Chapter IV
CHAPTER IV

PORTRAYAL OF FAMILIAL WOMEN

Introduction:

Though men and women are complementary to each other, even in this modern era, women are considered not as equal to men but as the weaker class. They undergo suppression in a male dominated society. Women are unvoiced creatures of the society. This chapter deals with the portrayal of such women in the novels of Githa Hariharan’s *The Thousand Faces of Night* (1992), Arundhati Roy’s *The God of Small Things* (1997) and Anita Nair’s *Ladies Coupe* (2001).

Any relationship is a beautiful bond that connects people to share pleasure and pain, joy and sorrow, success and failure. A strong and healthy relationship assures that a person that he/she is not left alone on this earth. Everyone is surrounded by such relationships such as marital, parental, siblings and friends. Trust, commitment, adjustment, sacrifice and above all, love are prime pillars of a healthy relationship. Ups and downs are part of all these relationships. But a few bonds, like love and marriage, when they break, cause damage and leads to excruciating and intolerable pain. For a long time, it has been ingrained in the minds of an Indian woman that marriage is the ultimate goal of her life and her husband’s home is her only abode. Indian society is still conventional in its approach in marriage. Here, husband and wife strive to maintain their balance and harmony. It is always the women who curb her individuality so that her husband shines in his professional and social life.
Marriage cuts off a woman from the mainstream life and pulls her back from achieving her goals. Most marriages are successful only when the women show major attention to the household affairs. For men it’s different. In most families, the man is considered as a boss of the house and wife as counsellor or a minister who assists or helps; but not the dictator of the family. Women are considered as second decision maker.

Beyond the threshold of her house, woman finds life less promising and confusing due to her social and cultural insecurities. Whenever women step out of their confinements, they have to fight against a thousand faceless demons to wipe out the negative image of women that already dwell in the minds of men and women. On one hands women are treated as angels and goddess. In some other aspects women are expected to be slaves, who are ready to work for a man’s benefits and comfort. Marginalization and centralization are common in a woman’s life. Veneration and isolation both do not help her to mingle with the realities of life.

An Indian woman has been either venerated as a goddess or rejected as a siren. The modern Indian woman has to compete against these two extreme images; she is striving to lead the life of a normal human being with normal desires (Manohar 22).

Women writers of Indian Writing in English are good in analyzing complex issues like complexities of human relationships, man-woman relationship, woman’s psyche and her potential.

The changing pattern of man-woman relationship is presented not only in the novels, but also in films and television serials. Bold themes and
diverse issues are now being taken up by the media. The mosaic of stories highlights the fact that man-woman relationship is a very complex and subtle issue (Mukerjee25).

The changing pattern of man-woman relationship can be traced in the works of Anita Desai, Nayantara Shagal, Arundhati Roy, Manju Kapur and Shobha de. These writers show how the modern Indian women attempt to free themselves sexually, economically and domestically from the male dominated society. Male and female characters in these novels fight against their interpersonal problems without minding the success; often ending in some kind of peace.

The novelists, like the readers, know that there is no logical analysis of emotion. However, it is interesting to note how certain types of men and certain types of women get along very well. The novelists often focus upon the lack of emotional fulfilment in man-woman relationship (Naik 56).

The Thousand Faces of Night:

Githa Hariharan’s *The Thousand Faces of Night* compels the reader to undergo an enigmatic experience, along with the protagonist, straight from a woman’s life. She ferrets out the struggle of Indian women in her affiliation with society and man for the sake of preserving her identity. The novel brings alive the underworld of Indian women’s lives. Most of the women live in dreams rather than the real world. The sharper relevance of the whole issue is on universal suffering of women in the subcontinent. Hariharan delineates significance and relevance of their suffering of the great epic periods of the Ramayana and Mahabharata because it is from them that Indian women draw their life models. Besides this novelist has pen their writing about women in a high range from lower class
not only the characters but also the situation also resembles in various way. Lot of changes are made in the women writing in English. Women are viewed in new dimension in their works. They portrayed their character as strong, powerful elements in their life. Women slowly changed their roles in society as well as physically they were very strong. She finds her moral support from herself rather than the men.

In the novel *The Thousand Faces of Night* exemplifies the multiple existences of Indian women by Hariharan. They are suffering and sustaining their life through their struggle and self-realization. Here Devi, the protagonist of the novel strives to preserve her life. She is “an uncompromising survival.”(9) The other Indian women novelists like Kamala Markandaya, Bharati Mukherjee, Anita Desi, Geetha Metha also views their women characters in a new perspective. Hariharan is a conscious experimentalist; she seems to have identified herself with Devi in order to decipher her feminist concern with emancipated women. She is more concerned with Devi rather than any other women in that novel. Her focus on Devi brings the vulnerable effect to portray the woman character. Pradeep Trikha says, “Devi’s interior climate, the climate of sensibility”(167) is seen throughout the novel.

**Devi’s Life Span:**

Devi is the central character of the novel, who went to the United States of America for her higher studies. After spending a few years in America, Devi comes to India to live with her widowed mother, Sita. Even her mother also waits for the daughter’s arrival to India. Initially she had a problem to mingle with the Indian culture because she was in western culture for some times. She confronts some difficulties in making adjustments with day-to-day realities but soon realizes it is not easy to radically change the old order of things because she has returned from a brave new old.
Since then a kind of equilibrium, unsteady but safe, had hung between them, and Devi began making plans to return. Her mother was delighted, and wrote a long, newly letter promising a wonderful home-coming, and insisting that she makes stopovers at London and Paris to complete her education (TFN 6-7).

Her homecoming sucks her back to the traditional Bharamin family life. She and her mother were pulled together like a one called unit. Sita becomes her “anchor rock, never wrong, never to be questioned a self-evident fact of her existence” (TFN 16). Though Devi lived in America for few years she still felt susceptible to her environment.

In her adolescence, Devi had listened to her grandmother’s stories. The epic stories like Ramayana and Mahabharata. Particularly her grandmother focuses her stories on women’s pride, destiny, fate, and self-sacrifice. She listens to her narration of Gandhari, who had blindfolded herself as a subservient wife because her husband, Dhritrashtra was blind. She doesn’t like to see anything in this world because her husband was blind. Perhaps the other aspect of Gandhari’s blindfold is her protest against an injustices imposed on her by getting her married to Dhritrashtra. Her mind rebelled against seeing more and more injustices in rest of her life. Gandhari’s story makes Devi life forward to live in this real world. She is the women of yore proud and wilful.

