In the chapter FAMILY SAGAS, Rushdie’s *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* (2000), David Davidar’s *The House of Blue Mangoes* (2000) and Amitav Ghosh’s *The Glass Palace* (2000) have been chosen for study. But before going deep into the study, a brief profile of some selected texts has been presented. This profile generally presents the theme of family in one way or the other presented in the novels of the nineties.

All happy families resemble one another, but each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way --- Leo Tolstoy in *Anna Karenina*.

At its best family is the home we carry inside us, a heaven in a troubled world and even at its most trying, family still helps us, expanding our capacity for tolerance and escorting us into new realms of understanding. Now-a-days notions of family extend to an ever wider community embracing cousins, colleagues, friends and even helpful strangers. Whether we are linked by blood, marriage, adoption or affection, the families offer a variety of opportunities to celebrate the bond of human relations. “The family is a country of the heart”¹, says Giu Seppe Mazzini, an Italian nationalist leader.

Many novels in the 80s and 90s have focussed on the family. Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children* (1980) and *Shame* (1983), Nina Sibal’s *Yatra* (1987), Allan Sealy’s *Trotternama* (1988), Amitav Ghosh’s *The Shadow Lines* (1988) and Boman Desai’s *The Memory of Elephants* (1988) revolve round the personal, familial, cultural, historical and political concerns of a specific well-defined community or event or institution that forms a strand in the rich cultural fabric of India — Muslim, Sikh, Anglo-Indian and Parsi.
The Family saga, in which the fortunes of a family are traced over three or four generations, becomes an occasion for political and social comment. The family saga allows a writer to move both diachronically and synchronically in order to confront the history and geography of India. The personal and the public merge here. Since the saga, usually from the point of view of the narrator—Saleem Sinai in Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children*, Eugene in *Trotternama*, Homi in *The Memory of Elephants*, Krishna in *Yatra* and Tridib in *The Shadow Lines* and since no one narrator can encompass the whole of Indian reality, that reality is refracted through a mix of fantasy, allegory, realism, wit and irony.

Family and family relationships centerstage the action of *A Suitable Boy* (1993) of Vikram Seth reflecting the tradition of the 19th century realistic novel. The novel is woven round the interests, concerns and behavioural patterns of four families – the Mehras, the Kapoors, the Chatterjees and the Khans. The four families are linked together by love, marriage and friendship against the backdrop of the national life of the 50s and 60s. Each family has a plot and therefore, there are four plots and there are some sub-plots here to help the four plots to advance slowly and steadily towards the main plot—the search for a suitable boy. The sub-plots -- the academic skullduggery, the political parallelism between Nehru and Tandon, on the one hand, and, the political rift between L.N. Agarwal and Mahesh Kapoor, on the other, Saeeda Bai and Maan, all help the main plot to stand on surer and firmer footing.

The Mehras are led by Mrs. Rupa Mehra (visibly) and Late Rughubir Mehra (invisibly). Lata, Savita and Pran (son of Mahesh Kapoor and son-in-law of Mrs. Mehra) and Varun are on the side of Mrs. Mehra and therefore, are
The family of five children born in strict alteration of sex to Justice Chatterji, though affluent and anglicised, is of lotus-eating type. This family represents the novel “Vanity Fair”. Chatterji himself puts it “None of them work, but each had an occupation” (ASB-384). The cheerful and cynical Amit writes poetry; his glamorous sister Meenakshi is a social butterfly; Dipankar seeks the ‘Meaning of Life’ and spends his time reading the poet Sri Aurobindo; Kakoli is always on the phone with her string of admirers; and Tapan attending a prestigious school at Jheel. Justice Chatterji reflects unhappily that his sons are “doing nothing that counted as real work” (ASB-384). He gives them the ultimatum that one of them has to finally undertake the responsibility of the family holdings.

The Kapoor clan is headed by Mr. Mahesh Kapoor, Revenue Minister in the Nehruvite S.S. Sharma Ministry of Purva Pradesh. His wife, Mrs. Kapoor, is deeply religious, superstitious and conservative. His daughter Veena is married into the Tandon family, with Kedarnath Tandon. His elder son Pran Kapoor, an asthmatic lecturer in English at Brahmpur University is married into the Mehra family with Savita Kapoor. With the exception of Mahesh Kapoor and Maan Kapoor, the family is, on the whole, traditionalist.

The Khan clan is headed by the old Nawab Sahib of Baitar, an old aristocrat, a big landlord and a big man in all respects. His sons Imtiaz Khan and Firoz Khan and his daughter Zainab are all birds. Only Begum Abida Khan is the most aggressive, modern and feudal.
As Mohapatra remarks “The novel is organised around marriage in the fundamental way reminding us the key issues of family, kinship ties and community intersecting on the site of marriage.”

Seth’s idea and practice of novel reflects the art form of soap opera, for instance, on the model of televised serials, The Bold and the Beautiful, Santa Barbara or Dynasty, wherein family remains the core of all ramification. Each family generates a whole network of subsidiary characters, related by blood or marriage, any one of them may and often does develop into a new story. Thus Chatterjees are allied to Mehras, Tandons to Kapoors. Saida Bai, Mistress of a Kapoor generates her own typical family consisting of an illegitimate daughter, her musician and language teacher, each of whom branches off into further diversion. Many of them like Rasheed suffer private hells or dream of exclusive heaven as dreamt by Dipankar but none can precipitate or retard the main action. Even the definition of novel as degenerate epic hardly suits such disconnected assemblage of characters and episodes on the sole principle of family network. But countless parallels may be cited from the soap opera where sons and daughters, fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters, former spouses and lovers always manage to extend the story on the small screen.

Mother defends the family against the modern / western invasion and protects its identity rooted in the inherited tradition. In A Suitable Boy, Mrs. Rupa upholds the status quo and defends her family against the intrusion of the modern India as a multilingual and multiethnic democratic reality. Mrs. Mahesh Kapoor fulfills the stereotypic role of Indian Mother as a glorious martyr to the family and tradition. The same is considered in respect of Upamanyu Chatterjee’s The Last Burden wherein Jamun’s
mother acts as a protective and uniting factor between father and sons who bicker always on account of loss of geniality in filial relations.

As Das Gupta observes: "It is the family a hermetically sealed unit frozen for ever in time and space, which triumphs, as Lata 'named after the most pliable thing, a Vine' withdraws her nascent attempt to grow as individual in the post-independent India and she does it exactly in accordance with the Bollywood masterscript which lays a total ban on cross-cultural man-woman bonding as well as issues of change and dynamism."4

It is the family that assumes centre stage in Seth's A Suitable Boy. As Anita Desai puts it, "Although in their rash youth, they (Lata and Maan) might be tempted by the possibilities of change, defiance, and the unknown, their lessons and return, chastened, to the safety and security of the familiar and the traditional, represented here, in the Indian fashion, by the great god family"5. Lata, denounces passion towards Kabir as she is totally shaped by family. She informs Kabir that she cannot give up her family, especially mother, by marrying him and hence with more than disinterested eye responses warmly to Haresh's proposal and finally marries him. The extended family enforces, as Kabir realises "a slow and strong acceptance on its members" (ASB-878) and he settles down peacefully looking after his insane mother and without thinking of marriage.

The birth of a girl child to Pran and Savitha brings home to Lata the significance of the family. Watching Mrs.Mehra fuss over Savita and her new grand child, Lata realises that she is not as important with her mother or resentful of maternal protectiveness, as she had been before. "Her mother appeared to her now as the guardian of the family; and with life and death so near each other in the hospital, it seemed to Lata that all that provided continuity in the world or protection from it was the family."(ASB-877)
Yet all is not perfect with the institution of family, for in it there are also areas of repressed sexuality and darker passions. Lata has a traumatic experience when her aunt’s husband, Mr. Sahgal, makes crude sexual advances to her at night on a visit to Lucknow to her mother’s first cousin. Lata keeps silent over this episode as she is governed by code of silence and honour in family circles. The middle-aged Lucknow lawyer has cruelly victimised his own daughter, Kiran, who does not speak about her violation, and has turned highly neurotic. He describes his wife as being “like Sita --- the perfect wife”, but takes pleasure in showing off the photographs of both his wife and daughter in distasteful poses.

Extramarital affairs have been offshoots of the modern insular families. The spoilt supersophisticated and glamorous Meenakshi Chatterjee has an extramarital affair, becomes pregnant, induces a miscarriage and then continues seeing her husband’s friend, Billy Irani.

The land-owning feudal family has proved itself destructive to the life of Rasheed who senses that his family is responsible for the pitiable state of the villagers of Debaria. Rasheed was determined to bring some sort of social change to the centuries-old land tenure system. He incurs the wrath of his own family when he compels the village patwari to transfer the ownership of his own piece of land to Kaccheru, a servant, who has served his family loyally for forty years. Disinherited by his family and driven to frustration he loses mental balance and commits suicide on the banks of the Ganges. Rasheed rebels against both conventional sexual morality and the institution of private property. Family softens even the most egotistical men. The bread-winning ruthless aggressive egoists such as Dr. Kishan Chand Seth, Arun Mehra and Haresh Khanna are considered nice men in the novel and they are more occupied with family than with the reality outside. The
Nawab of Baitar spends holidays with grand children and Kabir is devoted to his insane mother.

*A Suitable Boy*, as a “filmic melodrama idealizes family as a haven of peace and tradition.” The micro unit of family underpins the larger structure of society and state, a pattern on which the traditional realism rests. Thus the widespread infiltration of non-literary subgenres of mass entertainment and information subverts the traditional realistic form of the novel replacing parallel mimesis with formulas and uniqueness of human characters with stereo types.

Another novel that deals with a family’s quest for finding a spouse in an arranged marriage is *Freedom Song* (1998) by Amit Chowdhuri. It celebrates the minute frustrations and satisfactions of the numberless tiny routines that made up each day and week of two middle class families of Khuku and Bola living in Calcutta. The novel presents the elderly parents, Khuku and Shib, who have returned to Calcutta after an active life in Mumbai. Along with this is presented the web of familial relationships that fan out both geographically and historically crossed borders and pull different members of the family together, who are scattered apart over the west. Khuku’s brother is Bola. Bola’s son, Bhaskar has presented his family with two dilemmas – a suitable bride must be found for him, which is a little difficult because of his insistence on hawking copies of Ganashakti and breaking his allegiance from communist ideology. By recording Bhaskar’s passive induction back into the world of parents and eventual marriage the reality of the survival of the Indian family is suggested. Mini is Khuku’s childhood friend. The saga of her parental family is connected with the Partition of India. She, along with her siblings, moves to India in the wake of Partition. The early death of her eldest brother who doubled as guardian
to Mini and her sister meant that “the possibility of Shantidi’s and Mini’s marriage became more remote; and then they did not know exactly when, it no longer remained a possibility” (FS-118). The family circle around Mini shrinks with the death of her parents and two older brothers. Her youngest brother leads an incompatible married life. Mini and her sister Shantidi live bleak lives of spinsterhood. Khuku’s niece, Beena, is a divorce, living with her parents and teaching at an orphanage. Most of the characters wake, sleep and talk and eke out days with inconsequential chatter referring to the turmoil such as demolition of the Babri Masjid. The novel mirrors the slow fracturing of relationships across the insular world of family. Sons and daughters have gone abroad. The network of relatives of a family or clan has dwindled into a faint tracery.

Amit Chowdhuri’s another novel _A New World_ (2000) presents a disfunctional and disjunctional diasporic family life wherein the protagonist, Jayojit, a reputed academician loses his wife Amala in an uncivil divorce in America, and wages an acrimonious custody battle over their only child Vikram. “The pictures of Bonny were sans parents as if he’d been conceived in a future when parents were not only no longer necessary, but were no more possible” (ANW-48). The insularity of the family that seems to increase even without children is suggestive of a family of parentless children and childless parents with divorce as the pivotal principle of family’s bleakness. Yet another novel of Amit Chowdhuri _A Strange and Sublime Address_ (1991) is about an extended family with all sorts of relatives that lends the boy-protagonist Sandeep sense of rootedness, freedom, happiness, warmth and security. Dreaded happenings seem simpler in the company of family. For Sandeep, in his Chotomama’s illness, the terror of death seems to be a fleeting shadow chased away by assemblage of relatives as though the firm roots of the extended family support a weakened
one. Chotomama’s middle-class family expresses a strong bond between brother and brother, and brother and sister. Each family knows the antecedents of every other and take avid interest in the happenings of the other houses. It is in such a family of hectic activity that Sandeep gets happiness and not in his apartmentalised family in Mumbai.

Anita Desai’s *Fasting, Feasting* (1999) and Raj Kamal Jha’s *The Blue Bedspread* (1999) present the families that don’t function. In *Fasting, Feasting* Anita Desai presents Papa and Mama, the Indian parents, as two monsters of Gothic proportions locked into inseparable marital disharmony, determined to inflict on their two daughters Uma and Arana and son Arun every ounce of the prejudices and disappointments of their own lives.

“(Papa’s) jokes were always directed against others and they were quite ferocious under the cover of the geniality that seemed proper to the ambience of a dinner party or reception at the club. One could be fooled into thinking Papa was in good spirits. But the family was not fooled; they knew he was actually rattled, shaken by what he saw as a possible challenge to his status.”

Arun, on studies in America, at last experiences “the total freedom of anonymity” from the stifling family of his own in India. But in America he visits the Patton’s family in Massachussetts as a guest over a summer and much to his dismay discovers that the American family turns out to be as dysfunctional as his own in India. Though Mr. Patton does not command an unchallengeable control over his family, the children – Melanie and Rod — are not still living in bliss. All the members of the family seem to be going their separate ways. Rod is a fitness-freak; Melanie, a victim of bulimia;
and Mrs. Patton always shopping at the foodmart. Whereas Mr. Patton loves preparing and eating meat, Mrs. Patton poses as if enjoying her husband’s preparations, but secretly she hates them. This family seems to be on the verge of break-up and is unlike that of the Indian family of Mama Papa whose life goes on smoothly despite the subdued anger of the children.

Like *Fasting, Feasting*, Raj Kamal Jha’s *The Blue Bedspread*\(^1\) is also about a dysfunctional middle-middleclass family in Calcutta which has the dark aspects of abuse, incest, pain and domestic tyranny of wife-beating. It is also about petty aspirations and frustrations. There is a brother with his elder sister and there is pater familias with the latch-key maid Bhabani and finally mother who is introduced in the later part of the book. The shattered siblings (the sister and the brother) comfort each other at night in the blue bedspread against the viciousness of their father and the cruel world. Father beats mother and motherless children. Homosexual rape by a drunken father and mother-in-law sharing her daughter-in-law’s bed and resorting to cunnilingus are ugly incidents that occur in a peculiar conspiracy of silence woven by fractured families that mix love and hatred in equally strange proportions. R.K. Jha exposes the hidden hungers that fester amidst families that have been burdened with poverty of means so extreme that it has eaten into the soul of the father who thrashes the daughter when she cannot account for a one rupee coin that he has given the children for their bus fare. The narrator’s sister’s husband is a doubting Thomas. He doubts if his wife had had premarital sex. So, the wife breaks away from familyhood and falls into an incestuous family with her own brother resulting in the birth of a child. The last words of the novel “I am the father of my sister’s child” (BB-228) are suggestive of the fact that in the days to come the family may be either without parents or without children. The words of Mary Catherine Bateson, an anthropologist, seem true: “The family is changing, not
disappearing. We have to broaden our understanding of it, look for the new metaphors."

Vikram Seth's *An Equal Music* (1999)\textsuperscript{12}, a winner of Crosswords Prize for Best Fiction, intertwines the history of the town of Rochdale with that of Michael's family, mainly in order to present them as victims. Michael's father's butchershop was appropriated to make way for a road which was never built. Bereft of his profession the father fell ill. Nursing him, the mother suffered a fatal stroke. Over Christmas Michael plans to lay a white rose on the parking lot that eventually replaced the shop and family home: "The flat and, I hope snow-covered site of my mother's life." Michael loves Julia. They live together, move apart, meet again after ten years and then part again through the layers of love, passion, guilt, care and betrayal. Julia, like Lata in *A Suitable Boy* denounces passion towards Michael. She marries a dependable American non-musical businessman-husband and has a son. She feels guilty of having continued extramarital affair with Michael. She decides that her present and her future are her family. Michael is the past and she cannot continue to live there. She says "I, of all people, who have a Before and an After, should have known that you can't relive your life"(AEM-325). Here the words of Thomas Hardy come true : "I am the family face; flesh perishes, I live on."\textsuperscript{13} The honesty of love shown by her husband James has stood by her. She says of James as thus: "In the worst days, when I could hardly recognise myself in the mirror, I saw in his eyes that I was myself"(AEM-327). Whereas in Michael's presence she becomes restless and uncertain; afraid and guilty. Julia has her Catholic faith, which is her base of confidence. As a mother, she speaks of the need for stability for her son Luke and of her desire to extend the family by having another child so as to provide emotional security for him because "Luke needs someone to share me with, or he'll grow up to be as
selfish as Iam'(AEM-328). Besides she realises that continuation of pre-marital affairs with Michael would hurt her husband James and her son Luke. Renewal of such passion would destroy her family. Hence she decides in favour of a family leaving behind Michael. The Maggiore Quartet with whom Michael plays, laughs, lives, travels and finally leaves serves a metaphor of his family. At the end of the novel, the other members of the Quartet forgive him and they all reunite like a happy family, the quartet being the equivalent in this novel of a family of contrasting personalities who have learned to tolerate one another for their common good.

