CHAPTER – II

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Psycho Analysis

Literature deals with life. Men and Women with normal characteristics as human beings never interest a writer. It is their abnormality, a deviation from normalcy of humanness responsible for projections of unnaturalness and consequential accompaniments that catch the writers’ attention thereby catering to their propensities of writing. Any reading projecting the deviated personality of men and women needs enlightenment from the psychological angle. In this regard guidelines stem from the findings of psychologists and the application of such findings constitutes the ways of psycho – analytical criticism of literature. Though formalistic criticism takes cognizance of the various aspects of the language of expression of characters of works of art, psycho-analysis aided by the paradigms provided by psychologists fathom out the real reason for the behavioristic patterns of characters in works of art. Dr.Errest Jones’ interpretation of Hamlet from a Freudian perception happened to be a matter of interest to writers as it provided clues to the very process of art and the motives of characters.

That man is poised as a victim of environment or biology or both is an exposition that owes itself to the pursuit of literary
naturalism. Sigmund Freud’s investigations provided light, to the exposition made by literary naturalism, by means of specific psychologically scientific terminology. This in turn facilitated expression of man’s imprisonment to the repressions forced upon him or her and also the ‘libidinous compulsions’ that hold the beings in their clasp. Literary naturalism does not find fault with man. It sees him as a hapless and helpless being and a “dupe of natural and preter human forces” (Wilbur scott : *Five Approaches of Literary Criticism*, Collier Books, New York, p.69).

The concepts of the ‘collective unconscious’ and inferiority complex’ propounded by Carl Jung and Adler fortified what was already in operation - Freud’s conceptions.

In the mean time many writers, both creative artists and critics began to cast their attention towards this new area of knowledge. Human characteristics such as chastity, reticence, gentility, respectability etc. which were considered divine distributes by the American puritans and English victorians began losing ground and became washed out as consequences of the repressions of the *Id* of the human psyche.

However, the psychic unconscious is a constituent to psychological criticism relating to the race to culture. Owing to its relational propensity towards what is known as social anthropology. Henry A.Murray, a serious and stern psychologist of the modern times (the 1970s and ‘80s) transformed himself
into a psychoanalyst with his enterprises in the study of personology of characters in real life. He in his experimental studies as early as 1933 explored a psychological phenomenon related to projection, namely the attribution of traits and characteristics to another person, to put it somewhat more specifically, the notion that one’s emotional state of mind may affect one’s judgement of other persons in the environment. The pathological and abnormal aspects of man that Murray concentrated upon heads towards accentuating the supranormal, the good, the talented to focus on man’s capacity for proaction – for initiating programmes and actions to be creative.

Murray’s psycho-analytical research identifies two aspects as contributive to the development of traits of characters. One is the “Observation of the features (physical signs)” and the other is “the interpretation of them on the basis of associations which in the past have been found by the observer to exist between somewhat similar physical signs and particular types of behaviour (Henry A.Murray, *Endeavours in Psychology*, Harper and Row, New York, P275). In this connection the terms ‘perception’ and ‘apperception’ assume significance, for the former term pertains to conscious recognition and the later relates to the physical stimulus. The term includes understanding, interpreting, classifying, subsuming etc. These
orient towards ‘projection’ needs, feelings, emotions or images. A study of these constitutes what is known as ‘personology’ and the one who does it is a personologist. The distinction of the constituents of the psychic structure namely the *Id*, the *Ego* and the *super-Ego* assume significance in the context. The *Id* performs the unconscious processes. The Ego is selective and inhibitive and hence performs the repressive functions. Besides repression, Freud has described a number of other mechanisms such as projection, sublimation and nationalization whereby the Ego partially succeeds in veiling, transforming or excusing some of the active components of the *Id*. The *Ego* is associated with the will and the satisfactions of self-mastery.

**Analysis of the psyche of women in Penn manam**

These aspects are identified as causative of the paradigms for application in the analysis of the women characters in Lakshmi’s *Penn Manam* and *Oru Kaviriyai Pola*.

**Penn Manam** (The Female Psyche) is intended to convey the state of a female’s psyche which races with men of the twentieth century for a livelihood in consonance with achings within the confines of idealism and ethics. The protagonist is Chandra and a study of her constitutes half of the personological dimension of this thesis. That the protagonist is in an upset mood even at the outset of the novel is an indication of something amiss that must have led to her present emotional
turbulence. The all prevalent misery right from her birth until the present has made her feel bitter and thinking about it makes her more miserable. The death of her mother when she was eight, the entry of her step-mother after two years, the useless silence of her father, the sufferings that she experienced during the course of her studies have the stance as external factors impinging upon her personality. Repression from without is what she has been experiencing right from her early years. Her uncertainty about her future is further stifled by a letter from her step-mother which assails her for her wriggling out of commitment to married life. Her *I* can is made dysfunctional by her step-mother's persuasiveness and there is total blockade to any sort of flowering of positive ideas in her. Thus, the heroine Chandra is totally rid of any chance to pursue any proaction. Hence she is psychologically defunct.

Chandra’s friend Ambujam, an external influence on her revels over her nearing wedding whereas the former struggles even to think as to the howabouts of pushing the days and years ahead. That arrangements for her marriage stemming from her step-mother indicate her possible doom, for the proposed groom is already married with two children. Hence Chandra’s apperception hardens and consequently her defiance grows as a veil of security for her ownself. The reader is conscious of the absence of any proportion of the *I* in the
protagonist. Thus grows her stimulus against imposition and authority from her parents. Despite the impossibility of nourishing personal wishes thereby giving herself to the persuasive Id, Chandra yields to the unconscious process of Id’s persuasion to guard herself from the onslaught from her own family. Thus the Id serves her as a protective force even though it cannot positively help her.

Chandra’s character gains momentum in the novel from chapter eleven. She is beautiful and educated but her societal status is poor. She confronts an intractable situation in the house of one Nagaraja Iyer where she goes for private coaching for his daughter. One day Jaganathan, Nagaraja Iyer’s son authoritatively asks her for her hand in marriage. But Chandra totally bereft of any thinking of her future rebukes him for his uncivil behaviour. His affronting remarks on her status irks her and her ego is hurt. His arrogant approach is responsible for her ‘projection’ leading to ‘apperception’. His approach assumes the stance of disgracing her:

*My view is that if a man asks a woman to marry him is a sort of dignity conferred on her. Why don’t you tell how I can honour you more than this way! Save that you are educated and beautiful, you are poor! If I have not loved you, you are fit enough to be an*
assistant to my household’s cook.... foolish
woman don’t talk foolishly.

(Penn Manam, Poongodi Pathippakam, P59)

In this context, Chandra’s Id surfaces. Though fractured in prescribing any sort of ideal in her, it reveals itself in the unconscious shot of reply and thereby it gratifies her individuality:

_Enough your babble! It is within me if I happen to be poor. Be conscious that we value good behaviour more than your womenfolk. You be a mesomorph or rich man. What to me? Will any woman of dignity speak to you after hearing about your debased behaviour? I am caught here because of the tyranny of circumstances. Now itself I shall bid goodbye to this job in your household. Respectfully let the way otherwise I shall cry out and summon everyone here._ (Ibid)

Here Chandra’s Id becomes a protector and her Ego becomes dysfunctional. But the consequential happenings thereafter, the slanders inflicted on her by her unfriendly colleagues at school, the principal’s verbal assault on her stray behaviour and above all her father Kalyanarama Iyer’s fault –
finding barrage afflict her and her inadmittance of guilt piled upon her by all agencies activate her Ego to the level of self-mastery. In order to make this phenomenon of her personality tangible, Chandra decides to seek succour by means of exposition to her bosom friend Ambujam.

