

**The Patriarchal Perspectives on Female
Subjectivities in the Selected Plays of
Atamjit and Mahesh Elkunchwar**

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CERTIFICATE

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ABSTRACT

THE PATRIARCHAL PERSPECTIVES ON FEMALE SUBJECTIVITIES IN THE SELECTED PLAYS OF ATAMJIT AND MAHESH ELKUNCHWAR

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The present research is aimed at critically exploring the selected Marathi and Punjabi plays namely *Pooran*, *Farash Vich Uggya Rukh*, *Main Tan Ik Sarangi Han* by Atamjit and *Old Stone Mansion*, *Garbo* and *Sonata* by Mahesh Elkunchwar who are both well-known playwrights of the second half of the 20th century. Their plays are concerned with many social and political problems and divulge various dimensions which help construct female subjectivity. Both demonstrate woman as victim of the caste, class and gender discrimination. Inferior conditions of middle-class women, sexual issues like prostitution, violence, extramarital affairs, rape, murder, gender discrimination, exploitation, psychological disorders have been examined with special reference to construction of a woman's subjectivity. This research work is significant as these two are important contemporary authors who raise questions about the marginalisation and subjectivities of women in two different societies, languages and cultures of India. The selected plays analyse different women characters in the selected plays who sometimes accept the supremacy of a man, and resist at other times while also representing the psychological constitution of a woman in terms of her gender and her cultural placement. The present study has also undertaken a comparative study of selected plays in order to explore the typically patriarchal perspectives of the two authors in their given cultural locations on how a woman is constructed in contemporary Indian drama. The thesis employs readings of the plays in consultation with diverse disciplines such as Psychoanalysis, Marxism, Gender Studies and Performativity. This study will help forge an understanding of the female subjectivities from varying standpoints under the light of various discourses prevalent in the contemporary Indian locations, particularly, those of the selected playwrights.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Sr. No.	Content	Page No.
1.	Introduction (Chapter - 1)	1-40
2.	Gendered Construction of Subjectivities in the Selected Plays of Atamjit (Chapter - 2)	41-84
3.	Female Subjectivities in the Selected Plays of Mahesh Elkunchwar (Chapter - 3)	85-124
4.	Comparative Analysis of Two Perspectives on Female Subjectivities in Selected Plays (Chapter - 4)	125-150
5.	Conclusion (Chapter-5)	151-157
6.	Selected Bibliography	158-174

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

In the recent years, the term subjectivity has been given new dimensions by literary theorists. The question of identity can be addressed only in terms of subjectivity that is constructed within the scope of culture, politics, language, and society in the contemporary world. Globalisation, cultural locations, and social surroundings play a significant role in constructing subjectivity.

Subjectivity is a philosophical term, and it can be defined in the historical and political contexts. Subjectivity defines the way in which an individual perceives the world, and it may differ from one individual to another. It is based on an individual's personal experience of life and analysis of his/her opinions based on past experiences. Simone de Beauvoir observes subjectivity as the expression of human body enmeshed in a social matrix (Atkins 2). But for Donald E. Hall, "subjectivity is the intersection of two lines of philosophical inquiry: epistemology (the study of how we know what we know) and ontology (the study of the nature of being or existence)" (4). This is shaped by the individual's background and upbringing, the environment in which he/she lives, his/her likes and dislikes, discriminations and biases developed over his/her existence, and through his/her interactions with other human beings.

Michel Foucault's conception of subjectivity can be understood with the help of Mark G E Kelly's essay "Foucault, Subjectivity, and Technologies of the Self," where he states that Foucault associates subjectivity with "a reality ontologically distinct from the body . . . Subjectivity is a *form*, rather than substance" (513). Primarily, there is the question of the historical constitution which is the most radical part of Foucault's conception of subjectivity because it contradicts the traditional notion of subjectivity as historically invariant and transcendent.

According to Michel Foucault, description of subjectivity applies across history; this may seem to be another instance of an apparent contradiction, often encountered in his thoughts between his radical historicism and his use of modern terminology to understand the past. His conception of subjectivity is not self - contradictory in this way. However, he takes subjectivity precisely as something that has no universal content but rather needs to constitute itself in particular ways at any given time. Linda Alcoff, an American thinker of race theory, feminist,

epistemologist and existentialist also comments, “Foucault’s demotion of subjectivity to an analytic position posterior to power results in a conception of subjectivity deprived of agency. In the absence of agency. . . Resistance to domination is impossible and even conceptually incoherent” (qtd. in Taylor 167).

Foucault articulates that power exists at all stages, in every human relationship. An individual, consciously or unconsciously, participates in what Foucault calls ‘power relations.’ For Foucault, power relations exist when any individual involved has certain degrees of both individual freedom and power over the others. In *Discipline and Punish* Foucault proclaims:

. . . by an analysis of penal leniency as a technique of power, one might understand both how man, the soul, the normal or abnormal individual have come to duplicate crime as objects of penal intervention; and in what way a specific mode of *assujettissement* was able to give birth to man as an object of knowledge. (24)

When an individual’s freedom is kept at stake in this power relation, then Foucault calls it a ‘state of domination.’ Here, “the domination of the means of constraint, of inequality, and the action of men upon other men” (Foucault, *The Subject and Power* 786-787). In order to maintain independence from states of domination, whether internal or external, an individual must first explore these power relations and how he may change that relationship. Foucault further clarifies this concept in his essay “The Ethics of the Concern of the Self as a Practice of Freedom”:

. . . The risk of dominating others and exercising a tyrannical power over them arises precisely only when one has not taken care of the self and has become the slave of one’s desires. But if you take proper care of yourself, that is, if you know ontologically what you are, if you know what you are capable of, if you know what it means for you to be a citizen of a city . . . if you know what things you should and should not fear, if you know what you can reasonably hope for and, on the other hand, what things should not matter to you, if you know, finally, that you should not be afraid of death – if you know all this, you cannot abuse your power over others. (31)

For Foucault, subjectivity refers to a situation where one power operates so as to assault his sense of self and identity. In his study of subjectivity, Foucault is more interested in how public institutions apply power over individuals. An individual

becomes a subject to institutions of power when the system dominates some aspect of the person's identity. Lakshman Yapa defines system in this discourse as:

Institutions and their discursive practices are the agents by which objects (individuals) are divided, classified, and subjected to normalization. Consider the categories of normal versus mad, normal versus criminal, normal versus pervert, normal versus poor, modern versus traditional, and developed versus underdeveloped. They are the products of specialized discourses that determine the shape, form, and constitution of objects. (712)

Apart from Yapa, according to Dianna Taylor, Foucault propounds three techniques of subjectivity and disciplinary power. First, is the hierarchical observation function which makes subjects constantly visible and knowable through a single gaze that sees everything regularly. Second, normalising judgement is enacted through the micro management of behaviour in areas of social life from which penalty had previously been absent. The third technique of disciplinary power is the examination. Taylor examines the idea of subjectivity as being, "not distinct from but is rather formed in and through relation of power" (173). When an individual observes the rules, knowledge and methods of examination, he/she reveals the truth about herself/himself. Taylor further points out:

Practices of the self thus possess a two-fold character: on the one hand, they are manifestations of the norms and values of the society in which an individual lives and thus establish a relationship between the individual and others; on the other, in so far as the individual takes them up and incorporates them into the construction of his or her own subjectivity, these practices establish a relationship of the individual to her or himself. (174)

The notion of subjectivity views multiple historical processes and modifications in its meaning. Joao Biehl, et al. suggests that historically situated differences, cross-cultural differences, the peculiarities of each individual are the three aspects of subjectivity that illustrate differences across time and cultural spaces (3). They further state, "subjectivity constitutes the material and the means of contemporary value systems and that capital accumulation and governance occur through the

remaking of culture as well as the inner transformations of the human subject” (6). Regenia Gagnier has argued in *Subjectivities: A History of Self-Representation in Britain*:

First, the subject is a subject to itself, an “I,” however difficult or even impossible it may be for others to understand this “I” from its own viewpoint, within its own experience. Simultaneously, the subject is a subject to, and of, others; in fact, it is often an “Other” to others, which also affects its sense of its own subjectivity. . . . Third, the subject is also a subject of knowledge, most familiarly perhaps of the discourse of social institutions that circumscribe its terms of being. Fourth, the subject is a body that is separate (except in the case of pregnant women) from other human bodies; and the body, and therefore the subject, is closely dependent upon its physical environment. (8)

In order to understand the concept of subjectivity, it becomes inevitable to comprehend the term ‘subject.’ In contemporary literary theory the term ‘subject’ has replaced the earlier traditional term “self”. There are a few thinkers including Descartes who quite consistently write of the *cogito* or “I” rather than “the self.” On one hand, there is a line of thought that emphasises the linguistic form of objective conditions of understanding leading to an analytical philosophy of language (which are once thought a single medium of expression, are now considered to be limiting factors with regard to what we think) and philosophy of mind. On the other hand, there is a line of thought that emphasises that the subject nature of understanding leads to phenomenology. Garrett Thomson has noted:

Self-conscious reflection upon the sources and standards of knowledge was one of the hall-marks of the modern period. This was mostly due to Descartes . . . He saw the need to evaluate methodically and systematically all claims to knowledge, to think about how knowledge is possible, and to reconcile the conflict between the new science and the old religion. (qtd. in Hall 20)

But the term ‘self’ is discernible from self-conscious and self-awareness that refers to the extent to which self-knowledge is clearly defined and applicable to one’s thoughts and position. So one can say that ‘self’ is the collection of ideas about oneself and “the constitution of the self is a social process” (Zahavi 2). It means

the intellectual observation that one has of oneself. It is an identity of an individual. So “self” is an umbrella term that, “encompasses a range of concepts that relate to self-reflective activity, for example, “consciousness,” “ego,” “soul,” “subject,” “person,” or “moral agent””(Atkins 1), and the “terms such as “self” or “subjective” can be entirely replaced by objective and impersonal concepts, from those who argue that concepts of body, brain, psychology states, and so forth are derivative of a holistic conception of a person” (2). But according to Michel Foucault, “self is a reflexive pronoun . . . it also conveys the notion of identity” (230). The philosophers have recently questioned the concept of self. “Some have argued that the self is nothing but an illusion created by an interplay of various subsystems and modules in the brain. Others have claimed that the concept of self is a Eurocentric invention with limited historical relevance” (qtd. in Zahavi 1). Foucault’s writings spin around the concept of formation of self, concerning the relationship between power, truth and subjectivity. Each of these has a unique and integral relationship with each other. According to Foucault, through critical application one may alter these relationships, and therefore, alter what one may deem the ‘politics of self.’ Critical application is a matter of examining the existing conditions and maintaining the freedom to question it. For Foucault, “this freedom manifests and perpetuates itself through the ancient practice called care of the self” (qtd. in Stephanie M Batters 2). It constitutes life-long practice on one’s body, mind, and soul to better relate the self with others and live an ethically-driven life. In the analysis of modes of power and care of the self, Foucault condones a full immersion into the present. According to Foucault, care of the self, first and foremost, constitutes creation of the self. It requires a continuous practice of introspection that simultaneously allows for a realistic sense of individual’s surroundings. In “The Ethics of the Concern of the Self as a Practice of Freedom” Foucault observes:

In the Platonic current of thought . . . the problem for the subject or the individual soul is to turn its gaze upon itself, to recognize itself in what it is and, recognizing itself in what it is, to recall the truths that issue from it and that it has been able to contemplate. (29)

For Foucault, ‘care of self’ is counter-productive which focusses on the self, and keen self-awareness is vital for participation in social and political life. Thus, it became the central concern for individual freedom, positive relationships with others and potentially, ethical participation in politics. In order to know ourselves,

one must first understand what constitutes caring for the self. "It is both a mindset and a practice, constant throughout one's life, in which the individual takes charge of his identity and sense of self. This self-care occurs at the physical, mental and spiritual level (Batters 4). So, care of the self is very complicated, for physical and mental level of human being. Thus, "it is a matter of acts and pleasures, not of desire. It is a matter of the formation of the self through techniques of living, not of repression through prohibition and law" (Foucault, *Subjectivity and Truth* 89). In this regard one can conclude that care of the self-allows one to control power over both oneself and others. Awareness of self and one's surroundings plays an important role. Foucault sees care of the self as being an essential component of individual freedom.

Although the term "subject" is open to change and denotes both agency and structure, "it is in the notion of the individual self with agency and control over itself" (Mills 34), while the term "subjectivity" can be examined through discourse, power, culture and ideology. In his article "The Subject and Power" Foucault observes that "the human subject is placed in relations of production and of signification, he is equally placed in power relations which are very complex" (778). It is the function of power that makes individuals into subjects. Hence, "there are two meanings of the word "subject": subject to someone else by control and dependence; and tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge. Both meanings suggest a form of power which subjugates and makes subject to" (781). To explicate the concept of the subject, Cressida Heyes explains:

"The subject" is not simply a synonym for "person"; instead the term captures the possibility of being a certain *kind* of person, which, for the theorists who tend to use it, is typically a contingent historical possibility rather than a universal or essential truth about human nature. (Heyes 159)

Friedrich Nietzsche, a German philosopher, talks about the concept of 'subject' and argues that human being is a historical product and is influenced by value-system of the society. When these value systems change, then the identity of human being also changes. For Nietzsche, subjectivity is the product of repressive value systems of morality. He traces the existence of morality as 'bad' or 'evil' and as 'good' and 'moral'. His *On the Genealogy of Morals* concludes good and bad words. According to Nietzsche:

'the enemy' as conceived of by the man of *ressentiment* – and here we have his deed, his creation: he has conceived of the 'evil enemy', '*the evil one*' as a basic idea to which he now thinks up a copy and counterpart, the 'good one' – himself!
(22)

When Nietzsche talks about the origin of God then he says that morality and truth both are functions of social structure, and "morality is a self-supporting system, resting on nothing outside itself; that morality is founded in reason, and that the basis of morality is demonstrable" (Tanner 33).

We can understand Nietzsche's concept of "subject" on one hand, as human-being being a historical product and on the other, as being moulded by value system which compels an individual to think about his/her identity. When these values are changed then the identity of human being also changes.

Apart from Nietzsche's concept, one can also understand the notion of subject and subjectivity through other disciplines like Marxism, psychoanalysis and feminism. These disciplines, directly or indirectly, share a complex relationship with the theory of subjectivity. Through the theory of Marxism and psychoanalysis, one can understand the economic and psychological construction of an individual's subjectivity. The theory of feminism focuses on the issues related to identity of a woman in male dominated society. In feminist theory, the idea of subjectivity centres on the experience of woman as a human being and as an individual in relation to her socio-cultural situation.

1.1. Marxist Origins of Subject:

Marxist theory argues that when we see the difference between thinking and an experience of life, material reality is organised. For Marx, model of society is constituted by a base (production, distribution and exchange) and a superstructure (culture, religion, law). Marx suggests that an individual's identity is changed through the experiences of a person. Marxist theory focuses that the individual's identity develops under power/control. When Marx talks about the economic interpretation of history, he examines that history is created by individual's labour:

man *does* change in the course of history; he develops himself; he transforms himself, he is the product of history; since *he* makes his history, he is his own product. History is the history of man's self-

realization; it is nothing but the self-creation of man through the process of his work and his production. (Fromm 24)

Marx analyses 'self' through the relations of production and sees an individual as a subject which is further constituted by relations of production. Friedrich Engels believed that "women's subordination began with the development of private property" (Nanda 163), and at the stage when the idea of having private property came into existence, men started aiming for retaining power and property. He says both the division of class and the subordination of women developed historically.

1.2. Psychoanalytic Construction of a Subject:

In the Freudian theory there are three levels of human personality: ego, super ego and id. These three levels of personality are primarily concerned with the consciousness, conscience and unconscious. The unconscious is a part of mind, which is beyond consciousness. Inexpressible desires, unresolved conflict, painful and a traumatic past and inarticulate fear constitute it. "Freud's major contributions to the ongoing discussion of subjectivity were a revolutionary emphasis on the developmental aspects of individual psychology and a recognition of the powerful influence of the unconscious on conscious life" (Hall 60). Pamela Thurschwell illustrates it in *Sigmund Freud*:

[the] unconscious . . . is primarily the storehouse of instinctual desires and needs. Childhood wishes and memories live on in unconscious life, even if they have been erased from consciousness. The unconscious life is, in a sense, the great waste-paper basket of the mind – the trash that never gets taken out.(4)

Sigmund Freud called the unconscious "repressed" or "sublimated." Sublimation entails the conversion of these elements into socially acceptable forms. In "A Note on the Unconscious in Psychoanalysis," Freud specifies that the "term unconscious . . . designates not only latent ideas in general, but especially ideas with a certain dynamic character" (Freud 36). The unconscious finds expression in dreams. The *dreamwork* is significant thought in the psychoanalysis theory. In this term real events of desires are transformed into dream images:

displacement whereby one person or event is represented by another which is in some way linked or associated with it, perhaps because of a similar-sounding word, or by some form of symbolic

substitution; and *condensation*, whereby a number of people, events, or meanings are combined and represented by a single image in the dream. (Barry 94)

Jacques Lacan, a French psychoanalyst also refers that we can understand subjectivity through the framework of psychoanalysis that understands the conscious and unconscious processes of the mind. For Foucault “the belief that subjectivity is identifiable purely with consciousness is an understanding that relates to a particular way of constituting ourselves” (Kelly 515). Lacan observes subjectivity as deep structure of the psyche and Foucault articulates subjectivity as variable practices of self-constitution (516). Lacan’s first contribution to psychoanalysis is mirror stage. The mirror stage illustrates the formation of ego. According to Lacan, “It is the Ego that makes me accept as true that I am myself and the other is the other” (qtd. in Chiesa 16). It also forms part of the eternal structure of subjectivity. Lacan argues that the child’s notion and the sense of the self comes out in its illusion to the other; he says that before the emergence of self the child lives in the reality of *Imaginary*. “There is no distinction between the I and the other. There is no centre (“me”). In the pre-Oedipal stage the child has a *symbiotic* relationship with the mother, and does not distinguish between mother’s body and itself” (qtd. in Nayar 74). However, Lacan reveals that “the “*mirror stage*” is the origin of a fundamental alienation in the child’s sense of the self. The child, who is uncoordinated and unintegrated, sees in its mirror image a self which *it would like to be*, an illusion”(74). According to Lacan, an individual begins to identify the self in the mirror stage primarily. The selected plays could be related to the three types of reality as proposed by Lacan: imaginary, the symbolic and the real. Imaginary articulates that reality which is conceived by everyone. The symbolic reality refers to the kind of reality which is fixed like that of patriarchy, and the real refers to the fact how reality itself is formed. This idea undermines the notion of subjectivity. It is a very complicated phenomenon which is based on the woman’s experience. These three realities of Lacan have interrelation with individual’s psychology. According to Lacan, the real isn’t symbolised. It resists the totally symbolic. Through this idea the fact that comes to the fore is that reality exists at two levels i.e., symbolic and imaginary. The real is precisely that for Lacan, which is excluded from reality. This excessive stress on the idea of reality is essential as far as the present research work is concerned.

Apart from Nietzsche, Karl Marx, Freud and Lacan many philosophers, literary critics, feminist scholars and other theorists have deliberated about female subjectivity. From their views, it can be deduced that society plays an important as well as a dynamic role in structuring our subjectivity and its understanding.

1.3. Feminism and the Understanding of Female Subjectivity:

Since the experience of women at the social and cultural levels are entirely different from that of men, it can be deduced that there is a wide difference between female subjectivity and male subjectivity. Exploring female subjectivity in contemporary times becomes pertinent as the rights of females have been curtailed at social and personal levels in the patriarchal society. Feminists raise questions about the place assigned to women in the social setup. For Judith Butler:

Feminist theory has assumed that there is some existing identity, understood through the category of women, who not only initiates feminist interests and goals within the discourse, but constitutes the subject for whom political representation is pursued. (3)

Feminism includes various movements, theories and philosophies which are related with the issues of gender differences that divulge equality for women. It points out the unseen aspects of society which are concerned with the male-female relationship.

For Simone de Beauvoir, feminism revolves around women which refers to the position they occupy in the world, and what their place should be. Generally, a woman feels insecure in patriarchal setup, and attempts to come to terms with her subjectivity. This provides some specific insights into women's subjective experiences such as rape, love, sexual desires, sexual harassment, etc. The theory of 'gender identity' focuses on sexuality and reproduction. Sexuality brings in a range of associations related to the human body. Generally, males and females attached to these gendered identities define specific sexualities which "is an area of human behavior, emotion, and understanding which is often thought of as 'natural' and 'private,' even though it is simultaneously an arena of constant surveillance and control" (Altman 2). The sexuality of women is always controlled and kept under watch in a patriarchal society. Customs and traditions imbibed as

an inseparable part of domesticity to some extent function as measures to check and suppress the expressions of female sexuality. Women's questioning of the domesticity in a patriarchal society also leads to the questioning of norms that support such domesticity. Women's hope for freedom and a better life leads to the questioning of established norms like customs and traditions. These are imposed on the lives of women through various cultural codes. The do's and don'ts are prescribed for them and ideal women are designed to fit within the frames of patriarchies. Each and every movement is restricted, modified and defined for women. These restrictions aim to control women's body and sexuality. Therefore, feminist literature has always raised issues relating to women's body. They have deconstructed the ways in which societies regulate woman's sexuality. In her article, "Writing the Body: Towards an Understanding of "L'écriture Feminine," Ann Rosalind Jones points out that "theoretical work and practical evidence strongly suggest that sexual identity ("I am a woman, I Experience my body as sexual in this way") never takes shape in isolation or in a simply physical context" (253). Jones reveals that man objectifies the world through symbolic discourse. A range of cultural tools embedded in a society efficiently controls female body and sexuality. But, according to Jeffrey Weeks, who is a gay activist, historian and a sociologist in his book *Sexuality* writes: "the patterns of female sexuality are inescapably a product of the historically rooted power of men to define and categorize what is necessary and desirable" (36). Sexuality is influenced by gender norms which include the sexual attitudes of men and women. Gender describes the social identity of people as male and female. It is basically a product of the cultural baggage as an outcome of sexual discrimination. Many theorists have grappled with the question of gender, that is, of the power relationships among women and men in feminism. In the text *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*, Bell Hooks writes:

Feminism is a struggle to end the sexist oppression. Its purpose is not to give advantage to a particular group of women, or a particular race or class of women. Actually, it does not privilege woman over man but it talks about equality among male and female (28).

In the antiquity of feminism, some strong feminist movements came into being and the origin of feminism can be categorised into three waves. The first and second

wave feminists focused their struggle primarily on gaining legal rights such as the right to vote and property and they also highlighted the inequalities between the sexes. Women's Liberation Movement was mainly related with the issues of equality, such as the need to end gender discrimination in society, in education and in the workplace. Its effects can still be seen in the everyday lives of women. As a result of this movement, women emerged as equals in all aspects of society including education, employment, health, etc. Third wave feminism borrows from post-structuralism and contemporary gender and race theories to expand on marginalised population experiences. This wave originated in the mid-80s and emerged from discussions and writings about feminism and racism. The first two waves of feminism had emerged largely from white, middle class perspective. In the third wave movement, activists attempted to broaden the scope of freedom by including perspectives of coloured women and different social classes. The notion of subjectivity became a very significant term in the third wave of feminism. The most prominent pioneers of this wave are Margaret Atwood, Judith Butler, Patricia Hill Collins, Ellen Page, Joan Smith, Rebecca Walker, etc.

Female subjectivity is constructed in the realm of patriarchy as patriarchy is premised on the power structure of male over female and female subjectivity is constructed through the subjugating ideology of patriarchy. The social structure of patriarchy is structured and practiced in the way that it also controls the psyche of women.

1.4. Patriarchy and Female Subjectivity:

The nature of oppression and subordination of women in society can on an analysis be encapsulated in the notion of 'patriarchy'. The term patriarchy is originally derived from Greek and Roman law which empowered males to be the head of the household and have absolute legal and economic power over the family. Generally patriarchy refers to the rule of father and it describes the male dominated society. The notion of patriarchy is defined by different philosophers with different approaches. Patriarchy used "to refer to male-domination to the power relationships by which men dominate women, and characterise a system whereby women are kept subordinate in a number of ways" (Bhasin 3). However, the term patriarchy since then had acquired much wider historicity. Gerda Lerner in *The Creation of Patriarchy* believes that:

Patriarchy in its wider definition means the manifestation and institutionalisation of male domination over women and children in the family and the extension of male domination over women in society in general. (236)

Here, Lerner explores the origins of women's subordinate roles to men in society; "men hold power in all the important institutions of society" and "women are deprived of access to such power." It does not imply that "women are either totally powerless or totally deprived of rights, influence, and resources" (Lerner 239). For Bell Hooks, an American author, feminist and social activist, "patriarchy is the single most life threatening social disease assaulting the male body and spirit in our nation" (Hooks, *Understanding Patriarchy* 17), and "the word "patriarchy" in our adult life, when we learned that the script that had determined what we should be, the identities we should make, was based on patriarchal values and beliefs about gender" (19-20). She further points out:

Patriarchy is a political-social system that insists that males are inherently dominating, superior to everything and everyone deemed weak, especially females, and endowed with the right to dominate and rule over the weak and to maintain that dominance through various forms of psychological terrorism and violence. (*Understanding Patriarchy* 17-18)

As per the subordinate roles assigned to women in the society, men and women performed differently. Men were defined by their resources of production that they possessed, including the commodity of female sexual services; a woman's status was determined through her sexuality to a man. Moreover, women who did not conform to these heterosexual roles had to depend on a male dominant figure in their own family. Usually, women were subordinate to men in their lives, so they could not grow out of it. Since ages, women have been passed from one male protector - the father, to another - the husband. Furthermore, a woman's marriage partner was chosen in accordance with her family's interest. Women were also deprived of education. With nothing to base alternatives on, women were left to the oppression of patriarchy and, "it is this feature of male hegemony which has been most damaging to women and has ensured their subordinate status for millennia" (Lerner 223).

Lerner articulates that men appropriated women's sexual and reproductive capacity through abduction and sexual slavery. While men's power was established and wielded over the mode of production, women's power was exercised by sexual ties with men (Nanda 181). Sylvia Walby in her text *Theorizing Patriarchy* examines patriarchy as "a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women" (16). Maggi Humm has defined 'patriarchy' as:

. . . A system of male authority which oppresses women through social, political and economic institutions-Patriarchy has power for man's great access to and mediation of the resources and rewards of authority structures inside and outside the home (qtd. in Bhasin 5).

Zillah Eisenstein is one of the foremost political theorists and activists, and socialist feminist thinkers and has also defined patriarchy as "a political structure which favours man" (26). Patriarchy nevertheless survived with the cooperation of women:

This cooperation is secured by a variety of means: gender indoctrination; educational deprivation; the denial to women of knowledge of their history; the dividing of women, one from the other, by defining 'respectability' and 'deviance' according to women's sexual activities; by restraints and outright coercion; by discrimination in access to economic resources and political power; and by awarding class privileges to conforming women. (Lerner 217)

Thus, it is evident from the ideas of Lerner that women play an equally important role in the propagation and reproduction of forces of patriarchy although the source of that power originates with the father as suggested by Heywood who writes, "the use of the term patriarchy thus implies that the system of male power in society at large both reflects and stems from the domination of the father in the family" (153). Andrew Vincent also portrays the three main causes for the origin of patriarchy system in *Modern Political Ideologies*:

First, men have tended to dominate historical writing until recently, and there has been criticism of the exclusion of women or the marginalisation of women's history. In this context, that women have been written about by men and men will tend to be, consciously or not, systematically gender biased. Second, this sensitivity to

historical origins, coupled with the fact that the discipline of history itself can be part of a patriarchal male order, makes women much more sensitive to the account of the feminist movement and the origin of patriarchy. Third, all variants of feminism believe patriarchy to be one of the primary reasons for women's oppression and subordination, there is a necessity to differentiate between those contributing to women's issues and not truly engaging with the underlying factors responsible for male domination and those who are concerned about causal factors and believe in possible and complete transformation of the 'power-structured relationships' that govern society. (291)

There are various thoughts regarding the origin of patriarchy as a system. There are some who believe that, it is a natural hierarchal order and believe it to be man-made and enabled by man-made associations, laws, customs, education, culture, religion and etc. The traditional view of patriarchy is as biologically and naturally determined and regards women as naturally inferior and insubordinate to men. Aristotle regarded women "as 'mutilated male' one who does not have a soul . . . the biological inferiority of women makes her inferior also in her capacities, her ability to reason and therefore, her ability to make decisions" (qtd. in Nanda 161). Rousseau considered women "as inferior and regarded them as 'voluptuous creatures meant for male entertainment'" (161). For Gerda Lerner:

Traditionalists whether working within a religious or a scientific framework have regarded women's subordination as universal, God-given or natural, hence immutable . . . what has survived, survived because it was best; it follows that it should stay that way. (217)

For Mary Wollstonecraft patriarchy and the perpetuation of patriarchy were rooted in an irrational denial of rights, particularly to education and the cultivation of reason to women. The liberal feminists believed that the origin of patriarchy and the oppression and subordination of women were based on the same kind of appeals to customs that were used to perpetuate complete monarchy and black slavery. Insights of John Stuart Mill's "The Subjection of Women" into women's subjected selfhood are profound. In responding to the observation that the "rule of men over women . . . is accepted voluntarily; women make no complaint, and are consenting parties to it" (442), he notes that, "all causes, social and natural,

combine to make it unlikely that women should be collectively rebellious to the power of men” (443). Women are “strenuously taught to repress [all aspirations] as contrary to the proprieties of their sex” (442), but Kate Millet in *Sexual Politics* argued that “a theory of patriarchy, will attempt to prove that sex is a status category with political implications” (24). There is a relationship between power and sex which is evident in private as well as public sphere of life. She illustrated patriarchy as the primary form of oppression which maintains its domination through the ideological control. Feminists also regard Engels emphasis on economic factors as an inadequate explanation for women’s subordination and disagree with his argument that there is no subordination of the working class women (Bhasin 24). In *The Creation of Patriarchy* Gerda Lerner while assessing Engels’s contribution to the understanding of patriarchy writes:

Engels made major contributions to our understanding of women’s position in society and history. (i) He pointed to the connection between structural changes in kinship relations and changes in the division of labour on the one hand and women’s position in society on the other. (ii) He showed a connection between the establishment of private property, monogamous marriage and prostitution. (iii) He showed the connection between economic and political dominance by men and their control over female sexuality. (v) By locating “the world historical defeat of the female sex” in the formation of archaic states, based on the dominance of propertied elites, he gave the historicity. Although he was unable to prove any of these propositions, he defined the major theoretical questions for the next hundred years. (23)

Zillah Eisenstein also defines society as containing within itself the capitalist labour process in which exploitation occurs, and on the other hand the patriarchal sexual hierarchy in which the oppression of women occurs. The exploitation of women provided the general form of exploitation of nature by men. Eisenstein observes:

Patriarchy precedes capitalism through the existence of the sexual ordering of society which derives from ideological and political interpretations of biological difference. In other words, men have chosen to interpret and politically use the fact that women are the reproducers of humanity. From this fact of reproduction and men’s

political control of it, the relations of reproduction have arisen in a particular formulation of women's oppression. A patriarchal culture is carried over from one historical period to another to protect the sexual hierarchy of society. Today the sexual division of society is based on real differences that have accrued from years of ideological pressure. (25)

Radical feminists define patriarchy as a sexual system of power in which the men possess more power and economic privilege as compared to women. Patriarchy signifies the male-dominant hierarchical order of society. It is rooted in biology rather than in history and economics. This system is preserved in marriage and the family through sexual division of labour and society. "Women's position in the power hierarchy is defined not in terms of the economic class structure but in terms of the patriarchal organization of society" (Vincent 191).

Apart from these thoughts, the contemporary understanding of patriarchy has been clearly elaborated by Sylvia Walby and Robert Connell. In *Theorizing Patriarchy* Walby suggests that patriarchal relations in societies are constructed in which men dominate and exploit women. It can be enumerated as:

The patriarchal mode of production, patriarchal relations in paid work, patriarchal relations in the state, male violence, patriarchal relations in sexuality, patriarchal relations in cultural institutions . . . in relation to each of the structures, it is possible to identify sets of patriarchal practices which are less deeply sedimented . . . These are significant for the generation of a variety of gender-differentiated forms of subjectivity. This structure is composed of a set of institutions which create the representation of women within a patriarchal gaze in a variety of arenas, such as religions, education and media. (20-21)

The notion of patriarchy has been criticised on general grounds. "In order to address these criticisms Walby moved from the term 'patriarchy' to that of a 'gender regime,' wherein she made distinction between two main regimes present in advanced industrial societies. The first she terms a domestic regime distinguished by private patriarchal relations and the second public regime dominated by public patriarchal relations" (Nanda 168). In an article "Towards a Theory of Patriarchy" Walby further observes:

The domestic gender regime is based upon household production as the main structure and site of women's work activity and the exploitation of her labour and sexuality and upon the exclusion of women from the public. The public gender regime is based not on excluding women from the public but on the segregation and subordination of women within the structures of paid employment and the state, as well as within culture, sexuality and violence . . . In the domestic form the principal patriarchal strategy is exclusionary, excluding women from the public arena; in the public it is segregationist and subordinating. (167-168)

Apart from Walby, Robert Connell has also contributed to the replacement of patriarchy by the concept of gender regime in *The Polity Reader in Gender Studies*. According to Connell, there are three sets of structures which include the relations of power, production and cathexis (39). In the power relations, gender order is overall subordination of women which is dominance by men. Production relation is the social construction of masculinity in which male control the major institutions and business class. Cathexis means that the sexual desires are also gendered.

Feminists mainly use the term 'patriarchy' to describe the biased power structure between men and women. So, "patriarchy is more than just a term; feminists use it like a concept, and like all other concepts it is a tool to help us understand women's realities" (Sultana 2).

The system of patriarchy comes into existence because of the caste and gender hierarchies. Indian historical theorist, Uma Chakravarti claims that the main subjugation was that of women. The women in the Aryan community at the beginning played an active role in the pastoral economy but with class and caste stratification they were rendered powerless:

The first is ideology internalized by women as *pativrata* (wife fidelity) where the chastity of women and her 'purity' were to be maintained so women's mobility and sexuality could be controlled at any cost. The second was law and custom as set down by the Brahmanical social code to keep deviant women under patriarchal control. The third was the control of the State. If women could not be controlled

by the earlier two devices, the State enforced patriarchal norms in order to punish them for their transgressions. (qtd. in Nanda 171)

Uma Chakravarti also believes that patriarchy has been a system of 'benevolent paternalism' in which women who conformed to the patriarchal norms were accorded certain rights, privileges and security. She observes:

Through the reiteration of the cultural model in mythology, women believed that they had different and distinctive power, a higher and more spiritual power, a power which would save their husbands from the worst fate and even absolve them of their sins. Working together paternalism and cultural models of womenhood in mythology erased subordination, it was thus much easier for women to be complicit in such a structure. (qtd. in Bhasin 37)

With the rise of state-class societies and economic inequalities, etc. women were subordinated by men. The control of their bodies especially their fertility and sexuality and their labour came to be known as patriarchy. Over the last decades there has been an attempt especially in the third world to look for indigenous way of understanding patriarchy. The multiple patriarchies are present in plural and hierarchical societies which interconnect with class, caste, race, etc. It refers to the system of subordination of women in society due to the oppression and control by men and the contemporary understanding on patriarchy has tried to replace the word patriarchy with subordination of women and gender regime. The patriarchal society because of its dominating and oppressive mentality influences female emotions, feelings, dreams and desires.

