Chapter III

GODS, GRAVES AND GRANDMOTHER

_Gods, Graves And Grandmother_ (1992) is a touching novel by Namita Gokhale, who adopts the technique of narration in first person and plunges into the depth of poverty of female world. Gudiya arrives in Delhi with her old grandmother known as Ammi. As Ammi is afraid of the scandal and disgrace in small town, she plans to settle in Jhansi. But a practical beggar advises here to come to Delhi as one can hope for a bright future in this big city. This beggar Riyasuddin Rizvi was a gentleman and often made reference to his aristocratic past. He carried the photograph of a beautiful woman with a sad smile though he did not tell anything about her to Gudiya.

She wrote this novel in 1992 after having recovered from a serious illness. It is entirely different from her first novel _Paro: Dreams Of Passion_ and puzzled her due to unexpected reaction. Time changed but the basic themes remain the same. Like the heroin Gudiya Namita Gokhale accepts:

> When enough time passes, and the dust settles on those troubled memories, perhaps I shall be able to embellish them with a veil of fabulism and mystery. Rendering the past acceptable, if not accountable, is a talent I inherited from my Ammi.

It is easy to live in the present. Life ... has a
soothing sameness in its rhythm... Even Kalaki is
gone, but the end of the world is nowhere in
sight.¹

After the departure of her mother, Gudiya and her
grandmother felt themselves to be in the hands of fate. There was a
time when her grandmother led a life of luxury in a big Haveli with
twenty two servants. As ill luck would have it, time turned the
Tables and Ammi was reduced to nothing. However, she steals a
marble slab from the site of a building and establishes a sort of
temple with the help of five rounded river stones. It is an ordinary
shrine of God and a stainless steel thali is put with a few coins in
it. This temple is established beneath the holy Peepul tree with her
shaded little hut. Due to the superstitious nature of Hindus, the
people start coming here and offer prayers to Lord Shiva. Here
Namita Gokhale describes how religion is a business for the Pandits
and other tricky people.

While reading the first few chapters of this novel one feels as
if one is reading Bhabani Bhattacharya’s novel He Who Rides A
Tiger. There Kalo, a blacksmith from Jharna village establishes a
Shiva-Linga and earns money for himself and his daughter. He
succeeds in his mission as he wanted to take revenge from the
upper class people. As his business succeeds, a big temple is
constructed on that site and Kalo becomes Mangal Adhikari.
Similarly, the grandmother of Gudiya makes use of the magical
trick and proves her worth as a feminist as Gudiya remarks:
It was still a stranger to the paraphernalia of religion, brought up as I had been, ignorant of God or Divinity, and I puzzled to make sense of unfamiliar tableau as the flickering lamp cast new shadows on my grandmother’s trusted face (Gods 2-3).

Like Kalo, Gudiya’s grandmother does not know much about the fundamentals of Hinduism. She does not know the importance of various Vedic rites. She does not know what is right knowledge, right conduct and right philosophy. According to Hindu philosophy, an ascetic is above Kama, Krodha, Moha and Lobha and follows the policy of renunciation. He has studied The Ramayana, The Mahabharata and speaks fluently on various aspects of The Gita. He lives in the present and forgets his past. He lives for others and not for self-preservation. On the contrary, Gudiya’s grandmother:

Never well-versed in the higher tenets of Hinduism, knew enough about practical folklore to warn me about disembodied souls that flocked to the murmuring branches of the sacred tree, waiting only to pounce into the mouths of unwary travelers and take possession of them. She made me take a solemn oath never to yawn under the Peepul tree, or open my mouth in any way, without first snapping my fingers to scare away these phantoms (Gods 3).
Basically Ammi was a Muslim and does not take shelter in a mosque because women cannot earn any money there. Hindu spirits help the grandmother and Gudiya becomes familiar with them. There are no miracles under this Peepul tree and Gudiya admits:

It was the shrine beneath the Peepul tree that kept us fed and clothed, although we were of course not as rich as we had once been, very long ago. Money poured in: eight annas, five rupee coins, even the occasional fifty rupee note. The miracles were not yet manifest, but we were already rich beyond our wildest dreams. We had no neighbours to discredit us (Gods 4).

