CHAPTER III

REBELLIOUS HEROINES: A COMPOSITE OF CAMARADERIE

"I looked and it was a revealation: this world was a masculine world, my childhood had been nourished by myths forged by men and I hadn't reacted to them in at all the same way I should have done if I had been a boy".

-Simone de Beauvoir(103).

The real inequalities in the opportunities and power of men and women are often upheld by custom in Indian and Black American societies. As a result of such imparity, the life of a woman is built upon a foundation of what de Beauvoir calls 'impotent revolt'. Morrison, Walker, Desai and Sahgal reveal through the fictional narratives that the woman knows all the faults in the masculine system. These novelists through their artifacts do no hesitate in exposing such unjust system. As men are more inclined to reason, they choose to ignore a whole realm of human experience as they fail to think it, where as women live this experience. Women are aware of masculine reasoning. In their experience, it proves an "underhand form of force." Men's dictums are invincible in patriarchal societies. Women, by and large agree to what men say, out of respect for the whole system of accepted principles. As de Beauvoir affirms if woman "refuses, she rejects the entire system" (qtd. in Agonito 358).

Ever since her childhood, and adolescence, as de Beauvior observes, woman has been "protesting against her servile condition" (qtd. in Agonito 354). She often finds herself on the

horns of a dilemma. Nonetheless, she refuses to accept society as it is. Her defiance of existing patterns in society can be termed as rebellion. Generally she resigns herself reluctantly to use de Beauvoir's phrase "to masculine authority."

The history of the Negro woman as Baldwin proclaims in "A Letter from the South" is yet unwritten. Society looks away the reality of women's life in the face. As women also figure under the classification of humans, they too aspire to be themselves. Baldwin believes that human freedom is a complex, difficult-and-private thing. He explicates the point through an analogy. If life is a furnace then "freedom is the fire" in this furnace. This fire burns away all illusions. Yet in patriarchal set up men see only what and how they want to see. The myth of the feminine mystique needs a scrutiny. As it is revealed in the case of fictional heroines of Desai, they feel "a sense of emptiness" as Friedan calls it, a sort of "non-existence, nothingness..."(qtd. in Agonito 381). The life of women remain monotonuous. The societal code and patriarchy do not permit women to take real initiative. Nor are women allowed any expression of the self or any freedom for self-determination. These heroine-housewives in Desai and other novelists under study are not free to use "their ability to predict the future and to prepare for it..." (Friedan qtd. in Agonito 381).

Desai's heroines are not allowed to have adult self-respect. Their peculiar predicament neither gives them any "hope of advancement nor recognition." More often than not they are, as Friedan discerns "controlled by the needs of others" (382). Their

works do not emanate from women's own personality. It is not at all an expression of the self.

Under such circumstances the women novelists under this study have portrayed women of spirit and intelligence who rebel, who refuse to get vanquished. There is "something very strong" as Frieden observes, "in a woman (which) resists the death of herself." (384).

Ortega Y.Gasset defines man as "I am myself and my surroundings" (qtd. in Collier's Encyclo Pedia 18:231). This definition can well be applied to women and their surroundings too. Under the restrictive social milieu women rebel. As Gasset perceives "humanity" is "divided into classes of men rather than classes of society" (231). In such a structure women are mere appendages to men,their position is that of the 'other'. Women being intelligent, sensitive and alive to their surroundings react differently towards a restrictive social code. Such a discreet behaviour is different from the accepted pattern, the society permits to women. The heroines who react in such a manner are called rebellious heroines. Their rebellion is neither a mutiny nor a revolt, but an attempt against the female burden of suffering that estranges women from the plenitude of life.

The heroines of all the four novelists under study derive the power to rebel against the existing unsatisfactory social set-up because of their feminine sensibility as discussed in the previous chapter. They do not have slogans like "liberty, equality and fraternity" or " Land,peace and bread". The women

protagonists react against incompatible circumstances and unsympathetic social order.

The mode of rebellion varies from one novelist to another, but the quintessence of these narratives contain in themselves rebellious heroines. Their rebellion sometimes is as overt as that of Sula and Meridian, and sometimes it is as covert, subtle and formidable as that of Maya, Monisha, Sita and Sonali. The crux of their rebellion is that they wish to explore the unchartered territory of a woman's attempt to establish a new order which is just to women.

In the novels of Desai and Walker, Morrison and Sahgal we come across radical heroines. These women novelists have brought a new brand of female protagonists and have created virtually brilliant portrayals of women, iridescent with inner strength. What they rebel for is life: their right to their own lives. Many of these female protagonists often feel they are misfits in an insensitive surrounding. They rebel against adversities with the sad but certain knowledge that male dominated social order would overpower them. Yet as we know them through their inner thoughts and narratives. Mem Copeland and Meridian Hill charm us. Heroines like Celie and Pilate are distinguished even in their initial struggles and finally in their triumphs. Bim and Sita are able to resolve their dilemma in love and forgiveness. Sonali feels rejuvenated in her acceptance of a new assignment, whereas Saroj feels liberated in her departure from Inder. These women protagonists, Indian and black American fight a common enemy in the odds of sexism and racism or their agony in the patriarchal,

traditional social order. The elation of solving the mystery of creation as felt by Desai's Sita or the anguish of Monisha underscore the rebellious spirit in modern Indian women. One also gets an inkling of hope and looks forward with Bim towards a life beyond sex, boundless in love and joy and fulfilment born out of satisfaction for performing one's duty wholeheartedly.

The female protagonists: black American and Indian, when they rebel against unjust social order sense the futility of such rebellion. They rebel, for not to brave a harsh reality would be comparable to a living death. They show courage when they struggle to surmount humiliation, resignation, silence, inaction and self-pity.

In the world of fiction written by women one feels exhilarated as their heroines show rare courage, resilience, tenacity and endurance of a different kind. They not only rebel against the callous social norms, but also attempt to be true to themselves. Anita Desai and Nayantara Sahgal delicately yet firmly point out that the old stereotypes of women's roles are certainly crumbling around the edges. Modern Indian woman spares no effort to connect tradition with modernity, education and career with domesticity. Yet they assert that there are no simple resolutions for their problems. The princess with golden locks and her prince have melted away forever in Indian fiction.

Desai's heroines rebel against a patriarchal concept of women, their functions and their purview. Each of them searches for a meaning in her life. Some of them find it, while many rebel

against the restrictive norms of society, especially when their inner needs and urges for creativity are thwarted.

Desai deftly deals with sexual politics and rebellious nature of her heroines. These two aspects are concomitant with the awakened female consciousness in the narratives of Desai, Sahgal, Morrison and Walker. Sahgal and Desai delineate their female protagonists in traditional Hindu families and their resultant rebellion.