The Last Burden (1993) of Upamanyu Chatterjee is quite different a family saga as it is not concerned with Indian History but only remotely concerned with Indian middle-class life and explores that life with linguistic brilliance and wryness. It is a story of what happens to familial ties in the fast-changing socio-economic scenario created by the cataclysmic hurtling of India into modernity. Jamun, the protagonist learns to construct a halo around his private space and around himself and gradually loses these halos in the process of finding himself anew. He realises that his story is an ever repeated tale that had been lived by his father and by his mother and perhaps would continue forever. It focusses on how values and cherished relationships suddenly get distorted to mutually destroying burdens. The source of all trouble within the family emanates from the anachronistic, displaced and dispossessed patriarch, Shyamanand, who exercises his authority over his family. He would have lived much better and would have contributed much for the happiness of the family had he learnt to transmit his finer sentiments from the objects he owned and cherished the creatures connected with them. He always found it easier to cherish the inanimate rather than the vital. So, eternal bickering had made up the staple diet of their relationship and the children had grown up in a hapless home where they
were always taking sides with their evercomplaining mother. It is this bleakness of family that prevents Jamun from entering into family of his own. Everything considered, he feels that the allegiance of flesh and blood is real and insurmountable. He realises:

"......one’s duty must hurl one first towards one’s blood. To hold true to one’s blood is more noble ......Hearken unto thy Father that begat thee and despise not thy mother when she is old." 14

So he looks after his father Shyamanand as the last burden out of filial piety. In the character of Jamun and Burfi, Upamanyu Chatterjee depicts the slow erosion of the Indian family mores by christianity and English education, toils of capitalism and urbanisation. His concerns are disintegration of the family conflict between the generations that result in loneliness and isolation of individual. The novelist himself has pointed out in an interview : "My new novel, The Last Burden, is concerned not with growing up but with family ties. It takes a close look at an Indian family, the complexity of relationships and how these change as a cataclysmic event occurs." 15

History and family sagas of the nineties facilitate an analysis of institutions like family and marriage, institutions linked to the question of gender and institutions connecting with ground realities. Manju Kapoor’s Difficult Daughters(1998), Amitav Ghosh’s The Glass Palace(2000), Salman Rushdie’s The Ground Beneath Her Feet(1999) and The Moor’s Last Sigh(1994), David Davidar’s The House of Blue Mangoes(2002) and Arundhati Roy’s The God of Small Things(1997) are concerned with lineage and heredity and are in direct contrast to the kind of individualistic existential novels of Anita Desai and Nayantara Sahgal of the 60s and 70s.
In Difficult Daughters, 1947 Partition had great repercussions on the lives of people as it resulted in geographical, economic, emotional and psychological dislocation. The turmoil of partition corresponds with the turmoil in the lives of individuals. Lala Diwan Chand's house is divided on the insistence of Lajwanti, like the nation which divided along communal lines. Swarnalatha and Ashrafi cease to be friends. In the Professor's house, Virmati, the second wife, occupies the dressing room and formal seating area used by the guests while the first wife, children and mother occupy the centrally located room. During the summer the family sleeps on the roof while Virmati and the Professor sleep in the garden. This division of space is further highlighted when Ganga (the first wife) takes care of the Professor's needs such as food and clothing and Virmati shares his bed. When Ganga goes to live in Kanpur with her belongings, Virmati sticks on to the Professor and raises a family with the birth of Ida which coincides with the coming of freedom to India.

It is family's fury and reproaches from which Virmati runs away to live as a second wife and pursue education and career. For her own family she is a source of shame. They either lock up for an arranged marriage or allow her to go to Lahore only to prevent her encounter with the Professor. In the Indian context it is the existence in a family which ultimately gives one stability, anchorage and peace. Virmati, despite being a new woman, aspires to stick on to living as second wife to the already-married Professor. By living in the family that way she wanted to get the societal approval and identity. Enfolding herself in family with the professor relieves her from the sense of insecurity and uncertainty. To run her home, first a joint family and later her own, is happiness for her. The sense of continuation of family even extends to her daughter, Ida, who is ferocious and is unlike her mother Virmati. She rejects her husband Prabhakar outrightly and walks out of him.
who had denied her maternity by forcing her to go for abortion. She craves for rearing up of a family by holding her pregnancy. She admits:

“In denying that incipient little thing in my belly, he sowed the seeds of our break-up.” (DD-144)

Arundhati Roy’s *The God of Small Things* reflects Kate Millet’s idea of patriarchal family. “Patriarchy’s chief institution is the family. It is both a mirror and connection with the larger society, a patriarchal unit within a patriarchal whole.” The novel is about a family of different members supporting different parties and ideologies. Families that broke and transgressed established lovelaws have not been happy. Yet it is unhappy families which make nice stories. The Ayemenem House, with all its glorious name and its old hypocritical value systems, collapses like the Compson family in Faulkner’s *The Sound and the Fury*. The protagonists Ammu and Velutha are destroyed for their transgression of family’s ethical laws— “The laws that made grandmothers grandmothers uncles, uncles, cousins cousins, jam jam and jelly jelly” (GOST-31). From early childhood Ammu had realised the travesty of one happy family she had read in fairy tales. “As a child she had learned very quickly to disregard the Father Bear Mother Bear stories she was given to read. In her version, ‘Father Bear beat Mother Bear with brass vases. Mother Bear suffered those beatings with mute resignation’” (GOST-180). It is only because of patriarchal family that she has no place as a divorced daughter. Such a family naturally inflicts pain and suffering on the innocent twins Rahel and Estha, who by way of escaping its stifling atmosphere, cross the borders of love-laws “whom to love and how. And how much” (GOST-328) and resort to incest thereby getting a strange peace and freedom. The novel presents the family code of the Ayemenem House where love, the founding stone of all other
relationships in a family, remains only an unfulfilled dream or just a fleeting experience. The family which was exemplary in theological matters, fails to see an example worth emulating as far as human relationship is concerned. Familial ethic remains in conflict with the emotional urges of the individual. The so called bond of love-marriage, turns out to be a social obligation marginalising women and creating an illusion of family.

Salman Rushdie’s *The Moor's Last Sigh* is a family saga of merchants, painters and gangsters woven with the chronological sequence of political events such as the Emergency of 1970s, the anti-Sikh riots of 1984, the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi and the demolition of Babri Masjid including the references to Indian writers Manto and Chagti and film stars Sanjay Dutt and Nargis and also Miss World Rita Faria referred to as Nadia Wadia. The poses, antics and cavortings of the family’s founders, Cameons da Gama and Aires da Gama and their wives and relatives in the spice mountains of Goa, are related with zest and humour. Narrative distance is maintained. Even the meeting and mating of Portuguese Christian Aurora with Jewish-Indian Abraham are related with zest and humour through the imagery of a peppery consummation in the spice granaries of the port. But by the time their last child, nicknamed the Moor, is born some eighteen years after their increasingly unsuccessful union, the mood of this anti-novel has changed drastically from high good humour to a gloomy enquiry into evil, organized crime, hatred, vicious rumour-mongering, solitude and life as a spiritual sentence to despair. Only Aurora’s painting, or the Moor’s confessional writing, can protest with integrity against this despair. Of the siblings in this doomed family, Ina seeks escape in promiscuity in the USA but is laid low by cancer; Minnie seeks refuge as a Christian nun, sees absurd visions of a prophetic rat and dies as Sister Floreas in the Armageddon of Bombay’s firebombing; and Mynah is murdered, probably
by her father's henchmen because as a Marxist lawyer she was exposing his organized, commercial crime. So the siblings try all contemporary avenues: mindless pleasure-seeking, Christianity, Marxism, and for the Moor, the despairing confessions of uncommitted, secular art.

The Moor's Last Sigh and The God of Small Things have many things in common. They are both stories of families from the Christian community in Kerala. Rushdie's panorama is wider; his story is a saga, the da Gama-Zogoiby family saga. The Moor's father, Abraham, for example, is transformed from a humble Cochin Jew into the head of an evil empire, of commerce and corruption in Bombay. The family portrait Roy gives us is more intimate, and the connections between the generations are more immediate; it is the great-aunt who is most responsible for the betrayal that destroys the lives of the twins at the centre of the story. The main characters of both novels suffer incurable damage. Roy tells sometimes almost an unbearably touching story of a boy and girl, twins, who without meaning to cause the death of their English cousin and who, because of the terrible coincidence of the discovery on the same night of the affair that their divorced mother is carrying on with the young untouchable servant they all love, are forced to betray him, as part of the family's effort to preserve their reputation. They are never able to forgive themselves; years later the twins (who had been separated) meet again, both defeated by life, in the old family house, and celebrate their pain with an incestuous encounter that is only the last of their transgressions (and the family's transgressions) against "the laws that lay down who should be loved and how, and how much" (GOST-33). Questions that in India have social and even political implications because of the caste system, the world of the children, their perceptions of the physicality of their surroundings and the people there, their pains, guilts, perplexities, joys, and finally their sinking
into an emotional darkness that will last their whole lives, are portrayed with piercing immediacy.

On the other hand the Moor, Moraes, “deformed child born of a stunted love”, the last of a decaying family that “arrives hoping for somewhere better” than this world, in spite of his unhappy condition and lack of love, never becomes really moving. In some ways he is similar to Salim, the “hero” of *Midnight’s Children*, who is perhaps the only character to Rushdie that reaches the heart of the reader; but the Moor, also a victim of an incurable disease that is a metaphor for an age (his biological clock runs at double speed; for each year he lives two), seems to be conceived cerebrally and does not inspire spontaneous compassion. His fall into disgrace and violence, betrayed by his mother, does not bear much more weight than many other events in a basically picaresque narrative.

In contrast to Ammu, the twins’ mother and the cause of their destruction, who in spite of being sometimes unjust to her children also loves them and is herself a victim (to the death) of circumstances and social prejudice, Aurora Zogoby is over-lifesize and is a monster of egoism, stubbornness, even vulgarity. It is difficult to believe in her charm, and even more in her artistic talent; irony is obviously intended here as well, but unfortunately it further reduces any human sympathy she might inspire, which would have been necessary for her relationship with her son to become a strong enough thread on which to hang such a voluminous narrative.

Shobha De’s *Starry Nights* presents the protagonist Asha Rani, who after living a life of popular heroine in the Bollywood Cinema and experiencing a life of sexual promiscuity, boredom, and confusion finally settles down to a family life with one Mr. Jammy Phillips in Wellington. Far
from the world of cinema she leads a family life with this farmer—husband. Her life fills with love. Satisfied with her present state of life she tries to forget the past. She does not want to even think of India. When in one and a half year, she becomes the mother of a beautiful girl-child. She finds her life filled with every happiness of the world. To enjoy this important event of life, she decides that she will share the mutual trust and understanding—the most beautiful aspects of a mother-daughter relationship with Sasha, her daughter. When Jay, her husband, proposes that she visit India with the child, the thought of her mother shatters her. "Nothing doing, no way, I never want to go back. And please don't give Amma the news. I want to protect Sasha from her. I want to bring her up with all the love in the world. I never want her to meet her grandmother, never." On reaching India she finds herself in totally strange circumstances and feels a kind of responsibility towards her Appa (father) who is back home and is suffering from illness. Appa's faith in her gives her strength and courage to restart their old family film studio in Madras. Now as a member in the family's fold she has existence, belongingness, and opportunity to do something creative in her life. She, then, manages to bring beautiful Sasha to India to live with her so that she can give her daughter what she could not receive from her mother. The institution of family has such a therapeutic effect on the disturbed psyche of the individual that it gives satisfaction, peace and joy. The words of Susan Partnow (a peace activist) is what matters in the context of Asha Rani's life: "It is within the families themselves where peace can begin." 

Now some selected family sagas are discussed. Salman Rushdie's The Ground Beneath Her Feet(1999) reflects the words of J.S.Bryan "Many men can make a fortune but very few can build a family."
The primary narrative thread of *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*, follows a lovingly rendered group of characters and tells us the often deeply affecting story of how they live, love and die. If it is a novel about displacement and dispossession, it is also a novel about the fact that human relationships, whether in a family or outside a family, provide homelands of their own. The novel seems to be saying that those of us who live through things are all displaced persons and that surviving things often means losing them within the context of the past. We are displaced, all of us, from the naivete and innocence we possessed as children; we are displaced from those people whom we lost to death. The place to which we cling is not described on any map. When we search for handholds in the Teal, we search for other people to hold on to. When we cling, finally we cling to love and family.

Hybridity is the common element that runs through all families of Rushdie's novels. Love and fidelity run through sexual voracity, homelands are lost and new homes are never gained. Families that grow greedy for worldly gains end on a note of sorrow and despair.

Rushdie's *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* is a saga of families and their interactions are entwined with the elements of romance, music, rock'n'roll, myths and earthquakes. Families break up/apart and experience circumstantial drift across countries and continents in pursuit of survival, personal happiness and anchorage. Polygamous marriages and sexual promiscuity happen to be circumstantial necessity for successful survival.

The families of the Camas – Ormus and his parents, the Merchants - Rai and his parents, the Kalamanjias – Percis and her parents, the Doodhwallas- Piloo and his family and Shetty —Vina and her hybrid parents and their interactions form the main body of the story.
The family of Camas consists of Sir Darius Xerxes Cama and Lady Spenta Cama, a Parsi married couple. They gave birth to two pairs of dizygotic male-twins. In the first delivery they had Khusro and Ardaviraf simply called Cyrus and Virus respectively. In the second delivery they had Ormus and a still-born corpse of Gayomart. They lived in Apollo Bunder, a family apartment in Bombay with their sons. Darius, was a staunch Cantabrigian rationalist and an eminent barrister-at-law who had eaten his dinners at Middle Temple and had subsequently dedicated his life to what he called the miracle of reason. He yielded up rights of paternity to no god and took up the reins of fatherhood and in strict fairness, oppressed all his children equally. Lady Spenta was just a placid woman and took pride in the supremacy of Parsi divinity. Lady Spenta Cama’s religiosity—her faith in Parsi divinity, was taken for granted as stupidity by her husband Sir Darius Xerxes Cama. In fact

It was not stupidity. It was the unflappability of a soul fully occupied on the spiritual level, or, more exactly, a soul who found in her everyday routines a means of communing with the divine. Lady Spenta Cama was on speaking terms with two of the Parsi angels, the Amesha Spentas for whom she was named: the Angel Good Thoughts, silent conversations with whom occupied her for an hour each morning; and the Angel Orderly Righteousness, under whose tutelage she became minutely attentive to household affairs, the supervision of which took up most of her afternoons. Of the various supernatural Spentas, this was the duo with whom Lady Spenta Cama felt the most affinity. The Angel Excellence and the Angel Immortality were far beyond her, she
humbly allowed, and as to the Angel Perfect Sovereignty and the Angel Divine Piety, it would have been immodest to claim too close a connection with them. The Christian and Muslim concept of angels, she liked to boast, was “derived” from these Zoroastrian originals, just as devils descended from “our own Daevas”; such was her proprietorial feeling, her pride in Parsi primacy, that she spoke of these malignant forces as if they were personal pets, or one of the many china ornaments with which she littered the Camas’ thing-stuffed Apollo Bunder apartment, that much-coveted Bombay belvedere with its five high windows facing saltily out to sea. It was nevertheless startling that one so close to virtue should give way so spectacularly to the Daevas Misery, False Appearance and Evil Mind, and wretchedly cry out for woe. - - - - Arre, come on, then, take me, why not, O death be my dominion.”(GBHF-24).

Thus she always wished for premature death out of pessimistic religiosity. Sir Darius, being an Anglophile, had long found the various manifestations of his wife’s literalist religiosity difficult to handle. He concealed his unease but could not shut out her brat of religion. Since the death of her son, Gayo, her personality changed, becoming nervy, unsettled and easily flustered. Darius, the best cricketer hit his son Ardaviraf in the head leading to the permanent disability of mental faculties. Wordlessly as Ardaviraf grew, Darius punished himself by absenting himself from all sporting activities and music. Cyrus and Virus were stopped attending music lessons. After Virus’s retreat into silence, Lady Spenta retreated into her spiritual world. However, this silence made her more desperate. Sir Darius
retreated into the library of classical texts for peace of mind which had been so comprehensively destroyed by the private and public history of the pre-independent era. "The Law, which had given him such moral sustenance all his adult life, had become, as many of his colleagues had begun openly to proclaim, "an ass." In this period the imperial administration had begun to use the full force of the legal system against the nationalists, and even though Sir Darius was a leading advocate of British civilisation and opponent of the Congress, he began to experience a profound sense of unease at what was going on. Many of his respected colleagues had joined the Independence johnnies, whose leader, Mr. Gandhi, was after all a pretty crafty legal eagle himself. Taken by surprise by the storm within himself, Sir Darius Xerxes Cama gave up his practice and retreated into the sumptuous library of classical texts which was the glory of the Apollo Bunder apartment, and he sought in the groves of scholarship that peace of mind which had been so comprehensively destroyed by the private and public history of his time." (GBHF-40)

A kind of indifference and monstrosity grew in Sir Darius for he lost his capacity and all his faculties. He threw the blame on his children.