The tea-shop of Shambhu gets good business now. The sale of coconuts and marigold garlands goes up. Nobody knows that Gudiya’s grandmother is basically a Kothewali who had entertained the upper classes as a great singer. As Ammi’s younger brother was no good, he failed to redeem the family. Like Pip of Charles Dickens, Gudiya has dim memories of her childhood. She did not get the love of her mother for a long time as the latter eloped with Riyasuddin. As Riyasuddin was a married man, his wife tore the Burka of Gudiya’s mother. Gudiya’s mother lost every sympathy of Ammi. Quite often Gudiya remembers her mother but in vain. The grandmother believes what Riyasuddin said that “Allah gives, and Allah takes away” (Gods 10).
Sundar Pahalwan controlled the situation where Ammi established the shrine of Lord Shiva. He ordered Ammi to pay ten rupees a week if she wanted to run her business there. In case she does not accept this order, he suggested the girl (Gudiya) to beg on the cross roads. As the grandmother was tricky, she pretended to be a widow of a Brahmin priest and said:

Arre Rama, Rama, Rama ... seize our money, Pahalwanji, but spare our self-respect. I am the widow of a Brahmin, my husband was a priest, guard your tongue or else a virtuous woman's curses may follow you!(Gods 12).

Now the statue of Durga riding a tiger was installed there and was lit up by an electric bulb. As she was a perfect singer, her Bhajans appealed the devotees. Ammi told Gudiya:

... these religions, what should I tell you, they are a type of fashion. Bombay cut, Calcutta style, London look. In the old Havelies, the fashion was for Moghul beauties from Persia, from Samarkand. And so, being a fashionable lady, my mother switched to Burkas. Here, now, under this Peepul tree, perhaps this is better. In foreign countries, England, America, Christ is the fashion, so those Phirangi women, they wear skirts and even trousers. Don't trouble yourself about all this, or
your hair will begin to fall out like your mother's
(Gods 13).

Soon the temple became famous and Shambhu protected them. When the departmental chief reached there with a copy of the demolition order, his nose got burnt. Now Gudiya joined St. Jude's Academy for education. Like Kalo's daughter Chandra Lekha, she was good at Maths. Here Shambhu feels impressed with her new learning. Soon Ammi is accepted as a new Avatar. A lot of fruits and sweets are offered to Lord Shiva now.

Gudiya felt hurt as Ammi did not allow her to buy a doll. As many Janta flats were constructed near the shrine, the finances of the temple improved. A lot of clerks and their families visited the temple now. Unfortunately Shambhu started loving Saboo's wife Magoo. As a result the tension increased between Saboo and Shambhu. Grandmother talked of Maya and illusion and tried to console Saboo with the words: "... the world was just a dream within a dream" (Gods 18). Quite often Gudiya felt happy though she was tired:

I simply return to that time and moment, lying in my grandmother's lap, with the world just an illusion, something to be tolerated, something easy that passes like a hot June afternoon before the cool of midnight and the smells of fragrant night-flowers engulf and embrace us (Gods 18).
As time passes, Gudiya becomes conscious of her age and admits:

Even inside our room, I felt I was being observed from all sides by the enormous staring eyes of the gods and goddesses. I hated the sensation. Trembling with fear, I crept out of the room into the dark night. Stationing myself behind the Peepul tree, from which I could see Ammi’s huddled figure out of the corner of my eye, I settled down to my silent vigil (Gods 19).

Soon Shambhu had to pay a heavy price for his love and was murdered by Magoo’s husband. When Saboo was digging a grave, fate favoured Ammi:

Saboo was so involved in the burial that he did not even notice the gold. One-eyed Shambhu slumbered on, his eternal sleep not disturbed by the violent kick with which Magoo’s husband dispatched him to the grave. Grandmother was motionless as a little mongoose in that snake-infested dump. I knew that she had noticed me, that the eyes she possessed in the back of her head had already alerted her to my presence beneath the Peepul tree. As Saboo began shoveling the earth back over Shambhu, grandmother seized the moment and scurried forward to pick up the
glimmering gold coins that lay scattered around her feet (Gods 20).

