CHAPTER V
A CONSUMMATION

Having discussed all the selected women with virtuous and/or vicious characters from the Bible and Indian fiction, it is time to come to the clear perception about how these women are branded as virtuous or vicious basing on the traits, positive outnumbering the negative or vice versa.

As such, certain expressions like virtuous, vicious, submission, service, sanctity, adultery, etc., are to be understood from different, if not totally diverse, standpoint because the study discusses women characters in Indian fiction and makes an attempt to juxtapose the traits with the values that are imbibed from the biblical viewpoint. In spite of the fact that some of these expressions are refined and redefined in the modern scenario, the underlying values attached to these traits are neither undermined nor distorted. However, the same expressions, when viewed from the biblical perception are represented without any distortion, only with the intention of carrying the attached values in such expressions during the biblical times.

As such, a modest attempt has been made to trace the elements of virtuous or vicious traits of the biblical women in the modern fiction, though it is in a way, deviating from the path of the moods or
modes of the present society, where this work may appear as if done out of the way, not pleasing certain accepted modern norms. Once again, it is humbly and clearly stated that the manner with which the distinction is made between the virtuous and vicious is solely by taking into consideration the majority of characteristic qualities outnumbering the other qualities.

But in the modern society it is difficult to draw a line between the virtue and the vice unlike the biblical times, wherein the set of rules and the imposed punishment for violation of principles was beyond present perception. Crystal clear demarcations were drawn between good and bad in the biblical times and switching over from one element to the other was viewed seriously and punishments for such sinning were specified. The people living in the modern society may not consider it wrong to do certain things which were measured erroneous by the conventional olden days. The terms are furnished or provided with a divergent definition by diluting the attributed values for the convenience of the people suitable for living in the modern times.

Though life and society are dynamic, certain values are universal and eternal. The variation in contexts, age, milieu and culture does not deter a meaningful critique. The study, while juxtaposing the virtuous women characters from the Bible and Indian fiction, reveals the fact that the values embedded in the women characters of biblical times, are also very much prevalent in the present society,
wherein the women characters in the selected fictional works nurture similar virtuous traits and values. This, in a way, signals hope, a hope to return to the meaningful world of rich tradition where woman is perfect by all means. These virtuous women by donning their roles successfully build their families and lead a harmonious conjugal life. But as the coin holds two faces, these women may also possess certain evil traits, but their virtuous traits outnumber their bad characters resulting in matrimonial harmony are viewed as ‘virtuous’ women.

But the recognized notion is that good and evil coexist in any age, and there is a perpetual struggle between them. The way of the world is that the quantum of viciousness is, in a way, more than goodness. The juxtaposition of the vicious characters from the Bible and fiction is an arduous exercise. It vindicates the stand that the iota of evil committed by women then and now varies, but the decline of their lives is due to failure to draw a line between virtue and vice. The study of these vicious women discloses the reality that the evil traits exhibited by the women of the Bible, which caused failures in their marital relationships, are also prevailing in the modern scenario wherein the vicious traits in these characters also resulted in breaking their marriages and bring calamities in their conjugal and domestic lives. The lives of the vice also teach and preach not to embrace evil. These vicious women, failures in their conjugal relationships, teach what women are not supposed to do in
their marriage and how to confront the challenging situations of life, in order to avoid the tragic and catastrophic mistakes. Obversely, the women who display certain virtuous traits but whose vicious traits outnumber their good characters resulting in matrimonial disharmony, are considered as ‘vicious’.

These women chosen for study may not be broadly stamped as ‘virtuous’ or ‘vicious’ as the intention of the study is not to blame or appraise any woman with good or bad qualities but to demonstrate that the qualities, negative or positive, are also cherished by the women even in the modern times. The ultimate theory imposed is, those qualities which were considered virtuous in biblical times are also recognised as virtuous even in the present scenario. Once in a while, a deviation from the destined path is observed because of not exactly knowing where to draw a line between virtuous and vicious like olden times. These women are the by-products of unavoidable circumstances and as a consequence they come to terms to live and lead life on their own accord. But a close analysis of these factors in the light of biblical norms would give an impression that their temperaments and attitudes resulted in demolishing their domestic apparatus, precisely breaking the house on reasons whatsoever, is against the will of God. The very intention of the word vicious in the present thesis is attributed only for deviation from virtuous women characters. It is considered or viewed that no woman will intentionally come out of the framework of the family. But the study
is purely viewed from the biblical perception, as it is a study of woman from the biblical perspective.

