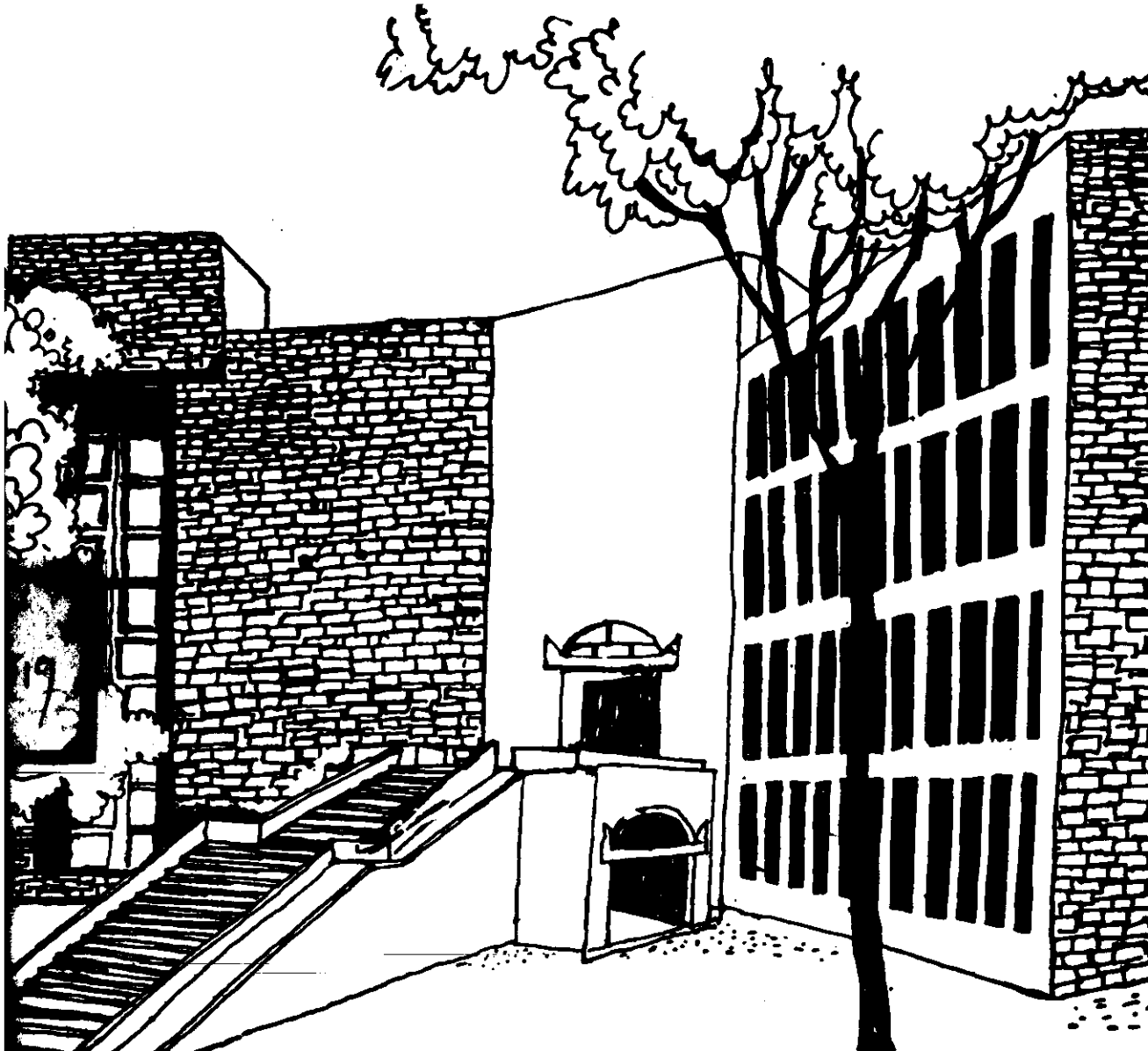




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**SYMBOLIC ROLE MODELS AND IDENTITY
PATTERNS OF INDIAN WOMEN**

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SYMBOLIC ROLE MODELS AND IDENTITY PATTERNS OF INDIAN WOMEN

CHAPTER 1

MAGIC SPACE

Woman is a phenomenon yet to be explored, experienced, and understood in all her vicissitudes, multiplicities, contradictions, and complexities. As she begins her journey in life at the dawn of birth and proceeds through different stages, she experiences herself and in turn is experienced by others in many forms and feelings. And yet she remains an enigma. Most of her life is shrouded in unfathomable dusk or twilight. Endless horizons defined by various locations shift and create many forms. Light and darkness; beginnings and ends; concretes and intangibles; feelings; fantasies and actions all merge, shift and merge; like in a kaleidoscope to make an ever shifting collage both real and illusory. All these acquire shapes and hold many meanings and reinforce the mystery of a woman.

The birth of a woman heralds human history to relive itself from dawn to its current setting in life. Her childhood is like a dew drop on a fragile petal to have a momentary radiance and vanish, and sometimes it is like a shadow to be avoided and left alone.

Her adolescence alluring and tantalising; inviting the unfolding of many a mystery on a starry night. Her youth like the waxing and waning of moon with the rhythms of the sea to the dancing heart beats, and it could also be alluring but unfolds many a ravagement. Her middle and old age is like the return of a weary soldier battered and tattered in search of some peace and tranquility, and it could also be a moment of suspended animation having done her duty await the call. Whichever meandering her life takes woman is still the mystery shrouded in twilight where opposites exist as if on a see-saw.

Sometimes a woman takes the form of the ocean which pays homage to the earth in an endless rhythm; or breaks itself repeatedly at the monolithic rock in fury and helplessness; sometimes like the wind she gathers the dark thunderous clouds to weep at the oppression, exploitation, and inhumanity, or to pour her heart in rain to replenish the barren, dried and parched earth; and sometimes to scatter the clouds to make a radiant day with a sparkling sun; and sometimes gearing up to an intense rage to let loose its ferment and fury on the ship. In her intensities she turns the world upside-down and

evokes fear. In her gentleness she touches many a heart with joy and comfort of whispering lullabies. Caught with sustenance and nurturance; curse and destruction; frozenness and immobility; she holds on to hope and strength of the gushing stream of life which gurgles and tumbles and touches many a heart.

The woman evokes in man many an emotion to behold and consume; and to destroy and idolize a need to comfort and aggress. Who is this shape and a form called woman? A woman evokes lust and passion as well as devotion; ravagement as well as union; physical fulfilment as well as communion; and at all times evokes anxiety, apprehensions, and fears - fears of merger and of dissolution. She carries many a names. Sometimes she is called a Goddess, sometimes Shakti and often a witch who is both seductive and fickle. She is the temptress and the rejuvenator.

How does a woman experience herself? Is she a mystery or an enigma to herself? Does she share these images of her own being. Who is she? How does she experience her space? How does she experience her

growth in the society she lives in? It means arriving at and crossing of a threshold. This threshold has two anchors - one social and the other psychological. The former refers to biological and chronological growth and transition from one role to another. Societies and cultures prepare individuals to move from one role to another with prescribed settings, pace and behaviour patterns. In such a transition the social threshold of the past and into the future is determined by traditions and heritage of role models available. A daughter moves into the role of wife, daughter-in-law, mother, mother-in-law and a grandmother. This transition is linked with biological growth and social cultural institution.

We set ourselves to explore with some women of India the nature and quality of this social and psychological threshold and their role taking processes they encounter in their process of growing up and their life space.

At the social encounter we found women sharing many of the above images of themselves. They saw themselves and were experienced by other as

unpredictable, unstable, subject to variant moods, being earthy and responsive to the stimulus of the environment. They appeared to live from moment to moment, and their interface with the environment reflected indecisiveness, entrenchment, holding confusion and disowning their potential resources. When we explored and pushed for elaborations of these first social encounters women talked of their helplessness - both economic and psychological. They talked of dependence, their social vulnerability, burden of carrying the virtue, and a refrain of compulsively doing the done thing. Their feelings of experiencing exploitation and ravagement in bondage surfaced. The woman - the martyr, the sacrificed - at the altar of a prescriptive society.