As grandmother was practical in her life, she brought the treasure of thirty-two gold sovereigns to her hut. Allah had helped her with gold Asharfees from Emperor Jehangir’s time. One finds the mixture of the probable and the improbable elements in this novel. Quite often Gudiya sees the ghost (glimpse) of Shambhu and becomes hopeless:

High on the upper branches I could glimpse Shambhu and Magoo, naked, hidden by the leaves, leering at me as they performed obscene and unspeakable acts. I tried to close my eyes, but they were closed already and I could not shut out the vision. And then again, in those branches, suspended against gravity, I saw my sad beautiful mother, and she too was naked and she too was enjoined in the unspeakable act with Riyasuddin the beggar (Gods 21).

Like the orphans of Dickens, Gudiya admits:

Yet so much had happened to me in my short life that I simply did not respond to grandmother’s arrest or her subsequent release and vindication. Fear, sorrow, surprise or any kind of reaction completely failed me. Even memory abandoned me,
and it is only from hearsay that I can patch together an account of what happened (Gods 23).

Gudiya knows that her grandmother knows the skill of survival. She was never afraid of Sundar Pahalwan. As Ammi is arrested due to the doubts, Gudiya felt helpless and admits:

I can never forget the look she gave me as she left, the stubborn resistance to the world’s outrage which her eyes conveyed to me, taught me. When at last she returned from the police station she was her old matter-of-fact self again, she went about her chores with her usual swift economy of movement, emptying out the collection boxes, sorting out the notes and the change from the withered flowers, and storing them in the new steel trunk she sent the electrician to purchase. She even gave me a glass of warm milk to drink and removed the nits from my hair (Gods 25).

Soon Ammi became popular as Mataji. Rumours were spread that she is hundred years old and she knows magical spells. She can even change the sex of unborn baby. Saboo is ultimately arrested. Now Phoolwati comes to Delhi to take care of Shambhu’s shop. Ammi takes a vow of silence and pretends to be an ascetic:

My grandmother began to believe in God. She took to fasting four days a week. Even when she was not fasting, she would eat just fruits and nuts and
sometimes a little yogurt. She took a vow of silence and remained completely mute for a month, crouched silently in a corner of the temple, her stubborn eyes resisting any questions or answers or any kind of communication with anyone. She was not unkind, but she withdrew into some intense and personal confrontation with the statues and idols around her; often I would find her muttering queries to Durga or Hanuman (Gods 27).

The condition of the temple improved and the money continued to pour in. Quite often Gudiya is afraid of spirits of night and admits:

... as I fell asleep on my folding cot near the window, the Peepul tree would begin its seductive song. Shuttering my eyes tight against the visions, I would still encounter the energetic acrobatics of Shambhu and Magoo, of my mother and Riyasuddin Rizvi. There were other ghouls and spirits who dwelt in that Peepul tree, a man with a blank featureless face, no eyes or nose, nothing save a large red mouth that was always laughing (Gods 28).
She feels frightened at night and yet remains helpless. Now her grandmother controls the temple with an iron hand. Ammi’s wisdom has its own results and everything is in her control. Three lepers had settled in front of the temple against the wishes of Ammi:

Word spread about Ammi’s extraordinary ability to sense out miscreants, adding to the already considerable accretion of myth and mystery that surrounded her (Gods 30-31).

Lila joined Phoolwati and started taking interest in the temple affairs. Lila faced every obstacle of her way and yet did not give up her devotion for grandmother. Of course, Lila rebuked Gudiya for watering the Tulsi plant on Sunday. The situation was reconciled by Ammi on the pretext that Gudiya is still a child. Lila blamed Phoolwati for being a barren woman and asserted that barren women and barren widows never prosper. Phoolwati wanted that Lila should return to her family but in vain!

