

A Struggle For Existence: A Thematic Study of Sex Workers in Jhimli Mukherjee Pandey's novel "Not Just Another Story"

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A systematic study of the most suppressed class of people in the society of human evolution are the sex workers. They are a highly vulnerable lot; vulnerable to diseases of a sexual nature, socially vulnerable to disgrace and economically insufficient and burdened. This genre of literature is examined in the "Queer Theory".

The Queer Theory seeks to examine various modes of writing that come from the socially underprivileged sections of society like the lesbians, gays and the class that projects sexuality as a way of life. What started out as a "liberation movement went on to become a full-fledged movement aimed at getting an 'identity'. These queer groups have the commonality of being suppressed minorities. In the 70's a single identity was aimed at; in order to recognise themselves. The 80's and 90's also focussed on the play of power and privilege between Heterosexuals and Lesbians. The most recent studies focuses on the idea that race and economic class relations are effective modes of gender and sexuality.

The area of studies in literature that has a universal appeal is that of the sex workers and their struggles to carve out an identity. This novel "Not Just Another Story" by an Indian writer Jhimli Mukherjee Pandey is precisely about three generations of sex workers in the family. The place of action centres around a village in Bangladesh. The posh Salt Lake City in Kolkata is the epicentre of all sexual activity. The character Lakshmi has a constant struggle to make another life outside the brothels and carve out a niche for herself.

Her one and only challenge in life is to find an identity and through this process acquire power and stability. The novel begins with Saraju Bala in the locales of Sonagachi. She was the youngest of all the children at fourteen years of age. The traditional Indian home would list out responsibilities for girls who attain adolescence. They have to fulfil them before taking up other

responsibilities. Education was a second priority. She considered herself to be partly privileged.

There is an obvious reference to child marriage from the lines "she was one of the few girls of her age who still went to school. The rest of them were married and many of them had moved away" (15). The reason why most girls marry at a younger age is to fulfil their responsibilities early and also avoid financial burden on their parents. All the young girls' minds and intellect was centred around the domestic work of the household like dehusking the paddy grains, sweeping the courtyard and picking up stones.

The mother of Saraju is a woman who belongs to the old traditional stereotypical thinking patterns. She believes in not giving an education to the girl child because it would not be of any gain to the family. There is a paradigmatic shifting of tone in the father's beliefs. The father Haripada reiterates the idea that a girl would only bring in Laxmi (symbolizing good luck) and that they are lucky to get a daughter. Haripada is like a feminist and supports women's rights and education. He was a self-sufficient man and also cares for the welfare of others. Some lines which describe this quality are "kaka, it is best to educate your daughters, too. After all, an educated mother will raise educated children". Wasn't that what Tagore had said" (18).

Haripada is symbolic of modernist thinking. But the obvious and unanswered questions that were staring into his face are as to why he did not give his older daughter in marriage? Was prostitution meant to be her occupation? This novel raises quintessential questions like the circumstances that led to Haripada (her father) initiate her into the flesh trade. This decision was not a carefully planned one rather a spontaneous activity.

Events of a political nature were unfurling in West Bengal. The partition of Bengal into West Bengal and Bangladesh shattered people's dreams.

The political upheavals can have a bearing on an individual's social life; this impact can either be a positive one or a negative one. Haripada's role was to pass on information to various other groups of people secretly. He becomes a revolutionary. Haripada out of his innocence leaks out all the information and is threatened by his brothers for the act. Hence, he flees to Sealdah and spends his time in a shock. The father who loved his daughter dearly, ignored her. Saraju had no parental intervention in her education. She had sleepless nights due to long queues at toilets in the morning. Some mashed potatoes and boiled rice are kept at her table. Her siblings and relatives became distant from her.

The act of prostitution makes a woman lose all her confidence and a non-existent entity. According to Sheila Jeffreys a critic, "prostitution is a violation of human rights". Saraju was so unprepared for the whole episode that she didn't even know how to react. What could she expect? Saraju had to learn the nuances of the trade gradually. Her father detached himself from the family. There was a gradual withdrawal of Haripada's family responsibility. This initiation into prostitution is one thing that no parents would introduce to their children. It is like an art of imitation. The family circumstances often become the voice of the victim's state. For Saraju it came at such a tender age where she had no maturity for understanding such things. They initiate her into the trade indirectly. She began socializing and mingling with children of her age with ease. This would not bring her bodily satisfaction and a mental one too.

Her first socialization was with Ramen, the street hawker. Ramen played a significant role in her life; she would listen to stories from him. Ramen promises to take her to Victoria Memorial along with Lata. But Saraju does not return and she was left at the brothel. Her caretaker was a woman named Shefali.

Dark secrets unfolded itself gradually. Lata and Saraju landed up in a totally messy social situation. Neither her parents nor Shefali the caretaker had any mercy on her. The hawker Ramen is projected as an anti-woman character. He merely looks at women as an object of pleasure. The Object Relations Theory projects the idea that a person/ thing which is objectified is seen merely as a stereotype. It does not play an active role. The objects were Lata and Saraju's own bodies. Ramen tortures and takes them far away to deny them a right to a decent livelihood. The next object is Saraju's friend Lata. Lata is sold to another brothel owner.

Tremendous psychological pressure and trauma is experienced by Saraju. She experiences the feelings of despair and hopelessness of being dragged into a net. Her heart is broken and mind split up into two fabricated fragments. The psyche and mind of a woman who suddenly gets introduced to the flesh trade is in a state of shock. The victim shows up symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). This state experiences problems like depression, somatization, sleep problems, frustration and alcoholism. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder is an experience that results from a trauma like injury or a physical problem. The direct reason for this situation is a childhood trauma, mental problem or drug abuse. But Saraju's story was entirely different. She was trapped into this situation and it became a childhood trauma. The worst thing was that her lonely confinement in another room became so unbearable. Her guardian was a woman named Shefali. Shefali had eight girls in her aegis and many attendant girls to work. She would report to her owner named Sonamukhi, a prostitute who retired. She is a symbol of an independent woman who earned her living and made a social status for herself. This house of hers got converted into a brothel. She could earn a lot from the clients.

Saraju gets shifted to Sonamukhi's establishment. She became a kind of threat to Sonamukhi due to her respectable background. It would be a real challenge in order to groom the girl to be a prostitute. Sonamukhi praises Saraju for her looks and disposition. The greatest quality that Sonamukhi possessed was to counsel the girls to be inducted into the life of a brothel resident. Saraju still had no idea of what a brothel is like. In fact it was a real challenge for her.