As the novel proceeds, the reader finds Chandra slowly changing to the like of an earthenware being shaped by its smith. The helplessness of her family, the inability of her father, the pitiable state of her brother Venu who works under Jaganathan, frame up before her and her father’s decision to marry her to Jaganathan consequent on the latter’s father asking him to that effect stall Chandra’s selective propensity – a trait of Ego and she cannot but succumb to the persuasions. Here both her Id and Ego become non-operational External factors impinge upon Chandra’s psyche which is maimed. However, it is dormant.

The dent felt on Chandra’s ideal of discipline and decency in public life however finds its substitutional padding in her outright rejection of Jaganathan’s persuasions to her to come out with him for selecting wedding dress for her. Anger, hatred, attempts of domination from without do have their impact on her Ego and her rejection of her fiancé’s overtures are mechanisms of her egoistic projections. These projections certainly indicate her uncertainties and her ego’s attempts of
her self-mastery. The novelist graphically presents this state:

“She was leaning on a large pillar besides the banisters thinking of the destined end of her life beyond her vision” (P82)

After the wedding, it is a strange experience for her to expect the arrival of her detestable husband. In the place of eagerness and joy in expecting his arrival from work everyday, it is with a disturbed psyche that she does it. This reversal gets acclamatized as it is the repressive function the Ego is performing in her. Jagannathan’s love-lorn words and attempts to touch her elicit her cold response coupled with burning anger. She declares him sinful. His reproaches in turn infuriate her further. She declares: “Don’t think that wife is a slave. I’ve got the right to speak. I know your behaviour... you’re a drunkard, womaniser, a fanatic, and a ruffian who thinks that he has bought women like me with your financial arrogance”. (P85)

Chandra finds it difficult to believe that the tenderness of love can stem from his psyche that has been so far downtrodden, attitudinally speaking. She feels affronted at the thought of her husband’s deceptive behaviour that has made many helpless women his victims. As life moves on and on, her stance towards her husband hardens.
That Chandra has had her unconscious aching for an ideal life permeated with genuine love from a man of her liking comes out during the course of her conversation with Jaganathan.

*What happiness can there be for me hereafter? you’ve blasted the joyful castle I had conceived of in my mind by destroying my dignity through conspiracy and devious means. Let me ask you one thing. What have I done against you? I’m poor. One who was striving to come up in life. Why should you strive to strew mud on me. (p.86)*

Jaganathan’s persuasions hardly placate her. His cajoling advances do not prove fruitful. She bursts out further saying that he might have been victorious in having bought her in marriage with his status and money. But her psyche remains unmoved and unbought. “After all it in this body that you require”, she bursts out. Jaganathan’s declaration that he is a new man from then onwards does not move her. This situation is a demonstration contrived by the novelist to dramatise the tug of war between Chandra’s *Id* and *Ego*, the latter finding it hard to adjust itself by means of compromise. The unconscious and the conscious repression, the denial of the present constitute her course of life even though it is settlement from
her parent’s point of view and from her husband’s stance, marriage can solve all differences and stands of unpalatable behaviour.

The course of Chandra’s behaviour - her wanton moving away from the presence of her husband and her hot words lend credence to a doubt whether she is masochistic. The novelist Lakshmi Juxtaposes another woman character in the novel – Ambujam. While there is interplay of Ego and Id in Chandra’s on goings, Ambujam is poised in a situation of irony. She derives pleasure from the display of love and affection from her husband Ramanathan.

The pleasure of Chandra is psychological but Ambujam’s is purely physical stemming from irony. The novelist deftly suggests through her description the state of Ambujam’s mind:

Ramanathan is her husband, golden hearted.
An intellectual who celebrates with supreme intent woman as god. She revelled at the thought of having got him as her husband.
(P103)

Chandra unconsciously lends a thought to the joyous state of her friend Ambujam. She doubts whether Ambujam’s husband is such a sanctified personality. Her own thought strands about her own lot come creeping upon her in her
thinking about her friend. She asks unto herself, which is in consonance with the novelists ‘showing’ technique.

*Is Ambujam’s husband that good as Ambujam describes him? Ambujam is white hearted and innocent Hers is a mentality that thinks that whichever is white is milk. Men are crafty They will act in anyway to entrap women in their affective bondage. All these Ambujam doesn’t know* (P103).

The novelist’s juxtaposition of the two women characters who are friends enlighten the reader as to the mental make up of Chandra and her friend, the former accruing pleasure from her uncertainties, doubts, her own assertions and the latter from her suppositions. In psychological terms Chandra acts on perception and Ambujam on ‘apperception’.

What is noticeable is that the psychological spontaneous reactions of Chandra undergo a sort of inward looking which acts as deterrent in due course of her behaviour towards her husband. This is corroborated by the novelist’s description of her slow transformation in her attitude. Chandra’s detest for the husband in matters relating to his actions, whatever natured they are, begin to change, of course consciously. Her
ego rises to the surface to the effect of realisation of the positive aspects in her husband. The novelist’s telling:

It is true that Chandra has realised that he has certain good traits too even though he has earned disrepute for his despicable qualities. The way in which she conducted herself in his case would not have been possible if it were some other person in his place. Jaganathan has not asserted his right on her as his wife so far. He has been thinking of her as an angel whom he doesn’t even deserve to touch. (Page 106)

At this point we notice that Chandra resembles Jane Austen’s Elizabeth Bennet who is a symbol of prejudice. Like Elizabeth Bennet, Chandra is also spirited. Her spirit revolves around idealistic relationship. But life’s forces as in Hardy’s novels, thrust on her certain acceptabilities to which she helplessly succumbs. Where Elizabeth Bennet is affectionate to her family members, Chandra spits fire at her step-mother, and father. The only being that she shows affection on is her brother Venu. The unconscious familial relationship which is normally affectionate in beings is thus belied in Chandra and this contributes to her Id’s failure to her aid.
The novelist does not at all provide any information on the nature of her desires and achings. These are perceptible through Chandra’s negative attitudes. Like Elizabeth Bennet, Chandra is sensible in her desires implied by her discordant behaviour. But she is a contrast to her friend Ambujam. She is good natured as is demonstrated by her attitude towards her mother-in-law Kamakshi and her sister-in-law Sakunthala. Though her husband Jaganathan is notorious in his general character, for he is shown a womaniser, her attitude towards him is one of prejudice prompted by her dormant pride. Hence one can decidedly affirm that Chandra is a character permeating with pride and prejudice. The course of the novel tells us of her transformation.