However, the psychological threshold is different from the social threshold. Chronological age does not determine the arrival or the crossing of the psychological threshold. In the journey of a woman's life the psychological threshold is determined by the woman accepting her maturity, crystallizing her identity, coming to terms with her past, laying down some of the ghosts of the childhood and adolescence,

taking charge of her own destiny, having a world view of herself and others around her, investing in the self, system and others and discovering the spirit of her own being and becoming. It implies a pause, a review and assessment of resources of the self and to give oneself the autonomy of moulding of one's tomorrow. This process is the crossing of the psychological threshold and arriving at her personhood. What seemed to us that the cultural lore provides many forms for the women to discover this threshold and cross it. However, Indian women seem to get entrenched at the social threshold and the prescriptive role models which allow them no space to discover newer choices. They continue to dominantly revolve around being the victims and martyrs in the crystalization of their identity.

Women in India are very similar to the prescriptive Indian society. Indian society with its diversity has been and continue to be experienced in all its multiplicity, complexity, glory, poverty, attraction and repulsion. It has a tradition and history of four thousand years of culture, legends, folktales, folklore, myths and epics (henceforth

referred to as cultural lore) which society makes available to its members--a rich heritage of social and psychological role models for its children to grow up with. These models from the cultural lore provide to the Indian women a core wherein they evolve their own identity and role patterns in interaction with the world and the people around them.

We set ourselves first to explore the role models available from the cultural lore and then to see what alternatives are available to the Indian women to reach the psychological threshold to create a wholesome world for themselves. We discovered that there are five basic themes from the cultural lore around which Indian women build their roles and crystalize their identity. These cultural lores have a universal appeal from the cultural lore across the world. The stories which are narrated below though Indian in origin (from folk tales, fairy tales, legends, epics and myths) have many similarities with tales from Arabian nights, Hans Christian Anderson, Grimm's fairy tales and similar other lores across the world and cultures. Ours here is a presentation as we identified the themes and

used the stories with many women participants in diverse settings to explore and understand the universe of women; their being, inner realities, fantasies, hopes, dreams and aspirations.

The Apple and the Stigma

Once upon a time, not long ago, yet a very long time ago, just here and just around the corner there was a kingdom. This kingdom had a king and a queen. The king was just, the queen was gracious, the kingdom was prosperous and the people were happy. After many a prayer from the king, the queen and the subjects, a lovely daughter was born to them.

The princess was the apple of her father's eye and was loved and cherished by all the people of the kingdom. She was delicate, soft spoken, gentle and quiet. She was talented and excelled in the art of music, poetry, painting and needlework. The days went by and each day the princess grew beautiful and radiant as the dawn. The people in the kingdom adored her and speculated as to the lucky man who would marry her. They speculated on the talents, qualities of valor, strength, wealth and courage of the man who would befit their princess.

Days flew by and the princess grew to maturity. And lo! and Behold! one day she was old enough to marry. She became the model for the mothers of the kingdom who cajoled their daughters to follow in her footsteps. The queen became anxious about the marriage of the princess and kept reminding the king who appeared oblivious of his duty to find a husband for the princess. One evening as the queen again raised the issue the king was terribly angry. In his fury and wrath the king announced that the princess, his daughter, would be married to the first man who entered the gates of the kingdom.

There was a silence and shudder in the kingdom. The gates of the kingdom were closed in the evening and an all night vigil was kept. People of the kingdom and the queen prayed all night that the first man who entered be worthy of the princess. The princess awaited her fate. As the dawn made its radiant and glowing entry, softly treading the path toward the kingdom, a lone traveller was glimpsed coming toward the gates of the kingdom.

In the light of dawn the king was repentant for his wrath, but as a king he intended to keep his words. He, too, looked out from the window which had the farthest view of the gates and saw a young man. On his approach the gates were flung open with a flourish. And what a sight. Horror, dismay and repulsion filled everybody as they saw a cripple. There were sighs, silent tears and wailing by some. The king, the queen and the subjects were stupified but saw no way to get out of the promise. Sad as they felt the destiny of their beloved princess was sealed. She was to marry the first man who entered their kingdom with the dawn of the day.

Preparations for the marriage had already begun. The princess with her gracious charm and the courage of her spirit stood poised and undaunted to accept her fate and destiny. She was married to the young cripple (stigmatised) and as per the tradition left the kingdom to go with her husband. She bid farewell to the parents, her beloved people and home of her childhood. Years went by and the king turned old and grey. The king could find no heir and thousand times a day he repented for his wrath and unworthy act.

The princess, married to the cripple husband travelled far, far away from her own land. Day and night they travelled and learned to discover each other. They went through many trials and tribulations. The princess with her patience, kindness, gentleness, affection and devotion slowly but gradually restored her husband, who put in the effort and labour to create a home for them. They prospered and had two children. Then one day, as the princess sat reflecting her life, she remembered her father and mother - the king and the queen - and the nostalgia of her childhood came surging back. She longed to meet her parents. She sent an invitation to the king and the queen - her parents for a feast. Everything was perfect in the feast and the king and queen were deeply touched. They talked of their sadness and bemoaned the loss of the daughter. The king was repentant. At this moment the princess revealed her identity and brought the two children. There was rejoicing and tears and the king persuaded them to return to the kingdom. In time he appointed the husband as the king and retired. And so goes the tale that everybody lived happily everafter.

Many variations upon this theme are available in fairy tales and folk tales across the country. Experiences with women from varied social, cultural and economic backgrounds reflect a similar basic structure of their life space and their identity with the princess of the story. Many young women are married to men far below either their social, economic, cultural and/or educational background. Examples abound in the Indian context. This happens in homes where the atmosphere revolves around traditional life styles, values and beliefs. The girls like the princess are trained in the skill and art of home making. Some of these women have had the status of being significant by virtue of being the eldest. They have been educated and succeeded but not for a career. Education was another asset built for role performance as a wife.

Their husbands are chosen based on traditional criteria, often without a proper evaluation of their personal attitudes. When personal attributes are given attention the man seems to be full of promises but the man cannot make his mark. Essentially, there is a kind of psychological or social cripple in our

context. Women married to such men take the role of providing support and shepharding the husband to achievement and success. They relentlessly devote themselves to create a context for the quality of life and relationship which fosteres success and well being of the husband. Many women in India reflect this pattern. These are the women who justify the saying--'There is a woman behind every successful man'. These women tend to accept the ups and downs of life and with commitment hold steadfast to their lot without complaints. They restore their husband's sense of self-worth and they inspire. Such women define their role as sustainers of marriage. The men and the home come first in their lives. Many of these are the glorified women like the Seeta and 'Savitri'. They live and breath for their husband and family, their survival restoration and sustainence. They merge themselves in their role. Very few, if any, ever know what is happening inside their beings. Their life is always punctuated by a cripple who requires their energy and fostering. This may be a son or a daughter, a younger brother or a sister of the husband or their own. They are all love and

affection. These and many more are their virtues. However, they also become compulsions. People around them feel handicapped in hurting them. Without intending they invoke guilt as well as mild emotional blackmail of confirmity to their expectations and standards.

The women who represent this theme cut across social, cultural and economic strata of Indian society. They are married below their social, cultural, and economic levels. Their struggle is to be autonomous and to generate resources for their family.

The Counter-Point

A reverse phenomenon also takes place. There are some women brought up in traditional families with middle class social economic background marry the prince charming - the man from elite social and high economic strata. These women are either sought for their beauty or the upbringing the family has given them. Such families are held in high esteem, respected in the community and looked up to for their ethics and moral values. However, the women married in such economically prosperous and socially elite families walk on a razor's edge. In the parental families after

marriage they are pampered, and often looked at with awe by the larger extended kinship. However, within the husband's family the women struggle to live up to the expectations of the husband and his family. They take the social responsibility of the larger kinship system of the husband. Their personal aspirations are set aside. In effect they become the managers of the family's peripheral and marginal social setting with little praise, affirmation - or acknowledgement of their contribution. The husband is rarely available emotionally and they are at the beck and call of the family. These women basically sustain themselves through their children, experience no replenishment or companionship. They are seen and regarded as poor man's daughter and repeatedly experience the patronage. They hardly if ever acquire the status of being rich men's wives to experience a sense of belonging, dignity and respect. The women remain uprooted and despite their sacrifices they do not find a location which they can call their own. Psychologically they live in a barren land.