"The two individuals who suffered most as a result of Sir Darius' decline were his sons, Cyrus and Ormus, both whom he took to berating regularly on the subject of the decay of Parsi youth whose alleged feebleness Sir Darius had begun to hold in contempt. The worse he played, the more vociferously he accused the next generation of decadence, of defeatism, of weakness, of homosexuality." (GBHF-45)
The Parsis' interests were inseparable from those of the British, whose presence they had so vigorously supported, whose culture they had so successfully integrated with their own. Anglophilia, for so long the basis of these people's ascendancy, would henceforth be like the mark of Cain in postcolonial India. It would be the dark star hanging over their interminable but also irreversible decline.

The Anglophilic Darius, by contrasting the British youth with the Parsi youth, deplores the pitiable state of the Parsi youth.

"Great things are consequently expected of the younger generation in England. Our youth, by sad contrast.....is in a state of advanced decay.........old virtues---service of community, discipline of personality, memorizing of poetry, mastery of firearms, pleasure in falconry, formal dancing, building of character through sport -- these things have lost meaning. Only in the mother country can they be rediscovered." (GBHF-88)

Sir Darius Cama belongs to a set of people who believed in a 'fourth function of outsidedness' (GBHF-72) and "who are simply born not belonging..... without strong affiliation to family or location or nation or race"(GBHF-72). Rushdie seems to celebrate "the non-belongers, the different ones, the outlaws, the freaks." (GBHF-73)

The tragic silence of the Camas in Apollo Bunder had driven away friends and colleagues. Darius took to drink and opium. He entered and enjoyed the dark existence of Kamatipura. The lower he sank, the louder he grew in his remonstrations.
"Returning from the cages of Kamatipura, from the rooms of the dancing whores, he would often shake his sons awake to accuse them of moral turpitude, of going to hell, to the dogs, to pot" (GBHF-45)

Cyrus and Ormus remained mute in fear. Ormus could not express his talent in singing. Lady Spenta was lost in mysticism, Virus in silence. The elder, Cyrus developed hatred for his father. This hatred turned into a mania of hurting his brother Ormus. However, Cyrus worshipped his father and spared no effort to please him.

Cyrus’s impotent rage towards his father turned into a psychic disorder and he diverted all his anger towards his brother Ormus. Got frenzied towards his musical notes, Cyrus attempted to pillow him to death. With a view to mend the wrong behaviour, Cyrus was put in a hill station Boarding School where the British principles of cold baths, bad food, regular beatings and high quality academic instructions were imposed. But all this made Cyrus grow into a full-blooded psychopath who later committed murders by pillowing. In this connection his mother Lady Spenta repents as thus “The best in our natures is drowning in the worst” (GBHF-136). The result was that Cyrus was disowned of his property. Ormus, who ran farthest from his father’s shadow, was actually the child who was most shaped in the family for he got the exhibitionist streak of music like his father. He got that freedom of following his dead twin brother Gayo’s musical intuitions even though he had not received any love from his father and even though he suffered the family affliction of silence and inwardness.
The other reason for Sir Darius's decline in the family might also be due to his wife Lady Spenta's indifference towards him. This might be in turn due to loss of her faith in the honesty of her husband. She discovered that Darius had built his professional life on a falsehood that his law degree from England was a fake one. So, she moved away from his conjugal bliss of married life. Their mutual affection founded on sexual compatibility gave way to mutual distrust and moral and emotional incompatibility. Moreover, Darius was a male chauvinist for he criticised Parsi ladies including his wife as stupid beggars, no backboned weaklings when they began raising funds for the emancipation of Parsi destitute women. Lady Spenta, by way of combating her tensioned domestic life, plunged into good works such as visiting hospitals and looking after the ill and crippled people. While she was battling with the real world, its diseases, its cruelties, Darius sank into the unreality of his library, boozing and solitude. The Parsi vision is found in Rushdie's The Ground Beneath Her Feet. The Parsi couple, Sir Darius and Lady Spenta, face a grim “to be or not to be” crisis of existence. Religion is no nonsense. Lady Spenta Cama turns to religious superstitions in times of crises. She fell into a deep sadness, under whose influence “she became blasphemously convinced that the Monster of the Lie, Ahriman or Angra Mainyu, was gaining the victory over Ahura Mazda and the Light, inspite of what was prophesied in the great books, the Avesta, the Yasna and the Bundahish. Priests in their white garments were invited with increasing frequency into the apartment on Apollo Bunder, and they brought their little fires with them and chanted nobly. ‘Hear ye then with your ears, and see the bright flames with the eyes of the Better Mind.’ “Blasted priests make the place look like a blasted hospital ---- Blasted fire’ll probably end up burning the blasted house down,” Sir Darius grumbled.”(GBHF-49)
Darius thought of his family decline in terms of the three concepts of the Indo-European mythical world-view—Sovereignty, Physical force and Fertility. As head of the household he possessed sovereignty within sovereignty but as he had grown remote from his children he became the smallest in their eyes. As for physical force within sovereignty, which he interpreted as the protection of family’s solidarity and continuity, became just a joke in his son’s eyes. Fertility within fertility became no more than indolence, dreams and music. Darius spent the last hours of his life in his library, fuddled by old age, mythology and booze. Ascension to higher intellectual is a fond Parsi obsession and pursuit. Sir Darius delves himself deep into his library studying classics of mythology and philosophy. The expression ‘Anglophile, the Parsee disease’ gets reflected in the manner of Sir Darius. He has almost gone insane. He had died of suffocation, the murderous trademark of his son Cyrus Cama. He yielded silently to the violence of Cyrus. The reasons for Cyrus’s irrational act of patricide were—he had been banished from home, chastised by teachers and legally disowned. He, on his confession, got imprisoned in Tihar jail under tight security. Later he became a wiseman, a guru, who wrote a book *Meditations on Kalki* prophesying the end of the world in the hands of Vishnu. It seemed inevitable that the Apollo Bunder apartment has to be sold and the family would be forced to move into humbler accommodation, joining the swelling ranks of distressed Parsi gentle folk. It is at this juncture of critical life Lady Spenta drifts.

“Into this growing crisis Lord Methworld’s letter of invitation dropped like a blessing........Spenta hugged it to her bosom and giggled, most improperly for one so recently bereaved. An interlace male party with a fortune is a boon to the spirits.” (GBHF-201)
Lord Methwold was a friend of her husband. Lady Spenta, in the inmost of her heart, felt her husband's death a blessed relief. Besides, the fate of her sons was in her hands. At least for their sake she had to seek anchorage in Lord Methwold for survival. She left for England with Ormus and Ardaviraf. She left behind criminal son Cyrus. She married Lord Methworld and became Lady Methwold. Virus Cama had been placed in a sanatorium where he would live under the finest care. Ormus had vanished into his own independent life.

There has been the breaking of family ties—between mother and sons. Of course, she regretted that she was not the good mother for she was a traveller drifting to be reborn in the new world of marriage with Methwold in England. The separation of Ormus from his mother is characterised by sense of guilt and remorse. Her giving Ormus five hundred pounds is just like buying freedom from him. Lack of emotional enthusiasm and absence of unconditional love drifted them apart.

"Mother and son go their ways: She into the arms of an old England, he into the new country that's in the process of being born. Destiny summons them both, breaking their family ties" (GBHF-270)

As Lady Methwold, Lady Spenta's married life was short-lived with Lord Methwold for the latter died peacefully in sleep leaving behind a vast property. Later, she had experienced the heart-breaking episode of Ormus Cama's coma following a road accident. She nursed him back to health as a real mother. She thought that her good fortune was just an admonition from God. To be suddenly rich in worldly goods is to understand the nature of deeper impoverishment.
“Of her three sons, one is in jail for murder, a second had been despatched (Oh, callous mother!) to a nursing home, so as not to trouble her aged spouse. The youngest has long been estranged from her, thinking himself unloved; now he’s badly hurt. She, who believed herself devout, has failed in her soul’s duty”(GBHF-311)

She felt morally afraid that her family members had fallen prey to demons. Here was another drift of Lady Spenta towards a man Mull Standish, a radio pirate who led Ormus into the world of music and prosperity. May be for comfort or anchorage or the betterment of her son Ormus, Lady Spenta sought the shelter of Mull Standish who was seven years junior to her. Standish, noting the advent of an unrequitable love, grew fond enough of her to let her dream of companionship. It was not for sex that Lady Spenta too needed him. Guilt haunts her like anything. She spoke to her husband Darius who is now an airy thing to assuage her guilt thus:

“But tell me: Is a third marriage proof of lax morals? Especially if for example with a younger man? Even if the gentleman concerned has no interest in um?"  (GBHF-330)

By taking airy Darius around with her, by pleasing his shade and seeking his approval, she assuages a certain guilt. Her companionship with Standish had not given any happiness for long. Slow melancholy comedy of misunderstandings played out. Mull Standish was purely a matter-of-fact man and as such he could not make any prosperity out of Ormus Cama’s tragedy of silence and that of his own son Waldo. He felt trapped between his gratitude to Spenta (for she gave his son Waldo the place of anchorage as mother) and solicitude for him. Spenta, in turn, felt humiliated “that she
had her ageing heart to one who could never take it" (GBHF-398). In this strangulating environment both began to think “that life might after all be no more than defeat”. Self-realisation dawned on Standish for he later followed Vina and left for India to retreat into Buddhist monasteries in the Himalayas. Reconciling herself to her fate Lady Spenta resigned to looking after the two injured children Waldo, the son of Mull Standish and her own son Ormus. Here she commented her association with Standish as thus:

“We are a sort of accidental family, after all....... a family of damage and loss” (GBHF-398)

Coming to Standish, he did not get mental peace in India despite his life of recluse in the Himalayas. He gets alienated from life itself for he had fought it hard and lost so much – children, illusions, money. In a fit of anger he killed Yul Singh and his wife and amassed victory of wealth. But soon retribution followed and the richness of his life was reduced to the thin finality of a crime-his body disappeared- the event presumed as either abduction or suspected murder. After the death of Standish, his son Waldo became a wealthy man. Lady Spenta, now being old with cataracted eyes and blinkered sight, found anchorage in her lonely life within the doors and be looked after by both Waldo and Virus. Though Waldo and Virus were not blood brothers, they were just another family relationship forged by circumstance rather than by biology. These three members of the accidental family really met with a fire accident and died. Ormus who was already a great victim of fancies and fantasies of Vina Apsara in America almost went insane by this time, did not attend his mother’s funeral in England. Now, he being the lone heir of Lady Spenta’s property, renounced all the riches and left them to Methwold’s cousins who began fighting over it. His mother’s death had shaken him. He too was shot dead by an unidentified
mysterious lady. The multi-million Cama Estate went to set up an Ormus and Vina Memorial Foundation to assist the underprivileged children around the world. This will was the only indication Ormus ever gave that he regretted not having had children of his own on account of his lover Vina’s barrenness. The enormous size of the bequest was a measure of the depth of his unspoken grief. Neither of the Camas could build and live a happy family despite making of material fortune. Filial relations / Familial relations were not of healthy breeding. Bleak childhood and emotional incompatibilities rule the family. Lady Spenta— a woman torn to pieces because of chauvinistic husband Darius, psychopathic son Cyrus, mentally-retarded Virus and indifferent Ormus.

Intertwined with the family saga of Camas is the family of Rai, the narrator of the novel. Rai too could not build a family of his own. He was born in the family of Merchants in Bombay. His father V.V. Merchant was a keen amateur of home movies, an architect returned from England and a devoted local historian. His mother, Ameer, though rich by name and the real money in the family, was a disappointed altruist, an angry woman who had come down to earth expecting a better place, who had landed in the lap of luxury and never recovered from the disillusioning discovery that dismal suffering, not easeful joy, was the human norm. Neither her philanthrophy nor her temper tantrums – though both were impressive-sufficed to assuage her disappointment in the planet and her own species. Of his parents and their love and marriage, Rai himself said thus:

“............they may be thrown by chance into each other’s arms and fall in love. In direct contradiction of their predominantly rational philosophies of life, however, my father and mother always believed that they were drawn
together by Destiny, which was so determined to unite them.............” (GBHF-31)

Beneath V.V.Merchant’s shyness and behind his buck teeth she had divined the existence of a great soul, a soul of profound constancy, a rock upon which......she could build her church. So she declared her daring love for her would-be-husband as thus :

“Between one merchant and another there is no middle way. Either we must be sworn rivals or we must merge, as partners.” (GBHF-33)

Rai himself said of his father as thus ;

“My father, the very model of the upstanding gent, the most honourable of men, the most honest, the least corruptible, the gentlest of manner but also the most iron-principled, the most tolerant----the best of men, a godless saint.....” (GBHF-77)

While V.V.Merchant looked into the past, his wife Ameer looked into the future. V.V.Merchant delved deep into the work of excavation of the British-built, ruled and cultured Bombay and found for artistic and aesthetic sides and his wife Ameer, with the vein of modernity and with the skill of entrepreneurship shaped the maquette of mansions from sand. While he dreamed of unknown depths, she brought into being a dream of heights. Rai, the only son of loving parents, had the best possible start in life. All this happy childhood would have a great store for him. Because of his parental obsessive behaviour, their smothering love and their business of
Rai drifted himself from Bombay and looked out towards the other world of America, photographing the real and stinking world.

Rai interpreted his parents as Islam converts losing connection with the history. He interpreted his father's diggings into Bombay's "as a quest for his mislaid personal identity" (GBHF-74). Ameer's dreaming of cuffescrappers was like "seeking lost certainties in visions of high-rise apartments" (GBHF-74). As for the situation of Rai as a growing man, heroism escaped him. He felt that the high moral formulation worthy of the world could not be applicable to daily life. He, of course, believed that the world was full of false notes, constant fallings-short. Rai, seemed to have imbibed his mother's disappointed idealism and growing cynicism.

He spoke of himself as thus: "............... at my worst, I have been a cacophony, a mass of human voices that did not add up to the symphony of an integrated self" (GBHF-75). Despite the best possible environment he had developed a weakened sense of affiliation cultivating silence, dreaming and singing. Family members' fragmented selves reflect the fragmented families.

The prosperous family of the Merchants got broken due to two visions. They were Ameer's vision of the scrappers and V.V.Merchant's fantasy of a cinema. The little clan slowly came apart and even Vina's idealization of Rai's parents as the joint architects of a happy home came as untrue. Luck ran out. Rai's parents had fallen off their pedestals before their early demises. V.V.Merchant, due to gambling, suffered heavy losses. As for Ameer, her cynicism, once just a pose, an idealist's armour, her defense against corruption that was all around her, had itself corroded her youthful principles. She was destroying what was beautiful for the sake of what was profitable. V.V.Merchant had to adjust himself to his wife's words in the
professional and financial activities of the family. He had remained in silent 
opposition to her construction business. Ameer was a woman who could 
brook no criticism. The merest hint that she might be acting improperly 
induced in her a storm of weeping and a quarrel that could not end until he 
abused himself and agreed he had utterly and cruelly wronged her and that 
her injured innocence fully justified her dudgeon and copius tears. Ameer 
could hardly restrain her husband from going into the construction of 
Orpheum cine theatre, which proved itself a gambling that had brought him 
into heavy debts. He was cheated by the dishonesty of contractors backed by 
his politician-relative Piloo DoodhwaLa. He had to mortgage the so-built 
Orpheum as a collateral security to pay off heavy debts of his gambling to 
one Mr.Raja Jua, a king of bookie, who worked for Piloo DoodhwaLa. It 
was at this juncture that Ameer’s anger for her husband turned towards Vina 
Apsara who came under her guardianship after having been banished 
from the house of Piloo DoodhwaLa. She scolded Vina in the most bitter 
terms. Vina, feeling betrayed of maternal affection from Ameer and guilty 
of her own sexual promiscuity with both Rai and Ormus, flew off to 
England with the jewellery of Ameer. Ameer later repented when she 
realized that fact that Vina was not an arsonist of their house either.

Ameer and V.V.Merchant had a tussle over the selling of house 
properties. Their home became a war zone. There was now the loss of their 
love. Meanwhile, their house “Villa Thracia” got burnt in a fire accident. 
Mutual doubting started between Ameer and V.V.Merchant. The 
tempestuous Ameer half-suspected her husband of the crime of arson of the 
house and in turn V.V.Merchant did the same. They hissed and fought and 
finally lost everything. They lived in a rented flat— husband and wife— 
living apart in separate rooms in the Apollo Bunder of the Camas. Bombay,
as a personified object, happened to be the destroyer of the loving family of Ameer and V.V.Merchant.

