow Brahmins: "He had turned over and fallen into his mother's lap and finding rest there after a great fatigue" (*Samskara* 67). Dimmesdale too in *The Scarlet Letter* undergoes identical experiences. Although he degenerates in spirituality, he gains on humane plane.

To sum up, both the priest protagonists are swayed by passions as well as soul's yearning for the ultimate. They become victims of sensuality and eventually their inner/ psychic world becomes chaotic. The eternal conflict between asceticism and eroticism is played in their lives like those of ordinary mortals. Their latent desire and repressed emotion erupt upon finding external stimuli, which causes profound inner anguish and confusion in their lives. Hence, it is sexual transgression that enables both, Praneshacharya and Dimmesdale, to break dead socio-

cultural norms and explore an alternative reality which is so germane to human life.

II

Like Hester and Chandri, Emma too in *Madame Bovary,* stands out as the smartest and the most receptive of the novel's main characters. Her early life influenced her entire approach to life. When she was thirteen, her father took her to the convent in the town. She was of sentimental temperament from birth, she came in contact with an old maid in the convent who would tell the girls stories, give them news and lent them some novels. Reading proved an escape to her from the ordinariness of everyday life. Dissatisfied with her monotonous routine of life, she started pursuing her dreams of ecstasy and love through reading: "Joan of Arc, Heloise, and Agnes Sorel, the beautiful Ferronier, and Clemence Isaure stood out to her like comets in dark immensity of heaven" (*M.B.* 49).

At the convent, the good sisters noticed in this girl an astonishing aptitude for deriving pleasure and satisfaction from life: "Accustomed to calm aspects of life, she turned; on the contrary, to those of excitement, she loved the sea for the sake of its storms, and the green fields only when broken up by ruins. She wanted to get some personal profit out of things and she rejected as useless all that did not contribute to the immediate desires of her heart, being of temperament more sentimental than artistic, looking for emotions, not landscape" (*M.B.* 47-48). Being basically a dreamy girl, she developed into an extreme romantic, who spent her time longing and sighing for old castles, secret meetings and intrigues. She closed her eyes to the real world and attempted to force life to conform to her romantic fiction. The dramatic world of her books infatuates Emma and her books cater to her dreams of providing her with pictures of the world, of distant unknown places. These exotic pictures of distant lands trigger her imagination and form a part of her dreams. Emma's dreams are prompted by the diction of the literary works

she has read. As such, the convent education brings about a significant change in her life. It proves to be a turning point in her outlook towards life. Victor Brombert's remark is worth quoting here:

> The convent is Emma's earliest claustration, and the solicitations from the outside world, whether in the form of books which are smuggled in or through the distant sound of belated carriage rolling down the boulevards, are powerful allurements. As for Emma's reaction to the books she reads, the image of a female Quixote comes to mind. She too transmutes reality into fiction. Here, as in Cervantes' novel, literature itself becomes one of the strongest determinants (Brombert 54)

Emma, in fact, is deluded by literature because she is in search of ecstasy and transcendence. She is looking for a higher, more meaningful life than the one available to her. A strong parallel to *Madame Bovary* can be found in eighteenth century novels *The Female Quixote*; or *The Adventures of Arabella* by Charlott Lennox and *Northanger Abbey* by Jane Austen. Both novels feature impressionable young women (Arabella and Catherine Moreland) on the threshold of adulthood, who immerse themselves in a world of popular fiction as an escape from the humdrum world they inhabit, developing an imagination maddened by fiction (Sim 79-90). Emma Bovary, like Arabella and Catherine Moreland, is also deluded by literature because she is in search of ecstasy and transcendence. Reading served as morphine allowing them to escape the pain of everyday life, but reading like morphine also closed them off from the rest of the world, preventing them from making rational decisions. Emma is lost in dreams and spent her time longing and sighing for old castles, secret meetings and intrigues. She closed her eyes to the real world and attempted to force life to conform to her romantic fiction.

Emma can also be compared to *Don Quixote* of Cervantes. Don Quixote is impressed and

motivated by the tales of bravery and honour. He wants to revive those glorious days of Knight-errantry and does so by assuming himself to be Knight-errant. So much had his senses been misplaced that he had lost the capacity to see things as they existed. He sees an ordinary inn but he imagines it to be a grand castle. He sees himself as the main trouble shooter and the redeemer of the downtrodden. Like Don Quixote, Emma's imagination is inflamed by the romantic books she has read: "It is not her intellect, but her capacity to dream and to wish to transform the world to fit her dreams, which set her apart. . . . Like Don Quixote's friends who decide to burn his books, Emma's mother-in-law suggests that reading be prohibited" (Brombert 85-86). Emma too lets fantasies of second rate writers imprison her dreams. Since this ideal is absurdly distant from more difficult rewards of any actual relationship, it guarantees that she will always be unhappy.

After her marriage to Charles, a country doctor, Emma continues in her search for excitement. She has pinned great hopes on marriage that it will provide her with ecstasy, passion and bliss. She craves for an exciting life of luxury and glamour as described to her in the books she has read. However, Charles's composed nature and his dullness quickly dampens her passion. She finds her honeymoon to be disappointing. She comes to know that Charles simply cannot live to her expected level in a man as initiator to remote mysteries: "She thought sometimes, that, after all, this was the happiest time of her life –the honeymoon as people called it. To taste the full sweetness of it, it would have been necessary doubtless to fly to those lands with sonorous names where the days after marriage are full of laziness . . ." (*M.B.* 53). But her romantic picture of married life cannot turn into a reality as she finds Charles to be "common place as a street pavement, and everyone's ideas trooped through it in their everyday garb, without exciting emotion, laughter, or thought" (*M.B.* 54).

Emma envisions her life as that of valiant men portrayed in the novels she reads and wishes her husband to be like them: "A man, on the contrary, should he not know everything, excel in manifold activities, initiate you into the energies of passion, the refinement, all mysteries" (*M.B.* 54). She wants to initiate him into love with all the passion and fervour and tries to arouse his inanimate spirit, but to no avail: "By moonlight in the garden she recited all the passionate rhymes she knew by heart, and, sighing, sang to him many melancholy adagios; but she found herself as calm after this as before, and Charles seemed no more amorous and no more moved" (*M.B.* 57). As such, contrary to Charles, literature profoundly influences Emma filling her mind with poetic and passionate illusions about love.

The initial months of Emma's married life were spent in a village called Tostes where she feels bugged immensely. By narrating a long series of trivial incidents the author has portrayed her boredom. As Maugham comments: "Each little incident is so commonplace, so lacking in excitement, you do get a vivid, even a devastating sensation of Emma's boredom" (Maugham 152). The life in Yonville appears to her to be "cold as a garret whose dormer-window looks on the north and the ennui, the silent spider, was weaving its web in the darkness in every corner of her heart" (*M.B.* 58). Emma gets into the habit of taking strolls as the future seems like an endlessly dark corridor. And repeatedly, the mournful church bell punctuates the return of the monotonous hours and days with its characteristic lament.

Emma laments her marriage to Charles and waits for the opportunity to escape it via relating to some other man: "She asked herself if by some other chance combination it would not have been possible to meet another man; and she tried to imagine what would have been these unrealized events, this different life, this unknown husband. He might have been handsome, witty, distinguished, attractive, such as no doubt, her old companions of the convent had

married" (*M.B.* 58). Charles Bovary represents both the society and personal traits that Emma detests. She finds him incompetent, stupid and unimaginative.

The inadequacy and failure on the part of Charles is set forth from the very first page of the novel which describes Charles Bovary's first day at school, as a clumsy, awkward young boy in comical attire. Flaubert also throws light on the boy's pitiful lack of elegance, his nervousness, submissiveness and resignation. He also proves meagre to the loftily idealistic, imaginative world of Emma. His trite, humdrum and routine life proves to be insufficient for the fanatical, obsessive, excited life of Emma.

Something extraordinary came upon her when Emma and Charles were invited to stay with the Comte de Vaubyessard for the family ball. It was a heart-felt opportunity for Emma to be introduced to the world of romance: "Emma finds herself for a moment in an aristocratic world, a world of luxury and romance which suddenly seems to offer everything for which she has unconsciously been longing" (Turnell 266). Emma is captivated by the outward splendour. Her perception is superficial. She never sees the people under this bright exterior. Emma's exposure to new experience proves disastrous to the married life of Bovary's. It exposed her to the world of her heart's desire where she will be availing the luxuries and comforts of the world, where her passion for love will be satisfied: "The visit, which has provided Emma with a glimpse of a world of luxury and romance (or so it appears to her) shatters her married life forever" (Giraud 102). Her dormant longing for lavish and extravagant life is awakened by this novel experience. She was frantically craving for escaping the banal and routine life of Yonville. Thus, attending this ball consequently created a fracture between Emma and Charles: "Her journey to La Vaubyessard had made a hole in her life, like one of those great crevasses that a storm will sometimes make in one night in the mountain" (*M.B.* 73).

Emma was not able to lead a usual life after attending the ball. She felt as if a great injustice has been meted out to her, that she is surrounded by dreary and frustrating country life without access to the joys and thrills of life: "All her immediate surroundings, the mediocrity of existence, the wearisome country, the middle class imbeciles, seemed to her exceptional, a peculiar chance that had caught hold of her, while beyond stretched, as far as eye could see, an immense land of joys and passions" (*M.B.* 76-77).

Her attending the ball added fuel to the fire. Once she comes in contact with luxuries and comforts afforded by the aristocratic world, her life is shaken out of its groove and it never attains stability after that: "Her background and her lofty dreams come into such evident clash that she is almost compelled to negate the one or the other" (Brombert 50). The ball at Vaubyessard is the episode in which Emma's discontent with her marriage is further enhanced due to magnificent display of luxury and by the exhilaration of the ball: "The floor was occupied by groups of men standing and talking and servants in livery bearing large trays. Along the line of seated women painted fans were fluttering, bouquets half hid smiling faces, and gold stoppered scent bottles were turned in partly closed hands ... lace trimmings, diamond brooches, medallion bracelets trembled on bodices, gleamed on breasts, clinked on bare arms" (*M.B.* 65).

This detailed description provides the superficial imagery of the ball. This is all that Emma is yearning for, the lavishness and the happiness. Most of Emma's activities can be seen as her attempt to let down a basic insecurity, "an insatiable emptiness that is supposed to be filled by lovers, things and confused notions of happiness" (Busi 61). The choice of adultery is Emma's only means of exercising power over her own destiny. While other men have access to wealth and property, the only currency Emma possesses to influence others is her body. She believes that adultery can give her the splendid life that her imagination conjures up. Her

memory of the luxurious life keeps her hopes alive and its glimpse makes her believe that this kind of life is attainable but not through fair means. So, she is obliged to settle for more vulgar forms of indulgence in her quest for happiness through others. Pierre Han remarks thus:

> The ball rekindles her romantic notions temporarily held in check by the duties of marriage, notions which have lain dormant since childhood in the convent. The memory of pleasure at the Vaubyssard is sufficient to keep her alive until she meets Leon and until she has an affair with Rodolphe, one set against the bovine motif of the agricultural fair (Han 30).

Romantic feelings blossom between Emma and Leon. They both are discontented with country life and dream of bigger and better things. But because Leon is a man, he has the power to actually fulfil his dream of moving to the city whereas Emma must stay in Yonville, shackled to a husband and child.

Flaubert has, by contrast, brought about the dull, barren, commonplace and vulgar environment in which Emma lives, by a series of images. The society in which Emma lives, is selfish, unresponsive and hypocrite. Emma stood isolated from the general background of these human faces. She also sees a vague abyss between her, the society and the geography around. There are "the confines of Normandy, Picardy, and the Ile-de-France, a bastard land, whose language, like its landscape, is without accent or character" (*M.B.* 92). Emma attributes her domestic mediocrity to her husband and holds him responsible for every shortcoming: "the gloomy room, the common place food, the lack of table cloth, the hopelessness of it all—appears to her as something that is connected to him, that emanates from him, and that would be entirely different if he were different from what he is" (Giraud 133).

Once exposed to the luxuries and comforts of the aristocrats, Emma finds everything

associated with Charles as disgusting. She now associates every shortcoming in life to her husband and imagines that if she had been married to some aristocrat, she would have enjoyed the luxurious life with every comfort available to her. This obsession with the aristocratic life makes her constantly restless. The name 'Bovary' suggests something like 'bovine,' cows and manure as motifs often get repeated throughout the novel, highlighting the 'placid' and 'dull'. Emma associates his eating and other habits with his mediocrity which she deeply resents: "Emma is repelled by her husband's eating habits, by gurgling noises he makes when taking soup or by his way of cleaning his teeth with his tongue. . .the very rhythm of his mediocrity is conveyed by cycles of alimentation" (Brombert 51).

Emma is infatuated with the life style of French bourgeoisie as "They were prodigal as kings, full of ideal, ambitious, fantastic frenzy this was an existence outside that of others, between heaven and earth, in the midst of storms, having something of sublime" (*M.B.* 76). Emma is enthralled by the promises of capitalism and economic prosperity of the bourgeois class, which had imprisoned her by letting her aspire to achieve the same wealth and social status.

Flaubert suggests at times that her dissatisfaction with the bourgeois society she lives in is justified. The author includes details that seem to ridicule stupidity and incompetence of the society around and the incivility of table manners of Charles. These details indicate that Emma's plight is emblematic of the difficulties of any sensitive person trapped among the French bourgeoisie. She aspires to have taste that is more refined and sophisticated than that of her class. Flaubert has tried to show how ridiculous, stifling, and potentially harmful the attitudes and trappings of the bourgeoisie can be.

Thus, the domestic mediocrity, stifling socio-cultural setup causes frustration on Emma's

part. And to aggravate it, there are things such as endless boredom, lust of the flesh, longing for luxury, and charm of novelty. All these put together, instil an urge in her to transgress the boundaries of morality and social decorum. Rodolphe too observes in Emma the frustration and dissatisfaction of life and traps her by extravagant promises of love. Jacqueline Merriam Paskow calls him "predator of pretty women" who is well read and shrewd enough to know how to seduce Emma: "He possesses the trappings and wears clothes that match those described in the text Emma could like to live by. The trappings include a chateau and certain possessions that for Emma are the signs of privileged male power: horses, carriages, whips, hunting guns inlaid with silver, and cigars. These objects become fetishes for Emma" (Paskow 330). In fact, Emma proves to be a gullible romanticist who is easily trapped and ensnared by Rodolphe. The romantic clichés exchanged in conversation, which are performed by Rodolphe entirely for tactical purposes, are taken seriously by her. She has the impression that Rodolphe can ship her away from her boring, conditional existence to some new exhilarating domain. Thus, his usefulness to her is as a vehicle. Han Peirrre aptly remarks: "Having seen Emma briefly, Rodolphe losing no time in setting up the strategy of the chase, the seduction, and the inevitable abandonment. But Emma is as unwilling to recognize this heartless, realistic side of his nature as she is unwilling to give up her romantic illusions" (Han 35).

Charles's failure in club foot operation disgusted Emma further. In this professional failure, she once again perceived his mediocrity. Whenever she listens to the sound of his walking, she is filled with feeling of disgust as it reminds her of the incompetence and stupidity of Charles. This episode removes Emma further from her husband and she starts to repent over her so-far virtuous life. Turnell observes: "Charles's incompetence leads to the amputation of Hippolyte's leg, the unfortunate man becomes a projection of Bovary's stupidity, and the thud of

his wooden leg on the paving drives home remorselessly the idea of professional failure" (Turnell 266). This incident widens the gulf between Emma and Charles. His very existence aggravated her revulsion now. His presence becomes irritating to her and the chances of reconciliation between them become bleak as "Everything in him irritated her now; his face, his dress, what he did not say, his whole person, his existence. . . . She repented her past virtue as of a crime, and what still remained of it crumbled away beneath the furious blows of her pride" (*M.B.* 239).

Emma was enraged by Charles' incompetence and mediocrity and repented over her past for being virtuous for this stupid person and of having supposed such a man was worth anything. She thought that she had ruined her life by continual sacrifices. Charles Baudelaire remarks thus: "A dark rage that had long been building up burst out of all the wifely pores of Madame Bovary. Doors slam; the stupefied husband, who has been unable to give any spiritual satisfaction to his romantic wife, is relegated to his bedroom. He is in penitence, ignorant culprit! And Madame Bovary, hopeless, cries out like a little Lady Macbeth yoked to some inadequate captain . . ." (Baudelaire 93).

Disgusted with her husband's professional failure, Emma throws herself even more passionately into her affair with Rodolphe. After a long indulgence in physical passion, Rodolphe finds her more demanding and possessive and gets rid of her. Emma falls seriously ill and after a short duration finds Leon while attending an opera. The opera rekindles the old romantic flame. "The world of music, particularly the exaggerated romanticism that is often associated with opera, provides the impetus for Emma to lose control of herself" (Han 30) and once again they are passionately in love.

Emma furtively sets aside the morality of motherhood and wifehood to satiate her desires

to be loved and to find the perfect mate described in the romantic novels she has read. Emma's first adultery deals with her desire to become a character as she attempts to project herself into the novels she reads. After she yields to Rodolphe, she exults in the role she has thus assumed: "I have a lover! I have a lover!" she kept repeating to herself, "delighting at the idea as if a second puberty had come to her. So at last she was to know those joys of love, "that fever of happiness of which she had despaired! She was entering upon marvels where all would be passion, ecstasy, delirium . . . she recalled the heroines of the books that she had read, and the lyric legion of these adulterous women began to sing in her memory. She realized the love dreams of her youth" (*M.B.* 211). She saw it as a great triumph and felt a satisfaction of revenge: "But now she triumphed, and the love so long pent up burst in full joyous bubbling. She tasted it without remorse, without anxiety, without trouble" (*M.B.* 211).

Elizabeth Amman contrasts Emma's two adulterous love affairs. She observes that the initial adultery focuses on Rodolphe's effect on Emma and her emotional awakening and the second examines Emma's influence on Leon and his sentimental education. Emma was full of admiration for Rodolphe. She was benumbed by the beatitude; her soul "sank into this drunkenness, shrivelled up, drowned in it, like Clarence in his butt of Malmsey" (*M.B.* 247). In the second affair, however, it is not Emma but Leon who feels this amorous inebriation as he feels, "like drunkards at the sight of strong drinks" in her company (*M.B.* 365). With Rodolphe she imagines how "from a mountain top there suddenly glimpsed some splendid city" (*M.B.* 252-253) and enjoys feeling above the "crowd of fools" at the comices, but with Leon she enters Rouen and goes slumming (Amann 229-230). Whereas in the first affair, it is Emma who sees herself as the heroine and enters the novel as a fictional figure, in the second, it is Leon who seeks to enter literature. He identifies in Emma "the mistress of all the novels, the heroine of all

the dramas, the vague 'she' of all the volumes of verse...she had the long waist of feudal chatelaines and she resembled the "'pale woman of Barcelona'. But above all she was the angel" (*M.B.* 343).

Madame Bovary in a frenzied state of emotions openly flouts social propriety and even walked out with Monsier Rodolphe with a cigarette in her mouth "as if to defy the people" (*M.B.* 247). Her love affair brought about such a complete change in her manners that she started wearing clothes like that of man and her speech became freer and looks grew bolder.

Let us now analyze the factors that inspire/impel Anna Karenina to transgress. Anna is introduced as a bright and energetic woman. She appears as a paragon of virtue—a woman in charge of her own destiny. She is full-blooded and passionate as any peasant and her vitality suggests both wholeness and naturalness: "It was as if an excess of vitality so filled her whole being that it betrayed itself against her will" (*A.K.* 60). She is introduced as possessing worldly wisdom as she tries to mend the marital strife between her brother, Oblonsky and his wife, Dolly. She first met Vronsky at railway station who immediately reads Anna's passionate nature brimming over with vitality: "He sees in her as he alights at the Moscow station, the suppressed animation which played over her face and flitted between her sparkling eyes and the slight smile curling her red lips. It was as though her nature were so brimming over with something against her will. . . . "(Calder 216).

Anna is warm, intelligent, vital, sincere and honest and of all Tolstoy's heroines, the most perfect human being. She is a mature woman, possessed of wit, grace and beauty, and above all, the gift of sympathy. She is one of those who have strong affections, who love profoundly and appreciate readily all that is best in others, who are also possessed of keen intellectual powers. Responding only to her inner emotions, she is the most natural character of all the urban

noblemen in the novel.

When young, she was married to a government official Aleksie Karenin who was twenty years her senior and held an important position. The marriage took place entirely due to the intrigues of Anna's clever and unscrupulous aunt. Anna and Karenin are poles apart in temperament. Like Emma and Charles in *Madame Bovary*, this couple too is incompatible in several respects. Karenin is cold and stiff by nature, whereas; Anna is warm and affectionate. Hugh I. Anson Fausset observes that "Karenin is less a man than a ministerial machine. He is too cold and fastidious to be crudely possessive as Mr. Galsworthy's Soames, but his attitude to his wife, as to life in general is, like that of Soames, possessive. He cannot perceive and enjoy beauty disinterestedly. It may be that Anna, before meeting Vronsky, had not realized how revolting loveless marriage with such a man was" (Fausset 177).

Like Hester in *The Scarlet Letter*, Anna too is a victim of a mismatch. Her husband Karenin like Chillingworth is much older than his wife and the match like Hester and Chillingworth's, is more of an economic arrangement than an emotional bond. Like Hawthorne in *The Scarlet Letter*, Tolstoy too acknowledges that the adulteress's marriage was ill made; indeed, he permits one of his characters to spell out the original error. Anna's brother Stiva tells her "You married a man twenty years older than yourself; you married him without love, not knowing what love was. That was a mistake, I grant" (*A.K.* 421). Such a cold marriage cannot satisfy her instinct for life. Moreover, living with pretence is hardly possible for Anna. Anna and Karenin live together for nine years and yet they do not know each other. In fact, they had nothing in common between them. To Karenin, ambition was the chief trait, while to Anna, passion was dominant force. Karenin felt ashamed to be guided by his heart, Anna never bothered. Whereas Anna wants to embrace life, Karenin fears it as David Holbrook observes:

> He is that kind of man, who in his capacity to distract himself in male activity from questions of being, loses himself in male activity and intellectual abstraction to avoid being confronted by "life". He talks a lot about duties and responsibilities, but never accepts his own responsibility, to try to understand his wife – or indeed, to understand himself (Holbrook 204).

When Anna meets Vronsky, she is captivated by his personality and charm. Vronsky with external glitter and light-heartedness seems to be ideal partner for her. He is essentially a man of the words, and enjoyment of life is his supreme concern. Philosophy, religion and politics hold no attraction for him. Such a man has an irresistible appeal to Anna. She thinks that her husband has never said such passionate things in a voice throbbing with emotion. Anna contrasts her husband with her lover to the latter's advantage. Handsome, brilliant and wealthy, Vronsky is passionate and is capable of arousing passion in her heart. Anna thinks that he is made for her as Winstanley remarks: "He really is what Anna had, at the first glimpse, divined him to be – her nature's destined mate; under the exterior of St. Petersburg dandy, he conceals a nature capable of extraordinary generosities and the most enduring devotion" (Winstanley 54).

Anna is full of passionate intensity and longs for love. Her fantasy for love is fed by reading romantic novels. It removes her from the reality altogether and makes her travel in the imaginary world. She, like Emma in *Madame Bovary*, wants to live the life of fictional heroines. The "hidden Anna" (she was suppressing her hunger for passion) makes her first appearance at the ball. She falls for Vronsky due to physical passion, lying dormant hitherto. She is so swept away by physical passion that she forgets her duty towards her child and her husband. She ignores the societal norms and comes in conflict with society's ethical code of moral conduct. Once she comes in contact with the corrupt society, her degeneration begins. Edward Wasiolek

observes thus: "There is no indication in Tolstoy's early works that a woman who lived in essentially beneficent conditions and one that was warm, intelligent, vital, sincere, and honest could be carried away by physical passion to the point of sacrificing her reputation, peace of mind, son and even her life for the sake of that passion" (Wasiolek 131).

Anna's incompatibility with Karenin was bound to be affected by the foreign influence. Given her romantic disposition, it could not be satisfied in passionless marriage to Karenin simply because "romance depends on mystery, which the very propinquity of married couple makes impossible" (Morson 64). Karenin, the cold official, like Charles in *Madame Bovary,* is unable to understand the real feelings and desires of Anna, and is content to think Anna to be happy. Karenin never sees Anna as a person, she sees her as his official wife. He never finds time to appreciate her beauty and charm as he is always absorbed in his official duties. Her nature is so large, rich, kind and amusing that she suffered unconsciously in her marriage to ardour less, passionless and frozen Karenin. Edward Wasiolek attributes Anna's transgression of accepted behaviour to her subjugated feelings in marriage: "Her feelings, it is clear, have been severely repressed in her marriage with Karenin. It is natural that the repressed feelings should, frighten and attract her, as well as disorient her behaviour" (Wasiolek 131).

Karenin is obsessed with appearances, with doing what is correct, with order and propriety. He is ponderous rather than passionate and is frightened of strong emotions. He is incapable of understanding the needs of his wife. Anna has been trapped in a loveless marriage with him. She frets for more genuine a relationship. The difference between Anna, Kitty and Dolly is that the former could not efface herself in the service of others, performing her maternal and wifely duties as the society generally expects from woman. But she becomes conscious of the life by which she is possessed and her own natural needs. Without this streak, she would

have been like Dolly and Kitty conforming to the society's expectations and losing her own identity deeply involving herself in the domesticity. But due to Karenin's failure to find the potentialities for love of the woman he has married, "Anna is taken over by the impulse to fulfil herself the way for which her soul yearns" (Holbrook 28).

Anna yearns for an authentic relationship based on truth and mutual affection in her deeper recesses of her unconscious mind. Tolstoy seems to be sympathetic to the plight of beautiful and radiant Anna as he does not condemn her but instead turns her feelings of contempt and disgust towards society. His contempt for the Russian society of the time is implicit in his presenting the male and female characters in an unfavourable light by showing their viciousness, hypocrisy and malevolence in contrast to the straightforward, truthful and open-minded Anna. Anna's marital relationship to Karenin, though socially secure, is dull and placid, and hence antithetic to her nature. Hugh I'Anson Fausset aptly writes that ". . . it is because her marriage is empty and false, and not through any inherent viciousness in her nature, that she surrenders so easily to Vronsky" (Fausset 178).

As there is always an antagonism between the demands of instinct and the norms of society, the conflict was inevitable, given the intense, animate passions of Anna, the social ethics and propriety was destined to be flouted. As the love instinct is so engrossing to the two lovers that the third one is irrelevant and superfluous and hence, they become oblivious of the society and its ethical laws. She explored her desires in defiance of those forces that threaten to repress individuality and control sexuality as Gary Saul Morson comments: "The passion to which Anna succumbs represents an unstoppable overflow of sheer vitality that makes right or wrong irrelevant. Anna lives more fully, more intensely and more radically than others. So, she is bound to come into conflict with society which subsists by hide -bound rules and norms" (Morson 64).

The passionate love of Anna and Vronsky could not remain concealed. Anna could not stem her feelings when Vronsky is thrown in a horse race. It became difficult for her to hide her feelings towards Karenin for long and she candidly acknowledges her infidelity as "concealment of any sort is hateful to her condour" (Winstanley 55). She gives way to her truthful and sincere nature putting aside the perception of society. Anna's vitality is reawakened as she comes in contact with warm-hearted nature of Vronsky. She resents the society's judgment of her husband as one who is magnanimous, religious, moral, honest and wise man but none recognizes what she has seen: "They do not know how for eight years he has been smothering my life, smothering everything that was alive in me, that he never once thought I was a live woman, in need of love" (*A.K.* 288). Karenin remained self-satisfied and could not notice frustration of her dreams. He never bothered to know what she needed and whether she was happily living with him: "From Karenin's perspective their relations were so close that Anna noticed the slightest change in his routine. But from the point of view of satisfying her emotionally (and possibly physically), his normal behaviour may have had an effect that did not differ from her the kind of love she needs" (Alexandrov 194). Karenin's complacence made her so detesting that she started cursing her lot to be tied to him in marriage. She tried to love him, but could not as she was not able to relate to him emotionally and a gulf appeared between them that could not be bridged. At this juncture she realises that she cannot ignore her real self anymore: "The time came when I understood that I could no longer deceive myself that I am alive, and cannot be blamed because God made me so, that I want to love and to live" (*A.K.* 288).