Such is the life space, the context of growth and the role model internalized from the cultural lore by a set of women who often are the eldest daughters. These women cross many a social thresholds. They postpone themselves. They live for others viz. the husband's family. Psychologically and as persons they put lot of hope in their children. They soon discover that their life is for everybody else but theirs and there is no one for them. In both the identity crystalization the struggle of women is to cross the social threshold and get in touch with their psychological beings and personhood. However, their personal anchoring and reinforcement by the social system is so much anchored in their role and the family they continue to disown their own potentials.

A set of women live through the identity pattern of 'The Apple and the Stigma'. A whole set of other women internalize the identity pattern of 'The Accomplished and the Trickster' of the cultural lore. This cultural lore is expressed in many a form across the world.

The Accomplished and the Trickster

Surrounded by mountains and across beautiful wooded lands was a kingdom characterised by competence and security. The king was a brave warrior and accomplished in many an art of battle and war. The queen was known for her intelligence, grace, wit and courage. The people of the kingdom were proud of their land and respected their king and queen. They felt safe and secure. They had trust in their king. Some were in awe while others feared the king and the queen. However, they devoted their time and effort to significant tasks of the kingdom.

The king and the queen had a lovely daughter. She was indeed a royal princess. From childhood she rode horses and was trained in archery, sword play and many other arts of war. She even went to battle with her father. In addition she was an accomplished scholar. She was beautiful, talented, and intelligent. The princess was also ambitious, competitive, and confident. As the princess grew, so did her accomplishment and beauty.

The days went by and eventually came the time when it was the age for girls to marry in the kingdom. The people in the kingdom speculated about the groom to be. They hoped that the husband would be a brave

warrior and a worthy man. However, as the time went by the princess had become a prize to be won. The princess concurred with this opinion. The king proclaimed that whosoever wished to marry his daughter must come to his kingdom and match the accomplishments of the princess. If they failed they would be made captives, put in the dungeon, or beheaded depending on the wish of the princess. Many princes came from distant lands. They were tall and handsome, talented and accomplished, heir to the thrones of big, and small kingdoms. They came dreaming and all aspiring to be the one to win the princess as their bride.

The princess set up many tests of bravery, perseverance, and skills in games and competitions. The princes succeeded in many games and competitions but failed in that one final challenge which could have won them the hand of the princess. Many of them were made captives felt ashamed and were humiliated and a number of brave princes lost their lives. As the numbers grew, the people of the kingdom became concerned and angry at the wilfull princess. They mourned the loss of many a brave and gallant princes.

But the fame of the princess brought many more to the kingdom. Then one day a trickster in the disguise of a prince came to the kingdom and took up the challenge. Through his tricks, he won all the games, competitions and also the final challenge the princess set for him. There was much rejoicing. The princess as per the rule married the trickster and left to go with her husband soon to discover the truth. She discovered the facade and grew angry. But the marriage had taken place. She had left the kingdom and her only companion was the husband--the trickster. She now lived the shame she had vested upon many a suitors. And as in all the endings of the fairy tales she did not live happily ever after. The resolution with herself came only when she discovered a sense of psychological equation with others and stopped demanding equality from others.

The lives of many women who we talked with were essentially analogues of the core identity in the scheme of life space of the Accomplished and Trickster. Search for compatibility and equality is the bane of the accomplished. Before marriage such women cultivate intelligence, talent and competence. They are

competitive, ambitious and aspiring. They struggle to be better than others. In relating to men they are provocative and challenging. They appear charming but are eventually experienced as controlling. Their vulnerabilities are turned into strength. They often evoke anger and aggression from men. Their feminine qualities - softness and graciousness - are used for control. Their close relationships are fraught with friction and conflict. Such women end up marrying men who in reality are far below their level of competence. The women initially respond to these men who display a facade of accomplishment. They sustain it by a domineering style and manipulative skills. Very soon the women discover that they have to be the strong ones. In crisis these women end up carrying the responsibility to manage the situation. With the husband's family independence is sought through defiance, rebellion and friction. With all the potentials, creativity and achievement many women in this identity pattern find themselves cheated of life, denied their due and like a warrior in a constant war with themselves and others.

Our explorations with women in this identity pattern suggest that the structure of the second identity theme follows the structure of the princess of the first story. The Apple and the Stigma is experienced as the primary identity theme of women. Fear of being married to the stigma and to its consequences drives these women to be accomplished and thus avoid the fate of the first princess. By being accomplished she prepares against the prerogative of the father to give her in marriage to anybody. As such, through her competence she ensures that she gets an unstigmatised husband who is competent. However, this in itself becomes her stigma. The psychological struggle is to find a secure and dominant male in whose security she can live. In this search the women end up with men whom they dominate and eventually hold in contempt. The men in reaction become either primitive, passive and/or waste themselves. This model provides no space for vulnerability. The women in this theme rarely give of themselves to anyone. At work settings they create an aura of being aggressive, self-centered, and exploitative. Their femininity draws people only

to experience let down. Many of them are creative but often lead a somewhat isolated and lonely existence punctuated with occasional intense intimacies. Despised and held in awe they rarely have meaningful relationships. They keep hoping that some day they would find a person to whom they could pay homage to but most of their idols turn out to have clay feet.

These are the glorified women of India the Kaikeys and the Amrapalis, the Kepts and the Courtesans, the Padminis and the Manjris - the queens who walked with their husbands as equal partners. These are the women who are either outcasts or who in assertion invite destruction. These women who made have history, they stood alone in their beauty, valour, courage, and sacrifice. They were married to kings and men of valour but who all at some point of time surrendered to the wills of these women or to their own vulnerabilities, thus inviting destruction.

The Counter-Point

Similar to the first identity pattern there is also a counter-point existing in this theme. These are the multitudes of women who are either handicapped

or who do not show any visible talents. These are the average female children. They are experienced as anxieties with concern about their future and marriage. The women experience themselves as insignificant, lack self-worth, feel small, and often the only response they receive, and experience is through aggression, abuse, and negative interaction. Many of these women are vulnerable to exploitation through seduction, and get lured by softness, gentleness and some attention only to be used and cast aside.

In marriage a large number of these women experience physical, sexual and psychological abuse both by the husband and the husband's family. They live a life of drudgery, over load themselves with household duties and extend their physical and psychological energies for some response, hoping to receive some kind words. They are victims of a social system which glorifies beauty, idealises male children, and perpetuates the phenomenon of women being burdens.

The women in the identity pattern of 'The Accomplished and the Trickster' of the cultural lore experience and encounter the social threshold. They struggle to encounter the psychological threshold and

get in touch with their beings. Caught in the entrenchments of the experiences with people and environment they find little space for their beings to unfold. They live under their own or the environments compulsions. They are oppressed by their own expectations and those of others and as such experience often futility and anger. They remain caught in the whirlpool of their feelings and encounter bio-social enactment of their roles. Many women in this identity pattern choose not to marry or they never find a man who is worthy of them.

Following the above two identity patterns of The Apple and the Stigma and The Accomplished and the Trickster of the cultural lore emerges the third identity pattern that of The Innocent and the Seducer. This identity is abundantly found in the tales of Arabian Nights, Grimms Fairy Tales, Hans Christian Anderson and other cultural lore across the world. Here the parents protect the innocence and naivete of the daughter only to find her confronting the bio-social reality through a socially undesirable man- be a soldier, a commoner or an alien.