1.5. Gender Roles, Performativity and Subjectivity:

The sex gender distinction has been central to the feminist argument in order to talk about the oppression and subordination of women in a patriarchal society. Gender today, has become a category of analysis as well as description. In *Gender-Theorizing Feminism V*. Geetha observes, "sex is considered a fact-one is born with either male or female genitalia. Gender is considered a social construction-it grants meaning to the fact of sex (10). Norms and expectations about roles become so powerful that they are considered as universal. That a woman should cook and do all domestic chores while a man should be master of the household is not based on any empirical facts but on this social construction of

gender. Such expectations lead to low self-esteem and feelings of guilt when such roles are not fulfilled perfectly. Those who break away from these norms are ridiculed or compelled so that the system is not threatened or challenged by them.

Gender Trouble is an acclaimed and pioneering text due to its innovative ideas regarding gender identity. It also discusses the complex relationship between gender and sex and introduces the notion of gender performativity. *Gender Trouble* explores the process of the construction of gender identity. Butler argues that gender is not a fixed or stable category, rather a performance that is mere role-playing that has to be repeated within social and cultural contexts. She also identified that gender identity is acquired through the repetitive performance. For Butler:

Gender is in no way a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts proceed; rather, it is an identity tenuously constituted in time - an identity instituted through a stylized repetition of acts. (519)

So gender identity is not what one is, rather what one acts. She asserts that gender identities are not imposed rather processes of constructing one's self. The subject is free to choose gender roles from the alternatives available within a cultural context. For Judith Butler, sex and gender are construction of discourses. In this text, she also undermines the distinction between sex and gender (sex is biological while gender is culturally constructed). She argues that human bodies cannot signify without gender, that is, both sex and gender are constructed. She exposes the view that gender identities are constructed in and through the language so there is no identity that precedes language. Butler traces various discourses around sex and gender. Her theory of performativity has been hailed as a significant contribution for the gender study. She argues that the concept of subject is a performative construct. Depicting the instability of the category of 'woman,' Butler says:

Woman itself is a term in process, a becoming, a constructing that cannot rightfully be said to originate or to end. As an ongoing discursive practice, it is open to intervention and resignification. Even when gender seems to congeal into the most reified forms, the "congealing" is itself an insistent and insidious practice, sustained and regulated by various social means. (33)

Butler considers that sex, gender and sexuality do not exist in relation to each other. Generally, sex and gender are seen according to gender and desire, but Butler criticises that gender and desire are flexible. For Butler, a subject cannot select her/his gender because the choice of gender is dependent on birth. Butler comments on the difference between sex and gender thus:

[T]o choose a gender is to interpret received gender norms in a way that organises them anew. Less a radical act of creation, gender is a tacit project to renew one's cultural history in one's own terms. (131)

Butler argues that sex and gender are constructed to the extent that there is no possibility of freedom beyond discourse. She emphasises that feminist theories should not approve of the category of 'woman' blindly but analyse its production within the constraints of power structures. In *Gender Trouble* Butler calls for "a feminist genealogy of the category of women" (2). Moreover, the idea is based on the Butler's theory of performativity. For Butler, gender is constructed and not naturally determined by sex. Here the question raises that whether sex is also culturally constructed. But according to Butler, both these categories are performative:

Gender is not a noun (but it) proves to be performative, that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be. In this sense, gender is always a doing, though not a doing by a subject who might be said to preexist the deed. (25)

If gender and sex are performative rather than given, according to Salih, it would be possible to "enact them in unexpected, potentially subversive ways" (58). Butler derives her approach from Foucault, who argues that speaking about sex is a way of simultaneously producing and controlling it. However, Butler differs from Foucault who assumes that there is a body prior to the discourse. Butler sees the possibility of subverting the law against itself through "reinscription and recitations" of sex and gender which constitute the subject's agency within the law (Salih 62). Observing the concept of performativity, Butler points out in *Gender Trouble*:

Gender proves to be performative - that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be. In this sense, gender is always a doing, though not a doing by a subject who might be said to pre-exist the deed. (25)

Butler also connects gender with the linguistic performativity. For her, gender identities are constructed in language. There is no gender identity without language. Sarah Salih proclaims:

There is no “I” beyond language since identity is itself a signifying practice, so that “culturally intelligible subjects” are the effects rather than the causes of discourses that conceal their workings (64).

Here is no identity outside language. Butler observes, “that the gendered body is performative suggests that it has no ontological status apart from the various acts, which constitute its reality” (136). In other words, there are many performative acts which undermine the normative conceptions of sexual and gender identity, such as cross-dressing. According to Hans Bertens:

Cross-dressing undermines the claim to naturalness of standard heterosexual identities and emphasises a theatrical, performance-like dimension of gender and sexual orientation that our discourses seek to suppress. (230)

However, there is no such thing as complete freedom of choice. Here, Sara Salih raises a very significant question, “If subversion itself is conditioned and constrained by discourse, then how can we tell that it is subversion at all?” (66). For explanation, she gives some examples of cross-dressing performances from movies, which talks about heterosexual power structures. It appears when the subject is snared within a discourse. Power works through discourses and a discourse, according to Hans Bertens, is “a loose structure of interconnected assumptions that makes knowledge possible” (154). According to Salih, “the discourses would already have determined “how to repeat” in advance, and what appears to be agency is probably another effect of discourse disguised as something else” (67). Hence, Butler claims, “construction is not opposed to agency; it is the necessary scene of agency” (147).

The interpretation of gender is a male centric approach. Culture, religion, education and history have mainly been expounded by men. Gendered roles are socially created and they lead to domination and subordination of women, and create the norms of masculinity and femininity. Gender is influenced by its culture, religion and the history of that culture. The religion has played a major role in the social construction of gender roles because “our parents believed in patriarchy; they had been taught patriarchal thinking through religion” (Hooks, Understanding

Patriarchy 18). The religious texts have given a subordinate and subservient position to women and also elevated the qualities and values of motherhood, purity and worship God as well. Bijaylaxmi Nanda writes that “Hindu religious texts are clearly patriarchal” (175). According to Nanda, in the *Manusamriti* and the other *Shastras* the role of the husband and wife in procreation is done through the analogy of field and seed. In epics such as the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* qualities of self-sacrifice, motherhood, purity and patience are extolled in women. The prescriptions of a good wife and good mother are detailed and reinforced throughout the narration. In the *Upanishads*, there is a section which deals with methods for sexual relations. The *Kamasutra* provides for the sexual violence. The interconnections of class and gender are also prominent in the text. In Christianity, Adam and Eve lay down that women’s craving for the forbidden leads to the breakdown of harmony and peace. It also emphasises that a woman is secondary to man as she is created from the rib of man. Jane Anger, an English author of the sixteenth century, and the first woman to publish a full-length defense of her gender opines:

Eve was superior to Adam: a second, and hence improved, model. Adam was fashioned from ‘dross and filthy clay’, God made Eve from Adam’s flesh, ‘that she might be purer than he’, and which ‘doth evidently show how far we women are more excellent than men . . . From woman sprang man’s salvation. (qtd. in Walters 9)

The *Upanishads* depict the situations of women how a man should persuade a woman for the sexual relations because “in scrapping everything except the Vedas and Upanishads, which were identified as the core of Hindu tradition . . . Once the Upanishads were identified as the ‘true’ religion, the golden age was perceived as lasting upto the time the Upanishads were composed . . .” (Chakravarti 34). But according to the *Arthasastra* in “such situations, striking the back of the wife by using a variety of means including a split bamboo cane was envisaged for the inculcation of modest behaviour” (Nanda 176). Woman in the lowest order of the social hierarchies were available to all men in the higher strata of society. The religious texts are replete with such examples on how to deal with errant and infidel women and how to inculcate discipline in women to prevent them from any kind of infidelity.

There are variations on the basis of caste and class when it comes to the process of socialisation. Gendered notions about roles as per one's gender are ingrained right from childhood. Its association with activities like games, behaviour, roles of girls and boys in the society and gender-specific ideas are unbreakable in every possible way. Women and men have certain beliefs derived from them about their cultural roles. The norms of masculinity and femininity are not just prescribed through texts but are popularised through mass media. The mass media such as television, movies, newspapers, magazines and other forms of popular media emphasize stereotypes. The symbols of married women, roles of a daughter and a daughter-in-law and the punishment for stepping out of these roles is the main focus of their storylines. The cinema in India is also influential over all classes in society. Masculinity or femininity portrayed in them follows the norm, it is the male lead who plays the main protagonist but the female lead is mostly second to male. Most of Indian festivals also emphasise these norms. For example: the festival of Karva Chauth emphasises on the association of purity of woman in serving her husband as God and Rakhi and Bhai Duj highlight the role of woman to pray for the life of their brother in return for male protection of their purity all their lives. Thus, one can say that the social norms are imposed on women, in a manner that time and again they should take the test of proving their love for their husbands and brothers. In an essay, "Whatever Happened to the Vedic Dasi? Orientalism, Nationalism and a Script for the Past" Uma Chakravarti observes that "the goal for women, as spelt out by the ancient Hindu legislators was *pativrata dharma* (devotion to the husband)" (33).

History is the description of culture, religion, and all other processes and is both cause and effect of these processes. Works of two Indian feminist scholars like Kumkum Roy and V. Geetha are worth elaborating on the notion of gender. Both have explained gender through history. The historical explanation of gender that V. Geetha has put together has both a western and an Indian aspect. Within the western aspect she has taken up the historical theories of masculinity and femininity elaborated in the Marxist theory of gender. By using these notions, Marxism addressed the question of how women became subordinate to men. A British psychoanalyst and feminist Juliet Mitchel writes:

neither male control over production nor their appropriation of the female experience of reproduction are solely responsible for the

exploitation and subordination of women. The social and economic structure that locks production and reproduction together is to be seen at four levels namely: that of production, reproduction, socialization and sexuality. (qtd. in Nanda 181)

In view of that one can say that culture also constructs gender, so the female subjectivities are also constructed by the cultural environment. The notion of subjectivity has become very significant in contemporary world literature and its influence can also be seen on Indian vernacular drama. Many plays like *LohaKutt* (Balwant Gargi), *Pooran* (Atamjit), *Mai Tan Ik Sarangi Han* (Atamjit), *Sat Begane* (Ajmer Aulakh), *Garbo* (Mahesh Elkunchwar), *Sonata* (Mahesh Elkunchwar) etc. depict women who are trying to deconstruct the myth of male sovereignty attempting to come out of the margins and to occupy the positions of subject. A more realistic picture of the Indian woman began to emerge from the Indian English drama as well as vernacular drama. As in the contemporary period, women raised questions in relation to their subjectivities being constructed and portrayed by the dominant groups and patriarchal system. Through the change of time, we need to note that it is this time when the representation of identities emerged in a significantly definite way. This is the period when various subaltern groups such as dalits, women, and religious minorities were questioning the all-pervasive notion of Indian nationalism in literature. The world of woman has long remained confined to the four walls of the house. It is where the panorama of human emotions gets displayed. Resistance by women takes various forms of expression and comes up in their lives and in social productions like art, literature, speech, and different modes of popular culture. Drama is one of them. Consequently, drama has become significant not only as an art form, but also as a form that provides space for resistance. The study focuses on the contemporary plays about women by male authors to locate issues of gender, patriarchy and resistance of patriarchy. This research is an attempt towards understanding the subtleties of oppression and the gendered relationships as experienced by women in society today.

The image of women in drama has undergone a substantial change in the last four decades. Writers have shifted from the traditional portrayal of enduring and self-sacrificing women, towards gender conflicts, female characters searching for identity; no longer characterised and defined simply in terms of their victim

status. A major preoccupation in recent Indian drama has been a delineation of inner life and subtle interpersonal relationships. In a culture where individualism and protest have often remained alien ideas and marital bliss and the woman's role at home is the central focus; it is interesting to note the emergence of not just an essential Indian sensibility but an expression of cultural displacement. Women's representation, now, is more assertive, more liberated and more articulate than the literary works of the past.

1.6. The History of Indian Drama:

History of Indian drama begins with the Sanskrit drama. The Classical Sanskrit Theatre is the initial stage of the Indian theatre. The Sanskrit words '*nataka*' and '*nata*' for play which is the Prakrit form of Sanskrit. Drama flourished and progressed in ancient India. The plays had a considerable freedom of choice of subject and treatment and can be described as melodramas or tragic comedies. The elements are mixed: gravity and gaiety, despair and joy, terror and love – are all combined. In the earlier plays death was generally not represented on stage. A Sanskrit drama opens with a *nandi* who is addressed to Ganesh/Shiva for prosperity of the audience by the *Sutradhara*. At the end of the Sutradhar's compliments the audience on their critical ability and introduces one of the characters of the play, after which the action goes on with the regular divisions into acts and scenes. The theory of unity of time, place and action which played so important role in the Greek drama appears in a rather modified form in India. The dramatist Bharata, thirteen of whose works have been recovered and published, is traditionally considered to have been the founder of Indian drama. The golden age of Sanskrit drama starts with well-known playwright Kalidasa. *Abhijanashakuntalam*, *Malvikagnimitram*, *Ranguvansham*, *Megaduta* (lyric poem) are plays in the genre of tragic-comedy, romantic comedy. Primarily, his plays are based on Hindu *Puranas*.

When the British came to India, adaptations and translations from English and Sanskrit followed. By the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, the Indian drama was written in vernacular languages mostly, and some plays were translated into English language. In "The Curious Journey of the Indian Drama in English" Jasbir Jain Remarks:

Probably it was during the colonial period that drama in English surfaced primarily as medium of reaching across or framing Indian culture for the benefit of the British. (27)

For Chakraborty “Modern Indian English theatre has, on the one hand, with the application of various theories and innovative tools, extended its focus from rural to urban India, while on the other, these plays, as a part of the ‘Theatre of Roots’ movement, are significant in their binding of traditional forms of Indian theatre with the modern”(1). Krishna Mohan Banerjee’s *The Persecuted* was the first play to be written in the English language. The theme of this play was conflict between traditional customs and modern education. The contemporary Indian drama has deviated from the classical/European models, which is experimental and innovative in technical and thematic aspects. In the context of contemporary socio-political issues such as history, myth, religion, folklore, and legend are investigated by the playwrights. Among the major playwrights who have given a distinctive shape to this enormous mass of creative material are Rabindranath Tagore, Vijay Tendulkar, GirishKarnad, Habib Tanvir, Badal Sircar, Mahesh Dattani and Mahesh Elkunchwar. This section, basically aims at critical evaluation of this cumulative tradition of Indian English theatre evolved by these representative playwrights.

Rabinderanath Tagore has also written remarkable plays in Bengali language and later on that plays translated in English as well as other vernacular languages. His plays are dealing with social, cultural and political issues.

Vijay Tendulkar is one of the most prolific Indian playwrights who have enriched the Indian drama and theatre by illustrating various problems of his native life in Maharashtra. He has made a powerful impression in the field of literature especially in drama. All his plays are illuminating. Through his writings he targets the hypocrisies and double-standards of the society. The theme of gender relation, sexual norms, institution of marriage and issues of morality are featured prominently in his plays. His themes range from social criticism to psychological analysis and gender studies. In *Silence! The Court is in session*, he has combined social criticism with the tragedy of an individual victimised by society. Another play, *Sakharam Binder* depicts with great objectivity, the problem in human nature due to sex and violence. The conservative section of Maharashtra society was stunned by the bold display of illicit sexual relations. He also reveals the human lives which are declined in the mire of frustration and sexual innuendoes, and

Tendulkar also exposes the patriarchal set-up of marriage “as a means of not only regulating sexual and reproductive behaviour but also a means of upholding male dominance” (Chakraborty 7).

GirishKarnad is one of India’s shining stars of drama today. For four decades, he has continued to write excellent plays, using history and mythology to tackle contemporary themes. His first play *Yayathi* was written neither in English nor in his mother tongue Konkani and it was written in his adopted language Kannada. His play *Mahabharata*, which chronicled the adventures of mythical characters was immediately translated and staged in several other Indian languages.

Habib Tanvir is a noted playwright and founder of the Naya Theatre. He continued the experiment with the form of Naya theatre. *Agra Bazar* and *Charandas Chor* are his famous plays. Tanvir was convinced that the techniques of folk theatre are in perfect harmony with the imaginative flexibility of classical Sanskrit dramaturgy. His play *Mitti Ki Gaadi* shows many signs of this conviction.

Badal Sircar is a famous Bengali dramatist and also known as the innovator of the Indian Street theatre. *Evam Inderjit* is his first play which attracted wide notice for the themes of absurdity, social conformity and identity crisis. Some of the names which can be mentioned are *Baki Itihaas*, *Pralap*, *Tringsha Shatabdi*, *Pagla Ghora* etc. His major concerns are the existential crisis, compounded by a sense of associative guilt and responsibility in disturbed persons. These persons belong to urban middle class in a world of increasing violence and in humanity.

Mahesh Dattani is one of best and most serious contemporary playwrights writing in English in India. A director, actor, dancer, and writer Mahesh Dattani is a versatile personality. His major plays are: *Bravely Fought the Queen*, *On a Muggy Night in Mumbai*, *Seven Steps Round the Fire*, *Thirty Days in September* and *Where There’s a Will*.

Mahesh Elkunchwar, one of the selected authors for this research project is a well-known Marathi dramatist. He deals with the themes of mortality, identity, subjectivity, gender issues and sexuality in his plays. *Sonata* (2001) is a tale of existence of three women on their own conditions. *Garbo* (1970) tries to find purpose, beauty, and meaning in life by living ‘other’ lives, and in *Old Stone Mansion* (1985) the female characters play a vital role and they are more

influential than male characters. All female characters in these plays are victims of patriarchy and Indian social set up.

The modern Punjabi drama can be best understood in terms of western influence on it. Though drama is a very old literary genre whose roots originally in India can be traced back to Sanskrit literature. But emergence of modern Punjabi drama can be attributed to the literary environment in Lahore at the beginning of the twentieth century with the emergence of Ishwar Chander Nanda as a dramatist. Before twentieth century, sole form of theatrical activity in Punjab was the skits and masquerades of street entertainers in towns and their counterparts in villages were called *bhands* who had their own private scripts which they presented on the festive occasions like marriage and birth of sons. The first Punjabis to devote their attention to this genre were Bawa Budh Singh and Brij Lal Sastri. Bhai Vir Singh also wrote a play in the same style, entitled *Raja Lakh Data Singh* (1909). He wrote this play in reaction to Bawa Budh Singh's play which he regarded as profane. Other attempts in this genre are represented by Gurbakhsh Singh Barrister's *Brij Mohan*, Feroze Din Sharaf's *Heer Syal* and some others. The modern period of Punjabi drama starts with Ishwar Chander Nanda. In all his works, Nanda focused on social problems and evils of society like economic exploitation of working class and gave voice to women. Sant Singh Sekhon is a prominent playwright in the history of Punjabi drama. In his first play *Mahatama*, he develops the idea embodied in a saying that bread in a rich man's house has a sap of blood in it and in the poor man's house has a sap of milk. His play *Puttar* portrays the life of a peasant family working in the rural areas of Punjab. He also signifies the social problems and evils of the society in his play *Duja Viah*. Sekhon takes up the inordinate vanity of mothers of young men becoming high officers getting them to repudiate their first wives and marrying for the second time to accord with the rise in their status. An exposure of the Indian trading class whose corrupt practices in business, smuggling and black-marketing intrude into its domestic life also appear in Sekhon's plays.

Gurdial Singh Phul is one of the most prolific playwrights in Punjabi. In his plays like *Adami di Akal*, *Dharti di Jai*, *Dharti di Awaz*, and *Lajja*, he focuses on social and economic problems of contemporary life. After these plays he takes a turn towards Sikh history and writes plays like *Tatti Vao Na lagai*, *Asi Dun Savai Hoye* and *Nanak Nadri Nadar Nihal*.

Harcharan Singh is the nearest successor to Nanda in both matter and manner. He entered the field of Punjabi play in 1937. Social evils and deplorable condition of woman in Punjab occupies the central position in his plays. *KamalaKumari, Anjod, Khedan De Din Char* depict all these themes. After Independence, Harcharan Singh imbibed the progressive influences and tried to reinforce this tendency by writing plays from the Sikh historical tradition. In *Aji, Kal te Bhalak*, he tries to expose a corrupt and lecherous temple priest who dreams of becoming a minister but is arrested by the police in the case of black-marketing. So these playwrights mostly presented social, historical and mythological themes.

Balwant Gargi, a well-known playwright in Punjabi literature, is known for his mastery of dramatic techniques. He wrote plays with romantic, poetic overtones, with some social and women related themes purpose thrown in. *Kuari Tisi, Pattan di Beri, Bebe, Kanak di Balli, Sail Pathar, Loha Kutt* portrayed these themes but in *Dhuni di Agg*, he got influenced by existentialist ideas. Well known playwright, Kartar Singh Duggal is the author of seven full length plays. *Mitha Pani, Kohkan, Shor te Sangeet, Ik Akh Ik Nazar*, and *Mian Meer* are some of his famous plays. As a playwright he has indulged in odd experiments in technique. He has also written a number of monologues.

Gurcharan Singh Jasuja made his name as a playwright when his play entitled *Gaumukha Shermukha* was published. His main concern is the projection of contemporary social reality highlighting its oddities. *Makri da Jal, Kandhan Ret Dian, Jungle, Char Diwari, Pachhtawa, Sikhar Dupehar ate Hanera* and *Paras di Chhoh* are his prominent plays.

Kapur Singh Ghuman started his career in playwriting with one act plays *Zaildar* and *Anhoni* which were written in realistic tradition. After that he began writing experimental plays. The characters of his plays are symbolic and represent different psychological states.

Surjit Singh Sethi accomplishes a commendable union of traditional realism and modernist experimentation. He started writing his plays in the traditional realistic style. His first play *Coffee House* portrays a picture of higher middle class in the metropolitan and industrial city. All his plays are influenced by theatre of the absurd. *QadirYar, Bharia Bharia Sakhana Sakhna, King, Mirza te Sapera, Mard Mard Nahin Tivin Tivin Nahin, Nangi Sadak Raat da Ohla* and *Eh Zindagi Hai Dosto* are written in technique of absurd. Harsaran Singh treads a new path in his

first full-length play *Jigra*. In *Lamme Sme da Narak*, he depicts different aspects of social, political and administrative life in our new democracy. His play *Kulachhne* revolves around sexual relationship as shared by men and women in the present age. So we can say that the themes of Harsaran Singh's plays also depict the problems of women in Punjabi society.

Ajmer Singh Aulakh emerged on Punjabi play scene in 1970s. He came into literary prominence with the publication of his first play *Aarbad Narbad Dhundhukara* which was followed by many more significant plays like *Begane Bohar di Chhan*, *Anne Nisanchi*, *Sat Begane*, *Bhajian Bhahan*, *Gani*, *Kehar Singh di Maut*, *Salwan*, *Ik Si Darya*, *Jhanan de Pani*, *Ishaq Baajh Namaz da Hajj Nahi*, *Nikke Surajan di Larai* and *Niyon Jadh*. He understands the crisis of farmers in Punjab. His plays depict the internal influences on the psychology of the individuals attached with political and social awareness. One can discuss his plays in reference to rural background because his plays present a picture of lower class rural life and he also projects a realistic picture of the farming community.

Atamjit, another selected author for this research project is one of the prominent playwrights of Punjabi literature. He popularised short-plays (one-act play) in Punjabi theatre and gave symbolism a new dimension with his symbolic plays. *Farash Vich Uggia Rukh* illustrates distrust in man-woman relationship with the symbol of a tree that has raised all of a sudden in the floor of the bedroom. The problem which the characters of *Farash Vich Uggia Rukh* (1984) have been facing, is that they always remain in fear that whether their desire would be fulfilled or not due to their social circumstances. While using myth as a technique in *Pooran* (1991) and exploring Luna as a mythical character Atamjit's main focus is to depict the identity of woman. In order to analyse the use of mythology in the text, the present study, also undertakes an investigation of the various theories regarding the subject, origin and function of mythology. The retelling of mythology and the classical texts from feministic perspective has been claimed by second wave feminists as a strategy to question the stereotypical representation of woman in literature. Since the present research also undertakes the feminist interpretation and assessment of the use of myth in literature. His play *Main Tan Ik Saarangi Han* (2001) also depicts the problems of contemporary women and issues related to their identity and subjectivity. His short plays *Murgi Khana* and *Pallu Di Udeek* are also equally well known to the Punjabi world.

In the selected plays, an oppressive system of patriarchal beliefs controls and inhibits the female characters and they submit to the identities constructed for them by the society. Both playwrights illustrate a beginning of female liberation, although female characters are also controlled by a male-centered value system. The concepts of identity is explored in two completely different locations by two different dramatists (Punjabi and Marathi), although they touch upon some similar themes.

Today Atamjit and Mahesh Elkunchwar are the powerful voices of International renown to emerge on the Punjabi and Marathi Stage. Their plays explore the psyche and identity of the woman in Indian Patriarchal setup. A critical study of the subjectivity concerns in Atamjit and Mahesh Elkunchwar's plays also help to analyse the collective social attitude which determines the constitution of the female character therein. Both dramatists sustain the strategy of compromise between the two extremes of life - orthodoxy and modernity, materialism and idealism, spiritualism and industrialism. Freedom is essential for a woman to realise her potential for a complete and independent. Towards the end, drama provides a powerful and important medium for portraying representations of women as well as the patriarchal constraints which have historically impeded their psychological development as fully functioning cohesive selves. They play an important part in paving the way for the proliferation of plays focusing upon women's issues. As modern women struggle to define themselves anew, they battle to break the patriarchal past which relegated them to a lower status in society. However, they face a much more difficult task than merely making themselves over into the fully realised selves they yearn to be. Psychologically fragmented and often docile, they have been used to having society dictate their roles to them. Psychoanalysis, particularly object-relations theory, offers a way to study these psychological splits. Plays of Mahesh Elkunchwar and Atamjit are representation of women working to fill that void with the limited options for self-determination present in patriarchal society. Both explore the emergence of contemporary Indian female subjectivity.

1.7. The Survey of Work Done

The research work to be undertaken would be incomplete without taking into account the theoretical framework of feminism and subjectivity as literary theories. Several thinkers have dealt with these aspects in their works. For instance, David Bouchier asserts in his Introduction to the book *The Feminist Challenge* that the aspiration for equality with men on the social and political levels took the form of an ordered movement in the west which later on spread throughout the entire globe. It involves both the great effort for women's equal rights as well as the aspirations and strivings towards the all-around liberation of women.

Aparna Dharwadker examines in *Theatres of Independence: Drama, Theory, and Urban Performance in India since 1947* the unprecedented conditions for writing as well as performance that the experience of new nationhood created in numerous major Indian languages and offers the detailed discussion of the major plays, playwrights, and other facets of drama, directors, that made the contemporary Indian stage a vital part of postcolonial and world theatre. The ten appendixes of the book collect extensive documentation of the work of leading playwrights and directors, as well as a record of the contemporary multilingual performance histories of major Indian, Western and non-Western plays from all periods and genres.

The Will to Change: Men, Masculinity, and Love is about our need to live in the world where women and men can be/live together. Bell Hooks signifies that patriarchy has maintained its power over men and their life. This book is also showing why feminist thinking and practice are only the way to address the crisis of masculinity today.

Numerous researchers have done their research work on Atamjit and Mahesh Elkunchwar's major plays and the perspective of women's experience in the patriarchal society. Prof. Madhu Malhotra in her article "Practical Criticism of Mahesh Elkunchwar's play *Apocalypse*" has tried to do the practical criticism of the play. The article covers various aspects such as dialogues and settings which highlights the theatrical performance; how the characters speak and what they speak.

B.S. Jadhav and B.B. Rajurkar focus on the depiction of women and their feminine role in a joint family in an article entitled "Female Characters in Mahesh Elkunchwar's *Old Stone Mansion-A Critique*." In this play Aai, Vahini Prabha and

Anjali are women characters that form the symbols of motherhood, multi-faceted characters and self-sufficient women.

Ankur Konar in his research paper “Cultural ‘Scape’ and Social Space: Reflection of Fragmentation in Elkunchwar’s *Sonata*” depicts radical displacement and differentiation on cultural level. Konar says that his play *Sonata* has an interesting sense of lateralisation and celebration of cultural transmission.

Surinder Kaur Bhathal in her article “Kamloops Diyan Machhian: Aurat di Hond te Honi” portrays the problems which women are facing in their life and how the author tries to analyse these problems and also explores the reasons under the context of social, economic and cultural values which are responsible for the creation of different psyche of female than male.

Attar Singh in the text *Hava Mehal te Hor Natak* scrutinises the works of the Punjabi playwright Atamjit and tries to examine the reality of life under the influence of political system and values. In this text he analyses several plays of Atamjit.

Kamlesh Uppal in her article “Rangmanch da Natak-kaar: Atamjit” analyses the successful run of his plays on stage. Thus Atamjit as a dramatist is well aware about the techniques of the play and how it can be staged successfully.

Davinder Singh in his research paper “Atamjit de Natakan Vichla Ktakhsh” illustrates the themes of Atamjit’s plays and he focuses on the theme of sarcasm. Primarily, his focus is on Atamjit’s collection of nine plays such as: *Lok Nath Akalmand*, *Hva Mehal*, *Murgikhana*, *Dyara ate Saleeb*, *Sade Tin Ltan Wala Mej*, *Rel Gadi*, *Anne Kane*, *Gubare* and *Thmeyan Wali Imarat*.

Various critics have written about the plays of Atamjit and Mahesh Elkunchwar but the selected two authors have not been attempted in comparison with each other from the patriarchal perspective. Both explore the similar theme of issues related with woman’s subjectivity.

1.8 Methodology

The study is basically focused on female subjectivity in different cultural locations of India (Punjabi and Marathi) informed with the theory of psycho-analysis, performativity, Marxism and existentialism. The present research involves a close textual analysis of the selected plays. Thematic analysis from patriarchal perspective for comparative approach would also be adopted for thesis which would try to bring closer attention to the subjectivity of women by comparing the

ways in which they are most susceptible in different patriarchal societies as portrayed in the selected plays. For the comparison, methods of 'parallelism' and 'intertextuality' have been used which are considered as significant tools of comparative literature. Intertextuality has also been used to study the reference, echoes or influences of images, symbols, metaphors used in a text to another. Apparently, Atamjit and Mahesh Elkunchwar differ in certain significant ways because of their different cultural locations and individual ideological orientations and assumptions.

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CHAPTER 2

Gendered Construction of Subjectivities in the Selected Plays of Atamjit

2.1. Life and Works of Atamjit:

Atamjit (b. November 2nd, 1950) is one of the most prominent playwrights in Punjabi drama. His father, S.S. Amol, was a well-known Punjabi writer and eminent scholar of Punjabi literature. His father promoted the art of theatre in Amritsar. Atamjit's mother, Partap Kaur, was an actress. While playing the role of a mad woman once, Partap Kaur got immersed in the very character so much that after the incident, she could never get rid of the mental trauma it left and later died. At that time Atamjit was twelve years old and these incidences shaped Atamjit in a way which lead to his rising in the field of theatre at an early age. He received many awards like Sahitya Akademi Award in 2009 and Sangeet Natak Akedemi Award in 2010. Atamjit stepped into the field of Punjabi plays in 1975. The era he joined Punjabi plays was a difficult one and Atamjit has to face various problems:

On the one hand, for Atamjit, there were challenges and on the other there were comforts too. He was given a land to make fertile. Atamjit accepted the challenge and within 26 years (1975-till date) experimented newer things in 26 published/unpublished plays and one act plays. (qtd. in Suri 36)

Atamjit detaches himself from any kind of movement when he is writing the script of a play. He does not merely attempt to solve the problems prevalent in Punjabi society but also tries to find out the reason behind their emergence. Hence, in the history of Punjabi play, there began a new metaphor. Well known Punjabi Critic Harbhajan Singh called his plays, "*soojh da natak*" (Insightful Plays).

He experimented in Punjabi plays from the perspective of art and vision. He enters into the field of Punjabi plays with his first play *Kabristan*. In this play he has focus on realism instead of idealism. He has depicted in it the corrupt system of teachers' community in a sarcastic way with the reference of family because family is an important unit of society. Every individual feels himself/herself safe and secure within the contours of family. However, with the change in times, the meaning of family is also changing. For instance, Mastram in the play has been depicted as a philandering subject. He is least bothered about his family. Even his relations with his wife are not on good terms due to his being sexually obsessed. Due to this, his behaviour towards his family also becomes inhuman and indifferent, and he is no longer at peace with his family. His next two plays *Pallu di Udeek*, *Chabian* and *Anne Kaane* deal with the problems of Dalit community. In his another play, *Kutta ate Manukh*, he focuses on the corrupt system of a society where even the animals are better than human beings. Here, he uses dog as a symbol because dogs are considered to be more faithful than men. The characters of the play *Chabian* live their life as slaves in the capitalistic system. In *Hava Mehal*, Atamjit attempts to refute the myth of religion and faith in order to accept a new myth without any superstition and illusion. In *Dyara ate Salib*, Atamjit has focused on the tensions in a human being's mind through the depiction of human psychology in changing social surroundings. *Murgikhana* and *Sadhe Tin Latan Wala Mej* are the plays in which Atamjit tries to demonstrate the roots of corruption and expose the socio-political system. Plays like *Gubare* and *Natak Natak Natak* articulate the psychology of children and discuss how fear and horror can be eradicated from their mind. Both these plays are analysed from psychological vantage point. His another play, *Rishtyan Da Ki Rakhiye Na*, signified the tragedy of 1947 partition. In this play, Atamjit has held political leaders responsible for the partition of India and Pakistan saying that their self-interests divided the humanity. In *Sehar Bimar Hai*, the playwright has represented the tragedy of 1984 Sikh riots and through *Kamloops Dian Mchhian* he depicted the problems of Diaspora community.