Anita Desai's Maya, Monisha, Sita and Bim are effervescent and efficacious as are Sahgal's Saroj, Rashmi Devi and Sonali. They all pine for living their lives to the full. Like Walker's Mem and Celie, Meridian and Sofia-Harpo's wife, Desai's heroines gauge the circumstances and rebel when they find themselves at the end of their tether. Desai's female protagonists allude to the 'mad clarity' of all human relationships, male and female. Desai marvellously brings forth the deeply felt and suffered agonies and resultant rebellion of Maya, who goes insane, while Monisha snaps her life, Sita retreats in her rebellious act to Manori island, her childhood home. Nanda Kaul in **Fire on the Mountain** is disillusioned by her husband's lifelong affair with Miss David, the mathematics teacher. Her Vice-Chancellor husband does not marry Miss David as she is a Christian, "whom he had loved, all his life loved" (**FOTM** 145).

Nanda Kaul's rebellion is against a way of life. She led a crowded life in past, without any respite. Her previous life appears like a long, restless journey in to the night. She had sat

on her cane chair in the veranda of their house. "not still and emptily, but mending clothes, sewing on strings and buttons and letting out hems,..."(FOTM 17). She also had to maintain the dignity of the house by her vigil that the dark furniture, "all rosewood, had been polished ... and to verify that all the metalware smelt freshly of Brasso" (FOTM 18).

The children and guests were to be looked after by Nanda Kaul. Her early life seems cluttered with care of others:

> She seemed to hear poignant shrieks from the canna beds in the garden-a child had tumbled off the swing, another had been stung by a wasp, a third slapped by the fourth-and gone out on the veranda to see them come wailing up the steps with cut lips,bruised knees, broken teeth and tears, and bent over them with that still, ironic bow to duty that no one had noticed or defined (FOTM 19).

In her long life, she never experiences any recognition either from her many sons and daughters or from her husband. She is a woman whose very existence is controlled by the needs of others as Friedan rightly observes in **The Feminine Mystique.** Nanda Kaul also experiences "a sense of emptiness" in her busy life.

In the din of children she entertains "a flurry of guests in their visiting saris, ...-the wives and daughters of the lecturers and professors over whom her husband ruled." (FOTM 18).

She manages the facade with dignity and within her earshot, these guests fling distasteful expressions." Isn't she splendid ? Isn't she like a queen ? Really, Vice-Chancellor is lucky to have a wife who can run everything as she does,"...(FOTM 18). At such moments Nanda feels infuriated and her eyes flash "like a pair of black blades, wanting to cut them, despising them, ..."(FOTM 18).

Her rebellion is against such an overwoiled, mundane, monotonous existance. When Nanda Kaul looks back, "over all those years she had survived and borne, she saw them, not bare and shining as the plains below, but like the gorge, cluttered, choked and blackened with the heads of children and grandchildren, servants and guests, all restlessly surging, clamouring about her" (FOTM 17).

Her life seems a long overstretched drama in which she existed only for others. The chores are endless in the life of a housewife, Nanda Kaul's inner life seems assaulted by all. Her retreat to Carignano seems a justified gesture. She simply rebels against continuous demands of children and elders. To get away from clutters and noise she tries to shut out sound by shutting out light. From all around sound invades her:

> ...a burst of giggles, an ominous growling from the dogs, the spray of gravel under bicycle wheels on the drive, a contest of squirrels over the guavas in the orchard, ...a drop, then spray and rush of water from a tap" (FOTM 23).

This was the pattern of Nanda Kaul's life. Even after her nap, she felt that the whole household pulls her, she could never be her ownself. Within a few moments, after she woke up:

> ... the baby would come crawling in, the first to hear her stir, the most insistent in its needs. Lifting it into her arms, she would go to the kitchen to see the milk taken out of the ice-box, the layer of cream drawn off, the row of mugs on a tray filled and carried out to the green table on the veranda around which the children already sat on their low cane stools ...Then there was the bread to be spread with butter, jam jars opened and dug into, knives taken away from babies and boys, girls questioned about homework, servants summoned to mop up spilt milk and fetch tea, and life would swirl on again, in an eddy, a whirlpool of which she was the still, fixed eye in the centre (FOTM 24).

After leading such a fretfully busy and cluttered life Nanda's need "to be alone, to have Carignano to herself"(FOTM 17) is indeed justifiable. Her wish to entertain only "stillness and calm" is a sort of rebellion.

Nanda Kaul"s rebellion is borne out of "vengeance for a long life of duty and obligation" (FOTM 48). The faithlessness of Mr. Kaul makes Nanda Kaul lose all faith in human relationships. She

plays her roles faithfully, yet she longs for stillness in a house resounding with a variety of sounds and a lot of movement. In her rebellious stance she resolves not to allow any intrusion. However, as the narrative progresses she is constantly disturbed by movements, voices and sounds. Part One of **Fire on the Mountain** depicts Nanda Kaul's anxiety to meet the young intruder in her private world of self-willed isolation. It is of primary interest that Raka is a "recluse by nature, by instinct." She does not "arrive at this condition by a long route of rejection and sacrifice—she was born to it, simply" (**FOTM** 48). On the contrary Nanda Kaul's gradual cool indifference towards Raka gives way to her desire for Raka's affection. By contrastive, suggestive juxtaposition of Nanda Kaul and Raka's relationship with each other, Desai accentuates their mutual need of security and fulfilment in loving relationship and not in evading it.

Clear Light of Day portrays the rebellious heroine Bimla Das. Bim rejects the unquestioning acceptance of a traditional female role. It is the rebellious Bim who occupies the centre stage in Desai's **Clear Light of Day**. She, like Nanda Kaul and Monisha does not get her due in life. At moments she feels unhappy. Nevertheless, Desai's heroines are more attractive, appealing, honest and true to themselves and finely tuned beings than all the doers and achievers.

Bim is a rebel with a positive attitude against the compulsion of succeeding in comformity. She refuses to accept and compromise with the age-old role of the woman as a wife. She puts a high premium on her intelligence. Her childhood dream was to

become a 'heroine'. She excels as a student at school and is admired by her teachers. Her ambition does not culminate in marriage, as she is convinced that it won't last her the whole of her life.

Bim as a heroine, is in a class by herself. As Iyengar notes, "the explosions in Mrs. Desai's novels occur only within narrow domestic walls" (464). Bim's complex emotional experiences are rendered pointedly. As Iyengar comments, it is "the intolerable grapple with thoughts, feelings and emotions." The readers are made actualy aware of Bim's struggle to be an emergent woman like Sula.

She is one of the most developed heroines in Desai's fiction. She yearns to live her life to the full as is reflected in her outlook. At school Bim becomes a "different person-active, involved, purposeful."