Innocent and the Seducer

Once upon a time there was a kingdom of many waterfalls, brooks, meadows, and gardens full of flowers. The winds blew gentle in this land and the breeze carried the fragrance of flowers everywhere. It was a land of sombre quietness and gentle folks. This kingdom had a king and a queen who were renowned for their being just, kind, and fair. They were gracious and concerned about the welfare of the people and the kingdom. Rich or poor, arrogant or humble, men, women, and children all received just treatment. The subjects of the kingdom could go to the king and queen and tell their woes, miseries, or share the joys and laughter. All received undivided attention of the king and queen. The people of the kingdom loved their king and queen. The king and the queen had a dainty daughter. The princess had all the virtues of a young maiden. She was cared for with love, gentleness, and affection. The king and queen and all the subjects were devoted to her. She was innocent, playful, and won many hearts.

And as it always happens, amidst all the good there is bad, amidst all joy there is pain, and amidst all blessings there is a curse, so it was with the princess. The sages and seers of the kingdom had foretold at her birth that the princess would marry an alien man who would capture the kingdom. As the princess was but a little child, the dark clouds were pushed out of sight and out of mind for the time being. The days went by and each day the princess grew lovelier. The king and the queen began preparation to prevent the predictions - the inevitable future. They constructed a palace with seven thick walls. Each wall had a gate and a huge lock. It was well guarded. Inside there was all the comfort a princess could wish. The day the princess reached puberty she was royally transported to the palace. There was a maid to give her company and guards at all the doors. Seven locks were used to padlock the door. There was one small window. To the world, she became invisible and to herself she was a captive.

The princess learned to dream and live in a world of fantasy. She saw the hustle and bustle of life from the window of her room. Young maidens laughing and

blushing and young men accompanying them. How she dreamed of being one of them. How she longed to frolic in the sun, have the breeze play with her hair and the raindrops soak her body and to shriek with joy and laughter amidst friends. Her pleading to let her be with them was of no avail. The king and the queen waited for the right moment and the right person to get her married.

The days went by and the princess became restless. There was only her maid as a companion and the queen as visitor. And then one day, just as the dusk was setting and wishing goodbye to the day and welcoming the night, a young man entered the room of the princess. There was magic in the air. The maid was asleep and the princess was overwhelmed by the presence of the man. She saw in him her savior and freedom from captivity in the palace. The man was a traveller who had heard of the beauty of the princess. He was charmed by her simplicity and gentleness and decided to marry her.

The princess stayed captive in the palace and her lover (husband) came to her every night through his magic. Months went by and one day to the dismay of the king and queen they discovered that their innocent child was pregnant. They raved and raged to know who

the seducer of the princess was. She stubbornly refused. They then, set traps and discovered the nightly visits of the traveller. The guards then surrounded the room and captured the seducer. A battle ensued and the seducer killed the king and large part of the army and vanished with the princess. Destiny had its day.

This identity pattern is common in the lives of many a women. The family protects the growing girl from the realities of being a woman. They uphold the girl's innocence, her naivete of impulses, uphold the virtues of purity and of being perfect. She is made to deny her impulses and compelled to live by an abstract set of ideals far removed from reality. She lives in a reality defined by others - especially the parents. Her life is governed by the ideals of the society. She is a captive and compelled to surrender her being and becoming usually to her parents. To the parents she is a possession to be preserved in innocence.

Women with this core of identity structures of life space fail to realistically assess the male. Their protection from the reality - the bio-social

reality--often make the young women susceptible to the charms and endearments of the men around - often the undesirables or the villains. The adolescence of many young women is then full of sexual exploitations, let downs, disillusionments, and disappointments which leave scars for the rest of their lives. In most cases the women see their desertion and rejections arising from themselves being the source. The exploiters are held in nostalgia. Women in this identity pattern often choose in marriage a man who is an alien in caste and religion. Their search is for a sense of belonging. Some of them even attempt elopement.

Often these women marry men who derive their own significance from smallness of others. Any attempt to acquire a sense of significance by the women raises anxiety and apprehensions in the men. The women in their own anxiety of being accepted surrender their being and play secondary roles in the system. The dream of the men is to marry the 'apple princess' but they end up marrying the innocent with the view of moulding her into an ideal woman - an apple princess - of their own choice. In later years if the woman acquired

her own sense of reality, marriage becomes a setting for constant friction. She either has the choice to rebel or to conform. She is doomed anyway. Alternately, many women with this core of structure of identity and life space remain captive. Their marriages are of the family not to individuals. But they are psychologically never married. They often continue to shuttle **back** and forth between their husband and parents home. They find no location for themselves. Essentially, women with this core of identity internalise the denial and deprivation processes let loose by the significant roles of the social system. They do not internalise management of impulses. They hanker for love, **praise**, and invocations to be adults. They remain objects of seduction. They disown their assertiveness, creativity, and their being. They become proxy roles. They weave dreams and fantasies of meeting someone who would value them and treat them as adults. Their posture remains innocent, naive, coy, shy, and hesitant. It is these very qualities which unfolds the script of their life space.

The women who internalise this core identity pattern surrender their own dreams and aspirations and ignore their own experiences of the world and people around them. They surrender their lives first to the parents and later to the husbands. They accept their destiny as to being controlled by others, guided by a set of ideals of purity a set of values, beliefs, and role processes of a bygone era. They truly become the echoes and shadows of significant roles and the social system. In this they feel their acceptance and affirmation for they tend to be glorified but eventually become the martyrs or the victims of situation and people.

The basic structure of this cultural lore for endless years has provided the format in many Indian films. Themes like 'Gaun ki Gori and Shehar ka Chalia or Babu' (The innocent village maid and the city born charmer) and many others depicting the **trials** and turmoils of this identity have been box office hits in India.

In the possibility that women with this core identity process enter the work setting it is more often for economic reasons than choice made by the

self. As such the chances of their bio-social exploitation are high. In the work setting these women end up doing routine jobs. They are often passive and rarely become significant. They are perceived as reliable, and productive. However, they do become indispensable but are taken for granted. The women are silent sufferers and their exploitation lies in their being overwhelmed when someone asks their opinion or advice. They hanker for being treated as mature adults but their experience of reality both at home and work setting is largely constructed by others. Their own experiences, impulses, and responses are held in abeyance.

Women in this core identity theme seek solace in God or religion. They live with guilt when their impulses are evoked and torment themselves with deprivations and denials of good things in life. Women deny themselves a respite from over extending themselves to their husbands, children or their work settings.

The women having experienced the three above core identity themes live with feelings of unfulfillment of lack of psychological replenishment. They

search for something to restore their sense of well being. They experience their acute loneliness of existence and social oppression. In this identity pattern of the cultural lore many women remain anchored at the social threshold. They search for a psycho-social relatedness and fail as they have very few positive encounters with their counter-part the male identity. Constantly they grapple with the bio-social role only to feel guilt with the body and its desires remain resentful at their feelings of non-fulfilment. The romanticism of togetherness, the dreams to be with the right one and the fantasy of a life full of passion and love eludes them. They find themselves in a dreary wasteland.

Then there are a whole set of women who internalize the fourth identity pattern of the cultural lore is 'The Lost and the Unfulfilled'. This is a natural and a sequential identity pattern which gets responded to by Indian women. The search then, is for self fulfilment and psycho-social personhood.

The Lost and the Unfulfilled

Surrounded by the ocean on one side and the vast desert on the other there was a kingdom isolated from the rest of the world wherein lived a king and a queen. The land was one of plenty, where flowers and fruits grew in abundance. The shops were full of precious stones and the fabrics most beautiful with vivid colours. The land was blessed and so were the people. The king and queen had many sons and seven daughters. The princes and the princesses were trained in social customs of the land and each had a unique capability. Put together all contributed to the cherished traditions of their kingdom.

Amidst this plenty, surrounded by many sons and daughters, the king and the queen were most concerned about their youngest child--a beautiful daughter. She had the gentlest of eyes and long, thick hair which reached her toes. When she sang the woods and the forests, the streams, and all the birds of the kingdom stood still. She had a melodious voice. It reached ~~right~~ through the hearts of many and evoked nostalgia, memories, and elusive fantasies. This youngest princess was absorbed in herself and often she would sit by the sea or the edge of the

desert for hours dreaming of lands beyond the horizon. She was content in her father's kingdom, yet she was restless. She was loved by many, and yet lonely. She had everything she wanted, yet she felt empty. She had the world at her feet, yet she felt incomplete, often she brooded. The king and queen worried for her. She was different from her brothers and sisters and the rest of the children of the kingdom. Her friends enjoyed her and the sisters teased her.