The lesson brought me five steps closer to adulthood. I saw, for the first time, that my parents too were afflicted by a kind of blindness. In their blinkered world they would always be one, one leading the other, one hand always in the grasp of another (TFN 29).
Amba’s Life:

Another mythological story that has influenced Devi, is the story of Amba in Mahabharatha. When Bhishma, the prince of Hastinapur went to Kashi as soon as he heard of a swayamvara at the king’s palace, he had already taken a vow of celibacy. Amba held out her hand for the king of Salwa but Bhishma abducted all the three for his step-brother, Vichitravirya. When they reach, Hastinapur, Amba pleads with him to let her go and marry a man of her choice. Bhishma taking pity on her says that it was he who had a rightful claim over her as he had won them all in the swayamvara. Amba returns to Hastinapur and pleads with Bhishma to marry her only to be snubbed by him. Offended by this, with the burning desire of taking revenge on Bhishma, she goes to the forest to perform penance. Devi has taken Amba as a model to take everything seriously and avenge the wrongs done to her. Devi realizes that the stories of women she knows are far sordid than their mythological equivalents. Devi feels she ought to do something as a mark of protest. She becomes “a woman warrior, a heroine and rode a tiger and cut evil, marginal demons head” (TFN 41). Her grandmother usually narrates a story appropriate to the occasion instead of giving a direct reply. All these mythological stories have controlled Sita in taking any decision.

Devi’s Existence with Mahesh:

After meeting five or six prospective bridegrooms Devi decides to marry Mahesh, a Regional Manager in a multinational company that makes detergents and toothpastes. Being a Manager, Mahesh believes in managing everything in his life as he does for his company. According to Mahesh, marriage is just a necessary milestone of life. His solicitude is to see that his goods are delivered to his consumers. He treats his wife Devi as one of
his customers. Devi is not able to lead a happy life with Mahesh. He is busy with his job. He doesn’t bother about his wife and her value in his life. He is one of male-ridden person even though he is educated in the modern world.

Devi decides to try for a job. In the newspaper, she sees a posting for a research assistant. So she asked permission to apply for that job. Mahesh doesn’t like that, he said for that post one more degree is needed. “You need at least one more degree for that,” he says (TFN 65). Apart from that he asked one more question what will she do when the baby arrives? Mahesh’s point of view is that the woman is responsible for the house hold word. As a Manager, Mahesh can run the business but not the house. He suggests one more idea for Devi to join in the painting class to make her time useful. But Devi is not interested to join. She thought that the art is in her hand rather than others teaching.

Otherwise Mahesh is like a pawn, “the company directors prefer their pawns clean shaven so that they can read and move them more effectively.” (TFN 60). Though Mahesh’s company manufactures detergents, he is unable to pull himself out from emotional squalidness. He is a poor ‘Manager’ of emotions; his imperceptible nature could never make him a reliable husband. He believes emotions and intimacy give rise to vulnerability whereas shrewd and devious moves in life are essential for smooth sailing.

**Male Prejudice:**

Mahesh expects that everything he does in life must bring to him positive results; he is in grip of his cursory commercial world. He treats his wife as an object to satisfy his needs in his life. This makes Devi get angry and rise to an awesome loneliness. Her existence with Mahesh is like living in an animal with hardly any breathing space between the two. Mahesh is unable to provide her stability and security, either physical or verbal; she is no
longer warm and safe. Devi ponders on their cohabitation. “Who was this man, this husband whose arms I was to lie in every night? Horror stories of perversion, blind bestial lust and impotence frightened her” (TFN 49).

Without considering the woman’s feelings, he went to hospital. He meets the gynaecologist. He is need of a baby to fulfil his married life. This shows the man wants to achieve not only in his profession but even in married life too. There is no interest for Devi to have a baby. Her love for Mahesh is not a success so ultimately she never thought of her baby. His male ego requires the birth of a child that would bring a semblance of normalcy to their existence.

Being a lonely woman, she finds comport in the hand of Gopal, a man of music who is warm and affectionate. To some extent Gopal tries to give Devi an attachment where Mahesh failed in his life. In the beginning she likes the company of Gopal but suddenly she realises the male’s world she came off from him too. This shows her influence of American culture in South India. This intermixture of culture breaks the life of Devi. She is not able to follow the western culture and at the same time she is not easily adopt the South Indian life style.

**Women’s Barrenness:**

Devi has a secret life; her own imaginary world in which she becomes a woman warrior, a heroine different from the lonely, indecisive, and passive woman she is in her daily life. Her longing creates a day-dream vision in which “a voice” leads her to a dizzy world in which a mountain woman, her new benefactor, trains her to become an incarnation of Durga, a fierce goddess. She also bears a woodland youth strong sons and daughters. So she is not only a lioness-like fighter, but also a woman with a womanly
body, and she has a mellowness that makes her far-sighted and perceptive. This is an androgynous dream for a woman for whom self-fulfilment is a greedy sin, given the caring wife-mother role which is expected of her. However, in real life Devi had along suffering from a sense of worthlessness because of her barrenness. Barrenness is a key term for Hariharan connected to the suppressed rage of women as bleeding bodies.

Devi’s relationship with Dan, Mahesh and Gopal are primarily noted as that of sexual appeal. Thus, she always seems to be on the run in her endeavour to find some place and relaxation. Mahesh expected her to bear children. He takes her to a doctor to set everything right with the help of sterilized instruments. The syringes and needles have their own language of torture for Devi. She could never become “an efficient receptacle for motherhood” (TFN 89) Sometimes, Devi thinks of herself like the Hindu goddess Durga the most beautiful manifestation to moral and spiritual power, whom even Siva the god of destruction respects. But Mahesh destroys the very spirit of Devi. Both Mahesh and Gopal lose Devi because they could not perceive her soul. Though she comes home from America, in fact her home-coming is her final withdrawal from the male world to stay with her mother, Sita.

Sita’s Obedience:

Hariharan makes Devi confront, her ‘yawning emptiness’ and realizes that if she had not played ‘an obedient puppet’ in the hands of her grandmother, mother and husband, things would have been different. Devi is different from her mother, Sita. Because her mother did all the work for her father and even her grandfather too. This is one of the reasons why she is not able to progress in the art of playing the veena. There is no time for her to play veena and for her entertainment. Even her grandmother belongs to
the traditional family and fulfilled her husband’s every need. From her grandmother, her mother adopts the culture. They pulled their strings and jerked her with their love. Through her they craved to achieve their unfulfilled urges.

Meanwhile, there is a need to recall that Sita, Devi’s mother, had also suffered a sacrificial married life. Earlier she showed a talent in playing the veena, a string instrument, and was absorbed in playing it. However, doomsday soon arrives in her life span. Her father-in-law is furious not finding a thing he needs in his prayer room: “Put that veena away. Are you a wife, a daughter-in-law?” (TFN 30). Thus she has to give up the music she loves to become “a dutiful daughter-in-law the neighbours praised” (TFN 30), her grudge buried in the sacrificial altar of marriage. But she is not passive: “Sita... reached for the strings of her precious veena and pulled them out of their wooden base” (TFN 30). She answers her father-in-law in a “stinging whisper, ‘Yes. I am a wife, a daughter-in-law’ without any word of protest, though her broken veena is “a discordant twang of protest” (TFN 30). This story is retold in part III, where learner learns that “She tore the strings off the wooden base, and let the blood dry on her fingers to remind herself of her chosen path on the first difficult days of abstinence” (TFN 103).