Thus a discreet study of the women biographies from the Bible and the works selected reveals the manoeuvring and influential nature of women both for good and for evil, thus demanding her titles as home-maker or home-wrecker.

The sacred texts of almost all the religions teach some general principles like love, charity, integrity, chastity, morality, etc. India is a country where religion and God are given prominence. Given the rich spiritual and cultural background, religion plays a vital role in the personal lives of Indians. Religion has its own impact in systematizing the physical, social and spiritual lives of individuals. But in spite of the destined rules and principles of religion, people stray away from the intended path largely owing to carnal desires and discontentment without any qualm.

In the modern scenario of advancement of technology, exotic lifestyle, immense promiscuity, deterioration of moralistic outlook, spiritual malnourishment, attitudinal incompatibility, temperamental problems, etc., normally it is considered to be highly difficult for the married couples to live loyal and committed to the vows of wedding. Departure from desired spiritual ways paved the way for various social and familial vices, in a way, leading to the
continuous increased rate of divorce, dysfunctional families and wrecked families. An analysis of the selected fictional works reveals the same.

In Kamala Markandaya’s novels, human, moral and spiritual values are the coral issues. Being a woman novelist, she has successfully portrayed her conceptions through her women characters. It is through her women protagonists, she passionately presents the concept of the virtuous and morally finer women to maintain the serenity and upholding the sanctity of the family. Through these women characters, Markandaya presents their efforts to cope with the challenges in order to protect the domestic harmony and personal dignity.

Basically Markandaya’s women characters in the selected novels are good and traditional with all morally good qualities. In *A Silence of Desire*, Sarojini is a traditional wife, who never neglects her role as a wife and mother and strives hard to carry on her responsibilities, in spite of her husband’s indifference to her feelings and distress. Though suffering from a serious ailment she does not reveal it to her husband and, with her staunch faith in divine healing visits Swamy without the knowledge of her husband, which creates a wide gulf in their conjugal relationship. But with her chaste life and morally strong character, she wins the heart of her husband and finally undergoes operation as per the wish of her husband and the
Thus with her devotion and virtuous characteristics like the virtuous women of the Bible, Sarojini becomes successful in donning her role as a dutiful wife and responsible mother. Her character can be compared to Hannah and Elisabeth in her religious and spiritual fervour and belief in the divine power, to Proverbs 31 Woman in her efficient management of finances in order to multiply and safeguard, taking care of the needs of the family, extending her hand to the poor and the needy, being faithful to her husband and in safeguarding her chastity with her strong character emanated from her spiritual strength. Like the Holy Spirit of the family, she comforts, teaches and soothes her husband. Thus with all her virtuous traits, she builds her family like the virtuous women of the Bible and leads a happy, comfortable and blissful life. As Sarojini possesses all these virtuous traits, which outnumber her few negative traits, she can be branded as a virtuous woman.

In A Handful of Rice, Nalini is also a traditional wife who, with her chastity and strength of character, conquers the heart of her errant husband, Ravi. When her husband gets lured by the attractions and the glamour of the city life and becomes a prey to the vices, it is Nalini who brings him out of the mire of the deep pit of follies and transforms his life. Ravi’s balance of mind is restored by
Nalini when he is carried away by the amoral world of Damodar. With the guidance of his wife only, he takes over the craft of her father-in-law and takes care of the family of his in-laws. Without Nalini, Ravi feels that his life is incomplete. For each step of his life he depends on the guidance of his wife. Under the eye of his wife he feels peaceful and safe. Even in the critical hours of his life he depends on this sheet anchor. It is she who wards off all the germs of vices from his heart and makes him a healthy being.

Thus Nalini, with her belief in the traditional norms and virtuous traits successfully dons her assigned role as a wife in building her family. Nalini can be compared to Ruth and Proverbs 31 Woman in her diligent work and humility and acting as a good helpmeet in bringing change in her husband with her wise, smooth and soothing words. In her virtue of contentment, sense of adjustment and simplicity she can be equalised with Hannah and Elisabeth of the Bible. She executes her role in her family as the Holy Spirit of the family by comforting and encouraging her husband in times of trouble. Thus with all these virtuous traits of the women of the Bible, she also builds her home successfully by bringing her wayward husband to the right path. With all these virtuous traits outnumbering her few negative traits, Nalini can be branded as a virtuous woman.
A prudent examination of Prawer Jhabvala’s selected novels makes clear that the women characters are given important roles in her novels. The stories weave around these female sketches. Man-woman relationship is central to her creative concerns. She endows them with required traits enabling them to maintain a tuneful relationship with their husbands in the patriarchal set up. Indian family life is realistically presented by Jhabvala in her novels.