The transformation starts in her because of Chandra’s inward looking. She thinks of her husband’s kind heartedness towards her father in getting him the Head Master’s post and finding out a groom for her sister Kamali. Moreover her brother Venugopal’s getting a higher post has been due to Jaganathan’s gesture of good will. All these begin to move her psyche. Her determination to stay away from her husband begins to dilate. This apart, Jaganathan goes out at ten in the night with his notorious friend Nagalingam. Chandra begins to think whether her signs of detest for him so far have prompted her husband to resume his licentious life. There stems in her uncontrollable
envy owing to her husband’s going out at night which acts as an infliction of disgrace on her. She begins to brood which the novelist using the technique of ‘telling’ picturises:

It’s past ten in the night. What could be the reason for his going out all on a sudden with his friend? After marrying Chandra Jaganathan has not ventured out like this until this day. What could be the purpose in going out at this late hour with Nagalingam who is wayward? Perhaps Jaganathan who has wallowed in loneliness has begun seeking the company of liquor and the relationship of women? (p.110)

Chandra’s Ego starts taking a back seat, for her possessive attitude begins to surface. Though inflamed, there arises a gushing intent that no other woman has any right to have her husband. She feels ashamed even on looking inward at her uncontrollable resistance-tendency. The novelist by her ‘telling’ shows signs of the compromise between Chandra and Jaganathan which is to come:

She has denied accommodating him in her heart! She has not willed to have her right of being his wife! Why should she feel jealous of
his partaking of affection with any other woman. (p.110)

What has hitherto been a kind of intractable detest for her husband, though there is deliberation in that, begins to melt away when she realizes that despite all her stalling efforts Jaganathan has been able to instill in her a fascination for him. There occurs within a jiffy uncontrollable love for her husband. She begins to whimper. Psychologically speaking, the unconscious Id begins taking an upper hand and wields control over her conscious Ego.

As has been pointed at the outset of Chapter IV in the novel, Chandra like Jane Austen’s heroines suffers from personal disadvantages. Though this is so, she bears a close similarity to Emma of Jane Austen in the emancipatory process. That is to say, Chandra like Emma is her own destroyer and creator. Like Emma, Penn Manam is a study in self-development. Emma Woodhouse changes from being vain and self-satisfied, blind to her own feelings, and dangerously insensitive to the feelings of others, in a slow, painful progress toward maturity. Precisely this is what happens in the case of Chandra. Circumstances -- her obduracy towards her husband and the consequential uncommunicating attitude imposed on him, and his actions which speak of his change of mind -- make Chandra’s inward looking possible. This sparks off her frozen
self-overcoming itself. It becomes increasingly evident that Chandra’s predicament centres around the tug of war between her psychic unconscious and the *Ego*.

Chandra’s concern for her husband grows day after day. One day, despite suffering from fever and severe headache, she feels the thrill of male-touch from her husband who enquires as to what is wrong with her. Her mother-in-law’s anxiety over her fever adds to her heart which begins gradually changing. She feels remorseful for her callous behavior towards her husband who exercises loving care for her. However, Chandra’s *Ego* surfaces now and then as is evident in her self-reproachment. When Jaganathan presents her with a costly diamond ring telling that he has wasted her life’s happiness, she wants to reply but her conscious *Ego* blocks her from saying that she needs his love and affection and nothing more. The novelist’s intrusion in the narrative provides the picture of Chandra’s state of mind:

*Confessing what she needs is his love will be a disgrace to her feminine self, is her conviction. Hence she controlled herself... Her emotions ran down in tears (P.118).*

Her beautifying herself one evening surprises Jaganathan. Actually her intent is to impress her husband. But she
maintains her feminine dignity telling him that she intended going to the temple but changed her mind afterwards. Domestic situations developing thereafter exhibit Chandra’s gradual familial and affectionate attitude towards her husband as is evidenced by her self-imposed kitchen responsibility and concern when Jaganathan prepares himself for his journey to Chennai. Her gestures tell of her positively to her husband who holding her hands declares: “Chandra, you are a woman of pleasant traits. I realize how far you are struggling to maintain my dignity eventhough I am sullied. It doesn’t behove of you to accommodate me in your pure heart” (P 129).

Hearing this, Chandra feels impelled to confess that he has entered her heart since long back, but emotions choke her that she leaves the scene. Bidding bye to her husband, she feels that she is parting from her life’s happiness, and experiences suffocation at heart. In due course when her husband faces arrest on some financial count at office, she is alarmed and feels totally nulled. Her conscious stubbornness which has hitherto been a deterrent to her to domestic harmony is no more. Her psychic unconscious, the Id surfaces to enjoy harmony with her husband. But the irony is that she struggles to let out her softness, an upshot of gradual dilation of her obduracy. Now her husband is smeared with embezzlement of funds at office and is incarcerated. At this juncture occurs the moment of de facto
transformation of her outlet of pent up emotions and feelings. Her fixity of ideal marital relationship which is dislodged of its stance by Jaganathan’s notoriety begins compromise due to the latter’s unflinching affection despite her self-restricting and self-imposed spite for him. This is certainly a point of departure of the conscious self-overcoming indicative of the warfare in her psychic consciousness of the Ego chamber. She begins to brood and the novelist pictures this:

*Chandra who experiences a minute as an aeon due to Jaganathan’s separation will have to be away from him for seven years! What if seven aeons? Chandra will love him. But he….? Will hate Chandra each day. A doll that has made his life pathetic – how can he love her? Whenever he thinks of his wife, his psyche will feel embittered and shrink. Even during the time of his return his mind might even hate and forget Chandra (P.146).*

One who reads Jane Austen’s novels feel the she introduces difficulties deliberately for her heroines. The same situation is also noticed in Lakshmi’s *Penn Manam*. Jaganathan’s imprisonment is an instance. The imposition of an intricate situation, however, is not to be viewed as deliberate. It
is a technique through which the self-overcoming process in the heroine is achieved.

Like Emma Woodhouse, Chandra has to live from the personal resources in a space which has confined her. The novelist provides ample opportunities for Chandra to exhibit her individuality and resolve to get out of the intricate situation. When her father-in-law is determined not to consult a lawyer for the reprieve of his son, Chandra resolves to go to meet the lawyer. She musters resources by selling her diamond necklace and other ornaments except the diamond ring her husband presented her. The diamond ring thus becomes symbolic of her devotion to her husband and assures of a harmonious life to come. That she goes to the lawyer’s house to discuss her husband’s release in the aftermath of absence of commitment in her in-law’s house affirms that she is going to be a new woman ready to sacrifice the Ego, wealth, life and heart.

That which deserves notice in the predicament of Chandra is that in her earlier state, it was anger and detest coupled with ideals of honesty that made her hate Jaganathan. Now all these dilate and when she is gradually leaning towards her husband, he is in turmoil. Her resolve to release him from the entanglement becomes her predicament now. Hence it is predicaments of sorts--the former, one of hatred and the latter one of concern. The novelist deftly juxtaposes this with the
mental pangs Chandra’s friend Ambujam experiences in the later part of the novel.

Both the major women characters Chandra and Ambujam, the latter projected in the sub-plot and hence of a little less of importance, experience mental pangs. While Chandra is unhappy in the earlier part of the novel, her friend is in familial bliss. When Chandra transforms gradually due to inward looking and sees streaks and strands of happiness, Ambujam comes to know of her husband Ramanathan’s episodic love life before his marriage with her. This shrinks her heart and she begins to equate Jaganathan, her husband Ramanathan and one Nagalingam, friend of the former and one who marries one Hemalatha, a local teacher whose younger sister Ramanathan had loved and jilted. Her opinion of these three males as representatives of vice, licentiousness and debauchery is presented as a sweeping estimate of all men.

Chandra’s transformation becomes more perceptible in her expression of her attitude towards her husband after the latter’s release on bail. His battered conscience makes him almost subservient to his wife. His remorseful statement on his having wasted her life promoted by his one sided love for Chandra makes her brim with realistic awareness and concern:
The Jaganathan, imaginatively conceptualized by people around is one; the Jaganathan I’ve found in truth is different. This I knew even days before. My good respects belong to you always under all circumstances. Don’t feel frightened (P.174).