Another sacrificial story about Sita’s marriage occurs in a midnight kitchen. Her husband is shocked to see Sita “ravenously eating the chapatti is left over from dinner” (TFN 103), and he realizes that she has not had any rice; in other words, “Marriage had meant that Sita would have to learn to eat dry chapattis, which refused to go down the throat like sticky, wet balls of mashed rice” (TFN 103). She has made sacrifices without any complaints to earn her husband’s “unswerving loyalty” (TFN 103)
to reach a goal of ideal wifehood. However, her body exposes her hidden desire behind her mask. Reader can see in her a fierce conflict between her stubborn abstinence her obsession about being a dutiful wife and her desire for music.

**As a Dutiful Woman:**

Her self-sacrificial pride as a dutiful wife and her suppressed grudge tell the tale of her marriage, which corresponds to Gandhari’s story of “blind suffering in *Mahabharata*” (TFN 29). At her wedding, Gandhari finds that her husband is in fact literally blind, and without a word she tears off a piece of her thick red skirt and ties it tightly over her own eyes. Gandhari sacrifices her eyesight in this way to show her loyalty to her husband, yet Gandhari’s anger seems to Devi to be “wrapped tightly round her head in a life-long blindfold, burnt in a heart close, very close to me” (TFN 29). Sita’s anger “could seep into every pore of a womanly body and become the very bloodstream of her life” (TFN 29).

According to Devi’s grandmother’s interpretation, Sita is a modern version of Gandhari, a personified self-sacrifice, but Devi sees the cracks between Gandhari’s and Sita’s stories. Sita does not utter a word of protest to her father-in-law’s reprimand, but her broken veena and the blood on her fingers speak volumes. Volumes that will soon be attended to by her daughter.

**Painful Life of Mayamma:**

Devi finds a good friendship with Mayamma, Mahesh’s family retainer. Devi listens to her life experience because she had allowed occurring all and everything on her, never, complained because she felt that success of life for woman depended on her ability to endure and go on. Whenever Mayamma is free she will tell the story of her life or
Devi’s mother-in-law’s life. Through Mayamma only Devi comes to know the whole history of Mahesh’s Family. According to Mayamma women should always depend on man. She also tells Devi to get pregnant soon. Then only the marriage is fulfilled. Her thoughts and emotions are belongs to the old generation. Mayamma is not a good friend but even sometimes she played her role as a mother too in Devi’s condition. Pradeep Trikha reveals on male gender superiority as

She often thinks of herself as a floating island detached from the solidity of the mainland. She realises that in a male world it is very difficult for a woman to exist and find an objective-correlative for her emotions in her partner because for man woman has always been primarily an object of sex and pleasure (171-172).

Uneducated Woman:

Hariharan creates a narrative that shifts the ideology of womanhood starting with menarche which is tacitly assumed to be celebrated only because it means future womanhood, and thus means nothing for barren women. Mayamma and Devi are quite different in terms of caste, education, age, and marital situation; however, they share the plight of barrenness, for which they have been forced to feel worthless and useless. The two women communicate, sympathize, and support each other, thus breaking “the proverbial silence” on the issue of women in Indian society (Desai 192).

Mothers of sons who can preside in the rituals indispensable to Hindus are highly respected in Indian society; however, an unavoidable physiological condition for motherhood, menstruation and the blood of delivery are paradoxically considered contagiously defiled and dangerous. The dialogues between Devi, a newly married
innocent wife and Mayamma in the Prelude show how Mayamma survived her long-suffering life as a wife and mother through her bleeding body in Hariharan’s own style full of comical pathos.

To Devi’s question about “why Mayamma had put up with her life, she laughed till the tears rolled down her wrinkled cheeks” (TFN Prelude I). As she tells her story, she teases Devi about her childishness

“When I lost my first baby, conceived after ten years of longing and fear, I screamed, for the only time in my life. Why?

The oily, pock-marked village doctor, his hand still dripping with my blood, looked shifty. A woman must learn to bear some pain, he mumbled. What can I do about the sins of your previous birth?

She [my mother-in-law] slapped my cheeks hard, first this then the other. Her fists pummelled my breasts and my still swollen stomach till they had to pull her off my cowering, bleeding body. She shouted, in a rage mixed with fear, ‘‘Do you need any more proof that this is not a woman? The barren witch has killed my grandson.”(TFN Prelude II).

Mayamma’s Scope:

Mayamma has failed to reproduce a son, an heir necessary to sustain the patriarchal system. Mayamma herself does not doubt this system, nor does she resist it, as Devi, another childless wife, will come to do. Mayamma finally breaks a “proverbial” silence through her scream, “Why?”, while Devi has asked her grandmother, a storyteller
of childhood fables, “Why?” thousands of times. Though she is told to be careful by Mayamma when she asks a next question, she promptly asks Mahesh, her husband, a taboo question, “Why do you want a baby?” TFN 87).

Mayamma’s painful story of survival is told repeatedly. After Devi leaves her husband, Mayamma’s memory goes back to her own marriage. One day, when Mayamma is hanging out her new sari to dry, her mother-in-law mocks, “What has your beauty done for you, you barren witch?” and “she pulled up my (Mayamma’s) sari roughly, just as her son did every night, and smeared the burning red, freshly-ground spices into my barrenness. I burned, my thighs clamped together as I felt the devouring fire cling to my entrails” (TFN 113). Mayamma, we learn, is married off at age twelve after her “blood flowed freely” and she became “a woman” (TFN 115). Her mother-in-law, being unable to “check Mayamma’s insides herself, she had contented herself with the astrologer’s promise that Mayamma would bear her many strong grandsons” (TFN 80). She watches Mayamma’s “slim waist intently for the first year,” and in the second year she breaks into complaints (TFN 80).

Her mother-in-law’s abuse is habitual throughout Mayamma’s married life. She forces Mayamma to fast every other day and to do penance to change the evil course of her horoscope “Mayamma welcomed her penance like an old friend” and did everything she could do: she woke up at four in the morning, walked to the pond, prayed and “dipped herself again and again in the pure coldness” (TFN 80). One day the goddess she has prayed to blesses her womb and joy rushes through her “blood” (TFN 122). However, then “the blood came, too soon, too soon. No expenses was spared, my husband wanted the new village doctor, not the midwife. He shoved his greasy hand into
my swelling, palpitating womb. I could feel the pull, the excruciating pain of the thrust, his hand, my blood, my dying son” (TFN 122). This scene, beginning with joy in the blood and ending with tragic bleeding, is inscribed in Hariharan’s own style, combining strangely jaunty rhythms and concise diction.

