Appendix:

Some Critical Responses to the *Fin de Siecle* Novels by the Indian Women Writers
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The fin de siecle novels by the Indian Women Writers portray the myriad dimensions of the responses of these authors to their time and place. Being women, all of these writers have also dealt primarily with the position of the women in the Indian society, their aspirations, fears, hopes and constraints. Often these writings have emerged as a means of the feminist protest which find expression in portrayal of various relationships, use of satire, attempt at “re-writing” the various myths that surround women, exposure of the class-caste-gender hierarchy, linguistic experimentations and so on and so forth. Consequently, such writings have evoked a wide array of critical responses. Here is a representative analysis of some of the critical reactions to the fin de siecle novels studied by me in this thesis.

The Thousand Faces of Night (1992):

Githa Hariharan’s novel, The Thousand Faces of Night has received critical attention for its treatment of Indian myths. In this novel Hariharan makes an attempt to look back at the traditional mythologies with a self-conscious goal of “Re-Visioning” (Rich 18). This theme is explored by C. Vijayasree, who in her article “Re-Visionist Myth-Making: A Reading of Githa Hariharan’s The Thousand Faces of Night” (Kirpal 176 – 181), argues that in Hariharan’s novel the myths undergo subtle changes as they are passed on from one generation to another. Both the narrator and the narratee are
engaged in this process of re-vision as the narratee at some stage turns into the narrator herself thus ensuring a constant renewal of culture. Rama Kundu too stresses the importance of myths and traditions in *The Thousand Faces of Night* in her paper, "*For a Story of my Own – The Female Quest for Identity: A Global Perspective*" (Prasad *Indian Novelists in English*, 80 – 94). According to Kundu, in *The Thousand Faces of Night* Hariharan portrays women who are balked down by tradition and culture but are finally successful in overthrowing the baggage of heritage that perpetuates the patriarchal order. Kundu’s paper also compares Hariharan’s novel to Jean Rhys’s *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Anita Desai’s *Fire on the Mountain* and Margaret Atwood’s *Surfacing* to show that all these novels exhibit the “same constant, long struggle against the dictum of the society that the woman be perceived as object and not as subject” (92).

The struggle encountered by the three major characters in *The Thousand Faces of Night* and their attempt to survive in a hostile atmosphere is the focal point of some of the critics. S. Indira, for example, highlights the identity crisis that Devi, the protagonist, suffers as she faces the traditional, hostile society in her article "*Walking the Tight Rope: A Reading of Githa Hariharan’s The Thousand Faces of Night*", (Dass and Dhawan, 67 – 70). Indira Nityanadam too argues much on the same lines in "*A Search for Identity: Githa Hariharan’s The Thousand Faces of Night*" (Dhawan *Indian Women Novelists Set III Vol. 4*, 183 – 192). She however, portrays Devi as a modern feminist, who in walking in and out of a relationship with the musician Gopal, shows great strength of character. Veena Seshadri, on the other hand, in her review of *The Thousand*
Faces of Night, "The Cold and the Dutiful" (Indian Review of Books 2.6, 31 – 32), finds Devi to have willingly moved towards a stupor of passivity. Even when she grieves about the emotional deprivation she hardly contemplates any positive action. Pradeep Trikha’s article “Githa Hariharan’s The Thousand Faces of Night: Straight from a Woman’s Life” (Dass, 169 – 173), harps on the “underworld of Indian women’s lives – where most dreams are thwarted and the only constant is survival" (169). Trikha explores Devi’s experiences with the male world from where she emerges scathed but stronger. Makarand Paranjape’s review article “A Cathartic Exercise” (The Book Review 17.4, 19 – 20), reads The Thousand Faces of Night as a story of a young woman’s struggle to cope with and survive an arranged marriage. Paranjape finds that though the novel dwells on an off-beat track, its success lies in the narrative ingenuity and portrayal of some strong women characters in the form of grandmother, Sita and Mayamma. K. Damodar Rao tries to bring out the significance of penance in the Indian psyche in his article “Penance as Multiple Response in Githa Hariharan’s The Thousand Faces of Night” (Dhawan Indian Women Novelists Set III Vol. 4, 159 – 169). The article seeks to show the predicament of the modern women who, being pitted in a hostile atmosphere, fail to rebel against their tormentors and often turn the anger against their own selves. Rama Nair pays attention to the ‘Prelude’ of the novel and shows how it strikes a balance between the narrative technique and feminist theory in contemporary women’s fiction. Her article “The Art of Fiction: A Note on the ‘Prelude’ of Githa Hariharan’s The Thousand Faces of Night” (Dhawan Indian
Women Novelists Set III Vol. 4, 170 – 176) analyses the use of point of view, symbolic names, interior monologue, time shift, irony and the interrogative structure in the ‘Prelude’ and their connection to the novel in general. Urmila Varna reads The Thousand Faces of Night as a protest novel and in her article, “Satire as Mode of Expression in Githa Hariharan’s The Thousand Faces of Night” (Pathak Indian Fiction, 100 – 104), studies how the author’s anger finds expression through satire, irony and sarcasm. Srilata Ravi’s probing article “In the Name of the Mother: A Feminist Reading of Githa Hariharan’s The Thousand Faces of Night and Indrani Aikath Gyaltsen’s Daughters of the House” (Dhawan 50 Years of Indian Writing, 76 – 93) attempt to explore the “shift from a poetics of suffering towards a poetics of individualistic empowerment” (76) in the lives of Indian women through a transformation in the mother daughter relationship. Ravi analyses Hariharan’s novel as an exercise in creating a new paradigm of woman’s identity through an exploration of female-female bond. Vera Sharma’s review on The Thousand Faces of Night (The Indian P.E.N. 56.1-3, 25 – 26) finds the novel to be a bit confusing, yet fascinating, and harps on the obsession with fair complexion in the Indian psyche as revealed in the novel.