She extends her hands willingly towards him as a mark of the welcome change descended on her ensuring institution of domestic and conjugal harmony.

That antinomies attract each other is a truism is a reality which the novelist emphasizes while dealing with the marital union of Nagalingam and Hemalatha. This she ‘shows’ though Hemalatha’s remark in reply to Nagalingam who says that women cannot become blind in matters of love:

Women praise the goodly qualities of men in their imagination. But in life, her psyche tends to be subservient only to the man of viciousness. This is one of the feelings that lies rooted in the women’s psyche (P.177).

Hence, predicament is a conscious self-infliction in the case of Hemalatha. This is quite contrastive to Chandra’s situation which is one of limitless happiness consequent on Jaganathan’s exoneration and release from charges of financial
embezzlement. But Hemalatha turns a victim, for her husband Nagalingam is implicated in the embezzlement due to his forgery. She comes to meet Hemalatha and asks as to how she has been able to withstand the mental pangs on Jaganathan’s arrest. Chandra replies:

That’s not a great thing. Hemalatha! The patience to withstand any affliction is possible when we have true love. It looks difficult at first (P. 183).

That one (especially a woman) should not lose the stability of her mind at times of crises is the advice Chandra extends to the beleaguered Hemalatha. A lesson that the novelist also imparts to women in general. Despite her husband’s release Chandra’s predicaments surface to continue. Her husband’s decision to go to Alagarmalai on a new assignment indicates that he does not want to take his wife along with him. His dissociation from her as indicated by his reply to his persuasive wife is one of total disregard for Chandra’s future. She asks him as to why she is not to come with him elicits a non-chalant reply:

If you like you be here with these people.

Otherwise you can be at your parents’ house

or anywhere you like. Apart from my father’s
own earnings, I have a share in the ancestral property. I've written a will stating that it should come to you. That’s enough for you for seven generations (P.187).

She does not want Jaganathan’s money of status. However, she musters courage to accompany him to Alagarmalai. But Jaganathan continues to be unmindful to this wife’s achings. When he falls sick, her care sustains him and the novelist’s brooding on her resembles a dramatic soliloquoy:

*How different are the changes that have occurred in her over a period of time! She behaving as of bereft of interest in life. She appears as if an angel of pity that has come in human form at a time when he is shrunk at heart over others deeming him to be a criminal (P.196).*

But Jaganathan’s indifference to Chandra is not because of his callousness. It is because he thinks that Chandra’s is regretful to having married him. However the changed psyche of Chandra is contributive to the normalization of their relationship. But the novelist introduces another side of female predicament in the form of Hemalatha’s destitution. Nagalingam, her husband is imprisoned and she with her child
comes to Alagarmalai for the post of social worker. Ironically, Alagarmalai turns a refuge for Ambujam also, for she chances to meet Chandra when she is on way back to her house after visiting doctor Joseph and his wife.

The novelist brings the three women characters in Penn Manam to Alagarmalai in their tragic phase of life. Among the three, Chandra is one who stands transformed aching for her husband’s love. She hated and detested and pooh-poohed him initially. But the change in her occurs as she begins to understand him as days go by. This understanding, though the readers know as the novel proceeds, is best presented by Chandra herself when she meets Ambujam who stands beleaguered by her husband Ramanathan’s past licentious behaviour:

I love my husband on par with my life until this day. There were days when I hated him like poison. I derided him when I thought he was sullied. I slighted him when he was ready to beseech me at my feet for my love. But as days passed I realized his value. Ambujam! You won’t believe. My heart melts for his love now at a time when he is living loveless like a hermit. You would have heard of the slurred remarks on my husband. It is
true that he was besmeared before marrying me. But after marrying me he has not committed any confidence trick against me. That alone is causative of the generation of love between us (P.209).

Whereas the prime protagonist’s predicament comes to close, that of the second protagonist surfaces. The situation is the same. In the case of Chandra, there is prior knowledge about her husband’s wayward and licentious behaviour. But Ambujam comes to know of her husband’s past love for women. Comparatively speaking, Ramanathan is not behaviour-wise as bad as Jaganathan. What plagues Ambujam is her husband’s past love which has hitherto been a secret. Her tender heart lacks the courage to reason it out. Hence her predicament.

The argument between Chandra and Ambujam then turns on Hemalatha. Chandra assails Amujam for her lovelessness for her husband. She points out at Hemalatha’s brave heart to withstand the onslaught of isolation with a child, for her husband Nagalingam, the real culprit is imprisoned for seven years. Her bravery has a strong ground on love. Chandra’s argument to Ambujam is in the way of inciting her love which lies layered below her hatred for her husband. As advised by Chandra, Ambujam goes to her husband to join him there in
domestic life. That her domestic harmony has revived is corroborated by a letter Chandra receives from her one day.

The novelist establishes through this novel that women in order to find joy in this world need the power of reason, patience and tendency to compromise. While Chandra and Hemalatha do have these traits, Ambujam lacks these and hence she feels battered. However all the three women undergo the pangs of emotional suffering and it is they who recover and revive. The conspicuous point is that, in the words of John Milton, the mind is itself can “make heaven out of hell and hell out of heaven”.

Chandra on being compared with Elizabeth Bennet appears an embodiment of pride, an inherent pride over her physical and mental bearing that prompt her to posit herself to the level of deservability on those that approach her. Though she is endowed with reason, she lacks the power to dissociate things for non-prejudiced judgement. Elizabeth Bennet is a parallel to Chandra on the ground of her attachment to Jane. When the latter suffers in her love for Bingley, it is Elizabeth who advises her to go to London with the Gardiners for a change. Chandra’s sympathy for Ambujam’s anguish in the later part of the novel resembles Elizabeth’s concern for Charlotte who suffers from the despicable attitude of Mr. Collins.

Elizabeth’s stubbornness in rejecting Darcy’s love has its corollary in Chandra’s detest for Jaganathan’s efforts to marry her. But Chandra differs from Elizabeth despite her strong views. She is caught up in the Indian millieu of womanhood. Despite her hatred, she cannot voice out her protest, for by
succumbing to Jaganathan’s efforts to marry her, she decides to put an end to the hardships of her father and step-mother and thereby to have a way for the marriage of her sister. Chandra thinks of her family’s welfare. Her brother Venu works in Jaganathan’s office where the latter guards him well. Hence Chandra’s willing suspension of her hatred for Jaganathan results in she becoming a victim initially. Whereas Elizabeth’s prejudices are largely responsible for the spirited stand she takes up, Chandra’s self-respect and idealistic conception of married life gets a jolt because of family circumstances. However, we are surprised to find a parallel between Darcy and Jaganathan, for the former retorts to Elizabeth in the novel *Pride and Prejudice*, that she would have overlooked all his defects had it not been for her pride. The Darcy-like importunity happens in the case of Chandra whenever Jaganathan has a chance to speak to her.

Chandra is not webbed around with many characters as her counterpart Elizabeth Bennet. Elizabeth has enough opportunities in the novel not only for brimming with familial and societal affections but also to be a humanist. Her spirited challenge and noble manner in which she pleads for her sister’s disappointment and also for the cruel, unjust treatment meted out to Captain Wickham speak of her altruism. But such a situation never occurs for Chandra. What happens around Chandra orients only towards her and her position in life.
Elizabeth’s concern for her sister pining away in secret, and Captain Wickham’s cruel deprivation of his legitimate share are evidence of her indignation for the authors of such misfortunes. Elizabeth is provided with a chance to show her objectivity too. Darcy’s assault on Elizabeth’s mother and the charge of levity and recklessness of her sisters though unpalatable, are understood in their perspective by Elizabeth. Though Darcy’s remarks are towards vindicating himself, Elizabeth with her characteristic objectivity admit them. This eventually leads her to change her attitude towards Darcy, for she believes in the frankness and justness of Darcy. This ultimately lands her to change her attitude towards Darcy.