**Social Treatment:**

Mayamma’s whole body is thus reduced to a womb, something which is celebrated if it can reproduce sons and cursed if it cannot in a society where a woman’s value mainly depends on her reproductive ability. From the viewpoint of her mother-in-law, who internalizes this patriarchal Indian culture, Mayamma is a dangerous witch; a killer of her grandson.

The village doctor also suggests that barrenness results from one’s sins in a previous life. Devi’s experience with the doctors at a modern fertility clinic is equally bleak, for they “bristle with impatience,” see her as “a stupid woman who couldn’t even get pregnant, the easiest of accidents” and seem to say, “Look at the obedient, dutiful wives around you” (TFN 91). Thus reader can see how providers of medical care do not really care, for they share the ideology of womanhood as a matter of reproductive capacity.

**Sin of Barrenness:**

Furthermore, the barrenness connotes sin, danger, disobedience, stupidity and guilt in a barren, revolting womb. The mother-in-law’s verbal assault makes Mayamma feel guilty, worthless and desperate to a degree that she imagines her “womb slips down, sagging with the weight of my greed for motherhood,” and she puts her hand up, pulls and tears it out and “throws it on the garbage heap to rot” (TFN 122–23). Mayamma’s self-tormenting day-dream is generated from her suppressed rage and estrangement from her own uncontrollable body.
However, as Devi secretly changes the plots of her grandmother’s stories, she begins to assume a defiant attitude toward the traditional role of women, as evidenced by her asking her husband the taboo question, “Why do you want a baby?” (TFN 87). Nevertheless, she begins to make desperate penance for her unborn son, following Mayamma’s advice. She sits day after day in a prayer room in front of brass and stone images of gods, who seem to dance round and round in a frenzy, chanting stories of sacrificial wives, and whose maniac rituals intrude into her dreams night after night. Mayamma, Annapurna, Parvatiamma, the maidservant Gauri, Devi’s cousin Uma, her grandmother, and the transgendered Amba whiz past, chanting stories of revenge. Out of these fragmented scenarios and other stories running in her head, she chooses one and leaves home on a journey with Gopal, a singer of ragas. She follows

Parvatiamma, her mother-in-law, who has left her husband and violated Lal says, “the law of threshold”(12) which restricts women within the boundaries of home. With this step, Devi is not a passive rebel any more.

**Mayamma’s Humiliation:**

Mayamma is more directly humiliated mentally and abused physically when her menstruation begins in a temple: “The blood that flowed down my bare leg, hot and sticky, that afternoon when I prayed in the temple. The hairy priest with a pot belly called me aside. I looked down at the blood on clear, white flesh, my heart overflowing with something like pride.

Go home, he hissed, and before I could turn around to run, his heavy hand marked my cheek with a stinging slap. Hussy that I had stained the purity of the temple with my gushing womanhood” (TFN 115).
Womanhood for Mayamma is thus inescapably connected with this gushing blood of menstruation and of stillbirth bleeding, which both leave traumatic memories of pain, abuse, humiliation, deprivation, the loss of joy and pride, and the death of her first son. The stinging slap on her cheek by the priest, which crushes her pride in her womanhood, for the defilement with which a female body is burdened in a male-dominated society. Clearly this traumatic experience influences her subject formation as a woman; self-debasement is inscribed in her bleeding body.

From this bleak background, Hariharan takes pains to project a womanhood among women who share the same existential crisis, to offer a new bodily image different from the bleeding female bodies defiled, isolated, or exploited for reproduction. She shows desiring female “bodies met in blood and sweat” (TFN 77) through intoxicatingly erotic rituals. She presents diverse metaphorical mother-and-daughter narratives besides the real mother-and-daughter narrative between Devi and Sita, including the relationships between Devi and Parvatiama, Mayamma and Parvatiama, Devi and her grandmother, and Devi and Mayamma. As each woman’s story intersects, so do the legends and fables of many heroines and goddesses as narrated by Devi’s grandmother; the stories become narratives of friendship between women of different castes, generations, and educational backgrounds.

Many years after her first son is born dead, Mayamma bears a son. After this son dies, she comes to Parvatiamma with only a torn sari, and Parvatiamma gives her a home. From that day, Mayamma tells Devi, “Parvatiamma was my sister, my mother, my daughter” (TFN 82). Mayamma, a victim of domestic violence by her mother-in-law, her husband, and her son, all sustaining the patriarchal system, is supported by Parvatiamma,
who chooses to leave her husband to seek God by herself and is thus labeled a fallen woman because she crosses “the threshold, the boundaries of home,” since for “women, a step over the bar is an act of transgression” (Lal 12).

Parvatiamma is doomed to be punished, but she also becomes a surrogate mother-in-law for Devi, her “guardian angel,” a model of a rebel woman for different from Devi’s mother, who has sacrificed her dream in order to be a good wife. When Parvatiamma leaves the house, Mayamma “felt destitute” as if her “mother had died again” (TFN 63). But Mayamma then finds she can live again, not only through Parvatiamma but “even through” Devi (TFN 136). Long-suffering Mayamma supports Devi because she is also sterile and feels humiliated by busy gynaecologists and her husband’s gaze and because she finally decides to leave home like Parvatiamma. Devi’s late grandmother had similarly given deserted wives and impoverished widows a warm refuge.

**The Dark Side of Woman’s Life:**

Ammu is the central female character of the novel, who underwent all the sufferings and tortures in the hands of society, culture, parents, and her husband. Ammu lives with her parents in Ayemenem after the father’s retirement.

It was a grand old house, the Ayemenem House, but aloof-looking. As though it had little to do with the people that lived in it. Like an old man with rheumy eyes watching children play, seeing only transience in their shrill elation and their whole-hearted commitment to life (GST 165).

Her family belongs to the middle class. Being a woman child of the family her education is completely destroyed by her father. But her brother Chacko had his
education in Oxford University. This shows the clear picture of male bigotry of the work where a male child can go after finishing his school went to Oxford University but the female child was stopped her studies in the school itself. Not only is her education destroyed but even her marriage life also without fulfilment.

Ammu finished her schooling the same year that her father retired from his job in Delhi and moved to Ayamenem. Very little for a young girl to do in Ayemenem other than to wait for marriage proposals while she helped her mother with the housework. Since her father did not have enough money to raise a suitable dowry, no proposals came Ammu’s way (GST 38).