Namita Gokhale has a great sense of humour and hence creates humorous situations. After having discussed the theory of male trees and female trees she remarks:

The next morning we awoke to a strange sight. Clusters of ripe yellow fruit had miraculously materialized on Phoolwati’s banana trees. They clung to the smooth green stems with joyous fecundity. Phoolwati herself was busy harvesting
crop, rushing from bough to bough, bunches of bananas draped over her enormous bosom like primeval adornments (Gods 36).

Lila was shocked to see the banana trees, though the large number of monkeys spoiled the whole show. However, grandmother did not make any remark on the miracle of the monkeys. As Riyasuddin Rizvi had decamped with Gudiya’s mother, Ammi developed an aversion for the beggars. But one of the lepers used to play on the flute nicely and simply blessed the grandmother. Sundar Pahalwan proposed a scheme for raising the funds with the help of the beggars. But grandmother rejected the idea and said:

Something for nothing is against the laws of Karma. We all have to strive, to make an effort. These beggars are like middlemen who want to intercede between you and your gods. They are pimps, dalals. Never give your hard-earned money to them (Gods 40).

In He Who Rides A Tiger a lot of things happen in the natural course and the credit goes to Mangal Adhikari. Similarly the teenage son from Sinha family comes out of coma and recovers soon. Mrs. Sinha thanks Ammi and the latter asks her to ‘lose hope’. Even Mr. Kalpnath Sinha comes to the temple to thank Ammi. One finds conversion of character in Ammi now as Namita Gokhale remarks:
But grandmother was busy. She was meditating, or thinking about something, or perhaps she was just sitting vacantly, letting the past and the present jumble in her mind with all the strange obscure thoughts she seemed always to be entertaining (Gods 46).

And she further says:

Despite grandmother’s disavowals, the inevitable spate of seekers surfaced. Every morning Phoolwati would eagerly escort in an assortment of accident victims, convalescents, and chronic hypochondriacs. Grandmother’s vigourous rebuttals and disclaimers regarding her healing powers made the believers even more certain that they were in the right hands. The legend spread that she could heal with a look. Ammi had to resort to holding morning Darshans, where the faithful swarmed, in armed with marigolds, coconuts, and incense, much to Phoolwati’s satisfaction (Gods 47).

Namita Gokhale refers to various Vedic rituals, auspicious and inauspicious grades, Panchang, lunar eclipse, the evil aspect of Rahu etc. She ridicules the contemporary superstitions though grandmother asked her devotees to follow the rituals. It is in her leisure moments that Ammi reveals the ambition of her heart to Gudiya and says:
When I was your age, I wanted to be a film star. There were only silent films on these days no sound. I wanted to be like Zubaida or Jayshree. But look at me now — holy woman! Truly no one can understand the ways of God (Gods 51).

Now Ammi becomes conscious of her Siddhies and does not speak much in the evening. Soon the three lepers become a part of the life of the temple though grandmother does not like it much. Now Gudiya becomes conscious of her growing age and feels sad due to the growing detachment policy of grandmother. Phoolwati is happy to know when Gudiya began her menses. Phoolwati tells her:

In our village we celebrate the arrival of womanhood, the descent of the Devi. But then your grandmother is an old lady; she has to manage the temple. Perhaps she doesn’t want you to grow up; she would have preferred a little girl who would sit on her lap and listen to fairy tales forever (Gods 55).

Gudiya is thankful to her as the latter brings many presents on this occasion. As Phoolwati is her dear company, she shares her likes and dislikes with her. Gudiya admits:

Phoolwati’s dignity, intelligence, perseverance and goodwill gave a stability and bulwark to my young self. We shared the same fiercely independent
spirit, but mine had floundered in the confusion of identity and norms. Whatever or whoever I had lost in mother and grandmother I regained in abundant measure in Phoolwati’s love and warm embraces, and her flatulence and mammoth bosom bothered me not a bit (Gods 57).