But Lakshmi, the novelist of *Penn Manam* makes her male Jaganathan replete with importunity towards Chandra and hence the latter begins to ponder over and this accounts for her change of attitude towards her husband. But there prevails a persistent awareness in Chandra about her good sense contributing to her dormant pride. She is fully conscious of the injustice she has done to Jaganathan, knowing very well that he has not been wayward after marriage with her. The novelist does not explicitly tell as to the reason why he sets out with Nagalingam on a few occasions. Perhaps this indication of the possibility of his going astray might have incited Chandra’s reason to change her attitude!
The dilemma that Elizabeth experiences with regard to Darcy that he at any moment might show his despise for her mother and sister is causative of her self-resistance in feeling love with Darcy straight away. Anyhow, it is their unexpected meeting at Pemberley Estate which makes Elizabeth feel that her love for him is lost for ever. It is at this moment she feels her intense love for him. Darcy’s attitude resembles that of Jaganathan, for he brings about the marriage of the eloped couple Lydia and Wickham. This again has a corollary in Jaganathan’s efforts to lift Chandra’s father in promotion, arrange for the wedding of her sister, and providing her brother with a good official position. Like Elizabeth who falls for Darcy’s good gestures, Chandra begins to dilate in her stubborn stance against her husband. In the former case, it all happens before marriage. But in the latter case it happens after the wedding. What is noticeable is that in both the cases of Elizabeth and Chandra, prejudice is overcome by love.

Chandra on being compared with Emma stands out distinctively, for she does not manipulate other people’s lives. Emma’s manipulation of other people’s lives threatens her own life and afflicts even the unconscious. Chandra’s family circumstances are such her father is a poor school teacher, and she has a step-mother with a daughter who in reality is Chandra’s cousin and a blood brother--that she like Jane Austen’s Elinor in Sense and Sensibility is blank at her own
prospect and cheerless in her own state of mind. But unlike Elinor, Chandra is negative in mind with a little learning on the stoical side. However she manages the situation paying attention to her sister-in-law and mother-in-law and her brother-in-law’s son. This is at variance with Elinor’s devoted commitment to those around her, particularly her sister Marianne. Further, Elinor has her social responsibility. This is not found in the on goings of Chandra’s life. Like Jane Austen’s characters, she too has a small circle to move about. The place of her habitation is limited in its reach. Hence Chandra’s predicament is more concentrated on her self and her husband only.

Just as the middle class novel of the eighteenth century in England brought out the middle class values and outlook, Lakshmi’s novels deal with the regional middle class, especially women and their dilemma particularly that which is generated due to the circumstantial compulsion that makes them come into contact with wealthy men deformed in character. Lakshmi like Jane Austen takes to deal with the manners of her times in the Tamil middle class society dominated by males. *Penn Manam* like Jane Austen’s *Sense and Sensibility* ridicules the ‘gentlemen’ society. All the three dominant males Jaganathan, Ramanathan and Nagalingam are responsible for the agony their wives undergo because of their selfishness and licentiousness. Whereas Jane Austen’s characters come within
a wide range, Lakshmi’s characters fall within a narrow range in semi-rural locations. Lakshmi and Jane Austen draw characters from their personal experience. Settlement of women in life was a problem more serious during the times of Lakshmi. This was applicable to all castes in TamilNadu. Lakshmi with her Brahminical background was more conscious about the sufferings of women in middle class families. Finding a husband of good character was a fortune. Her characters are drawn on personal experience and she brings out the fundamentals of character as revealed in activities of daily life. Jaganathan is a type. So is Ramanathan who proves good in family life though he had been astray before marriage. Nagalingam is the worst of all. Yet all these are types. These men are the generators of unhappiness in their women. But her women are strong or atleast strengthened.

Chandra in *Penn Manam* is psychologically strong and it is she who infuses hope and skill of familial arrangement in Ambujam and Hemalatha. When they stand out psychologically sunken and like orphans, Lakshmi animates, demonstrates and dramatizes her women as those who cannot be cowed down by life’s forces. What David Cecil said of Jane Austen applies well to Lakshmi also. He remarked that Jane Austen’s characters act in the theatre displaying their human folly and inconsistence and thereby to sustenance of human dogma, sometimes comic and sometimes tragic. Lakshmi’s understanding of human
psychology enables her to present round characters. Chandra, Ambujam and Hemalatha are not flat. They suffer, and grow under stress of circumstances of their own accord or at least learn from one another and thereby emancipate. They become different as the novel progresses.

*Oru Kaviriyaipola* (Like One Kaviri) permeates with a narrative form which does not falter to provide fillip to women during its entire course. Apart from being *Sahitya Academy Winner*, it made forward surges in the psyche of women in the nineteen eighties, especially when women in India, more so in Tamil Nadu were struggling to break away from the shackles of pseudo and ersatz familial affection which in fact was tyranny *de facto*. This is a novel of suppression on an individual female psyche to the level of distinction by the family force of the protagonist under the garb of responsibility. The novel also proves that the predicament of a woman can end with a male companion to her who can be compassionate, loving, supportive with understanding. The novelist projects by juxtaposition both the flowery side of a woman and the inhuman unwomanly phase of a woman by bringing them into a family fold. The novel further demonstrates that the sufferings of women are not only man generated but by women too. Kaviri’s elder sister-in-law is her only support but she is bedridden beset with heart disease and can only be psychologically supportive to her.
The novelist Lakshmi makes use of the stream of consciousness technique in the form of the protagonist chewing the cud of by gone days. The technique is not full-fledged but serves the purpose of placing side by side. Kaviri’s past happiness and the intensity of emotional bafflement and aching suffocation are interspersed with sentimentality. At the outset the reader is given to understand that Kaviri is in emotional nebulosity over the failure of her marriage with one Mohan. The man who wanted to marry her was not to the liking of her brothers. Hence her marriage dangles in mid air, despite her love for the latter man, a lawyer by profession.

However, her betrothal to Mohan did not end up in marriage, for Mohan had married a wealthier woman and this led to a slander among friends, relatives and others about Kaviri’s possible friendship with someone else which might have caused the break in marriage. This is her first shock, Whims and fancies of people around do indulge in fabrication to the metal agony of the criticised. Particularly in the case of a human whose character is assaulted, the agony intensifies.

She would have crumbled had not her elder sister – in – law assuaged her lacerated heart. The novelist during the course of her narrative gives a hint of Kaviri’s further trammels in life. She introduces a reprieve for Kaviri in the form of a letter
from one Damodharan whom she had not regarded enough. His letter of reprieve:

Regret to learn of the stoppage of your marriage. Concentrate on your work taking this as an accident instead of thinking of this as a matter of shame. You’ll forget all this soon. Please straighten up Damu (Oru Kaviyaipola, P.40).

Lakshmi, the novelist forebodes: “How many funny things are yet to take place in her life. Who knows?” (ibid). She has come to a place called Lady Smith, a place permeating with its historical reminiscences of the them governor’s prowess and his helping tendency in saving a Spanish girl from the local revolutionaries. He married her afterwards and named the place after her name. What an irony! Kaviri has come to a place of love and has to meet the man who gave her disappointment in life and speak to him on the native of the job she has to perform.