At 51, Ameer died of brain tumour leaving behind her only son Rai and her husband Merchant. Ameer’s last rejection of her husband might have been more painful than her death itself and that was why Merchant hanged himself and thus made himself both dumper and dumpee. Their life reflects that love is more than death. About his father’s love and death for her mother, Rai relates the myth of Orpheus as thus:

“Love is more than death, or is it, there are those who say that the songsmith Orpheus was a coward because he refused to die for love, because instead of joining Eurydice in the afterlife he tried to drag her back to the life before; which was against nature, and so failed. Judged by this standard, my father was a braver man than the Thracian lyre player, for in his pursuit of Ameer he sought no special privileges from the guardians of the hereafter, he requested no return tickets from the monsters at the gates.”(GBHF-206)

Rai, now alone without parents, felt their love for him and as such he too remembered them by loving what they had loved. And photography was his means of gaining an education in their love. By using illusion, he photographed the darkside of life, of the invisible side of things. What he felt was that honesty is not the best policy in life but in art it is so.

After his parent’s death, he sold away all his property for a handsome sum to the consortium of developers headed by Piloo Doodhwa. He, later with the help of his friend, Anita Dharkar, an editor of the Illustrated
Weekly of India, unearthed Piloo DoodhwaJa’s great scam of fictitious goats in the interior parts of Maharashtra and got him arrested. It was just a tit-for-tat business. Rai’s parental happiness and business were totally destroyed by Piloo and his men, who cheated them. As Rai was threatened by the political hooligans of Piloo, Rai crossed the borders of India taking the help of Anita Dharkar.

Just as Ormus, Rai too could not marry and rear a family of his own. He, of course, had sexual encounters with Anita Dharkar and Vina. He, like Ormus, thought that he would not need any partner in life. His one-sided love towards Vina did not materialise either into marriage or into family except occasional sexual encounters. And Rai, might be due to his thinking of love and marriage strictly in terms of the Indian ethos, could not fit into the fold of Vina, who all her life played the game of vagrant life with her whims and fancies leading a life of sexual promiscuity. Perhaps mutual distrust might have played its role in the making of the barren predicament of Rai. And Rai probably did not stand the test of higher love of exaltation that actually existed between Vina and Ormus. And Rai exhibits anger as his idealism in art and so might be his vein in the matter-of-fact life. So, he preferred to remain as just another choleric lover, warped by life, by endlessly playing second fiddler to Vina, Ormus being the first fiddler. Rai’s love for Vina was just half-love for he shared Vina in bed. To both Rai and Ormus Vina’s love was nothing but a sign of humanity, a sentiment with which they decided to live their lives. Rai’s losing control over himself was attributed as gender-biased male anger and that was also one of the reasons why Vina had pulled him away. While music was the real making of the exalted/transcendental divine unearthy love of Ormus and Vina, blind following and fucking were the real making of the earthy love between Rai and Vina. Vina, moreover, might have doubted the authenticity of Rai’s
love for she openly rebuked him for his desertion of his lady love Anita, some time ago. She felt no essential difference between Rai and Ormus in respect of their love for her. She did not trust either. Her words to Rai express her mistrust/distrust.

“Your life is dirt. You’re more like Ormus than you know only he’s all cleanness and light and you’re all mud and darkness. If you’re the best on offer, we should all give up right now.” (GBHF-427)

For Vina, love is the life and death business. Love goes beyond mortal life. Since Rai is a heathen, he cannot understand its mystical side. He simply believed that man-woman things are primary. Rai’s contempt for Ormus’s love for Vina and his undying optimism of forming a family by way of marrying Vina all have become a futile business as Vina preferred the trustless marriage with Ormus to her stolen hours with Rai. Moreover, in the field of love and desire, Vina behaved just like a man capable of loving wholeheartedly and half-heartedly betraying love without guilt and sense of contradiction and multiplying herself in which ever way she liked. Rai ironically viewed Vina just as husband-like and said these words.

“We, Ormus and I, we were her women: he, the loyal wife standing by her philandering husband, settling for him inspite of his roving eye, his wanderlust; and I, the simultaneously wanton and long-suffering mistress, taking what I could get. That way round it made perfect sense.” (GBHF-432-433)
When reverse is the order of things in the matter of married life it is natural that incompatibility prevails and the question of forging a family does not come into reality.

Lord Tennyson’s saying is proved topsyturvy. He says: “Woman is for hearth and man is for field”. Philandering husbands and wanderlust wives would never make a family and children. His friendship with Anita Dharkar, Ifredis, Maria and Vina has all gone by earthly/physical love of lust rather than love of human values. Rai himself told how his love was considered dumb by Vina and how he himself became a debased animal in her eyes by being at her beck and call and obsequiously following her.

“I’ve got only my dumb love to offer, this love that is finally after all the second-fiddle decades insisting on taking over the orchestra. Take me or leave me, that’s what I’ve come to say, knowing that if she does not want me I’m defenseless, a cap-in-hand school boy without even an apple for a bribe”(GBHF- 453)

Rai hopes of a better life with Vina but throws everything on the Immense (the unseen power):

“For Vina and myself-this is what I need her to understand-the Immense has taken the form of our lifelong, intermittent but inescapable love. Thus, if she will only leave Ormus for me, our lives will change entirely, we will both be altered in astonishing ways, but the new form which then emerges-She and I, together, in love-this will last for ever. For ever and a fucking day.” (GBHF- 461)
This hope of Rai did not materialise. His hope of forming a family finally metamorphosed into a death-like state of life and not a loving and loved stage. He said:

"Like every photographer, I have hoped to end my days with my name attached to a few powerful images, but the Vina picture will outstrip even my most ambitious, self-glorifying aspirations. The Lady Vanishes, as it will come to be known, will surely be my bitter posterity. If I am remembered at all, it can only be for this. So, in one sense at least, Vina and I will be joined together for ever, inspite of everything, a consummation for which I have wished, all my life, even more devoutly than I’ve wished for professional success. Yes, we’re linked for all time beyond hope, beyond life: metamorphosed by the Immense into the Eternal. But I was wrong about the nature of the metamorphic force working its marvels upon us. In our case, it was not love but death” (GBHF -467)

At the age of 52, when he was greying, being the other love and the king of Vina’s underworld dead, he understood the posthumous Vina as a gambler of love.

Ormus and Rai are identical lovers of Vina as their fears, their hopes, their dreams are all one and the same. After the death of Vina, they form a kind of male-male family. Rai had to help to save the insane Ormus and thus had to save himself also for “Now that she’s gone, we perhaps hold each other’s salvation in our hands.” (GBHF -510)
Ormus's aspiration of getting married to Vina-impersonate, Mira Celano, seemed to become a futility in the beginning as Mira Celano was Vina's polar opposite. She openly declared that she was for total love, total engagement and total fidelity. Moreover, she, as a mother, was totally committed to her only daughter's well-being who deserved a little continuity in her life and not a procession of inadequate men through her mother's bedroom. Of Mira's concept of life and love is described as heroic absolutism. Rai says of her as thus:

“But Mira's is the courage of experience, open-eyed bruised and fearful. Rejected by her father and family, abandoned by the father of her child, bearing the unclosed wounds of her broken loves, she is nevertheless prepared to risk her heart once more. To try for the best inspite of being terrified of the worst. This is brave.” (GBHF -532)

Mira did not easily trust the authenticity of the loves of both Ormus and Rai towards her. But she, the best impersonate of Vina, rejuvenated Ormus from insanity for the dead Vina.

The episode of love triangle seems to have begun again among Ormus, Rai and Mira Celano. Rai began day-dreaming of Mira Celano while Ormus and Mira were in their music language. Ormus was shot dead by a mysterious lady. Rai and Mira and her daughter Tara Celano forge into a family. Of his forging into a family with Mira Celano, Rai says thus: "Such are the families of modern epoch: elective alliance against terror or despair" (GBHF -567). Tara, daughter of Mira, here, stands as the drawing force of union and happiness. Of this strangely formed union, Rai himself says (he had taken the role of a parent for Tara) "..................We became conscious of our joint importance in her life (GBHF -567). Of his anchorage
as a father and his hope of a continuity of a family life with Mira and her daughter Tara Celano. Rai himself says thus:

“This girl, this dead stranger’s child, was the closest thing to a future I had found for myself anywhere in the world.” (GBHF-567)

Now, in the ordinary life of Rai, Mira and Tara remained as islands in the storm of life. He has a life of his own the ground beneath his feet. Human lives, according to Rai, are lived as thus:

“Our lives disconnect and reconnect, we move on, and later we may again touch one another, again bounce away. This is the felt shape of a human life, neither simply linear nor wholly disjunctive nor endlessly bifurcating, but rather this bouncey-castle sequence of bumpings-into and tumblings-apart.” (GBHF-543)

The family of Kalamanjias is yet another that has been interwoven in the novel. Persis Kalamanjia was the only daughter of Dolly Kalamanjia and Pat Kalamanjia. They hailed from Kenya and made money in the post-war London by travel agencies and the business of electronic goods. Dolly was a woman of strong-will, conservatism and emotional feelings. Her husband, Patangbaz, was her rock. For Percis, her father was a pride and joy. In the eyes of Lady Spenta Cama, Persis was a suitable girl for marriage with her son Ormus. Lady Cama enquires her son Ormus how he felt towards “dear Persis, such an able girl, with so many good qualities, so dutiful, so well educated, such good marks in the Matric and Senior Cambridge, and quite pretty in a way.” (GBHF-96) Ormus could answer nothing as he had fallen in love with Vina and Percis had no place in Ormus’s love. After Ormus
dumped Persis, she learned how a human being may believe two contradictory things at once.

“For a long time she believed he would surely return to her once he realized how true a love he had spurned, truer than anything that America-returned child could give him; and at the same time she also knew he would never come back. These two propositions of equal and opposite power, paralysed her, and she never married” (GBHF-92)

Yet, she continued loving Ormus and suffered sorrow even when Ormus was not alive. Monogamy, fidelity, trust, faith and hope seem to be the living and loving principles of Persis’s life. This impressive woman had been defenseless against the sheer force of Ormus Cama, his desirability, his voltage, his charms, his casual cruelty, his life. In the manner of a passive ordinary Indian woman, she accepts what is due to her granted by Fate. She could not all the way force Ormus into love with her when there was no reciprocality. She said to Ormus “Never mind what our mothers want. Love is too important to lie about” (GBHF-144). So, she began pretending and went on postponing of giving her decision about her marriage with Ormus. She told her mother a radical view of wife in life: “But a wife is for life and that is too long to be wrong” (GBHF-144). Freedom to reject is the only freedom. Freedom to uphold is dangerous. Persis exercised her freedom of losing her hope for the sake of Ormus’s real love for Vina.

Percis was all a humanist. She felt pity for the helpless Vina, and helped her fly over to England when she was humiliated by Ameer. Persis not only helped Vina to leave Bombay but also saved her from being wrongfully accused of the crime of arson which she did not do. Persis Kalamanjia, infinitely patient, bore no malice towards any human being.
The beautiful Persis who was like every mother’s ideal daughter and most men’s dream of a bride had been transformed by Ormus’s tormented fancy into an avatar of the Angel of Death. Persis, at 30, grew oddly asexual in her beauty, pious with her saintly personality and enigmatic smile. She joined her mother in a heavy programme of good works which made her respected. She grew mystical predicting gloomy future.

Her friendship with Rai grew into a brother-sister relationship. It was Persis who helped Rai cross the borders and fly to America when he was threatened for death by the Pilooists.

Even in the well-to-do family of Kalamanjia, there lurked a kind of indifference that killed its members. Men could of course build fortunes but they could not build and expand their families by way of love, caring and attention. On the death of his wife Dolly Kalamanjia, her husband Pat Kalamanjia blamed himself.

“All these years I have foregrounded business interests and neglected the little lady............. Now she has gone!” (GBHF-333)

Now his care is drawn towards his lonely daughter, Persis, who is considered his home. “Britain is best......But Persis, now, she is my only home” (GBHF-333). Though Pat felt that “Life is a broken radio and there are no good songs” (GBHF-335), he finally clunged to his daughter, Persis, who saved herself for Ormus and so lost herself altogether. Now it is just a family of father and daughter without mother.

The family of Mira Celano, the perfect-impersonate of Vina, is rather broken and her association with Ormus is based on the principle of human
service and not that of biology. Her father Tomaso Celano was a man of honesty and a high-flying corporation lawyer and he prized his family roots in Assissi, Italy. He, at the age of 61, married an Indian woman doctor, Mehra Umrigar and got a daughter, Mira. The name “Mira” signifies both India and Italy. Mehra Umrigar died of breast cancer leaving 4-year old Mira to the care of her husband. Mira, as a child did not receive any concern from relatives. Despite difficult discontinuities of education and peripatetic home environment, she became a straight A student of Columbia School of Journalism, became a star-singer, loved, got pregnant, got a baby, got disowned by his father who thoughtlessly dropped dead thus making a reconciliation impossible. His dying words “Not a red cent to my daughter Mira who has been the disappointment of my old age” (GBHF-521). His rage and hatred for his daughter Mira was so huge that his property was given away to his relatives and charitable institutions. She lived with her daughter Tara, rose into eminence by her singing just like Vina Apsara. Mira has much in common with her idol Vina Apsara: “The mixed-race family, the early orphaning, the loveless childhood years, the outcast’s deep-seated sense of rejection and exile— That thing about feeling out on the perimeter line and being pushed, by a powerful centripetal force towards the heart of the game of life.” (GBHF-522)

Again the episode of love triangle emerges---Mira, Rai and Ormus. Rai thinks of Mira as if she were his lover, whereas Ormus wants Mira to play his dead wife not only on stage for money but in his bed for the rest of her life. Friendship and humanism kindle in Rai. He wishes to save Ormus from the pangs of boozing and insanity. Ormus, on hearing Mira’s melodious music, thinks that the dead Vina has come back. Rai approaches Mira and pleads with her to save the life of his friend Ormus by impersonating Vina. This is a mercy mission. Mira is the polar opposite of
Vina. In so far as she insists on the rarest emotional contract between men and women—a total fidelity and not a procession of inadequate men through her bedroom. She, as a mother, has to offer her daughter a continuity of life as a sheltering tree. Mira exhibits a radical courage of practical wisdom and never risks her life once again in the name of love and lovers.

"But Mira’s is the courage of experience, open-eyed, bruised and fearful rejected by her father and family, abandoned by the father of her child bearing the unclosed wounds of her broken loves, she is nevertheless prepared to risk her heart once more. To try for the best inspite of being terrified of the worst. This is brave." (GBHF-532)

Mira has already lost a lover (husband) Luis Heinrich who shot himself to death out of emotional turbulence. So, she can’t all the way fall head long in love with anybody since she has already tasted the bitter experience of it.

Mira’s service and song rejuvenated Ormus. Rai’s love for Mira is once again earthly whereas Ormus’s love for Mira is rather a divine music. Slowly Mira drives Ormus reconcile himself to the earthly reality of Vina’s death. Ormus dies relieving himself of bubble of life. It was not primarily a point of sex but love of human relations that constituted the stuff of Mira’s love for Ormus. Ormus too realizes the fact that death itself is the love and the ground beneath his feet in his long sad-luck saga. The forging of Rai into a family with Mira, is rather founded on the principle of trust and optimism. Rai’s parental care for Mira’s daughter, Tara, seems to be the force of drawing together. Rai himself speaks of his forming a family with Mira as thus:
".....We became conscious of our joint importance in her life. Such are the families of the modern epoch: Elective alliances against terror or despair." (GBHF-567)

Man craving for some one else’s anchorage and finding solace in human relations seem to be the principle of the sustenance of family. Amidst the stinking of the world’s values, Rai’s forging a family reflects the following words, which he himself speaks:

"I am looking at Mira and Tara, my islands in the storm and I feel like arguing with the angry earth’s decision to wipe us out, if indeed such a decision has been made. Here’s is goodness, right? Goodness drinking O.J. and munching muffins. Here’s is ordinary human love beneath my feet. Fall away, if you must, contemptuous earth; melt, rocks, and shiver, stones. I’ll stand my ground, right here. This I’ve discovered and worked for and earned. This is mine." (GBHF-575)

Rushdie in his novel The Ground Beneath Her Feet reflects certain political concerns of postcolonial India thus making the novel a socio-political discourse. He mentions a character called Piloo Doodhwala. His four billion dollar worth ‘Great Goat Scam’ in which he himself was the proud owner of one hundred million wholly fictitious goats resembled People’s Car Scam of the later 1970s in which huge sums of public money disappeared from a project headed by Sanjay Gandhi, the Swedish Cannons Scam of the 1980s in which huge sums of public money went astray from an international arms deal that besmirched the reputation of Rajiv Gandhi and the Stock Exchange Scam of the 1990s. The narrator Rai, with the help of his journalist friend Anita Dharkar exposed Piloo Doodhwala’s cheating and
his Great Goat Scam. However the irony is that the so called Great Goat Scam, instead of ruining Piloo and his political career, actually made him bigger. “Prosecuting Piloo began to be described as an act of vengeance by the English medium elite against a true man of the masses, a son of the soil” (GBHF-245). With the influence of Sanjay Gandhi he was pardoned and released consequent on being elected the Mayor of Mumbai. “The electorate had endorsed tyranny and corruption. Chalta hai” (GBHF-245). Corruption had become the order of the days of 1970s. Anita Dharkar, who exposed Piloo’s scam, was raped by the Pilooists for her integrity. Rushdie says that she is just like “a boat against the current” of political corruption and power. Rushdie says that under the political supremacy of Piloo and Sanjay Gandhi, the utter ‘Caligulan barbarity’ of India was “The beatings, the bullyings, the jailings, the flailings, the burnings, the bannings, the buyings, the sellings, the shamelessness, the shamelessness, the shame.” (GBHF-248)

So, family with its joys and sorrows is the founding principle of the ground beneath the feet of human life.