Sometimes one feels that there is no hero in this novel as Kalki is too weak to be regarded the hero of this novel. He appears too late in the novel and does nothing heroic up to the end. He takes Gudiya in the bushes and enjoys sex with her. His passion of love is very ordinary, as he is interested in her beauty and money. He does not have the courage to face Phoolwati and her husband Sundar Pahalwan. It is true that Gudiya misses his company again and again. As predicted by Kailash Shastri, the husband of Gudiya is Kalki. Had there been no Phoolwati, Gudiya would have been ruined after his departure to Bombay. He appears in chapter twenty and impresses Gudiya at first sight. He is badly beaten by Sundar Pahalwan and since then he fails to take any risk for his love. Gudiya gets married with him merely because Kalki understands the pressure of Sundar Pahalwan. Kailash Shastri predicted:

When the end of the world approaches, Kalki will come astride a pale horse and put an end to this confusion of sin and pain. Lord Vishnu, it is said by those who know, will appear in his tenth and final Avatar. He will appear as Kalki. Handsome
and a king among men, he will be armed with a huge axe; his voice will resemble the rolling of thunder, the noise of which will spread terror everywhere. First he will destroy all kings, then all other men. Finally, seeing that his father and mother are but sinners like the rest of mankind, he will sacrifice them also to appease his anger. After this a New Age will begin, when, once again, virtue and happiness will reign on the earth (Gos 134).

Actually, there is no clarity in the calculations of Pandit Kailash Shastri. Whatever good fortune comes in the life of Gudiya it is with the gold coins picked up by grandmother. But she earns no fame and name at all. She possesses a lot of patience and fortitude and learns how to adjust with circumstances. Her marriage is a total failure as she has one more mouth to feed after the departure of her husband. She fails to possess a home of her own and her dreams proved to be great expectations.

After reading the film magazines such as Stardust, Movie, Filmy Duniyan etc. she tries to have a new hair style. Then she changes her name and identity. She is not prepared to accept that Phoolwati is her mother. Phoolwati's mean surroundings make her nervous and quite often she feels complex in her company. She fails to develop any liking for Sundar Pahalwan. Her moments of joy are rare and short-lived. After having enjoyed sex with Kalki

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she feels ecstatic joy though Phoolwati rebukes her for this. Now Kailash Shastri also warns her that Kalki is not a very 'nice person'.

In comparison to Kalki, Sundar Pahalwan proves to be a better life partner for Phoolwati. Gudiya fails to understand the real nature of Kalki, as she has no practical wisdom. The tendencies of Kalayuga are unknown to her, and hence, Kalki, an orphan like her, gets married with her. This love at first sight is just an emotional outburst of Gudiya, as she feels:

There was still very little that I knew about Kalki. I was sure that, once we were married, my undemanding of love would lower the defences he had built around himself and that one day we would achieve some sort of harmony with each other. He continued to maintain an impenetrable façade of gracious and strained dignity. The camaraderie, the unspoken bond, that had brought us together might never have existed (Gods 158).

Gudiya commits a mistake in leaving St. Jude’s Academy. Had she stayed in the academy with Roxanne Lamba, her lot might have been different. Roxanne takes interest in the welfare of orphans and requests Gudiya to stay with her. In the beginning Gudiya has all regards for Roxanne Lamba and remarks:
Roxanne was an able administrator, and our small school, with its three rooms, two tents and port-a-cabin administration block, was run with flair and acumen. We had blackboards and swings and a sandpit and three reasonably literate teachers who under the stewardship of Roxanne Lamba drilled us valiantly in all aspects of empirical knowledge. It was thus due to the noble impulses of the parishioners of the Church of the redemption, British Columbia to do good to others that I was inculcated at an early age with the right English accent (Gods 64).