There was an internal mind conflict happening in Saraju's mind. She was juxtaposed between two elements, one was that of tradition and the other an unheard of and unseen reality. She was too young to even understand the word 'sex'. This dreaded act she had to perform, in order to lose her virginity to a middle-aged man. Her virginity was being taken advantage of; nevertheless, Sonamukhi fetched a lump sum through Saraju. The most horrible experience that she could undergo all her life was this one. After that fateful night, Saraju got her reward of ten rupees. She was half in doubt and half in expectation. Did she earn herself a true reward or merely one that would be paid for her occupation? Was it moralistic or careeristic? In reality it is a dilemma for her. She gradually begins accepting her 'so called' career. It was only partly a career and partly a favour.

Secondly, this career would never fulfil her dream of having a good one. This would question her very nature of being absorbed into a profession of flesh trade. According to the novel itself, "But slowly she developed a steely reserve that no one could penetrate"(39).

Saraju was not so keen on accepting a life full of doubts and question marks. The lines "she was friendly with the other girls but held herself aloof proves this point. For a person from a good background, this trade would be a hindrance to a decent living. The social status would be completely altered. It would never be the same again.

She behaved like a fine girl from a refined background and exhibited this in front of Sonamukhi too. But the real action in the novel begins from this time. All of a sudden, Saraju breaks the news to Sonamukhi that she is pregnant. All the world is shattered. They hadn't been prepared for this kind of an odd development.

This occupation does not accord any importance to the value system. Their workings are completely focussed on pleasing and satisfying the client's libido. Saraju became a passive role-player all of a sudden. She had no second thought of aborting the child and tried every means to bring it to the world. This action of hers was to render her lost family back. Starting a new family was on her mind as she could not bring back the other original family of her parents and siblings.

Saraju became the one to unite her original family and the new family together. She is like a bridge bringing in new connections and firmly holding it in place. A sense of identity and oneness are the ideals of Saraju. There came a time in Saraju's life when everything became a stand still. She was crushed between two decisions; one of bringing up her child and the other of continuing a life of identity. Which one would she choose? It would be both, of course.

Another big challenge Saraju was facing was that she would be out of work for several months until her delivery. Sonamukhi took on the role of a guardian to Saraju. She had already warned Saraju to abort the child but did not pay any heed to the advice. There is a stark contrast in the way the situation is perceived by both the women. Sonamukhi is projected as a modern woman who only waits for her clients and sees a hindrance if her goal is not met. She never grows with time and has a one-sided approach to things. She is a flat character; a one-dimensional one and does not undergo any evolution or change. Fixed mentalities and single dimensional thinking is her mind's work.

Saraju is presented as a woman who is free and independent in thinking. She wants to break free from societal notions and emerge victorious in her life. Saraju is portrayed as a round character. A round character can be simple and at times complex. He/ She can be put to all kinds of trials and temptations and as a result of this, can become a person of good establishment. They can carve out their own identity. They are representative of real life and character. Saraju firmly becomes a mother and names her daughter Malati. She soon becomes the dear child of the household. By the character of Saraju Sonamukhi's attitude and approach to life slowly undergoes a transformation. From a hard core commercial woman to a woman who manages brothels and babies, Sonamukhi has come a long and hard way. She was slowly changing to a friendly role. All the hardness of life was making her personality to become stiff.

Children hardly learn through imitation. Even Aristotle the greatest of philosophers of our time, propounded that imitation is an art. So also, Saraju's child wanted to be a prostitute just like her mother. "I want to play with dolls and dress up like you do" (42) are Malati's words. The daughter's expressions are like that of an innocent girl. This term "dress up" is a loaded term for prostitutes dressing themselves up. Malati is ignorant of the idea that she would have to please customers for her flesh, like the way her mother did. Saraju entertained customers like anything and for a reason she also encouraged good relationships with them.

Once Malati turned ten years, Saraju set her up on an adventure to make herself independent. She broke free from the shackles of Sonamukhi and gained her own individual identity. She had already saved money to pay off her debts and rented a room. She became the "mistress of her own household"(43). Saraju did not have interference of any sort. She could entertain customers at her own will and wish. In the literary context, she becomes the "New Woman". The New Woman detests all authority and is independent in thought and action. She also opposes all things traditional while making her way through difficult situations and coming out with success. She finds an inner will to survive and fight all odds. She continued with her profession and juggled time sincerely. Fulfilling both personal and professional commitments, became her challenge, rather than seeking an identity for herself. Her priorities after marriage were adjusting herself. As Malati grew, Saraju would also be a household help. She had taught Malati the work and led her away from the

flesh trade. But the girl had no inclination towards other occupations. Malati had started visiting Noor Manzil which was a brothel for strip teasing. The aunties who ran this establishment would hire out services and half the commission went to them. Malati learned the tricks of the trade slowly. A tussle started with the mother Saraju and daughter Malati. Saraju wanted to make a decent life for her daughter Malati but she made money by prostitution.

There is a stark contrast in the behaviour of Malati and Saraju. Saraju is traditional while Malati is ultra-modern. Saraju believes in hard work and a comfortable life thereafter but Malati believes in money and status through smart work. She was outgoing by nature and charming too. She attracted customers easily. They were only happy to make her their partner. Noor Manzil is the poshest of all brothels and kind of upper class.

Malati went to the extent of becoming friends with Joy, a rich boy of the lane. He had learnt the art of going out with friends and took a special interest in Malati. She cultivated a friendship with Pritam and Kushan who were rich and spoilt kids. They had an elitist culture. Despite this, they befriended Saraju and immerse in a game of desire. Malati earned a living by performing massages on clients. The older men were enjoying the pampering by younger girls. But all hell broke loose when Malati was severely gangraped. She was devastated when her mother abused her for losing her virginity to several men. Malati became fifteen years of age. Her life changed forever. Her mother and she were transforming into spiritual goddesses. They would wait eagerly for Bengali festivals and celebrate with sweet dishes.

Poila Baisakhi is the Bengali New Year. A sweet called Payesh is made. Malati was not a conventional woman who woke up early and cooked traditional food like her mother. She loved to chill out in her teenage years and not fulfilling responsibilities. She spent her time in a carefree manner. Saraju was not in a position to check or correct her daughter. The new generation children are very disobedient to their parents and do not pay any heed. They have their own convictions and beliefs. Based on their small world of experience, they acquire their own dreams and ambitions and bring it to fruition. Parents and guardians opinions' do not matter to them anymore. The teenage years were setting into her life and major decisions had to be made. Malati found herself to be dominating and not listening to opinions from other elders.

