Class consciousness is a system of ordering society where people are divided into sets based on perceived social, economic and political status. It can also be taken as a category of things having some property or attribute in common and differentiate it from others by kind, type and quality.

Class consciousness is a term used in political theory, particular Marxism, to refer to the beliefs that a person holds regarding their social class or economic rank in society, the structure of their class and their social class and economic rank in society, the structure of their class and their class interests.”\(^1\)

“It’s an awareness of one’s own social and economic rank in society”

Random House Dictionary

“It is a feeling of identification and solidarity with those belonging to the same social and economic class own self”\(^2\)

Random House Dictionary 2016

In the present chapter, feminine consciousness is perceived in terms of class-consciousness. The expense of feminist consciousness has led women to be aware of their rights and take firm steps to stand against the boys of discrimination. In ancient time Women were given higher status in Indian society. The ever present powers grace on this universe in both forms of male and female. Lord Rama with goddess Sita and lord Krishna with goddess Radha have taken ‘Awtars’ in this world to punish the wicked and to protect their devotees and thus they teach a lesson to the worldly people to consider women equally important in discharging social, political, economic, and cultural responsibilities.

The New York Redical Woman emphasized upon female consciousness by selecting an area of feminine experiences such as husband dating, having children, economic equality and a plethora of other issues related to feminism. Further, the forces that insist upon women’s subjugation and marginalization are undoubtedly of extreme doubt and despair.
Shantha Krishnaswamy has taken into consideration female perspective and defined female consciousness, “there are no simple solutions anymore but the process of the awakening of her consciousness leads to her inner enrichment.”

In recent years, women centered studies have gained momentum in the area of post independence Indian English literature. There has been trend in literature focusing woman as a pivotal point. In an age of fast development in all spheres of life, one can not overlook almost the half population. Indian English women novelists have also penetrated deep and started acknowledging the position of woman in patriarchal society. The image of woman in different male centered studies presents women as playing minor role in history. They are scarcely projected playing crucial roles in social and economic development of the country. Such narrow minded ideas about womanhood are embedded in the dual oppositions between male and female characteristics, reason, emotions and spirituality. The nature of woman is continuously perceived in terms of male perception. It is the well known fact that all human beings are conditioned by their race milieu. Indian women reflect the very society in which they live in unfavorable and adverse circumstances. In the past, Indian woman enjoyed privilege in private and public sphere alive but with the passage of time, the conditions were not favorable for them. Medieval forms of victimization like child marriage and sati has been substituted by female infanticide and recently by amniocentesis. She has now started to come out of the domestic boundary and stepped in the professional and glamorous life. The role of woman has thus undergone a change from that of a homebound creature to a professional one. This very role of hard struggle in the exploitative world deserves a close scrutiny. The novels of Arundhati Roy, Manju Kapur and Githa Hariharan convey their feminist stand through study of social and familial relationships. Indian woman in their novels defines herself in terms of a set of relationships in different social circumstances. She faces traditional norms of society and struggles to live under double folds of tradition and modernity.

In ancient times, human beings were categorized neither on the basis of their birth in high or low caste nor on economic, political and other parameters but they were referred to as Barahman, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra on the basis of their karmas in this life. A man born in high class caste was considered downtrodden if he does not involve himself in
upliftment and welfare of others. At present, society in India is divided on the basis of caste structure due to ignoble, incomplete and partial parameters of judgment and selection of some persons involved in policy making decisions of the country. It is divided into inequality and hierarchal anarchy. Because of the caste inequality, one section of society always exploits and neglects the other. According to the superstition “an untouchable would defile, if he would touch anyone”. The touchables since past to the present time have not accepted untouchables as fellow human beings. The Vedas, the Upanishads, The Purans and the Smritis emphasized on human equality, enlightenment, love and kindness” not only to human beings but also for all living creatures. But generally the lesson of spirituality is not taken care of by masses. Mahatma Gandhi had painfully said about the social evil “a disgrace on Hinduism”.

Gandhi ji dwelt upon the idea of upliftment of untouchables by changing the mentality of human beings but it never happened. British power imposed various laws. They passed the law “The Widow Remarriage Act of 1876” and “The Caste Disability Removal act of 1850”. After independence various constitutional rights are provided to uplift the oppressed community.

In the democratic India, at the end of 20th century, still the untouchability is existing. Arundhati Roy has exposed the miserable lot of untouchables in her novel The God of Small Things, which depicts the cross class conflict. As a matter of fact, caste structure has weakened the roots of fast development.

Caste system has been emphasized in its different shapes by the novelist in The God of Small Things. Caste and sexuality is indeed ideological stand of the novelist. The novelist describes Ayemenem, a small village in Kerala, in order to put her theory of the marginalization of female class. The story of the novel rotates around Ammu, a young girl, and the daughter of Joint Director in Imperial Etymology Delhi. Arundhati Roy focuses on exploring the female identity and unfolds different facets of female exploitation particularly in the post modern era which has brought tremendous changes and life style of people. Ammu in the present novel complete her school education at the time of the retirement of her father and result of retirement, the family move from Delhi to Ayemenem. Ammu’s father is not in favor college education which he considers as an
unnecessary expense for a girl. In such circumstances, the alternative left for a young girl is to wait for her marriage and the family in domestic activities. The novelist comes heavily against the evil practice of dowry without which a girl can not get suitable proposal of marriage. It is but natural to be desperate in such adverse circumstances like ill temperament of the father and the suffering of her the mother. Being an orthodox, her father had not paid more attention on her education and did not take interest in selecting a suitable partner for her. Ammu had nothing to do except the household business and waiting for the unknown bridegroom in the village Ayemenem.

Arundhati Roy’s The God of Small Things is a debut novel which deals with universal theme of social consciousness. There is confrontation between class antagonism and exploitation, exposure of the injustice and tyranny against women, child abuse, and caste system, breaking of love marriages and above all the trials and tribulations. The novelist has highlighted the social and cultural perspectives which are the part and parcel of life. Moreover, Roy deals with the despondent predicament of untouchables in India. Arundhati Roy’s mother was a Kerelite Syrian Christian and father a Bengali Hindu who was a tea planter by profession. Her mother was divorced. The bitter and unhealthy relationship between husband and wife affected Arundhati Roy badly. As a result of this, the novelist focuses reader’s attention on the differences of husband and wife who belong to different regions and culture.

Caste system has influenced almost all the areas like education, economy, politics, marriage and religion. It is an inseparable part of Indian society. There was a prediction that if people will be educated, there will not be any space for caste system. But today there are number of incidents of caste discrimination among educated ones. There is a significant influence of caste in human life from birth to death.

It is also ironical that the church makes distinction between lower caste and upper caste. The caste taboos were still prevalent and not a part of India’s past story:

Mammachi told… Paravans were expected to crawl backwards with a broom, sway their footprints so that Brahmins or Syrian Christians would not defile themselves by accidentally stepping into a Paravan’s footprint. In
Mammachi’s time Paravans’s like other untouchables, were not allowed to walk on public roads, or allowed to cover their upper bodies, not allowed to carry umbrellas. They had to put their hands over their mouths when they spoke, to divert their polluted breath away from those whom they addressed.\(^4\)

Nobody from Ammus’s family thinks about her wedding. Ammu’s life is engulfed in boredom, isolation, and waiting for marriage proposal, the house of Ayemenem is like prison to her. Ammu desires to fly freely in the sky of liberty. Her wings fluttered.

All day she dreamed of escaping from Ayemenem and the clutches of her ill-tempered father and bitter, long suffering mother. She hatched several wretched little plans. Eventually, one worked. Pappachi agreed to her spend the summer with a distant aunt who lived in Calcutta.\(^5\)

Ammu gets an opportunity of moving to Calcutta to attend the marriage ceremony of a distant relative where she meets her future husband, an assistant manager in tea estate in Assam and who comes from a wealthy zamindar family. Here again she takes a definite step in trying to flee her tyrant father but unfortunately a wrong choice. She accepts the proposal of a man, not because she has fallen in love with him but simply in condition of desperation, “she thought that anything, anyone at all, would be better than returning to Ayemenem”\(^{16}\). She grabs this golden opportunity without hesitation and marries with young Hindu. Her husband is working as an assistant manager at tea estate in Assam. She marries him with the hope that this union will bring up all the love and affection which she lacked at her parental house. His job and attractive personality makes Ammu to choose this man as her husband without pretending to be in love with him. It is at this juncture that Ammu makes a mistake in a selecting a young boy as her husband without the consent of her parents. She has to pay heavily for taking immature decision and breaking social barriers in doing an inter community love marriage. As a result of her decision, she is overlooked by her family. Immediately after marriage, the real nature of her husband is exposed:
Ammu realized that the slightly feverish glitter in her bridegroom’s eyes had not been love, or even excitement at the prospect of carnal bliss, but approximately eight large pegs of whisky.\(^6\)