Some of his plays demonstrate the problems of women. *Pooran* is a mythical play, in which, Atamjit aimed to analyse the myth of Pooran in contemporary context. *Farash Vich Uggya Rukh* points out the psychology of men in a patriarchal system, where it is not ready to accept the equality of women. *Main Tan Ik Saarangi Han* exploring the psyche of three women, which displaying a strong bond to each other. This exploration is done with sensitivity, compassion, humour and artistic integrity. His plays explore human psychology which ultimately influences the psychology of his readers or audiences. Along with realism, the playwright has also made use of symbolism. His plays are influenced by absurd and epic theatres too. According to Atamjit, various changes have taken place in the literary life of Punjab for the past fifty years. The depiction of woman by Ishwar Chandra Nanda in his 1913 play *Dulhan*, no longer exists in the present scenario. Having gone through *Kuari Teesi*, *Loha-Kutt*, *Shobha Shakti*, *Bujharat*, *Dhooni Di Agg*, *Mai Vi Han Natak Di Patar*, *Saukan*, she has changed her identity. (Atamjit, Billet Doux 13)

Atamjit's plays depict the problems of man-woman relations within cultural context. His plays focus on the patriarchal culture in which woman is not equal to man. A woman has always been controlled by man in the male-dominated society. Atamjit has unveiled the tragic state of woman. Instead of portraying woman as 'a goddess', Atamjit has depicted her as 'a human being.' Atamjit seems to be aware of the psychological motivations of his female characters but in a few places in the texts, one does not fail to notice his distrust of women motivated by sexual desires.

2.2. *Pooran*: Portraying the Tragedy of Luna:

In this play, Salwan, who is not sexually satisfied with his first wife, and marries a girl of his daughter's age. Due to this marriage, his first wife Ichhran has to live a life of disgrace in spite of being a queen. On the other hand, Luna, Salwan's second, and much younger wife, is not sexually satisfied with him. This dissatisfaction leads to Luna craving sexual desire towards Pooran, her stepson who is of her own age. Her attraction for

Pooran is based on two reasons: first, she wants to satisfy her sexual desires with him, and second, she wants to take revenge from Salwan.

The opening scene of the play is based on Jagan and Kirpi. Kirpi is a maid at Salwan's palace and is about fifty years old. Jagan is the manager of the estate, and is thirty five years old. Both are gazing on the floor and are looking for snake. Kirpi tells Jagan that it is Salwan's bungalow, where the flooring is entirely cemented; hence, there is no possibility of a snake's burrow. But, Jagan argues that the snake can make a burrow even if the floor is of bricks or cement. During their conversation, Jagan tells Kirpi about the second marriage of Salwan. But, Kirpi holds Luna responsible for this and even compares her to a female snake who uses every possible way to destroy other's homes and hearths:

ਮੈਨੂੰ ਤਾਂ ਉਹ ਵੀ ਸੱਪਣੀ ਜਾਪਦੀ ਏ । ਭਲੀਏ ਮਾਣਸੇ ਕਿਸੇ ਦਾ ਵੱਸਦਾ ਘਰ ਕਿਓਂ ਉਜਾੜਦੀ
ਏਂ? (ਆਤਮਜੀਤ, ਪੂਰਨ 18)

¹I think she is also a seductress. Why would she ruin the happy home of somebody?

The conversation between Kirpi and Jagan, it becomes apparent that patriarchy accuses a woman instead of pointing on the man, even if the woman was compelled to do what she has been accused for. This patriarchal mindset can be seen in the another conversation between Jagan and Kirpi:

ਏਦੇ ਵਿਚ ਆਉਣ ਵਾਲੀ ਦਾ ਕੋਈ ਦੋਸ਼ ਨਹੀਂ । ਉਹ ਵਿਚਾਰੀ ਹੋਵੇਗੀ ਕੋਈ ਲੋੜਵੰਦ, ਬਾਪ
ਗਰੀਬ ਹੋਵੇਗਾ, ਸੋਚਿਆ ਹੋਣਾ ਏਂ ਪਈ ਕੁੜੀ ਚਾਰ ਦਿਨ ਸੁਖ ਦੇ ਕੱਟ ਲਵੇਗੀ । (18)

There is no fault of the bride in it. She must be some needy with a poor father who must have thought the girl will live happily for some days.

This conversation also conveys the idea that Indian patriarchal system gives preference to an economically strong groom, no matter what his age and educational qualification are. A number of such instances can be found

¹All translation is mine

in our history also; whenever a King found a woman beautiful, he gave a handsome amount of money to the woman's parents and married her. The same happens with Luna in this play. Due to financial weaknesses Luna marries Salwan. When, opposing the marriage of Salwan and Luna, Jagan focusses on the female body and objectifies it as an object of male desire:

ਕਿਰਪੀਏ ਸਭ ਮਾਇਆ ਦੇ ਖੇਲ ਨੇ, ਮਾਇਆ ਦੇ । ਸੋਹਣੀ ਤੀਵੀਂ ਦੇਖ ਕੇ ਤਾਂ ਦੇਵਤਿਆਂ ਦੇ
ਧੀਰਜ ਡੋਲ ਜਾਂਦੇ ਨੇ, ਇਹ ਤਾਂ ਫਿਰ ਵੀ ਇਨਸਾਨ ਦੀ ਗੱਲ ਏ । (18)

Kirpiye might is right. Even gods shake off their vows after seeing beautiful women, he is just a human after all.

A band is heard at the background of the play, which symbolises the coming of Salwan and Luna. Salwan and Luna enter the palace. Salwan introduces Luna to Kirpi and Jagan, however, Luna is standing like a statue who only greets them by joining her hands. Jagan and Kirpi leave to prepare the dinner. Salwan shows his estate to Luna from the window of his bedroom, which includes a textile mill, a rubber factory, a dairy farm, poultry farms, and agricultural farms. While Salwan is introducing his property to Luna, Luna is standing silently as if she has no interest in such things.

Here, Luna's silence is replete with a deep secret of the injustice done to her, because Salwan is of Luna's father's age and, due to his strong economic power, has married Luna. But, neither Salwan nor Luna's father seek Luna's viewpoint for this marriage:

ਪਿਉ ਨੇ ਮੁੱਲ ਵੱਟ ਲਿਆ ਤੇ ਪਤੀ ਨੇ ਜੁਆਨ ਹੋਣ ਦਾ ਦੰਭ ਪਾਲ ਲਿਆ । (63)

The father got the price, and the husband his lust.

In scene II, Luna is thinking about her constructed identity, and, while thinking, she approaches the idol of a snake in her room, and in the background is the music of a wind instrument². As she comes nearer to the idol, the music of the wind instrument becomes louder. She touches the idol twice or thrice and finally throws on the floor, and the idol breaks apart. Salwan used to worship this idol. This scene illustrates the emergence of revenge in Luna's psychology. When Jagan comes to know about the breaking of the idol, he tells Luna that Salwan sir would be very upset after

² Which is used by snake charmers

knowing that his favourite idol has been broken, therefore, he'll try to bring a similar idol, but Luna forbids Jagan to bring a new idol. After Jagan has left, Luna collects the broken pieces of the idol and throws them out of the window, and gives a smirking smile. When Kirpi comes to clean the room, Luna directs her to clear the dust of the idol, but Kirpi doesn't like the use of word 'dust':

ਚੁੱਕ ਦੇ ਇਹ ਸਾਰੀ ਮਿੱਟੀ . . . ਹੁੰਝ ਦੇ ਇਹ ਮਿੱਟੀ । (24)

Pick up all this dirt . . . clean up all this dirt.

When Kirpi is collecting the broken pieces, again the music of wind instrument is heard from the background. On being asked by Luna about the snake charmer, Kirpi replies that there are many snakes in the estate, and to catch them a snake charmer comes from the mountains. When Kirpi offers Luna to see these snakes, Luna says:

ਨਹੀਂ, ਮੇਰਾ ਦਿਲ ਇਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਸੱਪਾਂ ਨਾਲ ਖੁਸ਼ ਹੋਣ ਵਾਲਾ ਨਹੀਂ । . . . ਕਿਉਂਕਿ ਇਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਉੱਕਾ ਈ ਜ਼ਹਿਰ ਨਹੀਂ । (25)

No, my heart is not going to be happy with these snakes . . . because they don't have any venom.

This conversation by Luna connotes the idea that for her Salwan is also a non-poisonous snake, because he has failed to satisfy Luna both mentally as well as physically. Here, Atamjit uses snake as the symbol of male sexual desire and poison as a symbol of male virility. This could also be understood with respect to Freud's idea of sexuality and sexual symbols in literature as Freud believed that, "erotic/sexual desire as integral to the development of adult identity" (qtd. in Hall 60). In this light, all literature, like dreams, is a manifestation of one's unfulfilled desires. In this context, the symbols in a literary text become sexually relevant. Snake is a typical Freudian sexual symbol representing phallic connotations. According to Luna, Salwan is not a man but an insect without poison. Luna wants a man with virility and youth, who can satisfy her physically and emotionally. She says:

ਮੈਨੂੰ ਜ਼ਹਿਰ ਚਾਹੀਦੀ ਏ । . . . ਮੇਰੇ ਕੋਲ ਆ ਕੇ ਉਹ ਰੰਡਿਆ ਬਣ ਜਾਂਦਾ ਏ, ਨਿਰਾ ਰੰਡਿਆ।
(26)

I want venom . . . he becomes an earthworm before me, mere
an earthworm.

In this way it affects Luna's psyche and she suffers a stroke. She loses control over her mind. In this state, she is repeating only one thing:

ਮੈਨੂੰ ਜ਼ਹਿਰ ਚਾਹੀਦਾ ਏ । (ਦੌਰਾ ਧੈ ਜਾਂਦਾ ਹੈ) ਮੈਨੂੰ ਜ਼ਹਿਰ ਚਾਹੀਦਾ ਏ । ਮੇਰਾ ਜ਼ਹਿਰ ਬਿਨਾਂ
ਗੁਜ਼ਾਰਾ ਨਹੀਂ, ਮੈਂ ਮਰ ਜਾਵਾਂਗੀ । . . . ਮੈਨੂੰ ਜ਼ਹਿਰ ਚਾਹੀਦਾ ਏ, ਸਪੇਰੇ ਨੂੰ ਕਹੋ ਕਿ ਉਹ
ਕੋਈ ਜ਼ਹਿਰੀਲਾ ਸੱਪ ਲੈ ਕੇ ਆਵੇ । . . . ਮੈਨੂੰ ਡੱਸੋ! ਕਿੱਥੇ ਏ ਤੁਹਾਡਾ ਬਾਸ਼ਕ ਨਾਗ ? ਮੈਂ
ਸ਼ੇਸ਼ ਨਾਗ ਦੇ ਦਰਸ਼ਨ ਕਰਨੇ ਨੇ । ਮੈਂ ਬਾਸ਼ਕ ਨਾਲ ਖੇਡਣਾ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੀ ਆਂ । (26)

I want venom. (*suffers a fit*) I want venom. I can't live without
venom, I will die . . . I need venom, ask the snake charmer to
get some venomous snake . . . sting me. Where is your
Bashak snake³? I want to see *Seshnaga*⁴. I want to play with
Bashak.

Here, the playwright seems to suggest that Luna's desires for virility and her sexuality is the main reason for her to reject Salwan. However, in the later part of the play, the playwright seems to be showcasing the intellectual compatibility between Luna and Pooran which could have been the reason for her attraction towards him. The play thus pits Pooran against his father as an intellectually aware and mature person. Although he may still be lacking in understanding of the female psyche which shows the hidden power of discourse that works behind the cruelty of gender discrimination. The conversation between Salwan and Luna brings out the fact that in a patriarchal society no attempt is made to comprehend the psyche of a woman and no space is given to her sexual expression. Luna's psychological state is full of dilemma because her husband is financially strong but he could not satisfy Luna physically, which deeply affects Luna's psychology and leads her to depression. "ਮੈਂ ਜੀਣਾ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੀ ਆਂ . . . ਮੈਂ ਸੱਚ ਮੁੱਚ ਜੀਣਾ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੀ ਆਂ" I want to live . . . I truly want to live (27). Luna has dreamt of living

³King of snakes.

⁴*Sheshnaga* is also a king of *nagas* and also known as *shesha*. In the *Puranas*, Shesha is said to hold all the planets of the universe on his hoods and to constantly sing the glories of the God Vishnu from all his mouths. (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shesha>)

a life by fulfilling her desires. Their comprehension or neglect of Luna's desires and preoccupations by Salwan can be better understood in the light of Simone de Beauvoir's concept of woman as mystery:

The truth is that mystery is reciprocal: as another, and as a masculine other, there is also a presence closed on itself and impenetrable to woman in the heart of every man; she is without knowledge of male eroticism . . . As she is mystery for man, woman is regarded as mystery in herself. (318)

In the scene III of play, Salwan is calling out to Jagan and Kirpi intermittently while walking to and fro in anxiety. He is anxious because he has found all his clothes in the almirah being cut. He doesn't find any clothes uncut and, hence, wearable. He is not able to figure out why it has happened with his clothes only, because Luna's clothes were also placed beside his clothes. Here, Luna's feeling of revenge against Salwan emerges, which is annoying Salwan with little things in order to take revenge in return for the injustice inflicted upon her. When Salwan tells Luna about the cutting of his clothes, she says that somebody might be trying to take revenge from him. However, Salwan ponders why somebody would try to take revenge from him as he has never done anything wrong to anybody, to which, Luna replies:

ਤੁਸੀਂ ਜ਼ਰਾ ਕੁ ਧਿਆਨ ਨਾਲ ਸੋਚੋ, ਸ਼ਾਇਦ ਕਿਸੇ ਨਾਲ ਜ਼ਿਆਦਤੀ ਹੋ ਗਈ ਹੋਵੇ। (36)

Think a little carefully, perhaps somebody has been wronged.

Hence, Luna is aware of the injustice done to her. When Salwan mentions the cutting of clothes to Luna and Pooran again in scene V:

ਸਲਵਾਨ: ਵੈਸੇ ਸ਼ੁਕਰ ਏ, ਇਸ ਵਾਰ ਹਫ਼ਤਾ ਕੁ ਲੰਘ ਈ ਗਿਆ।

ਲੂਣਾ: ਨਹੀਂ ਏਡੀ ਜਲਦੀ ਨਹੀਂ ਕੱਟੇ ਜਾਂਦੇ।

ਪੂਰਨ: ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਕਿਵੇਂ ਪਤਾ ਏ ? ਕੱਟਣ ਵਾਲੇ ਨੂੰ ਜਾਣਦੇ ਓ ? (42)

SALWAN. Thank God, this time a week has passed.

LUNA. No, the clothes don't get cut so soon.

POORAN. How do you know? Do you know the one who cuts?

Though Luna is not sexually satisfied with Salwan, yet she is not attracted to the estate manager, Jagan, who understands the injustice done to her and looks after her when she is suffering from mental illness. In spite of being aware of the age difference between Luna and Salwan, Jagan advises her to remain happy. Here, the playwright, through the character of Jagan, endorses the patriarchal attitude of acceptance for a woman:

ਕੀ ਐ ਜੀ, ਮੈਂ ਤੁਹਾਡੀ ਕੋਈ ਮਦਦ ਕਰਨੀ ਚਾਹੁੰਦਾ ਆਂ, ਸਮ ਰੀਅਲ ਸਰਵਿਸ, ਤਾਂ ਕਿ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਬਿਲਕੁਲ ਠੀਕ ਹੋ ਜਾਵੋ, ਖੁਸ਼ ਰਹਿ ਸਕੋ। ਦੇਖੋ ਨਾ, ਬਿਮਾਰੀ ਅੱਗੇ ਕਿਸੇ ਦਾ ਕੀ ਜ਼ੋਰ ਏ ਜੀ? ਕਿ ਐ ਜੀ, ਸਲਵਾਨ ਤਾਂ ਜੀਵਨ ਦੀਆਂ ਜ਼ਰਾ ਜ਼ਿਆਦਾ ਈ ਪੱਤਝੜਾਂ . . . (33)

What is it, Mam I really want to help you, some real service, so that you be totally alright, and be happy. See, what can somebody do about a disease? Actually, Salwan is in a bit deeper winter of his life . . .

Yet, Luna shows no interest in Jagan. Has Luna wanted only physical satisfaction, she would have accepted Jagan, but she wants to take revenge from Salwan and, hence, scowls at Jagan. Her rejection of Jagan also hints at the nature of her desire which is not entirely sexual. She desires a mate who is her intellectual equal.

ਯੂ ਸ਼ਟ ਅੱਪ। ਗੈੱਟ ਆਊਟ ਬਲੱਡੀ ਬਾਸਟਰਡ। ਹਾਊ ਡਿੱਡ ਯੂ ਡੇਅਰ ਹੈਵ ਸੱਚ ਏ ਸਿਲੀ ਆਈਡੀਆ? ਆਈ ਸੇ ਗੈੱਟ ਆਊਟ। (33)

You shut up. Get out bloody bastard. How did you dare have such a silly idea? I say get out.

Pooran, who is the son of Salwan and his first wife and is studying in America, enters in scene V of the play. Atamjit's Pooran is not the mythical Pooran, he is modern in thinking and is living in America since his very childhood. In their conversation, Luna asks Pooran about the weather in America, and they talk about their estate and property. When Salwan asks Pooran about Luna, he replies by saying that Luna is an intelligent lady with a wonderful nature. However, having lived in a developed country like America, Pooran is modern in his thinking, but his regressive views about women emerge when he and Salwan talk about Ichhran. The playwright seems to be suggesting that although the outlook and personality of an educated modern male may seem liberated, yet patriarchy would still hold a deep-seated influence on his psyche. Like the Nietzschean metaphysics or

the Foucauldian discourse. Somewhere in his psyche, patriarchy has inhabited itself, because, according to Pooran, his mother is an orthodox woman, whose thoughts are not in sync with his father, and she is backward in comparison to his father:

ਮੇਰੀ ਮਾਂ ਬਹੁਤ ਪੁਰਾਣੀ ਏ, ਐਨ ਆਰਥੋਡਾਕਸ। ਪਾਪਾ ਤੋਂ ਬਹੁਤ ਪੱਛੜੇ ਹੋਏ ਵਿਚਾਰ ਨੇ ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਦੇ। ਇਸ ਲਈ ਉਹ ਦੋਵੇਂ ਖੁਸ਼ ਨਹੀਂ ਰਹਿ ਸਕਦੇ। ਮੈਂ ਸਮਝਦਾਂ ਜ਼ਿੰਦਗੀ ਵਿਚ ਵਿਚਾਰਾਂ ਦਾ ਸਾਵਾਂ ਹੋਣਾ ਬਹੁਤ ਜ਼ਰੂਰੀ ਏ। (42)

My mother is very old one, an orthodox. Very regressive as compared to my father. So the two can never be happy. I think similarity in views is very important in life.

Due to the difference in their thinking they could not happily together. Therefore, Pooran, in order to make their married life a happy one, believes that “ਮੈਂ ਸਮਝਦਾਂ ਜ਼ਿੰਦਗੀ ਵਿਚ ਵਿਚਾਰਾਂ ਦਾ ਸਾਵਾਂ ਹੋਣਾ ਬਹੁਤ ਜ਼ਰੂਰੀ ਏ” I think similarity in views is very important in life (42). His regressive thinking is also depicted in the play when Kirpi asks him to go to his mother, Ichhran, but he does not like the least to go to his mother and says:

ਪਰ ਮੈਂ ਉਥੇ ਕਰਾਂਗਾ ਕੀ? ਮੰਮੀ ਕੋਲ ਮੇਰੇ ਮਤਲਬ ਦੀ ਗੱਲ ਈ ਕੋਈ ਨਹੀਂ। ਜਾਂ ਚੁੰਮ-ਚੁੰਮ ਕੇ ਮੇਰਾ ਮੂੰਹ ਗਿੱਲਾ ਕਰਦੇ ਨੇ ਜਾਂ ਰੋ-ਰੋ ਕੇ ਆਪਣਾ। . . . ਪਰ ਮੈਂ ਏਡਾ ਬੱਚਾ ਨਹੀਂ। (44-45)

But what will I do there? I and my mother have nothing to share. Either she wets my face with kisses or her with tears . . . but I am not a little child.

When Luna also asks Pooran to go to his mother, he says that he doesn't like anyone's company but Luna's because, here, no one is as open minded as Luna. This is why instead of calling Luna 'mother, he calls her 'ma'am'. Pooran in legend considers Luna as his mother, but Atamjit's America returned Pooran takes Luna as the wife of his father. He is modern in his thinking. According to modern Pooran, his mother Ichhran is an orthodox woman whose thoughts are not in sync with his father Salwan. He has been depicted in the play as a self-aware man instead of a victim. So atamjit's Pooran is not as idealistic as that of Qadiryaaar who bows his head before social values. Luna playing chess is a symbol of her revenge from

Salwan, for which, she uses her step-son, Pooran, as a pawn. When her maid, Kirpi, asks her whether or not she has played chess before marriage, Luna replies that like other girls she also used to play with dolls and she has started playing chess recently, which indicates that Luna is bent on taking revenge from Salwan. When Luna asks Pooran about his hobby, he says that he loves to act in plays and has acted in a play, *Desire Under the Elms* by Eugene O Neil, in America. The theme of this play is a Greek tragedy which takes place in the rural area of New England. He has played the role of Eben in this play. According to the theme of the play, Eben and his step-mother are having an affair which leads to the pregnancy of the step-mother, but Eben's father thinks that she is pregnant with his child. Thus, it was a challenging role for him to carry out. Atamjit has used this theme as parallel narrative as Luna is also attracted by Pooran. She makes Pooran the pawn of her chess, and holds his hand. When he defies her advances, she says:

ਤੇਰੇ ਅੰਦਰ ਨਾ ਮਣੀ ਏਂ, ਨਾ ਹੀ ਜ਼ਹਿਰ।

There is neither *manī*⁵ nor venom in you.

ਮੈਨੂੰ ਹੱਥ ਲਾ ਕੇ ਦੇਖ। ਮੇਰਾ ਖੂਨ ਤੈਥੋਂ ਵੱਧ ਲਾਲ, ਸੰਘਣਾ ਅਤੇ ਗਰਮ ਏ। ਹੈ ਹਿੰਮਤ ਤਾਂ ਅੱਗੇ ਵਧ, ਸੱਚ ਦੀ ਅੱਗ ਵਿੱਚ ਹੱਥ ਪਾ ਕੇ ਦੇਖ . . . ਹੂੰ . . . ਸ਼ਤਰੰਜ ਦਾ ਖਿਡਾਰੀ . . . ਨਿਰਾ ਰੰਡਿਆ . . . (53)

Just touch me and see. My blood is more red, dense, and hot than you. Come forward if you dare, put your hand in the fire and see . . . nay . . . the player of chess . . . mere earthworm.

After this incident, Pooran decides to go back to America. When Luna comes to know about his decision, she asks him to finish the game, initially started by her. Then Pooran says:

ਕਦੇ ਇਹ ਵੀ ਸੋਚਿਆ ਜੇ ਕਿ ਜਿਹੜੀ ਖੇਡ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਖੇਡਣੀ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਓ ਉਸ ਦਾ ਅੰਤ ਕੀ ਏ ?
(57)

Have you ever thought what would be the end of the game you want to play.

⁵Precious stone; topmost vertebra of certain species of snake supposed to cure snake-bite. See page no. 662. *Punjabi University Punjabi-English Dictionary*.

Pooran does not even want to participate in the game because, according to his limited sense of morality, Luna is his step-mother and, on the basis of this relation, he doesn't allow Luna to do so. But, Luna refuses to accept this relation with Pooran because she doesn't consider that there is any blood relation between her and Pooran:

ਮੈਂ ਅਜੇ ਕਿਸੇ ਦੀ ਮਾਂ ਨਹੀਂ ਹਾਂ। ਜਿਸ ਨਾਲ ਮੇਰਾ ਵਿਆਹ ਹੋਇਆ ਸੀ, ਜੇ ਉਹੀ ਮੇਰਾ ਖਸਮ ਨਹੀਂ ਬਣ ਸਕਿਆ ਤਾਂ ਤੇਰਾ ਮੇਰਾ ਕਾਹਦਾ ਰਿਸ਼ਤਾ ? (57)

I am nobody's mother yet. If the one to whom I was married, could not be mine, what relation can the two of us have?

Luna is determined to take revenge from Salwan, no matter even if it entails to compromise her moral values. To understand the psyche of Luna, Atamjit has taken historical characters in the play. On the one side is Qadir, who is a supporter of patriarchy and according to whom Luna is completely wrong who did injustice to Pooran, and on the other side is Shiv who speaks from Luna's perspective. Qadir and Shiv are actually poets who have written literary works about Luna; Qadiryaar's epic is titled *Qissa Pooran Bhagat* and Shiv Kumar Batalvi has written an epic titled *Luna*. The author creates a scene in which Pooran is sitting with his two friends, Qadir and Shiv discussing his relationship with his step mother Luna. These two friends represent the two different stances taken towards Luna in the above-mentioned works.

Luna appears to be a woman deranged by her desire for revenge. Her immoral desires are pitted against the morality of Pooran. The mythical Luna is a nymphomaniac, but in the present play, the playwright invests her with a sense of purpose; although he may not agree with her view of morality which appears to bear some Nietzschean influence. For Nietzsche morality and truth both are functions of social structure, and "morality is a self-supporting system, resting on nothing outside itself; that morality is founded in reason, and that the basis of morality is demonstrable" (Tanner 33).

Thus, by putting myth and history parallel to each other, Atamjit has tried to represent the tragic situation of a woman in patriarchy. It is depicted

in the conversation between Pooran, Shiv, and Qadir, which takes place in scene VIII. Confiding in Shiv and Qadir about Luna's behavior, Pooran says that she wanted to develop a physical relation with him. Qadir is shocked by listening this because he is unable to accept how a mother can do such a thing with her son, but Shiv already had an inkling of this:

ਮਿਸਿਜ਼ ਲੁਣਾ ਦੀ ਥਾਂ ਹੋਰ ਕੋਈ ਵੀ ਔਰਤ ਹੁੰਦੀ, ਇਸੇ ਤਰ੍ਹਾਂ ਹੀ ਕਰਦੀ। (60-61)

If there was any other woman in place of Mrs. Luna, she would do the same.

Trying to justify the matter, Shiv says that it is natural because Luna and Pooran are of same age, and he himself does not consider Pooran as Luna's son. But, Qadir doesn't agree with Shiv and says that Pooran may not be Luna's biological son but being her husband's son she is his mother. However, Shiv says:

ਫ਼ਰਕ ਇਹ ਵੀ ਕਿ ਉਹ ਜਿਉਂਦੀ ਅੱਗ ਏ ਤੇ ਤੇਰਾ ਬਾਪ, ਕੋਲਾ ਹੋ ਚੁੱਕੀ ਲੱਕੜ, ਬਲਕਿ ਸੁਆਹ ਹੋ ਚੁਕਿਆ ਕੋਲਾ। (62)

The difference is that she is burning fire, and your father a burnt wood, no, a coal turned to ashes instead.

Qadir regards Luna characterless and says:

ਮੈਂ ਤਾਂ ਜ਼ਾਹਰ ਆਖਦਾ ਹਾਂ ਕਿ ਔਰਤ ਦਾ ਚਲਿੱਤਰ ਏ, ਉਸ ਦੀ ਹਵਸ। ਔਰਤ ਨੇ ਵੱਡਿਆਂ-ਵੱਡਿਆਂ ਦੇ ਗੋਡੇ ਲਵਾ ਦਿੱਤੇ। ਤੀਵੀਂ ਨੇ ਰਾਜੇ ਭੇਜ ਦੀ ਸਵਾਰੀ ਕੀਤੀ ਸੀ। ਯੂਸਫ਼ ਵਰਗੇ ਨੂੰ ਖੂਹ ਵਿਚ ਸੁਟਵਾ ਦਿੱਤਾ ਸੀ। ਸਰੂਪ ਨਖਾ ਦਾ ਕਿੱਸਾ ਤਾਂ ਤੂੰ ਜਾਣਦਾ ਏਂ। (62)

I openly say it's a woman's character, her lust. Women have defeated many greats. She rode on king Bhoja⁶. Had Yusuf⁷ thrown into a well and you are well aware of the tale of Sarupnakha⁸.

⁶ *Raja Bhoja*, Sohinder Singh Vanjara Bedi. *Punjabi Lokdhara Vishav Kosh*. Delhi: National Book Shop, See Page No. 1981.

⁷ A reference to Joseph from *Genesis*.

⁸ A reference to Sarup Nakha being insulting by Lakshmana in Ramayana resulting into a war.

In his epic poem *Luna* Prominent Punjabi poet, Shiv Kumar Batalvi has presented Luna's perspective and has spoken in her favour as against male dominated society:

ਪਿਤਾ ਜੇ ਧੀ ਦਾ ਰੂਪ ਹੰਡਾਵੇ
ਤਾਂ ਲੋਕਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਲਾਜ਼ ਨਾ ਆਵੇ
ਜੇ ਲੁਣਾ ਪੂਰਨ ਨੂੰ ਚਾਹਵੇ
ਚਰਿਤਰਹੀਣ ਕਹੇ ਕਿਉਂ
ਜੀਭ ਜਹਾਨ ਦੀ ? (ਕੁਮਾਰ 106)
If father sleeps with a daughter
The people feel no shame
If Loona wants Pooran
Why do they call her characterless?

According to Shiv Kumar Batalvi, Luna has strengthened the voice of women because every woman dreams of a prince like Pooran, with whom she wants to spend her life. But, due to his strong economic power, Salwan, who is of her father's age, married her. Atamjit's character Shiv also takes the perspective of Luna Like Prominent Punjabi Poet Shiv Kumar Batalvi.

But, Qadiryaar calls Luna characterless instead of trying to understand her psyche, because in a patriarchal society all women are a man's sisters and mothers except his own wife and, similarly, all men are a woman's brothers and fathers except her husband. Hence, for Qadir, Luna is a woman who should die out of shame for desiring a sexual relation with her step-son. In Qadir's view, Luna has no motherliness in her heart for Pooran, but from Shiv's vantage point, motherliness for Pooran should not be expected from Luna because he is of her own age. The playwright, however takes a middle path. He does not blame Luna for her desires, yet he does not celebrate her sexuality and intellect like Batalvi. Thus, there are certain gaps or silences in the play that can be better understood through the power of discourse because

. . . discourse is secretly based on an 'already-said'; and that this 'already-said' is not merely a phrase that has already been spoken, or a text that has already been written, but a 'never-said', an incorporeal discourse, a voice as silent as a breath, a writing that is

merely the hollow of its own mark. (Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* 27-28)

In this play playwright's 'never-said' about Luna is more significant than what is said. When Salwan comes to know about this behavior of Luna, he says:

ਉਹ ਇੰਨੀ ਜ਼ਲੀਲ ਤੇ ਘਟੀਆ ਔਰਤ ਨਿਕਲੇਗੀ, ਇਸ ਗੱਲ ਦਾ ਮੈਂ ਚਿੱਤ-ਚੇਤਾ ਵੀ ਨਹੀਂ ਸੀ। ਉਹ ਕਮੀਨੀ ਏ, ਮੱਕਾਰ ਏ, ਬਦਕਾਰ ਏ। (69)

I never thought she would be such a despicable woman, she is mean, fraud, and shameless.

Salwan is holding Luna responsible, and is not ready to accept the injustice he has inflicted on her due to his power. This behavior of Salwan symbolises the patriarchal thinking, in which a man accuses a woman even for his own blunders. Here, Atamjit has successfully articulated the male psychology in a patriarchal society; how in an Indian society, a woman is forever suppressed, she is always looked down upon and blamed. Salwan marries Luna out of his sexual desires, and the society, instead of blaming Salwan, condemns Luna. On the one hand, Luna does not accept Salwan and Pooran as her husband and son respectively. It leads to the tension between Salwan and Luna. According to Indian values a husband's second wife is known as the step-mother of his first wife's children. Pooran knows it very well that Luna does not consider him as her son. Therefore, he addresses Luna as 'Ma'am Luna' instead of mother Luna. On the other hand, Pooran is also aware of the injustice done to Luna and holds his father responsible for it, and says to Salwan:

ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਡੇ ਵਿਚ ਸੱਪਣੀ ਨੂੰ ਸਾਂਭਣ ਦਾ ਦਮ ਨਹੀਂ ਸੀ ਤਾਂ ਬੀਨ ਵਜਾਉਣ ਦਾ ਕੀ ਅਰਥ ਸੀ ? (71)

What was the purpose of inviting a snake if you could not handle her?

In the end of the play, Pooran goes back to America. Atamjit has presented the tragedy of Luna in this play but he has fully justified the role of Pooran, and doesn't let Pooran sacrifice like the mythical one. According to legend *Qissa Pooran Bhagat*, Luna is attracted to her step-son, who is of her own age. However, Indian moral and cultural values don't approve her attraction

and Pooran is sentenced the death penalty. The patriarchal perspective of Atamjit is reflected in his setting Pooran free and sending him back to the America instead of punishing him.

Hence, Atamjit doesn't justify Luna's character as he does in the case of Pooran; he objects to the injustice inflicted on Pooran through his palimpsest play but fails to recognise the injustice done to Luna. Although the author does not condemn Luna like Qadiryaar, yet his treatment of Luna does not appear sympathetic or celebratory like that of Shiv Kumar Batalvi. It depicts the patriarchal perspective of the author which probably results from his gendered orientation because had it been a female author she might have justified Luna's stance. The play also does not try to probe how and why Luna gets attracted to Pooran.

Every young woman desires for a man like Pooran, and it is unfair to expect Luna to compromise her desires with an old man like Salwan. Unlike the mythical Luna, Luna in the play also does not accept her unfair marriage as a matter of fate, and revolts against it. With the changing times, a woman chooses the path of struggle in order to break through her exploitation, to find her existence in a male dominated society, and to strengthen her financial stance. On the one hand woman is struggling of her existence and on the other patriarchal psychology wants to keep her under control. However, Pooran has been depicted in the play as a self-aware man who instead of sacrificing himself, chooses to leave home. But, Luna has been depicted as a defeated woman in the play with a desire for revenge. She appears to be a promiscuous woman with no sense of morality. She, thus, has not been sensitively treated in the play.

Atamjit has articulated the ego of a man, in which, he fulfills his desires by destroying others' existence through his economic power. The play demonstrates the values engraved in Punjabi psychology besides portraying the psychology of Salwan, Pooran, and Luna. On the basis of myth, Atamjit has presented the contemporary situation of a woman through mythical and historical characters. Such a plight of woman is not to be seen in the pages of history only, rather she has been enduring it in different

ways now be it in a feudal or capitalist society, or an era of globalisation. Over the periods of history, her inner turmoil are still the same resulting in the crushing of her desires and dreams. The playwright, though, is aware and sympathetic to her struggle, yet fails to empathise with her on a deeper level while also being unable to delve into the origin of her motives and desires.

2.3. *Farash Vich Uggya Rukh*: Depicting the Female Psychology in Patriarchal social setup

Atamjit has tried to bring forth the mental state of women in which most of her feelings lay buried. As these feelings are natural, so women can not keep them repressed inside. Instead of understanding a woman's feelings, she is looked upon with suspicion. With the passing of time, this distrust insinuates tension in the relationships. In Atamjit's play *Farash Vich Uggya Rukh* also, the skeptical aspect of human nature is articulated. By depicting the male-female psychology, Atamjit has attempted to depict the reality of male-female relationship, that seems to be strong, but is not actually. So man and woman try to follow the customs and traditions of their respective society, but this practice of them is limited to their social life only. In the preface of the play *Farash Vich Uggya Rukh*, Punjabi critic Tarlok Singh Kavar has attempted to observe the psychology of husband-wife's conflict of mind.