The Binding Vine (1993):

Shashi Deshpande has been examined with reference to her treatment of the complexities of man-woman relationship in most of her novels. Her novel, The Binding Vine explores the various aspects of the said relationship.
Shanthi Sivaraman in her article, “Women in The Binding Vine” (Pathak The Fiction of Shashi Deshpande, 132-137) looks at the various relationships that the protagonist Urmi is subjected to. Sivaraman looks at the novel as a challenge to the patriarchal, chauvinistic Indian male role and hails the novel as feminist. The multitude of relationships in the life of Urmi is again the focal point of J.P. Tripathi's article “The Binding Vine and Indian Ethos” (Pathak The Fiction of Shashi Deshpande, 150-154). Tripathi looks at the novel as primarily a depiction of the traditional Indian family under pressures of emerging modernity and finds Deshpande to have given it a firm anchorage in traditional, cultural and societal values. He looks at the positive approach to life that emerges from the novel despite the frustrations of the modern life. The complex maze of relationships that characterise Deshpande's novels is again the focal point of attention for Santhosh Gupta, who in his article “The Binding Vine of Relationships in Shashi Deshpande's Novels” (Pandey, M.K. 89-102) examines how Deshpande uses the women's point of view to present social realities as experienced by them. In presenting this point of view Deshpande, according to Gupta, is actually interested in presenting the conflict between the traditional and the modern – the patriarchal ethos and the women's questioning of such values. S. Indira in her paper, "A Bond or a Burden?: A Study of Shashi Deshpande's The Binding Vine" (Dhawan Indian Women Novelists Set III Vol. 6, 21 – 27) explores how the women characters in the novel seek selfhood within the orbit of their families and relations. The vision of life of the Indian women as delineated by the likes of Urmi, Vanna, Mira and
Shakutai is the focus of Ashok Mahashabde’s article, “The Binding Vine: Woman’s Vision of Life” (Pathak The Fiction of Shashi Deshpande, 138-143). Besides focussing on the novel as a protest against the discrimination and violence, Mahashabde specially looks at the novel as a critique of arranged marriage. Nisha Trivedi looks at the predicament of the modern Indian women as she stands at the intersection of the traditional and the modern. Trivedi’s article, “Treatment of Love, Marriage and Sex in The Binding Vine” (Pathak The Fiction of Shashi Deshpande, 144-149) is an exploration into the psyche of the modern Indian women who having achieved a fair degree of economic independence are rebelling against the inhibiting cultural and sexual roles assigned to them but find it impossible to reject their socio-cultural background completely. Rama Nair highlights how Deshpande seems to deconstruct femininity in The Binding Vine by emphasising the suffering that women endure as mothers and daughters. Nair’s paper, “Dissonance and Harmony in Shashi Deshpande’s The Binding Vine” (Rao, C.R.V. 152 – 157) points out that the psychological transformation that Urmi undergoes in the novel is achieved through awareness and realization of the multiple and contrary identities that a woman possesses. Gur Pyari Jandial’s paper, “Evolving a Feminist Tradition: The Novels of Shashi Deshpande and Manju Kapur” (The Atlantic Literary Review 4.3, 108 – 128) reads The Binding Vine as Deshpande’s strongest statement regarding sexual violence against women. Rape – both marital and extra marital – as discussed in Deshpande’s novel is the subject of Indira Nityanandam’s paper, “Shashi Deshpande’s The Binding
Vine: Silent No More” (Dhawan Indian Women Novelists Set III Vol. 4, 60 – 66). Nityanandam finds the novel to be more refreshing than the earlier novels by Deshpande as the protagonist is not confined to her own life but also tries to speak out for those unable to do so. The paper also brings out the impossibility on the daughter’s part to follow the mother in the altered scenario across a generation. Laeeq Futehally’s book review on The Binding Vine (The Literary Criterion 28.3, 89 – 91), shows how Deshpande deals with the theme of rape in her novel directly and decorously at the same time. Aruna Sitesh too concentrates on the violence explored in Deshpande’s novels in her article “Rape in Shashi Deshpande’s Novels” (Pandey, M.K. 195-203). Sitesh analyses the Indian society and shows how rape has been a frequent phenomenon even within the family; if we are unaware of the extensiveness of it, it is only due to the compulsion on part of the victims to remain silent. The same pressure forces Shakutai not to disclose her daughter’s rape. However, the persistent efforts of Urmila help her to break her silence. Sitesh sees the liberation of women in going vocal about rape and sexual abuse faced by women. However, the difficulty for the subaltern woman to speak, especially by those who are in pain is the subject matter of Mrinalini Sebastian’s discussion on The Binding Vine (156-165) as part of her discourse on “The Novels of Shashi Deshpande: In Postcolonial Arguments”. Sebastian argues that the eloquence of the characters is directly linked to the power they enjoy as individuals. Hence, we find characters like Urmila and Mira being heard but their speeches, according to Sebastian, come at the cost of silence on part of
the likes of Shakutai and Akka. Taisha Abraham's review article on *The Binding Vine* (*The Book Review* 18.2-3, 71 – 72) shows how the novel is based on the 'silencing' (72) of the Indian women by patriarchal/cultural norms. The silence in women’s lives, which they sometimes break and the intricate maze of relationships in their lives is brought forth by Lakshmi Holmstrong in her review article of the novel, entitled “Of Love and Loss” (*Indian Review of Books* 3.1, 52 – 53). S. Indira’s article “Ethel Wilson’s *Swamp Angel* and Shashi Deshpande’s *The Binding Vine* as Kunstlerroman” (Dhawan, *50 Years of Indian Writing*, 68-75) analyses the two novels as portrayals of the conflicts, faced by the artist-protagonists, between life and art and between the woman and the artist. Mira, burdened with the traditional, finds her femininity an obstacle to the development of her artist-self; which can only be resolved in Urmila, one who can simultaneously be a woman and a writer. “Of Mothers and Daughters, of the Great Divide: Shashi Deshpande’s *The Binding Vine*” (Kirpal 165 – 175), by Sarla Palkar, explores how the daughters reject their mothers as they represent limitations and narrowness of vision. However, when the daughter turns mother, she too can have no escape from the binding vine of love, and fears the associated vulnerability. Adele King's review of *The Binding Vine* (*World Literature Today* 68.2, 430) discusses the difficulties faced by the western reader in making a proper assessment of the novel.

Namita Gokhale’s Gods, Graves and Grandmother deals with some of the marginal women figures in the Indian urban landscape, who though remarkable for their gutsy nature, seldom come into focus as they occupy a world unknown to most of the middle class writers. The critics have tended to focus their attention on this aspect of the novel. Subhas Chandra, in his paper titled, “The New Woman’ in Namita Gokhale’s Gods, Graves and Grandmother” (Dhawan Indian Women Novelists: Set III Volume 6, 13 – 20), argues that in Gods, Graves and Grandmother, Gokhale makes a paradigm shift by making all the women characters strong and gritty, who have control over their mind and body. By dominating over the men, rather than being dominated these women create a sort of matriarchal space for themselves.

Chandra’s other article, “Female Subjectivity and Female Empowerment in the Fiction of Namita Gokhale” (The Literary Voice 3, 53 – 58), also explores how women display an assertive independence of personality in Gods, Graves and Grandmother. Dhanajay Kapse’s review article, “Childhood’s End...?” (The Book Review 19.12, 35) finds Gokhale’s novel to be an excellent work in ‘social realism’ (35), which moves towards the creation of a feminist utopia.