Being straightforward, she detested to maintain the façade of a successful conventional marriage. Before meeting Vronsky, Anna was restlessly fleeting as a beautiful shadow. Vronsky brought about a complete change in her life. Until now, Anna's life seemed to be peaceful with

no trace of grief. Before they met, Anna heaved a sigh of relief while returning from Moscow to Petersburg: "'Thank Heaven, to-morrow I shall see Serezha and Alexis Alexandrovich and my good accustomed life will go on as of old'" (*A.K.* 98). When she catches sight of Aleksie Alexandrovich in St. Petersburg, she feels a kind of physical revulsion for her husband for the first time:

> Great heavens! What has happened to his ears? she thought gazing at his cold, and commanding figure, and especially at the gristly ears which now so struck her, pressing as they did against the rim of his hat. When he saw her, he came toward her with . . . his long tired eyes. An unpleasant feeling weighed on her heart when she felt his fixed and weary gaze, as if she had expected to find him different (*A.K.* 102).

When Anna comes home, she finds that her little son is less entrancing than she had expected. Steiner ascribes this perversion to Anna's infatuation: "Already her capacities for discrimination and the habits of her moral life are being distorted by a passion of which she is, as yet, only partially aware" (Steiner 67). Anna is so swept away by the intensity of passion unleashed in her by Vronsky that she loses sight of the societal propriety. The passions prove too much for her moral sense. The unnatural forms invade her life. She disregards her maternal duties, and becomes completely self-absorbed.

Tolstoy juxtaposes the duties of a wife and mother, and the demands of love and passion. Eventually, the demands of love and passion grew stronger and led to the tragic catastrophe. Anna had never experienced the sensation of love and passion in the company of her husband simply because "Karenin seldom looked at his wife whose lovely eyes with their long lashes, her graceful bearing, her enchanting smile on her luxurious lips, her vivacity, her fullness of life, her unfading bloom, her irresistible charm, her dark hair with little curls attracted everybody but her

cold husband" (Gupta 26). Anna- Karenin relationship offers no scope for tender feelings and is only duty-bound. Karenin was performing his duty to his wife without giving her love. Anna pines for love and she gets it from Vronsky, she stakes everything for the gratification of her passionate urge and becomes a victim of unrestrained passion. Anna's love for Vronsky is all-consuming as "She becomes a fatal Aphrodite, a Lamia endowed with 'an almost infernal seductiveness'. The passion which burns in her bewildering eyes is an unholy fire. It fascinates but to consume, allures but to enslave. Vronsky is unmanned by it. He has no will of his own in her presence." (Fausset 178-179)

Vronsky first meets Anna at Railway station and is captivated by her beauty. As he looks around for a second look, she too reciprocates with her brilliant grey eyes, shadowed by thick lashes that give him a friendly, attentive look, as though recognizing him. In that brief glance, Vronsky is sharp enough to notice the suppressed animation which fleetingly appeared on her countenance. Vronsky was enslaved by the passion which burnt in her bewildering eyes. On her return journey, Anna was suddenly overcome with unreasoning joy: "The very thought of Vronsky fills her with an inhuman physical ecstasy akin to high fever" (Fausset 179). "She felt her eyes opening wider, her fingers and toes nervously moving, and something inside her stopping her breath and all the forms and sounds in the swaying semi-darkness around struck her with unusual vividness" (*A.K.* 99). So much so that she is not able to recognize her maid, Annushka sitting beside her. She seems to her like a stranger. She is amazed at the sudden change in her. "Am I myself or another?" (*A.K.* 99). Her whole being now seems indeterminate, fluid, like fire or water. In fact the "stability" of others like Stiva, Karenin, her maid, Annushka enables us to perceive and inhabit "the strange element" that delight her immensely (Bayley 213). Vronsky is delighted on his own as he goes to see Anna: "Delightful! O Delightful!"(*A.K.*

308).

He has often been joyfully conscious of his body, but has never loved himself, his own body, as he does now along with loving the charm of the phenomenal world. When he sees Anna, "a thrill passed like electricity through his body, and with renewed force he became conscious of himself, from the elastic movement of his firm legs to the motion of his lungs as he breathed and of something tickling his lips" (*A. K.* 309). Vronsky makes a great sacrifice for the sake of his passion. He is offered the highest advancement if he will abandon Anna, but the offer doesn't tempt Vronsky. Important people become displeased with him. Whenever Anna asks for a rendezvous, he immediately rushes to her leaving everything behind. Their honeymoon in Italy gives them joy and full freedom although it is of short duration. Vronsky finds complete fulfilment of what he had so long desired and he feels the "delight of freedom in general, such as he had not before known and also the freedom of love" (*A.K.* 462). But his joy does not last long. Sitting idle for a long while, he gets bored and hence returns to Petersburg.

Tolstoy uses the French novels as baseline against which to consider adultery, taking up not only their arguments but also their imagery and motifs system. Both the heroines of *Anna Karenina* and *Madame Bovary* are extremely beautiful, energetic and full of vitality. Their captivating beauties are of no value for their husbands. Their sense of erotic completion is not fully realized in their marriages. Their husbands are sexually as well as emotionally incompatible to their vibrant and passionate sexuality. They do not have time as well as inclination to look at their bright eyes, and vivacious expression. Both feel stifled in their hearts that their husbands are sexually unappealing. Karenin, like Charles in Madame Bovary, is ambitious and content with performing duties towards his wife. Both husbands are cold, official, calculating sans warmth. They are unable to understand the needs and desires of their wives. Emma Bovary longs

for luxury and comfort and is dazzled by the luxurious life being lived by the aristocrats. Herein, Anna differs from her as she already has all material comforts.

The balls play a great part in ruining their lives. Emma attends a ball at Vaubyessard and it makes a hole in her life. She has a glimpse of romantic life and it shatters her married life as she desperately aspires to come out of the triviality of her life. In the same way, Anna's meeting with Vronsky in a ball seals her fate from that very moment. The fantasies of both these heroines are fed by reading the romantic novels. They wish to live the life of the heroines of the novels they read. The fiction saps the reality from their lives.

Tolstoy has used several motifs to characterize Anna that Flaubert had used for Emma. He has used 'bird' motif suggesting the woman's captivity. They find the life with their husbands constricting and are 'fluttering' like caged birds. They are not content with prescribed roles (by patriarchy) of mother, sister or wife, but want to assert themselves as persons of flesh and blood, full of emotions, desires and feelings. They tend to refute the traditional belief that physical submission of women to their husbands is the law of life. Becoming conscious of their independent individual existence with their own physical and emotional desires, they strive to achieve the fulfilment by flouting the social conventions.

Emma fantasizes about eloping to Italy with pseudo-aristocrat Rodolphe whereas Anna and Vronsky go to Italy, a brief period of their honeymoon, although they do not find the desired ecstasy and bliss there. Both Anna and Anna discovered shortcomings or deformities in their husbands as soon as they came in contact with their paramours. Karenin's ears struck as propping up the rim of his round hat. Steiner found a parallel between these two novelists as he questions: "Is this not Tolstoy's version of Emma Bovary's discovery that Charles makes uncouth noises while eating?" (Steiner 67). Both start hating their husbands and rejoice in the

company of their lovers. These heroines identify their lovers as their true husbands, while viewing their husbands as sort of violators.

III

Arundhati Roy has herself remarked in an interview that her novel, *The God of Small Things* is about "biology and transgression" *The Week* (1997 : 46). Inside the world of *The God of Small Things,* history is equated with transgression, and transgression spreads to small and big alike. Nearly all the characters of the novel indulge in some kind of transgression. Pappachi, a Royal Entomologist beats his wife regularly with a flower vase. Baby Kochamma constantly schemes to "gnaw like a rat into the godown of other's grief" (Dhawan 102). K.N.M. Pillai's brand of communism is deceptive and motivated by selfishness. The police beat up the innocents and dispose of their bodies. The very natural phenomena – the river, the rain, the cool winds, the numerous insects and other characters are portrayed as transgressive and intrusive. But the focus of the author is mainly on the sexually transgressive act of Ammu and Velutha. As Bijay Kumar Das has remarked in one of his articles that "the core of *The God of Small Things* is Ammu's love for Velutha as a challenge to the love laws made in the patriarchal society" (Das 23).They have been condemned as worst transgressors.

Before analyzing Ammu's transgression in detail, it would be pertinent to study her family background and lineage. A close study of the lives of the characters belonging to the three generations of the Ayemenem House shows that the love which is the founding stone of all other relationships, remains an unfulfilled delusion or just an ephemeral experience for most of them. The book recounts in detail the relationship of Pappachi and Mammachi, first generation of Ayemenem House. The relation is devoid of love, and harmony remains but an illusion for the family. Ammu, Pappachi's daughter recollects with dread, her childhood days:

> In her growing years, Ammu had watched her father weave his hideous web. He was charming and urbane with visitors, and stopped just short of fawning on them if they happened to be white. He donated money for orphanages and leprosy clinics. He worked hard on his public profile as a sophisticated, generous, moral man. But alone with his wife and children, he turned into monstrous, suspicious bully, with a streak of vicious cunning. They were beaten, humiliated and then made to suffer the envy of friends and relatives for having such a wonderful husband and father (*TGST* 180).

Mammachi had exceptional talent for music, especially violin. When her music teacher praised her for her talent, Pappachi felt so jealous that it released all the animal fury in him and he broke the bow of violin and threw it in the river. In a way, he trampled her very spirit, obliterating all her woman's aspirations and blowing out the flame of independent thinking in her.

The reason behind his frustration is the denial of credit for his scientific discovery of a new moth. This moth is seen haunting not only Pappachi but also his children and grand children. The embittered nature of Pappachi creates a devastating impact on the mind of Ammu. Pappachi was not content with beating his wife and daughter; he even tore down curtains, kicked furniture and smashed a table lamp. Ammu watched him shred her new gumboots with her pinking shears (*TGST* 181). Mammachi regularly suffered this disgrace with increasing frequency till one day Chacko, her son "strode into the room, caught Pappachi's vase -hand and twisted it around his back" (*TGST* 48). He never touched her again and never spoke to her. N.K. Mishra and Sabita Tripathy remark that the reason for their maladjustment is rooted deep in his personal life. "He develops an eccentric mind as his psychological urge for social recognition in his official capacity is nibbed in the bud. . . . His life's greatest setback was not having had the

moth he had discovered named after him. . . . The psychological set-back Pappachi suffered increased his bad humour to 'black moods and sudden bouts of temper'" (Mishra and Tripathy 98-99).

Mammachi accepted rejection by her husband passively and submissively playing the role imposed on her by the society of docile, ungrudging and un-protesting wife. She abandoned all her personal convictions and freedom, slipping into the mould of traditional family setup. In Indian tradition, women in order to continue and save relationship from disruption, suffer, compromise and adapt even in battering relationship without raising their voice. It is the ideal womanhood not to voice their grievances as our tradition idealizes, expects and emphasizes passivity in women. They efface their very being to serve their masters. Mammachi embraces traditional ideal womanhood and totally effaces her selfhood for her spouse. Arundhati Roy ironically depicts pointless adoration by Indian women of their husbands who beat them. She writes that when Pappachi died: "Mammachi cried and her contact lenses slid around in her eyes. Ammu told the twins that Mammachi was crying more because she was used to him than because she loved him" (*TGST* 50). Ammu felt frustrated in the antipathetic attitude of the family members. The woman did not merit much freedom in the family code of the big Ayemenem House. Male dominance in family matters stifled their voice even in personal matters like marriage. This is the reason why Baby Kochamma had to live the life of a spinster even though she doted on Father Mulligan.

Roy depicts shocking relationship between Pappachi and Mammachi to "drive home the point that children brought up in such a vicious environment crave for escape which might eventually lead them to happiness" (Dhawan 80). Ammu has seen brutalizing masculine power from early years of her life. But she is a different type of woman with a distinct awareness

regarding injustice meted out to her because of her gender. This contributes to the hardening of her will and instilling in her an element of stubbornness.

Ammu becomes desolate in her big house. She wants to be free; her wings flutter like the caged bird: "All day she dreamed of escaping from Ayemenem and the clutches of her ill-tempered father and bitter, long-suffering mother. She hatched several little plans. Eventually, one worked. Pappachi agreed to let her spend the summer with a distant aunt who lived in Calcutta" (*TGST* 38-39). There she met her future husband. She married an Assistant Manager of Tea Estate. Ammu's marriage to a Bengali is a result of an escape rather than a well-thought decision: "She thought that anything, anyone at all, would be better than returning to Ayemenem" (*TGST* 39). Ammu rebels against age old social conventions and exercises her choice in the selection of her husband. She marries out of her community against the wishes of her family as she aspires for love and mutual fulfilment in marriage. Ironically, she too encounters and becomes victim of "drunken violence" of her husband (*TGST* 42). He is even willing to push Ammu into the hands of Mr. Hillock, his boss for career advancement. Appalled by this revelation of her husband's character, Ammu decides to break the marriage and return to her parental home.

Ammu meets a cold reception at home as expected. A divorcee, she has no place/ respect in the traditional Indian family. Her parents were shocked at the dissolution of marriage by Ammu. They believe in marriage as a sacrament, it cannot be dissolved whatever may be the supervening circumstances. But Ammu is not Mammachi, and compared to her, she definitely registers an advance. She shows an admirable sense of self-respect and breaks the marriage bond.

Ammu as a divorcee is shattered as her children are discriminated against by the family members. Sophie Mole, the half Indian daughter is considered an angel and Ammu's twins, the

devils. The preferential treatment shown towards Chacko's widowed ex-wife and their daughter is openly displayed in front of all and sundry, throwing Ammu and her twins into complete isolation. Alienated, her distress is diverted to her children, "You are the millstones round my neck" (*TGST* 291). Ammu did as much work as her brother did, but as a daughter, had no legal claim to property. Chacko tells Ammu: "What's yours is mine, and what's mine is also mine" (*TGST* 57). She has no locus standi as her position in her parental home is described characteristically by Arundhati Roy: "A married daughter has no position in her parents' home" (*TGST* 45). And as divorced daughter, she had no position anywhere at all, according to Baby Kochamma. To top it all, Ammu had defied her family and community and opted for inter-community love marriage which was yet another impediment in her way from the viewpoint of her legal rights.

The women continue to be defined within confining boundaries of virtue, marriage and motherhood. By continually portraying individualism and independence as catastrophic and transferring all negative values to the women daring to step out of her prescribed role of mother or wife, liberation has been equated with degeneration of women. She is held responsible for every disorder, every ill-luck or misfortune. Sunanda Mukesh equates women with the dalits as both are the deprived categories in the society: "Emotionally crippled, sexually harassed, and suffering from domestic violence, shattered, shorn and bruised, the modern woman is struggling hard to pave her path, to search for her identity, to find equilibrium between house and the advancing world around. . . . Strangely enough, women are like Dalits. Both voice their emancipating demands, claim their rights, and assert their existence as both are have-nots of society" (Agrawal 189). Their desire for possessing a 'self' becomes quite pronounced. Conventionally, woman striving to attainment of individuality and identity is considered

dangerous by society as she is idealized for the self-effacing and self-negating aspect of her personality.

Ammu transcends the prescribed role of motherhood or divorceehood handed down to woman from generation to generation. She becomes conscious of her own aspirations and desires. Roy writes that she has an "unsafe edge", an "unmixable mix" as "There was something restless and untamed about her. As though she had temporarily set aside the morality of motherhood and divorceehood" (*TGST* 44). "Roy", according to Rajeshwar Prasad Singh, "in the persona of a detached observer and an attached woman activist, has given voice to the voicelessness of woman by personifying her ideal of the 'new woman' in Ammu" (Singh 176). In India, woman is expected to be embodiment of sacrifice, silent suffering. She is the bearer of children, and their concern is considered to be her primary responsibility. Thus, her sphere is restricted to be her familial roles. Ammu, the new woman, strives to transcend this stereotyped role.

While searching for an anchor, Ammu catches the intent gaze of Velutha when he is tossing Rahel in air, and both share a moment of intense desire for each other. She felt drawn towards him. His fiery spirit of protest, which she herself wanted to articulate, but could not, forcibly drew her towards him. She felt herself drawn towards him like a plant in dark room towards a wedge of light. She breaks free of all the constraints and barriers and walks across to the life infusing company of the despised paravan. She did not stop to gauge the consequences, for nothing could be worse than what she had already faced. So, throwing all the cares to the winds she allows herself to be drenched in the love of Velutha every night for two weeks.

R.S. Sharma and Shashi Bala Talwar consider the sexual needs, which remained uncared for, the cause of her transgression:

> Up to this time, poor Ammu had no satisfaction of her libido in which love and sex are inseparable. The moment comes when she realizes that youth and beauty will soon be bidding goodbye to her body. Incidentally at that time, her childhood association with Velutha is suddenly revived; she perceives Velutha as a young man and notices his sexual appeal. Given her violent nature and desperation of her situation, she recklessly goes out in search of the man she truly loves (Sharma and Talwar 68).

Amu and Velutha's relationship is an act of conscious choice as they become oblivious of the caste beliefs for the sake of gratification of their elemental desires. Ammu is the 'new woman' in the sense that she does not conform to the views of her society which expects her to seek happiness in the rearing of her children. The society wants her to perform her maternal duties and obliterate herself in their service which is the only alternative for her if she wants to be appreciated as an ideal woman. But she refuses to be classed among those so-called perfect wives. On the other hand, Velutha is also a man of new generation. He also wants to rise above his 'untouchable' status and hence trains himself to be a skilled carpenter. His association with the communist movement is also emblematic of his search for equal status. Dodiya and Chakravorthy aptly observe that Ammu and Velutha "share many things in common. She refuses to conform to the rules ordained for 'motherhood' and 'divorce hood', refused to categorize her among the list of those 'washed up' by life. He refuses to symbolically crawl backwards with a broom as his ancestors have had to do literally in the past. And both transgress the 'love laws' in loving each other" (Dodiya and Chakravorthy 95).

Velutha was also aware of his bitter isolation and hungered for love and belongingness. He finds repose, sense of strength and confidence and a stable heaven in her. In their union, the latent hunger of the two socially marginalized beings for being set free from all oppressive limits

is symbolically depicted. The relationship between Ammu and Velutha is a genuine relationship as there is a true sharing of emotions and their selves. The sexual thirst of both is quenched and they are so engrossed in it that they become blind to its aftermath. Sexual act is a result of the natural instinct and knows no outer authority. Every other relationship in this novel except this is devoid of genuine reciprocity: "It is the perfect kind of man-woman relationship, and the only one which is illustrated with scenes resonant with love, sex and feelings of mutual fulfilment" (Dhawan 82). Their passionate love making and the delight involved therein, has been captured narrated by the author:

> At the moment that she guided him into her, she caught a passing glimpse of his youth, his *youngness*, the wonder in his eyes at the secret he had unearthed and she smiled down at him as though he was her child. . . . He kissed her eyes. Her ears. Her breasts. Her belly. . . . She danced for him. On that boat-shaped piece of earth. She lived . . . . Seven years of oblivion lifted off her and flew into the shadows on weighty quaking wings (*TGST* 336-337).

This is the kind of love, more intense, deeper, and more authentic for which Ammu had been craving. Velutha shows her what it is to love and how love can bring back to life her inner soul. He is thus truly her partner, as her husband never was. Indeed, he is even a father figure to her children whom he loved. Ammu feels secure with him; he is her fellow victim. Like her, he is hungry for a place in the sun and so like her, alienated and proud: "The two betrayed souls move through an odyssey of passionate social transformation by setting themselves the task of reuniting the centre-margin relationship with love and compassion amidst fear and fortitude" (Singh 179).

Velutha is a paravan, an outcaste and the God of small things. He is an expert mechanic

and artisan. That is why Mammachi employed him in her factory. His ancestors converted to Christian religion only to be immune from the victimization of a casteist society. But this conversion did not bring any fruitful result for them in society. Velutha, like Ammu has an 'unsafe edge' and his father Vellya Paapen is always worried about "the aristocratic behaviour of his son, Velutha, who is the product of the modern world" (Prasad 133). Vellya Papen was an old world paravan who had known the crawling-backward days. He was frightened by Velutha although he did not know what it was that frightened him. Perhaps it was just a lack of hesitation, an unwarranted assurance in Velutha that worried his father. He is apprehensive of Velutha "In the way he walked. The way he held his head. The quiet way he offered suggestions without being asked or the quiet way in which he disregarded suggestions without appearing to be rebel" (*TGST* 76).

Ammu and Velutha, both are victims of a callous social system. Ammu is the victim of gender discrimination and Velutha that of caste discrimination. Velutha has to suffer more indignities and humiliation than Ammu and resultantly has developed a much stronger sense of injustice. He has carried on his crusade against the society in his own quiet manner. The working people were eternally subjugated and victimized and their hard labour exploited to torture themselves by this brutal system of social engineering. But we cannot say that Velutha's relation with Ammu is a deliberate attempt to avenge on society for the injustice meted out by the society. This relationship is of genuine love, and initiative is taken by Ammu herself. Since biology forgets the society, both were so much captivated by intense sexual passion that they turned a blind eye to the societal reaction. Urbashi Barat compares Velutha to the Christ thus:

> His manual dexterity place Velutha among the anthropomorphic pagan gods, his parentage and upbringing, his rejection of his family, his disappearance from Ayemenem

> for four years, his fishing and his carpentry, have obvious parallels with Jesus's life. Like Jesus, he shows Ammu and her children a new way of life, love and salvation; and like Jesus, he becomes a scapegoat who must be sacrificed to appease the "ancient age-old" fears of social and political subversion, the fear of being dispossessed. . . ." (Barat 72).

The obvious parallel drawn above emphasises that the threat in the name of Velutha, like Jesus, is annihilated by the guardians of the society's moral and ethical laws as his transgressive acts endangered the subversion of structured composition of society. Velutha was used as sacrificial goat to uphold the age old traditions. Urbashi Barat has also compared Ammu to Mary, the mother of Jesus. She argues: "Like Mary, she gives birth to innocence and love, and an arduous journey; to divorce and single parent, her motherhood brings her into close kinship with the Virgin Mother, who has survived as an icon in a patriarchal world only through her role as mother" (Barat 73).

Though Ammu and Velutha seek emotional fulfilment through their union, society pursues them and does not permit them. The social mores are broken by them and they are punished for this. Velutha is killed by the brutal beating of the police and Ammu dies miserably. In this love story of Ammu and Velutha, love is portrayed as the passionate longing of the soul of the lover for the beloved, which culminates in their physical union. This love relationship, like what the feeling of love does everywhere, overthrows social constraints and prohibitions. As K.M. Pandey remarks:

> In fact, in every culture, love is presented as an emotion of subversion and overturning. Ossified social taboos and conventions are always challenged by love. If Romeo and Juliet met their tragic end, it was the family authority which was responsible for it. Laila and Majnu, Sohni and Mahiwal, Heer and Ranjha -- all died for just one cause -- a

longing, lingering desire that refused to respect man made boundaries (Pathak 83).

The second forbidden relationship which is transgressive in nature is between Estha and Rahel. They indulged in incestuous relationship which is taboo. The incest taboo is the most primitive and universal: "The imposition of this taboo duly regulates the transformation of a state of nature into a state of culture" (qtd. in Dhawan 168). Rahel and Estha have to suffer traumatic experiences which hurt them to the core of their heart. Right from their birth, they have to lead a life of fret and fever, cares and anxieties. They see the quarrels between their mother and father in Assam. When they go to live in the Ayemenem House, they are treated as outsiders. The reason why they were led to suffer the isolation can be traced back from their childhood traumatic experiences. The first traumatic experience which the sensitive mind of Estha encounters is the misbehaviour of the Orange Drink Lemon Drink Man in the Abhilash Talkies. The man forces or lulls the boy to masturbate him. This traumatic experience is so strongly engraved in the soft, simple mind of Estha that it sinks deep into the psyche of the seven years old child and haunts him throughout his life. Secondly, they were deceived into giving false evidence when Velutha was arrested and brutally tortured to death. It is a memory that Rahel could never put out of her mind: "They carry the burden of this guilt for twenty years and are unable to lead a normal life. This guilt consciousness can only be wiped off by their incestuous relationship, so the novelist makes us believe" (Bhatt and Nityanandan 141).

The twins were ill-treated by their family members. Deprived of a 'Baba', from a very tender age, the only defence these vulnerable and defenceless twins had was the fierce love of their mother. It was their ill luck that they were born in an environment of psychological violence. Rahel and Estha did not get the love and affection from their elders that they so badly needed. Their emotional needs remained unfulfilled. Of course, their mother had all the concern

for them, but in a hostile atmosphere, she was utterly helpless. They were scolded by their mother and always were apprehensive of being loved little less. Estha and Rahel remembered how once they were pushed around by Ammu to Baba, then to Ammu, and then again to Baba. While pushing Estha away, Ammu had said to Baba, "Here, you keep one of them. I can't look after them both" (*TGST* 84).

They become a prey to the morbid stiffness and malice of Baby Kochamma, who constantly reminds them of their insecure position, of their ostracization and even sinfulness. Chacko tells Estha and Rahel that Ammu has no locus standi. Their clear break from the family comes when Sophie Mole dies. At her funeral, they are made to stand separately. As such, a denial of security and love casts its shadow on her children right from their infancy. The problem of insecurity of the twins is very well expressed by the image of the frogs: "To Ammu, her twins seemed like a pair of small bewildered frogs engrossed in each other's company, lolloping arm in arm down a highway full of hurtling traffic. Entirely oblivious of what trucks can do to frogs" (*TGST* 43).

When Ammu died, Rahel was nearly eleven. As a child, she had seen suffering of her mother, the injustices meted out to her and the tortures she had been subjected to when her affair with Velutha was detected. With the death of her mother, Rahel had lost the last moorings that she had and she began to drift from school to school, spent eight years in a college without getting a degree and finally "drifted into marriage like a passenger drifts towards an un-occupied chair in airport lounge" (*TGST* 18). Rahel's husband kept her like a precious gift which was given to him in love. But when they made love, he was offended by her eyes. They behaved as if they belonged to someone else. Rahel could not love her husband, and when she returned to Ayemenem, she is a divorcee like her mother. Explaining the incestuous relationship between

Estha and Rahel, R.S. Sharma and Shashibala Talwar remark:

> The inducing factor lies in their complete rejection by society and in their utter loneliness combined with Rahel's compassion for Estha. They have no hope outside, so they seek solace in each other's arms. . . .There have to be some contributing factors. And these may be found in suppressed sexuality (Sharma and Talwar 73).

In view of Estha and Rahel's suffering, it can be argued that man is constantly searching for rootedness. There is always a need in human beings for bonds or ties with others. These provide emotional security and serve to reduce the feeling of isolation and insignificance. The negative resolution of this search for rootedness gets represented through 'incestuous ties' which happens when a person fails to establish new ties and hence the tendency to regress on the part of the twins. The outside world is viewed with fear and suspicion. The regressive tendency is due to incapacity to adjust to the new world. That is what happens to Estha and Rahel. Their bruised feelings remain in their subconscious and finding the outside world insecure, they looked each other for finding solace. It is pertinent to quote the words of Surendra Narayan here: "Though Rahel and Estha look all out to break a law which is culturally so deep-rooted, their act delicately justifies that they have definitely been hurt to the core of their being" (Dhawan 168).