There was a sudden lull from the first night's traumatic experience of Malati. She had become dull and Saraju hoped that she would give

back the brothel life. She sprang up mightier than before and went ahead with the sexual act. Sarajuhad an attachment with Sonamukhi who was her mentor. She becomes ever grateful to her and renders service to her arthritis-stricken legs. She would help in being a masseur. Malati returned all the good that was done to her by the other aunties. She was being cared for while her mother earned a living. It was a really nice feeling for Sonamukhi when Malati comes to her house and enquires about her welfare. She had not expected this and at the same time the other girls were not so grateful. The profession of prostitution is like any other profession that helps one earn money. But the only difference is that there is no respect accorded to this trade. There is no dignity of dress, discourse and behaviour. The one notable thing is that there is togetherness in the prostitutes' dealings. They are attached to each other, respectable and firm in dealings with members of their community.

Most importantly they bond with one another as members of a single family. They are glad to share their joys, sorrows and experiences. Sonamukhi compares the prostitutes of her generation and the present generation. She notices a sea change. The present generation's choices, value system and interactions are based on selfishness. Women from all the sections of society were present in the brothel of Sonamukhi. Some were housewives, some poor, some servant girls and the others who were desperate for some work and money. In the beginning of brothel life there is a sense of rejection, hopelessness, despair, maladjustment and not coming to terms with reality and finally adjustment to the circumstances. In the middle of the novel, the readers are introduced to a character called Golapi.

The novelist Jhimli Mukherjee projects the helplessness with which a person would land up in this trade. Golapi was harassed by her husband and parents because of giving insufficient dowry. Her sister-in-law silently sought refuge in introducing her to the flesh trade and the kind of entertainment it brings. Asha, Golapi's sister-in-law found a new ray of hope in sexual energy.

Sexual energy, when repressed severely also brings a certain depression in the minds of people and negates the incapability to carry on with normal activities. It brings about a condition called Repression. Golapi's character can be analysed as a classic case of repression. Repression in Psychoanalysis is termed as a temporary break or shift in the patterning of situations. It is a narrow escape from sadness and unpleasant things.

Repressive Psychosis is the situation that Golapi undergoes. For the fear of not facing her in-

laws torture, she runs away from the situation. When hard work does not get recognised, then an individual has feelings of frustration and despair. She performs all the household chores without any help, singlehandedly. Despite this, her husband's parents traumatise her. She found solace in her only sister-in-law Asha. Asha lands her up in the brothel. She experiences a life which is very different from the one that was earlier lived. They had sold her off to a brothel. She sees new sights with half-dressed women who looked seductive and use foul language.

There was so much of a culture shock or transformation in the new life that Golapi had to live. Sonamukhi, the chief of the brothel explains her philosophy of the life lived in. She explains the idea that women in Sonagachi earn a living by having sex with men for pleasure and money. She will learn to "shake off inhibitions"(64) according to Sonamukhi. She was assigned to Bula, a girl from the same brothel. Bula took care of Golapi really well and all of a sudden, there came a sudden drastic development in the life of Golapi. She was earning well, when all of a sudden, she got pregnant. Pregnancy was not allowed in the brothels. It became like a rule breaker in the law of the brothel land. There was an exception to this pregnancy. Golapi had carried this child in the womb right from her in-laws place. She could finally garner support from Malati to continue with the pregnancy and overcome the trauma associated with it. Confirming to all societal and personal agreement, Golapi's son Prateek was born. This child had a special place in the life of Golapi. It created a new ray of hope in the life of Golapi and ultimately she began looking at her own self from a good and respectable angle.

What one perceives in the mind as problems becomes a solution to many things later. It almost opens a Pandora's box. The motherhood though an early and unexpected one, became a huge psychological problem on her. But, she coped up with her new bundle of joy in course of life. Questions like how people would accept her child, her own acceptance in society bogged her mind. The primary question regarding people's acceptance of her child is a slightly difficult one as it would remain a child of secondary importance. Connected to this, there are other questions like Golapi's own identity as a prostitute would render her to be useless in society, while she herself had no importance, how could her own child have? There are twin identity problems for both the mother and the child.

Secondly, society would enquire about the paternity of the child. The absence of the father

would further cause a low self-esteem in the lives of the mother and son. The father, being the procreator of life has a subdued status because of the unlawful act of prostitution. He is almost missing from the scene as he does not have a rightful position of fatherhood. He had just abandoned his illegitimate child and shoulders no responsibility.

Another character who was in a similar position of being denied motherhood is Malati herself. Malati was also in a confused state. She did not accept her own state of pregnancy. It became such a scary situation for her as she felt restless both physically and mentally. She could not bring about a reconciliation to the fact that her responsibilities would change and she had come to terms with it (71).

Despite repeated doses of abortion, it didn't work. She had been raped by Joy, the rich boy down street. Saraju had still to enquire about the paternity of the child. Malati would bring out a Pandora of emotions when Saraju would make her daughter exit from brothel life.

Malati had difficult plans on her mind, she could not stop herself from continuing with sex. She was obsessed with it and is characterised as a sex maniac. She suffered excessively from it. In Psychology, this sex addiction arises from the result of a sort of escape or provides a temporary repose from tricky situations. It also shoots up from psychological problems like stress, anxiety, depression and loneliness. It can be characterised by hypersexuality and also thinking low of oneself; like low self-esteem.

A sex addiction could also have impulse control and this helps the individual to face his/her own problems with ease. Childhood trauma is a strong reason for this kind of compulsive behaviour. Malati had a whole welter of emotions since her childhood. Firstly, she did not have any normal childhood because of the tag of being a prostitute's daughter. Secondly, she gained no respect because of the repeated profession of bad choice of her mother herself.

Malati had become so desperate for money that she wanted to sleep with men during her pregnancy time. Her mother Saraju made quick attempts to retrieve her out of the mess of prostitution and the bad society she is mingling with. But she was deep rooted in it. Culture change is a carefully thought out process but cultural transformation is a choice. It cannot be fully reversed or fully adopted. It is in a middle state. Saraju was insisting on the idea of a culture change. Transforming oneself from one culture to another is

a difficult task; it needs a lot of mental adjustment and physical movement.

Culture according to sociologists David Dressier and Donald Carns propagate that cultural changes are often confronted by people who learn to adapt to new situations. The end result could be that of adoption or rejection. They term it as cultural eclecticism.

The second philosophy is that new practices could be adopted under two conditions. i) If it is desirable or acceptable socially. ii) It does not disturb the original cultural fabric. Saraju represents the first argument. She wanted to change the social situation and circumstance of her daughter Malati. This is because of her urge for more respect and social identity in life. This cannot be achieved unless the direct subject Malati is involved. She is a lot frustrated with society's choice and is contented with her own place in her own eyes; and not in front of society or society's eyes.