Ammu’s father-in-law, chairman of the railway board and secretary of boxing association gave the young couple jewellery and other presents and died before the birth of twins. Ammu leaves a lavish life after moving to Assam in the house of her husband. With the passage of time, she comes to know:

Her husband turned out to be not just a heavy drinker but a full-blown alcoholic with all of an alcoholic’s deviousness and tragic charm. There were things about him that Ammu never understood. Long after she left him, she never stopped wondering why she lied so outrageously when he did not need to.\(^7\)

Arundhati Roy has dealt with the patriarchal domination of a husband who hardly cares for his wife and children and drowns himself into drinking. He is not in a position to work as a result of his habit of drinking. Mr. Hollick, his English manager wants to exploit the opportunity and he pressurizes his junior to resign. The wickedness of the manager reaches at its height when he advises him to send Ammu to his bungalow. Arundhati Roy highlight exploiting nature of the western society. The money mindedness and immoral nature leads a man to offer his wife to serve his boss to sale his service. Physical and mental tortures inflicted by a husband, lead woman to take strong decision to protect her. The morality and modesty of Ammu is in danger of she continues to live with her husband who is hardly careful of his children and wife. Her aggression aggravates her physical and mental exploitation. Continuous aggression and conflict from her husband makes her to go back to her parents But the fate of married woman remains in dark when she leaves her partner due to intolerance of his violent behavior. Indian society does not allow a girl to live with her parents out of the social fear. Thus a woman becomes prey of adverse circumstances when she is rejected by her husband and not accepted by her parental family. The condition of unpredictability is dangerous for Ammu. In such circumstances Ammu seeks a company of a man who can take her away from the world continuous torchre from the bitter world of agonies. Velutha proves a changing point in her life.
On the other hand Velutha stands against the established norms of society by having an affair with a woman of high caste. Though he is an excellent worker in the factory, the co-workers don’t like him.

To keep the others happy, and since she knew that nobody else would hire him as a carpenter, Mammachi paid Velutha less than she would a paravan. Mammachi did not encourage him to enter the house (except when she needed something mended or installed). She thought that she ought to be grateful that he was allowed on the factory premises at all, and allowed to touch things that Touchable touched. She said that it was the big step for a paravan. 8

High caste class consciousness is reflected in jealous of Velutha for his ability to carry out certain work with precision and accuracy. Political party and police do not help Velutha in any way. His engagement with high caste lady proves disastrous for his life and turns into his tragic death in police custody. The weak god of small things is helpless against dominating forces representing feudal values. Velutha cannot stand against the dominant forces because he is untouchable.

Certainly he enjoys far more social freedom than most skilled laborers of his social status, but Roy’s bitter critique of the hypocrisy of the fictional Syrian Christian world in her native Kerala clearly highlights her frustration with the injustice of an ancient caste system that condemns certain citizens to live of drudgery simply because of an accident of birth. (Campbell- Hall 2002-03: 52-52)

Inhuman behavior of the police can be observed in the fact that the police gives intolerable tortures to Velutha even in the stage of semi-conscious condition. Untouchable meets his tragic end for natural act of love to an touchable woman.

His skull was fractured in three places. His nose and both his cheekbones were smashed, leaving his face pulpy, undefined. The blow of his mouth had split open his upper lip and broken six teeth, three of which were embedded in his lower lip, hideously inverting his beautiful smile. Four of
his ribs were splintered. One had pierced his left lung, which was what made him bleed from his mouth.\textsuperscript{9}

Tragic death of an “untouchable” by touchable boots of state police is an incident of mockery of the idea of God. There is no voice in favor of Velutha in police custody. The idea of untouchability is explored at two levels in the novel. Firstly we have socially untouchables, or prawan, who are never allowed basic human rights. Secondly, we have metaphoric untouchables in high castes.

There is no intimate relationship between Mammatchi and her husband Papachi. Papachi often beats and abuses his wife for no fault and at many times becomes the victim of his anger and frustration whenever he is in a position to fulfill his desired aim Vipin Kumar Pandey has laid emphasis on the concept of patriarchal society in The God of Small Things:

The God of Small Things is a remarkable indictment of patriarchy- apathy, injustice, and oppression faced by woman in the endocentric society. Woman is victimized everywhere: as a daughter in her parent’s house, as a wife in her husband’s house, as a worker in a factory or as an employee in an office, whether in India or America.\textsuperscript{10}

In this novel, the conflict exists between individual and society at many levels. Arundhati Roy tries to find out that how people are helpless to find an amicable solution of the problem of confrontation. Velutha, the lowcaste is not allowed live peacefully with ‘touchables’ because the label of untouchability. He is given an opportunity to work in the factory on account of his skill.

The economy of our country can not progress without the active oppression of all classes including male and female. Thomas Gray in his famous poem, ‘Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard’ writes-

“Full many a gem of purest ray serene,
The dark unfathomed cave of ocean bear,
Full many a flower in born to bush unseen,
And lost it’s fragrance in the desert air.”

Casticism is one of the greatest evil of our society. Roy picturises the untouchables and low caste people in this novel. The theory of thesis, anti-thesis and synthesis is woven into the texture of this novel which is an instruction and rather a solution to the higher class is to the higher and ruling class people for the rights of lower caste who undergo torturer for no fault of their own.

The two classes of male and female have been in the existence out of the natural and divine process but the bone of contention is unnatural behaviour of the male towards the weaker sex. As in education and politics and in various other fields woman is fighting for her rights. The main source of the empowerment of population in the modern world is education. Both men and women are like two sides of the coin and run equally like two wheels of the society. So both are important element of the growth and development in the country thus require equal opportunity in the education. If anyone of both goes downside, social progress is not possible. But exactly it is not happening. Women education is very important for the proper social and economic growth of the country. But with the passing of the time, the ratio of education is increasing.
### Female Education Ratio

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1951</th>
<th>2015</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>8.86</td>
<td>62.98</td>
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Until the middle of nineteenth century, women were educated only for traditional household works. Now, the society is witnessing changes in the role-status of women. There is greater emphasis on education of women in the same way as we educate men. The modern-day parents want to fulfill the aspirations of their children without gender parity.

Educated woman is like an effective medicine to cure a patient completely and provide health back. She empowers to come forward and contributes towards the development and prosperity of the country. Her identity as an individual would never get lost. She can read and learn about her rights for justice. It would eventually lead to decline in instances of violence and injustice against women such as dowry, forced-prostitution, child-marriage, female foeticide, etc. The condition of women would improve a lot if we educate women in different spheres of life. Educated women in all ages were sources of inspiration and motivation as they had ruled the world by discharging their responsibilities in many sphere of life.

J.P.Tripathi aptly pointed out:

> An admirable aspect of the novel *The God of Small Things* is the continuous exposure of the social, political, racial, religious and Christian hypocrisies.\(^\text{12}\)

Beverley Jacobs pointed out:

> Women were respected for their spiritual and married strength and men were respected for their spiritual and physical strength. Women were given the responsibility in bearing children and were given the strength and power to carry that responsibility through. Man had always respected that spiritual
and mental strength and women respected the men’s physical strength. There was always balance between man and woman as each had their own responsibilities as a man and as a women.\textsuperscript{13}

The issue of marginalization is continuously dwelt upon as it is very burning issue in the contemporary literary practice, the literary works lay emphasis on the voice of marginal people in the society. There are various forms of marginality which are experienced by people at many stages due to tendency of exploitation. The perception of marginality is determined largely by gender, caste and religion. Arundhati Roy is also one of them who shows how the brutality of our society is increasing with the passing of the time. Her writing is about current controversial issues like female marginalization in society. In her debut the booker prize winning novel \textbf{The God of Small Things} she directly deals with marginalization of three generations of woman of orthodox Syrian Christian family in Kerela. These women are Mammachi who is the representative of old generation of women. Ammu is the representative of middle generation and Rahel, the daughter of Ammu represents younger generation in the same family. These three generations of women are forcefully marginalized by patriarchal dominated society.