In *The Householder*, Indu is a woman who gives value to traditional norms. With her gentleness, she brings a change in her husband’s attitude towards her. By partaking in her husband’s worry she proves herself as a true better half and helpmeet for him. In times of trouble, she exhibits her patience like the biblical women and becomes a victorious wife. In his disappointment, she becomes her pacifier and comforter. She makes him realise that the happy adjustment in conjugal life is possible only through mutual affection and understanding.

Thus Indu’s life is an ideal example of revealing the truth that a wife’s presence alone gives fullness to a man. She builds her family successfully with her chastity and strength of character. With her good traits, she can be compared to Proverbs 31 Woman, Ruth, Hannah and Elisabeth. She is like Proverbs 31 Woman, in giving good suggestions and partaking in finances, and like Elizabeth, in enduring suffering silently without confrontation, and like the Holy
Spirit of the family she motivates and encourages her husband to face the challenges of life and in times of trouble comforts and pacifies him. She can also be compared to Hannah, in keeping herself patient and not complaining against her mother-in-law. With all these virtuous traits of the women of the Bible and being successful in building her family, Indu can be stamped as a virtuous woman.

In *Esmond in India*, Indira gives value to Indian customs and traditions and so leads a happy and comfortable life with her husband, though he is good only to his parents and not to her. She develops a good rapport with her in-laws by giving them preference and wins the hearts of all the members of her family with her compliance. With her submissiveness and chastity she proves herself as an excellent wife to her husband. With her support Amrit is elevated in his workplace and occupies higher positions. Thus Indira is completely successful in her family set up by playing her role as a winning wife and daughter-in-law.

Thus Indira’s life reveals the truth that submissiveness, patience and chastity are essential for a successful married life. Indira can be compared to Ruth in maintaining good and cordial relationship with her parents- in-law, in seeking her mother-in-law’s counsel even in trivial issues, in displaying her humble obedience to her husband as well as parents-in-law and in winning the heart of her husband. In
exhibiting patience and not involving herself in confrontation, she can be compared to Hannah and Elisabeth, and in managing finances she is like Proverbs 31 Woman. With all these virtuous traits, Indira becomes successful in making her family a green Pasteur by donning her role winningly and as such stamped as ‘virtuous’ woman.

Arundhati Roy’s novel *The God of Small Things* discloses that the problem of divorce existing in the present scenario is the result of marital discord which emanates from the lack of harmony and adjustment, and failure of observance of established family customs, traditions and moral values by both the husband and the wife. The women characters portrayed grapple with problems and puzzles of life and are repeatedly defeated or derailed by them. They are solely responsible for their development of character. Marriage, divorce and extra marital affairs are thematic concerns in her novels.

Ammu in *The God of Small Things* becomes the root cause of ruin of her own life and family. She tries to safeguard her chastity. But later, not respecting the societal norms, she develops an illicit relationship with Velutha. She finds love and happiness in his arms. Thus she is not hesitant to go against the social and moral codes instituted by the religion and society. She displays no commitment for the vows of wedding. Her flirting is the result of her indifference for not valuing the traditions or religious texts.
Thus she is not a good home-maker and failed in her responsibility as a wife and mother. She can be compared to Eve in her disobedience to her parents, marrying without her parents’ concern, and finally becoming a cause for the destruction of her family. She can be equalised with Jezebel with her loose morals in initiating an illegal relationship with Velutha. She would have streamlined her relationship by marrying him instead of going for an illicit relationship. If only she had taken into account the societal and moral norms and corrected her mistakes she would have been considered as virtuous. Though Ammu displays certain virtues like patience, endurance and forgiveness, strength of character (in the early days of her married life), she is not considered virtuous owing to her relation against the moral norms of the society and the Bible. Thus, in spite of attributing a lot of sympathy towards her, she is considered to be a vicious woman with her setbacks and failures.

A discreet analysis of Shobha De’s novels reveals that she projects the image of the changing traditional society. Her novels are considered to be womanly as they reflect the world of women than of men. In the advanced civilized life the changing moral values of people reaching heights are specified with unrestrained depiction in the novels of De. Her female characters are projected as convention-bashing new women subverting the male chauvinism and portrayed on par with male characters striving for independence in all walks of life.
In *Socialite Evenings*, Karuna without qualm goes against the established social and moral codes. The choice of her career creates havoc in her family as it is against the wish of her parents. She craves for uncontrolled freedom and takes individual decisions. Even after marriage her attitude is not changed. She flirts with her husband’s friend and divorces her husband for the sake of unrestrained life. She has no respect for the marital bond.