Paltu on the other hand is her sex partner. He sympathises with her at times and at others empathises too. He can never earn a rightful place in society because of all the fuss of he created. Fatherhood is not the right promotion for him; instead it is better if his identity remains unknown. A girl's virginity is not meant to be played with; it is a very respectable organ. It decided her future. Paltu had no intention to starting a family life with Malati; instead the feeling of pleasure takes over. But as Jeremy Bentham propagates that pleasure and pain are interlinked; so also is the theory of Ethical Hedonism.

Ethical Hedonism states that the correctness/wrongness of an action is judged by the way it creates happiness or sadness. This theory determines whether an individual has feelings of acceptance or rejection. Bentham in his "theory of Psychological Hedonism" describes stepping stones to identify various kinds of 'pleasure' like the pleasures of knowledge, friendship, privation and affection. She does not demand a life of acceptance, instead it is rejection from society and her acceptance from sex workers. Malati is in a middle state. Her definition of acceptance has a stark contrast from society's expectation levels.

Malati lived in a world of fantasy even in impractical situations. She encouraged men to penetrate into her even in the advanced stage of pregnancy. There are two situations present. One is that of Malati seeking too much of pleasure and the other is men being rude to women in this stage. Malati did not care for her wholistic well-being. She only satisfied her ego. When one is too desperate for love and recognition, this principle

comes to the fore. This man Joy is insensitive to the suffering and pain of women in her physically weak condition. The end result of her pregnancy is lack of acceptance towards the baby and the feeling of burden which lingers on.

Malati's hopelessness lay in the fact that she could not regain her strength or consciousness. Life of the baby was not given any importance, in fact Malati felt that she would not live. By sheer luck she survived and they accredit this luck to God. This life on earth is God's gift and also one cannot escape providence. By some good deeds done by Malati in the past, her weak child survived. She could witness the next generation.

Paltu was Malati's true support system; he nursed her back to health. What was Joy's responsibility was taken over by Paltu and managed by him really well. The recurring theme of a struggle for existence is present in the novel. Like her own mother, Malati's baby also struggles to find her own place in life and society alike.

The infant battled with life and gradually gained good health. This universe is a conglomeration of all wishes and desires; wishes of individuals and the desires of God. When these are in unison with each other, do events happen. Destiny and reality come together and form luck. Luck only blends the course of events and binds them together.

One British psychologist named Richard Wiseman studied the aspect of Luck. He reveals that luck is an inherent factor in a person's thinking and behaviour patterns. He has listed four essential principles of luck. They are listed as creating chances, feeling lucky, thinking luck and reflecting fate. The first priori which is creating chances can be explained by the idea that an individual makes or creates his/her own luck. This reiterates the idea that there is a half truth about luck. It is all in the mind. If one thinks of himself/ herself, then it is so and vice-versa. Even if there are negative situations, it turns out to be a positive one. This depends on the individual alone; he/she can bring luck as the binding factor to the situation and turn it in his/her favour. Reality is a situation where both the negative and the positive arrive. Luck is a chance, it has no realistic base. It can happen anytime or it may not happen at all. Luck is a positive situation whereas bad luck is negative. If we invite luck into our lives, then one can bring it to being. A famous proverb is "fortune favours the bold". It is a real test of patience and endurance.

The next point emphasised upon by Wiseman is "feeling lucky". Feeling the luck factor is an inherent part of life and fate is closely associated with it. Fate is termed as the non-

negotiables of existence in Wiseman's words. This can be universal in appeal or personal. The world itself is a place where one experiences bad luck. The basic idea that philosophers have of life is that it is one of suffering and hopelessness. Also, good luck is present when individuals die young without having to experience this gloomy existence. This world is a very stressful place according to the philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche. The forces of fate would conspire against life's meaningful existence and make it completely meaningless. Birth of a human is a gift that is unasked for, it is just granted.

Thirdly, thinking of luck is a concept that can be imaginary. Imagination blends the heart and the mind together. Unfulfilled dreams and desires are cast into the faculty of imagination. If luck is determined by man's actions then it can be justified. But if an individual merely waits for luck, then it will not happen.

Hard work and success determines luck. It has no firm base. Luck is just a factor that would not be at one's beck and call always. A sequential theory for luck is almost non-existent. The role in one's life keeps changing and so did Malati's. She became a mother and was too young to take up this responsibility. There was tremendous pressure on Malati to bring up her daughter in a normal way. It became a challenge because she was the daughter of a prostitute. Her mother Saraju brings her up in a normal way like other children. What is more important is that they should not have feelings of inferiority. A natural feeling of insecurity would cloud these children. But Malati's daughter did not develop inferiority complex. She socialized normally with other children. Inferiority Complex is a psychological condition which interferes with the normal workings of the human mind. This complex originates from the idea of comparison. When comparison is made between two or more persons, it makes them unhappy and lack confidence in themselves.

Inferiority Complex occurs when there is a constant feeling of bias in an individual's life. Low self esteem is a common human tendency. It has two facets. If it is a positive one, then it would trigger a person to improve the performance. Secondly, it would drive them to feel further low and build up jealousy and negativity according to Amy Flowers, a cognitive-behavioural therapist. It also cuts across every aspect of life including psychological, social and intellectual fronts. In a way it is like a depression. In the novel, Saraju suffers from severe inferiority complex as she is ashamed of her profession and social status. She suffers from pangs of guilt. Even though her grandmother feels insecure, she does not pass on

these feelings to her granddaughter. Instead she tries to undo it by her effort and experience.

She even saves her from one bad experience of an old man lusting after Lakshmi. The child Lakshmi, though unaware of things had a strong instinct that the man was doing some wrong thing. She retaliated immediately and struck him on the head. This man was alright after sometime but he was insisting on making Lakshmi a prostitute. While the family of Lakshmi was trying hard to move away from this tag, comes this man who wanted to spoil her future. It was not easy for children to survive in the prostitution trade. They would undergo a whole trauma of physical, mental and psychological enigma, however hard they tried hard to keep Lakshmi safe.

The paternal role in the lives of the women of Sonagachi is non-existent. They have to fend for themselves. The concept of single parenting is a much faced challenge. In the novel itself, the prostitute's daughter was asking about her father. She began feeling the absence. She suffers from her mother's denial. She is of the opinion that her father just had a temporary separation. But Malati despises it and makes her daughter believe that she is dead.