> ... A born organiser, she was patrol leader of the Bluebirds when still a small pig-tailed junior, later of the Girl Guides, then captain of the netball team, class perfect, even-gloriously, in her final year at school-Head Girl (CLOD 122).

This was Bim's way to rebel against the damp, dull atmosphere of their house, when she was young, and the flame sparkles to the end. The novelist juxtaposes two opposite characters of sisters: Bim bubbling with vivacity, ready to meet challenges of the outer world against timid Tara to whom school is a terror, "a blight, a

gathering of large, loud, malicious forces that threatened and mocked her fragility" (CLOD 123). The rebellious Bim reproaches Tara for her withdrawal from visiting hospital on charity Thursdays. Bim's outrage smoulders Tara as she tells her to get over her aversion of sickness, smells and stinks. She advises Tara: "if you can't even do this little bit for the poor, what will you ever be able to do when you grow up ?" (CLOD 126). Bim's character is embossed in bold relief as she worships Florence Nightingale along with Joan of Arc in her private pantheon of saints and goddesses. Whereas Tara lacks boldness even to express her idol of worship, She hopes that she will never have to do anything in the world. Her favoured past time is to hide under Aunt Mira's quilt or behind the shrubs in the garden and never be asked to come out and prove her courage.

Raja, their elder brother enjoyes all the freedom a grown-up lad can enjoy in a middle class family. So Bim's rebellious spirit spurs her to be something like Raja. She goads Tara to put on Raja's trousers in the afternoon, take a walk around, and smoke like Raja. Such a venture satisfies Bim which horrifies Tara. Bim's adventurous leanings reveal her rebellious character, as Sharma notes, "against the traditional image of the Indian woman" (138). The feel of Tara and Bim's adventure is conveyed which convinces the reader:

> ... Great possibilities unexpectedly opened up now (as) they had their legs covered so sensibly and practically. ... Suddenly they saw why they were so different from their

> brother, so inferior and negligible in comparison: it was because they did not wear trousers. Now they thrust their hands into their pockets and felt even more superior - what a sense of possession, of confidence it gave one to have pockets, to shove ones fists into them, as if in simply owning pockets one owned riches, owned independence (CLOD 132).

In her later life too, Bim proves a rebel as she has her own outlook, world view. She not only brushes aside Dr. Biswas's offer, but also remains single. She rebels against the age old practice and concept of fulfilled womanhood. Nonetheless, Bim remains a symbol of nurture. One gets glimpses of Bim's spiritedness right from her school days. Bim neither falls an easy prey to the lure of rich Hyder Ali's pomp and regalia like Raja, nor finds an easy solution to her own dismal household by visiting the neighbouring Misras like Tara. She does not get entrapped in Raja's Urdu poems which she thinks - highly imitative, lacking in newness and richness of images. She abhors Raja's style of living like a rich 'Pasha', getting invited to important occasions in the circles of rich, fat and successful people. Bim is true to herself and despises slavery of others' ideas and life style. She carves out a singular space for herself by her agile spirit of rebellion.

She is imaginative enough to think of hundreds of things to do, and therefore decides not to marry. This requires a courage to defy the set role for a woman in an orthodox society. Bim's

firmness to hold her ground and not to bow down to the set standards for women in Hindu Society add an extra dimension to Bim's character. She represents the new woman who has the ambition to excel in spheres traditionally regarded as male domain. Bim's personality has a sterling quality as she decides not only to earn her own living but also to look after Mira-Masi and Baba and be independent. Thus, Bim's revolt against the traditional image of the Indian woman is manifest in all that she says or does. She is devoted to Baba. Her character is reflected in the fact that she seels her totality and wholeness in retarded Baba who needs care, support and affection.

Bim realises meaningfulness of her life in her old home, where roots of all her brothers and sisters lay. She does not escape from her responsibility as Raja and Tara did. Instead,Bim willingly, devoutly and resolutely shoulders the responsibility traditionally entrusted to the man in the Indian Society. Bim thus becomes a woman rebel taking on the role of a male protagonist. She achieves selfhood and a sense of fulfilment not out of matrimony and motherhood, as the two roles traditionally expected from women. Tara, the younger sister escapes the ill, bourgeois atmosphere of their old house, yet she returns to the very house every three or four years and gains sustenance from it. Thus, Bim becomes a beacon of hope and nurturance to Das family because of her rebellious stance.

One could posit that there is a hope in women like Bim, who have the courage to brave the onslaughts of time and society.

Such women lead their lives on their own terms. They ask for the deeper morality of intelligent beings, who struggle for the loyalities of sensitive human relationships. Bim appeals to us as she has the intelligence to gaze steadily at history and not to be overwhelmed by present fears and needs, and the intelligence to look farther into the future to see the ancient patterns of humanity, rise and fall.

A vision of unhappy but exemplary wives does not adorn our world. As Simone de Beauvoir says, "much more intersting are the insurgent females who have challenged this unjust society; a literature of protest can engender sincere and powerful works" (718). In the galaxy of Desai's women protagonists, the passive woman does not exist. We encounter highly intelligent and sensitive women who question ceaselessly. They look around and refuse to accept the myths created and nourished by a male dominated society. Maya and Bim, Monisha and Nanda Kaul, Amla and Sita all react against the curious combination of passion and romance, custom and convenience. They are sensitive enough to react violently. As a result of their unexpected and abrupt reactions they are labelled as sobriquet of being insane or abnormal. Desai's fictional heroines turn romance upside down. Even examining chronologically all her heroines meet or marry men, measure them and discover them inadequate to their needs and march on their own separate ways.

As a woman in the patriarchal society, the female protagonist of Desai stands in a position of sexual inferiority and emotional vulnerability. From such a position she tries, not

necessarily always successful, to make an imaginative escape. As those heroines of Desai know what it is to be a woman, that too a sensitive, intelligent one, are true rebel in their own individual way paving a path of revolt against the conventional exploitative system. They exemplify that each of them inhabits a privatised world of emotions and can strike up for what she feels to be good, just and reasonable.

Anita Desai joins the illustrious company of George Eliot, Jane Austen, Bronte Sisters and Virgina Woolf as her heroines refuse to conform to the accepted patterns of male oriented, approved social behaviour. They are rebels, who are faced with a choice between their certitude and conventionality and firmly choose the former. They blaze the trail though it inflicts a great deal of suffering and social ostracisation on them.

Sita in **Where Shall We Go This Summer?** is a true rebel. The women at her in-laws spend their time planning, cooking and eating meals. But Sita finds their preoccupation with food and food alone too unnerving, she felt overwhelmed, suffocated at their "vegetarian complacence, the stolidity of the well-fed ..."(WSWGTS 33). In contract to these women; Sita, alive to every nuance around her thundered against their animalistic existence. she craves to be left alone with her own thoughts and imagination. Hence she and Raman, then onwards live in their own flat facing the sea. Sita gets entranced, and watches the ebb and tide of the sea. She rebels against overpowering violent surroundings and insensitive children.