Being deprived of a college education, Ammu’s father is not able to arrange a dowry and a grand wedding for her daughter. She lives at home and become gradually domesticated. Virginia Woolf sees domestic life as “almost exclusively social without any breathing space for women” (82). There was a change in her life from the native Ayemenem to Calcutta. During her stay at her aunt’s house, she noticed the Hindu Bengali from the tea-estates in Assam. She falls in love with Bengali boy, Baba without having any further consideration. She married him. Simone de Beauvoir observation on marriage as, “Marriage is not only honourable career and one less tiring than many others: it alone permits a woman to keep her social dignity intact and at the same time to find sexual fulfilment as loved one and mother.”(62)

Her marriage life soon bitters her. Her husband is a drunkard. She is the victim of violence in the hands of her husband. Baba doesn’t win the business tricks successfully. So he fails in his duty to take care of his two children and wife. Mr. Hollick, Baba’s boss at the Assam tea estate. He gives Baba an ultimate loss his job. Without knowing the real
value of woman or wife. Baba’s attempt to get Ammu to comply is the last straw for her and this leads to their divorce. She returned back to her own native house in Ayemenem. Simone de Beauvoir remarks,

There is a unanimous agreement that getting a husband-or in some cases a ‘protector’-is for her (women) the most important of undertakings... she will free herself from the parental home, from her mother’s hold, she will open up her future not by active conquest but by delivering herself up, passive and docile, into the hands of a new master.(352)

According to Baby Kochamma, her aunt, she had no position anywhere at all. And as a divorcee daughter from a love marriage, well, words couldn’t describe Baby Kochamma’s outrage.

Sinful Life:

Ammu had a long fight with her fate, yet she failed to attain anything substantial. She had too many fronts to adjust her private misery and her children’s upbringing. But she fulfilled her duty. She loved her children even more because they have lost their Baba and uncle Chacko can’t fulfilled their expectations even half-way. Ammu’s weakness is that she was too gentle and meek to assert herself. Colette Dowling explains,

it has do with dependency; the need to lean on someone... those needs stay with us into adulthood, clamouring for fulfilment right alongside our need to be self-sufficient...any woman who looks within knows that she was never trained to feel comfortable with the idea of taking care of herself, standing up for herself, asserting herself (13).
Ammu was enveloped in loneliness and isolation in her own house. When the whole family was expecting the arrival of Sophie Mol and Margaret the daughter and an exwife of Chacko, Ammu found this step-motherly treatment hard to digest. During the guest visits, she searched for companionship and warmth in her life. Velutha, who belonged to a lower class society, was very kind and sincere in his duty. Achanya remarks, “Velutha recognised Ammu as a woman and realized that he had something to share with her and that she too had gifts to give him” (146).

Not knowing the criss-cross cultural system, Ammu was captivated by Velutha’s arresting look. According to her she had already lost her charm of being a woman. So demolishes all the barriers and walk across to the salubrious company of the despised Paravan. She doesn’t care about the social and cultural customs. She found pleasure in destroying the community based life. She did not care about the criticism of society or family. She doesn’t care but the society is very much concerned about class and community.

Ammu was thrown away from the Ayemmem house. She searched a new job with good salary. This shows her strength to stand in the society being a woman alone in the world. Without getting the help and affection from her parents and husband she committed suicide in the dark room. Even the society doesn’t allow her love for lower class paravan community. It should be emphasized that the poor status of women, their oppression and exploitation, cannot be examined as an isolated problem in Indian society. Although the status of women constitutes a problem in most societies in the rigidly hierarchical and inequitable social structure which exists in India, the relative inferiority and superiority of various roles is much more clearly defined.
Mammachi’s Life Style:

Mammachi’s case is different. Her tale is different from Baby Kochamma. Her marriage with Papachi shows the ordinary human life, but later it is not the same. Though her husband was a professor in the department of Entomology, he never behaved as a good husband. In compliance to an old tradition, he was seventeen years older than Mammachi and had always been a jealous man. Mammachi was highly talented in veena and was highly praised by her teacher. Her husband never likes to play veena. He brooked the bow in that veena and thrown into the river. As a man he never allows her wife should be talented. So her art of veena is completely destroyed. She becomes an ordinary domestic woman, who takes part only in domestic works.

Mammachi also underwent untold horrors of male chauvinism in the hands of her husband. Being a sadist, every night he beat her with a brass flower vase. Frequently she was called an illiterate by her husband. As a woman, Mammachi accepts her husband’s torture. The result, ironically was that even the thin bond that was there between Mammachi and her husband completely snapped. He never touched her again. He never spoke to her. As a man he gets support from either side of the family. Either Kochu Maria or Baby Kochamma fulfil the needs of Pappachi. They are the intermediaries of Pappachi. He used to insult his wife also. He never allowed Mammachi or anybody of the family for that matter, to sin his car. He is superior to everyone in that family.

Even the public knew of her husband’s ill treatment. When some visitors were expected, he would sit on the verandah and publically sew buttons which were not really missing, only give an impression to the visitors that his wife neglected him. In brief, he completely rejected her and insulted Mammachi in every possible way. In other words,
she accepted the female role model imposed by the society. Because of Mammachi’s life detachment, she hates everyone in the family. Even when Ammu returns to her mother’s house she never showed her love and affection. Kochamma is also a functioning member of the same patriarchal society and shows her feminine jealousy for the women whom her son had loved and married. Mammachi never met Margaret Kochamma but she hated her “shopkeeper’s daughter – was how Margaret Kochamma was filed away in Mammachi’s mind. Mammachi’s world was arranged that way” (GST 167-168).

**Partiality between Daughter and Son:**

As a mother, Mammachi loved her son Chacko more than her daughter Ammu. She had a very strong belief that a male will support her in future “She liked to believe that he had never liked her in the first place” (36). In fact her maternal love grew into an obsession since the day Chacko prevented his father from beating his mother. That was the day when “Mammachi packed her widely luggage and committed it to Chacko’s care. From then onwards he became the repository of all her womanly feelings. Her man. Her only love” (GST 168). So while she was impervious to her daughter’s frustration, yearning and love, she could arrange for the “men’s needs” the divorce of her son.

Mammachi runs her pickle factors as Paradise Pickles and Preserves, with the help of her son Chacko after the death of her husband. Pappachi thought that it was disgraceful for a government employer’s wife to work in a factory.

Mammachi’s factory had no name. It was Chacko who christened the factory Paradise Pickle & Preserves and had labels designed and printed at Comrade K.N.M. Pillai’s press. At first he had wanted to call it Zeus
Pickles & Preserves, but that idea was voted because everybody said that Zeus was too obscure and had no local relevance, whereas Paradise did (GST 56).