But Joy had made up his future in a good way. He went to London to study medicine and never came back to see his partner and daughter. He did not even take them out from the web of prostitution. There was a possibility for him to undo their fate and join together as a family. But his selfishness and lack of identity proves it all.

The Feminist view of Prostitution propounds that women are merely exploited and it forms a part of the patriarchal order. It has a negative effect on their personalities and society too. They are merely projected as sex objects and used by men for the sake of enjoyment. In most cases, women are forced into this trade, it is a matter of choice, not a chance. Poverty and lack of good job opportunities are the reasons for women to surrender themselves into this profession. Critics like Sigma Huda see prostitution as an oppressive social power against women. They are attributed to a lack of economic resources.

Malati despite her frustrating situation, would never lower her financial status. She was quite self-sufficient. On the other hand, Lakshmi was offered a secure position by a widower named Pranay Babu. He was a widower and had three children. He worked as a clerk in Sovabazaar. The only difference between him and other male escorts is that he was very kind to Malati and her daughter Lakshmi. He even offered to marry her and provide her social security for generations to come. Most

importantly, in his own words he wanted to “marry her and take her and Lakshmi away from this life”(92).

The climactic point of this novel is this- if Malati would agree to this match then her children would not be secure, also a prostitute cannot be accorded the status of a wife. Pranay on the other hand, cannot force his children to adjust to his second wife and her children. This is a major crisis. Malati's behaviour was a positive one and changed for the better after being in Pranay's company. This was a good presentation of the problem. Pranay himself could not accept the offer of marrying her because his parents and elder brother took care of the children. This brought greater joy to him as his own family was present to take care of the children. Pranay gave this profession a caring twist. He did not treat her as a prostitute, rather as a family member. According to the novel, “he did not demand sex the moment he came” (92). “He seemed decent and caring and treated Malati like a friend and companion”. Her feelings started softening and her demure became mild and heartfelt. On one hand, Malati turns mild but on the other, she does not know how to control her daughter's emotions.

Lakshmi was an epitome of innocence. She would frequently ask questions to her mother and Malati instead of answering them would discourage her badly. Malati would not respond to childish things and did not consider the playfulness of her child Lakshmi. She always grew angry and annoyed by her. Malati pretends to have a headache as she did not want to entertain Lakshmi. Due to Lakshmi's repeated coaxing, Malati became angry and slaps her with a great impact. This shook the girl. At times, one tends to mix professional commitments with that of personal ones. This is when frustration begins. This situation becomes more dangerous if it is not addressed. An individual must calm down himself or herself if things do not go his/ her own way. In Malati's case, her solution to the problem of frustration could be sorted out if only she would accept her own daughter.

Secondly, Malati was in a bad mood. For the fact that her partner had stopped coming, This meant that she would not be able to earn a living. Malati's depression even surprised her own daughter because all her frustrated feelings were vented out at her. Saraju, her mother was also in a helpless condition. So Saraju calls for Pranay Babu. Paltu on the other hand was more understanding and pleasant natured. Paltu would care for Saraju and Lakshmi. Pranay Babu's whereabouts were not known. Malati was keen on talking to Pranay Babu and revive him into the trade. But she was not sure

of his residence. On enquiry, she found out that Paltu had remarried. Pranay Babu was not in a position to even entertain Malati. Paltu at last finds Pranay's residence. But Pranay wants Malati to believe in a makeshift story of death by accident. The reason for this was not to have a disturbed life. Instead he wanted to live blissfully with his wife and family.

But Malati had deep respect for Pranay. She goes to the Ganges and performs a funeral ritual. Malati takes off her sindoor and other marital symbols. This incident goes on to project the idea that if a woman has great reverence for the man she is unmarried to, it means that he also took good care of her both physically and psychologically. A woman is comfortable with a man only if he provides her with physical and psychological gratification at the same time.

Malati on the other hand enjoys her hobby of taking photographs. As eccentric as it got, she would take Lakshmi, Golapi and Prateek to the studio and get photographed just for fancy sake. She would also file them up in albums and cherish those wonderful memories. This proves that Malati was always keen on starting a family and living a decent family life but unforeseen circumstances brought her to this situation. Life in frames is totally different from the life experienced in reality.

Golapi and Malati's original family ties were severed but they form a new family together. The foster family becomes an original one. Golapi and Malati get close to each other and had faced a similar situation in life. Golapi becomes Malati's guardian since she had considered herself to be a widow. This stage of life would have been difficult for her to take. Just when Malati was about to raise a family, did she hear the news that Pranay Babu had passed away. Malati and Golapi gave some space to each other and poured out their feelings. Then they both calmed down each other. The quality of empathy is very clearly evident in these incidents.

Empathy in psychological terms is a very strong feeling. It is the quality of being able to feel other people's emotions. It is a broad concept and also includes cognition and emotions, showing compassion for other people is an important ingredient in the life of a human being. This would lead an individual to cultivate the essence of morality. Often researchers differentiate between two types of empathy. It is an emotional response as well as a personal distress. The emotional response is necessarily a feeling of sadness when the subject is in pain. The next step is the helping stage. After feeling the feeling, the action of

helping is performed. The second type of empathy is Cognitive Empathy. In this type of empathy, understanding plays a key role. This stage involves absorbing an individual's perception and analysing it in the form of total knowledge of the subject's feelings. Two commonly accepted theories of empathy are firstly, it is possible when a person is experiencing something and the simulation is represented in the similar feelings of the individual.

Secondly, the theory of prediction is the one that explains the idea that empathy has responses based on the context and reasoning. In the case of Malati and Golapi, the first theory is applicable. They both underwent the similar feeling of pain when their respective husbands did not support them when alive also. Only pleasure as derived. This gives rise to pain and discomfort in social life later.

The second tragedy which happened is the detection of Golapi's illness. All of a sudden she developed ulcers and it became unbearable. Golapi's death left her son Prateek shattered. More than his own emotions, he had to battle out his future. His future responsibilities were to be fulfilled and it sounded bleak to him at that point. Saraju tried to help him out; nevertheless he began working for the brothel owners. He was like an agent bringing in women, while getting his own tip. This was how his livelihood changed.

Prateek was aghast when he saw Teresa, a volunteer with Durjoy for spreading messages on health awareness. Prateek was taken away for adoption and enrolled in an orphanage home where he could stay. For earning money, he went to an NGO and volunteered. Just like he lost his own mother to a killer disease he began organizing health awareness camps for the use of condoms. Prateek became a key person for his employer Durjoy.