Arundhati Roy refers to metaphor ‘The heart of darkness’ which is taken from Joseph Conrad’s novel ‘The Heart of Darkness’:

\begin{quote}
In Ayenmenem, in the heart of darkness, I talk not about the white man, but about the darkness, about what the darkness is about.\textsuperscript{14}
\end{quote}

Mammachi, mother of Ammu and Chaku is a significant character in the novel is treated very brutally not by another man but by her own husband Pappachi. Mammachi is often beaten with a brass vase by Pappachi. She is very often harassed by her husband who beats her out of his inferiority complex in spite of her multi-dimensional genius. She is the very good player of violin but could not have dared to follow her talent for fear of hurting her husband’s pride. But when violin trainer makes the mistake of telling her husband that his wife is “exceptionally talented”, he breaks the bows of violin one night and throws it in river. She carries on the responsibility of earning member by pickle making business but
the husband continuously raises hurdles and disturbs the woman. Here lies the concept of anti-thesis of Arundhati Roy’s feminine sensibility. Thus the marriage of Mammchi with Pappachi was full of complication and lack of understanding, love and co-operation. Roy says:

Mammachi was almost blind and always wore dark glasses when she went out of the house. Her tears tickled down from behind them, and trembled along her jaw like raindrops on the edge of a roof. She looked small and ill in her crisps off-white sari. Chacko was Mammachi’s only son. Her own grief grieved her. He devastated her.15

Ammu is the second important female character representing second generation in Pappachi’s family but she is always neglected by both male and female. From her childhood she had a combative spirit. Ammu, the female protagonist of the novel is overlooked by her rich parents. In reality it shocks the reader that she never gets love or affection from her parents. Her father Pappachi overlooks the daughter and ignores her higher education in spite of being Ammu’s passion for studies. Pappachi considers the education of women an “unnecessary expense” so Ammu’s education comes to stop and she has no other alternative than to come with her father to Ayemenen and wait for marriage.

Traditional patriarchal family structure makes Ammu as burden on family. After completion of schooling, Ammu is not allowed to take further education, while her brother Chacko is sent to Oxford University for higher education. This dual nature of her parents is the main factor for her powerless and unimportant position, firstly in her family and secondly in society.

Pappachi insisted that a college education was an unnecessary expense for a girl. So Ammu had no choice but to leave Delhi and move with them. There was very little for a young girl to do in Ayemenem other than to wait for marriage proposal while she helped her mother with the house work.16
Disappointment becomes unbearable when her husband is suspended from job, seeks to bargain by procuring his beautiful wife for his boss Mr. Hollick. Mr. Hollick who suggest “Ammu sent to his bungalow to be locked after”\(^{17}\)

In Indian society a divorced woman can never get any place or respect in Indian traditional families, Ammu is also cornered or marginalized by family and social laws which prevalent among the Serian Christian Community in Kerela. Then she has a secret love affair with Velutha, an untouchable. She loves velutha all the more because he was possibly in Ayamenem who loves her children it is perhaps natural that Ammu with her trodden youth, oppressed existence and frustrated beings should drift towards Velutha, a Pravan. It shows her moral courage in accepting a man who is known as the member of any particular class of society but as a human being. This couple is not accepted by the orthodox society. This secret love affair continues for thirteen days until it is reported by Velutha’s father to Mammachi. When this affair is revealed, Velutha is arrested by police and killed on false case of rape. When she goes to the police station to set the record against Velutha. At that time police inspector insulted her with this remark,

Kottayam police did not take statement from Veshyas or their illegitimate children\(^{18}\)

Ammu is mercilessly persecuted by society that she often has nightmares, a recurrent dream in which ‘policeman approach her with snicking scissors waiting to hack off her hairs’\(^ {19}\) So at the end of the novel, Ammu is exiled from home by her family members. She is departed from her own children and not allowed to visit Ayemenem. She tries her best to seek good job in Anonymous places. But she is tired, exhausted, sick and finally defeated before death. Even after her death, her humiliation does not end as even the church refuses to bury Ammu. So finally, she is cremated in electric crematorium. So throughout the novel, Ammu is marginalized by social institutions like family, marriage, religion and police. Ammu is marginalized not only by men but also by women like Mammachi and Baby Kochamma.

The third marginalized female character of the novel is Rahel. She is not too much marginalized as her mother or grandmother. She never faces domestic violence as
Mammachi and Ammu had faced. Still she is neglected by society because of her marginalized mother Ammu. She is the child of broken home and daughter of a divorced mother who is absolutely neglected by the Ayemenem house. Socially like her mother Ammu, Rahel also faced marginalization and it’s crucifying effects throughout her life. She is too experienced to insult and humiliation from her childhood. Her life is totally disturbed and deserted because of the memories of agony effects. For her marginalization, the memories of her mother’s life play a key role. With the death of her mother, Rahel had lost the last mooring that she had and she began to drift, from school to school, spent eight years in a college without getting a degree and finally, “drifted into marriage like a passenger drifts towards an unoccupied chair in a airport lounge” 20 Roy presents some beautiful episodes in Rahel’s childhood which clearly show her rebellious and somewhat abnormal nature in order to search her identity. When Rahel return to Ayamenem, she is also divorcee like her mother had been. We observe that she has developed a casual attitude to life and does not restrict herself to limitations impose by social network . She does not feel any kind of shame or moral weakness after her divorce. She tries to show Comrade Pillai by informing him.

We’re divorced” Rahel hoped to shocked him into silence. Divorced? His voice rose to such a high registered that it cracked on the question mark. He even pronounced the word as though it were a form of death 21

Thus through the three different generations of the female of the novel The God of Small Things Arundhati Roy’s tries to show the miserable life of the women in Indian society. She presents suffering, pain physical and mental violence of female in male dominated society. Roy also criticized the social authorities which are made for the welfare of human being like family, marriage, religion and police authority which are responsible factor for the marginalization of women.

Manju Kapur, in her novel Difficult Daughters, tries to discover a new territory where she desires for freedom every time. Her characters are some strong individuals who face strongly man dominated society. They never hesitate to go beyond the traditional systems to visualize their dreams and aspirations.
Manju Kapur occupies an important position with her significant contribution to Indian Woman Writing by portraying the struggle of woman in the patriarchal society. She comes before the readers as an Indian English writer highlighting the problems of woman in various roles like wife, mother, daughter, daughter-in-law, etc. Her debut novel Difficult Daughters has won considerable fame not only in India but also abroad by winning the Commonwealth writer’s prize for the best first book in 1998. It is a feminist discourse in which the protagonist yearns for autonomy and shrives for identity in the patriarchal society. It is about educating daughters, and facing the consequences when they learn to think for themselves and start questioning the social norms and values. The novel takes us back to the years of World War II and the partition in the cities of Amritsar and Lahore after Independence. The novelist focuses on three generations of a family and exposes the sense of disillusionment created due to wrong perception of ideas. In this novel, the protagonist Virmati occupies central place to expose the hollowness and rigidity of traditions followed by the ancestors even at the cost of sacrifice of personal interests.

Difficult Daughters is certainly a pensive story of discomfort and disillusionment in the life of a sensitive and obedient daughter Virmati who seems to be struggling against the whimsicalities of patriarchal structure of a Punjabi family living in Amritsar. As family plays an important role in Indian society, it affects the life of members associated in that family under the pressure and need of each other. It is a conflict between tradition and modernity at the time of partition of India and Pakistan. Kapur ironically depicts the conflict between personal grievances and the existing traditions. She thinks that there is relevance of personal emotions especially for woman in the traditional family. Kapur describes in detail the character of Virmati who becomes perfect exponent of Kapur’s feminism in this novel. Kapur presents her story in a very simple and realistic manner. A critic writes in Literary Review:

This is a simple story, movingly told, a story of sorrow and coping, love and compromise. Kapur sets the scene in pre-partition Amritsar and Lahore, she re-creates that time and the locales beautifully, and this is a very impressive first novel.
Though the novelist focuses on three female characters, it primarily takes into consideration the role of Virmati, the difficult daughter of the second generation. She, being the eldest among the eleven children, appears to be rebellious under pressure of patriarchal norms. Virmi is the main character of the novel and the whole novel moves around her. Virmi being the eldest daughter among the eleven children carries on the responsibility of looking after her brothers and sisters. She helps her mother Kasturi in taking care of them. During the pregnancy period of her mother, Virmi is always taking care of the house-hold affairs and managing the things. Kapur writes about her duties in these words:

Even since Virmi could remember she had been looking after children. It was not any baby Parvati to whom she was indispensable; to her younger sibling she was second mother as well. She was impatient and intolerant of fuss, if they did not eat their meals, on her return home from school she would hunt out the offending brother or sister and shove the cold food down their throats. If they refused to bear the hand-me-down clothes she assigned them, she slapped them briskly. Usually once was enough. Sometimes she tried to be gentle, but it was weary work and she was almost always tired and harassed.\textsuperscript{23}

Virmi has to fight against patriarchal domination throughout her life and against her mother who is equally oppressive. As a result of this, Virmi becomes rebellious. She has almost to play the role of second mother for her brothers and sisters. Her childhood is ruined in discharging the duties of a mother, yet her strong desire to study remains alive. As a result of this, the relationship assumes rebellious shape as mother wants to keep her daughter within the traditional model of her feminity. On the other hand, mother plays a pivotal role in nourishing the whole family and generates life in the members living with her in the same house. But the image of motherhood has changed in recent times. Now the mother has become of women surviving for her existential identity by facing the bitter realities of life. The modern daughter Virmi appears to be of uncompromising nature. She is always in tussle with her aunty Lajwanti who has been nourished in a free
atmosphere. Her college education in Amritsar gives a boost to her free nature and puts her in conflicting situation in her family. Kapur remarks about her Nature:

Virmati was offended by this implication of herself as a pleasure loving female, and did not reply. If Lajwanti was offended by her niece’s rudeness, she hid this fact. She did not want to initiate a longish stay, was paying for with a quarrel.\textsuperscript{24}

Amritsar is a suitable place for Virmati to enter in the new realm of free atmosphere. Author weaves into structure the different perspectives of Virmati’s feminism in this novel. In the duration of her stay at Amritsar, her attitude and behavior changes. Kapur writes:

Her dresses too had changed from her Amritsar days. When they went visiting she wore her sari in Parsi-style, as Shakuntala called it, with the palla draped over her right shoulder. The saris were of some thin material, foreign, with a woven silk border sewn onto them. The blouses of some thin material, with loose sleeves to the elbows-she wore her hair with a side parting, smoothed over her ears into a bun at back. Her shoes were black, shiny, patent leather with high heals. Her jewellery consisted of a strand of pearls, a single gold bangle on one arm, and a large man’s watch on the others.\textsuperscript{25}

Kasturi, the mother of Virmati represents the ancient traditional values of Indians. She is projected becomes a victim of the patriarchal domination. As a matter of fact, she is presented as a sacrificing mother who is aware of the rebellious attitude of Virmati. She notices some changes in the behaviour of her daughter. But she is not in a position to take right decision at the right moment. She seems to be in hesitation. She does not wish her daughter to be educated in free atmosphere. But at the same time, she wants her daughter to be free from strict traditions for her proper betterment. The mother wants to choose the middle path. She is well aware of the need of marriage for Virmati. Kapur writes on it:

These people don’t really understand Viru, how much satisfaction there can be in leading your own life, in being independent. Here, we are, fighting for
the freedom of the nation, but woman are still supposed to marry, nothing else.26

Virmiti’s meeting with Shakuntala, her cousin provides her a platform for freedom. which she enjoys out of the walls of her house. According to her, freedom from traditional duties and enjoyment of modern luxuries is the real aim of education. Virmati and Shakuntala always involved in discussion on the issue of education and freedom. Virmati tells Shakuntala:

No, no really,’ said Virmati, catching her hand. May be here was the clue to her unhappiness. It was useless looking for answer inside the home. One had to look outside. To education, freedom and the bright lights of Lahore colleges.27

The novel traces a journey of thesis and antithesis in quest for freedom and identity. The desperation of younger generation is observed and presented in a realistic manner. constant suffering of young moderate girl Virmati enables her to be defiant and assertive. She is well aware of the need education which can make her free from oppressive system. Her cousin Shakuntala creates an atmosphere of freedom for Virmati. She encourages her to emerge like a ‘New Woman’. Under the able supervision of Shakuntala, Virmati stands against orthodox traditions, and social norms that expect her to be an ideal and traditional woman. it is the search of a girl for her existential identity in an adverse atmosphere of conflicting situations. In spite of the burden of domestic responsibility, she completes her B.A. degree from a college of Amritsar. In the mean time, her family members arranges her marriage with the canal engineer Indrajeet. Virmati’ mother complains against her own daughter who has become bad-tempered nature:

Leave your studies if it is going to make you so bad-tempered with your family. You are forgetting what comes first.28

The patriarchal forces treat woman as an object and allow them to name children after the man. In this way, the other sex is overlook, Virmati rejects both institutions and rebels against ideas provoking the honour of family relating to daughter. The conflict between Kasturi and Virmati is quite clear. It is the typical situation frequently observed in
family relationship. The marriage of her daughter is in priority for her mother Kasturi. The main concern for her mother Kasturi fulfills the role of caring mother who persuades her daughter for marriage. Manju Kapur writes about the conflict of a mother towards her daughter:

Kasturi found the fuss Virmati was making about failing and unreasonable. It hardly makes a difference to the real business of her life, which was getting married and looking after her own home. There was good samaji family making enquiries.²⁹

Virmati’s meeting with the professor gives her an opportunity to fulfill her dreams. Virmati’s family contacts professor Harish to look after her study. Virmati develops intimacy with him. The professor also found the perfect student in Virmati who was quite eager to realize her dreams at any cost. He finds the perfect companionship in Virmati. He is now ready to grab the occasion with smartness. The glimpse of Virmati gives him a real pleasure and emotional fulfillment. Graphically Manju Kapur presents the affair between the professor and Virmati:

Once, the class had been more than usually full. Virmati, a little late, found no room left in the first row. She hesitated at the door. The professor, sensing it was she, did not look up as he might ordinarily have done. Ignoring the half-dozen young man who rose to give their place, Virmati sat on the floor in front of his desk, looking at him with her longer eyes. The professor drank in the symbolism of her posture greedily. It moved him so deeply that he reminded it in all it’s detail even when his children had grown up the murmur and rustle of students with scratching pens, their heads receding in rows, the whirr and click-click of the fans overhead, and the stillness at the heart of it, enclosing him and Virmati, Virmati with her offering eyes in her open face.³⁰

In traditional Indian society it is impossible to think about such kind of relationship between the teacher and the opposite sex. The professor is quite aware of his own
limitations. He knows the consequences of such kind of affair and society which does not allow him to do so. But the professor is confused:

At what stage did thoughts of the Professor replace the permitted thoughts of her fiancé in Virmati’s mind? 31

On the other hand, Virmati does not respond to the professor. A sense of humiliation seems to be influencing the attitude of Virmati. She is no more the same girl as she was before her meeting with the professor. She has developed her own sense and attitude. She is not ready to accept the decisions of her elders especially in the case of marriage. She takes decision of her own likes and dislikes. And Virmati herself realizes this fact:

Virmati remembered, once upon a time, she had quite happy to be engaged to someone her elders had chosen. Had she been able to follow the path they had so carefully planned for her, they would had seen to it that the transition into adulthood was as painless as possible. How all that was over. Oh, why had not she married sooner? But deaths in both families had made hers a two-year engagement. In those two years she had fallen against the grain and whatever might be the consequences, she must continue her course. 32

But there is some different problem in the life of Virmati. Although externally, she was inspired by Shakuntala, but there are multiple problems before her. Virmati has also to adjust her five sisters waiting for their marriage. Her family is quite conscious about her because she is the eldest one. Her parents discharge their duty of marriage of Virmati as soon as possible. Kasturi reveals her intention before Virmati in these pathetic words:

Shakuntala Pehnji did not have five sisters waiting to get married either. And do you think it makes her mother happy to have her daughter unmarried? She may say what she likes about jobs and modern woman, but I know how hard she still tries to find a husband for Shaku, and how bad she feels. You want to do the same for me? To your father and grandfather. 33
Her mother is not ready to accept the relationship develops out of emotional involvement. She is not ready to accept the opinion of her daughter who seems to be hostile all the time.

Kasturi is a typical Indian mother who tries her best for the welfare of her daughter. On the other hand, her daughter stands against ancestral traditions. The hostile attitude of her daughter reminds Kasturi her past life when she could not dare to go against the wishes of her parents. It is always in her mind that the main job of education is to make her polite and obedient. Kasturi says disapprovingly remarks:

Study means developing the mind for the benefits of family. I studied too, but my mother would have killed me if I had dared even to want to dress in anything other than was bought for me.\textsuperscript{34}

Virmati develops an close emotional and physical relationship with Professor. The major part of the novel exposes with Virmati’s love affair with the professor. She informs her parents her decision regarding the marriage but all family members oppose her decision. On the other hand, the professor is also in search of her all the time. He started writing many letters. Not only professor but Virmati also writes number of letters to him in which she unburdens her soul and wants to show her inclination in passionate manner. She writes about her own commitments, her family, her decision and her willingness.

The professor inspires Virmati to continue her study. For him, education is a tool of freedom without which knowledge is not possible. In one of his letters to Virmati, he writes about the importance of knowledge:

Darling, you say your family is questioning your years of studying. One of the benefits of education is that it teaches us to think for ourselves. Even if we arrive at the same conclusions that have been presented to us, our faith in those beliefs is stronger for having been personally thought out. If, as sometimes happens, our education leads us to question some of value systems by which we live, that is not to say that we are destroying tradition. The tradition that refuses to entertain doubt, and remains impervious to new thoughts and ideals, become a prison rather than a sustaining life force.
Even the smallest one of us has a social function that function is not to follow blindly beliefs that may not be valid.  