Actually Roxanne Lamba had no axe to grind in taking care of Gudiya though the latter fails to take any decision and admits:

I realize now, in hindsight, that the personal loss of her affections made me misunderstand her almost celestial quiescence. The detachment that she had developed and her preoccupation with some elusive inward journey only aggravated my need of her individual attention. I began to hate her with a desperate longing. I needed to provoke and anger her, and yet when I confronted her and met the calm sanity of that wrinkled face I withdrew even further into confusion and hurt (Gods 68-69).
Gudiya adds:

I continued to oscillate between my two worlds. My existence veered between the St. Jude’s Academy for the Socially Handicapped and the Mataji Ka Mandir, as our temple was now commonly known. Mrs. Roxanne Lamba had plans for an impressive career for me, involving competitive examinations. Perhaps even the IAS, or else, she hinted, I could become a school teacher and educationist like her (Gods 69).

Roxanne Lamba had no regard for Phoolwati, Lila, Kailash Shastri etc. as she is above superstitions. She blames people like Phoolwati and Kailash Shastri for the backwardness of society. If Gudiya had stayed with Roxanne Lamba after the death of Ammi, the former would have received the best education. Roxanne Lamba was so considerate to Gudiya that she gave a share to her out of her property and assets. It confirms that Roxanne Madam was really kind to her. But, as ill luck would have it! Gudiya takes the wrong decision and leaves the Academy. One fails to understand – Why did Gudiya kick the shelter and support as offered by Roxanne Madam? Actually Gudiya fails to understand the difference between wise Roxanne and ignorant Phoolwati and remarks.

I missed Phoolwati’s warmth and the familiar smells and sounds of daily life. As I lay down on the cold clean sheets and looked around at my
carpeted room with its pastel colours and soft lights, I had the sensation of being held captive by unknown forces in an utterly alien world (Gods 101).

However, Phoolwati remains loyal to Gudiya at every critical step. The trouble with Gudiya is that she lacks the tactfulness, wit and intelligence of Viola, the heroine of *Twelfth Night*. Gudiya remarks:

> I know a sudden clarity that I could no longer tolerate this tussle for ownership. Phoolwati, Roxanne, then the Pandit and now Sundar Pahalwan – I belonged to no one, just as my grandmother had never belonged to anyone (Gods 108).

At so many times she feels that she belongs to nobody. Her grandmother was practical in her approach to life and established a temple just with the help of a green marble and five rounded river stones. Even Kailash Shastri wins the sympathy of her Ammi and plans his future in the premises of the temple. Phoolwati, though uneducated and a tough woman, is wise enough to understand the possessive nature of Kailash Shastri. But Kailash Shastri cannot be regarded a villain and a sinner. Like most of the ignorant Hindu Pandits, he has his practical ways to earn money. Whenever the situation demands, he takes out his Panchang and beats about the
bush. When Phoolwati asked him to read the hand of Mataji, he cleverly replies:

Great souls have no past and future. It is all the same to them. It would be sacrilege for me to talk about her past. I can see it here before me, like a cinema-scope – her history – but she is a saint, an embodiment of Shakti. You have much to learn, excuse me for saying so, if you can dare to ask me about her past. Om Ma Shakti (Gods 62).

As a feminist, Namita Gokhale satirizes the people who manage the temple as a commercial activity. Sometimes they have a musical sound and that is why sing Bhajan spontaneously. Gudiya remarks:

Two important changes had taken place in the temple routine. The first was that Pandit Kailash Shastri had set up office in the temple premises and was available for consultation from ten to twelve every morning and from four to six every evening. Phoolwati had even managed to procure a loudspeaker, which nestled in the spire and was wired up so as to broadcast Ammi’s evening Bhajan. We could be heard in a radius of a few kilometers. Grandmother’s liquid voice leading, and the disorchestrated response of our devotees,
became a feature of the evening life in our locality (Gods 70).