Next, David Davidar’s The House of Blue Mangoes (2000) has been discussed which also reflects the aspect of family. The novel comes under the category of Dynasty Novel. Dynasty novels are a genre by themselves. Like Amitav Ghosh’s The Glass Palace, The House of Blue Mangoes also successfully describes the life of family and community against the backdrop of the political, social and historical events of the first half of the 19th century Southern India. The saga of family and community is set against the background of castes and caste-wars and fifty years of turbulent Indian history. Vision of family, a vision that is clear to the Indian way of thinking, becomes the moral centre of the novel. Philosophy, religion, mythology and legend in almost every culture have invariably affirmed the
centrality of family and home in man’s life – which happen to be the means to man’s happiness, transcendence and even redemption. Over the years conventions, customs and rituals have evolved to fortify these institutions. If man strays, he must return to them because home and family offer all that man seeks by way of personal happiness and fulfilment.

“Call it a clan, call it a network, call it a tribe, call it a family. Whatever you call it, whoever you are, you need one.”24 The House of Blue Mangoes highlights the age-old ideal of home, family and community, which constitute the leitmotif of the novel. The lives of three generations assiduously lay bare the complications involved, but nevertheless go on to affirm the ideal of family, community and home. The novelist locates this ideal in a caste-ridden, superstitious, primitive and drought-prone typical Indian village called Chevathar wherein a Tamil Christian family saga is set in 1899, the days of British Raj in Madras Presidency. The village headman is called thalaivar. Here, the thalaivar, Gnana Prakasam Soloman Dorai Andavar rules the village with an iron hand, but very different from the Zamindars of North India who were corrupt and violent and mostly given to debauchery. Over some generations, there had been caste wars between the Andavars and the Vedhars in the district of Kilanad. Solomon Dorai led the Andavar clan and Muthu Vedhar the Vedhar caste in Chevathar, a panchayat in the district. All the time there had been a tense atmosphere of flaring up of caste violence – caste rape followed by caste murder.

“No young or even middle-aged woman is safe from the slyly outstretched male arm that seeks to brush and feel up, the crude insult, the lascivious eye............”(HBM-5)
In family and community, the predicament of the women of weaker sections is pitted against unfair social practices reflected in ‘Breast wars’ that happened in 1859 in Travancore of Madras Presidency. The ‘breast wars’ are described in detail:

“.....hither to tradition that the various members of the caste tree should bare their breast$ as a sign of deference and subservience to those who perched higher in the branches. Accordingly, the untouchables went bare breasted before the Pallans, the Pallans before the Nairs and so on until the Namboodri Brahmins, who deferred only to their dieties.” (HBM-17)

In 1859, at the urging of the Christian missionaries, Andavar and Nadar women turned to Christianity and began to cover their breasts. This threw the upper castemen into a frenzy of insecurity and frustration. The women who were clothed on breasts were abused and beaten. The middle ranking castes asserted “We have a divine right to gaze upon your filthy breasts and you should be flattered that we do so. They are ours to enjoy”(HBM-17). Solomon Dorai has kept caste violence out for decades till an Andavar girl, Valli is raped. Tension rises as Vedhars kill three men and rape five Andavar women of the village. Vakeel Perumal, a half-comic, half-sinister character, who suddenly turns Christian and names himself “Jesus Christ” on conversion, further queers the pitch. He protests vociferously against a lime-scrawled message on a rock, which says “Remember the 1859 Breast wars. If low caste dogs do not know their place, their wives and sisters will soon remind them of it”(HBM-16). Actually he has got the message scrawled himself. But the blame is thrown entirely on Muthu Vedhar, the antagonist of Solomon Dorai.
Feminist concerns are also depicted in the novel. Two days after rape, Valli hangs herself. Women experienced afresh the deep sadness of being born women. Her death transformed her from an insignificant girl without affiliation into a weapon that would deepen the division and rancour within the village. Solomon Dorai desperately tried to avoid caste wars whatever the extremity of the provocation. Nevertheless, he was concerned into the fight for other reasons. His own position as thalaivar and the existence of the members of his low-caste were challenged and it finally boiled down to a fight for survival. The upper-caste Muthu Vedhar insulted him in public during the Chitra Pournami procession by spitting on him thus giving vent to his old hostilities and jealousies. Though Solomon quietly absorbed this public insult and refused to retaliate, Mudhu Vedhar lunged upon him for a physical assault. It was only now that Solomon acted, manoeuvring to get an upper hand and roared at him.

"You big black buffalo, for all these years I have tolerated you and other jackals that work for you because I have tried to keep the peace. You have insulted me before the village and for that you will pay. I will give you and all those who owe you allegiance a month to leave. If you haven't gone by then I will personally make sure that you'll wish you had never emerged from your prostitute mother's womb." (HBM-68)

Once Solomon hurled the challenge, Muthu Vedhar, in the heat of the moment, turned belligerent and snarled back:
"I said I would reduce you to dust and I will reduce you to dust. I’m not leaving the village, it’s you and your stinking family who will leave or be destroyed."

(HBM-68)

This was the moment of destiny and subsequently the destructive consequence became an inevitable corollary. It was now a question of personal honour and dignity for both and however much Solomon wished to reverse the course of events in the interest of peace in the village, he was powerless to do so.

Father Ashworth, the local priest of the church, thought that perhaps the women of both the Andavar and the Vedhar heads would divert and avert the tragedy. First he approached Charity Dorai, who expressed her fear and inability.

"...............how powerless I was, even though I was the thalaivar’s wife. For the first time I truly understood how defenseless we are. Not a day passes when I don’t wake up frightened, but I’m powerless to do anything. We can pray, of course, that our men can protect us. My husband is a good man. He’ll do his best. And if he’s defeated, all I can pray for is that my daughters and I will be given enough time to prepare ourselves.”(HBM-94)

Even Saraswathi Vedhar, the wife of Muthu Vedhar, could do anything except to accept the inevitable that was ready to be faced. Every woman, whether Andavar, Vedhar or Marudar, said the same. Here, it is to be understood that the predicament of women in the family and community
has no bearing significance. There are no puratchi thalaivis in the novel. It is only puratchi thalaivars who matter and have a say in the narrative of the novel. Theme of gender bias is clearly presented here. David Davidar in *The House of Blue Mangoes* presents the servile status of women.

"Every woman in the village quickly learned her place in life, no matter how exalted her station. When Charity first arrived in the Big House as a young bride, she was shocked when Solomon hit her for not bringing him his coffee at exactly the right temperature......her mother-in-law.......... Thangammal had wiped away her tears with her saripallu... and told her: In these parts, my daughter, a woman must be prepared to be beaten by her husband.......It’s the way things are. When you are newly married, you are beaten for not bringing enough dowry, when you give birth to children you are beaten for not producing a male heir, or if you have already given a son, for not producing only sons. And then, when you have produced enough children, you are beaten for losing your looks and your youth." (HBM-31-32)

Now, for both the Andavars and the Vedhars, survival of family and community could only be at the cost of the other. It was really an 'either-or' situation rendering co-existence impossible. Peace-making efforts of both Father Ashworth and the District Collector Nathaniel Hall had no effect. The appreciating fact was that it was Solomon who had shown his utmost forbearance all through. Inspite of his deepest concern for peace, he was caught in the conflagration created by the cantankerous and cunning Vakeel Perumal. It is to be noted that caste rivalries are responsible in disturbing the
peace of community where a low-caste village headman rules the village while the upper-caste land owner is handed the role of the ruled. The English priest, Father Ashworth has always been intrigued by the corrosive effect caste has on the affairs of the community.

When he (Ashworth) had arrived in India twenty five years ago, he had been appalled above all else by the institution of caste.... That caste was necessary to give the country's vast and diverse population a sense of identity and belonging, but surely that did not excuse the injustice and barbarity perpetrated in its name! How could any sane and compassionate human being abide the discrimination sanctioned by caste and religion upon his fellows, based entirely on self-serving interpolations in the great religious texts? (HBM-30)

Nathaniel Hall, the Collector of Kilanad District, also got both surprised and confused over the caste violence. He wonders with a sense of sarcastic cynicism:

Why on earth should the natives choose the remotest corner of his district to cause trouble? And why should that fat toad of a governor care if a few hundred natives died? They died all the time anyway! Floods, droughts, famines, plagues, riots constantly decimated them. And death was, when you thought of it, a better alternative to the miserable lives they led."(HBM-71)

Having got vexed with the Indian system of caste violence and unable to hold the impending strife into an irreparable damage, Hall resigned his
ICS job and left India. It was in this context of mutual hatred and hostility between the Andavars and the Vedhars that led to arson, looting and rape in the 'Breast wars' of 1859 that Solomon's efforts to maintain peace of the community and preserve his clan could be termed brave and heroic, not withstanding his failure in achieving them. David Davidar is no facile idealist for he pitted the noble dream of the patriarch of the Andavar caste against the mighty forces of caste, superstition and prejudice. Both Solomon Dorai and Muthu Vedhar went down fighting for the "defence of their family home" (HBM-127). During the fighting, Father Ashworth was also stabbed to death by Muthu Vedhar, when the former interfered with them. Joshua-chattappa, a cousin of Solomon also died becoming a victim in the caste battle.

After the death of Solomon, sea changes came over the family. Charity was living in the parental home at Nagercoil at the time of caste-war. Her two daughters Rahul and Miriam were also with her. She felt loneliness always brooding over her sons Daniel and Aaron. She thought:

It's the tragedy of a mother to lose her sons. First Aaron, consumed by his father's passion that had spat him out, broken and bitter and full of hate for his surviving family, and now her favourite Daniel, who was poised to disappear into a world where she could not follow. Charity wept, as the sadness of the present and the past fused and swept over her."(HBM-118).

Abraham Dorai, the brother of Solomon Dorai who had lived in his brother's shadow all his life, had become thalaivar of Chevathar and his wife Kaveri ran the Big House. Though they were first conciliatory towards Charity, later they took over the household. Charity was elbowed aside and
Kaveri was now the mistress of the house. However, Abraham and Kaveri were kind towards Charity partly because they were terrified of Aaron. The deaths of both his father and uncle had affected Aaron badly. Aaron blamed his mother and brother Daniel and the rest of the world for having taken Solomon and Joshua from him. He loathed his uncle (Abraham) and aunt (Kaveri) as well. Aaron spent his days and nights in Meenakshikoil playing cards, picking fights and loafing around. Soon he picked a fight with Abraham on money matters and left the house. Family feuds came to a head when Kaveri slapped her sister-in-law Kamalambal for not scrubbing the floors to satisfaction and turned on Charity in a fury. On the condition of paying a sum of money and an annual rent of mangoes and rice, Charity left The Big House for her home town Nagercoil with her children. In Nagercoil, Daniel becomes a doctor of Indian Siddha medicine. He produces a whitening ointment called Dorai's "Moon-white Thylam". He makes a lot of money. Rachel the eldest daughter of late Solomon gets married to Romdoss. Charity has now shed a lot of burden in her daughter's marriage. She wept at the prospect of leaving her daughter to her in-laws and this weeping reflects the predicament of the Indian women in the light of gender discrimination.

"Her grief grew to include mothers and daughters everywhere but most especially in her past of the world, where a girl child was a necessary evil, suitable only for producing sons. She felt the pain of the village women who fed their infant daughters poison or drowned them, she agonized with young brides rejected or raped or tortured....She held her daughter and prayed that she would bear a dozen sons so that she would be spared some of the pain of being born a woman."(HBM-138)
It is in suffering and weeping that a marriage attains a totality in the male-dominated society. Cradling Rachel's tear-streaked face between her palms she said, "No marriage is truly complete, Kannu, until we've all had a good cry" (HBM-138). The following passage highlights the superiority of male patriarchy and reflects the Indian belief of having a son for the continuation of dynasty/family.

"Blessed was the mother of a son. Blessed was the family into which a son was born. He would extend the family line bring in dowry and good luck and attract the blessings of the Gods." (HBM-31)

The birth of a girl in a family was greeted with down-cast eyes.

"A girl meant nothing but sorrow. One more unproductive mouth to feed and heavy expense for the family-dowry, marriage costs, the endless demands of in-laws." (HBM-31)

That was how the family used to view the birth of a female child. Thank God, now the situation has a bit tilted in favour of girls who are better in respect of education and self-empowerment. Despite all this the age-old notion still lingers in the mind of the Indian milieu. And one wonders at the pitiable predicament of woman "in a land where the highest deity was Devi, the Mother Goddess, created by the co-mingling of the essence of the great Hindu trinity – Brahma, Narayana and Parameswara – to rid of the world of an evil they could not handle themselves." (HBM-31)

If caste functions from outside as the disruptive force of family and community in the first generation of Solomon Dorai and Charity, Muthu
Vedhar and Saraswathi Vedhar of Chevathar, it is domestic intrigue within the family that is shown to be the divisive factor for the second generation. After Solomon's death, his younger son, Aaron runs away from Chevathar for nearly five years and returns only to be falsely told by his uncle Abraham that his mother Charity and his brother Daniel had abandoned the place unable to "live in such reduced circumstances and that they had gone to Nagercoil not minding Solomon's sacrifice in defense of family home" (HBM-127). The effect on Aaron was that he was irrevocably confirmed in his hatred of his brother and his mother. Faithful to his father's sense of rootedness in family and home, Aaron decides to stay on in Chevathar where his ancestors lived for generations. However, for want of a cohesive family to sustain him, he eventually gets sucked into the vortex of the freedom movement. He becomes a revolutionary fighting for political freedom for India for he had no interest in farming and he had no desire to be a thalaivar. He was filled with disquiet and a deep frustration. While Aaron crisscrossed the Madras Presidency raising the nationalist consciousness of people, his rich brother Daniel in Nagercoil married Lily. Aaron now thought less and less of his family and when he did so they did not fill him with rage and hatred any more. Even hearing of Daniel's marriage and professional success did not enrage him, as it would once have done. Fulfilment isn't the best way to nurture hate and Aaron was more content than he had been in a long time for he loved the sense of purpose the freedom revolution gave him. While Aaron identified himself with the national movement, Daniel identified himself with family life at Nagercoil with the birth of his first daughter, Shanti. Later he begot his second daughter Usha and later a son, Kannan. Life for Charity seemed a balanced blend of both sorrow and joy. She was living with a hope against hope that one day Aaron would return home. But sorrow seemed to reverse her hope and joy. Aaron was sentenced to rigorous imprisonment in Ashe's murder
case. At Aaron’s sentence “the family’s grief grew so vast and intolerable that it exhausted them of every emotion” (HBM-175). Charity finally broke down and turned rather bizarre and eccentric almost bordering on madness. Her estrangement from Aaron “had been hard knot of pain at the centre of her existence and now it expanded and blotted everything from her world” (HBM-175). Meanwhile Charity was shocked by her father Jacob’s death. A fortnight later Rahel died giving birth to her third daughter. The idea of her orphaned children rocked Charity. Sense of family, however, fortified her “She must not let her grand children down; She must not let her daughter down.” (HBM-174)

Daniel, now, pitched into the unfamiliar role of the head of the family, thought that Aaron’s safe returning home would cure Charity’s mental illness. Even this hope had not yet fulfilled for Aaron was almost tortured to the state of a decrepit in jail. Even at this time, Aaron thought of his native village, Chevatham. His priorities in his life were centred round his family and home and in his dying moments he confessed this to his brother Daniel: “You should go back, anna, take out family back to where we belong.......Don’t have the regrets I do. You may not be much like me, but you’re the last of us......” (HBM-198). Aaron’s sense of family line and of a place where his ancestors belonged is poignantly expressed in these dying moments. Contemplating over his love Jayanti’s name, Aaron died with smiling lips. It is clear that in Aaron’s scheme of things too family and home and the continuation of family branch took precedence over the cause of freedom to which he gave his life. That he admits in his dying moments to regretting his separation from family and home only underscores his sense of loss. Daniel too suffered the same longing of family and home occasionally even when he was doing well in Nagercoil as a doctor.
Domestic felicity with mother, wife, sisters and grandfather at Chevathar made him feel nostalgic. He muses about his childhood in Chevethar:

“All said and done, he mused, he was the soil of Chevathar. He felt this most keenly in the early hours of the morning and as night approached...I miss Chevathar......I can never be truly myself anywhere else.......It was true that things had started working out for him after he had left Chevathar, but the yearning for it would never leave him.” (HBM - 157)

However these silent rumblings of nostalgia burst into open in Daniel only after he was reunited with Aaron. His moment of reunion with Aaron was also his moment of awakening and it is only now that he begins to see contours of his dream of a family and home. Daniel vowed: “I will recover Chevathar for you, Aaron” (HBM-199). Getting back to Chevatar, he found the Big House lifeless. He realized the evil nature of his uncle and aunt, Abraham and Kaveri, who grew cynical because of their childless marriage and who poisoned Aaron’s mind. “Through their avarice and selfishness, they had divided his family, dishonoured Solomon, brought about the death of his brother and the madness of his mother” (HBM-201). Daniel forgave them and allowed them to live in Chevathar instead of imposing banishment. Next he did Miriam’s marriage with a lawyer. In 1918 he founded a colony, Doraipuram with his clan rallying there as many of his relatives as was possible for the enormous wealth he made as a doctor. He deployed wealth for buying back most of the land that belonged to his father by paying undreamt of price. By offering land and money on attractive terms he brought together 150 families. He established his ideal republic of Doraipuram on twelve commandments of which “the most contentious was
the one which banned all political activity within the colony." A couple of cousins objected, but Daniel used his Chairman's veto saying "I've seen politics up close and find it abhorrent,......I've already lost a brother to it, and I will not lose any more of my family if I can help it" (HBM-214). He sought to banish caste by urging all the people of Doraipuram to drop caste names. But even Daniel had to concede defeat on the proposal he mooted to remove all traces of caste from the family. But no one, not even his faithful and devoted follower Romdoss supported his view on the ground that caste gave them identity. Helpless, he left the community alone and finally decided he and his immediate family would drop its caste suffix, Andavar. Thanks to the Daniel's efforts of casteless Doraipuram. He built a huge mansion "The House of Blue Mangoes" (Neelam Illum) in the Indo-Sarcenic style with 58 rooms, which was always filled with the members of his clan. Here, the family kitchen served food to nearly a hundred people every day. And here he had the son Kannan he craved for. Also, it was here that Daniel's mother Charity, who remained until now unhinged after the death of her father Jocob and daughter Rahel was restored to normalcy. Such was the restorative and therapeutic power of the family brought together in terms of the ideal. And Daniel's dream of family, community and home has come true.

"Doraipuram continued to grow. New families poured in and by the end of the third year of its founding the settlement was home to over a hundred and fifty families, some of whose links to the clan could best be described as tenuous. The brother-in-law of the husband of a third cousin for example. There were retired airmen, geologists, doctors, engineers, Accountants & Clerks..." (HBM-221)
Families thrive on gossip. Gossip keeps the extended family connected and interested in the life of its separate constituents. But it also has the potential to do great damage. "Squabbles broke out between families, relatives stopped talking to each other and Daniel's glorious idea acquired a malicious core" (HBM-223). Victoria, a gossipmonger spread the false gossip that Shanthi (the grand daughter of Charity) was moving with a Mangalam boy in the mango groves.

It is important to note that all these families of Doraipuram are held together by Daniel's vast riches. Daniel probably is not unaware of this. But the force of idealism, sustained by his eminence and wealth seemed to work. The novelist's creation of this ideal community can not be taken to be naïve or simplistic, because he shows the awareness of innumerable practical problems. For instance, he puts in here maggots-like rumour monger such as Victoria who could have vitiated things for the "great experiment" (HBM-224) had it not been for the good-hearted efforts of Charity to engage "Chivvying aunts and grannies, cousins and nieces into a variety of tasks" (HBM-225). It must be admitted that the novel simply skirts the complications – maggots in the mangoes – that might otherwise have destroyed the ideal colony Daniel had sought to setup. And the few complications that are really shown to vitiate the colony's atmosphere are too simplistic just as the trouble-shooting efforts made to assuage those problems are puerile and tame to be realistic. Wearing the blinkers, then, the novel progresses focussing simply on the pristine quality of the utopian dream to the exclusion of all practical difficulties that lay in the way of preservation of the dream in real time. As if to defend itself against the naïve inattention to the practical difficulties, the novel endows Daniel with the awareness in the final moments by creating a will in which Daniel talks of the maggots that lay hidden in the apparently healthy looking Chevathar.
blue mangoes. Speaking ruefully, Daniel expresses in his will his regrets a little before his death.

“.................. I regretted the things I hadn’t done, I thought about quarrels that hadn’t been resolved, I thought about matters left incomplete ........ And you, my family, whether you like it or not, are one of my regrets. I’ve often wondered why I slaved for you all my life when I could have lavished more care and attention on myself....... Every family has within it its maggots – greedy, dishonest, ungrateful people, whose worst qualities are magnified when they are gathered together. So, at the end of my life, my picture of Doraipuram is bleak. Outside to the world at large, we are an example of just how a family should be. Inside, the rot is beginning to spread.” (HBM-349-50).

Just before the budding of these deep rumblings of Daniel, Charity died. Mother’s death devastated Daniel. On the occasion of Shanti’s wedding, collective mass marriages were celebrated by Daniel.

Daniel’s son, Kannan, a representative of third generation, strays from the ideal of Doraipuram and even marries an Anglo-Indian girl called Helen and lives outside the clan and home thereby threatening, for some time, the continuation of the family line itself. It is interesting to note that Daniel who wanted to banish the caste factor from his ideal community, ends up opposing his son marrying outside the caste until the end. May be this is consistent with the terms of his dream of his family. For the Anglo-Indian girl Helen, whom his son marries, does not quite fit in. In the family, the inherent incompatibility between the daughter-in-law (Helen) and mother-in-law (Lily, mother of Kannan) is clearly brought out by the novel.
Lily’s good-willed wish is that Helen should become the traditional role model of the daughter-in-law and that she herself would need to be the right sort of mother-in-law. It was not to be. “The tyranny of the oppressed is much too potent to be deflected by mere good will. Helen had been wounded twice, first by Daniel and then by Pulimed society. And she was too mired in her own hurt to extricate herself. Even if Helen had been able to ignore the feeling of being wronged, Lily and she were too dissimilar to even begin putting the semblance of a relationship together. For a start, they didn’t have a language in common—Helen’s Tamil was as poor as ‘Lily’s English’” (HBM-320).

Trouble broke out almost as soon as Lily arrived at her son’s (Kannan’s) house, when Helen turned her nose up at the gifts her mother-in-law had brought. She hated to wear saris and jewellery and eat sweets Lily had bought. Kannan bore Helen’s contempt for his mother. There were other points of conflict too. Lily had objected mildly to Helen addressing Kannan by name and this had set Helen off again. In turn, Helen angrily ticked off her mother-in-law’s desire of cooking food Kannan had loved at home. Lily did not fight back. It would only make things difficult for her son. It is motherly love that prevents Lily from going to the extreme of strife. “How would Helen have fitted into Doraipuram and the traditional role of daughter-in-law” when there has been cultural and emotional incompatibility. There are two points to be noted in Helen’s incompatibility in the Andavar clan. First, it appears to affirm the clannishness and casteism of the Andavar Patriarchs. Second, Helen’s incompatibility appears to rule out the inter-racial fusion as a compromise solution because it does not work, reminding us of Rudyard Kipling’s belief that “East is East and West is West and never the twain shall meet.”
The House of Blue Mangoes thrusts towards a vision of family, home and community which incidentally might affirm casteism, and this appears to be a safe and guaranteed path to human happiness in Indian context. In the end, however, Kannan returns to his family clan leaving behind his incompatible and cantakerous wife, although the return of the native changes nothing of the character of the dream that is at the centre of the novel. Daniel is now replaced by the son, Kannan, as the rallying point for the members of the clan, although in considerably reduced circumstances. So many of the members of the extended family descended on Doraipuram for the Christmas celebrations of 1946 and at Neelam Ilium, the rooms that had been locked and shuttered for years, had been reopened. "All across the settlement old friendships were renewed and new ones forged, as the extended Dorai family gave itself over to a huge and tumultous reunion" (HBM-409). Bellowing out the Christmas carols, Kannan looks at his mother, Lily, Romdassmama, his nephews and nieces, the dozens of well-loved faces, unconsciously revelling in the sheer pleasure of being alive and together. And the great sprawl of the Dorai family forgot its worries and feuds, the future and the past, and concentrated on enjoying the bliss of Christmas. Kannan thinks that, his father Daniel would have been delighted at this had he been alive, and affirmed that his dream would never die. He agrees with Romdass-mama’s saying “Nothing beats a family in full cry"(HBM-411). He reflects how from age to age Chevathar’s Doraipuram had pulled people into its embrace—his grandfather, his father, his brother and himself.

"This is the land of my family ....... It belongs to everyone of us, we have made its hard red earth our own with our failures and our triumphs, our blood and our laughter. I am glad I'm here, it is the place of my heart."(HBM-412)
He looks forward to future with a hope that he will celebrate the next Christmas with his wife. Thus the novel celebrates the idea of the family without losing sight of the pitfalls in the way.

Besides the depiction of a family saga, David Davidar in *The House of Blue Mangoes* brings to life the familiar Indian situations as lived in villages in all its colours and shades. The novel delights in dwelling on the Indianness of life — the folk ways, the rituals, the festivals, the village politics, the mean as well as the noble aspects, the casteism, the squalor, the ancient system of medicine, the structures of our beliefs, practices and superstitions, the self-rule in the form of Panchayat, the beggars and the countless other ways against the backdrop of British colonialism and the National movement for freedom for a span of three generations over the period of a century.

Lastly, the novel *The Glass Palace*(2000) of Amitav Ghosh has been discussed as a family saga. While human greed was the destructive factor in the fragmentation of the family in Rushdie’s *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* and caste war in David Davidar’s novel *The House of Blue Mangoes* it was the British Colonialism that destroyed families in Amitav Ghosh’s *The Glass Palace*.

The breaking down of *The Glass Palace* is an apt metaphor of the crumbling of the royal family of the Burmese last king Thebaw and queen Supalayat. The glass is fragile and so freak does the royal family become in the sweeping tide of the British colonialism and imperialism. The colonial history entwines with personal histories to destroy and recreate new histories and cultures. The factual story of history mingles with the fictional
of the individuals intersecting class, race and religion. Languages and cultures mix and *The Glass Palace* incorporates complex instantiations of cultural syncreticism and metamorphosis. Customs are invented and absorbed to create new cultures in the realm of family ethics. The relationships between the families become denser through love, marriage and emotional involvements. The rise and fall of the Burmese royal family is interwoven with those of the family sagas of Raj Kumar, Uma and Saya John.

Colonialism defined by troops on the march, drastic changes in administration, large-scale transfers of goods and reconfigurations of political boundaries by way of invasions and wars happened to be the central force in the running and ruining of the lives of family sagas. The lucid narrative vividly concretised characters, their desires, longings and ambitions are constantly swayed and disrupted by the tide of history but the blending of the public and the personal is seamless.

The year was 1885. It was Burma. In the city of Mandalay the last of the Burma’s kings -- King Thebaw and Queen Supalayat lived inside a fort. The Royal family lived with hundreds of servants in “hundreds and hundreds of rooms with gilded pillars and polished floors—And right at the centre there is a vast hall that is like a great shaft of light, with shining crystal walls and mirrored ceilings. People call it the Glass Palace.” (GP-7)

The cause of the fall of the Royal family was that a British timber company sidestepped the Kingdom’s customs and regulations. It began cutting up logs to avoid paying duties. The royal customs officers had levied a fine on the company and demanded arrears of payment for some fifty thousand logs. The Englishmen have protested and refused to pay. And the British Governor in Rangoon, Colonel Sladen, sent the royal family
humiliating ultimatums to accept the terms of timber trade. Self-respect prevented the Queen Supalayat to accept the advice of senior minister, Kinwin Mingyi. She had “risked everything to secure the throne for Thebaw, her husband and step brother. Was it even imaginable that she would consent to give it all way now? And what if the child in her belly were a boy (and this time she was sure it was): how would she explain to him that she had surrendered his patrimony because of a quarrel over some logs of wood? The Queen had prevailed and the Burmese court had refused to yield to British ultimatum” (GP-22). The British invasion proceeded smoothly with its imperial fleet crossing the border on 14th November, 1885. About two-thirds of the soldiers were Indian Sepoys. After few days bombardment with the help of the latest breech-loading and rapid-firing rifles, the Burmese army surrendered without informing King Thebaw.

On the day of the seize of power, the soldiers as well as the people looted the palace. Colonel Sladen of the British Empire declared that the Royal family was to be sent into exile in India. Many of the assembled courtiers, who were in all their life trained in the service of King Thebaw, were now “neither the King’s friends nor his confidants and it was not in their power to lighten the weight of his crown. The burdens of kingship were Thebaw’s alone, solitude not the least among them” (GP-41). Thebaw and Supalayat and the Royal train remained impassive. That is how the Royal Power and the family are eclipsed in an instant when the world of the glass palace, “springs free of its moorings of dreams and reveals itself to be girdled in the pathways of survival and self-preservation.” (GP-42)

Queen Supayalat very often felt anxious about the fate of her two daughters. The first princess was Ashin Hteik Su Myat Phaya Gyi and the second princess was Ashin Hteik Su Myat Phaya Lat who were aged 3 and 2
respectively. Dolly, a 10-year old maid, looked after the second princess, a patient of frequent epileptic attacks. Soon, the Queen delivered a third female child and she was named Ashin Hteik Su Myat Paya. Every one was nervous because they knew how badly she had wanted a boy. But, she asserted feminine superiority in bearing a female child. Gladly she said: “a girl would be better able to bear the pain of exile” (GP-56). Later, the Royal Family was driven to Ratnagiri, a provincial district head-quarter between Bombay and Goa in Maharasra State. There the Queen, in the second year of the exile, delivered the Fourth Princess. All the princesses grew curious about their surroundings. They learned to speak Marathi and Hindustani. They were denied enough freedom as to visit local families, to form friendships and to grow to womanhood without knowing the outside world.

King Thebaw who was now a commoner spent hours on his balcony gazing out to sea with his gold-rimmed glasses. Ratnagiri was hard hit by plague. The royal family had to live in untidy conditions in Outram House. They could not afford even to pay the salaries of their servants. They sold out everything they got from Mandalay: “their treasure was gone, all except for a few keepsakes and momentos.” Amidst the menacing conditions the Queen was kind-hearted as to allow raise a basti of plague fearing and fleeing families around the Outram House. Overnight she became “a guardian goddess, a protector of the unfortunate, an incarnate devi who had rescued hundreds of the refugees of the plague” (GP-83). It is a wonder to note that how the royal and cruel came to be known as the common and humanitarian. The princesses mingled with the poor for “when they were hungry they would run into their friend’s shacks and ask for something to eat” and they “would fall sleep on the mud floors of the palm-thatched shanties.” (GP-83)
The King and the Queen, the only historical characters, are gradually stripped off all their prerequisites. Brooding over the glorious past, the Queen regretted over the present misery. The Outram House had grown to be a slum. Decay had become the Queen's badge of defiance. She blamed the colonial masters for "They chose this to be our gaol" (GP-87). She said to the visitors about the British rulers and their indifference to the Royal family:

Yes, look around you, look at how we live. Yes, we who ruled the richest land in Asia are now reduced to this. This is what they have done to us, this is what they will do to all of Burma. They took our Kingdom, promising roads and railways and ports, but mark my words, this is how it will end. In a few decades the wealth will be gone—all the gems, the timber, the oil—and then they too will leave. In our golden Burma where no one ever went hungry and no one was too poor to write and read all that will remain is destitution and ignorance, famine and despair. We were the first to be imprisoned in the name of their progress." (GP-88)

While Burma was depleted of its valuable natural resources-teak, ivory, petroleum, the royal family led a life of increasing shabbiness and obscurity in an unfamiliar territory. The rapacity and greed inherent in the colonial process both in India and Burma was same and that the Indians were willing collaborators in this enterprise of deprecation.

The common people happened to be the protagonist. Cultural hierarchies too overlap and there is an intertwining of the high and the low
classes to create new societies. Inspite of the queen’s desperate attempts to maintain the aristocratic superiority, her daughters choose their mates from the commonfolk. The first princess steals the heart of Mohan Sawant, the coachman and gate keeper, the secret lover of Dolly. She gets a pre-marital pregnancy. There are power structures operating within power structures. So, Dolly had to sacrifice her personal happiness for the first princess in her loyalty to the royal family and in order to maintain her job and security.