Arundhati Roy has also depicted political transgression of Comrade K.N.M. Pillai. She has created a cruel caricature of him. Pillai transgresses the beliefs and practices of communism. He belongs to a party that represents workers' interest and exists on the strength of its pledge to protect them from all kinds of socio-economical exploitation. Pillai's attachment to communism is only a mask, but behind the mask, he is a bourgeois, holding strongly to caste based traditions like untouchability. Mr. Pillai uses Marxism for personal gains rather than for poor labourers or the lower caste. K.N.M. Pillai is a trade union leader and a press owner at the same time. He

prints the labels of a factory by night in which he organises strikes of the workers by day.

Pillai projects himself as the champion of the down-trodden, but at the core of his heart, he is a class conscious, 'touchable' man, belonging to upper class community. Arundhati Roy unmasks the local Marxist leader and suggests that Comrade Pillai's attachment to Marxism is not born out of any political ideology or conviction; it is only a means to promote his own vested interest. His caste prejudice prevents him from treating Velutha as comrade and equal. He refers to Velutha as "that paravan"(*TGST* 278). When Velutha was implicated in a false case, he comes to him for help, he renders no help. "He merely assured Inspector Thomas Mathew that as far as he was concerned Velutha did not have the patronage or protection of the communist party" (*TGST* 262-263). Pillai resorts to the party principles to remind Velutha when he arrives at his house: "But comrade, you should know that Party was not constituted to worker's indiscipline in their private life" (*TGST* 287). Roy carefully exposes all unpleasant aspects of a degenerate politician through her portrayal of Pillai who will go to any extent for the sake of "self-promotion, maintaining one's hold over the citadel of power by playing one against other" (Ranjimwale 57).

Infact, Ammu-Velutha relationship is the only relationship in the novel which is reciprocal and full of mutual love and faith. Ammu finds in this relationship what she has ever been craving for and for which she had entered in the marital bond. She was living in an indifferent, cold, apathetic world where her instinctual demands were ignored. She craved for man's love "a tactile world of smiles and laughter" (*TGST* 176) and gratify it through Velutha.

Ammu was captivated by the physical strength of Velutha. "She saw the ridges of muscle on Velutha's stomach grow taught and rise under his skin like the division on a slab of chocolate. She wondered at how his body had changed . . . a swimmer's body . . . he had high cheek bones

and a white sudden smile"(*TGST* 174). Ammu's sexual thirst, the natural instinct of youth was not properly slaked and she was haunted by the sexual passion. Her stifled longing and brooding despair finds an outlet in tempestuous erotic encounter with Velutha. Velutha proved an agent of rebirth and transformation for Ammu. For the first time she felt alive and secure with a man. The delight of transgression was amazingly transforming for this sexually and emotionally starved woman: "Ammu smiled to herself in the dark, thinking how much she loved his arms – the shape and strength of them, how safe she felt resting in them when actually it was the most dangerous place she could be" (*TGST* 338).

For Ammu and Velutha, however, it was not a temporal fulfilment of desire, but threshold of a sublime experience into new and higher realms of mystical and spiritual consciousness. It was an initiation into divine mysteries, the mystery of the other world. The physical was sublimation into the spiritual for the two lovers. Ammu and Velutha relationship is that of a man and a woman who meet and instantly recognize the other self of themselves. They feel familiar with each other and are immediately able to sense the unalterable fact that they have been-are-and must always be one, and that their "destinies are linked" (Bhatt and Nityanandam 88).

IV

After a detailed discussion of the five novels from different socio-cultural perspectives, several points of convergence and divergence emerge. The causes of transgression in all the cultures have been found more or less the same. These novels mainly deal with the transgression (particularly sexual) of woman protagonists who are beautiful, warm, affectionate and full of vitality. Most of them are yoked to incompatible husbands who are no match to their emotional and sexual intensity. The kinds of loveless marriages that are arranged or foolishly entered into,

fail to meet the needs of these women who long for the perfect union. Their husbands fall short of the mark: they are inattentive bores, alcoholics, hypocrites or overtly ambitious men of principles. Hester in *The Scarlet Letter* and Anna in *Anna Karenina* are married to men considerably much older in age. Before making them enter into loveless marriages, issues of mutual compatibility are seldom taken into account. Commenting on the attitude of Leo Tolstoy towards marriage, Hugh I. Anson Fausset remarks:

> It mattered not whether an ignorant girl was trapped or pushed into marriage with a man who shocked or disgusted her by his violence; or whether either she or her husband had realized too late a hopeless incompatibility of temperament. He could not recognize the spiritual waste involved in such marriages . . . because his conception of marriage was material. The loveless marriage of a young girl was not tragic to him because he treated women as the physical medium of the life force. His admiration for their qualities as mothers was accompanied by contempt for them as merely instinctive beings (Fausset 182).

The above quote reflects traditional/ conservative views about marriage. Society never takes into account the individual desires, emotions and needs. Women are supposed to efface themselves for others. Woman is never recognized as an individual, an equal and a human being with her own desires and aspirations. She is often seen as an object of voyeurism and sexual pleasure by men, and is expected to play wife-mother role for all ages. These female protagonists do not want to be just puppets and refuse to be confined to four walls of their homes. They do not want to be deprived of their basic needs to grow and fulfil their potentiality as human beings.

In *Madame Bovary* and *Anna Karenina* particularly, the conflict arises due to Emma and Anna's craving for novelty, excitement and undying passion. Their husbands live by the code of

conduct prescribed by the societies to the detriment of their seemingly happy marriages. In *The God of Small Things*, Ammu is incensed with persistent craving for love and mutual fulfilment. Her repressed desires are fulfilled when she comes in contact with Velutha —a vibrant, energetic youth. Her womanly needs are well taken care of by Velutha who loved her during night and took care of her children by day. These women protagonists become conscious of themselves as human beings with their rights and individualities, tastes and distastes, and are punished by the their societies that ensures conformity to the marital vows. They never take into account the incompatibility of marriages or non-fulfilment of their individual aspirations and needs. Any deviance of these vows is watched by the guardians of society keenly and if anyone is found guilty, the wrong-doer is punished severely.

The transgression induces an exhilarating effect on the violators, even though for a short period. The thought of their lovers fill them with ecstasy. Nevertheless, it simultaneously induces a feeling of hatred for their husbands. They become alarmingly conscious of the deformity or shortcomings of their husbands which remain unnoticed hitherto. For instance compare "Great heavens what has happened to his ears?"(102) in *Anna Karenina*, to "his face, his dress, what he did not say, his whole person, his existence" in *Madame Bovary* (239) that appear detestable to Emma.

The male protagonists in *The Scarlet Letter* and *Samskara* are deeply rooted in the ritualistic aspects of their faiths. They are supposed to have chosen a life of celibacy and are cut off from the common rhythm of life. Their suppressed sexual instinct is controlled by the moral principles. But nothing could ever fully subdue this instinct which is implanted by nature. The power of this sexual impulse is well expressed by Gautam Buddha, "The sexual impulse is sharper than the prod by means of which wild elephants are tamed; it is hotter than flames; it is

like an arrow driven into soul of man" (qtd. in Bebel 100). The sexual desire was smouldering in Dimmesdale and Praneshacharya which explodes when they come into contact with passionate Hester and Chandri respectively. The shell of societal constraints is broken and lays bare the dormant elemental passion of these priests.

After analyzing the protagonists of the above novels and working out the factors responsible for the commission of transgression on their part, it would be pertinent to study the repercussion aspect of the transgression in the next chapter as transgressive act entails not only chastisement as well as harsh punishment by the society which in most of the cases becomes unforgiving. Society never spares transgressors and therefore Freud's observation gains importance here as he says that "repressive control of the instincts is imposed not by nature but by man" (qtd. in Marcuse 33).

Chapter III

Repercussions of Transgression

Having discussed transgression in different socio-cultural contexts in the first chapter, it has been established that whenever individuals violate the social and moral order by overstepping limits and boundaries of accepted behavior, the society invokes and imposes constraints. These restrictions have collective, socio-cultural sanction and run contrary to the individual will. The second chapter demonstrates how despite stringent and coercive socio-cultural norms, limits and restrictions are transgressed for one reason or the other. It has also been shown how people who feel trapped, threatened or violently constrained due to societal pressure, or forces beyond their control, turn transgressive even if it threatens their survival.

This chapter seeks to analyze the repercussions of transgression after one has committed it volitionally. Repercussion being the natural corollary of the commission of transgression, its diverse dimensions such as socio-cultural, moral, psychological, political, etc. shall be examined to exemplify that no act of transgression ever goes unpunished. Even if it is held as top secret within one's bosom (as in case of Dimmesdale and Praneshacharya), the repercussion follows by way of subtle psychological implosions, complex, unfathomable and dichotomous thought processes, acute sense of compunction and subtle, subliminal psychic upheavals that have debilitating and devastating effect on one's consciousness. The novels undertaken for critical scrutiny in the present dissertation have ample textual evidence regarding the repercussion aspect of transgression. Interestingly, each text presents markedly distinct socio-cultural contexts within which various protagonists operate.

I

Hawthorne remarkably presents the repercussion aspect of transgression in *The Scarlet*

Letter, which is a post-adultery narrative. As the novel opens, the sin of adultery has already been committed and the author chooses not to describe the passion of Hester Prynne and Arthur Dimmesdale. The novel unfolds a society which is conspicuous by sexual abstinence and absolute intolerance to adultery/sexual transgression. In fact, the puritan society is governed by patriarchs who follow a strict code of moral discipline thereby impeding genuine and honest interaction between the individuals. We are directly introduced to the protagonist of the novel, Hester Prynne being taken out of the prison where the entire community has assembled to make a public spectacle of the Hester's sin of adultery.

Hester Prynne is condemned to wear the scarlet letter 'A' on her bosom by the godly magistrates of New England puritan society. She is ridiculed, humiliated and sent to serve "a lifelong sentence" for having committed adultery. This society is so harsh and solemn in its attitude that the transgressor cannot even look for any kind of sympathy. She is relentlessly persecuted by the puritan society wherever she goes: "Clergymen paused in the street to address words of exhilaration that brought a crowd with its mingled grin and frown, around the poor, sinful woman. If she entered the church trusting to share the Sabbath smile of the Universal Father, it was often her mishap to find herself the text of the discourse" (*TSL* 65). According to A.N. Kaul, Hester poses a question concretely in the midst of puritans:

> If sin is a postulated basis of life, should its open manifestation be treated with understanding and compassion or with inhuman chastisement? The answer of Puritan community to this question – posed concretely in their midst by Hester– is to put her upon the pillory, to make her bear the stigma of her shame, and finally to excommunicate her. The most terrible part, the truly inhuman aspect, of Hester's fate is not that she is punished publically, but that her punishment takes the form of isolating her from the rest

of the community. (Kaul 178)

It is surprising that puritans, who believe in the frailty of human nature and especially in the infinite mercy of our God on the erring and the sinful children, show no compassion for the fallen Hester. The community remains blissfully unaware of their own libidinous urges. Nevertheless their moral disapproval of Hester is so strong that they are not able to sympathize with her. In this intolerant society, severest punishment is given for morally unacceptable behavior.

The puritan society frowns on any expression of joyful passion and emotions. The people are supposed to suppress their passion, sexuality and pleasures of youth. No entertainments that tend to titillate one's passions are allowed in this society as Johnson observes: "Assigning her [Hester] an 'A' of scarlet to wear as punishment, the community shows that it regards human nature, especially passion, to be devilish" (Johnson 10). The iron visage matrons in the crowd pour malice and abuse on her: "This woman has brought shame upon us all, and ought to die. Is there no law for it? Truly there is, both in the Scripture and the statute book. Then let the magistrates, who have made it of no effect, thank themselves if their own wives and daughters go astray!" (*TSL* 42).

The puritan society's preoccupation with moral uprightness makes them not only indifferent but also brutal towards anyone who violates the established code of conduct. The punishment meted out to Hester can be viewed as "communicative sadism" which conveys "the image of rage bursting through a social fabric in the guise of restoring a community to law and order, of saving and serving justice, of protecting the innocent and innocence" (Morris 472). The old women of Boston demand the cruelest punishment for Hester as if the sadistic pleasure derived from Hester's public suffering would compensate their own arid lives. The whole puritan

community appears to be deeply outraged as if the entire edifice of morality has collapsed. They view Hester as a threat to the moral fabric of the society. That is why she is forced to wear the scarlet letter 'A' like albatross hung around the neck of a sinner: "For the puritans, Hester becomes a live discourse with an ardent plea to be away from the seven deadly sins. The act of committing sin is destiny and consequent loss of innocence and human element is predestined" (Rao 75)

Claudia Johnson throws light on the hypocrisy of the puritan society which boasts of being based on high principles. Despite a theology that teaches that all people are innately or by nature evil, the community does not recognize that they themselves are sexual or passionate: "Because they despise so many human traits, while at the same time failing to recognize same passionate traits in themselves, Hester becomes a target for their cruelty. Even though, as we have seen Hester perceptively senses the lust in the heart of even the most pious men of God and the purest maiden, the community acts as if she alone has passion in heart" (Johnson 6).

The society as depicted in the novel sets itself up as a judge thereby conveniently ignoring its own faults and shortcomings and indulges in fault-finding and criticizing others. They assume an air of superiority over others by showing an attitude of arrogance. The unforgiving spirit as shown by the puritans towards the transgressor, Hester also exhibits the lack of compassion and sympathy. Upon having a deeper look at the novel, it becomes evident that it is not only adultery which is the main focus of the book, but also the hypocrisy of the puritans which has been equally brought into light.

The penalty given to Hester is indeed an appalling example of insensitive persistence exemplified by the sign 'A' she is forced to wear. But Hester passes the trials and tribulations with an exceptional fortitude. Initially, the scarlet letter "had the effect of a spell, taking her out

of the ordinary relations with humanity and enclosing her in a sphere by herself." But she has not chosen her fate; she has had it imposed upon her. Hawthorne holds the puritans guilty of a grave sin. Although Hester is guilty of adultery, the puritan society of lack of charity. (Wagoner 146).

Pearl stands as the constant reminder of Hester's sin. She is living signification of the scarlet letter that Hester wears. Pearl has also been viewed as Hester's reward and also identified with the law within, Hester's penance. Nina Baym sees Pearl as Hester's id, acting out her unconscious rebellion against the unfairness of puritan justice. She explains further: "Without Pearl to act out her unconscious desires, Hester might have come down to us in history, hand in hand with Ann Hutchinson or more likely as a fellow victim to Mistress Hibbins" (Baym 138). Thus, Pearl is her source of redemption. Her behavior is seen by the Puritan community as malevolent, as it is representative of Hester's repressed passion and unconscious urges which the puritans do not allow her to express.

Hester tries to reform her life despite being ostracized by the society. She exhibits the courage to rebuild her life. After seven years of humiliation and pain, she does not allow her soul to be scarred. It is because of the strength of her character that she is able to express freely the undiminished potentialities of her nature. She does not escape, rather takes her stance at the farthest edge of the settlement to prove her mettle. A.N. Kaul observes thus: "While society has cast her off, she herself has not lost hold of the captivating chain of humanity. The chain that bound her was of iron links, and galling to her inmost soul, but could never be broken. . . . The reason lies in the more intimate bond of love" (Kaul 182). Hester wears her scarlet letter as though it were a badge of honor that she has earned by appearing in her true light before the society. She is variously subjected to disgrace and mental anguish by the puritans, but Hester braves the puritan community with calm and dignity. She suffers no remorse for what she did,

but for the guilt of disgrace to which her crime has caused along with her being condemned to wear on her dress the scarlet letter 'A'. Hester endows her act with sanctity when she says, "What we did had a consecration of its own" (*TSL* 140). This is what Hoffman describes as "not a Christian or moral sanctity . . . but an acknowledgement of the life force itself" (Hoffman 114).

If Hester's isolation does not distort her moral personality, the reason is that throughout her life she has been seeking to reconstruct a relationship with other human beings on honest and authentic terms. In other words, she is isolated by society but not the entire humanity. The puritan community behaves as if they are going to be infected with her presence as custodians of high morality based on highest puritanical principles. They think themselves to be repositories of the nobility and purity of soul devoid of any carnal desire. A.N. Kaul implicates the puritanical society equally as he remarks: ". . . her excommunication, if one uses the metaphor of "The new Adam and Eve" amounts to the banishment of a leper from leper's colony" (Kaul 179).

In the years that follow, Hester comes gradually to play a part in the community which expresses in sublimated form the love that she is prevented from expressing directly. Hester lives by doing sewing and performing acts of charity, even for those who revile her in the moment of accepting it. Her handiwork decorates the cuffs of magistrates, the vestments and draperies of public occasions, baby linen and burial shrouds. She is never commissioned to embroider bridal veils which evidence "the relentless vigor with which society frowns upon her sin" (*TSL* 63). Yet, she manages to find a way out of her suffering. To convert it into a kind of triumph by her good deeds and humility, she slowly subverts the intent of the shame by transforming the object of law into an object of art. As such, Hester's selfless, noble and relentless work becomes a means of her salvation. The women in the community recognize her non-verbal, feminine form of communication. They come to her with their sorrows and perplexities seeking her counsel and

sympathy. She provides comfort and counsel to women suffering from sinful passion, "bestows all her superfluous means in charity, on wretches less miserable than herself" (*TSL* 64). The fact that the community is willing to use Hester's art to decorate their own pomp and ceremony testifies Hester's acceptability in the puritan community. Subjugating her ego, she connects herself truly to the cause of humanity. Her activism in the service of humanity creates space for her in the community: "As a lover she has been ostracized but as a 'self-ordained Sister of Mercy' she is normally accepted. . . . She is the pariah that the human family takes to its heart in times of affliction" (Bradley 375).

The community intends that wearing the scarlet letter on her bosom will cause Hester to feel repentant, but it does not. Contrary to this, she believes that she must accept her true nature and love others in order to repent. She also believes that change should come from society, not from within her. She succeeds in "subverting the patriarchal symbol of punishment placed on her breast, as well as the patriarchal power placed on all women in the community" (Last 361). She firmly rejects the values and beliefs of the puritan community. Not swayed by the puritan community's agonizing moral sense, she stands apart as an existential individual. The community seems to make Hester serve a living stereotype of sinfulness/ adultery, but by dint of her intelligence, skill and pride she thwarts the intention of puritan patriarchy: "Deprived of a public voice and reduced to a grey shadow, Hester lives out the problematic situation. Deliberately living it out, she emerges on the other side of it. She converts disinheritance into freedom, isolation into individuality, excommunication into a personal presence, that is actual and communicable (Bloom 31-32).

Dimmesdale's transgression does not come to be recognized by the society, but that very fact renders his own consciousness of his state more morbid than ever until concealment of the

guilty condition of his true self secretly destroys his moral tissue. Perhaps Dimmesdale's mortified awareness of sin is either due to his position as a religious leader or due to his intellectual superiority over Hester. Hester's public censure for her sin lessened her strong and morbid feeling of guilt that a secret sinner like Dimmesdale might have: "concealment of the guilty condition of his true self destroys his moral tissue. As a result, his moral suffering is far more intense and sickly than Hester's" (Hall 108). Dimmesdale undoubtedly suffers profoundly and it is greatly due to his puritanical consciousness as Semour Katz observes: "His Puritan beliefs made him feel the most intense remorse for his act of adultery, but prevented him from interpreting that remorse to be repentance until it issued in the outward act of confession" (Katz 10). That is why he says to Hester, "Of penance I have had enough! Of penitence there has been none! Else, I should long ago have thrown off these garments of mock holiness, and have shown myself to mankind as they will see me at the judgment-seat" (*TSL* 138).

Dimmesdale believes that he has fallen from the high ideals of priesthood and is constantly haunted by a sense of compunction that takes away his peace of mind. He does not want his public image to be shattered and therefore he hypocritically continues to wear a mask of piety. This is the basic reason why there is a constant strife in his heart between his desire to maintain his public image and the driving force of his conscience which demands a public confession from him. Dimmesdale's story is that of a young and sensitive man's initiation into sexuality in a society which treats sexuality harshly. He is despondently conscientious and extraordinarily sensitive. The conflict arises due to his being steeped in the ritualistic aspect of life and high principles. Dimmesdale is supposed to have chosen a life of celibacy and has committed himself to foster the spiritual welfare of his people. He is zealously dedicated to study and protect his soul from the impurities of earthly existence by observing fasts, vigils and

flagellations.

Dimmesdale is of the impression that he has committed a horrific sin and has violated the moral norms which he considers to be watched and ordained by God. He is afflicted with a strong sense of remorse: "Torn between the longing to acknowledge his sin and atone and the weakness which holds him back, Dimmesdale goes a little mad. He takes up some gruesome forms of atonement - fasts and floggings but he can neither whip nor starve the sin from his soul . . . . The dark stain he perceives on his soul saps the meaning from life and strength from his will" (Sheldon 11). As the head of the social system, he is restricted by its principles and regulations. Being of high standing and weighed down with wisdom of the scriptures, he is enclosed in his subjectivity. His eminence in the society makes him devoid of any genuine human relationship and practical experience. He leads his life in accordance with pre-conceived formula embedded in religious texts. He has never gone through an experience calculated to lead him beyond the scope of generally received laws. The admiration received from the multitude distances him all the more from everyone. Dimmesdale cares more for his social reputation than for anything else. His self-respect, peace, love and soul may all go; only his reputation must remain. However, it is the same false reputation that causes him the keenest torment of all on day-to-day basis.

The psychological implications of Dimmesdale's sin can be seen in his visions of diabolic shapes that grinned and mocked at him such as: "dead friends of his youth and his white bearded father, with a saint like frown, and his mother turning her face away as she passed by" (*TSL* 106-107). Last of all "glided Hester Prynne leading along little Pearl . . . and pointing her forefinger, first at the scarlet letter on her bosom, and then at the clergyman's own breast" (Gerber 85). He cannot escape the growing torment that little pearl's innocent look and behavior reveal his secret.

An "intellectual giant" and a "moral weakling", Dimmesdale is doomed by his "moral sensitivity" (Lata 12-13). Howsoever lofty his intellectual stature, he could not muster courage to make a public confession. This is the basic cause of his agony and mental torment. Pushp Lata further observes thus:

> One feels a sense of guilt only with respect to what one believes he had sinned against, whether it be God, natural law, the laws and mores of community or one's own moral standards. The sense of guilt inevitably brings with it a sense of isolation Hawthorne has shown how private and bitter loneliness can be (Lata 12).

In case of Hester, however, she never battles with the public but submits uncomplainingly to the obligations incurred by her conduct. By dint of her sheer resolve, she has carved a niche for herself in the unsympathetic society and makes her isolation less terrible than that of Dimmesdale. The weakling minister calls Hester for help to expose the father of her child: "Heaven hath granted thee an open ignominy, that thereby thou mayest work out an open triumph over the evil within thee, and the sorrow without. Take heed now thou deniest to him-who, perchance, hath not the courage to grasp in for himself—the bitter, but wholesome cup that is now presented to thy lips" (*TSL* 53).

We can attribute the torment in Dimmesdale's soul to sense of alienation from society. His detachment from society causes him a great suffering and grief. Lawrence Sargent Hall observes: "It is not the consciousness of sin and guilt that fills the soul of Dimmesdale with trance like terror; it is the sense of growing rift between him and society, the feeling that he has somehow become detached from life and is falling into a moral limbo farther and farther from reality and the honest existence of men" (Hall 171). Hester is successful in opting for human relationships in the unsympathetic and depressing world of puritans. On the contrary, "the

minister's desperate attempts to swim against the natural current result in complete exhaustion of the life within him" (Hall 171). He locks himself within his guilt and refuses himself any honest communication with the congregation, still in his heart he craves for companionship. Hester sees the torment of the wretched minister and is moved to pity understanding the condition of the man she loved, when she meets him in the woods. She counsels him to fly, to go back across the waters and escape the clutches of the cruel and tyrant, Chillingworth. Dimmesdale pleads that he has no strength left in him for such action:

> "O Hester!" cried Arthur Dimmesdale, in whose eyes a fitful light, kindled by her enthusiasm, flashed up and died away, "Thou tellest of running a race to a man whose knees are tottering beneath him! I must die here! There is not the strength or courage left me to venture into the wide, strange, difficult world alone!" (*TSL* 142)

Then she declares that she will go with him and protect him and watch over him with her strength.

Dimmesdale's profound belief in God who witnesses truth and the working of puritan order in his thoughts and feelings can be the cause of his weakness: "His cowardice . . . arises rather from the workings of puritan order within his own consciousness. His sense of personal sin is overwhelming to the point of moral blindness" (Kaul 184). Dimmesdale is a case of intense psychopathology resulting from religious mania. His neurosis saps his nervous system. He struggles his way to the scaffold in the dead of the night. While standing on the scaffold, he felt that an unseen crowd was staring at the scarlet letter on his breast, which hurts him. He suddenly cries out in the night. He thought that the whole village would awaken but it did not happen. The villagers mistook his cry for some frightful dreams of their own. The priest also called out to Pearl and Hester, who were passing by the scaffold. In reply to the question of Pearl whether he

would stand with her mother and herself in the morning, he replied that he would but on judgment day.

Dimmesdale is confused in the forest when he is offered a plan of escape. He is not able to decide whether he should stay or escape to a far off country across the sea with Hester. "If he stays, there is Chillingworth, whose gloating eyes he cannot escape ...There is also duty, the endless rounds of tasks. If he goes, there is Hester and the dream of love, a glowing face in the fire light and an embrace that is like an infusion of strength" (Sheldon 12). The flesh has to go or the spirit. There is no way of integrating both. B. Rajan and A.G. George rightly point out the impossibility of the duplicitous demeanor as the truth always has to come to light: "No man for any considerable period can wear the face to himself and another to the multitude, without finally getting bewildered as to which may be the truth" (quoted in Raman 13). As such, Dimmesdale's bewilderment is devastating for his psyche as well as physique.

However, Dimmesdale gathers courage to make a confession eventually. Apparently, the regenerating hand of God descends upon him as he turns to holier thoughts and decides to act in accord with the dictates of his spirit: "God is merciful! Let me do now the will which he hath made plain before my sight. For Hester, I am a dying man. So let me make haste to take my shame upon me" (*TSL* 179). The real agony of sin, as Chillingworth clearly perceived, lies not in its commission, which is always delightful, nor in open punishment, which is a kind of relief, but in the dread of its discovery. The concealment of sin and not accepting guilt publically causes shame and misery to Dimmesdale. Chillingworth who constantly torments him, can be interpreted as a morbid and remorseless conscience of Dimmesdale.

On the other hand, Hester confronts sin and guilt head on. She accepts responsibility for her sin rather than suffering guilt as mental obsession. That is why she does not suffer the same

physical and mental deterioration as suffered by Dimmesdale. Hester manages to find a way around her suffering and to convert it into a kind of triumph by her good deeds and humility. Genuine good work becomes a means for her salvation as she is able to get peace out of her suffering. In fact, Hawthorne believes that effects of sin may not always be disastrous. Sin may produce a feeling of isolation as the society is absolutely unforgiving in this regard; one may however convert it into an opportunity to increase her/his understanding of the world with compassion and empathy.

As such, the repercussion aspect of transgression involves diverse range of socio-cultural and psychological coordinates before s/he is able to make headway. Like Puritanism in *The Scarlet Letter*, Brahminism in U. R. Anantha Murthy's *Samskara* is lost in the baffling labyrinth of its rituals, and it poses greatest challenge for the transgressors as they have to deal with the polarity between the demands of existence on the one hand and the demands of rituals on the other hand. In *Samskara*, the basic schism is made apparent through conflicts between aestheticism and sensuality, tradition and defiance of tradition, ritual and the laws of nature, routinized existence and an existential commitment to life. On the symbolic level, however, these polarities are expressed through transgressors namely Praneshacharya and Naranappa who face the repercussion of their transgressive acts at psychological and social levels respectively.