The Act I of the play *Farash Vich Uggya Rukh*, opens in a beautiful house. Kumar, Veena's husband, is working in the office of PWD. Veena and Daleel Singh are cleaning the house. Kumar and Veena call Daleel Singh uncle. He is cleaning the mirrors of the house. Kumar tells Veena about the friendship between his father and Daleel Singh saying that though Daleel Singh was a peon in his father's office, but his father always treated him as his brother and they both even used to dine together on the same table. Here, according to Daleel Singh, "ਕੰਮ ਕਦੇ ਵੀ ਵੱਡੇ ਜਾਂ ਛੋਟੇ ਨਹੀਂ ਹੁੰਦੇ। ਵਡੀ-ਛੋਟੀ ਤਾਂ ਲਗਨ ਹੁੰਦੀ ਏ" The work is never small or big. Its our will that is big or small (Atamjit, *Farash* 21). During this conversation, the bell of main door is

heard, and Sahni enters with his friend Sethi. Here, Atamjit accentuates the problems of lower middle class families; how a lower middle class man moves throughout his life with the wish of accomplishing his desires in his heart, and, his desires are never fulfilled. Sethi belongs to lower middle class, who has already bought a plot of land to build a house, but, lacks the money to build it. The conversation between Kumar, Veena, Sahni, and Sethi indicates this situation:

ਕੁਮਾਰ: ਸ਼ੁਕਰੀਆ, ਤੁਸੀਂ ਕੋਠੀ ਕਿਥੇ ਬਣਾ ਰਹੇ ਓ ?

KUMAR. Thanks, where are you making a big house?

ਸੇਠੀ: ਨਹੀਂ ਜੀ ਹਾਲੇ ਤਾਂ ਸਾਡੇ ਕੋਲ ਮਸਾਂ ਪਲਾਂਟ ਈ ਏ । ਸੋਚਿਆ, ਚਲੇ ਕੋਠੀ ਤਾਂ ਨਹੀਂ ਬਣਾ ਸਕਦੇ, ਨਕਸ਼ਾ ਈ ਬਣਾ ਲਾਈਏ।

SETHI. No, right now we just have the plot. We thought that if we cannot build the house, we can at least get the floor plan ready.

ਵੀਨਾ : ਇਸ ਦਾ ਨਕਸ਼ਾ ਵੀ ਸਾਡੇ ਪਿਤਾ ਜੀ ਨੇ ਬਣਵਾਇਆ ਸੀ।

VEENA. Its floor plan was also prepared by our father.

ਸੇਠੀ: ਚਲੇ ਆਸ ਕਰਦੇ ਆਂ ਕੇ ਸਾਡੇ ਬੱਚੇ ਮਕਾਨ ਬਣਵਾ ਲੈਣਗੇ ।

SETHI. Let's hope our children will build a house.

ਸਾਹਨੀ: ਕੁਮਾਰ ਮਿਡਲ ਕਲਾਸ ਦਾ ਤਾਂ ਬੱਸ ਗੁਜ਼ਾਰਾ ਈ ਏ । ਇਕ ਜਨਰੇਸ਼ਨ ਬਣਾਉਂਦੀ ਏ, ਦੂਜੀ ਉਡਾ ਦਿੰਦੀ ਏ । (20)

SAHNI. Kumar, middle class lives from hands to mouth only.

One generation builds, while the next generation destroys.

Atamjit focuses on the lower middle class. There is the two reason behind: first, Atamjit himself belongs to the lower middle class and second, this class is a representative of the power of patriarchal discourses and cultural values of the lower middle class play the important role in the construction of individual's subjectivity. The economic situation of the lower middle class is not well, and the community of lower middle class frustrate because the lack of economic weakness also help in the construction of subjectivity. These literary texts present the most agitating issues of lower middle class.

Kumar shows the map of his house to Sahni and Sethi, Veena asks Daleel Singh to start indoor planting. She tells Daleel Singh to put vases in the living room, porch, balcony, and bedroom. But, Daleel Singh refused to do planting in the bedroom saying:

ਹਾਂ, ਪਲਾਂਟ ਜ਼ਰੂਰ ਹੋਵੇਗਾ। ਮੈਂ ਵਾਹਿਗੁਰੂ ਅੱਗੇ ਅਰਦਾਸ ਕਰਾਂਗਾ ਕਿ ਮੇਰੇ ਬੱਚਿਆਂ ਦੇ ਬੈੱਡ-ਰੂਮ ਵਿੱਚ ਇੱਕ ਹਰਿਆ ਭਰਿਆ ਪਲਾਂਟ ਹੋਵੇ। ਬਹੁਤ ਸੁਹਣਾ ਤੇ ਪਿਆਰਾ ਪਲਾਂਟ। ਫੇਰ ਮੈਂ ਉਸ ਛੋਟੇ ਜੇਹੇ ਪਲਾਂਟ ਨੂੰ ਪਾਲਾਂਗਾ, ਉਸੇ ਮੇਹ ਨਾਲ ਜਿਸ ਨਾਲ ਹਾਂਡਾ ਜੀ ਨੇ ਮੈਨੂੰ ਪਾਲਿਆ ਸੀ। (22)

Yes, there must be a plant. I will pray to Waheguru that there should be a green tree in the bed-room of my children. Very beautiful and lovely. Then I will nourish that small tree, with the same love, as Handaji nourished me.

In this way, in the patriarchal system, expectation of a child in his heart, with whom he/she can make his family grow. Generally, in Indian patriarchal system, everybody wants a baby boy. And, before the arrival of the baby people began to wish the family a baby boy. Through this play, Atamjit has also attempted to depict the cultural peculiarities of Punjabi society.

In her childhood, a girl feels the bias in the boundary of her house. In Indian patriarchal society, a family's priority is a son rather than a girl. We see this discrimination, through the character of Prabha in *Old Stone Mansion* where Deshpande family gives priority to the education of her brother Sudhir rather than her. The bias between a boy and a girl also constitute her subjectivity as a woman.

Atamjit also manipulates the symbolic words in the play. The title *Farash Vich Uggya Rukh* has own significant meaning. According to Indian patriarchal values the family system is the backbone of a society. Strong relationships are formed on the basis of strong beliefs, however, in Atamjit's view, when those beliefs begin to debilitate, suspicion begins to grow. In the title, Atamjit symbolises suspicion as a plant (Rukh). Apart from this, Atamjit uses many symbols: lemon water and tea (mismatch of husband-wife interests), the glass was broken by Daleel Singh (misunderstanding of relations), mirror cuts hand (psychologically break up of relations).

Scene II of the play begins with a morning. Veena is preparing a cup of tea for herself and a glass of lemon water for Kumar. When she asks Kumar also to have a cup of tea he replies by saying that he cannot live without lemon water. Veena begins to feel the difference between themselves due to the difference between their choices, then Kumar replied:

ਮਾਈ ਡੀਅਰ ਇਕਲੌਤੀ ਪਤਨੀ, ਇਹਨਾਂ ਛੋਟੀਆਂ ਛੋਟੀਆਂ ਗੱਲਾਂ ਦਾ ਫ਼ਿਕਰ ਨਾ ਕਰਿਆ ਕਰ। ਪਤੀ-ਪਤਨੀ ਦਾ ਰਿਸ਼ਤਾ ਅੰਡਰਸਟੈਂਡਿੰਗ ਤੇ ਵਿਸ਼ਵਾਸ ਦਾ ਰਿਸ਼ਤਾ ਏ। (23)

My dear and only wife don't worry about such small things. The relation of husband wife is a relation of understanding and faith.

After that, Kumar and Veena talk about their responsibility towards each other, and their aim in life. Telling Veena about Daleel's past, Kumar says that he is living his life for us. Further, Veena says that “ਪਰ ਮੈਂ ਕਈ ਵੇਰ ਸੋਚਦੀ ਆਂ ਕਿ ਆਖਰ ਅਸੀਂ ਕਿਸ ਲਈ ਜੀ ਰਹੇ ਆਂ? . . . ਸਾਡਾ ਆਦਰਸ਼ ਕੀ ਹੋਣਾ ਚਾਹੀਦਾ ਏ?” But I sometimes think what are we living for? . . . what should be our ideal?(24) This dialogue comes forth the idea of the meaningless life of a woman. There is two reason behind it; first, a woman can't live her life according to her will. Second, her life is affected by the patriarchal values and in the whole life she follows these values. But Kumar, tries to make Veena understand the difference between responsibility and aim, says that “ਜ਼ਿੰਮੇਵਾਰੀ 'ਤੇ ਆਦਰਸ਼ ਵਿਚ ਬੜਾ ਫ਼ਰਕ ਏ। ਜ਼ਿੰਮੇਵਾਰੀ ਮਨੁਖ ਦੇ ਨਾਲ ਤੁਰਦੀ ਏ ਤੇ ਆਦਰਸ਼ ਹਮੇਸ਼ਾ ਅੱਗੇ . . . ” There is a great difference between responsibility and ideals. Responsibility always walks with us and ideals ahead of us (24). However, both Kumar and Veena keep thinking about their aim in life.

Scene III begins with the discussion on 'an ideal person'. Veena is doing her hair in the bedroom when Kumar comes to her. After remaining silent by her side for a while, he asks veena “ਤੂੰ ਕਦੇ ਦੇਖਿਆ ਏ, ਭਰਿਆ ਹੋਇਆ ਮਨੁਖ, ਇਕ ਆਦਰਸ਼ ਇਨਸਾਨ” Veena, have you ever seen, a bloomed human, an ideal human (27). Veena asks Kumar that why he is brooding over the topic of an ideal person. Kumar again asks Veena if she knows any ideal person in her life, to which, Veena replies by saying that she does have come across an

ideal person whom she still remembers by heart. But she might have met that person in train before five years when she was going to Ajmer from Delhi. It leads Kumar to be suspicious of Veena. Here, Atamjit has depicted the ideology and psychology of men in Indian patriarchal system; no man can accept the ideal image of any other man in his wife's heart/mind other than himself.

Hence, Atamjit delineates the freedom of a female; that in feudal system even the thinking of a woman is a man's slave. In patriarchy, a woman is man's slave not only physically but also mentally. When Veena tells Kumar that she met the ideal person in train when she was going to Ajmer from Delhi, he reacts by saying:

ਵੀਨਾ ਇਹ ਕੀ ਮਜ਼ਾਕ ਏ ? ਕੌਣ ਏ, ਕਿਥੋਂ ਦਾ ਏ, ਕੀ ਨਾਂ ਏ, ਕੁਝ ਪਤਾ ਨਹੀਂ ਤੇ ਫੇਰ ਵੀ ਤੈਨੂੰ ਉਹ ਇਕ ਭਰਪੂਰ ਇਨਸਾਨ ਲੱਗਾ ਏ? (28)

Veena, is this a joke? Who he is, where does he belong? What is his name? You don't know all this and still think him to be an ideal?

Atamjit has tried to portray the desire for control over by demonstrating the change in husband's (Kumar) behavior when he learns that instead of him, someone else is the ideal man in his wife's (Veena) life. It is due to this change that Kumar says to Veena:

ਵੀਨਾ . . . ਜੇ ਤੇਰੀ ਜ਼ਿੰਦਗੀ ਵਿਚ ਕੋਈ ਦੂਸਰਾ ਆਇਆ ਏ ਤਾਂ ਉਸ ਬਾਰੇ ਮੈਨੂੰ ਲਾਜ਼ਮੀ ਇਲਮ ਹੋਣਾ ਚਾਹੀਦਾ ਏ। (29)

Veena . . . if somebody else has come in your life I must know about it.

Confiding to Kumar about the unknown ideal person, Veena says that for the first time in her life she saw such a person who “ਜਿਹੜਾ ਮੇਰੇ ਵਰਗੀ ਕੁੜੀ ਨਾਲ ਬੈਠ ਕੇ ਵੀ ਮੇਰੀ ਹੋਂਦ ਨੂੰ ਮਹਿਸੂਸ ਨਹੀਂ ਸੀ ਕਰ ਰਿਹਾ” The one who even after sitting with a girl like me does not feel my existence (30). His behaviour has attracted me. After that, Veena says to Kumar, “ਸਵਾਲ ਮੇਰੇ ਦਾ ਨਹੀਂ ਸੀ, ਸਗੋਂ ਇਕ ਆਇਡੈਂਟੀਫਿਕੇਸ਼ਨ . . . ਇਕ ਪਛਾਣ ਦੀ ਸੀ” It was not a question of love, rather identification . . . It was of an identity (31). The playwright tries to

understand a modern, liberated woman's idea of a partner. This instance can be compared to Luna, whose desires for an intellectual equal are, however, shrouded by the playwright's idea of morality. Veena however appears to be free of the controlling power of morality like Nietzsche's *Urbmensch*. Through the idea of *Urbmensch* he illustrates a human being who is capable of rising above the ideas received through generations and he also raises the questions about the repressive value system of an individual.

But, Kumar considers Veena's ideal man to be cheap. However, Veena thinks that if, in a male dominated society, a man behaves like an ordinary human being and encourages dreams in a woman's mind, these dreams may have been ideal. A woman determines a man's character by taking into account his behaviour. When Veena calls the unknown person and ideal man, Kumar becomes suspicious of her wife and asks her to differentiate between an 'ideal person' and an 'ideal husband':

ਵੀਨਾ ਤੂੰ ਪਤੀ ਤੇ ਇਨਸਾਨ ਵਿਚ ਫ਼ਰਕ ਪਾ ਦਿੱਤਾ ਏ, ਕੀ ਪਤੀ ਇਨਸਾਨ ਨਹੀਂ ਹੁੰਦਾ?(33)

Veena, you have created difference between husband and human, is a husband not a human.

Thus, there emerges suspicion in their relationship. Here, Atamjit has depicted the situation of a woman in patriarchal system. For Atamjit, women are not free to think. They are slaves to men because when a woman brings her own perspective, the patriarchal system draws boundaries for her because according to Beauvoir a woman is culturally defined as the 'other of man' whereas man acclaims the category of self:

Humanity is male and man defines woman not in herself but in relation to him, she is not regarded as an autonomous being . . . for him she is sex . . . absolute sex, no less. She is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her; she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the subject, he is the absolute. She is the other. (Beauvoir 16)

In scene IV, Kumar and Veena are waiting for Sumit. Kumar tells Veena that he and Sumit are friends since their college days, and Sumit was a very intelligent student. When Sumit comes, Veena tells Kumar that he is the same ideal person whom she met in the train. Kumar narrates the whole story to Sumit saying that he is the ideal person of his wife's dreams. But, at the same time, Kumar begins to suspicion the relationship between Veena and Sumit. Through Kumar's character, Atamjit has attempted to demonstrate the mentality of a modern man because of this suspicion, he says to Sumit:

ਕੇਈ ਗੱਲ ਨਹੀਂ। ਜਦੋਂ ਤੱਕ ਵੀਨਾ ਨਹੀਂ ਕਹਿੰਦੀ, ਤੂੰ ਇਸ ਘਰ 'ਚੋਂ ਨਹੀਂ ਜਾ ਸਕਦਾ। (44)

It's all right. Until Veena says, you cannot leave of this house.

This suspicion keeps intensifying in Kumar's mind and leads to the complications in his and his wife's relationship. In scene IV, Atamjit has focused on this conflict, as it is visible in the conversation between Kumar and Veena:

ਕੁਮਾਰ: ਵੀਨਾ ਇਹ ਤਾਂ ਗ਼ਜ਼ਬ ਹੋ ਗਿਆ !

KUMAR. Veena, this is a miracle!

ਵੀਨਾ: ਕਿਉਂ ਕੀ ਹੋਇਆ?

VEENA. Why, what happened?

ਕੁਮਾਰ: ਤੂੰ ਉਠਣ ਲਗਿਆ ਕੁਝ ਨੋਟ ਕੀਤਾ?

KUMAR. Haven't you noticed anything while getting up?

ਵੀਨਾ: ਨਹੀਂ ਤਾਂ।

VEENA. No, nothing.

ਕੁਮਾਰ: ਆਪਣਾ ਬੈੱਡਰੂਮ . . .

KUMAR. Our bed-room . . .

ਵੀਨਾ: ਹਾਂ, ਹਾਂ, ਕੀ ਹੋਇਆ ਬੈੱਡਰੂਮ ਨੂੰ ?

VEENA. Yes, yes, what happened to our bed-room?

ਕੁਮਾਰ: ਉਸਦੇ ਫ਼ਰਸ਼ ਵਿੱਚ ਤ੍ਰੇੜ . . .

KUMAR. A crack in it's floor. . .

ਵੀਨਾ: ਫ਼ਰਸ਼ ਵਿੱਚ ਤ੍ਰੇੜ ? (45)

VEENA. A crack in floor?

Here, Atamjit depicts that even a little suspicion creates many complications in husband-wife relations, and also attempted to justify the title of the play, *Farash Vich Uggya Rukh*. Here, *Rukh* (plant) is used as a symbol of suspicion which keeps on growing once planted.

In scene VIII, when Veena asks Kumar the reason behind his being worried, he replies by saying that it is due to the origin of plant in their bedroom. This plant has been used symbolically by the playwright; it signifies the suspicion in Kumar's mind. When Veena says to destroy the plant, Kumar wants to know the reason behind its growth and tells Veena:

ਮੈਂ ਇਹ ਵੇਖਣਾ ਚਾਹੁੰਦਾ ਕਿ ਆਖ਼ਰ ਇੱਕ ਨਿੱਕਾ ਜਿਹਾ ਪਲਾਂਟ ਬੌਡਰੂਮ ਦੇ ਪੱਕੇ ਫ਼ਰਸ਼ ਨੂੰ ਕਿਵੇਂ ਪਾੜ ਗਿਆ ਏ ? (49)

I want to see, how, after all, a small plant has cracked open the hard floor of the bed-room?

Atamjit presented the conflict in their lives to audience through Daleel Singh. Daleel Singh tells how they both are living a miserable life, and that he is unable to bear how a small suspicion has ruined their relationship. The suspicion leads to the idea of divorce in Kumar and Veena's relation. In scene IX, Kumar is talking furiously to Veena's father, Bhalla Sahib, and, addressing Veena, he says:

ਵਾਹ ਵੀਨਾ ਵਾਹ, ਬਲਿਹਾਰ ਜਾਵਾਂ ਤੇਰੇ ਕਾਰਨਾਮਿਆਂ ਦੇ। ਉਹ ਚੁੜੇਲਾਂ ਕਿਥੇ ਗਈਆਂ ਭਲਾ, ਜਿਹੜੀਆਂ ਦੇ ਘਰ ਛੱਡ ਦੇਂਦੀਆਂ ਸਨ? ਤੂੰ ਇਖ਼ਲਾਕ ਦੀ ਛਾਤੀ ਵਿੱਚ ਬੇਸ਼ਰਮੀ ਦਾ ਛੁਰਾ ਮਾਰਿਐ। ਉਹ ਕਿਹੜੀ ਕਮੀ ਸੀ ਜਿਸਨੇ ਤੈਨੂੰ ਏਨਾ ਜਲੀਲ ਕੰਮ ਕਰਨ ਲਈ ਮਜਬੂਰ ਕੀਤਾ ? ਤੇਰੇ ਇਸ ਨੀਚ ਕਰਮ ਉੱਤੇ ਹਜ਼ਾਰ ਲਾਹਨਤ, ਵਾਰ ਵਾਰ ਲਾਹਨਤ। . . . ਜੇ ਜ਼ਰਾ ਵੀ ਅਣਖ ਬਾਕੀ ਏ ਤਾਂ ਚੱਪਣੀ 'ਚ ਪਾਣੀ ਪਾ ਕੇ ਡੁੱਬ ਮਰ। (54)

Wonderful Veena, I marvel at your deeds. Where are those witches who would leave two houses before striking? You have stabbed the knife of shamelessness in the heart of wisdom. What dearth forced to commit such a shameless act? I censure you for such a base action, a hundred times, again

and again, I censure you. . . if you have a little sense of honour go and drown yourself.

The problem of Kumar is that he is suspicious of Veena's character. Regarding this suspicion, he also points out to Veena's father:

ਦੇਖ ਲਿਆ ਜੇ ਆਪਣੀ ਲਾਡਲੀ ਦਾ ਕਿਰਦਾਰ। ਏਸੇ ਨੂੰ ਕਹੋ ਦਿਖਾਵੇ ਆਪਣੀ ਕਰਤੂਤ ਦਾ ਚਿੱਠਾ। ਮੇਰੇ ਨਾਲ ਇਸ ਬੇਹਯਾ ਕੁਲਟਾ ਨੂੰ ਬੰਨ੍ਹ ਕੇ ਮੈਥੋਂ ਕਿਹੜੇ ਜਨਮ ਦਾ ਬਦਲਾ ਲਿਆ ਜੇ? (54)

Have you seen the character of your beloved daughter? Ask her to tell you about her misdeeds. What had I done to deserve this, that you married off your shameless daughter to me?

Here, through the behaviour of Kumar, Atamjit articulates the constructed values of male-dominated society which make a man superior to a woman because according to these values male ego can not accept women having an independent perspective on life. Simone de Beauvoir also traces differences between sex and gender, and observes an interaction between socially constructed and naturally acquired functions in *The Second Sex*,

one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman. No biological, psychological, or economic fate determines the figure that the human female presents in society: it is civilization as a whole that produces this creature . . . Only the intervention of someone else can establish an individual as an other. (273)

Under the influence of these constructed values Kumar blames Veena, however he has no idea whether or not his suspicion is justified regarding the relation between Veena and Sumit.

Along with Veena, he also suspects his friend, Sumit. He is unable to trust both Veena and Sumit, and decides to live separately from Veena:

ਮੈਂ ਇਸ ਪਲੀਤ ਔਰਤ ਤੋਂ ਛੁਟਕਾਰਾ ਪਾਉਣਾ ਚਾਹੁੰਨਾ, ਮੈਨੂੰ ਮੁਕਤੀ ਚਾਹੀਦੀ ਏ, ਤਲਾਕ। (ਥੋੜਾ ਵਕਫ਼ਾ ਤੇ ਫੇਰ ਬਹੁਤ ਉੱਚੀ) ਹਾਂ ਹਾਂ ਤਲਾਕ।

I want to get rid of this polluted woman. I want freedom, divorce. (after some time, very loudly) yes, yes, divorce.

In the last scene of the play, Kumar is silent. He calls Veena but she does not respond. He goes near her, they become emotional, and begin to talk about the conflict in their relation. Through the conversation of Veena and Kumar, Atamjit has again focused on the male psyche. Men usually hold women responsible for the conflicts and problems in their relations with them.

Thus, it can be said that through *Farash Vich Uggya Rukh*, Atamjit has tried to unfold the male psychology in a patriarchal system. In a male dominated system, man wants a woman even to dream according to him. A woman who lives her life according to her man is the only ideal woman for a man. Moreover, a woman is always perceived in terms of her “character” while a man is perceived in terms of his actions. Thus, the playwright privileges the male character in terms of his perception.

2.4. *Main Tan Ik Sarangi Han*: Representing the Situation of contemporary Woman

Atamjit's play, *Main Tan Ik Sarangi Han* is rich from a feminist vantage point. The play deals with three female characters, Geeta, Pal, and Meena, who are around 50 years old. There is a significant difference in the education, individuality, and behavior of these three women characters. But, in spite of these differences, they are connected to each other through their friendship. The whole play revolves around these three women. Through these female characters, Atamjit has explored how the subjectivity of a woman is constructed in a patriarchal system.

Geeta is a stage artist. Meena is a professor in a university. Meena uses a man for her sexual satisfaction. But, Pal fulfills her wishes within the contours of the social system. She is closer to the reality of life. With the help of psychoanalytical theory, we can analyse the psychology of Geeta as superego, Pal as ego, and Meena as id. Just as ego, superego, and id are

the different perspectives of same person. Geeta, Pal, and Meena also represent the different facets of the same problems: the problem of being a woman. All these three characters are victims of physical and psychological violence in their respective lives, and are raped by their own relatives. In the play the rape symbolises “the male usurpation of female agency and power” (Martin 205). But, according to Snehlata Jaswal, “the power of male characters should have lent security to females” (7). Pal was physically tortured by her uncle at an age when she hadn’t even learnt to speak and was unable to share the tragic experience of her life with anyone.

Meena’s viewpoint about a man reflects her lifestyle and behaviour. In spite of being an educated woman, she has to struggle for her existence and has to revolt against the system even for her minimal desires. She wants to live life on her own terms and with complete freedom. But, she is tortured by her cursed existence.

The play begins with women characters of 50 years old but, by the end of the play, these women characters are of 12 years of age. Mister Singh, Bapu, and Rajinder Singh are the three male characters but they do not appear directly in front of the audience.

Mr. Singh is the lover of Meena, Rajinder Singh is the lover of Geeta, and Bapu is the father of Pal. The play opens with a Chorus which depicts the situation of women in a patriarchal system. In this Chorus women compare themselves to *Sarangi*.⁹ It is a significant symbol for women because in folk contexts, a woman is also seen as a marionette in man's hand.

ਮੈਂ ਤਾਂ ਇੱਕ ਸਾਰੰਗੀ ਹਾਂ, ਨਜ਼ਰਾਂ ਦੇ ਜਿੰਨੇ ਵੀ ਸ਼ੀਸ਼ੇ
ਓਨੇ ਰੰਗਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਰੰਗੀ ਹਾਂ, ਮੈਂ ਤਾਂ ਇੱਕ ਸਾਰੰਗੀ ਹਾਂ। (ਆਤਮਜੀਤ, ਮੈਂ ਤਾਂ ਇੱਕ 15)
I am but a *sarangi*, coloured in the mirrors of numberless eyes
I am but a *sarangi*.

After the completion of the Chorus, the stage is illuminated. Geeta, Meena and Pal are sitting in a room. They are dressed in expensive dresses, which

⁹a Punjabi musical instrument.

show that they have gathered for an occasion and the occasion is Geeta's birthday celebration. The trio is talking about Kiran, daughter of Pal. She is twelve years old. Pal is happy about the growth of her daughter. She wants to celebrate her happiness with her friends because she thinks that her daughter has become an adult woman from a girl. So she says:

ਮੇਰੀ ਧੀ ਇਕ ਔਰਤ ਬਣੇਗੀ, ਪੂਰੀ ਔਰਤ । (16)

My daughter will be a woman, a full woman.

Through the characterisation of Meena, the playwright has depicted that community of women who befriend men to escape their loneliness and use them for their day to day needs; and, they do this with feelings of revenge against the male race. Beside this, Atamjit has represented the psychology of women, who have begun to feel lonely in their later years and to escape that loneliness they befriend men. Pal and Geeta advise Meena to avoid such things at this age, but she considers friendship more important in the second stage of her life. Thus, Meena signifies the tragedy of loneliness and how it tortures women.

Meena, Geeta, and Pal represent the contemporary women, who want to remain single out of their own will and who break away from the traditions of patriarchal system, which gives importance to marriage, to remain single. But, they bring forth the reality of problems faced by spinsters in the patriarchal system.

Pal represents the reality of life where she made love with to unknown man in order to have a child. She believes that there is neither ideal life nor absolute morality. The game of one's life depends on the kind of cards one gets. Nietzsche also argues that human being is a historical product and is influenced by the value-systems of the society. When these value systems change, the identity of human being is also changed. For Nietzsche, subjectivity is also the product of repressive value systems of morality.

Pal is very close to the reality of life. In a male-dominant society, where girls are considered as burdens by their parents, Pal narrates the problems faced by a woman:

ਗੁਣਾਂ ਦੇ ਸਿਰ ਤੇ ਜ਼ਿੰਦਗੀ ਕੱਟੀ, ਕਿਸੇ ਦੇ ਮੁਹਤਾਜ਼ ਬਣ ਕੇ ਨਹੀਂ। ਪੇਰੈਂਟਸ ਦਾ ਜ਼ੁਲਮ ਸਹਿ ਕੇ ਵੀ ਸਾਬਤ ਕੀਤਾ ਕਿ ਧੀ ਬੋਝ ਵਧਾਉਂਦੀ ਨਹੀਂ, ਵੰਡਾਉਂਦੀ ਏ। (20)

I have lived life on my own, and accepted nobody's subservience. Even after tolerating the tyranny of parents, I proved that a daughter is an asset not a burden.

Geeta, the third female character of the play, is quite sensitive. She is tortured by her school teacher, Madam Baveja, who is a lesbian. Meena's suspicion about Geeta's character made her cry.

In scene II of the play, the age of three women has been depicted 31 years. They are wearing simple dresses. They discuss a mythical story of a princess among themselves, which also deals with situation of women from historical perspective. The mythical story is: once a prince bets the son of Wazir that whosoever marries first among them, his wife would spend a night with the other one. The Prince gets married first and sends his wife to sleep with the Wazir's son. The bet has been used as an instance by Atamjit to demonstrate how a woman is used for one's pride without any attempt to comprehend her psyche. But, for the sake of her dignity/chastity, the princess further challenges the Wazir's son that if he succeeded in reknitting the bunkbed in same design the way it is after unknitting it, only then she'll sleep with him. Wazir's son loses the challenge and the princess succeeds in saving her dignity in the agreement (game/battle) of both men's bet through her sharp mind. But, Meena considers the princess wrong, saying that she should have slept with the Wazir's son because it was her husband's decision. However, Pal and Geeta do not agree with Meena's argument because it's not morally acceptable in a patriarchal system. But, for Meena, morality is nothing but a social propaganda, and she states:

ਉਹਨਾਂ ਦੇਸਤਾਂ ਦੀ ਮੌਰੈਲਿਟੀ ਕਿਥੇ ਐ ਜਿਹੜੇ ਇਹੋ ਜੇਹੀ ਸ਼ਰਤ ਲਾ ਰਹੇ ਨੇ? ਰਾਜੇ ਦੀ ਮੌਰੈਲਿਟੀ ਕੀ ਏ ਜਿਹੜਾ ਆਪਣੀ ਬੀਵੀ ਨੂੰ ਖੁਦ ਦੂਜੇ ਨਾਲ ਤੋਰ ਰਿਹੈ? ਤੇ ਵਜ਼ੀਰ ਪੁੱਤਰ ਦੀ ਵੀ ਕਾਹਦੀ ਮੌਰੈਲਿਟੀ ਜਿਹੜਾ ਸਚਮੁਚ ਘੁੰਡ ਚੁੱਕਣ ਲਈ ਤਿਆਰ ਬੈਠਾ ਏ? (24)

Where is the morality of those friends who are betting on such a thing? What is the morality of a King's son who is cuckolding himself? Further, what is the moral sense of the son of the minister who is virtually ready to lift the veil.

Thus, Atamjit has represented the mythical perspective on construction of a woman's subjectivity-how a woman enacts a play to maintain her existence. It can be assessed that Atamjit has employed certain myths that construct woman as a victim. Pal argues that why these moral issues are only for women. Depicting the psychology of women through the perspective of this mythical story, Geeta asserts that in such kind of a society woman's consent is given no importance and a man is free to inflict his decisions on her. When we discuss the Atamjit's perspectives on the issue of morality, the idea comes for that it is different for a man and a woman. His morality is different for Prince and Wazir's son rather than the wife of Prince because man believes that it is the duty of a woman to follow his decisions. Geeta, Pal, and Meena want to establish their identities as women different from that of the stereotypes. They regard the problem of princess a very significant one:

ਅਸਲ ਸਮੱਸਿਆ ਏ ਕਿ ਦੇਵੇਂ ਮਰਦ ਆਖਰ ਔਰਤ ਨੂੰ ਸਮਝ ਕੀ ਰਹੇ ਨੇ ? ਰਾਜ ਕੁਮਾਰ ਵਚਨ ਪੂਰਾ ਕਰਨ ਲਈ ਔਰਤ ਨੂੰ ਕਿਉਂ ਫਸਾ ਰਿਹੈ ? . . . ਇਮਤਿਹਾਨ ਵਿਚ ਔਰਤ ਨੂੰ ਪਾ ਰਿਹੈ । ਦਿਸ ਇਜ਼ ਰੀਅਲ ਹਿਪੋਕ੍ਰੇਸੀ । (28)

The real problem is what the two men understand a woman to be? Why is Raj Kumar entrapping the woman to fulfil his promise? . . . he is positioning the woman in an ordeal! This is real hypocrisy.

While analysing the woman characters of Atamjit, it becomes apparent that he considers the confidence of his female characters as the strongest asset of their identity. In Atamjit's viewpoint, a woman who succumbs to the dominance of men and, instead of revolting against the same, is laid down by the values and customs of patriarchy ultimately lets her subjectivity be suppressed as well. But, if she dares to fight against the system for her existence, she is looked at from a different perspective by the system. This

revolutionary picture of a woman is represented by the Chorus in this scene:

ਮੈਂ ਕਿੱਸਾ ਇਕ ਅਜ਼ੀਮ ਹਾਂ, ਕਿਤੇ ਜ਼ਰਬ ਕਿਤੇ ਤਕਸੀਮ ਹਾਂ।

I am a special story, sometimes multiplying sometimes dividing.

ਤੇਰੇ ਅੰਦਰ ਕਿਸ ਨੇ ਪਾਏ, ਮੇਰੇ ਲਈ ਨਫ਼ਰਤ ਦੇ ਬੀਜ।

Who sowed in you the seeds of hatred for me.

ਤੇਰੀ ਛਾਵੇਂ ਕਦੇ ਨਾ ਮੌਲੀ, ਮੇਰੀ ਖਿੜੇ ਰਹਿਣ ਦੀ ਰੀੜ।

My desire to bloom under your shade never materialised

ਵਕਤ ਦੀ ਮਿੱਟੀ ਵਿਚੋਂ ਨਿਕਲੀ, ਮੈਂ ਪਥਰੀਲੀ ਢੀਮ ਹਾਂ।(29)

I am just a stony pebble out of the soil of time.

Meena, who befriends men only to take revenge from them, wants to be the princess of the mythical story, so that she can marry the prince and, as per the bet, sleep with the Wazir's son, in order to take her revenge in a male dominated society where a woman has no existence:

ਮੈਂ ਤਾਂ ਅਸਲ ਪਾਤਰ ਬਣ ਸਕਦੀ ਆਂ। ਵਿਆਹ ਕਰਾ ਦੇ ਮੇਰਾ ਰਾਜ ਕੁਮਾਰ ਨਾਲ, ਤੇ ਲਿਆ ਦੇ ਮੈਨੂੰ ਵਜ਼ੀਰ ਦਾ ਪੁੱਤਰ; ਜੇ ਦੋਹਾਂ ਦੀਆਂ ਭੂਤਨੀਆਂ ਨਾ ਘੁੰਮਾ ਦਿਆਂ ਤਾਂ ਮੇਰਾ ਨਾਂ ਮੀਨਾ ਟੰਡਨ ਨਹੀਂ। (29)

I can be the real character, marry me with the Prince, or bring me a minister's son; if I do not make them insane don't call me Meena Tondon.