The first Princess’s pre-marital pregnancy has almost so indicted Queen Supalayat to great heights that she blamed the British administration. She would rather submit herself and support Sawant than to yield to the words of Beni Prasad Dey, the District Collector of Ratnagiri who wished that the scandal would not reach the public. To the Collector’s questions “Is it appropriate that a Princess of Burma should link herself to a household employee, a servant?” and “I am fully amazed that Your Highness should choose to make light of such a scandal” (GP-152), the Queen retorts:

“There is no scandal in what my daughter has done. The scandal lies in what you have done to us; in the circumstances in which you have reduced us; in our very presence here.” (GP-150)

Thus the episode of the First Princess’s pregnancy did not take the royal family by so much surprise as it did the Collector and the British Government. To them (the Royal family) the real scandal is their suffering of ill-treatment and imprisonment by the Britishers. The Collector, Bipin Beharey could not deny the truth of the Queen’s charges. He feels ashamed at his helplessness and perceives the immoral nature of his role. He loses his job on this ground as being proven incapable of protecting the purity of the
royal line of blood. With the sense of a loss in himself and his identity and unable to bear the strain of humiliation he chooses death as the way out by allowing himself drowned in the Bay of Bengal. However, the uproar of pregnancy scandal subsided with Sawant marrying the First Princess. The year was 1916. She had given birth to a female child, nicknamed as Baisu/Fatty who soon became a favourite of the Queen. King Thebaw and Queen Supalayat faced a bitter insult in the hands of the second Princess also. She eloped with a Burmese commoner. This news broke the heart of the King, who died 10 days later. The Queen oathed that the second Princess would never again be permitted to enter her presence. Overnight the British erected a tomb as to prevent the king's body from being taken to Burma and make the Burmese rally about it. The Queen, after the end of First World War in Europe, was allowed to return to Burma with her daughters. The first princess decided to go back to Sawant in India though it was suggested that she, as the eldest daughter, had a duty to remain with her mother. Defying the native land and the family of dynasty, she returned to her own family of husband and children in India proving herself to be the role model of the tradition. She died after 20 years in a small house on the outskirts of Ratnagiri town.

The second Princess and her husband, after living several years in Calcutta, left for the hill station of Kalimpong near Darjeeling and started a dairy business. Of the four princess, the first and the second, who were born in Burma, choose to live on with their families in India. The third and the fourth, born in Indian exile, settled in Burma with their families. Queen Supalayat spent her money on religious charities and on feeding monks in the last part of her life. She always wore white, the Burmese colour of mourning. She died in 1925, six years after the return from Ratnagiri. She was mourned by great numbers and was buried near the Shwedagon Pagoda.
in Rangoon. Thus the saga of the Royal family is set against the backdrop of the colonial tumults.

Amitav Ghosh, in *The Glass Palace* alights on families living out their lives in critical times. The interaction between the factual of the historical and the fictional of the commoners is both harrowing and exciting. The novel presents, besides the royal family, the members of the three families who often move from Burma to India to Malaysia by their own volition and circumstantiality. The novel presents, apart from the royal family, the interaction between three families. They are Dolly and Raj Kumar in Burma, Uma and her brother in India and of Saya John in Malaysia. These families intersect religions, cultures and countries. Their relationships become denser through love, marriage and emotional involvements.

The family saga of Rajkumar is a noticeable feature of the family portraits. Basically, it goes without saying that Raj Kumar’s orphanhood implies that he has to create a family where none exists; he has to build lasting bonds of trust with strangers such as Dolly. Structurally, that is, the unfolding of this novel is associated with the enfolding of family and friends around the central character. The story of Raj Kumar began in 1885 at the age of 11. He was a vagrant even before the British colonization had messed up the roots and ancestries of people by its ruthless transportation of men and women from the native lands of Burma and India to other parts of the colonial world. His family name was ‘Raha’ (GP-13). The 11-year old Raj Kumar drifted in life at his own will. His life is the story of struggle, survival and success in the midst of the colonial turmoil. With a temporary job at Macho’s tea shop in Mandalay, it is a surprise to see how temporary his position in the hands of the bigger forces. He watched the Royal family moving out of the city in an ordinary ox-cart and their palace being looted
by the hypocritical people. He spotted the beautiful 10-year old Dolly, a servant girl in the royal entourage. Bud of love for her grew in him. He said to her “I will see you again”(GP-36). These words raise the question of human will and the inevitability of the circumstances skilled in the art of survival in a different world. Raj Kumar gradually succeeds in teak business with the help of Saya John. The driving of capitalism turns Raj Kumar and Saya John into tools much as the sepoys had been made the instruments of the Empire. Raj Kumar became absorbed in the capitalistic love for money as an end itself. He even did the trade of supplying the Indian labourers to the foreign oil and teak businessmen in Rangoon before actually getting into timber trade. While the royal family was being transformed into commoners in Indian exile, the ‘Kala’ Raha was transforming himself into ‘Babu’- a colonial status, a man of name and wealth in the Indian community of Burma. Now at the age of thirty the bud of love for Dolly drew him to Ratnagiri. Dolly first thwarts Raj Kumar’s hope of love and marriage. She was just an embodiment of the virtue of chastity. She could not even contemplate to ruin the life of others. She felt guilty for having sexual encounters with Mohan Sawant in the age of adolescence. Sense of guilt prevented her from accepting Raj Kumar’s offer of marriage. She, with a sense of stoic resignation, decided to stay on the royal family. However on the persuasion of Uma Dey she revealed to Raj Kumar about her pre-marital adolescent sexual encounters. It was such a turn of event in her life that Raj Kumar accepted to marry her brushing out her sexual encounter with Mohan Sawant as immaterial for it was just a childish experience. Dolly and Raj Kumar signed the register of marriage. The married couple went to Burma. They proved themselves to be the best pair of compatibility and marital happiness. They are just a union of sense and sensibility devoid of any malice of pride and prejudice.
“Dolly and Raj Kumar seemed to have little knowledge of one another’s likes and dislikes, preferences and habits, yet the miracle was ... that far from weakening their bond their mutual incomprehension served rather to strengthen it” (GP-186). As Uma Dey put it “Dolly had been: a woman who had no illusions about the nature of her condition; a prisoner who knew the exact dimensions of her cage and could look for contentment within those confines.” (GP-187)

Her happy married life resulted in the birth of a male child. The boy’s Burmese name would be Sein Win and his Indian name was to be Neeladhri, Neel for short. Her second child was named Dinanath, Dinu for short. In course of time Dolly was so occupied with the growing of her children that she avoided social gatherings. She had to remain increasingly reclusive with contentment towards domestic life for over fifteen years. Dinu was interested in photography while Neel was in his father’s trade of timber business. On the invitation offered by Uma the Collector’s widow, Dolly along with Neel and Dinu, went to Malaysia to visit Morningside House of Mathew and Elsa, son and daughter-in-law of Saya John. Here Dinu fell in love with Alison, the only daughter of Mathew and Elsa. Neel, promising to double the amount his father had given him came to India and invested the amount on films. He was attracted by the beauty of Manju, Uma Dey’s niece. Manju knew her self to be shy and self-conscious and it was hard for her to imagine that she could ever enjoy acting in films. Just like the situation of most of the Indian girls, she knew “her future had already been decided: She would leave the house as some one’s wife” (GP-264).

She gets married to Neel. Raj Kumar, now in his sixties, suffers business losses because of depression. He was saddled with huge debts and had been forced to sell off many of his properties.
Sense of homelessness and loss of identity are revealed by the protagonist Rajkumar. Despite his losses in Burma he was now more adamant than ever about remaining in Burma at the time when racial riots broke out between the Burmese and the Indians.

'I've lived here all my life; everything I have is here. I'm not such a coward as to give up everything I've worked for at the first sign of trouble. And anyway, what makes you think that we'll be any more welcome in India than we are here? There are riots in India all the time—how do you know that the same thing wouldn't happen to us there?' (GP-245)

Adding much to his trouble the British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain, declared war on Germany, on behalf of Britain and her Empire. With the start of the war, Air Raid precautions were prepared for Rangoon. Certainly, in Burma, as in India, public opinion was deeply divided: in both places, many important personages had expressed their support of the Colonial Government. But many others could also be heard to voice bitter condemnations of Britain's declaration of war on their behalf, without any binding guarantees of eventual independence. Dinu dedicated himself to the Air Raid Precautions Scheme, involved in Student Union, politics and the publication of anti-fascist magazine. Civil defences seemed a natural extension of their political work. Dinu's opinions would always be violently at odds with his father's. But after the war they developed a kind of affinity may be ideological and revolutionary which is against the British policy of aggression. Unlike his father he was not a believer in colonialism and indeed his antipathy to British rule was surpassed only by his loathing
of European Fascism and Japanese militarism. Meanwhile Raj Kumar wished to dispose his property and pay off debts and invest the left-over money with his sons Neel and Dinu. However, a plan took shape before his eyes. The price of timber would soar at the time of war and profits would come.

“If he could build up a stock pile of timber in his yards......he’d be able to sell at a good price next year. The problem was liquidity: he would have to sell or mortgage all his assets to find cash....”(GP-315)

His belief was that ‘hoarding-war-profiteering’ which was negativted by Dolly. The Kemendine House became a bleak picture with Manju suffering from illness of pregnancy, with Neel and Raj Kumar arranging for the disposal of family’s properties and buying stocks of teak. Dolly and Manju, who were remote and unapproachable towards each other, had now become allies, team-mates working together for family’s renewal. Dolly, in her mid-sixties, seemed to have come to terms with the tenets of Lord Buddha, for she had read out to Manju:

“Develop a state of mind like the earth.......for on the earth all manner of things are thrown, clean and unclean, dung and urine, spittle, pus and blood, and the earth is not troubled or repelled or disgusted .... and...... develop a state of mind like water, for in the water many things are thrown, clean and unclean, and the water is not troubled or repelled or disgusted......And so too with fire which burns all things...”(GP-343)
Dolly’s mind was pre-occupied with the laws of eternal that brought her on to the plane of universal thought and everlasting peace. Meanwhile Manju gave birth to a daughter called Jaya. Manju who once grasped Lord Buddha’s first Sermon “.....birth is sorrow, age is sorrow, disease is sorrow, death is sorrow....every wish unfulfilled is sorrow.......” is now totally pre-occupied with motherhood as an end in itself. While Raj Kumar and his family were facing the economic and political problems in Burma, his son Dinu was happily enjoying himself at Morningside in Malaya, doing photography and loving Alison. He preferred personal happiness to familial responsibilities at home. When Dinu insisted on marriage in the style of traditional, Alison replied.

“You don’t know me, Dinu....I am not like you. I’m wilful, I’m spoilt ....... You’d hate me in a week if you were married to me.” (GP-358)

Dinu is shocked when he learns that Alison is rather unconventional and modern in her opinion on marriage while he himself is fixed and rigid. Meanwhile, Arjun, a military Officer of I.N.A.enter into the loved life of Dinu and Alison. Dinu gets a sense of disillusion. He thinks that his love Alison was drawn to Arjun. So he doubted the honesty of Alison’s love for him. He felt depressed and disappointed. He thought Arjun would win her hand.

“He grew angry with himself: If there was any tenet on which he’d wanted to build his life, it was that of never giving in to self-pity----that was a road that would not end.....” (GP-371)
However Alison was very rational and worldly in the matter of love. She resisted the temptation of making love to Arjun as she has pursued the essential difference between him and Dinu. She points out to Arjun:

“You’re not in charge of what you do; you’re a toy, a manufactured thing, a weapon in someone else’s hands. Your mind doesn’t inhabit your body—She saw that despite the largeness and authority of his presence, he was a man without resources, a man whose awareness of himself was very slight and very fragile.” (GP-376)

Love was considered in Platonic terms by Alison. She had to incline herself towards Dinu, who showed considerable care and affection for her.

The Japanese entered the war. The rubber estate owners of Malaya were fleeing to Singapore. Dinu advised Alison to move to Singapore along with her grandfather Saya John for safety. Alison’s mother was an American. Her brother Timmy still lived in America. Now America and Japan were at war. The Japanese might attack Alison as feared by Dinu. Dinu himself now would go to Burma to assist his family. But he changed his mind at Alison’s request and followed Alison. They failed to board the Evacuation train bound to Singapore. Racial discrimination was shown. The train was meant for Whites only. Dinu became angry at this and manhandled the Station Master and was later manhandled in turn by the guards. A few days before the final separation, Alison presented Dinu a ring as a token of remembrance and future re-union in marriage. Saya John felt happy over their marriage plan. He swayed his head: “Raj Kumar’s son and Mathew’s daughter.....The two of you have joined the families. Your parents will be delighted” (GP-446). Alas! The reverse had happened. The Japanese soldiers stabbed Saya John to death. Alison shot them in return. She also
was hit. She felt immensely satisfied for having rebuffed the Japanese heroically. What she did was just tit for tat. Bullet for bullet. That was the heroic end of Alison in Malaysia. Hereafter, deaths happened serially leading to the tragic atmosphere across the borders of Burma, Malaysia and India.

In Burma, exactly at the time of unloading timber for a road construction and making a huge profits out of it, the Japanese air-raids bombed. Raj Kumar’s timber yard was on fire. The elephants trumpeted wild due to the sounds of explosions. The burning heavy timber logs got loose and fell on Neel crushing him to death. His wife Manju went erratic, almost a maddened being. Even though Dolly and Raj Kumar were old, they stuck each other braving difficulties. Their daughter-in-law Manju was filled with a lot of revulsion towards their greed which was responsible for this sad state of affairs.

"She wanted to hit Dolly, slap her, shout in her face: ‘This is reality, this is the world, look at it look at the evil that surrounds us; to pretend that it is an illusion will not make it go away. It was she who was sane, not they. What could be better, proof of their insanity they should refuse to acknowledge the magnitude of their defeat: the absoluteness of their failure, as parents, as human beings? (GP-469)

In a fit of rage and confusion she waged a war of words on her father-in-law, Raj Kumar. "She called him buro in contempt; She no longer cared she was Neel’s father and that she’d always been in awe of him: now he
was just her tormentor, who would not let her enjoy the rest that she had earned." (GP-472)

Out of utter desolation, unrest and hunger, Manju committed suicide by jumping into the river, leaving her only daughter Jaya to the care of her-in-laws and hoping that they would see her home.

Raj Kumar and Dolly reached Calcutta in 1942 along with her granddaughter Jaya and stood before the house of Uma Dey, the widow of late District Collector of Rajnagiri. The next six years Rajkumar lived with Uma. Jaya became a bond linking every member of the household. Dolly took the job of translator of war-time pamphlets. Raj Kumar worked at saw mills and timber yards. In January 1948 Burma gained Independence.

Leaving behind the orphaned Jaya to the care of Raj Kumar, Dolly left for Burma with a hope of finding her son Dinu. By the time she reached Rangoon, it was in ruins, bombed to ashes. She found her son Dinu. She advised him to go to father Raj Kumar in India. Vexed as she was with her predicament, she crossed the river Irrawaddy and reached Sagaing, a tranquil and beautiful scenery dotted with thousands of white pagodas. She renounced worldly things and got her head neatly shaven and got saffron-robins in a Nunnery. After a year she died a quick and painless death.

Dinu set up the photo-studio called "The Glass Palace" in Rangoon. She married a 20-year old Ma Thin Thin Aye, a researcher writing a dissertation on 'The Glass Palace Chronicles' in Rangoon University, who later taught literature there. They were happy, content with the smallness and privacy of their world. Their childlessness did not seem a great lack. They lived a silent life under the dictatorship of General Newin in 1962.
However, she wrote political pamphlets. She supported Aung San Suu Kyi’s democracy movement.

Jaya, the daughter of Manju and granddaughter of Raj Kumar and Dolly, lived with her unmarried aunt Bela, Uma and Raj Kumar in Lankasuka, a house. She married a doctor who was ten years senior to her. After a brief married life Jaya’s husband died in a train accident leaving behind a 2-year old son. Jaya studied and got the job of college lecturer in Calcutta University. She educated her son, who won a scholarship and went abroad at 21. Later Jaya met her uncle Dinu, just a family re-union. He was now an old man aged 74. She heard him delivering coughed political speeches. His Burmese name was U Tun Pe. He was encouraging people to speak freely, which was almost an adventure and a self-discovery in Myanmar. Jaya told Dinu of her remembrances of the end of Uma and Raj Kumar at the age of 90. Uma died in sleep while Raj Kumar died of heart attack. Uma’s state funeral was attended by the Governor whereas Raj Kumar’s was a modest one. Jaya and Bela scattered Raj Kumar’s ashes in the river. During their life Uma and Raj Kumar had no ambiguity in the nature of their relationship. Their connection was one of charity, founded on Uma’s affection for Dolly. Uma was a benevolent benefactress; he a near destitute refugee. In 1988, as Jaya knew from Illongo, after the crackdown of democracy by the military regime, Dinu was jailed along with his wife. They were let out after three years. Dinu’s wife, Daw Thin Thin Aye contracted tuberculosis in prison and died within a year of her release in 1992. In the long family saga of Raj Kumar, the last survivor was Dinu the token of remembrance for Jaya and her son in America.