Thus Karuna is a failure in her marriage. As she has no commitment for the family and sanctity of the bond of marriage, she breaks her marital bond and leads single life. She is not a good home-maker as she fails in her responsibility as a wife and daughter-in-law. With her discontentment, and disobedience in taking decisions on her own, she can be compared to Eve, and with her desire to crave for things she does not possess and deceiving nature, she can also be compared to Sapphira. By her indiscipline, opting for a career against her parents, and without morals developing an illicit relationship with her husband’s friend, she displays her unconventional attitude. With her loose morals she can be equalised with Jezebel. If only she had realised her mistake and rectified her drawbacks she would have been considered as a virtuous woman, but instead there is no regret in her life for what she had done. As such she can be branded as a vicious woman.
The other character Anjali in Socialte Evenings, also displays almost similar characteristic traits of Karuna. Anjali doesn’t value marriage as a holy relation. Marriage is for the sake of status and to fulfil her desires. Her flirting is the result of disregard for established value systems. Thus she proves to be a failure and like the foolish woman she pulls her own house down.

With her disobedience and taking decisions on her own against the wish of her parents, Anjali can be compared to Eve. She can also be compared to Jezebel with her loose morals and showing no respect for religious or sacred texts. If only Anjali had turned away from her evil ways of flirting she would have been considered as a good woman. But as she is also a failure in her role as a wife and mother owing to her evil traits and as the vicious traits outnumber the virtuous ones, she can be considered as vicious. Hence with their disobedience and loose moral characters both Karuna and Anjali display similar characteristic traits of the vicious women of the Bible and so become failures in their conjugal relationships.

In Second Thoughts, Maya, does not care for traditional or moral values. She is not rated as a reliable and trustworthy wife because she never learns to deal with responsibilities at home. She craves for sexual pleasure outside marriage. She enjoys the company of Nikhil but cleverly hides the affair from her husband. As Eve enjoys the forbidden fruit she enjoys the forbidden fruit of promiscuity with
Nikhil. Possessing the traits of unsuccessful women of the Bible, Maya acts against the established moral and social standards and proves herself to be a failure in her chastity and in her conjugal relationship.

Thus Maya with her setbacks, not living up to the expectations of her husband, can be compared to Eve possessing certain traits like discontentment and nurturing doubt in heart, displaying disobedience to go after Nikhil even when her marriage is intact. With her loose morals she can be compared to Jezebel. If only she had developed certain traits of Ruth or Hannah or Elizabeth and had overcome the enticement of Nikhil, She would have been considered as a virtuous woman. But as she is a failure in her role with her sexual promiscuity, she is considered to be a vicious woman.

The outlines of the plots display the truth that women are the violators of the age old traditional morality prevalent in India. Extra-marital affairs disrupt marital life and results in breaking the marital bond. No law of land prescribes religion, personal ethics and domestic values. It can be inferred that the exposure /awareness of ethical principles and fundamental spiritual aspects would not result in personal degradation. The individuals are no doubt entitled to mould their lives on their own principles but what matters is the outcome, success or failure in confronting real life situations. The so-called liberation sought by the women should reform their lives
but in most of the cases (as far the novels selected for study are concerned) deterioration is noticed. The views held in this work are purely on the basis of biblical ideologies and no overgeneralisations and wild judgements are attempted.

A cursory examination of the virtuous biblical characters divulges that when confronted with problems of life, they faced them with challenge and came out with iridescent colours with their devotion and dedication to God and their husbands. Ruth’s problem was, she was a widow yet to take care of her mother-in-law, Elizabeth’s problem was her barrenness and Hannah’s problem was not only barrenness but to bear the cruel and scurrilous tongue of Peninnah. But by trusting the God of Israel, Ruth fulfilled her responsibilities as a daughter-in-law, and by enduring the suffering silently and trusting in the divine power of God and His blessings Elisabeth and Hannah could overcome their troubles.

Like the women of the Bible, even Sarojini, Nalini, Indira and Indu also face problems and ultimately come out successfully. For Sarojini, her ailment is a cause of rift between her husband and herself. For Nalini, financial insecurity and the errant life of her husband become problems. Indira is confronted by her husband’s neglected priorities. For Indu, her husband’s patriarchal attitude and meagre income to meet the requirements of the family are the problems.
All the women took some decisions in their problems. Ruth took a decision to go along with her mother-in-law to take care of her. Hannah took a decision not to retaliate the tongue of Peninnah but exhibit patience and also decided to give her son to the service of God if she was blessed with one. Elisabeth’s decision was to walk in all commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. All the three women with their spiritual strength and chaste character and dependence on God could execute their decisions winningly.