In scene III, Pal, Meena and Geeta have been portrayed 28 years old. Geeta and Pal are sitting while Meena is talking to Mr. Sandhu over phone. Meena has categorized men in her personal diary, which indicates her psychology about men.

In a patriarchal system, Meena is a free woman who, against the patriarchal values, decides to remain single. But, if one looks at the play from male perspective, as Atamjit is a male author, one can see that on the one hand Atamjit is representing Meena as a free woman and, on the other, he is also criticising Meena through Geeta. The psychology of a man towards a woman can be seen in this play when Geeta calls Meena a

prostitute, who can be availed by anyone, after Meena plans a dinner with Mr. Sandhu:

ਬਹੁਤ ਸਾਫ਼ ਏ। ਤੈਨੂੰ ਖਰੀਦਿਆ ਜਾ ਸਕਦਾ ਏ? ਤੂੰ ਵੇਸਵਾ ਏਂ? ਜਿਹੜਾ ਮਰਜ਼ੀ ਤੈਨੂੰ ਲੈ ਜਾਵੇ, ਜਦੋਂ ਮਰਜ਼ੀ ਤੇ ਜਿੱਥੇ ਜੀ ਕਰ ਲੈ ਜਾਵੇ। ਬਾਜ਼ਾਰ ਵਿਚ ਏਸੇ ਤਰ੍ਹਾਂ ਹੁੰਦਾ ਏ ਨਾ? ਏਸੇ ਨੂੰ ਵੇਸਵਾਪੁਣਾ ਕਹਿੰਦੇ ਨੇ ਨਾ? (31)

It's very clear. You can be bought, you are a whore. Anybody can take you anytime anywhere he wishes. This happens in the market, this is what prostitution is?

The construction of her identity as a moral or immoral being can be understood through Butler's theory of performativity. She believes that the category of woman is not stable and the identity of a woman is influenced by social and cultural contexts. In *Gender Trouble* she argues:

Women itself is a term in process, a becoming, a constructing that cannot rightfully be said to originate or to end. As an ongoing discursive practice, it is open to intervention and resignification. Even when gender seems to congeal into the most reified forms, the "congealing" is itself an insistent and insidious practice, sustained and regulated by various social means. (33)

It can be deduced from this conversation that the author also has looked at a woman's identity through the lense of patriarchy. If the writer of this play were a woman, her view towards Meena's freedom would not have been the same; and, she would not have seen Meena through frustration, loneliness, and violence. Meena reacted to Geeta's calling her a prostitute by saying that she doesn't need a certificate from anyone to prove her character, because she has learnt to live not by killing one's dreams and desires rather by fulfilling them. Meena is a friend to Geeta and Pal only because of her loneliness. She is a university professor with a good salary, with which she can fulfill her dreams. Hence, she says to Geeta:

ਤੂੰ ਮੈਨੂੰ ਬਾਜ਼ਾਰ ਔਰਤ ਕਿਹਾ ਏ। ਮੇਰੀ ਹਿੱਕ ਤੇ ਕੋਈ ਪ੍ਰਾਈਸ ਟੈਗ ਲਟਕਿਆ ਦਿਖਾ। ਯੂਨੀਵਰਸਿਟੀ ਦੀ ਪ੍ਰੋਫੈਸਰੀ ਵਿਚ ਚੰਗੀ ਤਨਖਾਹ ਏ ਅਜਕਲ੍ਹ। ਮੇਰੀ ਤੁਹਾਡੇ ਦੋਹਾਂ ਨਾਲ ਸਾਂਝ ਕਰੈਡਿਟਿਲਿਟੀ ਕਰਕੇ ਨਹੀਂ, ਇਕੱਲ ਕਰਕੇ ਐ। (31-32)

You have called me a prostitute. Is there a price tag on my breast. There is no price tag on my back. The professorship in university fetches handsome salary nowadays. I am with both of you not because of the credibility but loneliness.

We can very well discern the reaction of patriarchy towards a free woman through the characterisation of Geeta. Meena who, being a free woman, rejected patriarchy, is not free in the true sense of the word. People like Geeta, do not let her be free from the influence of patriarchy and keep influencing her. Meena's friendship with men is not due to her weak economic situation but for her personal interests. As she can fulfil her desires by her income, so she says, "ਮੇਰਾ ਪਰਸ ਮਰਦਾਂ ਦੇ ਬਟੂਏ ਤੋਂ ਸਚਮੁੱਚ ਭਾਰਾ ਏ।" My purse is truly heavier than the wallet of men (32). That is why she says to Geeta, "ਤੇਰਾ ਖਿਆਲ ਏ ਮਰਦ ਮੈਨੂੰ ਲੈ ਕੇ ਜਾਂਦੇ ਨੇ, ਹਕੀਕਤ ਇਸ ਦੇ ਬਿਲਕੁਲ ਉਲਟ ਏ। ਮੈਂ ਵੇਸਵਾ ਨਹੀਂ ਮਰਦ ਮੇਰੀ ਵੇਸਵਾ ਨੇ" You think men take me, the reality is totally the opposite, I am not a whore, men are my whores (32).

Here, we analyse the notion of 'pride' in Meena's character which plays the significant role in the construction of subjectivity. She is a university professor and an independent woman who fulfils her desires. However, a woman who is economically strong has a different identity rather than a dependent woman.

Marriage is considered as a significant role in a patriarchal society. The relationship between a man and a woman is acknowledged respectable only after marriage. But, a woman like Meena, view marriage as a bondage of a man, because, in such a society, woman becomes a life long slave to man after marriage because "patriarchal marriage" (Barlas 167) gives more importance to man rather than a woman this marriage institution establishes woman as man's property. In this play through Meena we can see a woman's psyche towards marriage:

ਵਿਆਹ ਗੁਲਾਮੀ ਏਂ। ਤੇ ਇਸ ਗੁਲਾਮੀ ਤੋਂ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਸਾਰੀਆਂ ਨੂੰ ਡਰ ਲਗਦਾ ਏ। . . . ਇਹ ਇਕ ਵਾਰ ਹੁੰਦਾ ਏ ਤੇ ਜ਼ਿੰਦਗੀ ਭਰ ਦੀ ਗੁਲਾਮੀ ਦਿੰਦਾ ਏ। (33)

Marriage is a slavery. And everybody is afraid of this slavery .
. . it happens once but incarcerates one for life.

All the three female characters have had bad experiences in their lives. Narrating her life experiences, Meena says that her father didn't want to get married but was forced to do so by his parents. After marriage her father spent one night with her mother and never came back. Meena says that during her childhood people didn't acknowledge her as an offspring of her father, and she herself too has often seen her mother with her lover, who was younger to her mother, and she used to call him uncle. But, her mother wanted Meena to marry her (mother's) lover. Meena's psychology can be seen through her conversation with Geeta:

ਉਹ ਮੇਰੀ ਮਾਂ ਦਾ ਆਸ਼ਕ ਤਾਂ ਹੈ ਈ ਸੀ ਤੇ ਜਵਾਈ ਵੀ ਬਣਨ ਤੁਰ ਪਿਆ । ਜਦੋਂ ਲੋਕ ਕਹਿੰਦੇ ਸਨ ਕਿ ਉਹ ਮੇਰਾ ਕੁਝ ਨਹੀਂ ਤਾਂ ਉਹ ਮੈਨੂੰ ਮੇਰਾ ਚਾਚਾ ਦਿਸਦਾ ਸੀ; ਪਰ ਜਦੋਂ ਪਤੀ ਬਣਨ ਲੱਗਾ ਤਾਂ ਮੈਨੂੰ ਉਹ ਕੁਝ ਵੀ ਨਹੀਂ ਸੀ ਲਗਦਾ । ਕੋਈ ਰਿਸ਼ਤਾ ਨਹੀਂ ਸੀ ਬਚਿਆ ਮੇਰਾ, ਨਾ ਉਹਦੇ ਨਾਲ, ਨਾਂ ਮਾਂ ਨਾਲ . . . । (35)

He used to be the lover of my mother, and now expects to be her son-in-law. When people said he was nothing to me, I thought him as an uncle, but when he tried to be my husband he was nothing to me. No relation was left for me, neither with him, nor with my mother.

It can be said that Meena and her mother are not completely free from the influence of patriarchy. When Mr. Singh wanted to marry Meera's mother, she was waiting for her husband, who had spent only one night with her. Mr. Singh proposed her many times but, under the impact of false notion of love and honour, she couldn't marry Mr. Singh and kept waiting for her husband. In this way, this incident shows the psychological construction of subjectivity of a woman; how, in a patriarchal society, woman has no existence of her own. Even if she is free from the institution of marriage, she is not fully free from the patriarchal values, which keep influencing the different perspectives of her life. This scene ends with a Chorus, which depicts such a sorry state of woman:

ਛੋਟੇ ਵੱਡੇ ਘਰਾਂ ਦੇ ਅੰਦਰ, ਸਜੀ ਹੋਈ ਇਕ ਚੀਜ਼ ਹਾਂ । (38)

In small and big houses I am a show piece.

In scene IV, the age of Meena, Geeta, and Pal is 26 years. Here, the author has presented a free woman's psyche. The conflict in Geeta's mind is that her spinsterhood and, by extension, rejecting patriarchy could not bring her a social status which marriage and, by extension conforming to patriarchy has brought to Jyoti and Bindu. Jyoti is an SDM and Bindu is a teacher. According to Geeta, they have their own respective home, job, and social status. Through Geeta, we can perceive the psychology of women, who preferred to live free of social values, but are no longer happy with their freedom and think that women who followed the patriarchal value system are more independent and have a better social status than them.

Atamjit has also focused on the issue of a woman's complexion in patriarchal system and how a woman's beauty is measured in terms of dark/light complexion. A white woman is looked at with respect; however, a black woman has to face an inferior gaze. Beside the society, her parents also regard her inauspicious. In this play, through the character of Geeta, the playwright has also attempted to demonstrate the discrimination in a patriarchal society whose basis is only colour. Geeta is a dark complexion woman, her mother taunts her:

ਤੂੰ ਕਦੇ ਆਪਣੀ ਸ਼ਕਲ ਦੇਖੀ ਏ ? ਤੇਰੇ ਮੂੰਹ ਤੇ ਮਨਹੂਸ ਲਿਖਿਆ ਹੋਇਐ। ਏਹਨੂੰ ਦੇਖ ਕੇ ਕੋਈ ਕੰਮ ਸਿਰੇ ਨਹੀਂ ਚੜ੍ਹ ਸਕਦਾ। . . . ਤੇ ਆਪਣੀ ਸ਼ਕਲ ਵੀ ਦੇਖ। ਤਵੇ ਦਾ ਪੁੱਠਾ ਪਾਸਾ
I (41)

Have you ever seen your face? Ominous is written over it, no work will be completed if you are there . . . and see your face black like the back side of a pan.

The play explores the problems of racism for a woman, in the patriarchal Punjabi society. A woman who has dark complexion doubly marginalised and oppressed by race and patriarchy. Here, Linda Alcoff argues that the key to overcoming racism lies in a confrontation with the "psychic process of identity formation" (qtd. in Elkholy). The race also helps to shape a woman's subjectivity. The importance of fair complexion is seen when Geeta's mother tells her that had Geeta been of fairer colour any man

would have been ready to marry her. But, this discrimination is applicable to women only, not men. When Geeta asks her mother that her brother Bittu's complexion is also dark, her mother gets furious.

Hence, the dark complexion of a woman becomes an issue of anxiety for her. In the dialogue of Geeta's mother, "ਤੂੰ ਸੁਹਣੀ-ਸੁਨੱਖੀ ਹੁੰਦੀ ਤਾਂ ਲੋਕਾਂ ਆਪ ਮੰਗ ਕੇ ਲੈ ਜਾਣੀ ਸੀ" If you were beautiful, people would ask your hand for marriage (43). We can notice it. Being dark or fair is not in the hands of a human being. Yet, a dark woman suffers as if she has committed a crime by being dark.

In Indian patriarchal system, since a boy is bestowed with a respectable status right from his birth as he is considered to be the heir of the family, therefore, Geeta's father, in spite of being poor, fulfills his son's demands and views Geeta as a burden. Thus, through the character of Geeta, Atamjit has tried to comprehend a different aspect of woman's subjectivity, in which, she has to rebel against the religion, social values, culture, and tradition for the sake of her identity.

In the next scene, Pal shares her life experience with Geeta. She narrates that when she was in school; her father did not favour her participating in debate competitions at school and used to snub her a lot. Like Geeta, Pal too has to face the same discrimination from her parents. We can have a glimpse of it in the conversation between her parents:

ਮੈਂ ਨਹੀਂ ਜਾਣਦਾ ਡਬੇਟਾਂ-ਡਬੁਟਾਂ; ਕੰਨ ਖੋਲ੍ਹ ਕੇ ਸੁਣ ਲੈ, ਇਹ ਕੰਜਰਖਾਨੇ ਏਸ ਘਰ ਵਿੱਚ ਨਹੀਂ ਚਲਣੇ। ਪਹਿਲਾਂ ਕਮੀਜਾਂ- ਪਜਾਮੇ ਪਾਉਂਦੀ ਸੀ, ਹੁਣ ਡਬੇਟਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਜਾ ਕੇ ਬੋਲਦੀ ਆ।
(46)

I don't know about debates; listen carefully, these actions won't be tolerated here. Earlier you were wore non-traditional dress, now you have started speaking in debates.

Pal's father considered her a burden, whose responsibility was a trouble to him. Her father thought that by befriending boys in school she may bring shame to him like her aunt who had an affair with a man of influence which made it difficult for her family to oppose this relationship, because, in a

patriarchal society, the prestige of family is supposed to be carried by its women. It has been exemplified in the play as well, when Pal invites her male classmate to her home in order to solve Mathematics sums, her father doesn't like it and, after furiously pushing her, says, "ਮੈਂ ਬਣਾਉਂਦਾ ਤੇਰਾ ਵਰਗਮੂਲ" I will make your square root (47).

The play takes the twin tool of violence and abuse to show that the gender based violence and abuse shape a woman's identity differently. A woman's scope and limitations are constructed within this category that is shaped through her relationship with man: whether abusive or otherwise. When Pal asks her mother to live separately from her father, her mother replies that she has to spend her life with her husband in order to keep the honour of her father, because a husband is considered a God in society, she says, "ਮੇਰੇ ਲਈ ਤੇਰੇ ਬਾਪੂ ਤੇ ਧਰਮ ਵਿਚ ਕੋਈ ਫ਼ਰਕ ਨਹੀਂ। ਤੇਰਾ ਬਾਪੂ ਈ ਮੇਰਾ ਧਰਮ ਏ" There is no difference for me between religion and your father. Your father is my religion (48). Thus, the play proliferates the social/ cultural bias that see

the woman as only the "Other" of male. Religion, social conditions and cultural conditions perceive the woman as an adjunct to the male. This means that the woman's identity is never separate but is subsumed under that of male (Nayar 83).

In scene VI of the play, the age of women protagonists is 22 years. In this scene, Atamjit has attempted to depict the woman's psychology from the viewpoint of myth alongside articulating caste discrimination in patriarchy. According to the mythical story '*Rajkumari Suchhaji*', Prince loves a low caste (Dalit) woman but marries a high caste (Khatri) one. According to Atamjit, the psychology of a man is:

ਜਿਹਨੂੰ ਇਸ਼ਕ ਕਰਦੈ ਉਹਨੂੰ ਵਿਆਹੁੰਦਾ ਨਹੀਂ, ਜਿਹਨੂੰ ਵਿਆਹੁੰਦੈ ਉਹਦੇ ਨਾਲ ਪਿਆਰ ਨਹੀਂ ਕਰਦਾ। (62)

He doesn't marry the one he loves and doesn't love the one he marries.

Prince is not allowed to marry a Dalit woman according to social values, but loving her is neither an issue nor disrespectful. Prince considers his wife unfortunate because he doesn't love her and has married her only under the compulsion of social values. Here, we analyse the power concept with the power of Prince, who wants to achieve everything through his power only: his reign, his wife, and also his beloved. A woman is doubly marginalised in this mythical story, first due to her caste and then her class.

In this play, Atamjit has also dealt with the issue of expression of sexuality by a woman. In her very childhood, Geeta is tortured by her idol teacher Madam Baveja. The problem with Geeta is that she doesn't like her parents' giving more importance to their son and, feels comfortable discussing her issues with her teacher. But, later she identifies her teacher's affection for her as sexual and begins to fear her sexuality. Madam Baveja assaults her sexually which affects Geeta's psychology. Geeta is seen to be very nervous whenever Meena recalls Madam Baveja's name in the play. There are a number of such examples in the play. Meena perceives Pal and Geeta's relation in the same light. When Meena discusses their relationship, their reaction is:

ਇਹ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਲੈਸਬੀਆਂ ਸਮਝਦੀ ਏ। ਜਦੋਂ ਵੀ ਦੋ ਔਰਤਾਂ ਕੱਠੀਆਂ ਰਹਿਣਗੀਆਂ, ਉਹਨਾਂ ਤੇ ਇਹ ਸ਼ੱਕ ਤਾਂ ਹਰੇਕ ਦਾ ਹੋਵੇਗਾ। ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਦੀ ਖੁਸ਼ੀ ਨੂੰ ਬਰਦਾਸ਼ਤ ਕਰਨਾ ਆਸਾਨ ਨਹੀਂ, ਔਰਤਾਂ ਲਈ ਵੀ ਨਹੀਂ। (20)

She thinks we are lesbians. When two women live together, they will be looked at with the suspicion. Its not easy for people to bear their happiness, not even for women.

With the development of the play's plot, Meena's suspicion seems to transform into reality. The reality of Meena's suspicion comes forth in the conversation when Pal and Geeta are discussing the importance of marriage in a patriarchal society. Pal suggests to Geeta that they should get married then Geeta replied:

ਗੀਤਾ: ਕਿਤੇ ਤੂੰ ਤਾਂ ਨਹੀਂ ਥੱਕ ਗਈ ਮੇਰੇ ਕੋਲੋਂ, ਬਵੇਜਾ ਵਾਂਗ?
ਪਾਲ : ਚਿੰਤਾ ਨਾ ਕਰ, ਜਿਸ ਦਿਨ ਮੈਂ ਥੱਕੀ, ਸਾਫ਼ ਦੱਸ ਦਿਆਂਗੀ। (40)
GEETA. I hope you are not fed up with me like Baweja?

PAL. Don't worry, when I am fed up I will tell you clearly.

The glimpse of their lesbian relation is also available in scene VIII of play when their age is 21 years and Geeta runs away from her home to live with Pal in a hostel and says to Pal, “ਤੇਰਾ-ਮੇਰਾ ਤਾਂ ਜਨਮਾਂ ਦਾ ਸਾਥ ਲਗਦੈ” It seems we are together forever (64). Their lesbian tendencies intensify by the climax. When Meena meets Pal and Geeta and discuss about Madam Bveja, then Geeta fears that Meena may separate Pal from her life:

ਗੀਤਾ: ਮੈਨੂੰ ਬਹੁਤ ਡਰ ਲੱਗ ਰਿਹੈ। ਕਿਧਰੇ ਤੈਨੂੰ ਉਹ ਮੇਰੇ ਕੋਲੋਂ ਖੋਹ ਨਾ ਲਵੇ।

ਪਾਲ: ਤੂੰ ਝੱਲੀ ਏ। ਉਹ ਮੇਰੀ ਸਧਾਰਨ ਜਿਹੀ ਦੋਸਤ ਏ . . .

ਗੀਤਾ: ਫਿਰ ਵੀ ਮੈਂ ਡਰ ਰਹੀ ਆਂ। ਸ਼ਾਇਦ ਤੇਰੇ ਵਾਸਤੇ ਮੈਂ ਬਹੁਤ ਪੋਸੈਸਿਵ ਹੁੰਦੀ ਜਾ ਰਹੀ ਆਂ। (68)

GEETA. I am afraid, lest he should snatch me away from you.

PAL. You are mad. She is just an ordinary friend of mine . . .

GEETA. I still fear. Perhaps I am being too possessive for you.

Having this conversation, they both hug each other, and, after some time, when they find a difference in their hug, they part from each other instantly and are very afraid. Not able to comprehend the situation, Pal hugs Geeta again and says, “ ਮੈਂ ਵੀ ਬਹੁਤ ਪਿਆਰ ਕਰਦੀ ਆਂ, ਮੈਂ ਕੱਲੀ ਨਹੀਂ ਰਹਿ ਸਕਦੀ” I also love you very much, I can't live alone (72). Geeta is not attracted to men at all. In scene VIII, when she is 20 years old, Rajinder, a theatre student, proposes her but Geeta ignores him and says to him that she can't agree with some of his ideas. The playwright treats the sexuality of these women sensitively and without bias. Moreover, he also depicts how their sexuality constructs their subjectivity, making them independent, strong and vulnerable at the same time.

Atamjit has also discussed the sexual subjugation of women as Pal is raped by her uncle at the age of fifteen and Meena was raped by her hockey coach, whom she has considered her ideal one. After her rape, Meena began to befriend men only for revenge, and that is why she says:

ਮੇਰੇ ਸਰੀਰ ਤੇ ਆਤਮਾ ਦੋਹਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਝਰੀਟਿਆ ਏ ਉਸਨੇ, ਮੈਂ ਉਸਨੂੰ ਕਦੇ ਮਾਫ਼ ਨਹੀਂ ਕਰ ਸਕਦੀ। ਮੈਂ ਉਸ ਤੋਂ ਬਦਲਾ ਲਵਾਂਗੀ। (80)

He has scratched my body and soul. I can never forgive him. I will take revenge from him.

In the last scene of this play, Atamjit has presented a mythical story. In this scene, the playwright has also justified the title of the play. Pal, Geeta and Meena are in seventh grade, and are playing 'Sarangi and Raano' on the school's stage. The Chorus of the play represents the psychological agony of woman. The woman of this mythical play, Raano, becomes 'sarangi' (a typical stringent Indian musical instrument) after death in order to make her voice reach to the people. Thus, Raano depicts woman's situation in the myth. The play ends with a Chorus which highlights the rebellious face of woman against patriarchal system:

ਸਾਜ਼ ਤਾਂ ਹਾਂ, ਆਵਾਜ਼ ਬਣਾਂਗੀ। ਅੰਜਾਮ ਹੋਇਆ, ਆਗਾਜ਼ ਬਣਾਂਗੀ।

Instrument I am, I will be a voice. The conclusion has been, now I will be the start.

ਚਿੜੀਆਂ ਬਣ-ਬਣ ਦੇਖ ਲਿਆ, ਉਕਾਬ ਬਣਾਂਗੀ, ਬਾਜ਼ ਬਣਾਂਗੀ। (86)

I have done being sparrows, now I would be an eagle or a hawk.

According to Snehlata Jaswal, if we look at the male perspective for woman's identity, Atamjit has exhibited sympathy for male characters along with female characters. Women have been held responsible for their situation. Both the fathers of Geeta as well as Pal are equally worried like their mothers in patriarchal system. Their fathers are also a prey to patriarchal values and customs. Thus, Jaswal does not hold any one person responsible for the present situation of women, rather she believes that whole patriarchal structure is accountable for it, whose roots are spread in the past, present, and far in the future (Jaswal 11).

Atamjit has made an appropriate use of Choral songs in this play. He has presented his ideology through these songs. The mythical folktales used in the play is an important part of it as it brings forth the dominance of men from the viewpoint of myth. Moreover, it accentuates the issue that woman have been discriminated since ages be it in history or in myth.

Thus, the play, *Main Tan Ik Sarangi Han*, portrays the tragedy of woman. Today's woman is economically equal to man, but psychologically and socially she is far behind the opposite gender, as in the play, even after being educated and independent, Meena is trapped between relations.

It can be concluded that Atamjit's plays divulge the various dimensions which construct the woman's subjectivity. In the play *Pooran*, the author explores the Mythical construction of Female subjectivity through the character of Luna, how myth shapes a woman subjectivity. In *Farash Vich Uggya Rukh*, one can see the psychoanalytical construction of a woman's subjectivity through the character of Veena. She is not free from patriarchal values. Her husband Kumar represents those men who usually hold women responsible for the conflicts and problems in their relations with them. In *Main Tan Ik Sarangi Han*, Atamjit portray the subjectivity of that woman who succumbs to the dominance of men and, instead of revolting against the same, is laid down by the values and customs of patriarchy. Her subjectivity is constructed in terms of suppression, discrimination and manipulation. She never realises the agency of womanhood and is victimised time and again by different discourses of patriarchy, mythology, sexuality and psychology, all of which come together to construct a woman as a socially and culturally inferior subject specifically with reference to plays under study. Although the author discusses woman's issues and brings to fore many unexplored themes related to women, yet, the attitude and the reference point is typically patriarchal which could be a result of cultural conditioning.

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CHAPTER 3

Female Subjectivities in the Selected Plays of Mahesh Elkunchwar

3.1. Mahesh Elkunchwar: Life and Works

Mahesh Elkunchwar (b. 9 October, 1939) is one of the prominent playwrights in Marathi literature who has made a bold attempt to portray the conditions of women in patriarchal society. In the contemporary era, he is hailed as one of the most influential and progressive playwrights along with Satish Alekar and Vijay Tendulkar. Elkunchwar came into literary prominence with the publication of his one-act plays that reveal a rare blend of strength and concentration. He has written more than twenty plays in the Marathi Language like *Rudravarsha* (1966), *Sultan* (1967), *Zumbar* (1967), *Kaifiyat* (1967), *Eka Mhatarachya Khoon* (1968), *Ek Osad Gaon* (1969), *Yatanaghar* (1970), *Garbo* (1973), *Desire in the Rocks* (1974), *Party* (1976), *Raktapushp* (1980), *Old Stone Mansion* (1985), *Reflection* (1987), *Autobiography* (1988), *The Pond* (1991), *The End of an Age*, *Tattered Clothes* (1995), *Godson* (1998), *Sonata* (2002), and *An Actor Exits* (2005). Most of his plays have been translated into several languages like Hindi, English, German and French.

Elkunchwar is not only prominent in the Marathi theatrical circle and is regarded as an extremely dignified playwright but also in the field of contemporary Indian theatre. His plays have a special significance in the history of Marathi theatre. Elkunchwar is gifted with a literary bent of mind and excellent command over everyday language. His spontaneity and efficient use of literary devices make his plays highly readable. The modern Marathi playwright, Mahesh Elkunchwar may be said to be the most eloquent defender of the social plays. His plays deal with the theme of family and offer an exploration of the struggle between family relations and social relations with realism and emotional power. His plays also depict the contemporary issue of female sexuality because “the patterns of female sexuality are inescapably a product of the historically rooted power of men to define and categorize what is necessary and desirable” (Weeks 36). In addition to his critical works, and theoretical writings, he is known for his active work as an

actor and screenwriter in India's Parallel Cinema (A film movement which is originated in West Bengal in the 1950s). Vikrant Pande states that

The plays of Mahesh Elkunchwar reflect the loneliness. The image of darkness dominates most of Elkunchwar's plays. It is not just the physical darkness, but it is the all-pervading darkness, occupying the psyche and the future of characters. (Swarajya, 30 June 2015)

So, he is one of the most influential and progressive playwrights not only in modern Marathi theatre, but also in modern Indian theatre. Girish Karnard, an Indian actor, film director, writer and playwright also says about Mahesh Elkunchwar:

Restless in his search and unrelenting in his honesty, Elkunchwar stands unsurpassed in modern Indian theatre for his emotional sweep, intellectual rigour, and subtlety.

(Elkunchwar Cover Page)

Elkunchwar has received many honours like the Homi Bhabha Fellowship (1976-78), Sangeet Natak Akademi (1989), Nandikar (1989), Maharashtra Gaurav (1990), Maharashtra Foundation for *Yugant* (1997), Sahitya Akademi Award (2002), Saraswati Samman (2002) and Birmingham Fellowship (2005), Nagbhushan Puraskar (2009), Janasthan Puraskar (2011), Vishnudas Bhave Puraskar (2013), Pu La Smriti Sanman (2013), Sangeet Natak Akademi Ratna Fellowship (2013), Bharat Muni Award (2014) and Zee TV Natyagaurav Puraskar (2015). Elkunchwar is deeply inspired and influenced by another prominent Marathi playwright Vijay Tendulkar, and he acknowledges him for being his inspiration:

I have a grand legacy of one hundred and fifty years of playwriting, but it is Tendulkar, who is in my emergence as a playwright. Temperamentally also I feel closer to him than many of the playwrights of his generation. So my tradition begins with Tendulkar. (Elkunchwar 26)

Elkunchwar is also influenced by Western dramatists and theatre, such as Anton Chekhov, Jezzy Grotowski, August Strindberg, Eugene Ionesco, Antonio Artaud and Samuel Beckett. Mahesh Elkunchwar reveals it in the

interview entitled “Urban folk theatre is artistic kleptomania” with Rana Nayar:

Perhaps this is the time I was working under the influence of Strindberg, Chekhov, Lorca, Sartre and Camus, among other playwrights of the West. Though I tried hard to resist, all of these influences did somehow filter in my early work. (The Tribune, October 18, 1998)

He focuses on the pangs, angst, agony and sorrows of men and women in the patriarchal society. Ravindra Kimbhune traces the influence of various movements in the end of 19th and the beginning of 20th century, “Elkunchwar’s plays are based on the philosophy of existentialism and absurdism” (qtd. in Rautrao 9). So, Elkunchwar’s early writings are influenced by absurdism. Many of his plays suggest the existential problems of the individuals. He says:

I am more interested, in an individual’s problems, his inner life, and his anguish. The psyche of an unhappy disturbed person interests me more than social problems. Social problems do not interest me really, because they have solutions. The human mind is unfathomable. It is the kind of material that’s never exhausted. (qtd. in Sunkanna 123)

This research project basically attempts to focus on Elkunchwar’s *Old Stone Mansion*, *Garbo* and *Sonata*, considering his themes and style of writing. The plays depict the plight of women, both traditional and modern, in the contemporary society. It, thus, focuses upon the suffering and struggle of women to establish themselves in the patriarchal world.

This chapter also seeks to study the patriarchal perspectives on female subjectivities. The problem, which the female characters have been facing, is that they always remain in fear whether their desire would be fulfilled or not due to their social circumstances. Elkunchwar also depicts the problems of contemporary women and issues related to their identity and subjectivity and the selected plays deal with the theme of mortality, identity, subjectivity, gender issues and sexuality.

Sonata (2001) is a tale of existence of three women on their own conditions, *Garbo* (1970) tries to find purpose, beauty, and meaning in life

by living 'other' lives, and in *Old Stone Mansion* (1985) the female characters play a vital role and they are more influential than male characters. All female characters in this play are victims of patriarchy and Indian social set up.

3.2. *Old Stone Mansion*: How Women deal with Traditional Patriarchal Discourses

Mahesh Elkunchwar is one of the major playwrights who deal with serious aspects of the human conditions unnoticed by a theatre obsessed with psychology as well as sociology in feudal/patriarchal society. The *Old Stone Mansion* is the translated version of the Marathi play *The Wada Chirebandi*. The play has analysed the issue of 'Wada' community and "it refers to the entire culture/tradition of the old, decaying feudal structure of a region in Maharashtra. It is a Marathi word which refers to a group of houses together where people live in joint families and share the wada" (Sukanna, Going 167). When the word 'Wada' is spelt with 'W' "it refers to the life style of the Maharashtra region with reference of entire rituals/customs, and culture/tradition, and when it is spelt 'w' it refers to the physical architectural space/structure of an old mansion where groups of families reside together" (168).

The play focuses on the issue of family crisis, and the crisis of commercial culture against traditional culture. Elkunchwar also questions the psychological state of women in terms of existing reality. Elkunchwar himself says about the play that "wada is not simply a family drama; it is more than that, a document of social change" (qtd. in Kanna 149). So, when Elkunchwar began to write *Old Stone Mansion*, he captures a close look at one of those families who are struggling with their surroundings.

The play begins on the fifth day after the death of Tatyaji who is the head of the Deshpande family. Act I opens with Aai, who is the widow of Tatyaji, and is waiting for the arrival of her youngest son Sudhir and his wife Anjali from Bombay, to attend the death rites of their father. After the death of Tatyaji, the eldest son Bhaskar and his wife, Vahini have taken over the reins of the family, which shows the use of their power after the death of

father. While using that power, they take control the keys of their ancestral jewellery box, because according to Indian patriarchal values, the head of family takes control of ancestral property. Vahini changes a lot after the death of her father-in-law. Now she feels that she can live her life according to her choice. Patriarchy, thus, can also empower women as well as disempowering them.

Being a Brahmin family, Bhaskar wants to conduct the traditional rituals of death; but Deshpande's family has suffered in difficult lines. Bhaskar's expectation is that his youngest brother Sudhir would bear the whole expense, because he lives in a big city and maintains their financially well off status. But Sudhir claims that he also suffers a lot in his life. The play also captures vividly the decline of "the 'Wada' culture in Maharashtra, unable to stand the test of time and the social change in the world beyond" (Sanap 155).

The 'Wada' insularity is a product of the large joint family with its hierarchic patriarchy that holds the tensions in check under a facile pretence of authority. The crisis brought forth in this play is also a crisis of traditional culture against global culture. Elkunchwar also depicts the generation's gap of Indian culture. In his research article "Going Beyond the Contextual Boundaries: A Study of The Wada Trilogy in Translation" A. Sunkanna observes about the generations:

The elderly men are lazy drones, the elder women are the patient upholders and preservers of the system, the younger men of the same generations are as subservient as the women in their submission to authority. It is only the new generation that bristles-in several variations of rebellion ranging from bitter cynicism to escape to irresponsibility. (167)

Elkunchwar makes comments on families who believe in outward show and pomposity, and also brings to light the typical Indian families who are more bothered about their status in the society. Act I, Scene II playwright depicts it very clearly through the conversation of Vahini:

The Deshpandes decided to be modern and put a tractor there. Forget about usefulness as long as we can make a show of wealth. (Elkunchwar 144)

In the play *Old Stone Mansion*, Elkunchwar takes those families who are struggling against time in patriarchal system, because if one can analyse the characters as subjects, it can be found that they would act freely but that freedom is constructed by the social-cultural structures where they live. Characters of the play are depicted as failing in their responsibilities. Here, one can find a crisis to revive the loosening ties within the family.

It can be also seen the disintegration of relationships within the Deshpande family. The *Old Stone Mansion*, begins when Deshpande family comes together for the funeral of their father Venkatesh but ends up fighting over who should get how much share in the family from their heritage 'Wada' or mansion, but nobody is ready to spend on the post funeral rituals. The conversation of Vahini with Aai shows this sentiment:

But can't everyone share the cost? Wasn't he everybody's father? Or are we alone responsible for keeping up the Deshpande name? (148)

But, mother, Aai knows who would take charge of the post-funeral expenses of her dead husband. She decides to sell her share of wada to meet the expenses and criticises. She says, "Do you all think I don't know what is going on? But things were different when he was alive" (124). Aai could see the old *wada* and the culture of living together in a community would collapse. Here, Elkunchwar refers to those families who wish to get rid of their responsibilities and their sole intention lies in just acquiring their share of land and money. Elkunchwar has first-hand experiences of growing up in a 'Wada' in the village of Parwa. In an interview (which is published in the 2004 edition of *Wada Trilogy*) he says that he always feels like an outsider in this 'Wada' milieu. So he is strongly critical of the Deshpande family. Elkunchwar portrays the character of Bhaskar who can't pay his grocery bill, still decides to feed the entire village as a part of their father's death rituals. One can analyse that the playwright deals with the crisis of traditional culture against commercial culture.