Virmati decides to go to Lahore for her higher studies. All her parents are against her decision but they are helpless before the decision of Virmati. Kasturi wants to persuade Virmati but she finds herself helpless before the obstinacy of her own daughter. She tells her daughter, Virmati:

If you can not consider your duty to us, at least consider yourself. There is time in the cycle of life for everything. If you will fully ignore it like this, what will happen to you? A woman without her own home and family is a woman without moorings.

Manju Kapur insists that the world she depicts in her novels, emerges out of the intellectual experience of her academic life. Her basic approach is to liberate woman from the oppressive and suppressive measures of patriarchy. Virmati disagrees oppressive social restrictions. She boldly takes the decision to study in Lahor like a modern girl in the company of Shakuntala inspires her to be vibrant in her outlook and manner. In the typical male dominated society, such conditions are prevalent because the individuals do not dare to cross social limitations. Virmati is also the victim of the double standard of society. If a man remains unmarried for longer period, it is not noticed at all. On the other hand, an unmarried girl is the subject of rumors who is so serious about her relationship with him. When she goes to meet her teacher, who put her questions:

Virmati cultivated friendships with some of the teachers, visited them in their homes in the winding gullies. All of them wanted to know why she was not married. Young and pretty, and coming from a good family what could be the problem? It bothered them. They wished her well. Virmati grew glib talking about the career, and need for dedication when one was teaching.

Manju Kapur’s protagonist is a daring girl who participate in the activities of freedom movement. She attends many conferences organized by various institutions organizing conferences on the topic of woman empowerment. She actively and
continuously participates in those conferences in order to have real knowledge of freedom as put forth by a freedom fighter Leela Mehta. In one of her speeches, Leela Mehta comments:

That is the real Inquilab. Not slogan shouting. Not posturing and empty speech-making. If you, the hope of the future generation, can achieve some difference in the lives of your fellow men, then indeed you are the true wealth of your nation.\textsuperscript{38}

Kapur’s protagonist is aggressive and stands against compulsive forces but in the process of refusal she still has to face humiliation. But Virmati does not become into a ‘New Woman’ in the real sense of the term. In spite of her revolt against the patriarchal domination and her firm stand in case of marriage. She is highly influenced by the active participation of women in freedom movement. She observes how women are more and can become active and vibrant. They are ennable to their male counterparts and their contribution is not noteworthy. Virmati is quite wonder struck at this point:

Virmati was amazed at how large an area of life these women wanted to appropriate for themselves, strikes, academic freedom, the war, peace, rural upliftment, mass consciousness, high prices due to the war, the medium of instruction, the Congress Committee, the Muslim League, anti-imperialism, Independence Day movement, rally, speeches.\textsuperscript{39}

Kapur presents the agonize condition of a woman who is upset by the maltreatment of her lover: ‘Here I am in the position of being of your secret wife, full of shame, wondering what people will say if they find me out, not being able to live in peace, study in peace and…. Why?’ the restlessness of Lady Macbeth enters in the life of Virmati who has been pressurized by unsocial situations. At this Juncture, she remembers her past life and her relationship with the man:

She had seen women growing in power and strength, claiming responsibility for their lives, declaring that society would be better off if it’s female were effective and capable. Why had she been so upset to learn of Harish’s absence?\textsuperscript{40}
In the modern scenario, importance of joint family system is gradually decreasing, and as a result of this importance of man-woman relationship is losing its importance. The joint family system has almost come to an end. In the present context case, dedication to each other is necessary to maintain harmonious relationship. In the very first novel Difficult Daughters, Manju Kapur tries to analyze the relationship between Virmati and professor in terms of modernity. Virmati is a member of such orthodox family in which girl is not allowed to take decisions about her marriage and education. Virmati boldly stands against the oppressive restrictions and takes her own decision related to her marriage. Her bold step regarding her marriage is the result of her stay in Amritsar and Lahore. She is aware of the result of such relationships:

“I want to know where I stand before anything else”, she insisted, backing into the room behind. In her hurry she did not lift the curtain high enough, and it got caught in the door, preventing it from closing. In a flash the professor was through. He pinned her between his arm, against the wall. She tried to push him away. “this is not an answer”, she said angrily.41

The novelist presents man-woman relationship in terms of the conflict between tradition and modernity which is main concern in modern scenario. Virmati’s physical and emotional involvement with the professor is so deep that she is not in a position to take right decision. But the professor is certainly exploiting the physical compulsion of Virmati. In the modern society such relationship between man and woman are very common and the social activists support it. But Virmati is aware of such intimate relationship which is carried on without the approval of society. Professor tries to console her:

Viru, I love you more than you love me, that much is obvious,” panted the professor. “it has been almost six month I can think of nothing else and here you torture me with you questions and answers.42

It is quite unpredictable for a girl to become pregnant before her marriage under the influence of sensual pleasure. Virmati has to face shameful situation and on the hand she is facing this time. She would like to be married as soon as possible. Her pregnancy puts the
professor in difficulty as he is already married. Virmati is blamed for this accident in her life.

Virmati can be compared with many girls and women in India. Virmati is in a tight corner and seems to lose her sense of morality. Her cousin is also aware of this fact. She remarks ironically:

Most of families look upon the marriage of daughter as a sacred duty or sacred burden. We are lucky we were living in times when women can do something else. Even in Europe women gain more respect during war time, and our satyagraha as well.⁴³

Virmati also realizes the situation of the professor who is already married, how could he dare to have another wife? The situation is not under control of the professor. On the other hand Virmati suffers due to her own wrong decision but she never imagine such type of life. A girl of this nature has no existence in the traditional society. Virmati is aware with this fact so she reveals to the professor in pathetic manner:

Suppose it happens to me, like those women you hear about, who die trying to get rid of it. There was a woman we had, a widow from Tarsikka. She got pregnant from the cook, though he said she was lying, and Mati was going to dismiss them both, but before she could, the women died in horrible agony.⁴⁴

Manju Kapur realizes the distance between the boy and the girl as per traditional norms. In the typical traditional society in India, it is not expected for a boy to meet any girl before marriage. But real education might bring the change in the orthodox outlook of the men. Mnju Kapur comments:

So when a man stays with you, and that too overnight, there is gossip. And you know how bad any hint of scandal can be for a school. It is important to set a good example, particularly because there is so much readiness to suppose that education encourages girls to be independent and wayward…. You know our people are simple. When they see something like this, they
jump to obvious conclusion - they do not know what else to believe. And a bad example is set.  

Finally, the professor has to take decision to marry with Virmati after a love afire of five years. Now the basic problem before then is how to make this relationship acceptable to society. Virmati has to taken consent of her parents to marry the professor. She is not in a position expose the reality to her parents. As a matter of fact a girl can not live without maintain parental relationship. But marriage is the real gift for them, especially for Virmati.

Similarly man is also put to questions if he violate establish social norms. The professor also is not in a position to face his wife and children after his second marriage. But no option is left before the man as he can not leave his first wife in lurch. He resolves the conflict and decides to go his house along with his new wife. He has to face the scolding and crying of his dear mother Kishori Devi. His first wife Ganga silently accepts the changed situation. Her mother in law consoles her in very sympathetic and compassionate words. Kishori Devi tells her:

In this life we can do nothing only our duty. Serve your children, look after your children, walk along the path that has been marked for us, and not pine and yearn for those things we cannot have. Since our destiny is predetermined, that is the only way we can know any peace. Duty is our guide, and our strength. How can be control the things outside us? We can only control ourselves. Ganga beti, you have been a good girl.

After marriage Virmati decides to go to her parental home to meet her family members. She is not in a position to decide regarding the attitude of her parents so far as her marriage is concern. She is very well aware of the mentality of her parents. Finally she departs from Amritsar for his parental village. The relationship of a daughter is as such that she can not ignore her parents even in unfavorable circumstances. Her mother does not response properly. She feels the danger. She was not wrong in this direction. Her mother Kasturi does not welcome her newly married daughter. She begins to scold her. She thinks her own daughter has damned the name of the family. All these words of her
mother made her strong. Now she does not think about the words of society. Insults made her more practical. Virmati’s vanity is always at stake. She tries to please everybody in the family of Harish and her own family but she never succeeds. It is not easy for a girl to satisfy everyone in the family easily. In the house of Harish, Virmati is alone, nobody accepts her. Ganga and Kaveri Devi are neutral for her, neither hostile nor polite. Even in her own home, she is not accepted at all.

Manju Kapur tries to portray a new image of female identity that changes her status from sufferer to the empower by redefining her relationship her family, her husband and her daughter. The novel focuses on the realization of a woman of her predicament, her wish to be recognize society. The protagonist boldly stands against social oppressions. The novel depicts a woman’s struggle and searched for her existential identity. The conflict presented is external as well as internal. In the end Virmati’s story disappear in the tragic partisan of India and Pakistan.