Sarojini, Nalini, Indira and Indu also take decisions in their problems. Sarojini decides to depend on the grace of God for healing and visit Swamy regularly, Nalini decides to be content with her financial position and to mould her errant husband towards good, Indira makes a decision to be content and happy with her husband's attitudes not neglecting her responsibilities and Indu makes her mind up to be happy with her subordinate position and to get adjust herself with the situations.

Sarojini gets cured of her disease by undergoing operation as per the suggestions of the Swamy and makes her husband realise the values of the traditions. Nalini, with her wise words brings a change in her husband and moulds his wayward life. Indira, by maintaining a good and cordial relationship with her parents-in-law and her husband, proves her mettle and builds her house successfully. Indu maintains a good relation with her husband and gains the heart of
her husband and thus brings a change in his attitude towards her. Consequently she makes him realise that the happy adjustment in conjugal life is possible only through mutual affection and understanding.

The positive influence and blessing of these virtuous mothers on their children is also apparently visible in the selected characters. As Ruth was the godly courageous and sacrificial woman, she gave birth to Obed who became the grand father of King David, a man after God’s own heart, in whose genealogy Jesus Christ was born. In the hard times when Israel lapsed to follow the high spiritual and moral standards, Hannah exhibited her patience and holiness diligently by following God devoutly. She gave birth to Samuel, who grew up and became the greatest prophet of Israel. Elisabeth’s influence was also apparent on her son. As she was a pious and faithful devotee of God, she gave birth to John the Baptist, who was the forerunner of Jesus Christ. The holy mother gave birth to holy son.

On the other hand the vicious characters when grappled with problems of life, they reacted in a different way and the result was destruction to their families. Eve’s source of problem was Satan. Jezebel’s problem was to satisfy the desire of her husband, because she had to follow evil means to get the vineyard of Naboth. And for Sapphira, the problem was her conflict between her worldly desire
and spiritual commitment. As they did not trust in the divine power of God because of their vicious qualities, Eve, Jezebel and Sapphira brought curse instead of blessing for themselves and their families.

Like the women of the Bible, even Ammu, Karuna, Anjali and Maya also grapple with problems but they do not come out successfully but become victims of failure. For Ammu, the problem is to safeguard her chastity. For Karuna, Satan like tempting source is Krish, her husband’s friend. For Anjali, her own flirting nature is her problem. For Maya, the satanic figure who creates problem to her is Nikhil, who entices her for illicit relation.

Eve succumbs to the verbal jugglery of Satan and ate the fruit of the forbidden tree. Jezebel took a decision to plot a treacherous plan in order to confiscate Naboth’s vineyard. Sapphira takes a decision to give her consent to her husband to keep back part of certain amount of money and deceive the men of God. All the three women took resolutions which ultimately brought calamity on their families because of their wrong choices, which were not constructive but destructive. In all the narratives, the unsuccessful role of wife is apparently visible by the acts of disobedience, destructiveness and deceitfulness.

Ammu, Karuna, Anjali and Maya also come to decisions when they confront with problems. Ammu takes a decision to divorce her husband as he is trying to entice her to go along with his master in
order not to defile her chastity but later when she decides to go with Velutha, she commits the same mistake as she moves with him without marrying him. Karuna decides to flirt with Krish and divorces her husband to lead an unrestrained life. Anjali’s decision is to flirt freely to satisfy her sexual desires. Finally Maya also makes a decision to yield herself to the temptation of Nikhil and continues her illegal contacts. All these women with no respect for the sanctity of the marital bond act with loose morals.

Ammu takes decisions on her own, like marrying without parents consent, when faced a problem sues divorce from him, and she develops an illicit relationship with Velutha, thwarting the ethical boundaries, which prove to be disastrous for herself and her family. Karuna without contentment, showing disobedience to her parents, lending no attention to their counsel opt for a career in modelling and without any restraint, she initiates an illegal affair with Krish even when her marriage is intact. Anjali, morally weak, displays recklessness in sexual behaviour, disrespects values, traditions and religious texts, divorces her husband and flirts with a chain of lovers. She becomes a rolling stone defying the traditional norms and customs and enjoys unrestrained freedom and acts independently. Maya, with her disobedience and discontentment aspires for freedom and falls for Nikhil. By initiating an illegal affair she looses her chastity for which she doesn’t have any value. Thus when these women face some challenging situations, they never
display patience and hope like Saroja, Nalini, Indu and Indira but fallen victims of evil deeds. As these women do not have spiritual strength, they do not have the strength of character. They display loose morals without any commitment for the wedding vows. Marriage is for convenience and social status. Marriage is for the sake of affluence and position.