The novelist creates for Kaviri chances from practical life experience to pull herself up from depts of psychological sagging. When Kaviri, battered by lovelessness at home, gets an official direction to visit a pupil patient. As a nurse, she has to attend on the boy. While talking to him, she is stunned at his expression of fearlessness over death, for he has already learnt
that he is going to die due to muscular dystrophy. The fearless reaction of the boy towards death wakes Kaviri up and she introspects:

> How foolish it is to have crumbled like this after defeat in love? Should she not shed off thoughts about Mohan and straighten up to design a life for herself (P61).

When she departs after her nursing preliminaries for the boy, she is filled in with new vigour. What is evident within sixty pages of the novel is that Kaviri, the protagonist is a blend of *Id*, *Ego* and *Super-Ego* and that the *Id* dies out early in the novel. The principle of reality, the ‘is’ thinking begins to be her propellant and she is heading towards the morality principle of stubbornness or obduracy to lift herself from the abysmal depths of despondency contributed by Mohan’s hypocrisy, and lovelessness at home, especially from her younger brother and his wife.

That Kaviri finds a source of comfort in the company of Demodharan is to the irritation of her brother Logendran who slaps her one night when she returns home after spending sometime with Damodharan. Here begins her total alienation. Her only support - her elder sister - in - law dies after witnessing the disgraceful treatment meted out to Kaviri. Her misery strikes a harder note when she learns from the family
advocate of the will of her elder sister – in – law. In an earlier will, she had bequeathed her share in Logendran’s restaurant, a vacant plot nearby and a sumptuous sum to Kaviri. But the reversed will as borne out by the advocate tells her that all these have changed to Legendran’s name. This proves mysterious. But the mystery is broken by her black servant Leena who hands over a letter addressed to her from her late sister – in – law. The letter is in a tone of regret and reveals that she had to reverse the will under coercion from Logendran and his wife. Yet, as a token of her affection, she has left an invaluable diamond ring to her. This provides a kind of appeasement to Kaviri, amidst a familial life of sterility.

Adding misery to misfortune, her younger sister – in – law under directions from her husband, (Kaviri’s brother) informs her one night the she has to shell out one hundred rands for her lodging and boarding at the house. Further, she has to do household work too. This makes Kaviri brood over the situation on her loneliness: “Money for boarding and lodging. As if that is not sufficient, share in household work supposing I were a servant like Leena….. Lodging, food and salary will also be available “(P 110)”.

As days go by, there is development in the relationship between Damodharan and Kaviri, Damodharan’s professional standing as a lawyer and his political stance have drawn the
attention of the African government and he is under surveillance by the crime investigation department. A CID personnel, a friend of Logendran, reports of Kaviri’s visit to Damodharan’s house and this sparks off Logendran’s anger resulting in his beastly physical attack on Kaviri. Herein starts her intractable dilemma of belonging. It is Kandasamy, an Indian neighbour who comes to her rescue, taking her to this house. Logendran declares total cut in his relationship with his sister. His wife Yasodha instructs him not to melt emotionally towards his sister again.

Negligence and merciless treatment, and his lack of commitment as a brother to settle his sister in life have dislodged Kaviri. She is further disgraced by her sister – in – law, for she piles up slanders on her among the neighbours. These awaken Kaviri’s ego and this acts as a conduit to her greater determination to counter challenges in life. An ordinary woman would have sought the means to settle down in life. But she stands to challenges. Mental consternation begins to torment her. A monologue disseminates in her mind.

*She could not go anywhere when the news of mohan shirking her off spreaded everywhere. Now Yasodha and Andal are going to fabricate stories. Oh! How is she going to*
live bearing this blot... (P 154)

That Damodharan has not contacted her after the melee at her household is puzzling to Kaviri. Her telephonic contacts to speak to him also proved of no avail. She gets a blunt rebuff from Damodharan’s personal secretary. Therefore Kaviri’s indeterminate mind begins thinking of the contrastive side of what she has understood of Damodharan’s declaration of his love for her. She thinks that she should not deceive herself anymore. Hence she hits upon an idea of applying for leave and flying to India. The novelist using the technique of ‘telling’ which speaks of the mind’s movements reveals Kaviri’s intentions.

_Soundari, the elder sister – in – law_

_has told that there are many_

_Ashramps, choultries and temples._

_How about joining one of these_

_and stay there ... Why should there be worry about future when there is a job on hand. That week itself she should start for India Without breathing about this to anyone, I should fly. She has taken a decision with determinacy (P 162)._

What follows thereafter is consultation with a friend, an elderly woman Sargunam. The latter counsels her as to where
to go in Chennai, and provides with the address of a woman who has migrated to Chennai, Kaviri, with her inherent shrewdness arranges for air tickets and complies with other formalities such as inoculation and money transfers and is all set to fly to Chennai. When the flight takes off, her native feeling, for she was born and brought up in Durban, well up much to her sentimental leaning, She is not going to see the beautiful Durban city hereafter. The novelist’s solidified description of Kaviri’s dienation together with her emotional angry is graphic:

That alone ? Brother, Sister – in – law,
relatives, friends – renouncing
the bondage of all – above all the one
loving one who aches to give her life
– she need not wallow and languish at
her brother’s household hereafter – dreams
about realities of
husband, home and life – all these have
turned day – dreams – forgetting
even Damodharan – she is going
as on orphan in isolated
state to her homeland which she has not seen (P 172).

Her departune thus demonstrates that her ‘ego’ – the faculty that reasons out things has split, for she is psychologically poised in ambiguity and hence tears away from
home – the offence centre. Therefore, Kaviri is impelled to take to the defence (not exactly *de facto* defence) but denial of offence. Idealism as regards affection and married life on being jeopardized takes to means of reduction of persecutory anxiety. Whether her new experiences are going to be alleviating is presented in the form of fiction. The intended or foreseen alleviation is nothing but hallucination. Her frustration has to be turned to the outer fold together with her aggressive impulses.

The novelist’s rhetorical question “Will she get peace atleast there” though linguistic, has psychological overtones teeming with the protagonist’s projection (mediated by drives) and introjection (modified by environmental experience). Her conscious ‘ego’ fails in conceiving of her hate greater than her love and hence the world seems riddled. In psychology, depressive anxiety, which Kaviri experiences is a given. Depressive functioning is regarded as a healthy means of functioning – as it implies the ability to love, empathise and relate to whole objects rather than internal part objects.

The way Kaviri behaves tells of her despondency characterised by unstable impulse control, self – image, moods and interpersonal relationships. Recurring qualities of the disorder include desperate attempts to avoid abandonment, identity disturbance, potentially self – damaging impulsiveness,
possible suicidal and self–mutilating thoughts, severe mood reactivity, chronic feelings of emptiness, boredom, uncontrollable anger, and oscillation between idealisation and devaluation. Kaviri appears to be suffering from object fragmentation – a borderline patient who finds it difficult to integrate the libidinally and aggressively determined self and object images. However, Kaviri despite her dilemma, psychological in nature, seems healthy in the sense that her depressive position is characterised by a goodly introjection facilitating a sense of security. Hence Kaviri’s action vacillates on the borderline. However, she is internalised and non-integrated, telling she is a patient, a healthy patient. Such patients can be traced of the absence of attention from the mother and in Kaviri’s case, she is parentless and the only support in her mother’s place – her elder sister – in–law is no more. Hence her split parts.