Praneshacharya and Naranappa have opposite ways of thinking. Praneshacharya's way is that of recompense and devotion, while Naranappa advocates frantic ways. According to R. K. Gupta, "Praneshacharya epitomizes the very quintessence of ghostliness, having brought to perfection the ideal only feebly and imperfectly practiced by other Brahmins. If the ghostly way of life is represented by the Brahmins and Praneshacharya, the demonic way is represented primarily by Naranappa and his followers" (Gupta 17). Pranshacharya is the embodiment of

purity and knowledge. He deliberately marries an invalid paralyzed woman to further strengthen his resolution of achieving *moksha* (liberation). He has subjugated his senses in a flawed belief that he is getting ripe for salvation. By virtue of his religious knowledge he has become a towering figure in his community and commands a great respect from his fellow Brahmins for his moral and austere living and compassionate attitude towards all, irrespective of their caste. Tremendous authority is vested in this exemplary Brahmin: "His very name implies "life", but he is ironically enough committed to a complete denial of life through renunciation" (Gupta 17). He represses his natural desires due to his excessive logos (reason and intellect) and has never experienced erotic love.

Naranappa, on the other hand, belongs to hedonist school of thought who enjoyed the pleasure of senses to his heart's content. He defies and defiles the religious and ritualistic traditions. He is a pleasure loving and anti-Brahminical Brahmin. The rebel Naranappa disavows openly everything that Brahminism stands for – restraint, control and denial. Praneshacharya and Naranappa represent distortions of certain values – denial in one and abandonment to the senses in the other. Naranappa lived a life of libertine in the heart of an exclusive orthodox colony – broke every known taboo, drank liquor, ate flesh, caught fish with his Muslim friends in the temple tank, and lived with a low caste woman. He had cast off his lawfully wedded Brahmin wife, and annoyed his relatives. Naranappa and Praneshacharya represent two different ideologies, which collide with each other. Commenting on Naranappa, Tejinder kaur aptly remarks:

> Naranappa, a product of the changing times, embodied the revolutionary spirit under the impact of western culture and new emerging ideas to abolish many social evils like untouchability, rigid caste barriers . . . and lives a life of pleasure and fulfillment. He

> mocked at and questioned the prescribed ideology and code of conduct for his caste and exposed the hypocritical and sinful living of narrow-minded, selfish, greedy fellow Brahmins whose brahminhood consists only of following age old rules and rituals without caring to understand them and living in the fear that disaster would fall them if these rules and rituals were not observed (Kaur 40).

This modernist, revolutionary ideology comes into conflict with the traditional and conservative ideology of Praneshacharya. Naranappa has been living a life of his own without any regard to the opinions of his fellow Brahmins who blame him of provoking their children to give up the conventional and outmoded thinking and way of life and join different professions in life to grow. He becomes a problem for the Brahmin society especially for its head priest, Praneshacharya who expresses his anxiety by saying that ". . . with this kind of rebellious example, how will fare play and righteousness prevail?" (*Samskara* 22). Naranappa not only challenges the conventional beliefs but also poses a threat to Praneshacharya, the adored representative of the agrahara Brahmin community: "Let's see who wins in the end – you or me. I'll destroy brahmanism. I certainly will. My sorrow is that there's no brahmanism really left to destroy in this place – except you" (*Samskara* 23). He advises Praneshacharya to push his sickly wife into river and get hold of a fish scented fisherwoman like the ancient sage *Parashara* did, and go to sleep in her arms. He also mocks at Praneshacharya for ". . . perpetuating the rotten samskaras among these sinful Brahmins" and holds him responsible for their "decadence" and "corruption" (Kaur 41).

The repercussions of Naranappa's transgression are observable in the disgust of Brahmins of the agrahara who were scared of him while he was alive as he was hell bent on destroying Brahmanism altogether. This fear is expressed by Lakshmana: "If any of us

questioned him in good faith, he would turn on us, and cover us with abuse from head to foot. As long as he lived, we just had to walk in fear of him" (*Samskara* 7). When he died, Brahmins vied with others in sharing shocking accounts of Naranappa's misdeeds. As a result of it, Naranappa's transgressive acts become the biggest stumbling block in his funeral rites. No one comes forward to perform his last rites due to the fear of his own loss of caste or excommunication. Not a human soul feels a pang at Naranappa's death, not even women and children. Naranappa has been an enemy while alive and a preventer of meals as dead. The question is raised as to who he is by caste. "Is he a Brahmin at all? What do you say?–He slept regularly with a low caste woman" (*Samskara* 5).

Because Naranappa has been involved in anti-brahminical activities, besides keeping a low caste woman in his house, his relatives are horrified to go against the socio-cultural customs. The orthodox beliefs of the Brahmins hinder the funeral of Naranappa. As far as Hindu traditions are concerned, "sexual relations across caste boundaries are considered equally polluting as they lead to confusion of classes" (Gupta 167). The Brahmins are so obsessed with physical and mental and racial purity that they have a dread to lose it by acting conversely to their religious beliefs. Vaidyananthan observes: "This ritualistic dilemma of cremation rites of a fellow Brahmin who has abandoned the rigid straits of orthodoxy for the primrose path of dalliance becomes the central core of the novel" (Vaidyananthan 166). Naranappa has not only lived with a low caste concubine, but also eaten food cooked by her and enjoyed animal flesh with his Muslim friends. Traditional caste taboos lay significant emphasis on the sharing of food. Naranappa has violated all these injunctions. Such behavior indicates his complete rejection of the Brahmin faith.

Rashmi Gaur rightly remarks about the Brahmin community of agrahara by saying that

"Their lack of initiative, dependence on customs, and an inner fear of committing anything sacrilegious inadvertently have gripped their conscience and nibbled at their free thinking" (Gaur 26). In India, the concept of caste was made all the more stern by integrating it with religion. Observing caste rules and performing rituals guarantees birth in the higher caste. That is why, people in India avoid confrontation with the religious traditions and in fear repress their innovative thoughts. This unknown fear haunts people throughout their lives and makes obeisance easy and unavoidable. This is the reason their lives become barren and devoid of dynamism and growth gets hampered. To quote Rashmi Gaur again: "The cyclic theory of rebirth, with the possibility of birth in a higher caste being linked to faithfully carrying out one's duties as per caste rules generated a fatalistic acceptance of one's situation" (Gaur 34).

Contact with a person of a lower caste can negatively alter one's purity and requires some form of remedial procedure, such as bathing and changing clothes. Naranappa shuns such procedures completely. He not only sleeps with Chandri but even eats what she cooks. As such, Naranappa's corpse lies in the agrahara causing rotting stench, hoarse cries of vultures and crows, and dying rats. Praneshacharya is held in astonishment and veneration by the Brahmin community because he has attained wisdom, psychic powers by subjecting himself to vigorous austerities, atonement and contemplation. His life is conditioned by a total involvement in the spiritual, and otherworldly. Praneshacharya lives within the confines of his customary Brahmin worldview which he has internalized deeply. His prestigious erudition has ensured his spiritual stature in the entire community.

Praneshacharya has been leading a life of a household ascetic by marrying an invalid woman, and this he considers as the altar of his sacrifice. He has a distinct individuality and a towering image among the masses. His greatness is so appealing and pervasive that he himself

fails to see through his own errors and weaknesses. He has lived in his ivory tower, unaware of the harsh realities of the external world. In his encounter with Chandri, Praneshacharya is confronted with the dichotomy between the body and the spirit. He is shocked by the wildness of his physical desires which he hitherto thinks did not exist. Praneshacharya is possessed with strange impulse after his exposure to Chandri. He is not able to cope with his bodily desires and is left in a state of desperation: "It is the pull of sex, all that his own wife Bhagirathi lacked, that suspends his rational faculties" (Gaur 102).

After his stumbling upon Chandri, Praneshacharya becomes aware of the physical world around him: "As if he had become a stranger to himself, the Acharya opened his eyes and asked himself: Who am I? How did I get here? What is this dark? Which forest is this? Who is this woman?" (*Samskara* 67). His vision suddenly becomes clear, as if a veil which has for all these years separated him from vibrating, thrilling world, has dropped. All his five senses are awakened in a sudden blissful awareness: "A night of undying stars, spread out like a peacock's tail. . . .Below were green grass smells, wet earth, the wild *Vishnukanti* with its sky blue flower. . . .tranquility of standing trees" (*Samskara* 67).

Praneshacharya's sexuality due to repression knows no bounds once it is given free play. Now he wants to sleep with other women, to live truthfully and undauntedly like Naranappa. He becomes aware of beauty of Chandri and the nature around him and the ugliness of his wife. His fall in the realm of sexuality is undoubtedly his initiation into the world of instinctual drives and desires. He craves for sensations, may be Chandri, Belli or Padmavati. He wants to follow the bidding of his natural urge. He is infused with warmth and exuberance. ". . . his eyes were filled with the sights, his ears with the sounds of all around him" (*Samskara* 67).

He is no more a non-aligned observer of life; he wants to be an involved and associated

with it. He is reminded of his old friend Mahabala in Kashi. Praneshacharya had subdued his bodily desires under the weight of wisdom and righteousness. But as Chandri's breast touches the Acharya, "the animal leaped to its natural self and bared his teeth" (*Samskara* 81). As a result of it, Praneshacharya thirsts for new and more such experiences, his fantasy "dragged in all untouchable girls he had never thought of; stripped them and looked at them . . . Imagining her earth colored breasts he had never before reckoned with, his body grew warm. He felt wretched at his fancy" (*Samskara* 82). His suppressed sexuality is aroused to frenzy as he longs to copulate with other beautiful women also. He realizes that senses can be subdued and controlled by spiritual practices, but they can never be vanquished forever and become active whenever they come in contact with sense objects. He becomes a slave of passions and seeks pleasure like an ordinary mortal. Praneshacharya's lopsided approach to life left him unprepared to meet the onslaught of senses which overpowers him and destroys his wisdom. He is compelled to acknowledge the power of "Eros" (sexual love). He starts feeling the irresistible attraction of the other -- the body, the worldly, the erotic, and the animalistic. He realizes the futility of chanting same old mantra. He becomes one with Naranappa, Mahabala and Sripati. In his fantasy, he sees untouchable girls whom he has striped and looked at, and keeps craving for the breast of Chandri.

The compelling hold of Brahminhood and its restricting bonds have broken and Praneshacharya is in search of the residual self that remains after the outer shells are discarded. Meenakshi Mukherjee in her article "*Samskara*" equates Praneshacharya with Richard II of Shakespeare:

> It is the universal problem of man who has equated himself with a particular role for so long that the role becomes his self and without the role he feels lost. King Richard after

> his abdication goes through a similar crisis of identity. He also comes to the realization that he has lost his name, his identity. For Richard, the tragedy is explicit because the loss of kingship reduces him to nothingness. But for the protagonist of *Samskara*, the loss of his social role is in a way liberation and regeneration (Baral 84-85).

Identity once lost is hard to regain as it is socially/culturally constructed. Praneshacharya was hitherto identified as the religious head of his agrahara. The growth of his individual self remained hampered as he identified himself with the community self. This sacrifice on the part of Praneshacharya brought him name and fame and he felt contented in this false reputation. Praneshacharya, after his encounter with Chandri, feels a sense of liberation and relief from the restrictions of his social role. He is unburdened of the responsibilities as the spiritual head. He wants to wander wherever his legs take him, shorn of all responsibilities. But this is a momentary relief. Soon he is afflicted with the sense of guilt. There is a complete transformation Praneshacharya: "His single track mind starts seeing not just the light of God but shades that are inescapable for ordinary mortals. . . . There is a clear shift in thought, from a quest of rigid and painful to an acceptance of the many hues that life can take without fore warnings" (Gaur 100-101).

The death of Naranappa proves to be a regeneration of Praneshacharya, as in the process of resolving the overwhelming question of Naranappa's death rite, the Acharya goes under a transformation of his inner self. His sexual encounter with Chandri causes a profound sense of compunction in his mind. He is so weighed down with this guilt consciousness that he starts believing that he has lost all his authority in the community. He thinks that he is no better than Naranappa or Mahabala. He is ashamed of his giving in to the sexual desires like ordinary mortals as it leads to his fall from the grace. He has hitherto abstained from sex and has been

treading the spiritual path like an ascetic who has renounced worldly desires. He has nurtured the belief that he is nearly ripe for attaining salvation. But his sacrifice comes to a naught as his sudden sexual impulse rears its head thereby shattering his mission of life.

His sexual transgression causes his psychological separation from the Brahmin community which eventually leads to his physical isolation as well, as he abandons his agrahara and wanders aimlessly in the forest. Acharya's inner feeling of disgust and guilt based on his own experience of forbidden pleasure dominate his mind. His inward suffering occupies his mind. There is acute conflict going on in Praneshacharya's mind which according to TRS Sharma is "between *svabhava* and *svadharma*, instinct versus culturally inherited identity" (Sharma 132). The question which needs answer here is whether Praneshacharya will be able to break free of his social identity and seek a new one, or not? Nevertheless, the Acharya does not seem to be worried about the role imposed by his community as his dilemma is to recover and realize his individual 'self'. The author focuses his gaze on Praneshacharya's inner voyage and decides to go back to his agrahara and the continuity—a return that signifies hope.

Samskara and *The Scarlet Letter* parallel each other in many respects. Arthur Dimmesdale and Praneshacharya, the venerated priests of the two novels have throughout striven to stifle the demands of libido as sinful. Under the weight of great wisdom of books and orthodoxy of religion they have concealed their true character. Their true nature as passionate individuals is revealed once they come into contact with their paramours. These meetings with Hester and Chandri respectively reveal to them the unhampered nature of human emotions as opposed to the limits of social conduct. Once they are liberated from the restrictions of conventionality, they are awakened to the sensuous aspect of reality. They go wild with passion

and lose their lofty ideals in life for which they had spent their whole life. Their union with Hester and Chandri affects a reorientation in responses of Dimmesdale and Praneshacharya to life in general. The full play of emotions is only possible in the forest outside the bounds of stratified society as the outlet for emotions and feelings is not allowed in their respective cold and bitter societies.

The blissful experiences of Dimmesdale and Praneshacharya are transitory as they are steeped in the orthodox religious beliefs. Their conditioning of mind causes a sense of guilt. In case of Dimmesdale, guilt eats away his very soul and threatens to destroy him. The original antagonist of his harmony was guilt, regret for his inconsiderate surrender to passion. In him, grief, anxiety, guilt and distrust all tend to destroy life force and invite decay and death. He realizes that any escape from Boston may be at the physical plane, but the real source of his anguish is the remorse in his heart. His qualm of conscience cannot be left behind in Boston.

Praneshacharya finds himself caught in the play of opposites soliciting away the person he once was one by one. He profoundly laments his sins, all his secrets and breaking of rituals to himself. The positive effect of his sexual experience is that he who had always lived at a remote distance from his fellow Brahmins, now feels that he has come down to their level. His sexual transgression and the resultant guilt make his condition similar to Arthur Dimmesdale. Like him, he does not have courage to confess his guilt. As Dimmesdale asks Hester to reveal the truth to the community, he also begs Chandri to do the same. He wants to be relieved of the burden of being a *guru.* The pain and agony involved in his dilemma is the pain of transcending one mode of existence to go into another.

Psychologically, Praneshacharya's encounter with Chandri proved rewarding for him as it bestows upon him authenticity of existence. It is a positive move because it helps him in

transcending his former self and enables him to forge for himself a new personality. Naranappa, the epicurean Brahmin, who defied all the conventions of Brahmin society, is shunned by the agrahara community. Through the depiction of his breaking off every social taboo, U.R. Anantha Murthy highlights the hypocrisy, greed, and avarice of the Brahmin community. They condemn Naranappa for living openly with Chandri but deep in their hearts they also desire to taste this forbidden fruit. Naranappa also brings a conflict in the Brahmin agrahara which is the main focus of the novelist. Naranappa's corpse lay rotten in the agrahara due to his sexual transgression. He is thought to have lost his Brahminhood for his violation of Brahmin moral codes. But his transgression proves to be regenerative for Praneshacharya as it brings his rebirth. Chandri never belonged to the oppressive values of Durvasapura. She is not subdued by the social and moral restrictions. She absorbs into herself the repression and frustrations of men, liberating them from their infirmities.

The Scarlet Letter is not excessively concerned with the sin that has been committed; it is more concerned with the repercussions of sin, with its effects on the persons involved. Hester suffers the public shame and scorn, she has nothing more to face and now her sin leads to her regeneration, as learning from sin, she grows stronger. She emerges from her experiences and is revealed to be a woman capable of helping others and is eventually respected by them. Dimmesdale, on the other hand, conceals his sin and withers from inside. Due to his intense feeling of remorse, he feels himself being isolated from God as well as from his fellowmen.

Hester and Chandri by their union with these two scholars awaken them to physical world and cause them to respond to the world around them in a fresh and different manner. They also make them acknowledge that the natural instincts can be subdued by the religious learning but cannot be eliminated altogether.

II

The narrative in Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* deals with Emma Bovary who has passion for both romance and material things. She is ensnared in loveless marriage with Charles, a country doctor. Charles fails to pass all of Emma's feminine testing. He is dull, dreary, and unimaginative. He is unable to give any spiritual fulfillment to his dreamy wife and fails to lead her into great mysteries of life, into energies of passion. No woman wants an equal partnership with a fretting, attentive, needy and weak man. Charles too is aware of Emma's "sublime nature" considering her class, her insignificant background and her limited horizon. "The good sisters in the convent notice in this girl an amazing instinct for life, for extracting satiation and delight from life" (Giraud 94). In fact, Emma is not content with her life. She has romantic, unrealizable dreams which ultimately lead to disappointment. Her excessive exposure to romantic literature leads to her misery. She has allowed an imaginary world of love and adventure to overwhelm her consciousness with which the factual world cannot combat. Emma is imprisoned as much by the conventions of her society as by her delusions. She is unable to discriminate between the fiction and reality as she imitates her fictional characters to the detriment of her morals. The main focus of the novel is to study as to how the delusion caused by the romantic ideas harms the moral life of the individual. As Enid Starkie says "Flaubert in this novel wanted to study clinically the disease of romanticism" (Starkie 297).

Love is Emma's life pursuit. She has entered into fictional world in order to explore the sensation of this prized emotion called love. She is deeply lost in the study of classical romantic literature, popular romantic fiction and later, the fashion magazines. These readings supply her with the reference points for her relationship to the outside factual world. She never comes to the realization that she is falsely trying to live by the standards of the life described in the romantic

literature. Instead of making distinction between the life in her fictional world and her real life, Emma "searches desperately for the real world referents of the words and images that she finds in stories of sentimental and erotic salvation" (Paskow 328).

In fact, Flaubert has used Emma's character as means of expressing his own perception of French society. He was critical of the trivial and commonplace values. He has no patience with societal stupidity. Just as Hawthorne in his masterpiece *The Scarlet Letter* and U.R. Anantha Murthy in his *Samskara* dwell in detail on their disgust of the respective hypocrite societies that they portray, Flaubert too is filled with irritation with the average and mediocre bourgeois. He was a romantic who feared his romanticism. Somerset Maugham's remark is apt in this context: "He flung himself into the grimy story of Madame Bovary with a zest of a man revenging himself on life by wallowing in the gutter, because life had not met the demands of his passion for life" (Maugham 148).

The Yonville society depicted in the novel is a fragmented society. It is malicious and spiteful also. The characters are callous in their business. James calls this society "Un-suspecting, un-assisting and un-consoling" (Gervais 46). Playing tricks behind each other's back and wishing harm on somebody else is emblematic of disjointed community. Monsier Homais appears to be the best friend of Emma and Charles but in reality, he, though a pharmacist, practices medicine without a license, keeping customers by driving away doctor. Any help from Homais is a disguised malice. He advises Charles to perform club-foot operation that goes wrong and causes debacle for Charles. Lheureux is master of appearance who superbly uses persuasion techniques to ruin Emma due to her lack of judgment. So everyone in this society is self-absorbed without any emotional concern for others.

Emma's affairs with Leon and Rodolphe are prompted by the boredom which she feels in

the company of her husband, Charles. She finds her life lacking in excitement and novelty of feeling as she expects after marriage. Their estrangement can be attributed to the fact that Emma cannot relate to her husband as an individual but only as a fictional ideal. That is why he falls short of her expectations and becomes more sensitive to his shortcomings. Her lovers, particularly Rodolphe, is engaged in grooming her saying only what she wants to hear in order to bring her under his influence. Extravagant declaration of love and devotion are part of the courtship ritual in this French society. Rodolphe's deferential tone disguises the patriarchal power that men in reality exercise over women. Emma who is completely deluded by the reading of romantic literature takes these sentiments at face value and most earnestly admires her lover whose lack of sincerity is revealed in the end when she faces financial crisis.

Emma's transgression causes a great amount of gossiping/ whisperings in Yonville society which alienates Emma. It begins when Emma goes to see her baby and asks Leon to accompany her: "That same evening it was known in Yonville. Madame Tuvache, the Mayor's wife, declared in the presence of her servant that Madam Bovary was compromising herself (*M.B.* 120). One morning while returning from Rodolphe's house, Emma is seen by Binet, the tax collector. She is frightened with the apprehension that it may lead to adverse speculations. People have also seen her strolling in the company of Rodolphe at the local agriculture fair. The rumors and gossip about Emma further alienate her from the society. Madam Tuvache and Madam Caron are the eyes of the town looking scandalized on her behavior from a distance without being immediately affected by it. When Emma goes to the tax collector to stave off her bankruptcy, Madam Tuvache and Madam Caron watch from a nearby attic window as Emma attempts to persuade wooden Binet to lend her money. The whole scene is depicted through the eyes of these two ladies who noticed that Emma was making advances and suggesting something

abominable to the tax collector. However, nothing comes of this gossip about a likely violation of the marriage contract.

It is true that at the beginning of her marriage, Emma is worried about what people would think of her if they would discover her with other men, but later, she feels such contempt for the Yonville society that she actually seeks to shock public opinion by parading through the town on horseback at Rodolphe's side after their love making in the forest while people see her from their windows without concern. But again nothing comes of her sallies, for no one does anything about these silly provocations. No matter what she does, no momentous consequences follow. In fact, the Yonville society is unconcerned, non-consoling, and non-sympathising. That is why nobody comes to the rescue of Emma when she is caught in financial crisis. The Yonville 'self-absorbed' society is slowly choking Emma who tries to outrage her modesty as she is only left with her sexuality and nothing else to pay for. There is not a single soul in the whole society having genuine feeling of empathy. She is tricked by her enemies and let down by her friends and lovers. Frustrated by the lack of fulfillment of her dreams through her affairs she had become restless and disillusioned. The disappointment of her failure increases the indignation of her outraged modesty. It seemed to her that providence pursued her implacably. Ultimately she commits suicide by consuming arsenic. Flaubert feels compassion for her which he does not feel for any of his other characters. She may be foolish and deceitful, but she is more considerate and more sensitive than others. Her predicament, as Martin Turnell observes was that of "the romantic individualist trapped in a hostile civilization which provided no outlet for . . . [her] natural aspirations" (Giraud 110). Emma's death does not put an end to the chase as the society's malice finds more explicit expression later. The music mistress demands payment for lessons that Emma never had, and the lending library for books she never borrowed. Mere Rolet claimed

the postage for some twenty letters. Felicite carried off that was left of the wardrobe (*M.B.* 440-441).

Emma initially shows some signs of remorse and her commitment to society's moral codes. She also feels regret for her marital infidelity, but it is momentary. She exhibits some resistance when Rodolphe seduces her as she ruminates howsoever fleetingly that "one must to some extent bow to the opinion of the world and accept its moral code" (*M.B.* 188). But she is so tempted by Rodolphe's seducing words that she submits herself to him. When Rodolphe takes her for a ride with the intention of overpowering her, one last spark of conscience inspires her to utter "I am wrong! I am wrong! . . . I am mad to listen to you!"(*M.B.* 209). Nevertheless, the forces of evil lull Emma into the abyss as the love so long pent up inside her soul bursts forth. "She tasted it without remorse, without anxiety, without trouble" (*M.B.* 211). Nevertheless, there are repercussions of wrong doing, of violating the moral order. She suffers again in soul and makes an attempt at repentance but is not strong enough to maintain it.

When her affair with Rodolphe breaks off, Emma falls ill and returns to religion with the same passionate zeal that she formerly pursued the adultery with. She turns to excessive charity. She sewed clothes for poor and sent wood to women in childbirth. She has made up her mind to resignation, to universal indulgence (*M.B.* 278). These activities of Emma can be taken as her atonement for violating morality. But the solace she tries to find in religion proves to be futile. Upon meeting Leon at opera, she renews her relationship with him. This will be her denouement, a final depravity which thrusts her over the brink of madness and eventually into the grave.

Though Emma shows some remorse for her transgressing the morality, she is not gravely tortured by guilty conscience as other female protagonists being analyzed in this chapter. The society depicted in the novel is self-absorbed and busy in materialistic pursuits. Emma is not

ostracized from society for her transgression as other female protagonists discussed here. The Yonville society is not so much affected as to react sharply against her with any kind of punitive measures. Self-interest is paramount in this society.

Emma's downfall can also be viewed as mainly due to her being woman in a society in which woman's role was both limited and circumscribed. Emma is not content with the position she is assigned in life and hence seeks fulfilment through adultery. Flaubert infuses a male spirit in feminine body as she is almost masculine as Charles Baudelaire has "adorned her with all the virile qualities". The supreme and tyrannical quality of imagination, sudden energy of action, rapidity of decision and immoderate taste for seduction and domination, are the masculine qualities infused in a charming feminine body (Giraud 93). She rejects the stereotypical, fixed gender roles and longs to transcend the boundary of restricted roles. As such, conflict arises between Emma's conventional female role and her increasingly non-conventional urges which result in undermining her social position and eventually lead her to commit suicide. Thus, the repercussion of Emma Bovary's transgressive act is devastating enough to end her life.

Like Flaubert, Tolstoy too in *Anna Karenina*, unravels the layers of society to lay bare the hypocrisy, deceitfulness and self-righteousness of the people. *Anna Karenina* describes the malevolent and venomous society at the same time preaching Christian values. The institution of marriage has been glorified and consecrated. The phallocentric hold on the institution determines the code of behavior for women and the limitations of her space, her elimination and invisibility. Patriarchy permits no alteration to marriage and holds in pity and disdains those who attempt to foil it.

Anna who is trapped in loveless and stifling marriage bond to a cold and bureaucratic Karenin, "a man whose self-esteem was matched by his utter impoverishment to the human

factors involved in the daily business of living together." Tolstoy views him ironically and says that on account of devoting his entire life to government duties "he even lacked the human weakness necessary to fall in love" (Simmons 97). Anna flutters her wings to escape it as her fierce desire to live and experience life is literally quashed to death because society can allow her to exist only in accepted parameters. Marriage is a valuable mode of living and conduct which leaves little scope for individualistic deviations. The process of patriarchal exploitation of marriage and its institutionalization which percolates down to modern times from antiquity is given further reinforcement by the Tolstoy's sermonizing in *Anna Karenina* that female salvation lies within the family system. As Fausset observes: "Anna, who transgresses law of life, not only by breaking her marriage vows but by becoming conscious of herself as a human being with rights and individuality, tastes and distastes, is inevitably punished by God as well as by society" (Fausset 181). Her crime is that she does not let herself obliterated and effaced by the patriarchal hegemony. She is forced to seek solace in the company of other men due to unbearable frigidity of life and emotional battering of her husband. Anna's temperament of passionate intensity comes into conflict with society. As Gary Saul Morson observes:

> Her passion to which she succumbs represents an unstoppable overflow of sheer vitality that makes right or wrong irrelevant, she lives more intensely, more radically than others and so she is bound to come into conflict with society which subsists by hidebound rules and norms" (Morson 64).

The Petersburg society women envy her for her beauty. They cannot ingest her qualities being appreciated in society. So when they hear about her affair; they throw full weight of their scorn at her: "They already prepared lumps of mud to pelt her within due time. Most of the older people and those of highly-placed regretted this impending social scandal" (*A.K.* 171).