After her death, her daughter Ida presents her mother’s life as perceived by her in terms of modernity. She does not find the life and ways of her mother justified. Though the daughter leads a free life, her problem appears to be like that of her mother. This can be observed in the statement “I felt myself hovering like a pencil notation on the margins of society”(279)

Manju Kapur has attempted to project a new sense of woman’s identity that transform her status from the victimized to the empowered by reconceptualizing the mother-daughter relationship. She celebrates the female-female bond, attempting to create new patterns for the recreations of woman’s identity.

Kapur has skillfully portrait the story of a girl. The world may not reciprocate love for love, but a daughter adores her parents. The novel is full of emotive overtones like love, affection, devotion and all that is good in human nature. The faith between daughter and a mother is the only a bond of permanent human relationship. The universal grief of a mother echoes throughout the novel: “What will happen to you after I am gone” Virmati is also conscious of her daughter as her mother Kasturi was conscious about her. Ida has a
disastrous marriage. Like Virmati, Ida is also the victim of oppressive forces. She suffers from melancholy, depression and despair as her own mother suffered. Ida says:

I was engulfed by melancholy, depression, and despair. I would lie in bed for hours, unable to sleep, pitying myself for all I did not have, blaming my mother, myself. How her shadow no longer threatens me. Without the hindrance of her presence, I can sink into her past and make it mine.47

In Virmati’s observation, her daughter is the victim of the age of transformation. The threat of misunderstanding and revolt between the daughter and mother runs throughout the novel. In the end of the novel, Ida remarks: “My mother tightened her reins on me as I grew older, she said it was my good. As a result I am constantly looking for escape routes.”(258)

The emage of woman in Indian society is built around her different roles in family, as a daughter, a mother, wife and home maker. The parameters decides woman’s success in the family and society. Institution of marriage plays crucial role in this process. So every activity of a female child is directed towards getting a good husband. In spite of the globalized opportunities for women, the primary consideration is given to marriage. Manju Kapur depicts the contemporary society in which marriage is the primary and fundamental factor in the lives of her novels. As a result of this her female characters present different views and opinion on this perspective. The novel tries to fill the gape between orthodox and conventional ideology. It also projects multiple views of various women with reference to their awareness of self and their bodies which are essential out come of the exposer to education and changing social modes. Thus the women in Difficult Daughters of Manju Kapur project innumerable views which are at times polarized with juxtaposing.

Manju Kapur’s female protagonist are mostly educated, aspiring individual caged within the confines of conservative society. Their education leads them to independent thinking for which their family and society become intolerent for them. They struggle between tradition and modernity. It is their individual struggle with family and society through which they plunged into a dedicated effort to carve and identity for themselves as qualified woman
with faultless background. The novelist has portrayed her protagonist as a woman caught in the conflict between the passions of the flesh and a yearning to be a part of the political and intellectual movement of the day.\textsuperscript{48}

Githa Hariharan covers important issues related to gender for which female writers have made a concentrated effort. She actively participated in debates and conferences which concentrated on gender politics in Indian society. Hariharan has clearly expressed her views in the question of her feminist beliefs and politics.

Just because \textit{The Thousand Faces of Night} or \textit{When Dreams Travel} address the lives of women directly, or in the second case power politics in relation to gender, this does not mean that the other novels are not informed by questions of gender. I don’t think I could write a single page that would not be informed by my beliefs, or for that matter, my confusions. My work grows out of my feminism and other political beliefs. Which does not mean a novel I write is some kind of handmaiden to ideology.\textsuperscript{49}

Hariharan is conscious of involvement with critical gender issues. She herself tells that she is not in a position to answer the question related to women’s lives. The reason behind this lies in the fact that she does not want to expose her actual contribution and state of mind but certainly. She explains her position:

But certainly, all my adult life, I have been involved in some way or other—often in modest way—in the activities of women’s groups, secular cultural groups, secular cultural groups, anti-nuclear groups. The guardianship case in the Supreme Court was just the most visible. I also write as often as I can about some of these issues.(anothersubcontinent.com2006)

Hariharan debut novel \textit{Thousand Faces of Night} has earned fame in critical circle. It has been read and analyzed from various perspectives like focus on man woman relationship, gender discrimination, the question of Identity, and the theme of quest of identity. As a matter of fact, the novel concentrates on human condition with special emphasis on female related issues. \textit{The Thousand Faces of Night} covers esthetic condition of Indian woman who search for ideal condition in order to fulfill their dreams.
drawn from the myths of ancient woman. Hariharan has explored and used myths about women as they are the result of patriarchal structure used as tools to suppress woman. Moreover, she is critical of those women who think that they have no social and moral restrictions in leading their lives according to their wishes. The Thousand Faces of Night is a sensitive novel which depicts the physical features, behavior and the psychic state of her characters. Hariharan presents the predicament of women in Indian society, and women’s continuous struggle for their existential identity. Divyarajan Bahuguna states,

While this novel successfully represents traditional Indian values and integrates it with modern thinking, it is basically a feminist writing in which myths are reviewed and retold from a women’s point of view.50

Because Githa Hariharan is herself a female writer that why she presents the picture of female in a very bold manner. In her novels, she presents her female protagonist as the image of new woman who has been carrying the burden of social pressures since times in memorial. Her fictional world depicts mothers and daughters who consider the institution of marriage as sacred phenomena. Githa Hariharan’s Thousand Faces of Night portrays women as insecure individuals struggling for love and social understanding, but all the time they suffer from ill-conceived ideas about them. It is the story of female protagonist Devi, a young woman, who suffers incessantly after her arrange marriage with Mahesh. Hariharan exposes her views regarding women by skillfully portraying multifacet personality of her characters. Her woman attain liberation and reconciliation through self-realization and self knowledge. Her protagonist Devi is presented along with four important female characters: her grandmother, her mother, her mother-in-law and her servant. All these women, each in her own way, have been both a victim and a survivor. Their lives have become hellish by suffering, sacrifice, injustice, and disappointment and yet they remain undefeated and strong.

In The Thousand Faces of Night, Devi is a foreign returned young girl who experiences humiliation and disillusionment in her colonial matrix. She can be seen as an example to explore the possibilities for the modern woman in the field of education and independence.
The novelist covers three generations of a family in order to bring out the reality regarding the status of an Indian woman. Devi, the protagonist of the novel represents the modern woman, while Sita, the mother of Devi and Mayamma, the caretaker of Devi the traditional ones. This novel focuses on the issue of arrange marriage. In the patriarchal framework of society a woman is expected to serve as a wife, mother, daughter and daughter-in-law but in return she is provided only minimum facilities in the family. Hariharan tries to expose the situation which is almost the same for an educated modern woman like Devi. Devi represents post-modern era who has studied abroad all alone. Sita and Mayamma represent uneducated women of older generation.

Mayamma had been thrown into the waters of her womanhood well before she had learnt to swim. She had learnt to swim. She had learnt about lust, the potential of unhidden bestial cruelty, first-hand. She had had no choices really. She had coveted birth, endured life, nursed death. And she had won some small victory – if you could call it by such a grand name – through that ragged belief she carried within her. She snarls and sulks, thought Devi with wonder, but she has no bitterness. She could live again through Parватиямма, even through Devi. They were not strangers to her, strange as their choices may have been.51

and —Sita, born fifteen years after Mayamma, was different. She had always been different. Her talent had set her apart from the other girls; so had her unfeminine determination, and the dark brown skin that prospective mothers-in-law had looked at with disapproval.52

Devi is sent to the U.S. on a government scholarship to complete her Master’s degree. Her black American friend Dan, proposes her for marriage but she does not accept his offer, because under the influence of her western education, she can not overlook deeply rooted Indian traditions. In America she is reminded of her grandmother who told stories of having moral relevance and cultural significance in respect of marriage. Unable to adjust with ambivalent American experience she comes back to live with her mother. She reasons out for her return to India thus:
Amma’s letter brought with them an unspoken message of loneliness, poignant in it’s quite dignity… But the image of her alone by the sea teased me like a magnet… That she might need me, my hesitant, self doubting presence, was intoxicating.\textsuperscript{53}

Devi regards her mother very highly and also out of her true and keen love for her, she comes back to India. The special bound between Devi and her mother, and the mother’s dreams of a bright future for her daughter is something common in the Indian family system. Commenting on the psychological implications mother –daughter identification, Sudhir Kakar observes:

The special maternal affection reserved for the daughters contrary to expectations derived from social and cultural prescriptions, is partly to be explained by the fact that a mother’s unconscious identification with her daughter is normally stronger than with her so in her daughter the mother can re-experience herself as a cared-for girl. And in Indian society … a daughter is considered a guest in her natal family, treated with the solicitous concern often accorded to welcome outsider, who, all too soon will marry and leave her mother for good. Mindful of her daughter’s developmental fate the mother re-experiences the emotional conflict her own separation once aroused, and this in turn tend to increase her indulgence and solicitude towards her daughter.\textsuperscript{54}