The negative and spoiling influence of these mothers is also candid in the characters chosen for study. Eve’s disobedience brought curse on her children instead of blessing. She had lost both of their sons on the same day, one was killed and the other was cursed to be a vagabond. Because of the evil and dangerous plot of Jezebel, God’s curse fell upon Ahab and his family. Ahab was killed in a war. After that on the same day Jezebel was killed and even her sons. The divorced parents will have their toll on their children. Anjali’s evil doings have their toll on her daughter who becomes a drug addict. Ammu’s influence is clearly observed. Estha occupies very little space in the world. Slowly, over the years, Estha withdraws from the world. As for Rahel, she marries but hers is also a failure and so divorces him and returns to her native place.

Thus on reasons whatsoever, the marriages are rocked and posing a serious threat to the very institution. Precisely this is against divine will and policy. So, one has to turn to religion to solve the problems of life. Almost all the religions provide a sense of direction for a meaningful life and prescribe the ways and means of
pious living. The Holy Bible is no exception as it conspicuously presents a moral code for all the facets of life.

Thus an analysis of the virtuous women of the Bible is an unavoidable requirement. Pondering on the lives of the virtuous and successful women of the Bible specifies that God is not indifferent to the struggle or pain or suffering of the individuals. He is not uncaring or silent to the petitions of them but operating in every circumstance of their lives to bring His good and valuable plan for completion. His working conditions are beyond the perception of the human beings and His actions do not fit in man’s time limits. But in the post modern era and culture the messages prevalent are to take control of other’s lives and fulfilment of aspirations, goals and desires through personal determined efforts. All these women in His Word stand as examples to divulge the care and concern that the Almighty demonstrated even for the smaller details for those who are the weak and needy facing hardships but faithful to Him.

Taking realistic lessons - from the lives of the virtuous women in building up the families and safeguarding from evil - certainly aid women to keep their heads above water in the darkest circumstances of life. Every present day woman will certainly hit upon something in the lives selected for study. The significance of spiritual discipline in exercising faith and the faithfulness of God in honouring such trust need not be accentuated.
All these women are included in the Holy Writ and brought to the
spot light because of their special and seminal place in the plan and
purpose of God. Their stories are recorded and immortalized in His
Word to teach the women of the present day, truths about His plans,
purpose for a victorious and successful married life. The Scriptures
also blush to show a completely unvarnished picture of humanity
with their drawbacks and short comings. Thus the Bible describes
women as they were in brutally honest and candid terms. In spite of
their fiascos they instruct lessons with their experiences and lives.

The documented record of all the biblical biographies lived and
died never knowing the eternal significance of their lives. But their
lives help women to find inspiration and instruction from them to
follow their footsteps to face the challenges of the day. About these
pivotal biblical figures Lahaye, a best selling author and Janice, a
University Professor remark in their book entitled *The Strength of a
Godly Woman*:

The biblical characters were authentic human beings – people
like us...we see in them our own needs, fears, passions, hopes
and hurts; until we see them as real flesh-and-blood persons
who bled and wept just as we bleed and weep. Then, and only
then, can we find inspiration from their pain, troubles, and
uncertainties...we find the reassurance that the narrative of our own lives has coherence beyond our comprehension.¹

All through history, the undeniable truth is that, women have been facing oppression and subjugation in the patriarchal system of male dominance. But the same history is replete with examples of women who have been exerting their impact and influence on the world around them. So Lahaye expresses about the power of a woman saying:

Never underestimate the power of a woman and the hand that rocks the cradle rules the world.²

The idea of the powerful woman is the idea invented by the feminists but the Bible in fact gave the concept long before. The biblical characters exemplified God’s definition and designation of a woman’s true strength and power. Women’s liberation in reality is proclaimed pertinently in the New Testament in the Epistle to Galatians where in Apostle Paul stresses on the equality of humankind:

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. (Galatians 3:28)
The Bible has given an elevated and responsible position to women per se God’s word preserved the stories of women highlighting their successes as well as failures:

When God wrote His history book, women were far more than footnotes! The lives they lead, mistakes and all are central to ‘The Story’.

Thus the covetous identity is given to women by the Holy Bible hundreds of years ago. An understanding of the biblical women will stimulate the women today to identify with their circumstances, tremendous challenges and to develop those qualities.