Sita's portrayal testifies that sensitive and intelligent women do not feel satisfied with wifehood and motherhood alone. Their creativity need manifest itself differently from the usual pattern. Sita rebels against the eternal waiting. Desai uses an analogy of soft grey sand and Sita's earlier years of life were dyed, coloured through and through, with the colour of waiting:

> ... It was not a pure colour--it was tinged at times with anxiety, at others with resignation. Or with frenzy, patience, grimness, fear. But whatever its hint, its tone, it had seeped through her, flowed along every smallest capillary till she herself was turned a living monument to Waiting (WSWGTS 55).

Her mundane existence does not enhance her sense of living a fruitful life. This sense of emptiness in the life of housewives is compared with the prisoners of concentration camp by Friedan in **The Feminine Mystique**. Sita senses the violence all around her and it overpowers her, shakes her, shocks her. While she waits for her fifth baby tobe born, she fails to see the meaning of creation in a violent, pain-wracked world. She loses faith in childbirth, and fears for the safety and well being of the baby safely contained in her frail goldfishbowl' belly.

Her rebellion is not overt one, but she tells Raman that she won't have the baby which in turn shocks the placid husband. The life as Sita lives on the main land -Bombay- becomes a crust of dull tedium, of hopeless disappointment which tumbles her more

often than not into a 'crashed pile of debris.' So Sita loses all hopes and refuses to lead a meaningless life further.

Then comes summer squatting "on its haunches, panting, unable to rise" and with it Raman asks Sita "where shall we go this summer?". Sita utterly dejected, instantly welcomes this query which also gives an impetus to her rebellious spirit.

Sita replies in an instant.'but in silence' to go to Manori. Because she feels that she would go there alone:

> The plan to escape boiled up in her with such suddenness, she was herself taken by surprise, not realizing that it had been simmering inside her so long although she was herself the pot, the water and the fire.(WSWGTS 57).

In her married life in spite of 'connecting, link by link, this chain' of relationship,Sita simmers and rebels. The chain not only connects but can also 'throttle, choke, and enslave'. Thus, Desai reveals Sita's rebellion against the insensitive surroundings of everyday world. She also rebels against the insensitivity of other human beings who donot sympathize or share sorrows of modern humdrum existence. She knows that her going away to Manori is an illusion, yet she resolves to go there thinking it as "a refuge, a protection", against the harsh reality of metropolis. She believes that the island "would hold her baby safely unborn, by magic" (WSWGTS 101). Even the sea

will help her to wash the frenzy out of her, drawn it. The tides will lull the children, Karan and Menaka whom she takes with her into smoother, softer beings. The grove of trees would shade them and protect them.

To Sita's surprise and shock her rebellious act of taking refuge on Manori proves a revelation. She feels her life is divided into two halves. It becomes almost impossible for her to decide which half of her life is real and which is unreal. Gradually, as she visualizes her predicament in the society where women have to function their roles. She resolves her problem imaginatively. The monotonous tract of her life 'whips' around her in 'swift circles, perhaps a spiral", and life seems all "bright and all blurred" (WSWGTS 154).

Thus, her rebellion seems resolved in her personal vision of life which has no periods, no stretches.

It is in Nayantara Sahgal's novels that we find a pulsating female heroine Sonali who rebels against the hollow, ostentation in the social fabric. Sahgal's female sensibility essentially creates female characters from the inside. Through Sonali, Sahgal attempts to portray a real picture of women in modern India. However talented or rich a girl might be, the Indian social order dictates that she be married: "There was no getting away from marriage. It was what life was about, from Kabul to the sea", ruminates Sonali (RLU 55). The biggest qualification for a bride is being 'snow-fair'. Thus, colour-line works miraculously in such an ethos in which intelligence of

girls and women is ridiculed or considered an affront. Sonali hates a 'show' as she had witnessed her friend Bimmie's wedding in her teens. Bimmie is attired for her wedding ceremony like a tent. Her nose ring, her manacled hands and submissive eyes make Sonali's heart feel like a stone. She knew vivacious, care-free Bimmie, a school girl. The same Bimmie is now a drastically changed person, whom she fails to recognise.

Sonali is quite different from the stereotypes of Indian womanhood found in fiction. She is an I.A.S. Officer, who topped the list at a competitive examination. She rebels against the old, hackneyed thoughts and customs, ideas and practices, in order to get rid of the world of arranged marriages. She studies in India and goes abroad to study further at Oxford. Thus, her rebellion is not only passive resistence, it is a concrete manifestation of creating a new image of Indian womanhood. Like the heroines discussed earlier, Sonali too is close to her father, Keshava Ranade, who was a conscientious I.C.S. officer from whom Sonali imbibed her values and ideals. Her rebellious attitude is discernible in her refusal to sanction the Happyola factory for Dev. Thus, she rebels overtly, without being intimidated by the bureaucratic set up.

Sonali presents a stark contrast to her sister Kiran and her mother. She has inherited her father's uncompromising idealism. She can well be called a true rebel as she knows what it is to be subjugated like a woman in the Indian society.

Storm in Chandigarh evokes a sense of a storm in the minds

of the reader. The novel depicts the struggle and trauma of the partition of Punjab into two states: Punjab and Harayana. Sahgal delineates the inner life of the heroine Saroj against the turn and tense atmosphere of Chandigarh. Her life seems a long, monotonous monochrome against the glittering lake of Chandigarh where she walks in the evenings to relive her sense of gloom and futility.

Saroj's character is different from Kusum in Nayantara Sahgal's first novel, **A Time to be Happy**. Kusum, as Sanad Shivpal's wife adheres to the archetypal image of Sita -Indian womanhood. Regarding Kusum, Mukerjee notes: "Suffering almost becomes a virtue" (137). She derives her "strength from service and sacrifice." Her credo is non-violence and believes in right action rather than happiness. She remains the virtuous wife and as a result of her virtuousness Sanad gets the best of both the worlds, the new and the old.

Storm in Chandigarh depicts Saroj, who is ensnared in the web of domestic turmoil and infidel husband. The crisis in the marital life of Saroj proves fatal. In her discussion with Vishal Dubey, an official in the Home Ministry, we perceive Saroj's trauma to hold on her crumbling married life. Dubey criticises the Hindu way of life, which is "wrongly called a religion,..." Very much like Sita of **Where Shall We Go This Summer?**, Saroj feels that there is another kind of courage. In the light of her belief she perceives her discordant relationship with her husband, Inder. As she explains to Dubey: "It's like clinging to a precipice, to all the dangerous places, by every hand and foothold, and never

giving up. May be we have that kind" of (courage) (SIC 88).