Q.Z. Alam’s paper, “Namita Gokhale’s Gods, Graves and Grandmother: An Assessment” (Pathak Indian Fiction of the Nineties 135 – 149) analyses the novel in details and draws attention to the plot development, characterisation and portrayal of the Indian society as depicted in the novel. Special emphasis is laid on Gokhale’s innovative use of language. The review of Gods, Graves
and Grandmother by Janaki Venkatraman, “Arrested Flight” (The Indian Review of Books 4.2, 33 – 34), feels that the plot in Gokhale’s fiction fails to move forward in spite of a good beginning.

**Difficult Daughters (1995):**

Manju Kapur’s *Difficult Daughters* is a remarkable portrayal of the events in Punjab in the decade preceding independence and partition. The novel won much critical acclaim and was the winner of the Commonwealth Writers’ Best First Book Prize in 1999 for the Eurasia region. The relationship between Virmati and the Professor, which is central to the novel, is the centre of focus of the paper by Bhagabat Nayak, titled, “Love and Longing in Manju Kapur’s *Difficult Daughters*” (Naikar 156 – 165). The paper analyses the complexities of such a relationship as the characters are caught between tradition and modernity and finds their salvation in love and longing for each other as well as in intellectual pursuits. “Manju Kapur’s *Difficult Daughters*: A Powerful Story of Man-Woman Relationship” (The Commonwealth Review 12.1, 71 – 78) by Satish Barbbuddhe looks at the relationship between the Professor and Virmati and finds how Virmati has to suffer due to the male egocentric attitude of her lover. The portrayal of women characters, especially in the writings of the Indian women novelists, has received much critical attention. Seema Malik emphasises the advent of the incipient ‘New Woman’ in Virmati, in her article, “Crossing Patriarchal Threshold: Glimpses of the Incipient New Woman in Manju Kapoor’s *Difficult Daughters*” (Bhargava 171 –
177), whom she finds to be conscious, inquisitive, educated and yet psychically dependent on one who is intellectually superior to her. Suman Bala and Subhash Chandra’s paper, “Manju Kapur’s Difficult Daughters: An Absorbing Tale of Fact and Fiction” (Dhawan 50 Years of Indian Writing, 105 – 110) points to the issues relating to women’s oppression by analysing how Virmati unshackles old bondages only to be caught up in newer prisons. The same idea again comes into focus in Gur Pyari Jandial’s paper, “Evolving a Feminist Tradition: The Novels of Shashi Deshpande and Manju Kapur” (The Atlantic Literary Review 4.3, 108 – 128) where she contends that though Virmati is able to break the shackles of an arranged marriage, she nevertheless, has to accept a life of slavery in another form. She gains some semblance of freedom but is not able to strike independent roots and grow.

Gajendra Kumar in his article, “Manju Kapur’s ‘Difficult Daughters’: A Saga of Conflict and Crisis” (101 – 109) focuses on the mother daughter relationships in the novel and considers how it becomes impossible for the daughter to live in her mother’s shadow. Veena Singh in “How Difficult are Difficult Daughters? Sunlight on a Broken Column and Difficult Daughters as Female Bildungsroman” (Gupta, S. 161 – 175) makes a comparative study between Attia Hossain’s Sunlight on a Broken Column and Manju Kapur’s Difficult Daughters and reads the novels as “the experience of the female child towards arriving at a sense of identity” (162) against the background of partition. The social attitude towards the women is the chief concern of Surendra Narayan Jha in his paper titled, “The Treatment of Modern Indian
Women in Manju Kapur's *Difficult Daughters* (The Commonwealth Review 12.1, 79 – 92). He finds Kapur's women to rebel against the traditional Indian values and considers most Indian writers writing in English to promote a culture that blindly follows the Western mode. “Manju Kapur’s *Difficult Daughters*: A Study in Transition from Chaos to Integration” (The Commonwealth Review 12.1, 93 – 100) by Gur Pyari Jandial explores how the novel interweaves the nation’s striving for independence with the individual's aspiration for freedom and celebrates the individual's strength and endurance – so essential for survival – in a violent world. Joya Chakravarty’s article, “A Comparative Analysis of Arundhati Roy’s *The God of Small Things* and Manju Kapoor’s *Difficult Daughters*” (Chakravarty 93 – 100) focuses on the post-colonial hangover evident in *Difficult Daughters* and *The God of Small Things* and shows how the theme of alienation dominates both the novels. Manju Roy analyses the readability of Kapur’s debut novel in her paper, “Readability of Manju Kapur’s *Difficult Daughters*” (The Commonwealth Review 12.1, 62 – 69) and finds the novel to be extremely readable for its frequent use of Hindi and Punjabi words, colloquial expressions, code switching devices and realistic narrative mode.

**A Matter of Time (1988):**

Deshpande’s *A Matter of Time* is also remarkable for its exploration of the intricate family relationships. This facet of the novel is discussed by R.S. Pathak in his article titled “A Matter of Time: Of Human Bonds and Bondages”
The various relationships are explored in detail and there is a special reference to the philosophical probing made by Gopal. Gopal's character again receives much attention in the writing of N. Poovalingam, whose article "A Matter of Time: Beyond the Stranglehold of Women" (Pathak The Fiction of Shashi Deshpande, 169-175) focuses on the loose ends in the female characters in the novel and claims Gopal's character to have far greater credibility. Poovalingam concludes with the postulation that with Gopal, Deshpande has finally developed a male figure who, stands on his own and is not a mere prop to highlight the women.

Meenakshi Mukherjee in her review of the novel, "Sounds of Silence" (Indian Review of Books 6.6, 30 – 31) contends that the richness of the novel lies in its attempt at exploring the "essential aloneness of each person" (30) while elaborating on the familial relationships at the same time. The novel is described by Keerti Ramchandra to be one dealing with "renunciation, bonds and ties and about alienation" (21), in his review article "Of fate and Eternity" (Biblio 3.4, 21). Ramchandra finds the novel to be introspective in nature where the characters respond to a given situation in varied ways. Latha Anantharaman's review of the novel (The India Magazine 17.3, 76 – 77) also takes on the same line, when she claims "none of the characters are fleshed out satisfactorily during the novel" (77). Gur Pyari Jandial's paper, "Evolving a Feminist Tradition: The Novels of Shashi Deshpande and Manju Kapur" (The Atlantic Literary Review 4.3, 108 – 128) sees in A Matter of Time, a glimpse of Deshpande's strident feminism where the women characters survive against
all odds because of their self reliance. The review article by Usha Bande, “How Women Cope when the Man of the House Quits” (Indian Book Chronicle 22.3&4, 42) also explores how the new generation of women long to break the impregnable silence of the earlier three generations in Deshpande’s A Matter of Time. Susheela N. Rao’s review of A Matter of Time (World Literature Today 73.4, 818 – 819), on the other hand focuses on Deshpande’s use of two narrative points of view, of the first and third persons, in her novel.