The princess continued to dream. She wandered through the kingdom. One day in her wanderings she came across an unconscious man cast on the shore by the sea. He was a stranger and an alien. The heart of the princess went out to him. For he was a handsome man. She moved to care and nurture the man back to life. The princess took the stranger to the palace where he was restored in health. She fell in love with the stranger and he with her and sought her hand. The king was troubled for none in the kingdom had married a man from an alien land. So the king set a difficult task. The stranger went through many a hardship.

Finally he completed all the tasks successfully and so stood the test of his love. The king finally bestowed the daughter to him. They lived happily thereafter. Years after the stranger wished to return to his home. Then the travails and the turmoils of the princess began.

There are a whole set of women who internalize this structure of the core identity pattern of the cultural lore. The experiences of growing up has left the women unsure of relationships and they are willing to offer all they have. Women bring to their relationship all that is considered "ideal" in society--love, conformity, obedience, unstinting loyalty, and sometimes blind faith. They often ignore the reality of other person and the situation. In their kind they have chosen to surrender to one person in life. They become blind to the subsequent manipulation and exploitation and live with the referred status of the others. Deep down many of these women live with feelings of rejection, and a lack of self-worth.

The Indian women marry a stranger with or without a choice. The women in search for an ideal relationship first attempt to create a relationship with their

husbands. They devote their lives hoping the response from the husband would fill the void and experience the magic they have dreamt. However, in reality the men they marry are self-absorbed and tradition bound. The men in their attempts to be ideal sons and responsible members of the parental family become so duty bound that they often neglect their own primary family of wife and children. The women in such a setting gradually feel disillusioned.

These women are silent sufferers. They hope that their husbands would understand their aspirations, potentials, and create a context for them to grow. The husbands, preoccupied in their own careers and caught in the traditional roles are more often insensitive to the inner realities of those women. The women continue to sacrifice their lives, and remain lonely as they were before. Women with this core of identity, and structure of life space internalise neglect, indifference and being alone. They come alive once and having displayed their concern and involvement and establishing a link they retreat back and await at the threshold.

In relationships and in marriage, these are the women behind their men. They turn their roles into becoming mothers to their husbands. They provide nurturance and sustenance and manage the infrastructures of the home to provide consistency, continuity, and stability. They make no direct demand for themselves and are support to everybody. They are towers of strength in times of crisis. Often they are exploited, taken for granted and always in demand when others are in stress. In their dysfunctionality or in their stress they evoke guilt in others for their sacrifices. Their worth is felt in their absence and most acutely in their death.

There are a whole set of women in this core identity pattern who when they experience disillusionment reach the point of despair. Some then, see suicide as their only alternative. The slow and gradual crumbling of their dreams is too much to bear. Many of them have postponed their career opportunities and sacrificed their potential, achievement, and capabilities. Some of them continue to play the idealized social role which glorify sacrifice at the altar of their husband's

needs. They have disowned their being and processes of becoming. They are talented and wish to create a niche for themselves in either home or the professional world. However, their talents are sacrificed for a home, husband, children and the social tradition.

In almost all of the stories the women who have internalised this core identity pattern and structure of life space experience many separations, go through many trials and tribulations, and suffer much heartbreak before they experience the union with their beloved. What really sustains them to persist in their effort is their devotion, faith, persistence, sacrifice and unstinting hope. There are innumerable life experiences of many women which emphasize themes of separation, non-fulfilment of dreams, lack of experiencing union, and silently living and harbouring love without actualization. The women go through tests of fire, and suffers denials. They remain undaunted in their love and devotion.

Indian cultural lore abound in this theme. This identity is glorified and idealized. Characters like 'Sita', 'Parvati', the religious faith of 'Ibera',

'Kannagi', 'Damayanti', 'Savitri', and many other social symbols are but a few of the examples. Internationalizations of these social models and their social and psychological expressions continue to be dominantly operative even today.

In essence these women search for that one person who would fulfil all that which they have been deprived from childhood to create a feeling of worthiness and wholesomeness in themselves. The search is for being owned and a belonging they can call their own. The search is for personal security and unconditional acceptance. The search is for their personhood and a context wherein they can flourish and grow.

The women having experienced and lived through the structure of the core identity theme of the Apple and the Stigma, the Accomplished and the Trickster, the Innocent and the Seducer, and the Lost and Unfulfilled find themselves falling back upon their own resources. They then begin to live through and experience the next core identity pattern of the Realist and the Exiled.

The Realist and the Exiled

Once upon a time not long ago there was a kingdom at the edge of the desert. The winds blew hot during the day and the night brought the cool breeze far

away from the distant oceans. The king who ruled this kingdom was temperamental. He either blew hot and lost his temper or was cool, calm and serene. The queen, a tall and dignified lady was generous and wise. People of the kingdom sought her advice on their day to day problems. And like the desert the days and nights turned into a rhythmic unfolding. The old man Time danced away into endless horizons.

The king and the queen of the kingdom had three daughters. Each one quite different from the other. Each daughter had a special skill and all were trained in the laws of the land, social customs, their roles and modes of relating with people of the kingdom. Often the king would talk to his daughters and narrate tales of yore to them. The king and the queen with their three daughters would meet the people of the kingdom. The people admired the differences, similarities and uniqueness of each member of the royal family. They felt that the kingdom had all the resources he could wish for.

One beautiful rainy day the royal family was sitting in their palatial room watching the rain pour down from the heavens. This happened very

rarely for they lived very near the desert. The king suddenly turned to the three daughters and asked them - "who do you love most?" The princesses were taken aback for a moment but the eldest one quickly replied 'you Father I love the best'. The second daughter then replied - "it is all the kingdom that you have created, its palaces, its monuments, the jewels you have brought from far far lands and everything that the kingdom holds that I love". The king was pleased and once again patted the hand of his daughter and said "I like what you say". Then he turned to the youngest daughter who looked at him for a long time and said--"Father, it is the salt I like best". The king turned red and purple and then like a volcano erupted into anger. He had lost his speech for some time. Now he roared and said-- "You are an ungrateful child for what you have received". And like the father of the first princess "The Apple and the Stigma" he declared that his youngest daughter would be married to the poorest man in the kingdom. And so it was proclaimed in the kingdom. The people of the kingdom were stunned for they all knew the poorest man.

The poorest man in the kingdom lived in a hut which was dilapidated. The walls had holes and half the time the roof was missing. It grew hot like an oven during the day and freezing cold at night. Often the people saw the poorest man of the kingdom searching for shade during the day and at nights huddling in a corner to protect himself from the cold. People wondered how the princess - the youngest princess - who had lived in the palace where cool breeze was fanned during the day and where at night she slept on a soft bed covered with silken quilt would survive. They sighed, bemoaned the king's temper and his hasty command. However, the command was given. Right or wrong, the verdict of the king had to be carried out. The poorest man of the kingdom was hauled before the king and the day came when the king married his youngest daughter to him.

And like all stories after a sad beginning we like to hear what happened to the princess. Did she survive? Did she weep? Did she moan, shriek or faint? Did she curse and lived in the heat and shivered in the cold? What happened to both of them? And so the story unfolds. The princess had courage. For she

spoke what she felt and what she believed in. So at the day of her marriage she dressed as a simple maid, abandoning all the royal fineries, and walked with firm steps to marry the poorest man of the kingdom. The poorest man of the kingdom now the husband of the princess was dumfounded and at first thought it was a dream. He looked at the gracious princess and was tongue tied. The princess took his hand and then set out to walk away from the court. They walked past the palace, the royal gardens, his hut and out of the kingdom. The people followed them till the edge of the desert and they stood still. Without looking back the princess and her husband walked on and on and out of the capital of the kingdom.