Saroj's efforts to live a truthfull and a fruitful life with Inder do not succeed. She confesses to Vishal that "there's no real rest except with someone of whom one isn't afraid." (SIC 91). This remark lets one know of Saroj's honesty and uprightness. She struggles to be true to herself, in this process Inder does not see much. In their relationship there is no intimacy which can sustain their marriage. She leads a peculiar life with Inder, where for every shortcoming she has to apologize. They cannot come on equal grounds and talk freely. Thus, on the mental plane Saroj has to be on her guards, as she tells to Vishal, the root cause of tenseness in life:

> "Half the time one is afraid, you know - of saying the wrong thing or of being misunderstood - just of being oneself and being punished for it. So one spends such a lot of time acting, or at least hiding, and that's very tiring" (SIC 91).

The trauma of Saroj's past relationship with another man is heightend by Inder's callousness. She never asks for forgiveness. Her inner self rebels against insensitive Inder and his outlook. She becomes a 'branded sinner' the day she tells Inder of her first relationship with a man.outside the canon of marriage.

Even the relationship between another couple in the novel- Mara and Jit does not sail smooth Mara, being a foreigner revolts

against the old, "useless, impossible ideas going on and on" in the Indian society.

Vishal and Gauri, Nikhil's wife, perceive Saroj and Inder's relation coming to an edge. Saroj, a bright girl, a graduate peters out in her long, tiresome relationship with Inder who belongs to "the he-man school". Saroj, who has been battered by Inder's bouts receives a camaraderie in Gauri's compassion and bonding. She perhaps helps in igniting the spark of rebellion in Saroj. Due to patriarchal strictures and pressures, Saroj is in the vortex. It is Gauri who lends an immense help in her planning to take Saroj to Delhi for her confinement.

Gauri's rebellious spirit breaks the tedious pattern of Saroj's life when the former visits Saroj in Chandigarh. Saroj's bioenergy gets spent in monotonous routine of arranging Inder's house.

It is Dubey who familiarises Saroj with revolutionary ideas that woman must know their own worth, they need not get trampled in the act of living. Sahgal like Walker advocates honesty in the life of a man and a woman. The inner spirit in Saroj longs to be true to herself, as Inder fails to understand this inner usage in Saroj who husbands his wife as if she is in his charge for eternity. Just as Sita in **Where Shall We Go This Summer?** waits and becomes the very colour of waiting, so does Saroj. Thus, the emptiness in the life of a housewife drives her to rebel and Saroj does rebel, leaves Inder and hypocrisy which threatened her earlier life. There may be sunshine and shadows, but the woman

does proclaim her right to live her own life in Sahgal's novels.

Thus, rebellion is a marked trait of heroines in the novels of Desai and Sahgal. They rebel against the established male social order. However, the rebellion is neither violent nor bloody. It is a strong protest and not a revolution.

Against this backdrop of Indian heroines, Sula in Morrison's novel of the same title emerges as rebellion incarnate. In the words of Mary Helen Washington:

> She is too magical, too extraordinary, too heroic and proud. She is the doer of deeds we dreamed of doing but dared not. She defies convention, scorns mediocrity, refuses the sexual role (154).

The very indomitable spirit of black women artists is reflected in the creation of their heroines and their gradual progression from being into becoming. Yet more often than not black woman is:"Not a woman with power, not a liberated woman (if liberation means the freedom to make choices about one's life), but a mule, picking up the burdens that everyone else has thrown down and refused to carry" as Washington writes in her Introduction to **Black Eyed Susans** In spite of racism and oppression the black woman survives and strives to survive 'as a whole'. She passed through harrowing middle passage, where she suffered at the hands of white males and females. Several slave narratives bear testimony to Alice Walker's claim: "that black women have for centuries been suppressed artists, some driven to

a numb and bleeding madness by the springs of creativity in them for which there was no release" (Washington Intro xi).

The female protagonists in Walker's poems, short stories and novels, as Christian appraises, "seek at all costs to be characteristically and spontaneously themselves" (88). Whether in West African, Afro-American or Indian Society, a woman with a spiritedness is always shunned. But just as everything in nature grows and defines itself in its own way; Walker's heroines endeavour to be themselves against all odds. In other words, they rebel against conventions which thwart black women from achieving the highest goal, to be themselves. In her two collections of short stories **In Love and Trouble** and **You cann't keep a Good Woman Down** we encounter heroines who defy the male dominance on black women as well as the unnatural hierarchical distinctions.

The personal spirit of Walker's women characters is also named as *agwu*, the spirit in all living beings. We perceive a clear progression of *agwu* in Walker's short stories and three novels. The heroines of **In Love and Trouble** wage their struggle in spite of themselves. Whereas, the heroines of **You Can't Keep a Good Woman Down** emphasize their right to challenge any societal chain that bind them. The heroines in Walker's novels, starting with Mem Copeland to Celie, embody their rebellious spirit through their constant struggles. Thus, the urge of black heroines as well as Indian heroines to be true to themselves bind them together. Like Walker, her heroines such as Meridian and Celie resist against sexism and racism in America. Walker herself embodies 'womanist' spirit as she focuses on womanist issues in

her novels through her heroines. These women pass through confusion and resist the established order and rebel. When these protagonists discover a freeing order, their growth, mental as well as spiritual, is achieved.

Through Celie's letters in **The Colour Purple** we can gauge the horrid impact of oppression on her spirit and finally her growing internal strength and final victory. As black women rebel against black men, be they fathers, brothers, husbands or lovers, their bonding to other black women is focused as vital to their survival. Through their sisterhood these protagonists can liberate themselves. Celie's covert rebellion against her husband to save her sister from ignominable future prospects reveal her inner strength and female bonding. She rebels against the societal convention and forms a lesbian relationship with her husband's mistress, Shug Avery. Celie's triumph is complete when she liberates herself from a relationship of a loveless marriage. She values her self-worth. The sensuous love bond between her and Shug establishes her agwu and African animism. Thus, she is the heroine who gets transformed, after a great and difficult struggle, to be herself. This transformation is felt intensely as she relates her own story in her own rural idiom and voice, which rings in the ears of the readers even after the novel has been read completely.

In **The Third Life of Grange Copeland** Walker juxtaposes the restrictions imposed on Margaret and Mem with their consequential responses. The novelist highlights the tension between convention

and the struggle of these women "to be whole".

Mem Copeland was once a beautiful woman. But after her marriage with Brownfield, for nine long years she underwent harrowing experiences. She is treated ignominiously by the very husband who praised and prized her initially. Her struggle to have better living standards for herself and her daughters finally puts a shotgun in her hands aimed at Brownfield. Thus, her rebellion is the outcome of her economic as well as sexual oppression. Mem allows Brownfield enough chances to feel "a little bit like a man". He fails Mem to go out to get the midwife even once under the pretext that he is too drunk, or the weather is too cold.