On the one side, *Old Stone Mansion* demonstrates women as victims of the caste discrimination and patriarchal mindset, but on the other side, it also presents them as representatives of change. In the play, Prabha is the sister of three brothers; Bhaskar, Sudhir and Chandu. She is

very intelligent but her patriarchal family does not allow her to go to college for higher studies. At the age of thirty-five, she is prepared to continue her studies, but Prabha is denied an opportunity because of the false notions of prestige of the Brahmin aristocratic family. Prabha wants to complete her education to find a good job, but her father never allows her to do this, because he holds the opinion that girls do not need education for their survival. It shows the psychology of her father about women. But Prabha is an educated woman and is well-aware of her rights. She is oppressed by patriarchal system. In this way, she is critically portrayed as a representative of the contemporary Indian women who live in same patriarchal social setup because subjectivity of a woman is socially as well as culturally constructed. Sex and gender are constructions of discourses:

Woman itself is a term in process, a becoming, a constructing that cannot rightfully be said to originate or to end. As an ongoing discursive practice, it is open to intervention and resignification. (Butler 33)

It is obvious that the patriarchal society never gives any freedom to women because customs, rituals and traditions are drafted by men. The traditional view of patriarchy is as biologically and naturally determined and regards women as naturally inferior and in subordinate to men. For Mary Wollstonecraft patriarchy and the perpetuation of patriarchy were rooted in an irrational denial of rights, particularly to education and the cultivation of reason to women (qtd. in Nanda 162).

After the death of her father, Prabha discusses with her brother Sudhir, that a girl has no future. She believes that after the father's death, a daughter ought to survive on her own as none in the family is ready to shoulder her responsibility. When Prabha expresses her wish to stay in Bombay with Aai, her sister-in-law seems indifferent towards her opinion. She makes her aware about the life in metropolitan cities:

PRABHA. This time I'll go with you to Bombay.

ANJALI. Won't Aai need someone here with her?

PRABHA. Let's take her along too. It would be a good change for her. Didn't you see? Vahini waited for Aai to take her money. If she stays here alone, they'll eat her alive.

ANJALI. Speak to your brother. It's not for me to say.

Whatever he decides . . .

PRABHA. You're quite under my brother's thumb, aren't you!

ANJALI. You know his temper. He's Deshpande through and through . . . You think it's all fun and games for us. But let me tell you, only we know how to manage. Pull the sheet over your head and your feet are uncovered. Cover your feet and the head's uncovered. First it was a battle to find a two-room flat. Now its battle to pay off the loan. At least here you own the roof over your head

. . .

PRABHA. Don't give me that sob story of your poverty, please. Nobody is going to visit you, all right? You are a proper Konkanastha, aren't you? (Elkunchwar 149)

The conversation between Prabha and Anjali shows that in the Indian patriarchal/traditional families the women do not want the dominance of their in laws in their home. In Act I Scene I, the conversation of Sudhir and Prabha depicts how Vahini has changed after the death of Tatyaji:

Let me tell you Sudhir. It's not even five days since Tatyaji died. Five days. And Vahini has changed already. The house keys moved instantly into her keep. And Aai went instantly into the shadows of the back room. When Tatyaji was alive, you couldn't hear Vahini's footfall on the verandah. But within five days her orders are heard way outside the wada. (141)

Through the character of Vahini, Elkunchwar depicts the psychology of women who live in the patriarchal system. After the death of the head of family they feel free of the feudal clutches where male is dominating. In patriarchal circumstances men's attitude exemplifies Foucault's observation where knowledge and power are dependent on each other:

What makes power hold good, what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it doesn't only weigh on us as a force that says no, but that it traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse. It needs to

be considered as a productive network which runs throughout the whole social body. (Foucault Power/Knowledge 119)

Prabha again raises the issue of her education in the presence of her family. After the death of her father she wants to continue her studies, because her father didn't like her to study. Her father believed that it is beneath their prestige and honour for a Deshpande girl to stay in hostel alone. Another reason was that Sudhir too was studying at that time, so it was difficult for him to pay for both. Patriarchal system prefers the study of boys over girls. Each time the girl has to sacrifice her desires. Prabha feels liberated after the death of Tatyaji. She hopes to be self-reliant and so wants to sell off her share of gold:

I'll put the money in the bank. That much gold will fetch fifty-sixty thousand. I can study on the interest. I'll take a small job on the side. Give tuitions. Do anything at all. You watch.
(Elkunchwar 184)

Here, through the conversation of Prabha, Elkunchwar depicts the situation of women in male-dominated society. When Ranju runs away with the gold, Prabha's hope is wasted. There is no hope for Prabha's studies to continue. However, she attains her strength and decides not to sell the portion at the back of the 'wada' house. She also argues with her brothers about their unconcerned behaviour towards the familial relationships. In the Act II Scene I, she says to her brothers:

My dear able-bodied brothers! Why don't you wear bangles?
Selling the morsel from your mother's mouth! And these two women, pretending as if they don't know what's going on!
(173)

Actually she asserts her belief in her desire of self-realisation. Tradition and modernity are not only two diverse aspects, but a composite overlap of conceptions that are apparently contradictory. In accordance to this, Prabha's subjectivity can be seen in two perspectives. On the one hand, her perceived subjectivity and her performed subjectivity. Here, Butler also elucidates that

gender proves to be performative-that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be. In this sense, gender is always a doing, though not a doing by a subject who might be said to pre-exist the deed (*Gender Trouble* 25).

Women characters in *The Old Stone Mansion* are depicted as victims of male dominated society. Generally, a woman feels insecure in patriarchal setup, and attempts to come to terms with her subjectivity. The recently widowed Aai is gradually, but definitely filling up that space which has been vacated by her mother-in-law. She is incapacitated, and the only business she has, is calling out the name of her dead son. Aai is devoted and thus she suffers, and has misgivings about the portion at the back of the house. She asks Bhaskar, "why don't you sell the part at the back?"(172). This is epitomised in her sacrificing her share of belongings for the concluding rituals of her husband. Since she is a widow, she hands over her sovereignty to her eldest daughter- in- law. When her daughter Prabha doesn't agree with her decision, Aai says that "my day is over. Now it's your sister-in-law's reign here. Let that guide your behaviour. . . I am going to spend the rest of my life with them"(181). Through this conversation, Elkunchwar articulates the situation of women who live in accordance with the customs, rules and traditions of a feudal Brahmin family, because "the problem of the play lies in the religious cultural identity" (Kamble 126). So, under these social norms, Aai is unable to influence decisions like educating her daughter Prabha. So, Aai confesses to her:

Prabha, we really ruined your life, dear. You were the cleverest of them. And you loved your studies. But that was his nature. Nobody could act against his word. For him it was just one thing-why do girls need education? (Elkunchwar 182)

Basically, Aai is concerned about Prabha's unmarried status, which would make Prabha dependent on her brothers and sisters-in-law. According to Kanna, "Aai's tragedy is the misfortune of crumbling values of feudal orders and patriarchy. In fact that is what the playwright is trying to imply in the play. No one wants to fight against the system. Everyone wants to hold on to past memories. No one advocates even the most basic changes like economic change, which can bring about freedom and liberation from

extremely regressive values” (Kanna 152-153). It is seen mostly in rural suburbs that a woman’s role complies with that of a man. She completely follows the instructions given by man and enters the evolutionary resist for progress as fervently as he does in a family. This can be seen in Vahini’s character. Vahini is a quiet, firm and very gentle character in the play. She represents an average Indian woman - wife, mother and daughter-in-law. Shanta Gokhale, comments on how the whole family believes in outward show and pomposity. She also brings to light the typical Indian sensibility where families are more bothered about their reputation in the society, no matter how hard they may try to make the ends meet (Sunkanna 169). Scene II Act I of *Old Stone Mansion* brings this kind of hypocrisy very clearly when Vahini says:

The Deshpandes decided to be modern and put a tractor there. Forget about usefulness. As long as we can make a show of wealth. So we have the tractor in front and the palanquin at the back! (144)

Vahini gains control over the family after the death of Tatyaji in the ‘wada’ house. It is not even five days that Tatyaji is gone, and she changes a lot. When Tatyaji was alive one couldn’t hear Vahini’s steps in the Veranda, but within a span of five days, one can hear her commands even from outside the house. When they discuss buying of groceries, she meticulously points out to ask the equal share of the expenses which is required for the rites of her father-in-law, according to Kanna, Vahini blindly justifies the actions of her son and daughter, though her son (153) who is a stupid drunkard: “It happened just a couple of times. And promptly all the relatives branded him a no - gooder. But, he’s like your Abhay, Bhauji” (Elkunchwar 153). Ranju’s interest in films, and at the same time she realises the fact that she is not able to do anything except spending her time at the mirror. Ranju belongs to a different world, and in this world, she has affair with her tuition master. Her dreams of the world are fantastical embodiment of what is she is denied in the family.

Thus, patriarchy not only deprives women of the power but sometimes empowers them and makes them influential. This can be substantiated through the changes that occur in Vahini immediately after

Tatyaji passes away. Now she takes an eager interest in all matters of Deshpande family besides the kitchen matters.

Prabha is a psychologically mature young woman. She understands people around her. She observes the attitude of the tutor towards Ranju. Here, Elkunchwar shows how Patriarchy works through its victims, the women, when Prabha sends her tutor back when he comes to teach Ranju, but Vahini is hesitant to send her tutor back because Ranju has already failed twice in her X class. Prabha worries her about an adolescent Ranju. Finally, Prabha finds that Ranju is not interested in her studies. The conversation of Prabha and Vahini makes it clear:

PRABHA. You'll regret it. Ranju is flighty to begin with. She's either in front of the mirror or gadding about in the village. We didn't dare step over the threshold of the house in the old days.

VAHINI. Let me also tell you, Prabha-vansa. Don't you pick on Ranju all time . . . Only you know why. But it's not good to be suspicious of people all the time. I know my children well.
(152)

On the one hand Prabha always fights with Deshpande family for her equal rights as well as her brothers, but on the other hand, her patriarchal attitude towards Ranju shows that her ideas is not free from the social and cultural discourses. In the play nobody advocates change. Everybody wants to hold on to past values. Even the most basic changes like "economic change, which can bring about freedom and liberation from extremely regressive values" (Kanna 153) are not welcomed.

Chandu is another tragic figure in the play. He is weak and sensitive, but he is a mentally strong person. He is working in the house like a servant. In the beginning of the play, he goes to receive Sudhir and Anjali. There he waits for them whole night. Later when he comes to know that the bus is cancelled, he comes back. He is a very responsible person. After the death of his father, he can't force his brothers Sudhir and Bhaskar for the money. Bhaskar and Sudhir enjoy more prestige than Chandu. In the play, Chandu is dependent on his brothers because he is a weak and sensitive person who does not have any voice in the family. After he is injured by the

tractor, he works in Deshpande family as a servant. But his younger brothers Bhaskar and Sudhir both think about their families. Chandu's future is not secure because his four-acre land has already been sold to pay off the debts of the family. Elkunchwar presents Chandu as a victim in the Indian patriarchal system. Chandu wanted to start a shop for securing his future, but his brother Bhaskar does not allow him. But for Bhaskar, this business does not suit Deshpande family. These traditions and the ideas of family destroy the dreams of Chandu.

The traditional values of Deshpande family collapse in the changing times. Elkunchwar depicts his behaviour when Aai suggests to sell off her portion but he reacts suddenly and asks his brothers to mortgage his land.

The *Old Stone Mansion* is a family centered play that illustrates the condition of women in the patriarchal system. Aai, Vahini, Prabha, Dadi and Raju are prominent women characters in this play. These women characters reveal the family attachment and community bonds prevailing in the Marathi culture and society because in the Indian patriarchy system, the people follow the rules and norms of their patriarchal system and culture. Women's boundaries are limited under the patriarchal system, so their experiences of life are different from men. The female characters in *Old Stone Mansion* display feminine sensibilities in their behaviour. The women's writings and the writings about women are questioning the patriarchal writings by imposing what women are and what writing about women is.

The female characters are more significant than the male characters and they are representatives of various human tendencies, nature, and mentality. They are also part of life-experiences and symbols of human tendency, and show the reconstruction of power from the old generation to the young generation, as Aai, after her husband's death gives away all the responsibilities by giving the keys to Vahini. All female characters are also victims of patriarchy in this play. The collapse of the family and the breakdown of social structure both themes have been portrayed, depicting the financial condition of the former feudal lord family of Deshpandes which is deteriorating continuously. "The play portrays the truth behind the walls of mansion (wada) and its decline, which is symbol of power, prosperity,

prestige and dignity of family” (Sanap 156). In the play, we considered Ranju and Parag, in the fourth generation, feels the need of escaping from their *Wada* as they feel subdued in a time stuck place. The obvious destination is Bombay. The split in the family widens when each start claiming their own. Ranju, with cinema in her head feels her private tutor can be a vehicle to reach Bombay. Parag, who has moved in wrong company, wants to change his ways in a faraway land All this leads to further complicacies which highlights the plight of such traditional families which have stuck in time. With the changing times, Sudhir and Prabha want to change along with the changing social structure. Sudhir wants huge expenses upon the rituals to be curtailed. Prabha, in spite of her talent, is not allowed to leave the place for further education because of family prestige. She wants to break the barriers of social status and patriarchal system and fulfill her ambition.

3.3. *Garbo*: The Uneven Male Gaze

Garbo is a tragic play written in 1973 by Mahesh Elkunchwar. It presents the story of four individuals: Garbo, Intuc, Shrimant and Pansy, the story of the play deals with the physical and psychological relationship among three male friends Intuc, Pansy, and Shrimant, and Garbo, an ordinary film actress who struggles to be successful. These characters have come together by coincidence and have entered into physical and sexual relationships. As Intuc and Pansy live in a flat owned by Shrimant. Act I of the play *Garbo* opens on Sunday morning in a living room of Shrimant’s house. The opening scene of the play is set in the mood of boredom and the passing of the time becomes the motif of the inmates of the room. Intuc and Pansy are engaging themselves in casual talk just for passing the time. Their ineffective talk reveals their attitude towards society. Pansy is listening to western music, but Intuc does not enjoy that music. Intuc is embarrassed because “everybody from the singers down to the listeners, are under religious obligation to pretend to be intensely interested in art” (Kanna, *Garbo* 376).

Thus, Intuc comfortably absolves himself from social responsibility in the guise of an intellectual person. So he tries to identify himself in a different social set-up which is supposedly more intellectually stimulating. He says, “the whole world rushes to these concerts, and this twerp says he’ll go mad . . . you’ll see our illustrious ministers there. They sit in front row on the VIP settee” (Elkunchwar 6). The conversation between Intuc and Pansy is interesting because it represents the class divide. Intuc is a poet whereas Pansy is just a failure art student who abandons his parents’ house. Pansy’s behavior demonstrates his immaturity when he says, “you know, Intuc, . . . you’ve got music in your blood . . .” (6). For, Intuc this kind of language comes from being immature. Pansy wants to attend school because he wants to become a great person like Shrimant and Garbo. But Intuc believes that “anybody can achieve greatness in this country” (7). After that he illuminates his personal experiences. He says, “Look at me. I wrote four stories and four poems and won instant fame” (7). He believes that he would be popular one day as people go on talking about his works. After the arrival of Shrimant, the trio plays different games. The use of harsh language and restless pauses by Elkunchwar depicts their awareness and contempt of physical desires. It can be analysed in the words of Shrimant very clearly what he thinks about Garbo:

Come off it, yaar. Who’s bickering? Aren’t we all involved with Garbo? I mean physically? I mean, I certainly am, only physically. If this is so, and is openly admitted to be so, and Garbo doesn’t seem to mind, why the hell are we chucking weighty words at each other? Sheer hypocrisy. And we don’t want that. Do we? (17)

But Intuc treats her differently. He wants to see her as Garbo because “names don’t change things” (17). For Intuc, Garbo is a challenge. Ethically, he feels that they don’t have the right to define the character of Garbo. The conversation of Intuc and Shrimant points out:

Then why do we try to define her? Or any woman? Or anything in the world for that matter? I think we should just lay back. Let Garbo be what she is. The important thing is to know what we are. (17-18)

Garbo is well aware that once a woman is neglected by a man, she loses her place in his life forever. She is explored, the thrill is gone. Intuc also believes that a woman should be able to satisfy fully and yet withhold a part of herself from someone like Shrimant. It is seen in the play when Shrimant asks Intuc about Garbo and he states that, "even after fulfilling the needs of all the three of us, a part of her still remains untouched" (19). It is evidently symbolised that all the three men have the craving for Garbo as depicted in the play when Shrimant says "now three cheers for Garbo the sex-Machine" (20). In the "Introduction" of *Collected Plays of Mahesh Elkunchwar* Samik Bandyopadhyay articulates:

Shrimant would like to treat as 'a sex-machine'; Intuc as 'a challenge', a living work of art, who 'grows older, but never stale . . . even after fulfilling the needs of all three of us, a part of her still remains untouched'; and Pansy as a mother figure, a guardian deity. (Bandyopadhyay xiii)

One can understand Garbo through the psycho-sexual discourse of subjectivity. The trios had been waiting for hours for the arrival of Garbo. Her character draws both dissatisfaction and sympathy. Elkunchwar represents her as a woman condemned to hopelessness and deranged mental state on account of desires. Garbo's thoughts are trapped in absurdity with her strength and limitations through her meaningless existence. Her loneliness is the result of her anger. So she hates the surroundings which compel her to sacrifice herself and give perpetual routine as a sex machine.

Through the character of Garbo, who is victimised in the patriarchal system Elkunchwar shows how women become vulnerable in the oppressive setup which intends at subjugating them because nobody attempts to understand her mental state. Nobody knows her emotions, feelings, desires, etc. In this regard, Kamlesh observes that:

Garbo dreams of becoming an actor like Greta Garbo, but in this attempt for sake of the biological creativity of life. Her action leads her to the emptiness and pangs of life. (63)

The three men wish Garbo to come to pass their time pleasantly. Garbo arrives and joins them. There is a tragedy in the play. Spiritual isolation is

signified when characters are faced with the reality of life. Amidst the conversation, Garbo announces that she is going to be a mother. They trio consider it as a joke and continue with pleasure seeking games. When Garbo is exhausted and retires to the inner room, Intuc guesses that she might be really pregnant. He talks about the problem to Shrimant. He feels that it would be foolish to take the responsibility of the child without knowing the authenticity of the father. As soon as Garbo comes out, she lets them know, that she is pregnant. She says:

Don't slobber over me like a dog. And don't call me Garbo again either. I don't want any of you to do that. Are you trying to merely flaunt my failure before me? I'm aware of my failure, perhaps better than you. And I'm trying to come to terms with it. (Elkunchwar 27)

After having observed Garbo's reluctance to be a mother of child, Pansy feels that she doesn't have even a bit of motherly love in her. There is only one reason that pregnancy should scare Garbo. Indian society disapproves of those women and children who are born in unconventional circumstances. Garbo feels that the new born is not legally bound, because she is unmarried. According to Indian customs and rituals, marriage is important part of one's life. Here one can find her having inner conflicts due to contradictory dispositions within her own self. Garbo is a woman above the average. Her ideas and activities are shown as her immature mental attitudes. She feels like a call girl who flits from one man to another man. In spite of her disgraceful life, she articulates her longing to be loved by someone:

I want to love somebody one day. To lose myself in love. Is this possible? There's a heap of ashes within me. Will I find one life ember in it? I have no more strength left. Will I be able to live intensely again? (41)

She blames the trio of being unsupportive towards her in the moment of crisis. Intuc, steeped in regret, comes out with the determination of rearing the child and becomes successful in convincing Garbo that she would give birth to the child. Shrimant offers to give his name as father of the child. Garbo is brought on the center stage. The three men encircle her and pay

homage in ritualistic style. She believes that she is not a proper woman even though she has three men to love. Her observation is that a woman does not need love because she feels so much emptiness in her. A man goes after a woman to get what he hasn't got. This subject is exposed in the dialogue of Intuc:

Not just intensely, but beautifully Garbo. This is your chance. Your life will once again shine forth like the sun, and the child will bloom like a flower in the warmth of your light. Garbo, Garbo, Garbo, a new life is beckoning you. (42)

In the second Act of the play, the stress overshadows the action and assumes the shape of emotional bent. In the beginning of the play when she proclaims that she is pregnant, the child is only hope of creation for the trio. They believe that she is the woman who has the power to procreate the significance of their lives. In the first Act the three men openly discuss their sexual relation to Garbo. But later when they know that Garbo is pregnant then they are worried to face the reality because they look for their own salvation in her pregnancy. Here, playwright Elkunchwar points out that the women are treated as sexual objects in the society. Elkunchwar's traditional style makes the play totally different from others.

In the second act of the play articulates that she has lost the child while shooting a stunt scene. Garbo is out of the city for the shooting of a film in Rajasthan. Intuc, Pancy and Shrimant all excitedly wait for her arrival, and the three men are occupied with their dream. They are waiting for the arrival of baby. When Garbo comes, she avoids Intuc. She goes on with her relaxed way and describing whatever happened with her at her shooting. Then, Intuc guesses something is wrong. He wanted that child badly to keep his identity intact. The characters start accusing one another of deception and doubt. She tells the trio how this tragedy happened:

It was during a camel race. He said he would never have included the shot had he known about me. Poor chap felt terribly guilty. He kept insisting it was entirely his fault. (*Pause.*) But honestly, even I didn't think it would happen. All that jogging up and down on the camel So unnecessary. . . . I'm playing the role of a Lamani girl. She's the second

heroine . . . She's terribly fiery, and terribly passionate . . .
And terribly beautiful. (*Pause.*) They could have used my
double, but I just didn't think . . . (48)

Garbo has lost her baby. She wants the sympathy of the three men. After that tragedy, when Pansy wants to go back to his home, Shrimant protests that he cannot leave them. He feels that he has become a part of their world already. Shrimant persists that their life is more striking together, because Pansy's parents are blackened by the smoke and ugliness. But Intuc feels that it's just a kind of figment and imagination. He says, "there's no escape for you, Pansy. Even if you leave this place you are not free" (51). Another issue is raised by Pansy, when he blames Shrimant with homosexual assault. Pansy reveals that

He's the one who's always after me. He used to barge straight into the bathroom. So I began locking the door from inside. He took off the bolt and threw it away. He had all the hangers removed from the bathroom so I couldn't take my clothes in with me but had to come out to dress. He's always hanging around in my room when I'm changing. (51)

After that Shrimant cannot face this reality. It is the reason, he wants to name Garbo's child after him; it would cover up his impotency. On the one side Shrimant doesn't want to face the vicious reality that he is a homosexual, and on the other side he wants Garbo forever.

In the play, we can notice the solidarity between women fighting for dignity and queers fighting for acceptance against male heterosexual patriarchal discourse. Shrimant's love affair can be related to the Sartrean idea of love which believes in the desire to possess other's consciousness. The theme is progressed through the dreams, despair and disillusionment of Shrimant. He is more passionate among the three for Garbo to possess her. At present, he determines that he is not responsible for the pregnancy of Garbo. Often, Pansy says that he wants to go home or he would kill himself. He is a frustrated person. Pansy feels that his parents don't like him. But he loves Garbo too much because she has given him some pleasurable moments. But Garbo says:

I played around with him just for fun. Then it became a habit. An entertaining game. (*Pause.*) But he attached different meaning to everything. (*To Intuc.*) Do you know the kind of places he has followed me to in broad daylight? He became addicted, and I was responsible. He would throw tantrums, cry, rage, threaten me into giving myself to him. I gave in each time, because I was either fed up, or annoyed, or in the mood for a lark. I should have hardened my heart at least once. (*Pause.*) (54)

As many writers, Elkunchwar also uses man's sexual adventures. Love is important but it has entirely different significance for individuals. In the play Shrimant needs love to cover up his weakness or satisfy his inability. But Garbo has different approach to love.

As per the patriarchal idea of protection, she feels that she needs someone not to fulfill her sexual desires but to protect her. We see a modern liberated woman reproducing the patriarchal discourse of protection in this instance. She is described within the terms of society, but not in her own existence. At one stage, Garbo feels that she cannot live alone. She is feeling sick. Hence the only way for her is to continue to face the cameras again and again with phony postures and gestures. For a moment, she feels that she should have got married, but she is frustrated. She suffers from depression. She knows that she could not continue in the films any longer. And there are many times when she feels deep-down restlessness. Besides she doesn't even have faith that someone would marry her because,

Men who danced around me two years ago are now at the most willing to have me as a keep. The proposition has actually been made to me. (*Laughs.*) I must give it serious thought. Maybe two years from now they won't even want this way. (58)

According to Mahesh Elkunchwar, "Garbo is nothing but an illusion that they have built for themselves" (qtd. in Kanna, Garbo 387). It is seen as a certain force which doesn't let them live but doesn't even kill them. The trio are depicted as cowards. Troubled with mental torture by the trio, Garbo

decides to tell the truth that the abortion was not an accident but she killed her own baby. She tells them:

I wanted to punish him. He didn't come to my tent. I went to his one night, because I wanted a role in his next film. He sniggered. He laughed at me. (Pause.) I couldn't bear it. He'd been like that from the beginning, taking every opportunity to insult me. And when I went to win him over, do you know what he said? He pointed at the camels and said, 'Go to them. That's what you want.' (Pause.) I didn't even have a second heroine's role. I was playing the ageing elder sister. I had about three scenes to do. (Pause.) When I did the camel scene my entire body was being churned up, and I kept praying, let it happen, oh God let happen. And it did. When I felt the warm blood streaming down, I screamed. Now let me see. Just let me see his miserable face. (Elkunchwar 65)

The three men are surprised, but Garbo feels relaxed because her pregnancy would spoil her life by many ways:

If the child will come in this social world, because society never allows a pregnant unwed mother to be lived peacefully. Secondly, if she will give birth to the child her career in movies will finish, then how she will spend her life. Thirdly her business of prostitution will also spoil. (Singh Neelam 3)

She is very glad as the child has luckily escaped from this vicious circle. Sartre also considers anguish to be the result of a person's uncertainty. Distress of death and the notion of non existence imply his isolation. Intuc can't absorb the truth and blames Garbo that she is a coward. At last, he asks her to leave the place as she cheated on him. Garbo calmly replies that he had deceived himself first:

You should never have expected so much out of me. I'm an ordinary woman of flesh and blood. You burdened me with all sorts of imaginary virtues. I carried on for as long as I could. But I couldn't keep up the pretence forever. That doesn't mean I have done any wrong. And anyway, who are you to make demands on me? (Elkunchwar 65)

Shrimant is unable to fulfill his dreams and his existence in it but Garbo decides to deal with it. At the end, when she is murdered by Shrimant, they realize her importance in their lives. With the character of Shrimant, playwright signifies the male ego.

The playwright is very conscious of existential loneliness of the human circumstance. He is also aware of individual's helplessness before the overpowering forces of circumstances. Shrimant retains the identity of a radical. Shrimant offers Garbo a marriage proposal, as an attempt to cover his manhood; however, Garbo turns down the proposal. Pansy wants to go with Garbo instead of going home or living with Shrimant as an object of his sexual gratification. Shrimant proposes to Garbo chooses to stay with him. When Garbo is about to leave, Pansy shouts that Garbo is a cheater and must be killed. Shrimant on the spur of the moment stabs her with a knife. Garbo falls on the stage in a pool of blood. Pansy cries out for help. There is a dead silence and the curtain falls. Elkunchwar rightly points out:

GARBO. who is pregnant, they do not know whom, but probably by one of them- will be the source of a new life. They look forward not merely to a new individual, but to the new purpose in life, the new hope that this individual will bring. But Garbo sacrifices the growing foetus to her pursuit of success. The three men, themselves not creative, kill her for having killed their only means of contributing creativity to life. (271-272)

The play ends with the murder of Garbo. Neelam Singh comments:

This time the situation became more complex because the only refuge was destroyed by the creator herself. The medium is destroyed by the power of destruction because she has destroyed the creation that was germinated from the destructive force. (7)

The theme of cruelty and violence is also scrutinised in *Garbo*. Elkunchwar deals with violence at the physical level as well as the emotional level which is evident in the conversation and actions. The murder of Garbo depicts the inflated ego of a man who can't accept the freedom of a woman. When Garbo takes an independent decision about her pregnancy, and aborts her

baby, the trio cannot accept her decision, and murder her. Through this incident Elkunchwar while using the technique of Artaud's cruelty of theatre depicts, in all blood and gore, the murder scene of Garbo on the stage. In *The Theatre and Its Double* Artaud writes:

Without an element of cruelty at the root of every spectacle, the theater is not possible. In our present state of degeneration it is through the skin that metaphysics must be made to re-enter our minds. (99)

According to Artaud cruelty works through the consciousness because

It is consciousness that gives to the exercise of every act of life, its blood-red color, its cruel nuance, since it is understood that life is always someone's death. (103)

When Shrimant kills Garbo with a knife, Elkunchwar creates the bloody scene to represent the degeneration and futility of human relations. Although, the play is named after its female protagonist, yet one can notice how a particularly patriarchal perspective envelopes the play. The play is written through the perspective of male characters like Pansy, Intuc and Shrimant. Garbo's motives are left unexplained and she appears to be a frivolous, cruel and a promiscuous woman because a woman is made to serve as subservient in the guise of social-cultural norms and ethical demands. Friedrich Nietzsche states that "oh how fortunate we are, we men of knowledge, provided only that we know how to keep silent long enough" (*On the Genealogy of Morals* 17). At a larger level, it relates to the patriarchal dominance and violence seen as a means to guarantee dominance and sustenance of control.

Throughout the play, only Intuc bestows with the deeper thoughtful perspectives on life through his cultured talk. In the "Introduction" to the *Collected Plays of Mahesh Elkunchwar* Samik Bandopadhyay writes:

Garbo grows out of a claustrophobic real-life situation pushed to the limits of endurance, burgeoning into a surreal holy dream that is too unreal and brittle to stand the test. But what gives the fantasy its compelling magnetism is the sheer power

of Intuc's words, coming in waves of cynicism, disgust, self-pity, lacerating introspection, flights of sacred vision. (xv)

In fact, *Garbo* is a contradiction of ideas. Garbo pretends that she is pregnant and, then she says that she lost her pregnancy, and all the three men react differently to it. This shows her confused state of mind. It is also said that the playwright has profusely conveyed the sense of emptiness and unrest of the four protagonists in the play. Even though Elkunchwar's concerns are originally centred on the issues of his own generation, he manages to communicate the sense of insignificance, meaninglessness and unrest that characterise the lives of the play's four protagonists to the contemporary spectators, without compromising on Elkunchwar's realism. *Garbo* draws attention to the perturbed young generation who live without aim along with frustration of devastated dreams, the burden of inhibitions and diffusion of mediocrity. It explores the inner battles and conflicts of these people as well as the manner how their sexuality becomes a defining factor for them.

Sexuality brings in a range of associations related to the human body. Generally, males and females attached to these gendered identities define specific sexualities which "is an area of human behavior, emotion, and understanding which is often thought of as 'natural' and 'private,' even though it is simultaneously an arena of constant surveillance and control" (Altman 2). The sexuality of a woman is always controlled and kept under watch in a patriarchal society. Women's hope for freedom leads to the questioning of established norms like customs and traditions. These are imposed on the lives of women through various cultural codes. The dos and don'ts are prescribed for them and ideal women are designed to fit within the framework of patriarchy.

The characters of the play are in regular contact with each other. As a result, each of the characters must have one or more protective escapes to which s/he resorts. In fact, this play is packed with escapes from social reality. Four characters in this play emblematically symbolise society. They are not individuals in a real veracity. They depict the intellectual class, modernity and perversity. On one hand, Pansy is the symbol of immaturity and emotionalism; on the other hand Garbo represents of every

contemporary women of metro cities who face similar challenges in life. These characters come together as an escape from intense frustration and disappointment. They are conscious of the fact that Shrimant needs psychological support. The characters of play are neither the family members nor relatives.

Elkunchwar represents the culture and life of women of metro cities that an intellectual woman may achieve economic independence but this does not guarantee her cultural and psychological freedom from the patriarchal dominance, which is being substantiated by Garbo's position and tragic end. Thus, the play explores the construction of a woman's subjectivity through the discourse of patriarchy.

3.4. *Sonata*: Representing the Psychology of Contemporary Women

The title *Sonata* signifies the most important forms of western classical music. The term means "to sound" or play a composition. Beethoven's 'Moonlight Sonata' is a dreamy composition that draws listeners into themselves. *Sonata* by Mahesh Elkunchwar is all about people drawn into themselves (Kaur 25). The play is about three single working class women- Subhadra, Aruna and Dolon (a journalist, a teacher and an MNC employee respectively). It addresses the problem of identity crisis for contemporary women in patriarchal system. The play is set in Mumbai, where the trio is living. As an effect of the metropolitan culture, the protagonists are highly influenced by western culture. However, they always feel the pain of loneliness.

The people of metros are self-sufficient and can afford to flaunt their temperamental and cultural differences- just like the three women in "Sonata". But in spite of leading a life as per their wishes they go through a tremendous sense of being lost and lonely. (Kaur 25)

Here, Elkunchwar has highlighted the harsh realities of life in metro cities by dealing with the theme of loneliness, alienation and gender issues. About this play Samik Bandyopadhyay also observes that in the "Introduction" of *Collected Play of Mahesh Elkunchwar*:

Elkunchwar gives them a physical/stage site, which seems to float among heights of Mumbai skyscrapers with a sense of cocooned security that is threatened from within again and again; the lonesome intimacy itself provoking the barbs and charges that fly between them. (xxvii- xxviii)

The three female characters share a life of solidarity, but live independently. The trio have a strong bonding despite their differences. *Sonata* explores deeper into the lives of three friends, who are apparently lost. For the past seventeen years, Dolon and Aruna have been sharing a flat but both have been constantly avoiding each other. There are certain reasons behind it. Dolon has with her an activist character on the surface, but her obscured loneliness represents those contemporary women living the same kind of life. Another character of play Aruna signifies those women who are never at peace and blame all men for the despondencies of women. She has been emotionally hurt by her lover, a school teacher by profession. Through the third female character of the play Subhadra, Elkunchwar represents the community of those women, who can live without men in their lives. Although the play is composed in Marathi language yet one can associate the three female characters to the new women of India with diverse temperaments.

The theme of loneliness has attained much attention in the contemporary era. In the play *Sonata* Aruna, Dolon and Subhadra, are the three college friends who have decided to remain single by choice. Although, they are successful and have great prominence in their professional fields but at the same time, they are not free from the pangs of loneliness. They keep going back to the memories of their past and trace the roots where they grew up. Aruna emerges to be an emotional woman who shares her longing of going home with Dolon at one instance in the play:

ARUNA. I'm planning to go home next week.