The days went by. The king and the queen married the other two daughters to the eligible and most desirable men in the kingdom. Once married, the eldest daughter only came to the kingdom when she wished. She got absorbed in her family and grew indifferent to the king. The second daughter always came back to make demands for gold, jewels and money. She was never satisfied. She would rave and rant if her wishes were not granted. The king felt very

disappointed. As he grew older and pondered about his life he thought about his exiled daughter. He wondered about her whereabouts. But he took no action to discover her.

Many years went by. There came to the capital a rich merchant who sought the king's audience and permission to settle in the capital. He offered precious gifts to the king in the audience hall. The king was pleased and gave his permission. The merchant grew in fame for honesty, and was held in deep respect by people. His wife too became the dozen of the wives of merchants.

One day the merchant presented himself to the king and asked the grace of the king to accept his invitation to visit him at home and to share a feast. The king was delighted to accept. On the appointed day the king found himself in a big mansion where all kinds of delicacies were being served to hundreds of elite merchants, bankers, and scholars of the city. He was invited to sit at the throne. The wife of the merchant accompanied by a dozen companions came to serve the king. The king took his first morsel and

to his dismay found it without salt. He tasted every dish, each lacked salt. By this time the king was puzzled and angry. He demanded an explanation of the behaviour. The wife of the merchant looked up and said -- 'once O king you considered salt dirt and cheap'. The king was perplexed and looked at the woman and recognized her as his exiled daughter. He realized the wisdom of the daughter and rose to embrace her. The daughter responded and they were united. There was great rejoicing in the kingdom. The king in time retired after appointing the merchant his successor.

There are some women who internalise this core structure of life space and identity of the cultural lore. Their attempt is to integrate their emotions, sentiments and feelings with the primary system and also include rationality, and practicality. Somewhere along their period of growth they have learnt to integrate their head and heart and evolved an action stance. Women with this core of identity pattern come through as secure in themselves and autonomous in their decision making. They are responsive to the people and situation and yet they

do not seem to be able to please people whom they relate with in their primary system. The women respect societal values but are willing to explore and question them. If necessary they experiment and establish new personalized values. While they accept existing societal values they also manage their differences with them.

In role bound relationships which permit only role appropriate actions and feelings these women may run foul of significant roles and get punished. They can operate in any structure of life space, but with a sense of aloofness. Their propensity is to create a structure of life space of their own. They deploy their resources to create a space where togetherness can flourish. They are neither echoes nor shadows. They are not dependent upon legacies. They can create heritage from themselves without negating the original heritage. They are the 'women-persons' and not 'women-roles'.

Many of these women become the pillars of community. Eventually they get sought as mother confessors. They are given respect, perhaps devotion but rarely love and affection. They neither negate nor victimise.

They state and act with their convictions. In this stance they themselves do not rebel but create new traditions. However, they are often perceived as provocators by traditionalists. In our experience these women once married stand with their men. They build a strong foundation to create a sense of mutuality and reciprocity. They are able to adjust with the extended social system and often bring families together. There are many examples where the entry of such a person in the family gradually leads to ending feuds, fostering reunions and a sense of well being in the family system.

In the work setting these women bring functionality, stability, and insights. They contribute to create a work culture. They are responsive to underprivileged and often take on the responsibility of fighting on their behalf. These women tend to be professionally inclined and hold a wider perspective of life.

These women create a location and a space which is a source of well being to themselves and others. They are capable of handling live issues, people and situation without compulsion to conform. Their identity is tuned to for a meaning and purpose.

They are accessible to others in their inner turmoil. Often they live with an acute sense of search-a-search for that something more amidst all the purposive transactions. These are the women who cross the social threshold, encounter the bio-social role modalities and discover their psycho-social personhood. In their personhood they find their freedom from confirming role boundaries and accept their multiplicities of their being and unfolding of their becoming. Their maturity lies in living with ambiguity, uncertainty, similarities and differences. They are able to converge contradictions into a meaningful whole and add their insights into living processes. They claim their space, give themselves legitimacy, own their unique existence, affirm their beings and feel blessed for the life they live.

A Perspective

These five core stories with variations of time and place are prevalent all over India and are called oral traditions. In somewhat more elaborate format they are also found in written and enacted tradition. We have put them together in this sequence to illustrate the vicissitudes of women's role and identity

patterns. The five core identity patterns are the unfolding of woman's structure of life space where she has to go through confronting the different faces before she can claim her real face. Each identity provides a pattern of relationships with their concurrent processes to be lived through to lay down the ghosts of victimhood, and martyrdom. Each core identity provides a confrontation with the compulsions of societal code of conduct and deeply embedded stereotypes of a woman's role. Each identity also provides the space to explore and discover resources within the self to take destiny into one's own hands or hand it over to the people, society or tradition. Hence the core identity from any cultural lore can provide new alternatives, a new path and a new direction or reinforce the existing social code of conduct.

The first story 'The Apple and the Stigma' is the story of woman's identity where significant people in her life space see her as a passive recipient of love, care and investment. She is supposed to withhold her own being and follow confirmed path to become. Her future may be of concern and anxiety but

not planning. When the time boundary of her role of daughter is over, she is handed over to the first likely candidate and left to drift on her own. To the father she is a burden and a stigma in which he refused to invest. He maintains her and gets rid of her at the appropriate time. The woman in this role identity introjects the stigma. It is further reinforced by the 'stigma' of withholding the being from unfolding. The inevitabilities of the structures of her life space are concerned with dissolution and resolution of stigma and restoration of her own wholesomeness. The stigmatised husband is the symbol of stigma she holds for postponing her being. Development of her resources to mobilise the stigmatised husband and thus, restore herself through him is one alternative she can choose. The message is clear that her being cannot be directly actualised. The other alternative is to fade away in conformity and to live the life of poverty of space and hard work. In the first alternative residual feelings are regrets of having restored others but achieving nothing new for herself. In the second alternative the residual feelings are of torture, and fate.

The second story 'The Accomplished and the Trickster' is the natural sequence of the first. The psyche of the woman having lived the stigma turns the life space of the daughter state into a place not only as a recipient of care and nurturance and life through conformity but an active place to struggle to give shape to the potentials within. In doing so she gets admiration and becomes a prized object but not loved. Behind admiration she is experienced as a successful manipulator of the environment and as a capable woman. She becomes what she is not supposed to become i.e., building the instrumental mode of male within herself. She comes to hold the instrumental psyche of man in a woman's body. She has internalised the instrumentality. It is this instrumentality (in its negative connotation) that the woman encounters in the trickster. The inevitabilities of the structures of her life space is pivoted around her becoming. Here lies the dilemma. If she lets go the instrumentality she would then fall back into the life space of 'The Apple and the Stigma'. In that role she can only be the context of restoration of somebody. If she retains the instrumental mode she

has to encounter its negative counterpoint and live through constant struggle in finding an equation. In many Indian stories like that of 'Kalidas' and later 'Tulsidas' and 'Soordas' these women push the trickster into positive modality by her contempt and then face desertion and condemnation. Tulsidas and Soordas eventually desert the women while Kalidas glorified her. The message is clear that the 'Being' of a woman when acting in male modality must invoke desertion. Many a career women in India either face desertion through divorce or live their life space turned into a battle ground. The residual feeling in either alternative is 'damned if you do and damned if you don't'.

The third story 'The Innocent and the Seducer' is another natural sequence of the first two. The woman psyche having experienced the travails and the turmoils of the two previous patterns chooses to play innocent. She is the recipient of protection. She is also the possessed and as such a captive. Her encounter with the seducer is an encounter with the reality with which she has never been allowed to cope.

The masked reality is that of her own impulses and their gradual rationalisations through living experiences in life space. The parents deny her the opportunity of being reborn into a socio-psychological identity as an adult. She is kept a prisoner in her bio-social birth within the primary family. She is not allowed to enter the secondary system in her own right. Her encounter with the seducer is to complete this process.