The state of split parts is what accompanies Kaviri in her journey to India, particularly her place of belonging in Tamil Nadu. She goes to her elder sister – in–law’s birth place Varathanatham where a few relatives live. But the relatives are poor and begin depending upon Kaviri’s resources and she becomes increasingly concerned about her emanciating purse – she feels bankrupt in mind over her relatives materialistic attitude and stands with a blank mind. But, a neighbour
Maragatham comes to her rescue, giving guidelines to go to Chennai. At last she reaches an ashram where she had intended to join and spend her days. After getting permission to join the ashram, her predicaments begin surfacing. The atmosphere is not secure. A foreigner misbehaves with her banging her room’s doors at night. She feels frightened and leaves the place.

It was trouble of the mind for Kaviri, in Africa. But it turns out to be physical in India, for Kaviri is a woman of beauty and this proves to be her enemy both at the ashram and at the house of Vasantha, a friend whom Kaviri’s acquaintance Ms. Sargunam, in Africa had recommended for her stay in Chennai. But Vasantha’s mother Alamelu is concerned about Kaviri’s stay in their house, for she is apprehensive of her son—law falling for Kaviri and changing his marital allegiance, This is further strengthened by Ragupathy, the son—law coming home early in the evening and treating Kaviri with all care and affections. This apart, Kaviri is beset with the impossibility of getting a nurse’s job in Chennai. Vasantha’s efforts to get her a job prove in vain.

However, a family friend of Vasantha, Mr. Devasundaram, comes forward to offer Kaviri a receptionist’s job which would fetch her four hundred rupees of monthly salary. The novelist presents Kaviri’s dilemmatic helplessness:
Will she be able to prolong her life here which is complicated in her homeland?
She has abandoned handful salary and car and an honorable job and in order to forget friends and relatives she has entered her native land. What will happen to her resolution not to go back to her country? (P 268).

Kaviri indulges in a reminiscence She recalls what her elder sister – in – law Soundari had remarked once about the state of women in India. “The country has liberated But women have not yet got their freedom. They continue to be saves still”. (P.272). Kaviri’s split in her interior psyche is further aggravated when she juxtaposes the status of women in Africa with that of those in India as was made out to her by Soundari:

We think that the Africans are backward in civilization. That is a mistake. Their culture and manners are superior to ours. I wonder much at their good attitude to respect a woman on par. How much respect do they give to the family constitution! How much respect do they give to the mother! (P 274).
This juxtaposition runs in Kaviri’s mind as a film trailer forcing her to think of her own demeaning position in her homeland. This clearly demonstrates Kaviri’s predicament which is a transitional phenomenon. The reader notices an abrupt self-discontinuity in the protagonist right from the time she is introduced in the novel. This phenomenon aggravates with the demise of her elder sister – in-law, a mother figure to the parentless and disaffected younger brother and his wife, and the failure of her marriage with one Mohan, and the rejection of one Damodharan by her household people when the latter approached them for Kaviri’s hand in marriage.

Seeing the chronology of events in Kaviri’s life, the reader finds that the supportive continuity in life being over, Kaviri’s true self of idealism, love and devotion wane into in significance. Hence there is the necessity to preserve herself from the onslaught of annihilation. It is a frantic effort. This is what is discernible is Kaviri’s movements, particularly after having been beaten up by her younger brother who is supported by his wife. The change is that she is keeping company with one Damodharan who was rejected as a groom by the household on the charge of the supporting the communists in Africa. Thus the familial circumstances do not contribute to the development of Kaviri’s true self which is her life – giving core. Hence she is left winerable and isolated. Her life becomes false.
When false life develops in Kaviri, she seeks to redress it by coming to Chenani to mingle with her relatives. But her experience in Varathanatham disappoints her and her further experiences with Vasantha and the acrimonious attitude of the latter’s mother – in – law disillusion her. Hence Kaviri decides to stay in an exclusive woman’s hostel. She gets a job as a receptionist in a private hospital with a meagre salary. But this job itself gets jeopardised owing to a young doctor Ravikanthan’s infatuation for Kaviri which creates a thunder in his household, the result of which is that Kaviri loses the job. She broods.

*Man has the right to love, If any problem arises in that, should the blame be loaded on the woman’s head? what is this injustice? Dr.Devan Sundaram also refuses to ask for the truth? Who can I report this to? (P 315)*

Chennai proves a difficult place for her to pull on. Her efforts at two companies for a job ended in vain, for they looked not honourable. In the meanwhile she thinks of going to Salem or Coimbatore or some other place seeking either a job or a place in an ashram. This propulsion in her is an offshoot of the sense of isolation. This behaviour of Kaviri has its direct relational impact on projective identification. She wants to be rid of her tension by being out of Chennai for quite sometime.
Hence she wants to vacate her hostel room. When she discloses this to the hostel caretaker Chandrasekar, she gets a blunt rebuff, for he insists that she should settle her account fully, before being given back a packet containing her passport, and some gold ornaments. She is taken aback. She is foolish to have handed over her passport to Chandrasekar, a stranger despite the warning from Dhamodharan. He had advised her indirectly that those Journeying outside should be careful about their passport.

Kaviri’s morality principle than rises to the fore. She importunes Chandrasekar to give her the packet from which she can take her chain and ring and sell them to give his dues. But he rejects her offer saying that he has not given her any receipt for the articles she states to have given him. She threatens him to go to the police. And he retorts, saying that he would blame her of being a call girl.

The subsequent happenings are prolongings of tyranny, for her demand for refund of money from the travel agency proves in vain. Her enquiry for lodging in a hotel represents her in a distorted perspective and her super ego has its severe jolt. Tormented thus from pillar to post, Kaviri tries her last chance to meet one Ms.S.R.Kalyani whose telephone number she searches for in the directory. She was an erstwhile resident of Africa and has settled down in Chennai after her husband’s
death. Kaviri’s efforts click. This serves as a fillip for Kaviri to overcome her sagged soul. Diwakaran, a lawyer by profession comes to Kaviri’s rescue though by persuasion of Kalyani and she gets back the lost sum from the travel agency. As regards her passport which Chandrasekar, the women’s hostel caretaker denies to having received for safe custody, there is no go except applying for a duplicate. This Kaviri does after talking to Damodharan to whom she with all forcefulness, propelled by her pent up emotions, declares her love. Thereafter, things move very fast and Kalyani’s supportive actions and Divakaran’s legal stance embolden her very much and her sagged soul retrieves itself from abysmal depths of despondency.

Her emboldened psyche is further toned up by a letter from Damodharan wherein he has declared his love for her and his eagerness to hear of her consent for their wedding. She along with Kalyani smiles thinking of her sweet future. All these become a possibility because, Kaviri, unlike the women in common, exercised resolution to overcome her self and activate her will to power. Her departure to Durban and the eventual wedding with Damodharan mark a new beginning of life, for she has hitherto been a Miss. Misfortune, bereft of familial love that too after the demise of her elder sister – in – law Soundari.

After becoming Damodharan’s wife, life is pleasant for quite sometime, and challenges to Kaviri’s mental fortitude
come to the fore. Damodharan courts arrest owing to his allegiance to communists and on the ground of the having been instrumental in the breakout of a revolution, the government arrests him which lodges Kaviri, once again in misery, this time with a child. The novelist’s concern is to demonstrate that Kaviri’s will is iron and that it can stand any degree of onslaught thereby making her a graminatical projection of exemplary character, for women in general to follow or emulate.