DOLON. Sure.

ARUNA. Twenty five years in Mumbai but I still think of home.

(Elkunchwar 251-252)

Here, Aruna wants to go back home but she never does. She remembers the moments spent with her nephews and nieces in the past. As a result, she yearns to return back and many a times invite Dolon to join her at her visit. She says to Dolon, "Let's go for a few days. . . My nephews and nieces will dance around you with joy. Dolonmawshi, Dolonmawshi" (252). When Dolon asks Aruna the age of her nephews and nieces, Aruna is not able to remember it properly:

ARUNA. The youngest is five, I think. Or six, maybe.

DOLON. You don't even remember that. (*Pause.*) You always say you'll go. You never do. (252)

The above conversation reflects that although her nephew and niece are close to her heart but she hardly seems to remember much about them, she has equally forgotten about her family and home. Primarily, Aruna is concerned with her inner thoughts and feelings rather than her social milieu. She has been embittered by society. In spite of the longing of going back home, she better knows that she cannot go back because no one desires her company in the home. Here, Elkunchwar portrays the hierarchy of patriarchal system.

According to the patriarchal norms a woman who gives importance of her identity is rejected by the society. *Sonata* depicts that realisation of the contingency of women's own indefinite situation in the world creates anguish. Elkunchwar also considers anguish to be the outcome of man's uncertainty.

Alienation is one of the most essential experiences for an individual. It is the state of emancipation from all powers other than the choosing of self. Alienation is the reason of sickness of human psychology. The protagonists of the play are depicted as unhappy because they are living in tragic situation and struggling to mark their existence in the male dominated society.

Act I of the play opens at the terrace of a flat in Bombay. The drawing room which is decorated with the delicate items shows that only women live there. As already discussed, Aruna and Dolon both have been living in one flat for the last seventeen years. They also share their problems with each other because their families are not bothered about

them. So, the experience of loneliness becomes a certain link between individuals. It also makes them dependent upon each other for the accounted factors.

In this scene, Aruna can be seen correcting the papers. Dolon, also the same age as Aruna, is shuffling around aimlessly. Dolon is portrayed as having a careless attitude towards her expensive dressing. At times she tries to systematise the room but cannot help but make it more unsystematic. Despite the disturbance caused, Aruna is making a great effort to ignore Dolon's activity. Dolon likes listening to loud music. Another striking habit is that she is very fascinated with the perfumes and she always confines herself to smelling the empty bottles and watching their colours and sizes. The playwright uses, empty bottles to articulate the emptiness of her life. Aruna speculates that Dolon is so fond of the perfumes that she intends to wear them at night as well. Dolon's silly attachment to the bottles irritates Aruna a lot. Elkunchwar represents Dolon as possessing a worthless passion. She is the most disturbed of all the characters who magnifies every issue and exaggerates her existential anguishes. The playwright has characterised Dolon as an escapist. It is well indicated in the play as whenever she is asked to cook something for dinner, she attempts to escape by saying that Aruna is the greatest cook. But Aruna knows this and also refutes it:

Will you please let me work? (*Pause.*) And you're the greatest eater. Gourmand. (248)

Hence, one can see the contradiction between their imagination and reality. At last, Dolon wants to end her day fasting because she has no other way to escape cooking. Besides she reminds Aruna that it is a Sunday and that is the only day when they get together and they should talk rather than concentrating on the topic of dinner. Dolon supports her arguments by expressing her concern for her diet:

Only fruit juice for breakfast. And sprouts. For lunch salad. Coffee may be. Black coffee. No sugar, no cream. And plain rice for dinner. Rice, dal, a vegetable. No maida, no bread, no desserts. (*Pause.*) Only three meals a day. (*Long pause. With a giggle.*) How obsessed I am by food! (249)

The conversation between Dolon and Aruna is very insignificant. They talk about perfume, food, papers, TV channels, and weight. Both occupy their time by trifling over things in order to pass the time. Here, Elkunchwar highlights the existential dilemma of the female protagonists. Aruna works as a lecturer and is highly educated, fashionable in outlook and forward in opinion. She has a decent job and good friends. Dolon is a different character who gives much importance to her body. She would give anything to experience the emotion and passion of the characters she lives. Dolon is concerned with her appearance, and is obsessed with the idea of losing weight. When Aruna suggests Dolon that she should see news, Dolon meticulously rejects the suggestion because she doesn't like the news reader. Finally they decide to watch 'saregama' programme where they discuss the origin of some words and their meanings. Dolon says that Marathi people are always correct in usage the words, whereas Bengalis are highly artistic and have a rich culture. Dolon targets Subhadra as not being fluent in any language. She comments:

my my my! Look at this! (*Pause.*) Can Subhi speak even one language straight? It is always a horrid cocktail of English, Hindi, and Marathi. (251)

The female characters in *Sonata* are afraid of confronting any responsibilities. Elkunchwar depicts that life of a woman is characterised by her social surroundings. The rapid growth in the professional life of people has extensively changed their working as well as social conditions. With the advent of modernity, the traditional social structure has lost its influence on the individual's behaviour to an extent that it forces the individual to manage their social relations by themselves. They must continuously undergo the process of self-orientation because of the changing circumstances and situations. The friendship of the three women in Elkunchwar's plot portrays the challenges of survival for single women in the contemporary times.

The patriarchal system of India does not approve of a woman habitual to alcohol or smoking. Such a woman is considered as a blot as per the so-called cultural values of the society. This idea comes to fore when Dolon says, "Why do people dislike me? (257). Dolon is apparently free in her life as she drinks, smokes and eats meats. She has got habitual

to drinking. But Dolon talks about the pleasure of drinking, in response to it, as she is addicted to alcohol by now. For her consumption of wine leads to interesting discussions, perhaps venting her innermost desires. Once she is drunk, she notices some interesting changes in her character. Such an activity also gives her an opportunity to spend quality time with her friends. Sometimes this habit gives her a worthwhile break from their monotonous life. Here, Mahesh Elkunchwar shows that alcohol facilitates a comfort zone for her which covers up her loneliness to some extent.

Dolon also takes the initiative of hosting parties and events in order to enhance her social life and interact with people. She believes that drinking of wine would enable her to enjoy with her friends in a totally stress free condition. When Dolon offers Aruna a glass of wine, she refuses it very respectfully. Aruna doesn't compliment the new dress and moreover she uses past tense. Aruna compliments that she "was good looking"(260). Dolon feels that Aruna is jealous of her beauty. Dolon always entertain the people around her. For instance she is careful about her make-up and she is wearing delicious perfumes as part of her strategy to attract the attention of men around her. Dolon's interest in make-up also connotes her loneliness, and shows how a liberated woman keeps herself occupied in frivolous pursuits as well as other modes of self-pleasure such as drinking wine.

Aruna is an existential character being suffocated due to her single status. She is a modern woman who always feels like an outsider. Although, Dolon is a rebel, unwilling to compromise with the existing norms and codes of society and conscious of her comfortable position as a teacher, pampered by her friends, she turns impractical and reluctant to adapt to the situation. Dolon begins to live in a fantasy world, a world that constrains her free movement and compels her to turn nostalgic. "Aruna is staring vacantly at the heap of papers. Dolon is shaking her empty wine glass listlessly and looking at the TV that is not on" (262). Then the third female character of the play Subhadra arrives. Hearing the door bell, Dolon jumps out of the sofa set to welcome Subhadra. She is of the same age as Aruna and Dolon. As usual, she is carrying a hand bag. Dolon welcomes her with hug. Subhadra presents her a delicious perfume bottle, which

makes Dolon feel very happy. Subhadra had come over to stay with her two friends. When Dolon tries to apply a few drops out of her perfume bottle on Subhadra, but Subhadra denies by saying

No, thank you. I don't like perfumes. I smell of my man. That's my perfume. (263)

These words of Subhadra indicate her obsession with the opposite sex. For Subhadra a woman's beauty depends on her man, contrary to Dolon for whom it lies in woman's self grooming and make-up.

After some time, Aruna and Dolon notice a mark under the eye of Subhadra, which makes them very curious. On being asked, Subhadra tells that her companion Sangram had hit her. She feels this has become a routine in her life. Here, Elkunchwar depicts her miserable situation. She returns all gifts that she had accepted from Sangram. She blames Sangram and says that all men are the same. Thus, it can be illustrated that these three women cannot live their life happily.

Usually Subhadra's day begins a little later than that of the other two. She doesn't like to get up early in the morning and prepare for school/office. It is only after the evening that her day begins. Her service hours commence from evening up to almost tiny hours of the next morning. She is often subjected to violence and exploitation by the employers. They abuse her like Sangram whom she believes to be very kind. At times he tries to control her physically, sexually, psychologically and financially. Self-sufficiency has to do with different aspects of life such as the culture and family besides financial independence. These three women belong to the same class, and can afford to flaunt their temperamental and cultural differences, and can; once in a while break out of their stance of self-sufficiency and address the audience together:

DOLON. What awful women are we!

ARUNA. We are all right. We're self-sufficient. We earn.
We spend.

DOLON. Self-centred. Do nothing for the society.

SUBHADRA. Without any commitment. Without any ideal.

DOLON. No ideology.

SUBHADRA. We're not even feminists.

DOLON. We blow money, smoke, drink.

SUBHADRA. And my affairs.

DOLON (*giggling*).sheeeee! What kind of people are we!

SUBHADRA.Decadent.But happy. We're happy.

DOLON.Unabashedly happy.

SUBHADRA.Abominably happy.

DOLON.Obscenely.

ARUNA.(*getting into it*): *Nirlajjamsadasukhi*.

SUBHADRA.(*mockingly sad*):Duniakyakahatihogihame?

DOLON. Fuck duniya. (271)

This conversation concludes that liberated women like these three can't find the vital meaning of their life and they are never satisfied. At last Aruna decides to join with her two friends for sharing the drink. Dolon invites her, "At last! The revolution has come. Come come come. Pour it yourself" (272). This happiness doesn't last any longer, when Subhadra receives a call from one of his colleagues. Subhadra exudes an infectious violence culminating in the explosion of abuse that she directs at the caller on her mobile, who informs her that she has lost her job for moral turpitude. Although, she has maintained her position during her term of being abused, it is now tainted with a misery which Dolon and Aruna can read on her face. Subhadra's revelation provides them with the power to engage with compassion and charity. When Sangram appears, Dolon proposes that they should invite him into the apartment so as to celebrate a party with him. Subhadra seems to be very indifferent and so she tries to hit him with a vase. Sangram keeps calling Subhadra, but she is indifferent towards him. In this play, Elkunchwar also deals with the psycho-sexual growth of a woman. Aruna proposes that they should live together. She tells her:

Nobody is budging here.(*Sangram calls again*). Let him holler. You won't move. (*Aruna pours a glass of wine. Dolon watches her fascinated Subhadra looks resigned.*) We three will live together. The two of us have been together. Now it will be three. The more the merrier. We will take turns cooking. We'll go shopping, see movies. You can drink everyday if you want. It's decided. You are going to live here. (276)

Subhadra smoothly refuses as she cannot live like Aruna in the transit lounge. She feels that she is jobless which gives an impression that she will be an extra burden to them. Despite her unwillingness Subhadra is constrained to leave them. "Subhadra is still looking around. She is about to grab a porcelain figurine, when Dolon hurriedly offers her an empty bottle. Subhadra throws that out. Comes to the sofa, sits covering her face with her hands" (276). Finally Subhadra leaves with lot of pain at midnight. At the same time, Aruna is vexed up with her regular life. She says that, "It's past midnight. And we are still awake like ghosts . . . Knowledge.Learning.Teaching. The pursuit of knowledge. A whole life spent doing this . . . A sensitive, creative, artistic life" (277). Both continue to drink even after midnight. With Subhadra's exit, Aruna and Dolon lose their moment of achievement and grandeur.

Aruna is a mediocre writer who writes some silly short stories. Surprisingly she gets an award for one of her short stories. She can be compared to Intuc of *Garbo* who also feels that he is a creative writer. But the fact is that Aruna has no illusions about her talent and accepts the truth that she is not a good writer. Dolon feels that 'Maitra' story is based on her life, which brought an award to Aruna. The heroine of that story also wears frilly and jazzy clothes. There are many similarities between the heroine and Dolon. She too drinks and smokes like Dolon. But Aruna doesn't agree with her judgment as today it has been a trend for many girls to do all these activities. Aruna explains her that it is totally an imaginary character based on Punjabi culture. Finally Aruna tries to console her with the fact that there may be some similarities between them, but she is totally different from Dolon. Aruna tries to convince her, "You hold a big post in multinational. She is a clerk. You are multilingual, she is almost an uneducated. . ." (279).

Dolon generates a lot of chaos with the same narrative which is the ninth rate story for Aruna. The fact is that she is irrational and she cannot abide the categorisation in the story. Even though, Dolon is disappointed, Aruna can do nothing as the story has already been read by thousands of readers. To cover up her insult, Dolon tries to blame her behavior and attitude with the students. "Aren't you always surrounded by all those young girls" (280).

Family is the backbone of society. Within its structural fold it contains two important kin bonds- matrimonial and filial. These primary ties are universally appreciated and treasured. Nevertheless these relationships strengthen or weaken under the multi-dimensional pressures and tension of human life and the acquired of the individuals. The only solution these women can offer is that they face the absurdity of life and live bravely. Only by identifying that the world is a horrible place they can productively come to terms with life. The modern individual is considered as deprived because s/he does not have faith in God. But s/he cannot live happily in such an absurd world; therefore, s/he continually makes leaps of faith into the upper levels to affirm meaning, value, and purpose even though s/he has no right to, since s/he does not believe in God.

The play *Sonata* is constructed with multiple thoughts and ideas that can be analysed from various perspectives. The entire play majorly consists of three female characters with a couple of minor male characters in the background. The primary action revolves around the female characters. The play opens up with the interaction between the characters Dolon and Aruna who not only belong to two different communities but they are complete contrast in their character, attitude and behavior. The non-linear, fragmented, often purposeless, repetitive version of conversation that takes place between these two characters from the beginning of the play defines the reality of human existence. In the frame of real life the interaction between the individuals also takes place in the same manner. The entire play takes place within the four walls of the house in which Dolon, Aruna and Subhadra live and they are completely trapped inside it. Their dreams, hopes, aspirations, happiness and sorrows all survive within these four walls. Aruna, Dolon and Subhadra often dream of escaping from this monotonous, rotten state of existence but that thought never develops into reality. They search for their freedom through the window in the sky. This shows how the artificial glamour of urbanisation has enmeshed their life totally and it is further understandable through the drinking and smoking habits of Dolon. In order to survive from a total degeneration they always make efforts to remain connected with each other though mostly in the form of debates and fights. In order to remain connected with the individuals

around her. The three are typical postmodern figures who find pleasures in violation of norms and conditions. Subhadra has accepted her violent relation with Sangram and their love blooms in the process of fighting with each other. Both Dolon and Subhadra are revolutionary figures who continue to fight against the established definitions of socio-cultural ethics and moralities.

The characters Subhadra, Dolon and Aruna can also be analysed on Freudian terms as a representation of id, ego and superego respectively. But amongst all Subhadra holds a better position compared to the two because she has at least been successful to break the limits and the entanglements of the four walls and reach the outside world and create a voice of her own. Although at the end of the play she returns to Sangram. In the process of drinking, smoking, and collecting the empty perfume bottles they search for their happiness and satisfaction. Aruna hesitates to do anything outside her own established norms of living whereas Subhadra breaks away from all forms of social and cultural establishments and creates her own. However, Subhadra's breaking away remains a temporary affair and it never gains permanence because she again returns to her old violent routine affair with Sangram. The reality is emphasised in the process of the ending of the play as it ends in an almost similar way though it achieves that the characters emerge to be a bit closer to each other. This reveals the ultimate inescapable existential reality of the women in contemporary era.

Various dimensions of Indian subjectivity are explored by the Prabha, Vahini, Aai, Garbo, Aruna, Dolon and Subhadra of selected plays. In *Sonata* Elkunchwar depicts the subjectivity of Aruna, Dolon and Subhadra, and represents that woman who accepts the supremacy of men and, instead of resisting, welcomes suppression of the expression of her free will. *Old Stone Mansion* and *Garbo* analyse the psychoanalytical edifice of a woman's subjectivity through Prabha, Aai and Garbo who are not free from the shackles of patriarchal culture. As patriarchy subjugates women into subjugation, Elkunchwar's plays can be analysed in terms of the construction of women's subjectivity through the discourse of patriarchy. Thus, the chapter allocates a powerful and important medium to portray

representations of women as well as the patriarchal constraints that have historically restrained their psychological growth.

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CHAPTER 4

Comparative Analysis of Two Perspectives on Female Subjectivity

Atamjit and Mahesh Elkunchwar are two powerful voices of International renown to emerge on the Punjabi and Marathi Stage. Their plays explore the construction of a woman's subjectivity in different cultural locations (Punjabi and Marathi) of the Indian patriarchal setup. Analytical studies of the female subjectivity concerns in selected plays also help formulate a perspective of attitudes, which determine the constitution of the female character therein.

4.1. Psycho-Social Construction of Female Subjectivity:

Selected plays for this research project divulge various dimensions that help construct the woman's subjectivity. Elkunchwar's play *Old Stone Mansion* demonstrates a woman as a victim of caste discrimination and patriarchal mindset. Through the character of Prabha, the social/familial construction of female subjectivity in patriarchal setup can be analysed. In this play, Prabha is sister to three brothers and is very intelligent. However, her feudal family does not allow her to go to college for higher studies. At the age of thirty-five, Prabha is prepared to continue her studies, but she is denied an opportunity because of the false notions of prestige of the aristocratic family; but Prabha wants to complete her education and find a good job as she very well understands that an economically strong woman has a different identity as compared to a dependent woman. Prabha's father does not allow her to do this, because his opinion is that girls do not need education for their survival. Here, her father's opinion shows a man's perspective about a woman's freedom in the Indian society. However, Prabha is an educated woman, well-aware of her rights. She is oppressed by the patriarchal system, and can be seen as a representative of contemporary Indian women who live in a similar patriarchal social setup. After the death of her father, Prabha again raises the issue of continuing with her education, as her father did not like the idea of her continuing with her studies, and he believed that it was beneath their prestige and honour for a Deshpande girl to stay in a hostel. Another reason was that her brother Sudhir too was studying at that time and it would have been difficult

for him to pay for the education of both. In the Indian patriarchal system parents prefer the education of their sons over their daughters. The women have to always sacrifice their desires. Prabha feels liberated after the death of her father. She hopes to be self-reliant and thus, wants to sell off her share of gold to continue her education:

I'll put the money in the bank. That much gold will fetch fifty-sixty thousand. I can study on the interest. (Elkunchwar 184)

But, in her feudal family there is no hope for her studies to continue. She blames her two brothers for their irresponsibility towards the family and her education. In accordance to this, Prabha's subjectivity can be seen in the familial perspective of the 'Wada' family as "the problem of the play lies in the religious cultural identity" (Kamble 126). Here, one can also see the social perspective of Aai's identity, as under these social norms Aai is unable to influence decisions like the education of her daughter Prabha. It is clear when she confesses to her daughter:

Prabha, we really ruined your life, dear. You were the cleverest of them. And you loved your studies. But that was his nature. Nobody could act against his word. For him it was just one thing-why do girls need education? (Elkunchwar 182)

Here, Elkunchwar articulates the situation of those women who live in accordance with the customs, rules, and traditions of a feudal family and represents Aai as a woman condemned to hopelessness and a deranged mental state on account of her desires. Prabha can be compared to the character of Garbo who is a liberated woman and an actress of B grade movies in the play *Garbo*. Both Prabha and Garbo demonstrate how women become vulnerable in the oppressive setup, which intends at subjugating them because nobody attempts to understand their mental state. Nobody knows their emotions, feelings, desires, etc. In the play, when Garbo announces that she is going to be a mother, the three male characters (Intuc, Pansy, and Shrimant) in the play consider it to be a joke and continue with pleasure seeking games without taking her seriously. Their behaviour can be seen in the scene from the play when Garbo says:

Don't slobber over me like a dog. And don't call me Garbo again either. I don't want any of you to do that. Are you trying

to merely flaunt my failure before me? I'm aware of my failure, perhaps better than you. And I'm trying to come to terms with it. (27)

Here, Garbo seems similar to Aai, the mother of Prabha, who also depicts the psychoanalytical construction of female subjectivity. Elkunchwar's play *Sonata* is also a good example of the psychoanalytical construction of a woman's subjectivity in the Indian patriarchal system. The play revolves around three liberated female characters: Aruna, Subhadra, and Dolon. Among the trio, Aruna is more concerned with her inner thoughts and feelings rather than her social milieu. She has been embittered by society. In spite of the longing to go back home, she knows that she cannot go back because nobody in the family wants her to come home. Here, Aruna portrays the hierarchy of the patriarchal system through a free woman's psyche who prefers to live free of social values but is no longer happy with freedom and thinks about those women who follow the patriarchal value system. According to Indian patriarchal norms, a woman who gives importance to her identity is rejected by the society. This idea is depicted in the conversation between Aruna, Dolon, and Subhadra when they address the audience together:

DOLON. What awful women are we!

ARUNA. We are all right. We're self-sufficient. We earn. We spend.

DOLON. Self-centred. Do nothing for the society.

SUBHADRA. Without any commitment. Without any ideal.

DOLON. No ideology.

SUBHADRA. We're not even feminists.

DOLON. We blow money, smoke, drink.

SUBHADRA. And my affairs.

DOLON (*giggling*). sheeeee! What kind of people are we!

SUBHADRA. Decadent. But happy. We're happy.

DOLON. Unabashedly happy.

SUBHADRA. Abominably happy.

DOLON. Obscenely.

ARUNA. (*getting into it*): *Nirlajjam sada sukhi.*

SUBHADRA. (*mockingly sad*): Dunia kya kahati hogi hame?

DOLON. Fuck duniya. (271)

Thus, the conversation among the trio depicts the psyche of self-dependent women who can't find the vital meaning of their life and are not totally free from the patriarchal norms of the society. The idea comes to the fore when Subhadra says, "Dunia kya kahati hogi hame?" Their conversation points out that 'a free woman' is also influenced by the patriarchal values. However, there is no such thing as complete freedom of choice. Here, Sara Salih raises a very significant question, "If subversion itself is conditioned and constrained by discourse, then how can we tell that it is subversion at all?" (66) This idea also can be seen in Atamjit's play *Main Tan Ik Sarangi Han* wherein he puts forth this idea through the character of Geeta. The conflict in Geeta's mind is that her spinsterhood and, by extension, rejecting patriarchy could not bring her a social status that marriage and, by extension, conforming to patriarchy has brought Jyoti and Bindu. Jyoti is an SDM and Bindu is a teacher. According to Geeta, they have their own respective homes, jobs, and social status. Thus, Atamjit and Mahesh Elkunchwar construct the subjectivity of a supposedly free woman in terms of their need for approval.

The character of Luna also connotes the psychoanalytical construction of female subjectivity in the play *Pooran*, who is the second and much younger wife of Salwan. The Indian patriarchal system gives preference to an economically strong groom, no matter what his age and educational qualification. In his Epic poetry *Luna* Shiv Kumar Batalvi depicts the situation of that woman who is financial weak:

ਰੋਟੀ ਖਾਤਿਰ ਹਰ ਲੁਣਾ,
ਪੂਰਨ ਦੀ ਮਾਂ ਹੈ।
ਇਸ ਬਸਤੀ ਵਿੱਚ ਰੋਟੀ ਹੀ,
ਮਹਿਬੂਬਾ ਥਾਂ ਹੈ। (ਕੁਮਾਰ 114)
Every Loona is the mother
Of Pooran for bread and butter
In this world bread and butter
Is weightier than beloved.

The same happens with Luna in the play. Due to financial troubles, Luna marries Salwan; however, she is not sexually satisfied with him. According to Luna Salwan is a non-poisonous snake, because he has failed to satisfy her both mentally as well as physically. This marital mismatch affects Luna's psyche and she suffers a stroke. She loses control over her psychology. The conversation between Salwan and Luna brings out the fact that in a patriarchal society no attempt is made to comprehend the psyche of a woman. Luna's psychological state is full of dilemma, which deeply affects Luna's psychology and leads her to depression. Atamjit demonstrates her depressed psyche wherein she dreamt of living a life by fulfilling her desires without compromising on her moral values. Here, Atamjit has successfully articulated the psychological construction of a woman's subjectivity in a patriarchal society; how in an Indian society, a woman is forever suppressed, she is always looked down upon and blamed. Salwan marries Luna out of his sexual desires, and the society, instead of blaming Salwan, condemns Luna. But Shiv further takes the perspective of Luna and writes:

ਓਸ ਕੁੜੀ ਦਾ ਆਪਣਾ ਹਾਣੀ,
ਓਸ ਕੁੜੀ ਨੂੰ ਮਾਂ ਹੈ ਕਹਿੰਦਾ ।
ਓਸ ਕੁੜੀ ਦੇ ਪਿਓ ਦਾ ਹਾਣੀ,
ਓਸ ਕੁੜੀ ਨੂੰ ਪਤਨੀ ਕਹਿੰਦਾ । (ਕੁਮਾਰ 126)

That girl's playmate calls her mother

The playmate of her father calls her wife

Luna does not accept Salwan and Pooran as her husband and son, respectively, according to Indian values the husband's second wife is known as the step-mother of his first wife's children. Here, the patriarchal set-up system constructs Luna's subjectivity as a queen and as a mother.

Apart from Garbo, Prabha and Luna, Pal, Geeta, and Meena have also had their subjectivity psychologically constructed in the play *Main Tan Ik Sarangi Han*. Narrating her life experiences, Meena says that her father didn't want to get married but was forced to do so by his parents. After marriage her father spent just one night with her mother and never came back. Meena says that during her childhood, people didn't acknowledge her

as an offspring of her father, and she herself had often seen her mother with her lover, who was younger to her mother, and she used to call him uncle. But, her mother wanted Meena to marry her (mother's) lover. This incident made her depressed. It can be said that Meena and her mother are not completely free from the influence of patriarchy. When Mr. Singh wanted to marry Meena's mother, she was waiting for her husband, who had spent only one night with her. Thus, this incident shows how, in a patriarchal society, a woman has no existence of her own. Even if she is free from the institution of marriage, she is not fully free from the patriarchal values, which keep influencing the different perspectives of her life.

4.2. Mythical Construction of Female Subjectivity:

If we look at the mythical perspective on the construction of a woman's subjectivity, it can be assessed that the authors have employed certain myths that construct woman as a victim and as a weaker sex. Man, who is economically stronger than woman, could do anything of his will. The mythical story of Savitri and Satyavan is a milestone that shapes the subjectivity of a woman in the history of myths. According to Vladimir Yatsenko, "it is particular feature which makes Savitri unique-not only her Pativrata (dedication of husband) quality which is usually emphasised by later Indian tradition (4). Along with this, the age old disrespect of women, the proofs of loot etc. have been preserved in the pages of history because a woman was seen as an object for man. Manu Laid down many restrictions on women, she could not even conduct a fast without the permission of her husband:

Day and night woman must be kept in dependence by the males (of) their (families), and, if they attach themselves to sensual enjoyments, they must be kept under one's control.
(Manu, 2)

According to Nanda, in *Manusamriti* and the other *Shastras* the role of the husband and the wife in procreation is conveyed through the analogy of field and seed. In epics such as the *Ramayana* (Seeta) and the *Mahabharata* (Draupadi) qualities of self-sacrifice, motherhood, purity, and patience are extolled in women. The prescriptions of a good wife and good mother are detailed and reinforced throughout the narration. In the

Upanishads, there is a section that deals with methods for sexual relations. The *Kamasutra* also provides for the sexual violence. The interconnections of class and gender are also prominent in several texts. In the history of Punjabi literature, Nathyogis have also criticised women in their works and have compared her with a 'tigress':

*Baghini Upaya Bhaghini Niraya, Baghini Pali Kaya,
Baghini takare jauriye pakhere, anbhayi Gorakh Gaya*

(Gorakh Bani 149)

So, there are many women characters in history who are extolled for being dedicated to their husband and they suffer a lot such as Sita, Savitri and Draupadi. Thus, women have had to face different situations in different eras. A man considers her an object while she considers man the corner stone of her life. There is no equality in their mutual relations. The control on the means of production being in the hands of man for centuries is the major reason behind this. As man's control increased on the means of production, the situation of women deteriorated with time and the sovereignty of man was imposed on woman. Man took charge of all resources in his hand and with this power he had not only made her a subordinate, but had also changed her individual existence into an object.

The selected play *Pooran* demonstrates the values engraved in the Punjabi psychology, besides portraying Luna's psychology. Atamjit has presented the contemporary situation of a woman through mythical and historical characters. Such a plight of woman is not to be seen only in the pages of history, rather she has been enduring it in different forms from then to now, be it a feudal or capitalist society, or an era of globalisation. A woman had been exploited (by man) directly and indirectly. In the feudal era, woman experienced slavery and instead of becoming a man's companion, she fell prey to his lust. Women in the lowest order of the social hierarchies were available to all men in the higher strata of society. The religious texts are replete with such examples on how to deal with errant and infidel women and how to inculcate discipline in women to prevent them from any kind of infidelity.

4.3. Patriarchal Attitude on Female Subjectivity:

There are many dimensions of patriarchal attitude which are apparent in the selected writings. *Pooran* play also portrays the patriarchal attitude of Atamjit where he has presented the tragedy of Luna, but he has fully justified the role of Pooran and doesn't let Pooran be sacrificed like the mythical one. According to the mythical legend of *Qissa Pooran Bhagat*, Luna is attracted to her step-son, who is of her own age. However, Indian moral and cultural values don't approve her attraction and Pooran is sentenced to death. The patriarchal attitude of Atamjit is also reflected in his setting Pooran free and sending him back to America instead of punishing him. Hence, playwright doesn't justify Luna's character as he does that of Pooran; he objects to the injustice inflicted on Pooran through his play but fails to recognise the injustice done to Luna. However, Pooran has been depicted in the play as a self-aware man who instead of sacrificing himself, chooses to leave home. In this way, Luna has been depicted as a defeated woman in the play. Atamjit has articulated the ego of a man, through which he fulfills his desires by destroying others' existence through his economic power. The play demonstrates the values engraved in Punjabi psychology besides portraying the psychology of Salwan, Pooran, and Luna. It can be said that throughout history to the contemporary times, woman has changed in her outer appearance only; however, her inner turmoil is still the same, such as the crushing of her desires and dreams.

In *Farash Vich Uggya Rukh*, through the character of Kumar, Atamjit further depicts those values of the patriarchal dominance that make a man superior to a woman. The play illustrates the ideology and psychology of men in the Indian patriarchal system, in which no man can accept the ideal image of any man other than himself in his wife's heart/mind. *Main Tan Ik Sarangi Han* also depicts the patriarchal attitude of playwright. In this play, Meena is a free woman who, against the patriarchal values, decides to remain single. However, if one looks at the play from a male perspective as Atamjit is a male author, one can see that on the one hand Atamjit is representing Meena as a free woman and, on the other; he is also criticising Meena through Geeta. The psychology of a man towards a woman can be

seen in this play when Geeta calls Meena a prostitute, who can be availed by anyone:

ਤੂੰ ਇੱਕ ਬਾਜ਼ਾਰੂ ਔਰਤ ਏਂ ? ਬਹੁਤ ਸਾਫ਼ ਏ । ਤੈਨੂੰ ਖਰੀਦਿਆ ਜਾ ਸਕਦਾ ਏ ?
(ਆਤਮਜੀਤ, ਮੈਂ ਤਾਂ ਇੱਕ ਸਾਰੰਗੀ ਹਾਂ 31)

You are a prostitute? It's very clear. You can be bought?

It can be deduced from this conversation that the author has looked at a woman's identity through the lens of patriarchy. If the writer of this play were a woman, her view towards Meena's freedom would not have been the same; and, she might not have seen Meena in frustration, loneliness, and enduring violence. Meena reacts to Geeta's calling her a prostitute by saying that she doesn't need a certificate from anyone to prove her character, because she has learnt to live not by killing one's dreams and desires, but by fulfilling them. Similarly in *Pooran*, through the character of Kirpi, Atamjit holds Luna responsible for the tragedy of the play and even compares her to a female snake who uses every possible way to destroy others' homes:

ਮੈਨੂੰ ਤਾਂ ਉਹ ਵੀ ਸੱਪਣੀ ਜਾਪਦੀ ਏ । ਭਲੀਏ ਮਾਣਸੇ ਕਿਸੇ ਦਾ ਵੱਸਦਾ ਘਰ ਕਿਉਂ ਉਜਾੜਦੀ ਏਂ? (ਆਤਮਜੀਤ, ਪੂਰਨ 18)

I think she is also a seductress. Why would you ruin the happy home of somebody?

From the conversation, it becomes apparent that Luna's identity has been constructed in a new way by her husband and her father, but, neither Salwan nor Luna's father seek Luna's viewpoint for this marriage:

ਧਰਮੀ ਬਾਬਲ ਪਾਪ ਕਮਾਇਆ
ਲੜ ਲਾਇਆ ਮੇਰੇ ਫੁੱਲ ਕੁਮਲਾਇਆ
ਜਿਸ ਦਾ ਇਛਰਾਂ ਰੂਪ ਹੰਡਾਇਆ,
ਮੈਂ ਪੂਰਨ ਦੀ ਮਾਂ
ਪੂਰਨ ਦੇ ਹਾਣ ਦੀ ! (ਕੁਮਾਰ 105)
My religious father committed a sin

Betrothed me to a wilted flower

Whose beauty has been devoured by Ichhran

I am the mother of Pooran,

I am the same age as him.

Here, Shiv Kumar Batalvi demonstrates the oppressed status of Luna in the patriarchal society. This patriarchal attitude of author on female subjectivity also comes to the fore in another selected play *Garbo*, which is named after its female protagonist, yet one can notice how a particularly patriarchal perspective envelopes the play. The play is written through the perspectives of male characters like Pansy, Intuc, and Shrimant. Garbo's motives are left unexplained and she appears to be a frivolous, cruel, and a promiscuous woman.

In her childhood, a girl feels the bias in the boundary of her house. In the Indian patriarchal society like Punjabi and Marathi, a family gives priority to a son rather than a daughter. This discrimination can be seen through the selected plays. In *Old Stone Mansion* the Deshpande family gives priority to the education of Sudhir over Prabha's education. The gender bias also constitutes the subjectivity of an individual. In the Indian patriarchal system, a boy is bestowed with a respectable status right from his birth as he is considered to be the heir of the family, therefore, in *Main Tan Ik Sarangi Han* Geeta's father, in spite of being poor, fulfills his son's demands and views Geeta as a burden. Through Geeta, Atamjit has tried to comprehend the different aspects that help in the construction of a woman's subjectivity wherein she has to rebel against religion, social values, culture, and tradition for the sake of her identity. Pal also shares the same experience of life as Geeta. She narrates that when she was in school; her father did not favour her participating in debate competitions and used to snub her a lot. Like Geeta, Pal too has to face the same discrimination from her parents. Pal's father also considered her a burden, a responsibility that was a trouble to him. Her father thought that by befriending boys in school she may bring shame to him, because, in the Indian society, the prestige of the family depends on the honour of its women. It has been exemplified in the play as well, when Pal invites her male classmate to her home in order to solve Mathematics sums, her father doesn't like it and, ends up furiously pushing her.