There are other women in the novel who commit adultery, like Princess Tversky, Baroness Shilton and Betsy, and are shown as loathsome women, but they are clever enough to maintain the façade whereas Anna's passionate, sincere and intense love knows no social propriety. Blackmur also appreciates her struggle for emotional honesty and freedom against constraints of social conventions. He sees in it an example of moral courage. He sees like D.H. Lawrence that her cause is good though her strength is not sufficient (Adelman 82-83). She defies social conventions by willfully betraying her marital vows. That is why she has to bear the author's wrath. Petersburg society ostracizes her and she is excluded from the society of good women and even the women who are morally inferior to her insult her. Petersburg society ladies like Betsy, who have been having affair, refuse to receive and reintroduce her to society when Anna leaves her husband, even though they encourage her affair in the beginning. Countess Vronsky condemns her, ignoring her own numerous past affairs. By showing contempt for the hypocritical society, Tolstoy seems to give the message that only he who is pure has the right to cast stone on others.

Her husband is offended not by her having affair with another person, but he is afraid of the reaction of society. He tells her that "There are certain laws of propriety which one cannot disregard with impunity" (*A.K.* 143). It speaks of the height of deceitful behavior of society and its two-faced mannerism. Anna, however, cannot live according to her own conscience or the conscience of hypocritical society. She must be true to her love and finds herself unable to lie about the passion consuming her life. Her disregard for society's demand for a false front is what offends society, not her affair. We can postulate from Tolstoy's attitude toward society as expressed in the novel, that society condemns Anna for her truth and Tolstoy condemns society for its hypocrisy. While many other characters in the novel have affairs, none suffers the scandal

and social scorn that Anna does. They do not have any compunction or qualm of conscience whereas Anna's tragedy results from the impossibility of transcending a culture of lies.

Alienated completely from society, Emma clings to Vronsky and craves for his constant companionship as she says: "It's all over.I have nothing but you left. Remember that" (*A.K.* 147). Winstanley also observes that since Emma is thrown entirely upon Vronsky's disposal, she becomes desperately jealous as "she is continually tortured by the fear of desertion" (Winstanley 57). She attempts to obtain a divorce from Karenin so that her position can be regularized, but her husband, fallen under the sway of a malevolent woman refuses. Karenin's cruelty towards Anna is also due to his social conditioning. "The root cause of Karenin's capitulation to Lydia is his internalizing of society's judgment" (Adelman 88).

Anna stakes everything – her name, her honor, her son and her love—and therefore her sense of insecurity is understandable. Her apprehensions are reasonable since the world is closed to her. She is trying desperately to cling to what she is left with--Vronsky. Angus Calder in one of his remarks on Anna rightly says:

> Anna cannot transcend the life of the book, which is the life of a 'society'. She is trapped in a web of relativities and cannot fly out to stand before us as a clear and simple moral symbol. We can locate her tragedy in this fact; she is only what she can be in the world which she lives in and she wants to be much more. She cannot help feeling guilty about her adultery; she must still hanker for her beloved son and weigh Serezha against Vronsky. (Calder 219)

Anna can neither uphold the stoic and self-sacrificing image nor curb her dangerous feminine desires. She does not find it possible to sublimate herself as social conformist or to strike out as rebel. Her social conditioning leads her to believe that she is a "fallen woman". She is not able to

overcome her guilt-ridden psyche. Although she is courageous enough to elope with Vronsky but there is no peace for her even in romantic place like Venice because her conscience too travels with her. She constantly feels that she deserves all the humiliation and misery she is subjected to.

Amy Mandelkar quotes Evan accusing Anna of failing to act to destabilize or resist the patriarchy: "Far from resisting conventions, Anna internalizes their constraints" (Mandelkar 39). She transgresses the ethics of a patriarchal society yet fails to redeem herself and thus remains an acquiescent convict of the patriarchy. *Anna Karenina* reflects Tolstoy's conservative attitude towards issues pertaining to women. Tolstoy creates Anna with revolutionary/ Rousseausque ideas and in the beginning she appears to be overthrowing meaningless social conventions which hamper her way to fulfill natural desires. Anna and Vronsky try to live in the pride of their passion and gather enough courage to escape to Italy. But after her return from Italy to Petersberg they have to face the public resentment. Anna, offended by society's scorn, succumbs to the public pressure as she cannot bear her isolation. Due to lack of societal support, she gives way to utter despair. This weakness created in Anna by Tolstoy deeply offended D.H. Lawrence who comments thus:

> Tolstoy betrays Anna by not giving her enough strength to fight society on equal terms. He creates her 'with a definite weakness . . . a certain inevitable and unconquerable adhesion to the community'. . . .He held Tolstoy, along with other nineteenth century writers guilty of immorality by failing to transcend their culture. Tolstoy is guilty of immorality when he attributes to Anna and Vronsky a mortal horror of society and then exploits their tragedy for a moralizing purpose (qtd. in Adelman 123-124).

Anna's over possessiveness kills Vronsky's love as "her love grows more and more passionate and his dwindles and dwindles" (*A.K.* 752). Anna wants him to give himself to her

more and more completely. Due to her sense of loneliness, she clings to Vronsky and repeatedly seeks reassurance of his love towards herself. Her mental obsession with possessiveness reaches to the extent of insanity. Her demand of ceaseless expression of love irritates Vronsky so much that he starts thinking about getting rid of her. She does not want Vronsky to lose intensity of passion: "She sees that Vronsky wants to relax, to be kind and familial, but for her that would be hell, 'for where love ceases, there hate begins', she realizes her compulsive need to make Vronsky suffer for the suffering he has caused her" (Bayley 226). Hence, he withdraws and his growing indifference confirms her fear. She feels wounded by her indifference and turns to ever more defiant behavior. Vronsky's romantic passion begins to die away now. The essence of romantic love is mystery. The moment the element of mystery is lost, the alluring power of romantic love declines. Now Vronsky is no more captivated by the bewitching charm of Anna; even he is offended by it as Winstanley remarks: "The incessant scenes of jealousy followed by passion and passion followed by jealousy strain his patience to the breaking point" (Winstanley 58).

A feeling of hatred of herself and also towards Vronsky wells up in Anna's heart. All her efforts to give meaning to the socially intolerable position by rekindling intense passion in Vronsky fail. She becomes exceedingly irritable and blames him for his callousness. The more desperately she tries to clutch at him, the more he resents her power. She is deeply enraged as she feels everything slipping away from her grasp. Terrified by her fear, she finds nothing to sustain. Her perception of reality gets distorted and she starts blaming him for loving the young Princess Sorokina. She is pricked by her conscience and thinks that what she has done is unpardonable. She expresses her horrified feeling thus:

"What am I? A depraved woman. A stone round your neck! I don't wish to torment you, I

> don't! I'll set you free. You don't love me, you love someone else!" (*A.K.* 734). She seems to be possessed by evil spirit and resolves to avenge on him by committing suicide and thinks that only then he will feel remorse and will suffer on her account and will love her. "If I die he too will repent, will pity me, will love me and will suffer on my count" (*A.K.* 734).

Anna comes to know that her fantasies are not realizable in this world. Her demand of exclusive concern from Vronsky is not responded favorably by him. Vronsky proves to be another Karenin and strives to be absorbed in worldly business other than love making by getting rid of Anna. Finding her fantasies unrealizable in life, she commits suicide and expects that Vronsky will repent and love her exclusively after death. Delving deep into Anna's psychological state, we may conclude that the reason for Anna's suicide is not a sense of impossibility of life with Vronsky, but her sense of isolation that crushes her. Had Anna not been isolated from society, she would not have clung to Vronsky so desperately and their relations would not have been strained by unreasonable demands as it happened. John Bayley writes in this regard that:

> It is her sense of being outcast from the kind of society in which she is most naturally at home, and where at the beginning of the book she was at home, that gives her final despair. . . . Ordinary society has not so much excluded Anna as simply failed to see how much she needs it. She has become accepted as being a different sort of person, and to her this is the final loneliness (Bayley 227-228).

Anna wants Vronsky always near her and resents any activity which takes her away from him. She has sacrificed too much to settle for anything less than passion:

> Anna's intensity can never find a fitting object, since no human being is large enough to

> receive it. She does all she can to make Vronsky as passionate as she is, but her craving to excite even greater demonstrations of passion is inevitably thwarted. The only possible end for her is self-destruction (Adelman 79).

This intensity of passion makes her almost hysterical and the author has exemplified her hysteria in the scene when she stands before her mirror, gazing at the swollen face with glittering eyes. "Why, it is me! She suddenly understood, and looking around, she seemed all at once to feel his kisses on her, and twitched her shoulders, shuddering. Then she lifted her hand to her lips and kissed it. "What is it? Am I going mad!" (*A.K.* 744).

The other transgressors do not show any sign of guilty conscience. Stiva's dalliances do not bother him because "his internal morality is almost entirely hedonistic: he sees it as natural and good that a robust man like himself should enjoy all the sensual aspects of life" (Alexandrov 196). After Anna and Vronsky consummate their passion, her reaction is so intense that she is unable to express it. In addition to joy and horror she feels deeply criminal and guilty. "My God! Forgive me!" She said, sobbing and pressing Vronsky's hand to her breast, "she felt so guilty, so much to blame, that it only remained for her to humble herself and ask to be forgiven but she had no one in the world now except him, so that even her prayer for forgiveness was addressed to him" (*A.K.* 146).

Thus, the repercussions of Anna's sexual transgression are multiplex as Alexandrov observes "The spontaneous upwelling of her moral sense from 'inside' her is manifested in such reactions as the profound grief, revulsion, and disorientation she feels when she first falls" (Alexandrov 195). Anna's moral sense is also manifested in her ability to reveal to Vronsky or anyone else the pain and guilt that separation from her son usually causes her. Anna's inherent moral sense is in accord with societal norms as Alexandrov states: "We repeatedly see her sense

of guilt reinforced from the outside via the insults and rebuffs she receives" (Alexandrov 196). Anna is constantly tormented by the competing demands of passion and morality. Her ultimate suicide is caused by her overwhelming sense of guilt, her alienation from society and her intense feeling of insecurity.

Both, *Madame Bovary* and *Anna Karenina*, deal mainly with the transgressions of the female protagonists. Both the heroines are extremely beautiful and their intensity of passion is no match to that of their husbands. Both of them are trapped in loveless marriage. The basic difference between the two is that Emma is more concerned about wealth and raising her social and financial status than about men. She is preoccupied with the idea of the fabulous and exciting life that money can bring. So different from a typical female is Emma that Charles Baudelaire views Madame Bovary in masculine light. Emma's unhappiness stems from the fact that she is treated as a woman whereas she has all the masculine traits. Anna, however, is totally concerned with searching for the perfect mate. She belongs to the aristocratic family, and unlike Emma, gaining wealth and raising social status is not her pursuit.

Both these female protagonists reject the stereotypical gender roles of motherhood and wifehood. In order to survive in a patriarchal setup, one has two choices: either accept its norms and validate one's membership, or be thrown out of it if one cannot conform. It is this conformity that most women turn to, but Emma and Anna rebel and openly oppose their traditional upbringing. They negate the feminine virtues of care and nurturing. These very virtues are traditionally held symbolic of ideal womanhood. If a woman fails to display these virtues she is branded unfeminine or masculine as Emma and Anna are by their respective societies. These traditional feminine virtues are encouraged to be imbibed by women. They are supposed to curb their own wishes and nurture individuality of others. But Emma and Anna are not ready to hide

their desires as they are conscious about these. They reject societal expectations to curb their natural instincts and imbibe the role of traditional women. They also chose to live for themselves and go where few women dare to go because they wish to be treated not as weak, unthinking stereotypical women. They focus not on their roles as wives and mothers but rather on themselves.

Both Emma and Anna transgress the traditional moral codes but the repercussions for their lapses vary in view of the different societies these women inhabit. The French society depicted in *Madame Bovary* is self-absorbed and as James aptly puts it "unsuspecting, unassisting and unconsoling" (Gervais 46). That is why Emma's transgression does not elicit such a harsh judgment from the society as in case of Anna. Although her violations of social morality cause rumors in the society, but Emma is not as alienated as Anna. The Russian society is highly hypocritical and the society's double moral standards are thoroughly exposed by the author. Anna is punished by her society for her honesty and sincerity in love whereas other transgressors are spared from the wrath of society as they succeed in maintaining the society's propriety and individual façade. Emma's social conditioning is different from that of Anna and that is why she does not suffer from mental anguish as much as the latter. Emma's crisis of guilt-ridden conscience is not as profound as that of Anna who is killed by the pricks of her conscience.

III

The God of Small Things can be read as a story of crime and punishment as Arundhati Roy depicts various characters in the novel who suffer as a consequence of transgressing, breaking social taboos. She examines and critiques social norms and values which over centuries have become part of a caste, class and gender-based society. The local fictional world of a south

Indian village extends into a universal one with its sensitive portrayal of perennial conflicts. The Indian society is replete with socio-cultural codes which constrain people's lives in various ways. Yet the possibility of successfully constructing human subjectivity depends on each individual and free will. The novel's core issue is the assertion of biology/ nature against custom/ nurture and this assertion is represented through sexual transgression.

The social norms are called "Love Laws" in the novel: "The laws that lay down who should be loved and how much" (*TGST* 33). The novel mainly deals with the breaking of these love laws by Ammu, Velutha, Rahel and Estha and the consequent punishment. According to R. K. Dhawan: "*The God of Small Things* demonstrates the virtually unbroken tradition and almost unquestioned role of these "love laws" in configuration of a conflict between their defenders and their challengers" (Dhawan 122). Thus, on one side of the dividing line we have Mammachi, Baby Kochamma, Chacko, Comrade Pillai and Inspector Mathews, on the other side we have Ammu, Velutha, Rahel and Estha, who are individualized, modern, questioning human beings and who are the antagonists in the struggle against the "love laws".

The women characters (Baby Kochamma and Mammachi) depicted in the novel symbolize the "ideal" women in Indian tradition who suffer all kinds of atrocities but are altruistically loyal to patriarchal prescriptions to maintain the "web of connections" so that no one is left out (Singh 41). Ammu emerges as a rebel in the novel as she challenges patriarchal societal norms. She is not ready to abide by the role assigned to her by the society. Her deviant behavior shows that she deliberately wants to flout social propriety. She smokes, has midnight swims and becomes an "unmixable mix." Her activities can be seen as her attempt to assert her own identity which the author wants to bring to light by contrasting her with other characters that effaced themselves in the service of others. According to John E. Abraham, "Baby Kochamma

brought up under the Victorian era of morality, does not seem to be obsessed with woman's needs as Ammu is. She graciously accepts the man-less-woman-state, while Ammu quarrels with it" (Abraham 115). Mammachi and Baby Kochamma, despite being women, have no qualm in accepting the notions of men's needs but could not accept the notion of "woman's needs" (Dodiya and Chakravarthy 34).

Ammu's transgression is contrasted with Chacko's (her brother) to show the duplicitous moral standards of the society – one for the men and other for the women. Ammu transgresses the social norms by marrying outside her community, without the consent of the family. She brings "shame" to her whole family, as for a young Christian woman from upper middle class; Bengali Hindu is not the right kind of man to marry. The Ayemenem family is so much outraged by her independent decision that they do not even bother to respond to her letter. Chacko also marries outside the community but without any reaction from family or society. As such, there are some who are allowed to transgress more than others as Brinda Bose rightly observes that "women's transgressions are generally more easily condemned; as are those to do with the 'love laws'" (Bose 93).

As their marriage is about to break, Ammu's husband asks her to spend some private time with his boss. When she refuses, he beats her in punishment for not obeying him, as if she does not really have a choice. When his violence extends to even her children, she leaves him and returns to live in Ayemenem house again. Sanjay Kumar sees her dilemma as the general predicament of the Indian women, "Victimized by the males around, Ammu appears to be a perfect scapegoat who, as Simone de Beauvoir observes, leaves one master in her father behind and chooses the other one in her husband. 'is easily victimized'" (Ali 158). Her return is seen as even more scandalous as marrying a stranger. The reason why Ammu leaves her husband is

irrelevant, no matter how terrible her husband is. According to conventional Indian thinking, divorce is a worse crime. Binoo K. John in his article "An Epochal Chonicle" published in *India Today* remarked:

> Passion and madness run wild in Ayemenem House and after breaking the rule all return to live out their lives. Chacko comes back after his marriage to Margaret is broken, Ammu returns with her twins when her marriage is broken and later Rahel will return after her marriage is over. The Ayemenem house is antidote to the Diaspora (John 117).

Ammu is treated as an outsider. She is cast out of the family and lives with her twins as an outcaste/ untouchable. Baby Kochamma for one can never be convinced about Ammu's stay at her parental home. She, in a sense, perpetuates the male point of view and exemplifies discrimination in female-female relationships.

Roy contrasts family's attitude towards Chacko for the same crime. Ironically, "a daughter estranged from the husband, is tortured and tyrannized in her parental house, whereas Chacko (the estranged son) is not only received warmly but also remains the rightful inheritor of the family's wealth and fortune" (Prasad 153). She is held in double contempt by the members of her family for marrying outside her community and then divorcing her husband. When Ammu sees her twins, she is filled with extreme pity as they have ever remained unloved, uncared for (*TGST* 43).

In fact, it is the humiliating neglect of Ammu and her children that draws her to Velutha, who not only cares for her but also treats her children with such paternal indulgence. The twins feel happy and at ease in his company as he makes them happy. She is also able to observe that Velutha "housed a living, breathing anger against the smug, ordered world that she raged against" (*TGST* 176). Both synchronize at a subtler and deeper level:

> Both Ammu and Velutha suddenly have an epiphanic vision of what history has done to them and what they should do to avenge themselves on it. The marks, scars and wounds that society had inflicted upon them suddenly became fresh. 'Centuries telescoped into one evanescent moment'" (Pathak 116).

Although Ammu and Velutha's consummation of their relationship seems justifiable as it originates from the inner core of their hearts, but their quest for and realization of the personal truth also means acting in opposition to the social norms of society. They stick to their delight and fulfillment remaining fully aware of the opinion of others and the consequences of their actions. According to Bhargava, "Their greatness lies in the fact that while disastrous consequences stared them threateningly into their faces, the lovers remained blissfully composed in their attitude, maintaining stoic equanimity" (Bhargava 91). They search for no escape routes; they only stick to small things. They both are rebels against repression and this fact unites this couple. Ammu is utterly neglected, discarded Syrian Christian divorcee while Velutha is socially outcast untouchable, they make a common cause. They have striven to seek fulfillment and get rid of psychic disharmony tailed with despair and anguish and live a more meaningful life founded on a concrete feeling of relationship. K.M. Pandey observes that the inevitable failure of Ammu-Velutha relationship is foreshadowed in the dream he sees one night. She sees a cheerful man with one arm holding her close by the light of an oil lamp. He has no other arm with which to fight the shadows that flicker around him on the floor: "If he touched her, he couldn't talk to her, if he loved her, he couldn't leave, if he spoke he couldn't listen, if he fought, he couldn't win" (*TGST* 217).

Obviously, he is this god of loss, the god of small things whose relationship with Ammu is bound to be broken. And this is what happens eventually (Dhawan 178). This dream of Ammu

has been interpreted in various ways by the critics. G.D. Barche calls this dream highly symbolic which expresses another truth of life:

> It is the destiny of man that he can do and have one thing at a time. For instance, when Ammu has marriage license, she has no satisfaction and joy from her husband; later on she has joy and satisfaction from Velutha, but she has no marriage license and that leads to her suffering and death. . . . Indirectly Arundhati Roy is reaffirming the Indian Upnishadic belief that man is incomplete (Apurna) and obliquely suggests that God, the Brahma, alone is complete (Purna)" (Ali 139).

The entire community is horror-struck and indignant when their relationship is publically known. They have broken social traditions, and as usual, are punished for this. In fact, such a love is inexorably followed by fear, torment and guilt. One trembles to see the punishment meted out to offenders by the keepers of social order since history always "collects its dues from those who break its laws" (*TGST* 55).

Baby Kochamma shudders at the thought of Ammu's affair with Velutha as she says: "How could she stand the smell? Haven't you noticed? They have a peculiar smell, these Paravans" (*TGST* 257). Mammachi feels a sense of shame and contempt as Ammu has "defiled a generations of breeding" (*TGST* 258). Ammu and Velutha suspended their caste beliefs willingly in order to seek an infinite joy. But it has its consequences as "social stigma in concert with family orthodoxy spreads its diabolical tentacles over the relationship of upper caste Ammu with lower caste Velutha because it vehemently defies all socially constructed restrictions" (Singh 179).

The Indian woman, who dares to cross the boundaries of caste is to face the most hideous form of ostracization and stands on the fringes of Indian society. It is the consequence of conflict

between History and human desire for happiness. It is the lesson the Big God imposes on the Small God when the former demands obeisance but the latter defies. Ammu does not follow the "love laws" and hence she has lost her identity. Ammu follows her heart and refuses to follow the restrictions of society or the laws that history imposes on woman in pursuit of her desire. Her transgression entails grave repercussions.

Ammu is locked in a room "locked away like the family lunatic in a medieval household" (*TGST* 252). When Ammu goes to the police station and tells Inspector Thomas Mathews that a mistake has been made and that she wants to make a statement, he taps her breasts with his baton as though he is choosing mangoes from a basket. The inspector tells her that Kottayam Police did not take statement from the *veshyas* or their illegitimate children. Ammu is shocked to hear these words and is taken away to live a life without her beloved children and they too lead a life without their dear mother. Her health deteriorates and one day she is seen dead by the sweeper. There was no one to shed tears on her death. The church refuses to bury her and wrapped in a dirty bed sheet, she is sent to the crematorium where beggars, abandoned people are cremated (*TGST* 162).

Velutha too is falsely implicated in a kidnapping and murder case. The policemen go to his house and beat him mercilessly: "Boot on bone. On teeth. The muffled grunt when a stomach is kicked in. The muted crunch of skull on cement. The gurgle of blood on a man's breath when his lung is torn by the jagged end of a broken rib" (*TGST* 308). Velutha lost consciousness and movement as his skull was fractured, nose and both his cheek bones smashed, upper lip split open, six teeth broken, ribs splintered and his left lung pierced (*TGST* 310). As such, torture, grief and painful separation are the end of forbidden relationship.

The transgression of Ammu causes a great damage to the life of her children as well. The

shattered relationship in the family keeps them deprived of protection and care: "A denial of security and love, that is the lot of Ammu, casts its shadow on her children right from their infancy" (Sharma and Talwar 70). The inharmonious atmosphere of their home has a detrimental effect on them: "Their tragic flaw is their vulnerability and their ill luck to be born and grow up in an environment of psychological violence" (Bhatt and Nityanandam 24). They become the victim of wickedness of everyone in Ayemenem house and are constantly reminded of their lack of legal position and belongingness in the Ayemenem house. Even the household servant of Ayemenem house, Kochu Maria does not hesitate to remind them of their otherness: "These aren't your beds. This isn't your house" (*TGST* 83). The children constantly harbor a feeling of anxiety. When they are scolded by their mother, the twins become very apprehensive about being loved a little less by her.

Rahel and Estha, like their mother, bear the brunt of patriarchal domination and psychological torture. Neglected both in home and outside they become the object of suffering pity, and contempt. Nandini Nayar in her article on "Twin (Un)certainties--Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*" narrates the afflictions of the twins and the disparity of dealing with Sophie Mol and the twins: "The twins live in this world only on sufferance . . . Sophie Mol is loved from the beginning" (*TGST* 186). The twins are expected to pay the price for being loved. Ammu expects good behavior and absolute compliance as her due for loving them. Baby Kochamma tries to transform the two egg twins, Rahel and Estha, into cultural ambassadors of India to their British cousin who is two years older to them. She expects perfection in English and expects them to learn a car song too. Sophie Mol is not expected to follow any such rules or pay dues to be loved: "Such a distressed reception of Estha necessitates the presence of an escape route to a safer place. And, therefore, twins create their own world" (Dodiya and Chakravarthy

82).

Rahel is always haunted by the nightmarish experiences she gathered in her childhood. After the death of Ammu, she lost the last mooring and begins to drift from school to school. She spent eight years in college without finishing the five years undergraduate course and taking her degree. During her stay in college she met McCaslin and drifts into marriage. Her husband was offended by her indifferent eyes--which "behaved as though they belonged to someone else" (*TGST* 19). Within a few days, Rahel was divorced like her mother Ammu. Estha develops a nature of taciturnity and living seclusion due to the viciousness and savagery of his family members. The twins withdrew themselves from the society and they also developed philosophic attitude of indifference towards the world around. As they have no hope outside they seek solace in each other's arms.

Ammu and Velutha's transgression can be read as a potent endeavor to break with the established order and to give voice to the most marginalized people in Indian society: women and low castes. Moreover, their act of rebellion though subdued has significant impact on the next generation represented by Estha and Rahel as they continue the struggle. Estha and Rahel's final transgression of boundaries can be read as a way to reconnect, to mend what was once broken by their family members. This transgression can be interpreted positively as a powerful break with the oppression, social codes of conduct. Like Ammu and Velutha, Rahel and Estha dare to assert their emotional needs and risk alternative, unchartered ways of living.

IV

The transgressors in the five novels being examined here have to face the repercussion of their acts as they suffer differently for violating the socio-cultural code of moral conduct in their respective societies. The punishment inflicted on these violators by their societies, vary in its

intensity. Some of them reconcile to their respective societies and are rehabilitated while others perish, unable to cope with the sufferings inflicted on them. In these novels, the leitmotif called love and betrayal is intricately woven with innumerable issues: marriage, religion, existential dilemmas, societal rigidity, the laws of the time and its prejudices against women. The burgeoning individualism of the protagonists is annihilated by the social laws. Very often, the conflict arises in these novels between the demands of instincts and social morality. The undying passion of the protagonists comes in conflict with rigid moral codes of society.

After analyzing transgressive acts of various characters committed in different socio-cultural settings, their repercussions have been examined above. One may comparatively conclude that as punishment for the breaking of age old social ethics, the transgressors are ostracized in most socio-cultural climes. They are treated as if they are infected with some contagious disease. The guardians of socio-cultural code/ laws ensure that they should not be sympathized with and that they should not be allowed any interaction whatsoever possible in society. The characters who have conventional understanding of sin and crime suffer the pangs of conscience and perish, whereas those who have strong faith in their individual beliefs survive. Hester, Chandri and Ammu have strong faith in their personal beliefs. Nowhere in the course of novel do they entertain any feeling of compunction as they believe that they have not done anything wrong. That is why they have no qualm of conscience, whereas, Arthur Dimmesdale, Praneshacharya, Anna and to some extent even Emma are conditioned by the social morality and have a strong sense of guilt and shame. They feel themselves alienated from society and are unable to bear this shock. They are tormented by the dichotomy of thoughts. They are unable to resist their inner craving for freedom and sexual fulfillment and at the same time are unable to bear the counter-pressure of societal norms. Their overwhelming sense of guilt kills them.

Nearly all the novelists sympathize with the transgressors in one way or the other, and while analyzing their immorality, have also exposed societal hypocrisy to reveal their inner substance, not as it appears to be but as it actually is. The societies depicted in these novels whether they are the French, the American, the Russian or the Indian society, are hypocritical, malicious, static, rigid, biased, evil and deceitful. The protagonists who violate the codes of conduct of these moribund societies are rebels and also ahead of their times, superior to their societies as they are more sensitive than others. That is why they feel like smothered in these kinds of societal set-ups. The authorial stance is that of disgust and denunciation for these societies.

The deviance from the socially prescribed role is given negative connotation by the respective societies. The authors of almost all the societies depicted in these novels repudiate it adopting different narrative techniques such as irony, sarcasm, satire, etc. The tradition bound societies in the novels consider denial/suppression of individuality as a great virtue but almost all the authors have brought to surface the strong point that it is being true/ honest about individuality and sexuality which is of great worth.