She prepares pickles, squashes, jams, curly powders, canned pineapples and special banana jam. When this factory was closed, she worked very hard to solve the problems. The major problem was created by her husband with the help of her neighbours. She remembers that the government banned their banana jam for being unclassifiable as either jam or jelly. This event encapsulates her family’s way of life, which involves constantly transgressing different type of boundaries. In particular, she thinks about traditions the mystery and uncomfortable atmosphere.

**The First Generation Women:**

Baby Kochamma and Mammachi are first generation women, following all the customs of society. They believe that being male make one is a superior. Baby Kochamma lives her life in the past. In her youth she had fallen in love with a handsome young Irish monk, Father Mulligan. In the beginning she tried very hard to win the heart of her lover by doing social work. Every Thursday father Mulligan use to come to church. So on that particular day before the arrival of father Mulligan, she used to bath a poor child to impress him. She is not able to win the heart of her love and so she converts to Roman Catholicism. Her father does not approve of her change in community but her desire is to reach Father Mulligan. Her strength is noted through caste and love.

When her family came to see through her plans, all her ideas are became nothing. Her father decides that since she couldn’t have a husband, she could have a good education her education would support her to live in the world. She is sent to a university
in America to do a course on diploma in ornamental gardening. She returned after two years with her own degree. She is not able to destroy the love for Father Mulligan. The society norms are a girl should have an education or marriage. The first norms are over. She had a graduation in Gardening.

Her frustration in love and the unspent force or repressed desire that makes her instrumental in making Ammu miserable. She also poisons the minds of Ammu’s mother and brother against her. She is the only responsible to a large extent for the children’s unending suffering. She never have any children to understand the pain and suffering of child hearted. She hates the twins, she always makes conversation in Malayalam. During the sad occasion, that is Sophie Mol’s death she wears a costly sari. She doesn’t understand the value of a child in her life. Baby Kochamma is a study in meaningless and perversion that may result from unnatural self-repression and the consequent frustration.

As a strong woman, Baby Kochamma is narrated though she is depressed but not shown outside of the world. She is an old traditional woman but she never practised in the modern world. When the novel opens Father Mulligan has been already dead for four years. His death did not affect the attitude of Baby Kochamma. On the contrary, she felt that she could possess him more now than she had ever done in life. She felt that “her memory of him was hers” (GST 298).

Even in her old age, she wrote her diary daily with the fresh note “I love you I love you” (GST 297). As a woman still in her old days she loves him by an imagination. She never thought of nun and sadness. Even after Father Mulligan’s death, “every night, night after night, year after, in diary after diary, she wrote “I love you I love you” (GST 298).
At the age of eighty three, she had a rebirth. This shows that age is not a matter of fact in human’s life. She adapted a new hair style. Her lips became very dark in colour. Her finger dazzle with diamond ring. The sound and music of bangles. Her neck glitters with gold chain. It all reveals the novelty in her life and finally she got over her loss. She becomes a queen and a young bride to herself.

She was wearing a lot of jewellery. Rahel’s dead grandmother’s jewellery. All of it. Winking rings. diamond earrings. Gold bangles and beautifully crafted flat gold chain that she touched from time to time reassuring herself that it was there it was hers. Like a young bride who couldn’t believe her good fortune (GST 22).

**Memory of Sophie Mol:**

Sophie Mol and her mother Margaret finally arrived to their native land. The family is at the airport to receive them. Though blind, she still manages to play the violin for Sophie. Kochu Maria, the maid, has baked a cake for Sophie. Little Sophie Mol wakes in Chacko’s room and feels lovely and homesick. The three children Estha, Rahel and Sophie Mol are on the river bank. They put their little boat into the water. They put extra provisions in little boat for two weeks. The twins remember Ammu’s angry words when she sends them away. Sophie Mol has convinced Estha and Rahel to let her come along with them. The three get into the boat and starting crossing the river.

The opening of the novel narrates Rahel’s return to Ayemenem after twenty-three years and then flash back to describe the funeral of Sophie Mol, without divulging the circumstances of her death. Both of these events work to establish spacing between a significant event and the residual aftermath of that event. In both cases, the looming
question is about how to talk about what has happened in the past, the ‘elephant in the room’ as one might say (which takes on an interesting meaning after of the incidental death of the elephant Kochu Thomban, leaving an “elephant shaped hole in the universe”, later in the novel). The space between past and present is a gap that must be negotiated by language or reconciliatory action, as eulogies and funerals negotiate the meaning of specific deaths. However, it is also implied in these opening pages that such a negotiation, in addition to remembering the past, alters and buries the past, framing people and events of the past in a new light. During Sophie Mol’s funeral, the young Rahel uncomfortably notices this covering-up.

When they lowered Sophie Mol’s coffin into the ground in the little cemetery behind the church, Rahel knew that she was still not dead. She heard on Sophie Mol’s behalf the soft sounds of the red mud and the hard sounds of the orange laterite that spoiled the spinning coffin polish. She heard the dull thudding through the polished coffin lining. The sad priests’ voices muffled by mud and wood. Inside the earth Sophie Mol screamed, and shredded satin with her teeth. But you cannot hear screams through earth and stone. Sophie Mol died because she could not breathe.

Sophie Mol is thereby established as a subaltern character. The circumstances leading to her drowning, the reader later finds out, were very different than what was said in the aftermath of her drowning she had approached the river because she had; out of loneliness and a desire to escape the world of adults, convinced Rahel and Estha to let her come along, but Margaret Kochamma later interpreted Estha and Rahel as being responsible for her daughter’s death. At that movement of her death, Sophie Mol become subject to radical re-interpretation that did not account for her own wishes and desires in
life. Her identity was redefined by her death instead of her life. It is the fact of Sophie Mol’s loneliness and spirit of subtle protest against an adult world that the funeral effectively buried, and this was possibly one reason for Sophie Mol’s posthumous screams during the funeral. The drowning of Sophie Mol in the Meenachal the reader finds out much later, did not allow. Even the slightest scream there was no storm music....Little Fist (GST 277).

On the Meenachal river with boundary transgression and with silence. It is in or around the Meenachal river that deviant acts against the social order are performed, but these deviant acts in the end lead to punishment by the more powerful upholders of that social order. However, punishment is a silent, negative act of purging, forgetting and washing away. Even though the death of Sophie Mol is purely accidental. The incident strongly interacts in the text with the figurative washing – away of Velutha. It is these in the inclusion silent deaths, aimed at facility ridding the environment of a certain presence, that the texts simplicity suggests a far more violent undertone.