The four folktales which Atamjit has used as metaphors in *Main Tan Ik Sarangi Han* also depict the patriarchal attitude of Atamjit. These folktales also portray the dual situation of a woman in the Punjabi society and myth.

The four folktales are *Aklan Wali*, *Pataal Da Raja*, *Rajkumari Suchhaji*, and *Rano te Sarangi*.

In *Aklan Wali*, the son of the king, who is a *khatri*¹, wagers the son of Wazir that the one who gets married first will let the other spend the first night with his wife. Depicting the woman as smart, the playwright narrates the story when the Prince sends his wife to the son of Wazir; she keeps her word with brilliance and keeps the son of Wazir busy in making the bed for the whole night and ensures her own safety from being unchaste. That is why she is called *Aklan Wali* (Having good wits) in this tale. She plays a game of killing two birds with one stone. By recreating this story from a feministic point of view, Atamjit has created new meanings and commented on the patriarchal society. But Meena, the character of this play considers the Princess M.M.B.B (*Maha Moorakh Bhed Bakri* which means foolish and illiterate), who is otherwise brilliant in public opinion. According to Meena, she submits to the slavery of such a third rate person who is not even a match for her. The playwright has brilliantly presented the feudal values through Meena:

ਰਾਜ ਕੁਮਾਰ ਵਚਨ ਪੂਰਾ ਕਰਨ ਲੈ ਔਰਤ ਨੂੰ ਕਿਉਂ ਫਸਾ ਰਿਹੈ ? ਉਹ ਖਤਰੀ ਦੀ ਹਉਮੈਂ ਵੀ ਨਹੀਂ ਛਡਦਾ, ਲੋਕਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਆਪਣੀ ਮੁਰਖਤਾ ਵੀ ਨਹੀਂ ਦਸਦਾ ਤੇ ਇਮਤਿਹਾਨ ਵਿਚ ਔਰਤ ਨੂੰ ਪਾ ਰਿਹੈ । (ਆਤਮਜੀਤ, ਮੈਂ ਤਾਂ ਇੱਕ ਸਾਰੰਗੀ ਹਾਂ 28)

Why is Raj Kumar entrapping the woman to fulfil his promise?

. . . he is positioning the woman in an ordeal!

The playwright has created new meanings of feudal values brilliantly. The playwright does not appreciate women's nature of living a compromised life; he justifies the autonomous existence of women and denies the so-called morality of the society.

Through the second folktale, *Patal Da Raja* Atamjit has analysed the mentality of people along with the situation of women. In this folk tale, a dog comes to the temple every day and when the priest asks him the reason behind his regular visits to the temple, the dog says that he needs a girl for marriage. The priest marries the dog with a girl who is one of seven sisters and belongs to a poor family. Although the dog in this folk tale is the king of

¹ Warrior or ruling (kshatriya) caste of traditional Hindu society, Hindu business class. See page no.229. *Punjabi University Punjabi-English Dictionary*.

heaven, this story represents the mentality of the patriarchal society. What are the duties of society towards a woman? Feeling forced by the economic condition, the helpless family arranges the marriage of their daughter to a dog without knowing the will of the girl.

The third folk tale *Rajkumari Suchhaji* includes a perfect Princess whose Prince is in love with a *bhathiyaran*² and does not even want to see the face of his wife. His wife meets him in the disguise of a *gujjari*³, a *jhiyuri*⁴, and a *ghumiyaari*⁵ who tells him that all three of them are the natives of *Prandapura*. Raj Kumar gifts a handkerchief to *gujjari*, a ring to *jhiyuri*, and a chain to *ghumiyari* as a token of love and is willing to meet them. While going out in search of *Prandapura*, the Prince asks his perfect wife to cook *paranthas*⁶ for him. His wife keeps the three gifts, the handkerchief, the chain, and the ring with the *paranthas*. After this incident the Prince realises that *Prandapura* is his own house and these beautiful women are none other than his wife. Through the folktale, Atamjit has represented the mythical construction of a woman's subjectivity -how a woman enacts a play to maintain her existence. Here, one can see the mentality of the society that considers the wife of the Prince a wise lady. But to Meena, the character of this play, she appears like a woman who has to perform a drama for her rights. In this patriarchal system, woman has to sacrifice and man is the owner of his own will and orders women around.

The folktales, in fact, have all teachings for women, it is not considered necessary to provide the man with a single piece of advice. After getting married to a *khatrain*, the Prince confines her to veil and himself falls in love and enjoys the company of lower caste women (*gujjari*, *ghumeyari* and *jheyuri*). Meena has beautifully commented on the role of a man in this folktale; she points out the character of Prince:

ਰਾਜ ਕੁਮਾਰ ਦਾ ਕੈਰੈਕਟਰ ਬੜਾ ਬੇਗਸ ਏ । ਸਾਰਾ ਕੁਝ ਈ ਮੱਲ ਕੇ ਰੱਖਣਾ ਚਾਹੁੰਦਾ ਏ,
ਮਾਸੂਕਾ ਵੀ, ਰਾਣੀ ਵੀ ਤੇ ਰਾਜ ਵੀ । (57)

² A woman who parches grains. See page no. 635 , Punjabi University Punjabi-English Dictionary.

³ A milkmaid who belongs to cattle-rearing tribe or community. See page no. 268 , Ibid.

⁴ Dish washer, palanquin-bearer woman. See page no. 371, Ibid.

⁵ She Potter.

⁶ Indian cake inlaid with butter and then fried. See page no. 539, Ibid.

The prince seems to be a bogus character. He wants everything, beloved, queen and kingdom as well.

The conversation of Meena depicts the power of a man. A woman is economically weak when compared to a man in a patriarchal society. She has to depend on men to fulfill all her needs. This male dominance has been represented through the character of Pal who plays the role of the Prince who says to her wife, “ਤੇਰੀ ਬਦਕਿਸਮਤੀ ਏ ਕਿ ਤੂੰ ਸਾਡੇ ਨਾਲ ਵਿਆਹੀ ਗਈ ਏ ਤੇ ਸਾਡੀ ਬਦਕਿਸਮਤੀ ਏ ਕਿ ਅਸੀਂ ਇੱਕ ਹੋਰ ਔਰਤ ਨਾਲ ਪ੍ਰੇਮ ਕਰਦੇ ਹਾਂ ” It is your misfortune is that you are married to me, and it is my misfortune is that I love another woman (57). Pal remarks exquisitely, the love of man, “ਇਸ਼ਕ ਕਰਨ ਲਈ ਭਠਿਆਰਨਾਂ, ਗੁਜਰੀਆਂ ਤੇ ਝਿਉਰੀਆਂ: ਤੇ ਵਿਆਹੁਣ ਲਈ ਖਤਰੇਟੀਆਂ ” *Bhathiyaran, Gujjarian, and Jhiyurian* to love; and *Khatrain* to marry (62).

Inter-caste marriage is prohibited in the Indian culture. A person can get married in the caste equal to or higher than his own caste. Such a marriage is considered respectable in our society. The above discussed conversation indicates that the Prince loves women who belong to lower castes but he gets married to a woman who belongs to his caste.

The fourth folktale is ‘*Rano te Sarangi*’ who is the lone sister to seven brothers. When she gets her first menstrual period, her *ghaggra*⁷ gets stained with blood of which she is unaware. This dress belongs to her sister in law who wants her *ghaggra* stainless. Her brother doubts her virginity and murders her. Through the folktale of *Rano te Sarangi*, the playwright has criticised the customs and rituals in our society related to the menstrual period. During this period, she is forbidden to work in the kitchen, to go to the temple, to touch eatables. Menstruation is a natural process with which patriarchal society has attached such conservative thoughts and beliefs. Girls like Rano have become the victims of such traditional and conservative values. The tragedy of Rano, infact, is the tragedy of every woman who is brought up in such an Indian society. She is not even comfortable with her relatives and family members. Rano was beaten badly by her brothers; she was thrown in a barren place. The playwright has used

⁷ A dress which is traditionally wears by a Punjabi woman.

these stories as a vehicle to convey a pitiful comment on the condition of a contemporary woman as well as that of a mythical one.

Apart from the patriarchal perspectives on female subjectivity, the present research project concentrates on certain elements like violence, alienation, and psychological symbols in the selected plays that shape a woman's subjectivity. The themes of sexuality and violence are few of the major issues of subjectivity and these issues also depict the economic, social, and ideological construction of a woman's subjectivity. Sexual issues like prostitution, violence, extramarital affairs, rape, murder, gender discrimination, exploitation, psychological disorders are highlighted in women's subjectivities across two different cultural locations of India.

Both playwrights deal with violence at the physical level as well as at the emotional level evident in the course of words and actions in the selected texts. For instance in *Farash Vich Uggya Rukh*, *Main Tan Ik Sarangi Han*, *Garbo*, and *Sonata*, the suffering and upsetting of female characters (Veena, Meena, Geeta, Pal, Aruna, Dolon and Subhadra) are symbolic of the journey of their life.

The thought of killing someone also amounts to violence, and the murder of Garbo depicts the inflated ego of a man who can't accept the freedom of a woman. When Garbo takes an independent decision about her pregnancy, and aborts her baby, they cannot accept her decision, and murder her. Through this incident Elkunchwar, while using the technique of Artaud's cruelty of theatre, depicts, in all blood and gore, the murder scene of Garbo on the stage. When Shrimant kills Garbo with a knife, Elkunchwar creates a bloody scene to represent the degeneration and futility of human relations. At a larger level, it relates to the patriarchal dominance and violence seen as a means to guarantee dominance and sustenance of control.

The theme of violence is also taken up in *Sonata* when Aruna and Dolon notice a mark under the eye of Subhadra, which makes them very curious. On being asked, Subhadra tells that her friend Sangram had hit her. She feels this has become a routine in her life. Here, Elkunchwar depicts her miserable situation, for which Subhadra blames Sangram and

says that all men are the same. Thus, it can be illustrated that these women have to bear physical violence, despite being independent and liberated.

Apart from Subhadra, Geeta, Pal, and Meena also represent the different facets of violence. All the three characters are victims of physical and psychological violence in their respective lives, and are raped by their own relatives. Pal was also physically tortured by her uncle at an age when she hadn't even learnt to speak and was unable to share the tragic experience of her life with anyone. Veena also suffers mental violence. In *Farash Vich Uggya Rukh*, a small suspicion has ruined her relationship. The suspicion leads to the idea of divorce. Here, the psychological shades of violence can be seen through dialogue of Kumar who decides to live separately from Veena:

ਵਾਹ ਵੀਨਾ ਵਾਹ, ਬਲਿਹਾਰ ਜਾਵਾਂ ਤੇਰੇ ਕਾਰਨਾਮਿਆਂ ਦੇ। ਉਹ ਚੁੜੇਲਾਂ ਕਿਥੇ ਗਈਆਂ
ਭਲਾ, ਜਿਹੜੀਆਂ ਦੇ ਘਰ ਛੱਡ ਦੇਂਦੀਆਂ ਸਨ? ਤੂੰ ਇਖਲਾਕ ਦੀ ਛਾਤੀ ਵਿੱਚ ਬੇਸ਼ਰਮੀ ਦਾ
ਛੁਰਾ ਮਾਰਿਐ।

Wonderful Veena, I marvel at your deeds. Where are those
witches who would leave two houses before striking? You
have stabbed the knife of shamelessness in the heart of
wisdom.

ਮੈਂ ਇਸ ਪਲੀਤ ਔਰਤ ਤੋਂ ਛੁਟਕਾਰਾ ਪਾਉਣਾ ਚਾਹੁੰਨਾ, ਮੈਨੂੰ ਮੁਕਤੀ ਚਾਹੀਦੀ ਏ, ਤਲਾਕ।
(ਥੋੜਾ ਵਕਫ਼ਾ ਤੇ ਫੇਰ ਬਹੁਤ ਉੱਚੀ) ਹਾਂ ਹਾਂ ਤਲਾਕ। (ਆਤਮਜੀਤ, ਫ਼ਰਸ਼ 54)
I want to get rid of this polluted woman. I want freedom,
divorce. (after some time, very loudly) yes, yes, divorce.

Through the conversation of Veena and Kumar, Atamjit has focused on the psychological violence of Veena, because men usually hold women responsible for the conflicts and problems in their relations with them. Luna also brings out the fact that in a patriarchal society, no attempt is made to comprehend the psyche of a woman. Luna's psychological state is full of dilemma because her husband is financially strong but he could not satisfy Luna physically, which deeply affects Luna's psychology and leads her to depression.

Apart from violence, alienation is another significant experience of a woman. The woman characters of the selected plays are portrayed as unhappy because they are living in tragic situations and struggling to mark their existence in the male dominated society. It can be analysed on the canvas of selected plays.

In the play *Garbo*, when Garbo pretends that she is pregnant and that she then lost her pregnancy, the three men react differently to it. This incident shows the confused state of mind of an individual. It is also said that the playwright has profusely conveyed the theme of emptiness and unrest of the four characters in the play. Although, Elkunchwar focuses on the frustrated generation who live without any aim, he also explores the internal conflict within an individual as well as their sexuality, which becomes a determining feature for them. The 'gender identity' theory focuses on sexuality and reproduction. Sexuality brings in a range of associations related to the human body. Generally, males and females attached to these gendered identities define specific sexualities, which "is an area of human behavior, emotion, and understanding which is often thought of as 'natural' and 'private', even though it is simultaneously an arena of constant surveillance and control" (Altman 2), but the sexuality of women like Garbo is always controlled and kept under watch in a patriarchal society. Customs and traditions imbibed as an inseparable part of domesticity, to some extent, function as measures to check and suppress the expressions of female sexuality. Women's questioning of the domesticity in a patriarchal society also leads to the questioning of norms that support such domesticity. Women's hope for freedom and a better life leads to the questioning of established norms like customs and traditions. The do's and don'ts are prescribed for them and ideal women are designed to fit within the frames of patriarchy. Each and every movement is restricted, modified, and defined for women. These restrictions aim to control women's body and sexuality. Women's hope for being 'a free woman' leads to the questioning of the established norms of the patriarchal set-up.

In the Patriarchal society, parents and teachers safeguard children from outsiders. The rape of Meena is committed by her hockey coach. Due

to these untoward incidents in her past life, Meena fails to rely on moral values and human relationship. Meena's first marriage also did not succeed. During her adolescence, several mis-happenings took place. Consequently, she leads a life of vengeance, free from the rules of society. She feels that every man is bent upon enjoying the female body. As such she restrains herself and indulges in relationships with men only on the physical level. However, Geeta is the opposite of Meena in terms of how she leads her life. Geeta had never been in a sexual relation with any person even at the age of 50 years. It is because such sexual relations beyond the ambit of marriage are considered immoral according to the traditional values of Indian societies. She maintains distance even from the man she loves. Her lover, Rajinder, was of the opinion that the modern thought process of a woman is her real liberation. Further, he contemplates that an extra-marital physical relationship of man and woman is inherent in modernity of a woman.

4.4. Narratives Techniques and Construction of a Woman's Subjectivity:

Both playwrights use many narrative techniques in their plays that construct a woman's subjectivity and also explore the woman's experiences with forms, themes, symbols, dialogues, and characters, which also help shape her subjectivity. It is one of the major concerns of their plays that these deal with the patriarchal structure of a family and society in Maharashtra and Punjab, with the depiction of a woman's emotions and struggles. The characters of the selected plays symbolically represent the intellectual and modern class of society.

Pal, Meena, Geeta, Aruna, Dolon, Subhadra and Garbo are the representatives of the economically independent and liberated woman in a patriarchal set-up, but they all are not free from the norms and rituals of patriarchy. They represent those contemporary women who have decided to remain single by choice and signify those women who are never at peace and blame all men for the despondencies of women. Thus, Atamjit and Elkunchwar portray the hierarchy of the patriarchal system, because according to patriarchal norms, a woman who gives importance to her identity is rejected by the society.

But Luna, Prabha, Aai, Dadi, Vahini, and Veena are representatives of those women who are dependent economically on men. The economic weakness of a woman constructs her identity in different ways. Same happens with Luna, due to financial weakness she marries Salwan and Prabha can't continue her study. But Veena in *Farash Vich Uggya Rukh* is a representative of those women who can't live her life according to their will and whose life is controlled by the patriarchal values.

Aai, Dadi and Ichhran are represented as traditional women in the selected plays. Aai's tragedy is the misfortune of crumbling values of feudal orders and patriarchy. Aai is definitely filling up the space vacated by her mother-in-law. It is clear in the play when she tells her daughter Prabha, "my day is over. Now it's your sister-in-law's reign here. Let that guide your behaviour. . ." (Elkunchwar 181). This dialogue articulates the subjectivity of the women who live in accordance with the customs, rules, and traditions of a feudal family. Among these women, no one wants to fight against the system. Everyone wants to hold on to past memories. No one advocates even the most basic changes like economic change, which can bring about freedom and liberation from extremely regressive values. It is seen mostly in rural suburbs that a woman's role complies with that of a man. She follows the instructions given by man. But, through the character of Vahini, Elkunchwar vividly depicts that patriarchy does not always deprive women of power, it sometimes empowers them and makes them influential. This can be substantiated through the changes that take place in Vahini immediately after Tatyaji passes away. She begins taking an eager interest in all matters of the Deshpande family. But on the other hand, Ichhran is depicted as an orthodox woman. According to Pooran her thoughts are not in sync with his father, and she does not resist or protest. Thus, the plays are written in different languages and different cultural locations, and these female characters can be related with the new women of India with different temperaments.

We can also see the patriarchal and liberal attitude of male characters in selected works. Prabha, Pal and Geeta's father, Kumar and Qadir have the patriarchal attitude who can't accept the freedom of a woman. Father of Pal, Prabha and Geeta give priority of their sons rather

than their daughters. That is the reason these women have to rebel against the social values, culture and tradition for the sake of their identity. The Character of Qadir in the play *Pooran* is also a supporter of patriarchy, and according to whom Luna is completely wrong because he doesn't agree that Pooran may not be Luna's biological son but being her husband's son, she is his mother. For Qadir, Luna is a woman who should die out of shame for desiring a sexual relation with her step-son. Similarly, Kumar in *Farash Vich Uggya Rukh* depicts those values of the patriarchal culture which assume a man to be superior to a woman.

The characters of Pooran and Shiv are representatives of liberal attitude in the selected texts. Atamjit's Pooran is not the mythical Pooran; he is modern in thinking and is living in America. When Salwan asks Pooran about Luna, he replies by saying that Luna is an intelligent lady with a wonderful nature. However, Pooran does not represent the average Indian male as he has added advantage of being exposed to a liberal culture. In the play, he doesn't like anyone's company but Luna's because according to him, no one is as open minded as Luna. This is why instead of calling Luna 'mother'; he calls her 'ma'am'. Shiv is also liberal in attitude as well as Pooran, according to him Luna has strengthened the voice of women because every woman dreams of a prince like Pooran, with whom she wants to spend her life. But, due to his strong economic power, Salwan, who is of her father's age, marries her. Thus, Atamjit's Pooran is not as idealistic as that of Qadiryaar who bows his head before social values. He is not a tragic soul as that of the dramas of Shiv Kumar. Most of his friends are girls and he has enjoyed the closeness of some friends. Pooran in legend considers Luna as his mother, but the America-returned Pooran takes Luna as the wife of his father. He likes to play chess with Luna and learn chess from her when he starts doubting the intention of Luna, he talks to Luna about *The Desire Under the Elms* by Eugiene O' Neil in which he has played the role of Eben. But when Luna tries to play the role of Eben with Pooran in the real life, he shows his disapproval by being annoyed. After having been pushed to this condition by the strong wife of his father, he comes to Shiv Kumar and Qadiryaar, who have been depicted as his poet friends, to analyse the whole situation and to understand his moral

crisis. In the long eighth scene of the play, there is an argument on Luna's attraction towards Pooran, which in reality is the argument of revolt by Atamjit against the response of Qadiryaar and Shiv Kumar.

Mr. Singh also has a liberal attitude in the play *Main Tan Ik Sarangi Han* who wants to marry Meera's mother, but she has been waiting for her husband, who had spent only one night with her. Mr. Singh takes the responsibility of Meena's mother at that time when she is living alone.

Both the playwrights seem to be articulating the woman's internal conflict between patriarchal values and liberation. The identity crisis of women is the major theme of their plays. Selected texts fully depict the complexity of existence of a woman, and are very effective with the use of various symbols. In the play *Old Stone Mansion*, Elkunchwar has analysed the issue of 'Wada' community. Here, the word *wada* has a different symbolic meaning, because when 'Wada' is spelt with 'W' "it refers to the life style of the Maharashtra region with reference of entire rituals/customs, and culture/tradition, and when it is spelt 'w' it refers to the physical architectural space/structure of an old mansion where groups of families reside together" (Sukanna 168).

Thus, the selected plays have brought new possibilities to the Punjabi and Marathi stage. In the play *Old Stone Mansion* Mahesh Elkunchwar refers to the symbol of devghar, which is the worship place of the Deshpande family. According to the Hindu rituals nobody can enter the devghar during the mourning period after a death in the family, but in the play Bhaskar hides the ancestral jewelry in devghar with the intention of grabbing it.

The 'Rukh' (tree) used in *Farsh Vich Uggya Rukh* is used in a symbolically rich connotation. Its metaphorical value lies in relation to the bedroom and the floor. Here, it can be recognized on two levels. First, on the level of its relation with its own class, and second, how it is related to the complete dramatic conversation and other symbols of relations. While studying 'Rukh' in the context of these relations, another very important relation is the one which represents the plant kept in the flowerpot and the spot to keep that flowerpot as a dramatic metaphor.

The bedroom is also represented as a metaphor of our cultural relations. The relation of a husband and a wife is also the relation of a man and a woman, but the symbol of the bedroom makes this relation a cultural one.

In the metaphoric arrangement of the dramatic world, symbols like cleaning the house (the way of leading a domestic life), full and half-filled bottles (completeness and incompleteness), breaking of a glass (breakup in relations), a hand getting cut with a piece of glass (the internal breakup in relations), pits on the floor (the effects of relations on mentality after a breakup) etc. have been used, which carry particular meanings in special contexts.

Towards the end of the play, Aatmjit, through the symbol of driftwood, has tried to exhibit that Veena should be accepted as driftwood instead of a woman. Atamjit has used this taboo in his play very exquisitely. As the taboo gets stronger in this play, the mental illness/ psychosis of Veena also grows, i.e. the increase in her realisation to live more which also includes her 'ideal' person. The process of the communication gap between Veena and Kumar is like a tree growing from a crack in the bedroom floor.

Veena has been represented as suffering from mental trauma, this mental trauma is her vanishing subjectivity and it is the unnecessary suspicion of her husband. One can feel the mental trauma of Veena through the physical movements, for example, after hearing the rumbling noise of a train and wrapping and unwrapping of the wool, turning the pages of a magazine, picking up a newspaper and putting it down without reading it, drinking a glass of water instantly, and punching the sofa etc.

The silence has been used frequently by Atamjit in this play; this silence revolves around the stressful situations and makes the plot more appropriate. To exhibit the agitation - the disturbance behind the smile, emitting a loud noise in silence, and representing present, past, and future collectively in this silence, is a technique Atamjit has used.

The title of play *Main Tan Ik Sarangi Han* is tied to folklore. A woman cannot develop a balanced personality in such an unsupportive atmosphere; 'sarangi' is the embodiment of aesthetics and music. Women have a better aesthetic sense than men but in this patriarchal society her

sensitive feelings are suppressed. In *Pooran* Atamjit works on two levels: the transformation of the narrative into a drama and the journey from tradition to modernity.

Myth or archetype does not exist in reality but it is stimulated from political aspects which are created and maintained, develop and highlight the ideology and sovereignty. (Singh 10)

Through this play, Atamjit has presented this folktale as a cultural transformation of modern times. The assimilation of folktales in *Main Tan Ik Sarangi Han* has co-related the woes of women of the modern era with their marginalised identity of the traditional patriarchal society.

Both cultures respectively Punjabi and Marathi are not free from the patriarchal attitude and male-dominance. The women struggle a lot for their identity in these cultures. A woman who belongs to a joint family is more conservative rather than that woman who belongs to nuclear family. Female characters in both the playwrights equally reproduce the discourse of patriarchy. Both the playwrights mostly focus on the issues of middle class women while Atamjit also takes into consideration upper class and lower class women in *Ichhran* and *Luna* respectively. Atamjit clearly takes the patriarchal stance in *Main tan ik Sarangi Han*, while Elkunchwar is more liberal in his depictions. Atamjit employs myth and psychology to explore women's subjectivity while Elkunchwar focusses on contemporary discourses such as psychology and existentialism. Elkunchwar and Atamjit have drawn more from personal experiences of the small town culture. Both have analysed the relation between art and artist, art and reality, imaginative experience and narrative experience, in their plays.

In the selected works, an oppressive system of patriarchal beliefs and controls inhibits the female characters and they submit to the identities constructed by the society. Both playwrights illustrate a beginning of female autonomy and suggest hope for a future and a more successful challenge to patriarchy. In the selected plays, the female characters are also controlled by a male-centered value system. The selected plays also spin around women's issues. The contemporary woman struggles for the construction of her subjectivity, she fights to break the patriarchal value

system that relegated her to a marginal status in society. However, women face a more difficult task than merely turning themselves into the fully cohesive selves they yearn to be. Psychically fragmented and often docile, they have been used to having society dictate their roles to them. Plays of Mahesh Elkunchwar and Atamjit are representations of women working to fill that psychic hunger with the limited options for self-determination present in patriarchal society. Examining selected plays of both playwrights provides crucial insights into analysing the struggles women have experienced. Thus, selected texts allocate a powerful and important medium to portray representations of women as well as the patriarchal constraints that have historically restrained their psychological growth.

The image of women in drama has undergone a change during the contemporary period. Writers have moved away from traditional portrayals of enduring self-sacrificing women, towards conflicts, female characters searching for identity; no longer characterised and defined simply in terms of their victim status. A major preoccupation in recent Indian writing has been a delineation of inner life and subtle interpersonal relationships. Women's representation is more assertive, more liberated in their view, and more articulate in their expression than the women of the past. Both Atamjit and Mahesh Elkunchwar also give a picture of the old and new values through their writings.

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CHAPTER 5

Conclusion

A close analysis of Mahesh Elkunchwar's and Atamjit's plays brings out a woman's identity within the framework of patriarchy. Both playwrights deal with the identity of a woman in Indian patriarchal setup, which has remained a dominant mode of literary representation in contemporary Indian drama.

The present research of the selected plays of two authors, who are dissimilar from one another by cultural, linguistic and geographical aspects, gives an opportunity to analyse how correspondingly and diversely women experience, act, and respond given the similar situation. Women's experience of oppression in different geographical areas (Punjab and Maharashtra) and at varied cultural locations clearly exhibits that the marginalisation of women is a universal phenomenon. At the same time, these women are progressive, expressive and in a constant struggle.

The selected plays divulge how the discourse of patriarchal culture constructs the subjectivity of a woman, and the issues discussed in the selected plays help us to observe unexplored layers of the life of a woman in different cultural locations. The selected works articulate various themes related to female subjectivity and examine critically the patriarchal values that affect the life of a traditional and a liberal woman. Female characters in the works of both the playwrights equally reproduce the discourse of patriarchy because their subjectivity is constructed in the realm of patriarchy as patriarchy is premised on the power structure of male over female, and it is constructed through the subjugating ideology of patriarchy. The social structure of patriarchy is structured and practised in such a way that it also controls the psyche of women. The thesis, basically, attempts to focus on the plays namely *Old Stone Mansion*, *Garbo*, *Sonata*, *Pooran*, *Farash Vich Uggya Rukh*, and *Main Tan Ik Sarangi Han*. These plays depict the plight of women, both traditional and modern, in the contemporary society.

Various dimensions of Indian subjectivity are explored by the female characters like Prabha, Vahini, Aai, Garbo, Aruna, Dolon, Subhadra, Luna, Ichhran, Veena, Pal, Geeta, and Meena of the selected plays.

Old Stone Mansion, Farash Vich Uggya Rukh and *Garbo* demonstrate the psychoanalytical edifice of a woman's subjectivity through Prabha, Aai, Veena and Garbo who are not free from the shackles of patriarchal culture. Their subjectivity is constructed in terms of suppression, discrimination, and manipulation. As patriarchy subjugates women into inferiority, the selected plays are analysed in terms of the construction of women's subjectivity through the discourse of patriarchy. These women though complex and liberal, fail to fully realise the agency of womanhood and are victimised time and again by different discourses of patriarchy, mythology, sexuality, and psychology, all of which come together to construct a woman as a socially and culturally inferior subject, specifically with reference to plays under study.

Apart from the patriarchal perspectives on female subjectivity, the present research concentrates on certain elements like violence, alienation, and psychological symbols in the selected plays that also shape a woman's subjectivity. The themes of sexuality and violence are few of the major issues of subjectivity and these issues also depict the economic, social, and ideological construction of a woman's subjectivity. Issues like prostitution (Meena), violence (Garbo/Geeta/Pal/Meena), non-marital affairs (Subhadra/Meena), rape (Pal/Meena), murder (Garbo), gender discrimination (Prabha/Pal/Meena), exploitation (Garbo/Geeta/Pal), and psychological suppression (Luna) are highlighted in women's subjectivities across two different cultural locations of India.

The theme of loneliness has attained much attention in this research. Aruna, Dolon, Subhadra, Meena, Geeta, and Pal are liberated women but they are more susceptible to pangs of loneliness. These independent women like Aruna (a lecturer) and Meena (a professor), who are more concerned with their inner thoughts and feelings rather than their social situation, have been embittered by society as well as family. Thus, these characters bring out the authority of patriarchal system because according to the patriarchal norms liberal women like Aruna and Meena, who give importance to their identity, are rejected by the society.

The present research also highlights the issue of expression of female sexuality that is prohibited by Indian patriarchal and cultural values but is advocated by liberal feminists. Elkunchwar's Subhadra is a free woman in terms of her choices: be it food, drinks or men. *Pooran* demonstrates the values engraved in the Punjabi psychology, besides portraying Luna's inner life. She is constantly judged on the basis of her desire in the play. Such a plight of woman is not to be seen only in the pages of history, rather she has been enduring it in different forms from then to now, be it a feudal or capitalist society, or an era of globalisation. In *Pooran*, the patriarchal attitude of the playwright is also reflected in his setting Pooran free and sending him back to America instead of punishing him like mythical Pooran. Hence, the playwright doesn't justify Luna's character as he does Pooran's; he objects to the injustice inflicted on Pooran through his play but falls short in sympathising with Luna.

Another example of patriarchal attitude of playwright can also be seen in another play *Main Tan Ik Sarangi Han*. On the one side, Atamjit presents Meena as a free and liberated woman who, against the patriarchal values, decides to remain single, on the other, he is also criticising Meena through Geeta when Geeta calls Meena a prostitute, who can be availed by anyone.

Farash Vich Uggya Rukh tries to unfold the male psychology in a patriarchal system with the reference of Kumar. In a male-dominated system, Kumar wants Veena even to dream according to him. A woman who lives her life according to her man is the only ideal woman for a man. Moreover, a woman is always perceived in terms of her "character" while a man is perceived in terms of his actions.

Old Stone Mansion demonstrates Prabha as a victim of caste discrimination and patriarchal mindset because she wants to complete her education to become an independent woman but her father never allows her to attain higher education and gives priority to his son rather than his daughter because he holds the patriarchal opinion that girls do not need education for their survival.

Garbo is depicted as an intellectually liberated woman, who is also limited by cultural discourses. Elkunchwar represents her as a woman

condemned to hopelessness and deranged mental state on account of her desires. The characterisation of Garbo shows how a woman becomes vulnerable in the oppressive setup which intends at subjugating her. Artaud's idea of cruelty and violence is also scrutinised in the play which depicts the inflated ego of a man who can't accept the freedom of a woman. For example, when Garbo takes an independent decision about her pregnancy and aborts her baby, she is murdered by the three men (Intuc/Pansy/Shrimant). *Garbo* is written from the perspective of male characters but Garbo's motives are left unexplained and she appears to be a frivolous, cruel, and promiscuous woman. Consequently, the sexuality of a woman is always controlled and kept under watch in a patriarchal society. Women's hope for freedom leads to the questioning of established norms, customs, and traditions.

We can also see the patriarchal attitude of male characters in the selected works. Fathers of Pal, Prabha, and Geeta give priority to their sons rather than their daughters. That is the reason these women have to rebel against the social values, culture, and tradition for the sake of their identity. The character of Qadir in the play *Pooran* is also a supporter of patriarchy. Similarly, Kumar in *Farash Vich Uggya Rukh* depicts those values of the patriarchy which assume a man to be superior to a woman.

Thus, both cultures, Punjabi and Marathi, are not free from the patriarchal attitude and male dominance. The women struggle a lot for their identity in these cultures. Female characters of both the playwrights equally reproduce the discourse of patriarchy because women's boundaries are limited under the patriarchal system. Thus, the female characters in selected works display feminine sensibilities in their behaviour.

The comparative analysis of works of these two writers (Atamjit and Mahesh Elkunchwar) have been undertaken so as to analyse the construction of female subjectivity as it emerges in their writings. The works of Atamjit and Mahesh Elkunchwar, to some extent, are similar in spite of the different cultures they belong to. There are some dissimilarities also in their writings such as family structures in Atamjit's plays are simpler and less oppressive than those of Elkunchwar. Both the playwrights mostly focus on the issues of middle class women while Atamjit also takes into

consideration upper class and lower class women such as Ichhran and Luna respectively. Atamjit clearly takes the patriarchal stance in *Main tan ik Sarangi Han*, while Elkunchwar is more liberal in his depictions. Atamjit employs myth and psychology to explore women's subjectivity while Elkunchwar also focuses on the contemporary discourses such as psychology and existentialism.

Apparently, Atamjit and Mahesh Elkunchwar differ in certain significant ways because of their different cultural locations and individual ideological orientations and assumptions. Both are two of the most prominent contemporary Punjabi and Marathi writers who perceptively and analytically present the harsh realities of a woman of rural and urban societies of India. They not only capture the social and cultural realities of the lives of women but also portray the broader historical and economic transformations taking place around them. In this sense, they are very reliable chroniclers of Indian patriarchal society. Their typical idiom and perceptive presentations of rituals and ordinary routines of the lives of ordinary people make them most significant contemporary Punjabi and Marathi writers. Yet, this study can be fruitful for understanding the patriarchal perspectives on female subjectivities from varying standpoints under the light of various discourses prevalent in contemporary Indian locations.

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