**The God of Small Things (1997):**

Arundhati Roy’s success with her debut novel is a rare achievement in the field of literary history. The God of Small Things has been in many ways unmatched for the media hype and rave reviews received by it. Indeed, it has been the most talked about novel of the last decade.

The novel has been analysed from various angles. From feminist perspective to postcolonial standpoint, from examination of relationships between characters to the study of language, from thematic exploration to a review of the social situation, it has definitely generated a lot of interest among the academicians. Even those who have not found favour with the novel could not have ignored it. Somdatta Mandal, for instance, in her article, “From Periphery to Mainstream: The Making, Marketing and Media Response to Arundhati Roy” (Dhawan Arundhati Roy: The Novelist Extraordinary, 11 – 22), analyses the immediate responses of the critics in the media and concludes that in spite of all the hype it received The God of Small Things might not
withstand the test of time. Madhusudan Mukherjee again focuses on the marketing strategies as regards to the novel in his article, “Why The God of Small Things Sells” (Dhawan Arundhati Roy: The Novelist Extraordinary, 38 – 40), and tries to analyse the factors that have contributed to make an exceptionally local novel into a universal bestseller.

The God of Small Things is a remarkable depiction of life in the small town of Ayemenem. Robert Pinto focuses on how the novel reflects the cultural background in his article “The Cultural Milieu of Arundhati Roy’s The God of Small Things” (Pandey, M.K. 103-129). He traces the cultural backdrop of the individual characters, the intimate relationship between culture and life, the complexities and tensions that arises due to mingling of people belonging to diverse cultures, the adoption of different cultures and the resultant complications and finally the impact of the various aspects of culture on the novel. The setting again is the crux of discussion in two other articles by Simon G. Barnabas and Christel R. Devadawson respectively. The formers article titled “Ayemenem and the Ayemenem House: A Study of the Setting of The God of Small Things” (Dhawan Arundhati Roy: The Novelist Extraordinary, 296 – 306), focuses on the importance of the locale of fictional Ayemenem – a place of social, political and moral corruption – in shaping the rebellious spirit in the character of Ammu. The same arguments are again made in Indira Bhatt’s article “Heart of Darkness: A Study of Roy’s The God of Small Things” (Bhatt and Nityanandam 98 – 102). Bhatt finds Conrad’s ‘Heart of Darkness’ as a metaphor for this novel and concludes that ‘God’s own country’ is the
heart of darkness today. “God’s Own Country: Kerala in The God of Small Things” by Indira Nityanandam (Bhatt and Nityanandam 179 – 184) explores how Kerala comes alive in Roy’s novel. Darshana Trivedi too finds the novel to be provincial both in theme and treatment in her paper, “Small is Beautiful” (Bhatt and Nityanandam 185 – 190). Devadawson’s article, “From Danzig to Ayemenem: A Look ahead at Arundhati Roy” (Dhawan Arundhati Roy: The Novelist Extraordinary, 286 – 295), on the other hand contends that in the evocation of Ayemenem Roy has contrived to selectively exploit both history and literature. This has given the audience the status of a tourist rather than a traveller who can view the world of Ayemenem only as an outsider.

The women’s question has been one of the core issues with which The God of Small Things deals. Naturally, this theme has found expression in the writings of many a critic. Madhumalati Adhikari’s article, “Power Politics in The God of Small Things” (Dhawan Arundhati Roy: The Novelist Extraordinary, 41 – 48), analyses the power equations in the novel and attempts to look at the new emerging tenets of such power games. According to Adhikari, women’s tenacity to fight, as displayed in the novel, has made a change in perception about such power games inevitable. Another article by Adhikari, “Enclosure and Freedom: Arundhati Roy’s The God of Small Things” (Bhatt and Nityanandam 39 – 46) focuses on how Roy elaborates upon the many enclosures of marriage, class, caste, politics, economics and emotions. In doing so, she however, attempts to be gender neutral and makes conscious attempts to dilute female preoccupations with specific roles and images. The
different generations of women characters and their modes of suffering is the centre of focus of Mohit Kumar Roy's article ““Locusts Stand I’: Some Feminine Aspects of The God of Small Things” (Dhawan Arundhati Roy: The Novelist Extraordinary, 49 – 64). The article also briefly glosses over Roy's narrative technique. Pratibha Verma, in her paper, “Arundhati Roy's The God of Small Things: A Study in Feminine Sensibility and Aspects of Style” (Dhawan Indian Women Writers, 180 – 187) looks at how the women are repressed and how their oppression finds expression in Roy's use of realistic elements with mythic and fairy-tale materials. The women's voice of resistance finds expression in Ranjana Harish's reading of Arundhati Roy's novel. Her paper, “Her Body was Her Own: A Feminist Note on Ammu's Female Estate” (Bhatt and Nityanandam 47 – 50) finds The God of Small Things to be a "feminist rejection of man's ownership of the female body" (47). N.P. Singh's article, “Women in The God of Small Things” (Dhawan Arundhati Roy: The Novelist Extraordinary, 65 – 70), concentrates on the women characters in the novel and finds that the ordinary life in an obscure village in Kerala has a universal appeal. The relationship between the men and women in the novel is the subject of the article titled “Man-Woman Relationship in The God of Small Things” (Dhawan Arundhati Roy: The Novelist Extraordinary, 77 – 83) by Nirmala C. Prakash. The author contends that the relationship between the men and women in the Ayemenem household always results in failure because of the prevalent bourgeois culture. “‘Wrinkled Youth and Pickled Future’ Comparing Githa Hariharan and Arundhati Roy” (Bhatt and
Nityanandam 63 – 97) by A.G. Khan draws parallels between the three women characters in *The God of Small Things* – Mammachi, Ammu and Rahel – with those of Sita, Devi and Mayamma in *The Thousand Faces of Night* portraying them all as suffering faces of Indian womanhood.