The Strong woman:

Rahel is the offspring of divorced parents; daughter of Ammu who is deprived of conventional parental love. She lives with the stigma of a mixed parent age, both religious (as her father was Hindu and Ammu a Syrian Christian) and ethnic (as father was a Bengali and Mother is a Keralite. She has a hard time in School and was expelled three times from the Nazareth convent and refused to be co-opted by the school. She is disliked by her relatives-Baby Kochamma, Kochu Maria and even Chacko. She considers Velultha to be a father figure with whom she plays. “She knew his back. She’d been carried on it. More times than she could count”. (GST 73). When Rahel discovers about
the sexual liaison of Ammu with Velultha, she locks herself in the bedroom. When Police
arrests Velultha, Rahel went to the police station with her brother Estha to identify
Velultha as a criminal. Being the victim of a dysfunctional family, she failed to connect
with the people around her and lacks self-confidence. The most unnatural act of social
transgression committed by Rahel is her incestuous love for her twin brother
Estha- which is perhaps her implicit resistance toward the social order. “Rahel watched
Estha with the curiosity of a mother watching her wet child. A sister a brother. A woman
a man. A twin a twin” (GST 93).

The only person with whom Rahel has harmony, an empathetic link is her own
twin brother Estha, eighteen minutes her senior. Their personalities balance each other
like the two halves of a circle; complementing each other. She is a girl with an active
imagination. For instance when she feels scared, she imagines that Pappachi’s moth is
crawling on her heart with icy legs. While attending Sophie’s funeral, she imagines
Sophie Mol turning over in her coffin. Like a lost soul Rahel wanders in her life. She
takes up an architecture program in Delhi without any thought or interest, there she meets
Larry MCcaslin the researcher, marries him and went to the U.S.A. She drifts into
marriage, “Like a passenger drifts into an unoccupied chair in an airport lounge”( GST
18) But soon divorced, she returns to Ayemenem, her birth place. The only person with
whom, she had compatibility, a balancing harmony was her brother Estha. Like Ammu,
Rahel at a young age also learns to dream and imagine and like her she is ultimately
disowned and rejected by the society. In a relationship with her brother Rahel
transgresses the traditional boundaries of a defined and social relationship. While Ammu
had an illicit relationship with Velultha, Rahel indulges in a sexual relationship with her
own brother. Both in a way transgress the social norms of the traditional Ayemenem society. Their transgression is perhaps a deliberate act to defy and to challenge the society where in, they have to survive as the oppressed victims.

Arundhati Roy in her novel has a sensitive understanding of her female characters. They are not emancipated, though they are affluent and belong to upper middle class. However, at the same time they cannot be called passive. There is a continuous struggle within their selves to seek out of their confined territories and to interpret their lives with individual freedom. They suffer oppression in the patriarchal world order, but they don’t cry or suffer in isolation. Rather they try to bring about a change through resistance which takes shape of transgression. They make efforts to interrogate the structures of caste, clan and gender in an implicit as well as an explicit manner.

**Chemistry Teacher:**

Margaret Shanti is one of the fellow travellers in the Ladies Coupe. Margaret’s story is a story of a woman who learns her own strategies to get her dreams true. Margaret’s husband, Ebenezer Paulraj, is an example for male dominance. He manoeuvres Margaret in a position of submissive silence, making her out to be an unnoticed and unremarkable girl. A girl, with a brilliant academic career and a warm and vibrant personality, is reduced to an average girl. His subtle cruelty to the children in his school gets repeated with his wife too. Once he was obsessed with the girlish, characteristics of Margaret. It is visible even at their first meeting. To retain the girlish charm in her, when she happily announces her pregnancy, he insists on aborting it. Margaret’s feelings are explicable: confusion, anger, sorrow, pain and self-pity. Tired of her submissiveness at her home, she finally takes her life into her own hands. With supreme will power she collects her hidden
strength and sends the ball to his court. Having learnt the tactics from his constant playing of games to get his things done, she takes her revenge by following the same tactics which are her husband’s tools to rule her.

**Super Power Paulrai:**

Margaret has gone through physical, mental and spiritual crisis throughout her life. She keeps on growing till she finds a state where she is happy and peaceful. Margaret’s marriage to Ebenezer Paulraj is like a fairy tale for her. Ebenezer Paulraj loves Margaret Shanti from the bottom of his heart but not ready to accept her individual likes and dislikes, whims and fancies and dreams and aims. Margaret’s state, hands tied freedom, is excellently portrayed by Anita Nair. He loves her but he did not allow her individuality. Margaret is initially a little girl who says ‘yes’ to whatever her husband says and ready to do anything for him. She is jolted out of this role when she has to go for an abortion. He controls her completely. She is forced to do B.Ed, though she wants to do Ph.D. She is made to work only for her husband and when she fails to do so he nags her. She starts to hate him and the day she realizes her hatred towards him, she feels liberated from some unknown clutches:

I mouthed the words: I HATE HIM. I HATE MY HUSBAND. I HATE EBENEZAR PAULRAJ. I HATE HIM. HATE HIM. I waited for a clap of thunder, a hurling meteor, a whirlwind, a dust storm… for some super phenomenon that is usually meant to accompany such momentous and perhaps sacrilegious revelations (LC 98).
Changes in Structure:

On understanding her isolation, Margaret finds solace in food. She puts on weight. Ebe, on the other hand, who is aware of his health and fitness, makes her feel guilty about her weight gain. She leads a routine life until the day James, the golden fish floats dead. The moment proves to be a turning point in her life. She does not want her life to float like a dead fish. She feels the need of her own identity. In the words of Anita Nair,

Among the five elements that constitute life, I classify myself as water. Water that moistens. Water that heals. Water that forgets. Water that accepts. Water that flows tirelessly. Water that also destroys. For the power to dissolve and destroy is as much a part of being water as wetness I (LC 96).

Ebenezer’s love for food and sex becomes a tool for Margaret. She starts pampering Ebenezer with sex and his food favourite. The result is that he becomes fat, loses his vanity and searches for her more and more. Margaret, who is controlled by him earlier, now holds him completely in her hands. A unique way adapted by Margaret helps her to go back into the society, changes her parents’ outlook and attitude of her husband. The strategy of finding and attacking the weakness of the opponent to win him, is artistically handled by Anita Nair. The heavy depression of Margaret, her silenced voice, her physical and mental sufferings, and the effort she takes to make her strong are the places where Anita Nair proves to be a notable writer of Indian Writing in English.

Traditional Woman:

Janaki, another fellow passenger of ladies coupe is an example of age old belief of Indian society that a woman should always be depended on some man in her life.
The comparison of woman with Sita or Savitri, epic characters of Indian Literature, also insists this motive.

During childhood, a female must depend upon her father, during youth, upon her husband; her husband being dead, upon her sons, if she has no sons, upon the near kinsmen of her husband, in default, upon those of her father, if she had no paternal kinsmen, upon the Sovereign, a woman must never govern herself as she likes (Ross 44).