The inevitabilities of the structures of her life space is to confront the reality of the world being simultaneously a mix of impulse and learning to discriminate and make mature choices. Unfortunately this identity confronts only shame and reactive violence. The alternative of confronting shame turns the seducer into a protector who takes her away into a new kingdom never to return. The hope is that she would be relocated in the new universe with respect, dignity and maturity. In encountering the reactive violence of the parents the seducer has to destroy the parental family and take over. Many women sharing this core identity relieve the encounter with seducers over and over again even after marriage. They hanker for romantic relationship

and get seduced. Those who succeed to bind this unfulfillment find it difficult to experience themselves as wives but only as mothers to their children. They become housewives and for all practical purposes objects for their husband and role bound in the society. They also very often turn to religion. The residual feelings are the regrets of having charge of one's own destiny.

The fourth story 'The Lost and the Unfulfilled' is another natural sequence. The woman psyche having experienced the travails and turmoils of earlier three identities chooses to remain uncommitted and uninvolved in the life space of a daughter. She chooses the stance of being and yet not being. She becomes intangible, self absorbed, and a fantasy. She lives in a never never land. She is not anchored in reality. She introjects the indifference. She internalises the pathos of lack. She awaits for a bestowal, recognition, and being received and invested in. Finally, she in her encounter with the wounded and the unconscious recognises that she has to take the first step to reach and invest. The wounded and the unconscious traveller is her own psyche. So she finally acts only

only once to nurture and awaken her own dormant being - only to become dormant once again in herself. She takes the mantle of traditional duty bound role. The wounded and the unconscious having been restored surrenders like her to the traditional role in the society. She recreates the indifference, the uninvolved and role absorbed status of herself.

Many women who share this core identity go through marriage with dreams and hopes of finding a man who would recognise, invest and receive them so that they can bring their being into play. Unfortunately most of these women by some peculiar process of choice either their own or their family end up in marriage with very formidable men who are sons to their mothers. The husband never grows out of this role and become an adult. These women become the part of the group whose pathos is so often sung and enacted in India - the good well bred bride tortured and harassed by in-laws. The residual feeling is that of regret of never having begun to create space around herself.

The fifth story 'The Realist and the Exiled' is then the final choice of the woman psyche to state from within and take the consequences. Her attempt

is to create a space to be tougher and claim that which is lost with dignity. Her encounter is with the fantasized lack of resources which the other four identities have held. Her encounter is not with her own symbol but the symbol of woman's psyche introjected from the environment which attributes women as helpless, dependent and demand continuous generation of resources and their deployment in the environment. It is as if this identity gets herself to prove the lie of the environment that women are resourceless. These women in India become the progenitors of a new heritage. In their over engagement they become glorified and perceived as tyrants by the third or fourth generations. In their sagacity and gradual disengagement they leave a heritage of dynamicity. Idealisation and deification is their reward and loneliness their lot.

These five stories are typically Indian. They may have parallels across many cultures. Meanwhile over centuries as other alien cultures got absorbed in India and number of other core identities and structures of life space have scope into Indian ethos. Influences from other cultural lores like the 'Sleeping Beauty',

'Cinderella', and 'Hansel and Gretel', are but a few examples.

Men and women from their unique experiences with the family as a system, parents and other individuals in insignificant roles converge directly or indirectly to role models from the cultural lore. For the folktales, folklore, fairy tales, legends, epics and myth provide in fantasy what individuals hanker, aspire and wish to receive from the system and significant individuals in the system. They also provide a psychological space to dream and fantasize a different world--a world full of aspirations, assertion, and freedom from the conformity of the role. In essence, the cultural lore provide an alternative expression to that which is intensely experienced. There is also an invitation to transcend the models and to create a life space of wholesomeness for the self and others in the system. An invitation to be a person without being a threat to the society.

Social Rituals and Role Taking

While the core of identity is kept alive in India through the internalizations from the cultural lore, the structure of life space for enactment of these identities is maintained by the rituals and proverbial

messages carried out in the society through the ethos of the times. An example of the proverbial messages prevalent in India is that the daughter is 'Paraya Dhan' (Somebody else's property held in trust). The message is that the daughter has no real psychological space at the father's home. She is a social transient. There are similar proverbial messages existing across different regions in India. The message of most of them can be summarised - 'You have some freedom here. Enjoy it with constraints. Once you go to in-laws beware of the in-laws'. 'You will have a hard time', 'You are the virtue and must be held in innocence. This is not for you to know. Your fate is to be subservient to fathers and brothers before marriage and husbands and in-laws after marriage and sons if you survive the husbands. Your destiny is to live for others. This you can only do by denying yourself'.

In India various rituals are also tied with stories from the cultural lore to affirm the inevitable structures of life space. Similarly, after marriage rituals and festivals like 'Karva Chauth' and many others in different forms across regions are only celebrated by women and are interspread through the yearly cycle.

The ritual songs and stories associated with these also reinforce the codings of the structures of their role and life space and persistently reinforce the role models. This theme is glorified and idealised. Internalizations of these social models and their social and psychological expressions continue to be the dominant theme of Indian women today.

Perhaps women across the world in every culture hold the live models from the cultural lore to fashion their life space and unfold their life role. It is a very interesting phenomenon that all the stories from the cultural lore become one of the significant sources of ~~introjections~~-is at the time of going to sleep. In Indian culture it was prohibited and discouraged to tell the child stories during the day. During the day a child could question 'why' and 'how'; But just before going to sleep the stories from the cultural lore evoked dreams and fantasies and could be imprinted in the child's mind unconsciously. Epics which were and are read during the day were to be heard in devotion and silence. The occasional interpretation is only given by the narrator who restated and emphasized the inevitable structures of life space and reinforced

the ethos through the role models. The taboo of story telling in the day was supported by the statement that mama (maternal uncle) would loose his way coming home.

For the Indian child and woman the Indian epics set in a spiritual and religious context provide only fragmented insight into the unexplored areas of being a woman. At best they provide fragmented and partial directions. The themes praise assertiveness only to act for others and to destroy evil only for the society. Acting upon the society for the injustice done to the husband or the child and earn the virtue in the social role, to be glorified. None of these role models however, provide a value inherently for the woman to act for herself and to live as a whole person. In moments of experiencing indignity she can seek others help (e.g. Draupadi seeking help from Lord Krishna) but never to act for herself.

The themes of action or assertion emphasize one **single** act in a state of existential anger against the system or a set of people on behalf of the husband or a son. They rarely promote assertiveness

as a value. Most of the spiritual and religious role models do not provide women a hope to integrate processes of their being and becoming. These models do not generate a socio-psychological identity for women nor do they create a legitimate-space for the being of women in society except for being compliant and conforming.

Let us hasten to add that Indian history and literature do have few examples of women seeking the fulfillment of their being. However, it is not surprising that these models are either of a courtesan or outcastes like Amrapali or women in the writings of Sharad Chandra Chattopadhyay and Jainendra Kumar Jain. In Indian history, at one point of time, the courtesan acquired a high status in society. Her occupation demanded that she be well-versed in the arts, music, literature, and politics. The profession also demanded a strict code of conduct and honour. This role was viewed with awe and evoked dignity. The courtesan in her role was assertive, articulate of her knowledge, accepted her femininity and grace, made choices rather than compromises, and commanded respect for herself.

Unfortunately, the acceptance of this role in its dignified aspect was short-lived. The rigid social code of conduct held this role as suspect, maligned it, and held it in contempt. Society turned this role into an object of consumption and all the accomplishments as an added asset to the glorification of the sexual skills and expertise. What was once a role which demanded rigorous training gradually deteriorated into vulgarity. Literature provides role models of assertive women who by their life stance restore the man but eventually are left on their own. The man restored in his wholesomeness and dignity walks away to create his own space in a new world without the ghosts of the past and leaves the woman - the source of his restoration - behind.

Essentially then, in her conformity the self of the woman is left disowned, her social roles are enacted and in the assertion for the self and others she has no space in their lives, not even with the one she has invested to restore. This leaves the question as to what options does the woman have? And what are the basic anchors of action choices embedded in the models of life role and life space of Indian women?

Other than the bio-psychological consequence of sustaining the child in the womb for nine months the psychological and emotional unique experience a woman lives with is that of inevitable uprooting from the parental home and re-rooting in the husband's home.