Two relationships – allegedly, forbidden ones – are primary in *The God of Small Things*. One of these is between Ammu and Velutha, the other being the one between the twins, Estha and Rahel. Naturally, these relationships have drawn quite a lot of critical attention. Urbashi Barat, for instance, in her article, “History, Community and Forbidden Relationships in *The God of Small Things*” (Dhawan Arundhati Roy: The Novelist Extraordinary, 84 – 99), contends that like the African American novels by women writers, *The God of Small Things* also embodies history and community, albeit differently. Both in Roy and the African American women writers forbidden relationships become the way of achieving selfhood. However, unlike the African American fiction there is no escape from pain in *The God of Small Things*. Similarly, Rajyashree Khusu-Lahiri in her article, “Broken Laws, Shattered Lives: A study of *The God of Small Things*” (Dhawan Arundhati Roy: The Novelist Extraordinary, 112 – 119), deals with how the novel shapes as a voice of protest in breaking the taboos of inter caste man-woman relationship and incest. Dieter Riemenschneider’s article, “… in the days when the Love Laws were made” (Dhawan Arundhati Roy: The Novelist Extraordinary, 120 – 131) looks at the novel as an appeal to modernity in its rejection of the traditional ‘love laws’ since they destroy men and women who strive to be their individual
selves. In a similar vein, Mini Chandy justifies the breaking of the 'Love Laws' in her article 'The Love Laws' (Bhatt and Nityanandam 83 – 92). Rama Kundu in "'Who should be Loved. And How. And Howmuch.': A Look into Arundhati Roy's The God of Small Things" (Revaluations 3.1, 45 – 53) reads the 'Love Laws' as essentially the social ethos that operated in India over millenniums regimentalizing lives and making society insensitive to individual aspirations. She considers the novel to be Roy's attempt in sensitizing the society to the cruelty of some traditions, especially to the women and the untouchable, by artistically challenging such practices. K.M. Pandey carries the argument forward when he reads the Ammu-Velutha relationship as a protest against the existing social institutions of family, religion, politics and public administration, in his paper, "The Small God Made Big: Arundhati Roy's The God of Small Things" (Dhawan Indian Women Writers, 172 – 179). V. Bharathi Harishankar in her paper, "Beyond Black and White: The Use of Doubling in The God of Small Things" (Bhatt and Nityanandam 51 – 57) referring to Robert Rogers's A Psychoanalytic Study of the Double in Literature finds Rahel and Estha to be 'complementary' characters who show 'explicit dual fragmentation and doubling by division' (52). She concludes Rahel-Estha relationship to be redefining the meaning of love and marriage. The article by Amina Amin, "Breaking Laws, Crossing Forbidden Territory: An Analysis of The God of Small Things" (Dhawan Arundhati Roy: The Novelist Extraordinary, 104 – 111), analyses the decay in the Ayemenem household that leads to social moral and cultural degeneration. Alka Saxena's paper, "Arundhati Roy's The God of
Small Things: A Study in Abnormal Psychology and Consequent Behaviour Pattern" (Dhawan Indian Women Writers, 138 – 144), analyses the psychic state that leads to the silence in Estha and the emptiness in Rahel and the incestuous relationship between the two. "The Code of Incest in The God of Small Things" (Dhawan Arundhati Roy: The Novelist Extraordinary, 132 – 143) by Sumanyu Satpathy asserts that the signification and sense-making strategies in The God of Small Things emerge through a network of plays, especially word-plays and analyses how the 'code of incest' is delineated all through the novel. S.P. Swain, on the other hand looks at the numerous references to sex in the novel in his article, "Erotic Pornography and Sexuality: A Study of The God of Small Things" (Dhawan Arundhati Roy: The Novelist Extraordinary, 144 – 150), and concludes that Roy 'seems to have proclivity for the publicization of sexuality' (144). A contrary position is taken by J.M. Verghese who rubbishes any interpretation of The God of Small Things as pornography in his article "Freedom and Suffering in Arundhati Roy’s The God of Small Things" (Bhatt and Nityanandam 58 – 62). Instead, he reads the novel as an existential discourse where characters revolt against the established oppressive social structures and assert their fierce individualistic self only to suffer in the process. "In Desire and Death: Eroticism as Politics in Arundhati Roy’s ‘The God of Small Things’" (Ariel 29.2 60 – 72) by Brinda Bose raises the question of whether there is any viable politics in Roy’s construction of eroticism in her novel. According to Bose’s interpretation to desire in spite of knowing that it may end in death is to believe that such a
death is neither a shame nor defeat. The politics lies in the choice made by the characters.

It is perhaps inevitable for any contemporary Indian writer to be attached with the postcolonial bracket. Roy too is analysed from the postcolonial perspective. Victor J. Ramraj, in his article "Arundhati Roy's and Salman Rushdie's Postmodern India" (Dhawan Arundhati Roy: The Novelist Extraordinary, 151 – 160), analyses Rushdie's The Moors Last Sigh and Roy's The God of Small Things and points how these novels capture India's passage from postcolonial 'angst' to postmodern multiculturalism. A comparative study between the same two authors is made by Latha Ganesh in her article, "Rushdie and Roy" (Bhatt and Nityanandam 103 – 112). She finds the two authors to have much similarity between them. Aparna Dhanwadker in her article titled, "The exercise of Memory and the Diasporization of Anglophone Indian Fiction" (Dhawan Arundhati Roy: The Novelist Extraordinary, 161 – 165), concludes that The God of Small Things "offers us a world that is shaped by complex interrelations between genre, language, literary precedent, method and market conditions, which have blurred the distinction between diaspora and nation" (165). The cultural complexity of the novel is again the focus of Mary Conde's paper, "Forging a New Identity: Arundhati Roy's The God of Small Things" (Dhawan Arundhati Roy: The Novelist Extraordinary, 166 – 176), where she shows how the novel make use of protagonists who have internalised the Western culture but are set against an exotic Indian background to create a new kind of fiction that cannot be easily categorized. In
his essay, “Interrogating change: Arundhati Roy” (Dhawan Arundhati Roy: The Novelist Extraordinary, 177 – 182), Joel Knortti points out how the novel criticises the very Anglophone culture that it depicts and concludes that in the postcolonial context there can be no way one can be respectful to the cultural contexts. “Down a Narrow Road in a Wide Car – A Study of the Anglophiles in The God of Small Things” by Premlatha Dinakarlal (The Literary Half Yearly 39.1, 52 – 58) portrays the Anglophiles with ridicule and sarcasm and thus produces a protest novel in the process. “The Fiction of Our Discontent: The God of Small Things” (Shukla and Shukla 72 – 79) by Subir Dhar, shows how each of the characters in the novel apart from that of Rahel are caught in the residual stranglehold of colonialism. The English versus Indian dilemma runs throughout Roy’s novel is again the conclusion made by Nazma Malik in her paper, “The God of Small Things: A Study of English Influence on Indian Culture” (Bhatt and Nityanandam 162 – 167). Corrado Micheli focusing on the language of Arundhati Roy argues in his article “The Eccentric Voice of The God of Small Things” (Dhawan Arundhati Roy: The Novelist Extraordinary, 208 – 214), that Roy’s English is a just retribution to the early impositions of Macaulyan imperialism.