According to Indian tradition, a woman is always synonymous with a good wife. A good wife should be faithful, obedient and virtuous. Janaki is expected to take up this traditional role of women. She plays various roles such as a daughter, a wife and a mother but not an individual who claims her life to be her own. The secondary position becomes permanent for her. This is mainly due to the patriarchal pattern of her society, which is accepted as a natural phenomenon.

The problems of adjustment with the husband and his relatives have been the most widely treated problems in the novels written by Indian women novelists. This has been treated, for instance, by Nayantara Saghal, Antia Desai, and Shashi Deshpande. These writers suggest that wives must be given more rights and not to be treated as inferior to their husbands, they should have a more positive outlook than the one they already have.

**Caring Husband:**

Janaki gets married with Prabhakar, when she is eighteen year old and leads a happy, comfortable, long married life for forty years. Janaki’s husband is a caring partner
and she has a son and daughter-in-law. Janaki leads a happy life until she realizes her submissiveness. She feels some string of revolt when she finds her husband controlling everybody even their grown up son. She says to her husband, “You just want to control him. You want to control everybody. You want everyone to do your bidding” (LC 30).

Prabhakar’s overbearing dominance, exactness, and precision irritates Janaki. The life which has gone smoothly starts to find its ups and downs. She discovers herself and her true happiness that lies in her but enable to take off the web under which she is covered for a long period. Her initial response to Akhila’s query “Why should a woman live by herself? There is always man willing to be with her, explains it.

I am a woman who has always been looked after. First there was my father and brothers; then my husband. When my husband is gone there will be my son, waiting to take off from where his father left off. Woman like me end up being fragile (LC 22).

An Adolescent Girl:

Sheela, the next narrator of Ladies Coupe, is a sensitive girl of fourteen years blessed with a deep insight. She looks at the family around her and relationship between her grandmother, mother and father and she understands the dynamics of life. Her grandmother teaches her practical life. She becomes attached to her grandmother until she dies and the attachment brings in a maturity to Sheela. Her conversation with other fellow travellers seems to be a matured one. The knowledge of three generations of women can be found in Sheela; her mother’s and her grandmother’s and also her own.
She knows that “Women turn to their mother when they have no one else to turn to. Women know that a mother alone will find it possible to unearth some shred of compassion and love that in everyone else has become ashes” (LC 71).

**Story of Grandmother:**

Her grandmother also teaches her the negative picture of men who dominate women physically as well as psychologically. Sheela is reprimand by her father incessantly for using shit in every sentence, for speaking to boys and for being rude. He has encouraged her to speak “with a razor-edged wit and a finely developed skill of repartee” (LC70). Sheela’s father who always gives preference to his child when she starts to talk like a matured woman, completely changes and starts to control her whenever she begins to talk.

When her grandmother dies of cancer and her body is prepared for funeral, Sheela dresses her grandmother in a good costume with her jewels. She does it because she remembers the words of her grandmother, “The only person you need to please is yourself. When you look into a mirror, your reflection should make you feel happy” (LC 67). Thus, Sheela fulfills the wish of her grandmother by adoring her dead body with jewels. A fourteen year old girl’s inner search and maturity are beautifully pictured by Anita Nair.

**The Illiteracy of Women:**

Anita Nair, with a deep, psychological insight, skilfully utilizes the story of Marikolundhu to comment upon the sexual exploitation of Indian women from rural background. Marikolundhu’s story recalls her encounter with men and concludes that
most men take advantage of women’s loneliness, illiteracy, dependence, ignorance and frustration. They never hesitate to blame the woman at the end. The society dominated by patriarchal culture tends to lay down the rule that a woman’s responsibility towards the family is total whereas any sort of other authority is conveniently denied to her. This society shuns to think that the woman is strong willed to create disastrous consequences if she is completely ignored. Marikolundhu undergoes humiliation and debasement, which result in the negating her son Muthu. Marikolundhu’s character reveals the physical as well as mental suffering due to ignorance.

**As a Retainer:**

Marikolundhu comes from a poor background. Her mother works as a cook at Chettiar house, who belongs to one of the richest families in their village. Even as a child she is the victim of social and economic repression. She loses her education by this. She looks after her house when her mother goes for work; later when her mother is seriously ill, she is employed at the Chettiar’s house. There, she is assigned with the work of taking care of a child of SujataAkka, the daughter–in-law of Chettiar. She showers love and affection on the child. She takes care of him well, but hates her son Muthu, the one who escaped many attempts of abortion. He is the result of her seduction by Murugesan. She does not want the child which is the result of seduction but the circumstances do not help her. So she leaves her son at her mother’s care and takes care the household of chettiar family.

**Murugesan’s Lust:**

Marikoulunthu, deprived from the society and Sujata Akka, deprived from her husband find mutual happiness in their nearness. Later Sujata’s husband also uses
Marikolunthu to fulfill his sexual desires. When Sujata Akka comes to know this, instead of punishing her husband, she pushes Marikolunthu out of her household. She gets the responsibility of her own child after her mother’s death. Mercilessly she mortgages him at one of Murugesan’s looms for Rs.5000/-. The anger she has on Murugesan, the society which saves him from punishment, her inability and the hatred of her son, everything leads to the death of Murugasen.

The turning point in her life comes when she sees the dead body of Murugesan burning at the pyre and she sees Muthu tends to the pyre. She is shocked at the realization that she has reduced her son to a very lower state for no fault of his. All the hatred she has on him goes with the flames. She feels love for her child. She decides to look after him and makes up her mind to call him back to her.

**The Poverty:**

Marikolanthu was surrounded by social, familial and financial problems. Her resolve to bring up her child shows her forming into a new chapter. Finally Marikolanthu, a voiceless victim of forced motherhood and lesbianism, found peace only after accepting her responsibility of the child, whom she had negated and neglected. Marikolanthu’s constant search for meanings and values of life ends here.

Anita Nair presents the existential struggle of woman who denies to flow along the current and refuses to submit her individual self. The woman emerging out of such situations is a defeated individual who undergoes much pain and suffering. Such characters exhibit a sense of insecurity due to their traumatic psychic experiences and also due to the collapse of one value system and the absence of enduring values.

**Summing up:**

The fictional representations of three generations of women are totally different from each other. The first generation women were Parvati, Mayamma and Devi’s grandmother in *The Thousand Faces of Night*; Mammachi, Baby Chochamma in *The God of Small Things*, and Janaki and Padma in *Ladies Coupe*. They were all followers of the old tradition and accept life as it is. They never found any self-motivation and individual growth in them. These women always stand behind a father, husband, son or to some extent mother or sister. The second generation characters are Sita in Hariharan, Ammu in Roy and Nair’s Akhila, and Karpagam are neither modern nor old tradition followers. The modern women change themselves according to the current scenario and they fight to stand on their own feet. In the current study, the characters depicting these qualities are Devi, Rahel, Prabha Devi, Margaret and Sheela.