And Kailash Shastri succeeds in the temple due to his tricky nature. He is practical enough to take care of his interests and hence remains alert from Phoolwati and Lila. The situation becomes manageable at the temple after the death of grandmother. On her death, Kailash Shastri makes the people believe that Mataji had attained Maha-Samadhi. Even Gudiya is really sad on her death and remarks:

... the mobs, who came, it seemed to me, not in curiosity but in genuine sorrow. Somewhere, somehow, my grandmother’s incredible energy and power had touched and moved and changed them. They filed past in the hastily executed cordons and barricades, to the courtyard where Ammi’s body was propped up, surrounded by lamps and camphor and incense. Their eyes seemed to be asking some questions, begging some hope, from grandmother’s lopsided figure and raised arm (Gods 75).

Pt. Kailash Shastri decides that Mataji should be buried in the premises of the temple. She is compared with goddess Durga and Maa Shakti:

The miracle created the expected stir. Even Pandit Kailash Shastri seemed convinced by his own interpretation of events. The crowds surged
forward to witness the hand of God. They pushed and jostled for a sight of that other-worldly Chunni. The offerings of flowers and coconuts piled up and had to be continuously removed. They were taken back to Phoolwati’s shop, from where she recycled them to the next batch of visitors (Gods 77).

In an outburst of emotion Lila threw her gold chain and bangles into the grave though her son did not appreciate this gesture of his mother. Like Charles Dickens, Namita Gokhale knows how to create pathetic situations and bring tears from the eyes of readers. Memories tough the heart and mind of Gudiya as she remarks:

It was strange to sleep without grandmother, to be without the sounds and smells of the temple, away from the presence of the Peepul tree. I tossed and turned all night, missing its comforting whisper as I knew my familiars missed me (Gods 80).

Like Arthur Miller, Namita Gokhale believes that ‘certain things will be and certain things cannot be’. Gudiya also remarks:

Life without grandmother continued much as before. In death all activities in the temple simply began to revolve around her absence ... Everybody was extremely busy with all manners of mysterious and arcane ritual. There were lamps that had to be
Gokhale analyzes the psychology of Gudiya who has a hidden sense of fear in her heart:

They stared at me incuriously, their glazed eyes still and unmoving, and I began to feel a strange chill of fear travelling down my spine. These were real holy men, the genuine article, not like my grandmother. Suppose they were to find out the truth about us? They had mystical powers — like Pandit Kailash Shastri, they knew everything. They knew about the glittering Ghararas in the tin trunk and the gold coin I had stolen; they knew about my wicked mother. Perhaps they even knew where she was; perhaps they would summon her to come and take me away (Gods 89).

This fear turns into panic and the lower branches of the Peepul tree start swaying with the wind. Gudiya does not know what fate has in store for her. However, like the heroes of Eugene O’Neill, her past haunted her again and again. She fails to get rid of her past. One of her dreams reminds her of the loving nature of grandmother:

I dreamt of grandmother that night. It was a vivid dream, which featured two groups of sultry belly dancers, who between them held a veil which concealed a precious object. After much laughter and music, the veil was moved to reveal my
grandmother, seated in the lotus posture as she had
been at the time of her internment, with the Amber
Chunni draped about her white Sari. She
summoned me towards her and, cupping my chin
affectionately in her gnarled hands, asked me how
I was keeping (Gods 97).

Sometimes Gudiya feels inspired to lead a normal life as
Ammi is with her. She has not left her alone. Gudiya is a round
character, as she has her own weaknesses. The question arises –
Why does she not take hold of the temple affairs? Why does she
remain indifferent to the construction plans of the temple? Why
does she not manage the donation money for public welfare?
Actually, she wants to marry a rich man who has handsome
personality. Had she been practical and bold, she would have
managed the temple well. The temple management could give her
fame, fortune, property and prosperity. But alas! She forgets
everything after meeting Kalki. As love is blind, she becomes blind
and forgetful due to her love for Kalki. Pandit Kailash Shastri
delivers lectures on The Bhagwad Gita and defines virtue, truth and
Dharma.

Time proves that she is really one of the underprivileged
students. Actually, she is not justified, if she blames others for her
miseries. She admits : “My Ammi had taught me that anything was
possible to one who aspired...” (Gods 125). It is not too much to
say that Gudiya fails in her duty for her passionate mother. Due to