The family saga of Saya John is knitted with that of Raj Kumar from the days of King Thebaw’s rule in Mandalay. He, as an orphan like Raj
Kumar was brought up by catholic priests in Malacca. His first name John Martins later turned into Saya John. His wife, a Chinese from Singapore, died leaving behind 6-year old son named Mathew, who was living with his mother’s family in Singapore. He was studying. He was very scrupulous in matters of marriage and celibacy. He pledged that he wouldn’t marry again as a true christian and he often visited church to pray for forgiveness for his sin of sex with Macho, a lady. He helped Raj Kumar to learn some trade secrets and skills. He helped Raj Kumar with money so as to set up a timber yard of his own. He at the age of semiretirement sold off his firm and moved from Rangoon and set up an office of his own. He was so kind-hearted that he hosted the newly-married couple Raj Kumar and Dolly. Dolly considered Saya John almost his father-in-law.

Saya John was secular in his thought. He came to know that his son Mathew Martin was engaged to an American protestant Elsa. Catholic Saya had no religious preoccupations. He readily accepted the protestant daughter-in-law. He moved back to Malaya again and started rubber. Meanwhile Mathew and Elsa begot a daughter named Alison and this coincided with the birth of Dinu in Raj Kumar’s family. A son, Timmy, was later born to them. Mathew took up his father’s business. He moulded jungle into a costly rubber estate. He was such a greedy capitalist that he squeezed the labour of the poor Indians and grew into a rich man. Very soon the tragedy of road accident in the Cameron Highlands took away Mathew and Elsa, leaving behind their 80-year old father Saya John and little daughter Alison. Their passing away seemed to have blanketed Saya John in greater confusion and he had begun losing the faculties of speech and memory. His indifference to her parental loss seemed to Alison “a profanation of parenthood” (GP-322). She forced herself to gain control of her anger lest her grandfather might also be lost.
“She and her Baba, as she called him, had always been very close. Now it was as though she were being forced to accept that he was no longer a sentient presence in her life; that the comforts of the companionship they had shared has ceased for ever; that he who had always been an unfailing source of support had now, in the hour of her greatest need, chosen to become a burden. Of all the betrayals he could have perpetrated, this seemed the most terrible---that he should become a child in this moment of her utter abandonment.” (GP-323)

Saya John was occasionally looked after by Illongo, an act of thanksgiving for the latter was educated by the former some time ago. Timmy, Alison's brother, was in New York with his own business to run. He handed Morningside over to her either for sale or for maintenance. Not feeling any sense of abandonment, she carved her life towards experiencing love with Dinu, her only hope of future. However her romantic life with Dinu was short-lived as she died heroically fighting with the Japanese soldiers in a bid to save her grand-father and herself. No one was left survived in the family saga of Saya John.

The family saga of Uma, which has feminist concerns closely knitted through-out the novel. It was Uma who almost played a big role in the reunion of families across countries. She appears in the novel in 1905, when her husband Beni Prasad Dey, an ICS Officer, was appointed the District Collector of Ratnagiri by the British imperialists for looking after the welfare of the exiled Burmese Royal family. King Thebaw and Queen Supalayat were greatly interested in the Collector's wife, Uma, for her new
style of wearing saree with a petticoat and a blouse. As regards the marital life of Uma and her husband it was sure that they were much drawn towards each other. They showed a lot of concern towards the marriage proposals of the Princess and Dolly for they felt that they were answerable to Bombay Secretariat if there was any defamation of them. They could find a few pure-blooded Princes for the Princesses. But Queen Supalayat declared that not a single one of them was a fit match for the true-born Konbaung Princesses. Uma was instrumental in forcing Dolly to marry Raj Kumar. As the Collector, Beny Prasad was held responsible for the defiling of the royal line of blood. He was humiliated and with the sense of loss of identity, committed suicide by drowning himself in the Bay of Bengal which Queen Supalayat considered a retribution. After this episode, 28-year old widowed Uma returned home in Calcutta. But Uma’s homecoming was not a happy one. As a widow living at home her life was a rigid one full of constraints and deprivations. Her hair was shaved off and she was not fed non-vegetarian food. With substantial pension her livelihood was assured. She had no children to care for. She went to Rangoon (Burma) and stayed with Raj Kumar and Dolly. Soon she found herself growing ever more painfully aware of the distance between Dolly’s ebullient happiness and her own circumstances. On seeing the innocent, strengthy and happy compatibility of the marital relations of Raj Kumar and Dolly, she pitiably reflected on her own:

"Between herself and the Collector, on the other hand, every eventuality had been governed by clearly defined rules and meanings. Whenever there was a question about what either of them might like or want, all they had to do was to refer implicitly to usage and etiquette....She saw that she herself had come to resemble the Collector more closely than she had ever thought to admit; that she
too had become a creature of rules and method and
dogged persistence and was in this sense utterly unlike
Dolly.” (GP-186)

Dolly and Uma are quite poles apart in respect of woman relations
with husbands. Yet, Uma thought of her husband as a successful Indian, a
model of his countrymen. She wished she were like Dolly without illusions
of predicament and with a sense of contentment.

“But she was not Dolly and never would be; some part of
her was irretrievably the Collector’s creation, and if
nothing was to be served by this disfigurement, then it
was her duty to her abilities to the task of seeking a
remedy.” (GP-187)

The remedy here was experiencing sense of freedom. On the sailing
ship she asks Mrs.Dutt, “Why should it not be possible for these freedoms to
be universally available, for women every where?”(GP-188). She felt
triumphant by speaking against the British imposition of subjugation on
people without granting freedom. While Uma was revelling in the freedom
in Europe Dolly “rarely gave any thought to such questions as freedom or
liberty or any other such matters”(GP-189). Uma was modern and
unconventional championing the cause of the feminist freedom whereas
Dolly fitted in the role model of Indian womanhood. The colonial London
reminded her of her late husband. She was a revolutionary at the core as
she worked with a group called Indian Independence League – striving for
the cause of India’s Freedom. At the age of 50 she lived at Calcutta with
parents gone, and her only brother, a father of three children. Even while
she was staying in California she prayed her best to induce sense of
nationalism among the Indian soldiers. Most of them were colonial loyalist-
turned-revolutionaries striving for India’s freedom from abroad. They spoke to one another brothers and sisters (bhai and bahen). They revered widowed Uma as an ideal woman—a symbol of purity. But she lightly brushed it aside as she had not minded it much. What Uma wanted to say was that politics would push everything out of an individual.

Uma was an outspoken feminist activist. She was raged when she knew of the story of Illongo’s mother. Long ago, Raj Kumar was used to engage to Illongo’s mother. He lied that his wife had turned away from the world. Once she got pregnant he stopped visiting her. He’d be sending her money. When, Uma wanted to bring the matter of Illongo’s mother’s sexual exploitation to the police and courts, the latter panicked.

"Because it will not help me to see him punished: It will only make things worse for everyone. The money will stop; there’ll be trouble. I am not a child: it is not for you to take this decision on my behalf.... " (GP-237)

Uma was moved deeply by the silent saga of mental suffering and physical exploitation of Illongo’s mother. “Tears of frustration welled up in Uma’s eyes. She’d often railed against women who allowed themselves to be trapped within labyrinths of fear—but now, confronted with this circumstance she was helpless, herself a part of the maze... ” (GP-237)

Having been in prejudice against Raj Kumar’s sexual assault on Illongo’s mother, Uma further flared at him over the predicament of enslaved Indians in Burma. Raj Kumar’s one trade was to transport the poor Indians to Burma to work as bonded labour. This act of him was considered worse than the worst deeds of the Europeans.
As a rule Raj Kumar never challenged Uma on political matters. But he was an edge too now, and something snapped. ‘You have so may opinions, Uma---about things which you know nothing,... I’ve heard you criticising everything you see: The state of Burma, the treatment of women, the condition of India, the atrocities of the Empire. But what have you yourself ever done that qualifies you to hold these opinions? Have you ever built anything? Given a single person a job? Improved anyone’s life in any way? No. All you ever do is stand back, as though you were above all of us, and you criticise and criticise. Your husband was as fine a man as any I’ve ever met, and you hounded him to his death with your self-righteousness.”(GP-248)

To which, Uma, just like a trodden cobra, replies:

“How dare you speak to me like that? You an animal, with your greed, your determination to take whatever you can---at whatever cost. Do you think no body knows the things you’ve done to people in power -to women and children who couldn’t defend themselves? You’re no better than a slaver and a rapist – you may think you will never have to answer for the things you’ve done, but you’re wrong....”(GP-248).

Their mutual disagreement and condemnation on socio-politico-gender views lead to strained family relations. Uma left for Calcutta to live with her brother’s family. Raj Kumar’s betrayals, Saya San’s rebellion in
Burma and its blood shed, the backwardness of the Indians led to a change in the attitude of Uma’s political thinking.

“In the past she had been dismissive of Mahatma Gandhi’s political thinking: non-violence, she had thought, was a philosophy of wish-fulfilment. She saw now that the Mahatma had been decades ahead of her in his thinking. It was rather the romantic ideas of rebellion that she had nurtured in New York that were pipe dreams. She remembered the words of the Mahatma...that the movement against colonialism was an uprising of unarmed Indians against those who bore arms--both Indians and British---and that its chosen instruments were the weapons of the weaponless, its very weakness its source of strength.” (GP-254)

Arjun, Uma’s nephew, joined the IMA, Dehradun. His priority was honour rather than personal happiness. He could not marry and rear a family of his own. He shoots himself and dies on the battlefield due to moral conflict relating to nationalism and identity.

The existential angst of modernist fiction is replaced in the postcolonial novel by a phenomenon called ‘exit-ential anxiety’. Diaspora here takes the place of doubt and homelessness becomes the principal trope, typifying an historical condition as well as a state of mind. When Rushdie’s narrator Rai in The Ground Beneath Her Feet dubs himself ‘a photographer of exits’ it is exactly this paradox to which Amitav Ghosh refers — of having to capture individuals and populations at the very moment they are about move out of a frame.
Writers such as Ghosh have sought some route other than the magic realist to the realms ‘beyond belief’ that every work of art subliminally demands. The Glass Palace deals with this literary compulsion by incorporating three ideal types within its text, which counterbalance and redeem those brute facts of history that Ghosh is clearly committed to describing in relentless detail. These are ---the image of perfect but very human beauty in the figures of Dolly and Suu Kyi; the theme of new diasporic beginnings after great upheavals such as one symbolised by the Burmese Royal family’s resettlement in Ratnagiri in India or Saya John’s son Matthew’s creation of the wondrous ‘Morningstar’ plantation in faraway Malaysia; and finally the enchantment of criss-crossing coincidences throughout the novel.

In almost all the family sagas such as Rushdie’s The Ground Beneath Her Feet, David Davidar’s The House of Blue Mangoes and Amitav Ghosh’s The Glass Palace, the married couples of all generations stick on to family and home despite their differences in pride and prejudice, sense and sensibility, despite resorting to loafing and loathing and experiencing of physical and emotional incompatibility and despite misunderstanding and mistrust. Even after eventful life either as widows or as second wives women stick on to domesticity of life with a sense of peace, reconciliation and stoic resignation either looking after or being looked after by their siblings.

In Rushdie’s The Ground Beneath Her Feet, the first generation couples are Sir Darius Cama and Lady Spenta Cama, V.V.Merchant and Ameer, and Pat Kalamania and Dolly Kalamania. Their families are role models of patriarchy and traditionality. In the characters of the second generation there has been a little erosion of familial and filial ethics despite
the holding of families. The marital bonds in the second generation families of Ormus-Vina, and Rai-Mira Celano do not prove themselves as strong as those of their parents. Ormus-Vina’s family is founded on infidelity and mistrust. Rai-Mira Celano’s family is an elective alliance forged by trust and optimism and not by sublime love. Hence they could not extend their families by having children. Some of the characters of the same second generation such as the psychopathic Cyrus Cama (Khusro) and the mentally-retarded Virus (Ardaviraf) of the Cama family remained unmarried for various reasons and hence could not build up families of their own. With regard to the life of Persis Kalamanjia, monogamy, fidelity, trust, faith and hope seem to be the loving principle of living the life. So, she remains a spinster without extending her family. Neither the families of first generation nor those of the second one could build a happy family despite their making of worldly fortunes. While it is greed for material wealth that fragments the families of the first generation it is infidelity and mistrust in human relations that ruin the families of the second one.

In *The House of Blue Mangoes* of David Davidar, the family ruins its happiness at the cost of caste struggle between Andavas and Vedhars. Survival of family and community could only be at the cost of the other. If caste functions from outside as the disruptive force of family and community in the first generation of the family of Solomon Dorai and Charity, Muthu Vedhar and Saraswathi, it is domestic intrigue within the family that is shown to be the divisive factor for the second generation of Daniel and Lily including unmarried Aaron. However, the families of Solomon and his son Daniel build and sustain family within the traditional fold of customs and conventions. It was only Aaron, who turned to freedom movement and later got imprisoned on the false ground of murder, that could not marry and extend a family of his own. However his persuasion at
the time of death which moves his brother Daniel to the founding of a colony, Doraipuram, constituting 150 families. Daniel banished all political activity relating to caste inside the colony. He constructed a huge mansion "The House of Blue Mangoes" (Neelum Illum) which was always filled with the members of his clan. The sense of family and its continuity are so deep-rooted in the scheme of the affairs of the family members that the third generation Kannan (Daniel's son) even deserted his Anglo-Indian wife Helen, and returned to Doraipuram to celebrate Christmas along with his clan. In a fit of joy he reflects, "Nothing beats a family in full cry" (HBM-411). The family has such a healing effect that Charity gets cured of her mental illness on the homecoming of her son Aaron who had been away involving himself in the historical activity of the nation.

In The Glass Palace of Amitav Ghosh, it is the British colonialism and imperialism that fragments the Burmese royal family and converts them into the common folk. Though Queen Supalayat and King Thebaw of the first generation tried to maintain the purity of royal blood, their daughters of second generation resorted to pre-marital pregnancies and love marriages out of caste, race and country and generated hybrid families of commoners. However the so called princesses stick on to the traditionality of family leaving behind their royalty and homeland of Burma. Such is the sanctity attached to the concept of family in oriental societies.

Yet another family of the second generation is that of Raj Kumar and Dolly whose family life is full of emotional compatibility. While they could build a wealthy family, it soon ended on a note of tragedy due to capitalistic greed and imperialistic war. Even their children could not survive successfully. His elder son Neel and his wife Manju died eventfully leaving behind their only daughter Jaya as a token of remembrance who in turn had
a son studying abroad. Raj Kumar's second son, Dinu lived a simple married life running a Photo studio called "The Glass Palace" in Rangoon.

Uma, who began living her early life as a widow, turned into a feminist. She too could not build a family of her own because of the early death of her husband. Her nephew, Arjun, a military officer in the IMA could not build a family as he had committed suicide due to severe moral conflict on the battle field. So in The Glass Palace the institution of family and its decline in happiness and longevity are set against the background of historical, social and political turmoils involving the concepts of capitalism, imperialism and colonialism. The circumstantial drifts across the borders and along the generations would naturally bring about attitudinal changes in the ethics of family—a change from traditional rigidity to modern flexibility.
NOTES


2. Seth, Vikram. A Suitable Boy, New Delhi: Viking Penguin, 1993. All subsequent quotations from this text are shown by the abbreviation ASB.


7. Chowdhuri, Amit. Freedom Song, Picador India, 1998. All subsequent references of this text are shown by the abbreviation FS

8. Chowdhuri, Amit. A New World, Picador India. London. 2000. All subsequent quotations of this text are shown by the abbreviation ANW.

9. Desai, Anita. Fasting, Feasting. Vintage London. 1999. p.9. All subsequent quotations of this text are shown by the abbreviation FF.

10. Jha, Raj Kamal. The Blue Bedspread (London: Picador, 1999) All further quotations to this edition will be shown by the abbreviation BB.


12. Seth, Vikram. An Equal Music. Viking Penguin, New Delhi-1999. All references to this edition will be shown by the abbreviation AEM.

13. Hardy, Thomas qtd., in Health High Point p.32-33


17. Roy, Arundhati. The God of Small Things (New Delhi: India, Ink, 1997) All further quotations from this edition will be marked with the abbreviation GOST.

18. Kate Millet, Sexual Politics (London; Virago, 1977). p. 25


21. Ibid., p. 32-33.

22. Rushdie, Salman. The Ground Beneath Her Feet, (Jonathan Cape, London, 1999) All further citations to this text will be shown by the abbreviation GBHF.

23. Davidar, David. The House of Blue Mangoes. (New Delhi: Penguin Books, 2002) All subsequent quotations from this text are shown by the abbreviation HBM.


25. Amitav Ghosh. The Glass Palace. Ravi Dayal Publishers, New Delhi. 2000 All subsequent quotations of this text will be shown by the abbreviation GP.