When Devi returns to Madras from America to live with her widowed mother, Sita, a very strong and protective woman she confronts some difficulties in making adjustments with day to day realities. Though she has come from a brave new world, she realizes that it is difficult to change the old order with her radical ideas and her dream like visit to America ends as soon as she is in India. She and her mother are pulled together like a one called unit,

She becomes her anchor rock, never wrong, never to be questioned, a self evident fact to our existence.\textsuperscript{55}
Though Devi lived in America for a few years, she still felt sensitive and emotional to her environment. After her return from the states, she finds her mother less distant, more vulnerable. Devi understands the nature of this change. Her mother loved her but she always puts on a clock to reserve and detachment lest she might be mistaken as a doting mother who was likely to spoil her only child. Devi’s mother loved her too much, but she did not make a travesty of her motherly affection because she exercised control on her emotions:

Amma and I did not touch each other and we certainly did not talk about love, for each other and anyone else. But in the first few weeks after my return to Madras, we were intensely conscious of each other; we were pulled together by a tender protectiveness that encircled our necks with it’s fine threads. Drawn together, my dead father’s memory receding for the moment, we became a one celled unit. We became, not a family, but mother and daughter.56

This bonding between the daughter and the mother began to grow day by day. Devi was elated by the possibilities of her newly-made friendship with her mother. But Devi soon realized that this new squirt of bonding was not without motive on her mother’s part:

Like a veteran chess player she made her moves. I have to give her credit for her sense of timing…led me to her carefully laid plans—a marriage for me, a swayamvara.57

Like the other traditional marriages in India, Devi’s marriage was also an arranged one. As a modern young woman she was allowed little freedom to choose her husband. Rather she had to choose one from the given lot. Finally, she chooses Mahesh who is not a prince of her dreams which was fixed in her psyche through the stories of swayamvara in which the princess has the freedom to choose a husband of her desire. When she confronts the hard reality of life, she has to come out from the world of fantasy. She meets and accepts Mahesh. Devi’s assessment of Mahesh is quite realistic, shorn of glamour and the dreamy visions of a prince coming to wed her:
Mahesh, the stranger who is to be my husband, visits us for an hour every evening. He is no prince, but a regional manager in a multinational company that makes detergents and toothpaste.\(^{58}\)

Githa Hariharan has also presents the dowry system in India in her novel through a character Gauri, Devi’s grandmother’s maid tells them that she is going to marry soon. The grandmother asks her about the boy and his family and also about the dowry-

> How many sovereigns?’ my grandmother asked, interrupting her. Gauri stared at her feet awkwardly. ‘Twenty, Amma. But I have almost eighteen. I’ll get the rest somehow.’\(^{59}\)

But the dowry never ensures a good fate for any girl after marriage. Her husband treats her like an animal. Only her younger brother-in-law consoles her through his tender love. Gauri is very beautiful girl like a princess, but her beauty also fails to bring happiness in her life. Devi’s grandmother articulates a story about a beautiful girl, who marries a snake, which, after marriage, turns into a human body. But Devi is still unable to co-relate the story of the snake with Gauri-

> I remember I spent days trying to unravel this message from my grandmother should Gauri, my happy, down-to-earth Gauri, have married a snake? And who was the snake in her story her bestial husband or her freakish lover?’\(^{60}\)

Through a character Uma in the novel, Hariharan focuses on domestic violence of Indian woman. Devi’s cousin, Uma, married into a good family, is abused in the hands of her in-laws and husband. After one year of marriage, she returns home for the rest of her life to live with her grandmother. She finds herself unable to bear the cruelties and tortures, given by her husband. Hariharan empathically explains the condition of an Indian woman through that character.

A few months later, I heard Uma’s story: a motherless girl like her was lucky to have found a match in a wealthy home, or so everybody thought. Her husband and his father drank till she was stupefied with fear, even her
girlhood, spent with an indifferent father and a hostile stepmother had not prepared her for this trial.\textsuperscript{61}

A woman is treated as if she is an object in our society which can be molded by anyone. Hariharan explains such type of female’s life through Amba’s life, who is treated as a property. First, her father does not protect her as his daughter, secondly, Bheeshma, kidnaps her like a kind of object, and then Salwa denies to accept her, calling her leftover. Such type of tradition of ours is disgusting where the woman is not respected as a human being. Hariharan presents this fact very brilliant way. When Devi asks her grandmother about Amba, who does not go back to her home, her grandmother replies-

\begin{quote}
A woman without a husband has no home.\textsuperscript{62}
\end{quote}

Failure of Uma’s marriage and Amba’s story leaves a great impact upon Devi’s mind. As a result, grandmother’s makes Devi a day dreamer about female avengers-

\begin{quote}
I lived a secret life of my own: I became a woman worrier, a heroine. I was Devi. I rode a tiger, and cut off evil, magical demons’ heads.\textsuperscript{63}
\end{quote}

But Devi also feels deprived of the joy which marriage brings about. Mahesh is practical, viewing marriage as a necessity. On the contrary, Devi has great expectations from marriage which are not fulfilled on account of the matter-of-fact attitude and behaviour on the part of Mahesh. Devi tries to realize Mahesh what is she consider the real aims of marriage: sharing, caring, and togetherness leading to fulfillment. But Devi’s husband, Mahesh, goes in long-tour for weeks to business. More absence of Mahesh feels her isolated. Mahesh provides everything Devi which a young lady can dream of an executive job, a palatial house in Bangalore and enormous riches. She is provided with everything but she feels that something is lacking in her life. Mahesh cold and indifferent attitude irritates her. Devi feels cheated and slighted. She wants an emotional support of her husband which she used to get from her mother Sita, she feels that marriage is a torture and it hangs like a knife above her neck:

\begin{quote}
I am still a novice in the more subtle means of torture. I thought the knife would plunge in, slit, tear, rip across my neck, and let the blood gush.... The
\end{quote}
games it plays with me are ignominious… The heart I have prepared so well for it’s demands remains untouched, unsought for.64

Devi’s marital life lacks the charm and excitement whatever she had expected. Her husband contrasts her with other women who are not so well educated but are happier. She underlines her deficiency and diminishes her self esteem:

This is what comes of educating a woman. Your grandmother was barely literate. Wasn’t she a happier woman than you are? What is it you want?65

The satiric tone is quite obvious when Devi confesses about Mahesh’s attitude towards her.

He is far too civilized to raise his hand and bring it down on my rebellious body. He snarls instead about women’s neuroses and my faulty upbringing.66

There is only one thing that fills Devi’s time, it is the story of her father-in-law Baba, when Mahesh goes on tours. These stories usually based on the messages of remaining a pure Brahmin or pure wife through a practice of self-control:

A virtuous wife is so devoted to her husband that she dies before him, a samangli, her forehead unwidowed and whole with vermilion, her arms and neck still ornamented with bangles and gold chains.67

He tells stories about the rewards of following the culture and punishments of not following the culture. He reflects a traditional thinking and preserving the ancient culture through his stories. He tells Devi, a way through her stories how to reach heaven –

The path a woman must walk to reach heaven,’ says Baba, is a clear, well-lit one. The woman has no independent sacrifice to perform, no vow, no fasting; by serving her husband, she is honoured in the heavens. On the death of her husband, the chaste wife, established in continence, reaches heaven, even if childless, like students who have practised self-control.68
Far from being a traditional person, Baba is a god person and a great philosopher. He reads so much literature in Sanskrit that he becomes very philosophical about life. When he sees the frustrated face of Devi, he tells her about true happiness:

Devi! He chided, his voice firm and confident now, ‘whatever is dependent on others is misery; whatever rests on oneself is happiness; this in brief is the definition of happiness and misery.69

When her father-in-law goes to USA to stay with his daughter, Devi is left alone in her life. Mahesh pays no attention to her feelings and rather laughs at her lifestyle and teases her. Devi requests Mahesh to guide to play rummy, he discourages her-

Don’t be silly, all the others are men,’ he said.70

Mahesh once says to Devi— I didn’t know you drank.71

She drinks alone to overcome from her loneliness. Hariharan’s Devi represents the contemporary woman, who tries her best to be equal to man in every field of life, even if it is drinking. Mahesh suggests Devi to plan for a baby to fill her empty hours of the day, she agrees, but fails to conceive even after trying for more than a year. She meets a gynaecologist, but getting no positive response from there, she suggests—

Let’s adopt a child.72

Mahesh wants his own blood in the child and refuses to adopt. He also scorns Devi—

You look so fragile, so feminine,’ Mahesh said. It’s hard to believe that you don’t want a child.73

On one hand, Mahesh expects Devi to be social, confidant and make-believe herself modern among his friends and on another hand, he wishes her to perform all her duties as a traditional Indian woman.