Uprooting

Except in some residual matriarchical patterns where women experience continuity, women live in a transient context from birth till marriage. They are not supposed to lay deep roots in their own parental family. At marriage they live through the experience of the pathos of being uprooted from the parental family. No marriage in real life or in Indian films, literature, and drama can side step the depiction of this moment of pathos of uprooting. The women even if they have lived through negative experience of their family cannot disown this reality of uprooting. They are immersed in the pathos. The only time this 'uprooting' and its anticipation is managed functionally and with positive frame is the dialogues, the humour and teasing about the

future time with the lover - the husband - are the dialogues and interactions with the 'Saheli' the peer and close girl friend.

The message is very clear. Marriage and the husband's home is the place where the woman has to relocate and root herself. She can either flourish or wither away. Even today most families would discourage the daughter returning back to the parental family even when the husband or his family are brutal. The message is - that is your place and there you stay. Advice for adjustment and surrender flood the daughter. There is no support. The woman can either become a victim or a martyr. If she succeeds to separate herself and the husband from the in-laws family she is condemned and holds the guilt. Husbands who let this happen are condemned as Joru Ka Gulam (the slave of the wife. The feeling tone is contemptuous) and go through torturous anguish for letting down the parents. Their marriages often go through a turbulent time managing and coping with this guilt.

Women across countries and cultures and in millions uproot themselves from the home of their parents to make new homes. Our exploration with a large number of Indian women suggests that the pathos

of uprooting and the difficulty of re-rooting crystallises in several critical orientations and attitudes. The most significant and critical seem to be of resources. The women find it difficult to use resources of the husband for the self. Many women when confronted with the statement that it is legitimate to claim familial resources for their own being and meaningful relatedness with the environment refuse to seek the resources and/or even accept the legitimacy of such a demand from their side. Their statements reflect that they have done their role and their being has been held in abeyance. The family has shown no concern and made no demands for its deployment. As such the women are not willing to claim resources for themselves. They felt that husbands gave resources to humour them or through fight but not with conviction. The message of the husband was 'you have everything what more do you need'.

The second set of manifestations were expressed in the field of psycho-somatisation and other illnesses. The women often kept falling sick but continued to work hard. They continue to prove that they were not letting go of their role but let the family know of the sacrifice. Another dominant anchor of the model

of life role and life space was the quality and meaning of relationship. In most of the core identity stories relationships are given more importance, which leads to women losing their identities. The woman was expected to hold her being in abeyance and define her relationship for purpose defined by the system and the significant ones. The relationship transactions were coded with an ethos of living for others.

As a part of the system the woman may have many role e.g., in the primary family she is daughter but also a sister, an aunt, a niece and other possible roles. However, in all these roles the daughter role is the anchor and the status of being a transient and a trust in the role permeates through other roles. Similarly in marriage she is either the daughter-in-law or the mother. Her role as a wife is secondary. Her status of being the daughter of the other house is constantly kept alive in transactions. It is only in the motherhood that she finds some integration and rooting for herself. In turn she tends to sometimes over possess children. Even in the current nuclear family the woman in a socio-psychological

sense continues to experience her role in the husband's family as an outsider.

The interesting dilemma for a woman in terms of relations is between her status as a transient and trust at her parents place and an outsider in the in-laws place. Her social locations may be in system but her psychological location remain floating and buffeted around. The dilemma of psychological location and hence the problem of stable sense of relatedness and meaning seems to haunt the inner life of many a women in India. The dilemma creates problems for women to find an emotional anchorage in the permitted legitimised role relationships. There is always the fear that a accusation of being an outsider would be thrown in their face. All their devoted efforts and contribution to the well being of the system and significant roles can crumble into dust and become meaningless by the smallest reference of their being outsiders. Their sense of location is very fragile.

Lack of this stability of psychological location has left only two resources to the women. In the social system to postulate a relationship with

religion or develop deep emotional anchorage in another male outside the marriage. In the past society permitted an institution of 'Dharam bhai' (brother in commitment). Such a person could come from within the in-laws family or from among the husband's family friends. In the psychological and emotional sense the response according to the stories, legends, and literature was to seek transient sensuous relationships. The married woman - the Abhisarika who against all odds and dangers goes to meet her lover. To what extent this was social reality or to what extent it was a prevalent practice is a matter of opinion. The fact that sex was not really a moral taboo in India may have supported this outlet in the minds of some women in India.

Another dominant anchor of action choice the Indian women make is to cultivate almost an absolutism of virtue and duty tempered with faith and observation of religious rituals. They become highly normative for themselves as well as others. This provided one kind of psychological location. It also freed them to create their boundaries and thus block many an exploitative engagements. It also created some space for women. Standing in this space she could bear with

ensor and persist. This action choice also gave the woman the role and significant meaning of the carrier of the heritage, family tradition and culture. She acquired the strength of being the moral backbone of the family through the vagaries of social and economic upheavels. Many a ravaged families got socially rehabilitated by strengths of such women. As devoted beings with a strong faith in religion many of them also acquired a meaning of being the source of family prosperity and happiness. It was their virtue and faith that kept the grace of God on the family.

The question today is what processes of role-taking are open to women? Women still carry within themselves the traditional cores of identity which push and pull in opposite directions. The present beckons with newer and wider opportunities of a life outside home. It provides investment in the self such as education which were once denied. The intelligence, abilities and capabilities are getting confirmed beyond the traditional fields of art, dance and music. Public appearance as a performer is an act of courage and conviction but available. The pull of the present is the highlighting of an invitation to become.

Many women have accepted the invitation and taken the first steps. How do they feel inside?

The women seem to be holding two simultaneous states of feelings. One set of feeling is of joy, pride, respect and affirmation of themselves. They have hope and sense of fulfillment. They feel a sense of being a part of the system, they attempt to carve a role, experience equitation and to be able to influence ones destiny brings to them a sense of dignity. However, the women are also acutely aware that their success and responsiveness to the present is shrouded in a mantle of suspicion, contempt insinuations of sexuality and such other attributions held in the environment. They carry feelings of anger, resentment and sometimes guilt and anxiety. Their movement in the present is very often like a see-saw in feelings - the joy of affirmation of being and becoming and feeling vulnerable simultaneously. A smiling brave face to the outside and perhaps an anxious and resentful residue inside seems to be quite frequent.

Future is a shifting collage. Women have still not found a place, a location - psychological or

social - where they can experience themselves without the ever present ghost of comparison with men and system.

In the absence of experiencing any space to explore their struggle for a meaning combined with the secondary status by virtue of being females, women in India experience lack of experiencing anchors within. Hence they conform to the social role prescriptions. Conformity to role prescriptions denies women the space to come to terms with their female body and their psychological location. It blocks the discovery of the personhood. This process starts an unending search to seek acceptance, and to please and render service. The women get compelled to make themselves desirable, and all this often gets caught with physicality, and reinforces their feelings of being exploited, stigmatized and shame.

Women continue to struggle to get in touch with their substantiveness and discover an identity beyond that of a victim and a martyr. In the absence of the system providing any space, lack of role models for such an exploration and their entrenchment into the compulsiveness of the social roles often makes them surrender their search for their personhood and settle down in a reactive mode.

Some women struggle for such a woman-person encounter--between themselves and the system--have often attempted to deploy their potentials both at home and the work setting. They often have confronted within themselves the pathos of traditional past and the aspired ethos of the present times. They have persisted but overloaded themselves with the processes of both. Their journey has been on a tight rope or on a razor 's edge. Most of them have sustained themselves on the razor's edge by over engaging with both roles. Others have fallen either in the role of daughters, wife, and mother. Thus, they find it difficult to evolve an integrated identity.

Some women continue their struggle to find freedom from dependent, controlling and patronising relationships. Their attempt is to redefine their role to include acting upon the system and to create a legitimate space for themselves. An exclusive emphasis on career and economic autonomy pushes women into a comparative framework and an aggressive mode, which in the long run becomes dysfunctional for themselves. Creating woman-person identity is associated with fears of social stigma, isolation, and loneliness.

The current issues is whether there are any alternative role models available for women. Are there processes in social system which will facilitate the transition from roles of a bygone era to the present times and allow them to be integrated persons?