All women protagonists of Lakshmi are splendid examples of the projection of inwardness. The predicaments that they confront in life cause a kind of uncertainty in their psyche and hence the inwardness in relation to life’s uncertainties. Their difficulties are mostly gruesome and hence they sink into neurosis, a psychological disorder which makes them sink. It is Lakshmi’s task to empower these women protagonists by means of reason and thereby facilitate them emerge as personalities of will power. This mission of the novelist is in line with the Freudian therapy by which psychological inhibition (due to sagging because of life’s forces) is brought to the level of consciousness and they are freed from the imprisonment of uncertainties.

**Feminine Predicament in Lakshmi's Bhavani**
Bhavani is a domestic novel woven with lively characterization, realism and vernacularism. It is a story of an aristocratic lady who falls in love with a widower and later marries him. After domestic complexities in life, both are reunited at the end. Lakshmi beautifully depicts the character of Bhavani and Vanaja. Bhavani is well educated, sociable and rational. She wants to marry one who should be elder to her. She is a free thinking woman who is brought up in such a way that she can take her own decision and act individually and independently. Ever her father does not intrude in her decision of marrying a widower having a daughter. She is very stubborn and a strong-willed character. She is bold enough to reject the proposal of Shanmugam, when he forces her in front of the temple. She openly rebukes him. She is quite egoistical too. When she realizes her mistake of leaving her husband under suspicion without any basic ground reasons, she is not willing to repent for her mistakes. She remains firm in her decision.

She is too possessive. She does not allow Radha to share her affection fully with her father. She behaves arrogantly with her. Eventually she becomes the reason for Radha leaving her father. She is independent. When her ego does not allow her to return to Sundaravadhanam’s house, she wants to apply for the post which is advertised in a newspaper. She does not want to rely upon others for her needs.
The novelist weaves Bhavani’s character with beauty. At the outset, she stands refined, polished, passionate and brilliant. There is sudden transformation in her character after her marriage. When she brutally assaults the child, she loses her patience. Actually her husband does not inflict any pain physically; as he is educated. But we can infer some mistakes within his self. As he is completely immersed in his duty, he fails to concentrate on his familiar issues. His lack of forethought yields many problems to him. If he has got this forethought, he could have rectified the clash between Bhavani and his daughter, Radha. He does not know how to manage the situation. When he receives the message that his son is affected by disease, he must have rushed to the spot at night. But he delays his travel due to operation. He fails to prioritize, when things are in urgency. The result is the fatal death of Kannan. This creates a deep scar in the heart of Bhavani and paves a way to degrade him for his inability to save his son, being a great doctor in that region.

After the demise of her son, she wants her husband to share sadness openly. But, being a great doctor, he does not have a heart to openly express the melancholy. But he is exceptional one who wants to transfer her sad thought into the achievement. He works round the clock without giving any significance for his own comfort. He reaches home late every
night. This makes Bhavani suspect him. Finally, it results in separation.

Bhavani deserts her husband by leaving a note in which she orders not to search for her. Six months elapse since Bhavani comes to Pooncholai. Sundaravadhnaan does not try to console her. If he had consoled her by visiting her house, he could have taken her to his house. But both are egoistical in nature. Both are very strong in their decision. No one wants to come down from their ego. Both think why I should come down and beseech but none of them thinks that their ego will yield disharmony only. In this novel, mental suffering of Bhavani is beautifully picturised.

Vanaja is the alter ego of Bhavani. Vanaja's suffering is also psychological. But her suffering are more. She is orphan docile, dependent, timid, beautiful, humble, and tolerant. She is a resident of Rangoon. Due to Japanese bomb blast, she along with her parents have to leave the land. When they are about to reach India, Vanaja's parents lose their life due to starvation and diseases. Vanaja alone reaches the destination safely. Now she is under the care of her uncle.

Lakshmipuram means a land of prosperity. But only one soul is made to be infertile and unproductive. She has to bear the tortures of her aunt. Her aunt disregards her because of her
deplorable condition and poverty. Vanaja's uncle wants her to get married with his son, Shanmugam. Vanaja has an incalculable amount of affection on Shanmugam. She is ready to serve on him throughout her life. Unexpectedly, a storm comes into her life. Her aunty wants his son to marry Bhavani, who will bring dowry after the marriage. Vanaja's sensibility is crushed not only by Abirami but also by Shanmugam. He could not understand her true affection and love. He runs after money, waiting for a chance to woo Bhavani. Vanaja's affectionate heart is broken, when she reads a letter of Shanmugam in which he explains her beauty in exaggerative terms and chance of wooing her. Mani, licks the tears flowing from her eyes. How pathetic it is!

Abirami rebukes Vanaja as she is incapable of bringing any dowry to her house, being poor and orphan. She says, “Good maid! She came to her uncle's house with her bag and baggage. Inauspicious time, when she entered the house. All our attempts ended in vain, whatever action was taken to execute perfectly” (Bhavani 53)

Vanaja becomes an inauspicious symbol, when she was left in the lurch by her husband after the marriage. Abirarni despises her like anything. She scolds her "poverty-stricken wife". Shanmugam, who settled in Bombay, does not think of
her pitiable condition and fails to mention even her name in the letter that is sent to his mother.

Her suffering is not only physical and psychological also social one. She cannot escape from the society. This society will mock at her by despising her life without husband. Bharathi tries a lot to make him realize about societal scandal on her. She says, “Like a coward you left her in the lurch after the marriage. Is it right? Don’t you know the restriction of your paternal society? You are husband. You can marry 1,000 women if you wish. How pitiful she is!” (Bhavani -102) She also adds; “What a pitiable state of her if she did not get any support from her husband! an orphan-no one can look after her except her own husband” (Bhavani -101).

Bharathi ironically points out that this society has given many rights to men but not to woman. Vanaja is a sympathetic figure whose painful agony cannot be tolerated. She is not a domineering personality and courageous lady who can fight for her rights. She is simple and humble one who lives under the shadow of others. She bears all the pain and suffering silently ineffable. The only redemption for her at the end is Death, the ultimate solution for all the suffering. Both in suffering and death she exhibits humility.
Lakshmi’s women characters are concerned with the *id* first. The sense of the *id* is devil. The external forces that affect Lakshmi’s women characters represent the *id* of others. The pleasure principle of others cause the miseries of Lakshmi’s women protagonists. In the case of Chandra in *Penn Manam*, it is Jaganathan who becomes her husband as a tormentor. In the case of Kaviri, it is her younger brother Logendran and his wife Yasodha. Besides these people, the characters in Chennai and Kaviri’s distant relatives, in order to gratify their own material advantage need to hoodwink Kaviri. Murugammal, Mrs.Deva Sundaram, Chandrasekar, the travel agent are all representatives of *id*–the pleasure principle, for they concentrate on their selfishness and their *id* is Kaviri’s devilish experience of exploitation.

According to psychological principles, the *ego* which is the a representative of the reality principle enfolds ‘legal ethics’, and ‘moral restraint’ rescues the individual there Kaviri’s *ego* clashes with the *id* of others and this proves problematic for Lakshmi’s women characters. However, the novelist delineates these personalities in such a way discovering events for them to wade through just to demonstrate that her women do have the temerity to tread the paths of life and stand as exemplary personalities. Hence the titles *Bhavani*, *Penn Manam* and *Oru Kaviriyaippola*. These are not mere title. They are emphatic
assertions. Women should assimilate, brew, and tune inner strength to vie with the outer world. The novelist’s women characters are embodiments of inner courage to be emulated by posterity.