Her good sense dictates her to leave the way of life Brownfield as a sharecropper adopts. She is determined to give a better standard of living to her children. She has suffered enough. She is the black woman who has worked all her life, "first trying to be something and then just trying to be" (TTLGC 87). It is the intimate world of human relationships, the bond between the mother and the children, for which Mem is prepared to toil harder. Brownfield, who blames the white master for his inadequacy to support his family, is "mean and lazy as the devil," besides 'a fool' in Mem's view. Thus, mem's rebellion is against the oppressive social order as much as against Brownfield. She does not approve of believing Captain Davis-the white master-God.

In her effort to improve her living conditions she not only finds a job in the city but also signs the lease for a better

house. Her strivings did help her in expecting a better future and an end to her dreadful life. The rebellious heroine's mettle is challenged when she asks Brownfield to follow rules she makes for living in the new house. Besides some ten commandments, she declares that it is to be her house, and in that house the white man's expectations of them would be of no count. Thus, Mem's rebellion is an overt defiance of racial norms set by the sexist, patriarchal order that she challenges openly.

The eponymous heroine of Waller's second novel **Meridian** can be juxtaposed with Sula of Morrison. She rebels against the entire sexist, capitalist and socio-political order. Her long journey into the awakening of her consciousness and self-hood begin with physical pain. When her son is sick with 'gasping and screaming' for a month, she becomes utterly exhausted. Constant demands of mothering her son batters her. Hence she rebels. Contrary to black woman's mythisized image of 'mammy' Meridian dreams each night "of ways to murder him" (her son) (M 69).

Just as Meridian's great grandmother Feather Mae rebels against the established norms of church and religion, Meridian rebels against the ubiquitous image of woman as "a mindless body, a sex creature, something to hang false hair and nails on" (M 71) in popular magazines.

In her journey to selfhood, she "had lacked courage, lacked initiative or a mind of her own" initially (M 109). Yet, from her inner most self comes the <u>will</u> that makes her to go to Saxon college. Then, she often thinks of herself as an adventuress. She

breaks through and establishes herself as an 'emergent woman'. Meridian feels thrilled that she belongs to the people who produced Harriet Tubman, who was the "only American woman who led troops in battle" (M 110). When Meridian met Truman she was already an awakened woman. She apprehends that Truman would have liked her better as "an attractive woman, but asleep". He does not want a woman who tries "to claim her own life" (M 110).

Meridian rebels against the institution of marriage and motherhood, patterns. She leaves Truman after her abortion as she discovers his infidelity towards her. She is enraged as she endures terrible pain while "he was oblivious to it" (M 114). Her indignation is visibly demonstrated in her defiance, when Meridian hits Truman with her "green book bag" thrice and leaves him.

Her revolutionary ideas get transformed into action on her deserting the usual pattern of life. She vocalizes her dissatisfaction at the classist society. She abhors "owning things (which) others could not have" as is the case in the capitalistic society. Besides she favours "the destruction of the rich as a class and the eradication of all personal economic preserves." She believes that "no one should be allowed to own more land than could be worked in a day, by hand" (M 118).

In a similar vein, Meridian rebels against the sexist society where woman, at every turn is assaulted due to her gender. The male, may he be a doctor or a professor, a black revolutionary or a black student is not an exception to the rule.

All of them alike treat the woman as a sex object, trample her, rape her. This attitude reveals the sexist nature of a racist society, against which Meridian struggles to survive 'whole'.

Meridian's character reveals that she rebels against the traditional pattern of motherhood. Like Sula, Meridian too chooses "to stand outside her community to define herself as in revolt against it" (Christian 179). We find the black woman as part of an evolutionary spiral, moving from victimization to consciousness, from abused, work burdened Mem Copeland to the deer-eyed, determined Meridian, through these characters. Walker portrays the saga of black, rebellious woman in racist and sexist, society.

Meridian's active participation in the Civil Rights Movement reveals her revolutionary nature. It is a movement opposed to violence and committed to the "wholeness" and creativity. She also probes into the meaning of motherhood, not solely in a biological context, but in terms of justice and love. Even in her poetry as Christian tells, Walker chooses "a flower as the symbol for revolution.". She thereby suggests that "beauty, love, and revolution exist in a necessary relationship." By choosing petunia as the specific flower, "she emphasizes the qualities of color, exuberance and commonness rather than blandness, rigidity, or delicacy" (97).

The heroine of **Meridian** is a radical who owns nothing. She wanders through the land, listens to the people and is close to them. She also helps people to get used to using their voice. She

paves the way for women like her to be their own selves. In the last Chapter, 'Release' Meridian becomes strong enough to return to the world, not strong in the traditional sense of her forerunners' sacrificies, but in the sense of her awakening to the preciousness of life. Walker presents a new angle of seeing motherhood through Meridian's perspective. Besides, Meridian passes on her struggle to Truman. He realizes that the "sentence of bearing the conflict in her own soul which she had imposed on herself and lived through-must now be borne in terror" (M 220) by the rest of the people around. Thus, Walker conveys that in passing on the struggle for understanding to man-Truman-the need for understanding of creativity and life in both men and women is a prerequisite for revolutionary change.

In Morrison's **The Bluest Eye** the character of nine year old Claudia, "the author's childhood alter ego" is representative of rebellious heroines. She is the one who is fascinated by all bodily functions and the 'physical residues' of living in the world. She rebels at being washed, finding her scrubbed body obscene due to its "dreadful and humiliating absence of dirt" (**TBE** 21). Claudia, who is endowed with sensitivity and imagination, dislikes the "irritable, unimaginative cleanliness" (**TBE** 21). As a young school girl, she loves the 'ink marks' on her legs and face. Due to the ritual of cleaning the body, she is devoid of her "creations and accumulations of the day gone" (**TBE** 21). Thus, she resents the very idea of getting rid of what is one's own.

Claudia's portrayal is emphatically that of a rebel heroine right from the beginning. The scene is all set for this young rebel as she and Frieda, her elder sister, watch Rosemary, their next-door white friend. The ferment of her anger froths as they "stare at her, wanting her bread, but more than that wanting to poke the arrogance out of her eyes and smash the pride of ownership that curls her chewing mouth" (TBE 12). Thus, the spirit of rebellion upsurges in Claudia when she encounters Pecola and Frieda in their adoration of 'cu-ute' Shirley Temple. She is clear about her "unsullied hatred" of "all the Shirley Temples of the world." In contradiction to the elders' belief about her, she despises the gift of "blue-eyed Baby Doll" for Christmas. She is not interested in babies or the "concept of motherhood". Her interest is only in humans of her own age and size. She is quick to learn and associate motherhood with "old age" and "other remote possibilities." Hence, any imposition is not acceptable to Claudia MacTeer, be it in the form of a gift or an idea. Her strong desire is 'to dismember' the big, blue-eyed doll. Her spirit revolts against everyone who adores, praises, agrees that "a blue-eyed, yellow haired, pink-skinned doll was what every girl child treasured" (TBE 20).