Roy’s tryst with history is the focus of Tapan Kumar Ghosh’s article, “Tomorrow Will Never Die: Arundhati Roy’s Tryst with History in The God of Small Things” (Dhawan Arundhati Roy: The Novelist Extraordinary, 183 – 193). In this paper Ghosh analyses the novel as “Roy’s tryst with the history of her society, her unyielding protest against the dubious heritage of an ancient
tradition" (184). Similar is the concern expressed by Soma Bhaduri in her article, "History, Social Dynamics and the Individual in The God of Small Things" (Dhawan Arundhati Roy: The Novelist Extraordinary, 194 – 207). The article looks at the individuals, their struggles and their small victories in The God of Small Things pitted against the impersonal social forces that are blind to the individual’s sensitivity. Prasenjit Maiti’s "History and Counterhistory: Reading Novels, Reading Politic: Arundhati Roy’s The God of Small Things" (Dhawan Indian Women Writers, 145 – 157) concludes that the reality of historiography and the reality of textuality as evinced in the novel are different in nature and scope.

The title of The God of Small Things has ensured a lot of attention to Roy’s portrayal of what is small and what is large, her bias for what is marginal and liminal and the resultant political statement that emerges out of it. Laxmi Parasuram in her paper “The World of Small and Big Things: Transgression of Rules and Roles in The God of Small Things” (Dhawan Arundhati Roy: The Novelist Extraordinary, 100 – 03), observes that the novel deals with both small and big things and they are intermingled in such a way so that there is no clear dividing line between the two. O.P. Mathur’s essay, "Arundhati Roy’s Paradoxical Celebration of Smallness" (Dhawan Arundhati Roy: The Novelist Extraordinary, 215 – 221) is a pointer to how Roy excels in sympathetically, amusingly and ironically observing every small object and invest them with startling human attributes. Sheobhusan Shukla points out in a similar vein in his paper, "The Bigness of the Small and the Smallness of the Big: An
Interpretation of *The God of Small Things* (Shukla and Shukla 80 – 89) that in *The God of Small Things* the small is often invested with much significance whereas the big appears to be puny and petty. In her article "The God of Small Things: A Tale of Mombattis' Brave Struggle" (Dhawan Arundhati Roy: The Novelist Extraordinary, 222 – 226), Ranjana Harish looks at the two characters of Ammu and Velutha, who are small yet illuminated, by drawing on the image of candles. Urbashi Barat, draws parallel between Velutha and Christ in her article, "Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*: Great Stories and Small Ones" (Bhatt and Nityanandam 69 – 82), and emphasises the conflict between the patriarchal Big God and the God of Small Things. Nirzari Pandit's "Societal Oppression: A Study of *The God of Small Things*" (Bhatt and Nityanandam 168 – 78) studies how societal oppression tends to destroy all small things so that the God of Small Things is finally reduced to an absent god or god of loss.

Alka Saxena's paper, "The God of Small Things and Significant Things" (Dhawan Arundhati Roy: The Novelist Extraordinary, 227 – 233), reads the novel as an eye opener to the over ambitious, selfish generation of today and contends that only those who recognise the value of small things in life can ever feel happiness and contentment. Pramod K. Nayar, in his paper, "Troping Silence: Oversignification and Liminality in *The God of Small Things*" (Dhawan Arundhati Roy: The Novelist Extraordinary, 234 – 240), contends that in the novel characters appear as mere signifiers without any signifieds. However, in spite of their smallness they are pitted against experiences which are large in magnitude further reducing them to a liminal position.
The theme of Roy's novel has also drawn a lot of critical response. G.D. Barche's paper, "Deconstructing the Deconstruction in Roy's The God of Small Things" (Bhatt and Nityanandam 29 – 38) raises a philosophical question from Kenoponishad which asks who controls man's mind, senses, actions and life and analyses The God of Small Things from that perspective. He finds that the answer to all these is God, as Roy herself has seemed to suggest. M.L. Pandit in his essay, "The God of Small Things: A Novel of Childhood Feelings" (Dhawan Arundhati Roy: The Novelist Extraordinary, 241 – 247), looks at the childhood relationship between the seven year twins Rahel and Estha, and feels it to be the core of the novel. Amina Amin's "Text and Countertext: Oppositional Discourse in The God of Small Things" (Bhatt and Nityanandam 18 – 28) analyses how Roy uses the authorial voice as well as the sensibility of the twins Rahel and Estha to portray the formidable power structure that Ayemenem House represents at the level of text and the voices of dissent, resistance and even subversion at the level of countertext. Antonia Navarro-Tejaro in her paper, "Memory and Incest as Liberation from Trauma: Abjection in Arundhati Roy's The God of Small Things" (The Atlantic Literary Review 4.1&2, 121 – 132) analyses in great details to the factors that lead to the abjection of Estha and his resultant loss of childhood. Indira Bhatt tells us about the victims and victimizers in The God of Small Things and the social atrocities that the victims have to go through in her paper, "Victims andVictimizers: A study of Arundhati Roy's 'The God of Small Things'" (Bhatt and Nityanandam 136 – 141). Amar Nath Prasad's article "Arundhati Roy: A
centrality and creation of an idiom that is unique. Prahlad A. Kulkami's paper, "From Frustration to Suffering: A Recurring Pattern in Arundhati Roy's The God of Small Things" (Dhawan Indian Women Writers, 188 – 193), deciphers a particular pattern in Roy's novel where her characters because of their weaknesses must remain unquenched leading to frustration and consequent suffering. P. Hari Padma Rani analyses the various marriages in the novel and the reason behind their failure in "The Theme of marital discord in Arundhati Roy's The God of Small Things" (The Quest 14.1, 34 – 37). Rama Nair, considers how the two recurring symbols of 'rose' and 'river' juxtapose the real world of transgression and brutality with the ideal of love and commitment in her article "Of Roses and Rivers: Thematic Symbolism in The God of Small Things" (Dhawan Arundhati Roy: The Novelist Extraordinary, 248 – 255). R. Hema Nair too focuses on Roy's use of imagery in her paper, "Remembrance of Things Past': A Reading of Arundhati Roy's: The God of Small Things" (CIEFL Bulletin 9.2, 49 – 56). Nair discusses the use of various imagery and the devices of reversals, repetitions, returns through which Rahel remembers the events of the past. "Sorry Spectacles: The Gaze in Arundhati Roy's The God of Small Things" (Bhatt and Nityanandam 13 – 17) looks at the use of 'gaze' as concept, metaphor and motif by Roy. M. Mani Maiti's paper, "Projection of Art and Life in The God of Small Things" (Dhawan Arundhati Roy: The Novelist Extraordinary, 256 – 265), elucidates the point that great tales are those that tell of simple thoughts. Surendra Narayan Jha, in his paper, "Dreams Re-Dreamed: The God of Small Things" (Dhawan Indian Women
Writers, 158 – 171), finds how the fanciful realm of dreams accommodates the sublime thoughts of the major characters. In his article, "The Anger in The God of Small Things" (Dhawan Arundhati Roy: The Novelist Extraordinary, 266 – 277), Shyam S. Agarwala analyses how the novel directs Roy's anger towards the Communists, the rich elite of Ayemenem, and the Police and concludes The God of Small Things to have Naxal leanings in spite of the author's own denial in this respect. On the other hand, Suguna Ramanathan's article, "Where is Christ in The God of Small Things?" (Bhatt and Nityanandam 63 – 68) infers that in spite of rejecting the Christian faith and institutions the novel is deeply overshadowed by a Christian undertone. Pradeep Trikha, in his paper, "The God of Small Things: A Rainbow in the Sky" (Dhawan Arundhati Roy: The Novelist Extraordinary, 278 – 285), finds that The God of Small Things is a novel of total perception which Roy builds with numerous unconnected fragments and impressions. The author herself is the God of Small Things in her role as the creator, preserver and sometimes even destroyer of the little events and ordinary things. David Myers's paper, "Contemporary Tragedy and Paradise Lost in The God of Small Things" (Dhawan Arundhati Roy: The Novelist Extraordinary, 356 – 364), analyses The God of Small Things as a tragedy of the modern times which goes to the "heart of taboos, the bigotry, the hypocrisy, the loveliness and the deadening respectability of or godless society" (364). Meamy Raphael C. in "Arundhati Roy's The God of Small Things: An Existential Perspective" (College English Review 2.3, 24 – 26) argues that the novel presents the Sisyphus myth by
suggesting a repetitive, monotonous and futile life revolving round the Ayemenem House with the hope for a future that can only be bleak. In his paper “Dark of Heartness Tiptoed into the Heart of Darkness: Arundhati Roy’s The God of Small Things” (Dhawan Indian Women Writers, 194 – 200), A.K. Mukherjee puts forward the view that Roy’s ‘Heart of Darkness’ is much akin to the primal world of Lawrence than Conrad. Comparisons with Lawrence is also made (albeit in the title only) by Uday Shankar Ojha and Gajendra Kumar, in their paper, “Arundhati Roy’s The God of Small Things: A Novel of Poetic Narratology and Lawrentian Ecstasy” (Dhawan Indian Women Writers, 210 – 217). The paper discusses Roy’s poetic narrative technique and the sublimation of sexual desire. Rosy Misra makes a comparative study between Mulk Raj Anand’s Coolie and Arundhati Roy’s The God of Small Things, in her essay “The Crisis in Human Values in Coolie and The God of Small Things: A Comparative Study” (Dhawan Indian Women Writers, 201 – 209) and infers that in spite of the socio-historical gap between these two writers and their differences in political ideology, there are points of similarity between the two novels, especially in their attempt at reforming the society. Ramesh K. Srivastava’s comprehensive paper, “Arundhati Roy’s God of Small Things: A Study” (Bhargava 87 – 135), focuses on the plot, treatment of untouchables, the fight of the social outcastes against oppression, use of language, imagery, child-psychology, comic elements and criticises Roy’s occasional foray into the sordid and base reality.
how the novel is rich in imagery and deals with the vulnerability of childhood so that it assumes poetic proportions.