The qualities which are mined out from a careful investigation and examination of the women characters can be summarised as, “Submitting to the headship of the husband, Supporting the husband, Serving husband, Sweetening the marriage, Sanctifying the marriage, Separating evil from marriage and Strengthening the commitment”.

Submission to the headship of the husband is a biblical perception since it is advocated by Apostle Paul to the church in Ephesus saying:

Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God. Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.
For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. (Ephesians 5:21-24)

The couples in the present day world consider that they can get along by treading on their chosen path instead of following God’s destined pathway or principle of marriage. As man’s chosen path has effected in dereliction he is reaping the fruit of negative consequences.

All the biblical notions do not advocate the intellectual inferiority of women but her indispensable feminine qualities preclude her being endowed with headship. There is no servitude or subjugation in this submission but it embodies willingness and not sufferance. The submission is for blessing and shielding but not for bondage or burden. As Manu advocates the law of protection and care of a woman, The Bible also explicates the same notion in the book of Numbers, Chapter 30 as:

God’s ultimate plan is for His female creation to be under protection throughout their entire lives – under their father’s protection as a single person and then under their husband’s protection when they marry. 

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Everywhere it is observed that women crave for independence and liberty which are the terms or principles “related to Satan’s kingdom. Likewise Submission is not the principle of Satan’s kingdom but God’s Kingdom”. Submission brings grace to the family but independence brings destruction. Submission is not something which will show a failing or weakness but the power for victory. The best example is served by Jesus Christ himself who displayed obedience to the perfect will of His Father by shedding His blood on the cross and bringing redemption for the people of the world.

Likewise a wife should extend her support and cooperation to her husband. Supporting the husband in a family unit is achievable only after realizing the roles in a family which is the fundamental principle of a successful marriage. It is correctly observed by Campbell:

God ordained the husband to be the Provider, the Protector and the Priest of the home. He created the woman to be the Nurturer, the Nourisher and the Nest builder. The husband is the Breadwinner; the wife is the Bread baker! The husband is the King; the wife is the Queen.

Wife, not competing for husband’s role, should encourage him to affirm his role as a husband, in order to be in the divine order of God. As the husband and the wife together assume the role of two
Adams instead of Adam and Eve by adopting humanistic stance there appears to be a vast increase in the disharmony between the couples, leading to the mounting of divorce rate. Rejection of God’s plan and purpose of marriage leads to problems and collapse. Stella Dhinakaran, an international Preacher, pertinently articulates the same notion:

In these modern days, instead of building up the home, women seem to be destroying families. Everywhere we find people are confronted with divisions and problems.  

The secret of a successful marriage is selflessness and serving. **Serving husband** is the outcome of love towards him. A woman should take pleasure in serving but not with burden. The basic example is shown by Jesus Christ himself by his selflessness and serving the disciples as mentioned in the Bible, “Jesus did not come to be served but to serve.” (Phil 2:68) A home, like a refuge, ought to provide peacefulness for the husband as well as the members of the family.

The other challenge extended to a wife is **sweetening the marriage**. A wife should sweeten the marriage by bringing into play the pleasant words, supportive words and encouraging words, which will never let down victory in a marriage. As God speaks to the Church, His espoused wife in Song of Solomon:
Thy lips, O my spouse, drop as the honeycomb: honey and milk are under thy tongue; and the smell of thy garments is like the smell of Lebanon. (Song of Solomon 4:11)

Words have the power for good or bad, to kill the marriage relation or to keep the relation alive. As pertinently expressed by Nancy Campbell regarding the flavour that women display outside and inside a home:

People turn their best side out: they are delightful in company, but snarl at home. There they give vent to their dissatisfaction, their temper, their grouch. They are scent-bottles abroad, vinegar-bottles at home.⁹

As life is not a bed of roses, maintaining conjugal relationship is also not an easy task. But a wife should sanctify the marriage by taking the matters to God in prayer habitually, trusting in His divine power and might. The lives of the Biblical biographies, Ruth, Hannah and Elizabeth selected for the study unveil the truth that God is not indifferent to the sufferings and troubles of those who come to Him. Groaning and blaming is not the solution for the dissonance but hang on the primary source, God, for deliverance with a forgiving heart. By devotion towards God, keep away the evil words which are like little foxes that incessantly spoil the vine.
Marriage is not a licence to do kinky things. But learn to keep the marriage bed holy by separating evil from marriage. As Mathew Henry has explained the importance of keeping themselves holy:

Those who keep themselves pure in times of common impurity, God will keep safe in times of common calamity.  