From a promoter of prevention against deadly diseases, his role changed to designing campaigns for women's rights in prostitution. The star lit speciality of this event was the presence of foreign volunteers. Alongside this, Prateek pulled off this campaign as an organiser and met with great success. His resounding success came when Prateek was awarded by the Social Welfare Ministry for his work in building a vigilance team. They had the responsibility of preventing human trafficking.

Prateek became such a star icon that he dedicated his prize money back to that organization. This money became a great support for the children of prostitutes who needed an aid. He changed his life totally as well as granted a ray of hope for everyone. Saraju also was gradually

diagnosed with fatigue and illness. She was to be given bed rest. The women of Sonagachi were steadily succumbing to sex diseases.

Lakshmi, Saraju's granddaughter felt her academic life fading into all oblivion as the grandmother fell ill. Negative vibes were being felt by the granddaughter Lakshmi. She foresaw her future in the brothels despite Malati's attempts to undo this situation. Prateek was trying to take advantage of the situation and also pursue her. He never even tried to understand her psychological self as she tried to battle two things; her grandmother's last days and the hurt sentiments of turning out to be a prostitute. The subject and the object are not in tandem with each other. The subject is Malati herself and the object is Saraju, her grandmother. The object is more experienced than the subject. But the subject is gaining superior ground due to the taking up of responsibilities. The subject's world and the object's experiences surround each other like day and night. When they intertwine, it forms a whole web of circumstances. These circumstances only gave Malati the strength to face life strongly. All hopes dashed to the ground when Lakshmi found her grandmother to be dead one day. She had no one for moral support. Her life would go on in innumerable ways, but without any meaning and purpose. The lines which prove this point are "Don't take Dimma away...Dimma...Dimma"(105). This happened when the body of Saraju was being taken away for burial. An intense moment of pain and suffering was experienced by Sonamukhi. She was like a parent and guardian to Saraju and others. Saraju's daughter and granddaughter were in shock after the death. Their power of speech collapsed. They could not digest the fact that Saraju was dead.

They went into a world of dreams or fantasy. Saraju's death bought about a gloomy world of existence for both Malati and Lakshmi. The climax of the novel comes at this juncture when Malati expresses the idea that Lakshmi would be initiated into prostitution. Paltu feels astonished as he sees the difference between Malati's dreams and Saraju's dreams. Saraju wanted Lakshmi to change her destiny and take up a respectable profession; whereas Malati is a person with realistic ideas and visions. She was keen to improve her financial status and this became the only means for extra income.

Parental responsibilities changed after the death of Dimma who is Saraju. Her guardianship was taken up by Paltu. He began acting as the caretaker of Malati and Lakshmi. Paltu got them food, clothing and had a good life and a comfortable one. He had slept in the veranda too at

nights, for protection. Despite repeated attempts by Paltu to stop Lakshmi from going into prostitution, there was no use. Malati put her under the tutelage of a lady called Suhani. Some money would be funded by Malati and some by Lakshmi while she grew up. This line “Suhani will charge of course, and I will pay some money”(108) raises questions as to whether there is a strong training for this profession. This profession is not a recognizable one; it has no respect.

Pleasurable Profession is an inappropriate word to describe it. People come to merely seek pleasure, out of physicality. Teaching someone to be a prostitute is a totally different training. It cannot be taught; merely depends on the person's passions and level of excitement. This profession is yet to be given its due; it is most often referred to as the flesh trade. A commercial activity or a mere enjoyment? These are the two dimensions of this profession.

Alongside this ruckus, there was no future for Malati too. She was the daughter of a prostitute. The lines “who will marry a prostitute's daughter” (108) are really powerful lines. They really negate the identity of the subject. Her future is at stake considering the situation and status that Lakshmi is in. Her paternal roots are missing and maternal roots are trying to come to terms with the situation. Still, in society's eyes it cannot be recognised. Mostly rural India is patriarchal in structure. Women are given secondary importance or no importance at all.

This situation of prostitution is a generation-based profession. It cannot be undone and there is no continuity for growth. They have to bear the insult of being a prostitute throughout their lives. No respect or dedication is accorded to prostitute women. All their generations face the wrath of society because of the flesh trade that they are involved in. Their bodies are sold to the point where frustration and negativity sets in. Transformation of their self does not happen, instead transfiguration occurs.

Greediness or the lust for bodies is a very fulfilling desire at first but later it produces the feeling of guilt and regret. Paltu constantly fought for the rights of the girls in Sonagachi. He even urged Malati to spend money on Lakshmi's education and other fruitful endeavours. Malati is in a daze when things don't materialize the way she wants it to. She is only looking for ways and means to earn money. Though the marriage was not consummated officially, Paltu feels his daughter's lack of good motherly parenting. He provides opinions from time to time and this is not welcomed by Malati. Her active role as a parent is

negated because of Paltu's indirect and inactive role. Paltu has a feeling that he wasn't getting enough space from Malati. He feels lonely and unassuming in power and responsibility. These lines prove it. “She's my daughter too” proves the above statement. Lakshmi soon realizes as to how mean her mother was. She kept her away from the father. As a symbolic gesture she sits by his side to feel the paternal presence.

The second book of the novel, “Not Just Another Story” is a plot about a couple Paul and Zoya Smith who are documentary film makers. They come to India in order to meet Father Julius and establish a family connection. His great grandparents live in Calcutta during the British rule. They were instrumental in setting up one of the first textile mills in the city of Birmingham.

The theme that the characters of Paul and Zoya reiterate is the policy of colonization. Calcutta was the hotspot of all colonial culture. The ancient palaces, churches and the pipe organ from England was really appealing. All of a sudden father Julius asked the couple about visiting the sex district of Kolkata called Sonagachi. They agree and were shocked to see the uncouth people and dirty lanes. The couple Paul and Zoya not in that frame of mind to tolerate the culture of the brothels. It was a surprise to them. They were unable to see the ugliness of the place.

Another culture that Paul and Zoya wanted to imbibe in these prostitute children is basic education and employment. Their lives could be changed and help them in seeking good employment opportunities. The original culture was a corrupted one in Sonagachi and the imbibed culture would be a free and fair one, one of learning and development.

This cultural framework fits in the critic Mathew Arnold's definition of Culture. According to him, “culture in making things better than they are, moved by the moral and social passion for doing good”. The ultimate goal of culture is to find refinement, refinement in thinking and behaviour patterns as a result of which Zoya consults Prateek the coordinator of that program on Social Work. They shoot a film on the women and children of Sonagachi. This seemed like a life changing story and experience. They wanted to improve the condition of the prostitute women in Sonagachi. The children of prostitutes would be taught the English alphabet and the older ones would learn skills. Once the skills are fully taught, then they would be employed. The volunteers of the education program were Foreigners. More than this, Paul wanted to shoot a film on prostitution of

the red light area in Sonagachi and Prateek readily volunteers to help in the shooting.