To the chagrin of her elders, she breaks off the doll's tiny fingers, bends the flat feet, loosens the hair, twists the head around, and the doll makes a screeching sound, precisely, the sound Claudia associates with the sound of their "icebox door opening on rusty hinges in July" (TBE 20-21). This act of Claudia reflects her rebellious spirit.

Morrison's portrayal of the MacTeers is unparelled. Both the parents literally thrash Henry Washington; their roomer when they learn about his 'fingering' of Frieda, and throw him out of their premises. Thus, their daughters too derive toughness and resilience to defend themselves and develop the inner strength to survive in the midst of a colorist, classist, patriarchal society. Frieda, in an amazingly clear and loud voice rushes to defend Pecola who is harassed by a bunch of headstrong boys. Similarly, when Maureen taunts Pecola, Claudia and Frieda for being 'black' and 'ugly', the MacTeer girls meet it with vehemence. Claudia feels enraged against the harasing boys. She rebels against Pecola's cowering attitude: "Her pain antagonized me. I wanted to open her up, crisp her edges, ram a stick down that hunched and curving spine, force her to stand erect and spit the misery out on the street" (TBE 61). This attitude obviously suggests Claudia's rebellious spirit. This young Claudia rebels, when she hears the yellow and pink Fisher girl addressing Mrs. Breedlove as "Polly". "...when even Pecola called her mother Mrs. Breedlove" (TBE 86). It is naturally in keeping with Claudia's temperament that at that juncture it "seemed reason enough to scratch her" (TBE 86).

Pauline Breedlove's early days are marked with a spirit of rebellion. During her first job, when the white woman denied her rightful eleven dollars, unless she left Cholly, she had enough courage to defy her. She thought once again and realized that it was not "none too bright for a black woman to leave a black man for a white woman" (TBE 95).

Another spurt of rebellion in Pauline is during her delivery in the hospital. The white doctor's discriminatory remark infuriates her. When he visits Pauline along with other internees he remarked,"... these here women you don't have any trouble with. They delivery right away and with no pain. Just like horses" (TBE 99). This was an outright insult to Pauline, a black woman in labour. To add fuel to fire, the same batch of doctors approached white women and felt concerned about their well being: "How you feel? Gonna have twins? ..." (TBE 99). They talked in a friendly tone to them. The same batch does not bother to inquire about Pauline's health. This discriminatory treatment rouses Pauline's anger and she rebels by crying out loudly.

The little MacTeer sister who narrates Pecola's poignant life history raises her voice "in defense of what is black." As Claudua, a rebel, feels "more strongly than my fondness for Pecola, I felt a need for someone to want the black baby to live just to counteract the universal love of white baby dolls, Shirley Temples, and Maureen Peals... " (TBE 148). Claudia raises her voice against the prevalent perversion all around her. She and Frieda know how Pecola was beaten by Mrs. Breedlove and soothed the "pink tears of the frozen doll baby that sounded like the door of our icebox" (TBE 148). We just adore Claudia; the rebel, and Frieda: her sister. They had defended themselves against everything and everybody. They considered all speech as a code to be broken by them, and all gestures subject to careful analysis. They said: "Nobody paid us any attention, so we paid

very good attention to ourselves." (TBE 149). Thus, the two MacTeer sisters embody the rebellious spirit, very much in keeping with the black women artists.

The many faceted black heroines are stunning in their power and reach the deepest core of memory and consciousness of the reader. Portrayals of Alice Walker's Meridian and Toni Morrison's Sula and Claudia are unforgettable in the gallary of black heroines. They "struggled to forge an identity larger than the one society would force upon them. They are aware and conscious, and that very consciousness is potent" (Washington, XV). It is "for purposes of liberation, black women writers will first insist on their own name, their own space" (Washington XVI). Morrison's **Sula** portray's such a rebel heroine.

In the Peace family in **Sula** one encounters two rebellious heroines - Eva; the grandmother and Sula, the granddaughter. "The creator and the sovereign of this enormous house was Eva Peace, who sat in a wagon on the third floor directing the lives of her children, friends, strays, and a constant stream of boarders" (S 30). Nel and Sula rebel against the norms of society which crush the initiative and identity of women and do not permit freedom. Nel and Sula "had discovered years before that they were neither white nor male, and that all freedom and triumph was forbidden to them. they had set about creating something else to be" (S 52). Between the two friends in **Sula**, Nel Wright rebels against her 'manipulating' and meticulous mother. Apart from her imaginary trips where she all alone was to travel, the first concreate act of her rebellion was her friendship with Sula. This gesture and

the complementing spirit of Nel's defiance is attributed to "the trip, perhaps, or her new found meanness," which "gave her the strength to cultivate a friend in spite of her mother" (S 19). However, later on, Nel settles as a 'conventional woman' in life. The novel resonates with Manichean idea of 'good' and 'evil'. Nel, initially gives an impression of a good, law-abiding house-wife, which she imbibes from her mother. She forcibly rubbed all the creativity out of Nel. But it went against Nel's grain, hence she was induced to have an intimate friendship with Sula who was totally different from her "in the way she looks at life." It is fascinating to look at Nel as a counter part of Sula, who hardly questions anything. One may find Sula disseminating the knowledge, as Morrison tells Stepto that "living totally by the law and surrendering completely to it without questioning anything, sometimes makes it impossible to know anything about yourself" (216-217).

Sula is diametrically opposite to Nel in the way she was reared up and consequent mental make-up. She is generally considered an evil, 'a pariah' by the Bottom Community. Sula's mettle shines in her adventuresomeness. She is the one who is interested in delving deep into life and experiencing it fully. She is 'a rule-breaker', hardly abiding by any values, because she does not believe in any of the community laws. She disregards them completely.

After staying away from the Bottom for ten years, Sula's rebellious character is revealed to the full in her 'scorching

dialogue' with Eva. Eva's suggestion 'to get married' is brushed aside as Sula is more in favour of making herself, than making 'somebody else'. Sula goes to an extent nobody ever dares to go. She defies Eva with complete disregard to Eva's sacrifice. Sula challenges her. She wishes to live the way she likes, even if she were throwing away her life: To Eva's remark that she was throwing away her life; Sula gives a quick repartee, "It's mine to throw" (S 93). This clearly reveals Sula's conviction that she should live her own life as she pleases. Obviously, it attracts us as women hardly own themselves by and large in the society. Most of all, Sula Peace as Christian asserts, "tries to create her own pattern, to achieve her own self" (153). Perhaps Eva is a prototype of Sula as she rebels against the severity of poverty-insecurity, and the famished day-to-day existence. Nevertheless, it is ironical that Eva resists Sula's need to make herself. Interestingly enough, Sula has as Christian perceives, "inherited this need for independence, this arrogance, this orneriness, at least partially from Eva who had the gall to destroy her only son to save his maleness" (166).