Much of Roy's originality in The God of Small Things is in her use of the language in the novel. All these articles – Cynthia Vanden Dreisen's "When Language Dances: The Subversive Power of Roy's Text in The God of Small Things" (Dhawan Arundhati Roy: The Novelist Extraordinary, 365 – 376), Alessandro Monti's "A(n) (En)Viable Idiom: Lexical Hybridization and Speech Acts in Arundhati Roy", C. Sathyamala's "The Emperors New Clothes: The God of Small Things" (Dhawan Arundhati Roy: The Novelist Extraordinary, 385 – 396), Kannammal Srinivasan's "The Future Memory and the Metaphysics of Technological Space: Text in Flux as Narrative Strategy in Arundhati Roy's The God of Small Things" (Dhawan 50 Years of Indian Writing, 94 – 104) – deal with Roy's enormous skill in word jugglery and narrative technique in The God of Small Things. Indira Nityanandam's paper, "The God of Small Things: A Linguistic Experiment" (Bhatt and Nityanandam 113 – 119), considers Roy's novel to be a clever experimentation in style. Y.P. Chhaya in her article, "Pearls in an Oyster" (Bhatt and Nityanandam 120 – 129) speaks about the various linguistic devices used by Roy to express the myriad ideas in The God of Small Things. The abundance of similes in the novel is the centre of focus of Darshana Trivedi, whose article, "Arundhati's Similes" (Bhatt and Nityanandam 130 – 135) draws parallels between the similes of Roy and those of the great Sanskrit playwright Kalidasa.
Though most of the critics consider Roy's novel to be one of the best things to have happened in the gamut of Indian English literature there are a few dissenting voice as well, who consider Roy's success as the handiwork of media propaganda and marketing blitz rather than the author's skill with the pen. Louella Lobo Prabhu's review, titled "The God of Small Things – In Perspective" (Indian Book Chronicle 22.12, 12 – 14) criticises the book for having no proper storyline and piling up of metaphors. Likewise, Rani Dharker's "Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Booker?: The Making of Small Gods in our Times" (Nanavati and Kar 140 – 144) is a scathing attack on Roy's novel in general and the linguistic devices applied in The God of Small Things in particular.