This film shooting is a symbolic reference to alleviating the condition of prostitution. Through this movie, the volunteers of this education program want to portray the idea that prostitution is not the right social step to end poverty. It also projects the idea that one should choose the right way of earning a livelihood.

The real and reel life portrayal of the subject of prostitution is the same. In reality, the flesh trade is like a surreal portrayal of fanciful people and objectified to please. The same reality is projected in the brothel life. What is simple and unsophisticated is cast as glossy and shiny. This is the credo of the brothel world. The project Paul was working on was to pick out six children and admit them into schools. They would also be taught to use the cameras. At last, they would metamorphose into official beings where work outside Sonagachi would be engaged upon.

These kids would tug at their creative side by shooting scenes in the camera. Prateek wanted Lakshmi and Keka to get a chance to educate themselves. They were given a chance by one of the volunteers of the NGO. But with a stranger going around in Sonagachi, things would be different. He would be doubted upon since the reporters would project negative reports about Sonagachi. Prateek's worry was that Lakshmi's life would be a difficult one as Malati's plans were beginning to take roots. Malati foresaw her as a prostitute only, whereas Prateek wants her to be a dedicated and hardworking professional. There was a great clash of ideals between the two of them. One is a conventional thought process and the other, a modern one. When both of these clash, it creates a misunderstanding. It took a while for Prateek to make Malati understand about creating a good future for Lakshmi. Prateek was to take Lakshmi for a film shooting on Sonagachi. Malati's idea of Lakshmi was that of an idealistic one. She was interested to make her earn money through prostitution and secure herself financially.

But the pertinent question remains as to whether she could secure herself socially? This would never happen as society is against the whole concept of giving a respectable place to prostitutes. They do not do intellectual or physical work; instead it is a blend of physiological and sexual work. This kind of work does not improve or enhance one's productivity, on the flip side it makes one lose their finer qualities and talents. They are also steeped into tradition as generations and generations of sex workers pursue this profession without a gap.

Prateek found it difficult to make Malati understand the importance of giving an education to Lakshmi. Malati was steeped in the thought of Lakshmi becoming a prostitute woman for the Britishers. But according to Prateek she would "learn English, eat and dress well" (132). This is the whole idea of being an educated woman, with enlightenment. At last the dreams of the grandmother Saraju were beginning to take root. Lakshmi would be an educated, cultured and a woman with insight. The arrangement was to pay Malati fifteen hundred rupees every month as maintenance money.

But this time, Malati was a completely new person. She had changed for the better and had upheld values and ethics for her daughter Lakshmi. According to her, Lakshmi should not be sent for late nights and also be informed thoroughly about her whereabouts. This is the first hint of civilized behaviour in the prostitute Malati's life. There is a huge demarcation between civilization and prostitution in a prostitute's life. Their professional aspiration gets converted into a life of indecency and uncivilized behaviour.

Lakshmi would make a paradigmatic shift in her life gradually. Her life would change or undergo a positive transformation. She began getting adjusted to the new sea change in discourse and circumstances. The volunteers Paul and Zoya gave them education, skill improvement and motivation. These three skills help one achieve success. Another skill that the six children learnt was group dynamics. They stayed together, played together, studied together and spent the rest of the day together. Their biggest talent was to grasp things quickly. Apart from this, the children went for sightseeing and saw monuments like the Victoria Memorial. Other historic places like the Chandernagore Fort were witnessed. The assessment of the children was about to be undertaken. They would be required to write about the picnic in their own words. All these developments in the novel portray the idea that education alone is an instrument of enlightenment. If an educated person is facing life's challenges, he/she would prosper and not go into negativity. Education also helps build one's life and generates growth opportunities. It helps one grow socially, morally and spiritually while preventing degeneration in every way. The luckiest day in Lakshmi's life is the day when she was granted admission to class VII at the Baptist Missionary School. Lakshmi becomes a transformed person this time, she hadn't dreamt of a life beyond Sonagachi, but it worked wonders for her. She tapped at her own potential and became creative to

the extent of writing a letter to her departed grandmother. Zoya, the volunteer at this education program projected her as a coordinator with ease. She supplied clothes and chocolates to the children.

These five children of Sonagachi became an exemplary example for other children to follow. They became self-satisfied and content after attending school. Moreover they learnt etiquette like talking and behaving decently, being respectful towards others and maintaining cleanliness. These attitudes are the ones which help one maintain dignity and decency. They adopted into the “new system” of modernity (145). The very first parameter by which Lakshmi’s decency could be measured was through her interactions with the mother Malati. Her behaviour became more refined and speech dignified. The real essence of education crept into her, the establishment of culture and an organised, systemic thought process. A thought about the insecure future struck Lakshmi. She felt that after these missionaries were gone, her life would again face the danger of prostitution. The only solution to this is the urge to continue education and strive to attain a golden future.

Having said this, after a while Lakshmi had stopped coming to school. Her mother Malati is of the opinion that Lakshmi would be sold off by the foreigners to some far-off land. Ultimately Malati is worried about her own financial well being and security. She cannot earn money if her daughter Lakshmi leaves her. She even demands maintenance money from them after conceding to their demands. Paul and his wife Zoya were not hurled abuses by the other people of Sonagachi. In fact they were in praise of the couple as they saved the lives of many children from destruction. They also funded the education of the children during the filming process of the movie.

Gradually after the shooting got over, Paul and Zoya had plans to travel to UK for the film’s editing. The best thing the couple did was to make the kids complete their education and continued to fund it. Malati was given ten thousand rupees for her maintenance. She would be given some more money later on. Malati’s behaviour towards Zoya is a study in contrast. Even though she was being coaxed to get rid of her traditional mindset, she didn’t pay any heed. She was steeped in the traditional thought process. It would be tough for Malati to take her daughter’s absence. Her only source of joy and strength was Lakshmi. Their priorities were entirely different. For Lakshmi, education was the one, while Malati wanted money.