As marriage is a covenant for life, strengthening the commitment to build a family acceptable to God and raise a godly seed is an obligation. Quitting the marriage relation is against the biblical concept of marriage but binding forever with commitment and love towards each other is the message of the Bible and the essential requisite of the present day. That’s why, about the interdependence of husband and wife, Zac Ponen, the author of “A Good foundation” appropriately states:

Eve could not do without Adam’s strength and Adam could not do without Eve’s tenderness…. Man is restless while he misses the rib that was taken out of his side, and woman is restless till she gets under the man’s arm from where she was taken. Such is the relationship that God desires should exist between a husband and a wife. 

As such a woman ought to be a crowning jewel on her husband’s head but not rottenness to his bones because the ultimate goal is
that both the husband and the wife should lead happy and blissful married life.

Shobha De also emphasizes on ‘3T’ theory for a successful marriage.

Couples need Time, Tolerance and Tenderness to make the relationship work. 12

All these qualities of sterling biblical characters will help sensitize women to the importance of identifying and adapting the qualities outlined in scripture for being a virtuous woman and not being a vicious woman. Following the guidelines documented in the Bible revealed through the selected women characters, relationships would be improved and marriages would be more successful.

Flanking with the Holy Bible, all the four novelists emphasize the role of “harmonious familial ties.”13 In the familial relationships some un-oiled cogs in the machine of family unit may disrupt the proper functioning of the relations. The fast developing cynical and careless attitude corrodes the basic foundations of marriage in the modern scenario. Certainly the views expressed serve as eye openers for women to follow the right and proper path to cherish the bonds of marriage in order to maintain the harmony in a family unit. As Waheed has succinctly pointed out:
...the woman’s heart is like a fruit which can only prosper in the warm sunshine of love and that love should be showered on the woman by the husband for a harmonious life making the home as paradise on earth.\textsuperscript{14}

Marital dissonance is definitely a reality, a painful disturbing fact of conjugal life, but its causes are rooted in the rigidity of male behaviour and consequently in the seemingly abnormal relations of women. Both men and women by changing the attitudes will have a blissful, delightful and peaceful married life.

Akin to the Biblical characters Eve, Jezebel and Sapphira who were disobedient, dangerous, and deceiving and destructive and were failures in their families owing to their vicious traits, Maya in \textit{Second Thoughts}, Karuna and Anjali in \textit{Socialite Evenings}, Ammu in \textit{The God of Small Things} also display some of the traits of these vicious women and they also become causes of failure in their families resulting in destruction to their lives and to their families. They face marital dissonance which is a painful and alarming fact of conjugal life. Where as Saroja in \textit{A Silence of Desire}, Nalini in \textit{A Handful of Rice}, Indira in \textit{Esmond in India}, Indu in \textit{The Householder} demonstrate the virtuous traits revealed in the biblical characters of Ruth, Proverbs 31 Woman, Hannah and Elisabeth and as such, like these biblical virtuous women they also become successful in their endeavours in donning their roles successfully as helpmeets and
mothers. Thus all the women chosen for study, have their own role in the family unit for good or bad which is authenticating the powerful responsibility of a woman in a family. Thus the fulfilment of the Proverb, “Every wise woman buildeth her house: but the foolish plucketh it down with her hands”. (Proverbs 14:1)

Thus the juxtaposition of the women characters from the Bible and selected fiction vindicates the stand that though the bit of evil committed in the present society may vary from the past, the decline of their lives is purely a failure in drawing a line between good and bad, what is moral and immoral. Thus in the deterioration of stress-torn, strife-ridden moralistic poverty-stricken modern society one has to turn to religion. The principles of marriage as an institution are embedded in all the religious scriptures. And the Bible has its own distinct place in laying down the norms for a delightful marital concord. Towards the end it is considered apt to conclude with the view of J.R. Miller who highlights the role of a woman in a successful marriage:

A true wife makes a man’s life nobler, stronger, grander, by the omnipotence of her love…. While she clings to him in holy confidence and loving dependence she brings out in him whatever is noblest and richest in his being…. She beautifies his life…. She clothes him with the gentler graces of refined and
cultured manhood.... she is really his queen, ruling his whole life and leading him onward and upward in every proper path.\textsuperscript{15}

The application of biblical ideologies to the selected fictional characters is undoubtedly a rewarding and meaningful exercise. Literature and the Bible are too humongous to be confined to a dissertation. It is hoped that an attempt to examine the virtuous and vicious characters in these domains will always bring newer insights that facilitate enriched thinking and understanding.
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