The overstepping of social barriers by the transgressors like Ammu, Velutha, Anna, Emma and Hester in the novels being analyzed here is treated as dangerous misdeed in their respective societies. The transgressors become doubly wicked objects of condemnation first because they cross the limit/ line and second because they cause danger to others. Their "gratifying repressed desire is bound to be kindled in all the other members of the community" (Freud 71-72). Hence, they receive harsh retribution from their respective societies. In order to restrain these individuals from pursuing their instincts and to render them social, their societies impose constraints on them. That is why "Constraint is a constant experience in the action of the

individuals in a society" (Jenks 7). These constraints are invoked to maintain collective life as they are resistant to the individual will. They are not tangible but are experienced as invisible prison walls. The society everywhere in the world recognizes adult and heterosexual alliance preferably qualified by ethnicity, religion and even by social class. Any deviance from these acceptable/ permissible relationships is relentlessly resented by every society across the world as evident through socio-cultural analyses of the novels.

The conventional, stagnant and patriarchal societies depicted in these novels are vicious, duplicitous and wicked as they expect the individuals to uphold external facade and societal propriety. The protagonists of the novels like Ammu, Hester, Emma and Anna pay heavy prices for being true to their individuality. Naranappa in *Samskara,* and Hester in *The Scarlet Letter* are made target of the attack of their respective societies, although they perceptively sense lust, greed and hollowness of life in the so called highly ethical and principled societies. Anna is suppressed brutally for deviance from her conventional, domestic existence and her failure to keep appearance, whereas other transgressors in the Russian hypocritical society are accepted as well as honored.

Most of the female protagonists are victims of patriarchal societies that strive to strictly limit their living space. Hester Prynne, Ammu, Emma and Anna are all "sisters in struggle". These female protagonists question the roles assigned to them as wives, daughters, and mothers and refuse to be the object of social/ cultural oppression by the age old patriarchal society. Being intelligent and sensitive, they feel choked due to male-defined moral codes of life. The closed mindset and the choking environment in which these female protagonists are placed induce them to rebel against family as well as society. They are constantly at war with their inner selves because they are impelled to suppress their instincts. Their transgressions can be seen as author's

potent weapon to dismantle the social hierarchy and gender oppression. The novels seem to imply that the traditional ways of life are changing and women are starting to think in a different way. They are deconstructing stereotyped representation, established sexist prejudice. Some of the struggles that the main women characters face are the result of the inner workings of their minds, their personal perplexities and social confrontations as individuals growing into themselves.

The treatment meted out to the women transgressors starkly exposes the disparities cultivated and practiced between the sexes in patriarchal societies. There is ample textual evidence of this discrepancy. As in *Anna Karenina,* Stephen Oblonsky is rarely questioned for his sexual transgressions whereas Anna is castigated for the same act. In *The God of Small Things*, Ammu's sexual /emotional needs are totally neglected whereas Chacko's needs are well taken care of. Emma in *Madame Bovary*, is used as an object, played with and discarded by the patriarchal society. In *Samskara* too, women are treated merely as sexual objects. Their emotional needs, feelings, likes and dislikes are never heeded.

As such, the repercussion aspect of transgressive acts as depicted in the novels examined above clearly evidences that sexual transgression does not go unpunished in any society. It entails suffering, sense of compunction, torture (both physical as well as psychological), grief, pain, anguish, humiliation, penance/atonement and also suicide or death which is premature. Not all transgressors have the courage to endure the repercussion of transgression with fortitude as they give in to their suicidal impulse. Nevertheless, there are others who hold their ground and stay rocklike to fight their battle to the end without giving up.

Chapter IV

Culmination of Transgression: Reconciliation and Realization

Having discussed repercussions of transgression in diverse socio-cultural climes in the last chapter, it will be worthwhile to examine issues concerning culmination of transgression along with examining how the transgressors reconcile with their fate followed by analysis of their final realization which determines their future course of action in this chapter. The focus will mainly be on the penultimate stage of psychological and socio-cultural upheavals caused by commission of transgression, repercussions of which have been discussed in detailed manner in previous chapters. Another point to explore will be to highlight as to whether socio-cultural response to transgression remains static all through, or does it change with the passage of time.

The term 'culmination' literally implies the point of greatest intensity, or a final climactic stage that also signifies completion of a movement. However, it also signifies a decisive result of our noble demeanor and also behavioral aberrations/deviations in life. 'Reconciliation' in Roman Catholic Church is "a sacrament in which repentant sinners are absolved and gain reconciliation with God and the Church, on condition of confession of their sins to a priest and of performing a penance" (*Collins English Dictionary*). Literally however, 'reconciliation' means reestablishing of cordial relations, resolving of disagreements/conflicts and also settling of differences. After reconciliation, a relationship undergoes from resentment and hostility to friendship and harmony. In order to effect reconciliation, one has to be self-critical and acknowledge self-responsibility for her/his own role in the creation of conflict. Reconciliation is a profoundly humane and complex process: it involves coming to terms with an imperfect reality which demands change in our attitudes, aspirations, emotions, feelings and also in our beliefs. The term 'realization' signifies "coming to understand something clearly and distinctly" (*The Free Dictionary*). It may

also be equated with dawning of understanding under trying circumstances that may cloud one's perception. Even though it is encompassing and wholistic in nature, it has contingent aspect as it happens to a person in view of her/his immediate reality, socio-cultural situation and psycho-spiritual orientation. To put it simply, realization enables a person to perspectivize things better than otherwise.

Nevertheless, to attribute any sense of finality to realization as the final stage in life narratives of various protagonists analyzed in this dissertation would be erroneous. There can neither be an absolute framework nor clinical categorization of realization stage, which, in fact, is fluid. As such, each character tends to sub-serve a larger process of life flux. Transgression of any sort undoubtedly causes a major upheaval in one's life, but it still remains a part of it. Thus the whole notion of transgression has inherent dynamism in it and points towards a future of possibilities and that is why it is fallacious to read any sense of formal closure in it. Moreover, the stages mentioned in the title of this chapter get reflected in the novels in a non-linear fashion, and at times even simultaneously. For instance, in case of Hester and Dimmesdale, all three stages have been systematically worked out. In case of Anna, however, the stages of culmination of transgression and realization of the wrong from socio-cultural perspective are simultaneous. In Naranappa, however, poses a very different sort of challenge as his life and death both test the limits of socio-cultural and religious fabric of agrahara community. He transgresses as a rebel who has issues with the hypocritical tenets and hollow ritual practices of Brahminism. Velutha is a transgressor from the margins who transgresses with complete awareness of how the powers that he could retaliate and perishes at the culmination stage like his paramour Ammu who too has been rebel in more ways than one. As such, this chapter aims at discussing where the repercussion leads the transgressors in the novels being analyzed here thereby showing whether

culmination signifies closure of a life narrative or it opens up possibilities of a movement ahead.

I

In *The Scarlet Letter*, Hawthorne clearly traces the culmination-reconciliation-realization stage in view of the trajectory of Hester's evolution. In fact, the author opens up the possibility of the commission of transgression and then delves into demonstrating the regenerative power of the transgressive act. The novel shows that transgressive act in all its forms has a devastating effect on transgressors and its concealment destroys one's physical, spiritual and moral fiber. However, its confession followed by repentance may also bring salvation. Hester bears the brunt of the puritans' wrath as she is socially condemned for her sexual and moral transgression. She suffers public shame and scorn. The entire world frowns at her and still she bears it all. She is made to wear scarlet letter 'A' as punishment and is also cast out of society. She refuses to disclose the name of her child's father. This refusal gives Hester a greater individuality as she rejects the traditional model of womanhood representing subservience and chooses to project her own meaning. The scarlet letter worn by her on her breast is so fantastically embroidered that it looks fascinating. This creative art of Hester reflects different shades of meaning to different scholars. For instance, for Shari Benstock, "Hester's embroidery makes a spectacle of feminity, of female sexuality, of all that Puritan law hopes to repress. Hester subverts patriarchal sign by adding a non-linguistic feminine subtext to it, making the symbol stand for 'woman'" (Benstock 289). By virtue of her art, Hester draws the stare more absorbedly to the symbol on her breast and accepts her isolation voluntarily than the inhuman decree of the magistrates.

Hester shows an extraordinary power of endurance. She accepts her role as an outcast along with societal revulsion and insults. Gradually, she becomes more and more alienated and withdraws from the social concourse. She begins journey inwards which places her far beyond

her time and age. Hester is a figure of strength, fecundity and wholeness. Our impression of Hester's strength resides to a great extent in our impression of her enormous effect on Dimmesdale. She is a great source of strength and confidence for Dimmesdale who requests her to "Think for me. Thou art strong. Resolve for me!" Dimmesdale pleads for her advice further: "Be thou strong for me! . . . Advise me what to do" (*TSL* 141). Hester is an ideal example of iconic incorruptibility as she stands on the scaffold with Pearl in her arms: "the image of Divine Maternity which so many illustrious painters had vied with one another to represent" (*TSL* 256). Quan Wang perceptively comments on Hester's strength thus:

> Apart from this physical battle of rescuing Dimmesdale, Hester also serves as his spiritual guide to see the truth: with her care, love and encouragement. Hester plays an indispensable role in enabling him to be honest with himself and the public: to declare his secret 'A' letter to the mass . . . . Her love and guidance also enable him to experience a transformed new life (Wang 8).

Hester tries to infuse courage in the weakling Dimmesdale as he seems to her losing his nerve completely. When Dimmesdale shows his helplessness due to the mighty task of self-confession before him, Hester tries to buoy him up with her own energy and exhorts him to leave it all behind and move ahead afresh. She also tells him to travel outward to the anonymity of Europe or the unchartered wilderness of nature to break out of the prison of his identity. He must escape the ring of observing eyes around him and trust whatever springs naturally from the heart. Being an apostle of individual freedom, Hester does not want life to be confined by the social mores hampering individual growth as Sujata Gurudev comments: "Having gone beyond the social mores, Hester Prynne graduates to an individual freedom. She only pays outward obedience to a system which has no further power upon her spirit" (Gurudev 55). Hester's

strength lies in her strong belief and firm conviction as she never gives way to traditional viewpoint about sin/ salvation and never allows her spirit to be undermined by the stern puritan retort. The growth of her individuality remains unchecked by social conventions as social law is no law for her. She believes in her own morality which she never violates. Thus, in her case, society's obsolete and irrational moral laws cannot become obstacles in her chartered path, as it usually happens. Robert Stanton observes the temperamental contrast between Hester and Dimmesdale thus:

> Hester's and Dimmesdale's temperaments are marked by their conception of their inner selves and their image of the natural flow of energy in their lives. Hester sees her life as a flow of energy from this inner self outward through her judgment, emotions and will. We can label her "emanative". Dimmesdale's is the opposite. He sees his inner self as an entity to be continually examined and conceives of his life as an inward flow of energies towards his inner self, the source of this flow being his own self scrutiny, his society or God. We can label his temperament "introceptive" (Stanton 475).

Dimmesdale's "introceptive" temperament has the hallmarks of the Puritans who investigate their soul for signs of sin, constantly predisposed to the expectations of the community or of God. The novel is built around the interplay between their temperaments and philosophical positions that they adopt.

Isolation is inflicted upon Hester but it does not pervert her moral personality as she emerges as a woman of tender human sympathies within cold and intolerant society. She maintains her calm demeanor and "dignity" in the face of "tribulation" and treats her societal "alienation" as "a source of vitality and creativity" (Tomc 474). She develops relationship with society on a newer and more honest basis. By accepting the punishment meted out to her by the

puritan community, Hester seeks to reunite herself with the law of the order which she had violated earlier. She completely transcends her own self to merge with the larger sphere of human activity. At the end of the novel, we see a completely transformed Hester, quite different from the egotistical and arrogant Hester of the beginning. She stops battling with the world and reconciles with her situation as Ernest Sendeen remarks: "In the years that follow, Hester comes gradually to play a part in the community which expresses in sublimated form the love that she is prevented from expressing directly" (qtd. in Bradley 374).

Her life becomes a saga of commitment to the ideal of selfless love and service. She renders service to the puritan community not as atonement for her sin, but on her own volition to dedicate herself to the service of the afflicted and the needy. Her isolation which is inflicted on her as a punishment for her transgressive act by her community proves to be boon in disguise for her. She turns to deep thought and meditation and comes to the realization that her salvation lies in service of the people. A.N. Kaul rightly says that Hester does not leave the Boston society but instead opts willingly to serve the humanity settling on the outskirts of the colony: "While society has caste her off, she herself has not lost hold of the magnetic chain of humanity" (Kaul 182). Hester develops an indifference to the scarlet letter and becomes an activist in the service of society. Her charity to the poor, her comfort to the broken-hearted, her unquestioned presence in the times of trouble are the signs that exemplify how she has carved a new role for herself in the society and how she binds herself to the humanity in the true sense.

Dimmesdale, on the other hand provides a perfect foil to Hester. Although he lives amidst puritan community, but deep in his heart he feels like segregated from the society. His guilt-ridden psyche prevents any authentic interaction with community. He has a compulsive need to be appreciated by them. According to Sujata Gurudev,

> Hawthorne's psychological probing into Dimmesdale is perhaps the finest portrait of a guilt stricken conscience. Hester has her own individual standing whereas Dimmesdale has a frail personality and is highly dependent on society. He cannot go up against its moral dictates and its loyalty. He wants to be a great figure in the eyes of people and needs to be adorned by them (Gurudev 56-57).

This adoration and love of society hampers his making a direct confession. Dimmesdale's mortified awareness of sin is due to his position as a religious minister. He is steeped in the religious orthodoxies of the puritan world. He believes that he has fallen from the high pedestal of priesthood and is therefore constantly haunted by the sense of guilt that destroys his peace of mind. He does not want his public esteem to be ruined; therefore he hypocritically continues to wear a mask of piety.

Hester's strong conviction nowhere is seen to be wavering that she has not sinned against God and she never feels like separated from Him as a result of her transgression: "She believes that though man has punished her for her sin, God has given her a lovely child. God, then, has not looked with unkindness upon her deed" (Gerber 107). That is why she does not feel guilty deep down. Although Hester is conscious of having wronged her husband and having dishonored the moral codes of society, she confidently believes that she has not violated her own moral principles. That is why by wearing scarlet letter, her heart has not been touched though she submits to public exhibition. It is quite evident by the composure with which she enthusiastically climbs the scaffold with her letter 'A'. Her brilliant and artistic embroidery on the letter also manifests her non-acceptance of community ethics. It is also the manifestation of the creative energy of Hester. She does not believe that she is a sinner in the orthodox sense of the word, even though she is aware that she has broken the law of order and introduced chaos in the

organized universe of the puritan society. Lawrence Sargent Hall makes a fitting remark in this context:

> The willing admission of wrong and willing assumption of the obligations incurred by her conduct, while they tend to ostracize Hester, provides her nevertheless with her proper role in the moral life of mankind thereby making her isolation far less terrible than Dimmesdale's. . . . Dimmesdale is isolated through keeping fearfully to himself his true position with respect to society. He well knows the moral disintegration which he faces in failing to take his proper place among men" (Hall 170-171).

Dimmesdale knows that he has sinned against God and social morality both as an individual and as a priest. He is even conscious that by hiding sin he is committing more of the same. But he lacks courage to confess. The cause of his weakness to confess can be traced in his addiction to social recognition and reputation. He does not want to fall in the eyes of his fellow men that had great veneration for him and who adore him for his spiritual wisdom and his austere living. Ignoring his personal morality, he conforms to the social conventions and expectations. He is weighed down with a sense of gratitude towards his puritan community who associates his name with glory and wonder. As Sargent Hall observes that "Dimmesdale – whose ethical perceptions are always greater than his courage to live up to them – realized which way salvation lay for him, but lacked the strength of will to take it" (Hall 171).

Dimmesdale is overcome with a great horror of mind, as if the universe were gazing at a scarlet token on his naked breast. He reflects that he has fallen from the high ideals and expectations of priesthood and that is why he is constantly haunted by a sense of sin. As he is unable to reveal his sin, this guilt consciousness causes psychological implosions as he loses his peace of mind and indulges in self-flagellations and mental torture which wrecks him physically.

Sara Sheldon insightfully questions: "What happens to a man who struggles to hide a terrible sin in the depths of his heart, but who profoundly believes in God that sees and loves the truth? That is a question Hawthorne surely asked himself in creating the character of Arthur Dimmesdale" (Sheldon 11). Dimmesdale loses touch with himself and literally sinks under the burden of his sin. Sin not only isolates him from God but also from his fellowmen. His encounter with Hester in the forest and the provisional plan to escape with her and Pearl offers no reprieve to him.

During the Election Sermon, Arthur seems to recoup some of his saintly eminence as he is described as an angel. It was the divine mercy which enables him to come out of his mental conflict which was gradually sinking his spirit. His true repentance brings him forgiveness of god. He brushes aside Hester's escape plan and resolutely decides to confess his guilt. In a sense, "The regenerative hands of God descended upon him as the dawn breaks and at last he turns to holy thoughts and will to act in accord with the dictates of his spirit" (Raman 13-14). His dying confession and changed demeanor is a spiritual feat and triumph for him as he had been waging an unending battle within, which damaged his nerves. For the puritan society, however, he had a lofty stature as he had been wearing a mask of piety. But deep in his mind, he had lost his standing and had become a parasite. He looked up to Hester to infuse courage in him to endure the deep mental anguish. He almost survived further downfall when he nearly gets ready to flee with Hester to some distant land in order to start life afresh with her. His acceptance of Hester's proposal "opened a breach in his already seriously weakened character" (Katz 12), which could be seen in his physical energy with which he rushes towards the town after his meeting with Hester in the forest. But his resolve to confess after the Election Sermon is quiet surprising and stands in sharp contrast to his earlier frailty of mind. Her confession is symptomatic of the great moral victory to him. He is so resolved toward the end that he even brushes aside Chillingworth

who tries to prevent him from carrying out his purpose. To quote Waggoner:

> He stretches out his arms in a Christ-like-gesture, forgives his persecutors, and accepts his death as one of triumphant ignominy. . . . He has emerged at last not only into the light of the day but into that which shines from the celestial city. . . . We note that the words that characterize his death as triumphant and suggest a salvation in a life beyond death are his, not Hawthorne's" (Waggoner 149).

The 'A' on Hester's breast represents different things as her story unfolds. For example, as a result of her charitable acts in the community, some people begin to think the "A" stands for 'Able' and when the community sees a scarlet "A" in the sky on the death of John Winthrop's death; they believe it stands for 'Angel.' In fact, even the most severe moral and political guardians of original meaning of "A" letter gradually change their views. The community had intended that wearing it would cause Hester to feel repentant, but she does not. Rather than coming to believe that she must accept her true nature and love others in order to repent, she believes that change should come from society, not from within herself. Harold Bloom comments on the transformation of the meaning of scarlet letter thus:

> As the years pass, the scarlet letter's original reference becomes dim and we see it beginning to acquire a kind of heraldic significance. . . . By the time of Hester's voluntary return from abroad at the end, it has completely lost its stigmatic meaning .... Eventually, Hester achieves the fame of a confidante, almost of the prophetess of the new truth to be revealed to the mankind" (Bloom 26).

Hester endures stoically the torment inflicted on her without losing her poise and dignity. She displays astonishing inner strength. Her sin and the resultant distress teach her a great lesson that ego is the cause of suffering and when one has merged her/his ego with larger humanity, it

gives a sense of contentment as worldly/material expectations evaporate. Hester returns from abroad not for any personal gain or to atone for the sin but for an altogether different purpose. She has found true meaning of life and this revelation has come to her at a high cost. Through the dramatic enactment of the story of Hester and Dimmesdale, Hawthorne has brought to fore the truth that the sufferings and miseries can cause immense mental anguish and pain, but taken positively suffering can result in complete transformation of a person and can lead to her/ his spiritual growth. This is what Hester stands for: transformation and evolution via suffering and mental agony. The isolation imposed by the puritan community as punishment gives Hester an insight into the hearts of the other people and she comes to know about the reality hidden in deeper recesses of their hearts. Hester's suffering makes her turn inwards and after deep reflection and self-analysis, ascertains root cause of her misery. By shedding his sense of self, she engages deeply with the afflicted society and achieves the status of "Sister of Mercy" (*TSL* 117). Hyatt H. Waggoner writes that "Hester's rise takes her from low on the line of moral value, a 'scarlet woman' guilty of a sin black in the eyes of the puritans, to a position not too remote from Wilson's as she becomes a sister of mercy and the light of the sickroom" (Waggoner 149).

Hester's self less service purifies her heart and opens it to receive divine light. She tries to wipe tears of those who were afflicted and removes the sorrow in a man by kind and loving words. She performs her actions detachedly in a spirit of dedication to the divine. She attains the highest degree of self-realization because she is no more identified with her body. She exhibits undaunted spirit and a matchless spiritual strength. She is not bound to anybody, anything, and any place. She has no desire to possess and is identified with the inner self.

The Scarlet Letter can also be interpreted in the light of *Felix Culpa*, a Latin phrase meaning 'fortunate fall'. In the catholic tradition, it refers to the fortunate ruin of Adam in the

Garden of Eden in that his sin brought more good to humanity than if he had stayed perfectly innocent. According to this doctrine, sin is the source of wisdom and spiritual enlightenment. The great wisdom, self-knowledge and spiritual greatness dawns on Hester and Dimmesdale which compensates them for their suffering. Had Dimmesdale not been given the smoldering anguish, and the company of the horrible old physician, Chillingworth, he would not have gained salvation.

Taking cue from Donald Ringe, Charles Child Walcutt views *The Scarlet Letter* from the perspective of fortunate fall: "Through her sin, Hester rises to a greater height than she could ever have attained without her fall, remorse, and long penance" (Walcutt 75). Hawthorne shows Hester as unfazed by harshness of puritan community in which she lived. She is intellectually emancipated as she exhibits great courage in the face of puritan orthodoxy. Viewed comparatively, Dimmesdale is steeped in religious convictions of the puritans. This religious conditioning causes immense mental strife which eats away the actual substance in him. Hester is aware of the hypocritical behavior of the puritan community as she has gained access to the secrets of their hearts. This spiritual insight she has achieved is due to her suffering for her sin. Hester becomes more loving, comprehending and reflective. Her dignified demeanor changes people's attitude towards her. Hester does not accept the imposition of the sense of sin by the puritan community in the form of the badge of shame, the scarlet letter 'A' which she is forced to wear. She uses this social imposition as a weapon to fight back the puritan community. The constantly changing meaning of the scarlet letter symbolizes her moral victory over the dark puritan community. The lofty stature she gains at the end of the novel is the outcome of moral wisdom she gains by enduring sufferings or bitter learning experiences. For Van Doren "Hester becomes a heroine, almost a goddess: she is ancient New England's most heroic creature" (qtd.

in Gerber 75-77).

In the light of the above observations, it can be concluded that Hester and Dimmesdale's transgressive act brings regeneration to them. Hester confronts the blame head on by accepting punishment, and in the process is educated and strengthened by suffering. Through her selfless service to society and her non-confrontational attitude and also through her stainless life for seven years softens the stiff puritans. Society thus accepts her as its natural member more readily. Hester thus, achieves reconciliation with social life. Hester becomes soberer and her haughtiness and arrogance give way to moderation. She acknowledges the realities of life. Toward the end of the novel, we see that she recognizes the futility of all that she has dreamed earlier. The movement of Hester at the end is largely inward although some of her outward flow of feelings remains as she allows herself the pleasure of embroidering garments for Pearl's baby. Thus, Hester's transgressive act attains regenerative quality despite its heinous ring at the beginning as perceived by the puritan society. She gains high spiritual stature and rises above mundane life lived by the puritans. Upon enduring great suffering, she gains insight and spiritual understanding to ultimately reach the realization stage in life characterized by forgiveness, mellowness, clarity and detached contentment.

Like Dimmesdale, Praneshacharya is the head priest of Brahmin society of Durvasapura. He is a profound scholar from Kashi known as the "Crest Jewel of Vedantic Learning" (*Samskara* 17). Being well-versed in the Vedas and the Puranas, his scholarship has won him accolades and spiritual superiority in the entire community as he becomes the arbiter of the village in all matters of religion, ritual and conduct. Nevertheless, the Acharya, despite his spiritual wisdom, is assailed by physical craving as it simmers in his unconscious mind and finds expression through his recitation of holy legends. Thus there is admixture of the "earthly in his

composition," as R.K. Gupta observes:

> There are chinks in Praneshacharya's armory too. Immeasurably superior as he is to other Brahmins of the agrahara, even he has not succeeded in completely banishing the demonic, so that there is an admixture of the earthly in his composition. Although he has practiced rigorous self-denial all his life, he vicariously enjoys the sensuous beauty of heroines in poetry and drama (Gupta 18).

His powerful erotic description of Shakuntla incites the likes of young—Sripati and that is why Naranappa accuses him of ruining Brahmanism: "Acharya-re- didn't the Achari himself corrupt the Brahmanism of the place? Did he or didn't he? That is why our elders always said: read the Vedas, read the Puranas, but don't try to interpret them" (*Samskara* 25). Acharya's obsession with purity (despite lurking sexuality within) has given him lopsided understanding of the physical nature of man.

Praneshacharya, in his eagerness to attain salvation, skips sequential stages of Indian concept of *Varnashrama*. Only after having satisfactorily experienced the first three stages, an individual can attain salvation. *Grihastha Ashrama* is very important stage as other stages do not produce offspring and for the performance of last rites offspring is needed as is evident in case of Naranappa (Gaur 48-49). Moreover, a person must have worldly experience and enjoyment before s/he can embark on spiritual quest. The stirrings of the flesh and blood are needed to be stilled otherwise s/he will become a victim of sensual temptation which often assails a person who tries to master her/his senses and mind. Forceful repression of senses endangers the whole process of spiritual advancement. Life in all its manifestations needs to be faced and lived so that a person is able to rise above all dichotomy and division.

Praneshacharya's sexual experience enables him understand his fellow men. He, who has

maintained a distance from his fellow Brahmins, now feels that he has come down to their level. He is at one with common joys and sorrows of ordinary man. In fact, he had hitherto dethatched himself from the common populace as he was living in a supercilious state of mind remaining cut off from the common rhythm of life. He becomes earthy, fallen from the spiritual height. His coldness and aloofness gradually disappears, and he begins to respond to human affection. He also feels relieved of all authority as S. Nagrajan writes: "Praneshacharya feels a weight has slipped off him, the weight of playing the guru. . . . He calls out silently to Chandri to strike off his shackles, to take down from him his throbbing head, the increasing weight of gurudom" (Nagrajan 119). He feels lightness in thought as he is now a free man, relieved of his responsibility to lead the way, as Murthy narrates: "What manner of man am I? I am just like you—a soul driven by lust and hate" (*Samskara* 77).

Praneshacharya is a transformed man and the change is for better because it provides him a glimpse of the sensual world which had been neglected under the influence of orthodox beliefs: "The desire natural to mere mortals, to tell lies, to hide things, to think of one's own welfare, arose in him for the first time" (*Samskara* 77). Praneshacharya feels his individuality like a caveman who sees the world anew. His encounter with Chandri brings out the disintegration of the authoritarian superstructure of official religious conviction and weakens the foundation of so called dharma.

A huge weight of responsibility of making righteousness and virtue prevail in the agrahara and upholding the highest principles of Brahminism has been removed from his mind as he feels buoyancy and ease. He now wants to breathe fresh air, smell fragrance in the air and taste delicacies of nature with voracious appetite. All his five senses become acute. He looks wonderingly all around and "saw a night of undying stars, spread like a peacock's tail. The

constellation of Seven Sages. . . ." (*Samskara* 67). Nature seems to him an amazingly wondrous as if he is examining it for the first time. Guru Charan Behera remarks that "profusion of these images of touch and smell, and of physicality conveys his intense struggle with the earthly and the physical" (Behera 189).