Right from her physical features like stemmed rose mark to her imaginative thinking Sula is unique, "she's not the run-of-the-mill" heroine. The impact of Sula's return to the Bottom may be symbolized by the 'plague of robins', for an average dweller in the community as anillomen. But to Nel, who was so close to Sula that they "were two throats and one eye" and Sula's retreat to the Bottom calls for celebration. It enhances her joy. Sula's presence brings a mystical calmness and rapture to Nel's tiny

universe. Because Sula "never competed; she simply helped others define themselves. Other people seemed to turn their volume on and up when Sula was in the room. More than any other thing, humor returned" (S 95).

Sula's rebellious thoughts swirl in Nel's house. When Nel mentions that she has not "strangled nobody yet" Sula boldly remarks that half of the Bottom needs killing. Sula's rebellious nature springs from the values she cherishes. She is not ambitious and she does not crave for material gains. "For that reason she feels no compulsion to verify herself be consistent with herself" (S 119). She is goaded by an inner voice to know herself. She has inherited Eva's qualities of 'arrogance' and 'self-indulgence'. Sula's imginativeness is a distinctive characteristic. The sheer challenge to love life, to live life in its stride was Sula's way of life.

Sula's circumference of life is different from the rest of the tradition-bound women of the Bottom. Until Nel's marriage Sula and Nel had clung "as the closest thing to both an other and a self" (S 119). Sula does not want to succumb to the life-sucking tradition as Nel has done. She has no intimate knowledge of marriage and the possessiveness of one person. Sula is totally unaware of "causing Nel pain when she bedded down with Jude" (S 119). Sula has no regard for lies or to lie for the sake of pretence or hypocrisy. She learns that Nel has joined the bandwagon of the Bottom women after marriage. None of the Bottom women are interested in embracing life with its challenges and dangers, excitement and imaginativeness. Against this, Sula

realizes that "no one would ever be that version of herself which she seels to reach out to and touch with an ungloved hand" (S 121). Her life becomes a symbolic odyssey where only "her own mood and whim" prevails.

But "Sula has the distinction of being herself in a community" which has codified that "self-hood can only be selfishness." Early in the life she passes through two revealing experiences: one, when Hannah remarks that she loves Sula but does not like her. This experience males her lose faith in her own mother. The other, when accidentaly Chicken Little gets drowned "with a closed place in the middle". The second incident males her repentant and she can not overcome the sense of guilt. Since then "she had no center, no spect around which to grow" (S 119). Sula, like her mother Hannah, sleeps with the husbands of her neighbours indiscriminately. But the distinction between Hannah and Sula is that the one-Hannah-males the men feel complete and seems to complement the women, whereas, the other-Sula-sleeps with them once and discards them. Like Hannah, Sula does not experience sex as a pleasant pastime. As Christian notes: "In sex she knows not her partner but herself" (166). This obviously places Sula in the company of rebellious heroines.

Sula's life, according to the customs and traditions of the Bottom is not hers to experiment with. Her sense of freedom has developed to such an extent that it becomes narcissistic in proportion. Such freedom is allowed only to the Gods, not to the mortals. Thus, Sula is a unique rebellious heroine who wishes to

have the freedom of Gods. This freedom cannot be granted to her because she is a black woman, as Nellie testifies that this cannot be because Sula is a "woman and a colored woman at that" (S 142). Nellie, a spokeswoman of the views of the tradition bound community advises to Sula that she cannot act like a man, that she cannot wall around independently acting according to her will. Even while dying, Sula's majestic demeanour is unique. She is all aware of the difference between her life and that of the rest of the women. She does not conceal the truth from Nel and tells that she knows "what every colored woman in this country is doing" (S 143). Nel might have been shocked at the answer. "Dying. Just like me. But the difference is they dying like a stump. Me, I'm going down like one of those redwoods. I sure did live in this world" (S 143). One feels the irony in this bizarre comparison of Sula to redwoods, because redwoods are associated with longevity, unless struck by the lightening. Sula's birth mark pursues her own uniqueness as revealed in her remark that she has got her own mind. In addition she knows "what goes on in it". Nel, not fully convinced of Sula's uniqueness says: "Lonely, ain't it ?" to this Sula says, "Yes. But my lonely is mine. Now your lonely is somebody else's. Made by somebody else and handed to you. Ain't that something ? A secondhand lonely" (S 142).

This assertion of herself proves too much for the town of Bottom. As the world is used to compromise, it will neither accept, nor understand, as Christian notes, Sula's concentration— "perhaps it must not, to maintain even a slim semblance of

order" (167). After Sula's death, the Bottom community too crumbles. Only Nel and Shadrach survive. The tale of Sula, the marked woman, thus emits the sparks and fans the embers of rebellion for future heroines.

Thus, women protagonists in Indian as well black American fiction, as we have seen in this chapter, rebel against social structures. In respect of the Indian society as Mukherjee asserts that the joint family is a formidable force. It represents the voice of authority and tradition. Further, it serves as a microcosm of the hierarchial society against which "the individual has to rebel against in order to attain his (her) personal identity. Just as society has various levels based on caste, the joint family has various levels of authority, different roles being allotted to individuals. ..." (82). We would assert that it is akin to the feudal system and the head of the family (a male) is on the apex of the pyramid and woman are feudatory.

In regard to the black situation, we perceive the 'intimidation' and as a reactionary measure, we note rebellious heroines. This leads us to study another disturbing phenomenon of female oppression. Morrison, Walker, Sahgal and Desai's quivering sensitivity absorb the subtlety and inherent in female predicament. They render the moving portraits of oppressed women characters. As Sartre accepts that among all whites their "worthiest souls contain racial prejudice" (21). Black women in and out of slavery have experienced dual oppression of being

black and female. One would posit that through the black women's literary renaissance they have "slowly but surely", achieved the "emancipation of the rebel." As we study the novels by black women novelists we notice that their novels have helped in diffusing the 'colonial gloom' which pervaded the life of black women. As Sartre tells in his preface to **The Wretched of the Earth** that the "rebel's weapons is the proof of his humanity" (22). 'Word' proves an apt weapon in the hands of women novelists as is studied in the sixth chapter of this thesis. The black and Indian heroines exemplify their humanity as is evinced in the characters of Sula and Mem, Claudia and Celie, Sita and Nanda Kaul, Monisha and Bim.

The genesis of these heroines' rebelion can be traced in their oppression in their respective societies as is examined in the fourth chapter of this thesis.

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