Due to Mahesh’s ignorant attitude towards Devi, leads her to an extra-marital affair with Gopal, a very melodious singer and her neighbour’s brother. Devi likes music and,
therefore, is drawn towards him. She notices that Gopal, also attracted towards her, pays too much attention to her. She frequently starts meeting him to hear his melodious songs and gradually they. Devi likes Gopal because he misses nothing about her-

He knows every muscle on my face, he sees the shadow before it falls across my eyes. We talk, he sings. When he takes my hand and brushes the fingertips with his moist mouth, the lush prison around me dissolves into a green blur. I sleep less and less every night. I ache for that drug, that blissful numbness. Waiting for him even the trees outside do not stir in their breathless anticipation.74

To be conscious of the feminist is the realization of victimization. As a philosophy of life, it tries to discover and change the strict and deep-seated causes of woman’s oppression. It is a concept of educating the consciousness of an entire culture. The analysis about Mayamma’s life is an attempt to discuss different aspects of feminism, analysing them into all its complexities. It has assumed different structure in relation to contemporary approaches.

Through her character, Mayamma, Hariharan portrays the image of suffering of a woman. There is only one character Mayamma, with whom Devi can talk to pass her time. Devi is very curious to know Mayamma’s previous life as well as her married life. Mayamma tells about her marital life that she was twelve, when she got married. Her mother-in-law examines her very closely whether she is a suitable match for her son, and also examines her jewellery whether it was her own or not, she pushed at the long thick plait to make sure it was real, checked her horoscope with the help of an astrologer who forecast that Mayamma is going to be a mother of many strong sons, but she could not check her inside. When Mayamma fails to be pregnant till a long time after her marriage, her mother-in-law blames her of showing them the wrong horoscope-

She tore my new saris and gave me yesterday’s rice to eat. What is the use of feeding a barren woman? You have been admiring your fine new sari, have you, continued the mocking voice. What has your beauty done for you, you barren witch?’ She pulled up my sari roughly, just as her son did every
night, and smeared the burning red, freshly-ground spices into my barrenness. I burned, my thighs clamped together as I felt the devouring fire cling to my entrails. The next time it was my breast. Cut the right one open, here take this blade. Take the silver cup with the blood from your breast and bathe the lingam.\textsuperscript{75}

She was one of the numerous sacrificial goats who were sacrificed on the altar of child marriage, a concept which was common in India till 1970’s. In spite of trust into the marriage, Mayamma continued to lead the life of the dutiful wife. Her husband was a rake, a wretched fellow. She also ignored the catastrophe, her marriage, which imposed experience on her childhood. She is exploited bestially by her husband and accepted it as her lot. She stays in her fast as a means of purification. She executes all kinds of puja and rituals to pacify almost all local deities and gods. In mood of despair, she meets secretly the priest of Kali and promised him a goat as an offering to the worship he would perform for her well-being and fertility.

After ten years of prayer and penitence, Mayamma’s son is born on an auspicious day Diwali. After eight years of her son’s birth, when Mayamma’s husband disappears with all the money, her mother-in-law blames her horoscope of bringing bad luck and curse to her family. Mayamma’s life was filled with the joy of motherhood and the curse of barrenness was lifted from her life. But her son spoiled at a very early age. At fourteen, he threatened to beat his mother and sold her last pair of bangles.

Hariharan presents the pathetic condition of woman either as a mother or wife. Mayamma’s son dies due to high fever. The son, who was born after a long prayer and sacrifices, tortured her when alive and till died, he left her mother all alone to face the problems of her old age. Hariharan also mocks at the superstitious fears and beliefs of people in India through the priest’s comments about Mayamma:

\textit{All the signs of luck are here, she will be welcomed in any house with a son like a young god.}\textsuperscript{76}

But in reality, there is nothing more than suffering-
When she cleared out whatever was left in the house- rags, remnants of a past she did not need to begin the flood of remembering- she found the horoscope with all the signs of luck on it, whole and intact. She burnt it along with the body of her son, and left the village by the first bus, next morning.77

Through the stories of herself Mayamma makes Devi aware of the real difficulties of life. Devi does not get any love and affection from her mother as she sees her friends’s mothers, loving and kissing their daughters.

The only time I remember her touching me was when I lay half-conscious in a fever and I felt a cool, dry hand lightly stroke my face.78

Sita is a very strict and disciplined mother and woman. She never allows her daughter Devi to mix up with her friends. Devi always misses her father very much because he was very lovable, gentle and kindhearted. She takes care of her house and the garden very sincerely. When she comes to India after her husband’s death, people come to console her, because they expect a crying and mourning widow. But she is totally different to their expectations. She is too confidant and strong to allow anyone to sympathise her. The following lines express her strong will power-

Earlier, at the airport, she had spied the band of mourners waiting to receive her. Her husband’s family of course, came with their breast beating grief and tearful promises of keeping away the loneliness of widowhood. She patted her wind-blown hair into place, drew her gold-worked pallav closely about her shoulders and walked towards them. A smile stretched her thin, finely curved lips as she greeted them, and asked after each one’s new grandchild, the youngest son’s medical seat, the third daughter’s marriage prospects.79

Hariharan presents the predicament of a sensitive woman character in her novel, who finds it is very difficult to adjust in this present mechanical and urbanized set up. A careful study of the novelist's language reveals the meaningful relation between the protagonist’s psychic condition and the deeds which is done by her. In spite of the continuously being in
touch to the mythical stories told by her grandmother from childhood, and father-in-law and the real stories of Sita, Uma, Gauri and Mayamma does not help her to be a submissive wife to Mahesh. Like her, her mother-in-law also revolted by leaving the family in search of God, Devi’s elopement with Gopal is also a revolt against her husband Mahesh, who merely wants her to keep waiting for his arrival as a submissive wife. Her longing to bear children to break the monotony, the loneliness and the meaninglessness of life is not fulfilled. Finally, in a fit to give a source to her solitary life, to put an end to her monotony, she chooses to elope with Gopal. She trusts to find comfort in Gopal’s company, but in futile. So, she again goes alone in search of her identity.

There is also the classification of people on the base of castes is found in India. People of upper caste maintain distance with the people of lower castes. Baba is pride to be a Brahmin and wants that Devi should also feel the same. Sita is also very much conscious not to be polluted by other castes. Mostly she inquires Devi of the caste of her friends. Devi reminds what her mother wanted to ask indirectly:

‘Are they Brahmin? Are kitchens spotless? And do they belong to our heirloom filled, pure casted aristocracy?’

Baba suggests Devi about the superiority of Brahmin in the country. Baba, father-in-law of Devi tells her,

‘wherever you are, remember you are a Brahmin. You may not know it, but underneath that skin flows a fine-veined river of pure blood, the legacy of centuries of learning.’

When we see very intimately at the women novelists of Indian English fiction we see that mostly all women novelists write from their own experiences of life; almost all of them end up in one or other form of feminism. Some of the novelists give us their autobiographical description and all virtually identify with their female characters. The main purpose of this chapter is to research on female awareness through the novels of Arundhati Roy, Manju Kapur and Githa Hariharan so taking in account the complexities of life, different histories, culture and different values, the woman’s curies, in spite of the basic solidarity, needs to be tackled in relation to socio-cultural situation. Women under
patriarchal pressure and control are subjected to, too, much more bunts and social banishment. The struggle under oppressive mechanism of closed society is very much reflected in their writings. We see a new women in their novels who are not puppets in hands of others, but someone who try to assert and carve their own identity in this all man’s world. Their writings reflect the experience of women in real world who is not a perfect one. They write about personal experiences, problems, spaces and identity crises. They write what today’s women can easily relate to and can see her novels as an extension of their own life. They deals with intermingling spaces of traditional and modernist ethos, women trying to grapple with it to find their identity. Their writings firmly argue for the values like freedom of thought and expression, liberation from oppression and marginalization, and equality as a quest for dignity are the primary requirement of their imagination and creativity. The portrayal of woman in Indian English fiction is the silent sufferer and up holder of the tradition and traditional values of family and society. Manju Kapur's novels create a space where the issue of woman and modernity can be discussed openly. But still there is angst that prevails throughout the novels regarding social and gender construct that arise as result of modernity. Her writing in 1998, Manju Kapur, in her novels presents women who try to establish their own identity. The women of India have indeed achieved their success in half a century of Independence, but if we talk about true independence of female, much remains to be done. The fight for autonomy remains unfinished combat in her quest for identity.

It’s difficult to separate the woman and the writer and the citizen in you. Personally, it was very important for me to challenge this: imagine being told you are not the “natural” guardian of the children you have borne - and that too in a society that places such a high premium on motherhood! But the important thing to remember is that all the personal laws in India are anti-women, anti-lower castes, anti anyone who was marginal to the scheme of things when these traditional laws were formulated.82
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