Praneshacharya finds himself floundering in a new world with which he was not hitherto familiar. He was unaccustomed to its physical aspect. Now for the first time he experiences strong sway of the sensual drives and wants to explore the desires in defiance of those forces that threaten to repress individuality and control sexuality. He notices soaring emotions and bodily sensations for the first time. Sanjoy Seksena observes: "There is a clear shift in thought, from a quest of rigid and painful morality to an acceptance of the many hues that life can take without forewarnings. The pulls are so strong in different directions that his personality itself is split" (qtd. in Gaur 101). Praneshacharya finds it difficult to reject either his past or to overlook his present situation. He is like a new born child who has come to this world with the memory of his past life. His sexual experience with Chandri demolishes completely his shells of egoism and bares him to his natural state. It leaves him with a new anguish and confusion about his true nature, his form. V.S. Naipaul comments on the aftermaths of sexual experience of Acharya thus:

> What has been his defining choice – the long life of sacrifice and goodness, or that barely apprehended sexual moment? He doesn't know; he feels only that he has lost form and that his person is now like 'a demonic premature foetus'. He is bound again to the wheel of *karma*; he has to start again from the beginning and make a new decision about his nature. In the meantime he is like a ghost, cut off from the community of men" (Naipaul 107).

Praneshacharya's journey starts after the death of his wife. His wife epitomizes the sterile

and stultifying life of agrahara. After cremating his wife he leaves the agrahara as he can't face the people who had revered him as the most virtuous person. Her death symbolizes the break with the traditional world of restraint, control and denial. It also symbolizes stifling of spontaneous and natural instincts. The sacrifice in marrying an invalid was for gaining spiritual eminence. Now his outlook undergoes a complete change. He becomes human in the true sense of the word with its likes and dislikes, attachments and aversions. He comes to realize his human weakness – his temptation to the flesh and body. Meenakshi Mukherjee in *Realism and Reality: The Novel and Society in India* remarks:

> From being a dispassionate observer of life he wants to be an involved participator, and in the process he becomes human . . . yet his desire to free himself from deception conflicts with his inability to tell the truth to his community. He does not know whether his inhibitions come from his own pride or a reluctance to let down a community which trusts him, but he knows that his intense self-absorption will not be easily purged (Mukherjee 176).

His journey is very strenuous as he suffers from withdrawal symptoms at every stage. He had distanced himself from the sensuous world and had avoided the pulls and pressures of the physical world. He had surrounded himself with shell of egoism and thought himself above the ordinary people. But after his sexual encounter with Chandri, he comes down to their level. His coldness and aloofness, the characteristics of asceticism gradually disappear and he begins to respond to human affection. His attempt to ignore and subdue his natural self fails miserably. Tejinder Kaur observes in one of her article: "Though he flees from his surroundings he cannot flee from himself. Through a peep into his mind we are shown the fraud of asceticism practiced by him" (Kaur 46). At times his attempt to fuse the old world with the new is typical of

schizophrenia. The decision to confess gets more and more difficult the longer it is postponed. He lacks the will to make an existential decision. He finds he does not have the courage to run the risk of exploding the trust Brahmins have in him, the respect they feel for him.

Praneshacharya's sexual encounter with Chandri culminates in a state of indecision and rethinking and is thus no longer fully committed to the absolutes that marked his life before the crisis. The gap between the previous world and the present one seems to be of abysmal proportion and his attempt at interweaving both is painful. During his journey, Acharya has a chance meeting with Putta, the rustic man in whom nature's rhythm appears to run unimpeded. He introduces Acharya to a natural/demonic world which he had carefully avoided so far. He finds himself entirely lost in this world as he is not familiar with this kind of world. It is during the car festival that Praneshacharya reaches a revelation about his place in the world. This is reconciliation stage in the evolution and growth of Praneshacharya. He realizes "the oneness, the monism, of desire and fulfillment. That art thou" (*Samskara* 121). Everything around him is also part of him; and he, in turn, is part of it all. At the car festival, Praneshacharya finally realizes that he is not only part of the Brahminic world but of the low-caste world as well.

Samskara can also be interpreted as a dramatic enactment of the theme of the 'fortunate fall' discussed above. For a while from an orthodox standpoint, he may have fallen, he has certainly gained as a human being. A sense of elation and fulfillment comes to him, the like of which he has not experienced before. He, who was proud of his supposed lofty stature and was living in the cold world of formalism, keeping a majestic distance from his fellow Brahmins now feels that he has come down to their level. He also recognizes the fact of human interdependence more sharply than he had ever done before. The novel ends inconclusively with Praneshacharya waiting "anxious, expectant". One may not agree with R.K. Gupta more when he observes thus:

> "There can be no doubt that his transition, unfortunate from an orthodox standpoint, has been fortunate from a human one. Just as Dimmesdale in *The Scarlet Letter* gains in stature and insight from his sin and suffering, Paneshacharya's acceptance of Chandri ultimately makes him human, adding depth and breadth to his moral vision" (Gupta 23).

As such, upon analyzing the stages of Praneshacharya's life, we may conclude that he voyage culminates in expansion of his consciousness as he evolves more holistically. His sexual transgression results in his soul searching and brings a complete change in his attitudes and beliefs. He reconciles with an imperfect reality and his perception becomes clearer as he critically analyzes his life. Nevertheless, his journey does not stop at this stage as after resolving the conflict and settling the differences, he moves away from external terrain and turns inward as the rest of the story is enacted at the inner psychic plane. His self-introspection is symptomatic of his inner evolution. This seems in sync with Indian philosophical thought wherein external reality is equated with illusion simply because truth resides in the soul. As such, whenever an individual turns inwards and goes deep down into the inner recesses of the mind, s/he gains insight into truth and evolves to the higher stage of growth. He is free from the external anxieties and illusion and immerses in the deeper sea of calm, contentment and tranquility. Praneshacharya, unable to cope with the psycho-spiritual stress, eventually surrenders everything to God, saying:

> If I don't tell the agrahara brahmins, if Naranappa's body is not properly cremated, I cannot escape fear. If I decide to live with Chandri without telling anyone, the decision is not complete, not fearless. I must come now to a final decision. . . . O God, take from me the burden of decision, just as it happened in the dark of the jungle, without my will, may this decision too happen. May it happen all at once. May a new life come into being,

before I blink my eye." (*Samskara* 132)

Unable to resolve the crisis, Praneshacharya turns to God and his anxieties and mental strife come to an end. This is the realization stage where an individual experiences the reality of the world as it is without any assumptions and where the sun which was eclipsed by the clouds hitherto is revealed in its dazzling brightness. "Evidently it is seen that Acharya achieves the state of *nishkama karma*; performance of actions disinterestedly without attachment to the fruit of the action thereof. Now he has 'no taint of repentance', 'no trace of sorrow.'" (Gaur 118)

Viewed comparatively, before sexual transgression, Praneshacharya and Dimmesdale were confined by the strict moral codes of the puritan and Brahminical societies respectively. They were caught in the orthodoxy-strangulated individuality. Their minds represented collective consciousness of their communities. They had totally subordinated their individual existences to the community life. But the encounter of Dimmesdale and Praneshacharya with Hester and Chandri respectively liberates them from the confines of their ethical selves. Hester and Chandri as the anima figures are the gateway to individualities via feminine. Their social morality is chipped away and they become true to self.

Dimmesdale's meeting with Hester in the forest, like that of Praneshacharya and Chandri's, removes them from the ethical parameters, relieves them of their religious duties and brings about lightness in the heart. The rigid and dehumanized social and moral codes prove to be hampering the personal growth and development of the protagonists of both these novels. The obsolete and unexamined moral values of both communities have kept them stagnant and sterile. The flawed beliefs of the protagonists of *The Scarlet Letter* and *Samskara* make their lives devoid of joys and delights of day to day life.

Sex is considered as sinful in puritan and brahminical societies and any adventure in this

field has awful consequences. Nevertheless, in case of Dimmesdale and Praneshacharya, sexual experience proves to be regenerative as the latter is infused with warmth and vitality like the former after they have decided in the forest to suffer no longer and to follow dictates of their passion. A sense of ecstasy and fulfilment comes to them, the like of which they had never experienced before. They achieve psychic wholeness and harmony in their respective beings. They were living object-like lives before their sexual union and were devoid of any genuine human experience. Dimmesdale and Praneshacharya both were infatuated with their social roles which they played for a long time in the environment they inhabited. Their new experience causes psychological turmoil with its full intensity shattering their old image of being torch-bearers of their ecclesiastical/orthodox societies. They have a sense of release from an oppressive burden and the exaltation which comes from a liberating and fully realized experience. They now begin to explore their individualities.

Despite the identical religious beliefs and outlook towards life whereas Praneshacharya is free of self-reproach and despite certain vacillations, is nevertheless unfazed and placid. Dimmesdale's agony enfeebles him because he in his own valuation has lost his self-respect as a loyal parishioner of Boston. The penalty meted out to Dimmesdale is self-inflicted as he covertly punishes himself for the sin of adultery. The pathetic state of Dimmesdale is the result of the sin if one does not purge it by confessing it, reconciling with one's being and realizing its limited, contextual implication.

Dimmesdale's union with Hester affects a reorientation in his responses. It liberates him from the restrictions of conventionality and also leads him to epiphanic experience effecting persuasiveness in his election sermon. God's compassion gives him boldness to confess on the scaffold and brings deliverance to him. Hester and Chandri ushered Dimmesdale and

Praneshacharya into the world of flesh and brought them face to face with new reality of life. Their unions gratify their physical desires and becalm their unruly senses. Both the novels bring to fore the notion that sexual repression and deprivation can hit even the strongest among us and that socio-religious practice of a society hampers the freedom of an individual and his personal growth. Hester and Chandri have been imbued with regenerative potential by the authors. They have been represented as agents of selfless giving and caring as they initiate Dimmesdale and Praneshacharya into the material world of physical and sensual pleasures and act as the catalyst for their initiation into the real world of men. Both these heroines symbolize the life giving forces of nature.

Dimmesdale and Praneshacharya's undeveloped wisdom, egotism and conceit cause their loss of grace and downfall. Their uni-dimensonal approach to life had swelled their spiritual ego as they were caught unawares by the temptation and onslaught of senses. Their spiritual pride is humbled when their complacency is violently jolted and exposed to the grim reality of life. But their fall has a fortunate ring as it leads them on the path of spiritual evolution thereby demonstrating how sexually transgressive act can be both educative as well as humanizing in its culmination.

II

Transgression as depicted in *The Scarlet Letter* and *Samskara* results in tremendous sufferings, mental anguish and torment of soul on the part of the protagonists thereby leading them to realization. However, in *Madame Bovary*, Emma's transgression culminates in suicide. The spiritual growth eludes her as she is unable to sublimate her desires. The maddening pursuit of her own dreams keeps her self-possessed. Emma does not wake up to the realization that her thirst for love, bliss, ecstasy, and adventure is unquenchable. The desires she pursues relentlessly

remain unfulfilled as there is great abyss between her aspirations and the world of reality. Her reconciliation remains obscure as she cannot come to terms with the world of reality. She does to have time to stop and be self-critical in the light of persistent psychological conflict going on in her mind. But there is no effort on the part of the heroine to change her attitude, aspirations, emotions and feelings. By the time she comes to realize that her capacity to dream is powerless to change the world, it is too late. Therefore, the only path to escape the disaster she deems fit is committing suicide.

The basic tension of the novel is made explicit by the author in the opening chapters by depicting the commonplace background of Emma, the banality of her environment and her lofty dreams. Madame Bovary is exceptional in her sensuousness and her beauty. She tries to live the life of her dreams. The milieu around Emma is empty, monotonous and unpleasant. The society in which she lives chokes her. The characters surrounding Emma's life are base, mean, stupid, trivial and vulgar. There is no person who seems sensible, benevolent and helpful. As such, the society surrounding Emma is quite repulsive and disgusting. Moreover, her education and tastes are above her class which eventually leads to her tragic maladjustment. Charles Baudelaire insists that Flaubert infuses his own "virile blood" into the veins of his fictional creature, and thus raised Emma to the rank of superwoman embodying all the qualities of "ideal man" such as energy, ambition and above all that "supreme and tyrannical faculty" called imagination. (qtd. in Brombert 88).

Given Emma's passionate nature, marriage could have resulted in a gratifying relationship and contented life. However, Charles' composed nature and his dullness quickly chill her passion. Had Emma found a mate with stronger zest for life, her fantasies could have been gratified. He, in fact, fell short of her expectations. Emma, who had thought that marriage

would be all thrilling, sensational and ecstatic, becomes dejected and dispirited. There is a tremendous mismatch between her fantasies and reality. Disappointed with her existential given, Emma eventually seeks happiness in the arms of her lover, Leon and when he departs, in her union with Rodolphe Boulanger. Nevertheless, even these affairs do not offer her the satisfaction she actually longs for and she finds "in adultery all the platitudes of marriage" (*M.B.* 374). As such, Emma becomes a victim of romantic disillusion. In fact, the happiness she imagines is unattainable. Romanticism has fostered a false understanding of the world in her. It has nurtured in her expectations that have no reasonable hope of being realized. Anthony Thorlby has rightly commented in this regard:

> The beautiful idealizations of romantic love turn into a case history of frustration. Frustrated by the discipline of the convent, Emma imagines poetic romances; frustrated by the loneliness of home, she marries Charles; frustrated by the mediocrity of married life, she falls in love with Leon; frustrated by his departure, she yields to Rodolphe; frustrated by his betrayal and her weariness with piety, she abandons herself completely with Leon (Thorlby 40).

Emma in her quest for the unattainable realizes that her lovers fail to even approximate her illusions of the perfect mate although they offer her the glimpse of ideal love. The real world cannot compete with the adventurous world of her fantasies and that is why she gets severely jolted. But in the end, the realization dawns upon her that adultery is no different from marriage and that Rodolphe is no different from Leon. Elizabeth Amman has made a significant remark in this context as she observes that "the double adultery serves only to show the emptiness of each affair. This is the interpretation toward which Flaubert's irony points" (Amman 225).

Imagining herself initially to be fictional heroine, her status suffers steep decline as she is

impelled to stoop to the level of a beggar, imploring one and all for raising some money to avert the financial disaster which she has herself caused. She turns to her lover, Leon to request him to arrange for the money she requires but of no avail. Then she goes to Rodolphe with whom she had dreamed to "live in a low, flat roofed house, shaded by a palm tree, in the heart of a gulf, by the sea" (*M.B.* 253). She bursts into tears and asks him to lend her three thousand francs. But he declares that he is hard up himself. So both her lovers do not come through and walk out on her. She nearly prostitutes herself when she pleads to Binet, the tax collector, causing scandalous talks among the womenfolk but could not raise the needed money. Ultimately a public notice is issued for her house to be auctioned. She cannot cope with her situation and pants as if her heart would burst. In utter desperation and unmanageable psychological stress, Emma rushes straight to the chemist's shop and commits suicide by engulfing arsenic. She "seized the blue zar, tore out the cork, plunged in her hand, and withdrawing it full of a white powder, she began to eat it" (*M.B.* 406). Thus, Emma's pursuit of the unattainable desire culminates in committing suicide.

Unlike in *The Scarlet Letter* and *Samskara*, sexual transgression in *Madame Bovary*, results in degeneration instead of regeneration. The protagonists of *The Scarlet Letter* and *Samskara* achieve saintly status gradually and have upward movement; whereas Emma Bovary has a downward movement as she approaches moral corrosion toward the end. There is ample textual evidence of her fall from grace in Part III of the novel. Victor Brombert has likened her moral corruption to steady deterioration of an organism undergoing the final stages of fatal disease (Brombert 84). According to Brombert:

> Flaubert insists on her imbalance and morbid excesses: the neglect of house and child, the taste of orgiastic books, the loss of *pudeur*, the rapacious desire for money, the aggressive sensuality. She became irritable, greedy, and voluptuous. One vice leads to another: she

> develops a talent and a taste for lying; it becomes 'a need, a mania, a pleasure". Finally her very senses seem affected: her behavior becomes odd, she assumes lascivious poses and a look of infernal boldness, goes to popular ball in debauched company, tries to goad her lover into stealing, and at the end quite literally prostitutes herself to her first lover" (Brombert 84-85).

She is so much self-absorbed and mentally obsessed with living a life like that of fictional heroines that she cannot develop her actual, ethical self. She cannot reconcile herself with the social reality. The society is so ruthless toward her that not a single soul comes to her rescue when she is caught in financial crisis. Rather than sympathizing with her, people take shameless advantage of her distress. Therefore she is filled with contempt toward the society. So much so, that "She would have liked to strike all men, to spit in their faces, to crush them" (*M.B.* 392). According to Raymond Giraud,

> She proves to be a gullible romanticist and is tricked by her enemies and let down by her friends. Although the society depicted in the novel is selfish, mean and degraded and Flaubert felt tenderness for her and has shown her more sympathetic and more sensitive than they are. She has been presented as superior to them all. (Giraud 110).

This superiority lies in generating such dreams that have an unquestionable authenticity. There is sincerity in her desires. Flaubert repeatedly insists on the genuine and even delicate nature of her sentiments. He beautifully presents before the readers Emma's terrible sense of isolation and her unquenchable aspiration for some unattainable ideal. To quote Victor Brombert again:

> "Hers are dreams that destroy. But this destructive power is also their beauty. Despite all her pretentious and hysterical behavior, Emma grows in stature; and toward the end of the novel, at the moment of her complete defeat in the face of reality; she acquires dignity

and even majesty" (Brombert 87)

Being of nearly the same temperament as that of Emma and given their identical situation, it will be interesting to trace the trajectory of Anna's movement in the novel. Anna's moral degeneration caused by sexual transgression/ adultery is in line with Emma in *Madame Bovary*. Sexual transgression in *Anna Karenina* causes harsh social condemnation and acute mental anguish for Anna. Readers can feel her intense pain and turmoil when she is cast out from the social circle for her morally transgressive act. Through this, Tolstoy has presented a compassionate understanding of a fallen woman and a deep insight into her stifling marriage. Anna's rebellion to reject the stereotypical roles prescribed for women by the patriarchal society is trampled severely. The society reacts with harsh punishment to Anna and teaches her a lesson that it will tolerate relationship only within accepted parameters. John Bayley has held lack of family responsible for her destruction: "Without the freedom of society this passion becomes a prison. Tolstoy puts it in a characteristic metaphor: we can sit motionless for hours if we know we can stretch our legs any time; but we develop agonizing cramp if we feel we cannot" (Bayley 201).

Anna is astonished at the changed behavior of the women in her social circle like Betsy who encourage and enable her to commit adultery. She conveniently disengages herself from Anna now: "She [Betsy] had a liaison with Tushkevich, deceiving her husband in the worst way, and she told me that she did not wish to know me as long as my position was irregular" (*A.K.* 629). As such, Anna finds herself all alone and defenseless and deeply agonized. She clings to Vronsky for support and becomes desperately jealous as she fears desertion. As she has abandoned her family, honor and everything for Vronsky's sake, she cannot lose him and tries to hold him fast as a baby monkey clasps his/her mother tightly so that s/he may not fall. Anna says

thus: "For me everything centers in him, and I demand that he should give himself up to me more and more completely" (*A.K.* 752). The more she is convinced of his apathy toward her, the more pronounced her attempts become to hang on to him. She further says thus: "For me everything centers in him, and I demand that he should give himself up to me more and more completely" (*A.K.* 752). Mere assurances on Vronsky's part would not satisfy Anna, as she wants to completely possess him. She wants to distract him from any other business than love making. As such, we observe that Anna could not build a relationship with Vronsky at deeper emotional level. This relationship has the fire, the fierce temper but neither emotional maturity nor security. Malcolm V. Jones in his article "Problems of Communication in *Anna Karenina*" observes thus:

> Anna cannot share her deepest and most imperious feelings with her lover, and she suppresses them and banishes them from her own consciousness. Of course, there is always the possibility that Anna may overcome these emotional difficulties but it can be seen that she never regains her emotional security. It is the breakdown of communication that erodes their relationship bit by bit. If a deep understanding had never been achieved in her marriage, it is never achieved in her relationship with Vronsky . . . even as the end approaches, Anna is capable of reverting to common sense and warm emotions, but eventually her soul is taken prisoner by the desire to punish Vronsky which takes her to the grave" (Jones 101-105).

Reconciliation eludes Anna as she feels lonely and completely alienated from society and cannot bond emotionally with Vronsky. Her lover cannot provide her with any substitute for a stable family life which she has abandoned. It is her sense of isolation that instills fear in Anna and in desperation she clings to Vronsky. Isolation is also inflicted on Hester in *The Scarlet*

Letter as punishment for her sin but she converts isolation into an opportunity to evolve emotionally. She reconstructs her life and reaffirms her relationship with the community on more honest basis, but this kind of endurance is lacking in Anna. She becomes desperate and unlike Hester is not able to sublimate her instincts of love. Thus, Anna's isolation, instead of providing her an opportunity for self-introspection leads her to commit suicide as John Bayley observes: "What crushes Anna most at the end is not, in fact, her sense of the impossibility of life with Vronsky, but her sense of isolation" (Bayley 227).

In fact, Anna was mentally obsessed with the relentless pursuit of her desires. She does not want to give freedom to Vronsky to pursue his political ambitions as she does not want to be tied to another Karenin. She wants to maintain her fascinating beauty and charm in order to bind Vronsky to her. This is the reason she takes contraceptive measures as she does not want to disfigure herself with pregnancies. Thus, it becomes evident that Anna is hell bent on doing everything possible to maintain her relationship with Vronsky. But despite her desperate attempts, Vronsky seems to her to be slipping away as he becomes aloof and indifferent. Anna grows gloomier and her love takes a destructive turn. She wants to extract passionate outbursts from him by punishing him through committing suicide as "hatred of herself, hatred of her lover, wells up in her heart, and, at last, her only desire is to punish him." (Winstanley 58)

In fact, the novel, *Anna Karenina* avoids the representation of sexuality at any level. The relationships as depicted in this novel lack sharing of emotions and feelings. There is no sincerity in the exchange of heart-felt emotions and that is why husband-wife or the lovers cannot actually relate to each other. There is complete breakdown of relationships in the novel as everyone is playing game, especially the males, without being earnest to each other. It is pertinent to quote Catherine Brown here: "Anna Karenina's reticence in the representation of sexuality also

accompanies a tendency not to represent connection between men and women at any level of consciousness; the relationships of Levin, Karenin, Vronsky, and Oblonsky with their partners are presented overwhelmingly through their deficiencies" (Brown 42).

Anna finds it hard to invent a feeling of happiness with Vronsky as she has become utterly pessimistic. Her gloomy vision becomes evident when she says: "It is impossible! Life is sundering us, and I am the cause of his unhappiness and he of mine, neither he nor I can be made different. Every effort has been made, but the screw has given way . . . a beggar woman with a baby . . . are we not flung into the world only to hate each other, and therefore to torment ourselves and others?" (*A. K.* 753). In fact, Anna is overcome by feeling of guilt and degradation. She is engrossed with the thought of what people think about her. When she returns home after meeting Kitty and Dolly, she thinks of glancing at the two pedestrians and wonders: "How they looked at me, as at something dreadful, incomprehensible and strange! How is it possible to tell another what one feels?" (*A.K.*749). Thus, Anna realizes her existential vacuum as she is weighed down with the feeling that Dolly and kitty despise her: "How glad she would have been at my misfortune! . . . Kitty would have been still more pleased. . . . She is jealous of me and hates me, and she also despises me. In her eyes I am an immoral woman" (*A.K.* 749). Anna's self-realization at this juncture becomes prominent as her immorality has started pricking her conscience constantly.

Anna realizes her blunder and is overwhelmed with sense of remorse. She asks penetrating questions such as "Well, I get divorced and become Vronsky's wife! What then? Will Kitty cease looking at me as she did this afternoon? No. Will Serezha stop asking and wondering about my two husbands?" (*A.K.*753). She holds Vronsky responsible for her predicament and in order to punish him she flings herself beneath the wheels of a train to escape

from the society as well as herself: "There, into the very middle, and I shall punish him and escape from everybody and from myself" (*A.K.* 757). Anna's internalized guilt which comes of social conditioning makes it clear to her that there is no future for her.

Thus, we observe that Emma and Anna refuse to play the stereotypical roles as wives and mothers assigned by the patriarchal society. They do not like to be treated as weak, unthinking, and docile women. They focus on themselves with their own desires, needs and aspirations. They prove misfits in their respective societies that are selfish, mean, debased and hypocritical. The self-absorbed, acquisitive and remorseless societies are antithetical to their sensitive souls.

Both of them cannot reconcile with their socio-cultural realities and their transgression culminates in suicides. Their unrealizable dreams and the wickedness of their respective societies become the cause of their destruction. Their minds were stuffed with romantic vision of life. The romantic suicide of Emma has also been interpreted as a repudiation of the inadequacies of modern life by some sensitive critic. In *Madame Bovary*, Emma cannot find a single soul who could identify with her. The society is so self-centered that they search for their personal gains in everything. The author has glorified the imaginative world of Emma over the materialistic world around her. Her husband is dull and unintelligent and is unaware of the requirements and aspirations of her wife. Her lovers desert her when she is in need of them. She is astonished at the indifferent attitude of Rodolphe when she is caught in the financial crisis and pleads for his help. Her desertion by Rodolphe for the second time expedites her decision to commit suicide.

Anna attempts to live and experience life by being oblivious to the stringent laws of the society. She is punished for being true to her love and life whereas those who wear masks and maintain the façade of society flourish. Anna is cast out of society and her alienation from the society proves to be fatal for her as she cannot live without society. She needs society as she has

such an amiable nature that she cannot survive in isolation. On the other hand, Emma does not need society at all. She despises society and never tries to build relationships in society. She is occupied in the hunt of her desires and tries resolutely to live the life of heroines of her books. She wants to live in the castles away from people. In this kind of society, no one is emotionally attached to others. Homais appears to be friendly with Bovaries but in reality it is only pretence. Lheureux is always enticing his customers for his personal gains. Rodolphe and Leon also play with the emotions of Emma and then desert her. Anna has a strong feeling of compunction and is tormented by her conscience that she has done something wrong whereas Emma has no qualms of conscience.

Both Anna and Emma come to the realization that the life in these kinds of societies is not worth living for them. As such, there is no attempt on their part to reconstruct their lives and reconcile with imperfections (as viewed by them) of their respective societies. They don't have the courage and skill to change the attitudes and beliefs of people around them as Hester exemplifies in *The Scarlet Letter.* Their conviction wavers with changing times. Moreover, their maddening pursuit of physical desire does not let them speculate on the deeper meaning of life.

Transgression of social ethics and the consequent punishment trigger transformation in the female protagonists of *The Scarlet Letter* and *Samskara* but in *Madame Bovary* and *Anna Karenina*, the transgressors cannot reconcile with the society as their transgressive acts culminate in suicides. They prove weak-willed and could not bear their sufferings and betrayal by their lovers. Anna in *Anna Karenina* transgresses the values of a patriarchal society yet fails to liberate herself and thus remains an acquiescent hostage of the patriarchy. Mary Evans rightly remarks: "Far from resisting conventions Anna internalizes their constraints . . . " (Mandelkar 39).

III

The protagonists of *The Scarlet Letter* and *Samskara* come to terms with the reality and accept their responsibility for creating distressed situation for themselves. They, by virtue of their self-introspection and self-analysis, reform their lives in the light of the new reality to which they are awakened. They reconcile themselves to the social reality. Forging their relationship with their inner soul, they also evolve to a higher stage of spiritual enlightenment. On the other hand, Emma and Anna in *Madame Bovary* and *Anna Karenina* fail to resolve the conflict with their society and their inner being. They lack the courage and conviction and hence, breathe their last confronting their socio-cultural selves.

The God of Small Things can be read in line with *Madame Bovary* and *Anna Karenina*, as the characters in this novel Ammu and Velutha break social laws and die for sexual transgression that lacks socio-cultural sanction. Ammu catapults across caste/class divisions to pursue an erotic desire for the untouchable carpenter, Velutha. The novel traces infatuation and hunger of Ammu and Velutha for each other, their liaison (transgressive act) and their eventual destruction on account of conventional strictures against their immoral deed.