Priorities according to Psychology are known as Value Priorities. They are principles

which make people have a knowledge of what they should do and also know the type of personality. This helps people compartmentalize things which are important and unimportant. Most importantly, the concept of Value Priorities is referred to as a theory which makes one experience new situation and individuals. When this situation occurs, they can use their value-based principles to visualise sameness. Hence, their response will be according to the value system imbibed. These value systems are referred to as a person’s own personal attributes and priorities. It also includes under its umbrella an unconscious pattern of judging principles. The right to evaluate or make a choice is a prominent feature of the Value Theory. Along with priorities, people have a certain perception of others which is classified as others’ priorities. Lakshmi still had hopes of continuing her education undisturbed. While Lakshmi was still coming to terms with reality, Prateek had some good news to share. The news was that the film had won a great award. The film that Paul had filmed in Sonagachi won the prestigious BAFTA Award. It was titled, “The Sex Citadel”. This award ceremony would be hosted in the Royal Opera House in London. The children who shot for the film would become heroes in school. This was their real excitement. Zoya also gives fifty thousand rupees to Malati as promised earlier.

Malati was calming herself down and felt grateful for all that Zoya had done. Women Empowerment is the main intention of the missionaries Paul and Zoya. They wanted to adopt Lakshmi and give her a secure job and future after completing her education. But sadly, the couple did not get sufficient funds to pay for Lakshmi’s adoption. What is dreaded the most by every prostitution worker is the same fate shared by Malati’s daughter too. Lakshmi finally joins the bandwagon of prostitutes. Her training had commenced under the tutelage of Suhani, an expert in the art of seducing.

Lakshmi would be launched into her first night. She had to please a customer and in turn got commission. The art of attracting a man in the flesh trade lies in the makeup and getup of a woman. But once the tender Lakshmi experienced physical pain, she felt assured that this profession was not meant for her. At this point in the novel Lakshmi experiences a dawn of realization that education is the only thing that would redeem people from other unnecessary suffering and pain.

Book III or the last part of the book portrays Lakshmi entrapping herself in an accident. She helps a man come out of the trouble he has landed into. But the man is shocked to see that he

had landed up in a brothel area. This became a difficult situation for him. He tries to get acquainted with Lakshmi and has an opinion about her background. She is pleased to describe her English Education and background. Rahul is a DJ in a night club at Park Street in Kolkata. He would help Lakshmi earn money by arranging for party girls at his pub.

One typical lifestyle of Rahul is that he was a gay. His own society and parents did not approve of it. So he was forced to go to Jodhpur Park, another area in Kolkata. His own definition of sexuality was an open one. He never had any qualms about it and practised it without any doubt. Rahul himself went about his duties and never seemed comfortable about hiding things. He was a free and frank personality. His character is one of adjustment and revival for something better. He rechristens Lakshmi's name as Anjali and makes her hep and stylish. According to him, it is "a game changer" (182).

Rahul introduces her to the group and leaves. As promised by him, Shekhar is Lakshmi's date. Lakshmi has sex with him and then leaves. She feels hungry and helps herself with some sumptuous food like kebabs and biryani from the takeout boxes. It was an out of the world experience, since eating such luxurious food was a rarity for her. She had also become financially independent. These words prove her self-worth. "You are not my owner, no one can own me" (185) hissed Lakshmi. She started challenging her mother too. This is typical of her adolescent age. She did not want to be checked and monitored all the time. Lakshmi became an adult girl and wished to do things at her own will and desire. She also gave money to her mother for the expenses, but arrogantly. Lakshmi was even contemplating plans to look for another accommodation far away from her mother's house.

Lakshmi had to face reality throughout. She could not be her dreamy self, nor a very practical one; she seemed to be in between both. Determined to earn money and comforts all her life, her fortune and stars were really blessed as she entered "The Owl" which is a night club at a hotel. Her attire was well fitting and appealing too. She comes into contact with Sohail Khan, a business man. He in turn introduced her to a lavish lifestyle. Shail's family was settled in the US, while he was in Kolkata. He introduces Lakshmi to his business clients.

She gradually learnt the art of "subtly massaging the egos of powerful men" (188). Sohail in turn wanted to introduce Lakshmi to another real estate tycoon Anant so that her life would be made.

Anjali and Anant go out on a date in a complex and adjust really well. They also visit places like China and Mauritius. He goes on a solo trip to Europe, while Anjali flew back to Kolkata. Her life was completely changed. Lakshmi started having access to luxuries of every sort. She has good food to eat, a luxurious car like limousine and also nice company. Her confidence was at an all time high as she moved around in high society.

The only one thing she lacked was to speak in English. Prateek wanted to get her back to track by granting her a job offer. But she wouldn't budge. She became so cozy and comfortable in her own skin. Anant had passed on orders to Lakshmi that she should "drop all her other clients" (192). These words were really strong and powerful; it was intended to be a pun. Lakshmi felt excited and ready to take up the challenge. Her art of negotiation proved the worth. She demanded a house, driver and servants as well as a monthly allowance for herself. Apart from this, Lakshmi would also arrange escorts. Her new home is named as "Nest". This name is symbolic of the way Lakshmi had her grooming. Her way of livelihood was her own self. She could not carve out an identity earlier but presently she would give in to her life's desires and steer it at her own will.

Lakshmi became very conscious of her moves. Nevertheless, she was excited about the business opportunity he provided her with, meeting clients and associating with them. Anant had conditions attached. One was that he would provide for her needs. Secondly, She should not consider herself to be his mistress. He was in a really unusual circumstance. Anant had a marriage that became his pain later on. It was a properly arranged match between two business class families and their relationship extended to that stature. A name sake relationship ensued between Anant and his wife. They lived in separate cities and led secluded lives.

Anjali aka Lakshmi was a stop gap arrangement for Anant's sex life. He could not gratify himself with his wife's body. Lakshmi became his escort and she had an inferior treatment in public due to her disposition. Inside out, Lakshmi knew her limitations and fought her battle bravely. One thing that enticed and reverberated in her mind was that her role would be dictated by Anant himself. She would behave according to his whims and fancies which would ensure her stability in sex life and provide her with financial security.

Her roles and motives in life revolved around Anant's goals. This became a gradual shifting of positions as well as ambition. The critical theory of 'self' and 'other' in literature becomes a binary. The self and other are blended

together in order to form a new personality. The old order is gone and all things past are forgotten. This chiselled creation is a pure one without any traces of the past.

Purity is a treasure that can't be hidden; it can only be showcased. In the words of the novel, "Anjali worked day and night to win Anant's trust"(195). All of her life revolved around Anant. She also kept track of Anant's personal diary and commitments. They together formed a team. Anant held on to a permanent label in their relationship. But Anjali aka Lakshmi did not label their relationship as a spouse, partner or a mere dreamy existence? The question still lingers on in the minds of readers. Can all relationships be labelled?

In conclusion, there needs to be a finer understanding in the minds of people that there is a group called prostitutes who are dying to earn a living with their profession. They must either be allowed to lawfully pursue their profession or make the trade illegal. This alone would ensure dignity without creating any social taboos.

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