**Fasting, Feasting (1999):**

Anita Desai's *Fasting, Feasting* is a novel about a young woman who grows up in an oppressive atmosphere in a typical Indian set up. Having failed in all aspects of life this woman, Uma encounters a claustrophobic world from which she seem to have no escape. The second part of the novel deals with life in America the link being Uma's brother Arun who stays with the Patton family on a summer recess. But soon Arun discovers the atmosphere in the Patton household is no better than what he faced at home. Like most of Desai's novel *Fasting, Feasting* too concentrates on the portrayal of families and juxtaposition of the East and the West. Naturally, the critics have mostly focussed their attention on these aspects. Gabrielle Annan, for instance in his
review of Desai's latest novel, "Sugar-Sticky" (London Review of Books 21.11, 35) feels Desai to be a guide who explains the Indian society and culture to the Westerners. Asha Choubey in her review article "Their Separate Worlds – Two Families in Contrast and Affinity" (Indian Book Chronicle 24.10, 5 – 6) argues that in portraying two different cultures, Desai actually shows that the human nature remains essentially the same everywhere. Ralph J. Crane too reasons in the same vein in his review, "Novel of Contrasts" (CRNLE Journal 2000, 49 – 51) and concludes that Fasting, Feasting presents two contrasting worlds and cultures but ultimately reveals the similarities between the two. Again Andrew Marr in “Excellent Test of Character” (Guardian Weekly 161.1, 23) harps on Desai's portrayal of the east and the west and the essential similarities between the two. “Families that don't Function” (The Spectator June 5 1999, 39 – 40), the review article by Andrew Robinson also infers that though the title of the novel reflects the polarities of Indian poverty and American plenty the novel does not draw any hard distinctions between the two countries. Malashri Lal on the other hand, in “Intermeshing the Bipolar?” (The Book Review 23.7, 11 – 12) finds that Fasting, Feasting draws a bipolar world where the cultural and social gulfs are prominent. The critic feels the novel to be a critique of the meaningless yet harmful traditions of the Indian society on which patriarchy is based. Drawing on the bipolarity of the title Alessandro Monti considers the elements of asceticism and eroticism as represented by 'Fasting' and 'Feasting' in Desai's novel with reference to the Saiva myth in his paper, “Failed Householders: Renouncement and
Distributive Strategies in *Fasting, Feasting* (*The Atlantic Literary Review* 2.1, 64 – 76). The condition of the female protagonist and the women in general as revealed by *Fasting, Feasting* has also drawn much consideration on part of the critics. Gina Wisker’s paper, “The Snail beneath the Leaf, the Cow in the Well: Woman’s Roles, Diasporan Vision and Paradox in Anita Desai’s *Clear Light of Day* and *Fasting, Feasting*” (*The Atlantic Literary Review* 4.4, 1 – 19) infers that *Fasting, Feasting* focuses on the cultural constraints and potential with special emphasis on the lives of women. Frederick Luis Aldana’s review of the novel (*World Literature Today* 74.1, 240) concentrates on the powerful portrayal of woman who can never blossom into her own under the oppression of social conditions. Shirley Chew in her review of *Fasting, Feasting*, “Acting as Sita Did” (*The Times Literary Review* 5017, 23) feels that in this novel Desai returns to the fiction of family and shows how in perpetuating the patriarchal ideal it blights the life of both women and men. Under such a situation there can be no real freedom for women like Uma. J.M. Coetzee in his review article “Messages and Silence” (*The New York Review of Books* 47.9, 33 – 35), concludes that in *Fasting, Feasting* Desai presents people who are unrepresentative and forgotten. According to Coetzee, Desai makes the “forgotten woman’s cry for freedom more absolute by making her stupid, inarticulate” (34). *Fasting, Feasting* surely is not the best of Desai’s works and some critics have rightly criticised the novel on this account. Nilanjan S. Roy in his review “Nibbling at the Edges” (*Biblio* 4.7&8, 20) feels that though the novel opens on a promising note it does not carry on in the same way. R.K.
Kaul in “Too Factual to be Good Fiction” (Indian Book Chronicle 24.12, 9 – 10), finds many things that Desai describes in her novel to be improbable.

**When Dreams Travel (1999):**

*When Dreams Travel*, the latest novel by Githa Hariharan, is a bold attempt to reinterpret the *Arabian Nights* from a feminist perspective. The author uses the device of metafiction in achieving her objective. This feature of the novel is the subject of discourse of Rama Kundu’s paper, “*When Dreams Travel*; Metafiction as Feminist Discourse” (Shukla and Shukla 61 – 71). In this paper Kundu explores how Hariharan attempts to write ‘a metafiction through an elaborate intertext that is made to foreground the feminist issue from a fresh perspective (61). In her review of the novel “Dreams and Deeds” (Biblio 4.1&2, 11), Shobhana Bhattacharji reads the novel as questioning the premises of the *Arabian Nights*. Bhattacharji also feels that the novel contributes greatly to the feminist viewpoint by raising questions about women’s narrative. In another review “Fantasy Unlimited” (Indian Review of Books 8.6, 11) Kagal Carmen praises the novel for its “richness of imagery and the seductiveness of prose” and the fictional craft as evinced in the book’s carefully planned structure. However, Kagal finds the stories dished out by Dunyazad and Dilshad to be puzzling and pointless.
Small Remedies (2000):

The latest of Shashi Deshpande’s novels, Small Remedies, is a quest for self discovery. The protagonist Madhu takes up the job of unfolding the life of Bai, the famous singer, only to unravel herself. This quest is the subject of Chandra Holm in his article, “Potent Remedies: Themes and Techniques in Shashi Deshpande’s Small Remedies” (The Atlantic Literary Review 1.2, 154 - 161). Holm contends that what Madhu discovers at the end of her inner journey is that there can be no escape from tragedies in life – one can only hope for remedies – of small acts of kindness from fellow people. Ira Pande’s review, “The Pain of Memory” (Biblio 5.3&4, 22) too focuses on the predicament of Madhu and how she is relieved from her sense of guilt when she realises that no one is safe or protected for ever. Madhu’s journey towards self realisation by understanding and coming to terms with the events of the past is the focus of Ritu Menon’s review of Small Remedies (The Book Review 24.7, 24 – 25). Menon describes the novel as “Shashi Deshpande’s most confident novel yet” (24). Lakshmi Holmstrong in her review of the Small Remedies (Indian Review of Books 9.8, 4 – 5) makes an intrusive analysis of the novel and concludes that it is an excellent fiction concerned with death, music and also the art of writing. Gur Pyari Jandial’s paper, “Evolving a Feminist Tradition: The Novels of Shashi Deshpande and Manju Kapur” (The Atlantic Literary Review 4.3, 108 – 128) studies Small Remedies as primarily to a theme involving sexual fidelity. Jandial explores how a harmless pre-marital sexual relationship rocks the boat of Madhu and Som leading to the
loss of their son Aditya. James Gerein's review of Small Remedies (World Literature Today 74.4, 804) focuses on the unpredictable scheme of random violence, both political and personal, in Madhu's life and how they affect her. Though Deshpande has been generally acclaimed for this novel, R.K. Kaul offers a dissenting voice. His review paper, "A Long Novel Short on Readability" (Indian Book Chronicle 25.9, 7) expresses his dislike for the novel as he considers it to be incoherent and full of pathos.

In this chapter I have tried to capture some of the typical responses of the contemporary critics with regards to the novels under the purview of my thesis as comprehensively as possible. Two things, I believe, come out of this exercise. Firstly, though some authors and their works, especially Arundhati Roy's The God of Small Things, have been thoroughly discussed most of the authors and their works have not yet received much critical examination. Secondly, there has not been any elaborate study of the mother daughter relationship as projected in its many facets in these works. Though critics after critics have tried to interpret the works of the women novelists in the last decade as feminist in tone, and these analysis and interpretations enrich our understanding of the texts to a great extent, one important aspect of the feminist movement – the understanding and interpretation of the mother daughter relationship – appears not to have received adequate critical attention.