Ammu is forsaken by her husband in the prime of her youth and hence her sexual thirst has remained unquenched. The matrons in the Ayemenem House do not heed her physical desires even though they are aware of "man's needs" in Chacko and even facilitate them. The Ayemenem House has been shown to be entrenched in obsolete familial codes which swear by male supremacy. In this imbalanced familial set up, marital relationships come down crumbling and "familial ethic" remains in conflict with the emotional urges of the individual (Prakash 34). The need for erotic fulfillment takes Ammu and Velutha beyond history and society straight into depth of their beings. The inexorable sexual attraction overcomes them and in the thickness of

night arrives at a spot where they meet as if in a predestined fashion: "They become pure embodiments of desire, and significantly, not a word of intelligent conversation passes between them. They seem consumed by helplessness, twice over before their own bodily desires and in relation to the world that surrounds them and about which they appear to wish to do nothing" (Prasad 39).

Velutha can be characterized as a symbolic character, as nature incarnate. He is portrayed as embodiment of pure natural instincts and disposition without the sophistication of culture/ civilization and elegant refinement. Vinita Bhatnagar characterizes him as a "dark, symbolic figure who inhabits the fantasies of the sexually unfulfilled . . . his dominant features are those of raw animal sensuality . . ." (Dodiya and Chakravorthy 97). Ammu's sexual relationship with Velutha is her attempt to slake her thirst, her natural instincts which the society considers a grave crime, even an unpardonable sin. In the tradition bound society, sex is recommended only for practical purpose of procreation in case of women. The satisfaction of sexual appetite, a natural need, is forbidden because it is equated with lust and hence sinful. Women, who unconsciously break the code, have a terrible fate awaiting them in the form of ruthless punishment. Ammu's aroused sexuality is considered a threat to the social structure. Hence, the guardians of social ethics unite to combat this threat.

Ammu is emotionally shattered. She is not able to cope with the shocks she receives and shouts at her children holding them responsible for her misery. When she visits the police station to make the things clear, she is ill-treated by the police inspector who calls her a slut. She is ordered by Chacko to pack up and leave the house and is separated from her children. After she comes back to Ayemenem "with asthma and a rattle in her chest" (*TGST* 109), Ammu breathes with a great difficulty and "each breath she took was like a war won against steely fist that was

trying to squeeze the air from her lungs" (*TGST* 160). She is found dead one morning by a sweeper and is buried where only beggars, derelicts and the dead in the police custody are cremated, as the church refuses to bury her. Velutha fails to understand nonsensical rules and regulations for untouchables and unsuccessfully tries to represent the changing face of India. To a certain extent, Velutha and Ammu have shown their efforts in challenging the fixed socio-cultural codes and the invisible authority. But in spite of their best efforts, they cannot find space in the tradition bound society and succumb to the lashes of society in the process of their struggle and perish eventually.

Ammu, though seems to be devoted towards her children's welfare, lacks the courage to protect her children from the shocks she receives as a consequence of her flouting family ethics. P. Radhika comments thus: "Throughout her childhood, she is psychologically bruised and during her marriage, she is beaten. But she does not show any awareness of her moral courage or use it to salvage her life and her children's from greater harm. In seeking sensual gratification, she asserts her individuality as a woman but in doing so, she simultaneously fails to discharge her responsibilities as a mother (Radhika 37). The morality of motherhood demands sacrifice. Ammu does have the desire to protect her children. As a conscientious mother, she has an awareness of the need to love them "more than double" (*TGST* 142); but unlike Hester she cannot suppress her personal desires.

Hester, in *The Scarlet Letter*, by dint of her pioneering spirit transforms the public opinion. Her isolation has freed her mind to speculate about the nature of society, and to decide that society is not fixed by God through some immutable law but is subject to change. On the other hand, Ammu transfers her anger at the unjust social system on to her children. Ammu defies social conventions when she marries out of community, leaves her drunkard husband who

is violent and unrepentant, and finally has a fling with Velutha and shows boldness to go to the police station to give testimony to rescue Velutha. Nevertheless, "her defiance is too feeble to warrant the epithets of 'feminist' being applied to her" (Vinoda 28). She plays the willing victim in Ayemenem house when she is out of it. She makes no attempt at bold and independent life of her own. She succumbs to her adverse circumstances. Hester never loses faith in her conviction whereas Ammu starts believing that her loving an untouchable has actually polluted her, and that she deserves to be treated as a prostitute. During the last days of her life, she has a "recurrent dream in which policemen approached her with snicking scissors, wanting to hack off her hair" (*TGST* 161).

Ammu and Velutha helplessly perish before the wrath of hostile, vindictive society. Their selves could evolve and their individualities annihilate due to the organized repression of society. The guardians of social morality unite to combat the threat as their devastating desire may kindle in other members of the community. Ammu and Velutha try to explore their nature in defiance of those forces that threaten to repress individuality and sexuality. Society becomes the monitor for inculcating order which the transgression of Ammu and Velutha has disrupted. The gruesome authority of patriarchal system and brutal authority makes their life dreadful. Hence, their dream of freedom from the societal constraints is trampled as they are emotionally as well as psychologically shattered, and eventually, their transgression culminates in their untimely deaths.

IV

The characters in the five novels transgress ethical codes of their respective societies and hence, have to face karmic retribution. But the sufferings which they are subjected to, bring wisdom and regeneration to some of them whereas others succumb to the punishments that society awards them. The qualms of conscience, in several cases, purify the hearts of the transgressors which

saves them from going down the path of degeneration.

Analyzing the life trajectories of the main characters of the novels examined above, we see that the culmination of their transgression has diverse aspects. Emma, Anna, Ammu and Velutha are all unable to resist the counter-pressure of societal laws/ constraints. Ammu rebels against the patriarchal society throughout her life but cannot liberate herself as her rebellion is trampled by the collective force of societal codes. So is the case with Anna and Emma. They cannot mend their lives and are unable to live life independently as liberated individuals. Emma could not reconcile with the French society as her temperament is quite contrary to the people living therein. She expresses a strong sense of disgust for this society. Anna, on the other hand, is psychologically shattered due to her disgrace and humiliation by the society. Anna's quest for honesty in her relationship is too serious a demand for a society that makes light of everything. It is a demand that can never be fulfilled and her search destroys her.

Both, Ammu and Hester have strong conviction in their beliefs and never show any sign of remorse, they do not believe that they have done anything wrong by flouting the ethical codes of tradition-bound, patriarchal societies, but unlike Hester, she cannot face the society and transform people's opinion about herself. Ammu, Emma and Anna try to go beyond the society's attempt to objectify them as they see themselves as subjects and in the process forge a link with their inner being. Their transgressive acts are protests against the restrictions of woman's lives. In creating these characters, their authors have tried to construct self-aware females who refuse to be objectified. All these self-aware females perish in the way. Ammu's transgression not only culminates in her untimely death but also casts its shadow on the growth of her children. Being children of parents of different communities, the twins are denied love and security in their family as they are humiliated by the elders of their own family, resulting in their withdrawal

from society. The psychological damage inflicted on them is irreparable.

Naranappa remains rebel throughout his life. He is a great threat to the socio-cultural and religious fabric of the Brahmin community. His transgression does not let him avail any chance of reconciliation with the society. But he exposes the hollowness and hypocrisy and avarice in the life of the Brahmins. Likewise, Ammu in *The God of Small Things*, perishes in the way but she jolts the traditional beliefs of the casteist society and exposes the inhumanity and callousness of the Indian society. Praneshacharya's transgression brings him to the path of individual growth. He has hitherto been living an uneventful life. He is obsessed with socio-cultural roles and has identified completely with his role of a spiritual head. His sexual encounter with Chandri enables him to reconcile with his fellowmen. He becomes humane and comes to terms with imperfect reality. His reconciliation is reflected in his awareness of the contradiction of his existence. Dimmesdale feels repentant for his intense guilt. He loses touch with himself and literally sinks under the burden of his sin.

Some of the characters reach realization stage whereas most of them perish on the way. For instance, Hester Prynne in *The Scarlet Letter* is made to suffer the most by the stringent puritan society. She is isolated from society and despite that comes closest to the positive vision. She dares to face the situation in a distinctly unique way compared to other characters examined above. Anna's defiance, on the other hand, is smothered by the Russian society. She finds the restrictions of patriarchal society so harsh for women and their confinement so deep-seated that for her life becomes an eternal recurrence of constraints. She comes to realize that any attempt on the part of the women to assert their self would be equated with regression, degeneration and revolt. Emma, on the other hand, finds herself trapped in the un-consoling, un-assisting materialistic society. Her transgression culminates in suicide as she finds pointlessness of life

and finds it not worthy of living. Her trajectory of life culminates in existential angst.

Hester is the only character who dares trust her and is capable of self-reliant, independent action. The meaning of scarlet letter "A" on her breast undergoes change as the novel progresses. It becomes "Able", "Angel" and loses its original meaning assigned/ imposed by the puritan society. She evolves into the'being'mode of existence and takes life as nothing more than an experience and involves genuinely with every activity of human life remaining detached from the reward of her actions.

Likewise, Praneshacharya's journey back to Durvasapura indicates a positive vision as he surrenders everything to the hands of God. Similarly regenerative hands descended on Dimmesdale and he decided to act on the dictates of spirit. Dimmesdale achieves a degree of redemption with his dying acknowledgment and transformed demeanor. Emma, Anna, Ammu, Velutha and Naranappa all perish in the way as they have a false belief that happiness lies in the attainment of desires. Throughout their lives they pursue their desires relentlessly ignoring the ethics of their societies. On the other hand, Hester finds happiness in the abandonment of personal desires. She treads the path of self-less service which purifies her heart and opens it to receive divine light. To pursue the desire and the longing to possess is bondage and the liberation is freedom from the false notion of bondage. Emma, Anna and Ammu personalize activities, whereas Hester spiritualizes them. She has a strong faith in her own spiritual strength. That is why she reaches the realization stage and becomes free from the bondage of desires. She may be equated with people living among the temptations of life, and doing many things that ordinary mortals do, and still be different internally thereby enjoying the superior bliss through detachment and inner poise.

Conclusion

Transgression, as delineated in the texts analyzed above representing diverse cultures and climes of the world, invigorates the contest between the demands of instincts and the prescriptions of civilization. Through enforcement of stringent regulations and codes of ethics, society often tends to curb most basic or fundamental needs of an individual. In order to satiate her/ his desires, one often comes in conflict with the rigorous precepts of society. In majority of cases, however, s/he has to suppress her/his desires in order to maintain social propriety. One's desires settle in the unconscious mind and often come in the way as obstacle in growth and evolution of the individual. This ceaseless battle between individual desires and societal norms has been going on from time immemorial. This basic urge to transgress the societal limitations and confines is desirous for the evolution and dynamics of culture simply because without the transgressive acts there may be stagnation in the development of culture (Jenks 7).

The female protagonists in the novels examined above rebel against the constraints of society due to which they find themselves circumscribed. Nevertheless, the collective societal force proves a bit too much for them to resist. The patriarchal mindset of the society would always want women to play the role of virtuous wives, caring mothers thereby obliterating their sense of selfhood. Those who dare to step out of the prescribed role are suppressed/ crushed brutally. Any attempt to step out of their tailor made existence is treated as an aberration. The feminine identity is also constructed in husband-wife relationship and a good woman is made synonymous with a good wife. Women are always seen in the context of their husbands as paragons of chastity, faithfulness and devotion. By and large, woman gets objectified as man's personal property. She becomes socially acceptable and is considered virtuous only when she is able to master her overriding passion and exercise complete control over her sexual instincts. She

has no choice but to live up to the ideals of chastity and sexual passivity and project herself as an ideal wife. She is glorified only if she is a good mother and a husband-worshipping wife.

As evident from the foregoing textual discussion, Hester, Emma, Anna and Ammu refuse to be confined to the stereotypical roles assigned to them by the patriarchal mindset. They rebel against their codified existence and seek to aspire for a new role for themselves. But out of all these rebellious figures examined above, it is only Hester who could survive in the inimical world that surrounded her. Hester suffers enormously all through the novel, but never accepts the puritan interpretation of her transgressive act in her heart. It is only due to sheer force of her inner conviction that she survives the punishment meted out to her with dignity, grace and ever-growing strength of character. She believes that she has not committed any sin although she feels that her transgression has ruptured the societal order. The punishment inflicted on Hester by the callous puritan community does not prove to be all that disastrous even though it brings isolation to Hester. Nevertheless, it also gives rise to compassion in her. There is no trace of exasperation and irksomeness in Hester's mind despite the fact that she is cast out of society. She accepts her role as an outcast facing boldly revulsion of society and insults from even those unfortunates whom she succours. Meanwhile, Hester lives by sewing and performing acts of charity even for those who revile and despise her. She is always there in times of affliction, assisting and comforting others. She finds strength in herself and eventually comes to be recognized by the strict puritan society as 'Sister of Mercy' (*TSL* 117). Gradually she comes to know about the futility of desire to possess things and starts living for others thereby achieving equanimity of mind. In fact, she achieves higher stage of growth by annihilating desire completely.

The other women protagonists, Anna Emma and Ammu, although rebel against the stultifying conventions of their respective societies but they cannot endure the societal pressure and

succumb to it. The society teaches them the lesson that they cannot go beyond the accepted parameters/norms of moral conduct, and if they dare, they shall be severely punished. Via inflicting punishments, the society reaffirms its constraining and confining character.

In the first chapter, it has been explored in detail as to how the transgression of social conventions and moral codes in different socio-cultural contexts results in more or less the same reaction. Through textual analyses of the novels above it has been exemplified that societies across the world have been governed by deep-seated conventional, patriarchal and moral prescriptions. People consider their social and moral laws as ordained by the almighty and guard them from violation at any cost. These laws are imposed on the individuals by different agencies. The nature of the social reaction against the sexual transgression by female protagonists reveals common symbols and shared taboos. The pressure that external authority exerts on the transgressors is similarly felt in the different cultural contexts as human society tries to restrain the damaging potential of transgression through the constitution of taboos. It only varies in degree, if at all it does, as we find that the theocratic puritan society in *The Scarlet Letter* and caste-ridden society in *The God of Small Things* are harsher in terms of punishment. In the caste-based Indian society, sexual transgression across caste boundaries is viewed as endangering the whole notion of caste system, and an attempt is thus made to forestall this by awarding severe punishment to the transgressors. The characters, especially women, feel stifled and constrained by the moral diktats issued by the practitioners of societal norms. They strive to seek fulfilment of their natural desires and assert their individuality. In this process, however, they come into conflict with societal expectations vis-à-vis rigorous code of moral discipline, and there is an eternal antagonism between the demands of natural instincts and the cultural constraints.

In *The Scarlet Letter*, Hester is made to display herself before the public as if she had committed an unpardonable sin by seeking to gratify her physical desire and to sexually transgress her marital bond. It is ironical that despite a theology that teaches that all people are innately evil; puritans fail to recognise that they themselves have physical passions. Their clamour for the harshest punishment to Hester exposes their hypocrisy. The same kind of treatment is meted to the transgressors in other novels too. For instance, in *Samskara*, Naranappa is condemned by the Brahmins for violating the rotten and obsolete social conventions and brahminical rituals. He also defies marital vows and develops relations with a prostitute namely Chandri, whom most of the male Brahmins of agrahara covet. The Brahminic society is offended by his living with the low-caste prostitute openly—a sin which is unpardonable for an orthodox agrahara brahamin. Praneshacharya, the head priest is worried as to how the morality will prevail with this kind of example in the community. Naranappa is considered a threat to the brahminical ways of living and thinking. Emma, in *Madame Bovary*, is seduced by her lovers in a planned manner and later is exploited by everyone as none comes to her rescue. The society remains self-absorbed, spiteful and hypocritical as usual. In *Anna Karenina*, Anna is completely ostracized on account of her transgression by most of her acquaintances. Although she remains true to her love, she is punished for her sincerity in love. There are other characters in the novel who also violate marital vows, but they keep the facade of propriety and hence escape punishment from the hypocritical society. The double moral standards also manifest in the treatment of Anna by the society as it accepts Vronsky whole-heartedly, but its doors are shut for Anna. Likewise in *The God of Small Things*, we see that Ammu's craving for sexual fulfilment is repudiated by her family and society whereas Chacko's sexual adventures are accepted, accommodated and even facilitated by the family. The treatment meted out to them starkly exposes the disparity cultivated

and practiced between the sexes in patriarchal societies. In *Samskara* and *The God of Small Things*, sexual transgression is regarded in the same light as in the ancient times especially because the regulations/rules of the Brahminic law books are still valid. Hence, the socio-cultural perception of transgression across caste/class boundaries is extremely harsh and so is the punishment meted out to the transgressors in most of the socio-cultural setups across the world. At times, it is the society that denounces the transgressive act whereas at others, the transgressor herself/himself becomes self-deprecating a la Anna, Dimmesdale, Praneshacharya and even Ammu.

The second chapter has demonstrated as to how even from the viewpoint of factors causing commission of transgression, an almost identical pattern emerges. For instance, most of the female characters in the novels discussed herein violate marital vows due to their being trapped in loveless marriages with incompatible temperaments of husbands along with their sexual as well as emotional incompatibility. Most of the women characters are extremely beautiful with passionate intensity. They have a great zest for life. Their husbands are sexually as well as emotionally incompatible to their vibrant and passionate sexuality. They find erotic vacuity completion in their marriages. Moreover, they have romantic temperament and their romantic notions of marriage and love are frustrated in their union with their cold and passionless husbands. Emma in *Madame Bovary* and Anna in *Anna Karenina* in particular are fed on romantic fantasies of the novels they have read. In their marital relationships, they expect their husbands to initiate them into the bliss of being as they have read such stuff romantic novels. Nevertheless, they fall short of their image of fictional heroes and hence indulge in extramarital affairs imagining themselves to be fictional heroines chasing big ideals. Eventually they perish. Both Emma and Anna are afflicted with the ideal of perfect mate. Ammu in *The*

God of Small Things finds her relationship with her husband contaminated due to lack of sincerity, truthfulness and commitment. Marital relationship is concretized through emotional care and gratification of physical needs. But unfortunately in case of Ammu, this relationship proves lacking in expression of love and care; hence, it breaks sooner.

In *Samskara*, Praneshacharya's fall can also be attributed to his lack of sexual fulfilment due to his marriage with an invalid. Had his physical needs been gratified in marriage, he would not have floundered on the path of his spiritual journey. The deliberate repression of his physical urges leads to confusion in his life. His failure in comprehending dichotomy of body and soul, results in his spiritual degeneration. Hester, in *The Scarlet Letter* could not love her husband as she found him totally devoid of love and affection. He was given to intellectual pursuits and was deeply involved in learning the facts of medical science. He wronged her by being away from her for two long years when she really needed him. The lack of fulfilment of her instinctual demands leads her to crave for a man's love. As such, she gratifies it though warm-hearted Dimmesdale.

Failure to find joy and happiness in marriage, fill women with pointlessness, loneliness and existential angst and that is why they are impelled to forge liaisons with other males and indulge in extra-marital relationships. The leitmotif in all the novels is sexual transgression. Most of the novelists seem to suggest in distinctly unique manner that the deficiencies in the institution of marriage cannot be removed by indulging in adulterous relationships with other men/women. As the illusion of adultery vanishes alongside its novelty and adventure, the attraction also wears off. The adultery also, after a point, proves as banal as marriage. For example, Emma in *Madame Bovary* forges parallel bonds with Leon and Rodolphe in order to seek recompense for the lacks in her loveless marriage with Charles and puts everything at stake for the sake of leading a

passionate life. Indubitably, as the initial stage, she seems to be getting everything she aspires for and starts imagining herself to be one of the heroines of her novels. But soon she finds her life with her lovers to be as monotonous as her marriage. Anna in *Anna Karenina* finds her marital relationship with Karenin on rocks contrary to her expectations of love and passion from it. She, like Emma, pursues her whim of ideal lover relentlessly and stakes her honour to achieve her ideal. In the end, Anna finds Vronsky, her lover similar in temperament to her husband, Karenin. Like her husband, Vronsky also proves to be more career-oriented than heeding her emotional demands. He grows from a bohemian to a conformist seeking acceptance in the patriarchal social order. He yearns to marry Anna after divorcing his wife and give the children his name.

Most of the women transgressors pursue the ideal of perfect mate relentlessly but it eludes them through and through. Their lovers promise to be ideal partners in the beginning but like their husbands cannot measure up to their expectations. Eventually, this illusory pursuit proves disastrous to their lives. More often than not, conflict arises on account of wives' craving for novelty of experience, excitement and undying physical passion and husbands' insistence to live by the code of conduct prescribed by their societies to the detriment of their seemingly happy marriage. For instance, the conscience of Karenin in *Anna Karenina*, Chillingworth, Dimmesdale in *The Scarlet Letter*, Charles in *Madame Bovary*, the Brahmins in *Samskara* and Chacko, Vellya Paapen, Mammachi, Baby Kochamma in *The God of Small Things* are conditioned by social morality. This is because the society clings to its outdated moral codes and no one dares defy/transgress these ethico-moral laws. The authors satirically peel the layers of the societal setups that are orthodox to the point of being ludicrous. In fact, these socio-cultural setups need to be rationally re-evaluated and transformed with changing times.

The third chapter has dealt with the repercussions of transgression. As stated above, the

punishment meted out to the transgressors is more or less identical as they are ostracized, alienated, or humiliated. In fact, society ensures that no sympathy should ever reach them and that they should not be allowed any kind of interaction with society at large. The characters who are steeped in traditional beliefs vis-à-vis sin suffer the pangs of conscience whereas those who have strong faith in their individual beliefs survive. It is evident from the above textual discussion that no transgressor goes unpunished. The transgressors, whose sins have not come to be known by the society, are spared of the wrath of society, but they suffer from psychological anguish a la Dimmesdale and Praneshacharya. The concealment on the part of of Dimmesdale secretly destroys his moral tissue as he cannot bear the brunt of untruth. Dimmesdale undergoes mental torture and self-imposed penance in accordance with puritanical ways of thinking. There are pricks of conscience visible in case of Anna too in *Anna Karenina*. Her conscience almost makes her neurotic thereby eventually forcing her to commit suicide. The authors of the novels discussed above have tried to hammer a common point that the society ironically sits in judgment on the transgressors ignoring their own shortcomings. The Biblical dictum that only the sinless have a right to cast stones on other sinners, has been underscored by all the authors.

Hawthorne in *The Scarlet Letter* shows how puritans act contrary to their principles. According to Puritanism, whosoever looks upon a woman has already committed adultery with her in his heart. Frailty has been intrinsically there in the human heart. These puritans act as if they are upholding high principles of Puritanism but in reality they are not above reproach. In *Anna Karenina*, Tolstoy has sympathized with Anna and has shown her on higher plane than those who condemn her. There are so many characters in this novel who commit transgression, but it is Anna who is punished, although she remains true to her love. Their hypocrisy and deceit prove to be protective cover for them, whereas Anna's inherent honesty/sincerity proves fatal for

her. Tolstoy's epigraph "Vengeance is mine, I will repay" seems to fault not Anna but the society that condemns her.

In *Madame Bovary*, Flaubert presents true picture of society's inner truths, people's hypocrisy, their materialistic creed, selfish nature and above all their insensitivity. There is not a single character who can understand Emma's receptive soul. In French society, everyone uses everyone else. No one really cares about anything but her/his own self. Emma proves to be a gullible romanticist and is exploited by her lovers and enemies. No one comes to help her when she faces financial crisis and in utter disgust for the society, she commits suicide.

U.R. Anantha Murthy has exposed religious orthodoxy of Brahmins in *Samskara*. It is regressive and impedes the growth of individuals. The deceit, hypocrisy and avarice of the Brahmin society have been presented before the readers. Naranappa realizes the inherent contradiction of Brahmin morality and that is why he breaks with it. Naranappa's open rebellion against Brahminism and his sexual transgression hinders his last rites as his corpse lays rotting in the agrahara. No Brahmin comes forward to cremate him as it can endanger his identity based on caste and it can also result in his excommunication. The hollowness of the Brahminical way of living based on extreme asceticism, neglecting the natural instincts, is brought to the light by the author.

Arundhati Roy attacks the outdated, ossified and rigid moral codes of Indian society in *The God of Small Things*. Through Ammu and Velutha's sexual transgression, the author has highlighted the double moral standard of Indian society. Amar Nath Prasad exposes gender discrimination as he observes that a daughter (Ammu) estranged from the husband is tortured and tyrannized in the parent's home whereas an estranged son, Chacko is not only welcomed but also remains the rightful inheritor of the family's wealth and fortune (Prasad 153). It is Ammu-

Velutha relationship which makes it evident that in this society what is desired and facilitated in case of man is branded blasphemous and sinful in case of a woman. The sexual adventure of Ammu causes harsh reaction from society as they operate collectively to deal with this threat to the patriarchal society. Ammu's rebellion, in fact, shakes the foundation of the caste-based society as it endangers the subversion of the caste structure. Her rebellion fails as it is not backed by the strong fervour of faith and her strength proves to be too weak to resist the counter pressure of societal constraints. So, the threat in the name of Ammu is annihilated by the collective force of the society.

The novelists seem to have sympathized with transgressors who are fallible human beings, but have pounded heavily on the hypocritical society that takes a sacrosanct position. This should not be taken to mean that the authors of all the novels examined above in any way uphold sexual transgression. As a matter of fact, the transgressors' predicament is humane to the core as they are sensitive souls trapped in merciless, un-sympathising and unforgiving society. The society is blind and inhuman when it comes to imposing ethico-moral code of discipline.

The last chapter deals with the culmination of transgression alongside of course, the points of reconciliation and eventual realization on the part of various transgressors. Some of the characters like Hester, Dimmesdale and Praneshacharya grow mature through their sufferings and hardships and are able to give meaning to their lives more genuinely. Their fall proves to be fortunate for them as it gives them deep mental anguish and psychological torment thereby enabling them to grow spiritually. On the other hand, Emma, Anna, Ammu and Velutha lack the self-will to fight against the social forces. In fact, the society is so hostile to them that they cannot even think in terms of reconciling with it. They lack the moral courage and conviction to change the perception of society about them. They succumb to the coercive power of social laws.

Hester emerges as an exception as she has the moral strength to deal with the punishment awarded by the puritan community. She fights against the society with their weapon and emerges triumphant at the end.

Even in case of Praneshacharya, transgression proves to be regenerating as he comes very close to realize the positive vision of life toward the end. He has been hitherto living in negativity (i. e. in terms of 'thou shalt nots') and is trying to be away from seven deadly sins. Nevertheless, his sin makes him alive to different facets of life. Even though his future course have not been clearly stated but there are enough hints to suggest that now he stands on surer and firmer ground and that his path is likely to lead him to spiritual evolution.

As such, on the basis of the foregone textual discussion, we can aver that transgression may cause a ripple, or a shock in the static societal/socio-cultural setup. To contain the damage to the different social institutions, all its guardians come together and impose the social and moral constraints that are always coercive in nature. As and when the community is attacked from outside, the external danger fosters solidarity within. These constraints are imposed in the name of maintaining order in the society to tone the temptation down, and to deprive the transgressor of the fruit of her/his enterprise. Transgression may break the shackles anytime as they hamper holistic growth of an individual who seeks fulfilment of her/his natural instincts and physical urges through socially unacceptable means. Hence, there is always a conflict between the demands of instincts and the cultural constraints. Despite the imposition of the moral and ethical codes of behaviour, they have been transgressed from the time immemorial. Transgression (sexual in particular) entails great suffering, mental torture and misery on the part of the transgressor as punishment from the society, which often culminates in either death/suicide or total transformation of the self. Transgression not only breaks the stagnation in

society thereby causing evolution of culture, it also causes evolution of the individual to a higher level of existence as evident through extended textual analyses above.

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